And *Still* We Walk

Mapping Pathways to Safe and Inclusive Public Spaces in India

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Centre for Enquiry Into Health And Allied Themes

Published in 2026

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Citation: Priyadarshini, P., Damle, A., & Kulkarni, P. (2026). And *still* we walk: Mapping pathways to safe and inclusive public spaces in India. Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT).

Contribution statement: Pratikshya Priyadarshini and Aarohi Damle conceptualised the research study and designed the methodology. Pratikshya Priyadarshini, Aarohi Damle, Pooja Kulkarni, Sanjida Arora, and Amruta Bavadekar facilitated the participatory workshops that generated the organisational evidence on which this report is based. The organisations mentioned below contributed the knowledge that informed the report. Pooja Kulkarni and Ashwini Chougule managed the data. Aarohi Damle, Pratikshya Priyadarshini, and Pooja Kulkarni analysed the data and drafted the manuscript. Sangeeta Rege, Amruta Bavadekar, and Sanjida Arora reviewed the manuscript and provided constructive feedback at multiple stages. All authors read and approved the final version of the report.

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ISBN: 978-81-89042-95-0

The title "And *still* we walk" draws inspiration from Maya Angelou's poetry, evoking resilience and the continued assertion of presence in public spaces.

Design: Sidharth Shivshankar
Printed by: Arya Enterprises

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FOREWORD

Feminist scholars across geographical and cultural contexts have drawn attention to the ways in which public spaces are deeply gendered. Fiction and non-fiction texts have underscored that women are marked as outsiders to public space even as they resist and transgress the boundaries that restrict them.

Women's presence in streets, parks, transport systems, markets, and neighbourhoods is never simply about movement from one place to another; it is about the politics of belonging: who is allowed to linger, who must hurry through, who feels entitled to occupy space, and who is constantly reminded that they do not quite belong. Gendered hierarchies in access to public space are overlaid with other identities - class, caste, sexuality, gender identity, physical ability to name some - that enhance or further obstacle women's access to the public.

My own engagement with questions of women's access to public space has been shaped by women's everyday negotiations. In my research and writing on women's right to loiter, I have argued that safety cannot be understood merely as protection from violence; that restricted access to public space is also a form of violence against women. The right and freedom to inhabit public space without purpose, without fear, and without having one's presence constantly questioned is central to any significant understanding of safety. Yet across many cities and towns in India, the threat or experience of gender-based violence continues to shape how women and marginalised communities move through public life.

Gender-based violence in public spaces operates not only as an act of harm but also as a mechanism of social control. It restricts mobility, curtails participation in education and employment, and limits access not only to opportunities that public life offers but also to the simple pleasures of being in public space as a citizen with rights. At the same time, violence in public spaces is often discussed in isolation from violence within homes and intimate relationships. Feminist scholarship has long shown that these forms of violence are interconnected, shaped by the same structures of power, patriarchy, and inequality that regulate women's lives across both private and public domains.

This report titled, "And *Still* We Walk : Mapping Pathways to Safe and Inclusive Public Spaces in India" written by CEHAT makes an important contribution by bringing attention to the work of grassroots organisations responding to gender-based violence in public spaces across India. Drawing together the experiences of nearly thirty organisations working in diverse socio-economic and geographical contexts, the report provides a rich account of how practitioners understand and respond to the everyday realities of violence that shape women's engagement with public spaces.

The report importantly records that these organisations do not approach violence in public spaces as a narrow or isolated issue. Their interventions emerge through broader engagements with questions of urban governance, youth mobilisation, labour rights, livelihoods, access to health, and community organising. In doing so, they recognise what feminist scholars have long argued: that the creation of safer and more equitable public spaces requires interventions across multiple domains of social life.

The report also offers a useful analytical framework by situating these interventions within the socio-ecological model. By examining risk factors across individual, community, institutional, and structural levels, it demonstrates that meaningful responses to gender-based violence must operate simultaneously across these layers. Urban planning, transportation systems, community norms, livelihood opportunities, and institutional accountability all shape how public spaces are experienced. Addressing violence therefore requires coordinated and multi-sectoral responses rather than isolated or short-term solutions.

Equally significant is the report's effort to document the practical realities of grassroots work. Such work is often rich in insight but remains underrepresented in formal research and policy discussions. By capturing the strategies adopted by practitioners, the stakeholders they engage with, the challenges they navigate, and the changes they observe, the report helps strengthen the evidence base on how public spaces might become more inclusive. By documenting this work the report contributes to a more complex understanding of gendered public spaces.

At a time when conversations around safety frequently reduce the issue to surveillance, policing, or restrictions on women's movement, this report reminds us that safety must ultimately be linked to freedom. Safer public spaces cannot be built by limiting the presence of women, transgender persons, or marginalised people in public spaces; they must be built by expanding their right to inhabit them fully and without fear.

Dr. Shilpa Phadke
Co-Author, Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets
March 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the trust and openness of the many civil society organisations across India who shared their experiences and institutional knowledge with us. We extend our sincere gratitude to the leaders and team members of these organisations who agreed to contribute to this research and engaged with the process through consultations, discussions, and written inputs. Their willingness to reflect on their work and share insights from their programmes forms the foundation of this report and has greatly enriched our understanding of interventions addressing gender-based violence in public spaces.

We would like to acknowledge the guidance provided by members of CEHAT's Program Development Committee including Dr. U. Vindhya, Dr. Padmini Swaminathan, Dr. Vibhuti Patel, Dr. Padma Prakash, Ms. Renu Khanna, and Dr. Padma Deosthali, whose inputs helped strengthen the conceptual and analytical foundations of the research. We are also grateful to the Institutional Ethics Committee of Anusandhan Trust for undertaking the ethical review of the study. The committee included Dr. Surinder Jaiswal, Dr. Anant Bhan, Dr. Nilangi Saredeshpande, Ms. Anubha Rastogi, and Ms. Kajal Jain, whose review ensured that the research adhered to appropriate ethical standards.

We thank Dr. Kalpana Vishwanath and Dr. Nandita Shah for reviewing the initial research proposal and offering thoughtful suggestions that helped shape the scope of the study.

We are also grateful to Dr. Shilpa Phadke for kindly agreeing to write the foreword for this report and for situating the study within broader feminist discussions on public space and gender justice.

We acknowledge the Ford Foundation for supporting the implementation of this study financially.

We thank Sangeeta Rege for her consistent support throughout the study. Her engagement at different stages of the research helped the authors situate the study within a broader academic framework. We also thank Sanjida Arora for her guidance in shaping the methodological approach of the study, addressing ethical considerations during the research process, and providing detailed feedback on the report. Our thanks also go to Amruta Bavadekar for supporting the team during the study and for sharing her reflections on the report.

We are grateful to Gulal Salil and Dr. Himanshi Jindal for assisting with the documentation of the workshop and discussions that informed this study.

Within CEHAT, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of colleagues who supported the preparation of this report. We thank Ashwini Chougule, CEHAT's librarian, along with researchers Heena Sinha and Pradnya Jadhav for their support with proofreading, referencing, and formatting the report.

We also extend our appreciation to CEHAT's administrative team, Swati Pereira, Sudhakar Manjrekar, and Pramila Naik, for ensuring the administrative and logistical arrangements required for this multi-stage research process. We also acknowledge Pooja Salian for her administrative assistance during the data collection process.

Finally, we thank Shobha Kamble, whose countless cups of tea and quiet encouragement sustained the team through the long process of completing this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive social issues in India. Since the 1980s, feminist and rights-based movements have actively responded to various forms of GBV occurring across public and private spaces. Landmark cases such as the custodial rape of Mathura and the gang rape of Bhanwari Devi exposed the structural nature of sexual violence in India. Widespread protests and advocacy following these incidents led to significant legal and policy reforms, including the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983 and the Vishakha Guidelines (1997). These watershed moments gradually expanded feminist understanding and intervention to address the broader social conditions under which violence is experienced and publicly sanctioned.

This shift coincided with the growth of feminist scholarship highlighting the everydayness and normalisation of gender-based violations in 'public spaces.' Scholars and activists drew attention to their tacit manifestations, including increased surveillance over women's mobility, moral policing, and the persistent threat of harassment and assault. During this period, civil society campaigns, from Blank Noise (2003) to Why Loiter? (2014), played an important role in bringing these experiences into public debate. Civil society organisations also began addressing GBV in public spaces through a prevention lens, working to transform the spatial dimension of such violence. Organisations empowered communities to adopt tools such as gender safety audits, community mapping, and digital crowdsourcing platforms to reveal how GBV is closely linked to spatial design and patterns of exclusion.

Over the past two decades, these civil society efforts have expanded significantly. Interventions increasingly combine spatial strategies aimed at reducing situational and physical risks with programmes focused on making public spaces more inclusive and welcoming for all users. These interventions include work on gender norms, increasing women's participation in education and work, and strengthening response mechanisms to mitigate the heightened risk of violence.

This indicates that practitioners have increasingly moved beyond debates over the physical boundaries of "public space" to focus on transforming the social conditions that sustain its perpetration. These practical strategies of prevention and response recognise that violence in public spaces is shaped by unequal gender norms, structural inequalities, and institutional failures across sectors such as transport, policing, and urban governance. Against this backdrop, the present study adopts the Social-Ecological Model (SEM) to understand the web of risk–protective factors in operation. The SEM is used to map civil society initiatives and examine how practitioners identify risks, design protective mechanisms, and translate these insights into strategies for safer and more inclusive public environments.

Objectives

This mapping study aims to:

1. Map interventions addressing GBV in public spaces in India, including their origins and motivations.
2. Examine how organisations conceptualise and operationalise GBV in public spaces.
3. Identify the risk factors and protective mechanisms recognised within these interventions.
4. Document the activities undertaken to institute protections, along with the barriers, facilitators, and incremental outcomes observed.

The Research Process

Given the diversity of approaches and the absence of a clearly defined 'universe' of interventions, the study adopted an exploratory research design. Organisations were invited to self-select into the study based on their grassroots practices. The research followed an adaptive and iterative methodology, in which theory, methods, and analytical frameworks evolved alongside the insights shared by the study participants. Data was collected in three stages, with each stage informing subsequent research methods, tools, and analytical approaches.

Stage 1: A Google survey **identified fifty-one interventions implemented by forty-seven** organisations across India, providing a baseline profile of interventions.

Stage 2: Thirty organisations from among the forty-seven consented to participate in this stage and completed a written questionnaire examining how they conceptualise public spaces and operationalise their interventions. **Analysis identified four key domains of intervention: inclusive planning, infrastructure and transportation; transforming gender and social norms; promoting public participation through livelihoods; and strengthening responses to violations.**

Stage 3: Four participatory workshops were organised around these dimensions to synthesise practitioner knowledge. **These discussions identified key risk factors, protective mechanisms, barriers, facilitators, and incremental changes observed by participants. Findings were analysed using a hybrid inductive–deductive approach and organised using the Social-Ecological Model (SEM).**

Key Findings

Motivations and Origins of Interventions

Most civil society interventions addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in public spaces did not originate as part of organisations' initial mandates. Instead, **engagement with the issue evolved gradually as organisations encountered violence while working on related concerns such as labour rights, youth engagement, gender equality, and access to justice.** Public spaces were revealed as critical sites where gendered violence shaped mobility, participation, and access to public life.

One key pathway to working on this issue was the catalytic role of high-profile incidents of violence. Landmark cases such as the Bhanwari Devi case, the 2007 Mumbai mass molestation incident, and the 2012 Nirbhaya case reframed public-space GBV as a structural issue rather than a private matter. This prompted several organisations to expand their work on women's safety and mobility across rural and urban contexts. **A second pathway emerged from lived experiences and everyday witnessing of violence.** Practitioners described how routine harassment, surveillance, and exclusion in public life, particularly affecting Dalit women, transgender persons, and other marginalised groups, motivated organisations to address violence embedded in everyday social interactions. **A third pathway arose through organisations' work with youth and informal workers.** Youth programmes observed harassment in educational institutions and public transport, while work with informal workers exposed routine insecurity in markets, streets, and public workplaces—directly affecting their sustained participation in public life. **Finally, institutional inaction prompted several organisations to mobilise around accountability and support for survivors.** Refusal to register complaints or dismissing and trivialising cases of harassment became key points of action.

- Thirteen organisations implement seventeen independent interventions specifically addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in public spaces. Seventeen organisations do not run dedicated interventions but identify GBV in public spaces as a central component of their broader organisational strategy.
- Fourteen organisations implement programmes exclusively in urban or semi-urban contexts, ten operate exclusively in rural settings, and six organisations run programmes across both urban and rural locations, reflecting the diverse spatial contexts in which GBV in public spaces is addressed.
- The interventions represented in this study span nearly five decades of civil society engagement. The earliest intervention by Stree Mukti Sangathana (Maharashtra) began in 1975, while the most recent initiatives by The YP Foundation were launched in 2022.

Understanding the Typology of Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces

Findings from the study suggest that organisations working on GBV in public spaces rarely rely on fixed definitions of public space. Instead, **practitioners view public space as fluid and shaped by lived realities.** For many marginalised groups, including informal workers, rural women, and transgender persons, public spaces may also function as sites of work, livelihood, or even dwelling. Violence in these spaces is therefore not limited to strangers and may involve supervisors, state officials, acquaintances, or intimate partners.

Across the cohort, participants emphasised that violence operates along a continuum between private and public spaces. Violence within intimate or domestic relationships often spills into streets, transport systems, markets, or workplaces, while acts of violence in public spaces may reinforce surveillance and control within the household. Rather than focusing on fixed locations, organisations often refer to “degrees of publicness”, shaped by factors such as ownership, visibility, control, spatial design, and social expectations governing behaviour.

The study also highlights important contextual differences between rural and urban public spaces. In rural settings, public spaces are embedded in dense social networks where high visibility and community surveillance can lead to collective enforcement of gender norms. In urban areas, by contrast, anonymity and high mobility often enable repeated harassment in public transport, streets, and shared facilities.

Despite recognising the fluidity of violence across spaces, organisations continue to “strategically foreground” the language of “GBV in public space.” Framing violence spatially allows them to identify accountable institutions such as municipalities, transport authorities, and local governance bodies and to position GBV as an issue of governance, infrastructure, and collective responsibility rather than a private matter. This framing also enables engagement with a broader set of actors and supports systemic responses to violence.

Risk Factors for GBV in Public Spaces Across the Social-Ecological Model

Using the Social-Ecological Model (SEM), the study identified multiple interconnected risk factors contributing to GBV in public spaces across the individual, relational, community, and societal levels.

At the individual level, vulnerability to victimisation was linked to social and economic positionalities that increase visibility in public spaces, require prolonged presence in public environments, or expose individuals to prejudice-based violence. Groups identified as particularly at-risk include young women and girls, transgender persons, Dalit and Muslim women, migrant and informal workers, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Individual-level risks for perpetration of violence are associated with internalised beliefs that reinforce gendered divisions of space, hypermasculine norms, and the normalisation of violence.

At the relationship level, restrictive gender norms within families and intimate relationships shape women's access to public spaces. Control over women's mobility, labour, and economic independence, along with the use or threat of violence within families, contributes to the reproduction of violence across the private–public continuum.

At the community level, several environmental and institutional conditions were found to enable violence in public spaces. These include unsafe infrastructure, lack of responsive bystander behaviour, dominance of patriarchal community governance structures, dismissive or inadequate responses from justice institutions, and exclusionary conditions in workplaces.

At the societal level, broader structural and normative factors create enabling conditions for public-space violence. These include masculinist spatial planning and infrastructure, gender-exclusionary legal and policy frameworks, entrenched caste and communal hierarchies, cultural and political patriarchy, the modelling of hegemonic masculinities, economic precarity in informal labour markets, and conflict contexts.

Together, these findings highlight that GBV in public spaces is shaped by multi-level structural, social, and institutional dynamics rather than isolated individual behaviours.

Instituting Protections

This study documents the protective mechanisms that mitigate the risk factors identified across the Social-Ecological Model (SEM). Interventions institute protections through four overlapping dimensions—**infrastructure improvements, norms change, work and livelihood support, and stronger response systems.** Together, these protective mechanisms reduce exposure to violence, challenge its normalisation, and strengthen pathways to accountability.

Dimension 1: Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Organisations respond to infrastructure-related risks in public spaces **at the individual level** by supporting at-risk groups to identify infrastructure and transport gaps and demand accountability through civic-rights mobilisation and community-driven data generation. **At the community level,** interventions focus on improving access to functional public infrastructure and strengthening natural surveillance through increased "eyes on the street". This is done through capacity building and engagement with institutional stakeholders and community gatekeepers. **At the societal level,** organisations challenge male-centric and universalist approaches to public-space design by promoting gender-inclusive planning standards. Interventions provide advisory support, advocate for the inclusion of gender concerns in the development agenda, and use creative public campaigns to highlight the links between exclusionary infrastructure and the risk of violence.

Dimension 2: Transforming Gender Norms

Protective mechanisms in this dimension target the social norms and structures that enable and compound the risk of violence in public spaces. **At the individual level,** interventions strengthen the agency of girls, women, and transgender persons, particularly those from marginalised identities, through awareness-building sessions, leadership opportunities, and the development of community role models. Interventions also engage boys and men to shift heteropatriarchal ideologies, challenge hypermasculinity, and question the normalisation of violence. **At the relationship level,** interventions with parents and families aim to reduce control over mobility and address the acceptance of interpersonal violence within the household. **At the community level,** interventions focus on reducing acceptance and trivialisation of violence among neighbourhood stakeholders such as vendors, shop owners, transport workers, and service providers, as well as duty bearers within education, transport, and healthcare systems. Engagement activities include bystander training and

perspective-building sessions to strengthen accountability and shift patriarchal norms. **At the societal level,** interventions aim to reshape socio-political discourses that promote violence and heteronormativity. These include public campaigns promoting positive masculinities and bystander action, research and evidence-building to reshape public discourse, and network-building to advocate for gender-responsive policies and gender-integrated education.

Dimension 3: Work and Livelihoods

Interventions institute protections that strengthen economic security, collective agency, and institutional accountability for groups vulnerable to violence in public and work-related spaces. **At the individual level,** interventions focus on expanding access to livelihoods and economic opportunities for at-risk groups through needs assessments, linkages to skilling opportunities, and placement support. Organisations also build worker solidarity and grassroots leadership by establishing collectives, peer-support systems, and community resource centres to facilitate access to rights. **At the relationship level,** interventions seek to shift family attitudes that restrict women's labour and economic independence through meetings and dialogues. **At the community level,** interventions work towards enhancing the accountability of employers and administrators to uphold workers' rights and safety. Activities include workplace safety audits, dialogue with employers and public officials, and sensitisation initiatives, particularly to promote the inclusion and safety of transgender workers. **At the societal level,** organisations address structural drivers of precarity by advocating for expanded social protection and access to citizenship entitlements. Civil society networks look to engage government actors to strengthen labour protections and simplify access to welfare schemes for marginalised populations.

Dimension 4: Strengthening Response to Violations

To address barriers in accessing justice for gender-based violations in public spaces, interventions implement survivor-centred protections across multiple SEM levels. **At the individual level,** interventions increase awareness of rights and legal protections among at-risk groups and survivors facing heightened vulnerability to violence. They implement legal awareness sessions, exposure visits to response institutions, and casework services that provide psychosocial care and assistance in navigating justice systems. **At the relationship level,** family engagements aim to reduce isolation and enable families to support survivors. **At the community level,** organisations build the capacity of traditional institutions, local self-governance bodies, and duty bearers such as police, legal aid providers, healthcare workers, and employers to respond to violence in a survivor-centred manner. **At the societal level,** civil society networks promote feminist, rights-based shifts in laws and policies on GBV responses by providing technical support to law and policy makers and convening for multi-stakeholder responses.

Learnings and Implications

This study offers civil society organisations a consolidated evidence base to strengthen programme design, reflection, and communication on GBV in public spaces. It maps risks and interventions across the Social Ecological Model, helping identify gaps, build linkages, and clarify pathways of change. The findings emphasise the need for stronger theories of change, improved monitoring beyond activities, and better documentation of incremental, non-linear outcomes. They support adaptive programming and highlight the importance of cross-sector collaboration. For donors, the study calls for long-term, flexible funding that reflects gradual change and moves beyond narrow impact metrics, along with greater investment in evidence-building and platforms for collaboration and knowledge exchange. For policymakers, it recommends more integrated approaches that combine infrastructure with gender-transformative strategies and address the structural drivers of violence.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ANM- Auxiliary Nurse Midwives
- APCOM- Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health
- ASHA- Accredited Social Health Activist
- AWW- Anganwadi Workers
- BDO- Block Development Officer
- BEST- Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport
- BMC- Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation
- BMM- Block Mission Manager
- BNS- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita
- BSA- Basic Shiksha Adhikari
- CBO- Community Based Organisation
- CCTV- Closed-Circuit Television
- CDC- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- CDF- Child Development Foundation
- CEO- Chief Executive Officer
- CEQUIN- Centre for Equity and Inclusion
- CJS- Criminal Justice System
- CLPR- Centre for Law & Policy Research
- CORO- Committee of Resource Organisations
- CSO- Civil Society Organisation
- CSR- Corporate Social Responsibility
- CWC- Child Welfare Committee
- DCPU- District Child Protection Unit
- DEEDS- Development Education Service
- DGP- Director General of Police
- DLSA- District Legal Services Authority
- DM- District Magistrate
- DPO- District Probation Officer
- FIR- First Information Report
- GBV- Gender-based Violence
- GDP- Gross Domestic Product
- GPDP- Gram Panchayat Development Plan
- GPS- Global Positioning System
- GRP- Government Railway Police
- IC- Internal Committee
- ICRW- International Center for Research on Women
- IEC- Information Education and Communication
- ILO- International Labour Organisation
- IEC- Institutional Ethics Committee
- IPC- Indian Penal Code
- IPS- Indian Police Service
- IPV- Intimate Partner Violence
- LGBTQIA+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual plus
- LMIC- Low and Middle Income Countries
- MAVA- Men Against Violence and Abuse
- METRAC- Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children
- MGNREGA- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- MHADA- Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority
- MLA- Member of Legislative Assembly
- MNC- Multi National Corporation
- NACO- National AIDS Control Organisation
- NCRB- National Crime Records Bureau
- NCDHR- National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights
- NEN- North East Network
- NGO- Non Government Organisation

- NREGA- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- NRLM- National Rural Livelihoods Mission
- NSS- National Service Scheme
- OSC- One Stop Centre
- PDS- Public Distribution System
- PE- Physical Education
- PIL- Public Interest Litigation
- PLV- Para Legal volunteer
- POCSO- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act
- POSH- Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act
- PDC- Program Development Committee
- PT- Physical Training
- RPF- Railway Protection Force
- RWA- Residents Welfare Association
- SC- Schedule Caste
- SDM- Sub-divisional Magistrate
- SEM- Social Ecological Model
- SHG- Self Help Group
- SMS- Stree Mukti Sanghatana
- SP- Superintendent of Police
- SRHR- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- ST- Schedule Tribes
- SWATI- Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative
- TISS- Tata Institute of Social Sciences
- ToT- Training of Trainers
- UGC - University Grants Commission
- UN- United Nations
- UNDP- United Nations Development Programme
- UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- USAID- United States agency for International Development
- VAW- Violence Against Women
- VLCPC - Village Level Child Protection Committee
- WASH- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
- WHO- World Health Organisation

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Social Ecological Model (SEM)

The **Social Ecological Model (SEM)** is a four-level conceptual framework developed by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** to understand and prevent violence. The model draws on ecological systems theory, which proposes that human behaviour and development are shaped by multiple, interacting environmental systems ranging from immediate interpersonal settings to broader cultural and structural contexts.

The SEM recognises that violence results from the interaction of factors operating at four levels: **individual, relationship, community, and societal.** By identifying risk and protective factors across these levels, the model provides a structure for analysing violence and designing **multi-level prevention strategies.**

Individual Level

The **individual level** is the first level of the SEM framework. It focuses on biological and personal history factors that influence an individual's likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating violence. These factors may include age, gender, education, income, substance use, attitudes supporting violence, and social isolation.

Relationship Level

The **relationship level** is the second level of the SEM. It examines how close social relationships—such as those with family members, peers, and intimate partners—influence a person's risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence. Factors at this level may include family conflict, poor parental supervision, and association with peers who engage in delinquent or harmful behaviour.

Community Level

The **community level** is the third level of the SEM. It refers to the settings and institutions within which social relationships occur, such as schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, and community networks. Community-level factors influencing violence may include limited economic opportunities, weak neighbourhood organisation, lack of recreational or social resources, and low levels of social cohesion.

Societal Level

The **societal level** is the fourth and broadest level of the SEM. It considers the larger structural and cultural conditions that shape the overall environment in which violence occurs. These include social and economic policies, cultural norms, societal attitudes, and systemic inequalities that may either tolerate or discourage violence.

Risk Factors

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the likelihood of an individual experiencing or perpetrating violence. These factors can operate at any level of the SEM and may include biological, behavioural, social, economic, or environmental influences.

Protective Factors

Protective factors are characteristics or conditions that reduce the likelihood of violence by buffering individuals or communities against known risk factors. Examples include strong social support networks, access to quality education, community cohesion, and responsive institutions.

Interventions

Interventions refer to long-term programmes designed and implemented by organisations to systematically address the risks that contribute to violence and to strengthen protective factors. In this report, the terms **"intervention"** and **"programme"** are sometimes used interchangeably, reflecting how participants used these terms during the consultative workshops.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organisations who have an interest in, influence over, or are affected by a programme, initiative, or policy. In the context of gender-based violence (GBV) in public spaces, stakeholders may include women, girls, and transgender persons; community members; government institutions and duty bearers; educators; advocacy organisations; funders; and other relevant actors.

Barriers

Barriers are obstacles or challenges that hinder the implementation, adoption, or effectiveness of programmes and strategies. Barriers may operate at any level of the SEM and can include structural barriers (such as limited resources), social barriers (such as stigma), organisational barriers (such as limited institutional capacity or staff turnover), and individual barriers (such as lack of awareness or motivation).

Facilitators

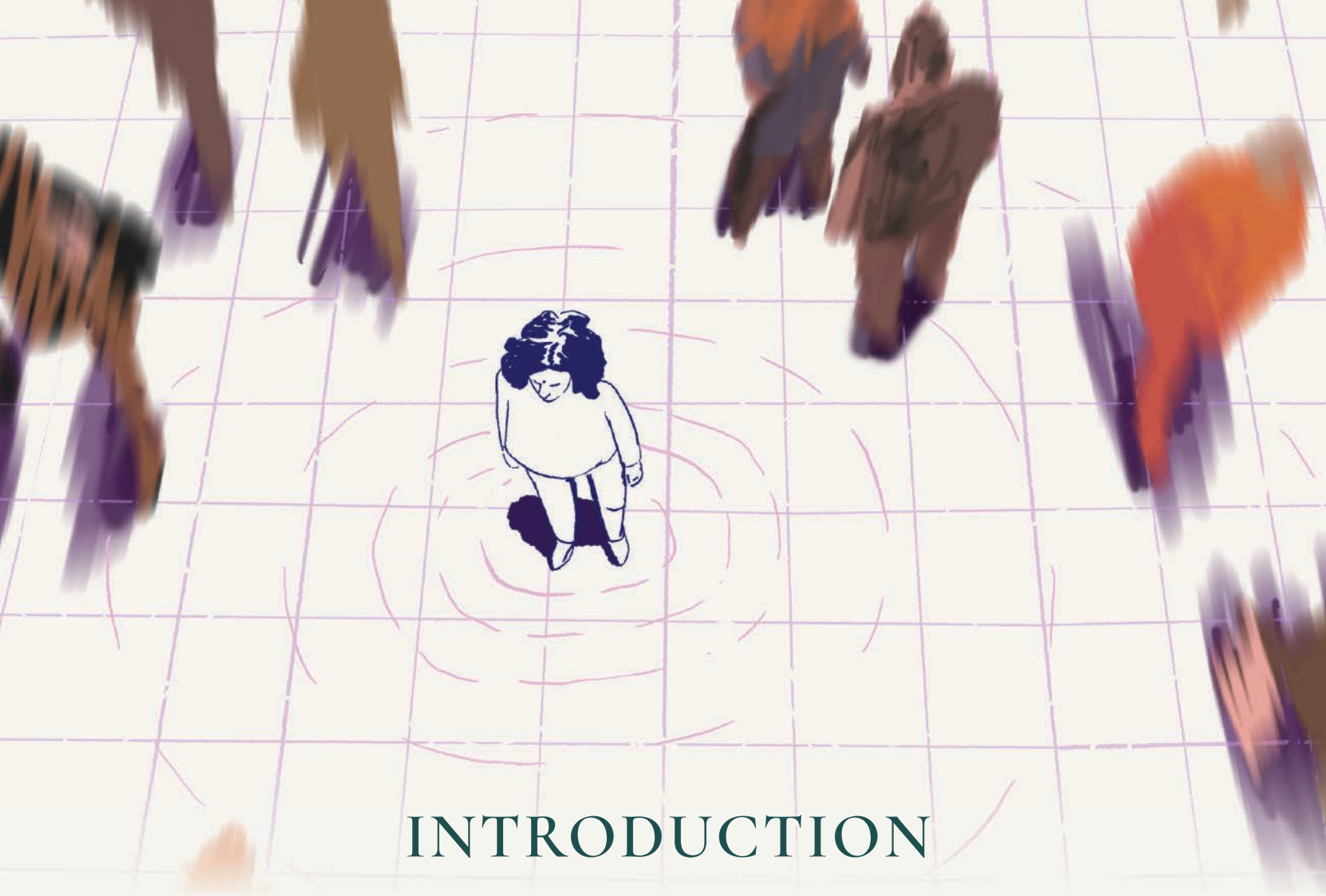
Facilitators are conditions or resources that support and enable the successful implementation of programmes or strategies. These may include strong community participation, institutional partnerships, supportive policies, and adequate financial or organisational resources.

Activities

Activities are specific actions or tasks carried out as part of a programme or intervention. They are designed to address identified risk factors and strengthen protective factors across the levels of the SEM. Examples include workshops, training sessions, community outreach campaigns, and mentoring programmes.

Incremental Changes

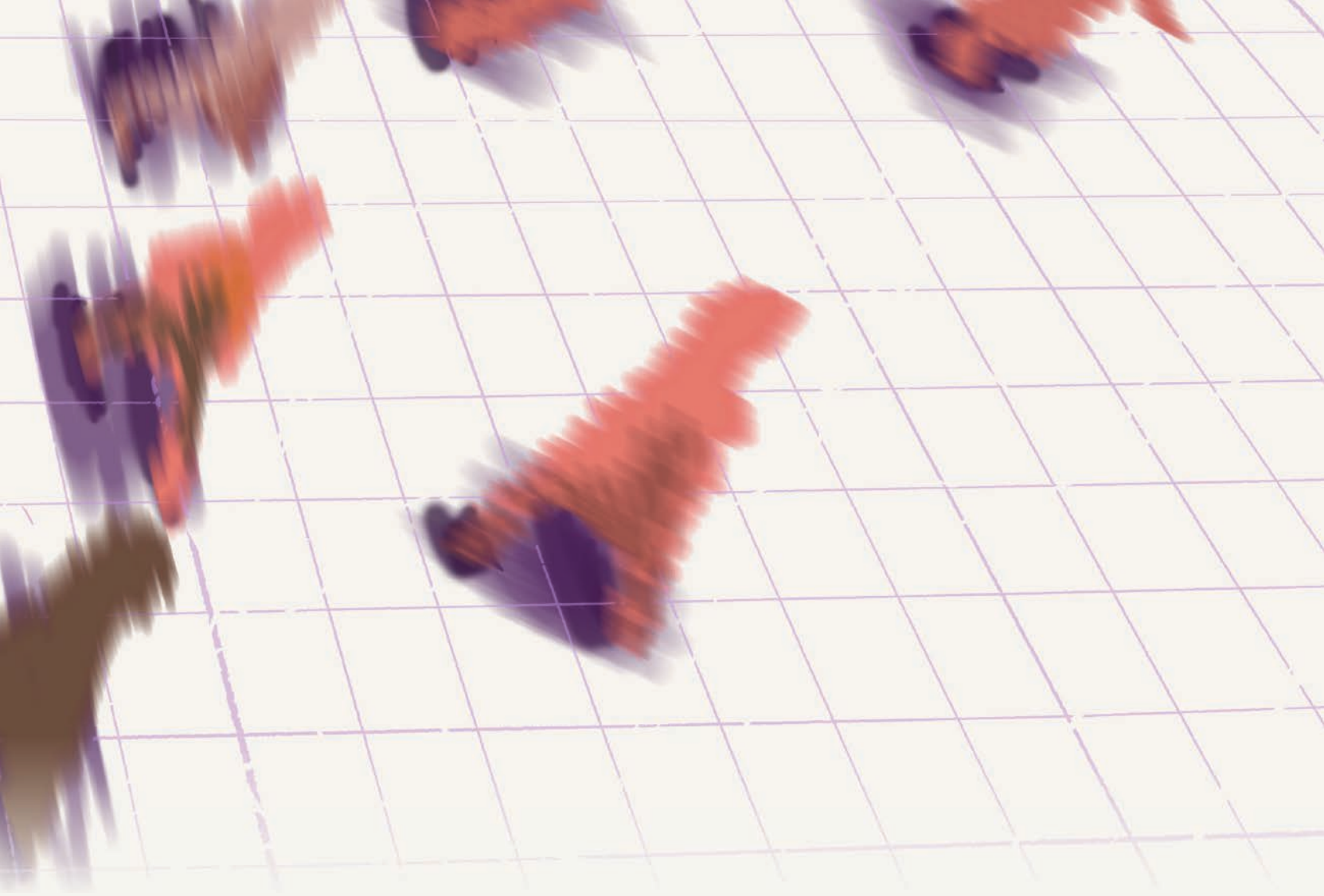
Incremental changes refer to small, gradual shifts that occur over time as a result of sustained interventions or programme activities. These changes may not immediately transform the broader structural conditions that produce violence, but they represent meaningful progress in attitudes, behaviours, institutional practices, or community responses. In the context of gender-based violence in public spaces, incremental changes may include increased awareness of rights, improved willingness to report violence, greater responsiveness from institutions, or shifts in community norms that challenge the acceptance of violence. Over time, such changes can accumulate and contribute to broader social and institutional transformation.



INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive and serious social issues in India. Feminist and rights groups have been responding to GBV occurring across public and private spaces since the 1980s. As Katzenstein (1989) notes, the focus of women's movement(s) shifted toward GBV after several incidents of sexual assault involving women from marginalised communities came to light. A key turning point was the custodial rape of a young Adivasi girl, Mathura, by policemen inside a police station in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. When the Supreme Court acquitted the accused, citing lack of resistance and Mathura's sexual history, the judgment triggered protests across several Indian cities. On 8 March 1980, several groups like Forum Against Rape (later Forum Against Oppression of Women) and Saheli led protests opposing the apathetic and insensitive response of the state and judiciary to the issue of sexual violence (Kumar, 1993). These mobilisations exposed the reality of sexual violence in public institutions by state actors and contributed to the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983. These amendments instituted custodial rape provisions, changed the evidentiary law to presume non-consent, and shifted the burden of proof to the accused. Another watershed moment came with the public gang rape of a Dalit frontline worker, Bhanwari Devi, by dominant-caste men after she intervened in a child marriage case. Although the accused were acquitted, the case led to a PIL that resulted in the Supreme Court's Vishakha Guidelines (1997), which defined 'sexual harassment' and mandated workplace redressal mechanisms for the first time. Subsequent incidents, including the rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama by armed forces and the caste-based public sexual assault in the Kherlanji massacre, continued to expose how sexual violence was used as a tool for asserting power, perpetrated by dominant castes, paramilitary forces, and state institutions. These incidents not only exposed the structural nature of sexual violence in India but also gradually expanded feminist engagement beyond domestic and custodial violence to include the conditions under which women experience violence in everyday public environments.

Around this time, several civil society actors and academics began delving more intently into the issue of gender-based violence in 'public spaces'. This was motivated by the realisation that not all violence that takes place outside the home manifests in graphic forms, but is, in fact, the 'violence of normal times.' This refers to an insidious form of violence that



structures the daily lives of women by controlling their movements and behaviour through the imposition of a constant sense of insecurity (Vishwanath and Mehrotra, 2007). This sparked a discourse around the conditional nature of women's presence in public spaces and the ways in which they are compelled to negotiate their safety every time they step outside the home ((Phadke et al., 2011). This body of knowledge locally contextualised the work of several scholars from the West who had highlighted the 'safety work' that women are required to undertake to navigate the complex 'geography of fear' (Hanmer, 1978; Pain, 1997; Valentine, 1989). These explorations revealed the urgent need for disruption – the need to rupture this normalisation of everyday violence that women either experienced or perpetually feared when they ventured out of their homes. Intersecting issues such as street sexual harassment and moral policing began being amplified through several organic campaigns in the early 2000s and 2010s, especially in the urban public. Blank Noise (2003), Pink Chaddi protest (2009), Besharmi Morcha (2011), Kiss of Love (2014), and the Why Loiter? campaign (2014) were all led by women activists and youth leaders across big and small cities.

Pilot & Prabhu (2014) wrote that the issue of violence in public spaces remained inadequately conceptualised and lacked policy or institutional responses equivalent to domestic violence. This was perhaps because domestic violence required 'dislodging' from the invisible space of the home and was routinely dismissed as a 'private matter' before women's movement(s) fought hard to 'politicise' it (Kumar, 1993). The struggle also resulted in a relatively coherent legal framework with a clear definition of 'domestic violence' as it manifests in the Indian context, through the passing of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) in 2005. However, similar structured efforts had not been made in the area of public space violence. This does not mean that civil society organisations had not intervened in everyday violations; rather, systematic responses, particularly from a prevention perspective, had not yet fully developed. Early efforts from civil society organisations came with the adaptation of tools such as safety audits from a gender lens by organisations like Jagori (Vishwanath and Mehrotra, 2007), which later developed into sophisticated but accessible digital platforms such as Safetipin. Institutional efforts gained momentum when UN Women launched the Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls programme in 2010, selecting Delhi as a pilot city and partnering

with Jagori, UN-Habitat, the Government of Delhi, and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) to generate evidence and policy responses (UN Women & ICRW, 2013). These novel initiatives were critical in revealing how GBV is directly connected with spatial design and driven by spatial exclusion.

These evolving civil society and institutional efforts gained unprecedented national attention following the 2012 gang rape and murder of a physiotherapy student in Delhi (Nirbhaya). Many organisations that had been building knowledge around the issue not only participated in the protests but also systematically engaged with the Justice Verma Committee. Drawing on their submissions, the committee recognised the everyday nature of violence and recommended criminalising "eve-teasing", recognising acid attacks as a specific offence with state compensation, addressing sexual violence by armed forces, and strengthening rape laws (Verma et al., 2013, pp. 142–150). These recommendations informed the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, which expanded the definition of rape under Section 375 and introduced offences such as acid attack (Sections 326A–B), sexual harassment (354A), assault with intent to disrobe (354B), voyeurism (354C), and stalking (354D) to the penal code. The committee also strongly opined that "certain basic measures regarding provision of civic amenities be undertaken by the State, so as to minimise opportunities for the perpetrators of the crimes" (p. 260). It also recommended measures such as better street lighting, improved sanitation facilities, and safer public transport through higher service frequency, designated security personnel, and the installation of CCTV cameras and GPS systems on buses. The Government of India's Safe Cities and SMART City Mission initiatives later integrated some of these measures into policy, though the operationalisation and implementation of the schemes remains uneven.

It is important to note that much of the discourse on gender-based violence in public spaces continues to centre the experiences of cisgender women, leaving the experiences of trans and queer persons relatively underrepresented in research and policy discussions. This gap is significant, particularly given that many transgender and queer individuals are materially and socially pushed into occupying public spaces for livelihood, mobility, and social belonging, often under conditions of heightened vulnerability. As a result, while the term "gender-based violence" suggests a broader analytical frame, much of the existing knowledge base continues to be shaped primarily by the study of violence against women (VAW). Recognising this limitation is important for expanding the analytical scope of GBV research and for developing responses that better reflect the diverse gendered experiences of public space.

Development and Expansion of Civil Society Responses to GBV in Public Spaces – Where Are We Now?

Parallel to these shifts, civil society organisations have continued to make efforts to understand and respond to the issue of GBV in public spaces in a multidimensional manner. Though the focus on the site itself is unique to these forms of violence, interventions have expanded in diverse directions, especially over the last two decades. Preventive strategies have targeted the built environment and surveillance, drawing on environmental criminology. These are institutionalised through safety audits, community mapping, planning, and infrastructure reforms aimed at reducing situational risk. At the same time, norms-change interventions including community mobilisation, bystander programmes, collective action by women and girls, and initiatives engaging men and boys have also been adopted by various organisations. Many programmes have focused on increasing women's workforce participation and safety at public workspaces. Response-related interventions include legal and remedial mechanisms such as criminal law reform, helplines, One Stop Centres (OSC), legal empowerment initiatives, and multi-sectoral response models that explicitly respond to harassment and violence occurring in streets, transport, workplaces, and other public sites.

Interventions have also expanded beyond urban centres into smaller towns and rural spaces. The need to engage with "public space" has similarly emerged within rural publics, closely tied to concerns of mobility and safety in transportation, public workplaces, and educational spaces. Over time, global tools such as safety audits have been hyper-contextualised and democratised, and are now widely used by diverse intersectional groups, including those in remote communities (Sebastian et al., 2020). At the same time, given the multidimensional nature of gender-based violence, organisations that have traditionally focused on domestic violence or workplace violence have increasingly confronted the challenge of GBV in public spaces. Many intervention strategies have therefore overlapped, with

approaches developed in response to other forms of violence, such as transforming gender norms or strengthening institutional systems, being adapted to address GBV in public spaces. Within this complex landscape of violence response, interventions overlap and converge, offering an opportune moment to examine the intellectual corpus constituted by these interventions.

Of Concepts and Debates – Questions that Linger and Emerge

While these interventions have expanded the field of action around GBV in public spaces, they have also generated several conceptual questions and debates. One of the most fundamental concerns is how the phenomenon itself should be understood. What constitutes the "public" in gender-based violence in public spaces? Where do its definitional boundaries lie? How can the "public" be defined analytically while remaining faithful to feminist scholarship that conceptualises space as political rather than merely situational (Valentine, 1989; Massey, 1994)? These questions are particularly important for empirical research, which requires conceptual clarity in order to operationalise and measure the phenomenon.

In GBV literature, violence in the "private" sphere is most often operationalised through a relational lens, referring to violence perpetrated by partners or family members. This relational framing allows descriptive research, such as estimating prevalence rates, to be conducted more easily. The site or location of violence is rarely emphasised in defining domestic violence or intimate partner violence, as there is a general understanding that location plays a limited role in shaping these forms of violence. Even administratively, violence in the private sphere is defined along similar lines through legal frameworks such as the PWDVA, 2005.

In contrast, scholarship on GBV in public spaces over the past two decades demonstrates diverse ways of operationalising what constitutes the "public". The category of "public space violence" is defined both in terms of relationship and location. Some studies conceptualise GBV in public space through terms such as "stranger violence", particularly when it occurs on the "street" (Rosenbaum et al., 2020). There is some evidence suggesting that forms such as sexual harassment are more likely to occur in public spaces and are more often perpetrated by strangers (Fileborn and O'Neill, 2021). In other studies, GBV in public spaces is operationalised through enumerated lists of sites, defining public space violence by the locations in which it occurs rather than by who commits the violence. Empirical studies and baseline surveys frequently identify violence across commonly used civic spaces such as streets, public transport, markets, parks, and recreational venues (UN Women & ICRW, 2012; Monqid, 2012; Chubin, 2014; Henry, 2017) Indian scholarship further extends this site-based approach by explicitly cataloguing diverse public and quasi-public locations, including transport nodes, leisure spaces, and privatised public spaces, in order to capture the situational ecology of women's public victimisation (Madan & Nalla, 2016; Sur, 2022). More recently, studies have attempted to distinguish GBV in public spaces from GBV in workplaces: sexual harassment occurring in public places is often termed street harassment, while harassment occurring in workplaces is categorised as workplace sexual harassment (Gnanaselvam & Joseph, 2023). In some ways, "public spaces" have therefore been conceptualised as the space situated between the domestic sphere and the workplace (Pilot & Prabhu, 2014).

On the other hand, the term "public spaces" is rarely operationalised administratively in India, even though it appears frequently in planning and policy discourse. Planning frameworks such as the Urban and Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation Guidelines (Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, 2014) do not offer a direct definition of public space; rather, they approach it indirectly through land-use categories such as recreational/open spaces, public and semi-public facilities, and transportation infrastructure. As a result, parks, streets, gardens, and civic facilities are addressed as distinct land-use functions rather than being conceptualised together as "public space". A similar absence can be observed within legal and criminological frameworks. While the Indian Penal Code (now Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) criminalises offences such as assault on women, sexual harassment, stalking, and insulting the modesty of a woman, these provisions regulate acts rather than the spatial contexts in which they occur, and "public space" does not appear as a distinct juridical category. This ambiguity is reflected in crime statistics compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), where offences are classified primarily by type of crime and only sparsely by location through broad categories such as workplace, public transport, shelter homes, and

"other places". Consequently, the spatial dimension of gender-based violence remains only weakly captured within administrative and criminological systems, making "public space" difficult to define or analyse within the state's own frameworks. Such administrative framings treat space as a neutral backdrop to crime, rather than recognising how gendered norms and power relations structure women's access to and safety within public environments. In doing so, they fail to consider how the characteristics and uses of particular spaces can themselves drive opportunities for violence, limiting their usefulness for understanding or addressing GBV in public settings.

At the same time, the field of action related to GBV in public spaces has continued to expand and transform. As mentioned earlier, interventions addressing GBV in public spaces have diversified across varying degrees of urbanisation and ruralisation, and engagements now encompass a wider range of vulnerable groups. As a result, the definitional boundaries of "public space" warrant renewed examination. Much of the existing scholarship relies on urban imaginaries of the public, centring ciswomen who access education and formal employment and who occupy these spaces largely for transitional purposes. In such contexts, violence in public space is typically conceptualised as stranger violence, enabled by the swift movement, density, and anonymity of urban streets and public transport. Public spaces such as streets, transport systems, markets, and recreational areas are also often analytically distinguished from workplaces, which are imagined as formal, institutional, regulated, and organised environments. While this specificity can make the task of operationalisation easier for researchers, it also raises several conceptual questions. If public space violence in urban contexts is understood primarily as stranger violence, how does this framing translate to rural settings where social relations are closer and anonymity is limited? If public space is defined in contrast to the workplace, how should GBV be conceptualised in an expanding landscape of informal and precarious labour, where streets, transport systems, and even homes frequently function as worksites for marginalised groups? More broadly, how can public space be operationalised for research without imposing rigid categories that overlook the fluid and overlapping nature of everyday spaces?

These definitional challenges also resonate with a longer-standing critique within feminist geography. Feminist geographers have long argued that the distinction between public and private space is itself misleading, demonstrating that space is relational, gendered, and produced through power rather than fixed or bounded (Valentine, 1989; Massey, 1994). Yet organisations continue to rely on spatial typologies that separate GBV in public spaces from violence in private or domestic settings, often for purposes of measurement, law, and programming. This raises a key tension: how can feminist theory's emphasis on spatial continuity be reconciled with the persistent use of site-based categories in practice? Assuming this represents a conscious and strategic framing by practitioners and advocates, what purpose does location-based typology serve? These are some of the questions that this study seeks to explore.

Concepts to Actions, Problems to Solutions – Where Are the Logical Threads?

While these debates highlight important conceptual tensions, interventions in practice often move beyond these definitional difficulties. Besides safety audits and spatial planning, mapping of interventions shows that practitioners consider norms change, institution of legal protections, and improvement of response and services as important strategies (Fulu, 2016; Nowrojee and Shebi, 2019). Practitioners also engage with a wide range of groups to highlight intersectional vulnerabilities to GBV in public spaces (Tandon Mehrotra et al., 2010; SWATI and ICRW, 2020). Reflecting this practice-based understanding, global and Indian frameworks such as UN Safe Cities (UN Women, 2017) and She Rises (Viswanath et al., 2022) explicitly recommend combining spatial, institutional, and normative strategies to create safe and inclusive public spaces.

Feminist theorising has long identified the root causes of GBV in public spaces as embedded in gendered power relations, everyday masculinities, and claims over women's bodies and mobility (Fileborn & O'Neill, 2021; Vera-Gray, 2014).. Global feminist policy frameworks similarly locate the causes of GBV in public spaces in unequal gender norms, institutional failures, and structural inequalities in urban governance, transport, policing, and services, reinforcing that such violence is systemic rather than situational (UN Women, 2017). Multi-level risk assessment frameworks similarly frame public space GBV as systemic, rooted in unequal gender norms, institutional failures, and structural conditions across transport, policing, and urban governance (Solotaroff and Pande, 2014).

Despite such extensive work on defining the risks, there is little documentation on how the programmatic linkage between risks and solutions happens. How do practitioners identify risks from their own exposure and experiences? Do they find value in this identification? How do they use their observed risks to develop solutions? Additionally, unpacking the logical thread between risk identification and intervention planning may help us better understand why, despite challenges in setting operational boundaries, organisations still clearly engage with diverse vulnerable groups and their interventions seep into homes as well as formal 'workplaces'.

The unpacking of risks is logically followed by efforts to understand what protective mechanisms are instituted in response and how. Undertaking a systematic mapping of interventions allows for closer examination of how different programmes respond to identified risks, the levels at which they operate, and the protective mechanisms they deploy in practice. Such mapping makes it possible to move beyond viewing interventions as isolated activities and instead situate them within broader ecosystems of risk and protection that determine safety, mobility, and access to public life. This kind of scoping and deep dive is important because work on GBV in public spaces is intended to inform and support practice, particularly for civil society organisations and practitioners designing, implementing, or adapting interventions. Organising interventions in relation to risks and protective factors helps surface the range of approaches currently in use, the assumptions that underpin them, and the vulnerabilities they seek to address. This, in turn, can support learning across organisations by helping identify gaps or opportunities in programming and enable more intentional engagement with the complexities of public space GBV.

Our approach to studying interventions through a social-ecological risk–protective factor lens (Dahlberg & Krug, 2006) is especially useful given the multi-level nature of GBV in public spaces, which is rooted in individual, relational, institutional, and structural conditions. Such a lens shifts attention away from activities alone and towards questions of what risks interventions seek to reduce, what protective factors they aim to strengthen, and how these are expected to contribute to safety, dignity, and participation in public life.

At the same time, it is important to clarify that mapping interventions in this manner is not the same as evaluating them. The purpose is not to assess effectiveness, rank interventions, or determine impact, but to organise existing work within analytical frameworks that can support more systematic thinking about outcomes, indicators, and pathways of change. This can create the conditions for future research, testing, and evaluation, including work led by practitioners themselves.

Finally, this form of mapping is important for strengthening documentation and learning within the field. Many interventions on GBV in public spaces operate in complex and resource-constrained contexts and remain under-documented. Bringing these interventions into a shared analytical frame can help build a cumulative evidence base that reflects practitioner knowledge and experience, and that supports more deliberate, risk-informed, and protective programming over time. Against this background, this research seeks to systematically map interventions addressing gender-based violence in public spaces. Our central research objectives are as follows:

1. To map the range of interventions being undertaken in India to address GBV in public spaces, including their genesis and underlying motivations.
2. To examine how these interventions understand and operationalise GBV in public spaces.
3. To identify the risks and protective mechanisms recognised and prioritised within these interventions.
4. To document the activities undertaken to institute protections, along with the barriers and facilitators encountered and the incremental outcomes observed.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

- This mapping exercise is limited to GBV interventions focused on prevention and response to violations occurring in physical public spaces. Digital gender-based violence operates within a complex web of digital publics, governed by a different set of laws and regulations, involving national and international entities. Therefore, a unique set of strategies must be employed for prevention and response to digital violence. Given these differences, including digital forms of GBV would introduce significant analytical variation. To maintain conceptual clarity and comparability across interventions, this mapping is limited to violence interventions in the physical space.

- The mapping will only include interventions designed and implemented by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in India. By CSOs, we include non-profit organisations, community-based organisations, and movements and campaigns. This is done to meet the primary objective of compiling feminist practice-based insights and experiential knowledge of violence prevention and response work.

- A limitation of this study is that, despite efforts to build a diverse sample, we were not able to include direct perspectives from organisations specifically working with Persons with Disabilities. As a result, the voices of women with disabilities, and the unique risks they face while navigating public spaces, remain underrepresented in this analysis.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

R E S E A R C H

This study adopts an exploratory research design to understand the dynamics of interventions that seek to prevent and respond to GBV in public spaces in India. This approach is particularly appropriate given the absence of a universal definition of GBV in public spaces that adequately captures its nature and impacts (Ahmed et al., 2014; Kearl, 2014; Kelly, 1988; Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014; UN Women & ICRW, 2013; Vera-Gray, 2014; Zietz & Das, 2018). The study therefore explores why, when and in what context interventions emerge as relevant, who they engage with and how they are implemented in the face of social and institutional challenges.

To begin identifying interventions for inclusion in this study, an in-depth literature review was conducted on documented experiences of GBV in public spaces as well as the 'targeted' interventions and programmes that emerged in the aftermath of the Nirbhaya rape case. The review revealed that GBV in public spaces is a multi-dimensional issue with a dynamic set of interventions. While some engaged with the issue directly by focusing on law and remediation or infrastructural change to ensure safety, other interventions worked indirectly by changing gender norms to reduce the risk of perpetration of violence (Nowrojee & Shebi, 2019). Since these intervention approaches may function distinctly or overlap, demarcating a clear research 'universe' and 'sample' (Gentles et al., 2015) of interventions proved neither accurate nor useful.

In response to this conceptual complexity, the research methodology was intentionally dynamic and reflexive, creating space for organisations to self-select into the study based on their grassroots practices. This exploratory exercise was guided by an adaptive and iterative methodology (van Assche et al., 2023) where theory, methods and analytical frameworks changed and evolved alongside emerging insights from the field. Data was collected in three stages and the findings from each stage informed subsequent lines of inquiry, the choice of tools and methods used in the next stage, and the analytical framework to organise emerging data. This process helped ensure both clarity and depth of information and enabled triangulation of findings.

In essence, the data collection contributed to knowledge-building in three key ways:

- Online Mapping: Captured the landscape of Indian organisations and provided a baseline profile of interventions addressing GBV in public spaces.
- Documentation: Examined how interventions conceptualise public spaces as well as the strategies and practicalities involved in implementation.
- Synthesis: 'Made meaning' of the field by situating interventions within the SEM framework.

Table 1. Stage 1: Mapping Landscape of Interventions

	Research Questions	Variables	Source of Data	Methods of Analysis
Stage 1	To map the range of interventions being undertaken in India to address GBV in public spaces, including their genesis and underlying motivations.	Intervention profile 1.Location 2.Activities 3.Stakeholders 4.Targeted forms of violence	Google Survey	Descriptive Analysis

To identify interventions that directly or tangentially address GBV in public spaces, we utilised an online Google survey tool (Annexure 1). The survey invited organisations to participate in the study *if they work on the issue of GBV in public spaces*. Online surveys are often criticised for their self-selection bias and unstructured distribution of the survey (Andrade, 2020). However, these limitations proved advantageous as feminist organisations were asked to self-report their interventions for inclusion in the study using the Google survey tool. Self-reporting of current or past interventions meant the definition and scope of interventions on "GBV in public spaces" organically evolved from grassroots practice, rather than being constrained by predetermined criteria.

The survey, developed in English and Hindi, was circulated among known national and local-level feminist networks for three months between January and April 2024. To maximise engagement, the survey was also shared with ~150 organisations contributing to GBV reduction through cross-sectoral strategies like housing, informal work, sport, etc. An email invitation to fill the Google survey was sent to the feminist networks and the select organisations, with a request to snowball the survey among peers and known community networks. The email invitation was followed by a minimum of two reminder emails and/or calls before the set deadline.

The survey conveyed detailed information about CEHAT, the context of the current study, and sought responding organisations' informed consent. The survey itself consisted of 15 questions that documented the basic profile of the programmes- *where, how,* and *with whom* the programmes are implemented, as well as the targeted forms of violence. Organisations were also asked for permission to use the provided information in the report and whether they were willing to participate in subsequent rounds of the study.

A total of 51 interventions (run by 47 organisations) were identified through the Google survey (Annexure 2). The collected data was quantitatively analysed to document the common characteristics between interventions in terms of communities of engagement, targeted forms of violence, field activities, etc. For the next step of the study, the plan was to group interventions for the purpose of conducting in-depth interviews with their representatives. However, the quantitative analysis revealed high heterogeneity among responses. This made any grouping and selection of interventions for in-depth interviews inaccurate and non-representative (Acocella, 2012).

Instead, more in-depth information was sought about the interventions through a written questionnaire. The expectation was that additional information from the questionnaire would help find common axes for grouping and organising the various interventions. The questionnaire also served as an expression of interest to participate in the subsequent stages of the research.

Table 2. Stage 2: Documenting Programme Data

	Research Questions	Variables	Source of Data	Methods
Stage 2	To examine how these interventions understand and operationalise GBV in public spaces.	1. Genesis and rationale behind intervention design 2. Clarifications on forms and locations of 'public' violence 3. Intersection of identities with forms of violence 4. Collaborations with different stakeholders	Written questionnaire	Qualitative analysis

CEHAT invited all 47 organisations identified at the mapping stage to fill out the written questionnaire. Detailed consent was obtained from all willing participant organisations at this stage. Organisations were asked to nominate one representative to take part in all subsequent data collection exercises to ensure continuity of data. The nominated representative was requested to be a mid to senior level team member, closely involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the programme. In cases where the organisation was running more than one intervention on GBV in public spaces, they were asked to nominate one representative for each intervention.

The open-ended written questionnaire (Annexure 3), in Hindi and English, was shared with the programmes, and sought to understand:

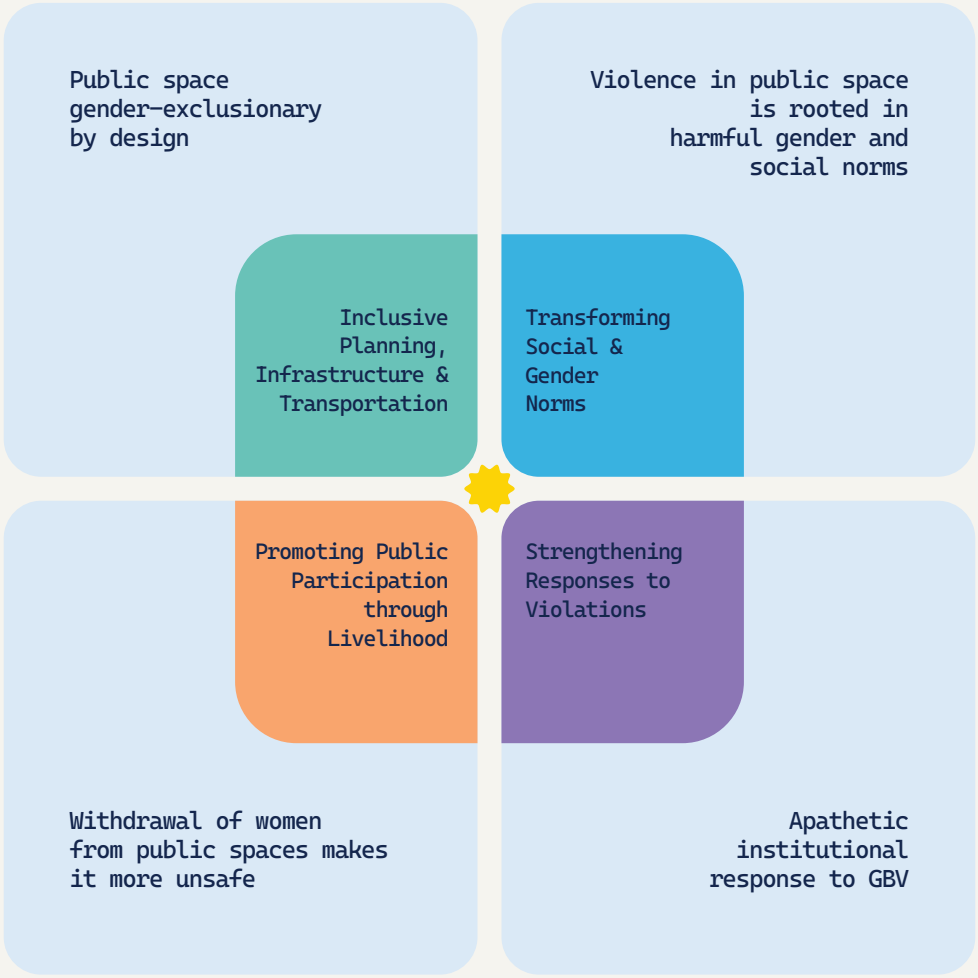
- The genesis of the interventions and their goals
- Socio-political context of the interventions
- The associated stakeholders and activities

The written questionnaire offered organisations a space to reflect on their interventions. Their responses provided valuable insights to the research team, helping to identify and organise the key 'Dimensions' of work addressing violence in public spaces. The questionnaire responses served as a preparatory guide for the researchers to design the discussion prompts and participatory methods for the next stage of data collection through participatory workshops.

Identifying Dimensions and Grouping Organisations

Analysis of the first two rounds of data, the responses to the Google survey and written questionnaires revealed certain common entry points into the field. It became evident that organisations approached the field of GBV in public spaces through four key *dimensions* of intervention work. These four dimensions are not exhaustive. Rather, these are complementary and often intersect in practice. Organisations often develop cross-cutting interventions and long-term programmes that engage with multiple dimensions simultaneously in their efforts to reduce GBV.

Figure 1. The Four Key Dimensions of Intervention Work



- To facilitate deeper analysis, participating organisations were divided into four groups, each representing an identified dimension. The grouping was informed primarily *by the nature of their interventions addressing GBV in public spaces* as well as their expertise in the field and their expected contribution for the research. To ensure accurate categorisation, researchers studied the questionnaire submitted by the organisations, conducted desk research into the interventions and organisational objectives, and followed-up with the nominated representative where necessary. To allow for a focused engagement on the various aspects of these grouped interventions, grassroots actions and solutions, each dimension was explored through a participatory workshop. The four dimension-wise workshops were as follows:

  - **Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation:** Interventions that enable the public space to be more gender-inclusive
  - **Transforming Gender and Social Norms:** Interventions that transform the norms and behaviour of users of public spaces
  - **Promoting Public Participation through Livelihood:** Interventions that enable women, girls, and

transqueer persons to participate in public spaces by improving livelihoods

- **Strengthening Responses to Violation:** Interventions that promote survivor-centered responses to GBV in public spaces

Given the linkages between each dimension, the knowledge contributed during one workshop may also be relevant to other dimensions. During the final analysis, such knowledge has been represented across relevant dimensions, irrespective of the group where it originally emerged.

Table 3. Stage 3: Synthesising Evidence

	Research Questions	Variables	Sources of Data	Method of Analysis
Stage 3	• To identify the risks and protective mechanisms recognised and prioritised within these interventions. • To document the activities undertaken to institute protections, along with the barriers and facilitators encountered and the incremental outcomes observed.	1. Risk factors that interventions target 2. Protective factors interventions aim to institute 3. Strategies and activities undertaken as part of intervention 4. Factors that facilitate or challenge sustainability of the intervention 5. Key indicators for monitoring of the interventions	Participatory workshops	Hybrid inductive-deductive analysis

For the third and last stage of data collection, CEHAT conducted four participatory workshops. Each workshop was held over two days and used participatory methods to highlight the strategies and challenges specific to each dimension. The workshop consisted of five sessions: (i) Historicising the interventions (ii) Risks and protective factors the interventions target (iii) Stakeholder engagement and the field activities (iv) Barriers and facilitators to implementation (v) Observing incremental changes.

These workshops were in essence focus group discussions (Caretta & Vacchelli, 2015), and the organisational representatives were the research participants. Here, the objective was not to elicit factual answers to programmatic questions, but to facilitate in-depth discussion and consensus-building at the level of each dimension. The workshops were guided by open-ended prompts and questions that allowed the participants to *'take over discussions'* (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Oftentimes, participants questioned the prompts and suggested changes to questions posed by the researcher to redirect the discussion to under-discussed topics or themes. This participatory and reflective approach to the group discussions guaranteed that the power balance between the researcher and participants was minimised. Since group discussions offer space for elaborate discussions, it also allows participants to verify, build upon, and disagree with other members of the group creating a synergistic effect.

To further minimise any hierarchies and power imbalances between the participants themselves, we used creative methods and tools to engage the participants. Krueger & Casey (2014) refer to them as 'questions that engage participants' and Bloor et al.,

(2000) call them 'focusing exercises' that provoke relevant debate. These task or action-orientated exercises like writing, mapping, free listing, presentation etc. were able to enrich the data, reduce drops in attention, allowing everyone to contribute in a group setting and made it easier to talk about the sensitive and complex issue at hand (Colucci, 2007). Such innovative and participatory methods for qualitative data collection have previously been adopted for research on violence against women by Ellsberg et al., (2021).

Note on Methods

- Many new participatory methods were developed to elicit responses regarding particular research questions. For example, for a reflexive activity on key triggers behind the origin of the interventions, participants were provided with a circular chart where they were asked to note the year their intervention or programme was founded. The charts were lined up on the wall chronologically and participants were asked to share the origin story of their intervention work. This enabled the participants to enclose into a small group physically, creating a reflexive space. They were able to look at how the stories of their organisations were intertwined, and how they were connected to the 'grand or little traditions' of the feminist movement(s) in India. Participants openly expressed how they related to each other's life experiences and how the genesis of their interventions was connected through shared historical contexts.

- In another session where participants were asked to reflect on the barriers and challenges faced when working with the stakeholders they had listed. The researchers lined up boxes labelled 'barrier' and 'facilitator' under images depicting the stakeholder categories and asked the participants to note down their points and drop them in the relevant boxes. They were given space to move around and time to think about their field experiences, or discuss them with others. Participants were given the space to decide whether they wanted to do this reflection individually or collectively. At the end of the activity, the researchers collected a repository of barriers and facilitators and the participants completed a pen-and-paper activity in an interactive manner, prompted by the visual cues.

- In the final session, researchers employed a method to visually map the 'incremental changes' practitioners observed among stakeholders throughout their interventions. The researchers laid down a big circular chart in the middle of the room and placed traffic cones at a distance around it. The centrally placed chart represented the 'goal' for change that interventions were striving towards, while each traffic cone represented a stakeholder category. The participants were urged to think of the small changes they observed in each stakeholder as they progressed towards the goal. They were given cards and requested to note the change and place it in line moving from the stakeholder towards the goals. Each card represented one incremental change, and there were no limits placed to the number of observed changes. At the end of the activity, a 'web of incremental changes' emerged, allowing the participants to visualise how their efforts were contributing to gradual changes among stakeholders who were progressing towards a common goal.

Although the analysis of the data collected through such a diverse range of activities can be complex, authors like Bloor et al., 2000 and Krueger & Casey, 2014 have discussed the step-by-step to organising and analysing such data. To aid the analysis process, each workshop was meticulously documented with the help of rapporteurs. The analysis provided aggregate insights into the commonalities of grassroots activities under each dimension, alongside nuanced details about the strategic approaches with each stakeholder. The analysis followed a hybrid inductive–deductive approach. Questions exploring the origins of interventions and typological understandings of GBV in public spaces were analysed inductively, allowing patterns, meanings, and interpretive frames to emerge directly from the data and generating a set of empirically grounded themes. In contrast, research questions examining risk factors and intervention strategies were analysed deductively, drawing on existing

theoretical frameworks to organise the data into predefined analytical categories (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

The analysis of this data is guided by the Social-Ecological Model (SEM) for violence prevention (The Social-Ecological Model, 2002). The SEM conceptualises violence as the outcome of interactions across four levels—individual, relationship, community, and societal. The concentric and overlapping levels of the SEM reflect the continuum of violence and recognise that violence is both a cause and a consequence of multiple influences and socio-cultural, economic and relational factors shaping behaviour (Ogolsky et al., 2026). It provides a dynamic, analytical framework to identify risk factors that shape the patterns of violence and prevention strategies that might mitigate violence. Recent efforts have attempted to map GBV interventions across the levels of the SEM, but only in the case of IPV interventions (Sabri et al., 2023). The study uses the SEM model to identify, examine and map how the interventions addressing GBV in public spaces address risks, protective factors at the different levels of the SEM.

Ethical Considerations

- The study underwent a rigorous scientific and ethical review to comply with Anusandhan Trust's Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) requirements. Considering that the study employed an adaptive methodology, where learnings from the first stage informed the design of the subsequent data collection stages, the study design was presented for approval at two stages to the CEHAT Programme Development Committee (PDC) and the Anusandhan Trust Institutional Ethics Committee. At the first stage, we presented the research plan preceding the online survey. At the second stage, we updated the PDC and IEC with our progress and presented the research plan for the written questionnaire round and in-person participatory workshops. Data collection was commenced at both stages only following the approval from the IEC.

- At stage 1, the online survey, participants were invited to fill in the survey with information about the study, its objectives, and intended use of the data. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could choose not to respond to specific questions, particularly those related to organisational confidentiality. The participants were assured of confidentiality and asked to provide consent for inclusion of their responses in analysis and reports. A clear statement regarding anticipated risks and benefits was also provided before the start of the survey. Personal details like the participants' email addresses were not automatically recorded on the cloud.

- At stage 2, consent was obtained in two parts.

  - Organisation heads were approached to nominate a representative to fill in the written questionnaire and participate in the study. In the invitation letter, the participating organisations were informed about the purpose of the study, its scope, and how organisational information would be collected, analysed, and presented. Organisations were informed that participation was voluntary, that there would be no direct benefits or financial compensation, and that they could choose the extent to which organisational details and names would be attributed in publications. They were assured that any non-public organisational materials shared would be kept confidential, securely stored, and accessed only by the research team, and that findings would be used solely for the stated research objectives.

  - Nominated representatives from organisations were informed about the nature of their participation, the in-person participatory workshop process, potential sensitivities involved, and their right to refuse or skip any part of the discussion without consequence.

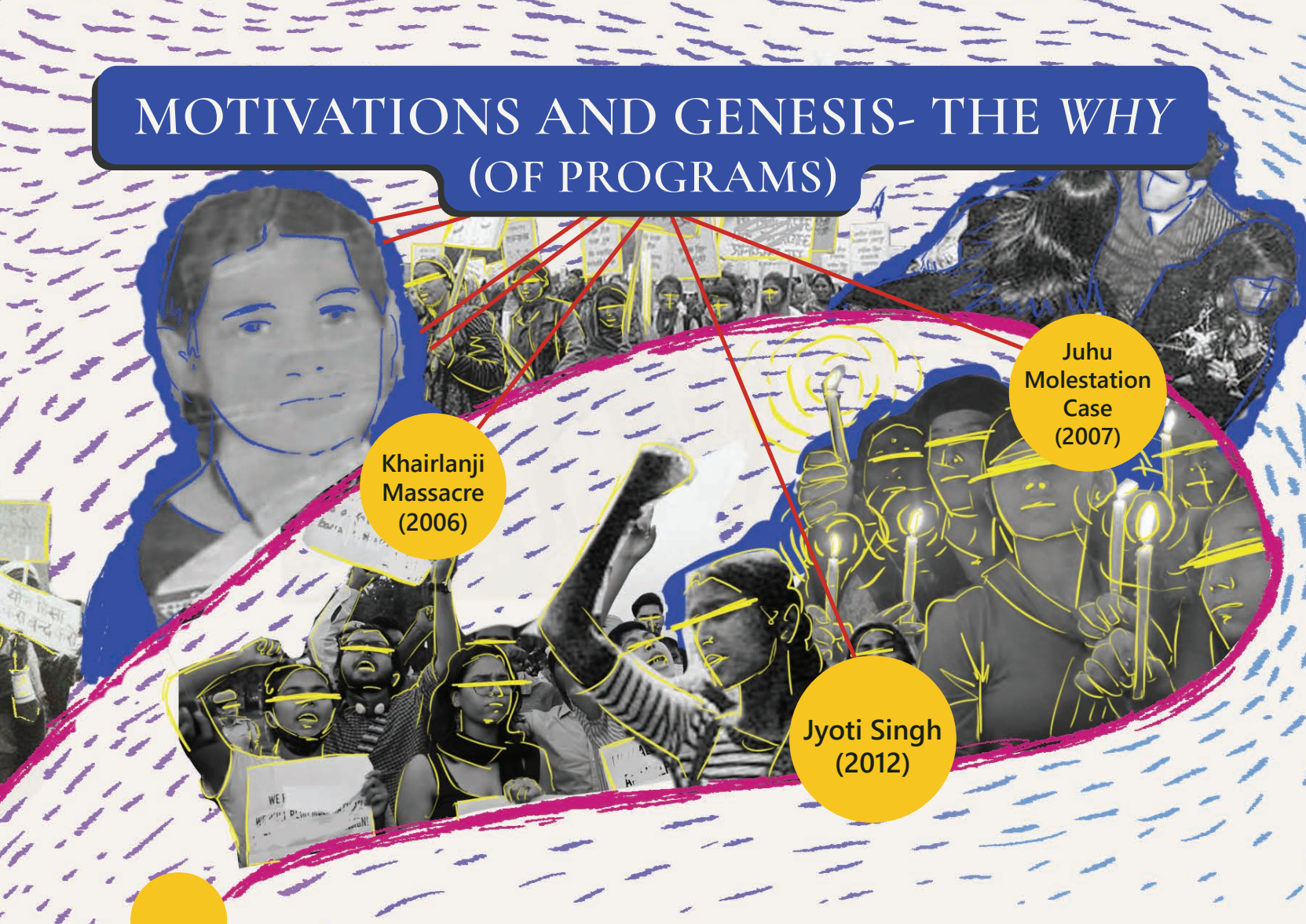
Importantly, these representatives were explicitly informed that their individual responses, refusals, or withdrawal would not be communicated to their organisation, thereby attempting to protect them from internal power hierarchies and potential repercussions. They were assured that they could choose the extent to which their personal identifiers would be used in the report. It was repeatedly stressed that participation was voluntary and non-coercive, and that they could withdraw at any point. This ensured that individual consent was independent of organisational authority and that they could participate and engage freely and safely.

- During the data collection process, audio recording was paused whenever even one participant privately expressed discomfort.

◆ Once the quotes had been translated and analysed, the quotations attributed to each speaker and used in this report were shared with them via email for verification. Participants were invited to review their quotations for any factual inaccuracies and to confirm that their statements had been correctly understood and represented in the final document.


Mathura
(1972)
Bhanwari
Devi
(1992)
Laxmi
Agarwal
(2005)
Priyadarshini
Mattoo
(1996)
REOPEN THE MATHURA CASE
WOMEN ARE NOT OBJECTS OF PLEASURE
RAPE is a CRIME AGAINST CIVILISATION
इस धरती से बलात्कार का नाम मिटा दो, नाम मिटा दो
SHAME ON THE JUDGEMENT
भंवरी पीछे नहीं हटेगी हम सब उसके साथ हैं

MOTIVATIONS AND GENESIS- THE *WHY* (OF PROGRAMS)

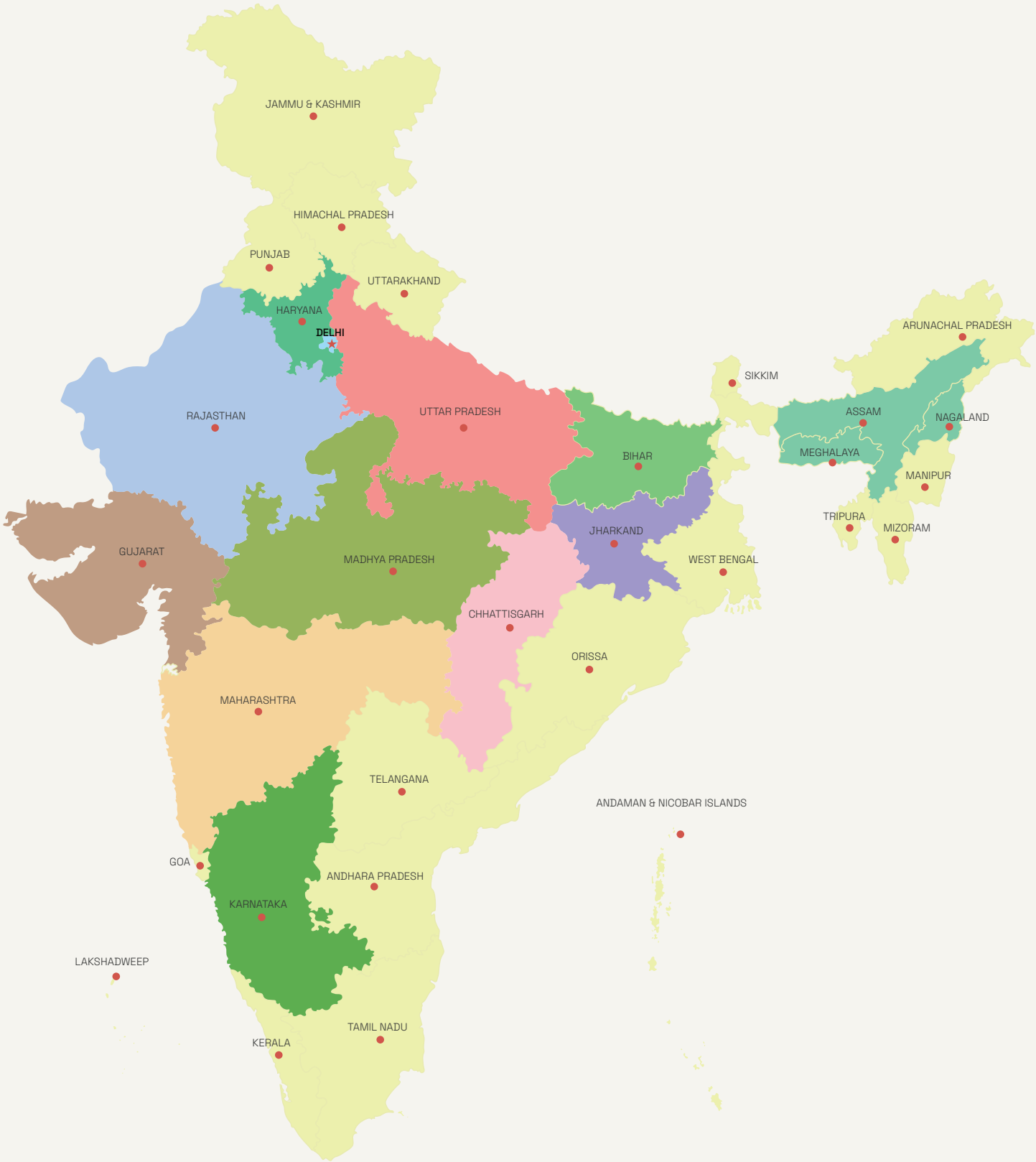


Findings in this section examine the motivations, triggers, and formative moments that led the participating organisations to focus on gender-based violence (GBV) in public spaces as a key issue. Drawing on the narratives that the representatives shared during the consultative workshops, this chapter traces how GBV in public spaces emerged as a standalone programme or a key component of their organisation's overall programme strategy. The findings also reveal that GBV in public spaces was not a part of the original mandate of most organisations but came to be addressed in response to lived realities encountered during interventions in a range of issues including gender and sexuality, health, education, violence, and access to justice.

We also attempt to discover patterns in what galvanised or catalysed the programming around GBV in public spaces- while some were a result of nationally visible events that exposed the pervasiveness of violence beyond the home, others were motivated by personal experiences of navigating gender and caste-based harm. Participants also spoke about how the programming focus diversified organically when the organisation began building evidence around gendered spatial exclusion, mobilising around labour rights, engaging young people through creative tools for social change, or demanding accountability in individual cases of GBV in public spaces.

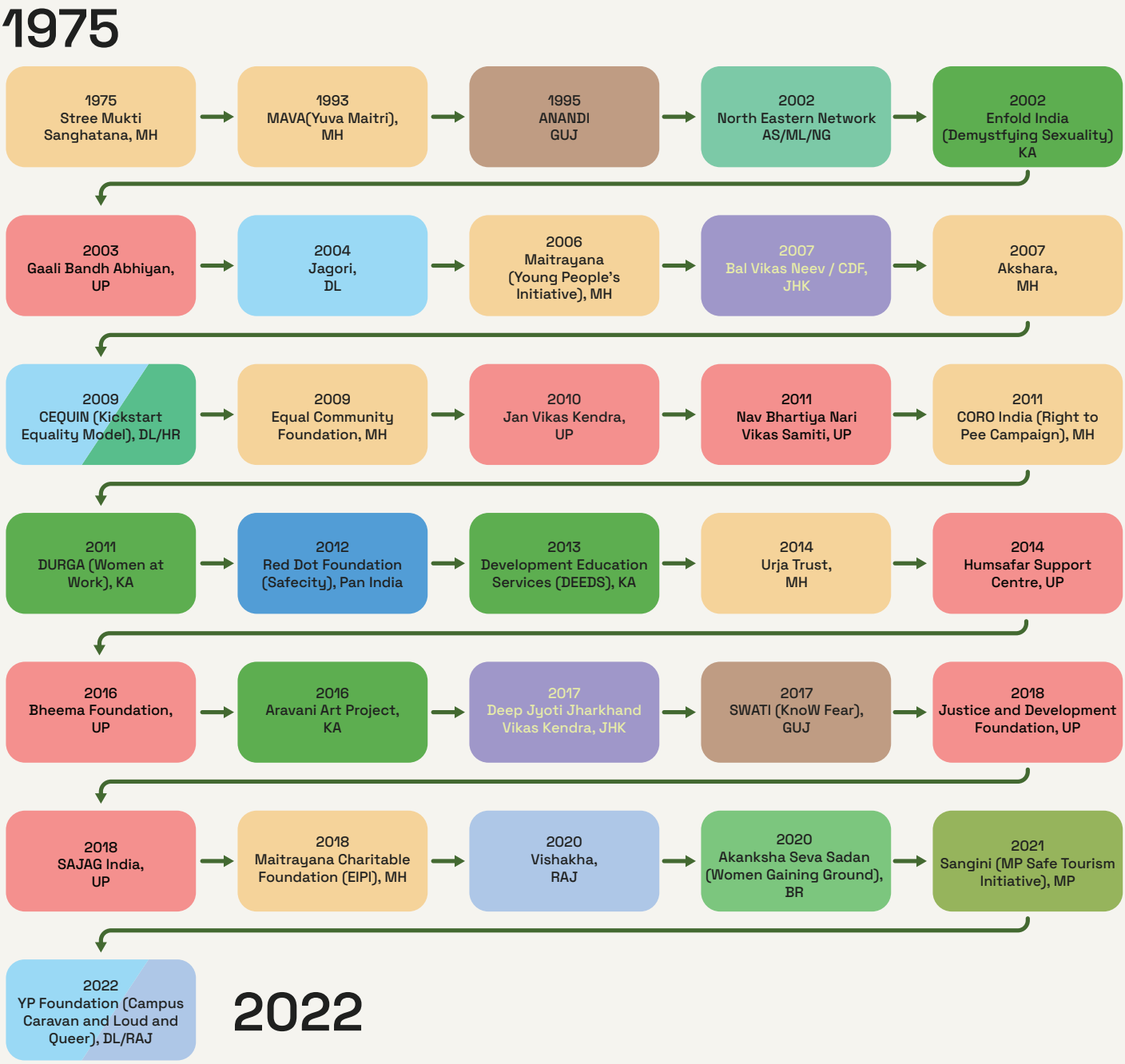
These origin stories show that work on GBV in public spaces did not emerge in isolation, but at the intersection of movements, moments, and methods which converged to name public space as a unique, critical arena for engagement. Further, in the second stage of the research process, the participants had shared a brief overview of the origins for their programme on GBV in public spaces, which helped us identify four major dimensions along which the interventions can be classified. The findings discussed in this section help us further synthesise how these dimensions came to be key entry points.

Figure 2. Map of India Depicting the Number of Organisations Participating from Each State



Each state has a unique colour, and all organisations from that state are shown in the same colour, which also corresponds to the colours used in the timeline given in the next page.

Figure 3. Flowchart Showing Timeline of Initiation/diversification of Programme for all Organisations



Observations Regarding Interventions

1. Studying the profile of the organisations reveals two distinct categories of interventions.

a. **Core programming on the issue of GBV in public spaces**- These are those organisations that have stand-alone programmes designed specifically to address the issue of GBV in public spaces. Some of these organisations have projects dedicated to the issue, while some others work entirely on the issue of GBV in public spaces as a part of their central programme strategies.

b. **Intersectional engagement with the issue of GBV in public spaces**- These are organisations that do not have stand-alone programmes for responding to GBV in public spaces but regularly engage with the issue because of its intersection with their wider programme.

2. 30 organisations participated in the consultative workshops, out of which 13 organisations run 17 independent programmes addressing GBV in public spaces. 17 organisations did not have independent

programmes on GBV in public spaces, but strongly see it as a central component of their programme strategy.

3. The oldest intervention in the group (Stree Mukti Sangathana, Maharashtra) began in 1975, while the most recent interventions in the cohort (YP Foundation's Campus Caravan and Loud and Queer) began in 2022. The collective trajectory of these 30 programmes spans nearly five decades. Notably, three organisations that began their work prior to the 2000s identified their engagement with GBV in public spaces as integral to their work from the outset. However, activism and scholarship at the turn of the century provided a clearer articulation of the issue, enabling organisations to retrospectively situate and relate their earlier work within the framework of GBV in public spaces.

4. 14 organisations implement their programmes in exclusively urban/semi-urban locations, while 10 organisations implement in exclusively rural locations. 6 organisations run programmes in both urban and rural locations.

1. **Landmark cases of GBV in public spaces as entry points into programming-** One of the most important findings that stood out from among the narratives of many organisations was that programming around GBV in public spaces was catalysed by high-visibility landmark incidents that exposed violence as embedded in everyday public life rather than confined to the private sphere. Several organisations traced the origin of their programmes to episodes of extreme public violence that revealed both the scale and impact of gendered harm and the inadequacy of existing responses. One of the first organisations working on the issue, Jagori from Delhi, identified the incident of sexual assault of Bhanwari Devi as a defining moment, *"The incident of sexual assault against Bhanwari Devi, and the landmark PIL Vishaka & ORS. vs State of Rajasthan 1997 filed by women's groups including Jagori was significant in shifting the focus on GBV outside the home"* The Senior Project Officer from Jagori shared.

   For other organisations like Akshara Centre in Maharashtra, high prevalence of public sexual violence and institutional dismissal acted as key triggers for pivoting towards GBV in public spaces work. The Programme Lead from Akshara recalled, *"At the time, we were working closely with youth who had experienced sexual violence. The young women told us that they experienced sexual harassment often in public places. This disturbed us deeply. When we were working with colleges in Thane, many cases of sexual harassment came up."* But one particularly catalytic moment occurred following a widely reported incident of mass molestation outside a luxury hotel. "*On 31st December 2007, outside the JW Marriott hotel, two girls were molested, and no police help or immediate action was provided. This was a time when prominent print and tech media were beginning to emerge, and the case received extensive coverage in newspapers like DNA and Hindustan Times. The very next day, Akshara decided to protest, along with other organisations, outside the Mumbai Commissionerate,"* She added.

   The 2012 Nirbhaya case emerged repeatedly across narratives as a nationally resonant landmark moment that accelerated and legitimised public-space GBV work. The Director and COO from Safe City (an initiative of Red Dot Foundation) reflected, *"Around 2012, gender-based violence in public spaces, such as buses and trains, was increasingly being recognised, yet remained largely unreported. Safecity was launched in Dec 2012 as an anonymous reporting platform to make these experiences visible. Shortly thereafter, the December 2012 Nirbhaya case brought national attention to the issue of violence in public spaces, accelerating the urgency of this work, and two years later, Red Dot Foundation was formally established to expand and institutionalise these efforts."*

   While such incidents largely triggered programmes in the urban areas, their impact was also felt in rural areas, driving organisations to pay attention towards public-space GBV. One of the caseworkers from Nav Bharat Nari Vikas Samiti, Uttar Pradesh recalled, *"The Nirbhaya incident happened to a girl who was originally from Ballia. It had a very bad impact on girls. People used to say that studying within the city is fine, but going outside the city to study is not allowed."* The Senior Counsellor from SWATI in Gujarat also shared that the Nirbhaya incident resonated among the rural communities where she works. The organisation began to reflect on the nature of public space in rural areas as being different from urban areas, and discussed how the interventions required to improve mobility and safety would also be different. Across contexts, these nationally visible cases served as entry points that exposed public violence as patterned rather than

exceptional. They compelled organisations at different junctures to view public spaces as central sites of gendered harm requiring unique intervention.

2. **Personal Experiences and "Witnessing" Shaped Programme Direction-** For many organisations in the cohort, the effort to engage with violence beyond the home was motivated not by national or global incidents but by personal experiences or witnessing of violence in public spaces. These biographies framed public-space violence as 'ordinary' and non-spectacular, yet deeply harmful. These experiences influenced programme orientation and priorities.

   One example was DURGA from Karnataka, where the focus on public spaces emerged from the founder's experience of navigating the city as a working woman. Reflecting on the origins of DURGA, the founder noted: *"Before starting Durga, we used to work in Bangalore, in urban spaces. As someone who has survived many everyday experiences, I felt very early on that when we talk about increasing the female labour force participation rate or Gross Domestic Product, we hear these words often but they cannot remain limited to big, abstract terms...Because our everyday struggles are so many. If I want to step out, I have to think: how is my dress, how is my shirt, where is my pallu falling, who is looking where? How am I supposed to focus on my work when there are so many little things to constantly worry about?"*

   Another example came from the rural context, where the organisation Jan Vikas Kendra from Uttar Pradesh emerged from the founder's personal experience of navigating the dual violence of caste and gender as a Dalit woman. She recalled, *"First, there is the burden of being a woman. Second, there is the burden of being a Dalit woman. These two are not the same; they are different...we need to understand that all of us face violence, some face more and some face less...But when we are from a lower caste, our violence becomes visible, while the violence of big houses does not show. I had worked a lot on domestic violence earlier. But when I began to see violence happening in public workspaces, that is where we took up the issue of MGNREGA."* The recognition of violence as structural rather than isolated or simply personal shaped the organisation's sustained focus on labour sites as locations where public space violence was highly visible.

   The Aravani Art Project similarly emerged from a founder's moment of direct witnessing, rather than programmatic intent. Describing the project's origins, one of the lead artists recalled, *"Our project started in 2016, initiated by Purnima Sukumaran. She is a cisgender woman. It began when she went to Koovagam, a place in South India where members of the transgender community gather on an auspicious day to pray. During that time, she closely observed the lives of transgender people, what they experience in public spaces and what they go through on an everyday basis. After returning to Bengaluru, she reflected and felt that she had taken so much from the community, and began asking herself what she could give back. Since she is a mural artist, she thought: can I teach mural art to the transgender community? That is how the work began."* This witnessing consistently revealed gender-based violence not as a discrete "issue area," but as an organising reality of public life that gave rise to interventions that prioritised dignity, visibility, and collective presence over protectionist or reactive approaches.

3. **Evidence on Spatial Exclusion as Gateways to Public-Space GBV Work-** Another strong pattern that was seen across organisations was that research, surveys, and documentation of the scale of public space violence and exclusion became the basis on which organisations entered intervention work. Data functioned both as evidence and as a strategic tool, allowing organisations to name the violence and emphasise the urgency of programming on it. One example was CEQUIN from Delhi, where the founders were looking to understand what violence looked like beyond the private sphere. A large-scale study conducted in Delhi urgently emphasised the pervasiveness of violence in public spaces. The Manager for Communications, Partnership, and Sports for Empowerment from CEQUIN shared, *"In 2009, even before launching our on-ground programmes, CEQUIN conducted a baseline study titled 'Perception and Experience of Gendered Violations in Public Places of Delhi'. One of its key findings was that 98% of women in Delhi reported experiencing some form of gender-based violence in public spaces. This evidence became foundational to our approach. It showed us that the issue was not only the violence women experience, but also the pervasive fear and anticipation of GBV that shapes how women move through and access public spaces."*

   Representatives from both Jagori and Akshara also spoke about how independent survey reports became key launchpads for their programmes. The Senior

Project Officer from Jagori shared, *"The story begins with a public perception survey in Delhi that found women's safety to be one of the major concerns facing the city. To understand the extent of the issue, it was crucial to highlight the gendered nature of access and usage of public spaces, and its impact on women's mobility, linking women's experience of violence and perceptions of safety to the very design of urban infrastructure and cultural mindset. Jagori launched the Safe Delhi Campaign in 2004 to bring the issue of women's safety in the city into public focus, using safety audits, research, public messaging, community engagements and strategic partnerships to include gender lens into urban planning and interventions for public safety."* The Programme Lead from Akshara added, *"We conducted a survey with Hindustan Times in Mumbai on sexual harassment among youth, covering 5,000 individuals, of whom 4,000 were women. As Mumbaikars ourselves, we were shocked to find that 95% of women in the city said they felt unsafe, especially while travelling on buses."* Jagori and Akshara were both inspired to contextualise and test the Canadian METRAC safety audit methodology in India because of these experiences. The representative from CORO India also mentioned that surveys mapping toilets and WASH infrastructure in the city of Mumbai enabled them to understand how women were vulnerable to violence because of lack of sanitation facilities. This motivated them to start the Right to Pee campaign.

Research and evidence building were also employed as baseline tools in contexts other than tier-1 metro cities to understand systematic exclusion and scale of violence. For example, in Lucknow, HUMSAFAR Support Center for Women, Queer, and Youth was motivated by the findings of a local survey to expand their intervention towards inclusion and safety of transgender persons. The Programme Officer from HUMSAFAR shared, *"We did a survey in 2023 on the access of transgender men and women to public toilets. So, the point that came out of it was that in the entire Lucknow, there is no separate toilet for trans people. This was a big challenge, and to address these we pivoted towards different strategies."* SWATI's kNOw Fear model implemented in rural Gujarat was also motivated by the need to raise evidence on the unique nature of GBV in rural public spaces. Their intervention research was built on a baseline study they conducted to capture perceptions of safety in rural public spaces and public transport. Interestingly, most organisations that relied on mapping prevalence and perception as entry points were able to locate risks in transport, sanitation, and infrastructure gaps. They positioned infrastructural change as central to reducing public-space GBV.

4. **Labour Mobilisation as a Motivator to Focus on Public Spaces-** Many organisations did not begin with an explicit focus on "public spaces." Instead, it became visible through women's participation in work, and the resistance they encountered when they entered workplaces, markets, and state institutions as workers. Early engagements with women's labour revealed how violence and humiliation were routinely used to discipline their presence in spaces not traditionally seen as theirs. The Head of Bal Vikas Neenv (CDF) from Jharkhand remembered, *"We also faced an incident with a government official in 2002. When we took a group of 10–12 women to the block office to demand MGNREGA work, they made a video and said, "Is there no work in your house? Are there no men in your house? You leave your household work and come here to do this and that?" They forced the women to leave the office."*

   Similarly, Sangini's work with domestic workers emerged from repeated instances of criminalisation and physical violence within private households- workplaces that are often excluded from conventional understandings of public space. This was further complicated by the fact that 'domestic workers' could not find legal recourse under laws governing the 'domestic', leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. As the Programme Head explained, *"In many cases, if something was stolen from a house, the first person to be accused was the domestic worker. The police would arrest them, employers would immediately dismiss them from work, and an FIR would be filed without any proof. In one case, a woman's hand was burned, she was told to swear that she had not stolen anything. Such incidents also happened. Seeing all this is what pushed us to start organising women."*

   Violence at the workplace was especially visible for women who were vulnerable because of structural factors such as poverty, migration, caste, and informality. Speaking about waste pickers, the Trustee from SMS noted, *"After the drought in Marathwada in 1972, many migrated. In the eastern suburbs, most waste pickers come from Marathwada; in the western suburbs, many come from South India. They have no skills and no education, which is why they do this work. But this work takes place on the streets. There is no safety. Whether they work at dumping grounds or on roads, there are many places where they face sexual harassment."*

Some organisations also undertook efforts to understand how remedial mechanisms such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 are being implemented, since they affect women working in formal and informal public workplaces. The Programme Head from Sangini shared, *"Although the law came much earlier, it was not being implemented anywhere, there was no real understanding of Internal Committees, neither in government institutions nor in the private sector. We conducted a baseline survey, and what we found was that people would simply ask for the 'Vishakha Guidelines' file, without actually understanding or operationalising the law."* It was apparent that laws protecting women's right to safe workplaces were being merely considered as compliance obligations rather than responsibility.

Organisations who worked with women workers felt strongly that violence is not incidental but a routine experience for those occupying public workspaces. These organisations saw work and labour as an entry point to engage with women's lived encounters with hostility, criminalisation, and exclusion from public spaces and public life.

5. **Work with Youth Inspiring Programming to Prevent GBV in Public Spaces-** For several organisations engagement with young people through mediums such as education, sports, art, and sexual and reproductive health rights became the entry point for addressing the issue of GBV in public spaces. In fact, much like 'work,' these programmes also did not explicitly begin with a focus on public space violence. Their approach has been to destabilise traditional gender norms that are responsible for all forms of gender-based violence, including those occurring in public spaces. Rather than beginning with violence as an 'incident,' these organisations counter GBV through efforts to shift norms that sustain violence in everyday forms. Efforts are focused on concepts like body, sexuality, health, boundaries, and consent.

   One example of work with young people is Vishakha's Kamar Kathi programme in Rajasthan. The co-coordinator from their GBV prevention program recalled, *"When we first started working, it was a little difficult. We were working on SRHR, so we were talking about the body, body parts, and what they are called. The girls did not know the Hindi terms, so we had to speak in the local language. But in the local language, naming body parts is considered the same as using abuse or bad words. Those were the kinds of words they were associated with."* Organisations such as Enfold and YP Foundation also started their intervention programmes using sexual and reproductive health rights and comprehensive sexuality education as the conversation starter on norms among young people in campuses.

   Organisations such as Equal Community Foundation, Gaali Band Abhyaan, and MAVA all found their entry into GBV in public space interventions through gender equality and masculinities education. The Founder of Gaali Band Abyaan recounted, *"When we started work on verbal abuse, we began to understand who was abusing more, and we realised that it was mostly boys. Then we tried to understand where they spent most of their time, which was in schools. So, we went to schools. Since we come from a privileged community and had many friends who owned schools, we started Gaali Bandh classes there. In November 2003, we developed a six-day syllabus that focused on identity, dreams, what you want, the problems related to your desires, gender, and gender-based violence- this formed the entire curriculum."*

   Some organisations in the cohort chose sports as a way to engage young people in the communities. At Maitrayana Charity Foundation in Maharashtra, sport was explicitly used to disrupt restrictions on girls' movement and voice. The Programme Associate from the organisation describes, *"The Young People's Initiative programme - we do it with girls and women aged 10 to 25 where we give them life skills sessions as well as netball sessions. So our vision-mission is to make an ecosystem where girls can speak up about their rights and a society where there is equality with equity."* Though not the primary entry point, sports like football have also been one of the most important tools used by CEQUIN for engaging young girls. Arts-based interventions similarly reframed public spaces as sites of norm contestation. The Aravani Art Project paints walls, metro stations, and public buildings as a way to reclaim visibility and challenge the assumption that certain bodies do not belong in public space.

   Working with young people in arenas such as SRHR, education, sports, and art has been one of the primary motivators for organisations to recognise the preventive potential of their work, demonstrating how sustainedengagement with young people can challenge norms and contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence in public spaces.

6. **Institutional Failure and Silence as Trigger for Organising Around Issue of GBV in Public Spaces-** Across many organisations, routine refusal of institutions to respond in cases of public space violence appeared as a recurring trigger for initiating structured intervention on the issue. In the course of supporting survivors, organisations repeatedly encountered dismissal and inaction by duty bearers, revealing the need to hold institutions accountable for everyday public violence against women.

   The Project Manager of Justice and Development Foundation, Uttar Pradesh recounted his experience, *"An incident occurred near our organisation's office involving a girl who was 16-17 years old. She was sexually assaulted openly. We saw that she was going to the police station to file an FIR, but the police did not file it. There was no one in the neighbourhood to help her...When I found out, I tried to understand why this was happening. I learned that the rapist was from an oppressive caste, and no one wanted to confront him. After much effort, some people took her to the police station, and we managed to file the FIR."* He shared that this experience became a reason for him to think and engage more deeply with the issue of gender-based violence in public spaces as well as the silence and minimisation around it.

   Similarly, the Executive Director of North East Network recalled how police apathy in a case of public space violence drove NEN to their initial campaigning on the issue, *"These two college girls came to us and told us that they had been walking through a residential locality near their hostel when a group of men groped one of them. And then they immediately went to the thana; the woman constable at the thana said that this is nothing actually...he only groped you. That really shook us...immediately after that we came to know about the 16 Days of Activism...so we took this up as an issue. NEN had actually introduced this Campaign in 2002 for the first time in North East India, using posters and stickers in common spaces to draw public attention to reflect how unsafe women felt in their own neighborhoods. So our entry point was this platform to highlight cases of women facing violence in public spaces...we started questioning what could be the role of the service providers, like the police, who were supposed to provide safety to women."*

   Participants from ANANDI also added that one of their earliest mobilisations to demand action against forest officials who assaulted a woman who was accessing the village commons, *"One woman who went to the forest was beaten up really badly, the forest guards had broken her hand. To address the violence, they led rallies and dharnas, and met with the forest guards. The women of the organisation protested as the police were not ready to register an FIR on the issue."* These accounts show that organisations did not mobilise only in response to acts of violence, but to a pattern of indifference from systems, where police refused to register FIRs and institutions normalised delay and dismissal. This institutional and social permission to look away became a central catalyst for sustained work on GBV in public spaces.

The narratives highlight the diverse ways in which organisations have come to understand the need for programming on the issue of GBV in public spaces. While in some organisations targeted programmes developed in response to moments of national reckoning, in others, programmes emerged as a result of the founders' moving personal life journeys. Many organisations also reflected how their focus on gender-based violence in public spaces was gradually built on their intervention in other domains such as mobility and 'public safety,' labour mobilisation, access to justice, or work with affected groups such as the youth. Efforts were solidified as organisations recognised that gender-based violence in public spaces is deeply pervasive and therefore, normalised and minimised. Its far reaching impact on mobility, participation, and belonging in everyday public life was revealed through research and documentation, which shifted its framing from individual experiences to a systemic concern. Interactions with workers and young people revealed how public spaces are regulated through norms that discipline women's bodies and punish transgressions. Crucially, repeated encounters with institutional silence and inaction highlighted that public space violence is sustained through routine normalisation rather than absence of law. These pathways pushed organisations away from reactive or protectionist responses and toward interventions that emphasised dignity, visibility, and structural change.

MAKING MEANING OF THE TYPOLOGY - THE *WHAT* (IS GBV IN PUBLIC SPACES)?

The introduction to this report raised several conceptual questions that guide the discussion in this chapter. How should gender-based violence in public spaces be understood, and where do the boundaries of "public" lie? How should we reconcile relational definitions of violence, which focus on the relationship between perpetrator and survivor, with site-based definitions that emphasise the location where violence occurs? If feminist scholarship has long challenged the public–private binary by arguing that space is relational and fluid, why do practitioners and organisations continue to rely on location-based typologies such as "GBV in public spaces?" Finally, how do organisations interpret "publicness" in different contexts, and what considerations shape their decision to frame certain incidents as violence in public spaces?

This section examines how organisations working on gender-based violence engage with the category of public space in their analysis and programming. Rather than assuming a fixed meaning of public space, it explores how practitioners interpret publicness across contexts and how these interpretations shape their understanding of violence. It also examines why organisations continue to foreground location in their work despite overlaps between public and private spaces, and how spatial framing functions within programmatic logic, including identifying responsible institutions, engaging duty bearers, and framing violence as a collective concern. These reflections help illuminate the practical reasoning behind the continued use of the typology of GBV in public spaces.

1. **Violence Carries Across the *Private-Public Continuum*-** Participants in our study challenged the binary framing of the public–private divide and instead emphasised how space exists on a continuum. They gave examples of how violence in private and public spaces often spill over into each other. The Programme Officer from HUMSAFAR, Uttar Pradesh, shared, *"In 2014, there was an incident: a girl from a slum was returning from her coaching at seven in the evening. And when she had to get down, the auto driver didn't let her get down and took the vehicle ahead. This resulted in her panicking and jumping out of the auto. And unfortunately, she died there. Because of that, the community and the girls therein who had been able to negotiate for so many years suddenly went back many years...there was increased control on girls' autonomy in their homes."*

Another example came from the Co-Coordinator of the GBV Prevention Programme from Vishakha, Rajasthan, *"We need to talk about cases where some kind of violence has taken place in intimate relationships, like family, partner, etc, in the public space...If a person comes from a specific identity, and an act is done which is considered morally wrong, families have the rights to hit or abuse publicly – it is considered, "Ghar ki baat hai."*

The Practice Lead of the Gender Justice Programme from ANANDI, Gujarat, shared an insight into where communities are complicit in public violence against women based on relationship conflict,*"Girls go outside for wage labour, and at those workplaces they sometimes develop relationships with others. In some cases, even married women form relationships outside of marriage. This tendency appears to be gradually increasing. In several incidents, it has been seen that such women have been subjected to public violence. Around five to six women were stripped of their clothes, beaten, and paraded throughout the village. Incidents of this kind of community violence appear to be increasing. We have also observed that in some cases the woman's own husband accuses her of having a relationship with another man or even instigates her to do so. Later, the same husband demands money from that person. Women also live with a deep fear that if people in the village come to know about such a relationship, they will capture the woman and the concerned man, bring them back to the village, and subject them to public violence or beatings."*

These examples show that participants often encounter the *interlocking nature* of violence on the private-public continuum. Violence in the private sphere often migrates into public spaces, while violence in the public space is

used to justify control and surveillance in the private sphere. Violence across the private-public continuum is a cyclical and reinforcing system.

2. **Publicness and Violence Diversify Across Urban and Rural Contexts-** Another theme that stood out in the discussion was the importance of speaking about *urban publicness* differently from *rural publicness,* which influences the perpetuation and response to violence. Many examples from the contributors highlighted how urban and rural contexts diversify in character, influenced by infrastructural, social, and cultural dynamics.

   Publicness in rural areas overlaps with **community life, where anonymity is less and visibility is high in public spaces.** Violence in public spaces occurs in a more familiar but tightly surveilled environment. This was well illustrated by the Senior Counsellor from SWATI, *"The village square is often occupied by the village elders, and only males. They are the natural CCTV in the village."*

   This means that such violence may often be community-sanctioned or community-driven. Two examples highlighted this quite clearly. *"Migration is increasing. Many girls aged 16–17 go outside with contractors to work as labourers. At home, they do not have much freedom to express themselves, so when someone speaks to them with respect at the workplace, relationships sometimes begin from there. However, village society does not accept this, especially when the boy and the girl belong to different villages. In such cases, attempts are made to forcibly separate them. If the girl is under 18 years of age, the social panchayat extracts money from the family. And if the girl is an adult but still refuses to follow the panchayat's decision, in many places she and her partner are publicly punished. This is not just domestic violence. When the entire village becomes involved in it, it turns into community violence."*- Project Coordinator, Young Peoples' Programme, ANANDI, Gujarat

   "We've seen many cases of witch-hunting violence, stripping women publicly, searching their bodies for marks [to check if they are witches], all of that happens. We've worked on those cases too. In that first case I mentioned, the one with the contractor, after the FIR was filed, people said, "If you see her face first thing in the morning, it's a bad omen…It's very difficult [To file FIR]. Because the entire village, the whole community, sides together, and the woman ends up alone."- Secretary, Deep Jyoti Jharkhand Vikas Kendra, Jharkhand

   Rural publicness is also characterised by low resources, leading to further environmental risks. The Director and COO of Red Dot Foundation illustrated this vulnerability, *"I was working in Bekavli, a village near Mahabaleshwar, a tourist spot. The Upsarpanch there was a woman. There are jeeps in the village that take people around, and limited and only infrequent public transport is available. Most times around 15-20 people would travel in one jeep. The jeep had small drums inside to accommodate more people. Most girls who traveled in those jeeps experienced sexual harassment. Due to this reason, many girls from that village stopped going to school or college."*

   In contrast, **publicness in urban contexts is defined by both density and isolation, movement and anonymity.** These spaces allow for opportunistic and repeated acts of sexual harassment, often perpetrated by strangers who are emboldened by spatial-temporal conditions, and lack of social accountability. Some examples were given by the contributors to illustrate this nature of urban violence.

   "In Mewat, Haryana, public transport largely consists of shared autos as there is no formal bus system. Many of our female staff have experienced sexual harassment while using these services. In Delhi too, women and girls face similar risks while travelling on buses. Several of our coaches, girls, and women who commute regularly report encountering harassment in these spaces."- Manager-Communications, Partnership, and Sports, CEQUIN, Delhi

   "In MHADA toilets, people would drink, etc., at night and sleep there. A toilet in a basti is a public space. Safety was a concern with theft, drunkards etc. Women felt unsafe."- Co-Lead, Right to Pee Campaign, CORO India

   These discussions bring attention to an important analytical distinction in how publicness itself is constituted across contexts. By foregrounding the differences between rural and urban public spaces, the contributors highlight how the character of "the public" is not uniform but socially produced in distinct ways. This proposition complicates conventional understandings of public space by showing that its boundaries, actors, and modes of surveillance vary significantly across settings. In doing so, it opens up a more nuanced way of examining how gendered violence becomes embedded within different spatial and social arrangements.

3. **Programmes Strategically Foreground the "Publicness" of Violence**- Another theme emerging from the narratives was that even though organisations understand the violence moves between public and private, they strategically foreground the publicness of violence in their work. Framing violence as public enables them to demand greater institutional recognition and accountability by highlighting where violence occurs, not only who is involved. This is grounded in the scholarship highlighting that elements in the environment have a bearing on the risk of violence as publicness increases. This is well illustrated by the Director and COO of Red Dot Foundation, *"We decided to focus on the location of harassment...Safecity is a platform that crowdsources personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces. This data, which may be anonymous, gets aggregated as hot spots on a map indicating trends at a local level. The idea is to make this data useful for individuals, local communities, and local administration to identify factors that cause behavior that leads to violence and work on strategies for solutions."*

   Emphasising publicness enables organisations to frame violence as a subject of governance, safety, and infrastructure. Organisations engage directly with a wide range of duty bearers like municipalities, panchayats, and transport departments, who are accountable for ensuring safety. The Senior Project Officer from Jagori shared, *"We need to remember that public sexual violence is not limited to eve teasing, nor is it any less than domestic violence. It is a systemic issue. Therefore one of our core strategies was to work with service providers like police, transport authorities and those who are responsible for planning and designing a better, safer city."*

   Emphasising the publicness of violence invokes collective response and encourages alliances with even non-traditional actors such as shopkeepers, bus conductors, auto drivers, vendors, and sanitation workers. The Programme Lead for Safe and Inclusive Cities from Akshara, Maharashtra, gave an example, *"We work with BEST in Mumbai. Training conductors on what they would do or how they would act if sexual violence happened in front of them. This has been included in their training curricula."*

   While foregrounding publicness, organisations are mindful that public spaces function differently in urban and rural contexts. Urban publicness is often shaped by anonymity and movement, while rural publicness is marked by visibility and community control. Acknowledging these differences is important because it determines who can be held accountable and how interventions are designed. This ensures that framing violence as a public issue leads to context-specific and effective responses, rather than a single, uniform approach.

The participants' reflections in this section show that organisations working on gender-based violence do not treat the public and private as fixed or even separate categories. Instead, their experiences point to a more fluid understanding of how violence moves across homes, streets, workplaces, and community spaces. Violence in the private space spills over to the public, and violence in the public space is ideologically produced in the private, in turn increasing surveillance and control inside the home. What becomes clear is that organisations view space not as a binary of 'private' and 'public' but as a continuum, and when they speak to 'GBV in public spaces,' they are speaking about the degree of publicness of the space where the violence occurs.

Various factors affect how this degree of publicness can be assessed, including who owns the space, who controls it, how much civility is expected from the space, how the space is physically designed, and what kind of people and activities are present. This articulation strongly resonates with the work of feminist geographers. We shall discuss the same in more detail later in the report. At the same time, the narratives highlight that publicness varies across contexts. In rural areas, public spaces are highly visible and closely monitored by the community, where violence is often collective and socially enforced. In urban settings, publicness is shaped by density, mobility, and anonymity, enabling repeated and opportunistic forms of harassment in spaces such as transport and sanitation facilities.

The participants also clearly explained how despite their consensus that gender-based violence and its underpinnings are fluid, the foregrounding of 'publicness' is a strategic choice. By focusing on where violence occurs, organisations identify responsible institutions, engage duty bearers, and frame safety as a shared public responsibility rather than a personal burden on women. This approach also allows for collective responses that involve many non-traditional actors in the community. Understanding the diverse nature of urban and rural publicness is also essential for organisations to adopt interventions into diverse contexts.

Another insight emerging from the discussions is that practitioners do not treat relational and site-based understandings of violence as mutually exclusive categories. While the typology of GBV in public spaces foregrounds the location where violence occurs, the narratives show that the identities and relationships between perpetrators and survivors continue to shape how violence unfolds. Violence by intimate partners, family members, or community actors may occur in highly visible public settings, just as harassment by strangers may take place in spaces that women routinely occupy for work, education, or mobility. In practice, organisations therefore recognise that relational and spatial dimensions of violence intersect rather than operate independently. The location of violence may shape how it is addressed institutionally, but the underlying social relationships and power dynamics remain central to understanding why the violence occurs.

The discussions also help explain why interventions focused on GBV in public spaces often extend beyond the sites where violence is immediately visible. Because violence travels across homes, streets, transport systems, and workplaces, practitioners frequently encounter situations where violence occurring in one sphere produces consequences in another. Public incidents of harassment may lead to increased restrictions on women's mobility within households, while conflicts emerging within families or intimate relationships may escalate into acts of public humiliation or collective punishment. As a result, organisations recognise that addressing violence in public spaces cannot be confined only to those locations. Interventions therefore often engage families, communities, and institutions simultaneously, reflecting an understanding that the social conditions shaping violence are distributed across interconnected spaces rather than contained within a single site.


ROOKIN

IDENTIFYING RISKS- *WHERE* (DO RISKS EMERGE) AND *WHO* (IS AFFECTED)

In this chapter, we examine the various "risk factors" identified by organisations, which they seek to address through their interventions. This study has attempted to create a comprehensive map of the risk factors for gender-based violence in public spaces, by encouraging the participants to retrospectively think about the rationale for their chosen interventions. Understanding the key risk factors for gender-based violence calls for models that capture its layered nature, and the ecological model provides a leading framework for studying this issue. This model has its origins in ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and has been applied to the field of public health since the 1980s (McLeroy et al., 1988). The central proposition of ecological theories is that human behaviour is influenced by multiple levels of interactive factors. By the late 1990s, scholars such as (Heise, 1998) applied the ecological model to explain the multifaceted nature of violence against women. (Dahlberg and Krug, 2006) later used this model to suggest that violence is the result of the complex interplay of individual and contextual factors. The iteration by the Center for Disease Control has revised the terminology to 'social-ecological model' (SEM), highlighting that health and violence are shaped not only by developmental contexts such as environment and interpersonal relationships but by larger social structures and determinants.

The SEM proposes that violence can be prevented by mapping risk factors at *four nested levels* that make people vulnerable to *victimisation or perpetration* of violence. These levels are- (1) **Individual level** which pertains to the effect of biological or personal history of a person, (2) **Relationship level** which explores the effect of proximal social relationships such as family or peers, (3) **Community level** which examines the characteristics of the settings within which social relationships function, including socio-demography or infrastructure, (4) **Society level** which analyses the overarching socio-cultural factors that reduce protections against violence or actively promote it, such as social norms or political and economic landscape.

In various adaptations of the model, the framework includes only those factors that have been shown to be empirically significant for differential rates of violence against women and girls (Heise, 1998; Fulu & Heise, 2015). However, there is limited research exploring direct causal linkages between risk factors and gender-based violence in public spaces, especially in the South Asian context. The issue of gender-based violence in public spaces has received much interest from the perspective of spatial criminology because of the importance of 'location' as an axis. Therefore, most research in the field focuses on 'environmental' risks exacerbating the violence. Given this trend, the empirical evidence overwhelmingly concentrates at the 'community' level under the social-ecological framework.

Second, in the context of gender-based violence in public spaces, studies often measure 'perception of unsafety,' or 'feelings of fear' rather than actual incidence of violent experiences, making it difficult to establish the correlation with potential risk factors. Such methodological diversity makes the study of risk factors more challenging. This is echoed by Solotaroff & Pande (2014), who suggest that in the South Asian context, there is limited literature analysing the potential risk factors or causes of violence against women in general, and the findings are mixed due to methodological diversity. They present potential risk factors across levels of social ecology, irrespective of whether empirical association is established or not. The ecological framework is also used as an organising rubric for proven or potential risk factors.

Practitioners who participated in this study suggest several factors that could indicate risk of gender-based violence in public spaces, which can be organised across the levels of SEM. While some of these factors have been empirically established as determinants in prior evidence, others emerge from experiential insights that can provide directions for future research. We discuss these potential risk factors in detail below.

Figure 4. Risk Factors for GBV in Public Spaces Across SEM Levels

Triggers vs. Risk Factors- Different Analytical Categories

While some triggers and risk factors may appear similar, they serve different purposes in this analysis. Triggers refer to the moments, incidents, experiences, or findings that prompted organisations to begin or shift their work toward GBV in public spaces. Risk factors, in contrast, are the conditions that enable or sustain violence in public spaces and that organisations seek to address through their interventions.

Although recognising a risk factor often acted as a trigger for programme initiation, the two are analytically distinct. Triggers explain *how and why organisations entered the issue, while risk factors explain what their programmes are designed to change.* This distinction helps clarify the progression from recognition to sustained intervention in addressing GBV in public spaces.

1) Individual Level Risk Factors for Victimisation

The risk factors for victimisation identified by the participants at the individual level were mostly identity-based factors that intersect with increased visibility, exposure, mobility, and sustained occupation of public spaces for a range of reasons.

- **Young age** emerged as one of the most important individual level risk factors as it intersects with increased visibility and new mobility in public spaces because of entry into higher education or employment. Participants shared that adolescent girls and young women repeatedly disproportionately report harassment in public spaces during their field interactions. The Co-Coordinator from Vishakha, Rajasthan, shared, *"I have conducted a safety audit in my own village...Girls in the local group work together to understand their fears and address them. For example, some schoolgirls have faced harassment from individuals who behave inappropriately. Boys in the village would stare at the girls, sometimes even open their shirts and run behind them. The girls have tried reporting these incidents to the police and even complained to the local administration."* The Programme Associate from Maitaryana Foundation, Maharashtra, also added that families and communities police young women's presence through moral scrutiny tied to honour, caste, and marriageability, using control and public violence to push girls out of public spaces altogether. She observed, *"When we work with girls within their own neighbourhoods, we often see that they can't even sit outside for half an hour. They worry - "What if my brother sees me? He'll say I'm ruining the family's honour and tell me not to sit there." Or their friends might shout, "Why is your sister sitting out there?"*

- **Being Dalit or Muslim** were also identified as identity-based individual level factors for victimisation for GBV in public spaces. The double marginalisation of caste and gender determines the material conditions of Dalit women and transgender persons. This manifests as financial disenfranchisement and poverty, leaving little choice but to occupy public spaces for work or habitation. The Organisation Head from Jan Vikas Kendra, Uttar Pradesh, explained, *"When we talk about Savarna women, most of them don't go to work in other people's fields or take up MGNREGA work. With them we mainly see domestic violence. But Dalit women, because they are Dalit or from backward castes, are the ones who go to the fields, do agricultural labour, and all kinds of public-facing work."* Systemic discrimination against Dalit communities also compounds the risks that Dalit women face in public spaces. The Programme Officer from HUMSAFAR, Uttar Pradesh, observed, *"When we work in Dalit bastis, women have to go far away to fetch water etc, because of lack of accessibility to resources in their segregated areas. This puts them at risk of sexual violence."* Dalit women also face systemic discrimination and harassment in educational and workplaces. Participants emphasised that the global rise of anti-Muslim rhetoric has translated into heightened vulnerability for Muslim women in public spaces, where visible markers such as the hijab are instrumentalised to justify harassment and violence by both state and non-state actors. This risk is further exacerbated by perpetrators' impunity and Muslim women's fear of backlash and mistrust of justice systems. One participant noted, *"If a Muslim woman is violated, even if she does not know the perpetrator personally, the moment we can see which group he belongs to, there is already a power dynamic at play,"* highlighting how identity fundamentally affects both exposure to violence and reporting.

Some participants also reflected on how Muslim men are facing heightened and highly visible forms of public violence in the current socio-political context, including lynching. This makes it impossible to analyse violence in public spaces without acknowledging their vulnerability. At the same time, they reflected critically on whether such identity-based violence should be framed as gender-based, noting that while it complicates and expands the concept of GBV, it also risks diluting its political focus on gendered oppression. Participants ultimately emphasised the need for an intersectional framework that recognises overlapping vulnerabilities without collapsing distinct experiences into a single narrative.

- Another identity-based individual level risk factor that was highlighted was **being transgender.** Due to stereotypes and stigma associated with the identity, transgender persons, especially those who also lack the privilege of caste and class, are forced out of their natal homes and also denied housing, employment, and other basic rights. They are marginalised because of deep structural violence that imposes exclusion by design. Transgender persons are rendered homeless and have to often live their lives in public spaces. One of the Lead

Artists from Aravani Art Project, Karnataka, who is a transgender woman herself, shared her experience of discrimination and then homelessness, *"One says, you are a boy, wear a pant-shirt, why do you wear a saree? Why do you beg? Go and find work. I thought to myself that I haven't studied or anything, what will I do? So I ran and came to Bangalore. Bangalore was really tough, I was sleeping on footpaths."* Transgender persons face heightened risk in public spaces due to structural exclusion from housing, identity documentation, and infrastructure, which pushes many into public-facing livelihoods. Here, their bodies and identities are routinely policed, stigmatised, and violently targeted often by state actors themselves. Another Lead Artist from Aravani Art Project recounted, *"My first project was to paint the home where transgender people reside. [The mural] was dedicated to a woman who had died during the period of demonetisation, when ₹500 and ₹1000 notes were banned. She had been a sex worker in Chennai, and after being taken to the police station, she tragically set herself on fire with petrol - in a moment where those meant to protect had become predators."*

- Other individual level risk factors identified showed vulnerability of the groups due to structural and material conditions. **Identity as informal or migrant workers emerged** as one such factor that exposes individuals to unsafety in public spaces. Participants gave examples of various professions such as street vending, waste-picking, agricultural labour or brick kiln work, forest produce collection, construction, sex work, and street performance, where women are required to be present in variedly accessible and regulated public spaces at different hours of the day. The Founder of DURGA, Karnataka, shared, *"A big reason for vulnerability is that many women work in the unorganised sector...Migrant women working in fields often live in unsafe places with no toilets or bathrooms. At the workplace - in the fields - owners, supervisors or young men working there harass them."* Participants working in forest regions shared examples of how forest and police officials use their authority to harass, assault, and control women who depend on public and common lands for livelihood. The Director of SAJAG India shared, *"People collect produce like mahua and timru leaves from their own village forests. Even then, forest officers stop them. If someone cuts a branch, there is beating, and sometimes worse. Police and forest officials come at night, do raids, break huts, commit sexual violence, and forcibly bring girls. Sometimes leaders are also involved."* A young Coach from Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra, also gave examples of the hypervisibility of sex workers, *"Sex workers receive no social respect..Performers, orchestra and bar dancers face high risks: they perform at weddings and events but cannot speak about it at home; families assume money is the sole motive. Young girls aged 14–18 are drawn into such work, required to dress and present a certain way, sometimes trafficked and sexually exploited."* Women engaged in informal and public-facing work face heightened risks of violence due to constant visibility, unsafe transit, and unequal power relations, with harassment occurring across worksites, transport routes, and markets. Authority figures such as contractors and supervisors routinely misuse their positions to harass women, while degrading working conditions, contractor-controlled transport, and early or late work timings further increase vulnerability, particularly for workers such as waste-pickers.

  Further, being a migrant worker, and the process of migration itself, also exacerbates risk of violence in public spaces. Precarious living and working conditions, risky transit pathways, lack of proper documentation, and loose legal protections make women and girls more vulnerable to violence in public workspaces. Seeking employer accountability also becomes challenging due to the insecure nature of their work and existence. The Director of SAJAG India shared some examples of the same. *"Talking about carpet workers, both men and women work there. Among these labourers are migrants from Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh, some work at brick kilns, while others work in the carpet industry. They are transported from nearby villages by buses and private vehicles, and even in these vehicles, they face incidents of violence and harassment."*

- Another risk factor for victimisation identified at the individual level is **experiencing homelessness.** Participants pointed out that patriarchal control and domestic violence force young women out of their natal or marital homes in large numbers, yet they do not seem to occupy public spaces for prolonged periods afterwards. This is possibly because isolated young women in public spaces or transit routes are hyper-visible to potential abusers and are swiftly targeted to be trafficked or recruited into sex work. The Head of Programmes from Urja Trust, Maharashtra, shared their observation from field research, *"A previous study and insights from past experiences at stations like Bombay Central found that when a girl steps off the platform, her first contact with a potential trafficker often*

occurs within a single minute. That was a crucial realisation - it helped us understand how movement through public spaces can initiate pathways to violence...Many girls who travel long distances to big cities like Delhi or Mumbai spend over 12 hours in transit, without any contact, documents, or resources, and often don't even know where to stop or whom to reach out to." Access is easier for abusers in the absence of familial or institutional vigilance and support. Participants also spoke about how vulnerability to violence increases due to counterproductive responses by the system. There is little recognition of the specific situation of homeless persons, especially young women, and a clear lack of will among state representatives to institute protections and ensure safety. The representative from Urja Trust noted, *"Remove all girls and single women from the station after 6pm is a solution proposed by a senior police officer...But such responses themselves are problematic because they do not address the root issue of safety; they simply erase visibility."*

- The last individual level factor highlighted by the participants was that the **lack of awareness of rights,** lack of knowledge about services, and structural barriers to access rights are reasons survivors do not report violence or get services. This gap in knowledge and access is deeply rooted in intersectional identity-based factors. This reduces deterrence and accountability, which contributes to a social environment where gender-based violence in public spaces is normalised. The caseworker from Nav Bhartiya Nari Vikas Samiti, Uttar Pradesh shared, *"Women and children often do not have the required information. They understand that something has happened to them, but they do not know whom they should go to. Even when they are told that such incidents have happened to many women, and they are aware of this, they still do not know where to go or whom to talk to. If they consider going to the police station, they do not know whom they would approach there. They think about all this beforehand and become suppressed."* The Founder and President of Bheema Foundation, Uttar Pradesh, observed, *"There is a lack of information, they are not sensitive to their own situation or to the law, and they do not have awareness. So when all these things are missing, lack of information, lack of sensitisation, they will not come forward, and they will not be able to protect themselves."* A consistent pattern emerges which shows that gender-based violence in public spaces persists partly because women lack awareness of their rights and of available reporting or support mechanisms, and this knowledge gap interacts with wider social and institutional barriers.

Although not strongly highlighted by the participants, existing literature shows that certain individual identities, such as being a single or widowed woman, a woman with disabilities, or a woman from the North East, are associated with heightened risk of gender-based violence in public spaces. Single and widowed women, particularly from lower castes, are disproportionately targeted through highly public forms of violence linked to land and property claims (Kelkar & Nathan, 1991; Mehra & Agrawal, 2016); persons with disabilities face more than twice the risk of sexual violence, with public-space harassment often disguised as "help" (Mailhot Amborski et al., 2022; Daruwalla et al., 2013); and North-East women experience routine sexualised and racialised harassment in everyday mobility, especially in urban settings (Bezbaruah, 2014; Mukherjee & Dutta, 2018).

2) Individual Level Risk Factors for Perpetration

Individual level risks for perpetration identified by the participants focused on the internalised beliefs and norms that define public space as male, legitimise control over women's mobility, and normalise aggression as a routine expression of masculinity. These beliefs lower personal restraints on violence by framing women's presence in public as inappropriate or transgressive and by positioning violence as acceptable means of asserting authority.

- The participants highlighted that men who have **hostile views of women's presence in public spaces** are more likely to perpetrate gender-based violence in public spaces. Men who are socialised into rigid ideas of the public-private divide internalise the belief that public spaces belong to men, while women's "proper" place is within the home. This fosters entitlement over public space, casts women's visibility as illegitimate or threatening, and links masculinity to the visible exercise of dominance. Men begin to resist women's entry into

spaces even from a young age. The Programme Associate from Maitrayana Foundation gave an example, *"Literally in the last four months, we had to shut down a community because the boys from that community came and fought with the girls at their parents' house. This is our ground, you cannot play here."* At the same time, they push back on women and girls who already occupy some space in the public. The Founder of DURGA illustrated this through an example, *"In Karnataka, bus travel has recently been made free for women. On the one hand, this has led to more women using buses, but at the same time, incidents of sexual harassment and everyday sexism have increased. Conductors make remarks like, 'You are travelling for free,' and there have also been instances of physical pushing and scuffles. In the last six months alone, conductors have slapped women passengers on six different occasions."*

- **Internalised Hypermasculinity,** defined by a belief system where aggression, domination, and subordination of women is understood as essential traits of being a man, was identified as another individual risk factor. Participants emphasised that this understanding of masculinity shapes boys' and men's self-concept from an early age and governs how they seek to be seen and evaluated by others, particularly in visible public interactions. The Programme Officer for GBV Prevention from YP Foundation explained how violence and suppression of girls are normalised as acceptable masculine behaviour,*"From a young age, boys are taught that if you say you will kill, if you watch thriller movies, if you beat people, if you do violence, if you keep girls suppressed, then you are considered fine."* Participants noted that men who fail to perform dominant masculinity are ridiculed, a form of social discipline that pressures them to assert aggression and control well into adulthood, including within intimate relationships. This pressure influences everyday behaviour, with dominance, control, and harassment becoming ways to affirm masculinity, particularly in visible public spaces.

- Another risk factor for perpetration identified by the participants was that individuals who carry **attitudes that normalise and justify violence** and aggression are more likely to inflict gender-based violence in public spaces. This risk factor often co-occurs with beliefs about the genderedness of public spaces, and the need to assert hypermasculine control. For individuals with such beliefs and attitudes, violence against women occupying public spaces is framed not as harm, but as correction and gendered disciplining. The representative from YP Foundation highlighted how violence has come to be normalised and become almost synonymous with masculinity, *"Aggression is really glorified and normalised. It's become part of what people think a man is supposed to be like, and that plays a big role in how men behave."* The Manager from CEQUIN also noted that gender-based violence is often reinforced by misogynistic stereotypes and narratives that are increasingly shaping the attitudes of younger men. She explained, *'We often discuss the idea of mardaangi as violence and control - a rigid notion of masculinity that is sometimes echoed in what is now referred to as incel culture. These beliefs frame dominance and control over women as markers of masculinity. As a result, some men justify exerting power through violence against wives or daughters. Unfortunately, such ideas are often socialised into boys from a very young age."* Harassment, intimidation, and coercive actions in public spaces are more easily rationalised as confidence, strength, or heroism, making the normalisation of aggression and entitlement a clear risk factor for perpetration. Men also often legitimise violence when women resist control or assert autonomy within intimate relationships, with such violence frequently spilling into public spaces where domination is reasserted through intimidation, surveillance, and physical assault. The Co-Coordinator from Visakha shared her observations regarding how girls and young women experience harassment and violence in public spaces linked directly to intimate relationships. She shared, *"When we began our work in 2014, we held discussions in girls' groups about education and nutrition, and many other issues came up. The girls spoke about the difficulties they faced, including harassment and taunting when they left their homes. Many shared experiences of violence in public places. For example, a girl's boyfriend would come to her school and physically assault her, while teachers and other students stayed silent, assuming he must have had some reason to act that way."*

Relationship Level Factors

At the relationship level, risk for gender-based violence in public spaces is produced through family-based socialisation processes that regulate gendered mobility, normalise control, and legitimise violence as a means of enforcing boundaries. Families function as primary sites where the public-private divide is reproduced, girls are socialised into restriction and fear, and boys are socialised into entitlement and gatekeeping. Relational contexts lead to heightened vulnerability to both victimisation and perpetration, making public space violence as an extension of everyday familial power.

- One of the major relationship-level factors identified by the participants was the strict e**nforcement of traditional gender norms within families** that shape both vulnerability to and perpetration of gender-based violence in public spaces. Families are the primary sites where expectations around gendered mobility are enforced. Control and surveillance starts when girls enter puberty, wherein girls are constantly given the message that they do not belong in the public. This is reiterated not only by families but also by neighbourhood and community. The Programme Associate from Maitrayana Foundation observed, *"...girls start missing our sessions as they grow older, and then the problems begin...comments like, 'You're growing up now; you shouldn't go to the ground.' Boys start watching them as their bodies change. When breasts develop and hair grows longer, it becomes visible that a girl is entering puberty... Even when a young girl begins to access community spaces for other things, pressure from the wider society starts to build, from families as well as from boyfriends or intimate relationships, since girls as young as 12-13 are now entering relationships."* Critical questioning and assertion is highly frowned upon, discouraged, and immediately nipped in the bud. Male members of families, including young men, voice this control and effectuate this curtailment of mobility as gatekeepers. As the Project Coordinator from ANANDI noted, when girls assert voice after awareness programmes they are labelled "spoiled" and prevented from going out, teaching them that visibility and assertion invite punishment and limit their ability to negotiate public spaces. At the same time, families and communities give a different message to young boys. The Programme Associate from Maitrayana described this succinctly, *"If men come home late, there is no question. But if a girl comes home even a little late, there are questions. There are restrictions on phones and clothes. If you are a daughter-in-law, you must cover your head and not go out. If you are a daughter, you must wear a dupatta. And if you are a man, then you can do anything."* Men are not only taught that the private space is where women belong and public space is men's domain, but that they are also responsible for ensuring this arrangement is maintained.

- **Exposure to violence in the family from a young age** was identified as another leading risk factor for perpetrating gender-based violence later in life. Participants suggested that children who grow up witnessing or experiencing violence directly normalise the same as a part of relationships, often harnessed for disciplining and exercising authority. Combined with gendered socialisation, individuals may legitimise the use of violence against women and girls for 'transgressing' false public-private boundaries. One of the caseworkers from Nav Bharatiya Nari Vikas Samiti observed, *"There are families where there are constant beatings, from the mother and father, from the grandfather, from the father, from the uncle. Children who see this do not take it as something bad. They do not see it as wrong. For them, it becomes a normal thing."* Some participants noted that early exposure complicates the distinction between victim and perpetrator. The Manager from CEQUIN highlighted how the abuse of boys - often under-recognised, can shape later expressions of masculinity and violence. She noted, *"There is still very little documentation on this, but if we look at data under POCSO, the number of young boys who experience abuse is significant. It raises an important question about how the lines between survivor and perpetrator can sometimes blur. Much of our work on masculinity grapples with this, at what point does the experience of being victimised get mirrored in behaviours that reproduce harm?"*

- Participants emphasised that **family control on women's work and control over their income** are not only economic decisions but mechanisms through which families regulate mobility, autonomy, and agency. The cumulative impact of such control extends beyond individual women to the wider public environment. This leads to systematic reduction of women's everyday presence in streets, transport, worksites, and other shared spaces, producing public spaces that are

increasingly male-dominated and less safe overall. The Programme Associate for Economic Justice Programme from Maitrayana Foundation explained that families often discourage or prohibit girls from working outside the home, framing employment as a threat to social standing and control. She observed, *"It starts within the family- 'You will not go for a job. Why should I eat your earnings?' Fathers say this because if a father sends his daughter to work, society taunts him: 'Oh, so now you will live off your daughter's income?"* Another participant from Maitrayana Foundation discussed that women's economic independence is widely perceived through a lens of moral panic, often rooted in caste and religion-based intermingling. Families associate earning with disobedience and loss of control. She added,*"This came out clearly in our survey. People say things like, 'If the girl starts earning, she will get spoiled. If she goes to work, it means she has gone out of control. She will start making her own decisions. She will marry a boy of her own choice. And all of this is not allowed in our community."* Participants noted that even when women are permitted to work, families tightly regulate their employment through restrictions on location, travel, and timing by often justifying it as safety. This economic control creates dual pathways of risk: it reinforces women's dependence and reduced bargaining power over safety, while normalising male entitlement to regulate women's labour and mobility, which later manifests as harassment and coercion in public spaces.

Community Level

At this level, vulnerability to gender-based violence in public spaces is created by environments where women's mobility is constrained, violence is normalised, and accountability is weakened. Conditions brought on by community level factors foster conditions in which tolerance for violence is heightened, impunity is accorded, and harm persists as an everyday feature of public life.

- **Poor, unsafe & exclusionary infrastructure** was repeatedly mentioned by participants as a risk factor that enhances public unsafety or perceptions of it. Poor infrastructure pushes women into situations of isolation and unsafety, where opportunities for violence are present and perpetrators can act with greater anonymity and impunity. They gave various examples of infrastructural gaps such as lack of lights, absence or poor maintenance of sanitation facilities, or proper roads. The Senior Manager of Operations and Partnerships from Red Dot Foundation shared, *"Many public spaces like bus stands, gardens, parks, toilets, sky walks, subways, underpass lanes, staircases at railway stations are not well lit. On account of this, these spaces get used for activities such as consuming alcohol or substance abuse. Girls often report being harassed in these spaces due to this behaviour."* The Co-Lead of the Right to Pee programme from CORO India shared how absence of women-friendly public toilets creates everyday indignities and heightened vulnerability,*"No ventilation, dirty toilets, no inclusive toilets. Locks and windows are broken, there is no privacy. They are not disabled-friendly. There are no female attendants. Public toilets are in remote places, surrounded by clutter. There is no water, no lights, no basic facilities like sanitary napkins. Sometimes money is charged to use the toilet. Because of this, women feel unsafe using public toilets and are exposed to harassment in public spaces."* She also added that lacking proper walkpaths forces women into more unsafe conditions,*"Broken paths mean choosing either a more isolated street or a more crowded one. Either way, there is more violence."* Participants noted that in rural and peri-urban areas, inadequate infrastructure such as roads, lighting, and toilets sharply restricts women's mobility, with isolation itself producing risk; as the Senior Counsellor from SWATI observed, *"Mahisagar is a hilly area, After 7 or 8 pm, women cannot go out."* They also highlighted that poor public transport infrastructure creates risk through both isolation and crowding. The Director from Red Dot Foundation noted that in Goa *"women stand in random places to get transport, which is unsafe,"* underscoring how infrastructural gaps create everyday vulnerability in public spaces.

- **Acceptance and trivialisation of public space violence by potential bystanders** was another risk factor identified at the community level. The participants emphasised that violence persists in public spaces because it is repeatedly dismissed as normal, private, or insignificant and community members do not intervene to resist it. Community members constantly draw

shifting boundaries around what counts as 'serious' or even what constitutes 'violence' and what can be ignored, allowing harmful behaviour to continue without challenge. The Consultant from MAVA shared an everyday interaction that illustrates how harassment and aggression are trivialised by bystanders, *"I was with my brother and was thinking about whether I should intervene, and my brother said, 'These are just nibba–nibbi people, they'll cry now and then come back together.' It made me think about the role of a bystander-what kind of violence is considered okay? We negotiate in our own heads what violence is acceptable and keep making our own definitions."* In many cases, potential bystanders do not even recognise certain acts as violence because of how pervasive they are, and therefore do not feel the need to intervene. The Programme Lead from Akshara who works with bus conductors to train them as active bystanders reflected, *"Initially, many of them were not aware that sexual violence or sexual harassment exists on a spectrum. They did not recognise behaviours such as staring, making suggestive sounds or comments, or singing sexist songs as forms of harassment."* She further noted that harassment in crowded public spaces is especially likely to be dismissed because it is perceived as unavoidable or ambiguous. Further, fear of social backlash often deters bystanders from intervening, and concerns about reputation and retaliation lead communities to suppress cases rather than seek justice. This routine minimisation frames public violence as a private matter, weakens social resistance, and enables impunity.

- Another particularly important community level risk factor that sustains gender-based violence in public spaces is the **dominance of patriarchal local community governance structures.** Participants constantly mentioned that especially in rural areas institutions such as jati panchayats and customary councils often have functional mechanisms of social control that regulate women's mobility and autonomy. They reinforce patriarchal norms and promote social scripts that punish women for stepping outside their homes, or exercising decision-making. The Co-Coordinator from Vishakha described how such systems intensify violence and surveillance, *"The structures of jaati also worsen violence and control over mobility, as jaati panchayats are highly prevalent. They say girls cannot have phones, cannot study beyond class 12, and cannot have love marriages. Girls can be killed or removed from the family if they do not listen."* In other contexts, especially in tribal or rural areas, formal legal protections exist on paper but are effectively bypassed in practice. The Director of North East Network described how violence is addressed through informal systems that operate outside constitutional safeguards, *"In predominantly tribal communities, even though SC/ST legal protections should apply and carry weight, in practice they have almost no value. Cases rarely go to court. Instead, matters are taken to tribal autonomous councils or informal village meetings in the villages. These spaces function informally and rely on customary laws which are handed down from one generation to the other. Because of this, it becomes extremely difficult for women to seek justice."* Customary councils frequently operate as parallel authorities to the state, and police and formal institutions often defer to their decisions despite their discriminatory impact on women. In such contexts, moral policing and social control take precedence over women's safety.

- **Institutional apathy of response systems** was recognised as one of the most community-level risk factors. Participants highlighted that while responses of institutions such as police, one stop centers, and courts are meant to evoke confidence among survivors and ensure deterrence, they often reproduce the same norms that silence survivors and provide impunity to perpetrators. Further their responses are often shaped by caste, indigeneity, gender identity, and social location.

  Participants described how institutions routinely minimise and dismiss gender-based violence in public spaces by ranking it within informal hierarchies of seriousness. Everyday harassment, threats, or coercion are dismissed as insignificant, inconvenient, or not worth institutional effort. The Director of North East Network shared her experience, *"Mechanisms like law enforcement agencies mandated to provide justice .. define violence in different hierarchies and say, 'This is nothing.' They see it as such a 'jhamela' to register cases that they end up advising women, saying, 'You go back, otherwise formal procedures will become very problematic for you,"* she observed. Stakeholders such as the police recognise violence only when it is extreme or visible, and act only when there is escalation. *"Violent physical assault or death or murder, etc get top-most recognition as major forms of violence to immediately intervene,"* she added. The participants also highlighted that especially in cases where violence has occurred in public spaces, victim-blaming is the most common institutional response. The Organisation Head from Bal

Vikas Neenv (CDF), Jharkhand shared how women's presence in public is immediately questioned by the police while perpetrators are shielded, *"Women are told, 'Why did you go out? You should have stayed inside the house. Why did you go to that place?' There is always an attempt to confine women indoors, while at the same time protecting sexual offenders."* Stakeholders deliberately deflect and delay so as to discourage the survivor altogether. Institutional apathy is intensified for Adivasi, Dalit, and other marginalised survivors, who are often viewed with suspicion and seen as less deserving of protection. Response systems frequently ignore how identity and power shape experiences of violence, approaching survivors through a paternalistic service-delivery lens rather than as rights-bearing individuals. This structural bias undermines fair investigation and accountability and reinforces impunity.

- **Exclusionary working conditions and workplace policies** pose a significant risk for gender-based violence in public spaces. Participants emphasised that when workplaces fail to create safe, enabling, and rights-based conditions for women and transgender persons to work, they are either pushed out of formal work altogether or forced into more precarious, informal, and unsafe forms of labour, where they are already more vulnerable to public space violence. In formal sector workplaces, the exclusion of women and transgender persons is often justified in the name of safety rather than addressed through meaningful infrastructure or policy reform. Employers frequently perceive women's rights, awareness, and legal protections as burdensome. The Programme Head from Sangini shared an example,*"When we were conducting POSH sensitisation with people from government and non-government sectors, a showroom manager clearly said, 'If you create this kind of awareness for women, we will not hire women at all. Who wants to deal with so much hassle?' Just like you said, women are not given night duty, this mentality still exists, that creating awareness will take away women's right to work."* Instead of investing in safety measures, institutions restrict women's participation altogether. This logic was also evident within government workplaces. The Trustee from Stree Mukti Sangathana (SMS) recalled, *"When we asked a depot in-charge he said that they never assign night duty to women. This is also a form of injustice. Why are women not given night duty? Because you have not made arrangements for their safety."*
  Participants further explained that exclusionary hiring criteria in the private sector systematically push women out of formal employment. In informal workplace settings, exclusion takes the form of complete absence of basic infrastructure and protection. Women workers are often required to live and work in unsafe environments with no sanitation, security, or grievance mechanisms. Additionally, the informal nature of such work means that women have little recourse when violence occurs. The Trustee from SMS succinctly put forth the problem, *"When we speak of POSH, there is POSH for workplaces, but how do you apply it to the unorganised sector where people are considered self-employed? Who will be held accountable? A woman working in someone's home might be identifiable, but a self-employed waste-picker who collects and sells waste, who do you hold responsible? Harassment happens a lot. We have followed up on cases, filed them, and pursued them, but it raises questions about how to implement POSH for people who work on the streets."*

4) Society Level

At the society level, participants pointed to risk factors that operate through normative and high-level structures that determine shared beliefs, rules, and power arrangements that govern public life. These factors drive gender-based violence in public spaces by creating those structural conditions that promote inequality and disenfranchisement. These factors largely determine whose presence in public is legitimised, whose safety is prioritised, and when violence is socially or institutionally tolerated rather than challenged.

- One of the most important risk factors that participants identified was the **male-centric and universalist design and use of public spaces.** Public spaces are designed keeping in mind the male user that makes them inherently exclusionary and dangerous for women and transgender people. The Founder of DURGA put it succinctly, *"Public space is made by men and for men. For the rest of us, women, girls, queer people, vulnerable groups, we are not even supposed to be visible. We are expected to move from point A to point B as quickly and*

invisibly as possible. The moment we are seen, we become targets- for harassment, molestation, even gang rape." The Co-Lead from CORO India gave clear examples to show how public infrastructure is built exclusively to cater to men, *"A survey we conducted in Mumbai found that there were 2,439 urinals for men and none for women. Toilets were free for men but chargeable for women."* Such male-centric design leads to direct withdrawal of women from public spaces, or their sparse presence in particular locations, or particular timings. The Senior Counsellor from SWATI observed this effect as, *"Most of the people moving around at night are men."* Participants explained that women's presence itself contributes to safety through informal surveillance, often referred to as *"eyes on the street."* When women withdraw from public spaces due to fear or exclusion, those spaces become even more male-dominated and unsafe. In low resource settings where there is an overall stress on public services, the little existing shared infrastructure is also dominated by men who routinely harass women and transgender people in these spaces. The representative from CORO India elaborated, *"In a 2018 survey, there were only 501 toilets for ten lakh people in this ward. Out of these, 90 toilets were extremely dangerous."* Representatives from SWATI also gave similar examples of male-domination over common village spaces in rural settings.

Lack of infrastructure is also structurally imposed through poverty, disability, caste, and class power. The Senior Counsellor from SWATI gave an example, *"Street lighting is available only in front of the houses of karta-dhartas, leaving other areas dark and unsafe for women."* The Senior Project Officer from Jagori spoke about how design that does not center disabilities makes women with disabilities feel more excluded from public spaces, and they are unable to navigate these spaces safely and confidently. The Head of Programmes from Urja Trust also highlighted how infrastructure that is universalist in nature is designed to make vulnerable people 'disappear.' She observed, *"The system has an invisibilising relationship with people who are homeless and with communities that do not live within fixed or recognised geographic locations. This exclusion...particularly affects nomadic groups and other communities whose lives do not fit into settled, location-based models of governance."*

- At the society level, one of the most critical risk factors for GBV in public spaces is that the **dominant legal and response approaches in this country are gender exclusionary and gender-blind.** The representative from Urja Trust pointed out that in the recent times, protections have been actively rolled back for queer and transgender persons, *"When we talk about the system, in the current BNS, all kinds of violence, particularly violence against queer and trans people, especially transgender persons, those sections have been removed. So at present, we do not have gender-neutral and gender-inclusive laws in place, even in our criminal justice system."* Further, although everyday forms of violence such as those experienced in public spaces were criminalised following the Justice Verma Committee's recommendations, the participants observed that the policy framework that strengthened support mechanisms were not designed to respond to such forms of violence. The representative from Urja Trust added, *"In the guidelines of the One Stop Center, it is written that the objective of the scheme is to look at emergency and non-emergency service support for violence happening in both public and private spaces, and domestic spaces. But largely what happens there is that sexual violence, to an extent, still comes into play, but only in critical cases where rape is being talked about. Sexual harassment or other forms of violence and discrimination that girls and women experience in other spaces, those very rarely get reported, or in that way, the officials there also do not have the training or sensitivity."* These exclusions reinforce a governance environment where violence in public spaces is minimised, misclassified, or rendered invisible. Participants noted that many GBV response schemes such as the Nari Adalats also adopt conservative, community-mediated approaches that overlook power and inequality. This institutionalises the status quo rather than restoring survivors' rights.

- **Policy frameworks reinforcing stereotypes** particularly linking women's value to marriage, reproduction, and male dependence also send society-level messages regarding their expected role within the public-private binary. The Manager from CEQUIN observed that state schemes often invest in women primarily during their reproductive years. She noted, *"Women's reproductive roles are deeply intertwined with experiences of violence. What we often see is a kind of tokenistic investment in women that is tied to their reproductive capacity, and many state schemes and policies are structured in this way. Even within families, girls and women are treated differently when they reach reproductive age, there is greater attention and control, but this period is also marked by multiple forms of violence."* Such framing

reduces women's identities to motherhood and marriage, limiting their autonomy and legitimising restrictions on their mobility outside these roles. These policies signal that women's security is tied to marriage rather than to independent livelihoods or rights.

Several examples illustrated how welfare schemes are designed around assumptions of male protection and female dependence. The Trustee from SMS explained, survivors of violence are excluded from maternity schemes if they do not conform to marital norms: *"Even under Mata Bal Sangopan, if a domestic violence survivor goes for delivery and does not have her husband's Aadhaar, she does not receive the ₹5,000–₹6,000 benefit. On one hand, live-in relationships are being legalised, but on the other hand, marriage is required to access maternity benefits."* The Practice Lead from ANANDI highlighted that state documentation and welfare systems continue to tether women's legal identity to husbands, reflecting a paternalistic framework that undermines women's autonomy and constrains their participation in public life.

- The participants noted that **cultures of hegemonic masculinity** are a society-level risk factor that drives gender-based violence in public spaces. Hegemonic masculinity refers to cultures of dominant forms of manhood that establish male power over women and other men, and promote rigid ideals of manhood that associate masculinity with dominance, aggression, sexual entitlement, and control over women's bodies and mobility. Such norms are circulated and reinforced through media, peer cultures, and everyday socialisation. The Programme Officer from YP Foundation highlighted how contemporary media intensifies these norms, stating, *"If we look at media, reels, movies, Instagram, the content we are consuming, especially the Gen Z language of Sigma men and Alpha men, if you understand this language closely, then it normalises violence even more."* The Consultant from MAVA also noted that hegemonic masculinity is sustained through ridicule and performance pressure among men. She observed, *"Insult culture is thriving. Boys are being judged on performance all the time. This performance pressure itself drives gender-based violence."* The Founder of Gaali Band Abhyan further emphasised that these masculine norms intersect with caste and economic marginalisation, creating cycles where violence is reproduced rather than challenged. Reflecting on the intersectionalities he notices while working with young boys, he shared, *"We also need to look at the context of places like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where caste factors are involved. Violence at workplaces, sexual violence against 'lower-caste' workers, people doing cleaning work, all of this exists. But I agree that there is also this very thin line, where what happened to them earlier turns into what they start doing later."* Cultures of hegemonic masculinity operate at a societal level to legitimise aggression, reward dominance, and normalise the control of women in public spaces, thereby increasing the risk of gender-based violence in everyday public life.

- Participants highlighted that the **cultural and political patriarchy** ingrained in the ecosystem where young men are socialised is a society-level risk factor that legitimises and normalises gender-based violence in public spaces. Patriarchy operates through deeply embedded cultural narratives, religious authority, and political power structures that collectively sanction control over women's bodies, gender roles, mobility, and behaviour. The representative from Vishakha pointed out how patriarchy is visible right from the level of the family and patriarchal power grants families moral and social legitimacy to enact violence against women in public spaces. She elaborated, *"When some kind of violence takes place within intimate relationships, family or partners, in public spaces, it is justified by saying, 'It is a family matter.' It is happening in public, but no one can say anything because the family is seen as entitled."*

  Cultural and religious narratives were also identified as powerful sites where patriarchal violence is normalised. Participants also noted how religious authority can directly translate into public violence. The Manager from CEQUIN shared, *'In one of the villages in Mewat, Haryana, where we have been working for years, local religious leaders physically reprimanded around forty girls simply because they wore football gear and played in a public tournament. For us, this highlights how certain actors continue to function as gatekeepers of public spaces and can become perpetrators of public space violence. Experiences like this are a reminder that norm change is never a one-time achievement, it is an ongoing process that requires sustained engagement and persistence."*

  Patriarchy is also reinforced through prevalent political narratives and men's dominance in the field. The Founder of Gaali Band Abhiyan shared, *"In politics, the heads of political parties are men. Women are not placed in positions where they can mobilise votes. Because of*

this, women are not able to enter or participate fully." The Youth Leader from Aakansha Seva Sadan, Bihar, also observed, *"Women become sarpanch, but the husband does the work, all decisions are taken by the "sarpanch pati,"* Women may get tokenistic representation in governance because of reservations, but they do not get any real political power to influence public norms and safety agendas. Participants also pointed to political rhetoric that trivialises violence, noting how statements by politicians like *"Boys will be boys, they will make mistakes"* become generalised, creating an assumption that gender-based violence is inevitable, acceptable, and unpunishable. Participants also spoke about how alignment of media and right-wing politics amplifies patriarchal and communal narratives, enabling falsehoods that legitimise social control and public intimidation of women in the name of community honour.

- **Communalism and caste** were identified as overwhelming society-level risk factors. The participants highlighted that communal polarisation directly translates into public violence, and women's bodies become the sites through which such conflict is played out. Observing from the context of rising majoritarianism one participant noted, *"Tyrannical forces like Hindutva oppression or communal violence between Hindus and Muslims are fought on the bodies of women as the battleground."* Participants also highlighted how in recent times Muslim women's identity has been deeply scrutinised and leveraged for communal targeting, leading to increased hostility against them in public spaces. One of the participants remarked, *"The hijab is an important identity marker for the Muslim community, but it is often viewed in a highly politicised and communalised way. Political leaders declared that girls would not be allowed to attend school wearing the hijab, precisely because Muslim girls had begun going to school. So they were told not to come to school in a hijab, and this was eventually turned into a law."* Such interventions explicitly regulate women's access to education and public space under the guise of governance. Similarly, systemic percolation of caste also creates conditions where targeted violence in public spaces is legitimised. Dalit women's bodies have been treated as socially "accessible" to upper-caste men. This is a result of caste hierarchies that positions Dalit women at the bottom of both gender and caste order. Sexual violence is often used as a tool of domination and punishment, reinforcing caste power by asserting control over Dalit women's mobility, dignity, and labour. The Director of SAJAG India elaborated, "*In Uttar Pradesh, caste-based violence against Dalit women is extremely high, whether they are girls going to school or women working in the fields...There are many cases of sexual assault against Dalit women because upper-caste men consider them inferior and feel entitled to enter fields or homes and assault them whenever they want."* Participants identified caste, class, or religious identity as enabling risk factors that shape sense of entitlement and authority in public spaces. Individuals who occupy such positions are more likely to believe that they can exercise control over others without facing consequences.

- Participants highlighted that the **political economy of precarity** characterised by unemployment, lack of social security, informalisation of work, and migration, operates as a key society-level risk factor for gender-based violence in public spaces. Absence of secure employment and social protection pushes women into unorganised and precarious work, where exploitation is routine and redressal mechanisms are largely absent. The Founder of DURGA explained, *"Many women work in the unorganised sector. Because it is unorganised, there is no proper redressal. They cannot go anywhere to claim their rights."* The Founder of Gaali Band Abhiyan similarly pointed out that economic precarity intensifies vulnerability, stating, *"Because of poverty, if women or people of different identities go for work, their exploitation is much higher."* Informal workers lack effective social security despite existing laws, as enforcement is nearly impossible in self-employment and subcontracted settings, forcing workers into debt, seasonal labour, and unsafe work and transit conditions. The Director of SAJAG India explained how supervisors and employers exploit women workers' dependence and debt, *"They are often indebted. They take advances and then end up being paid less. Violence comes from contractors, buyers, and customers."* Such arrangements limit workers' ability to refuse unsafe work or exit violent environments. Further, migration emerged as a direct outcome of this structural insecurity. He further shared, *"When women migrate to work in fields, the place they stay is not safe. There are no proper toilets or bathrooms. And at the workplace, the owner or other men around, even the boys working there, harass them."* The representative from Urja Trust further highlighted how migration pathways themselves become sites of violence, noting that *"when a girl steps off the platform, her first contact with a potential trafficker often happens within one minute."*

- **Conflict and Militarisation-** Some participants highlighted that situations of conflict create structural conditions that significantly heighten the risk of gender-based violence in public spaces. The Director of North East Network noted how conflict environments normalise sexual violence as part of broader political and territorial struggles, *"It is extremely important to understand how conflict, violence, and public spaces intersect...This region has witnessed multiple forms of conflict over land, water, and forest rights between different communities and also because of felt-injustices by state machinery. So it has been women who have been sandwiched between state actors and non-state actors."* It is public spaces where sexual violence is used as a tool to assert identity, instil fear, and threaten communities that are protesting or resisting. One of the participants also explained that conflict fundamentally alters how women can access safety and redress in public spaces, *"If someone is undocumented, she may not even have proof of address. So even filing a report becomes hard."* In conflict-affected settings, gender-based violence is not an aberration but a predictable outcome of structural instability and militarised control.

This chapter reveals the many layered and interacting conditions that increase the risk of gender-based violence being perpetrated in public spaces. Using the social-ecological model, the analysis demonstrates how individual identities, family control, community norms, institutional responses, and wider socio-political and economic structures drive vulnerability to and perpetration of violence in public spaces. Individual and identity-related factors such as age, caste, gender identity, migration status, informal worker status, or homelessness are structurally associated with increased exposure to violence, and such exposure intensifies in contexts where family norms push punitive messages in response to transgressions, communities normalise or trivialise violence, infrastructure gaps create environmental opportunities, and institutions turn a blind eye. Similarly, perpetration is influenced not just by personal attitudes but by family and community encouragement and sanction, dominance of harmful masculinities, power accorded by hierarchical relationships in workplaces, and expectations of impunity.

The findings also challenge the narrow assessment of public space violence mainly being a problem of physical design and environmental risk. While infrastructure and transport matter, they interact with deep social hierarchies and governance failures that force certain groups to be more visible, mobile, exposed, and precarious. Differences across urban and rural contexts are also clearly visible even within how each risk factor operates to produce violence. Most importantly, the participants' narratives spotlight the greater structural factors which foster the sustained conditions where gender-based violence amplifies in public spaces, becomes more diverse in nature, and is also more openly tolerated. These structural factors pertain to masculinist design, exclusionary laws and policies steeped in stereotypes, promotion of hegemonic masculinities, political and cultural sanction for gender-based violence in public spaces, unemployment and migration, caste and communalism, conflict and militarisation.

INSTITUTING PROTECTIONS- THE *HOW* AND WITH *WHO* (OF INTERVENTIONS)

In the previous Chapter, we have used the narratives of the participants to trace the nested risk factors for gender-based violence in public spaces. The Social-Ecological Model provides a relevant theoretical framework to understand and situate how the risks operate at various levels. In this Chapter, we will discuss how interventions in this study counter risks through their on-field engagements and activities.

We have analysed, organised and synthesised data on the dynamic elements of 31 interventions to identify **protective mechanisms**, in line with the SEM framework. These protections are delivered through four overlapping **intervention pathways (which we call dimensions)** - such as infrastructure improvements, norms change, work and livelihood support, and stronger response systems.

Here **protective mechanisms** will refer to the conditions that reduce exposure to violence, interrupt its normalisation, or enable timely response. These protective mechanisms work by transforming the individuals, environments, relationships, and systems through which violence becomes possible. Protective mechanisms do not work in isolation since the problem of GBV in public spaces is multi-dimensional and cuts across multiple levels of the SEM. Risks are therefore addressed through a combination of interventions and protections rather than any single solution. For example, young age is a risk factor that increases vulnerability to violence, but reducing this risk requires multiple forms of protection: building girls' confidence to recognise their autonomy and exercise agency, equipping them with capacities to enter workplaces, enabling them to understand and claim their civic rights in public spaces, and supporting them with knowledge of systems and processes to seek justice when violations occur.

Under each dimension, we discuss protective mechanisms instituted to counter risks experienced at each level of the SEM. We also analyse the key **stakeholders** involved and the activities implemented under each dimension. Stakeholders refer to the individuals, groups, or institutions that interventions directly work with to counter the risks. Stakeholders are mapped to each SEM level based on where they have the most influence and responsibility in addressing the identified risks. This helps show who needs to act at each level to make protection effective - from individuals and communities to institutions and wider systems. **Activities** refer to the concrete actions and processes that organisations carry out to translate their protective mechanisms into practice, such as training, surveys, audits, advocacy meetings, campaigns, service delivery, or community mobilisation.

We also make note of the 'barriers' and 'facilitators' shared by practitioners that arise when working with the identified stakeholders. **'Barriers'** are the factors that obstruct or limit stakeholders' ability or willingness to engage meaningfully with the intervention, while **'facilitators'** are factors that enable, support, or strengthen stakeholders' participation and ownership of the intervention. These barriers and facilitators are intended to provide practical guidance to peer organisations on how the field might behave when implementing similar interventions.

Finally, we also attempt to capture **'incremental changes'** (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2022) as seen through the course of engagement with stakeholders within the given dimensions. The term 'incremental changes' is increasingly being used to understand feminist intervention work, as it captures the small, gradual shifts in attitudes, behaviours, relationships, and agency. While these shifts may not immediately contribute to outcomes, they cumulatively contribute to deeper social transformations over time. The terminology recognises that for complex phenomena such as GBV, change is not always unidimensional or linear. Focusing solely on final outcomes invisibilises the many precursors and immediate shifts indicative of progress (TISS, 2022). We list the incremental changes reported by organisations and, where relevant, illustrate with examples of observed outcomes at the corresponding level of the SEM.

In this chapter, data emerging relevant to each dimension has therefore been analysed using the following framework.

Table 4. Framework for Thematic Analysis of Interventions Based on the Social Ecological Model

Dimension – Name and Description							
	Risk factors being addressed	Protective mechanisms being instituted	Stakeholders	Activities	Barriers to implementation	Facilitators to implementation	Identified Incremental Changes

Dimension 1:
Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Organisations working to enable safe public spaces operate on the premise that addressing gender-based violence requires not only a reduction in incidents of violence but also enhancing women's and transgender persons' perceived safety in public spaces.

Apart from the potential risk of crime, perception of safety in public spaces is shaped by the physical and social characteristics of urban environments, such as poorly lit streets, narrow alleyways, infrequent public transport, isolated public toilets, and the presence of social incivility. Stemming from a male-centric approach to spatial planning and design of the built environment, exclusionary public spaces sideline the needs of women and transgender people and force them to take precautions to navigate public spaces. This constrains their participation in public life, limiting their access to employment, healthcare, education, and leisure.

Against this backdrop, organisations seek to address the risks imposed by exclusionary infrastructure by creating conditions that enable women, girls, and transgender persons to assert their right to public participation and to occupy public spaces as legitimate users, without fear. Central to this approach is the provision of public spaces that are informed by and responsive to the needs of women, girls, and transgender people.

Table 5. Overview of Protective Mechanisms, Stakeholders, and Activities Addressing Risks in the Built Environment Across SEM Levels

SEM Level	Risks	Protective Mechanism	Stakeholders	Activities
Individual-Victimisation	• Young age (adolescent girls and young women) • Experiencing homelessness • Being transgender • Being from a Dalit community • Being Muslim	• Equipping at-risk groups to identify infrastructure and transport gaps and demand accountability	• Girls • Women • Transgender persons	• Community mobilisation on issues of civic rights through leadership skills, perspective-building and awareness of gendered infrastructure, promoting shared spaces, etc. • Generating community-driven data through safety audits and digital crowdsourcing of data
Community	• Poor, unsafe, and exclusionary public infrastructure	• Facilitating access to safe and functional public infrastructure • Improving natural surveillance and increasing the number of 'eyes on the street'	• Duty-bearers and institutions in charge of maintaining public spaces (like BDO, BMC officials, panchayat members, CBOs) • Gatekeepers and community key-persons (RWAs, school management, sports associations, religious leaders, etc.) • Formal and informal 'Eyes on the street' (Police, shopkeepers, transport staff, etc.)	• Capacity building of institutional stakeholders to monitor and maintain public infrastructure • Securing buy-in from community and institutional gatekeepers to enable equal access to public parks and playgrounds • Engaging eyes on the street to deter violence
Society	• Male-centric and universalist design and use of public spaces	• Developing and promoting gender inclusive standards and practices for design and planning public spaces	• Designated planning and design institutions in urban settings • Panchayat and Public Works Departments in rural settings • CSO networks and intersectional pressure groups • Local and national media	• Providing advisory and technical support for gender-inclusive planning and design • Advocacy to integrate gender concerns in the local development agenda • Network building and consultative spaces to push for gender-inclusive public spaces • Creative campaigns linking exclusionary infrastructure and risk of violence

Individual Level

Risks: Young age (adolescent girls and young women), Experiencing homelessness, Being transgender, Being from a Dalit community, Being Muslim

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Equipping At-Risk Groups to Identify Infrastructure and Transport Gaps and Demand Accountability

Organisations working with women, adolescents, and transgender and queer persons recognise that those who experience vulnerability, exclusion or violence in the public space should be the ones to effect change. As the participant from CORO India aptly stated: **"जिनके सवाल, उनका नेतृत्व"** *(people whose concerns arise from lived experience should be the ones holding leadership).* They primarily focus on building ownership within these groups (either through a cadre of leaders or the collective as a whole) to enable them to articulate their concerns, strategise on civic issues, and engage with institutions to demand inclusive infrastructure, thereby ensuring sustained grassroots action for gender-inclusive public spaces. To institute this protective mechanism, organisations adopt the following grassroots activities:

- **Community Mobilisation on Issues of Civic Rights-** A critical starting point for community mobilisation lies in enabling women and transpersons to recognise and assert themselves as legitimate occupants of public spaces. Through perspective-building sessions, interventions convey two messages: that safe, functional infrastructure is fundamental to one's civic rights, and public infrastructure and gender-based violence are mutually constitutive. Such framing aims to shift how these groups perceive public space. It prompts communities to view the absence, poor maintenance or lack of adequate infrastructure as not just a matter of inconvenience but as a failure of the governance system in upholding their rights. At the same time, it challenges their perception of the built environment as a neutral site and instead highlights how infrastructure reflects and reinforces unequal power relations. As the Programme Officer from HUMSAFAR, explained, *"We try to make the connection about how your toilet, your streetlights, and your roads are your fundamental rights, and then we talk about sexual violence and how all of these are interconnected."* A similar insight was shared by the Senior Counsellor from SWATI working in remote Gujarat, *"Roads and streets are made for vehicles, for men. But for women, they are a safety concern. It is the women who work hard and then face harassment - then they just want to get out of that space as quickly as possible. So we bring in the lens of how infrastructure affects women, how streets are for women too, and why roads should be open. Bringing all of these issues to the fore with the public and the Panchayat, especially with women's groups."*

This understanding of infrastructure as a rights-based and gendered issue lays the groundwork for cultivating a culture of accountability, that is, knowing who is responsible and how to hold them accountable. To facilitate this, interventions familiarise community members with local governance structures, institutional responsibilities, and budgetary processes. The information equips communities to be critical of duty-bearers and their actions, enabling them to challenge symbolic provisions and push for infrastructure that is responsive to their needs.

"When it comes to the role of the councillor (Parshad), the police, we outline what their accountability is. Since they are authority figures, people feel like whatever they are doing is already more than enough. However, [we] help them realise that these are their basic rights, and that the authorities are responsible for providing these facilities and services." - Programme Officer, HUMSAFAR, Uttar Pradesh

"The government constructed toilets in villages, but there is no water in the first place. So how will the toilets be used? Toilets are necessary, but they also need water. First water, then toilets." - Senior Counsellor, SWATI, Gujarat

As community-led action is a long and demanding process, organisations create shared interaction spaces to sustain collective efforts over time. These interactive spaces are designed to not only strengthen the functions of the collective but also to nurture relationships among members. For instance, community meetings allow for organic discussions around everyday life. As recurring themes emerge, particularly around civic difficulties faced by the community, members are better able to identify issues and implement collective solutions like preparing applications, visiting government offices, or

following up with authorities. These meeting spaces also provide opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate their hard work and wins which reinforces solidarity between community members. Other times, these interactions may also take the form of exposure visits for community leaders. This a model of peer learning and facilitates exchange of strategies for addressing similar civic challenges. It helps community leaders situate local struggles within a broader context and expand the advocacy tools available to the community group.

More importantly, convening interactive spaces for community members, especially women, girls and transpersons, allows them an opportunity to step out of their homes. It brings together diverse social groups and is an opportunity to challenge social divisions, particularly along religious and caste lines. HUMSAFAR, for instance, cultivates a sense of togetherness by encouraging members to celebrate each others' festivals and by holding sessions on constitutional rights. The Programme Officer shared, *"We also direct the attention of members to how Dalit, Hindu, and Muslim women are working together and try to strengthen these bonds ...for example, sharing gujiya during holi or sevaiyan during Eid. We are also conducting Samvidhan Shala. These meetings are important not only for advocacy but also for challenging the current social scenario."*

- **Generating Community-driven Data-** Male-centric infrastructure is reinforced by a lack of gender inclusive data that fails to account for the experiences of women and transgender users. Changes in how and what data is collected are a step towards closing this gap. Many organisations, therefore, adopt community-driven data or evidence generation as a key strategy to visibilise the needs of girls, women and transqueer persons.

  A range of qualitative methodologies like safety audits are popularly employed to record the prevalence, form and location of violence, document physical and social factors in the built environment that evoke a sense of fear, and capture expectations for change. The qualitative methods employed include focus group discussions, traditional surveys and interviews, online mapping tools, safety walks and community mapping.

  These methods legitimise lived experiences by creating accessible and inclusive ways of generating knowledge. Safety walks and community mapping, rooted in participatory practices, are led by women, girls, and transpersons themselves. Such exercises affirm participants as experts on their own safety. The anonymity provided by digital crowIdsourced apps is increasing disclosure by eliminating stigma associated with reporting on issues of safety and GBV, as observed by the participants:

  "Girls are trained in community mapping. They sit together in groups to draw a map of the village, identifying areas where there are challenges and unmet needs."- Senior Counsellor, SWATI, Gujarat

  "Most people have experienced GBV but don't speak about it. With our app, boys, men, folks from LGBTQ+ communities, and others reported in depth due to having a safe, anonymous space on the platform. We focus on locations of violence instead of survivors and perpetrators. Victims found solace in sharing their stories and comfort, that they were not alone" - Director and COO, Red Dot Foundation, India

  These narratives show that boys and men are also key stakeholders in shaping public safety. A few interventions involved boys and young men in conducting and mobilising participants for safety audits or undertaking tasks that carry risks for women and transgender persons. By involving them in the evidence generation process, organisations develop a cadre of strategic allies or 'safety champions' who strengthen efforts to make public spaces safe for everyone.

  "This one time, the parshad got to know that there was an RTI filed against him by a young girl. It did not work out well. She didn't get a response. So in high-stakes, budget-related cases, involving boys can be very useful" - Programme Officer, HUMSAFAR, Uttar Pradesh

  Community-driven means of data generation amplify the realities of individuals whose perspectives are often overlooked by decision-makers. Interventions sought insights from adolescent girls in rural areas, muslim women in informal settlements, transpersons, and informal women workers. As data is collected in or crowdsourced from hyper-local settings, it spotlights the nuanced experiences of a specific group in relation to the built environment around them. This provides a clear picture of the role of demographic factors in influencing access to and use of public spaces.

  "Everyone's experience of accessing toilets is different. Girls stated that boys would wait for them when they wanted to use the washroom to harass them. Boys standing in line would point to young women in a burqa and say, 'The one holding the red bucket is yours; the blue one is mine.' A woman's day begins in this manner. Transgender persons did not have a space in the toilets."- Co-lead, Right to Pee Programme, CORO India, Maharashtra

The tools also enable girls, women and transpersons to exercise agency over decisions that affect their everyday mobility. Along with capturing diverse understandings of the conditions under which they feel safe/unsafe, the data collection approaches elicit community-defined priorities for improving public spaces. Thus, the idea of what is "safe" and how safety is constructed in the public space emerges from the community itself. Importantly, when the data generated is made available to the community, it allows them to create solutions and decide for themselves how best to navigate public spaces safely within existing constraints. Participants shared numerous powerful examples of communities (re)defining 'safety.'

"We visit courts, private workplaces such as corporates and call centres, and these peers go to all these places in their leadership journey, looking for certain parameters, auditing them, and preparing indicators on how to measure these spaces,whether they are safe for us or not. And if not, how can they be made safe?" - Programme Officer, GBV Prevention, The YP Foundation, Delhi

"In Bekavli, a girl was subjected to GBV in a packed jeep that takes them to school. Because of the incident, other girls stopped going to school. We collected these stories on our apps...when the girls saw the data, they found the solution to this problem themselves. They called a tapri (Jeep) at 8 AM, and all the girls would jump into this jeep together and go to school." - Director and COO, Red Dot Foundation, India

Community-driven data generation is not a one-time activity, rather organisations use it as a pathway to demand action. Data becomes an entry point for women and organisations to engage with authorities, raise concerns, and advocate for changes that make public spaces safer. This is discussed further in the section under **Societal Level** protective mechanisms of this chapter.

Table 6. Individual-level Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Stakeholders for Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Barriers	Facilitators
• Competing family and work responsibilities make mobilisation difficult • Digital divide and lack of technical know-how limits participation • Participation and response from community members are limited unless issues of civic amenities are perceived as relatable	• Presence of women or youth leaders in the community • Existence of active collectives and peer groups • Recognition of infrastructure and transport as shared civic concern

Table 6.1. Incremental Changes at the Individual-level that Indicate Shift Towards Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Identified Incremental Changes
• At-risk groups voice their opinions about issues beyond GBV such as education, infrastructure, transport, and civic amenities • At-risk groups take up safety audits to identify infrastructural gaps • At-risk groups question elected leaders on budgetary allocation and service spending

Community Level

Risks: Poor, unsafe, and exclusionary public infrastructure

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Facilitating Access to Safe and Functional Public Infrastructure

Organisations engage institutional stakeholders responsible for monitoring and maintaining public infrastructure to strengthen their ability to discharge their duties. These efforts address a crucial gap in governance where duty-bearers lack the required clarity, tools, or incentives to translate responsibility into infrastructural change. Besides ensuring the provision of quality, functional infrastructure, organisations know that the presence of infrastructure alone does not translate to equal access and usage. Access and use are contingent upon the social permission of individuals and institutions who yield power within communities. Thus, organisations engage gatekeepers, who decide who can use a space, when, and how, to disrupt gendered access to infrastructure.

- **Capacity Building of Institutional Stakeholders to Monitor and Maintain Public Infrastructure-** One intervention approach is to build the procedural knowledge of institutions to help them execute their duties. Through its Right to Pee campaign, CORO India works with community-based organisations (CBOs) that operate and look after public toilets. The CBOs often remain unaware of their contractual agreements with the local government and end up functioning informally, which leads to weak coordination and inadequate maintenance of toilets. By clarifying their roles and responsibilities, local governance structures, and accountability mechanisms, CORO helps CBOs strengthen the management and usability of public and community toilets.

  Similarly, interventions are designed to equip authorities with tools that help them to identify infrastructural gaps and take ownership of outcomes. This strategy includes building the capacity of different duty-bearers to conduct safety audits and utilise the resulting data for decision-making. In doing so, this process brings infrastructural shortfalls and associated safety risks to their attention, and thereby drives tangible improvements. In this regard, Akshara builds the capacity of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) in Mumbai's suburban railway stations to execute safety audits. Given the RPF is responsible for maintaining railway property, they are able to take action or escalate any concerns emerging from the audits with the relevant authorities. In rural settings, the Red Dot Foundation trains ASHA workers, panchayat members, and Block Development Officers, on using audit data and designing interventions to address safety related issues.

- **Securing Buy-in from Gatekeepers to Enable Equal Access to Public Parks and Playgrounds-** Organisations recognise the critical role of stakeholders who control access to material resources and exercise power within communities. These actors include not only formal duty-bearers but also gatekeepers and community key-persons, whose formal or informal authority determines access to public spaces. Discussions revealed that securing their buy-in is especially important for ensuring young girls' equal and long-term access to safe public spaces, particularly playgrounds. For instance, through regular interface meetings with school management, sports associations, MLAs, Resident Welfare Associations, and religious leaders, organisations such as Maitrayana Foundation and CEQUIN work to facilitate girls' sustained access to sports and playgrounds. Such sport-based interventions are not only crucial for reclaiming safe leisure spaces for young girls but are also instrumental in shifting the perspectives and rigid norms upheld by these gatekeepers themselves.

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Improving Natural Surveillance

Interventions seeking to enhance public safety focus on the premise that safety is produced by "natural proprietors of the street", a term coined by Jane Jacobs in her pioneering work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Here, the natural proprietors are individuals whose continuous presence in or familiarity with the public space can prompt natural monitoring and deter incidents of gender-based violence.

- **Engaging 'Eyes on the Street' to Deter Violence-** Interventions engage with a diverse set of individuals in their role as 'eyes on the street', including elderly men in the neighbourhood, street vendors and shopowners, men and women auto drivers and police personnel. However, the nature of engagement depends on the level of influence exercised by these actors.

  Police presence has a strong influence on perceived safety. As the mobility of women and transpersons might be constrained in spaces lacking oversight, police patrolling is seen as an effective form of social control to deter antisocial behaviour and increase safety. In view of this, frequent meetings are held with the police to advocate for patrolling at certain times and places where vulnerability is heightened.

  "We urge Pink police in Lucknow to go to the bylanes of neighbourhoods...Girls avoid going to those areas which are dominated by boys" - Programme Officer, HUMSAFAR, Uttar Pradesh

  At the same time, there is value in engaging with informal actors whose familiarity with the locality enables continuous, natural surveillance. This includes local residents, rickshaw drivers, hawkers, and shopowners. Their visible presence and routine activities help create a sense of normalcy that enables safe passage for women and transpersons. In addition, these actors possess tacit knowledge of local dynamics and can distinguish safer areas from those associated with heightened risk. Hence, interventions engage these stakeholders for the wealth of information they can provide and use it for local-level advocacy for safe spaces.

  "We have trained female e-rickshaw drivers as 'active bystanders.' But they also function as 'eyes on the street' and help identify which areas are safe and which are not. We also conduct bilateral meetings with local leaders to address these issues." - Programme Officer, HUMSAFAR, Uttar Pradesh

Table 7. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Community-level Stakeholders for Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Barriers	Facilitators
• Resistance against hearing concerns and solutions offered by at-risk groups • Institutional deprioritisation of gendered infrastructural concerns • Loss of contact with stakeholders affects follow-up on outcomes • High work pressure and competing responsibilities of the administrative staff and personnel • Budget constraints and bureaucratic delays and corruption	• Presence of gender-sensitive champions in decision-making positions • Openness of officials towards participatory monitoring and implementation of services • Adequate budgetary allocation and willingness for effective fund utilisation

Table 7.1. Incremental Changes at the Community-level that Indicate Shift Towards Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Identified Incremental Changes
• Public utilities and services are available, regularly cleaned and maintained • Officials regularly involve at-risk groups in monitoring of infrastructure • Responsiveness of officials towards infrastructural concerns from at-risk groups improves • Information about grievance and reporting is clearly available and visible **Examples from the Discussion** • In the village residents without smartphones submitted written complaints in a wooden box placed near a temple by the Sarpanch. The village Police Patil was equipped with a smartphone by Safecity/Red Dot Foundation and would digitise the drop-box information to map locations, timings, and types of safety concerns and coordinate solutions with the police.

Societal Level

Many of the strategies discussed above entail a direct engagement with at-risk groups and institutions, resulting in local-level outcomes. However, organisations recognise that for the gender-inclusive practices and learnings to have a wider and sustained impact, they must be linked to structural changes. To this end, organisations engage policymakers and public functionaries for policy-level action to shape gender-inclusive policies and design and enable greater mobility and participation of women, girls, and transqueer persons in public life.

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Protective Mechanism: Developing and Promoting Gender-Inclusive Standards and Practices for Public Spaces Planning and Design

- **Providing Advisory and Technical Support for Gender-Inclusive Planning and Design-** For organisations working in both urban and rural settings, advocacy serves as a key lever to push for gender-integrated planning and design. This includes embedding gender considerations into the design of public spaces and ensuring that budgeting and resource allocation reflect these priorities.

  When organisations demonstrate that their advocacy agenda supports or complements what institutions already aim to achieve, authorities are more likely to accept and adopt policies that are gender inclusive. In their engagements with urban local bodies and state departments, organisations back spatial planning that supports the participation of women and transpersons in the workforce. Framing economic participation as integral to a city's development agenda has helped align the issue of gender and public safety with existing planning priorities. For instance, Jagori and Akshara have recommended prioritisation of mixed land use and land reservations for services meant for women and transgender persons, including multipurpose housing which combines emergency shelter, care centres for children and senior citizens, skill building centres etc.

  Organisations also engage with institutions to embed safety features within transport and public services, thereby creating conditions that enable women and transqueer people to more confidently occupy public spaces and shift the responsibility of safety onto the urban governance system. Akshara and DURGA, for instance, have advocated for mechanisms that make reporting of gender-based violence more accessible. They have implemented measures such as 24/7 dedicated emergency helplines in collaboration with city

police and panic buttons in Bengaluru's public transport buses, respectively, allowing those at-risk and bystanders to immediately de-escalate the situation.

"The idea was that if you cannot speak up, you can at least press a button. During our piloting, whenever someone pressed the alarm, the bus would stop, people would gather, and the perpetrator would have to get off the bus. We then got panic buttons installed in 200 buses of Bangalore city. In 2018, the central government announced that every new bus must have a panic alarm. We played a role in getting that policy passed." - Founder, DURGA, Karnataka

- **Advocacy to Integrate Gender Concerns in the Local Development Agenda-** Interventions involve engaging with the panchayats and public works departments in rural settings. This is done to highlight the exclusionary and hostile environment for women as a result of male-centric infrastructure, which impedes their routine activities of farming and household chores. For instance, SWATI urges community leaders to attend Mahila Gram Sabhas to make gender-inclusive public spaces a priority within local governance. In such forums, leaders present issues relating to infrastructural gaps, safety and mobility, so that it can be pushed for inclusion in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

  Notably, community-generated data on infrastructural or service gaps, as well as the location of violence serves as a strategic lever to bring GBV related concerns to the attention of public authorities. It offers an important counter-narrative that highlights the systemic nature of GBV, making it harder for authorities to dismiss the prevalence of violence and helping bring the issue onto the agenda of gram panchayats for action. As the Secretary of Deep Jyoti Jharkhand Vikas Kendra explained,*"Women don't report the incident immediately , it might be teasing, stalking, or verbal abuse. By the time we hear about it, there's no proof. So we document patterns. If something keeps happening near a market or bus stop, we keep track and then approach authorities with data."*

  Safety audit and crowdsourced data help build evidence and make a strong case for demanding action towards safer public spaces. This holds immense significance in rural areas where tight-knit relations and social hierarchies within the community (gender, religion or caste-based) often seep into local governance and influence its functioning and decisions. For instance, SWATI observed that panchayat representatives in a village in Gujarat were reluctant to intervene in cases of domestic violence due to fear of community backlash, as the perpetrator of violence was an upper-caste man and a member of the panchayat. However, they were more responsive to GBV in public spaces, when the violence was positioned as a governance failure in ensuring safe infrastructure.

- **Network Building and Consultative Spaces to Push for Gender-i**nclusive Public Spaces- Organisations rely on networks and participate in formal consultation spaces to push women's safety in public spaces onto the government agenda. Networks help sustain advocacy over time and catalyse the momentum needed to build pressure by bringing together different groups, expertise, and voices. Consultative forums with public authorities provide a space where demands can be raised and converted into policy action.

  Inclusive demands emerge from cross-sectoral convergence to comprehensively address the many interconnected issues of gender and urban planning. To this effect, organisations collaborate with representatives from feminist collectives, CSOs, academic experts, and urban planners working on related themes. This helps position the issue of GBV in public spaces as a central concern requiring cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral solutions.

  "There are many layers to understanding public safety from a gender perspective. If we want to move forward on combating GBV in public spaces, it cannot be the domain of any single group; it has to be a collective effort."- Senior Project Officer, Jagori, Delhi

- **Creative Campaigns Linking Exclusionary Infrastructure and Risk of Violence-** Organisations adopt a confrontational yet creative approach to advocacy to publicise systemic neglect and effectively pressure authorities to make tangible improvements in public infrastructure. Campaigns combine satire and symbolic actions to overcome bureaucratic inertia and trigger government responsiveness. Planned collaboration or even organic coverage of the campaign by well-known media outlets plays a key role in amplifying the issue and demanding the attention of the duty-bearers. CORO India in Maharashtra has been very successful in combining the reach of the media with satirical campaigns to draw public attention to WASH infrastructure concerns. As the Co-lead for the Right to

Pee Programme (CORO) shared, *"Although the city had been declared open defecation-free, many toilets were broken, and the BMC was not giving us time to address the issue. Over nine days, we held a 'shok sabha' or mourning ritual for the non-functional toilets... then on World Toilet Day, we wished corporators and BMC officials by bombarding their offices with cards that said HAP-PEE DIWALI! along with photos of dirty toilets....in both cases the media reported our campaign and the officials paid heed to us."*

Table 8. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Societal-level Stakeholders for Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Barriers	Facilitators
• Opaque processes and few avenues for providing input • Vested interests of dominant class and caste groups • Lack of political will to invest in gender-inclusive infrastructure • Over-regulation of NGO sector and budgeting constraints preventing effective convening opportunities • Conflicting agenda among different conveners • Lack of gender affirmative perspective in media that prevents uptake of relevant issues	• Presence of 'champion' officials within departments • Inter-departmental initiatives and open processes where expert opinion is invited • Availability of existing compliance standards for inclusive infrastructure • Gender transformative budgeting • Numerically strong networks who have shared agenda and are well-resourced • Champions in the media who are interested in issues of infrastructure and gender

Table 8.1. Incremental Changes at the Societal-level that Indicate Shift Towards Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure and Transportation

Identified Incremental Changes
• Issues raised by at-risk groups are integrated into development plans • Compliance standards for gender are disability-inclusive and adopted in policy • Budgetary allocations are made at local, regional and national level for inclusive infrastructure • Large scale upgradation of safety features on existing public infrastructure • Increased visibility of public messages around intolerance for violence and information for seeking support • Increased availability of fully equipped GBV response service infrastructure including helplines, one stop centers, shelter homes, health and legal services • Networks regularly mobilise and collectively raise issues of infrastructure and gender inclusion and safety • Media groups and journalists initiate conversations with organisations and communities to feature relevant news/stories **Examples from the Discussion** • Akshara has played a key role in introducing a Gender Chapter in the Development Plan of Mumbai City (2014–2034). One of the key inclusions in this chapter was Multipurpose Housing for Working Women and a Care Centre for Children. Besides formulating the policy, the organisation, as an active member of the Gender Advisory Committee of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), is also overseeing its implementation. • DURGA worked for the installation of panic buttons in 200 buses in Bengaluru. In 2018, the central government announced that every new bus must have a panic alarm and DURGA was instrumental in advocating for this mandate. • CORO has been successful in advocating for a separate budget for gender-friendly public toilets in Mumbai. This was done under the Swachh Bharat Mission, reflecting advocacy for gender-responsive sanitation infrastructure.

Dimension 2:
Transforming Gender Norms

Gender-based violence is caused by a complex interplay of individual (demographic characteristics and attitudes), social (norms and networks), material (poverty, poor infrastructure), and structural (conflict, law) factors (Heise, 2011). However, what sustains GBV are social norms anchored in unequal power relations, patriarchy, hetero- and cis-normativity, which govern access to resources and opportunities. Since any transgression from these gender expectations and gender-appropriate behaviours is met with strong sanctions, social norms tend to be more persuasive and powerful drivers of GBV than individual, material or structural factors. In effect, they operate as a 'brake on social change' (Alexander-Scott et al., 2016). To then bring any effective change in the incidence of violence, it is critical to address these harmful norms.

Therefore, interventions target the social norms and structures that enable and compound the risk of violence in public spaces. They seek to reinforce new norms and behaviours that encourage autonomy and safety, using a variety of mediums like education and curriculum, public art, sports, and community dialogues.

Most interventions focused on social norms change are long-term, multi-component interventions operating at all levels of the SEM. At the individual level, many interventions focus on children and young adults, grounded in the understanding that experiences of gender discrimination and the internalisation of regressive norms begin early in life and become deeply ingrained during adolescence. As these norms shape formative years, it becomes critical to prevent such beliefs from taking root. At the same time, given the influential role of family, communities, and institutions in upholding and perpetuating these harmful norms, effective prevention requires bringing gatekeepers and decision-makers into the conversation.

Table 9. Overview of Protective Mechanisms, Stakeholders, and Activities Addressing Risks Posed by Harmful Gender Norms Across SEM Levels

SEM Level	Risks	Protective Mechanism	Stakeholders	Activities
Individual-Victimisation	• Young age (adolescent girls and young women) • Being transgender • Being from a Dalit community • Being Muslim (especially visibly Muslim women)	• Enabling at-risk groups to recognise their own autonomy and assert their agency in public life	• Girls • Women • Transgender persons	• Awareness-building and activity-based sessions to build individual agency • Creating opportunities to exercise leadership • Establishing a cadre of role-models within the community
Individual-Perpetration	• Hostile beliefs about women occupying public spaces • Internalised hypermasculinity • Internalised normalisation of violence by men	• Deconstructing heteropatriarchal ideologies that normalise violence, gender binary and hegemonic masculinity	• Boys • Men	• Building critical perspectives on equality, identity and consent • Creating conditions to explore positive masculinities
Relationship	• Enforcement of strict gender norms within the family • Use of violence within the family • Familial control over women's labour and economic independence	• Reducing familial control over mobility and sexual agency of girls and young women • Eliminating normalisation and use of interpersonal violence in the family	• Parents	• Dialogue and discussion with parents to enable mobility for young girls
Community	• Acceptance and trivialisation of violence by potential bystander	• Reducing community tolerance towards instances of GBV in public spaces • Shifting stereotypical gender norms held by educators and duty-bearers	• Neighbourhood (street vendors, market associations, shop owners, owners and staff of cafes and salons, sanitation workers, security guards, drivers) • Duty bearers within education, transport, healthcare system	• Bystander training with neighbourhood stakeholders and duty -bearers • Perspective-building sessions for educators and duty-bearers
Society	• Models of hegemonic masculinity • Cultural and political patriarchy • State schemes promoting gender stereotypes • Communalism and caste	• Reshaping discourses that promote violence and heteronormativity • Instituting policies and budgetary provision that promote gender-equality in education, sports	• Legislators • Media • CSO networks and intersectional pressure groups	• Making new norms visible in public spaces • Campaigns promoting positive masculinity and bystander action • Research and evidence building to create counter-narratives • Network building to catalyse the spread of positive gender norms • Promoting Gender-integrated education and gender-responsive policies

Individual-Level (Victimisation)

Risks: Young age (adolescent girls and young women), Being transgender, Being from a Dalit community, Being Muslim (especially visibly Muslim women)

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Enabling At-Risk Groups to Recognise their Own Autonomy and Assert their Agency in Public Life

Organisations see the cultivation of self-efficacy and autonomy as a key mechanism for challenging patriarchal norms and harmful practices. To enable girls, women and transgender persons to push against the expected boundaries, interventions create opportunities for them to reflect on their restrictive self-beliefs, thereby weakening existing norms.

- **Awareness-building and Activity-Based Sessions to Build Individual Agency-** Most organisations conduct these sessions with girls and young women within community settings or as after-school initiatives. The aim of these sessions is to enable the individual to build a sense of ownership over self, which is seen as a critical precursor to claiming space. Participants emphasised that it is through having a positive relationship with one's body, that an individual develops confidence to assert themselves. As the Senior Programme Manager, Enfold, Karnataka explained, *"Empowerment truly begins with the relationship we have with our own bodies. It's not just about public space, but about every space, you become much more confident with yourself and in your interactions with others."*

  Awareness sessions typically cover sexual and reproductive health, gender and sexuality, citizenship rights, consent, and boundaries. Together, these interventions engage with the patriarchal gender-scripts internalised by girls and young women, while equipping them with the skills to negotiate for their rights. Access to credible information broadens participants' worldviews and strengthens their ability to articulate their needs, assert preferences, and contest restrictive practices.

  "In the session on menstruation, we make them aware of the myths as well as the skills that are required to dispel them, like you can speak, you can find and bring pads yourself, you can negotiate. These are the skills we give them later when we talk to them." - Programme Associate, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

  A similar pathway of change unfolds through activity-based sessions, often taking the form of team sports or self-defence workshops. Performing physical activities, oftentimes in public spaces, positively reshapes how girls relate to themselves, to others, and to their surroundings. They feel physically capable, develop a sense of belonging as members of a team, and view access to the public space as a right. Over time, they begin to embody new values and assert their rights more confidently. The Programme Coordinator from Maitrayana Foundation, in Maharashtra which runs a sports initiative for young girls shared, *"When I started playing, the first thing that came was body autonomy. I used to feel very ashamed of my own body.... but as soon as the 10-month programme ends, girls are confidently picking up the ball, talking to their parents and questioning - when boys can play cricket there, then why can't I?"*

  A similar change in participants' confidence was observed by CEQUIN in Delhi as they implement the Kickstart Equality programme. The Manager-Communications, Partnerships and Sports shared, *"When a girl moves from her home to the playground, from the playground to the outskirts of her town, then to another city, and eventually to the national level, it is a powerful journey. Each step expands her world and her sense of possibility. Just imagine what that kind of exposure and movement can do for girls."*

  As girls and young women begin to view themselves as agentic individuals, it further builds their confidence to claim space in other familiar settings by speaking up in school, negotiating within the household, or asserting presence in the neighbourhood. These repeated experiences strengthen their confidence to occupy public spaces and assert their equal right to these spaces.

"I think it's really about our neighbourhoods. If I can't even step out freely in my own neighbourhood, then how will I be able to speak up on the bus, "Don't look at my body like that," or "Don't do this"? So speaking up independently in the neighbourhood, and making it clear that...the space belongs to girls just as much matters." - Programme Associate, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

- C**reating Opportunities to Exercise Leadership-** Active participation of young people and gender-marginalised groups in decision-making roles functions as a key driver of fostering individual and collective agency. When individuals and groups, who are sidelined or seen as passive recipients, represent issues, shape agendas and influence decisions that affect their lives, it produces a shift in voice and authority. Participants from The YP Foundation and Aravani Art Project shared that leadership needed to emerge from within the community itself to foreground previously invisibilised narratives. This leadership was built on their own terms and was an important step in achieving self-representation.

  "Previously, we were collaborating with many people on queer issues. However, the youth from trans and queer communities said, "It is we who can tell how public spaces are for us". They make change action projects in which they tell us how they want to engage and scale up their ideas." - Programme Officer, GBV Prevention, The YP Foundation, Delhi

  "We make murals on trans identity, core aspects like taali bajana. But our work was not just about the trans community, but the LGBTQIA community. Everyone should be included." - Lead Artist, Aravani Art Project, Karnataka

  Across contexts, organisations create structured avenues for girls, youth, and transqueer people to hone their organisational and decision-making skills. In sports-based interventions implemented by Maitrayana Foundation and CEQUIN, girls from local sports teams are nominated to become club leaders in their locality and manage their teams.

  "As club leaders, they coordinate club meetings, organise tournaments with multiple clubs, take decisions, decide which days the club will run, and when parents should attend the meetings." - Programme Coordinator, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

  On the other hand, in The YP Foundation's Loud and Queer and Campus Caravan programmes which engage transgender and queer persons, and youth in colleges respectively, the leadership roles are created to negotiate with institutions such as workplaces and colleges. Participants are trained to advocate with authorities and engage in policy processes. Programme Officer, GBV Prevention from The YP Foundation explained, *"We would explain [to the participants] how they would enter policies, how an anti-ragging policy should be, how POSH should look, and how any safety-related policy can be implemented."*

- **Establishing a Cadre of Role Models Within the Community-** Modelling positive behaviour is a frequent strategy employed by organisations working on gender norms. The interventions are conceptualised around the premise that role models emerging from within the community offer visible proof of the benefits of adopting more equitable norms. Relatable role models are therefore best positioned to influence others to challenge harmful norms and galvanise community acceptance for the change.

  "When programme alumni are noticed by their community for their work and command some social influence, they begin to act as a strong pull-in factor for younger boys in the community." - Senior MEL Associate, Equal Community Foundation, Maharashtra

  These role models are typically former programme participants who have undergone shifts in their own attitudes and behaviours, and who have also contributed to change within their communities by contesting rigid gender roles. After graduating from programmes, they come to be seen as community leaders. Organisations often formalise this role in two ways: by creating internal leadership opportunities for alumni or by enabling professional pathways. In the case of CEQUIN, Maitrayana Foundation, and Equal Community Foundation, alumni were either absorbed into the organisation as peer educators, or supported to obtain professional certifications, such as licensed sports coaching. The leaders' age, similar personal trajectory and social location as 'youth,' and their tacit understanding of the neighbourhood dynamics makes them relevant role models who can create meaningful opportunities for others in the community. The Programme Coordinator from Maitrayana Foundation shared her own transformative journey, *"We have been participants together [of the sports programme], our staff*

in Mumbai are alumni of the same programme. When we talk about creating change, we ensure we give the same opportunity to others. Now I am a city coordinator, running that programme with girls... but I started my career with Young People's Initiative in 2013. When I am standing in front of girls, and when I am talking to them, I see them going through the same situation. It makes me realise that, yes, I am working towards something." - Programme Coordinator, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

Such role models enable others in the community to imagine futures that extend beyond the constraints of their everyday lives and make alternate pathways seem attainable where they were previously unimaginable.

Individual-Level (Perpetration)

Risks: Young age (adolescent girls and young women), Being transgender, Being from a Dalit community, Being Muslim (especially visibly Muslim women)

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Deconstructing Heteropatriarchal Ideologies that Normalise Violence, Gender Binary and Hegemonic Masculinity

Organisations combine critical reflection with careful facilitation of discussions to encourage men and boys to question harmful norms and explore healthier forms of masculinity.

- **Building Critical Perspectives on Equality, Identity and Consent-** Organisations work with men and boys to challenge the prevalent heteropatriarchal narratives and build more gender-equitable values. These engagements are mostly anchored in community spaces and in schools and colleges. Peer-group discussions, structured module-based sessions and dialogues are some of commonly used modes to encourage critical reflection.

  Through these sessions, participants are encouraged to see how inequality is embedded in social, structural, and institutional arrangements. Discussions draw attention to how power operates in everyday life through our everyday practices such as gendered language, swear words and slang. Participants unpack and collectively question these practices that are often seen as normal or go unnoticed.

  "We talk about sex and gender, how gender as a system works" - Senior Project Coordinator, MAVA, Maharashtra

  "There is a generalisation about gaalis (gendered slangs). That they are nothing if you see them separately, but when you consider them all, it tells you the kind of view towards women that is contained within." - Founder, Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh

  Addressing the social construction of gender and sexuality also constitutes a key entry point for disrupting the binary understanding of identity. Interventions introduce diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, and enable participants to engage with flexible notions of masculinity. By expanding the capacity to empathise with diverse persons and their life experiences, such interventions break down unfounded assumptions and discriminatory norms that sustain GBV.

  "We run a programme called "Demystifying Sexuality," where we talk about sexuality, gender, consent, boundaries, self-esteem, and body image. These are all issues surrounded by a lot of mysticism and misconceptions about one's own body and the bodies of others"- Senior Programme Manager, Enfold, Karnataka

  Limited or inadequate knowledge around sexual and reproductive health reinforces and perpetuates hegemonic masculinity and violence. To address this, interventions build understanding of bodily processes, consent, and boundary-setting, and in some cases conduct pre-marital counselling. These efforts encourage men and boys to develop respect for their own bodies and those of others and pave the way for healthier interpersonal relationships.

  "Men think they know everything about their health, but in reality they know very little. And they know nothing at all

about women and girls' health" - Founder, Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh

"When they (men) understand (about our bodies), it becomes more empowering for us." - Senior Programme Manager, Enfold, Karnataka

- **Creating Conditions to Explore Positive Masculinities-** Challenges to dominant belief systems are bound to provoke resistance. Individuals may not be open to the new ideas and feel threatened by the change in the status quo. For instance, reflecting on their work with young men on campus-based violence, Programme Officer, GBV Prevention, from The YP Foundation shared that the young men got defensive during discussions on masculinity as they felt implicated in driving violence. She explained, *"When we worked with men on masculinity and talked about violence, they said that it is happening to us too...They always bring it up in a comparative way. We were only getting the response - Why are you only talking to us if this is a larger problem?"*

  This has implications for how interventions facilitate critical reflection. It signals the need to create conditions that enable people to confront widely held norms without the fear of judgment or sanctions. One approach to circumventing resistance is by enabling meaningful dialogues centred on human values and rights. Before addressing harmful practices and the structures that sustain them, interventions connect with participants' sense of right and wrong, build consensus on values that matter to them and that they consider inviolable. Speaking to universal human values of respect, dignity and fairness helps them see different social groups as deserving of the same.

  As reflected in the quote by the Founder of Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh, the values clarification exercise helps reflect on the ideas of male privileges and their role in the violation of these shared values. By first establishing respect and dignity as non-negotiable, discussions on patriarchy are then introduced to explain why these values are unevenly realised.

  "On the first day of the training, we spend time identifying our core values, the things in life on which we will not compromise. For example, we ask: what does a person need to live? Food, clothing, and shelter. If someone throws food at you or gives you only half a roti (bread), would you take it? No, you would not, because dignity is above food. Do you need dignity? Yes. Does a rich person need it? Yes. Does a poor person need it? Yes. Does a man need it? Yes. Does a woman need it? Yes. That is why 'Sukh, samman aur sab kuch poora-poora' (well-being, dignity, and the fulfillment in everything) is one of our activities. The idea of 'Sab kuch poora-poora' (fulfillment in everything) is linked to the principle of human rights. All rights are connected to one another, they are interdependent. For example, to realise the right to education, one must also have the freedom of mobility, right to freedom. If the right to freedom is taken away, we lose all other rights. After this, we move on to discuss gender discrimination and patriarchy." - Founder, Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh

  Interventions also pay attention to the group composition and how dynamics in the room shape receptivity towards the alternate norm. Organisations working with men and boys have mixed-gender sessions or single-group sessions, depending upon the needs of the group and the nature of engagement. When the objective is to address gender-based violence against women and transgender folks, most organisations facilitate a men-only group, which allows them to express their vulnerabilities and feel validated. At the same time, mixed-gender sessions are also convened to ensure men do not feel individually targeted and to create opportunities for dialogue across genders on sensitive issues.

Table 10. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Individual-Level Stakeholders for Transforming Gender Norms

	Barriers	Facilitators
Engagement with at-risk individuals and groups	• Not easy to bring onboard transgender and queer persons who have experienced violence at the hands of the community/state • Young women and girls are assigned competing family responsibilities that makes it difficult to collectivise them and sustain engagement • Shame and stigma around conversations related to body, sexuality, and violence discourages girls and young women from participating • Participants reside in low-resource settings where there is a lack of space and social environment conducive for education and learning • Over saturation of NGOs and tuition programmes within localities limits participant availability • Scrutiny and gatekeeping by families and communities due to sensitive topic of discussion prevents participation of girls and young women	• Presence of reflection spaces that allow members to share life experiences and centering care in this process. • Visibilising positive role models among peers who have graduated from the programme helps mobilise new participants • Sensitive and supportive family members facilitates mobilisation of participants • Presence of women, girls and transgender leaders in the community • Existence of active collectives and peer groups • Presence of active ASHA and Anganwadi workers in the community • Women and girls perceive the awareness meetings as an opportunity for public participation
Engagement with those at risk of perpetrating harm	• Discussions on gender-based violence can trigger feelings of blame and be perceived as criticism of their identities, affecting engagement • Continuous reinforcement of negative messages counteracts efforts made with young men and boys • Exposure to widespread misinformation and harmful media content increases resistance to change • Social identity differences can create friction and disrupt discussions on vulnerability to violence. • Misconception that discussing gender, sexuality will spoil the youth • Over saturation of NGOs and tuition programmes within localities limits participant availability • Perception that non-academic sessions is equal to deprioritising "education"	• Entry point to engagement with men and boys using issues relevant to them • Senior positive male role models influence boys to participate • Creative and participatory outreach methods • Homogeneous social groups facilitate discussions

Table 10.1. Incremental Changes at The Individual-Level that Indicate Transformation in Gender Norms

Identified Incremental Changes
• Role models negotiate, advocate for, and influence community for participation of young girls in public spaces • Girls communicate their preferences at home • Girls adopt rights-based framing in conversations at home and in the community • Shaping career aspirations of younger community members • Girls manage menstruation at home without stigma and defy myths **Examples from the Discussion** • Maitrayana Foundation shared that girls are increasingly recognising their right to play and participate in sports periods. They approach the school principal collectively when these PT lectures are denied. • Younger members of the transgender community are reaching out to Aravani Art Project through social media platforms to inquire about employment and participation opportunities.
• Men and boys to engage with programmes challenging traditional masculinity • Men and boys take up household and carework responsibilities without any prompting • Men and boys speak up when witnessing verbal or physical abuse at home or in the community • Demonstrate leadership in mobilising the community against GBV **Examples from the Discussion** • CEQUIN noted boys initiate conversations with mothers and sisters about menstruation, discussing the menstrual cycle and questioning the taboos and stigma surrounding it. This highlights the small but significant shifts in how boys become allies in breaking silence around issues that have long been treated as shameful.

Relationship-Level

Risks: Enforcement of strict gender norms within the family, Use of violence within the family, Familial control over women's labour and economic independence

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Reducing Familial Control Over Mobility and Sexual Agency of Girls and Young Women

To address familial restrictions, organisations actively intervene and engage with families in an attempt to shift their mindset, attitude, and behaviour. Organisations find it necessary to include parents, as the lack of parental support affects the extent to which girls can exercise agency and independent decision-making. When decision-makers within families continue to enforce harmful norms, new norms struggle to take root or persist over time.

- Dialogue and Discussion with Parents to Enable Mobility for Young Girls– Interventions engage with parents to increase openness to and long-term support for girls asserting more agency. As captured in this quote, by the Programme Coordinator from Maitrayana Foundation, parental support plays a key role in enabling girls' access to public spaces, *"Here in Mumbai, we have to talk to parents to access the grounds. In the last four months, we had to shut down the activities in a community because the boys there came and fought with the girls at their parents' house saying 'This is our ground, you cannot play here.'"*

Involving parents prevents them from feeling excluded from their daughters' personal growth journey. When parents are informed of the content and intent of the efforts organisations are putting in, it builds trust, and they are more likely to extend support at home.

"We conduct meetings with parents and make them aware of the topics we are discussing and what exactly we are saying so that if boys and girls want to talk about these topics like human rights, gender, gender equality, adolescent changes, menstruation, sexuality, or violence, or challenge an existing gender norm at home, they are given that space there as well."- Senior MEL Associate, Equal Community Foundation, Maharashtra

To facilitate this, organisations adopt various modes of engagement to interact with parents. Community meetings and module-based structured sessions jointly address parents on the role and impact of unequal gender norms, while door-to-door visits help organisations assess and better situate household-level gendered attitudes and practices, which helps with context-specific engagement.

Organisations like Vishakha also utilise intergenerational dialogue as an engagement strategy. Such spaces allow parents to move beyond their supportive role to actively and jointly address risks and protective measures: *"We facilitate intergenerational dialogue between girls and women, where they understand their issues regarding violence. They talk about it and discuss how they can help each other."* - Co-coordinator, GBV Prevention, Vishakha, Rajasthan

Reproductive health, specifically sessions on menstruation, are frequently used as an entry point for these conversations. Many interventions engage with parents on this topic, since parents believe that organisations are *"corrupting girls, our girls will run away"* by discussing these taboo topics. These misconceptions become a mechanism through which parents control girls' behaviour and choices. Thus interventions focus on building parents' understanding of bodily processes. Access to clear and credible information helps counter fears, and gradually shifts the expectations parents place on girls, especially around their mobility and participation in public spaces. Organisations, by working through families and household norms, translate relationship-level norm change into more sustained support for girls' presence in public spaces.

Table 11. Barriers and Facilitators To Working With Relationship-Level Stakeholders For Transforming Gender Norms

Barriers	Facilitators
• Shame and stigma around discussing gender and sexuality in the presence of children • Families governed by dominant notions of honour, resist engaging on gender equality • Conservative families with "high" social standing resist engaging • Families where men are decisions-makers resist and prevent others members from engaging	• Using multi-media tools that engage with issues of gender spark discussion • Persistently and regularly engaging with families despite the resistance • Creating opportunities to celebrate the achievements of their children and community youth • Mothers and female role models in the homes are more inclined to engage with these discussion

Table 11.1. Incremental Changes At The Relationship-Level That Indicate Transformation In Gender Norms

Identified Incremental Changes
• Parents mobilise resources/opportunities for girls/young women participating in sports **Examples from the Discussion** • Maitrayana Foundation observed parents are increasingly inclined to offer their homes or community spaces for meetings and are willing to assist NGOs when needed, indicating growing trust and acceptance of the intervention.

Community-Level

Risks: Acceptance and trivialisation of violence by potential bystanders

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Reducing Community Tolerance Towards Instances of GBV in Public Spaces

This protection aims to shift the norms held by the immediate neighbourhood and community that trivialise and normalise experiences of GBV by ignoring incidences of violence. It engages with those stakeholders that are in close and continuous proximity of public spaces.

- **Bystander Training with Neighbourhood Stakeholders and Duty-Bearers-** Bystander action is included as a key component of responding to and de-escalating violence in public spaces. Most interventions target community members and duty-bearers who have sustained presence in public spaces - such as street vendors, shop owners, sanitation workers and transport personnel (like bus conductors and drivers, rickshaw drivers and railway staff). Some also engage NSS volunteers to train them to be safe responders within the campus and community, given their expansive reach among young people.

  A core component of bystander training across interventions is to provide an impetus for active bystander action. In the absence of appropriate resources, the training becomes a one-time awareness-building activity. Organisations adopt different tactics to ensure that individuals feel encouraged and adequately supported to directly intervene in incidents of GBV. For instance, securing buy-in from the institutions where bystanders work or are associated with is crucial to building a supportive environment and making bystander action a normal and expected behaviour. DURGA and Akshara conduct several meetings with shop owners' local associations or administrative bodies that employ sanitation workers and transport personnel to establish the need for the training, secure permissions for engaging with the staff on-ground and integrate it at an institutional level. Endorsement from higher authorities is a strong factor in facilitating the successful rollout and uptake of bystander interventions. As the Founder of DURGA explained, *"If we work with municipal sanitation workers, then the mobilisation work mainly involves talking to ward leaders, municipal depot heads, etc. Through them, we get the opportunity to engage with the women from one ward 2–3 times a week. We fix timings with them..Sessions are part of their paid work time...they decide who will cover their other duties at that time so they can attend our sessions"*

  Interventions include messaging that promotes incremental actions, emphasising that even the smallest of "non-threatening" acts can reduce the risk of or avert violence, or make the intervention tactic seem doable to encourage the prosocial behaviour. Akshara frames bystander intervention as an extension of the bus conductors' existing duties, so that it seems practical. The Programme Lead for Safe and Inclusive City at Akshara shared how they encouraged actions from bus conductors, *"We also told them about intervention tactics - if the bus is empty, and there isn't much*

crowding, still someone goes and stands next to the woman, so they can intervene and tell them - come sit here. Also, bus conductors have been told to take the bus directly to the police station during fights, arguments, thefts, severe forms of GBV...So the mandates were already there, but we urged them to add sexual harassment, which was important."

Some try to reinforce bystander action through written guides or experiential pedagogy. By outlining or enacting different bystander strategies and clarifying the conditions under which each should be used. These tools and techniques provide a clear structure for action and build confidence to respond.

"How many types of incidents they can handle themselves, which ones they can handle with someone else's help, and when they should call the police or emergency service." - Founder, DURGA, Karnataka

Few interventions incentivise bystander action through symbolic recognition (such as certificates or medals) or tangible support and direct benefits to those undertaking bystander roles. DURGA, for instance, has sought to reduce the everyday vulnerability of street vendors to the misuse of power by law enforcement by institutionalising support for them. The DURGA Founder shared, *"The local Traffic police.. they tend to display their authority and take things from the vendors for free. So we sensitise the traffic police to be understanding and urge them to assist the vendors whenever they need help, as their uniform carries power and responsibility. Similarly, we have obtained written permission from the Bangalore Commissioner's office allowing us to work with the Law and Order police as well, so that they too can support these people."*

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Shifting Stereotypical Gender Norms Held by Educators and Duty-Bearers

Duty-bearers such as teachers, transport personnel, healthcare providers, and local government officials shape how individuals experience institutions and services. Organisations therefore conduct perspective-building sessions to challenge entrenched gender biases and encourage more sensitive responses to GBV.

- **Perspective-Building Sessions for Educators and Duty-Bearers-** Building the perspective of duty-bearers is essential for shifting gender norms and reducing structural inequality. As authority figures, duty-bearers play a critical role in mediating people's interaction with systems. Their beliefs and knowledge systems directly shape how services are delivered and experienced. However, rather than being neutral actors, they reflect the harmful biases prevalent in society. These deeply internalised norms influence their daily work, resulting in a hostile or exclusionary environment for the individuals and communities they engage with.

  "It was necessary to work with teachers, because they consider themselves 'greater even than God.' 'गुरु गोविंद दोऊ खड़े, काके लागूं पाय। बलिहारी गुरु आपने, गोविंद दियो बताय॥' This means that if both the teacher (guru) and God (Govind) are present together, one should bow to the teacher first, because it is the teacher who shows the path to God. They believe that they cannot be questioned. In their teaching style, patriarchy, abusive language, and caste discrimination were clearly visible."- Founder, Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh

  "Many health care providers are not aware of the nuances of issues that intersex individuals face, how will they provide psychosocial care?" - Senior Programme Manager, Enfold, Karnataka

  "Earlier, bus conductors did not know that there are layers of sexual harassment and violence. They had an understanding that they would intervene (in cases of harassment) if help is explicitly sought" - Programme Lead, Safe and Inclusive City, Akshara, Maharashtra

  As these narratives show, interventions must frequently work with teachers in schools and colleges, transport personnel, healthcare providers and functionaries within urban local bodies to shift their perceptions on gender, discrimination, and violence. Through capacity-building efforts, the interventions make visible biases embedded in institutional practices, and encourage reflection on how it affects their work. These discussions are facilitated by addressing gender differences in access to resources, broadening understanding of degrees and forms of violence, and

introducing diversity in gender identities and sexual orientation. In this way, organisations enable duty-bearers to adopt more gender-sensitive and inclusive practices.

"They (school teachers) should understand the difference between equality and equity. We talk about how achieving equality means sending girls to study, but the girls have to work so hard for that, and no one thinks about - that is equity" - Programme Associate, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

"They [BMC officials] are taught that toilets aren't for males or females, but for everyone. Should be an inclusive toilet since it is used by men, women, trans, children, old individuals, and everyone. And hence the toilet should also be designed that way." - Co-lead, Right to Pee Programme, CORO India, Maharashtra

Table 12. Barriers And Facilitators to Working with Community-Level Stakeholders for Transforming Gender Norms

	Barriers	Facilitators
Bystanders	• Disinterest and/or fear of "getting involved" in GBV incidents • Loss of contact with trained bystanders	• Endorsement from higher authorities within the institutions facilitates successful roll-out and implementation of bystander intervention
Educators and Duty-Bearers	• Educational institutions deprioritise gender concerns and fear parental backlash • Educators unwilling or hesitant to engage during class hours due to syllabus load, heavy workload and stress, and unwilling to dedicate time post class • Harmful political and religious narratives thought to students limit open discussion on gender • Shortage of trained staff and infrastructure (including lack of PE teachers, resources, and physical spaces) make sustained engagement difficult • Institutional deprioritisation of GBV as a concern and duty-bearers lack understanding of intersectional vulnerabilities • Duty-bearers avoid or reject additional responsibilities and work hindering engagement • Bureaucracy, opacity, and corruption	• Onboarding institutions as collaborators and using co-creation processes to jointly develop curriculum and syllabi • Offering institutions technical support and benefits like increased visibility and recognition increases their willingness to collaborate • Presence of gender-sensitive educators committed to holistic student development. • Availability of publicly accessible data on school audits and budgets • Presence of proactive, gender-sensitive leadership within institutions • Capacity-building efforts that bridge the policy intention to service-delivery practices

Table 12.1. Incremental Changes at the Community-level that Indicate Transformation in Gender Norms

Identified Incremental Changes
Among Bystanders • Bystanders actively monitor, identify and report safety concerns in public spaces • Bystanders intervene to deescalate incidences of violence and assist survivors in reporting **Examples from the Discussion** • Several organisations reported that following trainings and sustained engagement, bystanders are more willing to involve duty-bearers and civil society organisations when incidents of violence occur in public spaces.
At Institutions • Institutionalisation of GBV prevention efforts within the public and private institutions • Increased logistical/operational support for GBV based intervention in school spaces **Examples from the Discussion** • The training module developed by Akshara has been adopted by BEST as part of its official training programme and has been used for over a decade.

Societal level

Risks: Hypermasculine messaging, Political and socio-cultural sanction for violence, Unequal power dynamics within institutions

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Reshaping Discourses that Promote Violence and Heteronormativity

For alternate narratives promoting equal norms to take root, there is a need for shared language and broader social acceptance. Organisations use strategic communication tactics to disrupt deeply entrenched societal norms and amplify the reach of new norms to more people.

- **Making New Norms Visible in Public Spaces-** Interventions create opportunities that deliberately bring the new, transgressive norm into the public realm, with the intention of drawing people's attention. When certain groups of people or discourses are not seen as belonging in the public space, then the act of visibility itself disrupts the rigid societal expectations. Many organisations base their interventions on this principle by engaging young girls and women in male-dominated sports, or when transgender artists paint murals in male-dominated spaces.

The public nature of these actions creates a bridge between new norms and the dominant social groups that uphold harmful ones. It allows people to see and engage with alternative ways of thinking and behaving. By making these new norms visible, interventions can reduce resistance and gradually increase familiarity and acceptance.

"The founder of Aravani wanted her friends to also learn more about our community and was wondering how to initiate conversations. It was through mural art that they shared their preferences, like which colours they liked and similar topics." - Lead Artist, Aravani Art Project, Karnataka

"We felt that if we spoke about SRHR only behind closed doors, people might assume we were hiding something or teaching something inappropriate. So we organised a 10-day campaign where we spoke openly about our mission. We clearly said that we were talking about the body, about choice, and about rights. We received negative and positive feedback from people. But after the campaign, many people came out in support of us, saying that no one really talks for women, no one talks about issues related to their bodies."- Co-coordinator, GBV Prevention, Vishakha, Rajasthan

When women, girls and transgender persons participate in activities in public, it allows them to demonstrate their skills and leadership before a wide audience. As their act or journey becomes highly visible, the larger society bears witness to their growth and expertise. This facilitates a gradual, yet fundamental shift in how society perceives them and their capabilities. Thus, as they take part in non-traditional activities, it shatters the conventional belief that associates women and girls with domestic duties or reduces transgender persons to stigmatised livelihoods.

"What does girls playing sports, particularly a team sport, do for the community? How does perception change in the community? When girls begin playing team sports like football, it gradually changes how the community sees them and their place in public spaces. In areas like Jamia Nagar in Delhi, often labelled conservative, seeing girls in hijab playing football in their gear in public grounds, shifts mindsets. It builds a sense of acceptability and pride, and challenges stereotypes about what girls, particularly Muslim girls, can or cannot do." - Manager-Communications, Partnerships and Sports, CEQUIN, Delhi

"Neighbours and boys taunt girls or laugh behind their backs and complain to their parents [about girls playing sports]. But it is important to keep engaging them, inviting them to spaces where young girls are being felicitated, getting stages to speak, to "set examples." - Programme Associate, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

"When we go to a public place to paint a wall, people look at us skeptically, asking why we are there and what we are going to do. But as we start painting, a metro station wall or a government building, they want to know our names and take selfies with us. These small changes are significant...the perspective has changed. They no longer think we only do sex work or wedding work. No. They think we are capable of doing other skill-based work." - Lead Artist, Aravani Art Project, Karnataka

- **Campaigns Promoting Positive Masculinity and Bystander Action-** Introducing an alternate norm to the wider society can entail pushback as it confronts the status quo. Strategic communication campaigns are developed to minimise resistance, break gender stereotypes and celebrate positive masculinities.

  Interventions leverage the potential of persuasive messaging by influential figures who are relevant to the target audience. They tap into the power of role models, such as celebrities and duty-bearers who command visible authority and are relevant to the community. This persuades people to adopt new norms and condemn harmful ones. The medium of mass media (radio, television), visual messaging through hoardings, and interface meetings between the role model and the community are useful tools that facilitate this change process. Besides traditional role models and communication platforms, the role of digital influencers holds significance in the present times. Through creative messaging, they are able to connect with and have direct engagement with a much larger target audience. The Manager- Communications, Partnerships and Sports from CEQUIN described their work with the police to familiarise the community with them, *"We invited the police to regularly engage with our programmes, and over time they began coming every month to interact with the community. I remember one officer saying how much he loved seeing girls play football in the neighbourhood. That kind of engagement helps build trust and signals to the community that institutions support girls' presence in public spaces."*

  Similarly, CEQUIN was successful in leveraging the power of the media to start breaking gender stereotypes through the very successful Mardo Wali Baat campaign. She further explained, *"Mardon Wali Baat initiative began as a public campaign engaging men and boys. When we first launched the campaign, we partnered with the Delhi Daredevils and had cricketer Virender Sehwag as part of the messaging. Hoardings across the city featured men speaking to other men, with a simple message: if you want to wear the Daredevils jersey, respect women, or else take it off. More recently, we have also experimented with new approaches, including working with male micro-influencers to run masculinity campaigns focused on preventing gender-based violence."*

  Participants were cognisant of moral messaging that may be received as preachy, confrontational or might end up having counterproductive effects, and therefore some interventions adopt subtle messaging to shift gender roles and masculinities. Through light-hearted role-play and

sensitively crafted media campaigns, interventions create opportunities to introduce the alternate norm and allow the audience to engage with it meaningfully.

"We hold community-based sessions on gender equality with the message 'housework is everyone's work.' We have everyone make chapatis, wear sarees, make dough, peel garlic, thread a needle, whoever completed these tasks first would win. The impact was that the youth realised that mothers do a lot of work and fathers should also share responsibility equally." - Co-lead, Right to Pee Programme, CORO India, Maharashtra

"In the 'Jagah Dikhao' campaign, we made a conscious effort to not confront the perpetrator; instead we show them their place subtly. We want men and boys to change; we want them to reflect on what they are doing. We need to see the vulnerabilities of the boys and men too...what caste, religion they belong to." - Programme Lead, Safe and Inclusive City, Akshara, Maharashtra

- **Research and Evidence Building to Create Counter-Narratives-** Organisations use research and evidence building to expose and challenge dominant institutional and political discourses and produce alternative ways of understanding gender-based violence and response. Evidence functions both as a tool for building a counter-narrative and as a medium to influence policies and institutional priorities.

  "In the entire syllabus of the IPS studies one is taught to abuse as part of their training. So in 2009, we got a chance to work with the DGP in UP. We wrote a lot of papers for police reforms." - Founder, Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh

  "In 2005, we published one of the earliest documentation of women in armed conflict situations in north-east India from a feminist lens. We spoke about public space where women's bodies have been battlefields and where sexual violence is used as a tool to assert identities and also to instill fear and threat in a community which is protesting. It became one of the pioneering studies and left the doors open for people to think, rethink and make suggestions about women in conflict." - Executive Director, NEN, Assam

  In the case of CEQUIN, the organisation leveraged evidence generation to (re)shape the policy agenda and prompt a state-level response. The research findings were strategically used in legislative spaces, and the issue of GBV in public spaces gained political salience, compelling the Delhi government to respond through a public campaign. The Manager- Communication, Partnerships and Sports explained, *"Our 2009 study, Perception and Experience of Gendered Violations in Public Places of Delhi', was presented across multiple forums and revealed a striking finding - 98% of women in Delhi reported experiencing gender-based violence in public spaces. The evidence sparked wider conversations and was even cited during a Parliament session that year, where policymakers and ministers were questioned on the issue. It also contributed to the Delhi government launching the Awaaz Uthao [Raise Your Voice] campaign to address gender based violence against women in public spaces."*

- **Network Building to Catalyse the Spread of Positive Gender Norms-** Although organisations intend to shift norms among the larger population, they may not have the required capacities to undertake the work independently and sustainably. Therefore, to scale the implementation and impact of their interventions, organisations build networks of allies composed of community-based organisations, feminist collectives, non-profits, student bodies, etc. By tapping into their local presence, existing relationships and contextual knowledge, organisations can easily reach more geographies and communities.

  "We engaged with NSS as a body that engages with a lot of young people. We worked on implementing a module of masculinity through them." - Programme Officer, GBV Prevention, The YP Foundation, Delhi

  "We wanted to implement our programme in the whole of Uttar Pradesh. So we formed a group, M-A-S-V-A-W, Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women. This is our network in 36 districts." - Founder, Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh

  A crucial part of this approach is to make it conducive for the networks to sustain in the long-term. Hence, organisations seek to build the technical capacity and strengthen the financial resources of select network members. This allows them to share the new understandings and practices systematically for the long-term.

  "To expand the Kickstart Equality model, we are developing state-based clusters and rolling out training-of-trainers (TOT) programmes with local partners. CEQUIN does not believe in setting up offices everywhere; many grassroots organisations are already doing strong work in their communities. Our approach is to strengthen and support these organisations, through capacity building and joint fundraising, so that together we can replicate a holistic model that engages girls through sports, builds allyship with boys, and fosters collective leadership among local women to address gender-based violence." - Manager-Communications, Partnerships and Sports, CEQUIN, Delhi

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Instituting Policies and Budgetary Provision that Promote Gender Equality in Education, Sports

Since gender-based discrimination and violence are rooted in power structures, sustained change requires long-term engagement with institutions that shape these dynamics. Organisations thus engage with the sports and education systems to bring about a change in their functioning. However, as policymakers and office bearers often resist policies that defy the status quo, organisations rely on collective action as a mechanism to push for change.

- **Promoting Gender-Integrated Education and Gender-Responsive Policies-** Organisations work within and alongside institutions to shift institutional priorities in ways that advance gender equality and address GBV. Most organisations focus on the education system as a lever to shift existing gender expectations. In particular, they aim to change the way that schooling is organised and learning takes place, as well as the broader culture of the education institutions. Through gender-inclusive curriculum and policies, interventions attempt to eliminate gender stereotypes, break down gender binaries, promote healthy relationships, and counter the culture of violence in campuses. To enable this, organisations engage with the stakeholders at the local, district and state levels, including the administrative staff within public and private educational institutions, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and University Grants Commission (UGC) and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

  "Then we started working with the Education Department of Karnataka on the integration of gender, sexuality, and personal safety into curricula. We also worked with the Education department of Telangana on integrating messages on self-esteem, positive body image, personal safety rules and guide; and POCSO into their textbooks. Now we are working with more state governments to do the same."- Senior Programme Manager, Enfold, Karnataka

  "The BSA of Gorakhpur is responsible for Nipun Abhiyan until the 8th grade in the entire district. Nipun means that they have indicators against which they assess and document the progress of students. So, we examined the indicators of Nipun Abhiyan from a gender lens and proposed to reverse the gender roles. Previously, if someone had to sing a welcome song, then it would be assigned to the girls. Now the so-called sports of girls were also being played by the boys." - Founder, Gaali Band Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh

  "We are planning a multi-stakeholder symposium based on this model. We will not call it merely a recommendation, but a declaration. We will invite students from Rajasthan in Jaipur. We will try to push all the recommendations on a higher education level." - Programme Officer, GBV Prevention, The YP Foundation, Delhi

  CEQUIN's work also illustrates this approach. The organisation holds sports associations and federations accountable for gender-inclusive planning and budgeting. They also provide technical inputs to politicians and legislators to advance norm-transformative interventions and budgets. The Manager- Communications, Partnerships and Sports shared, *"One of our co-founders, Sara Abdullah Pilot, served as the chairperson of the women's committee in the All India Football Federation. It was a long journey to reach that space and begin asking critical questions - how much investment goes into women's football compared to men's, how many leagues are organised for women, and how active are institutional mechanisms like POSH committees? Alongside this, in 2024 we have also worked to build a bipartisan network of women politicians and parliamentarians across party lines to support mentorship for women in political leadership and collective action on gender-based violence."*

  To negotiate with institutions for the adoption of gender-integrated education and gender-responsive policies, organisations build networks and coalitions with like-minded groups. These networks often include feminist collectives, civil society organisations, and existing community groups. Through collective action, they are able to build pressure and influence national-level institutions and government bodies more effectively.

  "Advocacy becomes far more powerful when organisations come together and engage systems collectively. A good example of this is the National Alliance for Women's Football, a network initiated and anchored by CEQUIN. Through sustained collaboration and advocacy, the alliance played an important role in pushing for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup to be hosted in India in 2022. For us, it showed how coordinated action across organisations can influence national-level platforms and create greater visibility and opportunities for girls in sport."- Manager- Communications, Partnerships and Sports, CEQUIN, Delhi

Alongside coalitions, some organisations strategically depend on influential formal actors as conduits to make the case stronger for the new norms and policies. Rapport and relationship building with the actors is a core component of this process. When such stakeholders publicly endorse positive gender norms, it helps spread and normalise the new behaviour. But more importantly, their active involvement in championing change provides critical momentum. Tangible outcomes may become visible over time.

"We brought together influential stakeholders within the AHA (Adolescent Health Academy), IAP (Indian Academy of Paediatrics), FOGSI (Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India), IAPSM (Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine), IPHA (Indian Public Health Association) to follow up on their joint statement calling for comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents. We also proposed developing a capacity-building course on child sexual development for medical professionals. Along with caregivers, healthcare providers are often among the first adults to interact with children, yet this topic is not routinely covered in medical curricula. Strengthening their capacity in this area would enable them to better guide parents and support early conversations on healthy development, sexuality, and personal safety." - Senior Programme Manager, Enfold, Karnataka

"After receiving recognition for the painting we did for the Election Commission, the state government recommended our work to a CSR who approached us to paint 10-15 schools in Bangalore."- Lead Artist, Aravani Art Collective, Karnataka

Table 13. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Societal-Level Stakeholders for Transforming Gender Norms

Barriers	Facilitators
• -Lack awareness or sensitisation towards GBV • Perpetuate discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, religion • Corruption and red tapism • Removed from ground needs and realities	• Staff is more receptive and respectful of transgender persons if their work is endorsed or recommended by the State • Presence of 'champion' officials within departments and institutions

Table 13.1. Incremental Changes at the Societal-Level that Indicate Transformation in Gender Norms

Identified Incremental Changes
• Community members offer vocal support to girls or transqueer people occupying the public space for sports/art • Policymakers engage with and support NGOs working to address GBV **Examples from the Discussion** • Aravani Art Project shared that while people initially assumed the group had gathered in public spaces to create disruption, their views changed as they watched the mural take shape. By the end, passersby often expressed admiration and curiosity, asking when the artists had started painting • CEQUIN noted that in 2018 the organisation partnered with the Delhi government, the Delhi Soccer Association, and a private football club to organise the first Delhi U-13 School Girls League, with over 400 girls from government and private schools participating.

Dimension 3:
Promoting Public Participation through Livelihood

Feminist organisations working on economic empowerment engage with the issue of GBV in public spaces as a necessary condition for increasing girls, women and transgender persons' participation in 'public life.' This approach addresses the assumption that public spaces become safer for everyone when girls, women, and transgender persons actively occupy these spaces by virtue of participating in the workforce. At its core, economic empowerment intends to enhance access to and ownership of assets and resources. It seeks to promote sustained public participation through informed and independent decision-making. To this end, organisations focus their efforts on establishing pathways to safe jobs and secure livelihoods to ensure girls, women, and transgender persons can not only enter work but sustain their workforce participation.

Achieving these goals of economic empowerment presupposes that the *right to work* is universally recognised and exercised in households and within communities. Yet, feminist organisations know this assumption rarely holds true. The *right to work* is not universally guaranteed, rather it is gendered, conditional, negotiated and exercised. Holistic and lasting economic empowerment addresses multiple risk factors that violate their right to work. Therefore, feminist interventions move beyond merely building skills and expanding work opportunities to bolstering workers' safety, mobility, social security buffers and freedom from violence at work.

The risks addressed under this approach operate at various levels of the SEM, determining who enters the workforce, their experiences at work, and exposing the gendered challenges of sustaining the work. Building on the risks identified earlier, this chapter examines the protective mechanisms related to work and livelihoods that organisations strengthen through targeted grassroots interventions, as well as the incremental changes resulting from these efforts.

Table 14. Overview of Protective Mechanisms, Stakeholders, and Activities Addressing Risks Related to Work/Livelihood Across SEM Levels

SEM Level	Risks	Protective Mechanisms	Stakeholders	Activities
Individual-Victimisation	• Young age (adolescent girls and young women) • Identity as an informal-sector worker • Identity as a migrant worker • Experiencing homelessness • Being transgender • Being from a Dalit community	• Facilitating access of at-risk groups to work and livelihoods opportunities	• Girls • Women • Transgender persons	• Needs assessment, soft skills trainings, one-time, • job readiness sessions, • job orientation sessions • Supporting placements and linkage to recruitment agencies • Linking to (up)skilling opportunities
		• Strengthening worker-solidarity and grassroots leadership to negotiate for rights and demand accountability • Establishing peer-support systems to address violence and welfare concerns	• Girls • Women • Transgender persons	• Building grassroots collectives • Leadership trainings • Collective action and pressure building to negotiate workplace rights • Establishing peer-support centres for survivors of workplace violence • Establishing community resource centres to aid access to schemes and entitlements
Relationship	• Familial control over women's labour and economic independence	• Shifting family attitudes to support women's and girls' work and economic independence	• Family (includes parents and siblings)	• Structured meetings and one-on-one dialogue with parents and siblings on career pathways for young women
Community	• Exclusionary working conditions and workplace policy	• Enhancing accountability of employers/ administrators to uphold workers rights and safety	• Employers (Public and Private employers, Recruitment agencies, Business owners) • Institutions (Schools, educational institutions) • Public Administrators (MGNREGA in-charges, supervisors, Panchayat Officials)	• Dialogues with employers and public administrators in-charge of workplaces • Safety audits of workplaces and technical support to employers • Meetings with local establishments to sensitise and advocate for inclusion of transgender people

SEM Level	Risks	Protective Mechanisms	Stakeholders	Activities
Society	• Political economy of precarity and migration	• Strengthening and widening the coverage of citizenship entitlements and social security	• Ministries and Departments implementing entitlements and social security schemes • CSO networks and intersectional pressure groups	• Advocate for laws and policies that guarantee the basic rights • Networking, convening and campaigning for better social protections • Advocate for simplifying the processes to make schemes more accessible to all marginalised populations

Individual level

Risks: Young age (adolescent girls and young women), Identity as an informal-sector worker, Identity as a migrant worker, Experiencing homelessness, Being transgender, Being from a Dalit community

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Protective Mechanism: Facilitating Access of At-Risk Groups to Work and Livelihoods Opportunities

For new workforce aspirants, especially girls and transgender persons, strict gender norms and restriction on education and mobility means they lack exposure to emerging work and career opportunities. In low-resource communities especially, skilling initiatives and pathways to work opportunities rarely reach its girls. As a result, many are unable to enter the labour market due to lack of information, networks, or technical knowledge, rather than a lack of interest or ability.

- **Orientation Sessions, Soft Skills Programmes and Supporting Placements-** To address these practical gaps, organisations implement a combination of grassroots activities where they hold one-time orientation sessions, soft skills programmes and supporting placements. The Economic Justice Programme (EJP), spearheaded by Maitrayana Foundation is a good example. The EJP Programme works in urban poor localities to provide orientation sessions to young girls from marginalised communities. The interventions cater to the needs and interests of the girls, to maximise uptake of available job opportunities. Young girls are given information about existing job opportunities to build their confidence to apply, and familiarise them with workplace expectations and job roles.

"For example, we have some organisations that organise events. And girls are interested in event organising; they want to volunteer. So for that, we call the person from that organisation to our main office so that they can orient the girls. And then, from among them, the girls who are interested give their names or register themselves for it." - Economic Justice Programme Associate, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

The highlight of this intervention is that it is a multi-step, longer engagement, which starts with a needs assessment and orientation and then links the girls to recruiters and employers. Young girls are provided guidance, training, and industry exposure through internships which often leads to employment.

"When we do an intervention with girls, we first conduct a needs assessment. After that, we try to understand the girls' interests. We have a form through which we find out which sector the girls are interested in for jobs. We conduct goal-setting sessions with the participants and through these sessions, we understand their skills and identify the type of job suitable for them. However, this becomes clear only after the completion of the 7-day session. Apart from that, after our 7-day or 8-day job-readiness session, we again try to understand which sector they want to go into. After that, we connect them with the employers we have

[within our network]. For example, if there are vacancies in malls, or HR vacancies, or if there are openings at the airport, or opportunities in hotel management, in this way we have many kinds of opportunities. Then after that, we prepare the girls according to their resumes, and then we connect them with the employers." - Economic Justice Programme Associate, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

Programmes focused on economic empowerment are often critical resource bearers within the community. They bring with them a plethora of connections to potential employers and the ability to negotiate on behalf of the aspirants. Organisations like ANANDI, SMS, Sangini too mentioned that orientation and placement processes were critical points of engagement with the girls and young women in the community.

- **Linkages to Skilling and Upskilling Opportunities-** Orientation to jobs and job placements is closely linked to connecting women and girls to skilling and upskilling opportunities. The goal for establishing these interventions is to offer both, new entrants and existing workers the opportunity for continuous growth and improve their employability. Ensuring consistent access to skilling and upskilling opportunities ensures workers do not drop out of the labour force due to the changing nature of work or changing demands of the labour market.

  To ensure sustainability and durability of this activity, these connections to (up)skilling opportunities are anchored through established institutions- like recruitment agencies, vocational training centres, government run schemes, etc. Participants scarcely reported implementing stand-alone (up)skilling initiatives and instead they act as mediators who systematically guide participants through the existing employment systems. They help bridge the gap between aspirations, skills and opportunity, particularly for first-time workforce entrants and those seeking to move beyond traditional, gender-segregated occupations. The Programme Head from Sangini, who works closely with the Madhya Pradesh Department of Tourism to promote women workers in Tourism, shared her observation, *"The idea was to skill women so they could open their own food stalls and also jewellery and craft items. Women drivers, tourist facilitators (a new term for guides) all these roles were included. MP Tourism supports these programmes, and Sangini acts as a bridge to link women with such opportunities. These schemes provide them with livelihood and knowledge of their rights. Federations are also being formed...The aim is to ensure that tourist places are safe for women. Women should be vendors, shop owners, drivers, guides,everywhere. It's both: for women workers and for women tourists."*

  Sangini shared that the information about vacancies flows from the government department, making it easier for them to train and link prospective employment opportunities. These upskilling initiatives go beyond employment to promote entrepreneurship as well. Participants from ANANDI spoke about enhancing the skills of women farmers for better yields and incomes. Sangini shared how their domestic workers sangathana has become a gateway for women to expand their capabilities- as grassroots leaders, counsellors, paralegal volunteers, and as self-employed workers.

  "We also tried to elevate the status of domestic workers by training cooks to enter catering services. We connected them with hotel management institutions. Usually, women only work as helpers/ labourers under male caterers/owners. The idea was to flip that and let women become"- Programme Head, Sangini, Madhya Pradesh

Upskilling initiatives must be designed with attention to the upstream, structural factors that perpetuate insecure livelihoods. These factors shape young people's (access to) opportunities long before they enter the labour market, and must be addressed to facilitate long-term economic security.

The 'study centres' run by the Stree Mukti Sangathana in the different bastis across Mumbai are an example of countering structural risks to entry into the workforce. This work deliberately extends beyond women waste workers to include their children in an attempt to break the cycle of informality. It aims to enhance the economic capacities of the next generation by providing the young learners with physical spaces conducive to social interactions and group study. Students of all ages are welcome and SMS has appointed teachers at the study centres who coach the students.

"The environment within the community also needs to change. We have started study classes as well. In the settlement, homes are very small, so people don't really have a proper place to sit together, then how will children study? That's why children now come to the community centre, where they sit and read and write, and we have also appointed a teacher. Children of any age, even older children, can come there, but the condition is that there must be genuine studying." - Coordinator, SMS, Maharashtra

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Strengthening Worker Solidarity and Grassroots Leadership to Negotiate for Rights and Demand Accountability

Another crucial protective mechanism to mitigate individual level vulnerabilities faced by girls, women and transgender workers is collectivisation. Collectivisation and community mobilisation is central to feminist organising and harnesses the strength in numbers. An assertion and exercise of their right to association directly shapes members' sustained participation at work and by extension in public spaces.

Although collectives operate at the community level of the SEM, we find that the process of collectivising and solidarity building itself produces direct protective effects at the individual level: by reducing isolation, raising awareness, enhancing bargaining power, and building social support networks to navigate economic risks safely and sustainably.

- **Building Grassroots Collectives and Developing Leadership-** In order to safeguard girls, women and transgender workers, the primary activity implemented by interventions is to build and strengthen their participation in grassroots collectives or Sangathanas in the forms of SHGs, women's collectives, unions, youth groups, etc. By strengthening grassroots collectives, organisations enable members facing inequities to articulate their demands and bring lasting change to their immediate circumstances. Collectivisation activities are based on the primary understanding that access to fundamental necessities, everyday civic challenges, and welfare measures come together to determine if and how women, girls and transgender people participate in work and collective action.

  To this end, emerging collectives of workers galvanise support and participation by prioritising 'needs' [jaroorat] of the communities they work with. Participants shared that jaroorat or pressing needs can act as a powerful unifying agenda which ensures empowerment interventions are not driven in a top-down manner. Without prioritising the immediate concerns of the community, it is impossible to gain entry to the community, or build a rapport with members. The emphasis on the needs or jaroorat of the community was perfectly articulated by the Organisation Head, Jan Vikas Kendra, Uttar Pradesh who explained: *"There is something called 'need,' and there is something called 'work'... Why will they join us? Why will they come to our meetings? Why will they spend their time with us? It is very important to understand this. That is why we go door to door to them , What do you need? And what do we have to do about it?"*

This account perfectly highlights how community participation is not automatic, but earned by bringing valuable support to people's lives. Here, the participants stressed that workers who face intersectional marginalisations are their foremost priority and their first point of contact in the communities. Mobilisation activities include door-to-door meetings, community meetings, awareness drives, sports, plays, youth groups, etc. As these spaces for participation and collective action expand, collectives are strengthened over time and livelihood safeguards emerge from the ground up.

A noteworthy example here is the Aravani Art Collective. What began as a local collective has become a non-traditional livelihood opportunity for many of its members, transforming their experience of doing work. In 2016, it started as a movement of transgender women artists in Bengaluru to create safe spaces for the transgender community. The collective itself gained numerical strength through known connections, peer networks and built momentum by sharing their lived experiences and challenges through public art. Skills transfer, like learning about mural art and painting took place within the collective and through hands-on practice. With time, the Collective gained formal recognition in India and abroad.

"In the beginning, we did not have livelihood support. We did not have a commission project. We just wanted the transgender community to be claiming their place in the public space. We got a commission project from the government, a commission project from the MNC, and a corporate office. So, we used it for livelihood and survival. Particularly, the transgender community. The perspective has changed. Mindset has changed in the world. They think only sex work or wedding work. No. They are capable of doing other kinds of work. They can do skill-based work." - Lead Artist, Aravani Art Project, Karnataka

Similarly, Sangini's two decade mobilisation journey with domestic workers (DWs) indicates how sustained organising can strengthen collective power and expand support systems around work. Not only have they successfully formed a DWs union but actively diversified their work to include leadership and skill development and addressing workplace violence.

"The journey that started in 2003 is still ongoing. Sangini's focus is on women domestic workers, and this work continues. Our main stakeholders are domestic workers , the women for whom we work. The work began in 2003 by organising them.

Their union was formed. Then came leadership development, material development, skill development, preparing them for self-employment, and training them as paralegals... this work has continued with them. This also includes casework, which covers mediation, advocacy, and litigation." - Programme Head, Sangini, Madhya Pradesh

Like Sangini, participants shared **that strengthening grassroots 'leaders' from within communities** is both a sustainability strategy and an organic outcome of collective building. Leadership training is not treated as an individual action but a collective process which includes identifying aagevans (leaders), building their soft skills, regularising collective meetings and instituting internal accountability mechanisms in the collective. From a feminist lens, grassroots leaders do more than represent community members- they bring right-based practice, ownership and transparency to collective action.

As illustrated by a story shared by the Organisation Head from Jan Vikas Kendra, Uttar Pradesh, the presence of Dalit leaders enabled Dalit women workers to claim their MGNREGA wages. She explained, *"We explained their [women worker's] rights. In the meeting we asked, "How many of you are ready to move forward for your rights?" Ten women stepped up and said, "We will go wherever needed. We will fight our own battle."* I told them, *"You only need to go to the tehsil and the block office."* They went to submit an application...Because, as the saying goes, *"The one whose foot wears the torn shoe knows where it hurts".* The women workers were repeatedly threatened by the upper caste Pradhan, Lokpal, DM and SDM but ultimately submitted applications across blocks. The case highlights how empowered women leaders, when supported with the knowledge of rights, collective strength and the local organisations' support, can successfully navigate power structures on behalf of the collective.

Parallelly, there is a targeted effort to institutionalise women's voices and leadership within formal governance structures. ANANDI works very closely with panchayat and local governance bodies at the village level, engaging with mahila sarpanches, ward members and candidates. Through this engagement, they seek to strengthen and expand the role of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) and enable them to actively address issues related to women's work and safety. The Practice Lead from ANANDI explained, *"Now a circular has been issued stating that a Mahila Suraksha Samiti (Women's Safety Committee) should be formed in every village within each panchayat area, with women representatives from every ward. Through our efforts, via the Gram Sabha, we facilitated the formation of these committees in 50 villages. In these committees, the EWRs themselves put forward their names. We are now holding meetings with them to discuss what their role will be in ensuring women's safety, beginning with gender issues, and then focusing on the concerns of women who go out for work so that they can be registered with the panchayat."*

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Establishing Peer Support Systems to Address Violence and Welfare Concerns

Another key expression of solidarity is the establishment of peer support centres within the worker communities. These peer support services, often run by the members of the collective, function as front-line, community-based mechanisms for two recurring challenges: cases of GBV at work and access to rights and entitlements.

Although collectives operate at the community level of the SEM, we find that the process of collectivising and solidarity building itself produces direct protective effects at the individual level: by reducing isolation, raising awareness, enhancing bargaining power, and building social support networks to navigate economic risks safely and sustainably.

- **Support Centres for Survivors of Workplace Violence-** Feminist organisations recognise that livelihood interventions cannot be fully separated from violence response. For informal workers specifically, who work without formal redressal frameworks or defined employer-employee relationships, access to justice is severely constrained. In this context, community-based support centres play an important role in breaking the survivors' isolation and in negotiating with different stakeholders on the survivors behalf. Across the cohort organisations like ANANDI, Sangini, SMS, Jan Vikas Kendra, NEN and Sanjag Foundation described implementing a model where support to address GBV is an embedded practice within their collectives, although the specific approaches to providing peer support differ. SMS runs a family counselling centre while Sangini operates a legal aid centre. Cases are registered at these centres and survivors are provided first-line support in

instances of GBV. These services were created to provide professional aid, holistic and survivor-centred support, as well as co-ordinated referrals for workers' complaints.

"If waste picker women face any kind of problem, whether related to work, domestic violence, or health , we refer them to the counselling centre. They leave very early in the morning because that is when more waste is available. Because of this, they are often accused of theft. Once, a watchman in a housing society threw something at a waste picker woman, assuming she was a thief, and her leg was broken. We handle such cases through the counselling centre."- Coordinator, SMS, Maharashtra

In contrast, organisations like NEN, Jan Vikas Kendra and Sajag Foundation train their community leaders to become barefoot counsellors for first-line support, spreading awareness on GBV and creating survivor support groups at the community-level. Whereas ANANDI supports a women-led *Nyay Samiti* (Justice Committee) which is composed of gender-sensitive Sangathana representatives from the village(s). Beyond providing support to survivors, the Nyay Samiti also plays an active role in monitoring how GBV cases are handled by state institutions, advocating for proper application of legal provisions, and ensuring that serious offences are not dismissed or informally "settled." The committee engages with senior officials, pushes back against social and political pressure on survivors, and facilitates access to legal aid and other institutional support.

The Practice Lead from ANANDI shared, *"In Dahod, so far there have been 5–6 cases where a woman was accused of having an affair, brought into a public space, and beaten in front of everyone by village elders. A video of the incident went viral. The police began action, but after some time we had to intervene. We went directly to the hospital and met the woman. Based on what she told us, Section 354 of the IPC had not been added to the FIR, and her belongings had also been stolen. She had come from outside for work. She had ₹20,000–25,000 with her and her mobile phone had also been stolen. The police had not recorded the money she had earned. We went to the SP's office , not just one or two of us, but the Nyay Samiti and 25–30 women went together. We had to ensure that all these details were added to the FIR. The FIR should have recorded exactly what the woman herself had stated. When the woman's statement was first taken, there was no woman with her, so she was not able to put forward everything she wanted to say. There was another case where both the husband and the wife were killed. Then the women's group had to step forward. We went to the SP's office, again, not just one or two, but 25–30 women went together. Even then, the complaint had been registered as an accidental death."* Practice Lead, ANANDI, Gujarat

The narrative indicates that when providing support for survivors of GBV, especially in rural settings, overlapping and hybrid forms of workplace violence are encountered, where harassment intersects with trafficking, bonded labour, child labour and community-incited violence. Such violence is particularly pronounced in migrant worker communities and is enacted publicly, where women and girls face harassment during transit, at worksites and upon returning home.

- **Community Resource Centres to Access Schemes and Entitlements-** Since access and availability of entitlements and schemes is often marred by bureaucratic hurdles and delays, grassroots organisations and collectives become key resource bearers who systematically advocate for peoples' citizenship rights. They leverage their community relationships, government networks, resources and infrastructure to set up accessible pathways to access welfare provisions. For community members, having the support of grassroots resource centres makes it easier for them to navigate bureaucratic processes without retaliation and converts an isolating process into a shared responsibility.

  Organisations set-up alternate mechanisms (help desks, camps, registration drives, etc.) to handhold their community members through the lengthy and discriminatory application processes. Alongside this, they invest in building the capacity of their grassroots leaders to assist community members to access key schemes and benefits, since grassroots leaders are the first and trusted point of contact for the community.

  An especially effective strategy has been the placement of help-desks and grievance support centres within government offices. By embedding support mechanisms within administrative spaces, interventions are able to intercept applicants early in the process, reduce reliance on informal intermediaries like agents, and ensure timely intervention when applications stall.

  "A leader from the Deogarh Mahila Sangathan runs a Lok Adhikar Kendra at the Executive Magistrate's office two days a week. There, she helps community members fill out forms for widow pensions, social security, food security, and ration cards. Through this process, we come to understand which government schemes are getting stuck on the ground and why they are not reaching people. The ANANDI team then analyses this information,where the process is getting stuck, what difficulties people are

facing, what improvements are needed in thesystem...Based on this, we carry out advocacy. At the block level, there are many agents who take advantage of people's vulnerability and charge money, because it is not easy for people coming from villages to understand government procedures. That is why, the work of 'Lok Adhikar' (People's rights) is to ensure that community members receive the right information and support, so that they can access government services without fear and without paying money. Knowledge of rights, correct guidance, and the support of the community, this is where real change begins." - Project Coordinator, ANANDI, Gujarat

"In 2010, we influenced the administration. We met with the Zilla Adhikary and got a letter issued to start a help center (Sahayata Kendra) in the panchayat where women and men could file their complaints. We initiated that without any support from the government, running it ourselves. It became a place where people could file their complaints,in the Panchayat."- Organisation Head, Bal Vikas Neev (CDF), Jharkhand

As the above accounts illustrate, efforts to facilitate access to welfare and entitlements do more than support individual applications or mitigate individual-level risks. They generate real-time insights into systemic gaps, delays and corruption, which organisations then use to shape evidence-based advocacy. In this way, grassroots resource centres strengthen individual protections and may contribute to institutional accountability and reform.

Table 15. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Individual-level Stakeholders for Promoting Public Participation through Livelihood

Individual – Victimisation Level		
	Barriers	Facilitators
Individual	• Familial restrictions on mobility and decision about participation in socio-economic opportunities • Youth engagement and interest is sporadic and fleeting making it difficult to sustain work • Competing family and work responsibilities, migration, makes sustainable engagement difficult • Participants reside in low-resource settings where there is a lack of space and social environment for education and learning • Mismatch between job requirements and individual skills	• Presence of women, girls and transgender leaders in the community • Existence of active collectives and peer groups • Formal partnership with academic and regulatory institutions (like UGC) can strengthen institutional collaboration and regularise youth engagement • Availability of education and skilling initiatives run by government or CSOs
Collectives	• Prevalence of caste, class and religions hierarchies makes mobilisation difficult and prevents leadership from emerging • Political interference makes community mobilisation difficult • Competing family and work responsibilities, migration, makes sustainable action difficult • Disagreement on which issues to prioritise among collective members • Threat of violence and retaliation against members of the collective • Lack of access to technology and digital divide complicates access to entitlements	• Existing community-based groups or collectives facilitate entry into communities • Leaders emerging from communities are already gender-sensitive and have rights-based perspective • Presence of strong CSO networks who support collectivisation and collective action • Existence of strong networks of survivors of violence who can provide peer support

Table 15.1. Incremental Changes at the Individual-level that Promote Public Participation Through Livelihood

Identified Incremental Changes
Individual Workers • Young women negotiate with their families to travel independently • Women, girls, and transgender persons participate in (up)skilling initiatives and vocational training • Women, girls, and transgender persons take up jobs • They start small-scale businesses or take up non-traditional jobs • Transgender persons are more visible in non-traditional jobs **Collectives** • Women's groups regularly initiate their meetings • Women workers are collectivised and registered as members • Women attend gram sabha meetings and raise issues related to livelihood • Women members of collectives personally raise issues of wage theft, workplace violence and discrimination, or poor working conditions with employers • Women members seek intervention of the collective in issues of workplace violence • Women members assist survivors of violence in seeking justice • Women members assist other women in processes to claim their socio-economic entitlements • Collective is successful in securing workers' demands and entitlements **Examples from the Discussion** • Through collective organising and rights awareness facilitated by DURGA, Paurakarmikas (sanitation workers) shifted from working in isolation to acting as a collective. This collective strength led to women openly challenging workplace harassment and faulty attendance systems, and actively using mechanisms like the Internal Committee. A major tangible outcome was that Bengaluru became the first city where Paurakarmikas were formally absorbed as municipal staff, securing social security and employment protections for a workforce predominantly belonging to Dalit community. • SMS supported collectives of waste pickers evolved into federations that the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai now formally engages with. As a result, waste picker women gained regularised livelihoods, minimum wages, healthcare access, leave entitlements, and operational control over BMC-run dry waste segregation centres. This has enabled their work to move from an informal and exploitative situation to becoming part of the formal municipal system. • ANANDI's collectives have created structured platforms for women to collectively address community-wide issues such as social security, violence, and education. The collective strengthens women's negotiating power with local institutions and embeds values of collective decision-making at the village and cluster levels.

Relationship-Level

Risks: Familial control over women's labour and economic independence

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Shifting Family Attitudes to Support Women's and Girls' Work and Economic Independence

Family relationships strongly influence the extent to which women, girls and transgender persons are able to participate in work. To address this, livelihood-focused interventions engage directly with the families of young workers, particularly parents and male siblings. The aim is to foster more equitable family relationships that support women's economic independence.

- **One-on-one Dialogue and Structured Meetings with Parents and Siblings-** Interventions consider working with parents and siblings foundational to their work. The support of parents and siblings is foundational to successfully implementing education, skilling and placement initiatives, since even the slightest resistance can lower girls' and women's participation. These engagements with the family can be in the form of unstructured meetings and one-on-one dialogues to assuage the family's fears regarding safety at work and during travel. The underlying rationale is to nurture supportive, trusting parent-child relationships.

  "The most important thing is that we also need to change the mindset of parents. We need to explain that a girl's education should not stop after she completes her studies. Just giving training and leaving it at that does not create livelihood. They also need support to take up jobs. The government should implement measures to create a safe environment so that women can travel to work safely." - Coordinator, SMS, Maharashtra

  "When we hold meetings, we also call the girls' brothers. We explain things to them so that they understand what we are trying to do. Once they understand, they also start supporting the girls, in helping them move around and move forward."- Director, Sajag India, Uttar Pradesh

  One more approach to engage families involves longer, structured sessions that follow a module. For instance, Maitrayana Foundation, holds inter-generational dialogues to address the most common myths, misconceptions and restrictions that girls encounter as they transition into adulthood. This approach helps parents better understand their daughters' lived realities. It equips parents to better support girls' aspirations and motivations to pursue livelihood opportunities.

  In the first session the focus is on gender and sex, to encourage parents to reflect on how gender norms distinctly shape their daughters' lives, dreams and capacities. The second session addresses puberty and menstruation, a taboo topic that rarely finds mention at home. It does, however, trigger increased mobility restrictions and limits their access to education and work. Since most attendees of these sessions are mothers, these sessions help them understand menstrual misconceptions and adopt more supportive practices at home. The third session highlights career pathways and explores how parents can encourage their daughters as they prepare for education, work, and livelihood opportunities. This process ends with a pledge, a promise from the parents. As the Coach from Maitrayana Foundation describes, *"And in the end, we take a promise,a pledge,from the mother, father, or whoever has attended the session. We ask them: if you were in your daughter's place, what expectations would you have from your mother, from your father? For example, if I am a mother attending the meeting, and I think about myself in that position,what would I want, what dreams would I have, and similarly, what dreams I have for my daughter. I reflect on this and then write it down. We do this so that the relationship between the mother and daughter grows stronger, and the relationship between the father and daughter also becomes stronger, so they can support her."*

Table 16. Barriers And Facilitators to Working with Relationship-level Stakeholders for Promoting Public Participation Through Livelihood

Barriers	Facilitator
• Conservative families with "high" social standing resist engaging • Resistance to engage due to the threat of public shame, stigma and blame due to violence • Threatened by women/girls exercising agency in choice of career, economic independence, romantic partners, clothing, etc.	• Sensitive and supportive male siblings facilitates engagement with families

Table 16.1. Incremental Changes at The Relationship-level that Promote Public Participation Through Livelihood

Identified Incremental Changes
• Families show more efforts towards continuing education of girls and young women • Families encourage young women to take up work of their choice • Family restrictions on mobility, including over timing and location of work/education is lessened • Young women are able to control their own income without family interference • Young women are included in economic decisions of the family

Community-Level

Risks: Exclusionary working conditions and workplace policy

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Enhancing Accountability of Employers/Administrators to Uphold Workers Rights and Safety

The objective of conducting training, dialogues and monitoring initiatives with employers and administrators is to shift the framing of workplace safety as an individual responsibility. Instead, these interventions underscore the regulatory mandates and duties of employers and administrators. The interactive engagements provide an opportunity to challenge harmful attitudes and promote workers' wellbeing.

- **Dialogues with Employers and Public Administrators In-Charge of Workplaces-** When it comes to informal workplaces, interventions initiate dialogues and meetings with employers, public administrators and duty-bearers to tackle the issues of sexual violence and economic exploitation at workplaces. These engagements explicitly tackle the issues of wage theft, inhumane working conditions, arbitrary termination and sexual harassment.

  However, engaging with informal employers and subcontractors is especially difficult despite open knowledge of repeated rights violations from the employers, coworkers, family members, etc. at the

worksites. These informal employers often operate just beyond the scope of formal regulatory and accountability mechanisms, making it tougher to ensure compliance and accountability. Even so, participants shared they make repeated and regular interventions at informal workspaces to sensitise the employers and to escalate severe cases of violence. Director, Sajag India, described the flippant and retaliatory response of employers to advocacy efforts, Kiln owners say, *"We pay people by giving them work,why are you coming here to create trouble?"...We have reported and advocated around all these cases of violence,in some cases, we were even threatened with pistols. There are instances of workers being forcibly retained and tracked. Even leaving home and returning safely becomes an uncertain risk...We carry out our work with our own safety arrangements, organise work in lines, and spread awareness in rural communities,among both Dalit and non-Dalit groups,about SC/ST laws and rights. Many people say these laws are only for Dalits, but we explain that the Constitution and all laws are meant for the welfare of humanity and apply equally to everyone."*

The narrative highlights the need for sustained work to address caste-based violence and new forms of bonded labour. Given employers' reluctance to engage on the issue of rights, participants shared they adopted a dual strategy of workers' rights awareness and employer sensitisation. This dual action ensures workers are able to identify rights violations and employers are able to provide sensitive redressal.

Another crucial stakeholder within the informal employment ecosystem is the public administrators responsible for implementing employment schemes like MGNREGA. These public officials are in-charge of guaranteeing the stipulated days of work, monitoring worksites, wage disbursement, oversight of worksite supervisors, etc. To this end, a set of administrative officials at the block and Panchayat level- like Panchayat Sachiv, Gram Sabha Members, BDOs, MGNREGA mates - are identified as key points of intervention. Engagement with these administrators focuses on both prevention of GBV at work and fair wages. The engagement mainly takes the form of dialogues and meetings. As the Organisation Head from Jan Vikas Kendra, Uttar Pradesh explains: *"When it comes to MGNREGA, the panchayat becomes involved. So we work on how to prevent verbal violence at the worksite. We hold dialogues with panchayat representatives, ward members, Block Development Council (BDC) members...about how such violence can be stopped."*

Similarly to reduce corruption, institutionalise accountability and expand women's access to paid work, Bal Vikas Neev (CDF), Jharkhand has actively collaborated with the Panchayat and BDO to ensure job cards and run a public campaign on the MGNREGA scheme.

"So, when the MGNREGA law came, we got a big opportunity. First of all, we worked with the BDO department and the Panchayat Sachiv (secretary) on how to get job cards issued to women and how to ensure their employment for 100 days. We worked on this together with them, and there were many campaigns in that. We initiated campaigns like "Kaam Maango-Kaam Karo" to see how we could work in the village.- Organisation Head, Bal Vikas Neev (CDF), Jharkhand

In instances where grievances remain unsolved at the Panchayat level or in situations of disbursement gaps, participants escalate the matters up the administrative hierarchy. This may involve meetings with the Block Mission Managers (BMM) who are tasked with stakeholder and financial management, and monitoring the MGNREGA scheme implementation across villages and blocks.

"When we talk about livelihoods, there is a BMM who monitors activities village by village, settlement by settlement. Since livelihoods are what we keep talking about repeatedly, they are the main person we engage with as well. For example, when it comes to MGNREGA, we first speak with the Pradhan (village head). If nothing happens after that, then we directly approach the BDO/BMM and tell them that work is not happening in this area and that they need to look into it."- Director, Sajag India, Uttar Pradesh

Across discussions participants emphasised the extremely precarious conditions informal workers continue to face, especially in the rural context where the enforcement of protective and redressal mechanisms is often diluted or entirely lacking. To address these systemic gaps, organisations are increasingly locating worker protections, GBV redressal and economic security within existing legal and employment frameworks like Prevention of Atrocities Act (1989), POSH, MGNREGA.

- **Safety Audits of Workplaces and Technical Support to Employers-** When working with employers it is imperative to change the dominant gender biases and institutionalise 'safety' at work for women and transgender persons. We find that a few interventions approach 'safety' through two interrelated lenses. The first involves bringing changes to the physical infrastructure by making it more inclusive for a gender diverse workforce. The second is by ensuring safety through secure jobs and strengthening employment conditions.

  For instance, Maitrayana Foundation provides technical support for gender audits of workplaces and recommends concrete solutions to make them safer and inclusive. Their model is to highlight the gaps within existing infrastructure that undermines women workers' health and well-being, and makes long-term employment difficult.

  "During factory visits, we understand what facilities are available and what are not, like places where even tea is not provided, or where a first-aid box is missing. Then we prepare a report and share it with the partners who oversee these factories. We also identify what things can be improved."- Coach, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

  A similar approach is adopted by The YP Foundation through its Loud & Queer Programme which works with transgender leaders. The Loud & Queer Programme encourages leaders to audit public spaces and workplaces and support employers and business owners to create inclusive and safe spaces for trans and queer persons. The rationale behind this programme is that "safety" must be shaped by the community and that employers and businesses need structured avenues to receive and act on these insights. As Programme Officer, GBV Prevention from The YP Foundation explained: *"We do capacity building for our youth leaders, and they also do capacity building for them [the owners]. [Together] They try to identify indicators based on capacity building, such as what makes a space safe...For instance, if there are salons, what does that service look like for queer and trans people?"*

  The second intervention pathway for engagement with employers is centred on reducing informality by strengthening compliance with labour laws. Maitrayana Foundation engages the employers in pertinent conversations around gender rights, contract, leave policies, etc. framing these as integral to workplace safety rather than as discretionary benefits. *"When a girl becomes ready for employment, we conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) with our partners, that is, the employers. In these sessions, we train them on what rights girls have, such as contract letters, leave policies, maternity leave, etc. We also use a card-based activity to explain workers' rights through visual prompts. This is how we interact with employers and build their awareness."* -Coach, Maitrayana Foundation, Maharashtra

Table 17. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Community-level Stakeholders for Promoting Public Participation Through Livelihood

Barriers	Facilitator
• Non-recognition of women and transgender employees as equal and key members of staff • Gender stereotypes and transphobic attitudes prevents hiring of transgender persons • Misogynistic and transphobic attitudes of management and staff members limit openness to discuss workplace violence • Institutional deprioritisation of GBV as a violation of worker rights • Weak accountability mechanisms that hinder follow-up and sustained action by organisations • Budget constraints and bureaucratic delays and corruption	• Presence of gender-sensitive, supportive and responsible employers, staff and administrators • Support of local CSOs who are able to initiate dialogues on behalf of (informal) workers • Willingness among higher management to execute existing gender-sensitive laws, rules and safety standards • Entering Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) to ensure structured and sustained engagement with employers and institutions

Table 17.1. Incremental Changes at the Community-level that Promote Public Participation through Livelihood

Identified Incremental Changes
• Information about violence redressal mechanisms is visibly displayed and easily accessible • Implementing affirmative action policies in recruitment and hiring processes • Fair promotions awarded to women and transgender persons in the workspaces • Women and transgender employees exhibit low attrition and stay longer at the workplace • Private and government employers formalise temporary and informal jobs • Private and government employers institutes and provides benefits like travel support, leave, childcare, washrooms, protective gear, security to their (in)formal workers

Societal-level

Risks: Unemployment and poor social security nets for citizens

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Strengthening and Widening the Coverage of Citizenship Entitlements and Social Security

Strong welfare protections and social security nets are required for girls, women and transgender persons to enter and remain in the workforce. Welfare protections such as income security, healthcare, childcare, and social assistance reduce economic vulnerability and help individuals navigate domestic responsibilities and life-cycle events. Strengthening and expanding the reach of these welfare protections is therefore an essential component of livelihoods interventions.

- **Advocate for Laws and Policies that Guarantee Basic Rights-** Organisations like SMS, Sangini and ANANDI, are established organisations with long-standing relationships with local governance systems and state bodies. Their participants shared the historical significance of feminist mobilisation around fundamental rights, and articulated areas of food security, right to health, right to education, forest rights, women workers' health and safety, social security, land rights, etc. They emphasised the importance of peer organisations and national-level networks in strengthening the bargaining power on issues of 'lok aadhikar' or citizen rights.

  For example, ANANDI which works closely with the Advasi community in Gujarat, and the women who are engaged in forest-based occupations, works to formalise safety and protection for these workers. Forest officials often fail to recognise them as rightful inhabitants of the land, harassing them for collecting and using forest resources. Their engagements unfold at two levels: first, to secure women's rights and ownership over forest land; and second, to address community rights to forest resources and issues related to the collection and use of forest produce.

  Similarly, SMS negotiates with the state through local government functionaries in-charge of implementing the available schemes and benefits for waste workers. But as the Coordinator from SMS noted, multiple follow-ups are often required to ensure compliance with existing rules and laws, *"After that, we put pressure on local self-governance institutions. They are not willing to act on their own, but through continuous follow-up we bring them into the process and make it necessary for them to implement government rules, laws, and schemes. Otherwise, they will not do this work on their own."*

- **Advocate for Simplifying Processes to Make Schemes More Accessible to All Marginalised Populations-** Given livelihood organisations are closely involved in linking community members to available entitlements and welfare schemes, they are best placed to identify recurring implementational challenges and bottlenecks in policy implementation. Grassroots organisations are

able to draw on their field experiences to appeal for changes in processes and policies.

Across the cohort, participants stressed the particular difficulties, delays and dropouts arising from tedious documentation requirements, ad hoc processes and procedural rigmarole. Girls, women and transgender persons are disproportionately affected as they do not have basic identity documents or because of errors on the documents. And applications for schemes, related to education, livelihood schemes, pension, credit, etc. are all contingent on the provision of basic identity documents.

Take for example maternity benefit schemes. Although the schemes are created to support maternal nutrition, participants shared delays, opaque processes and rigid documentation requirements. The Practice Lead from ANANDI explained, *"Under maternity benefit schemes...the Aadhaar card must have the husband's name,if the father's name is there, it has to be changed. But what if I am a single mother? First, you have to establish who the child's father is. This excludes even rape survivors. We have such cases,a girl is a rape victim and she has received nothing till now....We have raised this issue [with the government], but nothing has changed. Aadhaar must be compulsorily changed to the husband's name. An election card is also needed. One card is required to get another, another to get a third,and everywhere the husband's name is mandatory."*

Such mandatory requirement for an Aadhar card bearing the husband's name excludes not only single mothers, but women who are separated from partners, or women using their maiden names. Organisations working in the field are able to identify these procedural barriers that contribute to delays and exclusions in accessing schemes. In such cases, interventions must also engage with the government to advocate for changes in these application processes.

Table 18. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Societal-Level Stakeholders for Promoting Public Participation Through Livelihood

Barriers	Facilitator
• Opaque processes and few avenues for providing input • Lack of political will to invest in entitlements and social security interventions • Over-regulation of NGO sector and budgeting constraints preventing effective convening opportunities • Conflicting agenda among different conveners	• Presence of 'champion' officials within departments • Numerically strong networks who have shared agenda and are well-resourced

Table 18.1. Incremental Changes at the Societal-Level that Promote Public Participation Through Livelihood

Identified Incremental Changes

- Issues raised by networks are integrated into welfare policies
- Simplified application process and increased availability of service centres
- Improved coverage of existing entitlements and schemes specifically for women, girls and transgender persons
- Increased budgetary allocation for gender-focused social security and welfare spending
- Networks regularly mobilise and collectively raise common issues

Examples from the Discussion

- Qualitative evidence from Jharkhand illustrates how collective action translated into concrete policy and governance outcomes. The Bal Vikas Neev (CDF) team, through community-led monitoring and strategic legal action, improved access to food rations and shifted control of the Public Distribution System (PDS) to local SHG women. An order was issued for Jharkhand state where SHGs women are granted licenses to distribute PDS ration. This strengthens both accountability and women's leadership.

Dimension 4:
Strengthening Responses to Violations

Disclosure of violence and formal reporting is shrouded by a culture of silence and fuelled by self-blame, stigma, fear of escalation, and even a lack of awareness of redressal mechanisms (Adhikari & Husain, 2021; Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Garrett & Hassan, 2020). Reporting gender-based violence is difficult for survivors, while unsupportive families and communities and apathetic institutions exacerbate the stigma, contributing to the normalisation of impunity. Dominant social norms and material conditions such as economic vulnerabilities and caste-based power hierarchies make formal help-seeking risky and expensive. When it comes to GBV in public spaces, the high degree of social acceptance (and almost anticipation) can further create unfavourable conditions for help-seeking and access to justice.

In this context, it becomes clear that supporting survivors and strengthening the larger system that is accountable for violence response is one of the most important strategies for feminist CSOs. They recognise that GBV, irrespective of location and perpetrator, does not occur in isolation; nor is response an individual responsibility. Their grassroots activities, led by community leaders, grassroots collectives, barefoot counsellors, peer groups, and lawyers break the cycle of isolation and exclusion and build survivor's confidence to access and negotiate with the justice system. On the other hand, their intentional engagement with justice system stakeholders to centre gender-based violence aims to elevate the issue from its position among the lowest institutional priorities.

This chapter will situate the various grassroots activities and actions implemented by CSOs to transform the ecosystem for help-seeking and response within the SEM. Spanning from direct support to survivors to system strengthening initiatives and policy advocacy, these efforts mitigate individual, relationship, community and society-level SEM risks by promoting a multi-stakeholder response to GBV. Collectively, these actions operationalise the three interconnected pillars of violence reduction: prevention, response, and institutionalisation.

Table 19. Overview of Protective Mechanisms, Stakeholders, and Activities Addressing Risks Related to Help-Seeking and Response across SEM Levels

SEM Level	Risks	Protective Mechanisms	Stakeholders	Activities
Individual-Victimisation	• Young age (adolescent girls and young women) • Identity as an informal-sector worker • Identity as a migrant worker • Experiencing homelessness • Being transgender • Being from a Dalit community • Being Muslim (especially visibly Muslim women) • Lack of awareness of rights and access to legal recourse	• Increasing awareness of fundamental rights and laws on gender-based violence	• Women • Girls • Transgender persons	• Awareness sessions on gender equality, constitutional rights and laws • Exposure visits to police, OSC, courts, panchayat office, etc.
		• Enhancing survivors' preparedness to seek help and navigate justice systems	• Survivors of gender-based violence in public spaces	• Casework support through firstline psychosocial care and linkage to other services • Direct support to survivors to negotiate with response systems and demand justice
Relationship	• Enforcement of strict gender norms within the family	• Enhancing safety and reducing isolation of the family to enable them to support the survivor	• Family	• Family intervention meetings • Handholding them through legal processes
Community	• Dominance of patriarchal community governance structures • Institutional apathy in response systems	• Shifting attitudes of traditional institutions towards viewing gender-based violence as a rights violation • Enabling stakeholders in local governance institutions to respond to violence in a survivor-centred manner • Strengthening the accountability of formal systems to visibilise and prioritise everyday forms GBV in public spaces as an important issue • Instilling rights-based and survivor-centred approach into GBV responses by formal institutions	• Local Self Governance • Autonomous Councils • Caste Panchayat • Tribal Panchayat • Local executive functionaries (elected representatives in urban and rural areas, MLAs) • Law Enforcement-Police and GRP • Support persons-PLVs/social workers, • DLSAs/Lawyers/ Advocates • Community-based first responders- RPF, ASHA Workers, Anganwadi	• Gender sensitisation and awareness meetings with traditional institutional functionaries on issues of gender, rights, GBV and support services • Strengthening GBV response by setting up panchayat- or ward-level committees and training local elected representatives • Trainings with duty-bearers on laws and processes, their roles and responsibilities, gender-sensitive and survivor-centred response protocols • Strengthening implementation of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace law

SEM Level	Risks	Protective Mechanisms	Stakeholders	Activities
Community			• Workers • Child Protection Officer- CWC, Child Protection Officers • Judiciary: Judges • Government Crisis Support: OSCs, Shelter homes, • Hospital-based Healthcare Providers - Doctors, nurses • Government and private workplaces, Internal and Local Committees under POSH Act	
Society	• Gender exclusionary laws and GBV response policies • Communalism and caste • Cultural and political patriarchy	• Embedding feminist, rights-based and gender-inclusive principles in legal and policy frameworks to respond to GBV	• Women and Child Department (WCD) • Women's Commission • CSO networks and intersectional pressure groups	• Technical support to law and policy makers for stronger GBV prevention and protections • Networking, convening and campaigning for comprehensive, multistakeholder GBV response

Individual-Level

Risks: Young age (adolescent girls and young women), Identity as an informal-sector worker, Identity as a migrant worker, Experiencing homelessness, Being transgender, Being from a Dalit community, Being Muslim (especially visibly Muslim women), Lack of awareness of rights and access to legal recourse

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Increasing Awareness of Fundamental Rights and Laws on Gender-Based Violence

GBV in public spaces is widely normalised and is considered an inevitable consequence of use of public spaces by women and transgender people. Its ubiquity and pervasiveness obscures the structural roots of this form of violence. For women and transpersons, social acceptability of GBV in public spaces, means they are forced to ignore, tolerate, and even internally trivialise incidents. To disrupt this harmful pattern, interventions work on increasing awareness among at-risk groups on fundamental rights and legal protections related to GBV.

- **Awareness Sessions on Gender Equality, Constitutional Rights and Laws-** The strategy for building awareness on GBV with at-risk groups is a two fold approach: emphasising the fundamental right to access justice and improving knowledge on GBV and redressal. The awareness and sensitisation sessions begin with discussions of fundamental rights guaranteed to all citizens irrespective of gender, caste, religion, class, etc. By framing the messaging around constitutional rights, it helps participants understand socio-cultural issues, challenges, and violence as a violation of their basic human rights. As the Bheema Foundation Founder shared, this approach enables participants to reflect on who holds rights, how rights are enforced, who enforces them, and the avenues available for recourse.

  "We frame awareness through 'mulya' or values. We don't impose any ideology. We do not want any ideology that can be imposed on anyone. We start with equality. Once we discuss values like equality, freedom, justice, autonomy, then we connect those values to their issues. Otherwise, the message gets lost...][the order is] The values, the issues, who is responsible. Those who are responsible, how are they working on the issue, and if they are not working on it, then what can we do about it?"

  As the above narrative suggests, the discussion on constitutional rights provides a foundation for facilitating deeper dialogues on more sensitive topics like GBV. Organisations unpack the structural causes of GBV and emphasise that GBV is not a series of isolated incidents or personal failings but a systemic form of discrimination and denial of rights. They discuss how constitutional rights and safeguards against different forms of GBV are operationalised through laws and policy protections. To this end, participants develop a strong value base grounded in justice while gaining practical know-how on accessing the justice system.

  "Our aim is to make women aware of their own right, their agency- that they are equal rights holders. Especially in the context of GBV, we provide them information about what constitutes violence and what they can do next and how they can navigate the justice system." - Executive Director, North East Network, Assam

  "Awareness is also about demystifying the system. We explain what happens if you go to a police station, what documents are needed, what support you can ask for. Many people fear the process itself."- Head, Programmes, Urja Trust, Maharashtra

- **Exposure Visits to Police, OSC, Courts, Panchayat Office, etc.-** Another method of 'demystifying the system' for at-risk groups is to increase their exposure to different duty-bearers who are a part of the GBV response infrastructure. Such interactions are meant to build relational and procedural familiarity with the system and their physical spaces. Organisations facilitate exposure visits to police stations, courts, OSCs, DLSA offices, etc. to enable community members to observe proceedings firsthand, lessen the anxiety around interacting with officials, and reduce the perceived inaccessibility of these spaces.

  "We don't just take women to the One Stop Centre. We also invite the officials there and organise interface

meetings. Because of these meetings, problems are heard and changes begin to take place within the system as well." - Youth Leader, Akansha Seva Sadan, Bihar

"When we take girls and women to the police [stations]...they are able to fully understand the processes followed there. In villages, it is commonly seen that the police are perceived as unhelpful. So what we do is take the entire group together and ask the police officials to explain the kind of assistance they provide. We conduct a full police station visit, showing which spaces serve what purpose, how complaints are registered, and what information is recorded in a complaint or an FIR. This helps challenge the prevailing mindset among police officers that "girls should not come to the police station," as well as reduce the fear that girls carry about the police. The idea is to enable girls to directly ask questions and engage with them."- Co-coordinator, GBV Prevention, Vishakha, Rajasthan

Narratives suggest such consistent interactions with duty-bearers helps to build their awareness of the challenges faced by women and girls too. Exposure visits become a strategic tool to gradually establish GBV as a high-priority issue and build commitment towards a prompt and appropriate response. This is especially important for girls and young women, whose complaints are often dismissed and trivialised. As a Youth Leader working with girls, the participant from Akansha Seva Sadan, Bihar found value in regular interactions with duty-bearers: *"We realised that if we approached them (police, local governance) directly with claims of violence against girls, they might not believe us. Therefore, we conduct meetings to facilitate discussions."*

The exposure visits to institutions are complemented by inviting duty-bearers to participate in community-level meetings and legal and social awareness camps. Bringing duty-bearers into the community it offers a larger and more diverse set of at-risk community members to interact with them, in a safe and familiar setting. These face-to-face interactions reduce the fear of authority figures, and equip the larger community with practical knowledge about GBV laws, and the scope and nature of legal interventions in cases of GBV.

"During our programmes, we invite women police constables or station officers and facilitate face-to-face interactions with community members. This helps improve police–public relations. Safety does not only mean physical presence, it also requires information, knowing how to protect oneself while travelling or how to respond when the police intervene. We share this knowledge through songs, street plays, and training." - Organisation Head, Jan Vikas Kendra, Ambedkar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

Organisations from the cohort also reported sustained collaborations with community policing initiatives like *Mahila Dakshata Samiti, Suraksha Setu, Shakti Samiti.* The intent is to increase GBV awareness and reduce the distance between the community and law enforcement. Organisations work with these community policing bodies in new and creative ways to strengthen information about the different manifestations of public place GBV. A notable example is ANANDI's rapport and close collaboration with the *Suraksha Setu Society* for nearly a decade. The Project Coordinator explained, *"We have been working with Suraksha Setu Society for the past 8–10 years... Our work is connected with girls in the community, so we design activities together with them. Women are often afraid of the police, they do not understand how to speak with them or how to present their concerns. Suraksha Setu helps in this process, for example by organising awareness camps on cyber safety and women's rights. These sessions take place in colleges and villages. Suraksha Setu Society also brings in funds from different sources, some for competitions for young women, and some to work on specific issues. Recently, together with them we organised a street play against the practice of witch-branding, so that awareness against this harmful practice can increase in society."*

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Enhancing Survivors' Preparedness to Seek Help and Navigate Justice Systems

Although 'access to justice' is most commonly imagined as a linear series of legal proceedings, every survivor's pathway to justice is shaped by their specific vulnerabilities and circumstances. Survivors from marginalised caste locations, gender minorities, or those living with disabilities face heightened barriers in accessing formal mechanisms. This protective mechanism is therefore operationalised at the individual-level of the SEM - through provision of firstline psycho-social support for survivors and casework services to help survivors navigate the exclusionary justice system.

- **Casework Support through Firstline Psycho-social Care and Linkage to Other Services-** The foundation of feminist counselling and casework support is the provision of firstline psycho-social support with careful consideration of survivors' concerns and needs. Caseworkers, especially those based in the community itself, are in a strategic position to recognise and respond to the intersectional vulnerabilities of survivors. These vulnerabilities often shape the decision to disclose violence and seek formal recourse. Therefore, organisations emphasise meeting survivors at their individual 'starting points,' rather than expecting them to conform to a uniform and linear process. This approach ensures survivor-centred support and allows survivors to access justice in a manner and pace that is suitable and safe for them. As the Secretary of Deep Jyoti Jharkhand Vikas Kendra explained, the first meeting with survivors is crucial to establishing trust and addressing fears, especially in environments where disclosure has consequences:

  "We provide emotional support. When an incident happens, they get very scared. They're even afraid to tell their own family, worried it might affect their freedom of movement. We try to help them remove all these fears from their mind, making them feel safe and helping them trust us with information." At the same time, if survivors decide to pursue legal action, the ethics of feminist casework dictate that survivors are clearly informed of the hurdles and barriers that may arise through the course of the proceedings. Pursuing any legal recourse should be an independent decision for survivors and not an enforced action. She further elaborated, *"Even after filing an FIR, we need to orient them to reality- what could happen after. Economic situation, family pressure, community action- we handle this when we meet survivors individually."*

  As these reflections show, casework is not synonymous with formal reporting of GBV. Instead it creates a space for survivors to make informed and practical decisions about their next steps. To this end, casework intervention involves strengthening referral pathways. Organisations recognise that they cannot meet every single need or expectation of survivors, and must enlist the help of peers, CSO networks and formal stakeholders as well. But relevant referrals can only be made after assessing the varied risk posed to survivors. As the Head of Programmes for Urja Trust explained, referrals are especially crucial when providing support to survivors who have run away from home or have been trafficked: *"In the initial part of casework, during counselling, we try to understand where the person is coming from. Sometimes she has left her hometown and doesn't even know where she has landed. There are gaps in her story, and immediately the police process starts. We also tie up with other organisations to help. If the girl is from Bangladesh or the North East, we face language barriers, so we reach out to local organisations."*

Capacity Building of Community-Based Responders

Organisations working on access to justice recognised that in order to guide survivors sensitively through their individual justice journeys, it is necessary to first build the capacities of the grassroots teams to acknowledge survivors' intersecting vulnerabilities. Organisations within the cohort shared that capacity building of firstline counsellors, responders, leaders was an integral part of casework interventions. They shared that through the capacity building initiatives they are able to break the internalised biases within their teams and enable action that is in the best interest of survivors.

"If the survivor is queer or disabled, the stigma multiplies. Even within our own teams, sometimes the reflex is to treat them as separate, rather than just as survivors."- Secretary, Deep Jyoti Jharkhand Vikas Kendra, Jharkhand

"When survivors are trans or queer, we often face pushback from within the community. So we do internal training- making sure our own teams are sensitised before we engage outside, otherwise the harm continues." - Founder, Bheema Foundation, Uttar Pradesh

Direct Support to Survivors to Negotiate with Systems and Demand Justice- Filing a legal complaint is never easy for survivors. After careful contemplation, when survivors approach the CJS, they encounter contempt, disbelief, or outright dismissal from duty-bearers. Caseworkers therefore, step in to provide essential emotional and procedural support so survivors are not discouraged from seeking justice. Caseworkers also play a crucial role in safeguarding survivors' rights and ensuring that due process is followed. As participants noted, most survivors have little understanding of what follows formal reporting of GBV incidents, and require guided support to navigate the maze of legal proceedings.

"A lot of awareness happens in the follow-up process too. Once someone files a case, we check in, have they received their copy of the FIR, are they aware of court dates, do they need to speak to a lawyer? We find that people don't always understand what they're signing up for or what's next. So we support them in navigating the timeline." - Monitoring and Impact Assessment In-charge, DEEDS, Karnataka

"They [Police] might file an FIR, but we are the ones doing follow-up with the survivor, helping with medical reports, or arranging legal support. Sometimes, the survivor doesn't even understand what's been written in the FIR. In fact, sometimes the police write something completely different. Then we go with the survivor, read it with them, and if needed, help them file a correction statement." - Secretary, Deep Jyoti Jharkhand Vikas Kendra, Jharkhand

As the above discussions demonstrate, when survivors are unaware of legal processes, it can lead to documentation inconsistencies which can hurt their case. This creates space for institutions to dilute cases. Organisations have to continually stress that survivors have the legal right to read or have their statements read back to them before signing the FIR copy. Organisations at the grassroots also attempt to circumvent such institutional resistance by utilising available technologies like the Police Mitra app.

"We've trained women in our village to do reporting through the Police Mitra App. It's linked to the police department. They [survivors] can record statements in the local language and upload audio clips. The app itself has become a tool of awareness - women now understand that documentation matters."- Caseworker, Nav Bhartiya Nari Vikas Samiti, Uttar Pradesh

Despite providing meticulous handholding support to survivors, participants noted that formal reporting in cases of GBV in public spaces was a rarity. Survivors feel like they are being questioned and suspected, and not taken seriously by a system which hierarchies public space GBV as an "acceptable" form of violence. In the rare scenarios where cases are filed under IPC section 354 or 509, the legal processes are emotionally tumultuous and risky for survivors. The DEEDS team shared, in their experience, survivors had been forced to withdraw the case due to threats and monetary coercion.

It is important to note here that discussion on GBV in public spaces frequently extends to include institutional violence. Participants highlighted the institutional violence meted out by response systems actors like police, shelter homes, hostels, etc. They noted an overlap between GBV in public spaces and institutional violence given the publicness of response institutions. It is routinely observed but rarely acknowledged.

When offering casework services, such institutional lapses become especially noticeable. Organisations and caseworkers therefore become pivotal support systems not only for providing procedural guidance but also for demanding justice, transparency and accountability from legal actors. Participants shared that in cases of sexual violence perpetrated by duty-bearers, they undertook active fact-finding to verify inconsistent accounts and construct an evidence trail to support the survivor's case. These practice-based experiences show that support in GBV in public spaces cases often goes beyond legal action. It involves managing risks, demanding accountability for institutional failures, and creating an accessible support system for survivors when access to justice is uncertain and uneven.

Table 20. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Individual-level Stakeholders for Strengthening Responses to Violations

	Barriers	Facilitators
Girls, Women and Transgender Persons	• Structural differences such as caste and religious hierarchies, poverty and migration make mobilisation for awareness difficult • Competing family and work responsibilities of women makes sustainable engagement difficult • Political interference makes community mobilisation difficult • Community expects incentives from CSOs to participate in sessions	• Presence of women, girls and transgender leaders in the community • Existence of active collectives and peer groups • Presence of active ASHA and Anganwadi workers in the community • Awareness meeting seen by women and girls as a unique and rare opportunity for voicing their concerns and opinions • Knowledge regarding basic rights and laws seen as important and relevant
Survivors	• Stigma and fear of retaliation and isolation is a barrier to help-seeking • Poverty and lack of resources prevent help-seeking	• Resilience, courage, and ability to recognise and respond to violence in their own ways and take decisions • Identity factors that may help - socio-economic, caste, class, religion, education, sexuality, gender, geography • Relationship of trust between survivors and caseworkers

Table 20.1. Incremental Changes at the Individual-level that Strengthen Response to Violations

Identified Incremental Changes
Girls, Women and Transgender Persons • Women and girls regularly demand meetings • Women voice their questions and share their experiences and stories of violence during awareness sessions • Women identify issue of GBV in public spaces as a serious concern . **Survivors** • Feeling of self-blame among survivors reduces • Increased confidence among survivors to articulate their needs, concerns, and expectations from the justice process • Increased awareness among survivors of their rights, available support services, and avenues for legal recourse • Survivor demonstrates agency and informed and independent decision-making regarding available recourse • Survivors join and participate in local women's collectives • Survivors take steps to ensure violence does not reoccur • Survivors take on leadership roles and become-change makers within their community to support other survivors • Survivors recognise GBV in public spaces as a consequence of patriarchal structures and gender expectations

Identified Incremental Changes

Examples from the Discussion

- Multiple participants emphasised that casework engagements slowly help rebuild the survivor's confidence. Change is observed when survivors move from initial hesitation and reluctance to sharing their name at the first meeting to speaking openly and confidently about their experiences.
- The DEEDS Team observed, through sustained counselling and legal aid support, survivors who were initially reluctant to acknowledge sexual harassment or pursue legal action, developed greater clarity to access formal justice mechanisms and even file an FIR.
- The NEN Team shared that not all survivors pursue legal action. Exercising independent, informed decision-making means choosing if and how to engage with legal options, referrals or just using the safe space provided by the CSOs.
- Urja Trust shared that through sustained engagement with the survivors, they developed a structural understanding of GBV, recognising it as a shared and systemic issue rather than an isolated personal experience.

Relationship-Level

Risks: Enforcement of strict gender norms within the family

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Enhancing Safety and Reducing Isolation of the Family to Enable them to Support the Survivor

Community-based interventions facilitate dialogue and meetings with survivors' families to discuss possible paths forward. While survivors are often present, these engagements primarily centre families as key stakeholders. The aim is to lessen the influence of social norms and expectations by creating space for open discussion about violence, sharing accurate information, addressing fears, and building family support for the survivor and her decisions.

- **Family Intervention Meetings-** Family engagement functions as a critical intervention point in survivor support, particularly since familial expectations, social norms, and community pressures shape survivors' decision to report violence. Meetings with the family are often conducted in the presence of survivors, and aim to address the risks for GBV in public spaces emerging from violence and control in the private space.

  The Head of Programmes from Urja Trust, Maharashtra shared family interventions were a critical intervention point for their organisation given their work with runaway and homeless youth and young women, as well as trafficking survivors. In such complex scenarios, Urja Trust mediates with the families and focuses on rebuilding connection, and based on the survivors wishes, reintegrating the survivor back with the family following negotiations for non-violence. She elaborated: *"In the cases involving survivors of trafficking or child survivors who have now become adults and have been referred to us,we provide less legal support and focus more on family strengthening and mental health."*

  The intervention does not override the decisions of the survivor, instead it seeks to equip the family with tools to understand the survivors experience. They deepen the engagement with families, particularly with the male members, through the lens of mental health, and their roles and responsibilities in supporting the survivor. The Head of Programmes from Urja Trust further shared: *"Sometimes we see a shift in family members. Because when we engage with them, we also recognise that particularly men or other stakeholders, there is no organisation that works with them. So mental health, men's mental health...So there are very few spaces that they can access. So often when we make them a stakeholder and we engage in counselling with the family, with the children and with whoever is involved, they are better able to understand because they are being*

considered, being given importance. When we talk about the cycle of violence, they also understand where they [the men] are placed."

Taken together, these accounts illustrate how family-focused interventions extend beyond legal handholding to address mental health, stigma, and the interpersonal family dynamics. By engaging families as part of the response, interventions work to reduce harm, support survivor-led decision-making, and enable longer-term reintegration and safety.

Table 21. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Relationship-Level Stakeholders for Strengthening Responses to Violations

Barriers	Facilitators
• Family is fearful of intimidation and socio-economic consequences • Families drop out of legal process due to poverty and lack of resources • Families are themselves violent and have poor relationship with survivors due to patriarchy and transphobia • Families who come from marginalised caste or religious identities are fearful of further social persecution • Families resist engagement because they do not consider GBV in public spaces as a serious enough issue that warrants formal action	• Families have good political connections or hold positions of power • Families are economically stronger • Families are upper caste or belong to dominant religious groups • Families that are accepting of transgender family members

Table 21.1. Incremental Changes at the Relationship-Level that Strengthen Response to Violations

Identified Incremental Changes
• Family does not interfere in the survivor's decisions • Family provides financial and social support to the survivor when required • Family takes actions to protect the survivor and keep her safe • Family accompanies survivors in the legal processes **Examples from the Discussion** • Urja Trust has observed household decisions begin to involve the survivor and prioritise their best-interests, such as moving localities due to concerns about community rejection, safety, and social repercussions.

Community-Level

Risks: Dominance of patriarchal community governance structures, Institutional apathy in response systems

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Shifting Attitudes of Traditional Institutions Towards Viewing Gender-Based Violence as a Rights Violation

In the rural context, traditional institutions like the *Samajik Panch, Tribal Panchayats, Caste Panchayats, Village Councils or local committees, and Village Autonomous Councils* form a group of crucial alternate dispute resolution bodies. These institutions are constituted on the basis of caste or ethnic affiliations and consist of male leaders. This can bias decisions in favour of perpetrators based on their social locations. Intervening at the site of traditional institutions in the community, means arranging dialogues and meetings with these stakeholders. The objective is to shift their perceptions on gender, gender-based discrimination and inform them of their own roles and responsibilities in breaking the cycle of violence.

- **Gender Sensitisation and Awareness Meetings with Traditional Institutional Functionaries on Issues of Gender, Rights, GBV and Support Services-** Cases of GBV are often taken to traditional institutions by survivors and families seeking redressal. Given the proximity of these institutions to the survivors and families, they are easily accessible and provide speedy resolution in GBV cases. Thus, along with formal systems, local traditional institutions form an integral part of the justice infrastructure.

  It is therefore important for organisations to initiate dialogue and meetings with these functionaries to ensure resolutions are in the best interest of survivors. Participants shared that senior and high-ranked members of the community are part of these institutions. These institutional functionaries hold great power and influence over the community. Through their practice they uphold customary laws and practices as well as dominant gender norms and patriarchal expectations. This has direct negative consequences for survivors and their families.

To mitigate these risks, organisations actively and regularly engage with traditional institutions through perspective-building and sensitisation meetings. This engagement is intended to trigger a chain of positive effects, whereby the examples set by these traditional actors reduces acceptability of GBV within the community. Reflecting on this approach, the Executive Director of NEN shared the contextual example of Dorbar Shnongs or neighbourhood councils from Meghalaya. She explained, *"These traditional institutions are called, Dorbar Shnongs. Dorbar is like Darbar,a Hindi word they have used. Shnongs are traditional localities or neighbourhood communities... We also call them for meetings because they are very influential. If the head of the Dorbar Shnong says, 'Stop violence against women,' people will listen. So the interface between women's groups and traditional institutions is essential to mould public opinion."*

The Project Co-ordinator from ANANDI, Gujarat shared a different approach to the issue. They focus on perspective-building and sensitisation of other village-level key persons like police local leaders, who can lessen the influence of traditional institutions. Meetings held with these key persons also involve women community members and youth leaders in order to amplify their voices and concerns. She explained their work in detail, *"Even today, in many villages, social panchayats (samajik panch) make decisions that have no authority under the law. Despite this, they adopt illegal methods such as collecting fines of ₹2–3 lakh from people, beating them, and publicly summoning and humiliating them. On this issue, we begin a process of conversation and dialogue together with the police, Suraksha Setu Society, and local leaders. In these meetings, we clearly explain what the actual law of the country says and that such decisions made by social panchayats have no legal standing. Young leaders also actively participate in these discussions, so that they can understand the law and people's rights, and raise their voices in their communities in support of justice and constitutional values."*

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Enabling Stakeholders in Local Governance Institutions to Respond to Violence in a Survivor-Centred Manner

This protective mechanism involves supporting local governance bodies and their functionaries to work in a survivor-centred manner and encourage help seeking. Interventions working at the grassroots demand action and accountability from local governance bodies to ensure they actively implement their mandate on GBV reduction.

- **Strengthening GBV Response by Setting Up Panchayat- or Ward-level Committees and Training Local Elected Representatives-** Participants shared that they offer training sessions and technical support aimed at strengthening the capacity of the frontline community to act on GBV. It involves enhancing the capacity of governance structures to respond to GBV through advising on meeting agendas, moderating discussions on confronting GBV. For instance, Vishakha in Rajasthan works to strengthen the Panchayat's response to violence by supporting the functioning of Violence Prevention Committees that are functional in select blocks of Rajasthan. These committees comprise community key persons like village leaders, Anganwadi Workers, ANMs, and Panchayat officials.

  Well-aware and supportive local governance actors have a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what constitutes violence and safety across public spaces. It also means, they advocate and actively participate in the co-creation of safety for survivors, regardless of where, how, and who commits the violence. Participants shared that supportive functionaries from community support networks are able to actively identify incidents of violence, and direct survivors towards appropriate support services.

  "We include village-level functionaries in our awareness work , panchayat members, ASHA workers, police. We keep it informal, but consistent. Once they're sensitised, they become watchdogs themselves , they call us when cases come up"- Counsellor, Deep Jyoti Jharkhand Vikas Kendra, Jharkhand

  "We're also training panchayat members and youth groups now. The idea is to get the ecosystem aware. If a case happens, someone in the system , if not the police , should be able to respond" - Project Manager, Justice & Development Foundation, Uttar Pradesh

As the above narrative emphasises, community support networks involve a whole web of formal and informal individuals and institutions who can step in to support survivors, especially when formal systems are at a distance or inaccessible. The key stakeholders include ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers, panchayat members and police, or any community key persons or other local decision-makers who can influence the perceptions and behaviours within the larger community. This reinforces the principle that violence reduction requires community ownership, not moral judgement or individual blame. It requires an ecosystem approach.

"You need to strengthen the ecosystem. It is not just the responsibility of women or the women's organisations only.... identify your allies, the key stakeholders and engage with the ecosystem"- Executive Director, NEN, Assam

A supportive neighbourhood, peer group and wider community help redefine the values around gender, power and violence; break the stigma and isolation that follows disclosure. Regular engagement with the community, community mobilisation, sustained awareness, and sensitisation play a vital role in transforming the attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions surrounding GBV. Representatives observe a natural progression: a set of aware independent individuals evolve into an informal support network, and in the long run become a community of allies committed to safety and justice for survivors.

"...our aim is to build an understanding... to ensure that people gain awareness so that when we talk about safety or violence in these spaces, they are able to identify it and deepen their own understanding. It is also about making them more sensitive and aware. And secondly, in the long term, the idea is that they become allies with us in working towards safer public spaces, and that those who are service providers understand their role, take responsibility, and learn how they can offer support in the larger ecosystem."- Head, Programmes, Urja Trust, Maharashtra

Strengthening the Accountability of Formal Systems to Visibilise and Prioritise GBV in Public Spaces as an Important Issue

Survivors of GBV in public spaces are often met with apathy or procedural indifference from formal response systems. This is shaped by narrow institutional mandates and legal and policy frameworks that lack a contextual and intersectional understanding of the evolving nature of public GBV. Feminist organisations intervene to strengthen systems' accountability through two key strategies: sustained capacity-building of duty-bearers and technically supporting the implementation of protective laws, such as on workplace harassment.

- **Trainings with Duty-bearers on Laws and Processes, their Roles and Responsibilities, Gender-sensitive and Survivor-centred Response Protocols-** Capacity building and training of duty-bearers involves both a transformation of personal attitudes and institutional practices. It involves an improvement in skills and technical know-how. These engagements take multiple forms, ranging from longer workshops to short training sessions, consultations, and even informal meetings. Participants shared that GBV continues to be treated as a low-priority area within response institutions, resulting in limited allocation of time and budgetary resources for sustained capacity-building efforts. As a result, CSOs often step in to bridge persistent knowledge and information gaps within the system.

  Organisations work across all levels of the response system, engaging with a wide range of duty-bearers - from police and healthcare providers to DLSA and WCD officials. Participants shared that training is used as an entry point to initiate conversations on gender and the many manifestations of GBV across both public and private spaces. The objective is to shift the responsibility for preventing and responding to GBV away from individuals and towards institutions. However, the persistent gaps in a foundational understanding of gender and GBV among duty-bearers, often results in a lackadaisical approach to implementing laws and policies designed for women's safety.

  In response to these gaps, the capacity building sessions are anchored in clarifying the letter of the law and discussing the provisions of legal and policy frameworks like Criminal Amendment Act, POSH, POCSO Act, etc. More importantly, equal weightage is given to peer learning and practical guidance on case handling, referrals, legal proceedings, and gender-sensitive response protocols.

  "We train duty-bearers on gender and women's laws,POSH, POCSO, handling issues, and case studies. We engage with other NGOs, and department officials also participate. The work is done repeatedly, so we explain to whom the cases should be referred to. We discuss how to handle cases involving women and children, and how to communicate with them." - Monitoring and Impact Assessment In-charge, DEEDS, Karnataka

  Participants emphasised that training and sessions with duty-bearers are recurring activities since personnel transfers are common creating persistence gaps in knowledge, coordination, and practice. The need for regular training and refresher sessions is particularly evident in cases involving survivors with specific vulnerabilities or experiences of violence, where a standardised response can cause harm. The training is meant to help duty-bearers to move away from their assumptions and biases and towards measured survivor-centred responses. A participant shared, *"... Staff who work in public-facing services,those who work everyday in public spaces in some capacity have a certain degree of accountability. [When they see young women in transit modes] their instinct is to call the family after asking for identity, assuming it is a missing person. So we have to speak with them about what other processes can be followed if the person is an adult. This includes informing them about government services such as OSCs, what can be done if it is a case of violence, and the basic sensitivity and protocols that should be followed."*

  Organisations also use the mandated sexual harassment at workplace trainings as a strategic entry point to engage with duty-bearers on different issues. Participants shared how POSH training sessions have become a platform to discuss more than the scope of the POSH law– they use the training to talk about GBV in public spaces and workplaces and emphasise on the severity and many manifestations of violence. They also give information about the possibility of criminal action against sexual harassment.

"When we do trainings under POSH Act, we also talk about disrobing, voyeurism, definitions of rape and consent. We make a conscious effort, because sexual harassment at workplace cannot be addressed only through provisions of the POSH Act. It is important to be equally aware of applicable BNS sections...Gender sensitisation with regards to women and access to justice is important in order to understand the systemic barriers which women face." - Executive Director, NEN, Assam

The Founder of Bheema Foundation highlighted that POSH trainings are also an opportunity to address structural inequalities, particularly caste, that are often rendered invisible within workplace sexual harassment frameworks. He shared, *"In Jhansi, we approached more than ten institutions and helped set up ICs in them. I myself am a member of about five IC committees. To sensitise all the staff, we developed a training module that is conducted over four sessions. In addition, we created an SC/ST toolkit to address caste-based discrimination. It is important to understand that violence or neglect against a woman simply because she belongs to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe is unacceptable. Our aim is to ensure that violence does not occur, whether it is because someone is a woman or because of their caste."*

Strengthening Implementation of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Law- For organisations working on access to justice, the effective implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (POSH Act), 2013 is critical to addressing GBV. However, participants highlighted that implementation of the POSH Act and compliance continues to remain deeply ineffective. In both formal and informal sectors, women are not aware of what constitutes workplace violations, what the POSH Act entails and the legal redressal mechanisms available within it. Awareness about the POSH redressal mechanism and creating safe work environments is the task of the employers. While many formal establishments have instituted ICs, informal workers have no viable complaints mechanism since Local Committees are either not functional or have not been constituted. Weak information flows, administrative hurdles and lack of clear procedural rules exacerbates these implementation gaps and keeps speedy redressal inaccessible for workers.

Participants from SMS in Maharashtra emphasised that even where administrative structures have been established (WCD is the Nodal Agency for POSH), they often fail to effectively monitor the functioning of ICs and LCs.

"There is no fixed system within the nodal agency (WCD) to ensure that information properly reaches women. And even when a complaint is filed, the committee functions so weakly that justice is almost never delivered."- Co-ordinator, SMS, Maharashtra

In response to these systemic failures, organisations have adopted a dual strategy of sensitisation and structural intervention. Many organisations from the cohort work closely with the duty-bearers responsible for POSH implementation- like the WCD, IC committee chairpersons and members, and Local Committee members. They focus their interface and engagement with these functionaries to sensitise them towards the challenges of the women in the workforce and advocate for gender-sensitive and survivor-centred handling of cases.

The organisations step in to bridge knowledge gaps within the institutions themselves. Employers often lack information on basic procedures and compliance rules required to enforce the POSH Act. Participants emphasised that conducting detailed capacity building on the elements of the Act and duty-bearers' roles has positive outcomes on the implementation of the Act.

"Members were not even aware of the POSH Act, what their role is, what an Internal Committee (IC) is, the time limit for registering a complaint, or how to navigate cases of harassment. We explain all of this, especially to duty-bearers. Even WCD officials often do not know how committees are to be formed. After filing the RTI, three DLSAs in three districts have constituted Internal Committees under the District Court."- Monitoring and Impact Assessment In-charge, DEEDS, Karnataka

Discussions indicated that CSOs are often first to approach formal institutions to introduce and explain the POSH mandate. The participant from DEEDS further shared that the initial contact with formal stakeholders becomes the basis for future sustained engagement on the issue. She explained, *"Most of them were not aware of who the external members should be, so they began to*

find that out. In the next meeting, they asked participants to write down which topics they wanted more information on. They also started asking where complaints could be formally registered."

As the narrative suggests, initial contact with formal stakeholders often becomes the basis for long-term engagement on the issue. Participants shared that they are frequently nominated as external members of Internal Committees (ICs) because of their expertise. They also noted that the POSH Act mandates regular awareness sessions for employees. As a result, several organisations within the cohort, such as SMS, NEN, DURGA, ANANDI, Sangini, Justice and Development Foundation, Bheema Foundation, and Sajag India, are regularly called upon as technical experts to design and deliver training programmes for Internal Committees and staff.

Subsequently, organisations have achieved success in conducting capacity building and awareness sessions on the POSH Act across several private and government settings like MNCs, government departments, schools, universities, retail, malls, hospitals, etc– any setting where women are employed.

"We conducted a baseline survey, carried out training and orientation sessions, and developed materials based on the endline assessment. This work includes all government and private sector departments, from state department offices to every place where women are working. The Women and Child Development Department (WCD) is the nodal agency, and the CEO is the nodal officer. Along with them, the district administration, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, malls, showrooms and training institutes are also involved, meaning, wherever women are working." - Programme Head, Sangini, Madhya Pradesh

Organisations find that developing IEC materials, like posters, leaflets or booklets, is useful in engaging with employers, and to improve the staff awareness and visibility of POSH redressal mechanisms. The IEC materials are also developed to answer the frequently asked questions on sexual harassment in a simple and straightforward manner, but organisations also use the IEC materials as a space to discuss and spread awareness on relevant IPC/BNS sections that may pertain to more acute forms of GBV.

Table 22. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Community-level Stakeholders for Strengthening Responses to Violations

	Barriers	Facilitators
Traditional Institutions Panchayats	• Beliefs regarding GBV as "private matter" • Entrenched caste, religious, and gender biases act as significant barriers to entry • Negative political messaging tying women's autonomy to community honour undoes sensitisation efforts • Prioritisation of community prestige and honour over survivors' rights and safety • Political propaganda along religious and caste lines often leads community leaders to further insulate their own communities	• Presence of gender-sensitive leaders within governance institutions • Use of basic needs related agenda to find strategic grounds for entry and rapport building • Physical proximity of CSOs to communities and cadre of active grassroots workers
Duty-Bearers	• Institutional deprioritisation of GBV as a concern • Caste, religious, and gender related biases of personnel • Unwillingness of higher cadres to provide time and opportunities for training and other engagements • Training is not institutionalised or budgeted for and, therefore, sporadic • High work pressure and competing responsibilities of personnel prevents participation • Persistent expectation of incentivised trainings through gifts • Frequent transfer of officials, attrition of staff due to low pay hinders long-term engagement • Bureaucracy, opacity, and corruption • Lack of multistakeholder coordinated perspective	• Presence of proactive, gender-sensitive leadership/nodal officers within departments • Existence of government/court guidelines defining stakeholders' role, procedures and protocols for sensitive GBV response • Government/court directives mandating timely implementation of laws and compliance to rules and safety standards • Open and collaborative processes where expert opinion is invited • When issue of GBV in public spaces is prioritised strategically by state departments because of targeted crimes against women campaigns/initiatives/programmes

Table 22.1. Incremental Changes at the Community-level that Strengthen Response to Violations

Identified Incremental Changes
Traditional Institutions/Panchayats • Panchayat/council representatives refer GBV cases to CSOs and other support services • Panchayat/council representatives provide rights-based resolution and do not force settlements in cases of GBV • Panchayat/council representatives do not issue restrictive diktats against women and girls • Panchayat/council representatives do not inflict punitive violence on young people of diverse gender/caste identities **Duty-Bearers** • High-ranked officials participate in CSO led trainings and initiative • Private and government employers and institutions initiate requests for implementing POSH policy • Internal Committees and Local Committees are set up with the stipulated composition • Institutions initiate requests for implementing training on laws, policies, gender sensitisation and GBV • FIRs are recorded accurately in the survivor's words, are read back to them and filled under the relevant legal sections pertaining to GBV in public spaces • Departmental GBV-related Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) are established and followed by trained duty-bearers • Timely multistakeholder referrals are implemented and documented • Policing and patrolling officials provide emergency response to GBV in public space cases **Examples from the Discussion** • Through sustained engagement, NEN brought previously absent local council leaders into community forums, establishing institutional presence and opening pathways for accountability. • Following the POSH orientation and training from the DEEDS team, private and public departments began forming ICs, identifying external members, proactively requesting information for future meetings.

Societal-Level

Risks: Laws, policies, and schemes are paternalistic and rooted in gender binary

PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

Embedding Feminist, Rights-based and Gender-inclusive Principles in Legal and Policy Frameworks to Respond to GBV

Across the cohort, there was a broad and layered interpretation of the advocacy agenda. For the participants advocacy entails 'moulding opinions' within the system through dialogues and follow-ups with local-level functionaries, and simultaneous negotiations and discussion with state and national-level decision-makers to transform law and policy. They use the power of networks and active network building to advocate for their shared agendas.

- **Technical Support to Law and Policy Makers for Creating Stronger GBV Prevention and Protection and Networking-** Advocacy efforts with the state, national and international level to change, revise or reform laws and policy around GBV are usually led through organisational networks and pressure groups. These transformatory efforts are seeking to expand the legal recognition of GBV in public spaces, and build a response system that leaves no survivor behind. However, the consensus in the room was that these efforts are time and resource intensive, and very often outcomes are seen only in the long run. For instance, a participant shared:*"2-3 years back, Maharashtra Women and Child Development Department was developing a state policy for*

women. In which comprehensively, all sorts of discrimination and violence was being addressed, including public spaces, near schools, on transport and everything. To develop feedback, review it, it was the civil society and organisations [who were involved]. It has not come into effect yet."

While the Executive Director of NEN shared a success story where years of sustained advocacy efforts by feminist groups culminated in a law against witch hunting in Assam. *"Local interface through dialogues with relevant government agencies is very crucial. NEN along with local groups was quite instrumental in bringing out the Assam Witch Hunting Act. We made frequent submissions to establish local and internal committees under the POSH Act in Assam. We have been able to bring about some changes in implementation of the PWDVA. Currently, we are advocating for a revised state policy for women in Assam."*

Table 23. Barriers and Facilitators to Working with Societal-level Stakeholders for Strengthening Responses to Violations

Barriers	Facilitators
• Law and policy development process are resource-intensive, requiring continuous time and human resource investments from CSOs • Weak translation of expert inputs into law and policy, discourages sustained CSO engagement • Over-regulation of the NGO sector and budgeting constraints preventing effective convening opportunities • Conflicting agenda among different conveners	• Presence of 'champion' officials within departments • Numerically strong networks who have a shared agenda and are well-resourced

Table 23.1. Incremental Changes at the Societal-level that Strengthen Response to Violations

Identified Incremental Changes
• Laws and policies institutionalise and operationalise multistakeholder response protocols • Improved coverage and simplified application process for support services and victim compensation schemes for survivors and increased budgets for the same • Networks regularly mobilise and collectively raise common issues • Inputs shared by CSO networks are successfully incorporated into policy

DISCUSSION

This research study maps and examines civil society interventions addressing GBV in public spaces in India. It seeks to understand the genesis of these interventions by tracing the motivations, triggers, and contextual factors that led organisations to engage with GBV in public spaces as a programmatic focus. It also intends to examine how organisations conceptualise the distinct typology of 'GBV in public spaces.' The study also identifies the range of risk factors that drive such violence and documents the diverse strategies being adopted for its prevention and response. In doing so, it pays close attention to how organisations interpret the problem and the assumptions that underpin their interventions. The study delves into different approaches such as planning, infrastructure, and transportation; transformation of gender norms; promotion of livelihoods; and strengthening response to violations, that are brought together in practice, with the aim of building a more comprehensive and grounded understanding of the field.

An exploratory, multi-stage methodology was adopted, with each stage informing the next. The study began with a landscape mapping of organisations and interventions through an online survey, followed by short written questionnaires to develop more detailed programme profiles. In the final stage, organisations were grouped based on their primary approach and engaged through in-person participatory consultations. These discussions explored programme histories, practitioners' understandings of GBV in public spaces, and the mapping of risks across individual, relational, community, and societal levels of the Social-Ecological Model (SEM). They also examined the protective strategies employed, how these are operationalised through field-level activities, and the barriers and facilitators encountered in practice. The analysis uses inductive approaches to explore programme origins and conceptualisations and deductive approaches to examine risks and interventions using the SEM framework.

Motivation and Genesis

The inductive analysis identified patterns in how organisations initiated new programmes or reoriented existing initiatives to address GBV in public spaces. These shifts often clustered around 'critical events,' such as the strategic litigation following the sexual assault of Bhanwari Devi, or the legislative response to the Delhi gang rape, showing how nationally visible cases of GBV in public spaces become defining moments for organisational mobilisation (Gangoli et al., 2020; Lodhia, 2015). In other cases, commitment to the cause is inspired through personal experiences of founders, especially as they are repeatedly exposed to similar violence. These motivations are also reflected in a growing body of literature that show how survivors often become changemakers themselves, driven by the desire to transform personal harm into collective action, challenge structural causes of violence, and support other survivors through direct action (Wilson & Goodman, 2021).

Methodologies such as women's safety audits, and large scale surveys on victimisation and perceptions of safety threw light on how spatial factors influenced perpetration of gender-based violence and perception of safety. Countering unsafe environmental design became the entry point for several organisations. Past research shows that from the late 1980s onward, safety audits and global urban safety initiatives translated women's everyday experiences of fear into actionable infrastructure and governance demands, particularly in the Global South (Fraser et al., 2017; Habitat, 2024; Viswanath & Mehrotra, 2007; Verma et al., 2013; Whitzman et al., 2014). Further, many organisations in the cohort originated their intervention targeting GBV in public based on their on-ground learnings underlining the pervasiveness of the issue, especially among youth and informal worker groups. Global and Indian evidence demonstrates that youth-focused work through sports, education, and arts-based engagement became an important entry point to address gender-based violence by shifting gender norms, reducing acceptance of violence, and challenging inequitable masculinities (Bankar et al., 2018; Das et al., 2012; Rodriguez, 2024). Similarly, existing research also indicates that organisations engaging with informal and migrant workers often came to recognise GBV in public spaces because labour struggles exposed violence as structurally embedded in everyday work environments through routine harassment, policing, exclusion from infrastructure, and unsafe transit, thereby framing public-space violence as a condition of livelihood and urban governance (WIEGO, 2018; Hyun, 2022). Another

motivation for many programmes to shift to focus on to violence in public spaces was the experience of the frontline workers, who encountered persistent institutional apathy while supporting survivors. Organisations treated this frustration as an entry point to diversify their interventions, a pattern supported by evidence showing that frontline GBV workers' distress over systemic failures often coexist with, and even deepen, their commitment to structural and institutional reform (Crivatu et al., 2021; Bell et al., 2003).

Private-Public and Strategic Foregrounding

Another set of themes gleaned from the inductive analysis pertained to how the programme representatives understood the category of 'gender-based violence in public spaces,' especially when confronted with questions such as what places constitute the public, or what forms of violence are seen as public-space GBV. The findings showed that organisations approach "public space" less as a fixed location and more as a condition produced at the intersection of various factors related to ownership, control, discipline, design, and presence of people and activities. Thus, rather than being an absolute place, the public lies on a continuum- *a degree of publicness*. This aligns with what feminist geographers have long argued that space is socially produced and organised through gendered power rather than functioning as a neutral backdrop (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999). From this perspective, violence cannot be neatly separated into public and private spheres, as power, surveillance, and regulation operate across homes, streets, workplaces, and community spaces in varying degrees (Pratt, 1992; Blunt & Rose, 1994). The findings reflect this insight by shifting attention away from *where* violence occurs to *how* certain spaces enable, legitimise, or normalise it, and who is accountable for it. *Foregrounding publicness* also emerges as a strategic political move. Feminist scholars have shown that framing violence as "private" historically removed it from public scrutiny and state responsibility, while framing it as public makes it visible, governable, and contestable (MacKinnon, 1989; Pateman, 1988). Organisations in this study similarly use publicness to reposition violence as a matter of infrastructure, planning, and institutional accountability. At the same time, feminist work cautions against treating public space as uniform. Urban public spaces are shaped by anonymity, mobility, and density, while rural public spaces are structured by familiarity, visibility, and community surveillance, producing different forms of risk and control (Datta, 2016; Phadke, 2007). Recognising these variations is crucial for understanding how violence operates and how responsibility can be assigned.

Identifying Risks vis-a-vis the SEM

The framework used for deductively analysing the data was the Social Ecological Model (SEM), as adopted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from Heise (1998) and (Dahlberg & Krug, 2006). The Social Ecological Model is considered the foremost model to study complex phenomena such as gender-based violence due to its layered and multi-dimensional nature that allows for risk factors to be mapped across various actors - including individuals, families, communities, and society at large. The SEM allows us to understand plausible pathways, correlations, and points of influence, which can further guide research into establishing multiple causalities. The SEM was used for the analysis at various junctures of answering the research questions - mapping the risk factors, understanding the protective factors instituted, documenting the activities undertaken and the stakeholders involved, the barriers and facilitators at the level of each stakeholder category, and finally, the incremental changes seen at various levels indicating progress. At an earlier stage of the research, four dominant *dimensions* of intervention had emerged, indicating the central approach through which the problem is addressed- Inclusive planning, infrastructure and transportation, transforming gender and social norms, promoting public participation through livelihood, and strengthening responses to GBV. The SEM was used to embed the data in these four dimensions, in order to understand how each of these dimensions addresses the risks at various levels in diverse manners.

At the individual level, seven risk factors were identified for victimisation and three factors were identified for perpetration. Existing literature provides uneven but important empirical grounding for individual-level risk factors associated with victimisation. Among these, **young age** has the strongest and most consistent evidence base derived from large-scale, probability-sampled surveys in India. Nationally representative studies clearly demonstrate higher prevalence of public-space harassment and violence among girls and young women aged 15-25, particularly students and young commuters. This establishes age as a statistically tested risk factor (Jagori & UN Women, 2011; UN Women & ICRW, 2013). In contrast, while **being informal or migrant workers** is

widely recognised as heightening exposure to public-space violence, the evidence here is largely based on sectoral studies, qualitative research, and mixed-methods analyses rather than nationally representative probability samples (Hardt et al., 2023; Kabir et al., 2025). Similarly, **experiencing homelessness** has strong empirical associations with sexual violence in public and semi-public spaces in Western contexts using population-level data (Hudson et al., 2010). Indian evidence remains primarily qualitative, documenting pervasive exposure rather than statistically estimated risk (Bhattacharya, 2022). For **identifying as transgender**, robust probability-based victimisation data exists in Western contexts, showing markedly higher rates of violent crime compared to cisgender populations (Flores et al., 2021). In India and South Asia, however, evidence relies on large-scale surveillance surveys and qualitative studies that document high prevalence of violence but do not allow direct comparison with the general population (NACO, 2021; UNDP et al., 2018; UN Women, 2023). **Being from 'lower' caste or being Muslim** similarly emerge as critical axes of vulnerability in public spaces, with strong qualitative, legal, and movement-based documentation showing targeted and punitive forms of public violence against Dalit and Muslim women (Navsarjan Trust (India) et al., 2013; Sabharwal & Sonalkar, 2015; Desai & Temsah, 2014; Choudhary, 2022). Finally, factors such as **lacking legal awareness and knowledge regarding systems** are consistently identified across multi-city and comparative studies as correlates of underreporting and persistence of public harassment, though they are more often analysed as enabling conditions than independently tested risk factors (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Allen et al., 2022). For perpetration, the strongest and most consistent individual-level evidence link is to **gender attitudes and masculine norms**, rather than to social identity alone. This is to say that men who endorse patriarchal beliefs around authority, entitlement, and control over women, and who internalise hypermasculine ideals of dominance and sexual entitlement, are significantly more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes and to perpetrate physical and sexual violence (Flood & Pease, 2009; Jewkes et al., 2014; Santana et al., 2006). Most of these associations have been tested in the context of domestic violence and intimate partner violence, but may be expanded to GBV in public spaces based on the understanding that similar impulses influence violence irrespective of context.

At the relationship level, evidence links **family enforcement of gender norms, exposure to violence in the home, and control over women's labour and mobility** to heightened risk of gender-based violence in public spaces, primarily through socialisation and constraint pathways. Studies from South Asia and other LMICs show that restrictive family norms around girls' mobility and work, coupled with childhood exposure to domestic violence, are associated with reduced agency for women in public spaces and with men's later endorsement of entitlement, control, and harassment beyond the household (Borker, 2021; Fulu et al., 2013). These relationships have been tested mainly through qualitative studies, cross-sectional surveys, and quasi-experimental designs examining mobility, labour participation, and violence attitudes rather than reduction in GBV directly.

At the community level, five interrelated risk factors were identified that sustain gender-based violence in public spaces. Existing literature provides strong grounding for these community-level risks. Among these, **poor, unsafe, and exclusionary public infrastructure** has the most consistently documented association with public-space harassment and violence across contexts. Multi-city safety audits, urban surveys, and transport studies show that inadequate lighting, sanitation, walkways, and public transport heighten fear, restrict women's mobility, and create conditions of isolation or anonymity that facilitate harassment. (Jagori & UN Women, 2011; UN Women & ICRW, 2013; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014). **The acceptance and trivialisation of public-space violence by community members and bystanders** similarly emerges as a critical risk factor, with qualitative studies and intervention research demonstrating how the normalisation of harassment reduces informal guardianship and reinforces perpetrator impunity (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017). Evidence on the role of **patriarchal community governance structures**, such as caste councils and customary bodies, is particularly strong in rural, tribal, and caste-segregated contexts. Ethnographic and movement-based research documents systematic regulation of women's mobility and suppression of reporting (Navsarjan Trust (India) et al., 2013; Desai & Temsah, 2014; Choudhary, 2022). **Institutional apathy within local response systems**, including police and courts, is consistently shown to entrench underreporting and repeat victimisation through victim-blaming and delay, based largely on qualitative and administrative evidence (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; UN Women, 2023). Finally, **exclusionary workplace conditions and uneven policy implementation,** particularly in informal and public-facing work, are widely documented to displace women into

more precarious public environments increasing their exposure to violence (WIEGO, 2018).

At the societal level, the literature consistently frames gender-based violence in public spaces as emerging from **structural and normative conditions** that enable violence rather than from directly testable individual associations. Feminist urban scholarship shows that **male-centric and universalist design of public spaces** systematically marginalises women, transgender persons, people with disabilities, and those without fixed residence, producing masculinised environments where women's presence is curtailed and exposure to harassment increases (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014; Phadke et al., 2011). Legal and policy analyses further demonstrate that **gender-exclusionary and gender-blind laws and GBV response frameworks** including uneven criminal protections, conservative welfare-oriented schemes signal whose safety the state prioritises, thereby normalising public-space violence against marginalised genders (Narrain & Gupta, 2011; Verma et al., 2013). Sociological and public-health research on **hegemonic masculinity** shows how dominant masculine norms circulating through media, peer cultures, and politics legitimise aggression, sexual entitlement, and control over women's mobility in public life (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015). In South Asia, **cultural and political patriarchy, caste hierarchies, and communalism** operate as society-wide regimes of power that sanction public disciplining of women, particularly Dalit and Muslim women, through violence framed as protection of honour or community boundaries (Guru, 1995; Desai & Temsah, 2014; Choudhary, 2022). Finally, political-economy and conflict literature shows that **precarity, informality, migration, and militarisation** compel women and gender-diverse persons into unsafe public spaces while eroding institutional protections, making public-space GBV a predictable outcome of structural inequality rather than an aberration (Kabeer, 2012; Murphy et al., 2024).

While the objective of this study was not to evaluate any interventions but to systematically document them, we also attempt to scope whether any of these interventions have been studied to understand their effectiveness. We see this as an important exercise, as it can encourage further research where there are gaps. Promising interventions captured through our landscaping may be tested for efficacy. Where effective interventions already exist, potential for upscaling can be further explored. Additionally, given our learnings regarding the private-public space continuum, we are also careful not to critique evidence on the basis of where they are tested, but rather how their learnings can be expanded to test newer hypotheses that are based on increasing degrees of publicness. We shall also be examining the scope for organisations to expand their expected outcomes and indicators to record how their interventions have an impact not just inside the home, but as publicness increases.

Protective Factors Instituted through Inclusive Planning, Infrastructure, and Transport

Risk factors that are rooted in infrastructural gaps are the most directly addressed by location-focused interventions. These interventions are mostly aimed at spaces that lie in the built environment outside the home, where degree of publicness is higher in terms of ownership, control, access, and participation. Based on this, the pool of interventions is where efficacy can be assessed most directly for GBV in public spaces. From the perspective of instituting infrastructure and mobility-related protections, organisations implement various strategies across the individual, community, and societal levels of the SEM. Specifically, these efforts focus on: **(1) Equipping at-risk groups to identify infrastructure and transport gaps and demand accountability (2) Facilitating access to safe and functional public infrastructure (3) Improving natural surveillance and increasing the number of 'eyes on the street' (4) Developing and promoting gender inclusive standards and practices for design and planning public spaces**

Many of these strategies rely on participatory approaches that mobilise community data on public safety and access. Existing literature suggests that data collection techniques, such as safety audits and crowdsourced reporting, enable women and transgender people to be recognised as experts in their own right (Action Aid International, 2013, pg. 14). Such approaches help build salience around GBV as a community-wide issue, lead to improvements in the physical environment, and have been used to push for legislative action and gender-sensitive budgeting in planning and infrastructure (Fulu, 2016). For instance, The kNOw Fear programme, which was implemented by SWATI in Gujarat, mobilised youth and women on civic issues to demand local governance structures to prioritise and respond to GBV in public spaces. The programme was able to inculcate gender equitable attitudes and ensure accountability from governance institutions by advocating for inclusion of

safety issues in public spaces within the Gram Panchayat's development plan (Sebastian et al., 2020).

However, evidence also points to unintended consequences arising from the use of hyperlocal data, raising questions about how the data is interpreted and acted upon by authorities and whose safety gets addressed (Gupta et al., 2023). Data bias may reinforce negative perceptions about certain neighbourhoods being unsafe (Royo, 2021). Moreover, addressing the needs of one group may restrict how other groups, such as people experiencing homelessness, use public space (Whitzman, 2008). Infrastructural changes emerging from these exercises might lead to more surveillance (Phadke, 2005).

Interventions also emphasise the role of *Eyes on the Street* in shaping perceptions of safety within public spaces. People's presence and visibility of their daily activity in the neighbourhood evokes a sense of safety for women (Ceccato & Nalla, 2020; Kim & Hipp, 2020) and has been found to make it easier for women to traverse through public spaces (Hidayati et al., 2020). But not all forms of visibility serve as a protective measure; the impact of "eyes on the street" depends on who is observing and why (Vidal-Domper et al., 2025). When observation takes the form of formal surveillance and social control, public spaces become restrictive (Amiri & Crain, 2020).

Yet, across these interventions, there is a lack of evidence to establish the link between infrastructure modification, changes in attitudes and reduction in the incidence of public space GBV (Gramalaya, 2023), or the studies fall short of establishing evidence of causation between infrastructural changes and reduction in violence (Women in Cities International & Jagori, 2011). Research in India shows that construction of toilets through programmes such as Swachh Bharat Mission reduces sexual assaults on women, but do not discern consistent changes in rapes (Hossain et al., 2022). Global evidence on interventions such as female-only transportation or improved street lighting has yielded mixed results. Segregation reduces sexual violence experienced by women, but increases nonsexual aggression in male compartments like insults or shoving (Aguilar et al., 2021).

Protections Instituted Through Transformation of Gender Norms

The next set of interventions address risks related to deep-seated social and gender norms that drive gender-based violence across the private-public space continuum. As discussed in the reflection on risks, it has been firmly established that norms are solidified in the form of gender inequitable, hypermasculine, trans and homophobic attitudes, which result in gender-based violence. At the same time, traditional gender norms also manifest as low self-esteem and low confidence among women, girls, and transgender persons. Interventions targeting norms at various levels therefore may not always directly test for reduction in rate of gender-based violence but for more proximal indicators such as change in knowledge, attitude, or confidence and self-esteem.

Addressing gender norms to prevent gender-based violence focuses on strengthening individual agency while simultaneously working to build enabling environments for girls, women, and transqueer persons. Many interventions also work on addressing perpetrator-level risks. To this end, they implement strategies across all the levels of the SEM. This includes: **(1) Enabling at-risk groups to recognise their own autonomy and assert their agency in public life (2) Deconstructing heteropatriarchal ideologies that normalise violence, gender binary and hegemonic masculinity (3) Reducing familial control over mobility and sexual agency of girls and young women (4) Eliminating normalisation and use of interpersonal violence in the family (5) Reducing community tolerance towards instances of GBV in public spaces (6) Shifting stereotypical gender norms held by educators and duty-bearers (7) Reshaping discourses that promote violence and heteronormativity (8) Instituting policies and budgetary provision that promote gender-equality in education, sports.**

Existing literature on such interventions have found them to improve attitudes and awareness at the individual and community levels, but there is limited and mixed evidence on long-term reductions in actual violence. At the individual level, several interventions aim to enhance self-confidence and empowerment of young girls and women through structured curricula and activity-based sessions. For instance, Leventhal et al. (2015) found that a life-skills–based curriculum implemented with adolescent girls in rural Bihar led to improvements in self-efficacy, psychosocial well-being, and emotional resilience. Similarly, sports-based interventions that adopt a role-model approach have enabled girls and young women to claim public spaces, resulting in increased mobility and visibility (STRIVE). Self-defence workshops have also demonstrated positive outcomes, including a reduction in

experiences of violence and an increased ability to confront and report violence (Sarnquist et al., 2014).

Many programmes engaging with men and boys adopt a gender-transformative approach in supporting critical thinking about hegemonic masculinity to reduce GBV. Programmes delivered in schools and communities that include education about gender norms, relationship skills, and challenging harmful masculine stereotypes were associated with reductions in various forms of GBV, including forced sex, intimate partner violence, and dating violence. However, the strength of evidence varies: while attitudes and some behaviours improved, not all studies showed statistically significant reductions in actual violence, and evidence on long-term sustained change is still limited (DaSilva-Ibru et al., 2025). Similarly, bystander interventions have been effective in bringing about attitude change and increased prosocial behaviour. But evidence on how and to what extent it reduces sexual violence perpetration and victimisation is sparse (Coker et al., 2015).

Interventions also target duty bearers by seeking to influence their attitudes and routine practices. Many focus on building teachers' capacities to advance gender-equitable classroom environments. The REFLECT programme implemented in Austria demonstrated shifts in teachers' perceptions, viewing gender differences as less fixed and reporting greater confidence in supporting student motivation irrespective of gender (Kollmayer et al., 2020). The Blue Diamond Society in Nepal trained over 600 teachers on sexual orientation and gender identity, including violence-related issues, as part of the national curriculum on sexual and gender diversity (UNESCO, 2016). The effect of this training on homophobic bullying in classrooms, however, remains unclear.

Gender-sensitisation initiatives with public transport personnel activate the role of transport workers as key actors in shaping women's safety in public spaces. A Delhi-based programme sought to build a cadre of gender-sensitive rickshaw and taxi drivers. Post-programme evaluations indicated high perceived effectiveness and strong self-reported uptake of gender-sensitive behaviours, with most participants reporting increased politeness towards women and a greater willingness to assist women in distress (Fulu, 2016). However, retention of legal knowledge was inconsistent, and evidence of sustained behavioural change was largely self-reported. The absence of longitudinal measures limits the ability to assess whether these interventions translate into durable changes in everyday practices or reductions in violence.

Protections Bolstered Through Livelihood Promotion

The third set of interventions address the risks that prevent participation of women in public life through work and livelihood. These include structural factors like poor economy promoting precarity, informality, and migration; lack of social security and safety nets. These interventions also address more proximal factors such as lack of skills and opportunities, parental control on employment choices, and unsafe workplace conditions. Much like norms, these vulnerabilities also exacerbate violence across the private-public continuum. Thus, interventions targeted at improving access and sustainability at work may often be tested for change in indicators such as continuation of education, uptake of diverse and non-traditional career opportunities, exercising rights to collectivisation, compliance to safe workplace standards, affirmative hiring practices or increased protections.

The various protective factors that organisations intend to institute across individual, relationship, community, and society level include **(1) Facilitating access of at-risk groups to work and livelihoods opportunities (2) Strengthening worker-solidarity and grassroots leadership to negotiate for rights and demand accountability (3) Establishing peer-support systems to address violence and welfare concerns (4) Shifting family attitudes to support women's and girls' work and economic independence (5) Enhancing accountability of employers/administrators to uphold workers rights and safety (6) Strengthening and widening the coverage of citizenship entitlements and social security.**

The grassroots activities implemented by participating programmes are largely in line with local and global evidence that suggests they contribute to better economic outcomes and workforce participation in the mid to long-term. There is evidence to show strong uptake of interventions focusing on vocational training and skilling (Bandiera et al., 2017; Chinen et al., 2018) and job placements (Jensen, 2012) which have a small but significant impact on women's formal employment or self-employment and incomes. Similarly, rigorous evaluations in India show the power of grassroots collectives i.e. formal SHGs (International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), 2020) under NRLM are showing

better labour force participation for men and women, and increased household incomes and assets. However, evidence on the 'empowerment' outcomes of these livelihood interventions is often mixed or insignificant, and it lacks systematic and targeted documentation. For instance, despite increased labour force participation of women, the 3ie evaluation (2020) found no significant improvements in SHG women's decision-making inside the home. When it comes to girls' access to secondary education, programmes like Project Sankalp (Santhya et al., 2016) find improvement in girls schooling aspirations but no impact on their agency in matters concerning schooling within the household. Whereas, Singh et al., (2025) find that women trained under Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, were able to overcome household constraints but were unable to overcome demand side constraints i.e. the possible biases of employers impacting their long-term economic participation. In fact feminist organisations are actively shaping employer perspectives through the POSH Act framework, however, no India-level evaluations exist to suggest the mandated training is effectively changing employee behaviours. Instead, we find evidence from Bangladesh to show employers actively undermine sexual harassment intervention effectiveness by creating implementational barriers (Naved et al., 2021). This shows that increase in 'empowerment' is contingent not only on individual-level factors such as willingness, skill, and ability to negotiate, but also on systems-level factors such as ease of entry into the workplace and level of formality offered.

Systematic review literature from South Asia supports the claim that women's collectives can contribute to those dimensions of empowerment which are closely linked to GBV risk mitigation, including women's mobility, decision-making related to sexual and reproductive health, and political participation (Brody et al., 2017). In the Indian context, qualitative work by Nandi & Kashyap (2020) documents how trained collectives play a meaningful role in identifying and responding to IPV through mediation and alternative dispute resolution. Similarly, there is case study evidence on the increased bargaining power of informal women workers' collectives and unions in negotiating improved working conditions, safety, and welfare in India and globally (Downey, 2020; Budlender, 2013; Indian Sector for Self-Employed Women, 2012). Broader reviews of labour and feminist organising further reinforce collectivisation as a critical strategy for addressing structural vulnerabilities faced by women workers (Carré et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2015). However, while case studies provide in-depth insights into collectivisation processes and the diffuse individual-level outcome, they do not explore any direct links between collectivisation and increased safety at home or workplace.

Resource centres run by CSOs also play an important role in enabling the most marginalised workers to access government entitlements and social protection schemes (El Sabri et al., 2024; Thomas et al., 2022). There is again a notable absence of evaluation frameworks that examine whether improved access to entitlements or support services translates into livelihood-related mobility and public participation. As a result, the contribution of these interventions to GBV risk mitigation at the community and societal levels remains under-theorised and under-documented within livelihood programming.

Protections Focused on Strengthening Response to Violations

The fourth and final group of interventions focus on addressing risks associated with low knowledge of rights, presence of insensitive parallel redressal structures, and institutional insensitivity. These risks create conditions for violence to remain unchallenged and promote further perpetration across the private-public continuum. This leads to poor help-seeking among survivors; isolation of the survivor in the justice-seeking journey due to lack of family support; punishment and victim-blaming by communities and systems; and delayed or absent justice delivery. Strengthening help-seeking conditions and response systems is also a secondary prevention strategy, therefore, interventions are rarely tested for reduction of violence. Rather more proximal indicators such as increased reporting of incidents of violence, support extended by families, timely registration of complaints as per prescribed law, reduction in victim-blaming and minimising attitudes.

The various protective factors that are instituted through these interventions include **(1) Increasing awareness of fundamental rights and laws on gender-based violence (2) Enhancing survivors' preparedness to seek help and navigate justice systems (3) Enhancing safety and reducing isolation of the family to enable them to support the survivor (4) Shifting attitudes of traditional institutions towards viewing gender-based violence as a rights violation (5) Enabling stakeholders in local**

governance institutions to respond to violence in a survivor-centred manner (6) Strengthening the accountability of formal systems to visibilise and prioritise everyday forms GBV in public spaces as an important issue (7) Instilling rights-based and survivor-centred approach into GBV responses by formal institutions (8) Embedding feminist, rights-based and gender-inclusive principles in legal and policy frameworks to respond to GBV.

For feminist organisations in this cohort, efforts to strengthen GBV response systems largely focus on community-based legal empowerment and improving the responsiveness of duty bearers towards survivors. There is a growing documentation of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of community-based and gender transformative approaches to address underlying risk factors for GBV (Ellsberg et al., 2015; Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020). Evidence from India assessed for domestic violence outcomes suggests that integrated models linking awareness with community based support pathways can improve help-seeking. A cluster randomised, controlled trial in informal settlements in Mumbai shows that a combination of awareness and community-based counselling and support pathways have a statistically significant impact on women's help seeking behaviours (Daruwalla et al., 2025). Similarly, a pilot evaluation trained ASHA workers to conduct community meetings around GBV and provide support and referrals found help-seeking for domestic violence increased by end of intervention (Nair et al., 2020). Notably, while the community meetings addressed community violence, like witch hunting, social boycott that is meted out in public and by the public; the intervention found no measurable change in its prevalence or help-seeking for it. This suggests that though concerns preventing help-seeking may have similar underpinnings irrespective of the site of violence, degree of publicness and identity of perpetrators may have some bearing on whether incidents will be reported or not. In the broader literature, qualitative reviews of legal empowerment initiatives and legal aid is shown to improve access to remediation and justice for violence, education, health, economic assets, etc. (Goodwin & Maru, 2017). However, these findings are not supported by rigorous impact evaluations and verifiable links between legal awareness, formal reporting, and sustained access to justice remain weak.

As for the alternate dispute resolution bodies closest to survivors like caste or tribal panchayats, there is evidence to show a clear mishandling of GBV cases, especially against survivors of a marginalised caste, through threats of murder, coercion and forced extra- legal settlements (Swabhiman Society & Equality Now, 2020). Oxfam India finds that value in engagement with caste and religious leaders, as their intervention evaluation shows change in child and early marriage practices publicly endorsed by the leaders, but also an induction of women members into the caste society committees who were acknowledged for their handling of GBV cases (Oxfam India, 2021).

Studies evaluating the impact of training and capacity building, technical support, or systems strengthening in response by legal, health, or allied systems are very few in the Indian context. Research on police point to their apathy towards survivors of gender-based violence (Otto et al., 2020; Tripathi & Azhar, 2021) and that caste, class, and gender identity of the survivor plays a role in the response of the police (Amnesty International, 2001; Bajoria, 2015, 2017). But promising experimental evidence shows, women's help desks staffed by trained officers increase FIR registration for domestic violence and crimes against women, driven by shifts in police behaviour (Sukhtankar et al., 2022). The Special Cells for Women and Children is a promising model that has been upscaled and replicated across several states. An evaluation finds that the introduction of Special Cells led to a procedural shift in police response, with police increasingly referring survivors to Cells, facilitating meetings with perpetrators, and supporting complaint processes rather than dismissing or avoiding cases. While this collaboration improved access, sensitivity, and continuity of response, the report notes that police engagement largely remained limited to counselling and referral, with FIR registration still occurring in a relatively small proportion of cases, indicating incremental rather than transformative change (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2018). Another promising intervention which has been done with health systems is the Dilaasa Model. An independent evaluation showed Dilaasa intervention led to an incremental but institutional shift within public hospitals, with increased identification, documentation, referral, and coordination around violence cases that were earlier treated as routine medical complaints. Similar to the Special Cells model, these changes improved access and sensitivity but remained heavily reliant on trained personnel and sustained institutional support rather than systemic transformation (Ravindran & Undurti, 2010). The Dilaasa model has also been upscaled and replicated widely. Studies on one-stop centres (OSCs) reveal structural

barriers such as lack of multisectoral staff, private consultation space, coordination, unclear responsibilities, and community awareness in LMICs (Bajoria, 2017; Deosthali-Bhate et al., 2018; Olson et al., 2020). OSCs provide essential medical support and legal pathways in communities they serve (Hattery et al., 2020), but there is limited evidence regarding the experience of survivors or the effectiveness of the model in the Indian context.

Learnings and Implications

For civil society organisations working on gender-based violence in public spaces, this study offers a consolidated body of experiential knowledge that can support programme design, reflection, and articulation of their work. By mapping risk factors and intervention strategies across the levels of the Social Ecological Model, the report provides a framework through which organisations can situate their interventions within a broader ecology of prevention and response. This can help practitioners identify gaps, strengthen linkages between different components of their work, and articulate pathways of change more clearly. Importantly, the findings also point to an opportunity for organisations to more deliberately build and expand their programmatic know-how, particularly in developing clearer theories of change that connect activities to short, medium, and long-term outcomes across different levels. Given that many interventions operate through complex and non-linear pathways, there is also a need to strengthen how change is tracked and evidenced. This includes moving beyond activity-based reporting to identifying meaningful indicators of incremental change, refining monitoring frameworks, and investing in documentation practices that capture both intended and unintended outcomes. The documentation of barriers and facilitators in this study further supports adaptive programming by highlighting where interventions are likely to succeed or face constraints. In this sense, the report can function as a reference point not only for refining strategies and communicating value, but also for strengthening internal learning systems and building more robust, evidence-informed approaches. It also underscores the importance of continued collaboration across sectors, enabling organisations to situate their work within a wider ecosystem of actors working on public safety, urban governance, labour, and gender justice.

For donors and funding institutions, the findings highlight the importance of supporting long-term, multi-dimensional approaches to addressing gender-based violence in public spaces. The evidence suggests that many grassroots interventions operate through gradual and layered processes that aim to shift norms, improve institutional responsiveness, and expand women's participation in public life. These changes may not immediately translate into measurable reductions in violence, but they are essential for creating enabling conditions that sustain prevention efforts. Funding frameworks that privilege short project cycles or narrowly defined impact indicators may therefore fail to capture the value of such work. The study underscores the need for more flexible and sustained funding approaches that allow organisations to experiment, adapt, and document incremental outcomes, while also investing in rigorous research to test promising interventions and build stronger evidence for scale. At the same time, there is a critical role for donors in enabling greater collaboration and network-building within the ecosystem of actors working on GBV in public spaces. Given the fragmented nature of interventions, often operating across different sectors such as urban planning, labour, education, and justice, support for platforms that facilitate knowledge exchange, partnerships, and collective strategy-building can significantly enhance the coherence and impact of efforts in this field. Investing in such collaborative infrastructures, alongside programmatic funding, can help bridge silos, amplify learning, and support the development of more integrated and systemic responses to gender-based violence in public spaces.

For policymakers in India, the findings also point to important gaps and opportunities within existing policy frameworks such as the Safe Cities Mission, Smart Cities initiatives, and the implementation of the POSH Act. While these frameworks have brought much-needed attention and resources to the issue of women's safety, particularly through improvements in infrastructure, transport systems, and urban design, they tend to rely heavily on surveillance-led and technocratic solutions as primary responses to gender-based violence in public spaces. The evidence from this study suggests that such measures, while necessary, are not sufficient on their own to address the underlying drivers of violence. Gender-based violence in public spaces is sustained by a combination of social norms, institutional practices, and structural inequalities that extend across the private–public continuum, and therefore require more diverse and layered policy responses. In this context, there is a need to more consistently integrate investments in gender-transformative programming, community

engagement, and institutional accountability alongside infrastructural and technological interventions. Further, frameworks like the POSH Act highlight the importance of formal redressal mechanisms, but their reach remains limited in contexts where work and public space overlap, particularly for informal and public-facing workers. Strengthening implementation in such contexts, while also aligning workplace protections with broader public safety strategies, could help bridge existing gaps. Overall, the study suggests that current policy approaches would benefit from a more integrated orientation, one that retains the gains made through infrastructure and safety technologies, but places equal emphasis on addressing the deeper social and institutional conditions that enable violence.

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ANNEXURE 1

Google Survey Tool- Mapping Interventions Addressing GBV in Public Spaces in India

1. Name of Organisation

2. Where is your organisation/collective based? (City and State)

3. What is the name of the programme that engages with gender and public spaces? (If there is a specific name)

4. What is/was the duration of the programme? (Start and end dates)

5. Where is the programme located? (Please mention community, village/city/district and state)

6. What are the forms of gender-based violence in public spaces that your programme addresses? (You can choose more than one option)
    a. Sexual Harassment (Verbal harassment, inappropriate touching, staring, voyeurism, stalking etc.)
    b. Sexual Assault/Rape
    c. Acid Attack
    d. Witch-Hunting
    e. Identity-based hate crime
    f. Harassment in online space/social media
    g. Other: _____

7. What public spaces is the programme directed at? (You can choose more than one option)
    a. Streets/Alleyways/Roads
    b. Public Transport
    c. Recreational spots (Parks/Malls/Festivals and Fairs/etc.)
    d. Tourism spots
    e. Public sanitation/Toilets
    f. Farmlands/Forestlands
    g. Public Work Spaces (Public Construction sites/farms/brick kiln/mines/etc.)
    h. Closed Public Spaces (Educational and Workplace)
    i. Online or Digital Spaces
    j. Other: _____

8. Who are the groups you work with for this programme? (You can choose more than one option)
    a. Women
    b. Adolescent/young girls
    c. Men
    d. Adolescent/young boys
    e. People with LGBTQIA+ identities
    f. Government Stakeholders (Police, OSCs, Helplines, Healthcare Providers, Panchayat etc.)
    g. Judicial Stakeholders (Judges, Lawyers etc.)
    h. Other Organisations/Activists
    i. Other: _____

9. Are there any specific communities/identities that the programme works with? (You can choose more than one option)
    a. Dalit/Bahujan
    b. Adivasi/Indigenous Tribes
    c. Religious Minorities
    d. Informal Workers (Sex workers, Agricultural Labourers, Street Vendors etc.)
    e. Persons with Disabilities
    f. People in Conflict Zones/Disaster-prone Zones
    g. Single Women
    h. Youth
    i. Other: _____

10. What are the main activities used in the programme? (You can choose more than one option)
    a. Community Mobilisation
    b. Bystander Training
    c. Empowerment and Skill Building of Women and Girls
    d. Engaging Boys and Men
    e. Safety Audits
    f. Personal Safety Apps
    g. Casework
    h. Empowerment and Skill Building of people identifying as LGBTQIA+
    i. Campaigns and Awareness Building
    j. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)
    k. Sensitisation and Training of Government/Judiciary
    l. Networking and Advocacy
    m. Research
    n. Policy Intervention
    o. Other: _____

11. How have you assessed the progress and impact of your programme?
    a. External/Independent Evaluation
    b. Internal Evaluation/ Programme Monitoring & Evaluation
    c. Both
    d. No Evaluation Done
    e. Don't know

12. Please list the impact reports/publications associated with the project, if any. (Baseline/Endline, Case studies, Process documents, MEL data, etc.)

13. Are there any other programmes in your organisation that address gender and public spaces?
    a. Yes
    b. No

14. Would you or your colleagues in the organisation be willing to discuss the programme further with us through an interview? Please provide email ID if you wish to be contacted.

15. Do you consent to the use of the above information in the research report?
    a. Yes
    b. No

ANNEXURE 1.1

Google सर्वेक्षण टूल- भारत में सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर जेंडर-आधारित हिंसा (Gender-based Violence in Public Spaces) के मुद्दे पर काम कर रही संस्था/कार्यक्रमों की मैपिंग

1. संस्था/संगठन का नाम

2. आपकी संस्था/संगठन कहाँ स्थित है ? (शहर/जिला और राज्य का नाम)

3. जेंडर और सार्वजनिक स्थानों से जुड़ी प्रोग्राम का क्या नाम है? (अगर कोई नाम है तो)

4. प्रोग्राम कि समय अवधि क्या थी? (शुरुवात कब हुई और खतम कब हुई)

5. प्रोग्राम कहाँ स्थित है? (समुदाय, गाँव/शहर/जिला का नाम, और राज्य का नाम)

6. प्रोग्राम में सार्वजनिक स्थान पर जेंडर-आधारित हिंसा के किन-किन प्रकार के मामलों में हस्तक्षेप किया जाता हैं? (आप एक से ज़्यादा विकल्प चुन सकते हैं)
    a. यौन उत्पीड़न (मौखिक उत्पीड़न, अनुचित स्पर्श, घूरना, ताक-झांक, पीछा करना आदि)
    b. यौन हिंसा/रेप
    c. ऐसिड से हमला
    d. डायन हिंसा
    e. पहचान-आधारित, नफ़रत-आधारित हिंसा
    f. ऑनलाइन/सोशल मीडिया पर उत्पीड़न
    g. अन्य:
    h. _____

7. प्रोग्राम किन प्रकार के सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर फोकस करता है? (आप एक से ज़्यादा विकल्प चुन सकते हैं)
    a. गलियां/सड़कें
    b. सार्वजनिक परिवहन
    c. मनोरंजन स्थल (पार्क/मॉल/त्यौहार और मेले/आदि)
    d. पर्यटन स्थल
    e. सार्वजनिक स्वच्छता/शौचालय
    f. खेत/जंगल
    g. सार्वजनिक कार्यस्थल (सार्वजनिक निर्माण स्थल/खेत/ईंट भट्ठा/खदान/आदि)
    h. बंद सार्वजनिक स्थान (शैक्षिक और कार्यस्थल)
    i. ऑनलाइन या डिजिटल स्पेस
    j. अन्य: _____

8. इस प्रोग्राम में आप किन समूहों के साथ काम कर रहे हैं? (आप एक से ज़्यादा विकल्प चुन सकते हैं)
    a. महिला
    b. किशोरी/युवतियाँ
    c. पुरुष
    d. किशोर/युवक
    e. LGBTQIA+ पहचान वाले लोग
    f. सरकारी हितधारक (पुलिस, ओएससी, हेल्पलाइन, स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रदाता, पंचायत आदि)
    g. न्यायिक हितधारक (जज, वकील आदि)
    h. अन्य संगठन/कार्यकर्ता
    i. अन्य:

    _____

9. क्या कोई विशिष्ट समुदाय/पहचान है जिनके साथ आपका प्रोग्राम काम करता है? (आप एक से ज़्यादा विकल्प चुन सकते हैं)
    a. दलित/बहुजन
    b. आदिवासी/जनजातियाँ
    c. धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यक
    d. असंगठित कामगार [सेक्स वर्कर, खेती मजदूर, फेरीवाला (स्ट्रीट वेनडर)आदि]
    e. विकलांग व्यक्तियों के साथ
    f. संघर्ष-क्षेत्र (conflict zone)/आपदा-प्रवण क्षेत्र में रह रहे लोग
    g. एकल महिला
    h. युवा
    i. अन्य:

    _____

10. आपके प्रोग्राम कि मुख्य गतिविधियाँ क्या हैं? (आप एक से ज़्यादा विकल्प चुन सकते हैं)
    a. समुदाय को मोबीलाइज़ करना
    b. बाइस्टैन्डर ट्रैनिंग
    c. किशोर/पुरुषों के साथ काम
    d. महिलाओं और लड़कियों का सशक्तिकरण और कौशल निर्माण
    e. सुरक्षा ऑडिट
    f. व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा ऐप्स
    g. केसवर्क
    h. LGBTQIA+ पहचान वाले लोगों का सशक्तिकरण और कौशल निर्माण
    i. अभियान और जागरूकता निर्माण
    j. जल और स्वच्छता (WASH)
    k. सरकार/न्यायपालिका का संवेदीकरण (sensitisation) और प्रशिक्षण
    l. नेटवर्किंग और पैरोकारी
    m. शोध
    n. नीति में हस्तक्षेप
    o. अन्य:

    _____

11. कार्यक्रम के प्रगति और प्रभाव को समझने के लिए किस प्रकार का मूल्यांकन किया गया है?
    a. बाहरी/स्वतंत्र एजेंसी/व्यक्ति द्वारा मूल्यांकन
    b. आंतरिक मूल्यांकन/प्रोग्राम का मोनिट्रिंग और मूल्यांकन
    c. दोनों
    d. नहीं पता

12. प्रोजेक्ट से जुड़ी कौनसी रिपोर्ट/प्रकाशन आपके पास उपलब्ध हैं? (बेसलाइन/एंडलाइन, केस स्टडी, प्रक्रिया दस्तावेज, मोनिट्रिंग और मूल्यांकन डेटा, आदि)

13. क्या आपकी संस्था/संगठन में जेंडर और सार्वजनिक स्थानों से जुड़ी कोई और प्रोग्राम हैं?
    a. हाँ
    b. नहीं

14. क्या हम आपको या आपकी संस्था/संगठन को इस प्रोग्राम के विषय में इंटरव्यू लेने के लिए संपर्क कर सकते हैं? अगर हाँ तो संपर्क करने के लिए ईमेल आइडी लिखें|

15. क्या आप शोध रिपोर्ट में उपरोक्त जानकारी के उपयोग के लिए सहमति देते हैं?
    a. हाँ
    b. नहीं

ANNEXURE 2

Google Survey Tool- Mapping Interventions Addressing GBV in Public Spaces in India

Sr. No	Organisation	Location
1	Aakansha Seva Sadan	Muzaffarpur, Bihar
2	Akshara Centre (Akshara)	Mumbai, Maharashtra
3	Ankit Anusuchit Samaj Kalyan Technical Nari Uthan Evam Shikshan Sansthan	Deoria, Uttar Pradesh
4	Aravani Art Project	Bengaluru, Karnataka
5	Area Networking And Development Initiatives (ANANDI)	Ahmedabad, Gujarat
6	Ashray	Deoghar, Jharkhand
7	Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives Trust (AALI)	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
8	Avira Foundation	Karnal, Haryana
9	Bal Vikaas Neenv (CDF)	Garhwa, Jharkhand
10	Bheema Foundation	Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh
11	Centre for Equity & Inclusion (CEQUIN)	New Delhi, Delhi
12	Centre for Health and Social Justice	New Delhi, Delhi
13	Committee of Resource Organisations (CORO India)	Mumbai, Maharashtra

Sr. No	Organisation	Location
14	Deep Jyoti Jharkhand Vikas Kendra	Chatra, Jharkhand
15	Development Education Service (DEEDS)	Mangaluru, Karnataka
16	Durga India	Bengaluru, Karnataka
17	Enfold Proactive Health Trust (Enfold)	Bengaluru, Karnataka
18	Equal Community Foundation	Pune, Maharashtra
19	Gaali Band Abhiyan	Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh
20	Gaon Vikas Manch	Sitamarhi, Bihar
21	Humsafar Support Center for Women, Youth and Queer (HUMSAFAR)	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
22	Jagori	New Delhi, Delhi
23	Jan Vikas Kendra	Ambedkar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh
24	Jharkhand Vikas Parishad	Pakur, Jharkhand
25	Justice and Development Foundation	Amroha, Uttar Pradesh
26	Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM)	Pune, Maharashtra
27	Maitrayana Charity Foundation (Maitrayana Foundation)	Mumbai, Maharashtra
28	Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA)	Mumbai, Maharashtra

Sr. No	Organisation	Location
29	MukkaMaar	Mumbai, Maharashtra
30	Nav Bhartiya Nari Vikas Samiti	Ballia, Uttar Pradesh
31	North East Network (NEN)	Guwahati, Assam
32	Red Dot Foundation	Mumbai, Maharashtra
33	RUBI Social Welfare Society	Nagpur, Maharashtra
34	Sadbhavana Trust	New Delhi, Delhi
35	Sajag India Foundation Trust (Sajag India)	Sonbhadra and Bhadohi, Uttar Pradesh
36	Samriddhi Sanstha	Rohtas, Bihar
37	Sangini	Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
38	Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative (SWATI)	Ahmedabad, Gujarat
39	Stree Mukti Sangathana (SMS)	Mumbai, Maharashtra
40	Sutanutir Sakhya	Kolkata, West Bengal
41	Swadha	Champaran, Bihar
42	Swayam	Kolkata, West Bengal
43	The YP Foundation	Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Sr. No	Organisation	Location
44	Urja Trust	Mumbai, Maharashtra
45	Vacha Charitable Trust	Mumbai, Maharashtra
46	Vishaka	Jaipur, Rajasthan
47	VOICE 4 Girls	Hyderabad, Telengana

ANNEXURE 3

Written Questionnaire
[Please fill the questionnaire separately if you have more than one programme working on GBV in public spaces.]

1. Please mention the name of the programme working on gender-based violence in public spaces.

2. When did your organisation start working on this programme?

3. Why and how did your organisation decide to work on this programme?

4. What are the main goals and objectives of this programme?

5. Which and what kind of public spaces does the programme focus upon? (List as many as you can think)

6. What forms of violence in public spaces does the programme focus on? (List as many as you can think)

7. What are the various activities that you implement under this programme? Please fill in the table below. We have given two examples to guide you.

What group/ stakeholder does the programme work with?	Why does the programme work with this group/ stakeholder?	List the programme activity/ activities conducted
Example- Police	Example- They are responsible for preventing sexual harassment on the streets through community patrolling.	Example- Gender Sensitisation Training
Example- Street Vendors/Hawkers	Example- Street vendors keep a watchful eye on the streets and are present in public spaces for most of the time.	Example- Bystander Intervention Training

1. Is your programme on GBV in public spaces working with any specific 'vulnerable' groups and why? (youth, dalit, adivasi, disabled, queer persons, religious minorities etc.)

2. What materials have you generated in terms of posters, videos, booklets, reports or training manuals? Would you share these materials with us?

ANNEXURE 3.1

संस्थाओं के लिए लिखित प्रश्नावली
[अगर आपकी संस्था सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर जेंडर-आधारित हिंसा के मुद्दे पर एक से ज्यादा कार्यक्रम चला रही है, तो प्रत्येक कार्यक्रम के लिए अलग से प्रश्नावली को भरें]

1. सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर जेंडर-आधारित हिंसा पर काम कर रही प्रोग्राम का नाम क्या है?

2. इस प्रोग्राम पर आपकी संस्था ने कब काम करना शुरू किया?

3. आपकी संस्था ने इस प्रोग्राम पर क्यों और कैसे काम करना शुरू किया?

4. इस प्रोग्राम के विशेष लक्ष और उद्देश्य क्या हैं?

5. आपका प्रोग्राम कहाँ और किस प्रकार के "सार्वजनिक स्थानों" पर फोकस करता है? (कृपया जितने सोच सकते हैं उनकी सूचि बनाइये)

6. आपका प्रोग्राम सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर जेंडर-आधारित हिंसा के किन प्रकारों (forms) पर फोकस करता है? (कृपया जितने सोच सकते हैं उनकी सूचि बनाइये)

7. आप अपने प्रोग्राम के अनतर्गत कौन सी गतिविधियाँ करते हैं? कृपया निम्नलिखित टेबल में लिखकर बताइए। आपकी समझ के लिए हमने दो उदाहरण दिए हैं।

आपका प्रोग्राम किन हितधारक/ग्रुप्स (stakeholders) के साथ काम करता है?	इस हितधारक/ग्रुप के साथ काम करने की वजह क्या है?	इस प्रोग्राम के अंतर्गत आप इस हितधारक/ग्रुप के साथ क्या गतिविधियाँ करते हैं?
उदहारण- पुलिस	उदहारण- वेसा समुदायिक पेट्रोलिंग के माध्यम से सड़क पर यौनिक उत्पीड़न के रोकथाम के लिए ज़िम्मेदार हैं	उदहारण- जेंडर सम्वेदिकरण (sensitisation) ट्रेनिंग
उदहारण- सड़क विक्रेता/फेरीवाले/हॉकर	उदाहरण- सड़क विक्रेताओं की नज़र सड़कों पर होती है और वे अधिकांश समय सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर मौजूद रहते हैं	उदहारण- बाई स्टैंडर इंटरवेंशन ट्रेनिंग

1. क्या आपका प्रोग्राम किसी विशिष्ट 'वंचित' समुदाय के साथ काम करता है? क्यों? (जैसे किशोर/किशोरियाँ, दलित समुदाय, आदिवासी समुदाय, विकलांग व्यक्ति, LGBTQ व्यक्ति, धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यक इत्यादि)

2. आपने अपने प्रोग्राम से जुड़े कौन से पोस्टर, वीडियो, किताब, रिपोर्ट, या ट्रेनिंगमैन्युअल/सामग्री प्रस्तुत किए है? क्या आप हमारे साथ ये सामग्री साझा कर सकते हैं?

ANNEXURE 4

Participatory Workshop Guiding Questions

Session Number	Method	Key Questions
1	Setting the Stage	• What is the purpose of this study? • What have we done so far? • What do we intend to do in this round of data collection?
2	Contextualising the Cohort	Tracing the Journey of your Programme • In which year did your organisation decide to work on the issue of GBV in public spaces? And why? • How does the issue of GBV in public spaces relate to livelihoods and work of women and transqueer persons?
3	Identifying Risk Factors	Risk Factors • What factors related to work and livelihoods increase vulnerability to GBV in public spaces?
4	Stakeholder Mapping	Clarifying Stakeholders • Tell us about your work with the stakeholders. How does working with them enable women and transqueer persons' access to work and livelihoods?
5	Understanding Activities	Activity Mapping In the context of your work, reflect on - • What does it mean to implement these activities? What does it involve? • What key messages do you focus on or bring up in these activities? With which of these stakeholders do you bring up these points? • Whether the activities listed cover the work you do with stakeholders? Would you like to modify any?
6	Barriers and Facilitating Factors	Documenting Barriers and Facilitators • What factors make it easy or difficult for you to work with the stakeholders in your programme?
7	Documenting Indicators	Documenting Expected Outcomes • While working with your stakeholders, what changes have you observed in them? • What tells you that your intervention is bringing about a change in the stakeholders you work with?

Centre for Enquiry Into Health And Allied Themes

CEHAT is the research centre of Anusandhan Trust, conducting research, action, service, welfare and advocacy on a variety of public health issues. Socially relevant and rigorous academic health research and action at CEHAT is for the well-being of the disadvantaged masses, for strengthening people's health movements and for realising the right to health care. CEHAT's objectives are to undertake socially relevant research and advocacy projects on various socio-political aspects of health; establish direct services and programmes to demonstrate how health services can be made accessible equitably and ethically; disseminate information through database and relevant publications, supported by a well-stocked and specialised library and a documentation centre.

CEHAT's projects are based on its ideological commitments and priorities, and are focused on four broad themes, (1) Health Services and Financing (2) Health Legislation, Ethics and Patients' Rights, (3) Gender and Health, (4) Violence and Health.

ISBN: 978-81-89042-95-0