

Ending Violence Against Women

Violence Against Women and Girls in India

Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of human rights. Besides affecting their well-being, it prevents them from realising their full potential in society. Its impact ranges from immediate to long-term physical, sexual and psychosocial consequences for women and girls, resulting in some cases, in death.

As citizens and human beings, women and girls have inviolable rights to a life of dignity and freedom, both from violence and the fear of violence. Families, communities and countries have to pay monetary and social costs of violence as women and girls cannot access basic rights to education, skill development and employment.

Over the years, efforts made by civil society have placed ending gender-based violence high on national and international agendas. Today, a number of





- 82% of widows surveyed in Vrindavan (Uttar Pradesh, India) had to move because their husbands had left them no savings and 65% of them said that they owned no property. This UN Women survey also found that 90% of widows interviewed could “not even dream of remarriage” even if they were young with no children.
- According to Census 2011, there are about 27 million women-headed households, which is 11% of the total households in India.
- In the case of Bachpan Bachao Andolan vs Union of India, the Supreme Court stated that “trafficking of women and girls has become an extremely lucrative business especially since the risk of prosecution remains very low”. The Court has recognised that one of the main reasons for human trafficking is for commercial sexual exploitation.
- In Sri Lanka, India and Nepal, poverty and high unemployment have triggered fairly large-scale female migration. An increasing number of female workers are migrating from South Asia to the Gulf countries as domestic workers. In 2010, this number stood at about 6.45 million. Within South Asia, Nepal has the largest share of international women migrants (68.2%), followed by Sri Lanka (49.8%) and India (48.7%).
- 78% of men reported witnessing sexual harassment/violence in public spaces in Delhi. However, only 15% of them intervened (UN Women study).

countries around the world have laws in place against domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of violence.

Legal reforms have been welcomed at all levels in India. New provisions on acid attacks, voyeurism and stalking were made part of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act passed in April 2013 incorporates a wider definition of sexual harassment at the workplace. In addition, in recent years, India has enacted a number of progressive legislations such as the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006; the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994. However, effective implementation of these laws continues to be a challenge.

Women belonging to poor and marginalized communities are particularly vulnerable to violence, limiting their choices and access to legal and other forms of support.

Our Programmes

UN Women’s Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) programme in India works to prevent and respond to violence against women, both in public and private spaces. It works towards building women’s capabilities to reduce their vulnerability. It believes that promoting positive engagement of men and boys is critical to prevent gender-based violence.

Key Interventions

Anti-Trafficking Programme

UN Women works to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls in six states in India: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Rajasthan, by involving survivors, communities, civil society, government, and district officials.

The programme focuses on community action and participation to prevent trafficking in source areas. As a result, UN Women and its partners have established 40 Anti-Trafficking Community Vigilance Committees, which include survivors of trafficking. 81 villagers were selected and trained as peer educators. They have held 8000 community meetings with vulnerable women and girls to spread the message.

UN Women and its partners have built the capacity of local government functionaries and created prevention mechanisms within institutions to stop trafficking. 32 trainings have been held so far for local governance leaders.

To prevent trafficking, it is essential to provide education, skills and alternative livelihoods. It is for this reason that members of 148 Self Help Groups, as well as 680 women and girls, have been provided with income generation, livelihood and marketing skills. Women and girls now participate in 27 income generation activities in programme *panchayats* (village councils), including making *agarbattis* (incense sticks), organic



Photo Credit: UN Women / Shaista Chishty

The Power of Education : In four months, sisters-in-law Sunita and Manisha Chhadi learnt to read and write, thanks to the Non-Formal Education Centre that was part of a UN Women project. Sunita is thrilled that she can now sign her name and save money. Sunita and Manisha belong to the Nat community that traditionally sell their daughters into sex work. CECOEDCON and UN Women have ensured that 20 women of Sunita's community were able to get an education and sign their names for the first time.

From Start to Finish: Tunni Khatun is one of 30 women who work at the *agarbatti* unit in Jamuawan district of Bihar. She has been making *agarbattis* (incense sticks) for one and a half years. Earlier, she made them from her home and sold them to a contractor who paid her INR 1200 in a month. “Since this Unit has been set up in March 2013, I now make INR 5,000 per month. With this, I get to earn a lot more than what I was earning earlier. Jan Jagran Sanasthan trained me in making *agarbattis* from start to end, right from rolling the incense stick to packaging and sending it,” says Tunni.

farming, kitchen and poultry farming, goat-rearing and making paper plates. For example, 100 women were trained on organic farming in Gaya district of Bihar, and now each woman makes INR 5,000 on an average. In Jaipur district, 20 women are now literate, thanks to a Non-Formal Education programme supported by UN Women.

Empowerment of Widows and their Coalitions

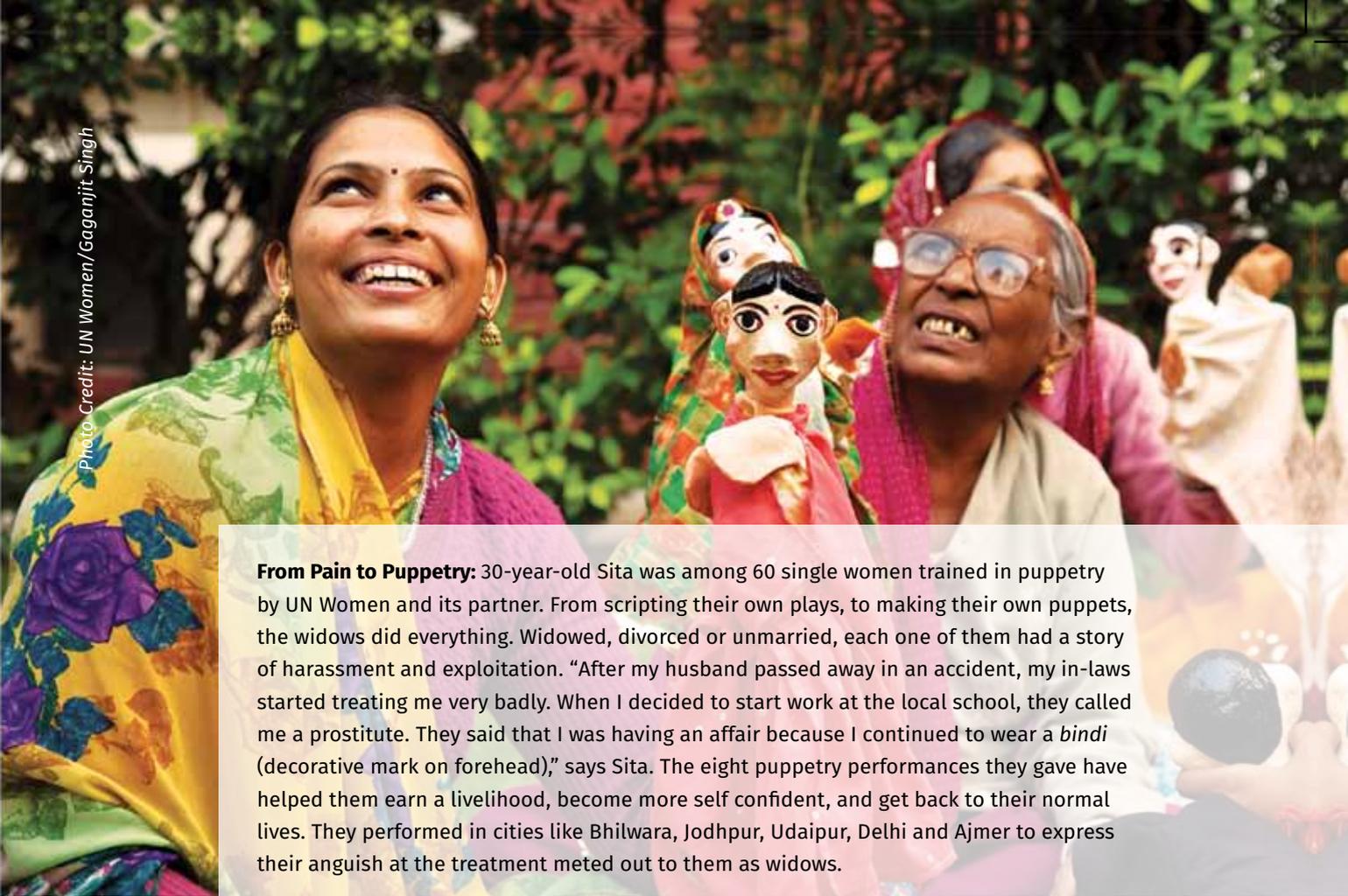
UN Women works with widows in Nepal, Sri Lanka and India to build their capacities and encourage them to become leaders. Widows are motivated to participate and speak up at widows’ camps, participate actively in building stronger coalitions of women and gain access to public schemes for widow pensions.

The three-year programme seeks to include quantitative and qualitative evidence of discrimination against widows and the stigma they experience in research and data systems in the three countries. The programme has been designed to develop rights-based strategies for empowering widows. These include those highlighted in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Charter on the Rights of Widows in 2009.

Photo Credit: UN Women/Gaganjit Singh



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From Pain to Puppetry: 30-year-old Sita was among 60 single women trained in puppetry by UN Women and its partner. From scripting their own plays, to making their own puppets, the widows did everything. Widowed, divorced or unmarried, each one of them had a story of harassment and exploitation. “After my husband passed away in an accident, my in-laws started treating me very badly. When I decided to start work at the local school, they called me a prostitute. They said that I was having an affair because I continued to wear a *bindi* (decorative mark on forehead),” says Sita. The eight puppetry performances they gave have helped them earn a livelihood, become more self confident, and get back to their normal lives. They performed in cities like Bhilwara, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Delhi and Ajmer to express their anguish at the treatment meted out to them as widows.

In two years of implementation, UN Women and its implementing partners have reached out to over 2,500 widows in the three countries. These widows have received intensive leadership and community mobilization trainings as part of this programme.

Photo Credit: UN Women/Caroline Pankert



Empowered Lives:

Widow Santosh Komodi does her hair at her house in Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh. Santosh Komodi is one of 62 widows who have received pensions under the widows' pension scheme.

Photo Credit: UN Women / Inverted Commas



Safe Cities: During interviews with women in Delhi as part of a study, nearly 73 per cent of women said they do not feel safe in their own surroundings and reported feeling unsafe all the time.

The Safe Cities Programme

Launched on November 25, 2009 in partnership with UN Habitat, Jagori and the Government of Delhi, the Safe Cities programme aims to make Delhi safer for women. Critical areas for intervention include public transport, civic awareness, layout of public spaces, provision and maintenance of public infrastructure, stronger legislation and support to victims. The programme has already consulted a large number of stakeholders including the Departments of Education and Transport of the Government of Delhi, the Delhi Police, women's rights groups and other United Nations agencies. UN Women's partner Jagori conducted seven safety audits in five municipal areas of Delhi in late 2012. The audits were conducted in low-income neighbourhoods, as well as markets, bus terminals, metro stations, and along the routes that girls take to school. The findings concluded that poor lighting near bus stops, lack of well-maintained public toilets and the absence of pavements make

women feel unsafe. Also women tend to need access to services like telephone booths, police and 24-hour hospitals very often and especially in markets and bus terminals.

A survey of over 5,000 respondents was conducted across nine districts of New Delhi. It gathered and analysed information about the nature and forms of gender-based violence and harassment faced by women. In cases of sexual violence, three out of four respondents agreed with the statement, '*Women provoke men by the way they dress,*' and two men out of five agreed with the statement, '*Women moving around at night deserve to be sexually harassed*'.

The Delhi municipal government launched the 'Awaz Uthao' Scheme on March 8, 2011. This launch demonstrated the buy-in of the Delhi Government on this issue as this scheme interlinks with the broader Safe City Delhi project. It is a pilot initiative with the objective of creating women's safety collectives in 25 low-income areas of the city.

Advocacy and Research

As part of the UN Secretary General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign, UN Women is working with the civil society to carry out research and analysis on the prevalence and underlying causes of violence against women and girls. Research on violence against women in politics provides a vital advocacy tool to flag the challenges faced by female political candidates. A study on a costing framework for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act of Bangladesh will be used as a tool to support the Government of Bangladesh to allocate funds efficiently for the successful implementation of this

Law. This research will also enable UN Women to support the design and implementation of targeted awareness raising initiatives for the public.

Advocacy is used as a tool under the UNiTE campaign to build the capacity of UN staff in India through internal trainings on violence against women, such as sexual harassment. Social media and on-ground campaigns reached out to thousands of young people encouraging them to act. The winning photos of UN Women's "Freedom from Violence" competition, for example, helped to actively involve young people as advocates.



"Teach your sons to respect women," is the singularly important message communicated by Tash McCarroll, winner of UN Women's 'Freedom from Violence' photo competition.

Past Achievements

- ▶ Since 2006, UN Women has supported the implementation and monitoring of the landmark Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. In partnership with the Lawyers Collective Women's Rights Initiative, and the Government of India, UN Women developed a monitoring framework and created awareness about the Act amongst protection officers and judiciary.
- ▶ The 'Bell Bajao' (Ring the Bell) campaign by Breakthrough, UN Women and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women reached out to more than 130 million people and raised awareness about domestic violence.
- ▶ UN Women's collaboration with the Positive Women's Network (PWN+) until 2011 was instrumental in helping women living with HIV to meet and support each other. This enabled PWN+ to provide outreach, counselling, health and income generating services to its members.

Photo Credit: UN Women/Shaista Chishty

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