Centre for Public Policy Research

# Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms Combating

## Violence Against Women and Girls

Goa | Telangana | Kerala | Rajasthan | Jharkhand



**Research Report**

Centre for Public Policy Research

December 2025

# Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms Combating Violence Against Women and Girls

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Centre for Public Policy Research, Kochi
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**Anu Maria Francis**

# ABBREVIATIONS

1. CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
2. VAWG - Violence against Women and Girls
3. ICCPR -International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
4. ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
5. CSW - Commission on the Status of Women
6. UNSCR - United Nations Security Council Resolution
7. GBV - Gender Based Violence
8. POSH - Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act
9. NCRB - National Crime Records Bureau
10. DIR - Domestic Incident Report
11. ICC - Internal Complaints Committee
12. LCC - Local Complaints Committee
13. BNS - Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita
14. BNSS - Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita
15. NFHS - National Family Health Survey
16. NGO - Non-Governmental Organizations
17. MWCD - Ministry of Women and Child Development
18. OSC - One Stop Centre
19. BBBP - Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
20. J&K - Jammu and Kashmir
21. HEW - Hub for Empowerment of Women
22. ERSS - Emergency Response Support System
23. NDSO - National Database on Sexual Offenders
24. ITSO - Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences
25. SAEC - Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits
26. MLR - Medico-Legal Report
27. FTSC - Fast Track Special Court
28. NALSA - National Legal Services Authority
29. SLSA - State Legal Services Authority
30. DLSA - District Legal Services Authority
31. CrPC - Code of Criminal Procedure
32. NCW - National Commission for Women

33. HDI - Human Development Index
34. PCC - Portuguese Civil Code
35. GSCW - Goa State Commission for Women
36. BDO - Block Development Officers
37. WPO - Women Protection Officers
38. SRCW - State Resource Centre for Women
39. GSWC - Goa Women's Commission
40. CIC - Crisis Intervention Centre
41. CEHAT - Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes
42. NMEW - National Mission for Empowerment of Women
43. FLPR - Female Labour Participation Rate
44. IPC - Indian Penal Code
45. DHEW - District Hubs for Empowerment of Women
46. NHEW - National Hub for Empowerment of Women
47. SHEW - State Hub for Empowerment Women
48. HEW - Hub for Empowerment of Women
49. GHMC - Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation
50. CDEW - Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women
51. SOP - Standard Operating Procedures
52. WHD - Women Help Desks
53. SAC - Social Action Committee
54. SERP - Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty
55. CMFCC - Community-Managed Family Counselling Centres
56. SHG - Self-Help Groups
57. SCERT - State Council of Educational Research and Training
58. UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund
59. PRI - Panchayati Raj Institutions
60. ICC - Integrated Care Centre
61. IEC - Information, Education, and Communication
62. SLL - Special and Local Laws
63. ICGE - International Conference on Gender Equality
64. KSWDC - Kerala State Women's Development Corporation
65. NRLM - National Rural Livelihood Mission
66. JS - Jagratha Samithis
67. CCSE - Counter Child Sexual Exploitation
68. CSAM - Child Sexual Abuse Material

69. CAP - Children and Police
70. GBVMC - Gender-Based Violence Management Centres
71. THQH - Taluk Head Quarters Hospital
72. ARSH - Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health
73. KeLSA - Kerala State Legal Services Authority
74. ASHA - Accredited Social Health Activist
75. RDPO - Regional Dowry Prohibition Officers
76. OSCC - One Stop Crisis Centres
77. RSCW - Rajasthan State Commission for Women
78. IMSUPY - Indira Mahila Shakti Udyam Protsahan Yojana
79. SWATI - Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative
80. AHTU - Anti-Human Trafficking Units
81. GSICC - Gender Sensitisation and Internal Complaints Committee
82. MSSK - Mahila Salah Evam Suraksha Kendra
83. ZMSS - Zila Mahila Sahayata Samiti
84. WED - Directorate of Women Empowerment
85. BSER - Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education
86. PLFS - Periodic Labour Force Survey
87. JHALSA - Jharkhand Legal Services Authority
88. PLA - Participatory Learning and Action
89. IJR - India Justice Report
90. MIS - Management Information System
91. VAWA - Violence Against Women Act
92. EEOC - Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
93. ITPA - Immoral Traffic Prevention Act
94. TVPA - Trafficking Victims Protection Act
95. CAPTA - Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
96. STOP C SAM - Strengthening Transparency and Obligations to Protect Children Suffering from Abuse and Mistreatment Act
97. OFVPS - Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services
98. TFVAWG - Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls

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# FOREWORD

The widespread occurrence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in India constitutes a significant obstacle to the nation's advancement and social cohesion. Notwithstanding the presence of comprehensive legislative frameworks, including the Protection of Women from home Violence Act (2005) and the POCSO Act (2012), the data reveals a dire situation of increasing violence in home, public, and private domains. The 2022 report from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) recorded 445,256 reported crimes against women, with cruelty by husbands or family members constituting 31.8 percent of these incidents. Moreover, the rise of the digital domain as a new locus of harm—evidenced by a greater than 34 percent increase in cybercrimes against women from 2022 to 2023—demands an immediate, comprehensive response.

Recent events, exemplified by the Kolkata rape case, underscore the enduring reality that over a decade following the 2012 Delhi rape case, systemic deficiencies in institutional accountability and enforcement persist, failing survivors. India's poor position in global gender equality rankings—ranking 135th out of 146 nations in the Global Gender Gap Report—highlights the significant progress required to attain Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality.

The study report titled "Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms Combating Violence Against Women and Girls," published by the Centre for Public Policy Research (CPPR), serves as a significant scholarly contribution. This study is significant for its thorough endeavour to delineate the current institutional framework across five distinct states—Kerala, Telangana, Goa, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand—encompassing a broad spectrum of regional, cultural, and socio-economic factors. This research transcends fragmented case studies by offering a standardised analytical framework, termed "3P + 2R + C," which includes Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, Coordination, and Governance.

This study is an essential resource for all parties engaged in the gender justice ecosystem.

• **For Policymakers and State Authorities:** The paper highlights a significant deficiency in interdepartmental cooperation and offers evidence-based recommendations for the establishment of autonomous State-Level Women Safety Boards. It promotes the establishment of comprehensive state policies on VAWG, modelled after Kerala's Nirbhaya Policy, to supplant existing fragmented measures.
The data indicate a significant deficiency of female staff in law enforcement agencies, with representation as low as 7.4 percent in Jharkhand and 10.9 percent in Rajasthan. The research advocates for increasing this representation to 33 percent and instituting specialised Women Safety Wings within state police departments to guarantee a targeted, trauma-informed methodology for investigations.

• **For the Judiciary:** The research identifies institutional inefficiencies contributing to case pendency rates as high as 54.4 percent in certain states and advises the implementation of online/remote testimony to mitigate survivor trauma, as well as the training of specialised cohorts of prosecutors to manage VAWG cases.

The study indicates that healthcare professionals frequently lack awareness of their responsibilities under the DV Act. It outlines a framework for establishing specialised departments within hospitals to manage medical care, facilitate evidence collection using SAFE kits, and provide psychological support.

• **For Local Self-Governments (LSGs):** Recognising the restricted institutional presence in rural regions, the report advocates for a decentralised framework of "Nirbhaya Sathis"—locally appointed women at the ward level to serve as reliable first responders.

The research highlights that Civil Society and Academic Institutions are presently underutilised. It promotes a collaborative strategy in which NGOs and institutions jointly develop training modules and curricula to foster attitudinal transformation among men and boys from an early age.

This research shifts from a solely "protectionist" perspective to an empowerment-focused mandate. The report acknowledges the survivor as a vital stakeholder and recommends incorporating their input as a mandatory part of institutional assessment. The report offers new strategies to disrupt the cycle of violence by juxtaposing Indian models with effective international techniques, including the Duluth Model for batterer intervention in the United States.

This report aims to serve as a framework for systemic reform, advancing India toward a reality in which every woman and girl can exist free from violence and prejudice.

**D. Dhanuraj, Chairman of the Centre for Public Policy Research**



# INTRODUCTION 01

# 1. Overview and Context

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive and deeply entrenched forms of inequality in the world today. It transcends geography, culture, and socioeconomic status, affecting millions and undermining the dignity, health, and rights of those targeted. Such violence reflects systemic failures within legal institutions, public health systems, and societal norms. Globally, one in three women, or 30 percent of the women worldwide, has been affected by physical violence of some form, such as intimate partner violence (World Health Organization 2021). Data on technology-enabled violence against women is limited; however, a European Union report suggests that one in 10 women in Europe has experienced cyber harassment since the age of 15.

Violence against women is perpetuated by factors like gendered power structures, deepened patriarchal norms (Mondal and Paul 2021), unequal economic laws, and lack of inclusive policies and systems. Women face violence in all three spaces:private spaces, in the form of intimate partner violence and domestic violence from family members; public spaces that include professional spaces; and cyber or digital spaces. Violence has long-term consequences on the health of the woman, both physically and mentally, including unwanted pregnancies, mental trauma, HIV infection, sexually transmitted diseases, physical injury, anxiety, and depression.

Internationally, 1985 Nairobi World Conference of United Nations identified violence against women as a critical issue. The 1979 Convention[1] on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.), and the 1993 Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, and later the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognised "violence against women" as a critical international concern. The year 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of Beijing Declaration that aimed to:

> ...integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women; the study of the causes and consequences of violence against women, as well as the effectiveness of preventive measures; the elimination of trafficking in women, and the provision of assistance of victims of violence due to prostitution.

Despite the existence of numerous international instruments and domestic policies to combat VAWG, the SDG Report 2025 highlights that only 63 countries (48.1 percent) have laws on rape that are based on lack of consent (United Nations Statistics Division 2025), and such crimes are still on the rise.

Many feminist scholars have identified that the institutions and institutional practices involved in the implementation of the laws act as cultural facilitators of violence against women (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1990). The institutions often lack clear guidelines and have discretionary powers under the laws, resulting in victim blaming and collusive practices. The poor interdepartmental coordination affects the sharing of data between the institutions, leading to multiple interventions without clear procedures (Robertson 1999). The laws and institutions must work together to achieve the goal of eliminating VAWG. The failure of the institutional machinery caused by deep-rooted patriarchal and social attitudes as well as weak processes must be understood in order to strengthen the responses towards survivors.

In this context, the present study focuses on institutional and legal mechanisms that are in place for combating violence against women and girls in India.

[1] *"The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community."*

## 1.1 Conceptual Setting

The scope of "institutional mechanisms" in this study is defined based on the definition given in the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). According to the Beijing Conference, a national machinery or institution can be defined as the central policy-coordinating unit that supports government-wide gender mainstreaming with a gender equality perspective in all government units (Rai 2018). In India, these national machineries include the Ministry of Women and Child Development at the development level, both centre and state; the state police machinery; the Central Ministry of Home Affairs (Women Safety Division); judiciary and legal service authorities at the centre and states; the central and state-level health machinery; and women's commissions at the national and state levels.

However, the study is not limited to the state-led institutions; it also includes civil society organisations and academic researchers who have been in the forefront of women's movements that brought many of the legal and institutional changes in the country in their fight for women's rights. This approach was reaffirmed in the Expert Group Meeting on "National Machineries for Gender Equality" conducted by UN in 1998, which noted that:

> Collaboration between national machineries and civil society is essential in creating a strong base for gender mainstreaming. Some national machineries provide funding to women's advocacy groups in order to strengthen their voice. It is important that national machineries, government and civil society are linked by formal communication channels (DAW/ECLAC 1998, National Machineries for the Advancement of Women).



Further reiterating the role of civil society organisations, a study by Weldon and Htun (2013), which analysed policies on violence against women in 70 countries from 1975 to 2005, found that strong, vibrant domestic feminist movements use international and regional conventions and agreements as levers to influence policy-making.

## 1.2 VAWG in India - Legal and Institutional Context

The Indian Constitution, under Article 15, mandates positive discrimination for women and children by allowing laws specially made for their upliftment. The Directive Principles direct the state governments to bring in policies for equal pay for equal work, maternity relief, just and safe working conditions, protection from all forms of exploitation, and free legal aid. Even though crimes against women are not specifically addressed, the vulnerable communities intended under the Constitution include women. Apart from the above provisions, the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts have provisions for the reservation of seats for women in local self-government elections.

Further, India has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966). India is a signatory to non-binding agreements like the

UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW, 1993), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), and the UNiTE to End Violence Against Women Campaign (2008). India is also part of the ongoing UN mechanism called the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), where reports on VAWG progress are reported on a yearly basis. However, India is not a party to the optional Protocol to CEDAW, which allows provisions for individuals to complain directly to the CEDAW Committee, nor has it adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, that deals with GBV in armed conflict.

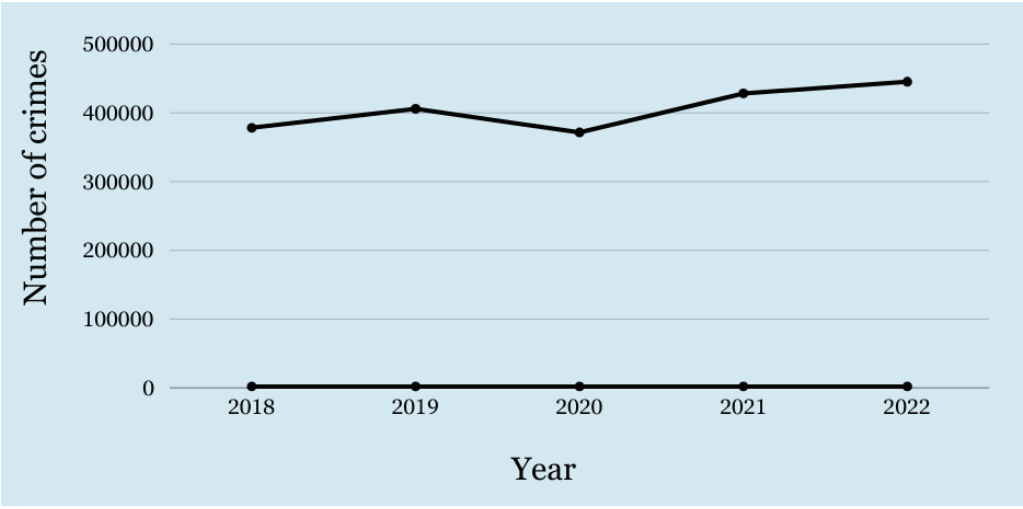
Based on the international commitments and the advocacy movement of NGOs, India has brought in specialized laws such as the Domestic Violence Act (DV Act), the Indecent Representation of Women Act, specific offences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita, the Dowry Prohibition Act, and the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act (POSH), to address and punish specific offences. These laws have established many institutional mechanisms, like women protection officers, dowry prohibition officers, and internal complaints committees for establishments employing more than 10 employees, and local complaints committees at the district level for POSH cases. Furthermore, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Women Safety Division under the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the National Legal Services Authority play a significant role in implementing specific schemes and programmes for combating violence against women and girls.

## 1.3 Prevalence of VAWG in India

Despite these laws and policies, the prevailing data paints a grim picture of the existing situation of crimes against women and girls in India. According to UN Women, the prevalence of lifetime sexual or physical intimate partner violence in India is 29.3 percent. While India has laws and institutions to combat violence against women, marital rape is still not considered an offence under criminal law. India lags behind in the Gender Inequality Index and Global Gender Gap Report, placing 102nd out of 172 countries and 135th out of 146 countries, respectively.

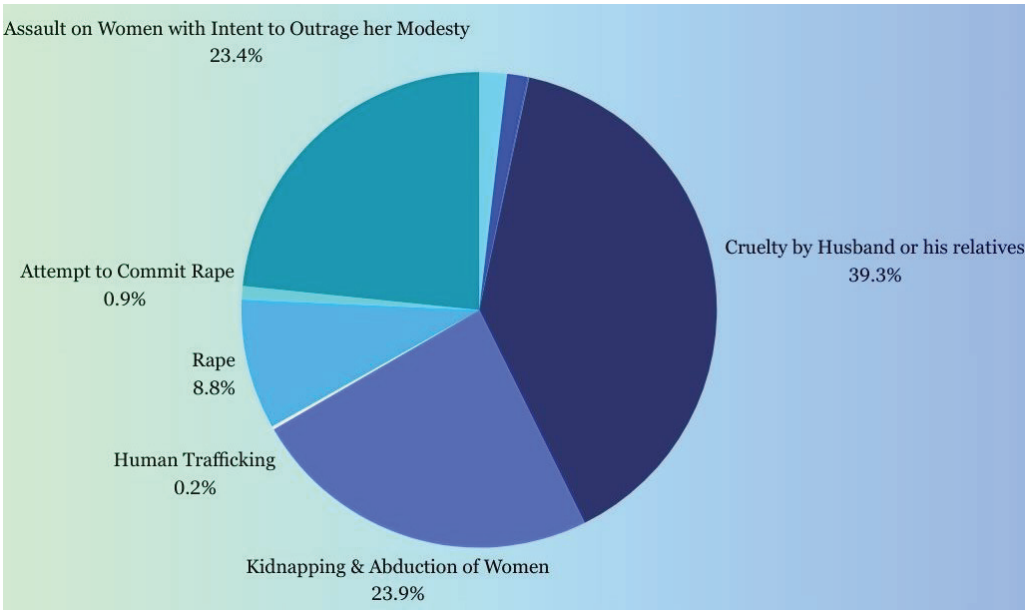
The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2022 report, released by the Ministry of Home Affairs, highlights an escalating trend of VAWG across domestic, public, and private spheres (*Crime in India 2022, n.d.*). A total of 445,256 crimes against women and girls were reported by the NCRB in 2022. Out of the reported crimes, the highest proportion of cases were recorded under "cruelty by a spouse or his relatives" at 31.8 percent, followed by "assault on women to outrage her modesty" at 20.8 percent, incidents of kidnapping and abduction at 17.6 percent, and rape cases at 7.4 percent (*Crime in India 2022, n.d.*).

**Figure 1: Number of Reported Crimes Against Women from 2018 to 2022**




*Source:* NCRB Data 2018-2022

**Figure 2: Types of Reported Crimes Against Women as per the NCRB 2022**




*Source:* NCRB Data 2022

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21) complements these findings, reporting that 29 percent of women have experienced physical violence since age 15, and 32 percent of ever-married women aged 18-49 have experienced spousal violence (National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21, n.d.).

A deep dive into the existing laws and institutional mechanisms in India combating violence against women and girls will help in examining the gaps and challenges that the system faces in achieving the SDG Goal 5.



## 2. National Policy Framework and Government Response

### 2.1 Legislative Provisions

India has a robust legal framework addressing various forms of violence against women and girls. The Prevention of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (DV Act), provides comprehensive support and protection to women afflicted by violence within their domestic relationships, which include their partner/spouse and partner/spouse's family members (respondent). The definition of violence encompasses a wide range of abuses, such as physical, sexual, economic, emotional, and verbal abuse. The Act mandates the institutionalisation of a Protection Officer, who supports the survivors by preparing the Domestic Incident Report (DIR) and submitting evidence to the Magistrate to request a protection order. The Protection Officer also facilitates shelter, legal aid, and other facilities as required by the survivor. A Residence Order may be issued by the Magistrate to ensure that the woman is not forcefully displaced or is forced to cohabit with the respondent in the shared

household. The Magistrate is authorised to direct the respondent to provide monetary relief for the financial losses incurred by the woman and her children due to the abuse. The Domestic Violence Act mandates periodic sensitisation and awareness training for police officers and members of the judiciary. It aims for speedy justice, requiring court proceedings to begin within three days of a complaint and for cases to be disposed of within 60 days of the first hearing (The Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005, n.d.).

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, prohibits the act of demanding, giving, or taking dowry. Failure to comply with the Act would result in imprisonment and/or a fine. The burden of proof to show that the groom has complied with the provisions of the Act rests with them. The state government appoints Dowry Prohibition Officers to ensure compliance with the Act, prevent any defaults, and collect evidence for prosecution (The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, n.d.).



The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, prohibits the operation of brothels, coercion of individuals into prostitution, trafficking of individuals for prostitution, and the act of engaging in prostitution in public places. Warrantless searches may be conducted by a police officer (not below the post of Inspector of Police) if there is reasonable evidence for prostitution being committed at a particular premise. Special courts may be set up by the state government to ensure the quick delivery of justice to trafficked individuals. Protection homes and/or corrective homes may be instituted by the state or Central Government as deemed necessary under the Act (The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, n.d.).

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), prevents sexual harassment of women at the workplace by any individual and provides avenues for redressal of complaints for any abuse committed. The Act mandates the establishment of an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in every company with more than 10 employees and a Local Complaints Committee (LCC) by the District Officer (District Magistrate, Additional District Magistrate, Collector, or Deputy Collector) for companies with less than 10 employees. Complaints of sexual harassment at a workplace are to be made to the ICC or LCC, as the case may be, within three months of the incident, based on which an inquiry is to be conducted for any further escalation of the matter (The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, n.d.).

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, prohibits the indecent representation of women through advertisements, publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other form. The production and distribution of such material is banned by the Act (The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, n.d.).

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act), protects children from sexual harassment, sexual assault, and child pornography and establishes Special Courts for conducting speedy trials of POCSO cases. Being highly stringent in nature, the Act mandates rigorous punishment, which may range from ten years to life imprisonment, along with a fine (The Protection of Children From Sexual Offences Act, 2012, n.d.).

The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex-Section) Act, 1994, prohibits sex-selection, whether before or after conception, and regulates prenatal diagnostic tests to prevent female foeticide (The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex-Section) Act, 1994, n.d.).

The Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita (BNS) and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which replaced the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, respectively, have provisions for crimes against women.Chapter 5 of BNS, covering sections 63 to 99, details the various crimes against women and children.

The Information Technology Act 2000 and 2008 amendments, has provisions on cyber offences, including capturing private images, cheating by impersonation using communication devices, fraudulent use of another person's online identity, capturing or watching any woman engaged in a private act, publication or transmission of obscene content, and disclosing personal information without consent— all of which are punishable under the Act.

Law and order being a state subject, the implementation and enforcement of all the laws lies with the state governments. Most states have dedicated ministries/ departments for women and child development, along with state-specific women's commissions. The state police play a significant role in the VAWG architecture. The states also have their own sets of rules under central laws, which establish procedural guidelines and processes for implementing the regulations. Apart from these, some states have their own initiatives like Bharosa Centres in Telangana, the Snehitha Help Desk run by Kudumbasree in Kerala, and Bhoomika Centres under the Health Department of Kerala.

Despite these efforts, persistent gaps and challenges remain in the implementation and reach of many of these laws and institutions on the ground. NCRB (2022) and NFHS (2019) data reveal the hard realities and the progress the country needs to make to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality. This study aims to bring policy recommendations, based on stakeholder interactions and workshop insights, to strengthen the current institutional mechanisms and support collaborative work towards achieving SDG 5 focused on gender equality, which aims to ensure that women and girls have equal rights and opportunities and can live free from violence and discrimination.

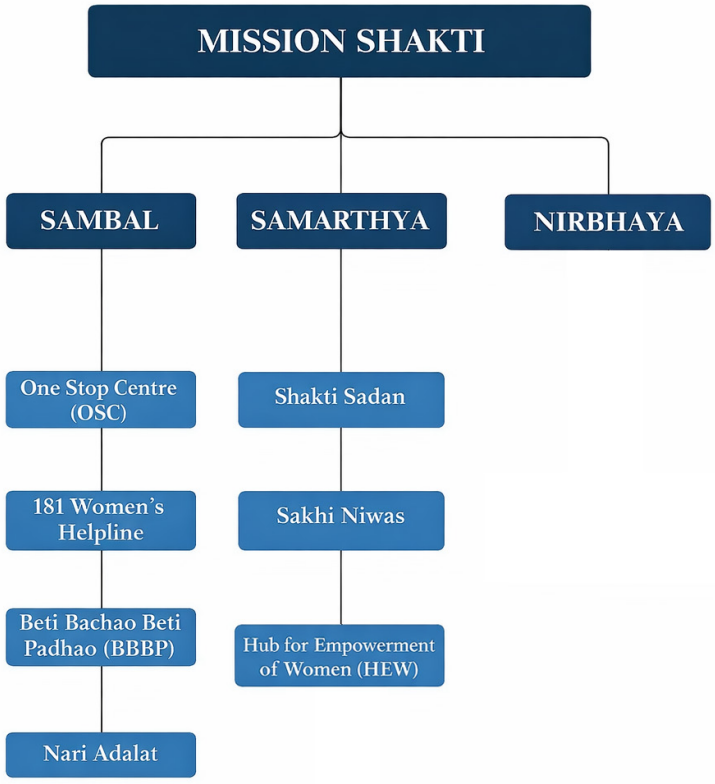
## 2.2 Union Government Initiatives

### 2.2.1 Nodal Ministries and Flagship Programs and Schemes

The governments at the centre, state and local levels, along with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have instituted numerous mechanisms, laws, and policies to tackle this pressing challenge constructively.

**Ministry of Women and Child Development:** Mission Shakti, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India, is a central scheme with various subschemes addressing violence against women within the domestic, private, and public domains.

**Figure 3: Flowchart Representing Schemes under Mission Shakti**



**One Stop Centres (OSC)** offer a comprehensive range of integrated services to women and girls who have experienced violence and distress (Revised Scheme of One Stop Center, n.d.). The **181 Women's Helpline** is a toll-free, 24/7 telecom service, central scheme, operated by the concerned State WCDs, for providing support, emergency services, and information to assist women and girls seeking the same (Women Helpline 181 | WCD, n.d.). **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** (BBBP), marking its 10th anniversary in 2025, aims to bring about behavioural social changes that eliminate the practice of female foeticide (Beti Bachao), and promote girls' education (Beti Padhao) (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) | WCD, n.d.). **Nari Adalat**, a scheme piloted in Assam and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is a grievance redressal mechanism, instituted at the local level, for resolving issues faced by women through mediation and mutual understanding at the Panchayat level (Nari Adalat, n.d.).

**Shakti Sadans** are relief and rehabilitation homes providing shelter for women in distress and those affected by violence (Shakti Sadan, n.d.). Sakhi Niwas are working women's hostels that provide safe and conveniently located accommodation for women working in urban, semi-urban, and even rural areas (Sakhi Niwas - Working Women Hostel, n.d.). **SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW)** is an institution that bridges the knowledge gap regarding key information on the schemes and services pertaining to women, including those faced with violence (SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women, n.d.). **The Nirbhaya Fund** is an exclusive fund administered by the Ministry of Finance, under which the MWCD is responsible for appraising and recommending proposals related to the safety and security of women in India, as well as reviewing and monitoring relevant schemes (Nirbhaya, n.d.).

The Ministry of WCD runs the SHe-Box Helpline for registering the cases of workplace harassment. Any working woman, irrespective of her work status in the formal or informal sector, can file her complaint in the portal, which then connects her with the authority having jurisdiction in the matter to take up the case.

**Ministry of Home Affairs :** The Ministry of Home Affairs has a dedicated Women Safety Division that provides advisory and guidelines regarding the handling of crimes against women and children. MHA manages several projects funded by Nirbhaya Fund, such as the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) and Safe City initiative. The Women's Safety Division also has an anti-trafficking cell for law enforcement of human trafficking cases. The National Crimes Record Bureau is managed under this division, which serves as the key data source for understanding the prevalence of the crimes against women and children in the country. NCRB oversees the National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO). An MHA Advisory dated October 9, 2020 reiterates the compulsory registration of FIRs, including Zero FIRs (for cases outside of their jurisdictional limits) in the event of receipt of information on the commission of a cognizable offence, which includes cases of sexual assault against women. The Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO), an online analytical tool, has been launched to monitor and track police investigations into sexual offences within two months, as per the provisions of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018. MHA supports police stations with one lakh rupees to set up women's help desks in the 10,000 high-crime-reporting police stations. Specialised training is also conducted for police officers, medical officers, and public prosecutors in the collection and data handling of DNA evidence and Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits (SAEC Kits).

Section 193(2) of BNSS states that cognisable offences against women and POCSO cases must be completed within two months from the date on which the case was first registered at a police station. Sections 173(1) and 173(1)(ii) of BNSS support Zero FIRs and online FIRs to be signed by the party within three days, respectively. Section 176 allows for recording rape survivor statements via audio-video electronic means, including mobile phone, at a location of her choice. Section 184 requires the submission of a Medico-Legal Report (MLR) to the investigating officer within seven days and mandates registered medical practitioners to conduct the medical examination of the sexually assaulted woman within 24 hours of receiving the information.

**Ministry of Health and Family Welfare:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare plays an important role in the VAWG institutional architecture. With VAWG being a public health concern, the proactiveness of health professionals can impact the survivors significantly. In 2014, the Ministry brought out guidelines on **Medico-Legal Care for Survivors/Victims of Sexual Violence**, a protocol based on principles of a survivor-centred approach to provide free and timely care and support for the survivors through a trauma-informed response and capacity building of health professionals (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare 2014). Additionally, the Ministry, in collaboration with WHO and UNFPA, has conducted capacity-building initiatives for the sensitive handling of survivors. **Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PC&PNDT Act)**, which curbs gender-selective abortions, is also implemented by the Ministry. In some states like Kerala, under the National Health Mission, programmes like Bhumika Centres are conceptualised and implemented in district hospitals for supporting survivors by providing referral services, apart from medical needs. Medical professionals have a crucial role in filing medical reports that act as evidence for sexual offences, dowry death, and other crimes, as per the provisions of the DV Act, POCSO Act, and BNSS, 2023.

**The Department of Justice**, under the **Ministry of Law** and Justice has a special scheme for fast-track courts. The **Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) Scheme**, implemented by the Department of Justice since October 2019, aims to ensure the speedy trial of sexual offence cases, including those under the POCSO Act. Each court comprises one judicial officer and seven staff members. Initially launched for one year with a total outlay of ₹767.25 crore, the scheme has been extended successively, most recently until March 2026, with a total financial outlay of ₹1,952.23 crore, including ₹1,207.24 crore from the Nirbhaya Fund. As of August 2025, 773 FTSCs, including 400 exclusive POCSO Courts, are operational across 29 states and union territories, having disposed of over 3.44 lakh pending cases. The Department ensures robust implementation through an online monitoring framework and regular review meetings with High Courts and state authorities.

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) also comes under the administrative control of the Department of Justice and is responsible for providing free legal services under Article 39A of the Indian Constitution. The NALSA Act mandates free legal aid to women and children.

### 2.2.2 Institutional Mechanisms - National Level

**National Legal Services Authority:** The Legal Services Authority Act, 1987 was enacted to provide free legal services, thereby ensuring access to justice to all, as envisioned under Article 39A of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution. The Act establishes an institutional mechanism consisting of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA), the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), and the Taluk Legal Services Authority. As per Section 12(c) of the Act, women and children are entitled to receive free legal aid services from the institutions established under the Act. There are also alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution, such as Lok Adalats and mediation centres. Under the Act, Special Lok Adalats can be convened to settle matrimonial, maintenance, custody, and domestic violence cases in a less adversarial manner. Women can access legal aid through DLSAs, Taluk Legal Services Committees, and Legal Services Clinics, which are often located in law colleges, jails, and community centres. In some states, DLSA works closely with the One Stop Centres (run by WCD) to provide legal assistance. NALSA, SLSA, and DLSA also conduct awareness campaigns across

their jurisdictions to promote the effective implementation of the law's intentions. The awareness campaigns and legal support services are provided by paralegal volunteers, who work on a part-time/-full-time basis and receive an honorarium for their services, as well as by panel advocates.

Another important initiative implemented by the State Legal Services Authority is the **Victim Compensation Scheme.** The compensation scheme was introduced in 2009 through Section 357A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973. The scheme fund is disbursed according to the respective schemes established by the state government and is administered by State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs) under the supervision of NALSA. Victims may receive immediate interim compensation even before the trial concludes. After the Supreme Court decision in Nipun Saxena v. Union of India (2018), NALSA issued guidelines titled “Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/-Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes, 2018”.

> As quoted:
> Women Victim Compensation Fund – means a fund segregated for disbursement for women victims, out of State Victim Compensation Fund and Central Fund. Within the State Victim Compensation Fund, a separate Bank Account shall be maintained as a portion of that larger fund which shall contain the funds contributed under CVCF Scheme by MHA, GOI contributed from Nirbhaya Fund apart from funds received from the State Victim Compensation Fund.

As per the Scheme, the Women's Compensation Fund comprises the following:

- Contribution received under the CVCF Scheme, 2015;
- Budgetary allocation in the shape of grants-in-aid to SLSAs;
- Any cost amount ordered by the civil/criminal tribunal to be deposited in this fund;
- Amount of compensation recovered from the wrongdoer/accused under Clause 14 of the Scheme;
- Donations and CSR funds.

As per the Scheme, the interim amount can be disbursed in full and only 25 percent of the final compensation amount may be given, placing the 75 percent as a fixed deposit for three years. However, the rationale for the fixed deposit is unclear. There are also minimum and maximum limits for compensation for certain offences like rape and gang rape.

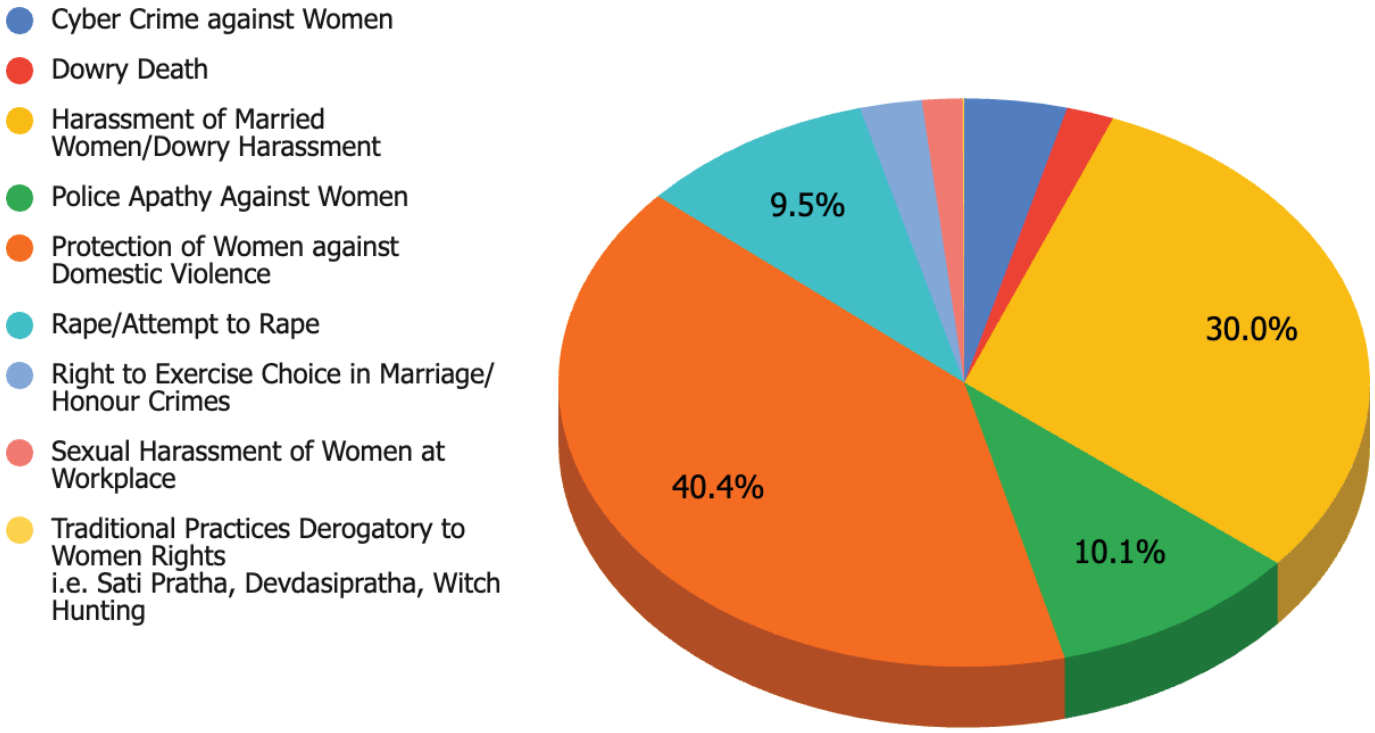
Despite these mechanisms in place, the weak implementation of the schemes at the state level is causing a burden on survivors who are actually in need of financial support.

**National Commission for Women (NCW)**

A statutory quasi-judicial body established under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, the Commission—under Section 10 of the Act— is responsible for investigating and examining all matters relating to the safeguarding of women under the Indian Constitution and other laws in India. They have the power to suo moto look into the complaints, breach of law, and the implementation of policies enacted to protect women. The NCW also undertakes research studies on specific problems or situations arising out of discrimination and atrocities against women to identify the constraints faced by women in various sectors and recommend policy changes to the government from time to time. They work in coordination with the state-level commissions constituted under the respective state laws.

The NCW runs a women's helpline (7827170170) that enables digital complaint registration by women in distress through trained counsellors. The “Her Legal Guide” app was launched by NCW in 2023 to help women understand their legal rights. On International Women’s Day 2025, NCW launched a new initiative called “Tere Mere Sapne”—a premarital communication centre aimed at offering counselling to young individuals to build healthy marriages. There is a dedicated NRI Cell that supports NRI women in registering their complaints.

**Figure 4: Type of Cases Registered in NCW (2023-24)**




*Source:* NCW Annual Report 2023-24

The above graph shows the prominent types of cases registered with the NCW and the percentage distribution of these cases for the year 2023-24.

## 3. CPPR Research Study: Introduction

### 3.1 Background and Genesis

Despite the existence of multiple institutions, programmes, and schemes at the centre and state levels, the implementation of these initiatives on the ground remains weak. There are gaps and challenges, such as limited accessibility of institutions, biased attitudes of the institutional personnel deep-rooted in patriarchal mindset, low chargesheeting and conviction rates, delays in institutional responses and court proceedings, inadequate financial support for survivors, the absence of reintegration strategies, and insufficient preventive measures. These factors continue to affect India's stride towards achieving a gender-equal society as per SDG 5. Most programs combating VAWG are centrally planned and funded, but their implementation depends on state mechanisms. Hence, a comprehensive state-level study was planned to understand the efficiency and effectiveness of VAWG-related institutions and mechanisms and the challenges and gaps they face, in order to strengthen them to fight against VAWG.

## 3.2 Rationale for the Study

### Knowledge Gaps

The existing literature on the institutional mechanisms combating VAWG is scattered and fragmented. This study aims to map the existing mechanisms driven by government as well as non-state actors like NGOs, CBOs, and academic institutions.

Although some standalone case studies document innovative state-level initiatives, such as Kerala's "Bhoomika" and Telangana's "Social Action Committees", a detailed account of best practices and operational structures that could be adapted across states is lacking. This study intends to showcase successful practices, analyze operational methods, and develop cross-state comparisons to inform policy and implementation strategies.

### Policy Imperatives

India's poor performance in global gender equality indices, such as the WEF Global Gender Gap Report and the Global Gender Inequality Index, underscores persistent gaps in law enforcement, institutional accountability, and deep-rooted social stigmas that continue to hinder women's safety and labour force participation. The recent Kolkata rape incident and the inadequate institutional response that followed call for serious review and introspection of existing mechanisms. Initiatives like the One Stop Centre Scheme, Mahila Police Volunteers, and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, emerged in the aftermath of the 2012 Delhi rape case as urgent reforms to strengthen women's safety and justice systems. Yet, more than a decade later, the Kolkata case exposes the continuing weaknesses in institutional strategies and implementation, highlighting the need for renewed commitment and systemic reform. A comprehensive review of existing laws, programmes, implementation strategies, and plans is the need of the hour to ensure meaningful progress toward gender equality and women's safety.

### Ground-Level Realities

Survivors, the key stakeholders affected by the crime, are often missing in the formulation of the existing programmes, guidelines, and protocols. A study among first responders in Goa highlighted that systemic barriers, patriarchal attitudes of institutional actors like police, politicisation, and media sensationalisation of sexual cases, and repetitive, lengthy court procedures lead to retraumatisation and trauma attacks for survivors (Nayak 2025). Studies by CEHAT in 2018 suggest that inadequate medico-legal evidence has led to acquittals in rape cases, thereby affecting the morale of the survivors (CEHAT and MCGM 2018). In order to understand the challenges in the system that lead to retraumatisation and low conviction rates, a thorough study of various institutions is warranted.

## 3.3 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of the study are to:

1. Map the existing institutional architecture in selected states for combating violence against women and girls (VAWG).
2. Analyse the functioning of institutional mechanisms in each state from a survivor-centric perspective.
3. Identify best practices and challenges encountered by various institutions in addressing VAWG.
4. Provide policy recommendations aimed at addressing systemic gaps and strengthening the overall response to VAWG.

## 3.4 Rationale of Selection of States

Being a national-level study, the following factors were considered for selecting the states: geographical location (one state from each region of India, except the northeast due to logistical constraints), cultural diversity (for example, Jharkhand with a 30 percent tribal population), variations in Human Development Index (HDI) from high (Kerala, 0.745 in 2021) to medium (Rajasthan, 0.640) to low (Jharkhand, 0.588), and crime data

(NCRB 2022 and NFHS-5) to capture varying levels of reported VAWG. Accordingly, the study was conducted in Kerala, Goa, Telangana, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan.

Table 1 presents the percentage of women aged 15–49 who justify their husbands beating them for at least one reason, along with their help-seeking behaviors. Interestingly, southern states like Kerala and Telangana, despite higher HDI indices, show a contradictory trend with respect to women justifying spousal violence, compared to the national average of 45.7 percent. Regarding help-seeking, only 14 percent of women seek any assistance, with nearly 61 percent approaching family members. Institutional mechanisms are less frequently accessed: 6.3 percent contact the police, 2.9 percent social service organizations, and 2.4 percent turn to doctors, medical professionals, or religious leaders. This highlights both a lack of awareness of rights and poor intervention by institutional support systems, which are affected by deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes.

### Table 1: Percentage of Women (15–49 years) Who Justify Husbands Beating Them for At Least One Reason

| State | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| **Rajasthan** | 34.6 |
| **Jharkhand** | 27.0 |
| **Goa** | 34.5 |
| **Kerala** | 52.4 |
| **Telangana** | 83.8 |

*Source:* (Data taken from National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21)

Table 2 shows the prevalence of spousal violence (emotional, physical, or sexual) across these states. Although NFHS-5 data indicates a slight decline in domestic violence compared to NFHS-4, the data clearly reflects the continuing need for empowering women and girls to prevent VAWG.

### Table 2: Women Experiencing Spousal Violence (Emotional, Physical, or Sexual)

| State | Spousal Violence (%) |
|---|---|
| **Rajasthan** | 26.3 |
| **Jharkhand** | 32.8 |
| **Goa** | 9.7 |
| **Kerala** | 12.9 |
| **Telangana** | 40.4 |

These data underscore the urgency of strengthening institutional mechanisms and awareness campaigns to effectively combat VAWG in India.

## 3.5 Research Methodology

The research design for this study was primarily qualitative, focusing on understanding the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms in combating VAWG across selected states. A detailed stakeholder mapping was carried out to identify key actors and their roles in addressing VAWG. The identified stakeholders included:

- Government departments at state and district levels
- Law enforcement agencies
- Judiciary and legal aid services
- Healthcare facilities and ASHA workers
- NGOs and civil society organisations
- Community leaders and women's groups

  Survivors

The study uses a combination of qualitative primary and secondary research methods for data collection. Primary research was conducted using the following sources:

1. Information from official government websites
2. Relevant laws and policies
3. Online and in-person interviews using semi-structured questionnaires.
4. Online survey questionnaires (Tech VAWG)
5. Workshops in all five states with group discussions and panel discussions with participants from all identified institutions, NGOs, and academicians working in the sector.

This methodology allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the institutional mechanisms, the challenges faced at the state and district levels, and the effectiveness of policies and programs in preventing and addressing VAWG.

## 3.6 Data Analysis Framework of the Study

Globally, several frameworks have been developed to analyse violence against women. The UN 3P Model - Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution is one of the most widely used. This framework emphasises:

- Prevention: Strengthening efforts to prevent violence through awareness, education, and legal or policy reforms.
- Protection: Ensuring essential services such as shelter homes, health, and legal assistance for survivors.
- Prosecution: Holding perpetrators accountable through effective institutional mechanisms.

Due to a lack of an intersectionality perspective, this framework was then revised as a 4P model by the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention. The Council of Europe clearly wanted a preventive approach involving men and boys being included in the P for Prevention and added a 4th P, “Policy.” The framework involved developing national action plans, implementing anti-discrimination measures, promoting women's participation in decision-making processes, and understanding violence from a cultural perspective. Later UNISAFE developed a 7P model. It encompasses Policy, Prevalence, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and internal disciplinary measures, as well as the Provision of services and Partnerships (Mergaert, Linková, and Strid 2023). For this study, drawing inspiration from these models, the framework was further expanded to include:

- Two ‘R’s: Rehabilitation and Reintegration
- One ‘C’: Coordination and Governance

This results in a **“3P + 2R + C”** framework, encompassing Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, Coordination, and Governance. This framework is tailored to address violence specifically against women and girls in diverse cultural, social, economic, and political contexts.

The prevention parameter, as expanded by the Council of Europe, includes the engagement of men and boys in preventing violence, establishing state policies and action plans on VAWG prevention, implementing community-based awareness programmes, and monitoring high-prevalence areas. Protection is similar to the existing models; however, it gives a strengthened focus on confidentiality and includes protection in cyberspace as well. The metrics include survivor-centric institutional response protocols and SOPs, availability of health support, legal aid, safe shelters for temporary stays, as well as data protection and confidentiality measures for survivors and safety in cyberspace. Prosecution encompasses the availability of Special Fast Track Courts for sexual offences, the functioning of Public Prosecutors for VAWG, FIR registration and follow-up rates, charge-sheeting rates, and conviction rates under key laws. The rehabilitation dimension focuses on the need to support survivors with long-term interventions, including mental health counselling, livelihood opportunities, survival grants, skills development, compensation, and case management services. These strategies must help the women overcome their traumatic experiences with violence. Reintegration is often neglected as an important component in many existing frameworks. Effectively addressing relapses and subsequent violence against survivors is crucial. This requires support mechanisms such as provisions for re-enrolment in education, workplace reintegration policies and anti-discrimination protections, and monitoring outcomes of post-institutional support. The coordination and governance dimension focuses on accountability, transparency, funding, grievance redressal within systems, convergence, and coordination between key pillars such as health, police, judiciary, and women's departments, as well as their collaboration with civil society, communities, and survivors.

## 3.7 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study was the challenge of capturing the diverse geographical issues related to violence against women and girls (VAWG). Incidents of VAWG can vary significantly across different regions due to cultural practices, socio-economic conditions, and local governance structures. While the study aimed to reflect these regional differences, practical constraints made it difficult to cover all areas comprehensively.

Additionally, there were logistical challenges in reaching certain states, which affected the data collection process. Factors such as limited resources, travel difficulties, and coordination issues made it harder to engage participants in some locations. In particular, engaging survivors in states like Jharkhand and Goa proved to be difficult. This may have been influenced by social stigma, fear of disclosure, or limited access to survivors willing to participate in the study.

Overall, these challenges suggest that while the study provides valuable insights into VAWG, its findings may not fully capture all regional variations and experiences, highlighting the need for further research with broader geographical coverage.

## 4. Structure of the Report

The report is organized into chapters that provide a detailed analysis of each selected state. Each state chapter begins with an overview of the state's development indicators concerning women, followed by a mapping of the legal and institutional mechanisms in place. This section highlights the programmes and schemes implemented to combat violence against women and girls (VAWG). The institutional mechanisms and programmes are then assessed using the "3P + 2R + C" framework, and each chapter concludes with specific policy recommendations tailored to the state.

In addition, the report includes a chapter dedicated to technology-enabled VAWG, examining the VAWG-related apps used by different states and providing targeted policy recommendations to address tech-based violence and enhance the effectiveness of these apps.

To incorporate international perspectives, a separate chapter reviews the laws and institutional mechanisms in the United States aimed at combating VAWG. The report concludes with a chapter presenting overarching policy recommendations for strengthening institutional mechanisms at the national level.

The report intends to provide an overview of challenges and gaps in the implementation of various initiatives by the institutional framework and the recommendations to strengthen the institutional architecture for better prevention, reporting, redressal, and reintegration of the women survivors into the society, thereby contributing to the achievement of SDG 5.

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State Report

# GOA 02

# 1. State Profile and Context

## 1.1 Demographic Overview

Goa, India's smallest state, is often recognized for its high literacy, cultural pluralism, economy, and relatively favourable socio-demographic indicators. The overall literacy rate increased from 81.9 percent in 2001 to 86.0 percent in 2011, with female literacy at 84.7 percent, among the highest in the country (National Health Systems Resource Centre 2021). Female labour force participation stands at 37 percent, well above the national average of approximately 25 percent, indicating comparatively higher economic engagement. Despite these advantages, the sex ratio at birth remains low at 838 females per 1,000 males, and the child sex ratio is even lower at 774 females per 1,000 males (NFHS-5 2019-21), reflecting persistent gender bias.

Despite high literacy and comparatively strong labour force participation, violence against women in Goa remains a pressing challenge. NFHS-5 (2019-21) reports that one-fifth of ever-married women aged 18-49 in Goa have experienced physical or sexual violence. A community study in Tiswadi taluka found that 26.6 percent of currently married women reported experiencing physical spousal violence in just the three months preceding the survey (Kamat et al., 2010). Help-seeking behaviour among survivors is extremely low, with nearly 76 percent of affected women choosing not to disclose their experiences or seek legal or institutional support (NFHS 5 2019-21). Social stigma, normalisation of violence, and internalised gender hierarchies contribute to this silence. Notably, over 35 percent of women agree that a husband is justified in hitting his wife for reasons such as neglecting home or showing disrespect to in-laws, highlighting how entrenched patriarchal norms perpetuate vulnerability.

Violence against women and limited agency within the household also intersect with broader structural vulnerabilities, making women and girls vulnerable to exploitation outside the home. Goa, despite its small population, reported the highest in human trafficking cases in India in 2021, with a location quotient of 8.18, indicating prevalence more than eight times the national average relative to population size (Dakua et al., 2023). The state's tourism-driven economy, coupled with migration and informal labour networks, creates conditions where women face high risks of sexual exploitation and coerced labour.

Efforts to address these vulnerabilities are supported by the laws, policies, and institutions in the state. The Portuguese Civil Code (PCC) of 1867, still in force, governs marriage, divorce, and inheritance across all communities. It mandates marriage registration, discourages polygamy, and ensures equal succession rights, positioning Goa as a pioneer in personal law reform. The state also relies on collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, Community Based Organisations, and academic partners to support women's rights. However, the effectiveness of these frameworks is often limited by cultural norms, low awareness, and weak enforcement, particularly in addressing domestic violence and trafficking.

Hence Goa presents high literacy, relatively strong female labour force participation, and progressive legal provisions; however, violence against women and girls persist, including domestic violence and human trafficking. These findings indicate the need for a detailed study to understand the challenges of legal and institutional interventions.

## 1.2 Prevalence of Violence Against Women

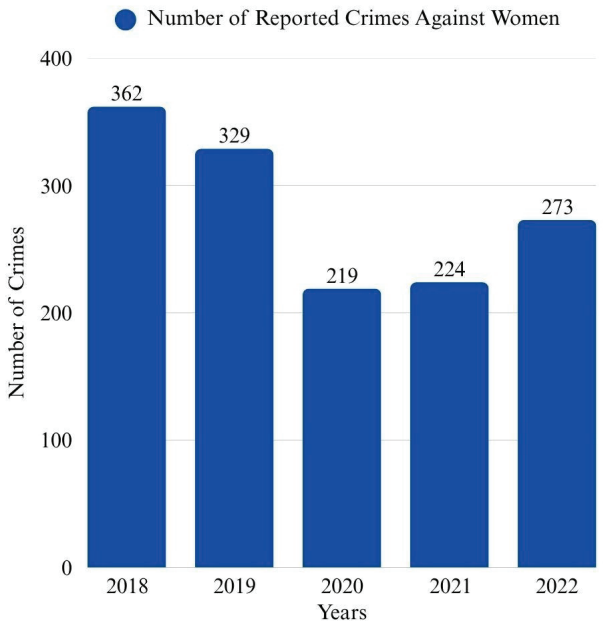
As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Report of 2022, Goa recorded 273 cases of VAWG. With 155 recorded cases, North Goa saw the highest crime rate, followed by South Goa with 96 cases. Common crimes include:

- Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty, with the highest recorded numbers (87 cases)
- Rape (73 cases)

- Kidnapping and Abduction of Women (60 cases), and
- Sexual Trafficking

An analysis of institutional data reveals a sustained increase in crimes against women reported across Goa over the past five years (Goa Legislative Assembly 2024). In OSC North, reported cases have steadily increased from 337 in 2019-20 to 506 in 2023-24, indicating a 50 percent increase. A sharper shift is visible in OSC South Goa, where cases surged from 116 in 2019-2020 to 525 in 2022-23, before slightly declining to 434 in 2023-24, which is still nearly four times the number recorded in 2019. Meanwhile, data from the Goa State Commission for Women (GSCW) shows more fluctuation, with cases ranging from 121 in 2019-20 to a peak of 176 in 2021-22, followed by a significant dip to 88 in 2022-23, and an escalation to 153 in 2023-24 (Goa Legislative Assembly, n.d.). The graph below shows the reported Indian Penal Code and Special and Local Laws crimes against women in the state of Goa between 2018 and 2022. NCRB Reports also reveal that the state's case pendency rate saw a reduction from 90.4 percent in 2018 to 26.1 percent in 2022.

**Figure 1: Number of Reported Crimes Against Women in Goa**




*Source:*
National Crime Records Bureau Report 2018-2022

According to National Family Health Survey NFHS-4 (2015-16), 15 percent of ever-married women in Goa experienced spousal violence (emotional, physical, or sexual), while 12.5 percent faced domestic violence, including acts by spouses and others (physical, sexual, or both). NFHS- 5 (2019-21) shows spousal violence reduced to 10 percent, but domestic violence increased to 21.3 percent. 76 percent of women have not sought any help in case of violence.

## 2. Institutional Mechanisms

The institutional mechanisms developed under the central laws and state laws constitute the core framework for combating VAWG in Goa. The Department of WCD plays a crucial central role in the implementation of many of the central schemes and programmes along with the police, who are responsible for enforcement and prosecution of the crimes under BNS and BNSS. The section provides a comprehensive overview of the existing institutional mechanisms under key departments that are responsible for prevention, protection, prosecution, rehabilitation, reintegration, coordination, and governance for combating VAWG in Goa.

### 2.1 Role of the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD):

WCD Goa is the primary implementing agency for state-level institutional mechanisms and schemes related to the protection and welfare of women and girls. The WCD runs the following schemes and programmes in the state of Goa:

- **One Stop Centres:** Under the centrally sponsored Sambal sub-scheme of Mission Shakti, Goa had established two One Stop Centres (OSCs), one each in North and South Goa districts, located within one km of the respective district hospitals, manned and run by NGOs selected by WCD. However, in 2024, WCD took over the OSCs, which are currently

implemented by the Child Development Protection Office (Stakeholder Interviews 2024).

- **Swadhar Greh Scheme (Shakti Sadan):** The Swadhar Greh Scheme, a centrally sponsored programme, under a 60:40 centre-state funding model, aims to support women in difficult circumstances through institutional care. Despite provisions for implementation through approved NGOs, local bodies, or public organisations, no Swadhar Greh homes were established in Goa as of 2022 (Press Information Bureau 2022).

- **Protection Officers under the Domestic Violence Act:** The Block Development Officers (BDO) have been assigned the duties of the Women Protection Officers (WPO). The Department is in the process of recruiting probationary officers who would later be trained to take up the posts of the WPO (Stakeholder Interviews 2024).

- **Shelter Homes:** The state has one shelter for trafficked women, maintained under a state scheme which is operated by a local NGO. The women may seek shelter there upon the orders of the Sub-District Magistrates of South and/or North Goa. The shelter provides counselling and livelihood generation training as well (Stakeholder Interview, October 3, 2024). It has a capacity to hold 20 inmates (Government of India 2023).

- **Schemes for Rehabilitation of Survivors:** Goa Technical/Vocational Training to Sex Workers and Sexually Abused Women Scheme, (PRABHAT) launched in 2013 by the Department of Women and Child Development and supported by the Anyay Rahith Zindagi NGO, is designed to rehabilitate women and children from Goa who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, irrespective of where the exploitation occurred. To avail the benefits, the individual must either be a native of Goa or a resident of the state at the time of application. The scheme is administered through a monitoring committee and supported by a corpus fund. Victims outside protective homes receive ₹2,500 per month for three months or until livelihood placement, along with free healthcare, education up to Class XII, counselling, and support for their children. Each survivor is assigned a mentor whose assessment is reviewed by a state-level monitoring committee of officials, survivors, NGOs, police, and industry representatives (Herald Goa 2025).

- **State Resource Centre for Women:** The State Resource Centre for Women (SRCW) at Goa University, established under the Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme, played a vital role in promoting gender equality through research, capacity building, legal awareness, and rural outreach. Initiatives like the Social Mapping of Women in Goa, Purple Campaigns, and village-level engagements reached over 1,000 participants. Despite its impact, the centre is currently non-operational due to funding shortages.

- **Local Complaints Committee (POSH Act):** As required by Section 6 of the POSH Act, the District Officer is responsible for constituting a Local Complaints Committee (LCC) in each district for handling complaints where the employer has fewer than ten employees or the complaint is against the employer himself. The LCC is constituted in both the districts of Goa as per the Act (Herald Goa 2025).

## 2.2 Initiatives under State Commission for Women

The Goa State Commission for Women Act, 1996 led to the establishment of the Goa State Commission for Women (GSCW) as a statutory body to safeguard the rights and interests of women in the state. Empowered under Section 11, it investigates violations of women's rights, reviews laws and policies, takes suo motu cognisance or complaints, assists women in legal proceedings, inspects shelters, jails, and remand homes, and recommends corrective measures or schemes for women's protection, including violence, trafficking, shelter, and legal aid. Holding quasi-judicial powers equivalent to a civil court (Section 11(2)), it can summon witnesses, enforce attendance, require documents, receive evidence, and requisition public

records. The Commission may initiate legal proceedings, appoint special prosecutors in VAWG cases (Section 11 (4)), attend in-camera trials in courts and Lok Adalats, and, under Section 13, utilise state or central investigating agencies to conduct inquiries, thereby strengthening its enforcement and oversight capacity.

The Goa Women's Commission (GSWC) coordinates with the Department of Women and Child Development to organise workshops and awareness programmes in the context of VAWG in higher secondary schools and colleges. Partnered with ARZ NGO, GSWC has conducted consultations on preventing sex trafficking by focusing on destination sources such as Kenya, Bangladesh, and Nepal. GSWC provides essential documentation support such as Aadhaar and ration cards, while also addressing housing discrimination faced by trafficked women.

The Commission has undertaken anti-human trafficking projects with BSF and CISF, recognizing the critical role of security forces in intercepting trafficking at airports. It has also engaged with 20 colleges to raise awareness on cyber security and technology-facilitated crimes against women, in collaboration with Cyber Response Wellness Initiative, an NGO that also works on cyber fraud cases. Additionally, in collaboration with Goa University, it is initiating research on marital discord and the feasibility of premarital counselling. The Commission also undertakes suo motu, including assaults in temples and suicides linked to cyber crimes. The Commission also plans sensitisation programmes in collaboration with GIPARD for ICC Chairpersons, ensuring institutional accountability.

## 2.3 Law Enforcement Agencies - Goa Police

- **Pink Force:** Launched in 2021, Goa's Pink Force Unit serves as a first responder to women's distress calls via helpline 1091, operating with 10-11 vehicles and around 80-85 personnel. The unit responds within seven minutes, coordinates with local police, and addresses cases ranging from domestic violence to senior citizen abuse. It also patrols vulnerable areas, maintains computerised case records, and is integrated with digital platforms like the 112 Emergency and SOS apps, enhancing real-time responsiveness and visibility of gender-sensitive policing (Stakeholder interaction, 03/10/2024, Goa).

- **Targeted Training Programmes:** Both male and female police officers undergo regular training on women's safety and violence against women and girls (VAWG). The Police Training School conducts specialised sessions for lower-ranked officers, focusing on the legal framework governing crimes against women, including relevant provisions under the IPC, PWDVA, and POCSO Act, to enhance sensitivity, legal awareness, and response capacity at the community level (Insights from stakeholder interview, 03/10/2024).

- **Women Police Stations and Help Desks:** The state has a single women's police station located in Panjim, where cases can be filed. In addition to the only women's police cell operating in Panjim, the women's police office in Margaon offers counselling services but is unable to register cases. Every police station in the state is staffed with a female police sub-inspector. The police are associated with the DLSA for supporting the survivor with legal assistance. However, when the female police inspector takes maternity leave, the department fills the vacancy with a male officer rather than the mandated female officer (Insights from stakeholder interaction, 3/10/2024, Goa).

- **Cyber Yodha:** Cyber Yodha Goa is a cyber security and cybercrime awareness initiative of the Goa Police aimed at creating a "Cyber Surakshit Goem" (Cyber Safe Goa). Under this initiative, trained individuals, known as Cyber Yodhas conduct awareness sessions in schools and community centres to educate students, parents, teachers, NGOs, and the general public on online safety, digital frauds, and emerging cyber threats. Prominent Cyber Yodhas have actively participated in sessions across educational as well as community institutions, empowering participants to act as cyber awareness ambassadors. To strengthen

community vigilance, 120 Cyber Yodhas have been trained by the Cyber Police Station to identify cyber threats, analyse crime trends, and disseminate preventive measures. Working in close coordination with beat officers and the cyber teams of police stations, the Cyber Yodhas ensure wide-reaching awareness across the state.

## 2.4 Helpline Numbers

The dedicated helpline 1091 connects to the emergency women's helpline response room, while 112 offers direct connection to the police control room. In addition, a WhatsApp helpline has been made available, providing an accessible and discreet means for victims to report abuse or request help. Alongside police services, the 108 ambulance helpline can be contacted for medical emergencies, including those linked to violence against women. While these mechanisms are operational at present, the 181 Women's Helpline has been discontinued.

## 2.5 Judicial Support

- **Specialised courts and tribunals:** The Goa Children's Act, 2003 safeguards children's rights and well-being, mandating state protection against abuse, sexual offences, trafficking, prostitution, commercial sexual exploitation, child labour, and other violations. The Act also mandates the establishment of a Children's Court in Panjim with child-friendly procedures, later strengthened by a 2015 PIL to operate with a full-time judge. Designated under the POCSO Act, it functions as a Court of Sessions to adjudicate sexual offences against children, with powers to summon witnesses, record evidence, and deliver judgements while prioritising the child's best interests and safety.

- **Fast Track Special Courts:** Since October 2019, the Department of Justice has been implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to establish Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), including exclusive POCSO Courts, across India for the expeditious trial of sexual offence cases. In Goa, one such FTSC was set up in Panaji in 2019, with the concurrence of the Bombay High Court, and holds statewide jurisdiction (Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Rajya Sabha 2025).

- **Goa State Legal Services Authority:** As established under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, GSLSA is responsible for providing free and competent legal services, ensuring that no individual is denied justice due to financial or social disadvantage. Though GSLSA does not work directly with OSCs, it supports women referred from them, especially in securing compensation. As of 2021, approximately 70 women have accessed free legal aid through GSLA (Official Gazette, Government of Goa, 2022; Stakeholder Interview, October 24, 2024).

- **The Goa Victim Compensation Scheme, 2012:** The scheme was introduced by the Government of Goa in coordination with the Central Government under Section 357A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to provide financial relief and rehabilitation to victims of crime or their dependents. Under Section 4, compensation may be awarded if the offender is not traced or identified and no trial takes place, while Section 7 allows rejection of applications on grounds such as non-cooperation, the victim turning hostile, or collusive cases. As per the Schedule (Clause 6), the scheme provides compensation of up to ten lakh rupees (Government of Goa 2012). Under this scheme, a dedicated Victim Compensation Fund is constituted through annual budgetary allocations and is administered by the Secretary of the Goa State Legal Services Authority. Compensation is disbursed based on recommendations made by the State or District Legal Services Authority, in accordance with specified provisions in the scheme's schedule. In 2024, only two applications were received by the GSLA for compensation funds (NALSA Website).

## 2.6 Health Support Systems

The Crisis Intervention Centre (CIC), established in December 2014 at Asilo District Hospital, North Goa, in collaboration with CEHAT and NMEW, provides crisis counselling, legal and police assistance, medical care, and referrals supported by a trained team that also builds the capacity of front-line providers. Although a Sakhi One Stop Centre was set up at Goa Medical College, Bambolim, under SCAN NGO in November 2015, it is not currently operational, with permanent infrastructure still in the planning stage (WCD 2024).

## 2.7 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

In Goa, a number of institutional mechanisms have been formally constituted to oversee schemes and address VAWG. At the state level, these include the State Level Committee to monitor the Shelter Homes for Women Scheme and the State Level Task Force (STF) under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, along with its district-level bodies.

At the district level, the North Goa District Level Official Committee and the South Goa District Level Official Committee were established through Notification No.2-117-2005/DW and CD/2055 for monitoring convergence in implementation of programmes and coordination among agencies dealing with women-related issues.

Further, the State Police Complaints Authority serves as an avenue for individuals who have sought police assistance and need to raise grievances against the department. To strengthen inter-departmental coordination, regular meetings with the police department are also held, fostering cooperation and improving institutional responses (Government of Goa, Directorate of Women and Child Development, Citizen's Charter).

## 2.8 Community-Based Interventions

### Roles of NGO

1. **Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN-Goa):** SCAN is a voluntary organisation providing integrated support for women and children in need of care, protection, or conflict with the law. Working closely with police, Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, and government agencies, SCAN delivers services such as counselling and multiple forms of therapy, socio-legal services, dispute resolution, rehabilitation, and job placements. SCAN also serves as a training hub, building the capacities of paralegal volunteers, police, doctors, teachers, counsellors, and students on legal and procedural frameworks under the Goa Children's Act, POCSO, JJ Act, DV Act, and other laws. It pioneered linkages between JJBs, police, and child care institutions, and continues to run awareness, sensitisation, and "Going to Court" programmes to strengthen survivor participation in legal processes (SCAN Goa, n.d.).

2. **Anyay Rahit Zindagi (ARZ):** Established in 1998, ARZ has been central in shaping Goa's anti-trafficking response. ARZ contributed to the definition of human trafficking in the Goa Children's Act, 2003, and operates government-supported shelters and rehabilitation programmes, such as the Prabhat Scheme and the Women's Initiative for Self-Help (WISH). Goa has also established an Anti-Human Trafficking Court under ITPA, with ARZ supporting implementation and advocacy (Insights from stakeholder engagement, 04/10/2024).

3. **Caritas Goa:** Caritas Goa provides shelter and adoption services for unwed mothers, facilitates reintegration with families, and offers skilling programmes (e.g., tailoring with state certification) for migrant workers in fishing, construction, and unorganized sectors. Its Self-Help Group (SHG) initiatives, first piloted in East Goa, reduced domestic violence and promoted women's economic empowerment, and were later scaled to other villages. The

organisation also conducted VAWG awareness campaigns in public schools of Goa at regular intervals (Insights from stakeholder engagement, 25/10/2024).

4. **Bailancho Saad:** Bailancho Saad is a leading women's rights collective in Goa, working at the intersection of grassroots mobilisation, service delivery, and policy advocacy. The NGO provides direct support to survivors of violence through counselling, legal aid, and referrals, while also engaging in systemic interventions such as training with police, health workers, and state departments. It has also played a vital role in highlighting gaps in service provision, documenting cases, and building survivor-centric safe spaces (Insights from stakeholder interaction, 05/09/2024).

## 2.9 Inclusion of VAWG Sensitisation in Academic Institutions

- **GEMS - ICRW:** The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) launched the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) programme in 2008, with the Committee of Resource Organisations for Literacy (CORO) and the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) as lead project partners. GEMS was implemented in public schools of Goa, integrated with the ongoing school curriculum. Focusing on children aged 12 to 14, the GEMS curriculum includes multiple classroom sessions on gender, violence and bodily changes, relationships, emotions, communication, and conflict resolution. With the aid of workbooks and extracurricular activities, the GEMS programme begins when a student enters the sixth grade and continues for two years (International Centre for Research on Women [ICRW], n.d.).

- **Goa University Policy for Gender Equity and Sensitivity:** Goa University has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination on the basis of sex, violence, and stereotyping. The policy is envisioned to guide all operations at Goa University to ensure gender equity and gender sensitivity. Under the policy, the university may identify schools, departments, and disciplines that carry out focused work on gender equality, sensitivity, equal opportunity, and diversity. The policy builds on Goa University's existing initiatives, including the Women's Studies Programme, the POSH Policy and ICC, UGC Saksham guidelines, the Gender Champions Programme, Equal Opportunity and SC/ST Cells, Academic Ethics Guidelines, the Grievance Redressal Committee, and the Anti-Ragging Cell. For accountability, it mandates GEM Committees in the university and its affiliated colleges (Goa University 2021).

## 2.10 Capacity Building of Frontline Officials

The Ministry of Home Affairs and the National Commission for Women (NCW) fund various programmes aimed at capacity building and sensitisation of immediate responders in relation to VAWG. The Police Training School in Valpoi provides structured instruction to junior and field-level police officers on legal provisions that safeguard women from targeted violence. In addition, specialised training modules on VAWG case management are delivered to police officers. Women's Police Cells and Pink Force Units undergo medical orientation to identify VAWG survivors and facilitate referrals to hospitals. The State Legal Services Authority (SLSA), in collaboration with the International Justice Mission, has also conducted workshops for police personnel and prosecutors in addressing the legal dimensions of VAWG. Additionally, the Goa State Commission for Women (GSCW) organised an anti-trafficking programme for Border Security Force and Central Industrial Force personnel deployed at airports to intercept trafficking cases. Furthermore, trained doctors, nurses, and social workers from the Crisis Intervention Centre (CIC) conduct sensitisation and capacity-building sessions for health professionals, teachers, transport workers, and other service providers.

## Insights from Workshop Discussions [1]

**Human Resource Gaps:**

- Inadequate number of staff across departments
- Undertrained staff due to lack of training sensitization
- Lack of trauma-informed understanding among personnel
- Shortage of trained legal assistants, counselors, and medical staff
- No remuneration for voluntary or NGO workers
- Over-reliance on contract workers without institutional support
- No permanent recruitment, especially in remote or rural areas
- Absence of a clear job role description

**Revictimisation and Poor Survivor Support:**

- Multiple repetitions of testimony (e.g., to police, hospitals, courts)
- Hostile or uninformed witnesses; risk of witnesses turning hostile
- Survivors left to navigate the system alone
- Re-victimisation due to system delay and lack of trauma-sensitive processes
- Inadequate follow-up or support after reporting
- Delay in medical examination and evidence collection

**Legal and Institutional Delays:**

- Delay between reporting and chargesheet filing
- No closure of cases; excessive pendency
- Lack of periodic review of laws and evaluation mechanisms
- Underutilised or non-functioning referral systems
- Bureaucratic hurdles slowing down survivor-centric service delivery
- Inconsistent or unavailable legal aid services

**Accessibility and Infrastructure:**

- Limited access to services in remote and rural areas
- Lack of assistive infrastructure for women with disabilities
- Shelters, OSCs, and legal clinics not readily accessible
- Absence of cyber wellness infrastructure and digital literacy
- Legal dockets or communication not available in regional languages

[1] *Workshop held on 19th and 20th June 2025 in Panjim.*

**Financial and Resource Constraints:**

- Insufficient financial support from state and central authorities
- Budget constraints for shelters, OSCs, legal aid, and training
- Dependence on short-term funding
- Lack of adequate infrastructure in health and support facilities
- No budget for counselling staff or regular training

**Operational Failures:**

- Weak inter-agency coordination
- Absence of collaborative platforms
- No nodal officers or single-point coordination mechanisms
- Limited collaboration with law colleges and local bodies

**Monitoring and Evaluation Gaps:**

- Lack of monitoring by HODs and higher officials
- No regular audits of survivor services or legal processes
- Absence of outcome-based indicators for interventions
- Limited use of data or digital records to track progress
- Infrequent training updates and feedback mechanisms

## 3. Analysis of Institutional Mechanisms

In order to analyse and critically examine the existing institutional mechanisms and to strengthen them through effective policy recommendations, the following framework is used in the study. The mechanisms are examined from the following lens: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Coordination and Governance. The analysis is carried out through an evaluation of stakeholder interviews and secondary data collected.

### 3.1 Prevention

**A. Existence of State Policies/Action Plans on VAWG Prevention:** A standalone strategy to address the prevention of VAWG is absent in the state, unlike Nirbhaya Policy of Kerala. Regarding awareness creation to combat VAWG, the Goa State Commission for Women (GSCW) conducts most of the awareness campaigns, such as sessions on cyber crimes against women, across colleges and universities in Goa. In contrast, the campaigns conducted by SLSA remain limited to women's rights.

Prevention efforts are currently dispersed, as institutional adoption by OSCs remains absent. The current prevention efforts are fragmented and are mostly supported by NGOs and through their donor funds. Among the governmental agencies, no institutions are conducting awareness campaigns at regular intervals apart from the GSCW.

B. **Engagement with Men and Boys:** Unlike specific efforts in countries like the USA (discussed in Chapter 7), there are no institutionalised initiatives for raising awareness among men and boys in many states of India, including Goa. SLSA's campaigns on women's rights and Lok Adalats primarily focus on women and girls, thereby weakening holistic prevention efforts. Although the Ankur initiative, launched by ARZ, engages school boys in raising awareness pertaining to child prostitution, it does not encompass the full spectrum of VAWG issues.

C. **Inclusion of VAWG-Sensitisation in School Curricula:** ICRW-GEMS is one among the many initiatives for developing a gender sensitised curriculum in five schools of Goa on a pilot basis; however, it was not sustained after the project period between 2008–2014. The GSCW conducts awareness programmes in higher secondary schools and colleges, particularly focusing on cyber crimes against women. However, these programmes have not yet been adopted as an essential component of school or college curricula.

D. **Community-based Awareness Programs:** While initiatives emphasising on the importance of community engagement have been introduced either by government agencies or NGOs, there are no interventions focusing on prevention emerging at the community-level.

E. **Training of Frontline Officials:** VAWG sensitisation training efforts for the State Police remain fragmented, with some departments yet to be covered and training for those included taking place at irregular intervals. Other attempts to bring police personnel and prosecutors together to provide training on the legal aspects of VAWG remained as standalone initiatives with limited continuity. Although doctors, nurses, social workers, BSF, and CISF units have received specialised training on identifying and assisting VAWG cases, these have not yet been extended to teachers and judicial officials.

F. **Monitoring of High-Risk Areas/Hotspots for Sexual Harassment:** While the Pink Force (PF) assists in conducting patrols across the state, the current strategies remain insufficient to monitor high-risk areas. Without regular public safety audits to identify vulnerable zones and a sustained supply of resources, patrolling efforts remain ineffective as a preventive strategy. With limited resources including vehicles and staff, PF's response capacity is constrained. The state has only one Women's Police Cell, reflecting the weak structure for targeted institutional support.

## 3.2 Protection

A. **Availability of Government Schemes and Safe Shelters:** OSC operations in the state were outsourced to SCAN, a local NGO based in North Goa and Bailancho Ekvott, which earlier operated as an NGO in South Goa. However, recently, WCD has taken over direct responsibility for its functioning. Its operations are currently on hold as WCD prepares to assume its administration. With the temporary closure of OSCs, the availability of temporary safe shelters is limited. Even when functional, the limited number of OSCs in the state restricts shelter capacity. As a result, survivors who approach these centres are often redirected to NGOs, further impacting accessibility and continuity of care.

According to Press Information Bureau's 2022 data, shelter homes have not yet been established in the state under the Swadhar Greh Scheme. However, a state-run shelter home that can accommodate up to 20 inmates is operational. Protection measures in Goa exist through parallel channels led by local NGOs.

As a result, the government continues to rely on parallel entities for the implementation of VAWG protection frameworks.

B. **Accessibility of Services in Rural/Tribal Areas:** Although not functional at present, both OSCs in the state were located in urban or suburban localities, with limited penetration into rural and tribal regions. Logistical constraints, coupled with the absence of mobile outreach and decentralised service models, restrict service delivery.

C. **Case Management and Follow-up:** A structured case management framework is absent across institutions dealing with VAWG. At present, case follow-up, if conducted, is carried out informally by OSC staff, or NGOs in the absence of the former.

D. **Responsiveness of Institutions (Police/Protection Officers):** Protection Officers are provisionally stationed under the PWDVA (2005), with Block Development Officers (BDO) serving as Women Protection Officers (WPO) at present. BDOs also function as Dowry Prohibition Officers. The department is recruiting probationary officers exclusively for WPO training. However, dedicated WPO recruitments are not yet in place.

While 10 Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO) are present across taluks in the state, they are all Joint Mamlatdars (administrative officers) who have been given this role as an additional responsibility. LCCs are constituted in both districts as per POSH guidelines and are headed by the respective District Magistrates. Pink Force Units are mandated to reach women in distress within seven minutes as part of their rapid response services, but limited staff and vehicles constrain consistent coverage. Additional responsibilities for existing revenue officials are overburdening the system, resulting in lapses.

E. **Survivor-Centric Institutional Response Protocols/SOPs:** There are no standardised protocols in place for institutions dealing with VAWG. However, police stations follow certain survivor-centric practices. Every police station in the state is provided with a female Police Sub-Inspector to foster emotional safety for the approaching survivors.

Infrastructural gaps, such as secure private rooms for statement collection and counselling, insufficient menstrual hygiene resources, and the limited availability of women-only stations can affect survivor comfort and access. Shortages of WPOs also hinder emergency medical examinations as part of FIR-filing. In contrast, Pink Force Units are equipped with emergency medical assistance training, menstrual hygiene products, and pepper sprays for survivors.

F. **Availability of Health Support to Survivors:** Sakhi OSCs are located within close proximity to hospitals, but the limited availability of these centres poses a challenge to survivors hailing from peripheral regions of the districts. Due to the minimal engagement of the Health Department in VAWG protocols, sample collection also remains weakly enforced during FIR registration.

G. **Legal Aid Support:** Free legal support is accessible via the Goa State Legal Services Authority (GSLSA). Paralegal volunteers from Taluk Legal Services Committee (TLSC) also conduct field enquiries based on the cases that come to their attention. While these mechanisms exist, legal aid is not always readily available at key points such as police stations, hospitals, and OSCs. GSLSA assists survivors redirected from OSCs with compensation processes, but direct collaboration with OSCs is limited. Legal aid provision is often subject to the mandatory submission of income certificates, compromising timely access.

## 3.3 Prosecution

A. **Special Fast-Track Courts:** As of October 2024, there is only one fast-track court in the state to process VAWG and POCSO cases in a time-bound manner. NCRB (2022) data record a pendency rate of 26.1 percent in the state. Limited availability contributes to delays, with judicial trials often extending beyond mandated timelines.

B. **Functioning of Public Prosecutors for VAWG:** A dedicated cadre of prosecutors specialising in VAWG has yet to be established. Further, inadequate compensation serves as a disincentive for sustained engagement by prosecutors.

C. **FIR Registration, Rate of Charge-Sheeting, and Conviction:** Support for survivors in filing FIR is limited due to weak collaboration between DLSAs and OSCs. Barriers such as lack of awareness and social stigma persist. In 2022, the charge-sheeting rate in the state for crimes against women was 76.1 percent, while the conviction rate stood at 8 percent.

D. **Victim-Friendly Procedures:** Mechanisms to ease court proceedings, such as video conferencing, shielding during testimony, child-friendly rooms, are not yet implemented. Stakeholders note that the judiciary shows a lack of sensitivity in handling cases involving VAWG survivors. Systemic apathy weakens public trust in the legal process and undermines the quality of survivor engagement. Cases are also not resolved within the stipulated time, leading to repeated court visits for women, causing emotional and financial strain.

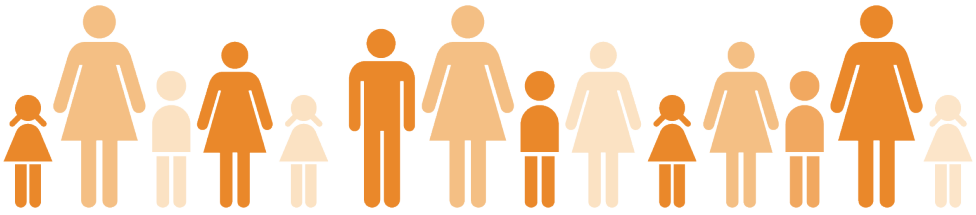
## 3.4 Rehabilitation

A. **Access to Trauma Counselling and Mental Health Services:** With OSCs temporarily closed, survivors are redirected to NGOs to access psycho-social counselling, highlighting the reliance on non-state providers for mental health support.

B. **Livelihood Support, Skill-development, and Support for Dependents:** Beyond the Prabhat Scheme that focuses solely on sexually trafficked survivors, there are no institutional mechanisms in place to ensure livelihood and skill-development support to VAWG survivors at a broader level. There is an absence of institutional intervention in childcare support. Lack of childcare provisions, particularly for young children, discourages survivors from accessing support, compelling them to remain in abusive environments.

C. **Compensation Schemes for Survivors:** Survivors are eligible for compensation from the government under the Victim Compensation Scheme. However, the restrictive eligibility criteria of the scheme and bureaucratic delays obstruct access to financial support. Furthermore, there is no cost component for compensation under the allotted Nirbhaya Funds to the state.

D. **Role of NGOs and Civil Society:** NGOs are central to the functioning of rehabilitation services in Goa. Survivors requiring shelter, counselling, and economic rehabilitation are redirected to shelters run by NGOs. Caritas empowers VAWG survivors through self-help groups, credit access, and training, while ARZ offers shelter, livelihood training, and awareness initiatives. With limited capacity and resources, NGOs remain central but stretched in their role without additional institutional support.



## 3.5 Reintegration

A. **Support for Re-enrolment in Education:** Targeted initiatives facilitating school or college re-enrolment of survivors, particularly adolescent girls, are absent. It remains overlooked in institutional frameworks as a component of reintegration, despite the critical role it plays in building self-sustainability.

B. **Workplace Reintegration Policies and Anti-discrimination Protections:** Systems to support workplace reintegration and anti-discrimination measures targeting survivor recovery have not yet been established. This leaves survivors vulnerable to exclusion, hindering recovery and economic rehabilitation efforts.

C. **Support for Survivors facing Stigma in Families/Communities:** Currently, institutional mechanisms for the community reintegration of survivors are absent. The socio-cultural stigma that the survivors are exposed to is informally addressed by the NGOs like Caritas and ARZ.

D. **Monitoring Outcomes of Post-Institutional Support:** NGOs monitor inmate outcomes post-departure. However, there is no formal system to monitor relapse, repeat violence, or reintegration. This gap limits understanding of long-term impact and hinders effective policy adjustments.

E. **Involvement of Local Leaders and PRIs:** Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and elected representatives have not been systematically engaged in survivor reintegration efforts.

F. **Inclusion of Survivors in Policy Consultation Processes:** Survivors are currently absent from policy design and feedback processes, reducing the effectiveness of reintegration efforts.

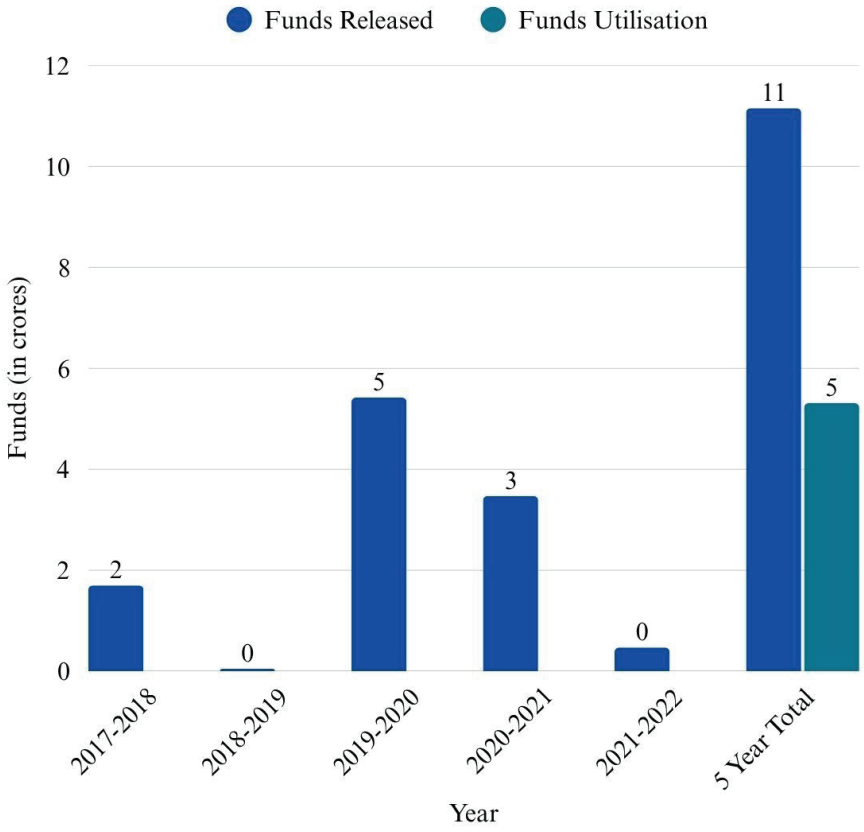
G. **Peer Support Groups and Survivor Networks:** While NGOs offer informal support networks for the survivor, peer-led recovery mechanisms are absent.

## 3.6 Coordination and Governance

A. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** State and district-level committees are in place to monitor the Shelter Homes for Women Scheme and other schemes pertaining to women, though information on its meetings or outcomes is not publicly available. At present, there is no integrated Management Information System (MIS) to track survivor progress, service usage, or institutional performance, which could otherwise support institutional accountability and inform evidence-based policy adjustments.

B. **Budgetary Allocations and Utilisation:** Through centrally supported programs like the Nirbhaya Fund (2013) and the OSC Scheme, funds have been allocated to combat violence against women in Goa. Between 2017 and 2022, ₹11.15 crore was released to the state under the Nirbhaya Fund (Open Government Data), but only 47.62 percent was utilised. The funds were intended for projects such as shelter construction, strengthening law enforcement facilities, and improving emergency response systems for abuse survivors (PIB 2022). However, despite repeated allocations in earlier years, no funds were allocated or utilised under the OSC scheme in 2022-23 and 2023-24, marking a stagnation that restricts survivors' access to essential crisis intervention services (MCWD Lok Sabha starred/unstarred questions, 2023; Scheme Progress Reports, Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022).

## Figure 2: Funds Released and Utilised by Goa Government




*Source:* Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022

## Table 1: Year-wise Fund Allocation and Utilisation for One Stop Centres (in Lakhs)

| *Years* | *Funds Allocated (in Lakhs)* | *Funds Utilised (in Lakhs)* |
|---|---|---|
| 2016-17 | 19.41 | 0 |
| 2017-18 | 10.85 | 3.92 |
| 2018-19 | 4.92 | 0 |
| 2019-20 | 15 | NA |
| 2020-21 | 30.01 | NA |
| 2021-22 | 30.01 | NA |
| 2022-23 | 0 | NA |
| 2023-24 | 0 | NA |

*Source:* The data presented in the table is drawn from Press Information Bureau (PIB) reports and Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India sources

The table above presents the allocation and utilisation of One Stop Centres in Goa in the years 2016-2024, providing an overview of distribution patterns across the years. Analysis of fund flow for OSCs in Goa from 2016-17 to 2020-21 indicates persistent underutilisation. In 2016-17, ₹19.41 lakh was allocated with no recorded expenditure. In 2017-18, an allocation of ₹10.85 lakh saw a modest utilisation of ₹3.92 lakh (36.1 percent). The following year, 2018-19, ₹4.92 lakh was allocated but remained underutilised. Allocations rose significantly in 2019-20 (₹15 lakh) and 2020-21 (30.01 lakh), yet the combined utilisation for 2018-19 to 2020-21 was only ₹3.92 lakh, reflecting a utilisation rate of merely 7.8 percent over total allocations of ₹49.93 lakh for this period (PIB 2020a, 2020b, 2021).

C. **Role Clarity and Accountability:** While mandates are clearly defined for the division of responsibilities among police, health, and judiciary, NGOs step in to fill gaps in institutional mechanisms. Due to NGO reliance, accountability structures remain to be strengthened.

D. **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** In instances where approaching survivors encounter difficulties in accessing or interacting with government agencies responsible for providing VAWG support, there is currently no centralised mechanism in place to address such issues. The absence of such a system may affect institutional accountability and public trust.

   The State Police Complaints Authority (SPCA) primarily oversees serious misconduct by police personnel. This restricts its applicability to only certain categories of complaints, excluding minor grievances related to VAWG case management.

E. **Adoption of Tech Platforms:** The state has yet to adopt tech platforms to facilitate inter-departmental coordination, enable grievance redressal, track case progress, or provide integrated service delivery for survivors.

# 4. Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the policy recommendations are divided into three major target timelines. The short-term recommendations are to be implemented within a one-year timeline, medium-term recommendations within two to three years, and long-term recommendations within five years. This enables a targeted and phased approach for VAWG state actions.

## Short-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| 1. **State Women Safety Council:** An independent dedicated council constituted under the Chief Minister's office consisting of representatives from Departments of Women and Child Development, Police, Health, Social Justice, Transport, Education, Legal Services Authority, Public Prosecutors, gender experts and cyber experts, CSOs, and survivors must be constituted. This council must meet every three months to review the activities of various departments for better coordination, revise existing policies, allocate budgets for training and awareness as required, support research on issues related to VAWG, and monitor the state VAWG dashboard.<br><br>2. District-Level Safety Council, Block-Level Committees, and Village-level Committees need to be constituted with similar compositions.<br><br>3. All other committees formed to monitor individual schemes like the OSC and Shelter Homes, may be subsumed under this system. | The analysis clearly shows the lack of a mechanism for inter-department coordination in the state for streamlining the efforts towards combating VAWG. A decentralised mechanism can improve coordination and reduce duplication of efforts. Being a multifaceted issue, the active involvement of CSOs and local self government institutions is essential. A single streamlined mechanism, instead of one committee per scheme for monitoring the same, is the need of the hour to avoid duplicated efforts. |
| 4. **Streamlining Victim Compensation Fund:** The criteria for the compensation must be eased so that it is accessible to more women and children who are in need of financial support. Section 4 | In the year 2024-25, there were only two applications received in Goa. Considering the rate of crimes against women, specifically sex trafficking, this number is grossly undermined. |

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| and 7 of the Goa Victim Compensation Fund Scheme needs to be revisited to align with the principles laid down by NALSA and BNSS.<br><br>5. Safety Councils at State and District levels should monitor the disbursal of the victim compensation funds. | The stricter criteria, excluding many deserving candidates, and discretionary powers for rejection of applications based on broad grounds undermines the very intention of the scheme. Section 4 of the Victim Compensation Fund Scheme allows compensation only in cases "where the offender is not traced or identified, but the victim is identified, and where no trial takes place, the victim or his dependents may make an application". In addition, Section 7 lays down criterias for rejecting the application with a sub criterion— "any other reason deemed fit by State or District Legal Services Authority"—which grants discretionary powers to DLSA officers in deciding the approval for compensation (Government of Goa 2012).<br><br>The victim compensation fund disbursals in Goa, thus, need to be streamlined and made available to women with minimal hassle. Drawing from the model of Madhya Pradesh, which disbursed over 88 percent of the funds through proper institutional mechanisms like State- and District-Level Monitoring Committees under its Home Department that meet quarterly to discuss the fund disbursals, Goa can make its processes more effective (Juris Centre 2025). These mechanisms help overcome the roadblocks in approving applications. |
| 6. **Strengthening the Institutions Under WCD:** The state OSCs are to be made operational in the hospital premises, with more temporary shelter facilities for accommodating at least 10 women at a time, considering the shortage of shelter homes in the state. The referral network must be strengthened by collaborating with the NGOs in the state as well as the local | With the State OSC being non-functional, the police is the only first-line responder in the state. Many studies, including NFHS data, show that women are hesitant to seek help from the police. Hence it is important to revive the OSCs and hospital-based crisis centres that were active in Goa for better accessibility of these services by women and girls in distress. |

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| self-government institutions. This network must be managed by a nodal officer at the district level designated by WCD. | |
| 7. **Women Protection Officers have to be dedicated officers, rather than designated officers,** for effective filing of DIRs without delays, while ensuring timely support for survivors. | Dedicated officers must be appointed instead of Block Development Officers, considering the volume of work involved for a WPO as per DV Act. The WPO may also act as the Dowry Prohibition Officer. |
| 8. **Mandatory compliance of the POSH Act** by companies and hotels registered in Goa should be monitored by the proposed District-level Safety Councils. | As a tourist destination with many hotels and related establishments, ineffective implementation of the POSH Act affects the direct avenues of support for women who need assistance. |
| 9. **Awareness Campaigns must be institutionalised under the Women's Commission**, with dedicated budgets, and implemented in collaboration with the academic institutions. These institutions and experts can help develop context-specific modules and curricula for awareness creation and training across the state. | This can help in streamlining the awareness efforts under a single entity, monitoring at the district level by the Safety Councils. Women Commission can collaborate with various departments for resource persons and assign the awareness campaigns to academic institutions for smooth implementation. A tripartite arrangement led by the Women Commission could be the way forward. This avoids duplication of efforts by various departments and enforces a regularity in the campaign strategies. |
| 10. **State-level Medico- Legal Protocol for Sexual and Physical Violence Against Women:** A state-level Medico Legal Protocol for Examination of Survivors of Sexual Offences to be instituted in Goa. | States like Kerala have issued a Medico-Legal Protocol for Examination of Survivors of Sexual Offences in 2019, with a survivor-centric approach (Government of Kerala 2019). These could be adopted by Goa for improving the medical examination of survivors of sexual crime including SAFE kits, keeping intact the therapeutic and legal role of the medical professionals, and avoiding revictimisation of the survivors. A state-level SOP for examining sexual offences is crucial for effective evidence collection and reporting, eventually supporting conviction in cases. |

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| 5. **Mandatory Training for Frontline Officials:** All frontline officials in the Departments of Women and Child Development, Police, Judiciary, Education, and Health must undergo structured training.<br><br>a. Online Training Module: A standardized online module should be developed, with mandatory completion during the probation period. The module must include assessment tests to evaluate learning outcomes. Non-compliance should carry strict consequences, such as delayed promotions.<br><br>Cyber modules must be a component in the online training module.<br><br>b. Offline Training Module: Department-specific offline training programmes should be conducted every six months, focusing on officials' roles and responsibilities. These sessions should integrate perspectives from civil society organisations and survivors to ensure a survivor-centric approach. Attendance by all frontline officials, including reporting heads, must be mandatory.<br><br>c. The Online Training Module can be developed and monitored by the State Women's Commission. | Although agencies such as the police and the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD) conduct training, these are largely job-specific and delivered at different levels. Introducing a mandatory, uniform foundational course for all frontline officials would ensure a common understanding of the state's approach to addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). In addition, department-specific modules can provide role-based training to equip officials with the skills needed for their responsibilities. Establishing a training calendar will further enable staff to plan and implement these sessions in a systematic and efficient manner. |

## Medium-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| 1. **Dedicated VAWG Policy for the State:** The state of Goa has to bring in a comprehensive policy for combating violence against women and girls, considering the rising number of sex trafficking cases among the tourist population. | For a concerted and coordinated effort to fight against the VAWG situation in Goa, a dedicated policy with clear goals and target-oriented plans are required. Goa can take inspiration from the State of Kerala which had devised a VAWG policy in 2012 called Nirbhaya Policy.<br><br>The study titled "Report on Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Goa – Situation and Intervention (2019-2024)" highlights the role of social media in facilitating the sex trafficking. Around 172 women and girls were rescued from sex and human trafficking during the period between 2019-2024. Another concern is the cases of domestic violence, especially in the rural areas. |
| 2. **Preventive strategies and activities to be incorporated into the existing mechanisms**:<br><br>a. The state has to have mechanisms for conducting public safety audits using citizen-provided data by incorporating the use of technology like Safetipin App.<br><br>b. The local self-governments must conduct monthly safety audits to replace dysfunctional street lights and map the crime hotspots in their jurisdiction.<br><br>c. For effective and impactful implementation, dedicated budgets with quality, quantity, and call to action must be incorporated. The fund needs to be disbursed by the nodal department, WCD with clear reporting mechanisms. | Currently, awareness campaigns and patrolling by police remains the only strategy for preventing VAWG crimes in the state. The preventive strategies are fragmented in its approach, without a clear framework to assess the impact of the programmes. |

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| WCD with clear reporting mechanisms.<br><br>d. A biennial study on the impact of the awareness activities should be conducted to revise the plans better. | |
| 3. **State-Level VAWG Dashboard Board**: A state level VAWG Dashboard may be developed for data collection and management across various departments for easy coordination.<br><br>a. The dashboard must entail all existing institutional mechanisms with admin logins, where each case data could be entered using a unique survivor ID and allow provision for assigning cases to relevant authorities to follow up and do necessary action.<br><br>b. A survivor feedback of each institutional mechanism can also be incorporated.<br><br>c. Using the data, a clear monitoring and evaluation framework can be developed to address the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the systems that are in place for further improvements.<br><br>d. The cases may be listed based on four broader categories- Domestic Violence, Cyber Violence, Sexual Violence, and Other Violence (Financial, Emotional, or Psycological).<br><br>e. The details of the survivor and the occurrence of the violence must be recorded in detail. | Currently OSC provides a unique ID for ease cases. This approach, if adopted across all VAWG services, helps in seamless data management with proper evaluation of the system responses to understand the flaws and improve the same. This will also help the survivor for smoother case follow-up and avoid retraumatising experiences due to repeated testimonies.<br><br>Data will inform future policies and actions, as well as support structured financial planning for required resources and preventive strategies. |

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| f. Considering the poor internet penetration and bandwidth, offline access of these dashboards must be ensured.<br><br>g. The POSH compliance and cases registered can also be integrated as part of the VAWG Dashboard. | |
| **4. Gender Curricula in Schools and Colleges:**<br><br>a. The Education Department has to incorporate gender modules in upper primary, high schools, senior secondary schools, and universities. The students must be informed about the gender norms, laws relating to women, cyber crimes, and related topics.<br><br>b. Encourage boys to act as bystander through a bystander incentive programme. | A study conducted by ICRW on the impact of GEMS curricula in schools of Jharkhand shows that about 71.5 percent of girl students protested or reported any type of physical violence to their teachers or parents, compared with only 47.9 percent previously (*India Today* 2016). This study shows the importance of institutionising the gender curricula among young students, both boys and girls.<br><br>Supporting boys to intervene as bystanders against VAWG in schools is practised in the USA, with grants provided to CSOs. These programmes have effectively reduced the violence against girls on campuses. |

## Long-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| 1. **Establishment of specific homes** for sex-rafficked women and girls, and mentally ill women survivors, run by NGOs. | As of now, the State of Goa has only one state-run shelter home that can accommodate 20 inmates. The Government of Goa can avail the funds under the Shakti Sadan programme of Mission Shakti to start new shelter homes with necessary facilities for long-term shelter of women. |
| 2. **Building reintegration policies into the WCD guidelines and institutional plans:** The state must ensure skilling and livelihood opportunities for the survivors. | The current policy landscape does not give importance to reintegration of the survivors into the society. States like Telangana have institutional training and skilling facilities for women survivors, run under the Department of Women and Child Development. NGOs in Goa and Telangana, namely Tharuni and Shaheen Resource Centre in Telangana, and Arz Goa, are also into conducting and running institutions to provide livelihood support. However, the survivors often find it difficult to find jobs that have upward mobility, especially in POSH cases. In POSH cases, they often find it difficult to get jobs in other firms due to the social stigma. Strict confidentiality of survivors is crucial for their smooth reintegration into society. |
| 3. Academia-NGO-Government Collaboration in conducting periodical studies for assessing institutional efficiency and effectiveness: These collaborations help in moulding the institutions in a regional and cultural context by collaborating with local organisations helping in better reach and accessibility of the programmes. These tripartite models can be explored in Goa with the law colleges, art colleges, and universities for improving the legal aid clinics, developing trauma care SOPs, and assessment of existing mechanisms. | The implementation of a tripartite collaboration was quite successful in implementing OSCs in the state of Telangana. TISS Hyderabad, along with NGOs and Department of Women and Child Development, developed an institutional framework for Project Monitoring Unit, SOP for OSCs, and criteria for onboarding NGOs that helped in planned launch of OSCs in Telangana, making it one of the states that has a well-functioning OSC system in India. |

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State Report

# TELANGANA 03

# 1. State Profile and Context

## 1.1 Demographic Overview

According to the Census and NFHS-5 (2019-21), Telangana records a literacy rate of 66.5 percent, with male literacy at 75 percent and female literacy at 58 percent, reflecting a persistent educational gap. The sex ratio shows near parity in rural areas with 999 females per 1,000 males, but it is 970 in urban spaces, while the child sex ratio is 932 females per 1,000 males.

As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, Telangana's Female Labour Participation Rate (FLPR) stands at 36.5 percent, notably higher than the national average of 32.8 percent. Rural female participation is 41.25 percent, exceeding that of urban (23.6 percent). The female-to-male labour force participation ratio of 0.62 and female-to-male wage ratio of 0.69 highlight disparities in access to equitable work (SDG India, 2023-24).

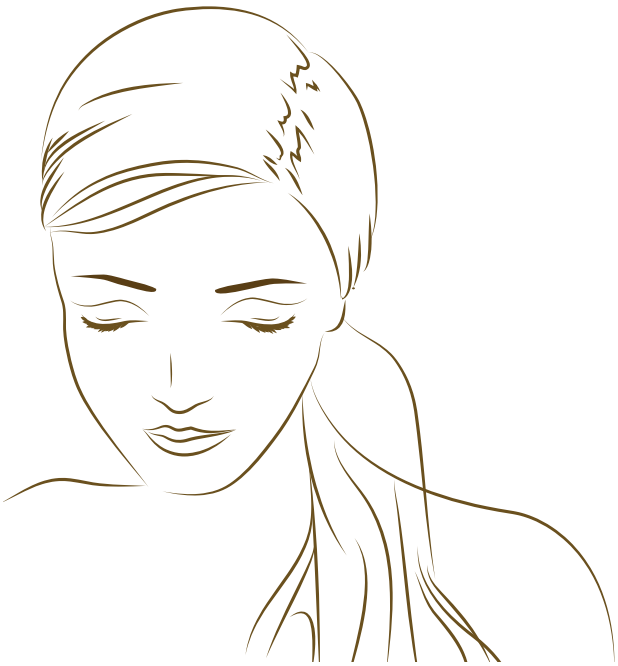
Despite these relatively favourable socio-demographic characteristics, higher FLPR, and near gender parity in the rural sex ratio, vulnerabilities and violence faced by women remain pervasive. According to the NFHS-5 Report (2019-21), 33 percent of women in Telangana reported experiencing domestic violence, exceeding the national average of 29 percent. This pattern is also reflected in the crime data. A recent study on domestic violence in Telugu speaking states recorded 8,541 cases in the year 2019, with 1,568 from Hyderabad alone, making it the city with the second highest rate of domestic violence in India (Veeramachaneni 2025). While dowry deaths have declined slightly, from 159 in 2019 to 132 in 2023, dowry harassment cases rose from 8,337 in 2019 to 9,458 in 2023.

The state has made significant investments in advancing women's safety and well-being through a dedicated Women Safety Wing under the Telangana Police and an active Department of Women and Child Development, which works closely with a robust network of NGOs across the state. However, a study conducted by Aahana Veeramachaneni on implementation gaps highlights that, despite the extensive laws and institutional structures, grassroot NGOs and communities continue to act as the primary anchor for women survivors affected by violence for immediate and long-term needs (Veeramachaneni 2025).

## 1.2 Prevalence of Violence Against Women

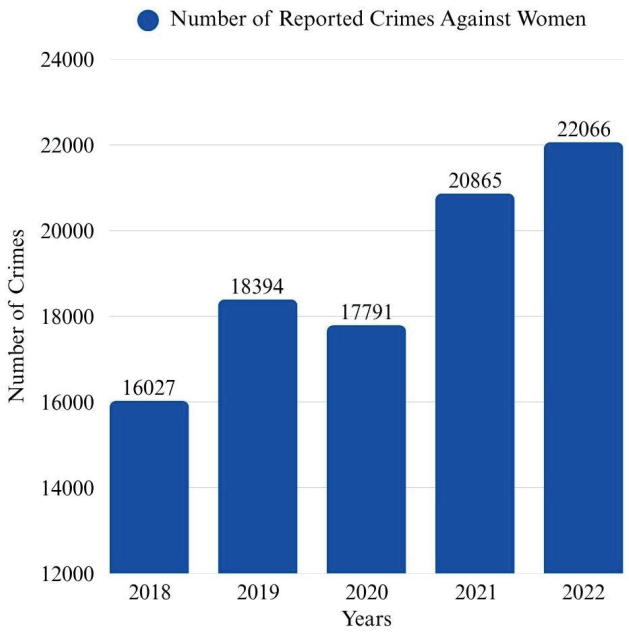
The National Crime Records Bureau's Crime in India Report of 2022 revealed that Telangana reported 22,066 cases of violence against women in 2022 alone. The highest number of cases originated from Rachakonda (3,684), followed by Hyderabad (3,145) and Cyberabad (2,969). Common crimes include:

- Cruelty by husband or relatives (9,996 cases)
- Assault with intent to outrage modesty (4,652 cases)
- POCSO cases (2,704)
- Cybercrime cases have also seen a steep increase, with 15,297 cases reported in 2022 and a chargesheeting rate of 17.1 percent.



The graph below shows the reported Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws (SLL) crimes against women in Telangana between 2018 and 2022. The increasing trend in case reporting during the period may be understood as an indicator of increased accessibility and reliance on institutional support. NCRB Reports also reveal that the state's case pendency rate saw a reduction from 78.6 percent in 2018 to 21.9 percent in 2022.

**Figure 1: Number of Reported Crimes Against Women in Telangana**




*Source:* National Crime Records Bureau 2018-22

The National Family Health Survey Report of 2015-16 reveals that 46 percent of ever-married women in Telangana experienced spousal violence that are emotional, physical, or sexual in nature. In this period, 45 percent of women were subject to domestic violence, which included but was not limited to the violence perpetrated by spouses. This refers to acts of physical violence, sexual violence, or both. In a study conducted among married women of an urban slum in Telangana, "70.5 percent women gave a history of being ever abused by their husbands and/or family members in any form. In help-seeking behavior, only 9 percent of victims had ever approached for help from other family members, neighbors or health care workers. Though 89 percent of women were aware that domestic violence is a punishable act, they never approached the police for help as they feared that it might affect the reputation of the family and attract reprimand by the husband or family members. 46.5 percent of women had knowledge about the existence of women helplines but were unaware about the contact details" (Das, Mohandas, and Killi 2022).

According to NFHS-5 (2019–21), in Telangana, 36 percent of ever-married women aged between 18 and 49 have experienced physical violence, and 5 percent have ever experienced sexual violence. Overall, 37.2 percent of women experienced physical or sexual violence and 4 percent experienced both physical and sexual violence. 19 percent of ever-married women experienced any form of emotional violence committed by their husband. Four percent of ever-married women aged 18-49 reported that their husband have physically forced them to have sex ever when they did not want to, and 2 percent reported that their husband forced them with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts they did not want to perform. Over 28 percent of married women aged 18-49 reported that they have suffered from injuries from what their spouse did to them. Only 21 percent of women who have experienced either physical or sexual violence sought help, while 8 percent never sought help but informed others. Only 8 percent sought help from the police.

## 2. Institutional Mechanisms

### 2.1 Role of Department of Women Development and Child Welfare

**One Stop Centres (Sakhi Centres):** The OSC Scheme offers integrated services including police facilitation, medical aid, psychosocial and legal counselling, and temporary shelter to women and girls affected by violence. The OSC is considered to be a nodal point in a district under Mission Shakti for coordination and convergence with other existing schemes like AHTU Units, Women Helplines, Women Help Desks, Fast Track courts, and

DLSA (Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development 2022). In Telangana, each One Stop Centre (OSC) typically handles an average of over 300 cases (From stakeholder interviews).

Telangana operates 36 OSCs (34 at the district level and 2 in Hyderabad), which offer emergency response, FIR assistance, legal and psychosocial aid, and temporary shelter. These centres were implemented initially through a tripartite model involving the Department of Women Development and Child Welfare (WDCW), TISS Hyderabad (knowledge partner), and NGOs (field implementation). Following a recent order from the Ministry of WCD, state WCD departments are directed to take over the operation of OSCs from the NGOs. However, the transition has not yet begun.

**Institutional Shelters:** Telangana currently has a total of 21 shelter infrastructure including 18 Swadhar Grehs, two Ujjwala Homes, and one short-stay facility, Sakhi Niwas, constituted across most districts. At present, nine Sakhi Niwas centres are operational, while five other centres are under different stages of construction. To further support the safety of working women, the state has established 22 working women's hostels across the state. In addition, the Department has institutionalised mechanisms such as Shishu Gruhas, Shishu Vihars, Children's Homes, and Anganwadi centres to ensure the protection and care of children (Department of Women Development and Child Welfare, Telangana, n.d.)

**District Hubs for Empowerment of Women (DHEWs):** The DHEW is an initiative under the Mission Shakti, constituted alongside the National Hub for Empowerment of Women (NHEW) at the central level, and the State Hub for Empowerment Women (SHEW) at the State/UT level. The Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW) functions as a convergence and facilitation mechanism, connecting women to policies and institutions that ensure access to healthcare, education, skill training, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, social security, and digital literacy at all local levels.

The DHEWs, with financial assistance from the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), is mandated to provide technical and human resource support to the district-level machinery. Each DHEW team, of not more than eight members, will consist of gender specialists; specialists for awareness generation and convergence; and specialists in financial literary and economic empowerment of women. Additionally, the team will have three to four staff members for administrative work.

**Protection Officers:** In Telangana, District Welfare Officers (DWO) under the Women and Child Department act as Women Protection Officers, with additional responsibilities of Bala Raksha (Child Protection) assigned to them. Currently, there are 33 District Welfare Officers functioning in the state, one in each district (WDCW, Telangana).

**Telangana State Commission for Women (TSCW):** The Telangana State Commission for Women was constituted under the Telangana Women's Commission Act, 1998 (Act No.9 of 1998), as amended in 2016, to protect and promote the welfare of women in the state. The act provides a legal framework for the establishment of the Commission, enabling it to inquire into unfair practices against women, recommend remedial measures, and advise the government on policy matters. Further reconstituted in 2020, it serves in both advisory and monitoring capacities. It facilitates help desks, provides legal aid, and conducts public hearings (The Telangana Women's Commission Act, 1998/2016).

The TSCW serves as a vital body addressing a wide range of issues concerning women's safety and rights. It receives petitions through post, email, or in person, and initiates appropriate actions such as counselling, referrals to police or protection officers, and advising petitioners to approach relevant authorities. The Commission handles cases including domestic violence, dowry harassment, workplace sexual harassment, cybercrime, trafficking, gender discrimination, and more.

**Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh Women's Technical Training Institute:** The Smt. Durgabhai Deshmukh Women's Technical Training Institute, located in Hyderabad, plays an important role in advancing women's empowerment through skill development

and vocational training. As per G.O MS. NO.14, WDCW and DW (ICDS -A2) Department, dated 23/05/2008, 70 percent of the seats are reserved for women from highly vulnerable backgrounds, including orphans, semi-orphans, destitute women residing in departmental institutions, as well as women belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families and survivors of trafficking. This reservation framework ensures that women who are most in need of protection and rehabilitation are given priority to access educational opportunities.

## 2.2 Law Enforcement Mechanisms

**Telangana Police Women Safety Wing (TGWSW):** The Women Safety Wing was instituted as a dedicated wing under the state Police on March 8, 2018, as an independent and fully functional department, evolving from the earlier Women Protection Cell under the CID. Operating from its dedicated premises, the Telangana Police WSW is equipped with a specialised cadre and is entrusted with a focused mandate to address issues related to women's safety, security, and protection in a structured and coordinated manner. TGWSW has been structured to investigate crimes against women with a specific focus on areas such as human trafficking, sexual offences, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, issues concerning Non-Resident Indians, and cybercrimes.

These include dedicated units such as the Analysis Wing, Anti-Trafficking Unit, Cyber Module, Domestic Violence Module, Leveraging Module, NRI Cell, Missing Person Monitoring Cell, SAHAS, SHE Module, Sexual Offences (Bharosa) Module, and the Women Helpdesk. Each initiative is designed to address specific dimensions of women's safety through coordinated, survivor-centric interventions.

**Safe City Project:** Hyderabad is one among the selected sites for the implementation of the Safe City Project, a centrally sponsored initiative funded through the Nirbhaya Fund, aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in urban areas. In Telangana, the project is being implemented within the Tri-Commissionerate jurisdiction, encompassing the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) area and portions of Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HDMA) region. Women Transit Dormitories with 400 bed capacity, along with SHE toilets, were some of the initiatives implemented under the project to ensure safer urban spaces for women(Indian Express 2020). The implementation of the project is undertaken in collaboration with GHMC and the Transport Department. The Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women, which acts as family counselling centres under Bharosa, is funded under the project.

**Analysis Wing:** The Analysis Wing under the Safety Wing, Telangana, assists the Special Task Force (Sexual Offences Module) in locating and arresting the accused in POCSO Act cases. This wing also assists in the investigation of cases related to cybercrime and human trafficking.

**Anti-Human Trafficking Unit:** Telangana established the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit in 2019 across 31 Police Districts and Commissionerates with TGWSW as the nodal agency. The AHTU follows a structured SOP encompassing all stages of anti-trafficking action. It also places emphasis on follow-up measures through strict enforcement and sustainable rehabilitation in partnership with civil society organisations to prevent re-trafficking.

**SHE Module:** SHE Module is the primary women's safety initiative aimed at institutionalising SHE Teams across the police units of the state. Established in 2014, these teams operate across 341 units statewide. She Teams deal with offences related to Women and Children such as street sexual harassment, stalking, and harassment against women and children in public places, educational institutions, and residential areas. Under the SHE Module, there are other initiatives adopted by the TGWSW to eliminate violence against women such as Safety Clubs, CybHER, and CybHER Paathshala LMS. SHE Teams receive complaints either directly or through social media, WhatsApp, or Hawk Eye app.

**SAHAS Initiative:** SAHAS is an initiative to ensure safe workplaces for women through legal aid, trauma counselling, and police support. SAHAS offers multi-channel support including a dedicated website, self-help resources, online complaint forms, chatbot or live-agent interactions, and helpline services. It addresses gaps by assisting women when Internal Committees (ICs) mandated under POSH Act are non-functional or unresponsive. It facilitates connection to District Local Committees or police, as required. The initiative is governed through a multi-tiered structure involving industry representatives and domain experts, and it emphasizes regular awareness and training for organisations and IC members.

**NRI Cell:** The NRI Cell, established in 2019, operates as a dedicated entity to assist women facing abuse, abandonment, or harassment involving NRI spouses or relatives. Functioning as a collaborative platform, the Cell works in coordination with key stakeholders such as the National Commission for Women, Ministry of External Affairs, and Indian Embassies to ensure timely redressal.

**Cyber Module :** The Module is responsible for addressing a range of technology-enabled offences against women, including online dating-related fraud, sextortion, cyberstalking, trolling, revenge pornography, and cases involving impersonation or fake profiles. Additionally, The Cyber Module monitors the received complaints and assists concerned officers to expedite the decision making and optimising SOPs. The T-SAFE app by Telangana Police, which is integrated with ride services, has handled over 23,000 SOS alerts, with an average police response time of eight minutes.

**Domestic Violence Module:** The Domestic Violence Module (DV Module) under the Women Safety Wing is dedicated to addressing cases related to domestic violence and dowry-related harassment. The module functions as a central monitoring and coordination unit, facilitating timely intervention, raising public awareness about women's and child safety. It handles a broad spectrum of issues, including domestic violence and abuse, harassment for dowry, dowry related murder cases, and workplace harassment.

**Bharosa Centres :** An initiative conceptualised by NGO Tharuni based in Hyderabad, Bharosa is an integrated support centre for women and children affected by violence, launched in 2016 with support from the Department of Women and Child Development. It provides comprehensive services including redressal, legal aid, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support for survivors of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse. The centres respond to cases of severe sexual abuse, including rape and attempted rape, sexual assault, and child sexual abuse. A lady police officer assists with filing FIRs and DIRs and recording statements under Sections 161 and 164 Cr.P.C for rape and POCSO cases. On-site medical examination and emergency care are provided, along with support from trained counsellors who assess needs and coordinate services. Currently operating with over 29 centres across the state, it provides legal aid, clinical psychologists, and other specialised support as required. Bharosa Centres and the Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women (CDEW) provide psychological counselling, vocational training, and referrals for survivors. Bharosa Centres adhere to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that ensure trauma-informed care, on-site evidence collection, and integrated legal-medical-psychosocial support, utilising female staff including Medical Officers and ANMs.

Bharosa model is registered as an autonomous society under the name Society for Protection of Women and Children, and is thus eligible to receive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding for a wide range of activities, including infrastructure development, operational support, cyber lab initiatives, capacity building, victim assistance, outreach programmes, and research. This model enables private sector engagement in strengthening survivor-centric support services, enhancing the scale of Bharosa Centres across the state.

**Women Help Desks and Police Stations:** Women Help Desks under the Women Safety Wing act as first points of contact for women in distress, functioning as one-stop support centres offering immediate assistance both in person and through a 24×7 helpline. Over 500 Women Help

Desks (WHDs) have been established in police stations, supported by trained women officers. Telangana has a total of 815 police stations, including 16 women police stations (*Women's Safety Wing, Telangana Police).*

Additionally, the Women Safety Wing of Telangana Police has initiated a pilot training program on gender sensitisation in schools, targeting 1,036 students from classes 8 and 9 across three Zilla Parishad High Schools in Hyderabad. The program seeks to address gender inequality and violence against women by educating students on gender equality, violence against women, and healthy relationships. Through this initiative, the aim is to cultivate responsible and aware individuals by embedding gender-sensitive values early in their educational journey (*Women's Safety Wing, Telangana Police).*

## 2.3 Emergency Helplines

- **Dial 100** serves as the primary emergency response system, ensuring an average response time of 10-15 minutes in urban areas.
- **Dial 181** is a 24x7 helpline operational since 2017. In 2022–23, the helpline received over 24,000 calls, of which 1,195 were classified as emergencies, and 298 remained pending.
- **Cybercrime Helpline 1930** has been operationalised by the Government of India to enable direct reporting of cybercrimes, including financial frauds, through the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal.
- **1098 Childline** is a 24-hour a day, 365 days a year, free emergency response service for children in need of emergency assistance. The service not only responds to the needs of children, but also facilitates their access to appropriate services for long-term care, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

## 2.4 Judicial Support

- **Fast Track Courts:** Telangana hosts dedicated POCSO and fast-track courts in at least nine districts. Hyderabad's Bharosa Centre incorporates a child-friendly court with separate victim access.
- **Legal Aid Services:** The Telangana State Legal Services Authority (TSLSA) coordinates free legal aid, compensation filing, and shelter referrals, including services for trafficking survivors.
- **Victim Compensation: The Telangana Victim Compensation Scheme (2015, updated in 2018)** provides structured payouts ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹10 lakh, with provisions for interim compensation. Special procedures are in place for POCSO victims, including fixed deposits for minors. From April 2016 to March 2025, Telangana witnessed significant shifts in decided applications, pending cases, and compensation awarded under the scheme.

### Table 1: Details of Disbursal of Victim Compensation Scheme in Telangana

| Year | Applications Decided | Applications Pending | Compensation Awarded (₹) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2016–17 | 23 | 8 | 12,00,000 |
| 2017–18 | 31 | 9 | 27,00,000 |
| 2018–19 | 13 | 26 | 0 |
| 2019–20 | 33 | 28 | 22,00,000 |
| 2020–21 | 31 | 28 | 62,90,000 |
| 2021–22 | 69 | 60 | 87,70,000 |
| 2022–23 | 131 | 142 | 2,60,69,000 |
| 2023–24 | 185 | 204 | 4,36,97,082 |
| 2024–25 | 199 | 253 | 5,88,12,500 |

*Source:*
Compiled by author using data from NALSA Website.

- **Case Management and Disposal:** Legal counsellors assist survivors through the e-Court platform and coordinate with District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) lawyers. However, obtaining and enforcing Protection Orders is challenging due to procedural delays.

- **Recording of Evidence of Vulnerable Witnesses:** High Court of Telangana, based on directions from the Supreme Court in Smruti Tukaram Badade vs. State of Maharashtra and Another, formulated guidelines for Recording of Evidence of Vulnerable Witnesses. Vulnerable witnesses include victims of POCSO Act, BNS provisions on crimes against women, etc (Telangana State High Court 2025).

## 2.5 Community Based Mechanisms

**Social Action Committees (SACs)** under SERP have been launched statewide led by SHG women, to resolve domestic disputes and provide community-based support. The Social Action Committees (SACs) were instituted as part of a large-scale poverty alleviation initiative launched by the Government of the erstwhile undivided Andhra Pradesh. It was implemented by the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), an autonomous body registered under the Public Societies Act, and with financial assistance from the World Bank. The programme aimed to address rural poverty through the mobilisation and empowerment of women's SHGs, positioning SACs as a key institutional mechanism within this framework (Vindhya and Lingam 2019).

A two-tiered, community-led structure was adopted for the programme: (a) the establishment of SHGs to function as first responders at the village level, with federated structures at the block and district levels, and (b) the creation of Community-Managed Family Counselling Centres (CMFCCs), operated by SAC members, which provided integrated services including counselling, mediation, psychosocial support, compensation facilitation, referrals, and coordination with local government bodies and state agencies.

SHGs in Telangana operate under SERP and are aimed at bolstering women's economic and social empowerment in rural communities. It is structured as a federation of SHGs integrating women into decision-making platforms through Village, Mandal, and Zilla Samakhya communities. SAC members identified from these SHGs receive training on gender rights, legal literacy, and counselling to address issues such as domestic violence, child marriage, and livelihood challenges. The initiative is backed by a social development fund, to which members contribute in order to sustain the activities (Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty, n.d.). However, this initiative fizzled out after the division of the states into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. SERP Telangana is currently under the process of rejuvenation of SAC in a new form for supporting victims of VAWG (Vindhya and Lingam 2019).

SERP has conducted training for male employees on gender issues and has established over 20,000 Social Action Committees (SACs) in rural areas. Gender resource persons and local gender forums also support village-level prevention efforts.

## 2.6 Role of NGOs

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a crucial and collaborative role in the functioning of One Stop Centres (OSCs) in Telangana by supporting outreach, survivor care, and reintegration. For instance, NGOs like Sneha Society in Nizamabad and Vision NGO in Medak are actively involved in managing OSCs, offering psychosocial support, legal assistance, and case follow-ups to survivors of violence against women. The organisations such as Bhoomika and Tharuni lead extensive awareness campaigns on violence against women and girls, as well as child safety, while also advocating for improved institutional infrastructure and community participation. Prajwala, a Hyderabad-based NGO nationally recognised for its work in anti-trafficking, provides rehabilitation and reintegration services for survivors of sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and works closely with law enforcement and legal bodies to combat systemic gaps. Meanwhile, Sangham Radio, India's first rural women's community radio

station based in Medak, serves as a powerful medium for spreading awareness on women's rights, domestic violence, and social empowerment in local languages, ensuring that gender justice narratives reach even the most remote communities. Together, NGO actors form an essential part of Telangana's gender-responsive ecosystem, complementing state efforts with grassroots engagement and survivor-centred advocacy (Narayanan 2025).

Enfold Proactive Health Trust, a Bengaluru-based non-profit organisation working towards personal safety, gender equity, and child rights, collaborated with SCERT Telangana and UNICEF to integrate gender sensitivity, child safety, and life skills into the state school textbooks from Classes 1 to 10. As part of its larger vision to build safer and more equitable communities, Enfold supported the development of age-appropriate, rights-based educational material that equips children with knowledge about their rights, respectful relationships, and safe practices, while also training educators and institutions to foster gender-just and child-protective environments (Enfold Proactive Health Trust and SCERT Telangana 2016).

## Insights from Workshop Discussions [2]

**Rising Cybercrime Attacks against Women**

- Email harassment
- Stalking
- Hacking
- Cyberbullying and defamation
- Revenge pornography and sextortion
- Cybergrooming

**Rape Response in Medical Sector**

- Lack of uniform procedures in sexual assault management
- Improper documentation of assault
- Mandatory police requisition for examination of sexual assault
- Use of unscientific medical examination methods
- Service providers remain ill-equipped to seek history of survivors
- Non-peno-vaginal assaults are not recognised
- Insufficient medical evidence collection
- Preoccupation with forensic role and ignorance of survivor's treatment requirements

**Institutional Capacity Challenges (WCD, Police, Health, Legal Services, PRIs, and NGOs)**

- Limited accessibility to institutional support for women with disabilities
- Low outreach and engagement with women hailing from marginalised communities

[2] *Workshop held on 19th and 20th June 2025 in Panjim.*

- Delayed processes at OSCs owing to the absence of police personnel and insufficiently trained staff
- Ineffective legal aid services owing to the lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- Lack of female police personnel, female staff at shelter homes, and female counsellors at OSCs
- Lack of confidentiality in case management
- Lack of trauma-informed care
- Excessive paperwork across institutions

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Absence of community-centred feedback mechanism
- Absence of social audits

**Legal Bottlenecks**

- Mandatory reporting under the POCSO Act clashes with confidentiality granted under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act. This discourages girls from seeking safe abortions
- Low conviction rates of domestic violence cases
- Inadequate infrastructure and implementation of the Gram Nyayalayas Act designed to bring quick justice at the village-level, discouraging survivors from taking the legal recourse

## 3. Analysis of the Institutional Mechanisms [3]

In order to analyse and critically examine the existing institutional mechanisms and to strengthen them through effective policy recommendations, the following framework is used in the study. The mechanisms are examined from the following lenses: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Coordination and Governance. The analysis is carried out through an evaluation of stakeholder interviews and secondary data collected.

### 3.1 Prevention

A. **Existence of State Policies/Action Plans on VAWG Prevention:** Telangana currently lacks a standalone policy addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). The most recent women-centric policy, Indira Mahila Shakti (2025), primarily focuses on economic empowerment through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and interest-free loans.

Budgetary allocations remain embedded within broader welfare schemes, with no dedicated VAWG prevention cost components. The absence of a comprehensive, VAWG-centred framework limits the effectiveness of prevention strategies.

[3] *Based on stakeholder interviews and Group discussions*

B. **Engagement with Men and Boys:** Tharuni, an NGO that works closely with Bharosa Centres, provides training to the judicial academy on trauma-sensitivity when dealing with VAWG cases. Additionally, the organisation also conducts VAWG sensitisation activities in schools and villages for boys aged between 10 and 14 years. SERP's initiative to sensitise male employees is also identified as a promising model for engaging men in targeted violence against women. However, the program's reach is currently limited to SERP's internal staff and has not yet been institutionalised across other departments. These sensitisation efforts lack continuity, weakening their long-term impact.

C. **Inclusion of VAWG-Sensitisation in School Curricula:** Some of the NGOs collaborated with SCERT Telangana and UNICEF to integrate gender sensitivity into the state school textbooks. Further the Women Safety Wing also conducted awareness campaigns in Zilla high schools of Hyderabad. The Telangana State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) has adopted modules that emphasise the importance of gender-sensitive teaching developed by NCERT in teacher training (Telangana SCERT 2019). However, the regularity and continuance of these initiatives need more attention.

D. **Community-Based Awareness Programs:** Several NGOs conduct VAWG awareness and community sensitisation programmes in urban and peri-urban areas. However, these campaigns operate outside a uniform state-led framework. This results in variability in thematic focus of the campaigns, uneven geographical coverage, and inconsistency in the adoption of updated strategies. They remain financially dependent on donor funding, with limited evidence of sustained support from the State Government.

E. **Training of Frontline Officials:** Frontline training programmes led by civil society organisations have been active for over three decades, engaging police personnel, school teachers, and other officials. Training for OSC staff, however, remains inconsistent across the state with no refresher training sessions post-induction. In the absence of direct governmental aid, the financial responsibility for these programmes rests with external actors. A report by UNFPA and Centre for Catalyzing Change (2022), "Mapping and Assessment of One Stop Centres", highlights high staff turnover and lack of refresher training of OSC staff has weakened the effectiveness of the services provided.

F. **Monitoring of High-Risk Areas/Hotspots:** SHE Teams under Telangana Police's Women Safety Wing carry out patrolling of harassment hotspots, particularly near bus stands, schools, colleges, and ladies hostels. Counselling is provided for first-time offenders, indicating efforts towards attitudinal change over increasing case reportage. The focus on female-dominated public spaces like bus stands and colleges also indicate strategic targeting of hotspots.

Shaheen Resource Centre's participatory mapping of unsafe areas in Old City, Hyderabad has led to notable infrastructural improvements, such as enhanced street lighting and CCTV installations. While effective, such practices have yet to be adopted by the State and integrated into urban planning frameworks, limiting their potential for wider application.

## 3.2 Protection

A. **Availability of Government Schemes and Safe Shelters:** 36 One Stop Centres (OSCs) and 29 Bharosa Centres operate in the state of Telangana, providing a wide array of services, including but not limited to legal aid, temporary shelter, and counselling for survivors of VAWG. Even though Bharosa addresses the needs of survivors of sexual offences and One-Stop Centres (OSCs) handle other forms of violence, survivors often face ambiguity about which point of assistance to approach. Currently, 18 Swadhar Grehs, two Ujjawala

Homes, and nine Sakhi Niwas are operational for short-term shelter needs. These shelters remain underfunded, and delays in construction of new shelter facilities compromise timely support for those in need. Further, there are no sufficient long-term shelters or support mechanisms for approaching survivors.

B. **Accessibility of Services in Rural/Tribal Areas:** Most OSCs and shelters are located in urban or suburban localities, with limited penetration into peri-urban, rural, and tribal regions. The Adilabad OSC is managed by an NGO working with tribal women, helping bridge communication gaps and empower the community. However, logistical constraints limit accessibility for survivors from peri-urban, rural, and tribal areas. These challenges, compounded by cultural barriers, deepen disparities in service delivery. Mobile outreach and decentralized service models are also absent, further curbing accessibility.

C. **Case Management and Follow-Up:** A structured case management framework is absent across institutions dealing with VAWG. At present, case follow-up, if conducted, is carried out informally by OSC staff and legal counsellors. The lack of digital integration or standardised protocols result in inconsistent follow-ups, thereby weakening institutional accountability.

D. **Responsiveness of Institutions (Police/Protection Officers):** Women Help Desks (WHDs) are operational in over 500 police stations. They serve as the initial point of contact for women and girls in distress. SHE Teams under the Telangana Police's Women Safety Wing are also active in curbing harassment in public spaces. However, Protection Officers mandated under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005, are absent in practice. Service-delivery varies by location, with urban centres reporting better response times than rural locales. It was also noted that digital safety interventions mechanisms like T-SAFE strengthen institutional accountability.

E. **Survivor-Centric SOPs:** Bharosa Centres follow comprehensive SOPs that prioritise the involvement of female medical professionals, uphold privacy, ensure trauma-informed care, and maintain forensic integrity. However, OSCs and other protection services do not have a standardised protocol.

F. **Availability of Health Support to Survivors:** Bharosa Centres possess on-site emergency rooms and medical professionals. However, public hospitals often face challenges in meeting the needs of VAWG survivors. Key issues include limited staff availability in the post-noon hours, insufficient privacy during medical examinations, and inadequate preparedness to address VAWG cases. Especially in cases of survivors who have multiple disabilities, there are no interpreters or special staff to help obtain information for medico-legal cases and rely on family members. (Vranda et al. 2022, 108).

G. **Legal Aid Support:** Legal support is accessible via the Telangana State Legal Services Authority (TSLSA) and District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs). Counsellors at OSCs also assist with FIR-filing and court follow-up. However, the appointed lawyers are poorly compensated, thereby limiting the consistency and quality of legal assistance.

## 3.3 Prosecution

A. **Special Fast-Track Courts:** 36 fast-track and POCSO courts are operational across the state. However, case disposal remains low, with over 300 pending cases per OSC. NCRB (2022) data record a pendency rate of 21.9 percent in the state. Judicial trials frequently extend beyond mandated timelines, thereby weakening public confidence in the system.

B. **Functioning of Public Prosecutors:** A dedicated cohort of prosecutors specialising in VAWG remains absent. Further, inadequate compensation serves as a disincentive for sustained engagement by prosecutors.

C. **FIR Registration and Case Follow-Up:** Legal counsellors at OSCs assist with FIR-filing and case follow-up through e-Courts Services. However, lack of awareness, social stigma, and institutional apathy remains as barriers to case reportage. Delays in Protection Order issuance acts as an additional barrier to case reportage.

D. **Rate of Charge-Sheeting and Conviction:** In 2022, charge-sheeting rate in the state of Telangana for crimes against women was at 87.6 percent. However, the conviction rate remained at a mere 12 percent during the period. Conviction rates also remain low across POCSO and IPC Section 376 cases due to underdeveloped evidence collection, protracted judicial processes, and instances of witness intimidation.

E. **Victim-Friendly Procedures:** Bharosa Centres have adopted global best practices for court proceedings, such as child-friendly rooms for children of survivors, exclusive entrances for survivors, one-way mirrors, and video conferencing facilities to ensure safety. These mechanisms, while effective in minimising the risk of survivor-revictimisation, are not uniformly available across the state. Gender sensitisation training for judicial officials is not held periodically at present, thereby undermining the quality of survivor engagement and weakening the delivery of justice.

## 3.4 Rehabilitation

A. **Access to Trauma Counselling and Mental Health Services:** Bharosa Centres and the Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women (CDEW) provide psychological counselling services. Bharosa's trauma-informed approach includes dedicated counselling rooms and trained staff. However, access to counselling services remains inconsistent across several OSC locations. Uneven distribution of services also makes follow-up support challenging. Consequently, follow-up counselling support is absent in the existing institutional set up.

B. **Medical Services:** The availability of sexual assault-focused care, and adherence to VAWG protocols remain limited across hospitals. Survivors reported instances of privacy violations and improper handling of evidence during medical care. The lack of VAWG-trained health professionals beyond city centres was also noted.

C. **Support for Dependents and Children:** Currently, there are no state-launched mechanisms that offer educational, financial, or psychological support to the children of survivors. At present, informal assistance is provided on these fronts by shelter homes or NGO networks. Such limitations in institutional rehabilitation places additional financial burdens on recovering survivors and their families.

D. **Livelihood Support and Skilling Programs:** Economic rehabilitation efforts include training in two-wheeler and electric auto-rickshaw driving. They are supported by SERP and the Department of Women and Child Welfare. Smt.Durgabai Deshmuk Women's Technical Training Institute is an example of skilling initiative provided to survivors. However, these services are not integrated into the OSC or Bharosa Centre framework. As a result, access to economic rehabilitation for women hailing from rural and tribal areas remains limited in scope.

E. **Compensation Schemes for Survivors:** The Telangana Victim Compensation Scheme (2015) offers financial assistance with defined slabs for different categories of violence. However, access is impeded by procedural delays and documentation processes. In some instances, mandatory submission of income affidavits or repayment clauses further exacerbates the process.

F. **Role of NGOs and Civil Society:** NGOs are central to the functioning of rehabilitation services in Telangana. They govern OSC operations in the state, manage outreach, and oversee shelter requirements. However, certain NGOs remain overstretched, operating multiple centres with limited human and finan-

cial resources. While cost-effective in the short-term, the current system's long-term viability remains limited in the absence of structured governmental support.

## 3.5 Reintegration

A. **Support for Re-enrolment in Education:** There are no targeted efforts addressing the school or college re-enrolment of survivors, particularly adolescent girls. Despite its potential long-term impact on survivor empowerment, reintegration through education remains neglected in institutional frameworks.

B. **Workplace Reintegration Policies and Protections:** The SAHAS initiative under Telangana Police's Women Safety Wing enables individuals to report sexual harassment at workplace via WhatsApp and chatbot services. However, digital grievance redressal mechanisms limit ease of reporting for women who are professionally engaged in informal sectors. While SAHAS offers a scalable, low-cost redressal model, it requires equitable service coverage. Additionally, SAHAS functions as a redressal platform and is not a facility designed to support workplace reintegration.

C. **Support Against Stigma from Families and Communities:** There are no formally recognised peer support groups, or institutional mechanisms in place for the community reintegration of survivors. Challenges stemming from socio-cultural stigma is informally addressed by the respective NGO or shelter staff at present. Community-level reintegration efforts also remain fragmented and inadequately resourced.

D. **Monitoring Post-Institutional Outcomes:** There is no formal system to monitor relapse, repeat violence, or reintegration. NGOs provide informal support networks for the survivor beyond institutional care. This gap limits understanding of long-term impact and hinders effective policy adjustments.

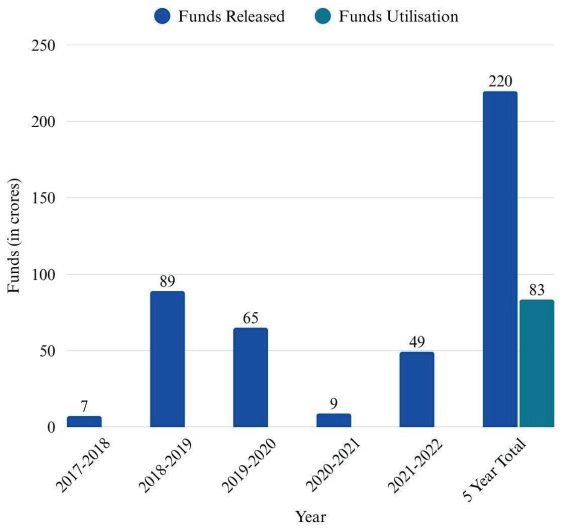
## 3.6 Coordination and Governance

A. **Coordination Between VAWG-Service Departments:** Inter-departmental meetings are irregularly conducted across the state, with the exception of Adilabad district, where convergence meetings are meticulously held. The absence of interdepartmental coordination leads to fragmented VAWG intervention efforts and service delivery.

B. **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** There remains a lack of a comprehensive M&E framework. Data is primarily collected by NGOs or via manual logs at OSCs. There is no integrated Management Information System (MIS) to track survivor progress, service usage, or institutional performance, thereby weakening institutional accountability and hindering evidence-backed policy adjustments.

C. **Budgetary Allocations and Utilisation:** Even with several VAWG-focused programmes in operation, budget lines remain delayed or underutilised. Delayed disbursal of the Nirbhaya Funds often result in salary backlogs and out-of-pocket expenses for the OSC staff, undermining operational efficiency. The graph below indicates funds released and utilised for Nirbhaya Fund projects and schemes between 2017 and 2022. Out of the total allocated funds to the state of Telangana, a mere 37.98 percent have been utilised towards the respective projects and schemes (Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022).

## Figure 2: Funds Released and Utilised by Telangana Government




*Source:* Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022

## Table 1: Year-wise Fund Allocation and Utilisation for One Stop Centres (in Lakhs)

| Year | Funds Allocated (in Lakhs) | Fund Utilised (in Lakhs) |
|---|---|---|
| 2016-17 | 155.31 | 138.07 |
| 2017-18 | 301.71 | 51.92 |
| 2018-19 | 589.49 | 105.19 |
| 2019-20 | 624.47 | 112 |
| 2020-21 | 793.39 | 109 |
| 2021-22 | 945.98 | 102 |
| 2022-23 | 1392.65 | NA |
| 2023-24 | 1217.41 | 81 |

*Source:* The data presented in the table is drawn from Press Information Bureau (PIB) reports and Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India sources.

Telangana's fund utilisation pattern for OSCs under the Nirbhaya scheme demonstrates stronger initial absorption rates followed by a decline in subsequent years. In 2016-17, ₹155.32 lakh was allocated, of which ₹138.07 lakh (88.9 percent) was utilised, indicating efficient fund use in the initial phase. However, in 2017-18, despite an increased allocation of ₹301.71 lakh, utilisation fell sharply to ₹51.92 lakh (17.2 percent).

Allocations rose further in 2018-19 to ₹589.49 lakh, with utilisation of ₹105.19 lakh (17.8 percent). In 2019-20 and 2020-21, allocations reached ₹624.47 lakh and ₹775.73 lakh respectively, yet combined utilisation for 2018-19 to 2020-21 amounted to only ₹306.36 lakh, representing a utilisation rate of 16.6 percent against the total allocation of ₹1989.69 lakh for the same period.

D. **Role Clarity and Accountability:** The overlapping roles of OSCs and Bharosa Centres, along with fragmented responsibilities between police, health, and Women and Child Development (WCD) departments, contribute to survivor fatigue and service duplication. Mandates need to be clearly defined, and accountability structures put in place to strengthen institutional intervention against VAWG.

E. **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** In instances where OSCs or Bharosa Centres underperform, or approaching survivors encounter difficulties in accessing or interacting with government agencies responsible for providing VAWG support, there is no centralised mechanism in place to address the issues raised. This weakens institutional accountability and public trust in the system.

F. **Adoption of Tech Platforms:** Telangana has pioneered several digital safety tools including T-SAFE, SHE app, SAHAS, and e-Court Services. There is strong uptake of these platforms in urban and suburban localities with positive survivor feedback. However, peripheral regions of the districts show low response rates.

G. **Involvement of Local Leaders and PRIs:** While SHG-led Social Action Committees are present, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and elected representatives are not engaged in survivor reintegration in a structural capacity.

H. **Inclusion of Survivors in Policy Consultations:** Survivors remain underrepresented in policy feedback and design, weakening relevance and impact of reintegration efforts. There is no standardised mechanism for survivor inclusion in policy consultations.

# 4. Policy Recommendations

## Short-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **SOP for Health Care Professionals:** Develop a standard operating procedure protocol for health professionals to identify victims of DV and sexual harassment and help them with responses provided under DV and other relevant laws, including non medial services such as referrals, shelter, legal assistance, community-based support services, and child protection. | While Telangana is at the forefront of efforts to combat VAWG through a dedicated Women Safety Wing under the Police, the Health Department is not actively involved and participates in supporting OSC and Bharosa Centres as and when required. VAWG, being a public health concern, requires proactive involvement of health professionals to help protect the interests of the women. Studies by CEHAT states that women approach public health centres in case of injuries sustained through domestic abuse while being hesitant to report to police. Hence, strengthening health professionals through a clear SOP and training on handling cases of domestic abuse and sexual abuse can help empower women to take up the cases through timely support. |
| **Provide Mandatory Training for Health Professional to Deal with VAWG Cases:** Design training programs in accordance with WHO clinical and policy guidelines. | Health professionals perform a dual role in VAWG cases: therapeutic role and medico-legal role. Often lack of training and SOPs distract them from playing the roles effectively. For instance, in cases of rape, a any negligence by the doctor in providing medication to avoid unwanted pregnancies can affect the future of the survivor leading to repercussions at all levels - societal, legal, and economical.<br><br>Handling a survivor and providing her with right support must be guided by a non-judgmental approach, which requires regular and ongoing training for the professionals. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **A Dedicated Department in Every Public and Private Hospital to Deal with VAWG Cases:**<br><br>Institute a dedicated department in every public and private hospital for coordinating the VAWG cases and refer the same to concerned authority along with training the professionals | A dedicated department will streamline the activities to ensure strong inter-departmental coordination and data management with departments like Police, WCD, and others. |
| **Design special training programs** for public prosecutors, and for lower and higher judiciary on VAWG, including special procedures to minimize re-traumatisation in courts. | One of the common issues inVAWG cases in court is the low quality of the lawyers provided by the DLSA (often caused by low pay), as well as the lack of survivor-centric court processes. To improve the situation, training for handling VAWG cases must be provided to the empanelled lawyers, and a standardised protocol should be followed in respective cases. Often, the negligence of the system to understand the need for special treatment of VAWG cases results in generalising the processes, leading to retraumatisation of the survivors. |
| **Conduct post-intervention surveys as part of SOP** for VAWG services provided by OSC, health professionals, and police by engaging academic institutions. | Often, feedback surveys are not part of the SOPs or guidelines of OSC, Police, etc. However, the Women Safety Wing has a dedicated MIS dashboard and third party feedback systems to receive feedback from survivors taking the services at centres like Bharosa and Centre for Empowerment of Women as part of their protocols. These systems can be adopted in the processes of other departments as well. |

## Medium-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Involve local self-governments to create community-level awareness on VAWG prevention and response by:**<br><br>1. Co-Developing Gender Action Plans with LSGs<br><br>2. Safety Mapping by LSGs | An active role could be played by LSGs by drawing inspiration from Jagrata Samitis of Kerala and Kudumbaree Mission, which support the implementation of laws relating to VAWG at the ward level through prevention and protection strategies.<br><br>Telangana, being a big state, district-level OSCs and Bharosa Centres alone will not suffice in reaching the whole of the state. Building gender action plans at LSG level, with specific objectives considering the socio-economic context, would be beneficial in tackling VAWG cases. For instance, Telangana has a high intra-state migration, leading to settlements in cities where crimes are reported. Elopement of girls under age of 18 and resultant pregnancies are also a common issue. Poor educational enrollment is also an issue in rural areas; hence, understanding the socioeconomic context of each village is important for developing customised plans to prevent VAWG crimes. LSGs can act proactively through safety mapping in collaboration with SHGs and local NGOs and prioritise their interventional strategies. |
| **Build Shelter Homes in Every District with at Least 25 Inmates Capacity** | Lack of sufficient shelter homes for long-term rehabilitation is an issue highlighted in Telangana. Further, specialised shelter homes for mentally challenged women, adolescent girls, and elderly women also have to be established for targeted interventions and support. Shelter homes are a crucial link in supporting survivors in their reintegration journey into society. A one-size-fits-all approach in building shelter homes catering to all women may not yield the intended results. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Regular Training of Frontline Workers:** A dedicated, iinterdisciplinary module, including gender sensitisation, information about various programmes by different institutions, psychological and medical support, trauma-informed care strategies, and follow-up and monitoring, must be developed as an online module.<br><br>The following modules must be developed:<br><br>1. Gender Norms and Sensitisation<br>2. Trauma-Informed Care and Counselling<br>3. Legal Module<br>4. Police Module<br>5. Rehabilitation Module<br>6. Reintegration Module<br>7. Monitoring and Evaluation Module<br>8. Feedback and Follow-up Module<br>9. Cyber Module<br>10. Self-care Module<br><br>The online module must be completed within the first three months of the job.<br><br>Specialised modules for each department can be developed by the respective departments.<br><br>These modules must be made mandatory for every official under WCD, KSDWC, Police, Judiciary, and KeLSA and must be linked to their performance appraisal through mandatory assessment tests. | As of now, the training is being conducted for OSC, and Bhoomika staff. However, these are standalone and restricted in its content. Job-specific training is different from training the VAWG workforce about general topics.<br><br>A standardised online training that is applicable to all officials and staff working for VAWG helps in ensuring a minimum level of training. These can help in improving the responsiveness of the frontline workers towards the survivors.<br><br>Online courses hosted by Telangana Police are an example of using technology to create awareness (https://benchstep.com/womensafety/). |

## Long-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Prepare a Preventive VAWG Strategy:** WCD, being the nodal agency, must have clear budgets outlined for every quarter to conduct awareness campaigns and sessions through State Women Commission, Kudumbasree, KSWDC, and selected CSOs.<br><br>WCD can bring police, judicial members, and lawyers for the sessions, thus making the module more comprehensive.<br><br>The WCD also must have a monitoring mechanism with quantitative and qualitative outputs of each year's awareness activities.<br><br>An assessment study must also be in the strategic plan to understand the impact of the awareness campaigns by engaging academic institutions. | The current awareness campaign lacks a targeted approach and consistency. Different departments work in silos, resulting in fragmented information reaching the masses. There needs to be a coordinated effort to streamline the awareness-based activities against VAWG by nominating WCD as nodal agency for the same. |
| **Reintegration of Survivors - Plan and Implementation:** Reintegration of survivors need a multifaceted approach; psychological, social, and financial reintegration support has to be provided.<br><br>Some of the initiatives that could be made into the policies are:<br><br>1. Formation of survivor support groups at the local level<br>2. Skilling survivors and recruiting them as OSC and other survivor staff.<br>3. Supporting POSH survivors in obtaining jobs.<br>4. Integrate shelter home skilling initiatives with job fairs and employment portals to secure relevant | Often the reintegration perspective is missing from existing schemes and programmes. Considering the social stigma, lack of financial support, and the long-affected trauma surrounding the survivors, reintegration has to be an inevitable part of the survivor support programmes. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Constitution of State Women Safety Board:** At the state level, a board dedicated to interdepartmental coordination and collaboration must be constituted with the following functions and responsibilities:<br><br>1. Coordinating state-level prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration strategies for combating VAWG across various departments.<br>2. Planning budgets for developing and revising common training modules for VAWG workforce across institutions.<br>3. Gender-specific research grants disbursal for state-specific studies on various programmes.<br>4. Resolving duplication of resources and streamlining referral networks<br>5. Revision of state-level policies from time to time.<br><br>The members must be representative of all relevant stakeholders, including cyber experts, gender specialists, and survivors.<br><br>This model must be decentralised at district and block level. | Interdepartmental coordination is a weak link in the current institutional framework. To strengthen the same, a nodal agency has to be constituted. None of the existing mechanisms are representative of all the relevant departments that are currently working towards combating VAWG. |
| **State level VAWG Dashboard for better data management :**<br><br>A state-level VAWG dashboard must be created that could be accessed by officials of OSCs, Women Protection Officers, Dowry Prohibition Officers, police, prosecutors, DLSA, and survivors for real-time data of a case.<br><br>The common dashboard will give comprehensive data on the stage at which cases are resolved, the status of each case, key facts, and the support provided to survivors.<br><br>This common dashboard also helps survivors to track their cases, rather than going to different institutions.<br><br>Sensitive data that helps in identifying the survivors must | Telangana Women Safety Wing has an MIS dashboard to track the activities of Bharosa and other family counselling programmes run by the Wing, with third-party feedback integration. The system is robust with a lot of data being generated and analysed for improving the services with a dedicated Analysis Wing within the Women Safety Wing. (https://womensafetywing.telangana.gov.in/analysis-wing/)<br><br>Other available dashboards are centralised and provide data on Mission Shakti schemes.<br><br>An integrated dashboard with WCD, Women Safety Wing, Health, and Legal Services Authority has to be devised by taking inspiration from Women Safety Wing MIS Dashboard for better data management and informed policy making in VAWG issues. |

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State Report

# KERALA 04

# 1. State Profile and Context

## 1.1 Demographic Overview

Kerala has demonstrated remarkable investments in human development and social welfare. The state has consistently topped Niti Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index Performance Reports for the last three years, excelling in SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). With an impressive Human Development Index of 0.75 points, Kerala ranks among the highest in India, compared to many developed countries. Kerala retained its leading position among the larger states with an overall performance score of 82.20 for the reference year 2019-2020, reflecting sustained excellence in health outcomes (NITI Aayog and World Bank 2021). According to the Census of India 2011, the state's total population was 33.4 million, an increase from 31.8 million in 2001. During this period, Kerala recorded 16,027, 412 males and 17,378,649 females, corresponding to a sex ratio of 92.23 males per 100 females. The state presents a unique context for analysing the prevalence of violence against women, as it consistently outperforms most other Indian states on key human development indicators for women. According to Census 2011 data, Kerala has a female sex ratio of 1,084 females per 1,000 males, the highest in the country, and a female literacy rate of 92.7 percent, reflecting widespread access to education (Census2011.co.in, n.d.). These indicators suggest a progressive social environment for women, however, this makes the persistence of violence against women and girls in the state particularly complex.

The Kerala State Nirbhaya Policy 2012 was implemented by the state government through the State Nirbhaya Cell under the Department of Women and Child Development, with the purpose of preventing sexual violence against women and children. The Nirbhaya Policy includes strategic intervention across the areas of prevention, rescue, protection, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration, coordination, implementation, and monitoring. Monitoring mechanism is ensured through a multi-tiered governance structure consisting of a State Coordination Committee, District-level Nirbhaya Committees, and Jagratha Samithis at the Panchayat and Urban Local Government levels.

Under the Nirbhaya Cell, 13 Women and Children's Homes are currently functioning across various districts. The establishment of similar homes is also to be managed by the Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society. The SOS Model Shelter Home caters to girls below the age of 12, whereas the Tejomaya Aftercare Home initiative is designed to provide transitional housing and skill development for residents. The Integrated Care Centre (ICC) aims to support women in need of continuous care from pregnancy to post-natal, including those who have undergone Medical Termination of Pregnancy.

A Relief Fund Scheme instituted under the initiative provides immediate financial assistance to survivors of violence. Furthermore, Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns are regularly organised through OSCs to promote gender awareness and women's empowerment, targeting Anganwadi workers, Kudumbashree volunteers, and parents (Nirbhaya Kerala State Police, Dept. of Social Welfare, Kerala Govt.).

In 2024, the Kerala State Government finalised a draft Women's Policy replacing the 2015 Policy. The policy draft highlights interventions on important areas like education, healthcare, labour, culture, law, and women's safety. It also outlines a comprehensive framework to bridge structural gaps, with an emphasis on advancing gender equality across social, economic, and cultural spheres. However, the finalised draft (building on its earlier version in 1996, 2009, and 2015) does not contain a robust or stand-alone section dedicated to violence against women and girls.

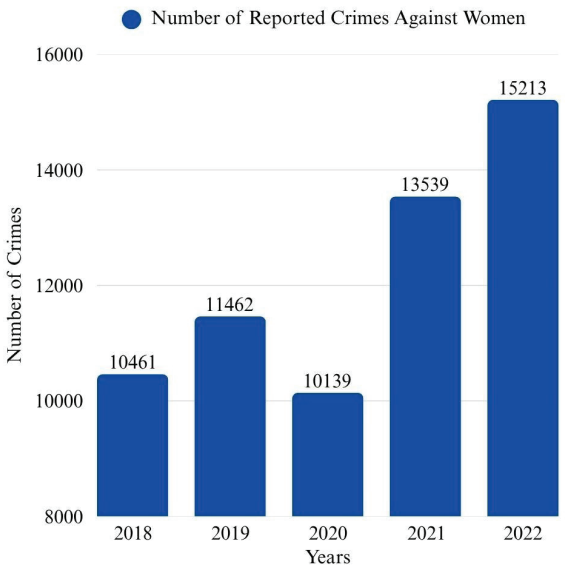


## 1.2 Prevalence of Violence Against Women

The National Crime Records Bureau's Crime in India Report of 2022 revealed that Kerala reported 15,213 cases of violence against women in 2022 alone. The chargesheeting rate for the period was 94.5 percent. The highest number of cases originated from Thiruvananthapuram (1,933), followed by Ernakulam (1,884) and Kozhikode (1,670). Common crimes include:

- Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives (4,998 cases)
- Attempt on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty (4,949 cases)
- Protection of Children from Sexual Violence Act (POCSO) (2,957 cases).

### Figure 1: Number of Reported Crimes Against Women in Kerala




*Source:*
National Crime Records Bureau 2018-2022

The National Family Health Survey Report of 2015-16 reveals that 16 percent of ever-married women in Kerala experienced spousal violence that are emotional, physical, or sexual in nature. In this period, 14.5 percent of women were subject to domestic violence, which included but was not limited to the violence perpetrated by spouses. This refers to acts of physical violence, sexual violence, or both. The 2019-21 Report by NFHS noted that spousal violence saw a reduction to 13 percent during the period, while domestic violence dipped to 9.8 percent.

According to the NFHS 5 report, in Kerala, nine percent have experienced physical violence, and one percent have ever experienced sexual violence. 10 percent of women ever experienced physical or sexual violence and one percent experienced both physical and sexual violence. 10 percent of married women between the age of 18 and 49 have experienced any form of physical violence committed by their husband, two percent have experienced sexual violence committed by their husband, and seven percent have experienced any form of emotional violence committed by their husband. One percent of ever-married women between the age of 18 and 49 have reported that their husband have physically forced them to have sex, and one percent reported that their husband forced them with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts against their will. 29 percent of ever-married women aged 18-49 have experienced suffering from injuries from what their husband did to them.

However, only 24 percent of women who have ever experienced physical violence from anyone have sought any help. 57 percent have neither sought help nor informed anyone about the violence.

Further, as per the crime records of Kerala Police, between 2020 and 2024, Kerala witnessed a general increase in reported cases of crimes against women, reflecting heightened awareness and persistent systemic gaps in prevention and redressal. Rape cases rose from 1,880 (in 2020) to 2,901 (in 2024) with a 54 percent increase. Molestation cases remained high throughout, peaking at 4,940 in 2022 and, despite a slight dip in 2024 (4286), still surpassing the 2020 baseline by nearly 10 percent, indicating the need for more effective interventions and gender sensitisation. Cases of cruelty by husband or relatives under Section 498A spiked sharply from 2,707 (in 2020) to 4,997(in 2021) and have remained consistently above 4,500 annually,

indicating potential structural and cultural issues surrounding marital abuse. Eve teasing and kidnapping/abduction have shown a fluctuating yet rising trend, with eve teasing cases increasing by 57 percent between 2020 and 2024, and 2025 (up to June) already recording 506 cases. Although dowry deaths are fewer in number, they remain a recurring concern, with 11 cases in 2022. Most notably, 'other offences' category, including cyber-crimes, stalking, and related offences, more than doubled from 3,583 in 2020 to 6,366 in 2024, making it the largest crime category by volume (Kerala Police, n.d.). Overall, while Kerala continues to rank high on various women-centric development indices, violence against women remains widespread.

## 2. Institutional Mechanisms

The laws and policies under centre and state have brought in many institutional mechanisms in the state. Some of the institutions like LSG based Jagratha Samitis are a unique initiative of Kerala under the 2012 Nirbhaya Policy to enhance the role of local self governments in the institutional architecture combating VAWG. Gender Park is another innovative institution functioning under the state government that supports research, training, and similar co-creating spaces for better policy implementation in gender space. This section catalogues the details of various institutional mechanisms under different departments in the state of Kerala aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls.

### 2.1 Role of the Women and Child Development Department

**One Stop Centres (Sakhi Centres):** One Stop Centres, established under the Mission Shakti framework, function as integrated support hubs for women affected by violence in both private and public spaces, including within families, communities, and workplaces. In Kerala, 14 OSCs are currently operational, providing critical services to women survivors of violence. Additionally, Sakhi One Stop Centres (OSC) function as 24/7 integrated service hubs offering emergency shelter, medical and police aid, legal support, counselling, and video conferencing for legal proceedings, to prevent re-victimization. The OSCs are coordinated by the State Nodal Agency (Nirbhaya Cell) and Task Force Committees chaired by respective District Collectors with financial support from the Central Government.

**Mahila Mandiram:** Mahila Mandiram is a shelter institution functioning under the Department of Women and Child Development, Kerala. These institutions provide temporary shelter, care, and rehabilitation for widowed, divorced, deserted, and destitute women above the age of 18 who have no family or support system. Mahila Mandirams also admit women accompanied by their children allowing them to stay until the child reaches six years of age. Women can be admitted to Mahila Mandirams upon the recommendation or directive of district probation officers, police officials, or courts. These are operational in all districts except Idukki and Wayanad.

**Shakti Sadans:** These centers provide prolonged shelter for destitute and deserted women and survivors of VAWG crimes, with 10 operational centers across Kerala as of 2022.

**Sakhi Niwas:** These are safe and secure hostels, operated in collaboration with NGOs, providing hostel facilities with day care in urban and semi-urban areas to support women's employment and education opportunities. As of 2023, there are 129 operational Sakhi Niwas across Kerala.

**Ente Koodu (My Nest):** Overnight shelters for women, available free of charge, in Trivandrum, Kozhikode, and Ernakulam.

**One Day Home:** A shelter facility in Trivandrum offering one-day accommodation for women at a rate of ₹150 per night.

**SOS model homes:** Under the Nirbhaya Day initiative, residential shelters were created for girls under 12 who have suffered abuse.

**Gender Park:** The Gender Park, established in 2013 in Calicut, is an initiative under the Depart-

ment of Social Justice with the Department of Women and Child Development being the primary coordinating authority. Gender Park serves as the first globally of its kind. The initiative acts as a platform for research, advocacy, capacity building, and policy dialogue on gender justice. Partnering with the UN Women, the Gender Park endeavours to position itself to be the South Asian hub on the gender discourse while undertaking initiatives like She-Taxi and the ICGE (International Conference on Gender Equality).

**Women Protection Officers :** Kerala has also implemented the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 through state-specific rules. Women Protection Officers are appointed in every district, supported by clear guidelines, forms and duties. Currently, there are 14 Women Protection Offices in Kerala, functioning in each district (WCD, Kerala).

**Dowry Prohibition Officers:** The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 criminalises the giving, taking, or demanding of dowry, prescribing up to five years' imprisonment and fines. In Kerala, the Dowry Prohibition Rules, 2004 introduced three Regional Dowry Prohibition Officers in Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, and Kozhikode, overseen by the Director of the Social Justice Department. The 2021 Amendment designated the Director of the Women and Child Development Department as Chief Dowry Prohibition Officer, supported by district level officers. The state has also launched a dowry prohibition portal to enable direct online complaints and is preparing standard operating procedures for handling cases.

**Aswasanidhi Corpus Fund:** Aswasanidhi, instituted under the Nirbhaya Cell by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Kerala. Announced in the 2018-2019 state budget, Aswasanidhi is a corpus fund of ₹300 Lakh established to provide interim financial relief to victims of sex crimes and heinous violence against women and girls, irrespective of other statutory victim compensation mechanisms. The financial assistance varies based on the type of loss or injury, with minimum and upper limits (e.g., ₹50,000 - ₹1,00,000 for sexual assault of minors, and ₹1,00,000 - ₹2,00,000 for acid attacks).

Upon reporting of a grievous incident, Women Protection Officer (WPO) is responsible for recording the case, initiating an FIR or DIR, and conducting an on-site assessment within 24 hours. Based on the assessment, a preliminary report with the recommended amount of interim relief is submitted within 48 hours to the Director of Women and Child Development and the State Coordinator of the Nirbhaya Cell. For minor victims, funds are transferred to a joint account with a parent, guardian, or designated authority such as the Child Care Institution. The scheme was instituted to work in tandem with One Stop Centres (OSCs), which serve as nodal points for continued support to survivors.

## 2.2 Initiatives under State Commission for Women

**BODHYAM:** A gender-responsive policing initiative by the Kerala State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC) and the Home Department, providing comprehensive gender sensitisation training to police personnel (up to Sub-Inspector rank) across all 564 police stations. Launched in September 2019, it had trained around 6,432 officers by July 2021. The curriculum covers fundamentals of sex, gender, transgender identities, sexuality, laws addressing violence against women, cyber laws, POCSO, soft skills, HIV/AIDS, and, importantly, includes sessions by transgender trainers for trans inclusion. The initiative aims to build foundational awareness in gender issues, encourage empathetic policing, and promote visibility and inclusion for transgender communities.

**Women Cell (KSWDC):** Aims to empower women students by making them aware of their rights and duties and providing a platform to share experiences and views on gender inequalities. Its objectives include enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence, providing training for self-sustainability, and promoting intellectual and cultural activities for overall personality development. The KSWDC proposes to start Women Cells in 80 colleges across Kerala.

**KSWDC Working Women's Hostels:** The Kerala State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC) operates eight working women's hostels across six districts (Trivandrum, Ernakulam, Malappuram, Wayanad, Kannur, and Kozhikode), offering safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women away from their families.

**Vanitha Mithra Kendram Project:** Launched by KSWDC, this project assures lodging facilities for women passengers across all 14 districts, crèche services for children, and short-stay facilities for stranded women. Buildings have been completed in Perinthalmanna in Malappuram and Kakkanad in Ernakulam.

**Safe Stay Program:** A flagship program by the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) and KSWDC aiming to provide safe and affordable short-stay facilities for women travelers (including boys below 12 years). It envisions networking existing hostels and economy hotels, with a comprehensive app for checking availability and making reservations.

## 2.3 Kerala Women's Commission

The Kerala Women's Commission Act, 1990 establishes a statutory body to safeguard women's rights and welfare in the state. The Act, which came into force on December 1, 1995 and was later amended in 2002, empowers the Commission to inquire into grievances, recommend remedial measures, and facilitate redress of grievances. The Commission consists of a Chairperson, up to four women members, and a Secretary. Since its inception, the Kerala Women's Commission has functioned as both a grievance redressal body and a policy advisory institution. It works closely with registered NGOs and Jagratha Samithis to extend support and provide integrated services.

## 2.4 Kudumbasree Initiatives

**Snehitha Helpdesk:** Snehitha is a 24x7 gender help desk set up in all districts of Kerala to support women and children in distress. Launched by Kudumbashree in 2013 initially in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and Malappuram, it was expanded statewide by October 2017. There are currently 15 Snehitha Centres across Kerala, including a Special Snehitha in Attapadi, which operates separately solely through resource persons. The initiative originally emerged in response to women's experiences of economic abuse in families and workplaces, particularly raised by Kudumbashree's Gender Resource Persons.

The Snehitha initiative is funded through the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) for gender training programme and Plan Funds for operational expenses. Approved by the Government of Kerala in 2019, Snehitha provides emergency support, counseling, short-term shelter up to four days, legal assistance, and rehabilitation services. It caters to victims of violence, social exclusion, exploitation, family rejection, and other vulnerabilities, offering immediate care and long-term support with the goal of empowering and protecting marginalised women and children, with regular online monthly meetings and quarterly physical meetings at the CDS (Community Development Society) level. While its operational framework remains the same across districts, each centre is culturally tailored according to local needs. In Malappuram's Ponnani, the Theeram programme supports women and children from fishing communities, including special provisions for pregnant women.

Beyond crisis intervention, Snehitha focuses on capacity building by regularly training its staff in gender sensitisation and counseling. Through the Meet the Department programme, it offers gender sensitisation training to officers across the government departments. In collaboration with KeLSA, DLSAs, and the People's Council for Social Justice, Snehitha conducts VAWG sensitisation workshops focusing on boys in colleges, schools, Anganwadis, and Panchayats. Legal aid has been

extended to over 18,000 reported cases with support from Kerala Legal Service Society. It also runs the self-defense programme Dheeram in partnership with Janamaithri, Police, and Excise departments, and deploys Gender Resource Personnel for community outreach. Snehitha's work is grounded in convergence, actively interfacing with government and non-government actors, and partnering with the Kerala Institute of Local Administration for training, Legal Clinics, and Adalats.

Awareness tools like Snehitha leaflets are distributed to all Ayalkoottam members, including contact numbers for 24/7 access. There is a Coordination Committee headed by the District Collector, ensuring cross-departmental referrals. Notably, Snehitha, in collaboration with police stations, enables police to refer survivors needing counseling or mediation. The programme also supports Malala Day courses helping women resume education via partnerships with IGNOU and Sree Narayana Guru Open School, along with guidance for college enrolment (Insights from stakeholder interactions: 03 July 2024 and 04 July 2024).

## 2.5 Initiatives under Local Self Government Department

**Jagratha Samithi (Vigilance Committee) :** Citing the growing number of crimes against women and the lack of timely redressal, Jagratha Samithis (JS) were institutionalised in 1997 under the supervision of Kerala Women's Commission, in coordination with district and local self-government bodies. In 2007, a government order was issued by the Department of Social Justice and the Women and Child Development Department, Kerala, to reorganise the structure of District- and Panchayat-level Jagratha Samithis for more effective functioning. The JS, operating in close collaboration with the Kudumbashree initiative, serves as the core implementing committees of the Nirbhaya Policy, linking state-level directives into action at the local level.

At the Panchayat and Urban Local Government levels, JS functions as the core implementing agencies of the Nirbhaya policy. They are tasked with ensuring coordinated, grassroots level responses to violence against women. The JS comprises of:

- Panchayat President/ Chairperson, Municipality/ Corporation Mayor (Chairperson)
- Standing Committee Chairperson (for ULGs)
- Woman Panchayat Member/ Municipal Ward Councillor
- Doctor of the PHC/CHC
- Kudumbashree CDS Chairperson
- Woman Lawyer (to be nominated by the District Legal Services Authority)
- Circle Inspector or Sub Inspector of local Police Station
- Woman SC/ST Panchayat Member or Social Activist
- One Convenor of the Ward Level Jagrata Samitis
- The ICDS Supervisor/CDPO (Convenor)

Support groups include other elected representatives, local officials, ward-level convenors, representatives of political parties, and women's organisations. To strengthen their mandate, JS are also empowered to invite the Police Officer from the Anti-Human Trafficking Squad and local NGOs working in the fields of women and child welfare. These efforts aim to reinforce multi-stakeholder convergence and grassroots monitoring within the Nirbhaya scheme.

## 2.6 Initiatives under Cultural Directorate

Samam is a cultural initiative under the Directorate of Culture, Kerala, launched in 2021 in response to the rise in dowry deaths and violence against women. It aims to address the cultural roots of violence against women and promote attitudinal change through art, media, and public engagement. Through a wide range of programmes, from honouring women across professions to hosting International Gender Film Festival, and literary awards, Samam fosters inclusive representation and dialogue. It has translated Supreme Court's gender-sensitive language guidelines into Malayalam and collaborated with community organisations to amplify voices of marginalised women from regions like Attappadi, Alappuzha, and Malayoram.

## 2.7 Law Enforcement Agencies - Kerala Police

All women-related activities under Kerala Police are coordinated under a State Women Cell functioning under ADGP (Crimes), with district-level cells in 20 police districts for investigation and counselling. Apart from this decentralised institutional setup, there are specific schemes and projects for combating VAWG especially with a focus of prevention, protection, and prosecution strategy adopted by state police.

**Pink Protection Project:** Launched in 2021, the Pink Protection Project is a comprehensive initiative aimed at ensuring the safety of women across private, public, and digital spaces. The project comprises multiple interlinked components including:

- **Pink Patrol:** All women police teams patrolling public areas such as bus stands, schools, and colleges from 8 AM to 8 PM in GPS-enabled vehicles connected to the Pink Control Rooms.
- **Pink Janamaithri Beat:** Community-oriented beat officers conduct regular home visits to collect intelligence from neighbors and local leaders regarding domestic violence, enabling early intervention.
- **Pink Control Room:** Operates 24/7 at the district level to coordinate real-time responses across the Pink units.
- **Pink Shadow Patrol:** Plainclothes women officers surveil crowded public areas and transport systems to deter and respond to harassment discreetly.
- **Pink Romeo:** A female bike patrol unit ensures rapid response and mobility, particularly across narrow or congested routes.
- **Pink Digital Drive:** Cyber patrolling and monitoring of online platforms to detect, report, and remove abusive content. Legal action is pursued under relevant provisions of the IT Act.

**Counter Child Sexual Exploitation (CCSE) Centres:** In alignment with Kerala Police's commitment to zero tolerance towards child pornography and crimes against children, the year 2019 was declared the "Year of Cyber Security." As part of this initiative, the Counter Child Sexual Exploitation (CCSE) Centre was constituted under the Cyberdome, the state's cyber security platform.

The CCSE Centre operates as a dedicated wing to combat online child sexual exploitation, with a focus on proactive detection, investigation and victim support, and public awareness. The centre conducts extensive cyber awareness programmes and workshops across schools, colleges, and communities, with a focus on child and adolescent users. Additionally, it is also actively involved in tracking, reporting, and removing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) from online platforms.

**Gender Inclusive Recruitment Policy:** One-tenth of the vacancies in Police Constable posts in each district is reserved for women, with the aim of increasing the overall representation of women in police to 15 percent (GO 222/2024, Home).

**Hi-Tech Crime Inquiry Cell:** Established in May 2006, the Hi-Tech Crime Inquiry Cell functions under the Crime Branch of Kerala Police to address organised cybercrimes including online fraud, phishing, identity theft, cyberstalking, and crimes against women and children. It provides technical expertise and digital forensic support to police units statewide.

The Cell works with agencies like C-DAC, NIC, Kerala IT Mission, and telecom providers, and conducts cyber awareness programmes for students, professionals, and the public. In collaboration with CCSE Centre and Cyberdome, the Cell identified over 200 individuals distributing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), resulting in 38 arrests during Operation P-Hunt.

**Policing with Equality:** The Kerala Police has recently adopted gender-neutral language in official oaths and terminology to foster inclusivity across its operations. In a significant step towards women's empowerment, the force has also trained over 1.2 lakh women since November 2018

through a comprehensive 60-hour self-defence programme. Targeting students and women across the state, the training includes legal awareness, confidence building, and practical techniques for handling threats such as acid attacks and chain snatching.

**Women's Police Stations:** Kerala holds the distinction of establishing Asia's first Women's Police Station in Kozhikode in 1973 in institutionalising gender-sensitive policing. Currently, there are 14 dedicated Women's police stations across the state out of 564. These stations are staffed by women officers trained in handling cases related to domestic violence, sexual assault, dowry harassment, and other gender-based crimes.

**Women's Desks:** Since 2006, Kerala has mandated the presence of Women's Desks in all police stations. These desks operate daily from 8 AM to 6 PM and serve as the first point of contact for women seeking police assistance. Staffed by trained women personnel, they provide legal guidance, and referrals to specialised services. They also maintain close contact with Vanitha Cells and Jagratha Samithis.

**Vanitha Cells and Counselling Centres:** Dedicated women's police desks exist in every district, staffed with counsellors and NGOs for sensitive handling of reports. Established in 1996, these units, also known as Crime Prevention Family Counselling Centres, provide family counselling with trained counsellors in collaboration with the Social Justice Department. They conduct follow-ups to ensure further violence is prevented and to build confidence in the women involved.

**Domestic Conflict Resolution Centre:** Established in 2020 to address the surge in domestic violence cases, DCRCs aim to resolve domestic disputes through non-adversarial means, reducing the need for prolonged legal proceedings. These centres work in collaboration with trained counsellors to mediate and settle disputes. DCRCs is operational with 19 Women's Cells across district headquarters in Kerala. Complaints that fall within the ambit of domestic violence are taken up by the centres. To manage case volume and complexity, some districts have appointed more than one family counsellor.

**Referral services:** Women's Cells offer referral services for psychological support, directing women to Seethalayam, a women focused initiative by the Department of Homeopathy, Kerala, instead of general mental health hospitals.

**Chit Chat:** An initiative by the Police Department to provide counselling to children in need of assistance with stress, drug addiction, and related issues.

**Children and Police (CAP) initiative:** Operates a children's helpline for those requiring assistance.

## 2.8 Medical Support Systems

**Bhoomika:** The Bhoomika Programme is a pioneering initiative that integrated Gender-Based Violence Management Centres (GBVMCs) into the public health system. From its inception, the programme was embedded within the existing health infrastructure, which made it more accessible and less stigmatising for survivors to approach for help. Initially launched in 2009 across 14 district hospitals, the programme was gradually expanded, with seven more centres set up in taluk hospitals, followed by four new centres in 2011-12, two in 2012-13, and one in 2013-14. Currently, there is at least one GBVMC in every district hospital and Taluk Head Quarters Hospital (THQH) in the state. Each GBVMC is overseen by an Institutional Committee within the hospital and an inter-sectoral Committee at the district level to ensure multi-agency collaboration. Bhoomika provides a range of survivor-centric services, including medical aid, psychosocial support, legal assistance, temporary shelter, and community sensitisation.

A trained counsellor is present at each GBVMC, and health personnel including doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff receive on-the-job and refresher training to effectively address violence against women. The programme brings together multiple stakeholders such as NGOs and Civil Society Organisations, child welfare committees, hospital staff, women police officers, women protection officers, legal experts, and Bhoomika counsellors. In addition to emergency responses,

the initiative prioritises long-term strategies such as rehabilitation of survivors, holistic counselling, referrals to specialised support services, problem-solving during interventions, and consistent follow-up to support the survivor's reintegration and well being. Bhoomika also provides medical examinations for women affected by VAWG using a SAFE kit and receives cases from private hospitals. With its decentralised structure, public health anchoring, and emphasis on inter-sectoral collaboration, the Bhoomika Programme stands out as a comprehensive and sustainable model for addressing violence against women in India (Based on Stakeholder engagement; workshop insights).

**Medical Kits:** The State Health Department initiated and standardised a medico-legal protocol across all public hospitals dealing with VAWG cases. Medical kits were specially developed for the medical examination of assault survivors, and the protocol saw periodic revision until 2019.

**Specialised Health Services:** Schools host Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) clinics and programs specifically targeting girls, including addressing bodily changes and awareness. The Aardram Mission has upgraded Primary Health Centres to Family Health Centres, increasing their capacity to screen and support marginalised and vulnerable women and adolescents.

**Seethalayam:** A Women's Healthcare Centre initiated by the Homeopathy Department, it assists women affected by VAWG through healthcare services, treating physical injuries, mental health challenges, and suicide tendencies.

**Mental Health and Helpline Support (Health Department):** A 24x7 WhatsApp call center was introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing survivors to report domestic violence and harassment. Health workers also provide counseling, psychosocial aid, and connect victims with legal and protection services.

## 2.9 Emergency Helpline

**1. Childline (1098):** A 24/7 emergency helpline for children in distress, offering care, protection, and rescue.

**2. Women Helpline (1091):** A toll-free helpline providing immediate support and assistance to women facing violence or harassment.

**3. Mithra Helpline (181):** A 24x7 support service offering counselling, rescue, and legal aid for women in crisis.

**4. Crime Stopper (1090):** An anonymous crime-reporting line to help police take preventive action.

**5. Snehitha (18004252573):** A Kudumbashree initiative that offers emergency shelter, legal aid, and psychosocial support to women.

**6. Snehitha Kudumbashree Helpdesk (0471 2430661):** A central helpdesk that coordinates services for women in distress across Kerala.

**7. DISHA Health Helpline (1056):** A 24/7 free tele-helpline under NHM and Bhoomika, DISHA offers counselling and medical guidance through psychiatrists, psychologists, and trained professionals. Accessible via toll-free number 1056 (BSNL).

**8. Nirbhaya Police Helpline (0471 3243000/4000/5000):** A dedicated helpline under the Nirbhaya initiative for immediate police support to women and children.

**9. Railway Alert (9846200100):** A helpline for reporting safety concerns and emergencies on trains and railway premises.

**10. Pink Patrol (1515):** A women-led police squad helpline ensuring safety in public spaces and responding to harassment complaints.

**11. Cyber Crime Cell (0471-2300042):** A helpline for reporting cyber crimes, including online abuse, fraud, and digital harassment.

**12. Emergency Response System (112):**
A national integrated emergency number for police, fire, and ambulance assistance.

## 2.10 Judicial Support

### Fast Track Courts

Under the POCSO Act, 2012, Special Courts have been established in 14 districts of the state to ensure the speedy trial of offences. The Act mandates that the child's evidence be recorded within 30 days of the Special Court taking cognisance of the offence, and the trial be completed, as far as possible, within one year. In appropriate cases, the special court may also direct the payment of victim or interim compensation to the child for physical or mental trauma or for immediate rehabilitation. Where the child has a mental or physical disability, the court may seek the assistance of a special educator or a person experienced in the relevant field.

To further expedite proceedings, the State Government has established Fast Track Special Courts for exclusive handling of POCSO cases. There are 56 FTSCs, including 14 POCSO Courts (Lok Sabha Unstarred Question 2024). Each Special and Fast Track Court is assigned a Special Public Prosecutor under Section 32(1) of the Act, responsible solely for prosecuting POCSO cases. The Public Prosecutor is mandated to represent public interest, rather than pursue conviction at all costs.

### Legal Aid Services

**Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KeLSA)**

The Kerala State Legal Services Authority ensures free legal aid clinics in police stations, hospitals and OSCs to provide assistance to survivors, while also organising special Lok Adalats for women to resolve cases of domestic violence, maintenance, and family disputes speedily. KeLSA also offers counselling, mediation, and awareness programmes, along with capacity building initiatives for paralegal volunteers and communities.

The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), working under the supervision of KeLSA, primarily aims to resolve issues without court involvement, but also allocates panel advocates for pro-bono legal assistance and court interventions in serious cases. DLSAs remain active in awareness raising initiatives. Sessions are conducted across schools, colleges, and panchayats. DLSAs also conduct sessions focusing on the POSCO Act and Juvenile Justice Act for school students. Paralegal Volunteers (PLVs) conduct fieldwork at the Taluk Legal Services Authority (TLSA) and receive induction and annual training, while panel lawyers receive biannual, often gender-oriented, training at the judicial academy.

Victim Compensation Scheme by Legal Services Authority aims to provide financial compensation and rehabilitation support to victims of violence (including women and girls) who have suffered injury or loss due to a crime, particularly in cases of rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, acid attacks, and other forms of violence against women. Victims of crime (including rape, acid attack, domestic violence, and sexual assault), their dependents (wife, husband, parents, unmarried daughters, and minor children), and victims where the offender is unidentified or untraced are eligible. Female victims and children are eligible regardless of income. Victims must not be responsible for the crime or injury. Maximum compensation varies based on the type of injury or crime (e.g., ₹3,00,000 for rape, ₹50,000 for sexual assault, ₹3,00,000 for acid attack resulting in over 40 percent disfigurement).

**Kerala Victim Compensation Scheme (2014)**

Victim Compensation Scheme by Legal Services Authority. This scheme aims to provide financial compensation and rehabilitation support to victims of violence (including women and girls) who have suffered injury or loss due to a crime, particularly in cases of rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, acid attacks, and other forms of violence against women. Victims of crime (including rape, acid attack, domestic violence, and sexual assault), their dependents (wife, husband, parents, unmarried daughters, and minor children), and victims where the offender is unidentified or untraced are

eligible. Female victims and children are eligible regardless of income. Victims must not be responsible for the crime or injury. Maximum compensation varies based on the type of injury or crime (e.g., ₹3,00,000 for rape, ₹50,000 for sexual assault, ₹3,00,000 for acid attack resulting in over 40 percent disfigurement).

**POCSO Legal Desks:** Launched in hospitals under the Nirbhaya Day initiative to provide immediate legal support to minor survivors.

## 2.11 Community Based Mechanisms

**Mahila Samakhya Society:** The Mahila Samakhya Programme is launched largely to implement the National Policy on Education, with a shift focus on empowering rural women, especially those from socially and economically marginalised groups. It works to strengthen solidarity among women to collectively solve their problems and to address issues through their Mahila Sanghas at the grassroots level.

**CAP:** Cultural Academy for Peace is an NGO dedicated to women and children who are survivors of crimes and abuse. The NGO undertakes initiatives that focus on promoting women's empowerment and legal rights as well. Their SAKHI Centre provides holistic support to individuals and families in vulnerable circumstances through essential psychosocial, legal, and emergency services, free of cost. In addition to telephonic counselling services, SAKHI also offers integrated services such as police coordination, mediation, and referrals. Their legal aid department offers awareness programmes on legal literacy in collaboration with stakeholders, on areas such as domestic violence, POCSO Act, POSH Act, and Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA).

The Service Providing Centres under CAP, offers legal counselling support to women survivors of domestic violence under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. The SPC also works with the police, legal counsellors, and District Protection Officers to provide safe shelter, medical care, and legal aid. In addition to direct services, the centre conducts public awareness and legal literacy sessions. The organisation also collaborates with medical professionals to disseminate awareness materials through leaflets.

## 2.12 Educational Initiatives:

- **Student Police Cadet Project:** This project involves high school students in civic responsibility, discipline, and respect for vulnerable groups, promoting early awareness of gender issues. Guidelines have been issued directing all government and government-aided colleges to establish Gender Clubs, where sensitisation efforts will be promoted among students.
- **Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) clinics and programmes:** These are hosted in schools, targeting girls and addressing topics like bodily changes and awareness.

## 2.13 Civil Society Partnerships:

**Role of NGOs:** Several NGOs, in affiliation with institutions like WCD, undertake significant work in preventing VAWG and supporting survivors. They operate Domestic Violence (DV) Centres, offering flexible services similar to OSCs and Snehitha. Many NGOs also run shelters and provide livelihood-generating training. They play a major role in monitoring and evaluating government institutions as members of interdepartmental coordination committees. Being field experts, several NGOs are professionally trained to fill institutional gaps and often provide gender sensitisation training for government officials (e.g., at the Judicial Academy) and educational institutions. However, their skills are often underutilised by the state, including in areas such as crime mapping to improve case reporting. NGOs include Anweshi (Kozhikode), Archana Women's Center (Trivandrum), Neethi Veedhi (Wayanad), and the Cultural Academy for Peace (Trivandrum).

## Insights from Workshop Discussions [1]

**Rising Cybercrime Attacks against Women**

- Five percent of women face online abuse like cyberstalking and sextortion; 1 in 10 by age 15
- Social stigma and insensitive police reactions lead to underreporting
- The IT Act, 2000, does not cover deepfakes and cyberflashing
- Shortage of gender-disaggregated data holds back policy-making
- Deepfakes and encrypted sites go undetected

**Rape Response in Medical Sector**

- Inadequate OSC training on mental health limits support for rape survivors
- Substandard infrastructure at crisis centres discourages help-seeking
- Judgmental counselling further harms survivors, especially male and marginalised victims

**Institutional Capacity Challenges (WCD, Police, Health, Legal Services, PRIs, and NGOs)**

- WCD: One WPO per district is inadequate to handle the GBV caseload
- Police: Women's complaints are often dismissed, especially when perpetrators are family-supported
- Health: OSCs remain underutilised (e.g., Ernakulam with only 2–3 residents) and staff lack training for complex cases
- Legal Services: Courts are overwhelmed (10 judges for 10 million cases); panel lawyers and PLVs receive limited training.
- PRIs: Legal aid often does not reach block and tribal areas due to logistical barriers
- NGOs: Chronic funding shortages and overlapping roles with government bodies reduce efficiency

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Weak oversight and non-functional monitoring committees erode trust
- Inefficient fund tracking enables misuse, limiting victim support
- Absence of digital records and integrated platforms leads to lost FIRs and hinders coordinated action

**Legal Bottlenecks**

- Court backlogs delay women's cases, with priority given to children and evidence-related hurdles
- Conflicting laws (e.g., DV Act vs. Mental Health Act) create confusion for NGOs
- Protection orders are issued quickly in Kerala but poorly enforced.

[1] *Workshop held on 17th and 18th June 2025 in Thiruvananthapuram.*

# 3. Analysis of Institutional Mechanisms Mechanisms

The laws, policies, and institutional mechanisms discussed above are analysed in this section using an evaluation framework that examines them from the perspective of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Coordination and Governance. The analysis is carried out through an evaluation of stakeholder interviews.

## 3.1 Prevention

A. **Existence of State Policies and Action Plans:** Kerala's Nirbhaya Policy (2012) comprehensively addresses prevention strategies. It covers aspects including, but not limited to, training and sensitisation of teachers, crime mapping in school vicinities, and identifying and counselling potential perpetrators among children and adults. While a more recent Women's Policy Draft was published by the Government of Kerala in 2024, it lacks a dedicated VAWG component. The 14th Five-Year Plan of the State lays emphasis on elements like creating a safe working environment for women, enhancing law enforcement and access to justice to better combat VAWG, and disseminating knowledge to target groups as part of prevention efforts. However, this has not been reflected in the draft policy.

B. **Engagement with Men and Boys:** Vulnerability mapping, an initiative to identify abusive tendencies in men at the local-level for early interventions within families and communities, has not been adopted as a standard practice across the state. However, localities with a strong presence of Snehitha Help Desks have witnessed regular vulnerability mapping efforts at the panchayat-level and family-level.

   VAWG-sensitisation efforts focusing on school boys is active in Thiruvanthapuram, but these efforts are not uniformly present across districts. Stakeholders noted a general lack of awareness among men that domestic violence constitutes a criminal offence. Voluntary male participation in open sessions on violence against women also remains minimal. Both at the cultural and structural levels, preventive methods focusing on men, boys, and families remain limited.

C. **Inclusion of VAWG-Sensitisation in School/College Curricula:** These sessions aim to promote favorable attitudes against injuries and violence, including VAWG, particularly targeting adolescent girls.

   Although several initiatives by DLSAs, OSC staff, and NGOs exist, they largely remain fragmented. As it stands, awareness building around VAWG has not yet been introduced as a curricular model in schools and colleges, obstructing early interventions.

D. **Community-based Awareness Programs:** At present, there are no prevention interventions emerging at the community-level. Most initiatives to date have been led by institutional or non-governmental actors.

E. **Training of Frontline Officials:** While training sessions are regularly conducted for Snehitha staff, medical officers, ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, KeLSA and DLSA officials, significant gaps remain. There are no VAWG-focused sessions integrated into the induction training of Police Sub-Inspectors. Judicial resistance to sensitisation efforts on VAWG was also noted. Post-COVID, state-sponsored training by Bhoomika Centres has stalled due to a lack of timely funding. Further, training for Protection Officers and OSC staff remains inconsistently implemented. Training efforts remain isolated, with minimal cross-departmental collaboration, contributing to systemic insensitivity that often prioritises mediation and compromise over the needs of survivors.

F. **Monitoring of High-risk Areas and Hotspots for Sexual Harassment:** The Pink Protection Project by Kerala Police focuses on monitoring high-risk areas. However, the project's scope is confined to patrolling high-risk localities between 8 AM and 8 PM. In addition, cyber patrolling by the Pink Digital Drive becomes an added layer of prevention efforts. Another notable initiative is the crime vulnerability map-

ping by Kudumbasree. Being a decentralised initiative, Kudumbasree leveraged the familiarity of neighbourhood groups ("ayalkootam") to identify the crime hotspots and potential houses or premises that are vulnerable and report them to the local self-government.

## 3.2 Protection

A. **Availability of Government Schemes and Safe Shelters:** OSCs, Bhoomika Centres, Snehitha Gender Helpdesks, and Seethalayam Units complement each other in providing protection services. Despite the presence of these centres across the state, accessibility still remains limited. For survivors hailing from peripheral areas of the districts, OSC accessibility becomes difficult as each district possesses only a single One Stop Centre. The same may be true for survivors hailing from hilly terrains due to lack of easy access to public transport.

Due to delays in fund disbursement, operations at Bhoomika Centres remain defunct, and recruitment and salary delays at OSCs have negatively affected their functioning. While Bhoomika Centres do not provide shelter facilities, medical professionals stationed there refer survivors to short-term shelters when there is a risk of revictimisation.

For survivors of abuse under the age of 12, specialised care is provided at exclusive SOS model homes. However, a shortage of shelter homes exclusively for mentally disabled survivors requiring dedicated attention was noted. At present, unrestricted long-term shelter stays are available only at Mahila Mandirams. However, Idukki district lacks a Mahila Mandiram shelter, placing survivors in need of long-term accommodation at a disadvantage, as they may be forced to travel to other districts to access such facilities. The sanctioned capacity for Shakti Sadans in the state is 200 residents, however, resource constraints limit intake to a mere 25 individuals at a given time. This indicates that while shelter facilities are many, gaps remain in focused care and capacity utilisation.

B. **Accessibility of Services in Rural and Tribal Areas:** In hilly districts like Idukki, accessibility poses a challenge. Most OSCs, and shelters are located in urban or suburban localities, with limited penetration into rural and tribal regions. Logistical constraints hinder accessibility for survivors hailing from these regions. Mobile outreach and decentralised service models are also absent, further curbing accessibility. It is to be noted that DLSAs appoint Paralegal Volunteers from tribal areas to strengthen accessibility of legal services in these regions.

C. **Case Management and Follow-Up:** Institutions such as OSCs and Bhoomika Centres, currently lack a structured case management system. Follow-ups are informally carried out by OSC staff, legal officers, ASHAs, or Anganwadi workers. The lack of digital integration or standardised protocols result in inconsistent follow-ups, thereby weakening institutional accountability.

D. **Responsiveness of Institutions (Police and Protection Officers):** Stakeholders noted the insensitive attitude of police personnel when responding to VAWG cases. The reports also indicate that women approaching with complaints of domestic violence are often dismissed by the law enforcement. NGOs are often compelled to intervene and threaten legal action in order to prompt appropriate responses from both the police and the perpetrators. Violations of Protection Orders are also frequently overlooked by the department. Further, the approach taken by the law enforcement tends to prioritise mediation over legal recourse, increasing the risk of further violations against the survivor.

Three Regional Dowry Prohibition Officers (RDPOs) are posted with independent charge across the state, overseen by a Chief Dowry Prohibition Officer under the Social Justice Department.. Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) were also reconstituted in every district after a temporary lapse in its operational status, in accordance with PoSH guidelines.

E. **Survivor-Centric SOPs:** The Kerala Medico-Legal Protocol of 2019 lays down several survivor-centric practices. These include obtaining informed consent before medical examination, giving them the right to refuse any part of the procedure, and trauma counselling. It also mandates child-friendly procedures, such as allowing the presence of a trusted adult during medical examination. The guidelines laid out are comprehensively survivor-centric, balancing medico-legal requirements with sensitivity to the survivor's physical and emotional wellbeing.

   Beyond the medico-legal protocol, survivor-centric SOPs are not formally mandated, resulting in inconsistent practices across institutions. Stakeholders highlight that one WPO per district remains inadequate to handle the growing number of cases. Institutional apathy, however, still remains a concern at the law enforcement level. Further, periodic VAWG-sensitisation training is not carried out for the staff at Bhoomika Centres, impacting the quality of support extended to survivors. Certain OSCs were also observed to prioritise mediation between the survivor and perpetrator, particularly in cases of domestic violence, without accounting for the trauma experienced by the survivor.

F. **Availability of Health Support to Survivors:** OSCs are located close to government hospitals for easy access to health support. While the OSCs adhere to most parts of the guidelines, gaps remain in the provision for an in-house paramedical person and access to a vehicle or ambulance. As a result, there is no provision to avail emergency medical assistance at the centres. Ride-hailing to the nearest medical facility also poses difficulty, particularly at odd hours of the day.

   Medical kits were specially developed for the medical examination of assault survivors under the Medico-Legal Protocol of 2019. Following the conversion of Bhoomika Centres into One Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs), interdepartmental coordination and service delivery have weakened. Further, delays in fund disbursement by the State and Central Governments have adversely affected the operational capacity of these centres.

G. **Legal Aid Support:** Most OSCs are linked with the local DLSA to ease access to legal aid. However, affected individuals are currently required to approach the respective DLSA directly, which often leads to delays in accessing legal aid, as many are reluctant or unable to approach a district-level office. Legal counsellors regularly visit OSCs, and counsellors at OSCs and Bhoomika Centres also assist with FIR-filing and court follow-up. However, the appointed lawyers are poorly compensated, thereby limiting the consistency and quality of legal assistance.

H. **Data Protection and Confidentiality Measures:** OSCs and Bhoomika Centres maintain strict data confidentiality. Once the case details have been recorded, an identification number is issued and used as the sole case reference for accessing subsequent services at Bhoomika Centres. Police reporting is not mandatory, which helps ensure confidentiality and encourages survivors to seek medical treatment without fear of exposure.

## 3.3 Prosecution

A. **Special Fast Track Courts (FTSCs):** Forty one fast track special courts and 14 POCSO exclusive courts are operational across the state. According to the Department of Justice, GoI, FTSCs in the state have a cumulative disposal of 26,202 cases with 6,292 cases pending. As per the NCRB Report of 2022, pendency rate in Kerala was 18.4 percent despite the presence of 55 specialised courts dealing with VAWG cases.

B. **Functioning of Public Prosecutors for VAWG:** A dedicated cohort of prosecutors specialising in VAWG remains absent. Further, inadequate compensation serves as a disincentive for sustained engagement by prosecutors.

C. **FIR Registration and Rate of Charge-Sheeting:** While assistance for FIR-filing and navigating the legal system are comprehensively provided by institutions such as OSCs, Bhoomika Centres, and Snehitha Centres, the lack of awareness, social stigma, and institutional apathy remain as barriers to FIR registration.

In 2022, the charge-sheeting rate in the state for crimes against women was at 94.5 percent. However, there is no digital mechanism in place to track cases once it enters the system, leading to gaps in institutional accountability and follow-up.

D. **Use of Victim-Friendly Procedures:** Mechanisms to ease court proceedings, such as video conferencing, shielding during testimony, and child-friendly rooms, remain unimplemented in the state. The lack of sensitivity in the judiciary's handling of cases involving VAWG survivors was noted by stakeholders. As a result, survivors often opt for out-of-court settlements, contributing to low conviction rates. Cases are also not resolved within the stipulated time, leading to repeated court visits for women, causing emotional and financial strain.

Additionally, VAWG-sensitisation training for panel lawyers, which is to be conducted every six months, is currently on hold. Beyond this, there are no ongoing sensitisation efforts targeted at the judiciary. Systemic apathy weakens public trust in the legal process and undermines the quality of survivor engagement.

## 3.4 Rehabilitation

A. **Access to Trauma Counselling and Mental Health Services:** Psycho-social counselling is consistently available across OSCs and Seethalayams in the state. For complicated VAWG cases, survivors are referred to the psychiatric department in the associated government hospital. However, long-term mental health support is absent, weakening survivor recovery.

B. **Access to Emergency Medical Services:** A medical Safe Kit for examinations was developed in association with CEHAT, and disbursed to hospitals upon the consultation of the District Medical Officer. This exhibits institutional compliance to the medico-legal protocol developed by the government. The Disha 1056 Helpline is also available 24x7 to provide prompt service in cases ofVAWG.

C. **Livelihood Support, Skill-Development and Support for Dependents:** Snehitha provides livelihood support and skill-development at the district level, with programmes tailored to the specific cultural and demographic needs of each district. Context-specific interventions like these help enhance service delivery and are more effective.

There are no state-launched mechanisms that offer educational, financial, or psychological support to the children of survivors at present. Such limitations in institutional rehabilitation places additional financial burdens on recovering survivors and their families.

D. **Compensation Schemes for Survivors:** Survivors can avail compensation from the government under the Central Victim Compensation Scheme. However, the restrictive eligibility criteria of the scheme and bureaucratic delays obstructs access to financial support. In contrast, the Ashwasanidhi Compensation Scheme by the state comprehensively covers survivors of various kinds of VAWG including POCSO victims, loss of foetus or fertility as a result of assault, human trafficking victims etc.

E. **Role of NGOs and Civil Society:** A key observation is the absence of NGO collaboration in the operation and outreach activities of the OSCs in the state. Though the centres work closely with local NGOs for the extended accommodation of survivors, their services are not utilised to conduct survivor-centric and trauma-informed training for the OSC staff. However, Women's Police Desks across police stations are staffed with NGO staff, highlighting institutional emphasis on sensitive handling of reports.

NGOs undertake significant initiatives towards post-institutional support such as livelihood-generation training and extended shelter services. They operate Domestic Violence (DV) Centres, offering flexible services similar to OSCs and Snehitha. Where the reach of OSCs and Bhoomika Centres is low, Snehitha Centres step in to fill the gap, particularly in skill development and shelter facilities. Similarly, ASHAs and Anganwadi workers often play a key role, particularly in providing long-term rehabilitation support networks. In this manner, they effectively complement institutional mechanisms.

They play a major role in monitoring and evaluating government institutions as members of interdepartmental coordination committees. Being field experts, several NGOs are trained to provide gender sensitisation training for government officials (e.g., at the Judicial Academy) and educational institutions. However, their skills are often underutilised by the state, including for vulnerability and crime mapping to strengthen early intervention and improve case reportage.

## 3.5 Reintegration

A. **Support for Re-enrolment in Education:** Beyond the efforts by Snehitha to conduct Malala Day programmes in collaboration with universities, there is a lack of structured institutional mechanisms addressing re-enrollment into education.

B. **Workplace Reintegration Policies and Anti-discrimination Protections:** There are no established systems in place to uphold workplace reintegration or anti-discrimination measures targeting survivor recovery. This leaves survivors vulnerable to exclusion, hindering recovery and economic rehabilitation efforts.

C. **Support Against Stigma from Families and Communities:** Challenges stemming from socio-cultural stigma is informally addressed by NGOs, shelter staff, ASHAs, and Anganwadi workers. Community-level reintegration efforts also remain fragmented and inadequately resourced.

D. **Monitoring Post-Institutional Outcomes:** Given their decentralised presence and close engagement with grassroots communities, ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and Snehitha Centres are best equipped to carry out sustained follow-up. However, outcomes are only monitored informally.

E. **Involvement of Local Leaders and PRIs:** Jagrita Samhitis, the mandated vigilance committees at the Panchayat level, are intended to address VAWG issues. However, their implementation is inconsistent, meetings are infrequent, and their role is limited to mediation. Funding remains an issue for the effective functioning of Jagriti Samhitis. As a result, their effectiveness in a reintegration capacity remains low. Some schools also host similar committees, known as School Protection Committees, with ward counsellors as members. The impact of their work is similarly limited.

## 3.6 Coordination and Governance

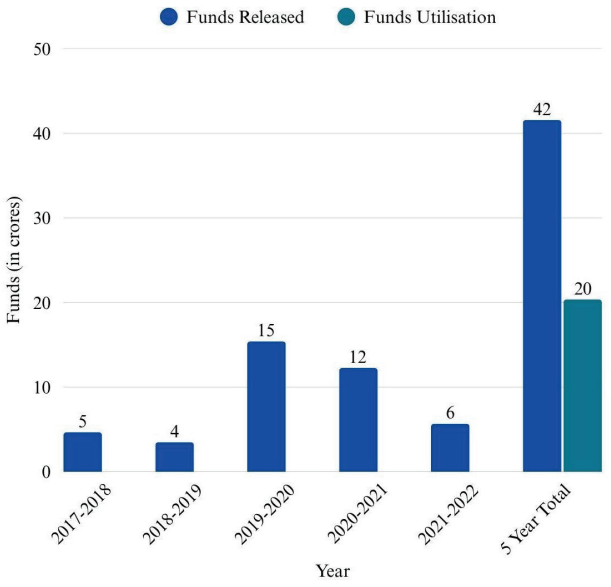
A. **Coordination Between VAWG-Service Departments:** Snehitha Gender Help Desk operates on the principle of convergence, maintaining a close interface and collaboration with various government and non-governmental organisations. Bhoomika Centres highlighted the limited support they received from the police department for training initiatives. Delays in coordinated response were also raised as an obstruction to effective operations. Social audits and convergence meetings remain weakly enforced by OSCs. DLSA, too, has several convergence issues with other government departments. Across institutions, irregular interdepartmental meetings are a major impediment, leading to weak communication, lack of awareness about case proceedings, and overlapping efforts. The absence of collaborative training further contributes to

information and communication gaps, a lack of trust, and ineffective interdepartmental coordination.

B. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Reporting mechanisms are promptly followed by the OSCs with monthly, quarterly, and annual reports being submitted to the Nirbhaya Cell and the Women Protection Office (WPO) under WCD. Beyond this, there are no effective mechanisms to monitor the other systems in place in each district. Institutions also fail to define specific indicators for their objectives, making it difficult to assess their current standing, develop appropriate inputs and activities, and measure outcomes or long-term impact.

C. **Budgetary Allocations and Utilisation:** The graph below indicates funds released and utilised for the projects and schemes under Nirbhaya Fund between 2017 and 2022. Out of the total allocated funds to the state of Kerala, a mere 49 percent have been utilised towards the respective projects and schemes (Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022).

**Figure 2: Funds Released and Utilised by Kerala Government**




*Source:* Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022

**Table 1: Year-wise Fund Allocation and Utilisation for One Stop Centres (in Lakhs)**

| Year | Funds Allocated (in Lakhs) | Fund Utilised (in Lakhs) |
|---|---|---|
| 2016-17 | 113.66 | 34.87 |
| 2017-18 | 11.8 | 0 |
| 2018-19 | 282.32 | 48.38 |
| 2019-20 | 140.9 | 95 |
| 2020-21 | 243.06 | 68 |
| 2021-22 | 234.41 | 94 |
| 2022-23 | 139.28 | 82 |
| 2023-24 | 0 | NA |

*Source:* The data presented in the table is drawn from Press Information Bureau (PIB) reports and Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India sources.

The analysis of OSC Fund allocation and utilisation between 2016-17 and 2023-24 in Kerala shows a recurring pattern of underutilisation. In the initial years, while ₹113.66 lakhs were allocated in 2016-17, only around 30 percent was utilised. The following year 2017-18, witnessed a drastic fall in allocation to just ₹11.8 lakhs with no utilisation at all, pointing towards administrative bottlenecks and weak fund absorption capacity.

From 2018-19 onwards, allocations stabilised, with ₹234.41 lakhs in 2021–22 and ₹139.28 lakhs in 2022–23. Utilisation has also shown slight improvement compared to earlier years, with 40 percent and 59 percent spent respectively. In 2023-24, no fresh allocations were released. Overall, the data highlights a persistent mismatch between the allocated fund and actual spending.

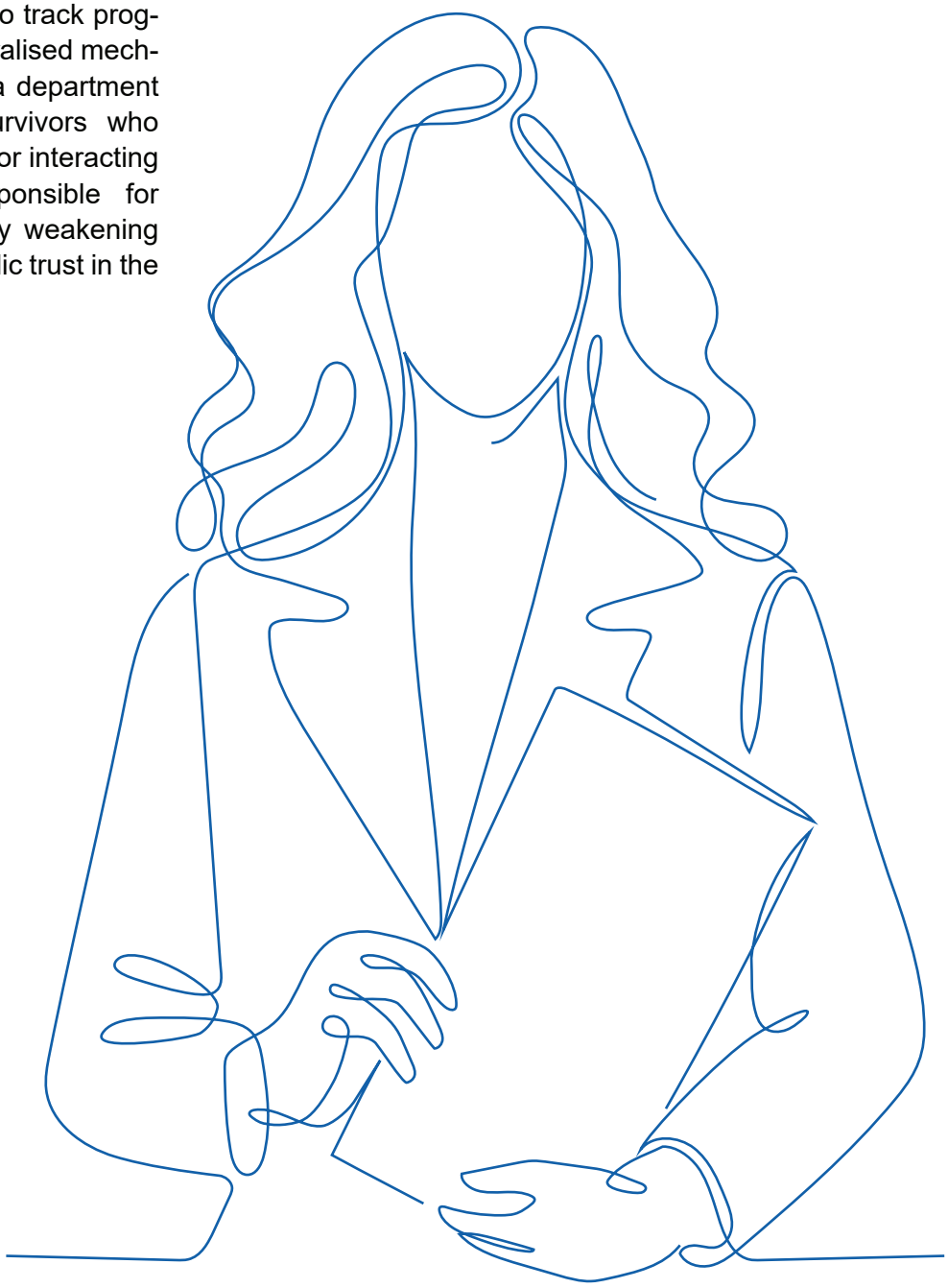
D. **Role Clarity and Accountability:** OSCs are primarily understood as counselling or mediation centres. There is a lack of clarity about the range of services it offers. Overlap of services exist between OSCs, Bhoomika Centres, Snehitha Desks, and Seethalayams. However, survivors often find it easier to approach

Bhoomika Centres located in hospitals or Snehitha Helpdesks, primarily due to the limited awareness of OSCs. Hospitals are also perceived as more accessible entry points for medical assistance, from which survivors can be redirected to legal support, rather than approaching police stations or lawyers. Further, institutional accountability structures either remain absent or weakly enforced.

E. **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** For grievances related to Aswasanidhi, telephonic lines are open to directly contact the State Coordinator of the Nirbhaya Cell or the Director of the Women and Child Development Department. However, there is no mechanism to track progress. Beyond this, there is no centralised mechanism in place to address when a department underperforms or to support survivors who encounter difficulties in accessing or interacting with government agencies responsible for providing VAWG services, thereby weakening institutional accountability and public trust in the system.

F. **Adoption of Tech Platforms:** The state has yet to adopt tech platforms to facilitate inter-departmental coordination, enable grievance redressal, track case progress, or provide integrated service delivery for survivors.

G. **Inclusion of Survivors in Policy Consultation Processes:** Survivors are absent from policy design and feedback processes, reducing the effectiveness of reintegration efforts. At present, there is no standardised mechanism for survivor inclusion in policy consultations.



# 4. Policy Recommendations

The recommendations are approached through a targeted, timeline-based approach for better implementation and transitions based on changing social attitudes.

## Short-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Revamping Jagratha Samitis at LSGs:** Jagrata Samitis must be revamped by integrating the following into the structure and functioning of the present system:<br>1. Every local body must dedicate a fund for VAWG prevention and protection activities.<br>2. Every Samiti member must undergo the training through an online module and a specialised offline module focusing on Samiti functioning.<br>3. Cyber experts and gender specialists must be part of the Samiti.<br>4. Samiti must maintain an online record of the number of prevention and protection activities done in a month.<br>5. Samiti must have participatory forums where CSOs, educational institutions, faith-based organisations and survivors can meet and discuss the contextual issues relating to VAWG systems and processes for better streamlining of the initiatives. | Jagrata Samitis, as grassroots-level institutions, can resolve the accessibility issues and act as a referral body for coordinating the activities across different departments at that level.<br><br>Mapping of crime hotspots and vulnerable sections can be easily done by the Samitis, in collaboration with CSOs and faith-based organisations.<br><br>Reports of Samitis can act as a source for district and state level policy revisions from time to time. |
| **Reviving Bhoomika Centres:** Being a successful hospital-based model, these centres must be revived with a dedicated budget under the Department of Health and must work in collaboration with the Women Protection Officers and DLSA. The revived Bhoomika can be located at Taluk Hospitals than district-level hospitals as OSCs are currently present in the district headquarters. | Studies by CEHAT have clearly pointed out the positive impact of having survivor support centres integrated into hospitals, as women feel safer to attain help in healthcare settings compared to convincing their families to approach the police. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Regular training of Frontline Workers:** A dedicated, interdisciplinary module, including gender sensitisation, information about various programmes by different institutions, psychological and medical support, trauma-informed care strategies, and follow-up and monitoring must be developed as an online module. | As of now, the training is being conducted for OSC, Bhoomika staff, and others. But these are standalone and restricted in its content. Job training is different from training the VAWG workforce on general topics. |
| The following modules must be developed:<br>1. Gender Norms and Sensitisation<br>2. Trauma-Informed Care and Counselling<br>3. Legal Module<br>4. Police Module<br>5. Rehabilitation Module<br>6. Reintegration module<br>7. Monitoring and Evaluation Module<br>8. Feedback and Follow-up Module<br>9. Cyber Module<br>10. Self care Module<br><br>The online module must be completed within the first three months of the job.<br><br>Each department can develop specialised modules tailored to its specific functions.<br><br>These modules must be made mandatory for every official under WCD, KSDWC, Police, Judiciary, and KeLSA and must be linked to their performance appraisal through mandatory assessment tests. | A standardised online training that is applicable to all officials and staff working for VAWG helps in ensuring a bare minimum training. These can help in improving the responsiveness of the frontline workers towards the survivors. |
| **Reintegration of Survivors - Plan and Implementation:** Reintegration of survivors need a multifaceted approach, including psychological, social, and financial support. | The reintegration perspective is often missing in the schemes and programmes. Considering the social stigma, lack of financial support, and the long-affected trauma surrounding the survivors, reintegration has to be an inevitable part of the survivor support programmes. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Some of the initiatives that could be made into the policies are:<br>1. Formation of survivor support groups at local level<br>2. Skilling survivors and recruiting them as OSC and other survivor staff.<br>3. Supporting POSH survivors for obtaining jobs.<br>4. Integrate shelter home skilling initiatives to job fairs and employment portals to attain relevant jobs (Spotlight Initiative, 2025). | |

## Medium-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Revise the State Nirbhaya Policy (2012) and bring a new policy, specifically addressing VAWG in the state:**<br>The State Nirbhaya Policy is outdated and needs a revision based on the needs of the hour. Through a multi-stakeholder consultation, the policy must have focused on better interdepartmental collaboration with enhanced roles for CBOs, NGOs, and survivors. | The current policy is 13 years old, and many of the institutional mechanisms that were formulated under the policy are facing challenges in its implementation like the Jagrata Samitis. |
| **Constitution of State Women Safety Board:** At the state level, a board dedicated for interdepartmental coordination and collaboration must be constituted with the following functions and responsibilities:<br>1. Coordinating state-level prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration strategies for combating VAWG across various departments. | Interdepartmental coordination is a weak link in the current institutional framework. To strengthen the same, a nodal agency has to be constituted. None of the existing mechanisms are representative of all the relevant departments that are currently working towards combating VAWG. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2. Planning budgets for developing and revising common training modules for VAWG workforce across institutions.<br><br>3. Gender-specific research grants disbursal for state-specific studies on various programmes.<br><br>4. Resolving duplication of resources and streamlining referral networks.<br><br>5. Revision of state-level policies from time to time.<br><br>The members must be representative of all relevant stakeholders including cyber experts, gender specialists, and survivors.<br><br>This model must be decentralised at district and block level. | |
| **State-level VAWG Dashboard for Better Data Management :**<br><br>A state-level VAWG dashboard must be created that could be accessed by officials of OSCs, Women Protection Officers, Dowry Prohibition Officers, police, prosecutors, DLSA and survivors for real-time data of a case.<br><br>The common dashboard will give comprehensive data on the stage at which cases are resolved, the status of the case, key facts, and the support provided to survivors.<br><br>This common dashboard enables survivors to track their cases, rather than approaching multiple institutions.<br><br>Sensitive data that helps in identifying the survivors must be kept confidential.<br><br>The evidence collected digitally can also be part of the integrated data system with digital locker | Current dashboards are centralised and provide data on Mission Shakti schemes. A decentralised state-level VAWG dashboard can integrate state-level interventions as well and gives data for contextual study of the cases. |

## Long Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Prepare a preventive VAWG Strategy:** WCD, being the nodal agency, must have clear budgets outlined for every quarter to conduct awareness campaigns and sessions through State Women Commission, Kudumbasree, KSWDC, and selected CSOs.<br><br>WCD could bring police, judicial members, and lawyers for the sessions, thus making the module more comprehensive.<br><br>The WCD also must have a monitoring mechanism with quantitative and qualitative outputs of each year's awareness activities.<br><br>An assessment study must also be in the strategic planning to understand the impact of the awareness campaigns by engaging academic institutions. | The current awareness campaign lacks a targeted approach and consistency. Different departments work in silos, resulting in fragmented information reaching the masses. There needs to be a coordinated effort to streamline the awareness-based activities against VAWG by nominating WCD as nodal agency for the same. |

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State Report

# RAJASTHAN 05

# 1. State Profile and Context

## 1.1 Demographic Overview

Rajasthan has a total population of 6.85 crore, of which 3.29 crore are women. According to the 2011 Census, Rajasthan's average sex ratio stands at 928 females per 1,000 males, which is below the national average of 943. However, the state's child sex ratio (0–6 years) is 888, which is also lower than the national average of 918. The literacy rate in Rajasthan stood at 66.11 percent, with significant gender disparity, 79.19 percent for males and 52.12 percent for females. In rural areas, male literacy was 76.16 percent, while female literacy lagged at 45.8 percent. The gender disparity in literacy rates is relatively lower in urban areas, with male literacy at 87.91 percent and female literacy at 70.73 percent (Census 2011) .

Despite poor literacy rates, the female labour force participation rate in Rajasthan shows a steady increase in the last decade, reaching 47.9 percent in 2022-23 (PLFS Data 2022-23). The historical and structural challenges such as feudal legacy, difficult geography, and low literacy rates have posed significant challenges to the state's women empowerment. Despite these factors, women-centric development is progressing through strengthening of women political participation, integrating grassroots NGO efforts with state programs, and implementing innovative strategies to address violence against women and girls (VAWG).

As part of the Women Development Programme of Rajasthan, started in 1984 to empower rural women through collective action, the Saathin initiative was launched. Saathin are community-based women volunteers who serve as information providers and facilitators for women's issues. The landmark Vishaka judgment[1], delivered by the Indian Supreme Court on a PIL filed by Vishaka NGO based in Rajasthan, formulated guidelines to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace. This judgement is a result of the Bhanwari Devi rape case[2]. Bhanwari Devi was a saathin engaged in fighting child marriage practices, who was brutally raped by high caste groups during her work (Smt. Bhanwari Devi v. State of Rajasthan, 1996).

Building on this context, the state government launched a series of targeted initiatives that strengthen resilience against VAWG. Economic support measures such as low-interest loans of up to ₹1 lakh, skill development training, and monthly loan camps are intended to reduce women's economic dependence, which is a key driver of vulnerability to violence. Backed by an initial release of ₹150 crore in December 2023 and a ₹1000crore Women Empowerment SHG Mission, these interventions, along with the Namo Drone Didi initiative (PIB 2025), expand women's presence in emerging sectors, helping to build autonomy and bargaining power.

Given Rajasthan's sex ratio of 928 females per 1,000 males and child sex ratio of 888, both below the national averages (943 and 919, respectively), the Rajasthan government launched the Laado Protsahan Yojana in August 2024. The scheme encourages the birth of girl children in economically disadvantaged families and promotes their holistic development. By providing financial support in instalments to parents or guardians of girls born in government or authorised medical institutions, the scheme seeks to address gender discrimination, improve the child sex ratio, ensure school enrollment and retention, promote higher education, and reduce child marriage. Complementing this, the Chief Minister Ekal Nari Samman Pension Yojana extends regular financial support to divorced, widowed, or abandoned women, enabling them to meet household expenses.

These schemes align with the vision of the Rajasthan State Policy for Empowerment of Women (2015, updated 2021), which seeks to advance women's health, education, economic participation, and political engagement, while also safeguarding them against violence and discrimination. The policy emphasises the convergence of government schemes and effective monitoring by the

[1] *Vishaka & Ors vs State Of Rajasthan, (1997) 6 SCC 241*

[2] *Smt. Bhanwari Devi v. State of Rajasthan, (1996) Cri LJ 367 (Rajasthan High Court)*

Rajasthan State Commission for Women (RSCW), which works with government departments, NGOs, and community groups to promote holistic empowerment (Times of India, 2021; Rajras, 2021)

## 1.2 Prevalence of Violence Against Women

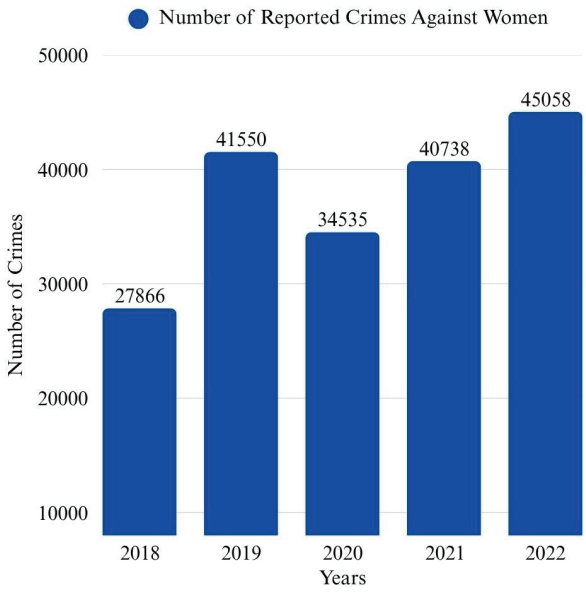
Even with a higher labour force participation, violence against women and girls is a reality in Rajasthan, with 24 percent of ever-married women being affected by physical or sexual abuse. Only 13 percent of women affected by violence have shown help-seeking behaviour and among them, only 14 percent sought support from police, while the rest relied on family support.

The National Crime Records Bureau's Crime in India Report of 2022 revealed that Rajasthan reported 45,058 cases of violence against women in 2022 alone. Chargesheeting rate for the period was a mere 54 percent. The highest number of cases originated from Jaipur (4,642), followed by Ajmer (2,482), and Udaipur (2,244). Common crimes include:

- Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives (18,847 cases)
- Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty (8,508 cases)
- Rape (5,399 cases) and,
- Female Foeticide

The graph below shows the reported Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws (SLL) crimes against women in the state of Rajasthan between 2018 and 2022. The increasing trend in reportage during the period may be understood as an indicator of increased accessibility and reliance on institutional support. NCRB reports also reveal that the state's case pendency rate saw a significant reduction from 87.8 percent in 2018 to 7.9 percent in 2022.

**Figure 1: Number of Reported Crimes Against Women in Rajasthan**




*Source:*
(The data presented in the graph is compiled from National Crime Records Bureau reports)

The National Family Health Survey Report of 2015-16 reveals that 26 percent of ever-married women in Rajasthan experienced spousal violence that is emotional, physical, or sexual in nature. In this period, 23.1 percent of women were subject to domestic violence, which included but was not limited to the violence perpetrated by spouses. This refers to acts of physical violence, sexual violence, or both. The 2019-21 Report by NFHS noted that spousal violence remained at 26 percent during the period, while domestic violence increased to 25.5 percent.

Between 2015 and 2016, a mere 8.8 percent of VAWG survivors across the country sought help from medical professionals, police personnel, lawyers, social service organisations, or other non-familial entities. An increase in help-seeking tendencies was noted between 2019 and 2021, with 15.4 percent of VAWG survivors seeking assistance. According to the NFHS 5 report, in Rajasthan, 23 percent of women aged between 18 and 49 have experienced physical violence, and five percent have ever experienced sexual violence. Overall, 24 percent women have experi-

enced sexual or physical violence, and four percent have experienced both. Nine percent of ever-married women have experienced any form of emotional violence committed by their husband. Further, two percent of women aged between 18-49 who have ever been pregnant have experienced physical violence during their pregnancy.

Five percent of married women aged between 18 and 49 reported that their husbands have physically forced them to have sex, and two percent reported that their husband forced them with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts they did not want to engage in. Among women aged 18–19 who have experienced physical or sexual violence, only 13 percent sought any form of help, while 9 percent did not seek it but disclosed their experiences to someone. A large majority, around 78 percent, neither sought help nor shared their experiences. Among the women who sought help, the main sources of help were their own family (66 percent), their husband's family (26 percent), or a friend (21 percent). Formal avenues of support were rarely used, with only 14 percent approaching the police.

# 2. Institutional Mechanisms

The institutional mechanisms developed under the central laws and state laws constitute the core framework in the combating of VAWG in Rajasthan. The Department of WCD plays a crucial central role in the implementation of many of the central schemes and programmes along with the police, who are responsible for enforcement and prosecution of the crimes under BNS and BNSS. Apart from WCD and the police, the Department of Health and Judiciary also plays a crucial role in combating VAWG. In Rajasthan, there are multiple initiatives involving PRI institutions as well. The section provides a comprehensive overview of the existing institutional mechanisms under key departments that are responsible for prevention, protection, prosecution, rehabilitation, reintegration, and coordination and governance for combating VAWG in Rajasthan.

## 2.1 Role of the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD)

Department of Women and Child Development (WCD), Rajasthan, is a principal state government department committed to the empowerment, development, and welfare of women and children. It has an array of innovative schemes aimed at health, education, economic empowerment, and safeguarding from social maladies.

**One Stop Centres (Sakhi Centres):** Rajasthan's 48 One Stop Centres under the WCD support women facing violence, offering integrated legal, medical, psychosocial, and shelter services. In 2023, the OSC resolved 10,000 cases, of which 4,000 were domestic violence cases; 2,500 sexual assault; and 1500 child marriages, with urban areas reporting 90 percent compliance but rural areas trailing behind at 60 percent (Government of Rajasthan, Jalkalyan).

**Swadhar Greh (Mahila Mandiram):** The Swadhar Greh Scheme, implemented by the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD) in Rajasthan under the Ministry of Women and Child Development's Mission Shakti, has merged with the Ujjawala Home Scheme to form Shakti Sadan, an Integrated Relief and Rehabilitation Home for women in distress. Aimed at supporting socially and economically vulnerable women, including those affected by family discord, violence, trafficking, prostitution, social ostracism, or disasters, it provides shelter, food, clothing, medical care, counseling, legal aid, and vocational training to facilitate emotional and economic rehabilitation. The scheme targets women who are homeless, abandoned, victims of domestic violence, trafficking survivors, HIV-positive, or ex-inmates without support, along with their children (girls up to 18 years old and boys up to 12 years old) (Revival Foundation). Operating across multiple cities with a capacity of 30 women, Swadhar Greh Centres are currently located in Jaipur, Udaipur, Kota, Baran, Dungarpur, Bundi, Bhilwara, and Jhunjhunu (PIB).

**Sakhi Niwas:** Sakhi Niwas is a working women's hostel established to provide secure and affordable accommodation for employed women, as well as those pursuing higher education or vocational train-

ing, with a particular focus on urban and semi-urban areas. Administered under the Ministry of Women and Child Development and implemented by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of Rajasthan, the scheme offers safe residential facilities alongside ancillary services such as daycare for the children of residents, as well as periodic skill development and vocational training programmes. The target beneficiaries include working women, trainees, and their children up to a specified age. Distinct from the Swadhar Greh Scheme, Sakhi Niwas prioritises economic empowerment through the provision of stable and secure housing. The initiative is consistent with the national policy objective of promoting women-led development and receives Central Government support to expand hostel infrastructure across the state. As of 2023, there are 15 operational Sakhi Niwas in Rajasthan.

**Mukhyamantri Rajshree Yojana:** The Mukhyamantri Rajshree Yojana, launched by the Government of Rajasthan, represents a targeted policy intervention aimed at promoting gender equity through financial incentives that support the birth, survival, education, and empowerment of girl children. Introduced statewide from August 1, 2024, and expanded in scope and funding in March 2025, the scheme seeks to address entrenched socio-cultural biases against female children and to discourage practices such as female infanticide and child marriage.

The scheme is guided by the following policy objectives:

- To encourage the institutional birth of girl children and reduce gender-based birth disparities.
- To improve the health and educational outcomes of girls from birth through higher education.
- To elevate the social status of girls and support long-term gender parity.
- To mitigate regressive social practices by creating economic incentives for the survival and education of girl children.

Under the revised 2025 structure, the Mukhyamantri Rajshree Yojana provides cumulative financial assistance of ₹1.5 lakh per eligible girl child, disbursed through seven conditional cash transfers tied to age, immunisation status, and educational progression.

**Dowry Prohibition Officers:** Instituted under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, the rules prescribe the procedure for eliminating dowry practices in Rajasthan. Dowry Prohibition Officers (DPOs) carry out work in districts, hearing complaints instituted by aggrieved women, their representatives, or recognised welfare institutions. Public awareness is raised by DPOs through the implementation of surprise raids, camps, and the media, as well as the registration of complaints and marriage gifts in accordance with the 1985 Rules. DPOs are responsible for carrying out preventive and curative measures independently, referring prosecutions only when they are absolutely necessary, and concluding enquiries within one month. The State Chief Dowry Prohibition Officer is responsible for the coordination of statewide activities, the submission of annual reports, and the promotion of initiatives such as Dowry Prohibition Day. The parties are required to provide lists of the gifts they received at the wedding within a month. Recognised welfare organisations with a minimum of three years' experience in social welfare can apply for five-year recognition, which can be renewed on satisfactory performance. The DPOs have the police powers of investigation, except for warrantless arrest, and can carry out searches with the sanction of the District Magistrate. In spite of such measures, the 1986 Rules, as quoted by state practices, reflect continuing issues with the reporting of 55 percent of rural dowry cases due to cultural tolerance and social stigma.[3]

**Women Protection Officers:** The State Government of Rajasthan has made provisions for the appointment of Protection Officers under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. As per recent data from the WCD listing, there are 548 Protection Officers currently appointed across 33 districts in the state. These officers are tasked with the following responsibilities: coor-

[3] *Rajasthan Dowry Prohibition Rules, 2004. (2004, July 17). Notification No. F22(1) Home-9/97, G.S.R. 21, Rajasthan Gazette Extraordinary, Part 4(Ga) (Rajasthan Dowry Prohibition Rules, 2004)*

dinating with local police and service providers, facilitating relief and legal aid, assisting women in domestic violence situations, and preparing a Domestic Incident Report for the Magistrate.

**District Hubs for Empowerment of Women (DHEWs):** Under the auspices of Mission Shakti and state schemes, the Rajasthan Department of Women and Child Development (WCDimplements numerous initiatives to address gender-related issues and empower. This is an essential platform to fill knowledge gaps, facilitating women to avail government schemes and as a Project Monitoring Unit for components of Mission Shakti.

**The Indira Mahila Shakti Udyam Protsahan Yojana (IMSUPY):** The Indira Mahila Shakti Udyam Protsahan Yojana (IMSUPY) initiated on December 18, 2019, with a budget of ₹1,000 crore, enables women entrepreneurs by providing loans of up to ₹50 lakh for individuals and ₹1 crore for Self-Help Group (SHG) clusters, along with subsidies (25 percent general, 30 percent SC/ST, widows, and survivors of violence) and skill development to enable economic independence (Government of Rajasthan, मुख्मंत्री नारी शक्ति उद्यम प्रोत्साहन योज).

**Local Complaints Committee:** Under the POSH Act, it is mandated that Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) must be established in each district to handle cases where an internal Committee is absent or the complaint is against the employer. In Rajasthan, LCCs have been constituted and are active across all 41 districts, with details listed on the SHe-Box portal (State of Rajasthan, February 2025).

## 2.2 Initiatives of the Department of Medical, Health, and Family Welfare

### The Aparajitha One Stop Centres

The Aparajita One Stop Crisis Management Centre for Women was inaugurated in 2013 at Jaipuria Government Hospital, Jaipur, as part of a coordinated initiative led by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Rajasthan. Conceived as a single-stop support facility for women facing violence or harassment, the centre aimed to provide integrated medical, police, legal, and counselling services, along with temporary shelter and rehabilitation support. Survivors could approach the centre directly or be referred through hospitals, police stations, NGOs, or Protection Officers under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

Each case was to be documented and followed up, with monthly progress submitted to the Principal Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development. A state-level committee chaired by the Principal Secretary was constituted for oversight. While the model was an important step taken by the state government towards addressing VAWG, its current operational status is unclear (Two Important Programmes for Women- ‘Aparajita Centre OSCMCW', Glory of Rajasthan, 2014).

### Health System Interventions

On August 22, 2023, the Maharana Bhupal Government Hospital in Udaipur inaugurated a dedicated Outpatient Department (OPD) to assist women survivors of domestic violence and related atrocities. Within its first month, the facility assisted over 40 women, offering integrated medical treatment, psychological counselling. In collaboration with the Society for Women’s Action and Training Initiative (SWATI), the unit also ensures the provision of legal assistance to women when needed. By integrating medical treatment, psychological counselling, and legal support within a public health facility, the OPD offers a survivor-centric response to domestic violence in Rajasthan.

## 2.3 Law Enforcement Agencies

**Kalika Patrolling Units:** The Rajasthan Police launched the all-women Kalika Patrolling Units, initially consisting of 250 teams, with plans to expand to 500 across the state. In Jaipur, 35 units were rolled out initially, and each District Commissionerate received 10 teams. These units, composed of female officers from constable to head constable rank, utilise specially designed blue

uniforms with a neon monogram, and patrol on black scooters in public areas like schools, markets, and tourist destinations to deter crimes against women. While the impact of the units is still being assessed, initial actions by the Jodhpur Police Kalika Unit included preventive measures against 18 suspicious individuals during inspections of 32 spa centers. According to the Jodhpur Police, the unit also carried out awareness campaigns, educating 1,380 individuals about the RajCop Citizen app and facilitating 868 app downloads.* The initiative aims to enhance the safety and security of women and children, and promote confidence in reporting harassment and crime, according to the Times of India. Concurrently, the Rajasthan government has sanctioned a 33 percent reservation within the police force for women, linking institutional reform to field-level safety initiatives (Government of Rajasthan, Department of Personnel 2024).

**Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs):** Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in Rajasthan are district-level task forces set up under the directive of the Ministry of Home Affairs to deal with human trafficking under a coordinated and multi-pronged approach. The units are made up of trained police and Women and Child Welfare Department personnel who function in coordination with NGOs to to probe trafficking as an organised crime, with a specific emphasis on women and children. Their roles are rescue operations, prosecution, rehabilitation of the victims, and community sensitisation among vulnerable groups. Although they are stationed throughout districts, AHTUs are confronted with issues of restricted resources, a lack of training, and operational challenges in accessing small towns and villages. Despite the challenges, they form a critical institutional framework within the Human Rights and Anti-Human Trafficking Wing of the Rajasthan Police, dedicated to the provision of a victim-centered and integrated approach to trafficking.

**Cyber Support Centre:** Rajasthan has made strides in fighting cybercrime by setting up its first Cyber Support Centre in Jaipur to assist victims, especially women and children, of online threats, harassment, and fraud. Set up in the Jaipur Police Commissionerate, it provides psychological counseling, legal assistance, and digital safety training, and functions in collaboration with a Mumbai-based NGO and the Kogta Foundation under Cyber Safe Jaipur campaign (Economic Times). Immediate support for issues such as sextortion, online harassment, and cyber fraud is offered through key helplines (8764866039, 8764866040, and national number 1930), as well as help desks. Cyber commandos are trained by Rajasthan Police in the state. Wherever needed, these commandos provide their services. About 3,000 cyber cases are being registered every year in Rajasthan. Out of these, 47.25 percent are financial crimes and 30.16 percent are related to UPI scams, 12 percent related to social media and 11 percent related to sexual harassment (ETV Bharat 2025). Outside of this hub, the state has initiated more comprehensive efforts such as Operation Cyber Shield to prevent the sale of illicit SIMs, monitor criminals, and promote citizen awareness (ETV Bharat 2025).

**Women Police Stations and Help Desks:** Forty Women Police Stations (Mahila Thana) received 8,000 cases in 2023, operated by women officers to offer secure reporting areas. Yet, they are greatly understaffed (2–3 officers instead of 10 needed), with 30 percent without private counseling rooms. Women's desks, previously present in every police station, are dysfunctional, substituted by Child Desks in locations such as Udaipur, with officer contact information no longer posted. Cases relating to family are dealt with by Women Police Stations, while serious cases of domestic violence (DV) and POCSO are referred to special stations. Mediation pressures, in which survivors and offenders are compelled to sit together, hinder FIR registration in 40 percent of DV cases (1,600 cases). Survivors undergo long legal proceedings (2–4 years), with minimal emotional or logistical support, termed as "saza ke baad bhi saza" (Field Notes, 2025; The Indian Express, 2024, February 10). Police are under restrictions to gather evidence, particularly in older cases (CBGA 2023). Delay in documentation by police officers delays compensation payment to survivors (CBGA 2023). There is just one state forensic lab, resulting in delayed investigations (CBGA 2023).

**The Suraksha Sakhi scheme:** The Suraksha Sakhi of the Rajasthan Police is a grassroots initiative of community policing aimed at increasing the safety of women. Suraksha Sakhis are female volunteers who are associated with local police stations and have an age range of 15 to 70. In an effort to alleviate the disparity between the police and the community, they work in close collaboration with their designated nodal officers. Their duties encompass the identification of cases of violence, the dissemination of information regarding legal rights, the support of victims, and the promotion of self-reliance (Times of India 2021). Regular meetings, awareness campaigns, and self-defense training are the main activities of the program. Exclusive campaigns such as Suraksha Sakhi Pakhwada have made a huge impact with outreach exceeding 66,000 women and 101,000 girls sensitised in a recent campaign. With over 11,000 active Sakhis, the program encourages early intervention and the establishment of trust between communities and police, thereby significantly contributing to the empowerment and safety of women in Rajasthan (Times of India 2021).

**RajCop App:** Real-time police alerts, location sharing, and emergency contact alerts were introduced in April 2025. Within three months, 1,000 alerts were processed. In order to guarantee an immediate response, it is furnished with panic buttons and multilingual interfaces (Field Notes, 2025). Only 10 percent of rural women are aware of its functionality, and coverage is limited by low digital literacy (30 percent of rural women) and smartphone penetration (20 percent in rural areas). To optimise its efficacy, it is imperative to conduct digital literacy training and awareness campaigns.

## 2.4 Emergency Helplines

- **Women's Helpline (1090) and Childline (1098):** Available 24/7, handled 15,000 calls in 2023, but rural connectivity restricts access for 60 percent of rural women (12 million). Only 40 percent of calls are converted into case registration due to gaps in follow-up.
- **Mukbhir Yojana Helpline (104):** Initiated in 2019, incentivises reporting of VAWG with up to ₹2,50,000 rewards, receiving 1,000 Complaints in 2023. Only 20 percent of them result in FIRs because of stigma and fear of reprisal (Kumar, 2023; The Hindu, April 10, 2024).

## 2.5 Judicial Support

**Mahila Courts:** Rajasthan has 25 Mahila Courts across its 36 judicial districts that focus on cases of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), such as domestic violence, dowry harassment, sexual assault, and cruelty as defined by Sections 498A, 354, 376, and 509 of the Indian Penal Code. Set up to offer a secure and non-threatening environment, these courts are headed by women judges and assisted by mainly female staff, ranging from lawyers to clerks, to help minimise intimidation for survivors. They dealt with 5,500 cases in 2023, 60 percent being cases of domestic violence and dowry harassment, and 20 percent based on sexual assault. In spite of their desire for quick justice, 40 percent of cases are disposed of within a year because there is a lack of trained judges and patriarchal prejudices amongst judicial personnel, which influence 50 percent of cases. For example, mediation is given importance over prosecution, deterring FIR registration in 30 percent of cases. Rural access is low, with only 25 percent of the survivors from rural locations accessing these courts due to transportation and awareness hurdles. Though functioning until July 2025, Mahila Courts are crippled by lack of personnel, poor training, and social pressures, and require reforms such as compulsory gender sensitisation and enhanced rural outreach to significantly impact VAWG (Verma, 2022; The Hindu, March 12, 2024).

**POCSO Courts:** The Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the establishment of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), including exclusive POCSO Courts, introduced in October 2019, has set up ways for rape and other crimes under the POCSO Act, 2012, to be dealt with quickly. As of August 2025, Rajasthan has 45 operational FTSCs, of which 30 are exclusive POCSO Courts, and the state has disposed of 13,602 POCSO so far. Additionally, two special

courts at Hanumangarh and Sawai Madhopur are in progress (Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child, 2024).

**Gender Sensitisation and Internal Complaints Committee (GSICC):** In Rajasthan, the Gender Sensitisation and Sexual Harassment of Women at Rajasthan High Court (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Regulations, 2014, provide for the constitution of the Gender Sensitisation and Internal Complaints Committee (GSICC) to oversee prevention, prohibition, and redressal of sexual harassment within the High Court precincts. The GSICC functions as the umbrella body responsible for awareness, training, and gender sensitisation programmes, while also constituting the Internal Complaints Committee or a sub committee to inquire into specific complaints (Rajasthan High Court 2014).

**Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA):** In 2023, 5,000 VAWG cases were disposed of through 33 District Legal Aid Clinics and 1,000 Lok Adalats, providing free legal assistance for cases of domestic violence, dowry harassment, and sexual assault. Only 30 percent of the services are accessible to rural areas due to connectivity and lack of awareness (Rajasthan Legal Services Authority).

**Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme:** The Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme, 2011, is a state policy scheme prepared pursuant to Section 357A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, with an objective of extending monetary help and enabling the rehabilitation of victims of crime or their dependents (Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority).

The scheme seeks to provide organised assistance to those who have been physically, emotionally, or financially injured as a result of criminal offences, such as situations where the perpetrator is unknown. Conditions for eligibility include that no compensation for the same loss should have been received from other government schemes, and the loss or injury should have caused evident financial difficulties or incurred medical costs beyond the victim's resources (Rajasthan Government Gazette).

Significantly, the plan permits compensation even if no convicted offender is found, as long as the identity of the victim is determined. The amounts of compensation differ based on the type of crime, with specific ceilings for cases involving loss of life, disability, sexual assault, and offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. Interim compensation is also envisaged, with child victims becoming eligible for up to 50 percent and adult victims up to 25 percent of the overall compensation limit, especially for meeting critical expenses such as medical and funeral costs. The applications are dealt with by the State or District Legal Services Authorities, which are legally bound to determine compensation within two months, or within 30 days in POCSO cases. The scheme is funded by a dedicated Victim Compensation Fund under the State Legal Services Authority, with states receiving annual appropriations from the state governments. Furthermore, the legal services authorities have the power to sanction immediate free medical treatment, and appeals against compensation orders can be filed within 30 days.

## 2.6 Rajasthan State Commission for Women (RSCW)

The Rajasthan State Commission for Women (RSCW) was set up on May 15, 1999, and is a statutory commission committed to safeguarding women's rights and combating discrimination and violence against women in the state. Its major functions are to inquire into crimes against women, study laws, recommend welfare schemes, and suggest steps to the government. It has civil court powers to call for records, interrogate, and suggest legal action. Key initiatives are a 24x7 helpline (181), Complaint Cell, Mahila Salah Suraksha Kendras (MSSKs), public hearings, gender awareness programs, and online complaint facilities. It also assists district-level interventions through Zila Mahila Sahayata Samitis. The RSCW tackles problems of domestic violence, dowry, workplace harassment, and property rights, but continues to face problems such as lack of awareness, societal stigma, and paucity of resources. Its outreach and capacity need to be strengthened to create a safer and more equal environment for women in Rajasthan.

## 2.7 PRI-based Institutions for Women

**Mahila Panchayats:** Mahila Panchayats, instituted by the Rajasthan State Commission for Women, serve as a community-based forum to address cases of violence and crimes against women. Each Panchayat consists of a woman sarpanch and five members and is organised every Monday of the month. They provide space for both individual and public hearings, ensuring that survivors can voice their grievances in formats that feel safe and accessible. Beyond adjudication, Mahila Panchayats also focus on counselling and awareness generation around crimes against women. Each Mahila Panchayat is required to send a monthly report to the RSCW. They work towards reducing women's hesitancy in reporting cases and providing quicker community-level interventions (RSCW, RAJ RAS).

**Mahila Manch**: Mahila Manch aims to increase awareness, offer assistance, and establish solidarity networks for women by expanding the women's commission's reach into districts. The Manch, which is located in 19 districts throughout Rajasthan, serves as a platform for women to collectively address the issue of violence against women and girls (RAJ RAS).

Mahila Sabhas, which are part of PRIs, are responsible for the safety of women in 7,000 panchayats. However, the impact of these Sabhas is limited by the leadership of men, as only 30 percent of them are involved in VAWG (Joshi 2021). In 2025, there will be no government-established Mahila Panchayats or Mahila Manchs; NGO-initiated initiatives are unfunded and voluntary (Field Notes). There is also insufficient coordination among a variety of service providers across states (CBGA 2023).

## 2.8 Inter-Departmental Initiatives

### Mahila Salah Suraksha Kendras (MSSKs)

The first such holistic redressal centre for women facing violence called the Mahila Salah Evam Suraksha Kendra (MSSK) started in Jaipur at the Bajaj Nagar Police Station in January, 2002. It was staffed by two social workers and two police officers from the Mahila Police Station. A team of lawyers and representatives of diverse social support agencies also constitute the Kendra.

The MSSKs across the state are run by NGOs selected by Zila Mahila Sahayata Samiti, which is headed by the District Collector of each district. As per the policy, the police department is responsible for providing a suitable place within the premises of the selected police stations for establishing the Kendras and also providing human resources and other office amenities. Priority is given to Mahila Police Stations for the setting up of such Kendras. The Superintendent of Police of the district monitors the functions of these Kendras. The affiliated NGO sends a quarterly report to the concerned SP, who along with her remarks, sends it to Zila Mahila Sahayata Samiti, from which it is eventually submitted to the WCD Commissioner or Director on the due dates.

Fifty NGO-run MSSKs provide social (Master's in Psychology and Sociology) and legal (LLB) counseling, handling 5,000 cases in 2023, primarily domestic violence and dowry disputes. Every centre is granted ₹5 lakh per annum, with ₹4.08 lakh for counselor compensation, with only ₹92,000 remaining for operations, which is usually not utilised because of official discouragement. Delays in funding (1–2 years) and district-delegated procurement (restricted to preferred vendors) lead to poor-quality digital tools. Sixty percent of centres have insufficient spaces and no privacy, which impairs service quality.

Training is confined, duplicative, and not standardised, given to only chosen counselors, with no formal assessment studies. The absence of psychological or mental health counseling limits

trauma support, critical for survivors. MSSKs lack computers and printers, forcing staff to visit nearby police stations for printing, risking the confidentiality of sensitive survivor data in SGBV cases (CBGA 2023). Counselors' salaries are low, unrevised for over a decade, and lack social security benefits (CBGA 2023). There are insufficient support mechanisms available for couples who are prone to violence within their families, as noted by the CBGA in 2023. More than 80 percent of cases are mediated and settled (Field Notes, 2025).

### Zila Mahila Sahayata Samitis (ZMSS)

The Zila Mahila Sahayata Samiti (ZMSS), or the District Women Assistance Committee, is a key government committee in Rajasthan, headed by the District Collector, and is tasked with responding to violence and harassment against women. With members from police, health, legal services, and NGOs, ZMSS offers crucial assistance in the form of legal aid, shelter coordination, and rehabilitation to the victims of violence against women and girls. Working in all 33 districts, it convenes quarterly to plan for women's safety and empowerment but is impacted by issues such as low attendance (70 percent of its meetings are without vital officials) and narrow rural penetration (only 30 percent of its services are available). Despite the gaps, ZMSS closed 2,500 cases in 2023, contributing significantly to Rajasthan's response to violence against women and gender justice.

## 2.9 Community-Based and Preventive Initiatives

- **Women's Development Programme (WDP) – Sathin Engagement:** The Women's Development Programme (WDP), 1985, in Rajasthan engages Sathins, honorary women workers at the village level, as catalysts of change at the grassroots level for empowering rural women. Their main duties are to raise awareness about women's rights, government programs, and social matters; organise women into groups for collective action; and prevent harmful social practices like gender-biased sex selection. Sathins also support and advocate for women who are discriminated against or subjected to violence and promote education, health, and political participation for them. Sathins, though they play a crucial role, suffer from insecure jobs and low wages. However, sustained government support and subsidies indicate their continued relevance in promoting gender equality and social change in Rajasthan.

- **Mukbhir Yojana:** Initiated in 2019, it incentivises reporting of VAWG with up to ₹2,50,000 rewards, receiving 1,000 complaints in 2023. Only 20 percent of them result in FIRs because of stigma and fear of reprisal (Kumar, 2023; The Hindu, 2024, April 10). The Mukbhir Yojana provides assistance through the helpline number 104.

- **Health and Social Justice Project:** A Center for Health and Social Justice project reaches men by engaging them in focus groups, interviews, and surveys to challenge gender stereotypes in order to advance women's health outcomes in 10 districts. It reached 50,000 men in 2023, decreasing VAWG incidents by 10 percent in the areas covered.

- **NGO Programs:** SWRC, Seva Mandir, and Urmul Trust operate 50 shelters and provide literacy, legal awareness, and vocational training to 20,000 women every year in 50 percent of rural blocks. They have community-based initiatives such as women's groups and health camps, but crime mapping is not being utilised, with only 10 percent of NGOs employing data-based methods (The Indian Express, January 10, 2024). No case-by-case information is gathered, divided by location, caste, religion, disability status, or income group (CBGA 2023).

## NGO Initiatives

- **Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan (RSKS India):** RSKS India is a grassroots organisation founded in 1992 with the objective of addressing critical social issues such as illiteracy, poverty, and violence against women. The organisation, which is headquartered in Rajasthan, India, is actively engaged in the implementation of a variety of women's empowerment programmes that are designed to promote economic independence and self-reliance. RSKS India strives to instill financial capabilities in women and foster their confidence by implementing initiatives such as self-help groups, awareness campaigns on women's rights, and skill development training. In an effort to establish a more equitable and just society for women, the organisation advocates for education, economic opportunities, and social awareness.

- **Gram Chetna Kendra (GCK):** Gram Chetna Kendra (GCK) is a dedicated organisation operating in rural Rajasthan with the mission of addressing gender discrimination and supporting survivors of violence against women. It provides comprehensive assistance through legal aid, counseling, and livelihood support, ensuring that affected individuals receive the necessary resources to rebuild their lives with dignity and independence (Gender-Based Violence: Exploring the Role of Political Institutions in Jharkhand and Rajasthan, Mr Naman Sachdeva, Dr Anna Nath Ganguly).

- **Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR):** The Directorate of Women Empowerment (WED), in collaboration with CFAR, has launched a capacity building programme to develop a cadre of trainers for preventing and addressing violence against women in Rajasthan. In the first phase, 28 Sathins and supervisors from different parts of the state underwent a three-day intensive training in Jaipur. The programme equips Sathins with skills to connect survivors with essential services, conduct gender audits, and advocate for gender-responsive budgeting, thereby integrating gender concerns into local governance. Supported by the Panchayati Raj Department and the Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority, the training also familiarises participants with updated legal frameworks, compensation schemes, and access to free legal services.

- **CHIRALI Friends Forever:** Chirali was launched by the Directorate of Women Empowerment, Rajasthan, with UNFPA support in 2017, to address VAWG through community action groups including Sathins, Anganwadi workers, PRI members, teachers, and volunteers. It aimed to raise awareness, advocate for women's rights, and provide support services (UNFPA India 2017).

**Integration of VAWG Sensitisation in School Curriculum**

## 2.10 Initiatives in Schools and Higher Education

In Rajasthan, the Board of Secondary Education has taken steps to integrate issues of gender justice into the school curriculum by including modules on gender sensitivity, as well as crimes against women and their legal penalties, in the Class 10 syllabus under Sharirik Shiksha (Physical Education).

**SPARSH- Central University of Rajasthan**

The Central University of Rajasthan has established the Anti-Sexual Harassment Cell (SPARSH) in accordance with UGC guidelines and Supreme Court directives to ensure a safe and congenial environment for staff and students. The cell is tasked with developing comprehensive guidelines and norms to prevent sexual harassment, formulating principles and procedures for addressing complaints, and implementing both short-term and long-term action plans.

## 3. Interventions to Combat Witch-Hunting in Rajasthan

"Dayan-Prantha" is a witch-hunting malpractice prevalent in many Indian states, including Rajasthan. The practice is prevalent among Dalit communities who victimise women as witches for personal rivalries, property disputes, or sexual exploitation. Often, any kind of disaster, epidemic that affects the village or neighbourhood or family leads to blaming women in marginalised communities as witches (Scroll.in, 2023). The dogmatic faith and the concept of man-made faith healers have led to many deaths in the state in the past years (Refer Table 2).

Rajasthan has passed Rajasthan Prevention of Witch-Hunting Act in 2015 for preventing and prosecuting the crime.

### Table 2: Number of Deaths in Rajasthan on Account of Witch-Hunting

| Year | Deaths in Rajasthan | Cases in India |
|---|---|---|
| 2016 | 1 | 134 |
| 2017 | 2 | 73 |
| 2018 | 1 | 63 |
| 2019 | 1 | 102 |
| 2020 | 1 | 88 |
| 2021 | 1 | 68 |

*Source:*
National Crime Records Bureau Data for 2016-2021

**Rajasthan Prevention of Witch-hunting Act, 2015**

The Rajasthan Prevention of Witch-Hunting Act, 2015, enacted by the Rajasthan State Legislature and published on April 1, 2015, has come into force with the aim of putting an end to the practice of witch-hunting and witchcraft in the state of Rajasthan. It prohibits identification, accusation, or harming women as witches, i.e., persons suspected to possess evil powers, and prohibits witchcraft practices like "Tona-Totaka" or "Jadu-Tona." The punishments for witch-hunting range from 1–5 years of harsh imprisonment and/or ₹50,000 penalty, which extends to 3–7 years and/or ₹50,000 for severe offenses like forcing consumption of non-edible items or parading naked women. Imposing witchcraft or faking control or curing witches draws 1–3 years imprisonment and/or ₹10,000 fine, while performing or inducing rituals to "free" a woman from evil spirits results in 3–7 years and/or ₹50,000. Causing a woman's unnatural death by witch-hunting carries seven years to life imprisonment and/or ₹1 lakh fine. Collective fines can be levied on guilty communities by the state government, which go into victim rehabilitation. Prevention can be done by police and District Magistrates, while the government can design victim support schemes and awareness against witchcraft beliefs. Despite these measures, only 15 percent of reported crimes are convicted due to society's beliefs (SCC Times 2018). The Act is implemented by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of Rajasthan. As per news report, 261 cases were reported, however police chargesheeted only in 109 cases (Sharma 2020).



## Insights from Workshop Discussions [4]

**Rising Cybercrime Attacks against Women**

- Increase in sextortion, cyberstalking, image leaks, and revenge porn
- Low awareness of cyber laws and reporting mechanisms
- Technical glitches and limited accessibility of RajCop app
- Shortage of police response and cybercrime investigation capability
- Minors involved in cybercrimes; parents unaware of legal liabilities

**Rape Response in Medical Sector**

- Compulsory police requisition delays medical examination
- Outdated medico-legal practices harm survivors and evidence quality
- Lack of trauma-informed, gender-sensitive protocols
- Mental health care in hospitals is severely lacking
- Coordination gaps between hospitals and other service providers

**Institutional Capacity Challenges (WCD, Police, Health, Legal Services, PRIs, and NGOs)**

- Staff shortages and constant vacancies across departments
- Limited gender-sensitization and trauma-informed training
- Severe shelter shortages and inadequate infrastructure
- Weak interdepartmental coordination and fragmented service delivery
- Delay in funding and overlapping roles with NGOs and Aparajita Centres
- Limited legal aid in tribal and block-level areas

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Non-functional monitoring committees reduce accountability
- Weak survivor feedback mechanisms
- Lack of data-driven decision making
- Inadequate tracking of intervention outcomes and misuse of funds
- Minimal evaluation tools and limited staff capacity

**Legal Bottlenecks**

- POCSO and IT Act do not fully address digital crimes like grooming and sextortion
- Outdated medico-legal practices
- Tribal panchayat rulings lack formal oversight
- Patriarchal judicial biases lead to low compensation and leniency for perpetrators
- Marital rape remains non-criminalised
- Weak witch-hunting and child marriage laws

[4] *Workshop held on 24th and 25th July 2025 in Jaipur.*

# 3. Analysis of Institutional Mechanisms Mechanisms

In order to analyse and critically examine the existing institutional mechanisms and to strengthen them through effective policy recommendations, the following framework is used in the study. The mechanisms are examined from the following lens: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Coordination and Governance. The analysis is carried out through an evaluation of stakeholder interviews and secondary data collected.

## 3.1 Prevention

A. **Existence of State Policies/Action Plans on VAWG Prevention:** Rajasthan has a standalone Women's Policy (2021) that also addresses violence against women and girls at present. However, budgetary allocations remain embedded within broader schemes, with no dedicated VAWG prevention components. The absence of a comprehensive, VAWG-centred framework limits the effectiveness of prevention strategies initiated by police personnel or LSGs.

B. **VAWG Sensitisation in School Curricula and Engagement with Men and Boys:** In a pioneering effort, Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education (BSER) has introduced chapters titled "Gender Sensitivity" and "Crimes Against Women and Penalties" for Class 10. This becomes an important starting point towards standardising VAWG specific curricula across different classes and boards. Although various colleges have individually developed anti-VAWG action plans like SPARSH by Jagatha University, there is no mechanism to assess their implementation quality or overall effectiveness. However, targeted efforts to engage men and boys in addressing prevention remain under-prioritised.

C. **Community-Based Awareness Programs:** The Chirali Friends Forever programme recognised the importance of community action in the prevention of VAWG. However, it remains inoperational since 2019. Although a structured dialogue exists between women and law enforcement through Mahila Police Samwad and Suraksha Sakhis, there is limited evidence to indicate that the concerns communicated through this mechanism are incorporated in formulating prevention strategies.

   NGOs have also engaged cooperative police personnel in dialogue with local women to identify the vulnerabilities of their respective communities. However, these interventions are restricted to localities with an active NGO presence. In addition, the Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan (RSKS) implements targeted community awareness campaigns to reduce the incidence of child marriages and crimes against women.

D. **Frontline Official Training:** The Directorate of Women Empowerment (WED) is currently leading a cascading model of training for frontline workers who are addressing VAWG. No refresher training is being conducted by specific departments, with the exception of the orientation provided upon the initial enactment of the DV Act. Therefore, the initiative by WED fills this gap.

E. **Monitoring of High-Risk Areas and Hotspots:** While Kalika Patrolling Units are active and responsive across districts, their operations are limited to conducting random patrols and responding to distress calls. In the absence of crime mapping, high-risk areas cannot be systematically identified for targeted intervention by the Kalika Units.

## 3.2 Protection

A. **Responsiveness of Institutions and Survivor-Centric SOPs:** Protection Orders are often delayed, adding to survivor distress. Instances of police insensitivity are also common. Although Suraksha Sakhis bridge the gap between police and civilians, the law enforcement's apathy discourages women from seeking support. Moreover, there is no uniform survivor-centric SOP for departments responding to VAWG cases.

   In a pioneering move, Rajasthan Police has developed a standard operating procedure to provide protection for live-in couples facing threat to life by family or other societal elements.

B. **Availability of Health Support:** OSCs are not located within hospital complexes or within a two kilometre distance of hospitals. This impedes the timely provision of emergency services, particularly in the context of sexual assault offences, where an immediate medical examination is essential for the establishment of case credibility.

C. **Safe Shelter Availability:** The state currently has 48 operational OSCs that provide short-term accommodation for survivors in distress. Aparajita also provides temporary shelter facilities. Eight Swadhar Greh shelters are also available for long-term stay of up to three years. Out of the total capacity of 240 at Swadhar Grehs, occupancy stands at 203 as of 2022. As a result of high occupancy at these shelters, long-term shelters are provided in collaboration with NGOs such as Seva Mandir and Urmul Trust. There is scope to strengthen the capacity of temporary shelters, and the availability of long-term shelters also needs to be enhanced.

D. **Legal Aid Support:** Vidhik Sahaytha provides free legal aid for women at every court of law. However, the lack of coordination between DLSAs and OSCs hinders the ease of availing legal aid (Stakeholder Interview).

E. **Data Protection and Confidentiality Measures:** All VAWG support service departments maintain data confidentiality. However, database systems and data-sharing protocols lack uniform safeguards to preserve confidentiality. Such circumstances negatively impact survivors' confidence in institutional processes and can have a detrimental effect on reportage.

## 3.3 Prosecution

A. **Special Fast Track Courts (FTSCs):** Fifteen fast-track special courts and 30 POCSO exclusive courts are operational across the state. The Department of Justice (GoI) reports that the state's FTSCs have disposed of 14,432 cases cumulatively, with 4,892 cases still pending. Defaulters frequently fail to appear for hearings, and fast-track court trials frequently exceed mandated timelines, thereby eroding public confidence in the system. Despite the existence of 45 specialised courts that handle VAWG, the pendency rate in Rajasthan was 7.9 percent, as indicated by the NCRB Report of 2022.

B. **Functioning of Public Prosecutors for VAWG:** A dedicated cohort of prosecutors specialising in VAWG is absent. Coordination efforts between prosecutors and DLSAs also remain inconsistent. Further, inadequate compensation serves as a disincentive for sustained engagement by prosecutors.

C. **FIR Registration, Rate of Charge-Sheeting, and Conviction:** In 2022, Rajasthan's charge-sheeting rate stood at 54 percent, with a conviction rate of only 17.1 percent. Stakeholders noted that many women hesitate to report incidents of VAWG due to fear of stigma, social repercussions, and personal safety. Perpetrators often comply when called by police for mediation out of fear of case registration, which further lowers charge-sheeting. While the implementation of MSSKs has modestly increased FIR filing, bribery of law enforcement to quash FIRs remains common. Legal counsellors are active in OSCs, and each DLSA has two dedicated officials for

VAWG cases, but awareness of these services is limited. Moreover, the DLSA is not perceived as an accessible entry point compared to more immediate touchpoints like police stations or hospitals.

D. **Victim-Friendly Procedures:** Although Mahila Courts are functional in the state, mechanisms to ease court proceedings, such as video conferencing, shielding during testimony, and child-friendly rooms remain unimplemented in the state. Cases are not resolved within the stipulated time, leading to repeated court visits for women, causing emotional and financial strain. Systemic apathy by judicial officials weakens public trust in the legal process and undermines the quality of survivor engagement.

## 3.4 Rehabilitation

A. **Access to Trauma Counselling and Medical Services:** Trauma counselling is available at OSCs and Swadhar Grehs. However, Aparajita One Stop Centres provide no counselling facilities. Women's helpdesks at police stations are also inadequately resourced to provide private counselling rooms for approaching survivors. Uneven distribution of services makes follow-up support challenging. In addition, the availability of sexual assault-focused care and adherence to VAWG protocols remains limited across hospitals and integrated service centres. The lack of VAWG-trained health professionals was also noted.

B. **Livelihood Generation and Support for Dependents and Children:** There is an absence of institutional intervention in childcare support. The lack of childcare provisions, particularly for young children, discourages survivors from accessing support, often compelling survivors to remain in abusive environments. Additionally, livelihood generation initiatives also remain unimplemented by the state.

C. **Compensation Schemes:** While the Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme allows for a quick compensatory process, the timelines of disbursement in practice remains uncertain. The RSLSA is also empowered to sanction immediate and free medical treatment for survivors. The lack of coordination between DLSAs and OSCs further slows this process.

In 2016-17, 1,319 applications were resolved, 65 were pending, and compensation totalling ₹148,961,500 was granted, according to NALSA's records. The number of applications that were decided in 2017-18 was 1,288, with 746 applications still pending. The compensation was ₹19,734,900. The year 2018-19 saw a significant increase, with applications decided being 2,170, 674 pending, and compensation increasing to ₹216,523,750. In 2019-20, 2,242 applications were decided, 451 remained pending, and ₹32,752,00 was awarded. In 2020-21, decided applications dropped to 1,360, with 614 pending, but compensation reached ₹168,908,500. The year 2021-22 registered 1,818 decided applications, 370 pending, and the highest compensation so far of ₹231,745,500 was granted.

In 2022-23, 2,227 applications were decided, 323 were pending, and ₹34,639,700 was awarded. The period 2023-24 marked a significant surge in compensation, with 2,858 applications decided, 587 pending, and ₹366,937,750 awarded. Most recently, in 2024-25, the figures peaked with 4,462 applications decided, 412 pending, and ₹409,191,500 in compensation awarded (Based on NALSA statistics on the disbursement of victim compensation fund).

**Role of NGOs and Civil Society:** OSCs in the state are run by local NGOs. Their services are employed to provide extended accommodation for survivors. However, the state does not leverage NGO expertise to provide survivor-centric and trauma-informed training for OSC staff. Further, the capacities of civil society organisations remain underutilised by the state, particularly in areas such as vulnerability and crime mapping for early interventions and enhancing reporting.

D. **Accessibility of Services in Rural and Tribal Areas:** OSCs in the state are concentrated in urban and suburban areas, with limited reach in peri-urban, rural, and tribal regions. Therefore, accessibility is hindered by logistical constraints, absence of mobile service models, or inadequate proximity to hospitals. These challenges disproportionately affect survivors who come from remote areas.

E. **Case Management and Follow-up:** MSSK informally conducts follow-ups with the survivors even after the case is closed. However, a structured case management and follow-up framework is absent across institutions dealing with VAWG. The lack of digital integration or standardised protocols also result in inconsistent follow-ups, thereby weakening institutional accountability.

## 3.5 Reintegration

A. **Support for Re-enrolment in Education:** The absence of institutional mechanisms in Rajasthan to guarantee the systematic re-enrollment of survivors in education has a detrimental impact on their ability to achieve long-term self-sustainability.

B. **Workplace Reintegration Policies and Protections:** Programs like the Indira Mahila Shakti Udyam Protsahan Yojana and the Mukhyamantri Work From Home Initiative provide economic opportunity, and RSCW supports employability through vocational training from recognised institutes. However, these measures do not address the critical gap in workplace reintegration. There are no established mechanisms to facilitate survivors of VAWG returning to the workplace, nor policies to prevent discrimination to ensure their long-term inclusion.

C. **Support Against Stigma from Families and Communities:** Socio-cultural stigma remains largely overlooked. Challenges stemming from socio-cultural stigma are currently addressed informally by the respective NGO or shelter staff. Community-level reintegration efforts also remain fragmented and inadequately resourced, with no planned strategy in place.

D. **Monitoring Post-Institutional Outcomes:** Although decentralised networks such as MSSKs, ZMSS', and OSCs are available to monitor relapse or repeated violence, monitoring efforts are irregular and inadequately resourced. Workers such as Sathins and Anganwadi workers are best suited for long-term monitoring but need improved training and allocation.

E. **Involvement of Local Leaders and PRIs:** Structurally, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and elected representatives remain uninvolved in survivor reintegration.

F. **Inclusion of Survivors in Policy Consultation Processes:** Survivors are not commonly involved in policy design or feedback processes, weakening the success of reintegration strategies.

## 3.6 Coordination and Governance

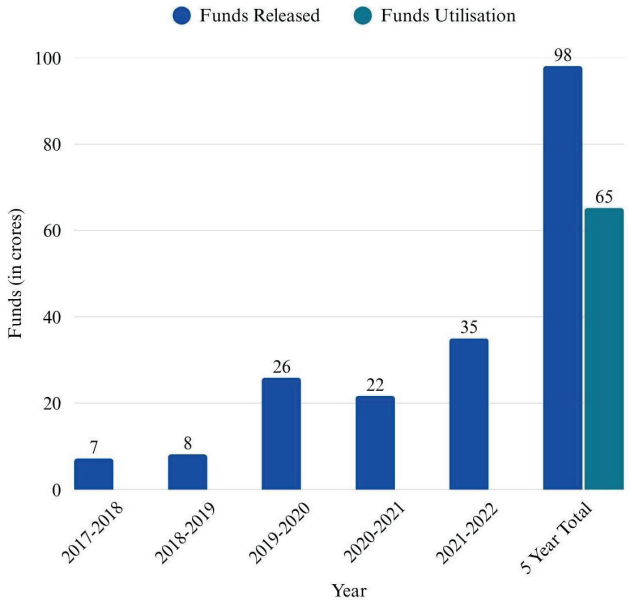
A. **State- and District-Level Coordination Mechanisms:** Inter-departmental meetings are irregularly conducted across the state. The absence of interdepartmental coordination leads to fragmented VAWG intervention efforts and service delivery.

B. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** There are no structured mechanisms to monitor the VAWG systems in place in each district to assess departmental performance and address gaps. Institutions also fail to define specific indicators for their objectives. This situation makes it difficult to assess the current standing, develop appropriate inputs and activities, and measure outcomes or long-term impact.

C. **Budgetary Allocations and Utilisation:** The graph below indicates funds released and utilised for Nirbhaya Funded projects and schemes between 2017 and 2022. Out of the total allocated funds to the state of Rajasthan, a mere 66.49 percent have been utilised

towards the respective projects and schemes (Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022).

**Figure 2: Funds Released and Utilised by Rajasthan Government**




*Source:* Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022

**Table 1: Year-wise Fund Allocation and Utilisation for One Stop Centres (in Lakhs)**

| Year | Funds Allocated (in Lakhs) | Fund Utilised (in Lakhs) |
|---|---|---|
| 2016-17 | 341.23 | 122.69 |
| 2017-18 | 28.96 | 52.29 |
| 2018-19 | 308.6 | 87.81 |
| 2019-20 | 677.12 | 37 |
| 2020-21 | 566.87 | 58 |
| 2021-22 | 941.85 | 331 |
| 2022-23 | 129.59 | 51 |
| 2023-24 | 883.59 | 101 |

*Source:*
The data presented in the table is drawn from Press Information Bureau (PIB) reports and Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India sources.

From 2016-17 to 2020-21, Rajasthan's OSC scheme witnessed fluctuating allocations and consistently low fund utilisation. In 2016-17, ₹341.23 lakhs were allocated but only 35.9 percent spent. The following year, allocation dropped to ₹28.96 lakhs yet utilisation(₹52.29 lakhs) exceeded it. In 2018-19, allocation rose to ₹308.6 lakhs, but only 28.4 percent was utilised.

For 2018-19 to 2020-21 combined, the state received ₹1551 lakhs but spent just ₹227.38 lakhs, an overall utilisation rate of 14.65 percent. This persistent under-utilisation suggests delays in fund release, limited administrative capacity, and possible infrastructure gaps.

D. **Role Clarity and Accountability:** Overlap of services exist between MSSKs, OSCs, and Aparajitas. There is also limited awareness of OSC's integrated services. In addition, the fragmented responsibilities between police, health, and Women and Child Development (WCD) departments, contribute to survivor fatigue. Further, institutional accountability structures either remain absent or weakly enforced.

E. **Grievance Redress Mechanisms:** When systems underperform or approaching survivors encounter difficulties in accessing or interacting with government agencies responsible for providing VAWG support, there is no centralised mechanism in place to address the issues raised. This weakens institutional accountability and public trust in the system.

F. **Adoption of Tech Platforms:** The state has yet to adopt tech platforms to facilitate inter-departmental coordination, enable grievance redressal, track case progress, and provide integrated service delivery for survivors.

# 4. Policy Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the policy recommendations are divided into three major target timelines. The short-term recommendations are to be implemented in an year timeline, medium-term are aimed to be materialised in two to three years, and long-term in five years. This enables a targeted and phased approach for VAWG-related state actions.

## Short-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Strengthening OSC and MSSKs in the state:**<br>- Data Management with training of the staff in using the technical devices.<br>- Biannual training in trauma counselling.<br>- Integrate survivor feedback into the SOP.<br>- Training survivors for being part of the MSSKs and OSCs.<br>- A standardised protocol for data charing and follow-up between MSSKs and OSCs.<br>- Increase funding of MSSKs to 5 lakhs. | While MSSKs and OSCs are two major institutions supporting VAWG survivors in the state of Rajasthan with a decent tribal penetration, often lack of clear SOPs and protocol for coordinated working results in gaps. MSSKs are located in local police stations, ensuring better accessibility. However they lack temporary shelter facilities, whereas OSCs have para-medical officers and shelter support for a few days. These facilities can act in complementarity if there is a formal link between these institutions.<br><br>MSSKs are receiving only ₹3.15 lakhs, most of which is consumed by staff salaries. More funding would help improve the outreach and preventive activities of the NGOs running the MSSKs. |
| **Dedicated Women Protection Officers in Every District**<br>- Women Protection Officers must be dedicated officers at the district level to implement DV Act and can also act as nodal officers to coordinate the activities of various institutions for the effective and efficient implementation of various laws and policies. | The state has designated CDPOs or Deputy Directors under WCD as WPOs. This often overburdens the officers with responsibilities under various Acts and policies, resulting in poor implementation of the DV Act. The need for dedicated officials for implementing the DV Act and ensuring coordination between departments was reiterated by the Supreme Court in May 2025 in We the Women of India v. Union of India and Ors (Mishra and PTI 2025). |

## Medium-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Integration of Reintegration Strategies**<br><br>- A dedicated framework for reintegration should be a part of the state's VAWG Action Plan.<br>- The survivors must be reintegrated into mainstream society by continuing their education or getting employed by adopting the following:<br>- Skill assessment and recognition<br>- Skilling or formal education as required<br>- Psychosocial support<br>- Reunification with family<br>- Access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities | The reintegration efforts in the state are carried out by the RSCW and NGOs such as Sambhali Trust, Jatan Sansthan, and others. Reintegration efforts often adopt a uniform approach that does not match with the existing skills and education of a survivor, resulting in adverse incidents in her life affecting her future opportunities.<br><br>Thus, recognition and assessment of existing skills have to be part of the reintegration efforts. While RSCW has programmes for skilling and rehabilitation of survivors, this perspective is lacking in their efforts. |
| **Enhancing the Coordination Between DLSA and Other Institutions**<br><br>- DLSA and Taluk Legal Services Authority must have monthly meetings with OSCs and MSSKs to ensure speedy disposal of VAWG cases and enforce the protection orders.<br>- Tracking of victim compensation funds. | In Andhra Pradesh, OSCs in the districts are visited by the DLSA officers for tracking the pending cases and ensuring their speedy disposal. This approach has enhanced the efficiency in obtaining protection orders.<br><br>This approach can be adopted in the state to improve the disposal rate, streamline the cases based on the priority, and ensure the timely disbursement of compensation funds managed by DLSA. |
| **Integrating Women-Friendly Processes into Judicial System:**<br><br>- Incorporating processes like video testimony and online tracking of cases through apps. | Delhi, Karnataka, and Kerala provide video-link testimony for sexual violence survivors. Some international best practices are Brazil's dedicated Domestic/Family Violence courts under *Maria da Penha* Law (Fonseca Rosenblatt, de Mello, and Salazar L'Armée Queiroga de Medeiros 2022) and South Africa's specialised courts for sexual offences with trauma-informed training for judges and lawyers. |

## Long-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **State-Level Women Safety Board**<br>- Constitute a state-level board to coordinate the activities of all departments, with a nodal officer appointed by the board to report to them.<br>- The Board may be constituted under the Chief Minister of the State.<br>**District-Level Women Safety Board Under the Leadership of District Collector**<br>**Local Level Women Safety Board under local self-government** | The constitution of a board at the state level will solve the poor coordination between the departments. While the State of Rajasthan has multiple VAWG systems in place like OSC, MSSKs, Suraksha Sakhi, and Sathins, the connection and coordination between these agencies are leading to duplication of efforts.<br><br>Effective use of the existing institutional framework to optimise their efforts must be the way forward. To streamline operations, there has to be a strong referral system in place along with proper data management. |
| **State-evel VAWG Dashboard and MIS System**<br>- Every district must have a VAWG Dashboard nodal officer who works with the district level VAWG institutions like OSC, MSSKs, DLSA, and Aparajitha to ensure that the data collected are properly recorded into an integrated MIS Dashboard that could act as a database for tracking the cases, disposal rate, remedies, follow-ups, rehabilitation, and reintegration efforts adopted by various agencies. This helps in plugging the gaps through informed decision-making. | Ineffective data management results in fragmented efforts and survivor fatigue. To overcome delays, prevent revictimisation of survivors, and ensure improved standards of service delivery, data collection, analysis, and reporting are crucial. The Women Safety Wing of Telangana has invested in an MIS dashboard that helps manage the various activities under the department aimed at reducing the VAWG crimes in the state, with survivor feedback integrated into the system. |
| **Strengthening the Cyber Crime Reporting and Awareness**<br>- The state requires dedicated preventive efforts against cybercrimes by police.<br>- Biannual training for State Police Officials in handling cybercrimes, with better data collection and management, must be mandated. | Jaipur Commissionerate has a Cyber Support Centre launched by Responsible Netizens, an NGO based in Mumbai to raise awareness on cybercrimes among vulnerable groups and provide counselling facilities. However, these efforts are limited to Jaipur, while over 4,500 cases are registered in the state, and only around 1,400 cases are chargesheeted. |

| | |
|---|---|
| - At least one training programme should be provided to all frontline responders, including OSC, MSSK, health professionals, and DLSA-empenelled lawyers.<br>- Awareness efforts must be strengthened among communities through collaboration with NGOs. | Rajasthan's Bharatpur district contributes to 18 percent of cybercrimes in India and is a major hotspot (PTI 2023). Considering the situation in the state, the police have to collaborate with NGOs working in cyberspace to raise awareness and train the frontline responders in handling cybercrimes. |
| **Mapping Vulnerable Crime Hotspots**<br>- The local self-governments, through grassroot level workers like ASHA, Anganwadi, Sathins, and SHGs, must map the crime hotspots in their localities every six months and plan measures to enhance the security and safety in these regions. | Mapping vulnerable spaces is a preventive strategy that could be done with the help of citizens by collecting information through apps (Safetipin). This information can help the police to strengthen the patrolling efforts, as well as the local government in improving the safety of public spaces at all hours. |

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State Report

# JHARKHAND 06

# 1. State Profile and Context

## 1.1 Demographic Overview

Jharkhand, a state rich in resources, has a total population of 32.99 million, with 26.21 percent of the population being tribal communities (Census 2011). The state's overall literacy rate is 66.41 percent, lower than the national average of 72.98 percent. The data shows low literacy rates among women and a poor child sex ratio in Jharkhand. Male literacy stands at 76.84 percent compared to 55.42 percent for females. Urban areas record a higher average literacy rate (82.26 percent), with 88.44 percent for males and 75.47 percent for emales, while rural literacy lags at 61.11 percent (72.86 percent for males and 48.91 percent for females). The rural population totals 25.05 million with a sex ratio of 961 females per 1,000 males, while urban areas are home to 7.93 million people with a lower sex ratio of 910. Child sex ratios (0-6) remain a concern, recorded at 957 in rural areas and 908 in urban areas. In cities and towns, children aged 0-6 years account for 12.88 percent of the population, numbering around 1.02 million (Jharkhand State Minority Commission, n.d.).

In Jharkhand, labour market participation reveals significant gender and rural-urban disparities. As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, the labour participation rate (LFPR) for the 15-59 age group shows that rural males record 84.9 percent while rural females stand at 61.3 percent. In urban areas, male LFPR is 75.3 percent compared to only 21.5 percent for females. With a score of 42 on the SDG 5 (Gender Equality) Index, Jharkhand thus shows significant gender gaps across key indicators (Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2023-24; IWWAGE 2023).

The state has taken up the case of women's empowerment through state laws and institutions. Witch branding of marginalised women is a taboo and practice in the state. To protect women, the state has passed the Jharkhand Witchcraft (Prevention of Witch Practices) Act, 2001, that criminalises witch-branding, a practice that targets women and often results in violence, ostracism, or even death. The Act safeguards women's justice and reintegration by prohibiting accusations, threats, and violence associated with alleged witchcraft, while simultaneously challenging harmful superstitions.

Social practices, such as dhuku, a type of live-in relationship that is prevalent in numerous tribal communities throughout Jharkhand, are also of equal importance. In dhuku unions, couples cohabit without formal marriage, frequently raising children together, and women have a degree of autonomy in selecting their partners.However, in the absence of legal recognition, women in such situations frequently encounter vulnerabilities, particularly in terms of property claims and agency. Community marriages have recently emerged as one way of addressing these gaps, offering couples an avenue for formal recognition while balancing cultural practice with legal frameworks.

In parallel, Jharkhand has adopted livelihood and social protection schemes that focus on gender equality and survivor support. The Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) plays a central role in advancing women's empowerment through Sakhi Mandals (SHGs). Its recent Nayi Chetna 3.0 campaign, launched in November 2024, established Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) providing mental health counselling, legal aid, and livelihood opportunities. Women from Sakhi Mandals lead culturally resonant awareness drives, ranging from wall paintings with the message #EkSaathEkAwaaz-Hinsa Ke Khilaf (One Voice Against Violence) to street theatre, rangoli, and mehendi competitions, mobilising collective action against violence against women and girls.

Beyond these initiatives, Jharkhand has introduced social welfare and rehabilitation schemes to protect vulnerable groups. The Skill and Entrepreneurship Training for Adolescent Girls (2019) offers vocational training, legal awareness, and life skills to survivors of human trafficking in order to facilitate their reintegration. The Foster Care Scheme (2018) establishes care environments for children who are in need of protection. Additionally, the Jharkhand Victim Compensation Scheme (2012, amended in 2016, 2018, and 2019)

provides financial assistance to survivors of violence, thereby fortifying the framework of restorative justice. Although these schemes and initiatives collectively contribute to the empowerment and welfare of women, there is currently no dedicated policy framework that specifically addresses VAWG. The state government has not adopted a comprehensive strategy since the 2014 drafting of a State Women's Policy, which was never implemented.

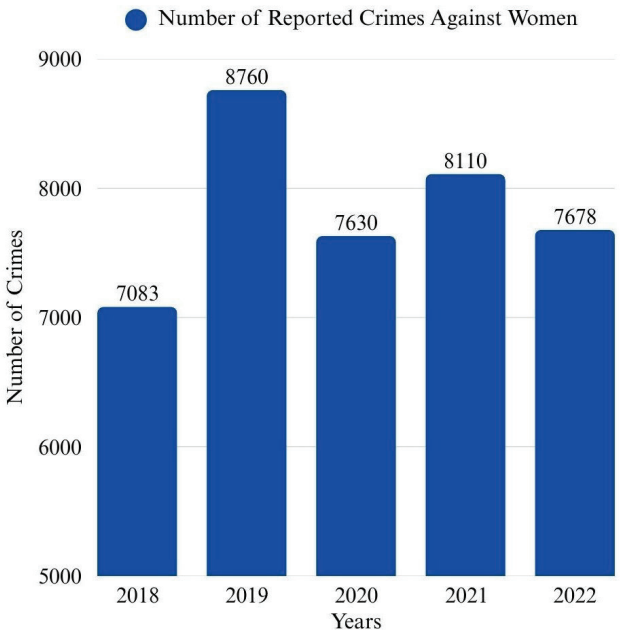
## 1.2 Prevalence of Violence Against Women

As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Report of 2022, Jharkhand recorded 7,678 cases of VAWG. Common crimes include:

- Rape (1298 cases)
- Kidnapping and Abduction of Women (1265 cases)
- Assault on Women with the Intent to Outrage Their Modesty (1167 cases) and,
- Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives (870)

The graph below shows the reported Indian Penal Code and Special and Local Laws crimes against women in the state of Jharkhand between 2018 and 2022. In 2022, the chargesheeting rate of 80 percent reflects relatively high levels of case processing. NCRB reports also reveal that the state's case pendency rate saw a reduction from 88.1 percent in 2018 to 54.4 percent in 2022.

**Fig 1: Number of Reported Crimes Against Women in Jharkhand**




*Source:* (The data presented in the graph is compiled from National Crime Records Bureau)

The National Family Health Survey Report of 2015-16 reveals that 35 percent of ever-married women in Jharkhand experienced spousal violence that was emotional, physical, or sexual in nature. In this period, 30.4 percent of women were subject to domestic violence, which included but was not limited to the violence perpetrated by spouses. This refers to acts of physical violence, sexual violence, or both. The 2019-21 Report by NFHS noted that spousal violence saw a minor reduction to 34 percent during the period, while domestic violence increased to 34 percent.

Between 2015 and 2016, a mere 8.8 percent of VAWG survivors across the country sought help from medical professionals, police personnel, lawyers, social service organisations, or other non-family entities. An increase in help-seeking tendencies was noted between 2019 and 2021, with 15.4 percent of VAWG survivors seeking assistance. According to NFHS-5, in Jharkhand, 30 percent of women aged 18-49 have experienced physical violence, and seven percent have experienced sexual violence. Overall, 32 percent of women experienced physical or sexual violence and five percent have experienced both physical

and sexual violence. Twelve percent of ever-married women between the ages of 18 and 49 have also reported that they have experienced emotional violence committed by their husband. Additionally, five percent of ever-married women aged 18-49 reported that their husbands had physically forced them to have sex; four percent reported that their husbands had forced them with threats or in any other way to engage in sexual activities when they did not want to.

However, only nine percent of women aged 18-49 who have experienced physical or sexual violence sought help, while 12 percent never sought help but disclosed their experience to someone. A large majority, about 78 percent, neither sought help nor disclosed their experiences. The primary sources of assistance for the group that sought assistance were either their own family (57 percent) or their husband's family (12 percent). It appears that the number of individuals seeking assistance through institutional support is low, with only four percent of individuals seeking assistance from the police.

# 2. Institutional Mechanisms

The institutional mechanisms developed under the central laws and state laws constitute the core framework in the combating of VAWG in Jharkhand. The Department of WCD plays a crucial role in the implementation of many of the central schemes and programmes along with the police, who are responsible for enforcement and prosecution of the crimes under BNS and BNSS. The section provides a comprehensive overview of the existing institutional mechanisms under key departments that are responsible for prevention, protection, prosecution, rehabilitation, reintegration, and coordination and governance for combating VAWG in Jharkhand.

## 2.1 Role of the Department of Women, Child Development, and Social Security

**One Stop Centres:** As of June 30, 2025, Jharkhand has 24 operational One Stop Centres one in each district, which have handled 6,255 cases. OSCs and Sakhi Centres are an integral part of the state government in providing services to women in distress, including rescue, medical aid, police liaison, legal assistance, psychological counselling, temporary shelter, and video conferencing under one roof.

Since their inception, OSCs in Jharkhand have handled nearly 6,000 plus cases, providing integrated support including police assistance, medical aid, counselling, legal aid, and temporary shelter. Currently 24 OSCs are operational across all districts, with seven additional centres approved for high-population areas (Times of India 2025).

**Vivah Sahayatra Yojana (2020):** Provides financial support for marriages of girls from economically weaker families, promoting legal-age marriage.

**Savitribai Phule Kishori Samriddhi Yojana:** The Savitribai Phule Kishori Samriddhi Yojana, launched by the Department of Women and Child Development and Social Security, Government of Jharkhand, is a statewide initiative to combat gender discrimination and promote girls' empowerment. The scheme seeks to counter female foeticide, child marriage, low sex ratio, and weak educational attainment by addressing social and economic barriers. Its objectives include promoting girls' education, eradicating child marriage, supporting higher educational expenses, improving adolescent health and hygiene, fostering women's empowerment, and enabling adolescent girls to make independent life choices.

**Protection Officers under PWDVA:** In line with Section 8 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA), Jharkhand has appointed a total of 136 Protection Officers to facilitate the effective implementation of the Act. Significantly, of these, 129 are women and only seven are men (PIB 2013).

**Dowry Prohibition Officers:** Under the provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, the State Government of Jharkhand has appointed 24 Dowry Prohibition Officers (DPOs) to monitor compliance with the Act and prevent dowry-related offences. These officers are empowered to collect evidence for prosecution and undertake inquiries with the support of District Probation Officers, wherever necessary. The Chief Dowry Prohibition Officer coordinates the DPOs, who are responsible for the statewide implementation, public awareness initiatives, and the preparation of annual reports to enhance accountability and policy response (PIB 2013).

**Swadhar Greh Scheme:** In Jharkhand, under the Swadhar Greh Scheme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (revised with effect from April 1, 2016), there are five Swadhar Grehs with a sanctioned capacity of 150. As per data for FY 2021-22, the occupancy was 18, indicating the extent of utilisation of these units within the state (PIB 2022).

## 2.2 Law Enforcement Agencies

**Mahila Thanas:** In order to enhance the safety and security of women, the Jharkhand Police has rolled out multiple measures, including the deployment of women officers in police stations, the establishment of Mahila Thanas, and specialised training in gender sensitivity. Currently, there are 20 Mahila Police Stations functioning in the state. Additionally, 42.6 percent of police stations have established women help desks, while women constitute only 6.2 percent of the overall police force. Within the officer cadre, the share of women is at 4.3 percent (India Justice Report 2025).

**Special Cell for Women's Safety:** The Jharkhand Police has established a dedicated Special Cell to strengthen institutional responses to crimes against women and enhance victim support. Spearheaded by the Additional Director General (ADG), the Cell is designed to provide a responsive mechanism for addressing harassment, domestic violence, and other forms of violence against women. Staffed with trained officers, it focuses on survivor-sensitive handling of complaints and investigations, while also coordinating with local authorities, NGOs, and women's groups to extend legal aid, counselling, and awareness. In addition to monitoring the progress of cases, the Cell undertakes preventive measures through community outreach and awareness campaigns (Suraksha—The Police News 2025).

**Shakti-App:** The Shakti initiative, launched by the Jharkhand Police, is an android-based mobile application designed to enhance women's safety and security. Upon installation and registration, which required the user's name, mobile number, and details of at least three relatives or friends, the application equips women with the ability to send a real-time distress signal. By pressing the HELP button on the home screen, an alert is simultaneously transmitted to the Police Control Room and the registered mobile contacts, ensuring a swift response mechanism.

The initiative not only addresses the urgent need for rapid assistance in cases of threat or violence but also builds trust between citizens and law enforcement by leveraging digital tools for safety. To preserve the integrity of the system, the application is to be used exclusively in genuine distress situations; any form of false reporting or misuse is considered a punishable offence.

**Hum Tum Nirbheek:** The Hum Tum Nirbheek, launched by the Jharkhand Police, is a child protection and adolescent safety initiative aimed at empowering schoolgirls to report and resist harassment, eve-teasing, molestation, and related violations. Beginning with 50 government girls' schools in Ranchi, the campaign provides anonymous complaint boxes in schools, monitored weekly by local police, along with dedicated helpline numbers. Specially trained female officers conduct awareness sessions, educate students on forms of violence and legal remedies, and build confidence in reporting incidents. School-level safety committees, led mainly by female teachers, offer counselling support, while sensitisation sessions on child marriage, child labour, eve-teasing, and sexual exploitation are also carried out.

**Nirbhaya Shakti Mahila Arakshi:** Jharkhand Police has launched the Nirbhaya Shakti Mahila Arakshi initiative, deploying specially trained women constables across 38 women's police stations and high-crime areas to address offences against women and children, particularly sexual crimes. Out of 450 applicants, 150 constables were selected, with training conducted at the Investigation Training Institute in Hotwar. The first batch of 45 constables has already been deployed, while the second batch of 46 has begun training. These officers are equipped not only to investigate cases but also to provide primary medical aid, counselling, and courtroom support, ensuring a more survivor-centric approach (TaazaTV 2024).

**Prahari:** In July 2024, the Jharkhand Police introduced the Prahari initiative in Seraikela Kharswan district to strengthen community safety and address rising incidents of crime, drug peddling, and harassment of women. Under this initiative, police personnel will conduct regular foot patrols at least three days a week, focusing on 128 identified sensitive routes, 146 hotspots of unlawful gatherings, and 51 areas vulnerable to criminal activities. The program seeks to instill public confidence, curb eve-teasing, regulate illegal parking, improve traffic management, and enhance overall law enforcement visibility (Press Trust of India 2024).

- **100/112 Police Control Room:** Provides round-the-clock emergency assistance and rapid response for citizens in distress.
- **1091 (Women Helpline):** Dedicated line for women facing harassment, violence, or emergencies requiring immediate support.
- **9771432103 (Mahila Helpline):** State-level helpline offering assistance, guidance, and protection services for women in need.
- **9771432133 (Cyber Crime Helpline):** Specialised support line to report and address cyber-related offenses.
- **8877444444 (Children Helpline):** A child-specific helpline catering to emergencies, protection, and welfare concerns of minors.
- **18003457019 Sahyog Helpline**



## 2.3 Judicial Support

**Jharkhand Legal Services Authority (JHALSA):** JHALSA, constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, functions with the mandate to ensure access to justice for all, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable sections of society. Under the supervision of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), JHALSA provides free legal services and counselling to women, children, and other vulnerable groups in distress.

It undertakes legal awareness programmes addressing issues such as domestic violence, dowry harassment, workplace harassment, property rights, and child marriage. JHALSA also extends support through victim compensation schemes and provides rehabilitation assistance to survivors of violence and trafficking.

**Project SAHYOG:** JHALSA has launched Project Sahyog as a dedicated initiative to extend effective intervention and support for victims of violence against women. Implemented through the District Legal Service Authorities (DLSAs) and Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committees, the project ensures that women facing violence and exploitation are not left without timely legal, medical, and rehabilitative assistance.

Under Sahyog, JHALSA provides free legal aid to women who are victims of crime and facilitates access to counselling by experts to address trauma and emotional well-being. The project also assists in ensuring proper medical treatment and helps victims in filing applications under the Jharkhand Victim Compensation Scheme, enabling them to secure financial relief. Further, JHALSA takes proactive steps towards the rehabilitation of victims and supports them in accessing the benefits of various government welfare schemes aimed at women's protection. No data is publicly available to assess the effectiveness of the project.

**Juvenile Justice-cum-POCSO Committee:** In Jharkhand, the Juvenile Justice Committee and POCSO Committee were merged in 2023 to a single Juvenile Justice-cum-POCSO Committee to oversee child protection and justice mechanisms. The Committee monitors implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, engages with government departments, NGOs, and stakeholders and addresses challenges in inter-agency coordination. A dedicated Juvenile Justice Secretariat, established in 2017, supports the Committee and oversees statutory bodies, including Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees, and Special Juvenile Police Units (High Court Jharkhand 2025).

**Victim Compensation Scheme, 2012:** The Jharkhand Victim Compensation Scheme, 2012, notified under Section 357A of the CrPC, provides financial support and rehabilitation to victims of crime and their dependents. It is implemented through the Jharkhand State Legal Services Authority. Claims are processed by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), chaired by the Principal District and Sessions Judge, with oversight provided by the State Committee, led by the Director of Prosecution.

In Jharkhand, 370 applications were decided, 145 were pending, and ₹1.57 crore compensation was awarded in 2016-17. The following year, 680 cases were decided, 524 were pending, with ₹3.79 crore compensation. In 2018-19, 373 applications were decided, pendency rose to 981, and ₹5.94 crore was awarded. By 2019-20, 484 cases were decided, 1,149 were pending, and ₹9.89 crore was granted. In 2020-21, decisions dropped to 222, pending rose to 1,383, and ₹4.26 crore was disbursed. Recovery was seen in the following year, with 672 cases decided, 1,026 pending, and ₹12.28 crore awarded. In 2022-23, 512 cases were decided, pendency climbed to 1,395, with ₹16.13 crore awarded. The year 2023-24 saw the highest spike, with 846 cases decided, 1,625 pending, and ₹26.51 crore awarded. Finally, in 2024-25, 983 cases were decided, pendency increased to 1,934, while compensation slightly declined to ₹25.30 crore (NALSA Statistical Information on Victim Compensation Scheme, from 2016 to 2025).

## 2.4 Jharkhand State Commission for Women

The Jharkhand State Commission for Women, established in 1993 as a statutory body, serves as an important institutional body for safeguarding the rights and welfare of women in the state. The Commission addresses a wide range of issues and crimes against women, ensuring their access to justice and state protection mechanisms.

## 2.5 Interventions for Addressing Witch-Hunting

**Prevention of Witch (DAAIN) Practices Act, 2001:** The Prevention of Witch (Daain) Practices Act, 2001, was enacted in Jharkhand to curb witch-branding and related violence, predominantly affecting women in tribal and rural areas. The Act criminalises the identification of any person as a witch (Section 3), the infliction of physical or mental harm on such grounds (Section 4), and abetment in witch-branding (Section 5). It further prohibits so-called witch-curing practices, including jhad-phook or totka, where harm is caused in the name of healing (Section 6). All offences under the Act are cognisable and non-bailable (Section 7), and

the state government is empowered to frame necessary implementation (Section 8). Penalties include imprisonment ranging from three months to one year, along with fines.

**Fast Track Courts for Witch-Hunting Cases:** The Jharkhand government has approved the establishment of fast-track courts in five districts to expedite trials in witch-branding cases, where almost 50 women are killed annually and over 700 since 2000. While Jharkhand enacted the Anti-Witchcraft Act in 2001 and set up a Special Investigation Team, stakeholders note that the law remains weak, with no penalties for ojhas who instigate violence (IANS 2016).

**Project Garima:** Project Garima is a rehabilitation and awareness initiative launched by the Jharkhand government in April 2022 under the leadership of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, with the aim of eradicating the deeply entrenched and discriminatory practice of branding women as witches. Implemented through the JSLPS, the project focuses on identifying and supporting women who have faced social stigma, violence, and displacement due to false witchcraft accusations. So far, over a thousand women have been identified across 25 selected blocks in the state. The initiative combines psychological, social, and economic rehabilitation, while also working to raise awareness against misuse of witchcraft allegations, often linked to enmity and land grabbing.

**Project Suraksha:** The project was recently launched by JHALSA to address witch-hunting by raising awareness about medical conditions and scientific causes, encouraging the communities to reach out to qualified medical health facilities rather than "ojhas" and other superstitious institutions that lead to witch-blaming. DLSAs will spearhead the campaigns in collaboration with private and public hospitals and NGOs (Sahay 2025).

## 2.5 Interventions for Addressing Witch-Hunting

### NGO Initiatives

A wide range of civil society organisations in Jharkhand are complementing state-led efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG). The Ahaan Foundation, established by Rashmi Tiwary, works directly with tribal communities to address domestic violence by challenging entrenched socio-cultural practices, raising awareness on women's rights, and tackling issues such as alcoholism that perpetuate abuse. Shakti Vahaini, a New Delhi-based NGO with a strong presence in Jharkhand, addresses witch-hunting, human trafficking, and domestic violence through legal aid, survivor support, and sustained advocacy within tribal communities. The Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) programme, implemented by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in partnership with CINI and LEADS, has been rolled out across schools in Ranchi and Khunti districts. It trains teachers and engages adolescents in classroom discussions related to gender attitude and violence-preventive behaviours. Yuwa, founded in 2009, empowers girls from marginalised rural communities by combining football training with access to formal English-medium education and leadership training, thereby reducing vulnerability to child marriage and trafficking. Pratigya, launched in 2007, works at both grassroots and policy levels to secure access to quality education for girls by providing scholarships and tracking dropouts. It has mobilised advocacy campaigns on issues like rape-free India, ending child marriage, and preventing child trafficking; it is also a partner in the global Girls Not Brides network. Similarly, the Srijan Foundation, active since 2001 in nine districts of Jharkhand, has implemented community interventions to strengthen women's security and children's rights. Pratigya has collaborated with Jagori to roll out the Safe City Programme in Hazaribagh and with Girls Not Brides to advance campaigns against child marriage. These organisations play a crucial role in creating safer environments, promoting gender equity, and building resilience among women and girls in Jharkhand.

## Insights from Workshop Discussions [1]

**Rape Response in Medical Sector**

- Lack of clarity on medical treatment facilitation via OSCs and Project Sahyog
- Insufficient data on integration of legal and medical services at taluk levels
- Duplication of services across agencies like OSCs and JHALSA

**Institutional Capacity Challenges (WCD, Police, Health, Legal Services, PRIs and NGOs)**

- One Stop Centres are often understaffed
- Shelter homes (including Nari Niketans and Shakti Sadans) have uncertain capacity and weak funding mechanisms
- Unclear duration of stay and livelihood support at shelter homes
- Limited training for OSC staff and ineffective monitoring systems
- Lack of clarity on funding, staffing, and effectiveness of Mahila Police Volunteers and AHTUs

  Interdepartmental coordination remains a challenge

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- No detailed system described for monitoring OSCs, shelters, or coordination centres
- Lack of clarity on follow-ups, case tracking, and real-time data systems
- Vague oversight mechanisms for state-run support services

**Legal Bottlenecks**

- Ambiguity on implementation of the Witch Practices Act and case data
- Unclear data on the legal reach and effectiveness of Project Sahyog and compensation schemes
- Tribal dispute systems function outside formal legal frameworks, complicating access to justice
- Judiciary and police approaches to VAWG remain underexplored in terms of sensitivity and training
- Unclear processes and delays in victim compensation fund disbursal

[1] *Workshop held on 29th and 30th June 2025 in Ranchi.*

# 3. Analysis of Institutional Mechanisms

## 3.1 Prevention

A. **Existence of State Policies and Action Plans on VAWG Prevention:** Although a State Women's Policy was drafted in 2014, it was left unimplemented. Since then, there has been no policy by the Jharkhand State Government specifically addressing violence against women and girls.

B. **VAWG Sensitisation in School Curricula and Engagement with Men and Boys:** ICRW's GEMS initiative in collaboration with JCERT offers training to school-going children on promoting equality and preventing violence. This initiative focuses on boys and young men as part of an early intervention effort. The initiative focuses on reshaping young minds for a long-term impact on anti-VAWG efforts. These efforts are yet to be integrated into school curricula as an essential component.

C. **Community-Based Awareness Programmes:** A study by BMC International Health and Human Rights highlighted that community mobilisation through participatory learning and action groups (PLA) had a positive impact on how VAWG was viewed. This initiative was led by ASHAs, emphasising the importance of grassroots-level engagement in prevention strategies. Although proven to be effective, PLAs are not consistently implemented across the state. Beyond this, initiatives emerging from the community level are also limited.

D. **Training of Frontline Officials:** As per the India Justice Report of 2025 (IJR), Jharkhand Police has utilised only 89.2 percent of its training budget. Of the total budget allocated to the Police Department, the training component constitutes only a mere 0.92 percent. NGOs also remain underutilised towards training efforts (India Justice Report 2025).

E. **Monitoring of High-Risk Areas and Hotspots:** There are no targeted interventions by the Police Department to identify and monitor areas vulnerable to crimes against women. This weakens prevention efforts, limiting police action to a reactive stance after the crime has occurred.

## 3.2 Protection

A. **Availability and Accessibility of Schemes:** 24 OSCs are available in the state for shelter and protection of approaching survivors, with seven more being approved to tackle the load in highly populated areas. While OSC guidelines mandate 24/7 working of OSC, in Jharkhand OSC work for 6-8 hours a day. Accessibility from peripheral regions of each district, however, still remains an issue. "Hardly any tribal woman is availing the services at OSC" (Stakeholder Interview, July 2025).

Staffing gaps remain, with each centre possessing only three or four staff members as opposed to the mandated 12. This leads to hurdles in the day-to-day operations of OSCs. There is also low awareness of the integrated support centre's protection services, even among police personnel. Towards this, the Jharkhand Women's Development Society (JWDS) is initiating training and awareness drives.

B. **Responsiveness of Institutions:** The state has exhibited low POSH compliance in the past, with only the details of Khunti district's Local Complaints Committee being publicly available. In February 2025, Jharkhand became one of the five states that was fined by the Supreme Court of India for its POSH non-compliance, indicating the inadequacy of institutional response.

Cybercrime cases of several districts were cited to be redirected to a single OSC, causing workload. This indicates the limited resources at various OSCs in tackling cybercrime or related cases.

C. **Survivor-Centric SOPs:** Stakeholders note that institutional apathy remains a major concern within law enforcement. Periodic sensitisation efforts are not carried out, influencing the attitude of staff and quality of service. This undermines survivors' experience and discourages individuals from seeking protection services. There are no standard operating procedures for departments dealing with VAWG cases.

D. **Availability of Legal Aid and Health Support:** IJR 2025 indicates that only 51 percent of the state's legal aid budget has been utilised. JHALSA's Project Sahyog was launched with the specific purpose of easing access to immediate legal, medical, and rehabilitative assistance to survivors of VAWG. They were also intended to provide assistance in availing the Victim Compensation Scheme and other welfare schemes from the government. Although it was envisioned as a dedicated one-stop telephonic assistance in availing services, the helpline number is not operational (India Justice Report 2025).

E. **Availability of Safe Shelters:** Temporary accommodation is provided at OSCs across the state. However, only five government-run Swadhar Grehs, three Nari Niketans, and two Sakhi Niwas' are operational for survivors who are seeking long-term rehabilitation. This reflects a significant reliance on NGOs and privately operated shelters for both temporary and long-term accommodation of VAWG survivors.

F. **Data Protection and Confidentiality Measures:** The Jharkhand High Court has recently issued guidelines for Recording of Evidences of Vulnerable Witnesses, 2025, that covers children under 18 and POCSO survivors. These guidelines are intended to help them dispose of evidence before the court in a confident way, without fear (Jharkhand High Court 2024). The HC also observed that sharing information of the survivor identity of sexual crimes on platforms such as Whatsapp, is also punishable (Verdictum 2024).

## 3.3 Prosecution

A. **Special Fast Track Courts (FTSCs):** As of July 2025, Jharkhand has concluded the FTSC scheme. During its operational years, FTSCs in the state disposed of a total of 9,114 cases. The state also experiences a high pendency rate of 54.4 percent, as of the 2022 NCRB data.

B. **Functioning of Public Prosecutors for VAWG:** A dedicated cohort of prosecutors specialising in VAWG remains absent. Coordination efforts between prosecutors and DLSAs also remain inconsistent. Further, inadequate compensation serves as a disincentive for sustained engagement by prosecutors.

C. **FIR Registration, Rate of Charge-sheeting, and Conviction:** The SLSA and DLSAs do not collaborate effectively with OSCs, thereby weakening support for survivors in filing FIRs and navigating the legal system. Lack of awareness, social stigma, and institutional apathy remain as barriers to FIR registration. In 2022, the charge-sheeting rate in the state for crimes against women was at 80%. However, the conviction rate remained at a mere 6.3 percent during the period.

D. **Victim-friendly Procedures:** Mechanisms to ease court proceedings, such as video conferencing, shielding during testimony, and child-friendly rooms, remain unimplemented in the state. There is also no VAWG-sensitisation training in place for judicial officials at present. Stakeholders note that the judiciary shows a lack of sensitivity in handling cases involving VAWG survivors. Cases are not resolved within the stipulated time, leading to repeated court visits for women causing emotional and financial strain. Systemic apathy weakens public trust in the legal process and undermines the quality of survivor engagement.

## 3.4 Rehabilitation

A. **Access to Trauma Counselling and Medical Services:** Psycho-social counselling is provided at OSCs. Beyond OSC assistance, trauma counselling and mental health services remain largely inaccessible for VAWG survivors. The availability of sexual-assault-focused care and adherence to VAWG protocols also remains limited across hospitals.

B. **Livelihood Generation:** The Aaghaaz initiative seeks to provide skilling and income-generation support to survivors of trafficking. This represents an important collaboration between the Social Welfare Department and NGOs to strengthen rehabilitation efforts. Similar efforts for survivors of other forms of VAWG, however, are currently not in place.

C. **Compensation Schemes:** While the Jharkhand Victim Compensation Scheme allows for a quick compensatory process, the ease and rate of approval, as well as timelines of disbursement in practice, remain uncertain. The lack of coordination between DLSAs and OSCs further slows this process. The unavailability of the Sahyog helpline, envisioned to ease compensation processes, hinders access to financial support and discourages survivors from legally pursuing cases.

D. **Accessibility of Services in Tribal Areas:** Tribal populations go unaccounted for in the current VAWG support service framework. There are no focused rehabilitation initiatives by the state to provide assistance in tribal regions. Cultural stigma further exacerbates the issue for tribal survivors seeking institutional support. Most shelter services are located in urban or suburban localities, with limited penetration into tribal regions. Logistical constraints hinder accessibility for survivors hailing from these regions. Mobile outreach models are also absent, further curbing accessibility.

## 3.5 Reintegration

A. **Support for Re-enrolment in Education**: Jharkhand has weak institutional frameworks to support the education re-enrollment of VAWG survivors. Guidance and counseling for survivors to access higher education and vocational training is largely lacking. NGOs such as Pradan and community-based organisations work in partnership with open schools to provide educational access, but the scale and scope of these efforts are limited.

B. **Workplace Reintegration Policies and Anti-discrimination Protections:** Jharkhand does not have a formalised system specifically for workplace reintegration and anti-discrimination protections. Initiatives such as the Mukhyamantri Udyami Yojana and JSLPS offer economic opportunities via skill development and entrepreneurship, but neither has any specific provision addressing workplace reintegration nor discrimination faced by survivors. JSWC provides vocational training via recognised institutions to improve employability, but the absence of targeted workplace policies makes survivors susceptible to marginalisation, which in turn hampers their economic rehabilitation.

C. **Support Against Stigma from Families and Communities:** Socio-cultural stigma is being addressed informally by organisations like Pradan, Torang Trust, and ActionAid, as well as by community workers, including Sahiyas and Anganwadi workers. The JSWC offers counselling to facilitate emotional rehabilitation, and groups such as ActionAid operate awareness programs to counter VAWG stigma. These activities are, however, fragmented and lack a policy-driven approach, restricting their scope in mitigating stigma at family and community levels.

D. **Monitoring Post-Institutional Outcomes:** Monitoring outcomes is not carried out systematically. At present, OSC staff or the respective NGOs informally track post-institutional outcomes. Grassroots-level workers such as

Sahiyas and Anganwadi workers are best placed for long-term follow-ups, but they need improved training and funding.

E. **Involvement of Local Leaders and PRIs**: Male-dominated leadership in PRIs and low participation by women constrain the effectiveness of these institutions to tackle reintegration of survivors. NGO-driven initiatives involving local leaders do not have official recognition and possess limited resources as a result.

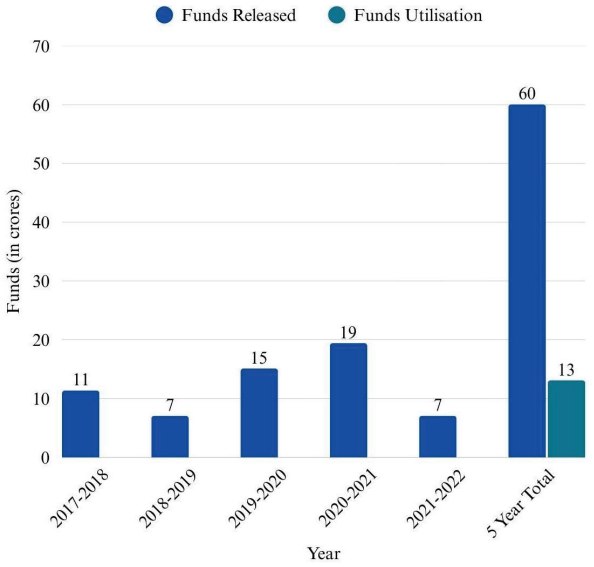
F. **Inclusion of Survivors in Policy Consultation Processes:** Survivors in Jharkhand are not involved in policy-making or feedback processes, undermining the effectiveness of reintegration.

## 3.6 Coordination and Governance

A. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** There are no structured mechanisms to assess departmental performance and address gaps. There is also no integrated Management Information System (MIS) to track survivor progress, service usage, or institutional performance, thereby weakening institutional accountability and hindering evidence-backed policy adjustments.

B. **Budgetary Allocations and Utilisation:** The graph below indicates funds released and utilised for Nirbhaya-funded projects and schemes between 2017 and 2022. Out of the total allocated funds to the state of Jharkhand, a mere 21.82 percent have been utilised towards the respective projects and schemes (Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022).

**Figure 2: Funds Released and Utilised by Jharkhand Government**

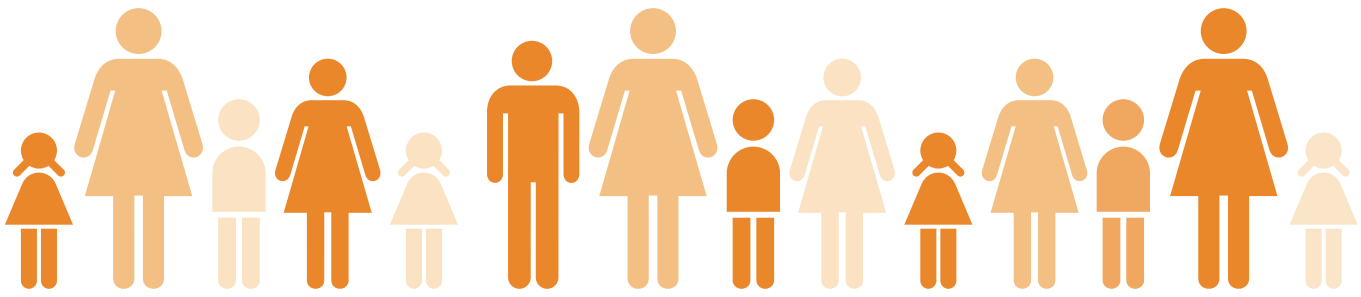



*Source:* Rajya Sabha Session 256 2022

**Table 1: Year-wise Fund Allocation and Utilisation for One Stop Centres (in Lakhs)**

| Year | Funds Allocated (in Lakhs) | Fund Utilised (in Lakhs) |
|---|---|---|
| 2016-17 | 56.83 | 41.2 |
| 2017-18 | 18.47 | 0 |
| 2018-19 | 704.37 | 63.2 |
| 2019-20 | 408.53 | NA |
| 2020-21 | 697.25 | 7 |

(The data presented in the table is drawn from Press Information Bureau (PIB) reports and Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India sources.)



In Jharkhand, the allocation and utilisation of funds for One-Stop Centres over the years reflect both the scaling up of the scheme and persistent utilisation gaps. In 2016-17, ₹56.83 lakhs was allocated, of which ₹41.20 lakhs was utilised, indicating relatively strong expenditure efficiency in the initial phase. However, in 2017-18, although ₹18.47 lakhs was allocated, utilisation fell to zero, signaling possible administrative or operational delays. The scheme received a major financial boost in 2018-19 with an allocation of ₹704.37 lakhs, yet only ₹63.20 lakhs was spent, highlighting significant underutilisation. In 2019-20 and 2020-21, allocations stood at ₹408.53 lakhs and ₹691.25 lakhs respectively, and across the three years from 2018-19 to 2020-21, the combined utilisation was ₹355.37 lakhs, which is less than one-fifth of the total funds available.



C. **Role Clarity and Accountability:** The fragmented responsibilities between police, health, JHALSA, OSCs, and NGOs contribute to survivor fatigue. Mandates, although clearly defined, remain weakly enforced. Moreover, accountability structures need to be put in place to strengthen institutional intervention of VAWG.

D. **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** In instances where a department underperforms, or approaching survivors encounter difficulties in accessing or interacting with government agencies responsible for providing VAWG support, there is no centralised mechanism in place to address these issues. This further weakens institutional accountability and public trust in the system.

E. **Adoption of Tech Platforms:** The state has yet adopted tech platforms to facilitate interdepartmental coordination, enable grievance redressal, track case progress, or provide integrated service delivery for survivors. Although a helpline number under Project Sahyog was launched for legal, medical, and counselling services, it remains non-operational at present.

# 4. Policy Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the policy recommendations are divided into three major target timelines. The short-term recommendations are to be implemented in a year timeline, medium-term within two to three years, and long-term in five years. This enables a targeted and phased approach for VAWG state actions.

## Short-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Strengthening of OSCs in Jharkhand**<br>- **Ensure 24/7 working of OSCs**<br>- **Fill the vacancies and enable full staff strength as per the OSC guidelines, with temporary shelter facilities.** | While 24 OSCs in 24 districts are operational in Jharkhand, many are affected by understaffing. Hardly three to four staff handle each OSC, while central guidelines mandate 12. The working hours are also affected due to a shortage of staff. The number of women assisted by existing OSCs is low in Jharkhand compared to other states with a similar number of OSCs (Shakti Dashboard, GoI). Thus, there is an immediate need to conduct more recruitments, fill the vacancies, and ensure round-the-clock functioning of OSCs in Jharkhand.<br><br>The state plans to enhance the reach and accessibility of OSCs by establishing seven additional centres. This process needs to be expedited, with a stronger focus on tribal districts, as tribal women currently make limited use of OSC services despite Jharkhand's tribal population exceeding 30 percent. The Tribal Digital Atlas can serve as a valuable tool for identifying suitable locations for the newly planned OSCs, while also guiding future expansions.<br><br>Regular audits and reporting on the working of OSC must be ensured for improved implementation of the scheme. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Decentralising Grievance Redressal Mechanisms under Police, Department of Social Welfare, JHALSA** | While there are established systems like the State Police Complaint Authority and the Samadhan Jharkhand platform, to file the complaints against the nonperformance of the government officials, these are not accessible or known to the general public.<br><br>Greater accountability of governmental services can be assured through effective grievance redressal bodies. Hence, strengthening the existing systems and improving the reach of these systems through a decentralised model by integrating tech would be the way ahead.<br><br>Every training programme must have sessions on providing awareness about grievance redressal systems. |
| **Structured Training for VAWG Frontline Staff Across Institutions** | Refresher training is often neglected in the police and WCD. Comparatively, JHALSA reported having more training and sessions for panel lawyers and paralegal volunteers**.**<br><br>Rather than a fragmented approach, it is important to develop common training modules for frontline staff of various institutions. While specialised modules are required to be provided by concerned departments, the staff of every institution must be provided basic training in the following modules:<br><br>1. Gender Norms and Sensitisation<br>2. Trauma-Informed Care and Counselling<br>3. Legal Module<br>4. Police Module<br>5. Rehabilitation Module<br>6. Reintegration module<br>7. Monitoring and Evaluation Module<br>8. Feedback and Follow-up Module |

| | |
|---|---|
| | 9. Cyber Module<br>10. Self-Care Module |
| **Increasing Number of Women Police Officers** | The current percentage of women in the police force is reported to be around 5-6 percent across various sources. As per the MHA advisory, states have to raise the women's representation to 33 percent. According to research studies, more women in policing improves trust among survivors, leading to higher reporting rates of sexual assault and domestic violence (Miller & Segal 2019). |

## Medium-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Building More Shelter Homes for Long-Term Rehabilitation** | The state has limited capacity in Nari Niketans and Shakti Sadans for long-term rehabilitation efforts. Stakeholder interactions further suggest that long-term shelters need to provide specialised care for older women and women with mental challenges, both to avoid conflicts among inmates and to ensure a safer environment.<br>Long-term shelters and the services they provide, such as psychosocial support, livelihood assistance, and skill development, are critical for reintegrating survivors back into society. While India has no set per capita standard for shelter home capacity, it has to be sufficient in number and infrastructural facilities. |
| **Building SOP/Protocol for Data Management and Sharing of Data**<br>- A nodal officer can be designated for data management and facilitation of sharing the data. | Interdepartmental sharing of data is crucial for effective coordination and for avoiding the duplication of efforts toward combating VAWG. Such sharing can help in the effective utilisation of resources. However, there are currently no platforms for sharing the data collected and handled by the respective departments. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Strengthening Support System for Witch-Hunting Survivors**<br><br>- Initiatives to increase health care support in areas where witch-hunting is prevalent must be strengthened. | The menace of witch-hunting and the issues relating to the same are persistent in Jharkhand. The implementation of the laws, attitude of the officials, and the interventional programmes remain weak. One of the core reasons is inadequate health care provision (Alam 2025). Hence, investing in human resources and infrastructural facilities in witch-hunting-affected areas must be increased. |
| **Educational Interventions Among Young Boys and Girls**<br><br>- A structured module on gender norms, safe spaces, relationship skills, and sex education must be curated and provided to students from Class 8 onwards every year. | While the ICRW GEMS initiative is a promising model, more targeted and regular programs must be planned and implemented for sensitising young boys and girls about gender roles, sex, and values in relationships. The Breakthrough India-Bell Bajao Campaign evaluation study has shown increased bystander interventions and reduced tolerance for violence. The BMJ Public Health (2025) Global Systematic Review of 178 VAWG programmes highlights that interventions targeting adolescents and youth, especially those focusing on transforming gender norms and attitudes, are among the most effective (Ullman et al. 2025). |

## Long-Term

| Recommendation | Justification |
|---|---|
| **Setting up State VAWG Safety Board in a Decentralised Model**<br>- Establish a state-level board to oversee the operations of all departments at the state level, and designate a nodal officer to answer to the board.<br>- The Board may be constituted under the leadership of the Chief Minister of the State.<br>**District-Level Women Safety Board Under the Leadership of District Collector.**<br>**Local-Level Women Safety Board Under Local Self-Government .** | The constitution of a Board at the state level will solve the weak coordination between the departments. While the State of Jharkhand has multiple VAWG systems in place like OSC and DLSA, and others, the connection and coordination between these agencies are leading to duplication of efforts.<br>Effective use of the existing institutional framework to optimise their efforts must be the way forward. To streamline, there has to be a strong referral system in place along with proper data management. |
| **Effective participation of LSGs and JSLPS**<br>Every LSG is to bring Gender Action Plans with JSLPS.<br>An active collaboration between LSGs and JSLPS by training women from the community to act as an anchor against VAWG crimes in the neighborhoods through supporting systems like Gender Resource Centers must be planned and implemented. | An active role could be played by LSGs, drawing inspiration from Jagrata Samitis of Kerala and missions that support the implementation of laws related to VAWG at the ward level through prevention and protection strategies.<br>Jharkhand, being a state with a 30 percent tribal population, cannot rely on district-level OSCs alone to reach the whole state. Building Gender Action Plans at LSG level in collaboration with JSLPS, with specific objectives considering the socio-economic context, would be beneficial in tackling VAWG cases. LSGs can act proactively with safety mapping in collaboration with SHGs and local NGOs and prioritise their interventional strategies. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **State-Level VAWG Dashboard and MIS System**<br><br>- Every district must have a VAWG Dashboard Nodal Officer who works with the district-level VAWG institutions like OSC, DLSA, and others, to ensure the data collected are properly recorded into an integrated MIS dashboard that could act as a database for tracking the cases, disposal rate, remedies, follow-up, rehabilitation, and reintegration efforts adopted by various agencies. This helps in plugging the gaps through informed decision-making. | Inefficient data management results in fragmented efforts and survivor fatigue. To overcome delays, reduce revictimising the survivors, and ensure improved standards of service delivery, data collection, analysis, and reporting are crucial. The Women Safety Wing of Telangana has invested in an MIS dashboard that helps them to better manage the various activities under the department aiming to reduce the VAWG crimes in the state, with survivor feedback integrated into the system. |
| **Strengthening Skilling and Workplace Reintegration for VAWG Survivors**<br><br>In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Skills, WCD must bring skilling initiatives targeting VAWG survivors, with appropriate financial support. The skilling programme must be oriented towards recognising the skills and interests of the survivor, rather than taking a uniform approach. | Often, the reintegration efforts adopt a uniform approach and do not match with the existing skills and education of a survivor, resulting in the untoward incident in her life affecting her future opportunities. Thus, recognition and assessment of existing skills has to be part of the reintegration efforts. |
| **Bring Out a State Level VAWG Action Plan** | The formulation of a State Action Plan provides a framework for intersectoral collaboration, enabling diverse stakeholders to coordinate efforts toward achieving systemic and sustainable change. |

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# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE U.S. AND INDIA

07

# 1. Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to understand the institutional mechanisms and policy framework to combat violence against women and girls in the USA, including government institutions, referral services, and public-private partnerships. By examining the countries' legal and institutional frameworks to address violence against women and girls, the chapter highlights structural differences, institutional innovations, and points of convergence. The aim is not only to map the distinct trajectories, but also to explore how models from each system can inform more comprehensive, survivor-centred responses to violence against women and girls.

# 2. Comparative Analysis of Legal Frameworks on Crimes Against Women

Legal frameworks in India and the USA combating different types of VAWG are listed below. The tables highlight convergences and deviations in definition and scope, reliefs provided, delivery networks, and funding structures.

## 2.1 Domestic Violence

Enacted in 2005, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) is India's primary legislation addressing domestic violence and related crimes against women. Its legislative counterpart in the USA is the Violence Against Women Act, introduced in 1994 (VAWA).

| | India: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA) | USA: Violence Against Women Act, 1994 (VAWA) |
|---|---|---|
| **Definition and Scope** | Broadly defined. Covers physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic abuse in a domestic setting. | Covers both domestic and intimate-partner settings including sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. |
| **Reliefs Provided** | Protection orders, shelters, custodial services, monetary support for cases, and compensation. | Civil protection orders, shelter, and financial support. |
| **Delivery Network** | WCD, Police, Protection Officers, DLSAs, OSCs, and Judiciary. | OVW at the federal-level. Legal aid at the state-level. Shelters and training by non-state actors. |
| **Funding** | Only direct service providers are funded. | State governments are provided funding to offer legal aid services. Grants are awarded to NGOs and universities to provide shelters and carry out training and research. |

Both PWDVA and VAWA converge on providing protection and rehabilitation facilities, including safe housing and financial assistance. However, VAWA extends its scope beyond domestic settings to cover dating violence and stalking. The two differ primarily in delivery networks and funding models, with India relying more heavily on state machinery, and USA emphasising on grants-based partnerships with NGOs and universities.

## 2.2 Harassment at Workplace

India's Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH) is a legislation dedicated to harassment at workplace that targets women. Similarly, USA's Civil Rights Act, 1964 addresses harassment based on sex under Sections 703 and 704 of Title VII.

| | India: Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH) | USA: Civil Rights Act (1964) |
|---|---|---|
| **Definition and Scope** | Focuses specifically on sexual harassment at workplace with targeted strategies addressing prevention, prohibition, and redressal.<br><br>Harassment is holistically defined as physical advances, sexually coloured remarks, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature, threat of future employment, hostile work environment, etc.<br>Wide applicability with interns, volunteers, and workers not remunerated by the employer being covered along with regular, temporary and ad hoc employees.<br>Extended workspaces like cafeterias, parties, and work-related travel are also covered. | Harassment at the workplace falls under a broader legislation on anti-discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, and national origin (Section 703 and 704, Title VII).<br>Specified under "Unlawful Employment Practices," it remains a civil matter federally. Frequent verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, sexual favours, and a hostile work environment are covered as sexual harassment at workplace. Off-hand comments and isolated incidents are not covered.<br>While state laws differ, only the employer can be sued under federal law instead of the harasser. |
| **Reliefs Provided** | Employee training, presence of an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), annual reports, and compensation for the aggrieved are mandated under the Act. | Employee training, ICC, and compensation are provided as per the respective state laws. |
| **Delivery Network** | ICC, District Officer, Police, DLSA, and Judiciary. | The respective Civil Rights Department of each state, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and the Office of Civil Rights at the National-level. |

Both frameworks mandate preventive mechanisms such as training, complaint committees and compensation for survivors. While POSH is a targeted legislation with wide applicability, in the USA, workplace harassment forms a sub part of broader Civil Rights Act and not a specialised law.

## 2.3 Human Trafficking

India's Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA) was enacted in 1956 in compliance with the 1950 International Convention for the suppression of immoral traffic in women and girls. United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), was enacted in 2000 and reauthorised in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018, in conjunction with the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime and the Palermo Protocol, 2000. In addition, the Abolish Human Trafficking Act, 2017 is USA's broader legislation addressing improved victim support, and enhanced prevention strategies across sectors.

| | India: Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA) | USA: Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000 (TVPA) |
|---|---|---|
| **Definition and Scope** | ITPA focuses on sexual trafficking of women for various purposes. It criminalises prostitution and brothels.<br>The Act identifies trafficked individuals below the age of 21 as minor girls. This complements the provisions under the POCSO Act and the criminal provisions detailed under BNS.<br>BNS Section 143 covers trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation.<br>The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill of 2018, although it lapsed in the Parliament, provided a framework for comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation. | TVPA addresses sexual trafficking, slavery, and involuntary servitude with a focus on preventing violence against women.<br>Recruiting, harbouring, transporting, or providing for girls below the age of 18 accounts for trafficking even in the absence of coercion.<br>The Act grants funds to state and local governments, as well as NGOs for developing rehabilitation services.<br>Nevada is the only state permitting prostitution, but only in 10 of its 17 counties. Paine has decriminalised engaging in prostitutions in 2023. In all other 48 states, it is criminalised. |
| **Reliefs Provided** | Intermediate custody, protective homes, and removal from unsafe locality. | Safe custody, legal counsel, and medical and trauma support are provided as part of emergency services.<br>Immigration relief and protection from deportation are also extended for non-native trafficked persons. |
| **Delivery Network** | WCD, Social Welfare Departments, Police, and Judiciary provide relief services at the state-level. | Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the federal level. State agencies such as Health, Police, Social Services, Child Protection Services, and Justice provide protection services in the respective states. |

Both the legislations converge on criminalising prostitution and related sexual exploitation of persons. While ITPA focuses specifically on the immoral trafficking of women and girls, TVPA covers a wider range of crimes, including sexual trafficking, slavery, and involuntary servitude. Although NGOs and civil society organisations in India are involved in combatting human trafficking, support from state machinery remains limited. In contrast, the USA employs and funds NGOs for rehabilitating survivors.

## 2.4 Child Abuse

The United States has several legislations addressing abuse and exploitation of children. They extend beyond sexual offences against minors to address neglect by parents or guardians. India's Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012, focuses primarily on crimes of a sexual nature, and mandates enhanced protection and prosecution measures for processing POCSO cases.

| | India: Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) | USA: Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, 1974 (CAPTA); Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, 2006; Strengthening Transparency and Obligations to Protect Children Suffering from Abuse and Mistreatment Act, 2023 (STOP CSAM) |
|---|---|---|
| **Definition and Scope** | All individuals under the age of 18 are accounted for in the POCSO Act. It covers sexual assault, harassment, and use of children for pornographic purposes by persons of authority, family members, or custodians. | *CAPTA* provides a comprehensive framework to combat child abuse and neglect, with funding provided by federal authorities for research, training, and technical aid. States design and implement child protection systems, with services provided locally by health, education, and law enforcement agencies.<br>The *Adam Walsh Act* establishes a system for recording and monitoring sex offenders, allows for the confinement of sexually dangerous offenders after imprisonment, and strengthens enforcement of internet safety for minors and child pornography.<br>Under *STOP CSAM*, protections are enhanced for child victims in the Federal Court of Law. Restitution of child victims of abuse, kidnapping, and exploitation are also enhanced. It mandates greater accountability from technology companies for transmission of sensitive content pertaining to young girls. It also mandates a report and remove mechanism for online content promoting child sexual abuse. |

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| **Reliefs Provided** | Mandates child-friendly statement collection and medical examination proceedings. Establishment of special POCSO courts with child-sensitive trial procedures such as video-conferencing. Shelter, counselling, medical support, and compensation is also extended. | *CAPTA*: Grants to states, research and training agencies, and NGOs. Provision of counselling services, long-term protection, and skill-development training.<br>*Adam Walsh Act*: Funding for child protection programmes such as Big Brother/Big Sister, and Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces (ICAC). Enables public online access to information on sex offenders and notifies schools, housing societies, and law enforcement agencies about the relocation of offenders.<br>*STOP CSAM*: Additional federal grants are provided to states and ICAC to enact stronger child abuse laws. Financial safeguards are provided, including compensation and restitution managed by trustees. |
| **Delivery Network** | WCD, POCSO Courts, Special Juvenile Police Units, and Health. | *CAPTA*: Office of Child Abuse and Neglect and Advisory Boards at the federal-level. Child Protection Service Departments at the state-level.<br>*Adam Walsh Act*: Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART) and National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at the federal-level. State Sex Offender Registry Authorities, and Probation and Parole Officers at the state and local-level.<br>*STOP CSAM*: ICAC Task Forces, Child Online Protection Boards, and the Judiciary. |

Both India and USA recognise children as a vulnerable category requiring special legal protection against violence. They also share a common emphasis on enhancing child-sensitive procedures, providing shelter, counselling and medical relief. USA adopts a multi-legislative framework where protection systems against physical, psychological, and sexual violence are emphasised by CAPTA; offender monitoring and collaborations with schools and community-level organisation are emphasised by the Adam Walsh Act; and protection mechanisms and accountability structures in the digital sphere are laid out by STOP CSAM. In contrast, POCSO acts as a consolidated statute for sexual crimes alone.

## 2.5 Other Criminal Provisions

Listed below are the criminal codes and legal frameworks in India and the USA to combat the increasing trend of crimes against women and girls.

| | India: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Special and Local Laws (SLL), and other relevant legislations | USA: United States Code (US Code), Model Penal Code (MPC), and other relevant legislations |
|---|---|---|
| **Cruelty by Spousal Relatives** | BNS Section 85: Covers harassment by spouse and spousal relatives. | Prosecuted under VAWA assault or related statutes. A specific category for "husband and relatives" is absent. |
| **Dowry Death** | BNS Section 80 | Absent as a federal category due to cultural irrelevance. |
| **Acid Attack** | BNS Section 124 | Prosecuted under aggravated assault or battery statutes. |
| **Kidnapping and Abduction** | BNS Sections 137, 138, and 140.<br><br>A specific category is introduced under Section 87 for abduction to compel for marriage. | MPC Section 212.1. Prosecuted as a felony in several states.<br><br>Forced marriage is prosecuted under US Code 34, 12291A. |
| **Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage Modesty** | BNS Section 74 | Prosecuted under VAWA assault, sexual battery, or harassment. |
| **Rape** | BNS Section 63: Marital rape is not criminalised if the woman is 18 years of age. | Prosecuted under assault by various states. Marital rape is criminalised in all 50 states. |
| **Sexual Coercion by Authority Figures** | BNS Section 68: Covers intimidation into sexual intercourse by fiduciary authorities, public servants, and jail or hospital staff. | US Code 18, 2242.<br><br>Code of Federal Regulations 29, 1604.11 (CFR).<br><br>Prosecuted under various statutes in different states. |

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| **Publishing or Transmitting of Sexually Explicit Material** | BNS Section 294 | US Code 18, Chapter 17 |
| **Indecent Representation of Women** | BNS Section 91 | Prosecuted under broader obscenity and anti-harassment statutes like VAWA.<br><br>CFR 29, 1604.11 addresses indecent representation. |
| **Cyber Crimes** | Sections 66E, 67, 67A, and 67B of the Information Technology Act of 200 (IT Act). It covers capturing, publishing or transmitting obscene content, or sexually explicit content of women and children.<br><br>BNS Section 77 covers voyeurism; Section 78 covers both physical and online stalking; and Section 294 covers transmission of obscene material without the woman's consent. | US Code 47, 223A covers publishing and transmission of obscene material at the federal-level.<br><br>US Code 18, 2261A covers cyberstalking laws including sextortion.<br><br>US Code 18 , 2251A specifically covers sextortion of children.<br><br>Various states also possess their own statutes on cyber crimes targeting women and girls. |

India provides specific criminal provisions for crimes like dowry and acid attacks, reflecting cultural realities in the country. A key divergence in both systems is marital rape, which is not criminal-ised in India if the wife is over 18 years of age, but is criminalised in all US States. In addition, dating violence and intimate-partner violence are recognised as a specific problem in the USA, whereas India only recognises spousal violence in the same capacity. Cybercrimes, sexual coercion, and harassment are comprehensively covered under both legal frameworks.



## 3. Comparative Analysis Institutional Mechanisms to Address VAWG: India vs. U.S

| Category | India | United States |
|---|---|---|
| **Government Ministries and Departments** | - Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)<br>- National and State Commissions for Women.<br>- District-Level Protection Officers under the Domestic Violence Act.<br>- One Stop Centres (OSC and Sakhi) for crisis intervention.<br>- Safe City Project.<br>- Investigation Tracking System of Sexual Offences.<br>- National Database of Sexual Offenders.<br>- Mission Shakthi.<br>- Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.<br>- Meri Saheli Initiative.<br>- SHe-Box Portal.<br>- Project Stree Manoraksha under NIMHANS. | - Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).<br>- State Domestic Violence Coalitions funded under VAWA.<br>- State and country victim service officers under governors or attorneys.<br>- OVC- Office for Victims of Crime.<br>- Family Justice Centres (FJCs): Crisis response centres.<br>- National Sexual Violence Resource Centre.<br>- Sexual Assault Response Teams.<br>- Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services. |
| **Law Enforcement Agencies** | - Police Mahila Help Desks and women's help stations.<br>- Mahila Police Volunteers.<br>- Cyber Crime Cells for technology facilitated violence.<br>- Cyberdome model in Kerala and CyberYodha in Goa.<br>- Sensitisation and training mandated for police under Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013.<br>- Pink Force in Goa; Pink Protection Project in Kerala.<br>- Anti-Human Trafficking Units. | - Specialised DV and SA units in police departments.<br>- Mandatory arrests and pro-arrest policies in many states.<br>- Campus safety units under Clery Act for universities.<br>- VAWA-funded police training for victim sensitive practices.<br>- Sexual Assault Kit Initiative. |

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| **Judicial and Legal Mechanisms** | - Nirbhaya Fund supporting fast-track courts.<br>- Free legal aid through NALSA and State Legal Service Authorities.<br>- POCSO courts for child sexual abuse.<br>- Judicial monitoring committees.<br>- Victim Compensation Fund.<br>- Fast-track courts for sexual violence cases and cases under POCSO Act. | - VAWA provisions for Civil protection orders.<br>- Specialised DV courts in some jurisdictions.<br>- Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV) Program.<br>- Constitutional protections underpin litigation.<br>- Batterer Intervention Programs - Duluth model. |
| **NGOs and Civil Society Partnerships** | - NGOs run OSCs, manage helplines, or operate shelter/rehab facilities (e.g. Prajwala, Apnalaya, and Caritas Goa).<br>- NGOs like Jagori, Lawyers, AALI, etc., campaign for legal reforms, right awareness, and public education.<br>- Organisations like SEWA and regional groups mobilise women's self-help collectives, rural communities, and networks.<br>- Anti-Trafficking NGOs and NGOs focusing on caste, tribal women or workplace harassment, | - Polaris Project, National Center for Victims of Crime, and tech-partner NGOs focusing on sexual assault, cyber safety, and child protection.<br>- FJCs serve as hubs connecting multiple services for survivors of violence at one place.<br>- Advocacy groups like Futures Without Violence, RAINN drive campaigns, and training.<br>- Raksha: Dedicated to serve the South Asian-American community; focusing on post-trauma care, skill development, and justice delivery.<br>- Nationwide shelter and hotline networks (e.g. National Network to End Domestic Violence, RAINN) along with local YWCAs and local community organisations.<br>- Green Dot Bystander Intervention Program |

Both the United States and India adopt a multi-level governance approach to address VAWG, combining central and federal policy frameworks with local implementation. In the U.S., the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) under the Department of Justice (DOJ) is the lead agency, administrating grants and overseeing the implementation of VAWG-focused interventions in the states, tribal governments, and communities. Complementing this, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) administers the Crime Victims Fund to support survivor services. In India, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) leads the national response, framing schemes such as Mission Shakti (consolidating safety and empowerment interventions) and the Nirbhaya Fund (dedicated corpus fund for women's safety projects). These frameworks set standards while empowering states to design and implement locally adapted schemes.

The U.S. emphasises a grant-based model to resource community-level organisations. The OVW Legal Assistance for Victims Program and the Legal Services Corporation ensure survivors, especially low-income women, have access to free or subsidised legal aid. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), through the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS), funds emergency shelters, awareness campaigns, and operates the 24/7 National Domestic Violence Hotline with multilingual and culturally responsive services.

India has a similar model with the One Stop Centres and 181 Women's Helpline, established under the Nirbhaya Fund, offering medical, legal, psychological counselling, and temporary shelter under one roof. The 112 Emergency Response Support System extends 24/7 crisis support through integrated platforms, while the SHe-Box portal addresses workplace sexual harassment. There are initiatives under NIMHANS-MWCD to provide mental health support to the survivors as well.

The U.S. has institutionalised integrated service delivery through Family Justice Centres (FJCs), which serve as one-stop hubs where survivors can access legal, medical, and social services. Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) further exemplify multidisciplinary collaboration by connecting law enforcement, prosecutors, forensic experts, and advocates to strengthen evidence collection, prosecution, and survivor support. Similarly, in India, Women Helpdesks have been established to make law enforcement more accessible and gender sensitive, while Mahila Police Volunteers help bridge the gap between police and communities. State-specific innovations such as Kerala's Pink Protection Project or Goa's Pink Force highlight region-specific adaptations. Similarly, in Telangana, the police department has implemented initiatives such as SHE teams, Bharosa Centres, and Women Safety Cells, combining surveillance, victim support, and community outreach.

In the U.S., reforms focus on bias-free policing and evidence-based interventions. Many states have adopted mandatory arrest policies, particularly in the case of domestic violence, sexual assault, and repeat offending. Under its provisions, the law enforcement agency is mandated to make an arrest in the case of an occurrence of domestic violence or a sexual assault case. The DOJ's 2022 guidance on preventing gender bias in law enforcement and the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) reflect efforts to strengthen investigations. Additionally, Batterer Investigation Programs target offender rehabilitation through court-mandated behavioural interventions.

The Nirbhaya Fund supports Fast Track Special Courts and POCSO courts for crimes against women and girls, while Legal Services Authorities (NALSA and SLSAs) provide free legal assistance for the survivors. Victim-centric provisions, such as the Victim Compensation Fund Scheme, further institutionalise financial and rehabilitative support. Additionally, the mandatory police sensitisation and specialised cybercrime cells address emerging challenges such as technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.

The U.S. judicial system has developed a layered framework to address VAWG, combining federal and state intervention. Central to this framework is the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), first enacted in 1994, which provides federal funding for victim services, legal assistance, and specialised training for law enforcement and judicial actors.

Additionally, specialised domestic violence and family courts have been instituted in several states to ensure expedited hearings, victim protection orders, and offender accountability.

The National Sexual Violence Resource Centre (NSVRC) and SAKI Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) program strengthen the capacity of local jurisdictions and disseminate best practices, whereas in the India, capacity-building is mainly carried out at state and district levels through Training of Trainers (ToTs) for police and prosecutors, supported by the Ministry of Home Affairs. These workshops are complemented by monitoring dashboards (e.g., Mission Shakti Dashboard) to track implementation of services like OSCs.

## Data Collection

The Sexual Assaults Recorded by Law Enforcement, released by the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) in the U.S., provides state-specific data regarding cases of sexual assaults reported by men and women, with information pertaining to the average age of the survivor, the percentage of cases where the perpetrator was known to the survivor, time and location of committing the assault, demographic information of survivors, and clearance and arrest by the law enforcement. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) conducted by the Centres for Disease Control captures national and state-level data of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking victimisation. The survey details the type of methods used for inflicting violence, type of perpetrator, the age of the survivor, the immediate and long-term health implications associated with the violence, and demographic information.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) is published by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The NCRB reports publish annual statistics on crimes against women at the state and district levels, disaggregated by the offence category. The data is based on the First Information Report (FIR) registered at police stations across India. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is published by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. The NFHS is a nationally represented household-level survey, which includes a category of violence against women, including that of ever-married women and violence inflicted during pregnancy.

The NIBRS and the NCRB are reports produced by the law enforcement agencies of the respective countries. This leads to challenges as several cases that are underreported fail to be captured in the data collection. While the NCRB is published more regularly when compared to the NIBRS, the latter is more representative in terms of the details of perpetrators, demographics affected, factors affecting the crime, and so on. This approach shifts the focus to the perpetrator of the crime, rather than merely calculating the number of women affected. The NISVS is a survey that exclusively deals with varied forms of VAWG and its related health implications. The NFHS, which is funded by several national and international agencies, including the USAID, provides comprehensive information regarding the health, nutritional, and family planning aspects, of which VAWG constitutes merely one category.

While these national surveys and law enforcement data networks provide the foundation for understanding the prevalence of VAWG, their utility is closely associated with the monitoring and evaluation framework in practice. In both the U.S. and India, institutional accountability is heavily dependent on the data collected, reported and integrated into the evaluation systems. Hence, an elaborate examination of the M&E structure in both contexts highlights the differences in institutional capacity, as well as the extent to which data is crucial in appropriate analysis of service delivery.

## 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

In the U.S., the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of VAWG programmes, operated by the state or NGOs, are integrated into feeding the Congressional briefing, funding allocations and renewing policy frameworks. As mandated by VAWA, the Attorney General is to submit a report to the Congress every two years on the impact of the services provided by OVW-associated grantees, the number of women served, and the number of women seeking services but could not be served. As per the Act, all grantees of the OVW are to submit progress reports through the grant management system, indicating their outcome-based performance and progress along with an assessment of their fund utilisation. The report includes quantitative and qualitative data, which informs the OVW for reallocation of funds as required, identifies structural gaps, conducts training, and revises community outreach efforts.

In India, the M&E are output-oriented and highly varied across states. Though the MWCD monitors the central schemes with the support of the state DWCDs, the reports track the services provided by the institution rather than a comprehensive analysis of the services attained and benefited by the survivors from across departments. Since the schemes are often operated by the respective governments, monitoring is rarely conducted by NGOs. Though social audits are mandated for the OSC as per its guidelines, the ground reality suggests that they are rarely conducted. The fund crunch, accompanied by overburdening of administrators, prevents them from conducting regular interdepartmental meetings to track the outcome of services provided by WCD institutions.

The integration of NGOs in the system and regular state evaluations at the institutions in the U.S. provides for accountability and outcome-driven feedback. Since VAWA mandates that M&E reports inform legislative activities undertaken by the Congress, such evaluations are generally complied with. Weak enforcement of M&E in India prevents recording the outcomes of the services provided and the community outreach programmes conducted. Though the PWDVA mandates monthly report submissions to the state WCD, there is scarce information regarding how the data provided is to be utilised for enhancing the policy and institutional mechanisms.

## 5. Promising Models from U.S

The analysis throws light on some of the promising models in the USA that could be considered to be adapted in the Indian context, based on the cultural and social norms in India. Some of the promising models are as follows:

### 5.1 Batterer Intervention Programmes (BIP)

Batterer Intervention Programmes for offenders are focused on changing the abusive behaviour by making them identify the causes of the behaviour, and are conducted either voluntarily or through court orders. The completion of the programme and not reoffending during the programme, in some U.S. jurisdictions, result in lesser sentences. The Duluth Model is one of the successful feminist psycho-educational approaches that offers batterer intervention on a community level (Stop Violence Against Women 2025). Allies in Change, Emerge model, etc., are similar models to Duluth practised in the U.S. One of the key principles in these BIP programmes is that couples counselling in situations of domestic violence is not a recommended best practice and can place victims at a continued risk of harm. BIP programmes have proven to be successful for those who complete the programme; the dropouts are most likely to reoffend and is viewed as potential concern by the community, and the completion is considered as proof of commitment to change (Moyer, 2004).

In India, only couple-intervention or survivor-centric tools are tested and implemented on the ground rather than programmes focused on offenders. Considering the rise in DV cases in India, these models of batterer intervention programmes can be adopted for IPV cases and could be implemented by NGOs certified as

programme implementers by the government. There could be similar incentives provided to the offender like lesser sentences if the programme is completed. This could help in avoiding repeated episodes of violence against women in the offender's household. Interventions like BIP can be studied for feasibility and cultural considerations for adoption in India.

## 5.2 Dedicated Grants Programme under Office of Violence against omen

The VAWA in 2000 recognised the specific needs of people with disabilities and older adults, creating dedicated programs to prevent and address violence against them. The objective of the grant programme is to develop the capacity of the country, strengthen the services to survivors, and make the offenders accountable for their actions.

Some instances are the Abuse in Later Life Program that expanded from police training to a comprehensive elder abuse response and the Disability Program, which has grown beyond awareness and training to drive systemic change in how organisations support survivors with disabilities and Deaf survivors. There are discretionary grants provided for tribal communities. The Children and Youth & Engaging Men Program (CYEM) engages boys and men in preventing violence against women by supporting initiatives that provide educational programs and promote community organising. It encourages men and boys to work as allies with women and girls to stop domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (U.S. Department of Justice 2025).

However, this approach of grants with a specific focus on advocacy, training, and protective elements are missing in the Indian systems. NGOs are not provided with grants directly by the Central Government; instead, some states like Telangana and Rajasthan work with NGOs for the implementation of certain schemes and programmes. The centre provides funds to the states for specific programme implementation like the One Stop Centres, Shakti Sadans, Nari Adalats, and many more. A thriving civil society supported by grants is absent in the Indian context. However, considering the societal relevance of the issue, crimes against women and girls can be better tackled with community-based interventions spearheaded by civil society organisations and local governments.

## 5.3 Special Grants for Engaging Men and Boys against Combating VAWG

The Grants to Engage Men and Youth in Preventing Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Programme (EM Programme) is one of two NOFOs issued under the Consolidated Youth and Engaging Men (CYEM) Program. This grant can be applied by non-profits, schools and city, township, and tribal governments. This grant supports programmes started in 2013, developing men and boys as positive influencers to work as allies against combating VAWG, identifying children affected by domestic violence, and providing support services (U.S. Department of Justice 2025). This grant supports bystander intervention and respectful relationships through educational campaigns.

In India, the approach towards engaging men and boys in combating VAWG is absent in the governmental institutional mechanisms. The programmes and schemes are focussed on preventive, protective, and prosecutorial efforts. The preventive programmes in schools and higher education institutions, like gender clubs and gender champions, have boys and young men as one of their target groups. However, a targeted approach to build an ally network with boys and men is absent in the current programme and scheme frameworks. Civil society organisations like MAVA in Mumbai, Maharashtra, Bell Bajao (Breakthrough Campaign) supported by Breakthrough, UNIFEM, and India's Ministry of Women and Child Development, and Men Against Rape and Discrimination (MARD) campaign by actor Farhan Aktar are some initiatives promoting the practice of having men and boys in fighting against VAWG in India. Considering the deep-rooted patriarchal norms in society, women's empowerment via education and employment is not the only way to tackle the imbalance in gender relations. This needs similar interventions

with men and boys as key stakeholders in the VAWG frameworks.

## 5.4 Expand the Scope of PWDVA to Incorporate Dating Violence:

Under VAWA, dating violence is defined as:

Dating violence: The term "dating violence" means violence committed by a person— (A) who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and (B) where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors: (i) The length of the relationship. (ii) The type of relationship. (iii) The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.

The definition is broad enough to cover live-in relationships and all forms of dating.

In India, the PWDVA Act under Section 2(f), a domestic relationship is defined as

"a relationship between two persons who live or have, at any point of time, lived together in a shared household, when they are related by consanguinity, marriage, or through a relationship in the nature of marriage, adoption, or family members living together." This definition mandates cohabitation of the partners to presume it as a relationship. Hence, violence that occurs outside of cohabitation while in a dating relationship is not addressed. In a survey conducted by Kasperky, 54 percent of online daters in India reported that they have faced violence in some form in their relationship (India Today 2024). According to the NCRB 2022 data, the percentage of known offenders to victims in cases of rape is quite high. The known offenders include friends (including online friends) or live-in partners, separated husbands, and others.Offenders who are unknown to the victim are less than five percent of cases reported in India. Considering the data from NCRB, the growing market for online dating apps, and changing social relationships, there is an urgent need to broaden the definitions of relationships and types of violence addressed under the PWDVA Act.

## 5.5 Establish Bystander Intervention Program in India

Green Dot is a bystander intervention programme aimed to prevent sexual assault, harassment, and dating violence among students and is implemented in schools. It identifies "popular opinion leaders" who receive additional instruction and disseminate the training to their peers. The program emphasises the "three Ds" of intervention: Direct (e.g., offering support to someone in a risky situation), Delegate (enlisting a trusted peer to intervene), and Distract (creating a diversion to defuse potential harm). Participants are also encouraged to report concerning situations to authorities, challenge harmful statements that perpetuate rape culture, and provide emotional support to individuals appearing distressed (Office of Justice Programs 2017).

India does not yet have a governmental intervention using bystander training approach for combating VAWG crimes. However, there are some initiatives like the Bengaluru Safe City Project, which includes the "Active Bystanders Initiative". Implemented by the National Law School of India University in collaboration with the Bengaluru City Police and Durga Foundation, the initiative promotes proactive bystander behaviour to enhance public safety through workshops, street theatre, and community outreach. Between September 2024 and March 2025, participants from diverse occupations, including drivers, street vendors, factory and domestic workers, security personnel, and BBMP employees, were trained across multiple police jurisdictions (NLSIU, 2025). Adopting similar initiatives to a national level can help combat VAWG in public spaces making our cities safer and thereby empowering women.

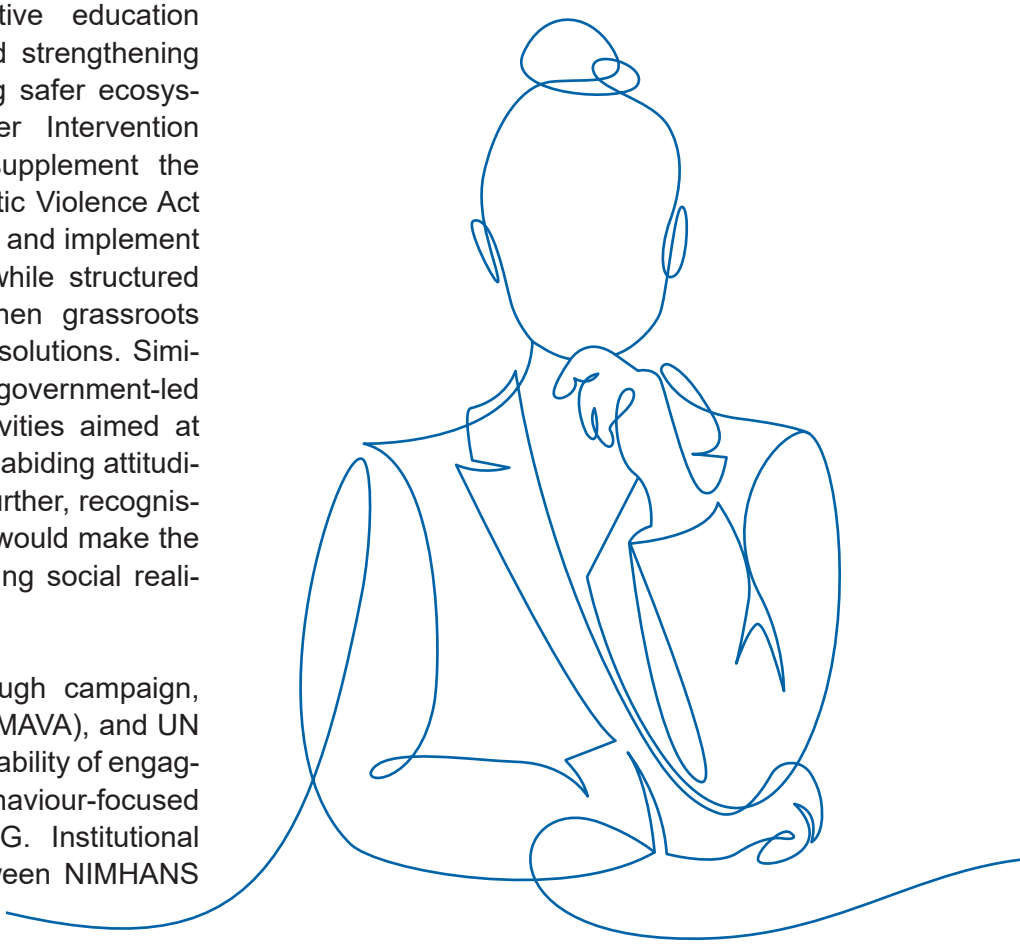
## 6. Conclusion

Promising models identified in the U.S. underscore the significance of a comprehensive framework for addressing violence against women and girls, particularly one that demands multi-stakeholder participation. Models such as BIPs, dedicated grant schemes, the recognition and prevention of dating violence, as well as bystander intervention programmes are relevant in the Indian context, where institutional frameworks in practice primarily focus on survivor protection. Such models remain significant to the Indian framework as it currently lacks required attention on perpetrator accountability and community-based preventive programmes.

In India, initiatives under Nirbhaya Scheme and Mission Shakti have led the foundation for integrated service and safety infrastructures. However, they remain limited by implementation gaps, resource constraints, and uneven engagement with civil society organisations and NGOs. Adapting U.S. models can help bridge these gaps by enabling offender-centric behavioural change mechanisms, expanding preventive education among young boys and girls, and strengthening community participation in building safer ecosystems. For instance, the Batterer Intervention Programme in the U.S. could supplement the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act by addressing the causes of abuse and implement behaviour-focused interventions, while structured grant mechanisms could strengthen grassroots NGOs in bringing context-specific solutions. Similarly, integrating men and boys into government-led educational programmes and activities aimed at combating VAWG could also foster abiding attitudinal changes in gender relations. Further, recognising dating violence under PWDVA would make the legislation more inclusive of evolving social realities and relationship dynamics.

Initiatives such as the Breakthrough campaign, Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA), and UN Women's HeForShe illustrate the viability of engaging men and communities in behaviour-focused interventions in addressing VAWG. Institutional collaborations such as those between NIMHANS and the Ministry of Women and Child Development for psychosocial assistance, or between NLSIU Bangalore, Durga Foundation, and Bangalore City Police for the "Active Bystanders Initiative," exemplify cross-sectoral attempts that can be scaled nationally.

Additionally, partnerships between Indian Ministries and U.S. departments and agencies such as the Office on Violence Against Women, Office for Victims of Crime as well as international benefactors like USAID or UNFPA, can support technical exchanges, feasibility runs, and collaborative capacity-building projects. By establishing a knowledge-sharing platform on VAWG prevention between India and the U.S.— focusing on behavioural interventions, robust M&E frameworks, and community engagement—institutional learning and capacity in addressing VAWG can be institutionalised further. Rather than replicating best practices, adapting such models to India's context-specific demands, can further strengthen mechanisms to address VAWG.



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# TECHNOLOGY-BASED MECHANISMS TO PREVENT AND PROTECT AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

# 08

## 1. Background of the Study

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a pervasive problem deeply rooted in India, driven by entrenched cultural, structural, and systemic inequalities. Traditionally confined to physical spaces such as homes, workplaces, and public areas, VAWG has increasingly extended into the digital realm, giving rise to complex and evolving threats. Incidents of cyberstalking, image-based sexual abuse, and doxxing demonstrate the way patriarchal violence is transposed into the virtual world, highlighting the need for more immediate and complex responses. Digital literacy and technologies have enabled abusers to target women more effectively through tracking their movements and location. Perpetrators can reach victims from distant locations without any physical contact and coerce them through AI-enabled explicit images. These cross-border crimes in the digital space makes it challenging for the authorities, especially police, for providing timely redressal and remedies beyond bureaucratic hurdles and inter-country cooperation (Sippy et al. 2023). Digital access, thus, makes women vulnerable to cybercrimes. A report by Feminism in India notes that online platforms lack strong reporting mechanisms, thereby eroding the trust of women and compelling them to quit digital platforms (Pasricha 2016). Therefore, laws and institutions must be proactive in supporting women in preventing, as well as in responding to these crimes.

At the same time, as traditional help-seeking structures are beset by problems of access, immediacy, and institutional backlogs, technology has also emerged as a game-changer in the fight against VAWG. From mobile apps and GPS tracking technologies to helplines and integrated support platforms, a technological ecosystem is slowly emerging in India's response to violence against women and girls. Yet, the efficacy of these mechanisms is often impeded by digital illiteracy, poor cross-sectoral coordination, and limited awareness, especially among women from rural or marginalised communities.

This chapter, in the first part, critically examines the dual dimensions of technology in the context of VAWG in India, both as a site for emerging violence and as a tool for its prevention and redressal. The study explores the functioning, reach, and incorporation into institutions of selected digital platforms designed by state and non-state actors (private sector), with empirical evidence and stakeholder evaluations. In the second part, the chapter examines the effectiveness of both public and private digital platforms and technology-based solutions developed to address VAWG. It analyses how these platforms function in terms of accessibility, inclusivity, responsiveness, and accountability, highlighting their role in enhancing women's safety.

## 2. Prevalence of Technology Facilitated VAWG in India

With rapid expansion of the internet connectivity and use of digital technologies across India, incidents of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls have increased significantly. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB), cybercrimes against women in India have shown a sharp and consistent rise over the past few years. Reported cases grew from 10,730 in 2022 to 14,409 in 2023, an increase of over 34 percent. The highest surges were seen in categories such as cyber pornography (18.72 percent), cyberstalking and bullying (27.36 percent), and defamation and morphing (39.49 percent). However, there was a decline in cases of cyber blackmailing and threatening by 37.5 percent and fake profile creation by 20.44 percent. This data underscores both the intensification and evolving nature of online violence targeting women and girls in the country.

Despite increased reporting, conviction and charge-sheet rates remain disproportionately low. On average, 1,500 cybercrime incidents are recorded daily across India, yet only about 30 are formally registered as police cases (Rai and Bano 2024). As per data submitted to the Lok Sabha, in 2021, a total of 52,974 cybercrime cases were registered nationwide, but charge sheets were filed in only 18,744 cases (35 percent), and convictions

were achieved in just 491 cases, less than one percent of the total. Similarly, between 2019 and 2020, cyber police stations recorded 94770 incidents, but charge sheets were filed in only 23,363 cases, with prosecutions in just 126 (0.54 percent). The following table shows the prevalence of cybercrimes under different offences in the selected states of the present study (Rai and Bano 2024).

**Table 1: State-wise Cyber Crimes Against Women- 2022**

| State | Cyber Blackmailing/ Threatening | Cyber Pornography/ Publishing Obscene Material | Cyber Stalking/ Bullying | Defamatio/ Morphing | Fake Profile | Other Cyber Crimes | Total Crimes Against Women |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Goa | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 32 |
| Kerala | 0 | 122 | 45 | 2 | 9 | 203 | 381 |
| Telangana | 23 | 14 | 279 | 0 | 3 | 943 | 1262 |
| Rajasthan | 16 | 136 | 79 | 3 | 11 | 253 | 498 |
| Jharkhand | 0 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 93 | 106 |

*Source:*
Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, "State-wise Cyber Crime Against Women- 2022"

As per the study conducted by CEDA, India has around 73.7 percent of men owning smartphones compared to only 56.6 percent of women. Women are around 10 percentage points more likely than men to use the internet solely for entertainment and communication (35.7 percent versus 25.8 percent, respectively)(Thomas 2025). Statistics show that 98 percent cybercrime offences are performed against women (Rai and Bano 2024).

In the context of the increasing online crimes against women and girls, it is pertinent to understand and analyse the existing laws and institutions for combating technology-enabled violence against women and girls.



# 3. Law and Institutions for Combating TFVAWG in India

## 3.1 Legal Context

India has developed laws for combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls by retrofitting the existing laws like Information Technology Act (IT Act) and Indian Penal Code (now Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita), through various amendments. However, internationally, India is not a signatory to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrimes that has provisions on online crimes against women. The IT Act was extensively amended in 2008 to include cybercrimes against women. Section 66E penalises the unauthorised capture, publication, or transmission of private images without consent, a provision particularly relevant to cases of revenge pornography and leaked personal content. Section 67 criminalises the publication or transmission of obscene material in electronic form, addressing the growing issue of cyber pornography. Section 67A further strengthens these protections by specifically dealing with the transmission of sexually explicit content, which is critical in cases involving deepfake technology and other forms of digital abuse. Section 66C deals with identity theft, which is frequently used to create fake profiles or impersonate individuals' identity.

Post the Delhi Gang Rape Incident, The Indian Penal Code was amended in 2013 to include cyber offences like stalking, vouyeriusm etc. The Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita, the new version of IPC has provisions for cyber stalking under Section 78, Online Harassment And Cyber Bullying under Section 75 and 77. Crimes such as doxxing (Publicly Sharing Private Information), and AI deep fakes pornography are not recognised separately as offences; however law enforcement agencies apply existing laws through extrapolation and interpretation in the absence of more specific provisions of law.

In specific cases, like when a child's mother is intimated online via Twitter that her child will be raped (Mantri, NewsMinute 2018), there are no specific provisions for online intimidation under the IT Act. However, the police booked the culprit under relevant and related sections of POCSO and the IPC.

## 3.2 Institutional Context

Institutional mechanisms to combat online violence against women and girls (VAWG) have evolved steadily since the early 2000s. The first cyber police station was established in Bengaluru in 2001, followed by the creation of the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) in 2004. Further strengthening the cyber governance framework, the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) was launched in 2020, along with the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) under its ambit to enable easier reporting and coordination of cybercrime cases. States like Kerala have developed innovative models such as Cyber Dome, a public-private partnership initiative for combating cybercrimes through collaboration with ethical hackers and cyber security professionals. [1]

1. **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre was established by the Ministry of Home Affairs to act as a nodal agency to deal with cybercrime in a coordinated manner. It functions as an overarching framework for law enforcement agencies, providing technical assistance, capacity building, research, and threat analysis to address emerging forms of cybercrimes. It also facilitates inter-agency coordination at the national and state levels and oversees the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) scheme.

2. **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in):** The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal is an online platform launched under the I4C to enable citizens to report cyber offences securely. The portal allows users to lodge complaints related to

[1] *https://hackp.kerala.gov.in/cyberdome/*

cyber fraud, online harassment, cyberstalking, and sexual exploitation through online platforms.

3. **NCW Women Helpline Number - 7827170170:** NCW operates a dedicated round-the-clock helpline number to support women facing violence, including cyber harassment and online abuse. The helpline offers immediate assistance, connects victims to local authorities, and facilitates the filing of complaints through the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal or relevant state police units.

4. **National Cyber Helpline - 1930:** Managed under the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Cyber Helpline provides immediate assistance to victims of cyber fraud and online financial crimes. Victims can report incidents of unauthorised transactions, phishing, or online financial scams through the tollfree number. The helpline connects users directly to the nearest Cyber Police Station or the Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System, facilitating rapid response and fund recovery.

5. **Cyber Police Stations:** Many states and union territories in India have established dedicated Cyber Police Stations to handle cases of cyber offences efficiently. Presently, there are 459 Cyber Crime Police Stations in India (Data on Police Organizations 2024). These specialised units are equipped with trained personnel, digital forensic facilities, and technical infrastructure to look into crimes such as online stalking, identity theft, cyber fraud, and data breaches.

6. **Sahyog Portal:** The Sahyog Portal is an online platform established by the Ministry of Home Affairs and operated by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre. Conceived as a centralised, automated system, the portal streamlines the process of issuing takedown notices to internet intermediaries such as social media platforms and service providers. By facilitating real-time coordination between authorised government agencies and intermediaries, Sahyog expedites the removal or disabling of access to online content deemed "unlawful" under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act.

7. **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty for Transnational Crimes:** The MLAT serves as a key international cooperation mechanism through which India collaborates with other countries to investigate and prosecute transnational crimes, including cyber offences. MLATs enable the exchange of evidence, sharing of digital data, and coordination in cross-border investigations, ensuring that perpetrators of cybercrimes can be held accountable. As of 2019, India has signed MLATs with 42 countries.

8. **State Police - Cyber Apps:** Several state governments in India supplement the national emergency response system with dedicated apps and helplines to respond to VAWG. Examples include Delhi Police's Himmat, Kerala's POL-App, Rajasthan's Shakti App, and Abhivyakti under Chhattisgarh Police. These digital initiatives enhance women's safety and strengthen the VAWG response network by providing rapid communication with law enforcement agencies, location tracking, and SOS alerts that ensure immediate assistance in emergencies.

Apart from these official helplines and apps, India has also seen the rise of numerous public and private mobile applications designed to address violence against women and enhance safety in both urban and rural contexts. Some of these tech solutions are government-developed, such as the Himmat App, POL App, or the T-Safe App, while many others have been created by private developers, NGOs, and civic groups. These apps commonly include features such as SOS buttons, GPS-based location sharing, and automated alerts to emergency contacts. Certain private initiatives have further developed options such as community-sourced safety ratings for neighbourhoods, mapping of unsafe zones, or discreet messaging systems that allow women to seek help without alerting potential perpetrators.

**Box 1: PPP Model: Cyber Dome Project in Kerala**

Cyberdome is a Centre of Excellence for Cybersecurity established by the Kerala Police as a public-private partnership (PPP) initiative to enhance cyber safety and strengthen digital policing. It serves as a collaborative platform connecting government agencies, academia, industry, ethical hackers, and cybersecurity experts to create a cyber threat-resilient ecosystem in the state. The centre focuses on preventing cybercrimes through research, technology development, capacity building, and public awareness. It also engages with national and international cybersecurity networks and law enforcement agencies to address TFVAWG.

However, the institutions face numerous challenges in tackling online crimes due to factors like cross-border nature of the crime, inadequate cyber legal awareness, hesitation to report cases, technical and procedural knowledge gaps among police personnel, and lack of facilities like cyber forensic-cum-training laboratories (Sippy et al. 2023). The judiciary faces challenges like lack of proper digital evidence, limited specialised knowledge of cyber networks and its intricacies, jurisdictional issues and poor coordination of police officials in dealing with cybercrime cases (Bhatt and Dobariya 2021). Studies show that absence of support systems like cyber-psycho counselling and women cyber police officers affects women survivors' willingness to disclose the abuse they face (Rai and Bano 2024). Another persistent challenge encountered by technological solutions is their lack of offline capabilities. Although these apps include features such as emergency sharing, SOS alerts, communication services, incident reporting, and other safety solutions, their functionality is inefficient in areas with limited internity access (Rahman et al. 2025).

The cross border nature of crimes in cyberspace is also posing several challenges in the speedy investigation and collection of evidence. Most of the countries like the U.S., which houses major tech platforms like Google, Meta, and Microsoft restrict companies in their territory from disclosing data to foreign jurisdictions through their Communications Act, 1986. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties are the most important tool used in such circumstances to retrieve data and evidence from foreign jurisdictions. While India has MLATs with more than 40 countries, the effectiveness of the institutional mechanism to make use of these treaties is not adequate. The Ministry of Home Affairs is the nodal agency responsible for obtaining evidence through diplomatic missions of other countries; however, the long bureaucratic processes caused by limited human resources and a lack of specialised knowledge, affect cases of cybercrimes against women (Sinha et al. 2018).

At the same time, technology is used by the state police agencies to increase the reporting of crimes against women and girls. As discussed above, POL App of Kerala Police, and T-Safe of Telangana Police provide features for women to report untoward incidents during their travel on public transport by sharing location, vehicle number, and other relevant information.

In the above context, and considering the limited capacity and resources, a detailed study was undertaken to analyse the utility of the existing apps and helplines, as well as the challenges faced by them.

## 4. Need for the Study

Image-based abuse, including deepfake pornography, disproportionately affects women. These types of harm transcends geographical boundaries, mirroring traditional gender dynamics in online spaces as well. While TFVAWG becomes a compounding concern within the broader spectrum of VAWG, it presents unique opportunities for intervention, as tech platforms can be leveraged to track and address such crimes more effectively. These online intervention models could subsequently be adapted to address traditional forms of VAWG as well.

To meet this growing demand for innovative frameworks to prevent and respond to VAWG, both government and private agencies in India have launched a range of digital platforms. These platforms differ in design, functionality, and scope, but are unified in aim: to improve women's security through accessible, real-time, and coordinated care systems. In general, these can be classified into emergency hotlines, mobile applications, and comprehensive digital assistance systems. The platforms identified and contacted include:

| Government-run Platforms |
|---|
| 112 Helpline - Kerala State |
| 181 Helpline - Kerala State |
| 1090 Helpline - Ernakulam Police |
| NCW Helpline - Countrywide |
| *She-Box* - WCD, GoI |
| *Himmat* - Delhi Police |
| *She Safe* App - Telangana Police |
| *T-Safe* App - Telangana Police |
| *Abhaya* App - Eluru Police |
| *POL* App - Kerala Police |
| *Nirbhayam* App - Kochi City Police |
| *RajCop Citizen* - Rajasthan Police |
| *Shakthi* App - Jharkhand Police |

| Privately-run Platforms |
|---|
| *My Safetipin* App |
| *I'm Safe* App |
| *My Ambar* App - Vodafone-Idea Foundation |
| *Saahas* App |
| *Smart 24x7* App |
| *CitizenCOP* App |
| *Satark* App |
| *SafeCity* App |

## 5. Methodology

The study commenced with the compilation of a comprehensive list of technological solutions operating in India that contribute to strategies for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls (VAWG). This initial scoping exercise facilitated the identification of a broad spectrum of digital safety mechanisms, encompassing government-led intervention, and privately managed initiatives, including mobile applications, helplines, and service aggregator platforms.

Building on this mapping, a structured survey questionnaire was designed to systematically collect operational and technical information from the identified platforms. The questionnaire was organised around the following key dimensions:

- Nature and extent of services provided
- Technical functionalities (e.g., GPS tracking, real-time safety alerts)
- Types of cases addressed
- Follow-up and redressal mechanisms
- Coordination frameworks with relevant stakeholders
- Implementation challenges and constraints
- Feedback systems and user engagement practices

## Survey Administration

1. **Email-Based Distribution:** For platforms based outside Kerala, or in cases where in-person communication was not feasible, the questionnaire was digitally circulated to the designated staff or departmental heads.

2. **In-Person Administration:** For platforms based in Kochi, responses were gathered through field visits and stakeholder interviews, allowing for real-time clarifications and more nuanced qualitative inputs.

## Respondent Profile

Respondents include senior officials, technical coordinators, and programme heads directly involved with digital safety platforms addressing VAWG. Inputs were received from both national-level stakeholders, such as helpline managers and application developers, and state level stakeholders, particularly those operating in Kerala.

The platforms represented in the study varied significantly in scope, scale, and operational model. This diversity provided a wide-angle view of implementation practices across institutional types. The survey placed emphasis on organisational structure, geographical coverage, and technical capacity. Notably, the majority of respondents held direct managerial or coordination responsibilities within the platforms they represented, thereby ensuring that the information gathered was authoritative and operationally grounded.

# 6. Limitations of the Study

**Non-Uniform Response Rates:** Not all identified platforms promptly responded to the survey questionnaire. Smart 24x7, a private employee travel safety application, and Code Nirbhaya, a government-run distress call application lacked verified points of contacts to effectively carry out the survey. Nirbhayam by Kochi City Police in Kerala and Abhaya by Eluru Police in Andhra Pradesh are no longer operational. In several cases, repeated follow-ups were required, and data gaps remain due to non-responsiveness.

**Variability in Data Detail:** The detail and quality of responses varied considerably. While some platforms shared comprehensive insights into their operations, others provided only limited or generalised information.

**Exclusion of End-User Perspectives:** The study did not include the perspectives of end-users such as women or girls using safety apps or helplines. The focus remained on institutional and operational actors, limiting the ability to capture lived experiences and user satisfaction.

# 7. Platform-Level Assessments and Findings

This study focuses on nine key platforms that represent the diverse landscape of technology-enabled safety tools. A detailed summary of the research sample can be found below.

## 1. My SafetiPin App

*My SafetiPin* is a mobile and web-based application to enhance the safety of women in urban spaces. Developed by Active Learning Solutions Pvt. Ltd in November 2013, the platform collects data on safety, accessibility, and mobility through crowdsourcing and GPS-enabled technology. The data is analysed using a safety audit rubric, which evaluates parameters such as lighting, walkability, and public infrastructure.

The Safety Audit generates area-based safety scores that support systemic monitoring and evidence-based urban improvements. *SafetiPin* translates this data into actionable insights for multiple stakeholders: citizens can conduct audits, report hazards such as broken walkways or inadequate lighting, and access real-time safety information to plan safer routes; government service providers can identify and address infrastructure gaps like non-functional streetlights or unsafe pedestrian pathways; NGOs employ the tool as an advocacy resource, especially in low-income neighborhoods; corporations integrate it into employee safety strategies, including transport route planning and real-time tracking; and portals

and platforms for services such as real estate or travel services can incorporate SafetiPin's safety scores to offer users with critical neighborhood safety information (Safetipin 2025).

*SafetiPin* has been deployed across Indian cities, including Delhi, Guwahati, Chennai, Kerala, Pune, and Bangalore, as well as internationally in Bogotá. With over 170,000 users, multilingual support, online/offline functionality, and end-to-end encryption, the platform balances accessibility with privacy. Its methodology draws on the safety audit framework pioneered in the late 1980s and adapted in India by organisations such as Jagori, a leading women's NGO.

## 2. 112 Helpline (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

The 112 Helpline is a government-run emergency response support system (ERSS) designed to assist the public, including women in distress. The helpline does not depend on an app-based GPS technology. Instead, it links callers with the nearest available Pink Patrol Unit for prompt assistance. The platform may be accessed solely through telephone and works offline, ensuring outreach in areas with weak internet connectivity. It accommodates users speaking in English and all regional languages spoken in the country. While it has no in-built disability-friendly features, it links users to NGOs that provide support for individuals with disabilities. The helpline is designed to provide a human response and follow-up system, promoting a personalised response. Data relating to the nature and volume of crimes, as well as services delivered, are gathered and presented to the Police Control Room for analysis on a regular basis. Its uniqueness lies in its immediate access to dependable institutional support systems. However, stakeholders highlighted the need for increased personnel to distribute workload and better assist incoming calls. User feedback suggests that the 112 Helpline remains a good first point of contact for emergencies.

## 3. 181 Helpline (Kerala State Women's Helpline)

The Kerala State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC), in line with the framework of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, has established Mithra 181 Women's Helpline as a 24/7 information and emergency support service for women in distress. The helpline was launched in 2017 in collaboration with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC). For adolescent girls and women facing domestic violence or harassment can avail services. The helpline functions as a toll-free, round-the-clock service, providing both crisis and non-crisis interventions through coordinated referrals to police, hospitals, ambulance services, and other relevant agencies.

Mithra 181 provides women and girls with a reliable, government-backed helpline for emergencies, information, and support. It aims to prevent VAWG by enabling reporting, raising awareness, and offering real-time assistance, referrals, counselling, and follow-up to ensure cases are resolved, while also sharing locally relevant information on government services. Importantly, Mithra 181 also prioritises inclusivity by building a disability-friendly platform, ensuring that vulnerable groups are not excluded from accessing assistance. The helpline provides services such as emergency response and rescue, private reporting of VAWG, referrals (police, medical, and NGO services), case management, including tracking through its collaboration with ERSS and Child Helpline. It is also equipped with a human response system attended by trained personnel. In addition, the helpline incorporates live-location sharing technology.

## 4. 1090 Helpline (Ernakulam Police)

The 1090 Helpline serves as a comprehensive 24/7 platform for reporting harassment, stalking, and cybercrime, primarily targeted at women and girls. Managed by the Ernakulam Police Control Room, this government initiative offers multi-modal access through phone call, mobile application, website, and WhatsApp, making it one of the most technically integrated systems among the platforms studied. Notably, it supports live location sharing and uses automated call routing, allowing

quick integration with police systems. The platform supports Malayalam, English, Hindi, and Tamil, and is accessible offline, ensuring wide usability. It connects with police and NGOs for disability support, providing an intersectional approach to safety and accessibility. A key feature of 1090 is its commitment to caller privacy and anonymity, with user data masked upon request. The helpline excels in offering comprehensive services, including emergency response, safe reporting, medical and NGO referrals, and client follow-up. Feedback suggests strong user satisfaction, citing the platform's responsiveness and privacy safeguards as major strengths. Some operational issues, such as limited network compatibility, were identified as areas for improvement.

## 5. I'm Safe App

Developed by Free2Live Tech Solutions Private Limited, *I'm Safe* is a privately run application specially launched to combat violence against women. The primary objective of the platform is prevention of VAWG, with its target audience being all women and girls in distress. The platform provides international coverage, enhancing accessibility and supporting users as they move across geographical boundaries. The platform stands out for its group alert facility. It lets people create trusted groups to share live location, battery levels, speed of travel, and SOS alerts. It combines personal, group, and community safety in one place, activating multiple access points at once when an emergency arises.

The app records information about location of incidents and user movement, time, and frequency of SOS alerts, battery level, mobile signal, and travel speed. This helps identify risky areas and improves support within the trusted groups created by the user. While this information may be useful in an individual capacity, the data collected remains underutilised for vulnerability mapping to enhance policy-level action plans. Although panic buttons and sirens are available, the platform does not provide emergency response and rescue services directly.

It has a feature to record usage patterns by enabling users to tag hotspots, which helps identify risky locales and alerts emergency contacts accordingly. It is a free mobile application that requires the internet for usage, making it inaccessible in remote areas. The platform primarily supports four languages namely English, Tamil, Hindi, and German. While response and follow-up mechanism is human-assisted, it does not currently feature disability-friendly features. The application has over 15,000 users and over 35,000 downloads, with over 100 safety devices sold since its launch in September 2023.

## 6. Saahas App

The *Saahas* App, developed entirely by Kirthi Jayakumar, was launched by the Red Elephant Solution in 2016. Although its services were discontinued in 2022, *Saahas* significantly contributed as a tool for survivors of violence and for bystanders to equip themselves with information and resources to respond to violence against women and girls. Saahas consisted of a directory of support services across 196 countries, a database of guidance on handling violence against women and girls, and a reporting tool that assists survivors in reporting the incidents on Safecity's crowdmap. The support directory consisted of over 20,000 organisations offering medical, legal, educational, employment, and police and ambulance services for women who had faced violence. The data provided was regionally specific and verified by a dedicated team of volunteers from across the world.

## 7. POL App

*POL* App, managed by the Kerala Police, was initially developed by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in June 2020. The objective of *POL* App is to provide a free and unified digital platform to enhance public safety by connecting citizens with police services and emergency response. While the target audience is the common public, the platform significantly contributes to technology-enchanced safety provisions for women and girls. The platform's distinctness lies in its SOS feature, which allows citizens to instantly alert the police during emergencies with real-time location tracking and optional video recording until help arrives. Along with this, other key services such as support

for single women living alone, appointment booking with the SHO, and Track My Trip facility are also available. It includes panic button, live-location sharing, GPS tracking, SMS alerts, and automated calls to emergency contacts. The application is accessible online and remotely, with some features requiring an internet connection.

Data collected through the application is primarily used by the police, with relevant insights being shared to government agencies. Although real-time location is recorded, the platform does not perform vulnerability mapping to earmark repeat locales of violence or high-risk areas. It is used for information dissemination purposes, creating a direct and quick channel to citizens in distress. Its in-built client satisfaction and follow-up provision allows for necessary improvements in service delivery. All response systems and follow-ups are human-assisted to meet the varying needs of users in a prompt manner. The app has over 10 lakh downloads and 4.3 rating on Google Store (Data accessed on 30 Sep, 2025).

## 8. SafeCity App

Operated by the Red Dot Foundation, *SafeCity* App was developed by The Data Duck in 2012. The platform crowdsources personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in both public and private spaces. The data is then plotted on a map, indicating trends at a local level with the aim to make the findings useful for individuals, local communities, and local administration. Geotagged localities can help identify factors that cause violent behaviours when studied contextually, by taking demographic aspects into consideration. Therefore, *SafeCity* functions primarily as a tool for vulnerability mapping rather than an SOS app.

The platform's target audience is any survivor of VAWG, and it operates internationally. It focuses on VAWG prevention, incident reporting, service referrals, and information dissemination through data collection. The data generated highlights vulnerable areas that do not typically feature in official records. This indicates that a majority of privately reported cases submitted to the platform represent previously unreported cases. The privacy safeguards offered by the platform reduce procedural barriers for survivors and improves the likelihood of reporting.

Crime hotspot data is shared with city administration, law enforcement agencies, transport and tourism authorities, and educational institutions in India and abroad. The platform provides good accessibility by offering services free of cost and making their services available via mobile application, website, and telephone. Most features of the mobile application are available in remote mode, except for certain features that require an internet connection. With accessibility to 15+ international languages, the platform has a reach of 15 lakhs since its inception and has mapped 1,00,000 cases in total. "Project Showcase," a data-driven policing initiative developed by SafeCity in collaboration with Haryana Police Department, received global recognition at the German Federal Foreign Office's data innovation showcase.

## 9. MyAmbar App

MyAmbar is a digital solution that came about as a CSR initiative of the Vodafone Idea Foundation in collaboration with Nasscom Foundation, Safety Trust, and UN Women under the Connecting for Good programme. Designed to assist women in distress, the app offers an elaborate directory of helpline numbers and service providers across India, alongside a step-by-step risk assessment tool. The app also features an SOS button offering instant location-sharing with registered emergency contacts, as well as functionality for survivors or high-risk individuals to report complaints and seek help. Available on Android in English and Hindi, the content is also accessible in audio-format, and the app is optimised for working even on low-bandwidth networks to ensure wider reach.

# 8. Comparative Summary

| Platform | GPS/GEO Features | Feedback Loop | Accessibility (Languages) | Disability Inclusion | Key Strengths |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***My Safetipin* App** | Yes | Yes | 7+ international languages | No | Safety auditing, data-driven planning |
| **112 Helpline** | No | Yes | English and all other Indian regional languages | Via NGO | Immediate local response, integrated with police |
| **1090 Helpline** | Yes | Yes | Malayalam, English, Hindi, Tamil | Via NGO/police personnel | Multi-channel access, anonymous reporting |
| **181 Helpline** | No | Yes | Malayalam, English, Hindi, Tamil | No | Comprehensive women-centric services |
| ***I'm Safe* App** | Yes | Yes | English, Tamil, Hindi, German | No | Group alerts, international coverage |
| ***Saahas* App** | No | No | English | Yes, provides screen reader compatibility | Emergency rescue, intersectional accessibility, remote and international coverage, integrated referral |
| ***POL* App** | Yes | Yes | English, Malayalam | Yes, provides support for colour blind users | Quick response, emergency rescue, integrated referral, follow-up, accessible via app, website and telephone |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***SafeCity* App** | No | No | 15+ international languages including English, Kannada, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi | Yes, provides support for colour blind users | Safe and private reporting of VAWG incidents, vulnerability mapping of high-risk areas and neighbourhoods reporting high number of DV cases |
| ***MyAmbar App*** | No | Yes | Hindi and English | Yes, provides screen reader compatibility. | Quick response time. |

## 9. Challenged and Gaps Identified

A. **Outreach and Service:** Awareness and outreach remain a major challenge. Despite the availability of tech-interventions, many users are not aware of the existence of these apps and helplines, particularly in areas where digital penetration is low and promotional efforts are minimal. Most platforms function in an SOS capacity, with limited vulnerability mapping facilities.

B. **Accessibility:** Limited disability-friendly features were observed across platforms, with most lacking voice assistance, screen-reader compatibility, and special provisions for visually or hearing-impaired users. Accessibility in low-connectivity areas also remains a challenge. Technological literacy acts as a barrier in usage, especially among rural and older populations who may not be familiar with mobile applications or multi-channel helplines. The utility of most tech-based interventions are limited to those who are comfortable with smartphones or GPS-based apps. In such instances, telephonic helplines serve as a valuable resource.

C. **Underutilisation of Data:** Across the research sample, with the exception of SafeCity, data is not pooled to strengthen safety planning for women and girls. Most platforms primarily focus on response and reporting services; however, long-term prevention models are not developed from the data collected. Better use of this data could prove beneficial to training and research efforts.

D. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Some platforms exhibit provisions for user feedback and monitoring. For example, My Safetipin allows users to share comments and photos, but helpline platforms rely primarily on internal tracking, thus raising the question of consistency and accountability. A structured approach to feedback collection, transparency in reporting, and continuous service evaluation would improve accountability and trust in these systems.

The survey findings reveal the growing significance of technological platforms in safety, emergency response, and support services, particularly for women and marginalised communities. Each

platform studied, from app-based tools such as My Safetipin to helpline numbers such as 112, 1090, or 181, offers a unique set of functions and a critical role in the larger ecosystem of public safety and social support. The comparative overview of selected digital solutions in addressing VAWG highlights how their design features contribute to their accessibility, inclusivity, and the overall effectiveness of technology-assisted safety interventions. While several applications integrate GPS and location features for emergency response and tracking, others, particularly helplines, operate without these features and rely instead on human-assisted follow-up. This further indicates a divide between technology-enabled platforms that cater largely to digitally literate populations, and low-tech services that remain crucial for outreach in low-connectivity contexts.

Language accessibility emerges as another crucial design issue. While some platforms such as Safetipin and SafeCity offer services in multiple regional and international languages, most remain limited to English and a small number of local languages. This restricts usability for marginalised populations who may not be able to navigate apps in English or Hindi. Disability inclusion remains one of the weakest areas across the platforms studied. Only a few applications such as Saahas, POL App, MyAmbar, and SafeCity, provide features like screen-reader compatibility or color-blind support. The absence of consistent disability-friendly design highlights the accessibility gaps within safety technologies. Feedback loops and accountability mechanisms are also inconsistent. While some apps such as Safetipin encourage user engagement through comments and photos, helplines typically rely on internal monitoring.

## 10. Policy and Design Implications

On the design front, platforms must be more accessible and user-friendly across socio-economic and linguistic divides. This includes simpler interfaces, multi-language support, and features for persons with disabilities, such as voice control, screen readers, and alternative input options. Importantly, apps must function reliably on low-bandwidth connections and in offline modes to ensure usability in underserved areas. Cross-sectoral coordination among helplines, police, shelters, NGOs, and healthcare providers is essential to delivering seamless and effective services. Shared digital systems or unified dashboards can reduce duplication, expedite response times, and foster a more holistic user experience. Additionally, incorporating robust user interfaces for feedback such as service ratings, complaint filing, and case tracking can significantly enhance transparency, responsiveness, and accountability.

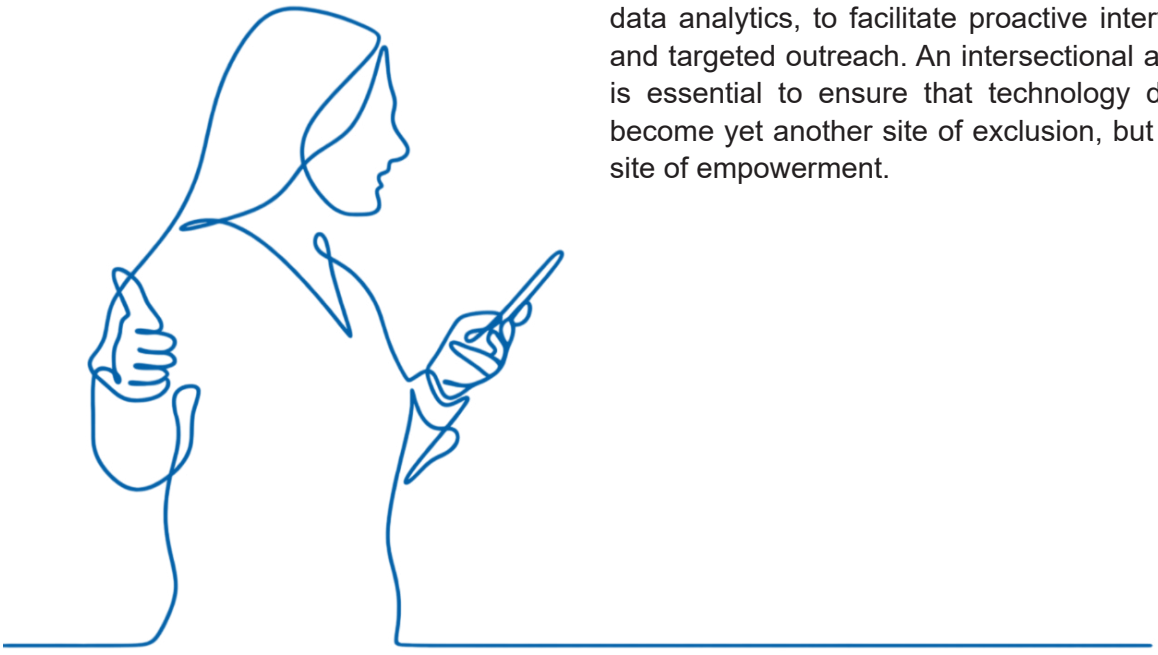
At the policy level, it is critical to integrate these platforms within broader national and state-level safety, justice, and social protection frameworks. This includes linking helplines with government schemes, ensuring sustained public investment in digital infrastructure, and formulating clear, standardised operating protocols across departments. Capacity-building for frontline workers, coupled with partnerships with local communities and civil society, can further enhance implementation and outreach. Regular audits based on user feedback and service data should guide continuous improvement and public trust.

From a legal and ethical perspective, platforms must prioritise data privacy, user consent, and secure data handling. Transparent data protection policies, anonymisation tools, and user-friendly grievance mechanisms are fundamental to protecting survivors and preventing secondary harm. Legal redress systems must treat technology-facilitated harms, such as cyberstalking, impersonation, and online harassment, with the same urgency and procedural clarity as offline violence. Ethical design must centre on user dignity, autonomy, and safety regardless of the form or setting of abuse.

While the proliferation of safety technologies presents significant opportunities, their utility is often limited by deep-rooted structural barriers. Digital illiteracy, low public awareness, limited language support, and widespread institutional distrust continue to marginalise those most at risk. The relevance of these tools, therefore, lies not simply in their availability, but in how equitably and thoughtfully they are designed, implemented, and integrated within systemic reform efforts.

Moreover, existing legal frameworks in India remain inadequate in addressing the full spectrum of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TFVAWG). While sections of the IT Act (2000) and IPC (e.g., 354D, 66E, 67A) offer partial safeguards, significant gaps persist in relation to psychological abuse, generalised misogyny, and non-domestic online harassment. Legislative reform must adopt a survivor-centered lens and promote convergence between legal, technological, and community-based responses.

In sum, realising the full potential of safety tech platforms demands a synergistic approach combining inclusive design, coordinated service delivery, progressive legal reform, and participatory governance. Only then can these systems truly empower survivors and ensure timely, respectful, and trustworthy assistance for all, especially the most vulnerable.



## 11. Conclusion

Technology has emerged as a strong catalyst for systemic change, providing scalable, real-time prevention, reporting, and redressal mechanisms for violence and distress. It fills the gaps in service delivery, formulates evidence-based policies, and equips the users with the tools they need to make decisions. However, for technology to play a meaningful role in systemic change in the long run, it must be supported by inclusive design, strong legal frameworks, ethical governance, and policy integration.

Research and innovation must focus on building upon these platforms, making them more inclusive for differently-abled users, digitally excluded populations, and non-native speakers.

Future research and innovation should focus on making these platforms more accessible to digitally excluded users, non-native speakers, and differently-abled individuals. Integrated digital systems that link helplines, shelters (such as yellow pages or call centres), legal aid, and healthcare services could be used to make journeys smoother and outcomes better. Future studies could investigate the long-term impact of these platforms on behavioral change, trust, and perception of public safety. Meanwhile, studies could also concentrate on using emerging technologies, such as AI and big data analytics, to facilitate proactive interventions and targeted outreach. An intersectional approach is essential to ensure that technology does not become yet another site of exclusion, but rather a site of empowerment.

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# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

# 09

# Introduction

The chapter summarises the common problems and challenges identified from the five states of study, namely Goa, Telangana, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Kerala. This chapter also suggests policy recommendations that have to be adopted at the national level. Several of the issues discussed in the chapter can be generalised as common issues faced by most of the states in India. Hence, the policy recommendations can act as a key resource that would support the strengthening of the VAWG institutional mechanisms in the states.

The recommendations are divided under thematic areas that include,

1. Human Resources and Capacity Building
2. Institutional Strengthening and Governance
3. Judicial and Legal Ecosystem
4. Resource Allocation and Fund Utilisation
5. Technology, Data, and Evidence Systems
6. Community-Led Prevention and Engagement
7. Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls
8. Police Reforms

Each thematic area outlines the specific problems identified, followed by corresponding recommendations and a justification for each proposed measure.

## Issues and Recommendations

# 1. Human Resources and Capacity Building

**1.1 Problem:** States like Goa, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand are facing staff shortages in OSCs. OSCs are not operational in Goa and only partially operational in Jharkhand, with services available only during the daytime. Another crucial issue is accessibility. As OSCs are located at the district level, mostly near the district headquarters, women living in the outskirts, especially in larger districts, find difficulty in accessing the services provided or are unaware of the institutional presence. OSCs in Kerala handle an average of 30 cases per month (WCD, Kerala). In Jharkhand, with 24 OSCs as of July 2025, a total of 6466 cases have been handled (Sakhi Dashboard). Considering the number of OSCs and the time period that they are operational, these figures clearly indicate the limited reach of these institutions.

**Recommendation:** In order to expand the reach of OSCs to the grassroots level, a dedicated cadre of women called "Nirbhaya Sathi," who are recruited women at the gram panchayat/ward level, is proposed. They are to be trained in handling survivors of domestic violence, dowry harassment, and other sexual offences, as well as in carrying out outreach activities through awareness campaigns at the local level. They are to act as trusted first responders for the survivors. The cadre can actively support local panchayats and police stations to map crime vulnerability in the locality. The proposed model shall function as a decentralised referral and support system operating at the gram panchayat or ward levels. The members would be recruited locally, ensuring contextual understanding as well as community engagement. They shall be closely integrated with institutional service providers, including the police (for FIR registration and follow-up), OSCs, DLSA, shelters, counsellors, and hospitals. A dedicated fund for the initiative may be planned under the Mission Shakti.

**Justification:** While some states like Rajasthan have made similar models called “Suraksha Sakhis”, the model was not successful due to a lack of proper structure, remuneration, support system, and reporting structures. Another model worth mentioning is “Gramin Mahila Kendras” by NEN in Assam and “Social Action Committees” under SERP during undivided Andhra Pradesh. The formation of a dedicated workforce at the grassroots level for prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration, along with coordination between departments can solve the critical issues faced by all states.

Frontline community workers such as ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) and Anganwadi workers already carry extensive responsibilities within the health and welfare systems. ASHAs act as the crucial link between communities and healthcare services, handling maternal and child health, immunisation, community-based mental health, and palliative care. AWWs, under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, manage nutrition, preschool education, health monitoring, and assist ANMs in identifying supporting target groups.

A bottom-up approach with strengthened PRIs and a dedicated workforce at the grassroots level could be the solution. Establishing a dedicated cadre of trained "Nirbhaya Saathis" at the gram panchayat or ward level would therefore fill a critical institutional gap. Unlike ASHA or Anganwadi workers, their primary focus would be to address VAWG, community awareness, and referral coordination. They can serve as trusted first responders, conduct awareness and prevention activities, and maintain strong referral linkages with institutional actors such as the police, OSCs, DLSA, shelters, and hospitals. By focusing exclusively on violence response and survivor empowerment, this cadre would strengthen grassroots gender justice mechanisms through a decentralised, community-anchored approach.

**1.2 Problem:** In most cases, Women Protection Officers (WPOs), under the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, are not dedicated officers. The Child Development and Protection Officers (CDPOs) or Integrated Child Development Service Scheme (ICDS) officials are allotted the extra functions and responsibilities of a WPO. This dual designation affects the dedicated functioning of the key institution under the Domestic Violence Act. Moreover, the term "Protection Officer" carries a negative connotation, which may not be empowering for survivors.

**Recommendation:** Dedicated officers should be recruited and trained as WPOs in every district. The WPO could also act as Dowry Prohibition Officer under Dowry Prohibition Act. The WPO could serve as the district nodal officer for coordinating the implementation of the DV Act in the district and for maintaining the referral network effectively. The officer can be the anchor of the Department of WCD to coordinate with DLSA, District police and police stations, OSCs, Nirbhaya Saathis, and LSGs in the district. Further, renaming the Women Protection Officer as the Women Empowerment Officer would shift the focus from protection-only to empowerment and survivor support, enhancing both the role's effectiveness and perception among stakeholders.

**Justification:** The Supreme Court, in Write Petition (Civil) No. 1156/2021, underscored the urgent need for effective implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, including the proper appointment and functioning of Protection Officers under Sections 4-11 of the Act. A key challenge identified across the states has been the lack of dedicated and trained officers to coordinate services and ensure timely redressal.

In this context, appointing dedicated, full-time Women Protection Officers (WPOs) in every district, as practised in Kerala, has demonstrated greater administrative efficiency and interdepartmental coordination. Kerala's standalone WPO model allows officers to function as district-level nodal points, ensuring better coordination between the Department of Women and Child Development, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), police, OSCs, Nirbhaya Saathis, and LSGs. Renaming the position as Women Empowerment Officer further broadens the mandate from mere "protection" to empowerment, rehabilitation, and survivor-centric support, aligning with the evolving framework of gender justice and the Court's emphasis on holistic implementation of the Act.

**1.3 Problem:** Lack of Self-Care Frameworks for Frontline Workers: Self-care of the frontline workers is a critical issue that needs attention for the effective and efficient delivery of services with sensitivity and care. Often, understaffing in the OSCs and other institutions increases the workload, resulting in burnout that affects the quality of service provided.

**Recommendation:** Include a self-care framework with retreats and other support systems as part of the OSC guidelines. India would be one of the

front-runners if such a policy were implemented as part of the framework. To safeguard the mental health and long-term effectiveness of frontline workers addressing VAWG, it is essential to institutionalise self-care and trauma-informed support systems within all relevant sectors. This includes training on vicarious trauma, regular case debriefings, access to professional mental health services, and peer support groups. Case workers and frontline responders supporting gender-based violence are at constant risk of vicarious trauma and emotional exhaustion. To ensure their well-being and sustained effectiveness, a mandatory, organisation-wide self-care framework should be integrated into all state and NGO-led VAWG programs. Adapted from the Rape Victim Advocacy Program (2000) and Judith E. Booth's work on vicarious trauma, such a framework should include regular access to mental health support, peer supervision, structured downtime, and stress management protocols like flexible caseloads and time-off policies.

**Justification:** Repeated and prolonged exposure to violence, danger, and human distress takes a toll over the course of an emergency service job. This factor is neglected, as there are no evaluation studies assessing the quality of the services provided by these governmental institutions working to combat VAWG. Under-resourced systems like OSCs and shelter homes cause severe mental trauma and burnout to first-line responders. In Australia, some of the Emergency Services Foundation have launched a four-day residential wellness retreat for all emergency workers (police, paramedics, dispatchers) and their loved ones. These models are worth emulating for improving the quality of service delivery of OSCs, shelters, and similar institutions.

**1.4 Problem:** There is a clear absence of institutionalised and sustained training on survivor-centric and trauma-informed approaches across institutions in all states. Existing training provided by the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD) is largely scheme-specific and irregular, with minimal focus on refresher sessions.

In the health department, there is limited awareness among doctors and health professionals regarding their roles and responsibilities under the Domestic Violence Act. For instance, many are unaware that they can assist in filing Domestic Incident Reports (DIRs) and that hospitals can function as service providers under the Act. Crucially, the therapeutic role of health professionals in cases involving violence against women and girls (VAWG) is frequently disregarded, particularly in situations that result in pregnancies due to rape and subsequent abortions. Similar gaps are seen in the police force. Despite being among the first responders in such cases, there is a persistent lack of sensitivity and training. This often leads to delays in filing First Information Reports (FIRs) and inadequate evidence collection, significantly contributing to poor conviction rates.

No state currently has a mandated policy that requires periodic or structured capacity building in this area. As a result, much of the training is conducted by non-governmental organisations using donor funds, which leads to a siloed and fragmented approach to strengthening frontline responses to violence against women and girls. The different levels of training across these institutions also affect the interdepartmental coordination, limiting smooth and effective support to survivors.

**Recommendation:** Implement a policy framework mandating biannual training for police officers, protection officers, WCD functionaries, healthcare providers, and community-level stakeholders. These trainings should be integrated into the annual work plans and performance appraisals of departments to ensure accountability and participation. The curriculum for police training, WCD staff, healthcare providers, and others must be revised to include modules with assessment tests.

Develop a cadre of certified trainers through structured Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes at the state and district levels. These trainers can then deliver context-specific sessions in local languages, ensuring effective dissemination of legal, procedural, and survivor-support frameworks across all relevant departments. The cascade model promotes sustainability, scale, and contextual relevance.

Partner with experienced civil society organisations (CSOs) and academic institutions at the district level to co-develop and facilitate training modules. CSOs can bring in field experience, survivor perspectives, and subject expertise. Their involvement in panel discussions, simulation exercises, and sensitisation sessions helps bridge the gap between policy and practice and builds empathy and responsiveness among officials.

**Justification:** The lack of training for the staff about gender roles, sensitivity of the issue, and handling of different kinds of trauma affecting survivors is vitiating the whole intention of the schemes and programmes. The reiteration of patriarchal norms that one has imbibed from childhood critically affects the judgments and approach of the staff towards survivors, leading to a lack of trust in governmental processes and institutions. Hence, training of the staff is critical and should be prioritised in the planning of financial resources provided to states under different departments. While there are very few international models, the Office of Violence against Women, USA, provides grants to agencies that develop courses training responders in trauma-informed care.

The MHA Advisory No. 15011/126/2020-SC/ST-W dated 29/07/2020 mandates that the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) and Central Detective Training Institute (CDTI) make nominations for the training and sensitisation of police personnel and that these models be replicated in states/UTs. However, institutionalised training efforts remain weakly enforced.

**1.5 Problem:** Academic and civil society institutions are underutilised for training, assessment, and evaluation. Law colleges, universities, and NGOs often work in silos with limited coordination with WCD or legal aid bodies. A recent study on the role of NGOs in combating VAWG highlights the need for and importance of community outreach programmes. The implementation of the law alone cannot solve the problem of violence against women due to deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes and imbalanced gender power relations. NGOs, being in direct contact with the survivors, can gain trust and better reach the community and family to support them. The study also strongly recommends a collaborative approach between NGOs and government for a comprehensive implementation of the schemes, programmes, and laws supporting women survivors effectively (Kumari 2023, 38–52). In states like Telangana, NGOs play a significant role in the effective implementation of OSCs.

**Recommendation:** A collaborative approach must be adopted by the government towards the NGOs and academic institutions specialised in women's issues. Recognised academic institutions should formulate training modules on various forms of VAWG for government and frontline staff. These may include modules on gender sensitivity, survivor handling, and confidentiality; partner with recognised NGOs and CSOs to develop curricula for schools and colleges covering human rights, gender equality, and basic legal literacy (e.g., Women Against Violence Europe Network model).

**Justification:** Despite the legal framework established through the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and allied legislations, a persistent implementation gap remains due to limited capacity, inadequate gender sensitivity among frontline staff, and the absence of coordinated community engagement.

Academic and civil society institutions possess the research expertise, pedagogical capacity, and community linkages necessary to bridge this gap. However, their potential remains underutilised as they function in isolation from government departments such as WCD and legal aid bodies. Engaging recognised universities, law schools, and NGOs in developing and delivering standardised training modules on gender sensitivity, survivor handling, and confidentiality can significantly enhance institutional responsiveness. Moreover, embedding human rights, gender equality, and legal literacy in school and college curricula through partnering with credible NGOs and networks like Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) can foster long-term attitudinal change.

Thus, a structured collaboration between government bodies, academic institutions, and civil society organisations is essential for creating an ecosystem of accountability, empathy, and competence in addressing VAWG.

## 2. Institutional Strengthening and Governance

**2.1 Problem:** Strengthening the state-level institutions to support better implementation of laws and policies and to streamline the activities against VAWG. State-level workshops and stakeholder interviews reveal a severe lack of interdepartmental coordination. While schemes like OSC have mandatory guidelines for constitution-level and district-level monitoring committees, most of them are only on paper. In states where meetings are conducted, often the nominees of the officers attend, resulting in poor outcomes. Furthermore, these institutions for monitoring are scheme-specific and do not act as a comprehensive body to address VAWG as a whole.

**Recommendation:** The State-Level Women Safety Board (WCD, Police, Health, Education, Legal Services Authority, cyber/gender experts, CSOs, and academics) will look into the following:

1. Advise the government to bring in revisions in the existing legal and policy framework.
2. Approve Research and Development Funds to study the socio-economic impact of the institutions, programmes, and policies impacting VAWG.
3. Review budgetary allocations, oversee grievance redressal and training and capacity building.
4. Strengthen interdepartmental coordination.

District-level Women Safety Boards shall coordinate activities at the district level and provide inputs to the respective state-level board. The District-level Women Safety Board shall oversee the following:

1. Review district-level activities
2. Review the fund disbursement and utilisation.
3. Oversee the grievance redressal mechanisms.
4. Oversee the training and capacity building.
5. Strengthen interdepartmental coordination.
6. Suggest policy revisions for state-level adoption.

The general framework to be adopted by these boards shall be: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Reintegration, Coordination, and Governance.

**2.2 Problem:** The current institutional framework assigns minimal roles to LSGs in addressing VAWG, despite their proximity to communities. Existing state-specific SHG-led frameworks (e.g., Kudumbashree in Kerala, JSLPS in Jharkhand, and SERP in Andhra Pradesh) remain fragmented and non-standardised.

**Recommendation:** Establish multi-tier committees modelled after Jagratha Samithis in Kerala at each level: Department of Women and Child Development—State Women Safety Board—District Women Safety Board—LSG Women Safety Committee—Ward Women Safety Committee. These shall include representatives from local governance, law enforcement, health, legal aid, CSOs, and survivors (with consent).

**Justification:** Local Self Governments (LSGs) are the governance units closest to women and communities, yet their potential role in preventing and responding to VAWG remains minimal and unstructured. Existing SHG-led frameworks, such as Kudumbashree, JSLPS, and SERP, though active in women's empowerment, lack institutional convergence and consistent accountability mechanisms.

The Jagratha Samithi (JS) model in Kerala offers a proven and adaptable framework for community-based, multi-stakeholder coordination in addressing VAWG. Established in 1997 under the Kerala Women's Commission, the JS institutionalised a bottom-up, decentralised response mechanism, linking state policy to local action. Functioning in close coordination with Kudumbashree and the Nirbhaya Policy, JS units integrate representatives from LSGs, police, legal services, health departments, and community organisations to ensure timely redressal, survivor support, and preventive outreach. Adopting a similar multi-tier structure, from the State Women Safety Board down to Ward Women Safety Committees, would enable systemic coordination, improve monitoring, and institutionalise convergence between govern-

ment departments and community actors. Such a framework would embed accountability at every administrative level while ensuring that local governance structures serve as active nodes of prevention, redressal, and empowerment.

**2.3 Problem:** Absence of institutionalised consultative mechanisms involving NGOs, faith-based organisations, and survivors. While the OSC guidelines mandate social audits, they are rarely conducted under the OSC scheme, leading to weak accountability, poor feedback loops, and limited transparency in service delivery.

**Recommendation:** Create Participatory Governance Forums with survivors, CSOs, and community representatives under LSGs, supported by small grants through Mission Shakti; in states with active SHGs, members from Kudumbasree, SERP, and JSLPS, should be formally included in local committees.

**Mandatory Digital Social Audits:** Institutionalise digital social audits integrated into the dashboard to ensure regular monitoring, transparency, and accountability across all OSCs and related services.

**Justification:** These forums will help the government in their preventive strategies by identifying local issues, unsafe locations, and local-level community-based initiatives. The platform also helps in ideating solutions driven by the community itself. The discussions will also act as a feedback mechanism for the governmental institutions to review their processes, thereby strengthening the responses towards survivors.

**2.4 Problem:** Institutional processes often fail the survivors due to poor feedback mechanisms. Governmental schemes and guidelines overlook the need for incorporating the experiences of survivors in the form of feedback for improving processes and efficiency of the system.

**Recommendation:** Make survivor feedback a mandatory part of evaluation under Mission Shakti, MHA advisories, NHM Guidelines, and NALSA Guidelines; frame a structured audit model for all VAWG institutions to ensure safety, dignity, confidentiality, and non-discrimination.

**Justification:** Australia has clear pathways to include survivors in the policy research, with their involvement in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. Studies suggest a model for survivor engagement with a "participate, advice, collaborate, co-design, co-create" strategy. (Lamb et al., 2023). Many studies among survivors (Hooker, L. 2025) and the state-level workshops conducted by CPPR highlighted the importance of developing structured, organisation-wide feedback mechanisms that go beyond ad hoc evaluations. This involves creating standardised processes for collecting, analysing, and acting on feedback from all stakeholders.

## 3. Judicial and Legal Ecosystem

**3.1 Problem:** The judicial system in India faces structural inefficiencies due to the absence of case-specific specialisation. Judges are often tasked with both civil and criminal cases, including those requiring forensic or gender-based violence expertise, resulting in delays and inconsistencies in case handling and adjudication. While the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, mandates a 60-day timeline for settling the matter, courts often take more than two years to settle domestic disputes. The lengthy judicial process results in secondary traumatisation, and the judicial processes themselves often re-traumatises the survivors.

**Recommendation:** Adopt online/remote testimonies via Zoom/video conferencing to enable survivors to record statements, thereby reducing trauma and delays; record survivor statements at the first point of contact to prevent re-traumatisation.

**Justification:** In-camera proceedings are mandated under Section 327 of the Indian Penal Code (CrPC) and reinforced by several Supreme Court judgments like State of Punjab v. Gurmit Singh, (1996). Stakeholder interviews reveal that in-camera proceedings often include prosecution and defence lawyers with their juniors and the accused

may be present in the court. Survivors frequently experience secondary victimisation or retraumatisation during testimony, as they must recount painful experiences in the presence of the accused and unfamiliar legal personnel.

Judicial delay has been a longstanding human rights issue. Attempts to start new fast-track courts and digitalise systems have improved the system; however, it is not up to the expected level. A recent study by XXDR shows that the processes in a case such as multiple filings and adjournments due to the absence of either party, are major irritants causing the delays. The suggestion is to implement digital summons. As part of the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) Project, Telangana has integrated the CCTNS project with the eCourts and ePrisons databases and other pillars of the judiciary. These are promising initiatives that need to be scaled up, especially for VAWG crimes. Section 173 of BNSS allows the victim to provide information through electronic communication, and it shall be taken on record by the officer in charge of a police station once it is signed by the informant within three days of submission.

In Andhra Pradesh, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) is mandated to visit each One Stop Centre (OSC) at least once a month. This regular engagement aims to strengthen coordination between legal aid services and survivor support systems, ensure timely legal assistance, monitor the quality of services provided, and address any gaps in the functioning of the OSCs.

**3.2 Problem:** Accessing victim compensation is challenging due to delays and bureaucratic hurdles, often discouraging survivors or delaying support that is critical for their recovery.

**Recommendation:** Streamline victim compensation systems by simplifying eligibility criteria, requirements such as income certificates and departmental NOCs; and establish a tracking system to monitor compensation orders and disbursal.

**Justification:** Victim compensation is an identified right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution (Rudul Sah vs. State of Bihar) and a statutory right under Section 396 of BNS, which is implemented by LSA. However, the implementation of the provision is not uniform across the states. The compensation amount, the criteria for obtaining compensation, and the process involved vary from state to state. Some states like Madhya Pradesh have 80 percent settlement of funds and a very effective system with several committees that collect state-level data and hold quarterly review meetings.

**3.3 Problem:** The legal aid delivery suffers from systemic weaknesses, including poorly paid and overburdened panel lawyers under the State Legal Services Authorities, and the lack of a robust monitoring mechanism to ensure accountability and quality of service. Paralegals are poorly trained for handling the survivors and supporting them through necessary referral services.

**Recommendation:** Paralegals and panel lawyers must undergo training to handle VAWG survivors. Paralegals must have a clear career advancement trajectory planned to incentivise them to provide quality services under the Act, including through certifications. Legal aid services must be linked to the VAWG state dashboards for transparency on pendency, lawyer assignment, and delays.

**Justification:** Current honoraria (as low as ₹500–₹1,000 per hearing in many states) disincentivise quality work, especially in sensitive VAWG cases. With higher pay, specialised training on VAWG, POCSO, DV, etc., can be made mandatory, improving survivor experience, legal outcomes, sensitivity, and follow-up.

**3.4 Problem:** There exists a legal conflict between the POCSO Act and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act. While POCSO mandates reporting of any pregnancy in a minor to the police, treating it as evidence of sexual offence, the MTP Act, particularly after the 2021 amendment, prioritises confidentiality and non-judgmental access to safe abortion services. This inconsistency creates ethical and procedural dilemmas for healthcare providers and may deter minors from seeking timely and safe medical care. One of the reasons for the increasing POCSO cases is consensual sex among adolescents, resulting in criminalisation

due to the 18-year age threshold under the POCSO Act. The health professionals, including doctors, are mandated to report sexual crimes against children, with penalties for failure to do so.

**Recommendation:** Address inconsistencies between the POCSO Act and MTP Act to ensure coherent legal redressal.

## 4. Resource Allocation and Fund Utilisation

**4.1 Problem:** The existing fund allocations and poor disbursal mechanism under Mission Shakti and related schemes are affecting the operational and infrastructural needs of shelter and support services. This has led to staff incurring out-of-pocket expenses and has limited the capacity to provide quality care to survivors. The absence of clear financial planning and monitoring mechanisms at the state level has resulted in delays and underutilisation of central funds, affecting the delivery of essential services to women. Investing in human resources by adequate staffing, training, and self-care programs requires a dedicated fund. However, the planned budget is skewed towards these aspects.

**Recommendation:** Increase funding under the Mission Shakti programme, ensuring better allocation and planning of resources to strengthen infrastructure, improve service delivery, and address remuneration gaps. Streamline the central fund utilisation through structured financial planning at the state level, with defined priorities for infrastructure, training, awareness creation, and operational expenses.

**Justification:** As per the OSC guidelines, the centre releases 25 percent of the allocated funds to a state at the beginning of the financial year. The next payment is processed only after 75 percent of previously released funds are utilised. This severely delays the timely payment of salaries and allowances, hindering the effective functioning of institutions.

Between 2016-17 and 2021-22, the Ministry spent less than its allocated budget; ₹6,000 crore (21 percent) remained unutilised in 2019-20 alone. The Standing Committee on Women and Children (2022) attributed this to poor planning, weak implementation, and monitoring gaps, with COVID-19 affecting 2020-21. Meanwhile, the SC on HRD (2020) noted the Ministry's Union Budget share remained at just one percent over five years, despite ongoing development gaps for women and children. This share has since dropped to 0.6 percent in 2023-24. The utilisation of the Nirbhaya Fund has been inadequate; only 33 percent(₹2,989 crore) of the ₹ 9,177 crore sanctioned across 35 projects has been used.

**4.2 Problem:** States like Telangana, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Goa lack adequate shelter and aftercare homes, and the existing facilities often fail to meet basic needs of safety, hygiene, and accessibility. This limits survivors' access to long-term rehabilitation and protection. Under the Mission Shakti, the existing Swadhar Grehs and Ujjawala Homes are integrated into one program called Shakti Sadans. However, the state-level studies revealed the need for special facilities for mentally challenged/psychiatrically treated women survivors as well as adolescents. The one-size-fits-all approach often fails due to the lack of specialised care required by many survivors.

**Recommendation:** Establish more shelter homes and after-care facilities across states to ensure adequate infrastructure and regionally balanced access to safe accommodation for women in distress. The fund allocated for Shakti Sadans must not be conditional, and the states must be provided the flexibility to build homes for specialised care under the scheme.

**Justification:** States such as Telangana, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Goa currently have an alarmingly low number of shelter and aftercare facilities under Mission Shakti. According to official data, Telangana has only five Ujjwala homes, Jharkhand has two, Rajasthan has one, and Goa has one. This is highly disproportionate to the volume of reported cases of domestic violence, trafficking, and abuse in these states. For instance, Karnataka and Rajasthan report around 20,000 domestic violence cases annually, while Telangana and Jharkhand report nearly 10,000 and 9,000

cases respectively. The gap between the demand for safe accommodation and the availability of such facilities reflects a serious shortfall in the protective infrastructure for women.

The current model lacks specialised provisions for women with mental disabilities, adolescent survivors, and those requiring psychiatric treatment or trauma-informed care. Many shelters also fall short in ensuring safety, hygiene, privacy, and accessibility — factors essential to ensure survivors' recovery as well as reintegration. A conditional and uniform funding structure restricts states from creating context-specific, specialised care homes responsive to regional needs. Empowering states with greater flexibility in fund utilisation under Mission Shakti, along with targeted investment in infrastructure and aftercare, is essential to ensure regionally balanced, need-based, and dignified shelter access for all women in distress.

**4.3 Problem:** Current guidelines for OSCs and Shakti Sadans do not adequately account for the needs of women with disabilities or other marginalised groups, leading to their exclusion from essential protection and care services.

**Recommendation:** Integrate audits into the OSC and Shakti Sadan guidelines to ensure that infrastructure, services, and processes are inclusive and accessible for all women.

**Justification:** Women and girls with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing services following sexual violence. These barriers include inaccessible reporting mechanisms, inadequate medical care, and lack of specialised support during legal proceedings. A 2018 Human Rights Watch report highlights that despite legal reforms, women with disabilities continue to encounter systemic barriers that hinder their ability to access justice. Current guidelines for OSCs and Shakti Sadans do not comprehensively address the unique challenges of this group. Without structured audits, there is a risk that these facilities may continue to exclude women and girls with disabilities from essential protection and care services. Implementing regular accessibility and inclusivity audits will help identify and rectify physical, procedural, and attitudinal barriers, ensuring that all survivors receive equitable and effective support.

By integrating regular audits into the operational framework, OSCs and Shakti Sadans can align with national commitments under the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This proactive approach will foster an environment where all women and girls, regardless of disability, can access justice and support care without discrimination.

**4.4 Problem:** Reintegration efforts often fail to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities. States like Telangana provide skill development opportunities for the women survivors through industrial training institutes and similar programmes, but the survivors have limited choice in accessing the kind of skills that meet their interests or support career building, rather than just sustenance. The financial aid for survivors ends with providing shelters and skills that enable the women to get a job for sustenance. However, critical services like long-term psychosocial counselling and childcare services, which help women to stabilise themselves are lacking in the present institutional framework and guidelines.

**Recommendation:** Establish a dedicated reintegration fund for livelihood and rehabilitation support to survivors.

Shelter home guidelines must mandate supporting survivors to start a bank account, linking Aadhar, enrolling in Jan Dhan insurance schemes, and accessing financial credits.

Integrate a mind-body intervention incorporating trauma-informed yoga for survivors in long-term shelters, similar to the HaRT Cebu Program (Philippines)(Cordisco Tsai et al. 2025, 487).

**Justification:** One of the key barriers in reintegration efforts is the lack of funding and professionals to support the survivors in counselling.. The HaRT Cebu program is highly effective because it uses a low-tech approach that does not require professional therapists. Studies have shown that in the Philippines, the programme was successful in reducing the mental health concerns like depression and anxiety, as well as increasing the help-seeking behaviour among the survivors.

## 5. Technology, Data, and Evidence Systems

**5.1 Problem:** Data collection under the OSC scheme remains weak and fragmented, lacking critical socio-economic indicators such as caste, religion, income level, and education. The absence of coordinated data sharing among departments like police, WCD, health, and legal aid prevents a holistic understanding of VAWG and limits evidence-based policymaking.

**Recommendations:**

1. Establish a State-Level VAWG Dashboard integrating data from police, WCD, health, legal aid services, and OSCs, managed by WCD with DHEW as district-level implementers.
2. Generate a unique survivor ID, similar to OSC scheme, to prevent duplication of services and ensure continuity of care for every reported case. This will enable seamless tracking across institutions. The ID should link case history, service access, referrals, and follow-ups without compromising survivor confidentiality.
3. Enable district-level data validation by training DHEW and WPOs to update dashboards regularly, with provisions for offline and mobile access for low-connectivity areas.

**Justification:** While internet access still acts as a barrier, technology adoption and digitalisation remain key to improving transparency and accountability. Digitisation can help prevent retraumatisation, reduce multiple documentation, avoid duplication of resources, and enable better assessment of both the quality and quantity of the outputs and their impact on the programmes. An example is the MIS dashboard, developed and implemented by Bharosa Centres in Hyderabad, which integrates survivor feedback as well as performance of each centre. Poor staff feedback gets translated to warnings at the initial stage and firing at the next stage. This approach has improved the quality of services provided.

**5.2 Problem:** Existing monitoring mechanisms are department-specific and focus largely on numerical reporting of cases rather than outcomes related to survivor recovery, justice delivery, or systemic performance. This limits the capacity to assess the effectiveness and quality of interventions. Mission Shakti has a three-tier monitoring system for its schemes and programmes at national, state, and district level. However, the monitoring framework should be integrated with other institutions like police, Legal Services Authority, and health departments as well to ensure that the support provided to the survivor meets the standards at all levels.

**Recommendations:**

1. The Ministry of WCD should develop a robust M&E framework with both quantitative and qualitative indicators for all relevant ministries involved in eliminating VAWG.
2. Quantitative indicators include FIRs registered, case resolution rates, convictions, timelines, and service uptake.
3. Qualitative indicators shall include survivor feedback, satisfaction with services, emotional well-being, and risks of re-traumatisation.
4. Outcome-Based Monitoring: Link M&E to justice delivery and survivor well-being outcomes, such as reduced case pendency, faster access to aid, and higher conviction rates.

**Justification:** Bangladesh has a National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework called “A Multi-Sectoral Approach to Combating Gender-Based Violence,” which provides clear indicators for each of the ministries to evaluate the various support schemes and programmes provided to women to eliminate VAWG. However, the indicators are heavily quantitative and give little weight to outcomes or quality of services (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs 2020, 9). Adopting similar models in India can strengthen the efforts of various ministries, resulting in optimal use of resources based on evaluations.

## 6. Community-Led Prevention and Engagement

**6.1 Problem:** Lack of structured community-based safety programmes and minimal participation of men and boys in gender initiatives.

**Recommendation:** Scale up Bystander Intervention and Peer Group Programme in schools and communities (e.g., Hyderabad's Old City leadership programme); institutionalise mandatory modules on consent, gender roles, sex education, and "good touch/bad touch" from primary to higher secondary levels through the Education Department.

**Justification:** While institutional protections are essential to safeguard women and girls from violence, preventive strategies that address and aim to transform harmful social norms are equally important (DFID Guidance Notes). Many boys and men grow up unaware of the lived realities of women, often resulting in apathy towards VAWG as a human rights issue. Early awareness interventions that engage boys and men can play a vital role in fostering empathy and emotional regulation, promoting shared responsibilities at home, and reinforcing the importance of consent. Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA), an organisation operating across the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Assam, conducts sensitisation training for young men aged between 18 and 20. Through workshops, writings and film-screenings, young men are encouraged to resist abuse targeting women. These interactions are curated to challenge harmful social norms that are embedded in the cultural fabric of society. Tharuni, an NGO based in Telangana, conducts sensitisation sessions for boys between 10 and 14 years of age. Collaborations are made with both schools and local villages for the same. Scaling of these activities at state level, in collaboration with these organisations can improve the social attitudes on gender issues.

## 7. Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls

**7.1 Problem:** The IT Act is inadequate to deal with emerging forms of cyber violence, such as revenge porn, doxxing, AI-enabled sexual content, and deepfake pornography. Provisions such as Sections 66E and 67 of the IT Act and certain sections under the BNS are limited in scope. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, also fails to address digital or virtual offences.

Recommendation: Enact a dedicated law on cyber violence against women, or introduce a separate chapter under the BNS covering technology-facilitated offences against women and girls. Implement data-protection safeguards to secure survivor information and prevent misuse or leaks during investigation and trials.

**Justification:** The IT Act and related laws were not designed to address emerging digital harms like deepfakes, doxxing, and AI-generated sexual content. Existing provisions under Section 66E and 67 of the IT Act, and certain sections of the BNS, are too narrow to capture the complexity of these offences. Moreover, the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, remains outdated and inapplicable to online contexts. A dedicated legal framework is therefore essential to define, prevent, and penalise technology-facilitated violence against women. Additionally, robust data-protection safeguards are critical to protect survivor privacy and prevent secondary victimization during investigations and trials.

**7.2 Problem:** Frontline workers lack adequate training to recognise, document, and refer to cases of cyber violence. This results in weak referrals and loss of survivor confidence. Moreover, existing training curricula for police and WCD staff insufficiently cover the digital aspects of violence.

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop a Cyber Crimes Against Women module and integrate it into Mission Shakti as a mandatory training component for WCD, DLSA, and police personnel.
2. Encourage replication of Cyber Dome models (Kerala) in other states to strengthen technical and investigative capabilities against cyber-crimes.

**Justification:** Rising cybercrimes against women, including online harassment, stalking, and fraud, require specialised response, yet frontline personnel often lack the technical expertise to identify, document, and refer to such cases. Existing training curricula for police and WCD staff focus primarily on physical and domestic violence, leaving digital dimensions unaddressed. Integrating a Cyber Crimes Against Women module into Mission Shakti will build capacity for effective detection, referral, and survivor support. Replicating the Cyber Dome model in other states can further strengthen investigative capabilities and ensure robust protection against cyber-based gender violence.

**7.3 Problem:** Cyber safety awareness among students, teachers, and parents remain low, while internet penetration in schools is uneven, with only 53 percent having access (UDISE Plus, 2024). The absence of structured cyber safety education increases the vulnerability of children and adolescents to online exploitation. Inadequate school-level interventions and lack of regular cyber safety evaluations leave students vulnerable to online threats such as cyberbullying, phishing, and exposure to harmful content. Without structured awareness programmes, clear reporting mechanisms, and periodic safety audits, both students and teachers often lack the knowledge and tools to identify and prevent online threats effectively.

**Recommendations:** Integrate cyber safety education into school curricula from Class 5 onwards, extending it to higher educational institutions. Conduct cyber safety assessments among students and parents to gauge awareness levels and improve digital literacy interventions.

**Justification:** A successful model in school-based cyber interventions is Project Koottu in Kerala. It is a child protection initiative launched by the Kerala Police Cyberdome with the assistance of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA), aimed at preventing sexual abuse and exploitation of children while safeguarding their overall emotional and social well-being. The goal is to address the high incidence of P-Hunt cases in select districts of Kerala through a dual strategy. First, it builds awareness among children, parents, and teachers on cyber threats using modern IT tools, robotics, and interactive methods. Second, it provides rehabilitation for child victims of online crimes by establishing free counselling centres and legal aid posts in high-incidence districts.

**7.4 Problem:** Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties remain slow and bureaucratic, with cases often taking up to two years to process. Divergent privacy, data protection, and evidentiary standards across jurisdictions delay justice and undermine the effectiveness of cybercrime investigations.

**Recommendation:** Strengthen Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty systems through dedicated resources, faster coordination mechanisms, and prioritisation of cases involving crimes against women and girls; develop a data repository on the nature of online content, including time, geography, and offender profiles, to better assess patterns of vulnerability and enable targeted policy action.

**Justification:** Cybercrimes against women, such as online exploitation, image-based abuse, and trafficking, demands cross-jurisdictional coordination. However, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) often operate through slow and bureaucratic processes, with requests taking up to two years to be resolved. This delay compromises the integrity of evidence, prolongs survivor distress, and weakens prosecution outcomes.

Divergent data protection, privacy, and evidentiary standards across jurisdictions further hinder timely access to digital evidence. Establishing dedicated coordination mechanisms and resource units to expedite MLAT requests will strengthen international collaboration and improve conviction rates.

Additionally, a centralised data repository on online offenses, disaggregated by geography, platform, and offender profile, is essential to identify emerging patterns of digital vulnerability and inform targeted prevention and policy interventions.

**7.5 Problem:** Online platforms exhibit inconsistent definitions of cyber offences and often cause delay in content takedowns. This lack of standardisation and slow response hampers the timely removal of harmful content and weakens deterrence.

**Recommendation:** Harmonise definitions of cyber violence against women across platforms and legal jurisdictions, establish time-bound content takedown protocols monitored by a government-regulated mechanism, and implement a rapid response strategy for serious offences such as deepfakes and non-consensual intimate imagery.

**Justification:** The absence of standardised definitions and response mechanisms for cyber violence across digital platforms has created significant inconsistencies in enforcement. Platforms follow varying internal policies for content moderation, often leading to delays in the takedown of harmful material, including deepfakes and non-consensual intimate images. Such delays exacerbate survivors' trauma, enable repeated violations, and reduce the deterrent effect of law.

Establishing uniform definitions of cyber offences across jurisdictions and platforms, along with time-bound, government-monitored takedown protocols, will ensure accountability and consistency in redressal. A rapid-response framework for severe cases will enhance survivor protection, promote compliance among intermediaries, and strengthen the overall governance ecosystem against tech-assisted violence against women.

## 8. Police Reforms

**8.1 Problem:** Shortage of Women's Representation in the State Police Forces: According to the India Justice Report 2025, as of Jan 2023, the percentage of women police officers in the police force of the state is depicted in the following table.

| State | Percentage of women in police force | Number of Women Police Stations |
|---|---|---|
| Kerala | 8.3% | 14 |
| Rajasthan | 10.9% | 40 |
| Telangana | 8.7% | 16 |
| Jharkhand | 7.4% | 30 |
| Goa | 10.8% | 1 |

*Source:* India Justice Report 2025 (based on BPR&D Data on Police Organisations, 2022).

The shortage in the number of women personnel has led to critical lapses in law enforcement such as the requirement of a woman police officer for arresting a woman.While women police officers are on maternity leave, states like Goa often struggle to replace the temporary vacancy with female officers.

As per a PIB release dated December 13, 2023, all states and union territories were directed to create additional posts for women constables and sub-inspectors by converting the vacant positions. Each station is required to have at least three women SIs and 10 women police constables, so that the women's help desk is manned round the clock. At present, these helpdesks remain understaffed.

**Recommendation:** According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Advisory (No. 15011/126/2020-SC/ST-W) dated July 29, 2020, States/UTs are directed to take steps to increase women's representation in police to 33 percent.

This has to be enforced and must be scaled to 50 percent in 10 years. The Ministry of Home Affairs can bring in incentives through grants for the same.

**Justification:** Studies by Carrington, Guala, Puyol, and Sozzo (2020) show that specialised women police stations in postcolonial societies have increased the access to justice for women, especially in domestic violence cases. Carrington et al. (2020) also note that these stations increase reporting and support for survivors of VAWG. Another significant study on women police stations in India by Sofia, Sonia, and Nishith (2021) clearly shows the implementation of WPS led to a 29 percent increase in the reporting of VAWG cases to the police, driven by an increase in the reporting of domestic violence cases. Also, the safety perceptions among women have improved, leading to more women entering the labour market. Hence, increasing the number of women and women police stations within the state police architecture can positively affect the reporting of crimes against women. Earlier, Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) acted as a bridge between survivors and law enforcement. With the initiative being discontinued in 2022 and a dearth of female officers at women police stations, access to institutional support has further weakened.

**8.2 Problem:** There are no dedicated women safety wings or departments under the state police. While Ministry of Home Affairs has a dedicated wing for women's safety, only Telangana, among the states under the study, has a dedicated Women Safety Wing with specific modules for addressing issues related to domestic violence, NRIs, cybercrimes, sexual violence through initiatives auch as Bharosa and Family Counselling Centres under Safe City Programe. While there are women police stations and help desks, the services provided are not specialised.

**Recommendation:** Establish a dedicated women's safety wing in the state police department. A dedicated department under the law enforcement agency with trained officers can bring more coordination between various departments like WCD, Health, Education, Judiciary, and Legal Services Authority. A dedicated wing with enough funding and autonomy can bring in state specific programmes for prevention, protection, and prosecution.

**Justification:** The absence of a dedicated women's safety wing within the state police reflects a structural gap in institutional response mechanisms addressing crimes and vulnerabilities specific to women and girls. Though existing police stations and women's help desks provide institutional support to the survivors, their limited mandate and lack of capacity hinders their effectiveness in prevention and victim support efforts.

A dedicated safety wing that caters to the needs of women within the department of police would ensure a focused and comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women and girls. The Bharosa model implemented by the Telangana Police illustrates how such a structure can integrate prevention, protection, and prosecution within one framework. It also enables improved provisions for data collection, faster responses, better coordination among health and legal services, as well as judicial support.

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