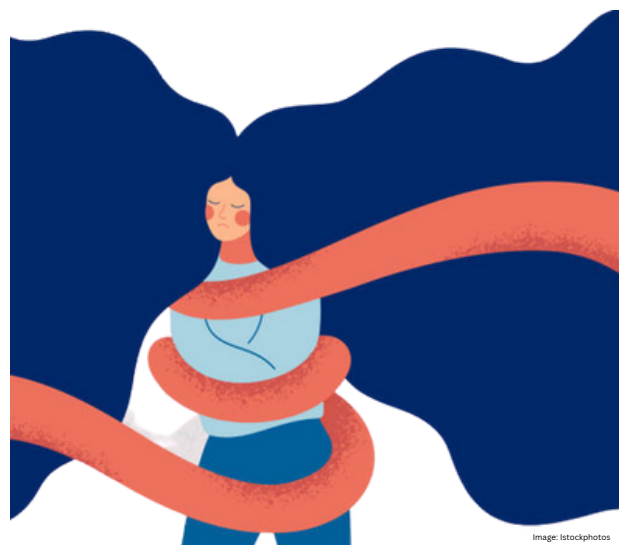


# International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

November 25 was declared to be the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) by the UN General Assembly in 1999. This month's newsletter focuses on this theme as well. [The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) defines 'violence against women' as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. It looks at violence against women as an obstacle to the creation of an inclusive and sustainable society and observing this day, therefore, symbolizes the need to prioritize the culture of safety and gender equality.



## Tête-à-Tête with Prita Jha

**Prita Jha** is a legal and social activist, a researcher and trainer who has been engaging with issues of justice in various capacities over the past decade. Apart from being a member of the CMGI, Jha is also the founder member and President of Peace and Equality Cell (PEC) which provides free legal and moral support to survivors of child sexual abuse. She loves being part of the long-term process to bring about social transformation in India on many fronts despite its extremely complicated social and criminal justice context.

*We come across news relating to different forms of gender-based violence every day. As a practitioner who works closely on the subject, what are your views on the current situation in India?*

As per UN data, [1 in 3 women](#) globally have been subject to violence, and younger women are more at risk. As per the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS), [30 per cent](#) of the women in India have been subject to physical or sexual violence. That is very serious. Also, one needs to factor in that many crimes go unreported or underreported. Overall, the percentage of violence against women has been consistent throughout the years.

If we look at the definition of violence in the law, which includes emotional and verbal abuse, I have not met a woman who has either not suffered or seen domestic violence. We have been aware of it; the laws are there now, but implementation is a big issue. It affects women's lives in so many different ways and across multiple layers. The issue is also very complex because not all women are the same. There are more vulnerabilities depending on your caste, class, gender identity, disability and so on.

*Can you talk about the role of law, and the impact it has on ground reality?*

Ambedkar in one of his speeches talks about how the Constitution is not going to be of much value unless we change the social reality about caste. The same argument can be extended to gender as well. The concerns of a gap between social reality and constitutional reality or between legal reality and implementation is very much real. Lawyers Collective headed by Indira Jaising brought out this mismatch when they undertook an evaluation of the Domestic Violence law. They found that many states didn't have a sufficiently large gender budget to implement the tenets of the law. For instance, the law provided for counsellors and shelters, but the same didn't translate on to the ground due to lack of funds.

There is also a disconnect between the law and ground reality with regard to what is 'normal' and 'acceptable.' When the law on consent and rape changed, I remember training on it in a rural context. When I talked about this, women would say it wasn't relevant to them as they didn't have the power to negotiate in the bedroom. This is because the changes in our laws have not been accompanied by a shift in power dynamics within our personal spaces. Of course, that's not to say the change is not welcome.

We are so fixed in a structure that is extremely patriarchal, it is a constant challenge for us to check over selves – are we thinking in a gender equal way, are we thinking in a gender just way? It really depends on whether that woman has had the opportunity to look at this herself, without power settings.

*'Harmless' jokes normalising violence and rape are shared on social media platforms regularly. How do we tackle the issue?*

Patriarchy is not just the violence and aggression, it's also this common sense, this normalization. 'Why are you being so stiff? Why don't you take it as a joke?'-these are often thrown at individuals who call out such toxic jokes. They are made to feel as if they are over reacting. We need to start calling it out at individual levels when we see such normalization.

Somehow at this point, feminism has become a dirty word. Feminism is a very just ideology based on equality and justice. It has got nothing to do with being anti-men. It is anti the *idea* of exploitation of one set of people by others. It's no longer about men and women- it's about gender identities. I think we should keep on talking about it and I think it's really important for men to be a part of this conversation if they care about safety.

*Violence against women on campuses is a major concern in many parts of the world. Recently we saw male students hurl sexist abuses at their female counterparts in unison at a college in [Spain](#). How do we ensure a safe environment is created in our educational spaces?*

We need to begin by creating formal and informal groups to make more people aware of such issues. This involves not just students, but also teachers, administrators, and the institution as a whole. Bodies such as the CMGI are responsible for trying to ensure safety. We can provide training to make people aware, but the deeper issue is how do you change the mindset? It requires much more intense and repeated engagement.

The other challenge is that by the time one gets to the university space, we have already been socialized at so many different levels - family, friends, school, religious institutions. This change in mindset cannot come from training alone. All stakeholders within the university space need to ensure that they carry out their roles, responsibilities and communication in a sensitized manner. For example, faculty need to ensure that the material they teach does not carry gender stereotypes. It carries more weight when it comes from faculty. They can show it as an example – something that everybody should live by.

*As members of this society, what are some things we can do to tackle violence against women?*

This is a question that we all have to ask ourselves. When patriarchy is so interwoven and so fixed in culture, it's not just about women and men; it's the ideologies that they have internalized. I believe very much in the Gandhian format where you begin with yourself. It would include educating yourself, knowing the infrastructure available for redressal, being aware of the law, helping others access these, spreading knowledge and fighting for yourself. It is not easy to bring about community or societal level change. But we need to start challenging the norms.



At the same time, things do not need to change drastically to bring about a transformation. However, we have to get to a stage where we embrace differences a lot more. It is not about judging each other as feminists. It is about widening the pool and having everybody work towards the cause. It's very important for us to build a movement through working across these differences.

At the end of the day, we all should ask ourselves- do we want to live in a society where half of the population lives in fear of violence?





# Understanding Violence Within Our Homes

Written by Anandita Bardia, Research Assistant at IIMA

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states, '*Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.*' These unequal manifestations are often seen within our homes, at times subtle but pervasive. Here, we look at two forms of violence that occur within the four walls of our homes: domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

Prevalent in both developing and developed countries, it has been recognised as a human rights violation across the globe. Despite the existence of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA), the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) estimated that 26.3% of the women in India had experienced spousal violence. The violence is perpetrated through physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours of the partner. Intimate partner violence differs from domestic violence in that the latter encompasses abuse by any household member.

The causes of such violence can be understood on multiple planes. At the individual level, a woman's educational status, exposure to violence between parents and a history of abuse can prove to be vulnerabilities that are exploited. The relationship with her partner can be a cause of violence if there is a conflict or dissatisfaction, the prevalence of male dominance in the family or economic stress. At the societal level, gender-inequitable social norms, weak legal sanctions and lack of civil rights for women are reasons for violence (WHO (2012)). The prevalence of inter-generational violence is also seen as a rising cause of domestic violence (Martin et al. (2002)). Various socio-demographic factors aggravate the incidence of violence experienced by women. One such factor is the unemployment rate in relation to the abusive partner. A study by Bhalotra et al. (2019) examines data from 31 countries to find that a 1 % increase in male unemployment rate gives rise to an increase of 2.75 % in the incidence of violence against women. They also find that a 1 % decrease in female unemployment leads to a decline in the incidence of violence by 2.87 %.

The discussion surrounding the negative implications domestic violence has on women begins with the adverse health consequences. There is evidence of the association of domestic violence with women's physical and mental health. These take the form of injury, chronic pain, hypertension, increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and miscarriage. Violence can also induce psychological stress, anxiety, trauma and suffering (WHO (2012)). Garcia-Moreno et al. (2006) studied the extent of intimate partner violence across 15 sites in 10 countries in industrialised settings. The prevalence of physical violence against women ranged between 4% in Japan and 49 % in Peru. They also found that most women who had experienced physical abuse were also subject to sexual violence. This study highlights the pervasive nature of intimate partner violence and the dire need to assess public-health interventions. Campbell (2002) investigates the health consequences of intimate partner violence in the USA and finds that it has a long-term negative impact, which lasts even after the abuse has ended.

Violence against women is rooted in gender inequalities, power dynamics and the attempt to dominate. The presence of structural inequalities amplifies this violence further. Anderson (1997) presents findings to support this and reinforces the need to integrate the concepts to understand violence-related issues better. The issue is pervasive and has negative implications for their health and well-being. Given its adverse impact on women, it is essential to take transformative policy measures to ameliorate the predicament.

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# RESOURCES



Here we introduce a few NGOs who have been making impact by assisting women who face violence in different forms. Most of them run helplines providing counselling support.

**Jagori:** With violence intervention as one of its verticals, the NGO supports young women who are at the receiving end of sexual abuse. Direct support is made available to women facing violence through counselling, referrals, legal aid and facilitation of alternatives.

☎️ 011-26692700

☎️ 8800996640

**Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA):** Functioning out of Mumbai, SNEHA tackles domestic violence at the individual and community level. Its interventions range from immediate relief which includes emotional support, contacting assistance and provision of shelter to long term services such as counselling.

☎️ 9167535765

**Vimochana:** The collective based out of Bangalore addresses violence targeting women within homes and outside. Strengthening women's resistance to such violence is one of its main objectives.

☎️ 25492781

**My Choices Foundation:** The NGO provides grassroots services to survivors of violence. Operation Peace Maker targets domestic violence, while Operation Red Alert tackles sex trafficking.

☎️ 18002129131 (Domestic Violence helpline)

☎️ 18004198588 (Sex trafficking helpline)

**Shakti Shalini:** A Delhi based organisation, this NGO supports survivors of gender based and sexual violence with a focus on preventing everyday violence. They run 'Pehchan'- a shelter home for women in distress.

☎️ 011-24373737

**Peace and Equality Cell:** Headed by the CMGI's external member, Ms Prita Jha, the organisation provides free legal representation to survivors of child sexual abuse and subsidised representation to other survivors of gender-based violence.

✉️ [peaceandequalitycell@gmail.com](mailto:peaceandequalitycell@gmail.com)

**AKS Foundation:** A Pune based NGO, it supports victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual harassment from all over the country. They run a 24\*7 helpline.

☎️ 8793088814

**Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative (SWATI):** The NGO started targeting rural women's socio-economic empowerment and quickly realised that systemic violence was the main factor holding them back. They have set up women-led forums that work against Violence against Women (VaW) along with leadership empowerment. kNOW fear is a pilot initiative undertaken jointly with the International Centre for Research on Women, where the safety of rural women in public spaces is looked at.

✉️ [swati.org@gmail.com](mailto:swati.org@gmail.com)



SERVICE PROVIDER	
Women In Distress Helpline	1090 1091
National Commission for Women	7827170170
State Women Commission Gujarat	1800233111 079-23251604 079-23251613
Ahmedabad Women Action Group (AWAG)	7926441214

**Abhayam 181** is a 24\*7 helpline for women in distress and was launched in 2014 by the Gujarat government. Recently, a mobile application with a built-in panic button was rolled out. Alerts are sent to all listed emergency contacts and the authorities. It also provides the option of taking photos which can later be used as evidence.

If you feel you have been subjected to sexual harassment or if you would like to make any suggestions regarding curbing sexual harassment or gender bias on campus, please reach out to us at:

Email: [chr-cmgi@iima.ac.in](mailto:chr-cmgi@iima.ac.in)

Phone: 97129 15533

Please note that any communication with the CMGI is strictly confidential.

The monthly newsletter from the Committee for Managing Gender Issues (CMGI) is an attempt to initiate conversations on discrimination, gender bias, sexual harassment, and related issues. We would love to have the community participate. Please reach out to Therese Abraham at [theresea@iima.ac.in](mailto:theresea@iima.ac.in) for submissions, queries, and/or feedback.