

PANCHAYATS FREE FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

A HANDBOOK FOR
ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES



What is Gender-Based Violence (GBV)?

GBV refers to any violence that is perpetrated by a person (or persons) on another person (or persons) based on unequal gender-power relations. It includes violence against women, girls, men, boys and individuals with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities.

GBV is the most pervasive violation of human rights. Women and girls often experience higher vulnerability to GBV throughout their lives and also bear the burden of long-term harmful consequences of GBV on their health, development and well-being. Evidence indicates that nearly one in three women have faced some form of GBV.

GBV may take many forms: physical, sexual, emotional and economic. It denies women the right to survival, well-being and development. Because of the stigma related to violence, most survivors do not report it and continue to suffer in silence. Violence can have many fatal and non-fatal consequences.

Elected representatives (ERs) of Panchayats can play a crucial role in addressing GBV in public and private spaces. They can actively contribute to:

➤ Prevent GBV

➤ Respond to survivors of GBV

➤ Support interventions to empower women and other individuals who are vulnerable to the risk of GBV



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What are the forms of GBV?

•Physical •Emotional •Sexual •Economic

Physical Violence

This can include physical assaults and threats. It may take the form of beating, strangling, burning, biting, throwing objects, kicking, pushing, and using objects or weapons to cause injury. Such violence may lead to injuries ranging from cuts, bruises, and burns to permanent disability and death.



Physical Violence: A Case Study

23-year-old Jamuna lives with her husband Ravi and two children in a village of Dhenkenal district of Odisha. One evening the food she made was spicier than usual. After eating, her husband said that she was a careless woman who was only interested in watching television and not doing any work, he then slaps her and calls her worthless. Jamuna remains depressed but does not know what to do.

If you learn about such an incident as an ER, you can take the following actions:



Approach the woman, **establish rapport, and listen to her experience**



Share helpline number for women in distress – **181**



Assure the woman that the violence is not her fault and **counsel her to seek support**



Understand from the woman what help she would like to seek and **provide all possible assistance in seeking services including monetary support for local transportation if required**



Understand the woman's needs (physical, emotional, or any other needs)



Counsel the husband that violence in any form is not acceptable in your Panchayat, both in public and private spaces



If the woman has an injury and needs medical attention, **ensure that she receives first aid with the help of ASHA worker/ANM**, and refer her to the hospital for further treatment if necessary



Create awareness that domestic violence is an offence under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act



If the woman needs medical assistance, police support, legal aid, temporary shelter, or counselling services, help her to **connect with the Centre Administrator at the One Stop Centre**



Persons with disabilities are at a two to four times higher risk of facing violence both in public and private spaces. As an ER **be sensitive to the diverse needs of this group, treat them with dignity and ensure their access to services**

Emotional Violence

This includes mistreatment or undermining of a person's self-worth. It may take the form of criticism, threats, insults, belittling comments, isolation from family or friends, threat to harm people close to the survivor and things regarded by the survivor. Individuals who suffer from emotional violence, generally undergo depression or anxiety due to loss of self-esteem.

Emotional Violence: A Case Study

Phulee stays in a village of Beed District of Maharashtra. Phulee has two daughters and is expecting her third child. Her husband and parents in law keep taunting her for bearing daughters. They are forcing her to undergo sex determination and have told her that if she does not give birth to a son this time, they will send her back to her parents and her husband will remarry.

If you learn about such an incident as an ER, you can take the following actions:



Listen to woman with empathy and **provide them emotional support**



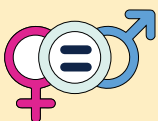
Ensure that **community is aware of financial incentive, conditional cash transfer schemes for girl children** and are able to access them without difficulty



Counsel the family that they should not discriminate against girls and **welcome the birth of a girl child**



Support implementation of grassroots activities and campaigns under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Programme



Ensure that **families of pregnant women are counselled and given information about illegality of sex-selection** by ANMs and ASHA workers



Ensure constitution and functioning of Village Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committees in the area to **address health, immunization, nutrition of girls** that is often neglected



Undertake awareness campaigns to **change mind sets that prefer boys over girls**



Mobilize families and community to **celebrate birth of a girl child** through innovative means



Undertake campaigns to inform community about **illegality of sex selection and sex determination** under the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act

Sexual Violence

This includes any sexual act targeting an individual, perpetrated against a person's will. It may take the form of demands for sex or sexual acts using coercion, forcing partner to have sex with others, treating partner in a sexually derogatory manner or insisting on unsafe sex, showing pornographic images or graphic description of pornography, against the person's will. Such violence can have severe emotional, psychological and physical consequences.

Sexual Violence: A Case Study

19-year-old Sumati stays in a village of Saharasa District of Bihar. Her neighbour makes inappropriate remarks on Sumati. Last evening, when she was returning from her college, it was dark and he assaulted her by pulling her and touching her inappropriately. Sumati was scared but mustered courage to tell her parents. Her parents reached out to the ER.

In such instances as an ER, you can take the following actions:



Listen to the woman and her family and **provide them emotional support**



Counsel the family members to **report the incident to the police**. Take the Panchayat support to **ensure the family's safety and security by organizing night watches and keeping a strong vigilance**



Send a strong message to the perpetrator that his actions will not be supported by the Panchayat who will take strict action against him



If the woman needs access to support services including medical support, police, legal aid and counselling, **refer her to the One Stop Centre**



Seek the support of men and boys to take a strong stance against violence within homes and in public spaces



Work with women and girls in the community to **undertake safety assessments and identify spaces** in the village that are unsafe



Take action on the findings of the safety assessment by including identified issues as part of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and Budget



Identify community focal points (Community Vigilance Committees, Community Police) to support women in distress and link them to services



Create awareness that any form of sexual assault is a criminal offence under the Criminal Law Amendment Act



Safety Assessment

- 1 Safety assessment is a participatory method to gather **information about perception** of safety in public spaces.
- 2 This can be used to **understand safety concerns of women and girls** based on parameters they feel are most relevant, like insufficient street lights, lonely pathways, places where groups of men and boys gather and make inappropriate remarks and other factors that make women and girls feel unsafe.
- 3 ERs can **encourage women and girls in the community to discuss and identify spaces** where they feel most unsafe, and map these spaces on a community map.
- 4 ERs on their part **ensure that identified solutions** (putting up street lights, CCTV cameras, etc.) **are included in the Gram Panchayat Development Plans as budgeted activities.**

Economic Violence

This includes denying economic resources like money, income, wages, inheritance and alimony support, etc., opportunities for economic empowerment including education and work, and access to personal belongings and basic needs i.e., food, clothing and housing, etc.

Economic Violence: A Case Study

Rekha lives with her husband and parents in law in a village of Jodhpur District of Rajasthan, ever since her marriage. She is being called names and criticised by her husband and mother in law for bringing less dowry. Since she refused to ask her parents to give in to the recent demands of her husband and mother in law, she is not being given food and money to meet her basic needs.



If you come across such an incident as an ER, you can take the following actions:



Approach the woman, **establish a rapport, and listen to her experience**



Talk to the family and ensure that they **provide the woman with food and money to meet basic needs**



Inform the family that violence in any form, including economic violence like **denying woman her basic needs is not acceptable** in your Panchayat



Undertake campaigns on illegality of giving and taking dowry as per the Dowry Prohibition Act



Ensure pledge taking on doing away with dowry in forums like Mahila Sabha, Bal Sabha, Ward Sabha, Gram Sabha, etc.



Ensure access to Dowry Prohibition Officer, by **displaying contact details of the designated officer at important public places**



Recognize and appreciate families who enter into marriage without dowry



Promote women's economic empowerment by linking them to vocational skills



Create **awareness in the community about different forms of economic violence** such as denial of opportunities for education, access to income and that legal remedies are available to address these activities



Ensure availability of support facilities, such as crèches for children, day-care centres for elderly, **to ensure women's participation in gainful employment**

GBV can occur in public, private, work and online spaces and can be of various types like **sexual harassment, stalking, voyeurism, trafficking, etc.**



Human Trafficking: A Case Study

18-year-old Sujata stays in a village in Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh. She lost her mother when she was very young and used to stay with her grandmother and father. She found solace in meeting her friend Shyam, who used to bring her gifts and speak to her nicely. Shyam promised to get her work as a receptionist in a reputed organization in Bhopal. Hoping to find work in a big city, she accompanied Shyam. On reaching Bhopal, Shyam leaves her in a brothel, saying it is his friend's house. Sujata is scared and tries to contact her family.

Back in the village, Sujata's family is desperately trying to look for her and approach the ER for help. Sujata manages to escape and calls her family to inform them about what happened.

As an ER you can take the following actions if such an incident occurs:



Listen to the family and **provide them emotional support**. Counsel them to report the incident to the police without delay



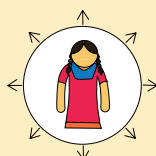
Network with the local police to **bring back the survivor** from Bhopal



Address concerns of stigma that such girls and women might face after they are rescued and brought back home



Ensure that **survivors of trafficking** are linked to education and gainful employment



Educate women, girls and other at risk community members about human trafficking, its causes and risk factors



Sustain awareness and empower community including local store owners, managers at taxi/bus stands, taxi and bus drivers, to take action by immediately reporting to the Elected Representative or Police, if they suspect a case of trafficking



One Stop Centre

A scheme to support women affected by violence under one roof.
The range of services include:



181 Women Helpline

This number is intended to **provide immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence** by providing referrals to police, One Stop Centre, health services, and information about women-related government schemes or programmes through a single uniform number.



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What steps can ERs take to prevent GBV?

Elected representatives can take the following steps:

- 1 Speak out against GBV in all your interactions with the community;
- 2 Mobilize community members to spread awareness on GBV and take action for prevention by:
 - ◆ Undertaking campaigns to break the silence around GBV within homes and in public spaces;
 - ◆ Undertaking safety assessments to map community spaces where women and girls feel unsafe and address issues of safety at these places;
- 3 Publicise the availability of GBV response services in nearby areas, including helplines, police, hospitals, one stop centres.



How can ER's designate community focal points or community vigilance groups to support GBV survivors?

Elected representatives can designate youth as community focal points, to forge better relations between police and the community. These focal points can work towards:

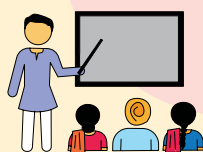
Creating community awareness on **rights, entitlements and laws** that promote gender equality



Ensuring **improved linkages of women and girls with police** to help overcome stigma/fears of approaching police



Empowering the community to demand services from the police and ensure accountability



Undertaking **outreach sessions to create awareness** on GBV in the community, in schools, colleges, etc.



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What steps can ERs take to respond to GBV survivors?

Elected representatives can take the following steps to respond to survivors of GBV:

- 1 Connect with hospitals, One Stop Centres, shelter homes and police stations, to ensure timely response;
- 2 Integrate information provision on GBV services as part of the help desk operational within the Panchayat office, that survivors can access without stigma;
- 3 Allocate budgets in the GPDP to ensure support to survivors for accessing services (coverage of transport cost, medical costs, legal cost as relevant) and for ensuring safety in public spaces (installation and maintenance of street lights, CCTV cameras, etc.).

Panchayats can display numbers of the following at the Panchayat Bhawan



Helpline for women facing violence



Police Station



District hospital



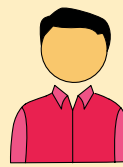
One Stop Centre



Shelter home



Protection Officer



Child Marriage Prohibition Officer



Dowry Prohibition Officer



ANMs



ASHA workers



Free Legal Aid (District Legal Services Authority)

What can ERs do to support interventions to empower women?

Elected Representatives can take the following steps:

- 1 **Ensure equal and active participation of women in Panchayat activities**, including through the organization of *Mahila Sabhas* and in planning and execution of GPDPs

- 3 **Ensure participation of women and individuals from marginalized groups in the constitution of Gram Panchayat Standing Committees**



- 2 **Develop linkages with existing structures at the village level** such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and other community-based groups and invest in opportunities for women's economic empowerment

- 4 **Ensure housing rights and right to agricultural land** for women and girls

What is a Mahila Sabha? How to organize it?

Mahila Sabha is an assembly of women voters from a Gram Panchayat (all women above the age of 18 years). **Organization of Mahila Sabhas has been mandated by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India before every Gram Sabha.** *Mahila Sabhas* are organized to provide a platform to village women to discuss about their development needs and prioritize them for inclusion in the GPDPs.

Some of the issues that can be discussed in the *Mahila Sabha* include:



Access to schemes and programmes related to women and girls including various social security schemes



Access to education and reducing drop out of girls



Menstrual health and availability of menstrual products like sanitary napkins



Addressing violence in public and private spaces



Access of women and girls to **vocational skills and gainful employment**



Ensuring linkages of women, SHGs with bank credit, skill training and marketing tie ups



Availability of **quality health services**



Opportunities for joint registration of houses and agricultural land



Access to and availability of **safe drinking water**



Extension of training for women farmers and linkages with subsidies and farming inputs

