

Addressing Violence Against Women Home-Based Workers (HBWs) during the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Asia



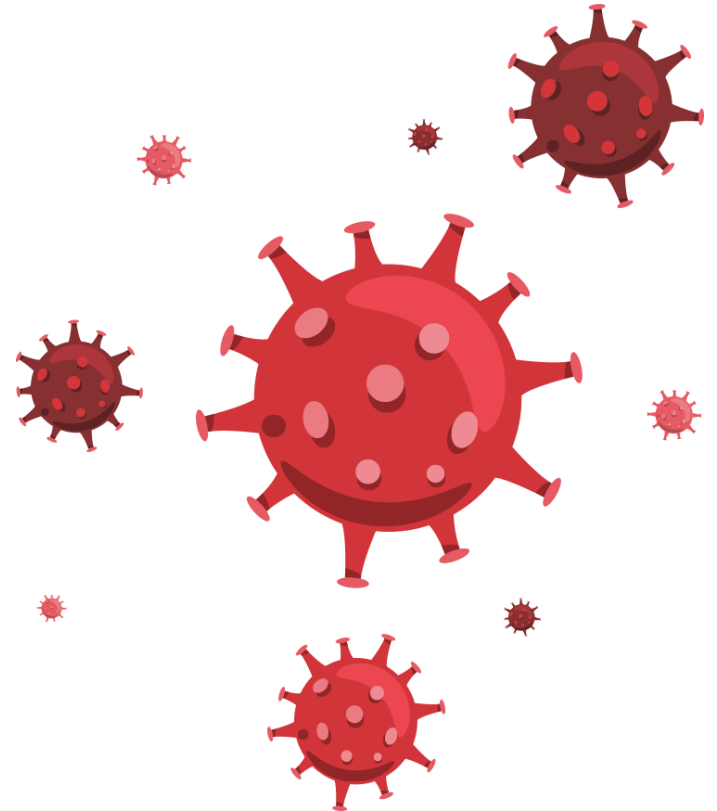
Key Principles

1. Let's listen to each other.
2. Let's not assume, judge, doubt or blame anyone.
3. Let's be open to differences.
4. Keep it confidential.
5. Consent is the most important.



Understanding the COVID-19 Pandemic

1. An illness caused by a virus that can spread from person-to-person.
2. “Pandemic” because it has spread throughout the world.
3. There is currently no vaccine that offers protection from the disease.
4. The best way to protect oneself is to avoid exposure to the virus.



Understanding the COVID-19 Pandemic

How has the pandemic impacted the day-to-day work and lives of people?

1. Country-wide lockdowns.
2. Crisis in the health sector.
3. Closing of workspaces, factories, offices, businesses, markets, etc.
4. Loss of jobs, work and livelihoods.
5. The impact of the pandemic on Home-Based Workers (HBWs) has been devastating.



Impact of the Pandemic and Lockdowns on HBWs

Impact on work and livelihood of HBWs

1. Loss of work and income.
2. Non-payment of past dues.
3. Low wages.
4. Increasing indebtedness.
5. Absence of aid and financial support.
6. Uncertainty about work and future.

Impact on health and well-being of HBWs

1. Increased exposure to the virus.
2. Reduced access to food and nutrition.
3. Health needs of women not prioritized.
4. Reduced access to good quality healthcare services and information.
5. Extreme stress, anxiety and depression.



Impact of the Pandemic and Lockdowns on HBWs

Other impact on HBWs

1. Increased burden of work – household, childcare, care work & own work.
2. Increased restrictions and control.
3. Lack of privacy at home and lack of time for themselves.
4. Difficulty in organising HBWs into collectives.



The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns have increased the risk of violence for women HBWs.



Understanding Violence Against Women (VAW).

What is Violence Against Women (VAW) ?

1. VAW is normalized in a patriarchal society.
2. Through violence, domination, control and power are exercised and strengthened on women.
3. Globally, at least 1 in 3 women faces violence in her lifetime.
4. Both, men and women can be perpetrators and victims of violence. However, women are more vulnerable and face more violence.



What is Violence Against Women (VAW) ?



1. Any act or threats of act that result in physical, sexual, mental, economic harm and suffering to women.
2. Can take place in both public and private spheres of life.
3. Physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and economic violence.

What is Violence Against HBWs?



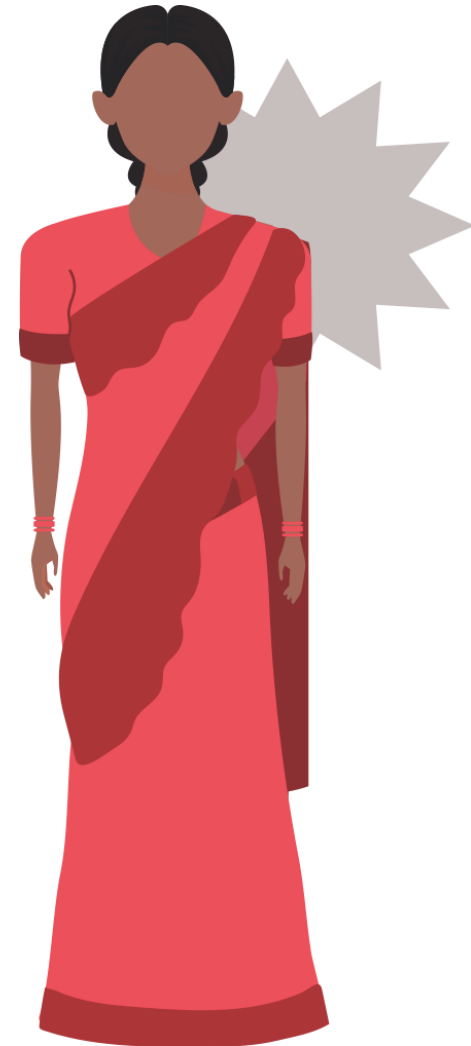
1. Home is also the workplace for HBWs.
2. Domestic violence is highly prevalent among HBWs and is often invisible.
3. Violence at work can take place at the hands of contractors and other intermediaries.
4. HBWs are the least organized category of workers because they work individually from their homes.

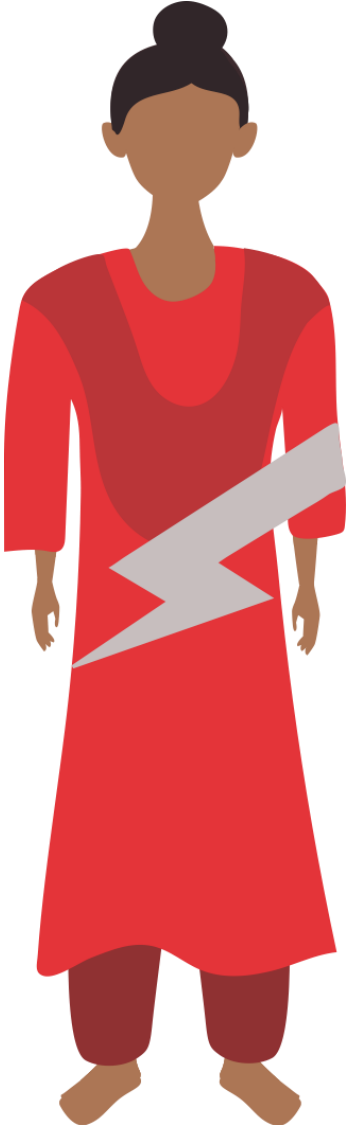


1. The different forms of violence are interlinked.
2. Different forms of violence can be experienced by one woman at different times and/or at the same time.
3. Violence can also exist and be experienced in other different ways.
4. The pandemic and lockdown have increased the exposure, vulnerability and risk of violence for HBWs.

Physical Violence

- Slapping, beating, arm-twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, acid attack, threats with an object or weapon, murder and other physically harmful traditional practices





Sexual Violence

- Coerced sex through threats, intimidation or physical force.
- Forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others.
- Contractors and other intermediaries demanding sexual favours in return for work and/or payment.

Economic Violence

- Denial of funds, refusal to contribute to household expenses, denial of food and basic needs, controlling access to health care, access to employment, forcefully taking away earnings by intimate partner or family members.
- Non-payment, delayed payment, inadequate payment of wages for work completed by contractors and other intermediaries.





Psychological Violence

Behaviour that affects the woman mentally, emotionally and psychologically. For example –

- Verbal aggression at home and at work.
- Taunts, negative remarks, blaming, shaming and other ways of verbal abuse.
- Constant humiliation and insult.
- Behavior to scare, instill fear, threats of abandonment, threats of throwing her out of the home or of confining to the home.
- Constant surveillance and control.
- Threats to take away custody of the children.
- Breaking and destroying of objects.

Understanding the Impact of Violence



Impact of Violence on HBWs

Impact on work and livelihood of HBWs

1. Physical inability to work and to work at stretch.
2. Low productivity and loss of concentration.
3. Reduced control on money and expenses.
4. Reduced ability to make decisions related to work.

Impact on health and well-being of HBWs

1. Unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, risk of HIV, use of unsafe services related to childbirth, abortion etc.
2. Trauma, fear, depression & suicidal thoughts.
3. High levels of stress and anxiety.
4. Impact on self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of self-worth and tendency to blame oneself for the violence.



Impact of Violence on HBWs

Other impact on HBWs

1. Physical injury, pain, marks, bruises.
2. Reduced mobility and access.
3. Cut off from information and services for support, safety & protection.
4. The impact of violence in any other way (physically, sexually, economically) will also impact the woman psychologically.

Do you think the violence faced by HBWs impacts children in their homes and families?



Impact of Violence on Children

1. The impact of violence at home on children can be severe and last throughout their lives.
2. Children could be affected directly and/or indirectly by child abuse and physical abuse and/ or affected emotionally and psychologically.
3. Girls and boys experience violence differently.
4. Violence faced by a parent or caregiver could affect the caregiving abilities of the individual towards children.
5. The impact of violence on children is severe and manifests in their day-to-day life in many ways and forms.



Impact of Violence on Children

1. Lack of supportive and safe spaces for children to share with others on the violence they experience or witness at homes and/ or with their parent or caregiver.
2. Children exposed to violence need trusted adults to turn to for help and comfort, and services that will help them to cope with their experiences.

Before COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 45 million children (MICS 2019) in Bangladesh were experiencing violence. Violence has now increased by 31% due to the pandemic, according to a study by the [Manusher Jonno Foundation](#).

In Sri Lanka, an early warning sign came with a worrying increase in the number of calls – received by a child helpline - from children alleging abuse. Between March 16 and April 7, 2020, out of 292 child protection complaints, 121 concerned cases of cruelty – 40% above the average.





Increased Instances of VAW in South Asia
During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Increased Incidence of VAW in South Asia

BANGLADESH

- The UN Needs Assessment Working Group's anticipatory assessment report reveals 49.2% of women and girls feel safety and security is an issue in the current lockdown.
- At least 33% women and girls are currently unaware of where to seek help for abuse and/or ill treatment by anyone including family members.
- In the month of April, 2020, 19 cases of gender-based violence have been reported in media – the majority of which were rape and physical assault.
- A recent survey by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) reports a total of 13,494 women and children were subjected to violent incidents in 53 districts of the country, by [\(June 2020\)](#).

BHUTAN

- Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) recorded 13 cases of domestic violence in March, 2020. 7 cases were reported in April [\(April 2020\)](#).

Increased Incidence of VAW in South Asia

INDIA

- [In 2020, between March 25 and May 31](#), 1,477 complaints of domestic violence were made by women. This 68-day period recorded more complaints than those received between March and May in the previous 10 years. About 86% women who experienced violence never sought help, and 77% of the victims did not even mention the incident(s) to anyone. The National Commission of Women witnessed a significant increase in the number of calls from women asking for help and protection from domestic violence

NEPAL

- [A report](#) published by the National Women Commission discloses that 604 cases of domestic violence took place in Nepal during a two-month lockdown period, out of which 139 were related to abuse of women. Domestic violence seems to have increased by 77 per cent after the lockdown compared to the period before it.

Increased Incidence of VAW in South Asia

PAKISTAN

- Government officials reported a 25% increase in domestic violence incidents during the lockdown across the eastern Punjab province, with authorities registering 3,217 cases between March and May 2020 ([July 2020](#))
- Mental health professionals in Pakistan, are seeing a rise in requests for online therapy sessions related to domestic abuse.

SRI LANKA

- Between March 16 & April 01, 2020, Women in Need (WIN) received approximately 250 calls out of which 60% were related to domestic violence (April 2020) .
- Nurses and activists in Sri Lanka, urged the government to bring out more helplines and relief measures for victims of domestic abuse during the lockdown.



1. Limited or restricted access to available services for help and support in these regions.
2. Some helplines report a decrease in calls, because of the difficulties in making private calls.
3. There are reports of shelters for violence survivors being closed, reports of emergency helplines operating with reduced services and mobile clinics and counselling services being affected.

**পারিবারিক সহিংসতার বিরুদ্ধে
সামাজিক আন্দোলন গড়ে তুলুন**





Isolated Not Alone



Helplines Available for Women in South Asia

Country	Helpline Number
Nepal	• National Women Commission – 1145 • LACC (for legal aid) -9841437949, 9841644515 • TPO (for psychosocial counseling) – 1660 010 2005 • Saathi (For shelter services and counseling) – 9841607846, 9801038482 • CWIN (for children related issues) – 1018 • Asha Crisis Centre (for shelter and counseling)- 9801193088
Pakistan	• Pakistan's Federal Ministry of Human Rights Helpline - 1099 & WhatsApp Number 0333 908 5709 • Madadgar helpline for women and children- 111-911-922 • ROZAN Helpline- 0800-22444, In Person Counselling - 051-2890505-7
Sri Lanka	• National Helpline - 1938

Helplines Available for Women in South Asia

Country	Helpline Number
Bangladesh	- Ministry of Women & Children Affairs (Hotline) – 109 - One Stop Crisis Cell under the Ministry of Home Affairs (Hotline) – 999 - Helpline - 16430 (from Ministry of Women & Child Affairs) for helping DV - Blast Helpline Number - 01715-220 220
Bhutan	- Woman & Child Helpline Number – 1098 - RENEW - 17126353 - One Stop Crisis Centre - 77119024
India	- National Helpline – 103 - Domestic Abuse Helpline – 181 - Women Police Helpline Numbers - 1091 & 1291 - NCW - 7217735372 (WhatsApp Number)
Maldives	- National Child Helpline - 1412 (used as a hotline during COVID-19) - Hotline - +960 9494869 (supported by the Queen's Commonwealth Trust)

Helplines Available for Children in South Asia

Country	Helpline Number
Afghanistan	Child helpline: 707199199 (Toll Free from any local telecom networks), Operational Hours: 24/7
Bangladesh	Child helpline: 1098 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7
Bhutan	Child helpline: 1098 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7
India	Child helpline: 1098 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7
Maldives	Child helpline: 1412 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7
Nepal	Child helpline: 1098 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7
Pakistan	Punjab: CP Welfare Bureau: 1121 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: CPWC: 1121 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7 Sindh: CP Authority: 1121(Not Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7 Balochistan: SWD DCPU: 081-111-666-775 (Not Toll Free), Operational Hours: 9am-5pm
Sri Lanka	Child helpline: 1920 (Toll Free), Operational Hours: 24/7



Safety Plan

“As an individual HBW facing violence at home, how can I keep myself safe?”

“At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have had to face the harsh realities of life once again. I lost my job contract because of the pandemic and once again I don’t have an income source. This has set me back by 20 years, because my husband and his family members have again started to torture me mentally and physically”
- Anita (name changed)

1. If Anita decides to stay in the same house as her husband and his family, what would her safety plan include?
2. If Anita decides to leave the house, what would her safety plan include?
3. Is there a person/are there people Anita could contact during an emergency? Who could this/these be?
4. Is there an alert code she can develop with people who are aware of her situation and can help her when she is facing violence?

1. How can Farzana address this issue at her workplace with the contractor?
2. Should Farzana take action against the contractor individually or approach her HBW collective to plan her action?
3. How can the collective address this situation?

“I am a home-based worker. The lockdown which started in March made me lose out on earnings from the lucrative April-May wedding season and the Eid festival time. Today, I am facing a hand-to-mouth existence. The contractor has agreed to give me some work but wants me to come alone to his house to collect the work. Whenever I go to meet him, he touches me inappropriately and forcibly.”

- Farzana (name changed)

“As a community leader of a HBW collective, how can I prevent VAW and support HBWs when they face violence at home and/or from contractors and other intermediaries?”



- a. Does being part of a collective support HBWs to address the violence they face at home and at workplace?
- b. In what ways can the collective support HBWs facing violence at home?
- c. In what ways can the collective support HBWs facing violence at work from contractors and other intermediaries?
- d. What can we do in our collective to prevent VAW in our communities?

Our Collectives are Our Strength

VAW is a crime and all women have the right to report and seek legal support.

Living a life free of discrimination, violence and abuse is our fundamental human right.



Effective support services are available for all



Hum Sab Ek Hain! (We are one)

Tanha Nahi, Tanzeem Hai Hum (Not alone, we are together)