



**Implementation research study to understand  
DAY-NRLM's institutional mechanisms and  
interventions to address Gender Based Violence  
in Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya  
Pradesh**

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>CLF</b>	Cluster Level Federation
<b>CRP</b>	Community Resource Person
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>DAY-NRLM</b>	Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission
<b>DLSA</b>	District Legal Service Authority
<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
<b>GC</b>	Gender Champion
<b>GF</b>	Gender Forum
<b>GP</b>	Gram Panchayat
<b>GPP</b>	Gender Point Person
<b>GRC</b>	Gender Resource Centre
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IIPS</b>	International Institute for Population Sciences
<b>IRB</b>	Institutional Review Board
<b>IWWAGE</b>	Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality
<b>LEAD</b>	Leveraging Evidence for Access and Development
<b>MoRD</b>	Ministry of Rural Development
<b>NFHS</b>	National Family Health Survey
<b>SAC</b>	Social Action Committee
<b>SHG</b>	Self-Help Group
<b>SRLM</b>	State Rural Livelihood Mission
<b>SWAYAM</b>	Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment
<b>VAW</b>	Violence Against Women
<b>VO</b>	Village Organisation
<b>OSC</b>	One-Stop Centre
<b>PCR</b>	Police Control Room
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WEC</b>	Women's Empowerment Collective



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**Foreword**

Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), under the aegis of the Government of India, has been tirelessly working on raising awareness and implementing programs to assist women and girls and also sensitising men and boys to be active in preventing violence at home, and in communities. Addressing violence requires it to be disclosed; the non-disclosure and non-reporting of violence have a significant impact on cases being addressed and potentially being resolved. Establishing strong institutional mechanisms such as Gender Resource Centres (GRC) and Gender Cadres (GC) will help women exercise their voice and agency and play a vital role in delivering an appropriate response.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive reality for an overwhelming majority of women in rural areas; it is a human rights violation and a global issue. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provides a robust structure for ensuring women's economic rights. The principle of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights means that all rights are equally important and interrelated. Therefore, it becomes imperative to address GBV as an integral part of our work on livelihoods. We need to acknowledge that women will be in a better position to achieve their livelihood potential when they enjoy security and freedom from violence and have enhanced capabilities to exercise their choices with dignity.

DAY-NRLM, MoRD, with support from 'Initiative to What Works for the Advancement of Women and Girls in the Economy' (IWWAGE), has completed a research study to understand DAY-NRLM's institutional mechanisms and interventions to address gender-based violence against women in Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. The study documents women's experiences with the services of GRC in addressing GBV. Furthermore, the study highlights existing social norms in the community that enable/inhibit the implementation of interventions aimed at addressing GBV. The study finds a gradual transition and acceptance of the institutional mechanisms within the communities to address GBV towards a more gender-responsive practice. The study is the first of its kind to collate practices on how NRLMs grassroots institutions are working on providing a better outreach to women in addressing GBV.

I appreciate the efforts of the gender teams of the national and state missions, especially the bold women who shared their personal stories of struggle for this study; this report is a triumph of their resilience. I would like to congratulate IWWAGE for constantly providing the technical expertise required to support the work being undertaken by NRLM to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

(Smriti Sharan)



## Preface

Global evidence demonstrates that women empowerment collectives (WECs) are instrumental in helping women break free from marginalization, providing them with access and opportunities to participate fully in economic and social life. To achieve the mandate of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana NRLM for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, the Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE) partnered with Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM through the SWAYAM initiative. SWAYAM is dedicated to fortifying women's institutions and empowering them by curating designs, approaches and evidence, and channelling expertise through embedded gender experts in the national program.

Through SWAYAM, IWWAGE actively supports the mission and its implementing partners by generating valuable insights into the advancement of gender mainstreaming. Building upon existing research, IWWAGE generates compelling evidence to advocate for the economic empowerment of women in India.

IWWAGE is an initiative of LEAD, an action-oriented research centre of IFMR Society (a not-for-profit society registered under the Societies Act). IWWAGE aims to build and deepen evidence around the low participation of women in the economy - caused by low asset base, poor access to public services, restrictive gender norms, and the burden of unpaid work - to find solutions to inform gender transformative changes and policy reforms. SWAYAM has been a critical program for IWWAGE under LEAD to bring solution-driven models using different research methods and learnings and align jointly with Government and CSO partners to achieve scalable impact through actionable policy.

This Implementation research study is critical in understanding Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM's institutional mechanisms and interventions to address gender-based violence against women in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. The study reflects an understanding of the enablers and barriers to the effective implementation of the SWAYAM interventions. The functional institutions are citizen spaces that continuously provide access to rights and entitlements and act as a space for GBV resolution for strengthening women's voice, choice, and agency.

The endeavour has been an extremely insightful and consuming journey for the team to deepen intellectual insight. The IWWAGE- DAY-NRLM partnership generated empirical evidence to inform policies leading to the social and economic empowerment of women.



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*LEAD is an action-oriented research centre of IFMR Society with strategic oversight from Krea University*



## Acknowledgements

Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE) aims to build on existing research and generate new evidence to inform and facilitate the agenda of women's economic empowerment. IWWAGE is an initiative of LEAD at Krea University, an action-oriented research centre housed at the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR), a not-for-profit society which is also the Sponsoring Body of Krea University.

The report 'Implementation research study to understand Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM's institutional mechanisms and interventions to address gender-based violence against women in Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh' is an output of the SWAYAM (Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment (SWAYAM) programme of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) in collaboration with IWWAGE, New Delhi.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), specifically Ms. Smriti Sharan, Joint secretary, MoRD and members of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM, in particular Ms. Nivedita Prasad, Deputy Secretary, MoRD for her invaluable support. We would also like to thank the State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) in the four states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha for offering their invaluable support in providing respondent data and supporting the overall study. We would also like to sincerely thank the SWAYAM partner organisations Chaitanya WISE, Pradan, Anandi and Project Concern International for their hands-on support in each state; without their efforts, this study would not have been possible. We also extend our sincere thanks to Ms. Sunandita Banerjee, Ms. Moumita Sarkar and former team members; Ms. P.Usha Rani and Mr. Neelesh Singh for their inputs and support. We also wish to acknowledge the hard work put in by LEAD at Krea University's operational and field team led by Mr. Prasenjit Samanta and all the project associates and interviewers who worked hard to complete the study.

Finally, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the respondents of this study who fearlessly shared their experiences of violence with us. Their courage is the reason that this study is in its present form, and we hope that the findings and the recommendations of this study will provide some important insights in ameliorating violence against women.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Strengthening Women's Institutions for Agency and Empowerment (SWAYAM) programme is being carried out in four Pilot states; Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha under SWAYAM. IWWAGE and DAY- NRLM partnered to demonstrate pilots in the above geographies for scalability and impact.

In India, DAY-NRLM is the largest government programme working exclusively with rural women. Yet, there remains the need to move from working with women to working with a gender equality and rights approach. DAY-NRLM believes that gender mainstreaming should feature in its framework, systems, institutions, and processes to achieve sustainable social, economic, and political goals that have a direct and indirect impact on the quality of life in a community. Gender mainstreaming can be adopted through a multiple-track strategy that combines both integrating gender in its operations and a more targeted approach. The gender integration approach focuses on shaping policies and programmes in all verticals of DAY-NRLM with a gender lens.



Under SWAYAM, the strategy adopted was to provide technical assistance in providing gender-responsive training to cadres and institutions on concepts such as gender and sex, gendered division of labor, legal protection for women, rights and entitlements, etc. Additionally, the programme emphasizes establishing Gender Justice Centre at the block level for greater negotiation with the governance structures for accessing rights and entitlements and recording grievances and addressing concerns of violence. Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE)- an initiative of LEAD at Krea University- provides technical assistance to Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) on SWAYAM.

IWWAGE conducted an in-depth qualitative implementation research study to understand the process of the SWAYAM programme in pilot geographies in the four aforementioned states in addressing Violence Against Women (VAW). The study aimed to understand the design and contextual influences that exhibit/inhibit the SWAYAM programme in addressing VAW. The objective of the study is to understand women's experiences with referral, access to, and utilization of services





for survivors of violence provided by GRCs under the SWAYAM programme. Furthermore, the study tries to understand the institutional mechanisms under the SWAYAM programme that enables/inhibit community members from intervening in cases of VAW, and also to understand the impact of broader social norms in the community on the feasibility and implementation of specific interventions in the SWAYAM programme aiming to address VAW, along with the impact of gender training modules on SHG members' attitudes towards VAW.

The study was undertaken within the SHG ecosystem; first were the SHG women who had been trained under the SWAYAM programme, a subsection of this category was SHG women who had not been trained under SWAYAM. Both categories were selected to understand if there was a difference in attitudes and norms regarding violence when women had received gender trainings under SWAYAM. Second were women who had taken cases of violence to the GRC to understand their experience of using a GRC for cases of violence. Third were Gender Champions, the DAY-NRLM cadre trained to provide SHG women with gender training, and finally, the fourth category were men who were related to SHG women. Over all 102 in-depth interviews were conducted across the four states.

Gender norms are the collectively held belief about what others do and what others think one should do based on their gender identity. Gender norms are learned through socialisation beginning in childhood, reinforced by family and community, and embedded in institutions, policies, and regulations (World Bank, 2022). While patriarchy manifests itself in various social spheres (economic, political, environmental, etc.), it becomes prudent for this study to take the family as its analytical unit, as the majority of the respondents in the study identified the perpetrators of violence to be their husbands and/or in-laws. On the other hand, the study also finds that a semblance of equality has been achieved, especially in the school education of girls and boys.

In connection with the right to work, the study finds that many women report that their husbands support them being SHG members and encourage them to attend SHG meetings and events. However, the study also reports that the normative structures still hold women back, restricting their mobility outside the house and denying women the equal opportunity to move out of the homestead for work or leisure.

The study further contextualizes and specifically discusses community norms related to gender-based violence. Both men and women interviewed agreed that domestic violence was not acceptable, even if there is a disagreement or even if the woman had done something wrong, men or the family should talk to her and explain, but they should not hit her. However, in most cases, it was also believed that the woman must have done something wrong or there must have been a valid reason for the man



to hit her; this was especially common regarding expectations from gendered roles within domestic space. The study reports that communities, including SHG women, feel that there is certain work (usually unpaid care work) that is a woman's duty to fulfill. Overall, the study finds that while there have been marginal advances in societal expectations of women and girls, rigid normative barriers to women achieving equality are sustained by communities and society.

In this study, we attempt to contextualize the gender normative structure within the discourse on violence deriving from the lived experiences of women respondents. Violence is often triggered by one or more instances. One of the most common triggers of violence among the women we spoke to was alcoholism. This was seen across the four states where interviews were conducted. Another commonly reported trigger for violence is if women do not adhere to rigid social norms; do not cook good food, or serve to husband, among others. Women's mobility is also a cause for concern and often leads to violence against women. The evidence from the study suggests that husbands often pose barriers to their wives' mobility to work outside the home. Dowry was also reported as one of the major reasons for Violence Against Women (VAW).



While all women recognise that violence is not appropriate and should not be tolerated, women seldom speak about the violence they are facing. The disclosure of violence is essential for cases of violence to be resolved; the study finds that often women do not disclose violence. The non-disclosure and non-reporting of violence have a major impact on cases of violence being addressed and potentially resolved.

Addressing issues of violence and bodily integrity would require the establishment of institutional mechanisms such as gender justice centres for legal support and counselling and sensitising of key local-level functionaries and stakeholders (police, panchayat officials) through training on gender-based violence (Tankha, 2014). In that context, DAY-NRLM, in partnership with IWWAGE, piloted Gender Resource Centres (GRC) in four states to test their relevance and effectiveness in helping women voice their concerns and getting access to rights and entitlements. The study focussed on understanding how GRCs operated in the different sites and how communities engaged with them. The study found that women (i.e., both Self Help Group women and women who used GRCs) disclosed VAW against themselves or others to a range of individuals/institutions (namely family members/neighbours, the Gram Panchayat





(GP), SHG/Voluntary Organisation (VO) members, Gender Champions (GCs)/Community Resource Persons (CRPs), GRCs, police, and courts).

Most GRC users knew and were aware of the functions of GRCs. They informed GRCs were meant to be accessed when they faced any form of violence. Some users also mentioned that GRCs are also effective in accessing rights and entitlements such as shelter or ration. The study finds that most GRC users got information about GRCs from gender CRPs. Some GRC users also received information from Gender Point Persons (GPP), appointed at the SHG level, to facilitate discussions around gender and provide necessary information/linkages to resolve any issues.

While women approached GRCs for redressal, the study reports that GRCs were not always accessible to women and were far from their homes. However, most GRC users expressed willingness to access GRCs as they were less intimidating than the police/courts. Some GRC users also reported they didn't approach the GRC as it doesn't have any legal authority, and may be unable to assist.

The study reveals a range of actions that the GRC took, depending on the type of case. Most cases involving quarrels or verbal abuse were resolved through mediation or counselling. The GRC approached such matters in two/both ways - (a) they listened to the survivor's case, counseled her, and provided her information on the next steps; and/or (b) they mediated between the perpetrator and survivor and counselled them. In cases of physical violence, where the survivor was grievously injured or faced an imminent threat to her life, the GRC responded in the following ways - (a) they sent a formal notice to the perpetrator either as a warning or as a summons to appear at the GRC on the said date; (b) they helped the survivor approach the police and file a case against the perpetrator; and/or (c) they referred the case to the nearest One-Stop Centre (OSC) for further action.

The study reports that most GRC users' experiences of GRC usage were mixed. While many GRC users were satisfied with the processes involved in registering their cases and the subsequent action is taken, some users were dissatisfied with the lack of follow-up or resolution. For many GRC users, the experience of accessing GRCs was a positive one - from increased knowledge on how to approach cases of VAW, to feeling a sense of security or belongingness to a complete resolution of cases. Some users also experienced reduced/no harassment from their perpetrators after the GRC intervened. GRCs, are a recognized collective of women, having more linkages and bargaining power when resolving cases. While most GRC users narrated positive experiences of GRC usage, some users felt that GRCs did not offer them enough assistance. Their concerns ranged from limited follow-up on their cases to little to no change in their situation owing to the fact that the perpetrators in their cases were unfazed by the action taken by GRCs.

For the GRC to intervene or resolve VAW cases effectively, there has to be a constant interaction with other institutions external to the DAY-NRLM architecture, like the police and legal aid services like DLSA and One-Stop Centres (OSC). From the evidence, we find that the GRC directly interacts with the police in assisting women in registering cases or for immediate intervention in ongoing instances of violence, like calling the PCR to intervene and stop an act of violence. However, most GRC users claimed to have negative experiences when they approached the police or the courts for redressal. Negative experiences with the police ranged from refusal to intervene in an ongoing instance of violence to accepting bribes from the perpetrator for an early release from jail. As for courts, GRC users felt that redressal was extremely time-consuming and an expensive affair.

Gender-based violence is a pervasive reality for an overwhelming majority of women in rural areas, and it is critical for women to articulate, report, and have the knowledge to address gender-based violence (Tankha, 2014) Social and gender norms continue to influence the effective implementation or enforcement of laws and policies that are critical to advancing gender equality.

This is the final report of the implementation research study of the SWAYAM programme to understand DAY-NRLM's institutional mechanisms and interventions to address gender-based violence against women; it documents the findings and provides recommendations to strengthen further the institutional mechanisms for addressing gender issues.









CHAPTER 1  
**Introduction**  
About DAY-NRLM



DAY-NRLM is a flagship scheme implemented by MoRD to address multidimensional poverty through building strong institutions of the poor and its federated structures. The unique feature of this programme is that poor women from different cross sections of the class and caste implement the programme under the guidance and support of other community women who have come out of poverty using the DAY-NRLM institutional platform.

The existing institutional structures at the village level like the Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Gender Point Persons (GPPs), Sakhi Manchis, Village Organisations (VOs), Gender Forums (GFs) at Block and Panchayat- levels, Cluster-Level Federations (CLFs) offer a unique opportunity to address women's identity, access and control over economic and productive resources, technical knowledge, dignity and bodily integrity. These institutions serve as an effective fundamental structure for establishing a demand-supply relationship with other public offices/spaces like the Gram Panchayat/Village Council (specific to tribal areas), Gram Sabha, Anganwadi Centres, Banks, Public Health Centres, Public Distribution System, schools, etc.



With a renewed focus towards a demand-driven strategy for poverty alleviation and gender-responsive implementation of DAY-NRLM, the differential needs of women are continuously being discussed at these institutional platforms and integrated into the development planning process to achieve the objective of increased agency of women. The lived experiences of women using these platforms to challenge varied social issues ranging from child marriage to domestic violence (DV), asset ownership, governance and financial inclusion suggest a diverse range of solutions that can help women and girls to lead a decent and dignified life. Using the lens of women's rights perspective, these institutional mechanisms show how a focus on developing and strengthening the collective identities of women by increasing their consciousness, understanding of the political economy and their position in the development process can improve women's interface with the community and governance machinery. They can serve as a bottom-up approach to catalyze public cooperation for the provision of public goods and other services for a decent living.





## Mainstreaming gender in the institutional architecture

### *(a) SHGs and the need for gender mainstreaming*

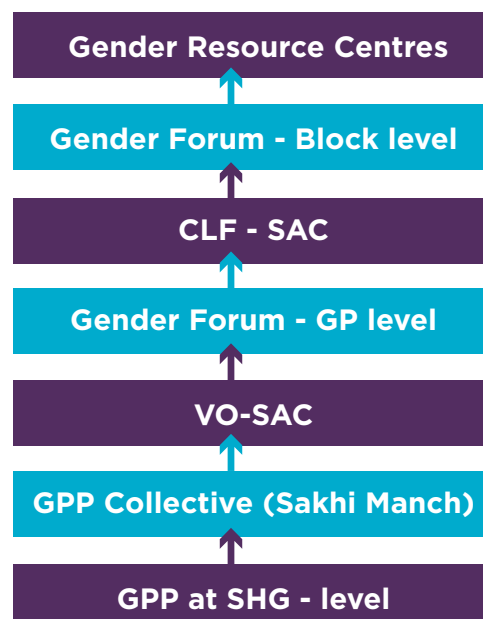
The SHGs empowers women to engage in collective decision-making to solve conflicts through collective leadership and mutual discussion in order to provide economic support with terms decided by the group. It is a collective space for women to exercise human agency for social, political, and cultural transformation of the community as well as the individual. It is also a means for women to share and address various issues they are facing, including issues of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and social exploitation.

For women to achieve sustainable economic, social and political empowerment, it is imperative that there be a special focus on gender within SHGs. Based on this understanding, the DAY-NRLM developed protocols for gender mainstreaming within the SHG ecosystem in 2016 with the belief that gender sensitization and social action should be mainstreamed in its framework, systems, institutions and processes to achieve sustainable social, economic and political development. In this regard, the DAY-NRLM not only mobilizes poor women in general but also undertakes special mobilization efforts for reaching women in exploitative situations/ occupations (such as single women, divorced/separated women, survivors of violence, trafficked women, devadasis, HIV+ve women, etc.) in particular.

Recognizing that gender is a cross-cutting issue, DAY-NRLM's gender mainstreaming strategy stresses on the need for gender-specific policies and interventions with a focus on the rights-based approach as well as an increased need for gender sensitisation and capacity building. Communitisation and convergence with line-departments and other key stakeholders is another key focus area in this strategy.

### *(b) Institutional mechanisms for gender integration*

At the programme implementation level, the institutional mechanisms available for gender integration start at the SHG-level and go up to the block-level (as represented in the chart). Community Resource Persons (CRPs) play a critical role in capacity building of the institutions (i.e., GPP, VO Social Action Committee (SAC), CLF SAC, GF at the Panchayat and block-levels and Gender Justice Centres) on gender concepts, institutional mechanisms, action and intervention. They also support institutions in addressing various issues.





## About SWAYAM (Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment)

Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE) is an evidence generation to an action-use programme aimed at influencing and informing policies and providing solutions to empower women economically. IWWAGE builds upon existing research and generates new evidence to understand factors that enable inclusive, equitable and meaningful financial inclusion among women. Specifically, IWWAGE works with a range of stakeholders, including researchers, academia, civil society and donors, to strengthen the evidence base to inform social and economic policies and design solutions to enhance women's and girls' economic empowerment. The organisation also works with a community of practitioners and policymakers to provide workable and scalable solutions.

IWWAGE is spearheading SWAYAM—Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment. SWAYAM has the mandate to provide technical assistance on gender programming to the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana– National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) to work with Women's Empowerment Collectives (WEC) across 28 states in India.

SWAYAM began as a pilot programme in four states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha to test context-based models to understand 'what works' and how to advance gender-based programming. SWAYAM was founded on two basic strategies - the first was 'gender trainings' where SHG women were trained on concepts such as gender and sex, gendered division of labour, legal protection for women, rights and entitlements, etc. The second was the establishment of Gender Resource Centers (GRCs) where women can access rights and entitlements and record grievances, and address concerns of violence.

Each state had a slightly different implementation model. In each state, a dedicated gender carder of SHG women was identified who were intensively trained by CSO partners to become gender champions. Gender champions would take on the responsibility of training CLF, VO and SHG women as well as staff the GRCs. In Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh, the unit of intervention was a block and training was provided at the CLF and VO level, with the assumption that CLF and VO women would take the concepts of these training back to their SHGs. In Odisha, the unit of intervention of the Gram Panchayat (GP) and trainings were provided at the SHG level, i.e., Gender Champions (GC) directly trained SHGs in intervention GPs. In Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh the GRC was established at the block level. In Odisha the GRC was established at the GP level and in Jharkhand the GRC institution was not established, however VOs and VO SACs were strengthened and capacitated to undertake the responsibilities that GRC undertook in other states.

Today, seeing the need for gender-based training as well as the establishment of institutions like GRC that specifically address women's concerns, DAY-NRLM has expanded the SWAYAM model across 28 states of India.

## Theory of Change (ToC)

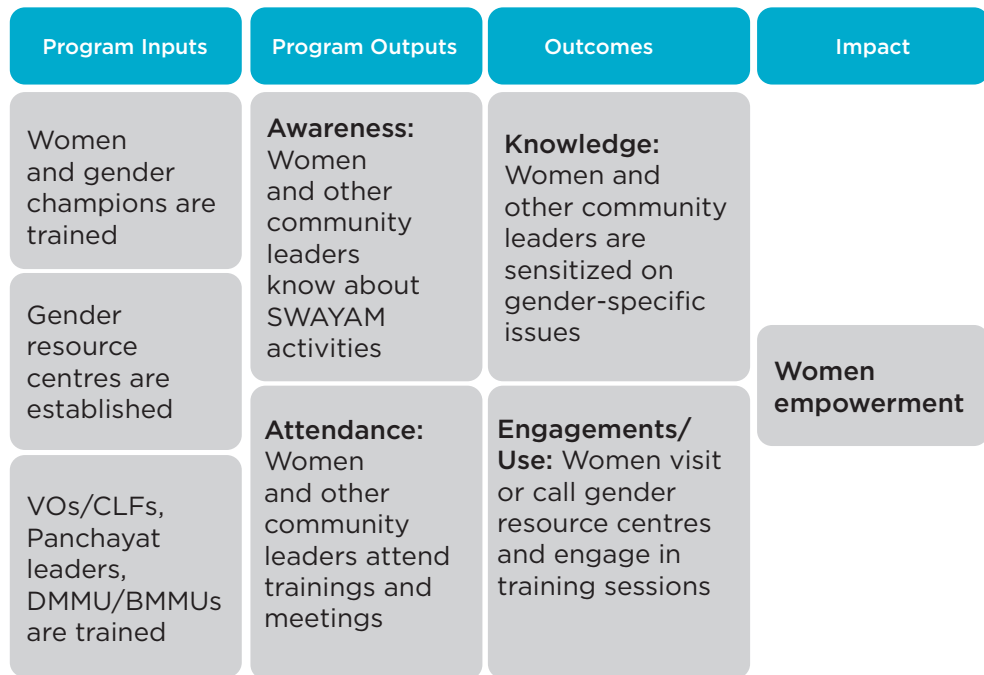
The SWAYAM pilot programme was a complex intervention with multiple intersectionalities between the community and the National and State government partners. The Theory of Change (ToC) for SWAYAM was designed iteratively with all SWAYAM partners and was based on certain fundamental assumptions based on reaching a population-wide impact. These assumptions were mainly directed toward the input activities of gender training and the establishment of Gender Resource Centres. Figure 1 shows a simpler version of the SWAYAM ToC.







Figure 1: Theory of Change



In Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh, training intervention design assumed that having a dedicated and well-trained cadre of master trainers to train women at the VO and CLF level would be sufficient for knowledge and information to be diffused down to the SHG level. The assumption is that women from the VO/CLF would share their expertise with their SHGs. There was no mandate within the design stating that communication with the SHG was mandatory; however, it was assumed that this would happen voluntarily.

Under the aegis of the first assumption, for instance, the ToC assumed that VO/CLF members would be capable of training or sharing information and knowledge with their SHG after one training session on a topic without themselves being given any facilitator training.

Through this study, it was found that gender trainings took place, i.e., that master trainers trained women at the VO/CLF level in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh; however, this did not necessarily translate into training knowledge and information being shared in the SHG level. Diffusion from VO/CLF to the SHG without a mandate in the intervention design to do so was low. In contrast, in Odisha, where the intervention design was for master trainers to train at the SHG level, there was a much wider spread of information and knowledge. Therefore this study finds that for the cascading model of training to work (CLF-VO-SHG), the intervention design must mandate the cascade of training and women trained to be facilitators who can share information and knowledge.

Second, it was assumed under the SWAYAM ToC that increased awareness and knowledge through SWAYAM gender trainings would lead to actual change and an increase in gender-equal practices. However, this was not witnessed in practice. While this study finds that information, knowledge, and individual attitudes of women are overall gender equal, this does not mean they have been able to translate this into gender-equal practices. For example, many women, even when they know and believe that violence against them is incorrect, they prefer to remain silent just for the sake of staying put in turbulent circumstances owing to the fear of society and social exclusion and alienation, for the sake of keeping families intact due to issues resulting from stigmatisation.

Next, SWAYAM's strategy was to establish GRCs. The intervention design here assumed that establishing and staffing GRCs and spreading awareness about these centres would increase women's access to GRCs, and by making the GRCs accessible, women's concerns could be addressed. While the first half of the assumption holds, the second may not always be true. Evidence suggests women who access the GRCs do not necessarily find a resolution to their issues at the centre, especially



concerning cases of violence. The GRCs have little authority or power to effect change. This is primarily due to women in charge of GRCs were aware of the local contexts and dynamics - the stereotypical perceptions attached to cases of domestic violence and the subsequent struggle with addressing the issues. The next is the local ecosystem and its infrastructure, i.e., non-cooperative police departments, no short/extended stay facilities, court cases taking decades to resolve, etc. The study found that where mediation through collective action was possible, the GRCs were, on the whole, prompt in taking action. However, where other forms of the resolution were needed, a lack of proper and formal convergence with other departments was detrimental. This holds for VOs too (as in Jharkhand) that perform the role of GRCs vis-a-vis cases of violence where GRCs as institutions did not exist during the pilot phase.

However, having said this, we do acknowledge that during the time of these studies, the GRCs in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh, respectively, had only been functional for a year, whereas the GRC in Chhattisgarh had only been functional for six months; therefore given more time, these institutions may mature.

## Women collectives and violence

Nationally, India has several legal provisions, policies, and programmes that demonstrate the country's commitment to gender equality and the reduction of Violence Against Women (VAW). However, despite this commitment, the latest National Family Health Survey five (NFHS 5) has reported that 30 percent of women in India between the ages of 18 and 49 report that they have faced physical or sexual violence (IIPS 2021). A key constraint in realising the potential for the provisions put in place and understanding why they have not translated into on-ground action that would advance gender equality remains a challenge. While a number of programmes are being implemented by the government and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that focus on reproductive health, women's rights, and gender-based violence, little effort has gone into systematically studying these programmes and understanding where the gaps lie.

With the launch of DAY-NRLM in 2011, there was a renewed commitment by the government to involve women in the development process. The formation of SHGs, VOs, and CLFs provided platforms for women to collectivise and form solidarities. The formation of these institutions also created platforms through which gender integration or gender-responsive programmes could be brought to the community level through members of the community themselves. Multiple programmes were designed leveraging the institutional mechanisms of the DAY-NRLM. However, we find the same gap in evidence as we find above; while several studies have been conducted on women's collectives and financial inclusion, there is limited evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of these platforms in addressing other forms of social development issues such as health, sanitation, reproductive health, gender equality, and violence.

The limited evidence shows that while there are barriers, interventions with women's collectives can improve women's reproductive and sexual health and reduce violence (Desai et al., 2020; Pronyk et al., 2006; Gram, Desai & Prost, 2020). A systematic review conducted by Desai et al. (2020) found only four studies that have researched violence against women and women's groups. The interventions of the first two studies were limited to providing gender transformative training to women; the review found that such interventions with women's groups led to little to no impact on improvement in attitudes, social norms, levels of physical violence, and an increase in emotional, marital violence (Desai et al., 2020). Further, on other parameters of the study, such as nutrition, reproductive and sexual health, and maternal and child health, the review found mixed results across the evidence present (ibid).

Gram et al. (2019) conducted a similar systematic review that looked at mechanisms, enablers, and barriers to improving women's and children's health behaviours via interventions with community groups. The review demonstrated that while various studies regarding community mobilisation identify multiple mechanisms, enablers, and barriers through women's groups, evidence regarding the effectiveness of these mechanisms remains limited.

Overall, there is a lack of evidence in understanding how women's groups can most effectively address Violence Against Women (VAW). SWAYAM, as a programme, relied on trainings with CLF/VO and SHG members and establishing the Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) to give women the information, knowledge, and resources to fight VAW.

This report attempts at filling in some gaps in evidence and understanding how effective these strategies have been in addressing VAW.





## CHAPTER 2

# Methodology



This chapter outlines the aims and objectives of the study, provides justifications for the research design and sampling and details out the data collection and analysis methods.

## Aim of the study

This is a qualitative implementation research study that aims to:

1. Understand the intervention processes of the SWAYAM programme in addressing VAW
2. Understand the design and contextual influences that enable/inhibit the SWAYAM programme in addressing VAW



## Objectives

This study has four main objectives:

1. To understand women's experiences with referral, access to and utilization of services for survivors of violence provided by GRCs under the SWAYAM programme
2. To understand the institutional mechanisms under the SWAYAM programme that enables/inhibit community members to intervene in cases of VAW
3. To understand the impact of broader social norms in the community on the feasibility and implementation of specific interventions in the SWAYAM programme aimed to address VAW
4. To understand the impact of gender training modules on SHG members' attitudes towards VAW





## Research design

This study was undertaken within the SHG ecosystem in the four SWAYAM pilot states - Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. Four respondent groups were identified that interacted directly or indirectly with the SWAYAM programme to answer the objectives outlined above.

First was SHG women who had been trained under the SWAYAM programme, a subsection of this category was SHG women who had not been trained under SWAYAM. Both categories were selected to understand if there was difference in attitudes and norms regarding violence when women had received gender trainings under SWAYAM. Second, was women who had taken cases of violence to the GRC, to understand their experience of using a GRC for cases of violence. Third, was Gender Champions, the DAY-NRLM cadre that has been trained to provide SHG women with gender trainings and finally, the fourth category was men who were related to SHG women.

Each respondent group was administered an individual topic guide to understanding their opinions, attitudes, and experiences of SHG functioning, SWAYAM trainings, attitudes towards violence, norms regarding VAW, community support to survivors of violence, the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms such as GRC, police, panchayat to address VAW concerns and outcomes of cases of VAW.

The research team leveraged existing connections with CSO partners within the field to gain access to respondents.

## Sampling

Trained SHG women, GRC users and GCs were purposively sampled from a list of women provided to us by the CSO organisations and the SRLM, of women who had undergone SWAYAM training, used the GRC and were GCs. Untrained women were selected through a snowballing approach, whereas the trained SHG women introduced us to women in the SHG network who had not undergone training. Men were also recruited through SHG women, usually their husbands or sons.

Over all 102 in-depth interviews were conducted across the four states. Table 1.1 below shows the distribution of respondents across states.

States					
Respondents	CG	JH	MP	OD	Total
Trained SHG Women	5	7	4	14	30
Untrained SHG women	4	7	8	0	19
GRC users	5	6	7	8	26
Gender Champion	2	3	3	3	11
Men related to SHG women	6	2	4	4	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>102</b>





## Data collection

Data was collected by four trained women (1 for each state) who were local to their respective states. The research team trained the interviewers over a period of one week and conducted the de-briefs with the interviewers after each day of data collection to solve any queries or issues that may have arisen in the field.

Data was collected in person, with the interviewers travelling to the villages where the respondents were located. All interviews were recorded on a recording device and securely transferred to the research team at the end of each day of data collection. Data was collected over a period of two months, between November and December 2021.

## Data analysis

A systematic thematic analysis was conducted on all the interviews collected using the MAXQDA qualitative software. Codes and sub-codes were created from the themes emerging from the data. The research team worked in collaboration to create an initial listing of code emerging from the first few interviews analysed. However, the creation of codes was an iterative process, and as new themes emerged during analysis new codes were added till saturation was achieved. The same coding framework was used to code interviews across the four states.

Once all the transcripts were coded using the software, an in-depth exercise was undertaken to extricate patterns of human experience vis-a-vis violence against women and social norms that restrict or aid women in addressing concerns of violence. Again the MAXQDA software was used and the experiences of women were extracted to find patterns across the data set.

## Ethical considerations

This study was conducted by IWWAGE as a part of its technical assistance to the SWAYAM programme. The study obtained an Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance from the IFMR Human Subjects Committee affiliated to Krea University. Consent forms were used to inform all research participants about the purpose of the study and their rights as women being interviewed for this study, including their right to choose not to participate, refuse to answer a particular question, end the interview midway, and their right to withdraw consent at any time post the completion of data collection. All participants of this study were able to articulate consent or refusal.

As the study was exclusively focused on women, it was ensured that all interviewers were female. All respondents who have taken part in this study have been kept anonymous and no names have been used during the analysis or reporting of study results. Access to the data was limited to the research team and the interviewers during the data collection phase and exclusively to the research team at the time of analysis.





CHAPTER 3  
**Intervention  
Inputs**



*This chapter focuses on the different intervention inputs of the SWAYAM programme aimed at the reduction of VAW.*

## **SHG functioning**

The BMGF funded SWAYAM programme is a technical assistance to DAY-NRLM by IWWAGE, with SHGs being the primary focus. While SHGs are voluntary groups of women engaging in savings and credit activities, the programme focussed on fostering discussions around VAW within SHGs by trained CRPs to provide a safe haven for women to be able to disclose violence.

The study found that most SHGs were functional, i.e. they were following DAY-NRLM's prescribed principles of 'Panchasutra'. However, some SHGs had also dissolved. The study also found that SHGs were engaging in discussions on non-financial issues such as gender, health, nutrition, and WASH. However, the frequency and intensity of these discussions were not clearly prescribed or uniform across the study sites.



## **SWAYAM trainings**

SWAYAM built on the assumption that strong and functioning SHG were present and active and that they could be used as a foundation through which women and women's collectives could be trained on concepts of gender and issues pertinent to women's lives. SWAYAM trainings were focused on gender perspective building among SHG women. In all states, there was a DAY-NRLM cadre of community women trained by SWAYAM CSO partners to be gender facilitators, also known as gender champions, who were extensively trained to further train the CLF, VO, or SHG level.

In three states, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh the trainings were conducted at the VO and CLF level, where gender champions trained women who were members of the VO and CLF, making sure to include the VO and CLF officer bearers as well as VO SAC and the CLF SAC. In Odisha, the model was slightly different, where gender champions were directly trained at the SHG level.





Women were trained across different thematic areas, which included gender-based violence, economic rights and entitlements, social rights and entitlements, gender, sex and society, gender division of labour, legal protections for women and children and institutional support that women could access. While not all states touched on all the concepts, these were the broad conceptual underpinnings of the SWAYAM training.

## Gender Resource Centres (GRCs)

Gender resource centres are institutional platforms meant to connect women with different avenues of support. Counsellors at GRCs can help women with a host of issues, ranging from helping women access entitlements to providing support to women who may be experiencing gender-based violence.

As a part of DAY-NRLM's gender mainstreaming agenda, different institutional mechanisms were introduced in Madhya Pradesh (MP), Odisha (OD), Jharkhand (JH) and Chhattisgarh (CG) in select blocks, as pilots, implemented and supported by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). MP and OD were the first implementers and the first GRC in MP, known as 'Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK)' was inaugurated in Karahal block in June 2020. In OD, the GRCs were named 'Prerna Kendra.' Chhattisgarh started implementation later due to delays in approvals and challenges presented during COVID-19. However, at the pilot stage, each CLF was to have a GRC that the CLF SAC members facilitated. Jharkhand chose a different approach wherein existing VO SAC and CLF SAC were to be strengthened to be able to discharge the roles of GRCs. A point to note is that these institutional mechanisms [(i.e., GRCs in MP, OD and CG) and trained VO SAC/CLF SACs in JH)] were active in sampled pilot blocks during the time of the study.









CHAPTER 4  
**Violence  
Against  
Women**



In India, issues of gender inequality are rooted in and reinforced by social norms, customs, family traditions and patriarchal value systems (Dutt, 2018; Singh et al., 2021). Normative structures that sustain patriarchal systems uphold principles of gender inequality where men hold power, access to resources within and outside the family and control assets. For example, only 15% of households across India are headed by women, with a majority of households across the country being headed by men (IIPS & ICF, 2017). Household headship is a good indicator to demonstrate male control over familial resources and reflects the power relations that exist within households.

While patriarchy manifests itself in various social spheres (economic, political, environmental, etc.) it is prudent for this study to take the family as its analytical unit. First, as the family provides a specific context bound by restrictive social norms within which violence occurs and second, as a majority of our respondents have identified perpetrators of violence to be their husbands and/or in-laws (Mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law). Additionally, women's lives are



often circumscribed by their duties and responsibilities towards the marital home and failure to meet these duties often results in violence.

Any society that views women as subordinates and holds prejudice against women has the potential to become violent, especially if the sanctity of marriage and patriarchal structures that hold the family together take precedence over the needs of women and children (Bhattacharya, 2004). Social norms and values linked to marriage and the family unit are highly entrenched and internalised by a significant number of women who are not willing to disclose the perpetrator of the violence they have suffered (Daga et al., 1999). This is in keeping with what we find in this study, where although the perpetrator of violence has been disclosed to the interviewer in a confidential manner a significant number of women are not willing to file complaints against their perpetrator as they are often family, perpetuating the cycle of violence.

This section gives an overview of the normative structures the respondents of this study are bound by, that have led to contexts within which violence arises, is seldom disclosed, and is often sustained.



## 4.1 Norm Change and Gender Equality

All women respondents of this study were living in rural geographies at the time they were interviewed. They were all married and a majority of them were women with children. We asked women about how they (as individuals and women at large in the community) are treated in comparison to men and how the community and the family treat daughters (their own and daughters in general). We find that in certain aspects, a semblance of equality has been achieved between men and women and between daughters and sons. This is especially seen in the school education of girls and boys. A majority of women responded that in their village, the education of girls and boys is given equal importance. As articulated by a woman in Odisha.



*No ma'am now many people understand. If such a time comes, then we also go and explain to them that what happens if a girl happens [sic], they have also suffered, get them educated too. Will also give work like a boy, not only a boy but also a girl can do everything. Now everyone has understood after being in SHG. Leave the girls to study, they teach whatever they have. Not that everyone has understood. So there will be two or three people out of them who do not understand. But people have already understood a lot.*

**Female Respondent Odisha**  
(December 2021)

While she acknowledges that there is more to be done and that there may be a few people who still believe that girls should not be educated, she sees that things have changed and that “alot” of people now understand that girls and boys both should be educated.

Moreover, the study finds that a majority of respondents believe in equality between daughters and sons. While this may not always be translated into practice and have already led to normative change, there has been a transformation in how girls and boys are viewed. A respondent from Chhattisgarh elaborates



*“You should not discriminate between son and daughter. Both are the same. If the son can care parents then the daughter can also care for them. Now transformation is there.”*

**Female Respondent Odisha**  
(December 2021)



While such beliefs and practices are not consistent across states or within states, it is encouraging to note that a slow shift towards gender equality has begun.

The study also finds that in a number of cases, women are reporting and experiencing a normalisation of women's right to work. A significant number of women reported that men and women are both allowed to and should work outside the house. A woman in Odisha reported that there was a time that family members and the community used to question why she, as a woman, needed to go out and work, however, these attitudes have changed over time in her community.



*Earlier they would say that she is a girl; what will she do by going out, but they do not speak like this right now. Now let's see how much work a boy can do. A girl can do the same thing.*

**Female Respondent Odisha**  
(December 2021)

## 4.2 Prevalence of restrictive normative structure

While it is encouraging to see that there is a forward movement towards gender equality, especially in terms of education, the right to work, and the belief that women and men can take on the same responsibilities. The study also finds that normative structures hold women back and have been major constraints for them.

### 4.2.1 Preference for Male Children

Preference for male children is still prevalent. Multiple respondents have reported that in their village, it is common for women to continue to try for a male child even after having 4 or 5 children that have been girls. Such instances have been reported from all states; even though the SHG women do not believe this is correct, they do concede that this practice continues in their village. It was reported that family pressure to have a male child restricts women's bodily autonomy to decide when to stop having children, especially if they only have daughters. Additionally, respondents reported that sex determination before birth was also prevalent within the community. The most common reason for not preferring a girl child was reported to be the demand for dowry during the time of marriage. Respondents also reported that they often see in the village that boys get more care and are treated better than daughters.

### 4.2.2 Restricted Social Mobility

A significant number of women have reported that within rural communities, women do not enjoy the same mobility as men. For example, a woman from Chhattisgarh shared,





*But still, there are some in the village who don't like to go for the training. Sometimes, families also do not allow women to go out. So, still, there is no complete change in the society.*

**Female Respondent Chhattisgarh**  
(November 2021)

Men who were interviewed for the study also echoed what the women were saying that within the larger community in the village there were men who objected to women going out of the house



*Yes, some men are there. They object to women going out.*

**Male Respondent Chhattisgarh**  
(November 2021)

Therefore, the movement of women outside the house is guided by the norms that deny women the equal opportunity to move out of the homestead for work or leisure.

#### **4.2.3 Gendered roles within domestic space**

Multiple women reported that the expectations the family had from daughters were different from that of sons. Daughters, even though they were studying and going to school, were expected to come home and help with domestic household chores; these same expectations did not apply to sons, who were allowed to study or play on returning from school. A respondent from Madhya Pradesh reported that although girls are in school, some households still expect them to come home and work.



*All girls are studying from home. But some make them do work also [after school]*

**Female Respondent Madhya Pradesh**  
(November 2021)



Our respondent conveyed to us that there are aspects, especially where girls' responsibilities are concerned, where they are not treated equally within the household.

It is common to hear from respondents that daughters-in-law are mistreated or not treated equally within the family. It is common and often internalised even by SHG women that it is the daughter-in-law's responsibility to cook, clean and look after the household. In a case from Jharkhand, the daughter-in-law refused to take responsibility for household tasks which led to fighting and abuse from the family towards her. Even the community, including SHG women, agreed that the daughter-in-law should do household work and it is not good for her to refuse to do this work. This incident holds significant value demonstrating that even today, communities including SHG women feel that, there is certain work (usually unpaid care work) is a woman's duty to fulfill. Overall, the study finds that while there have been marginal advances in societal expectations of women and girls, rigid normative barriers to women achieving equality are sustained by communities and society.

### **4.3 Norms related to Domestic Violence (DV)**

In the context of this study, it is important to specifically discuss community norms that relate to gender-based violence. This will also contextualise the next two sections, specifically talking about the triggers of violence as well as the disclosure of violence.

Both men and women interviewed agreed that domestic violence was not acceptable. If there was a disagreement or even if the woman had done something wrong, men or the family should talk to her and explain, but they should not hit her. In a majority of cases, the narrative was that she (the woman) must have done something wrong or that there was some valid reason why a man would have hit her; however even if the reason was valid domestic violence was not seen as acceptable. Similarly, both men and women agreed that if women come forward and talk about their experience of violence, they should be believed. The community belief was that if a woman is coming out and talking about such things, it must be because it is true, as she is talking about very personal and intimate matters of the household in the public domain.

Simultaneously, however, within the community, the dominant understanding or norm is that domestic violence is a private matter and should not be talked about outside of the home or in public. Therefore, if a woman is facing DV, she should try and sort it out with her husband or within her family. Solidifying the normative structures that the sanctity of conjugal relations must be kept paramount.

Gendered normative structures that frame women's lives and their lived experiences form the context within which we frame the discourse of violence that the respondents of the study shared with us.

#### ***4.3.1 Triggers of violence***

Triggers of violence are causes, reasons, or trauma that lead to one or more instances of violence. Perpetrators and survivors may be conscious of triggers of violence (for example, women saying, 'he beats me when he is drunk'; alcoholism being the trigger of violence) or they may be subconsciously perpetuating violence because violence against women has been normalised within society. In both cases, however violence is an outcome of the disproportionate amount of power men hold over women in rigid patriarchal social contexts. Throughout our study, we encountered numerous triggers that led to violence, which are elaborated below.

One of the most common triggers of violence among the women we spoke to was alcoholism. In a majority of cases women reported that husbands would consume alcohol outside of the home and on returning home in a drunken state they would beat their wife. This was seen across the four states where interviews were conducted. In Odisha women reported it was common to hear about cases when husbands beat wives when drunk.





*Yes, I have heard about domestic violence in the village. I have heard that after drinking alcohol they tortured their wife. His wife didn't have any fault. Husband was drunk, so he beat up his wife.*

**Female Respondent Odisha**  
(November 2021)

Similarly, in MP a woman narrated that her husband would become abusive after drinking alcohol.



*My husband would beat me after drinking everytime I visited. He threw me one time after he came back drunk. He would abuse me and say that I am characterless.*

**Female Respondent Madhya Pradesh**  
(November 2021)

Even when both husband and wife work, women have reported that their husband spends all their money on alcohol. As this case from Chhattisgarh shows.



*Husband and wife both are working but husband spends all the money in consuming liquor. Because of that more fights happen. That fight happens because of money only.*

**Female Respondent Chhattisgarh**  
(December 2021)

Multiple women reported that it was women who were working and earning to support the family while their husbands would either work part-time and spend all their money on alcohol or would not work at all and demand money from their wives for the purchase of alcohol. Most men would become drunk and beat their wives in a drunken state. In certain cases, it was also reported that the violence was not only toward the woman (wife) but also toward other family members.

Another commonly reported trigger for violence is if women do not adhere to rigid social norms. For example, if women do not take care of their prescribed gendered roles as good wives and/or mothers (i.e, if she does not cook good food, or does not serve food to their husband). A woman from Chhattisgarh reported.





*If I would ask him why he is beating me then he would say because of cooking food. He would say that I wake up late and because of that I do not cook food and give it to him. If someday I was not well, then he would, again and again, say these things.*

**Female respondent Chhattisgarh**  
(December 2021)

Another instance of violence was spoken of by our respondent in Madhya Pradesh. Upon asking why did people beat a woman of the household and the answer was



*Because I cook food during the time the family was observes fast. When I feel hungry and want to eat, I am beaten and abused.*

**Female respondent Madhya Pradesh**  
(November 2021)

The experiences and instances being shared by women demonstrate women are expected to perform certain tasks and behave in a certain way.

Women's mobility is also a cause for concern and often leads to violence against women. The evidence from the study suggests that the husbands often pose barriers to their wives' mobility to work outside the home, and more often than not, the wives' act of transgression in stepping out of the house to work is met with violence as this case from Madhya Pradesh demonstrates:



*He would hit me just like that for working outside and not sitting at home, because I would work on others' fields during the harvesting season, and he demanded me staying at home and not step out.*

**Female Respondent Madhya Pradesh**  
(November 2021)

Linked closely with norms that see the man as the breadwinner who should work outside and the woman as the homemaker who should look after domestic duties, such norms that require women to gain permission before stepping out of the house severely limit women's mobility. And when transgressed as we see from the case above, women often face violence. (Baseline Evaluation of SWAYAM Scale-up, 2022:Unpublished) . It has also been reported that women who work outside the house often face more violence than those that do not.

Another major reason for violence against women as reported by our respondents was dowry. More accurately the belief of the marital family that not enough dowry was provided by the bride's family. Cases of dowry-related violence were reported across states. This case reported by a respondent in Jharkhand exemplifies the magnitude of violence women face in relation to the demand of dowry.



*She was married to... I forgot the name of the village. They were demanding dowry. Telling, go and bring this much dowry. She was telling, how my father could give this much. Whatever he had, he spent in marriage. Now my father is earning anyhow and feeding the family. How he could give you as much. But they were saying, no. go there and bring. Her mother-in-law was also beating. Her husband was also beating her.*

**Female respondent Jharkhand**  
(November 2021)

While it is common knowledge among SHG women and most rural communities that dowry is an illegal practice, the practice continues. Families continue to ask for and receive dowry during the time of marriage and often continue to face dowry-related violence.

Elaborated above are the major causes of violence reported by the respondents of this study. However, the causes of violence are not limited to those mentioned above, while not as common other cause of violence include extra-marital affairs (usually by the husband), women using technology such as phone to talk to friends and parents, listen to music or watch videos, the birth of a girl child and educating the girl children have also been identified as triggers of violence.

Unfortunately, as we will see in the next section, while all the women recognise that violence is not appropriate and it should not be tolerated, women seldom speak about the violence they are facing.

#### **4.3.2 Disclosure of violence**

The first and possibly most important step in addressing concerns of violence is the disclosure of violence. In this study we asked survivors as well as women who had heard about cases of violence about the frequency of disclosure in cases of violence. The results here are mixed, with half the women telling us that violence is disclosed by the survivors, while the other half telling us that violence is not disclosed by the survivors.

In this section we will address the instances where violence was disclosed and why. When violence is disclosed it is usually disclosed to family members, SHG members or the CRP or BRP of the area. When violence is disclosed, there is a potentiality that the violence may be resolved. Usually, this takes the form of collective community action. As the following example from Jharkhand shows.





*One didi from Gohadil had come to our SHG. When we asked them, what happened to you? Then she said, my husband consumes liquor and beats me. He is not providing me meals. We noticed blood on her body because of being beaten. First she went to her SHG and Badlav didi informed her to go to the cluster. Then her case was noted down in the cluster register. Then we asked about her issue.*

*Then she informed us that her husband is taking liquor and beating her a lot. We have 4 kids, so what should I do? She was asking for help. Then we all BRP didi, SAC didi, Badlav didi and other didi around 20-25 didi went there [to her house]. We called all didi from the SHG area along with the village head and sarpanch. We arranged a meeting in a school over there.*

*We told them, she is beaten in your area. Do you all like this? Tell her husband to not do that otherwise, we all didi sign papers and escalate matters in the police station. When police will arrest him and they will beat him with a stick then he will automatically become right. Then her husband said, forgive me, from today, I will not do that. If I make any mistake then I am ready to get punishment from your side.*

**Female Respondent Jharkhand**  
(November 2021)

The case above highlights the power of collective action, in numerous cases, we have documented that when women come together and act towards achieving a common goal it is possible that they can bend societal expectations and be effective and achieve those goals.

However, often our data shows that violence is disclosed only where it becomes unbearable and often the consequences of speaking out are negative for the survivor. For example, a woman in Odisha reflects on her situation saying



*Since I was the daughter in law of the household, I was not supposed to speak up against any domestic violence that was meted out, as then I would have had to suffer even more if I became vocal about it.*

*Upon asking whether others in the family would explain this to her mother in law she said:*

*Everyone else instead backs my mother in law and I have no say.” thus highlighting her own limited agency in social participation.*

**Female Respondent Odisha**  
(December 2021)

The consequences of speaking out can perpetuate violence for women who speak out. Fearing backlash a significant number of women chose to stay silent. We have seen through our study that this is commonplace. Therefore the second, and often travelled route is that of silence, i.e where women do not disclose violence that they are facing.

We see many cases where taking steps does not resolve the issue, therefore women have resigned themselves to baring violence.

For example a woman in Odisha reflected upon her ordeal of domestic violence. She was asked whether she would complain to the police and she said



*I am no longer going to the police, i dont go as my husband initially stopped and the he began again, so I thought there was no point.*

**Female Respondent Odisha**  
(December 2021)

A woman from Chhattisgarh echoed a similar sentiment.



*I didnt take any action against my husband, and I dont think anything of myself.*

**Female respondent Chhattisgarh**  
(November 2021)

The study also finds that traditional normative understandings of how the family should be and therefore is being represented to the outside world in a certain way holds women back from coming forward with concerns of violence. Often, women do not want to show their husbands or families in a negative light. This case from Chhattisgarh demonstrates, when asked whether one of the victims went to the police.





*I dont prefer going to the police and dont intend to take the case forward. I am repeatedly told I am the woman of my family, and the image of the family will get spoilt. Nothing should go outside the house and the matter should settle within the boundaries of home.*

————— **Female respondent Chhattisgarh**  
(November 2021)

Similarly, another case from MP reiterates this conceptualisation that family matters should be kept private, unless they become intolerable.



*Whenever there was an argument or a fight over any issue, my husband would hit me. He would also hit me each time I returned late from my other home. I would repeatedly break down but I had to keep it private /personal as he didnt beat me that much also.*

————— **Female respondent Madhya Pradesh**  
(November 2021)

Another aspect of remaining silent is shame. Shame of oneself being the subject of violence and abuse. This is articulated by a woman in Odisha, while she knows what her husband is doing is wrong she is ashamed to come forward about the violence she is subject to.

For instance, on asking what the respondent did after the husband beat her a respondent from Odisha said:



*My husband would drink alcohol and beat me up, while I chose to remain silent. I felt ashamed of informing anyone outside the house or seeking help from outside as I was just ashamed of my reality of being beaten up.*

————— **Female respondent Odisha**  
(December 2021)



The cases above demonstrate that women often resort to silence in many cases as (a) they do not want to take family matters outside the homestead; (b) they do not believe the violence they are facing has reached a level where they need to report it; (c) they fear backlash if they report violence; and/or (d) they are restricted by patriarchal concepts of shame i.e that suffering domestic violence or violence in general is a matter of shame for the women.

While the disclosure of violence is essential for cases of violence to be resolved, the study finds that often women do not disclose violence. The non-disclosure and non-reporting of violence has a major impact on cases of violence being addressed and potentially being resolved.

In the next section we will delineate how, if and when cases of violence are disclosed, what are the community and institutional mechanisms that support survivors to resolve their cases.









CHAPTER 5  
**Gender  
Resource  
Centres**



Global evidence shows that WECs can have a transformative effect by leading women from a position of limited power and voice to having skills, resources and opportunities to access markets and public spaces. Membership in their own SHG can have significant positive impacts on women's economic and political empowerment; and their mobility and control over decisions like family planning.

To further its women's empowerment agenda, DAY-NRLM, in partnership with IWWAGE, piloted GRCs in four states (i.e., MP, CG, OD and JH) to test their relevance and effectiveness in helping women voice their concerns and getting access to rights and entitlements. Facilitated by SRLMs and CSO partners in each state, GRCs were developed as distinct scalable institutional models, with the federations being capacitated to manage GRCs. The pilots were successful, with GRCs now being replicated in states outside the pilot geographies.

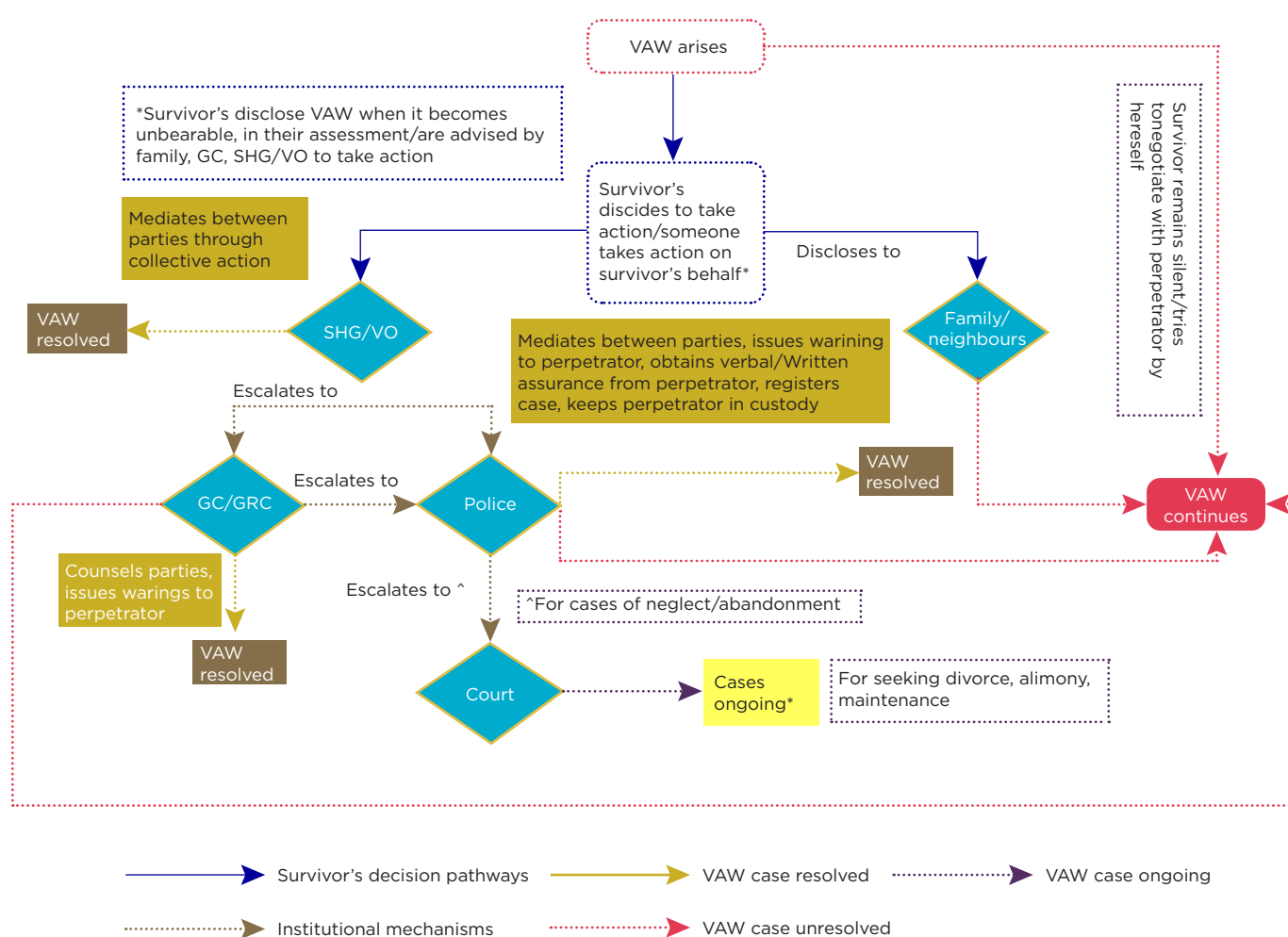
The study focussed on understanding how GRCs operated in the different sites and how communities engaged with them. The following chapters focus on what mechanisms were adopted by GRCs to help women address VAW.



## 5.1 Redressal mechanisms for VAW

Data from the study reveals that women who face violence use multiple redressal mechanisms within and outside the DAY-NRLM architecture to disclose and address cases. The flowchart below (Figure 2) represents the action taken by survivors of VAW and the subsequent institutional pathways for addressing VAW.

Figure 2: Pathways for redressal for VAW







### **1. When VAW arises:**

When instances of VAW arise, women take either one of the two decision-making pathways available – either they remain silent or they disclose violence. Disclosure leads to some form of institutional action being undertaken, which can have positive or negative outcomes. We found that the proportion of women reporting disclosure or non-disclosure of violence is fairly equal, indicating that a large number of women, even in SWAYAM areas, are reluctant to disclose violence.

### **2. Disclosure/non-disclosure of VAW:**

In cases where women remained silent, VAW continued since no other redressal mechanisms were put into action. However, in cases where women decide to disclose violence, we observe that they take either of the two following pathways – they either disclose violence to their family members/neighbours or to their SHG/VO.

### **3. Disclosure to family/neighbours and SHG/VO members:**

In cases where disclosure takes place with family members/neighbours, VAW usually continues. This is mostly because of the restrictive social norms that view violence as a private matter and where disclosure to others (community/institutions) is still taboo. In cases where survivors disclose violence to the SHG or VO, two pathways are seen. Either the SHG or VO undertakes some form of collective action or counselling with the survivor and the perpetrator resulting in the violence being resolved, or they refer the case to the GRC or the police.

### **4. VAW cases referred to GRC:**

In cases where survivors were referred to the GRC, the GRC is either able to counsel the parties or issue a warning to the perpetrator and violence is resolved, or the GRC is not able to solve the case and refers the survivor to the police, or the GRC is not able to solve the issue and does not take any further action resulting in the violence continuing.

### **5. VAW cases referred to police:**

In cases where the SHG or VO refers survivors to the police, the police either holds a mediation with the parties, issues a warning to perpetrator, takes a written statement to not commit such actions from the perpetrator, registers a case or keeps the perpetrator in custody overnight resulting in the violence being resolved or the police refers cases to the court (seen in cases of divorce, alimony, settlement). From the evidence, all such cases are ongoing with the court or the police does not take action or takes ineffective action and the violence continues.

## 5.2 Institutions accessed by women for cases of VAW

Gender resource centres are institutional platforms meant to connect women with We found that women (i.e., both SHG women and women who used GRCs) disclosed VAW against themselves or others to a range of individuals/institutions (namely family members/neighbours, the GP, SHG/VO members, GC/CRP, GRC, police, and courts). In MP and CG, the first point of contact, in the majority of cases, was family members/neighbours. In OD, findings showed that the first point of contact for disclosure of violence was either the SHG or the police. In JH, VAW cases were predominantly disclosed to the SHG first. The evidence suggested that very few women (SHG or GRC users) accessed GRC's as first point of contact.

These institutions performed various actions to resolve cases of VAW, ranging from counselling the survivors and providing them shelter to filing a report with the police. The types of action taken by individuals/institutions accessed by women for VAW have been provided in Table 2.

**Table 2: Types of action taken by different individuals/institutions accessed by women to address VAW**

Family members/ neighbours	SHG/VO	GC/CRP	MP	OD	Total
Helped survivor file report with police	Initiated group meetings with perpetrator/ issuing warnings (collective action)	Escalated case to GRC	Helped survivor file report with police	Counselled survivor/ perpetrator/both	Intervened in ongoing VAW incident by visiting the home of the survivor
Provided shelter to survivor	Discussed issue in SHG	Helped survivor file report with police	Counselled survivor/ perpetrator/ both	Mediated between survivor and perpetrator through discussions	Issued warning to perpetrator - verbally/through written statement
Took survivor to police station	Helped survivor file report with police		Mediated between survivor and perpetrator through discussions		Registered case of survivor against perpetrator
	Mediated between survivor and perpetrator through discussions		Accompanied survivor to hospital		Took perpetrator into custody
	Provided information to survivor on GRC		Sent formal notice to perpetrator/ issue warnings		Jailed perpetrator
			Referred survivor to other institutions like One-Stop Centres		Referred survivor to GRC



## 5.3 Usage of Gender Resource Centres

To understand women's experiences with GRCs, we interviewed GRC users in all study sites on themes around awareness about GRCs, what action GRCs took on their cases, how accessible they felt GRCs were, follow-ups on their cases, reasons for choosing to approach GRCs over other institutions like the police, and their perceptions on the effectiveness of GRCs in resolving their cases. The findings have been presented in the subsequent sections.

### 5.3.1 Awareness of GRCs

To assess whether users were aware about GRCs, probes were used in the research tools to understand what women knew about GRCs' functions and what their sources of information were. The findings are presented below:

#### a) Knowledge of functions of GRCs

Most GRC users had knowledge and were aware about the functions of GRCs. They informed GRCs were meant to be accessed when they faced any form of violence; whether physical, verbal or economic - either from their husbands or in-laws.



*I already knew that for women's violence, you can call there. They also have an office in Deogarh. That's why I called and in our meeting, CRP also told us to call there.*

————— **GRC user from OD**

Additionally, some users also mentioned that GRCs are also effective in accessing rights and entitlements such as shelter or ration.



*Everyone is being helped. If someone is not getting a home, she is being helped. If someone is not getting ration, she is being helped. Every situation is being solved.*

————— **GRC user from MP**

#### b) Sources of information on GRCs

GRC users received information about GRCs from various sources ranging from family members and neighbours to gender CRPs.

Most GRC users got information about GRCs from gender CRPs. CRPs usually attended SHG meetings and informed members about GRCs and their functions and means to access them.

Most GRC users had knowledge and were aware about the functions of GRCs. They informed GRCs were meant to be accessed when they faced any form of violence; whether physical, verbal or economic - either from their husbands or in-laws.



*Meenakshi madam (CRP) informed about the Prerna Kendra and said that if I call to Prerna Kendra, I would get help, so I called with confidence. I believe and will be happy to call if something happens in the future.*

————— **GRC user from OD**

Some GRC users also reported that the GP told them to approach GRCs to resolve their issues.



*We have the panchayat; I came to know through them about Sangini Kendra. Sangini Kendra said we could get something done, and they did an inquiry.*

————— **GRC user from CG**

Some GRC users also received information from GPPs, who are appointed at the SHG-level to facilitate discussions around gender and provide necessary information/linkages to resolve any issues.



*I came to know about GRC 1-2 months ago. I met a didi who gave me this information that might be able to help me with my issues; she is attached with an SHG (GPP). With her help, I was able to reach GRC.*

————— **GRC user from MP**

Lastly, some GRC users reported that they learnt of the GRC and its functions from their family members or neighbours who had previously accessed GRCs and were aware of the assistance they could provide.



*Yes, I took help on my matter from Sangini Kendra, my sister-in-law informed me about it. Meaning, all this (GRC) is here in Sambalpur and my sister-in-law is from here. So my aunt went there and my sister-in-law told my mother that by talking things out the matter can be solved here (GRC).*

————— **GRC user from CG**



### 5.3.2 Accessibility of GRCs

#### (a) Physical proximity as an enabler/barrier

Only a small proportion of GRC users responded on whether they felt that GRCs were physically accessible to them or not. The responses were mixed in nature, wherein some users felt that the GRCs were close to their homes and easily accessible, sometimes by foot while some others felt that they were far and hence, not easily accessible.



*GRC is a 10 minutes walk from my home*

———— **GRC user from MP who felt GRC was close to her home**



*Sangini Kendra is very far away from my home. Approximately 20-25 Kms*

———— **GRC user from CG who felt GRC was far from her home**

#### (b) Willingness/lack of willingness to access GRCs

Most GRC users, who were aware about the GRC and its functions, expressed willingness to access GRCs when they faced violence. They felt that they were less intimidating than the police/courts and that they could easily explain their issues to a more receptive audience.



*I understood that I could get help from the Sangini Kendra. By making them understand, the problem can be solved.*

———— **GRC user from CG**

The following excerpt reveals how users felt more comfortable accessing the GRC over the police.



*"I am happy with the functions of the Prerna Kendra. We used to get frustrated when we went to the police station, but because of the inspiration centres, we did not even have to leave the house. Prerna Kendra comes home and understands. For that the Prerna Kendra should be thanked.*

———— **Female GRC user from OD**

While most survivors of VAW had already accessed GRCs to seek resolution for their cases or expressed willingness to do so in the future, a few did not access them either because their cases were resolved through other institutions or because they felt that if the police or the courts were not able to resolve their cases, then the GRC, which does not have any legal authority, would definitely not be able to assist them.

A survivor from MP stated that she did not see the merit of approaching the GRC since the courts, which had legal authority to resolve cases like hers, had failed to provide her with a satisfactory resolution.



*No, I didn't think about going to GRC. I do not have much knowledge, and when the court is not able to do anything, then what will the GRC be able to do? So that is why I did not go.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Survivor from MP**

Another survivor from MP stated that her case was resolved within her SHG itself, with support from the GC, and hence, there was no need to approach the GRC.



*"I got the help from the Samta Sakhi. So, my matter did not reach the Lok Adhikaar Kendra and it got solved within the group and I got my share and they helped me.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Survivor from MP**

### **5.3.3 Nature of assistance offered by GRCs**

GRC users were also asked to discuss what kind of action was taken by the institution when they approached it. The findings revealed a range of actions that the GRC took, depending on the type of case.

Most cases involving quarrels or verbal abuse, were resolved through mediation or counselling. The GRC approached such matters in two/both ways - (a) they listened to the survivor's case, counselled her, and provided her information on next steps; and/or (b) they mediated between the perpetrator and survivor and counselled them.



*I called the Inspiration centre. They (GRC) said that they were coming (home), and they came and explained to us what would happen if we quarreled. (They said) solve together and don't quarrel. We've been living peacefully since then.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**GRC user from OD**



In cases of physical violence, where the survivor was grievously injured or faced an imminent threat to her life, the GRC responded in the following ways - (a) they sent a formal notice to the perpetrator either as a warning or as a summons to appear at the GRC on the said date; (b) they helped the survivor approach the police and file a case against the perpetrator; and/or (c) they referred the case to the nearest One-Stop Centre (OSC) for further action.



*When I went to the Sangini Kendra, they said they will look into it. I told them everything. They called the daughter and son-in-law in front of me, and told them that the girl's mother is sending a notice stating that you beat her daughter up.*

**GRC user from CG in whose case a formal notice was sent to the perpetrator**



*Inspiration centre didi helped me and also helped me reach my father's house. I myself did not go to the police station, I went through the inspiration centre. My husband was in hiding, and I was at my mother's house. The police went back after 4-5 days, and he was found. The police gave my husband a paper (written undertaking) which said that he would not beat me any more. He agreed. Then he was asked whether he was ready to take his wife and children or not. He said yes!*

**GRC user from OD whose case was reported to the police by the GRC**



*Yes, I have been to GRC. I went to the GRC with my daughter's report. I took her to the GRC; now if the GRC is open, then we will obviously go there, and people there should tell us what to do. When I went to the GRC, they told us to approach the One-Stop Center.*

**GRC user from MP whose daughter's case was referred to the OSC**



*In situations where the survivor's case was ongoing in court for a long period of time, and the survivor approached the GRC for assistance to expedite the case, the GRC provided contact details of other lawyers or helped the survivor approach such lawyers.*

**GRC user from MP  
whose daughter's  
case was referred to  
the OSC**



*They cannot help since the case is already going on in court this is what they said. Yes, the man said this, but the woman did not. The woman said that whatever they could help with, they will. She said at the court; there are government lawyers. There is a woman there, and we went to meet her. She took me along and gave the woman the information that they could not help me with anything else, but they could get me a good lawyer. If I did not have the money, then she can get me a government lawyer to fight the case.*

**GRC user from MP**

### **5.3.4 Perceptions of utility - Experiences on GRC usage**

GRC users were also asked to narrate their experiences on GRC usage. The responses were mixed. While many GRC users were satisfied with the processes involved in registering their cases and the subsequent action taken, some users were dissatisfied with the lack of follow-up or resolution.

#### **(a) Positive experiences of GRC usage**

In cases of physical violence, where the survivor was grievously injured or faced an imminent threat to her life, the GRC responded in the following ways - (a) they sent a formal notice to the perpetrator either as a warning or as a summons to appear at the GRC on the said date; (b) they helped the survivor approach the police and file a case against the perpetrator; and/or (c) they referred the case to the nearest One-Stop Centre (OSC) for further action.

For many GRC users, the experience of accessing GRCs was a positive one - from increased knowledge on how to approach cases of VAW to feeling a sense of security or belongingness to a complete resolution of cases. The following section presents findings on some of these experiences.

For most GRC users, the major reason for satisfaction came from the timeliness in the action taken by the GRC. GRCs, as a recognised collective of women, have more linkages as well as bargaining power when resolving cases. The excerpt below presents how the GRC assisted a survivor in calling the Police Control Room (PCR) to request a vehicle to take the survivor to the hospital and, subsequently, file a police complaint.





*The PCR (van) was not coming. After she (GRC member) called the PCR, they came and took me to the hospital. After that, I was able to file the case. I feel very happy about this. I am happy with all the help the inspiration centre has given me. I have faith that whatever happens, it will be solved. Just that the sooner there is a solution, the better.*

**GRC user from OD**

In another case, the VO members collectively arrived at the survivor's home, approached the perpetrator and warned him of strict action leading to no further violence.



*When the Gram Sangathan (VO) didi, EC members came to my home, my husband was not accepting his mistake. I showed them that he had broken the door. They said to my husband that;*

*"It is not your wife's mistake. If you behave like this after consuming liquor, is it correct? If you beat her after consuming liquor then all of us women here will tie you to the tree and beat you up and make a recording of that for further escalation."*

*Then my husband accepted his mistake and said "From now onwards, I will not make any mistakes. If there is a fight between us, I will record that and show all of you. If I am at fault, you are free to tie me up and beat me."*

*Then, they all left. A couple of days later, he was drinking liquor but he did not shout at me and just went and slept. After that, he went out of the village to earn money. Now, he is not in the village.*

**GRC user from JH**

Some users also experienced reduced/no harassment from their perpetrators after the GRC intervened. One of the survivor narrates how the GRC resolved her case in which she was facing sexual harassment from a group of men in her village who would follow her around and keep calling her phone.



*My experience at the Sangini Kendra was good and I felt good that I went there. My problem was addressed and solved. Now, the men harassing me don't come around anymore and neither do they call.*

————— **GRC user from CG**

Some GRC users also felt that the GRC was a safe space to share issues and connectedness with the GRC provided them with a sense of security.



*"I am very happy with my experience with the inspiration centre. They helped and there hasn't been a fight since. He (husband) is on his own way and I'm on my way. He cooks in his own kitchen and I eat in my kitchen. The inspiration centre came and provided the solution. Since then, my husband and I haven't spoken to each other. I am very happy that I have got security too."*

————— **GRC user from OD**

Another positive experience from accessing GRCs is that some users felt that they had increased access to information on a variety of issues ranging from violence to rights and entitlements.



*I am very happy after the introduction of the inspiration centre. We did not know anything before and now we get help from the inspiration centre.*

————— **GRC user from OD**



### **(b) Negative experiences of GRC usage**

While most GRC users narrated positive experiences of GRC usage, some users felt that GRCs did not offer them enough assistance. Their concerns ranged from limited follow-up on their cases to little to no change in their situation owing to the fact that the perpetrators in their cases were unfazed by the action taken by GRCs.

While most GRC users reported that GRCs were proactive in listening to their cases and providing necessary information or assistance for taking action, in terms of registering cases with the police or referring them to other institutions like OSCs, other users also reported that GRC representatives did not follow-up on their cases, either via phone calls or home visits.



*They took my mobile number and said that we will call you after speaking to my brother-in-law but they didn't call me. It's been three or four months. My case has not been resolved.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from OD**

In some cases where the GRC tried reaching out to the perpetrator via telephone, the perpetrator ignored their calls or summons.



*I went to the didi at Sangini Kendra, and put a request there. I wouldn't know the process. A phone call was made, but he (husband) didn't pick up. He didn't want to speak, he didn't want to pay any money. I had papers (notice) sent to him also. He disconnects the phone when I call. I called twice, each time he disconnected. He doesn't even talk properly.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from CG**

In a few cases, where the GRC tried to intervene by sending written notices, the perpetrator remained unfazed.



*The GRC told him that the girl's mother is sending notice that you beat up her daughter. He said "Send the notice, I will tear the notice when it comes. I won't come over at sangini Kendra.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from CG**

In many cases, even after an intervention from the GRC, VAW has continued or has not been completely resolved.



*"After the meeting, he is not blaming but small-small fights still happen at home. He does not provide us ration on time."*

**GRC user from JH**

Some GRC users also faced retaliation from their perpetrators after they disclosed violence to GRCs.



*When I came back, no one from GRC came to visit my home till now. My problem isn't solved. ....Since I have raised an objection, they are not allowing me to enter the home. They have beaten me and my kids and sent us away.*

**GRC user from MP**

## 5.4 Convergence of GRCs with other institutions

For the GRC to be able to effectively intervene or resolve VAW cases, there has to be a constant interaction with other institutions external to the DAY-NRLM architecture like the police, legal aid services like DLSA and One-Stop Centres (OSC). From the evidence, we find that the GRC directly interacts with the police in assisting women for registering cases or for immediate intervention in ongoing instances of violence like calling the PCR to intervene and stop an act of violence.

While in most cases, the GRC has the capacity to resolve VAW cases through counselling or mediation, in extreme cases, where the survivor is brutally abused and fears for her or her children's lives or is seeking separation or alimony from her husband, the GRC is limited in its ability to resolve them. In such cases, the GRC refers the case to the police or legal services or One-Stop Centres (OSC).

As a part of the research, GRC users were also asked to narrate their experiences of engaging with the police and the courts for resolution of their cases. The findings are presented in this section.

### **(a) Positive experiences engaging with police and courts**

The findings show that very few GRC users had a positive experience when they approached the police for assistance and no positive experience when engaging with courts. However, the findings also reveal that in cases where police took proactive measures, timeliness in police action prevented further violence and provided a sense of security and reassurance to the survivor.





*The police came there two or three times and told me not to go home. They said "If you go home, he will kill you." So, I did not come back for a month out of fear. Later, I called my husband and asked "Will you beat your wife?" Then, my husband said that he will not. Then I asked him whether he would take me and the children back or not. My husband said yes. But, I still did not go back out of fear. Later, the police came to my house and said "Go back and stay there. Nothing will happen. If he does something, we will take care of it."*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from OD**

In another case, the timeliness in police action prevented loss of life. The following excerpt reveals how the police saved a survivor whose husband was about to stab her.



*The police came and seized the dagger? .... I made a quick call. We were saved by a whisker when the police arrived.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from OD**

### **(b) Negative experiences engaging with police and courts**

Majority of the GRC users claimed to have negative experiences when they approached the police or the courts for redressal. Negative experiences with the police ranged from refusal to intervene in an ongoing instance of violence to accepting bribes from the perpetrator for an early release from jail. As for courts, GRC users felt that redressal was extremely time-consuming and an expensive affair. The findings are presented below.

In many cases, when GRC users reached out to the police, either via phone or by physically going to the police station, the police refused to intervene citing reasons such as the matter being private to the husband and wife and therefore, not warranting external intervention or one that could be resolved within the community with help from the SHG.



*"On one occasion, when my husband was misbehaving, I called the police station and said "Sir, my husband is misbehaving and beating me after drinking liquor." But they replied saying "What can we do in a fight between husband and wife?" They refused to come here. They asked to settle the matter in the village. They said that the women of the samuh (SHG) could do something in this regard. "Only women can control their husbands?" they said.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from JH**

In many cases reported by GRC users, the police refused to lodge cases from survivors and asked them to compromise.



*We went to the police station and said to them that if they put him in jail for 10 months, things will be fine again, but the police said that it does not happen that way. They said that I will have to compromise and said that they will not forward the case to the court.*

————— **GRC user from OD**

In many instances, where the police lodged a case against the perpetrator, they did not take any further action.



*In the beginning, I did lodge a police case. The police said nothing. They just wrote down the FIR and that's it. They did nothing. I don't know these things so I didn't ask why they haven't done anything. I don't know anything.*

————— **GRC user from CG**

In other instances, police only lodged cases after the survivor paid a bribe to 'cover expenses of the investigation' such as cost of fuel for travelling to and from the place of investigation.



*Even after the case was lodged the police did not do anything. The police asked me whether I can bear the expenses or not and only if I can handle the expenses then they will go to my in-law's house. I did not have the money to handle the expenses, so they did not go and did not do anything. Expenses like the cost of diesel for the car... To go to my in-laws live in Bondi district. So, the police said that if I want it, then they can go there, to my in-law's house, but I will have to pay for the expenses. But I had to refuse. I did not have the money to handle their expenses. I am not able to handle my own expenses.*

————— **GRC user from MP**



In cases where survivors refused to pay bribes, no investigation was undertaken by the police.



*We did not give any money to the people who took the report and no investigation happened. We do not know how to do all these things...We registered the complaint at the police station. Registered the complaint at the Shivpur police station. Yes, but they did not do any investigation. Now God knows what they found but they did not investigate it.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from MP**

In some cases, the police accepted bribes from perpetrators to not arrest them or to secure an early release for them.



*When the keepers of law are asking for bribes, what will others do?. This is blind law with no justice. No one sees what is happening on the inside. They are all the same. And no one listens to the poor, only the rich are heard. I had lodged a case before, he (perpetrator) gave money (bribe) and stopped it. I had filed a case in the police station but for 3 months they neither warned him nor did they did not arrest him.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from MP**

With regards to GRC users' experiences with the courts, most felt that approaching them was an expensive affair. They felt that while payments for lawyers were in itself costly, it was also possible that the lawyers were accepting bribes from the perpetrator to sway the decision in the latter's favour.



*They didn't they let me enter the lawyer's office. The gatekeeper at the office didn't let me go in. All the paperwork was done, still they didn't let me enter. Lawyers are expensive and I am a poor woman. How will I pay so much money to the lawyer? The lawyer may take a bribe, speak on behalf of the other side and I will lose. He (perpetrator) has the money, so he will use it. Everything is on his side.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **GRC user from CG**

For cases that were with courts, users felt that there was no resolution even after long periods of time had elapsed.



*"It has been a while since I filed a case in the court. Around 2 years, I think.*

**GRC user from MP**

Lastly, in the small percentage of cases where the court had ruled in the favour of the survivor, the perpetrator remained unfazed by the court's decision. This was mostly observed in cases of alimony where the court ruled that the perpetrator would have to pay a certain amount of money on a monthly basis as the survivor's maintenance and the former refused to pay following which the court issued summons but the perpetrator remained defiant.



*"The court has fixed INR 5000 per month. The court is doing what it can but is also saying that these processes take time and there is no way to fast track it. He is not giving me the money the court has fixed and he is not even coming. The court is sending notice to him but he is not coming".*

**GRC user from MP**

The findings from this chapter show that while GRCs may or may not be the first/only institution approached by survivors in cases of violence, their experiences with institutions of authority - i.e. the police and the courts have been mostly negative. Contrarily, their experiences with GRCs have been mostly positive with some type of institutional action being undertaken. However, given the limitations in the functions of the GRC in resolving all types of cases of violence, the outcomes of the cases may not be positive or favourable.









## CHAPTER 6

### Recommendations



This section enlists the recommendations of the study. The purpose is to offer strategies on how the findings of this study can be incorporated within SWAYAM's gender mainstreaming design to increase the effectiveness of its interventions for reduction of VAW. It also offers suggestions on how the challenges of the implementers at various levels of the SHG ecosystem can be addressed for better outcomes.

### **1. Equip GRCs to effectively address all types of VAW**

The study finds that there are no set processes and procedures available with GRCs to follow in cases of violence. We find that for cases of violence that are of similar nature, individual GRCs have undertaken different processes, oftentimes not resulting in the effective resolution of such cases.


- DAY-NRLM may consider commissioning a formative research study across states to understand how GRCs are currently handling cases of VAW with a focus on mechanisms for convergence with the police and the legal system.



- Based on the study's findings, DAY-NRLM may consider the development of a ready reckoner detailing processes for handling different types of VAW, keeping in mind the social context of the community and the available supply-side linkages.

### **2. Strengthen existing institutions with formal linkages between GRCs, the police, and the legal system**

Evidence from the study has shown that despite gender training sessions which result in increased awareness and knowledge, a large number of women continue to tolerate violence and not disclose it. This is largely owing to systemic failures in the redressal of VAW cases. Therefore, there is a need for strong institutional mechanisms where women can safely discuss concerns of violence and seek redressal. Well-capacitated GRCs with formal supply-side linkages to the police and legal services are essential to allow for an increase in reporting of violence and their subsequent redressal.

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- A protocol, stipulating how GRCs can effectively engage with the police and the legal system to promote reporting and increase redressal, can be developed.
  - Developing a holistic and responsive ecosystem where reporting of and seeking redressal for VAW are not solely the survivor's responsibility and there are strong institutions and relevant supply-side services that work together to support women through cases of violence can be considered.

### **3. Equip GRCs with additional trained staff (counsellors and paralegals) as well as GBV-responsive infrastructure**

While the GRC is an important institution that has supported women in disclosing and addressing cases of violence, the lack of relevantly trained staff and GBV-responsive infrastructure inhibits their effectiveness in resolving VAW.

- DAY-NRLM can consider staffing GRCs with trained counsellors for mental health support and paralegals to provide legal advice and assistance such as contacting government/private lawyers/advocates.
- DAY-NRLM can consider construction of short-stay facilities within the GRC premises for survivors who do not have the ability to/do not want to return to the same village/household as their abuser immediately.
- A 24x7 GRC helpline, operated by trusted members of the community, can be activated.

### **4. Conduct gender sensitization programmes for local police, lawyers and other members of the judiciary**

The study demonstrates that existing supply-side actors such as the local police as well as lawyers/advocates are often gender-biased and insensitive to survivors approaching them with cases of violence.

- Curated gender sensitisation programmes, led by GRC officials or SACs, with the police and the legal system, can be considered.

### **5. Increase programme-level engagement with social norms through additional community-level activities**

Findings from the study show that social norms, rooted in patriarchy, act as barriers to women's equality, choice, and agency. While GPPs and gender CRPs generated some awareness on violence at the individual-level, they could not effectively engage with normative change at the household and the community level that could facilitate the community to change their perspective on women's societal role.

- In the scale-up phase, adding components in the training modules for GPPs, CRPs, and SACs, that specifically engage with women to reflect on normative barriers can be considered.
- An additional component, with activities such as street plays to spread awareness on traditional/regressive social norms and their impact on women, could be designed to encourage the community, including men, to discuss issues in a non-judgemental environment.









## CHAPTER 7

### Conclusion



SWAYAM is an ambitious programme which started as a pilot in four states and is currently being scaled across geographies. The focus of the pilot phase was on developing 'learning sites' that would exhibit how strengthening the existing federated SHG ecosystem through relevant capacity building mechanisms could help to enhance SHG women's knowledge on gender equality and access to rights and entitlements. Another important component of the pilot phase was to simultaneously build a strong institutional mechanism, with GPPs at the SHG-level, gender CRPs at the community-level and GRCs at the block-level, to assist women in rural communities in the redressal of VAW and to increase their access to rights and entitlements.

The focus of this report was to understand the nature of violence faced by women, social norms around VAW and its disclosure, and how GRCs across the four pilot states were able to assist women in addressing concerns of violence. While regressive social norms such as violence being a private matter was a major barrier to the disclosure of VAW, the study also found that VAW, when disclosed by survivors, was addressed in two ways: (a) by increasing women's awareness and knowledge on existing laws that protected them and (b) through institutional mechanisms set in place for redressal ranging from GPPs at the SHG-level to the GRC at the block-level. The study also highlights the



importance of gender CRPs as effective conduits between the community and the GRC as motivated individuals who help foster a culture of discussion within SHGs on violence as well as facilitate linkages to GRCs.

The findings from the study demonstrate how effective capacity building of women-operated, community-based organisations like the VO and CLF can facilitate the redressal of violence. In this context, we find evidence on how the GRC, which is staffed by women from VO/CLFs, is an institution that can help in the redressal of VAW through counselling and referrals. They also act as a bridge between survivors and other institutions like the police and courts. While there are limitations to the functions and effectiveness of the GRC, such as limited follow-up on cases and retaliation from perpetrators leading to increased VAW, the study also finds that rural women rely on GRCs over the police and courts to seek redressal for a range of issues, especially VAW.

For GRCs to be effective institutions for addressing VAW, supply-side institutions like the police and the legal system must be sensitised, and formal linkages for convergence must be established between them. Additionally, equipping GRCs with trained and motivated staff as well as gender-responsive infrastructure, can also facilitate disclosure and redressal of violence. Finally, engaging the larger community to recognise and address regressive social norms and their impact on women can help foster a holistic ecosystem for the disclosure and redressal of VAW.





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