

Violence against Home-Based Workers in South Asia

A Cross-Country Study



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ABBREVIATIONS

CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
FGD	Focus group discussion
HBW	Home-Based Workers
HNP	HomeNet Pakistan
HNSA	HomeNet South Asia
IDI	In-depth interview
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key informant interviews
LC	Local Committee
LEARN	Labour Education and Research Network
LIE	Labour and Informal Economy
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
OBC	Other Backward Castes
POSH	Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal)
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization

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Executive Summary

Violence against Home-Based Workers (HBWs) is a serious human and labour rights violation. Owing to the unorganised and informal nature of their work and overlap between home and workplace, HBWs remain at a grave risk of domestic and workplace violence. Violence against HBWs is a very real and persistent problem, but little has been done to understand and address it. This cross-country study is an attempt to understand violence against HBWs in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The qualitative study describes in detail the nature, scope and context of violence faced by HBWs in domestic and work spheres. It provides an overview of policy and legal frameworks in place for protection of HBWs in the study countries, and elaborates upon the available coping and redressal mechanisms that HBWs opt to use to deal with violence. It further captures the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HBWs and moots a set of recommendations to prevent and respond to violence against them.

1.1 Methodology and scope

The geographic scope of this study was limited to women HBWs in urban settings. Women HBWs — the primary participants — and representatives of civil society organisations were selected purposively from one city in Bangladesh (Dhaka) and two cities each in India (Mumbai and Nashik) and Pakistan (Karachi and Lahore). In each study country, 20 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with HBWs, 1 focus group discussion (FGD) with 8-10 additional HBWs, and 1 key informant interview (KII) with a representative of a community organisation were conducted. Data collection was undertaken by a team of two data collectors from partner organisations of HomeNet South Asia (HNSA). All discussions with primary respondents were audio recorded, field notes were synthesised and the cleaned data was reviewed and gleaned with the help of ATLAS.Ti software. The data was coded based on recurrent themes; these themes were then clustered into meta themes and connections between them were analysed. Meta themes included nature, scope, context, impact of violence, coping and redressal mechanisms and fed into study findings. Specific emphasis was laid on identifying gaps in these mechanisms.

Recommendations were crystallised based on voices of the respondents. The report was shared with HNSA partners, Advisory Board members and donors for feedback and inputs, which were incorporated into the report. The study followed key research ethics including respecting the autonomy of all participants, maximizing potential benefits of participation and minimizing risks through informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality of participants.

1.2 Limitations

The study was based on self-reported data, which is limited by the fact that it can rarely be independently verified and can contain several potential sources of bias. Because the study was qualitative in nature, therefore data collection heavily relied upon researchers' skills and experience. Their own personal views and biases may have come into play during data collection, field note synthesis and reporting their findings.

1.3 Review of literature

Recent global estimates from the International Labour Organization (ILO) peg the number of HBWs at 260 million. Of these, 86 per cent reside in developing/emerging countries and more than one-third (36 per cent) live in East and South-Eastern Asia. This proportion translates into approximately 94 million HBWs, of which 57 per cent were women.¹

As women the world over still shoulder the burden of unpaid care work, some turn to working from home as a way to combine care responsibilities with paid income opportunities, even if it results in an extension of the working day. In places where care services are non-existent or inaccessible – for either practical or financial reasons – homework presents itself as a viable alternative to paid work outside the home. In some instances, women are stigmatized for working outside the home or even prohibited from doing so. The workers in informal and unorganised sectors remain at a heightened

risk of violence due to a lack of adequate social and legal protection. However, women workers are disproportionately affected by violence due to the intersection of their gender, unequal status and power relations, insecure working conditions, and their high concentration in the informal sector.

However, very little data exists. Only a few studies have been conducted on violence against HBWs in South Asia, primarily in Nepal and in some parts of India. It has been recognised that available evidence on workplace violence from South Asia is most probably only the tip of the iceberg, and that it largely focuses on the formal sector. The review further revealed that international conventions (ILO Convention 177 on Home Work (1996) and ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment (2019) and comprehensive laws and policies for HBWs have not been adopted in the study countries. This uncertain legal framework for HBWs makes them vulnerable to all forms of exploitation.

1.4 Findings

1.4.1 Bangladesh

Profile of HBWs: Half were in the age group of 18-30 years and had studied till primary level, while six had completed class 10 and two had completed graduation. All women respondents in Bangladesh were Muslims, and all were engaged in various labour-intensive activities of the garment industry. Despite putting in many hours daily – almost half reported working over 6 hours/day and two said they worked for more than 10 hours/day – all women reported earning less than 200 Taka/day; some even reported earning less than 100 Taka/day. Almost all the women said that with Home-Based work, they could take care of the household

and children. The second most common reason was that one could work from the safety of home and did not have to step out.

Lived experience of violence: While narrating their lived experience of violence in the domestic sphere, respondents revealed that they could face different forms of violence at any given point of time. For instance, physical violence was often accompanied by verbal abuse. Likewise, economic violence or gaining control over financial resources was coupled with psychological and emotional violence.

1 Bonnet, F., Carré F., Chen, M., and Vanek, J. (2021). Home-Based Workers in the World: A Statistical Profile. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 27. <https://www.wiego.org/publications/Home-Based-workers-world-statistical-profile>

In the work sphere, all respondents spoke of economic exploitation they faced. Three forms of economic violence that were delineated by a majority of respondents included low pay, delay in payment and cutting wages by pointing out defects in the readied items. Middlemen and contractors often used loud and rude tones to suppress the HBWs. Instances of sexual violence and harassment were reported predominantly when the HBWs went to collect raw materials from the middlemen or the lenders. Asking for sexual favours in return of more work, touching hands inappropriately, coming very close or passing lewd comments were some ways in which HBWs were sexually harassed. In one instance, an HBW's daughter was also harassed by the middleman. Bullying by middlemen as well as co-workers, which involved targeting one HBW or passing mean comments to denigrate and criticise her work, was noted as a form of psychological violence. Blackmail used by middlemen to force women to extend sexual favours was described not only as a form of sexual but also psychological violence.

Causes of violence: In Bangladesh, most respondents could articulate root causes of violence against HBWs. They specifically explicated patriarchy and gender discrimination as two interlinked factors that oppressed women and put them at risk of exploitation and violence. Poverty, family members' anger over a perceived imbalance of work and household responsibility, and impunity of perpetrators were recognised as contributing factors.

1.4.2 India

Profile of HBWs: In India, of the 20 HBW respondents, half were below 40 years of age, five were in their 40s and five were above 50 years. Twelve were Hindus, six were Muslims and two were Christians. Most respondents had completed some education, although most only to primary levels. The majority of respondents were married; of note, four had received a divorce due to domestic violence and ill-treatment by husband and/or in-laws. Most of the respondents were engaged in garment industry and its various supply chain processes, but some made household food items or jewellery. A majority of respondents did more

Impact of violence: Violence impacted HBWs physical health, disturbed their psychological well-being, caused them a lot of stress and in some cases led to suicidal tendencies. Marital discord and exposure of children to violence were noted as effects on the family. A few respondents said that violence at workplace and home interrupted smooth workflow and lowered productivity. During the discussions, respondents mentioned that violence made them aloof and lonely and they did not feel like stepping out of the house or participating in social life. Almost all the respondents noted that economic hardship and violence during COVID-19 increased, but none shared a personal experience of facing increased violence.

Coping with violence: All respondents mentioned that initially, they tried to tolerate violence and did not raise their voice against violence straightaway to protect the family and children. However, when violence escalated, they showed resilience and courage and mentioned that they tried to reason with perpetrators to stop violence and if that did not work, they raised their voice against it. Some respondents also mentioned that in talking with perpetrators, they made it clear that if the violence did not stop they would take further action.

Responding to violence: The respondents from Bangladesh were very vocal about reporting and addressing the violence. Most respondents noted that they reported violence to community leaders who, through mediation or social sanctions against the perpetrators, tried to address and prevent various incidents. A large majority of study respondents spoke of reaching out to the helpline of a victim support centre, or to local NGOs and government bodies to respond to violence.

than one type of work and reported working 8-10 hours per day in addition to their domestic and child care duties. The majority earned either less than INR 200/day or between INR 200-400/day. The respondents cited poverty and the ability to add to household income as the primary reasons for opting for Home-Based work. Being able to look after home and children and working from the safety of home were stated as key benefits.

Lived experience of violence: A majority of respondents shared their own experiences of facing violence at home. They expressed that at

any given point, they could face multiple forms of violence including physical, verbal, psychological and emotional violence. Most respondent reported facing frequent physical violence — getting beaten, kicked and being hit — at the hands of partners and in-laws. One respondent mentioned that she was forcefully pushed out of the house. Use of foul or abusive language and taunting were cited as common forms of verbal abuse faced by the respondents. Apart from partners, family members (primarily in-laws) verbally abused the respondents. Many respondents mentioned that physical violence was often accompanied by verbal abuse.

Threatening and creating fear were identified as key tactics for hurting women psychologically and emotionally. One particular respondent explained that her husband hid/stole her identity documents and stared at her for an entire night with murderous rage to scare and harass her. Maligning a woman's reputation and insulting her were also recognised as forms of psychological and emotional violence perpetuated by not just family members but also neighbours and community members. One respondent noted that she faced discrimination and maltreatment from community members because she was separated, but community members treated her like a widow and demeaned her during social gatherings. Two respondents each spoke of facing economic violence at the hands of a husband and son. Both reported that these male members did not contribute to the household income but instead took away the respondents' earnings and even sold household items (in both cases the men had either alcohol and drug addiction or gambled).

Describing the hardships they faced at work, most respondents spoke of economic violence perpetrated by their contractors, sub-contractors and customers. The lived experience of HBWs revealed that due to their dependence on contractors and sub-contractors for work, they had to silently and passively deal with the various forms of violence inflicted on them. This economic violence was coupled with verbal abuse. The contractors perpetrated psychological and emotional violence by criticising and humiliating HBWs in front of neighbours or bad mouthing them among other contractors. Sexual harassment by workplace stakeholders included contractors, sub-contractors or customers who came to pick up readied goods and gazed at the HBWs or passed lewd comments. In some cases, the contractors

touched HBWs inappropriately or demanded sexual favours for work. A few incidents of online violence were reported wherein women said they received anonymous calls from men in and around workplace.

Causes of violence: The respondents identified both the causative and contributing factors that could lead to and sustain or increase the severity of violence. The responses also revealed intersectionality between these factors and HBWs' own unique circumstances. Patriarchy emerged as one of the root causes of violence. Forms of patriarchy in domestic, labour relations and social life were linked to gender discrimination and the power imbalance between men and women. Many contributing factors such as culture of silence and normalisation, victim blaming and internalisation were directly linked to patriarchy and gender discrimination. It is important to note that these factors also intersected with women's socioeconomic characteristics and situation. Other contributing factors to violence identified were poverty, alcoholism/drug addiction, perceived imbalance between work household responsibilities, partner infidelity and suspicion, and instigation by partners' family and friends.

Impact of violence: Violence has multiple effects. The study respondents from India elaborated on how violence affects various facets of their life including health, psychological well-being, family life and overall productivity. They explained that violence both in the domestic and work spheres concerned them severely, affecting their focus and concentration levels while working. Domestic and workplace violence affected HBWs' family life and most importantly children, who could become targets of violence themselves at the hands of the perpetrator. A few respondents specifically spoke about how violence affected their social life. Upon facing violence, the respondents feared that if others came to know about it, they would begin victim blaming. Due to the fear of stigma, the HBW would avoid stepping out of the house, interacting with neighbours or attending social gatherings. A few respondents validated that economic duress and overall stress associated with the pandemic must have led to fights at home. They noted that having husband, wife and children confined in houses would have increased the likelihood of fights and domestic violence. However, no respondent explicitly shared her personal experience of facing increased violence during COVID-19.

Coping with violence: Discussions during the IDIs and FGDs made it amply clear that HBWs in India faced various forms of violence and it impacted them in complex and intense ways. However, despite the lack of support systems or response mechanisms, many showed high levels of resilience and found their individual way of coping with violence. To avoid sexual harassment through the phone, one respondent stopped using her phone and asked her son to take and receive calls. In another instance, a HBW got to know that a man who was stalking and harassing her through repeated phone calls was in her vicinity; she was able to successfully trace calls and confront him. A number of respondents mentioned that talking to a friend or neighbour who they trusted helped. Both in IDIs and FGDs mentioned that to keep their families intact and for the sake of their children, they endured violence. Three respondents identified their faith in God or a religious teacher as a coping mechanism. On rare occasions, women summoned up the courage and really fought back instances of violence.

1.4.3 Pakistan

Profile of HBWs: More than half of the 20 study respondents in Pakistan were between 19-30 years of age. All were Muslims with the exception of one Christian respondent, and most women were from Hazarewal and Arian castes. More than half of the respondents had studied till or above class 10, two had completed graduation and higher degrees, and only one had no schooling. Of the 20 respondents in Pakistan five were divorced, one each were single and widowed and the remaining 13 were married (one was divorced and had remarried). All six divorced respondents had been in abusive marital relationships and faced harassment and violence from their ex-husbands and in-laws. A majority of women were engaged in garment industry but a large proportion also took up jewellery making. More than half the respondents reported that they worked for 8-10 hours and sometimes more than 10 hours in addition to household work. Respondents reported that HBWs earned around 200-400 Pakistan Rupee/day. The most often cited reasons for working from home were that it added to the household income and it was safe and comfortable. A large proportion of respondents spoke of mobility restrictions as a reason for choosing Home-Based work.

Responding to violence: All women agreed that being a member of or having contacts with an organised body (Sangathan) such as HBWs unions or grassroots collectives was extremely helpful in addressing issues of violence and other challenges faced by them. All respondents were members of the union. The respondents noted that being a member of union renewed their socialisation processes and helped them realise their identity as a 'woman' and as a 'HBW'. Because they derived collective support from the large membership of the union, they felt capable of raising their concerns. Apart from the union, other women's groups or collective action by HBWs to address violence, in both the work and domestic spheres, were considered effective by the respondents. Mobilising supportive neighbours and other women nearby to talk to the perpetrator worked in certain situations. Most respondents mentioned police as a last resort. They chose to go to the police collectively and police intervention was found more successful when the union was involved.

Lived experience of violence: Most of the respondents in Pakistan had faced physical violence from partners, in-laws or other relatives. They reported being slapped, punched, kicked, beaten and pushed. This violence could escalate to serious levels and cause serious injuries. The respondents reported that physical violence was often accompanied by verbal abuse. Criticising the household chores done, passing mean comments, abusing, shouting and use of foul language were some common forms of verbal abuse that women dealt with at home. Psychological and emotional violence included aggressive behaviour, coupled with threats of divorce, separating children, cutting access to economic resources and sending the HBW back to a parents' house. The respondents also spoke about facing economic violence from husbands and in-laws. This manifested in the form of not giving household and personal expenses. Unlike India and Bangladesh, many respondents in Pakistan spoke about facing sexual violence perpetrated by husbands. They recognised marital rape as a form of violence and openly spoke about how they and other HBWs in the area faced various forms of sexual violence at home.

Like India, most women admitted that they faced economic violence ranging from withholding of dues, delay in payments and low pay in work sphere. Pointing out errors in the finished goods to cut down the pay or wages and forcing HBWs to re-do the work but not paying for overtime were commonly reported forms of economic violence. Speaking rudely, verbal arguments to re-negotiate the pay and use of abusive language to criticise their work when HBWs demanded their pay were some forms of verbal abuse that contractors, sub-contractors and middlemen resorted to. Psychological and emotional violence included threatening and blackmailing. The contractors threatened HBWs with not paying dues or not giving work. HBWs were also blackmailed to complete work on difficult deadline. Various instances of sexual violence at workplace were narrated by the respondents. These included demanding sexual favours in exchange for more pay/work and touching inappropriately. Contractors also committed sexual violence against children of HBWs. In one case, the contractor had sexually abused the son of a HBW. They added if they rejected contractors' demands for sexual favours, they received differential treatment as opposed to those women who conceded. The latter were paid more and treated well. The one Christian respondent reported facing discrimination by the contractors because of her religion.

Causes of violence: The respondents reflected on various causes of violence against women and HBWs declared that patriarchy and the power imbalance between men and women were root causes of violence. It was noted that religion, state and law all supported and sustained men's position of privilege and women were expected to subordinate them. Lack of education and gender-sensitive values; culture of silence; victim blaming; child marriage and other customs and lack of awareness among young girls were identified as contributing factors, among others.

Impact of violence: Various forms of violence impacted respondents in Pakistan in multiple ways. These impacts ranged from stress, suicidal thoughts, health problems and disturbances to personal and social life. The effects on children and family life were also cited numerous times during the discussion. The respondents, in frustration, reported that they beat their children. In other cases, respondents stated that persistent exposure to violence had made the children violent too. Inability to contribute to household

income and loss of husband's job intensified the situation at home and gave rise to violence. More than three women talked about specific instances of heightened violence during and due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coping with violence: Grappling with violence and culture of silence, the respondents in Pakistan demonstrated tenacity in coping with violence. They reached out to their family, friends and relatives. Despite a strong culture of silence, a few respondents in Pakistan raised their voice against violence. A total of eight women said that they just tolerated violence silently for the sake of their children.

Responding to violence: A number of respondents said that they reached out to police and took legal action to address domestic violence. These are also the women who had taken divorce. They were satisfied with the police intervention. Almost all respondents agreed that collective action was effective in cases of both domestic and workplace violence, provided women support each other. However, only two respondents reported taking help from community level women's groups or other HBWs in addressing violence. Other than the collective, some respondents spoke about reaching out to an NGO working on issues of HBWs in the area.

1.5 Recommendations

For violence prevention, the following recommendations emerged:

Ratification of international instruments to prevent violence against HBWs: The three study countries must exhibit strong commitment and will to protect workers of the unorganised sector, including HBWs, by ratifying ILO conventions C177 on Home Work and C190 on Preventing Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

Adoption and enforcement of legislation, policies and interventions: Work on prevention of violence against HBWs must be supported through the development of formalised processes such as in legislation or in high-level, cross-sector plans.

Creation of responsible value chains: Value chains that promote gender equity and protection for workers at all levels, including those who are in the unorganised sector, are critical. A first step in this direction would be to mainstream violence prevention in the unorganised sector in all efforts of labour, women and child development and other relevant departments. These efforts should be supported with funding and other resources, including with budget lines and allocations within the national budgets.

Interdepartmental coordination: Violence against HBWs is undeniably a form of gender-based violence, but it has added layers involving unequal labour and economic relations. For this reason, departments of labour and of women and child development, along with other relevant bodies, must work in synergy for capacity building, social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) and community sensitisation. In addition, working with all stakeholders involved in informal supply chains to raise awareness of the valuable contribution of HBWs and the devastating impacts of violence must form part of these interventions.

Embracing non-violent and gender equitable social norms: Patriarchy, gender-discrimination and culture of silence and normalisation around violence are all related to the deeply-entrenched social norms. Therefore, these communities as a whole are required to strengthen non-violent and equitable social norms and practices. This can be achieved through SBCC interventions at individual, household and community levels that underscore

why violence is wrong and must be stopped; its impact on women, children and household; and its social and economic cost for the community and nation as a whole.

Capacitating and collectivising women and girls for preventing violence: Capacities of women and girls must be built so that they can be empowered to promote constructions of femininity that emphasize autonomy and agency.

Involvement of men and boys in preventing violence: Most respondents during discussions pointed out that violence cannot end unless men and boys are involved. Therefore, it is necessary to build capacities of men and boys to promote non-violent, non-dominant roles and constructions of positive masculinity. Further, measures should be put in place to prevent ‘backlash’ from community leaders, and men and boys, or to respond to it should it occur.

Equipping government and civil society practitioners working on issues of HBWs: The practitioners and workers should have access to tools (e.g. instructional manuals, campaign materials, curricula, group programmes) and have the skills and knowledge to design, implement and evaluate prevention interventions.

Advocacy to strengthen institutional and community commitments for violence prevention: Civil society organisations and collectives of HBWs should continue to advocate with government, local governing institutions and community leaders to invest, initiate and sustain efforts for violence prevention. Most importantly, they should prioritise violence against HBWs as a key labour rights issue.

Reducing harmful alcohol and drug use: Alcohol and drug use has emerged as major cause of violence in the study findings. Governments and non-government agencies, in collaboration, should consider providing brief interventions and longer-term treatment for problem drinkers.

To strengthen response to violence, the following actions are recommended:

Community-based reporting and response mechanisms: Culture of silence, victim blaming and fear of reprisal after reporting violence necessitate creation of community-based reporting and response mechanisms. It was noted that such mechanisms are approachable and can respond in real time.

Establishment, expansion of helplines, online platforms and information sharing: Helplines were found particularly useful in Bangladesh as they were responsive and provided victim support, including psychosocial support. In post pandemic times, online platforms show potential as effective platforms for reporting violence in a confidential manner. Expansion of such helplines and platforms and widely spreading information about these helplines were recommended.

Ensuring access to response and support: Institutions and systems to respond to individuals affected by violence should be functioning well and there should be linkages between systems involved in prevention and response interventions.

Awareness creation around response, support services and punitive measures for violence: A number of respondents across the study countries dwelt upon the need to create widespread awareness on response and support services for the violence.

Holding perpetrators accountable: A number of respondents talked about impunity of perpetrators as an important factor for perpetuating violence. They strongly recommended taking action against the repeat offenders and perpetrators to deter future violence.

Sensitisation of police and protection functionaries: In India, reporting violence to police seemed low due to the unsatisfactory intervention, corruption and red-tapism that HBWs encountered when they did involve police. However, this was not the case in Pakistan, where women were more forthcoming in reaching out to the police. Many responses during the data collection implied that police need to be sensitised

to the issues of HBWs. Police and HBWs collectives can work together towards this end.

Sensitisation of public prosecutors and judiciary: Though this issue did not come up specifically during the study, it is also essential to sensitise and build awareness of public prosecutors and judicial authorities to issues of HBWs, most particularly their contributions, challenges and issues relating to discrimination and violence.

02 Background, Context & Methodology



Rapid economic growth and expanding markets in developing countries in recent decades have led to increased informalisation of the labour force.¹ Home-Based Workers (HBWs) form a significant proportion of the informal workforce in manufacturing, services and agriculture, and the overall majority of HBWs are women who live and work in poverty. In countries both rich and poor, they produce a wide range of low- and high-end goods and services from within or around their own homes. These goods and services may be for domestic or global markets, or both. HBWs stitch and embroider garments, make shoes and footballs; weave textiles; roll incense sticks, cigarettes and cigars; thread flower garlands; prepare food items; assemble electronics, automobile parts and pharmaceutical products; and do laundry, hair-cutting, mechanical repair, clerical and professional work (Chen & Sinha, 2016).²

Globally and in the South Asian region, women form the majority share of HBWs, pointing towards a feminisation of Home-Based work. Women turn to Home-Based work for various reasons, including lack of necessary qualifications and formal vocational training, absence of child-care support, and social and cultural constraints on mobility (Sudarshan & Sinha, 2011). Due to the informal and unorganised nature of work and the lack of social and legal protection, informal workers are highly vulnerable to exploitation and violence at the hands of their employers, contractors, co-workers and even customers.³ They also face violence at home from their partners, in-laws and other family members.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 and ensuing restrictions, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines show that all types of violence against women and girls, and particularly domestic violence, has intensified. The lockdowns induced by COVID-19 confined survivors with perpetrators of violence in closed spaces for long durations, making women highly vulnerable to different forms of violence.⁴

Despite working in precarious conditions, HBWs actively contribute to national and household economies in their countries. However, their lived experience of violence, how it affects them, and the associated challenges often do not form part of the larger public discourse. This is reflected in the dearth of studies, literature and data on violence faced by Home-Based Workers. The magnitude and degree of exploitation and violence faced by HBWs thus demands a strong international legal framework, responsive national policies and laws, public interventions and collective action. For this, in-depth studies on the prevalence of violence in Home-Based work, causative and contributing factors, and evidence-based strategies to combat it are all required. To bridge the gap, this cross-country study explores violence against HBWs in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The study is descriptive in nature as it aims to describe in detail the nature, scope and context of violence faced by HBWs in domestic and work spheres. It elaborates on the mechanisms HBWs choose for coping and redress to deal with violence. The study further provides an overview of policy and legal frameworks in place that aim to protect HBWs in the study countries. It also captures the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against HBWs.

This report examines the study objectives, methodology, and existing literature on HBWs and the detailed findings emerging from primary data collected from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. This examination is followed by a set of recommendations for violence prevention and response in Home-Based work.

1 Mehrotra, S., & Bigger, M. (2002). Social Protection in the Informal Economy: Home Based Women Workers and Outsourced Manufacturing in Asia. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and Department of Economics, University of Florence. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/iwp97.pdf>

2 Chen, M. & Sinha, S. (2016). Home-Based Workers and cities. *Environment & Urbanization*, 28(2), 343–358. DOI: 10.1177/0956247816649865

3 Samantroy, E. & Sarkar, K. (2020). Violence in Times of COVID-19 Lack of Legal Protection for Women Informal Workers. *Economic and Political Weekly*. <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/violence-times-covid-19-lack-legal-protection>

4 UN Women. The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19. Campaign website. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>

2.1 Methodological framework

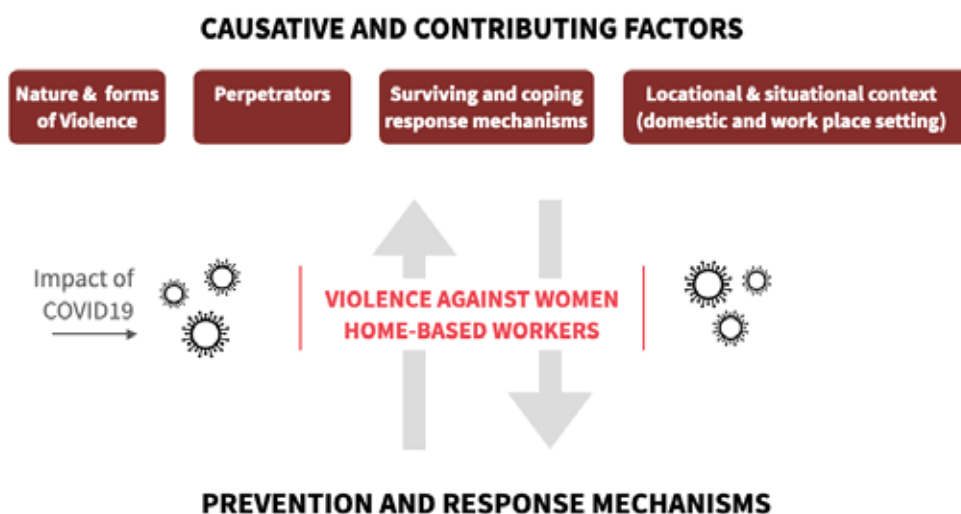


Fig. 1. Methodological framework

The present study is purely qualitative in nature. It aims to capture the lived experience of women HBWs facing and dealing with violence. To this end, the study employed qualitative methods of data collection, ranging from in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interview (KIIs). The study has operationalised the following four-fold methodological framework to understand violence against women HBWs (see figure 1).

- **The nature and form of the abuse** considers the type of contact or non-contact violence, use of force or coercion, frequency
- **The perpetrators** might be an intimate partner, family members, employers, or contractors/sub-contractors
- **The survivor coping and response mechanisms** examine the nature of violence

- considered in the context of the victim/survivor's characteristics such as vulnerabilities and capacities, which will influence how they will be affected and respond to violence.⁵
- **The location/situational contexts** that can create vulnerabilities include home, work settings which may be closer to home, employer or contractors/sub-contractor premises.

Additionally, the study attempted to understand factors which cause and contribute to violence. These factors emanate at community/organisation and societal levels. The impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on violence against women HBWs was also examined. Likewise, the coping, prevention and response mechanisms available to HBWs were explored.

2.2 Study objectives

The objectives of the study were established:

- To review laws on violence against women in study countries and identify gaps in the same
- To describe the nature, scope and context, including causative and contributing factors of domestic violence faced by women HBWs
- To elaborate upon the nature, scope and context, including causative and contributing factors of violence emerging for them from the world of work
- To describe the impact of violence on HBWs, including the impact on ability to work, access

5 Adapted from Radford, Lorraine (2018). "A review of international survey methodology on child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation". Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/a-review-of-international-survey-methodology-on-child-sexual-abuse-and-child-sexual-exploitation/>

to livelihood, identity as a worker and access to public resources and voice within the community

- To understand and describe the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on women's experience of violence
- To detail the coping and redressal mechanisms women Home-Based Workers access to deal or respond to violence

To recommend actions for preventing and responding to violence faced by women HBWs

The operational definitions for the study have been provided in the Annexure 1.

2.3 Study stakeholders, sample and geographic scope

The study primarily focused on bringing to the fore voices of women HBWs around violence they face in domestic and work settings. Additionally, the study aimed at capturing perspectives of organisations working to protect the rights of HBWs, including safeguarding them from violence. Thus, the women HBWs formed the **primary research participants** of the study. The community leaders, workers' unions and civil society organisations working with HBWs and representatives of organisations working for their rights comprised the **secondary research participants**.

The geographic scope of the study was limited to women HBWs in urban settings. As a result, women-HBWs and secondary research participants were selected purposively from one city in Bangladesh and two cities each in India and Pakistan (see Table 1). The selection of cities was done based on a high concentration of HBWs and strong presence of HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) partner and affiliate organisations in these locations. In each of the cities, one locality/colony/slum was identified as the primary sampling unit for the study.

The study data collection was undertaken by Labour and Informal Economy (LIE) in Bangladesh, Labour Education Research and Network (LEARN) in India and HomeNet Pakistan (HNP) in Pakistan

Since the study was purely qualitative in nature, **non-probability purposive sampling** was adopted to select the respondents. Given the difficulty in identifying or locating survivors of violence, the sample was drawn from a database available with HNSA partner and affiliate organisations with relative ease. A minimum quota of 10 women HBWs in each of the primary sampling units was set. However, the actual sample comprised 20 HBWs in each study country. Additionally, two FGDs were conducted with HBWs in each country. One representative of workers' unions/organisations working for the rights of HBWs in each of the countries was interviewed. The sample was determined while keeping in mind the time constraints and COVID-19-related movement restrictions in the study locations.



Fig. 2. Primary & Secondary research participants

Table 1. Sample & geographic data

STUDY COUNTRIES	CITIES	SAMPLE		
		IDI with HBWs	FGD (6-7 HBWs)	KII with organisational representative
Bangladesh	Dhaka	20	2	1
India	Mumbai	10	1	1
	Nasik	10	1	-
Pakistan	Lahore	10	1	1
	Karachi	10	1	-
Total		60	6	3

2.4 Data collection instruments

Considering the qualitative nature of the study, the IDIs and FGDs were used for collecting information from primary research participants—the women HBWs—and KIIs were used to interview the secondary research participants.

The proposed themes for IDIs and FGDs with HBWs encompassed:

- Background information, including information about family
- Work profile, including kind of work done, frequency of working hours, working conditions, income, and any employee benefits offered
- Reasons for opting for Home-Based work
- Benefits and challenges of Home-Based work
- Prevalence of violence at home and at workplaces in the localities
- Knowledge of someone facing violence in their friend, social or work circle, probing on nature, impact and redressal sought
- Respondent's lived experience of facing violence
- Nature of violence, perpetrator, the severity and frequency
- Impacts of violence

- Contributing and causative factors of violence
- Redressal and response mechanisms
- Support services required

The potential themes for KIIs with organisations for HBWs for data validation included:

- Challenges faced by HBWs
- Prevalence of violence at home workplaces in the localities
- Causes and contributing factors to violence
- Impact of violence on HBWs, particularly due to proximity and overlap of home and workplace
- Redressal mechanisms available for responding to violence
- Problems and gaps in the existing mechanisms and recommendations for strengthening the same
- Actions recommended to prevent and respond to violence

See Annexure 2 for detailed study instruments.

2.5 Research processes

An overview of the research processes is provided below.

Planning meeting: An initial meeting with HNSA team members and representatives of HNSA partners and affiliates was conducted to kick-start the study. The meeting focused on reviewing and fine-tuning methodology, research processes tools and timelines.

Tool development and translation: Based on the discussion of field planning meetings and inputs on themes proposed, the tools were developed in English by the Principal Investigator and were then translated into Bangla, Hindi and Urdu by representatives of HNSA partners and affiliates.

Training of study team and pre-testing and finalisation of tools: The study teams comprising of two researchers were deployed for data collection in each of the three study locations. All researchers had prior experience of working with HBWs and were well-versed in vernacular. The researchers were recruited and trained for the study in consultation with HNSA team members and representatives of its partners and affiliates. The researchers were provided a half-day virtual training on study objectives, methodology, ethics, safety protocols and dealing with the challenges faced during data collection.

Data collection and field note synthesis: The primary data collection for the study was undertaken from Aug-Oct 2021. The researchers first visited a known respondent, formed a rapport with them and obtained their informed consent for both the discussion and audio recording of the same. Researchers then ensured a private and safe space for detailed interviews. At all times during the field work, the researchers observed COVID-appropriate behaviours such as wearing a mask, physical distancing and washing hands.

Monitoring and data checking: All field discussions with the participants were audio recorded, followed by transcription and field note synthesis. The data collection process was monitored by the representatives of HNSA partners. All field notes/transcripts were thoroughly checked for any discrepancies and inconsistencies and were cleaned and anonymised in consultation with the researchers.

Data analysis and report writing: The cleaned data was reviewed and gleaned in the light of the methodological framework with the help of ATLAS.Ti software. The data was coded based on the recurrent themes; these themes were then clustered into meta themes and connections between them were analysed. These meta themes included nature, scope, context, impact of violence, coping and redressal mechanisms, which fed into study findings. Specific emphasis was laid on identifying gaps in these mechanisms and recommendations were crystallised based on voices of the respondents.

Verifying findings and finalising the report: The report was shared with HNSA partners, Advisory Board members and donors for feedback and inputs. The inputs received were duly incorporated in the report.

2.6 Expected outcomes

The findings of the study are expected to enhance understanding on violence faced by women HBWs and help programme planners, implementers, practitioners and HBWs themselves to address and prevent violence. The study will also contribute to existing evidence on nature, context and scope of violence HBWs. The themes and factors which influence violence and its occurrence can be further researched through statistically representative quantitative studies.

2.7 Challenges and limitations

The study was based on self-reported data, which is limited by the fact that it can rarely be independently verified. Self-reported data can contain several potential sources of bias.

These are:

1. Selective memory [remembering or not remembering experiences or events that occurred at some point in the past];
2. Telescoping [recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time];
3. Attribution [the act of attributing positive events and outcomes to one's own agency, but attributing negative events and outcomes to external forces]
4. Exaggeration [the act of representing outcomes or embellishing events as more significant than is actually suggested from other data].

The study was qualitative in nature and therefore the data collection process heavily relied upon researchers' skills and experience. Their own personal views and biases may have come into play during data collection, field note synthesis and reporting findings.

Given the sensitive nature of violence, researchers faced challenges in forming a rapport with HBWs to help them disclose the violence that they had experienced. To offset this challenge, the

researchers explained the purpose of the study and how it would enhance the understanding of violence and harassment that affected HBWs in the region. Researchers assured respondents that information given to them will be kept confidential. During the data collection phase, COVID-19 cases were on the rise in the study locations. This affected the pace of the fieldwork. Despite these challenges, researchers completed the data collection process while observing strict COVID-19 safety protocols.

2.8 Ethical considerations

In many ways, the ethics of violence research are the same as those which guide all research with human participants. These require researchers to strive to respect the autonomy of all participants, maximize potential benefits of participation and minimize risks, while ensuring that both are accrued equitably, and respect vulnerable populations. However, due to the traumatic and potentially threatening nature of the subject matter, a number of ethical considerations stipulated by the International Research Network on Violence and Women and the World Health Organization (WHO)⁶ were kept in mind. These included confidentiality and safety; the need to ensure that the research does not cause any participant to experience further harm (including not causing the participant further trauma); the importance of ensuring that the participant is informed of available sources of help; and the need for the interviewers to respect an interviewee's decisions and choices.

Individual consent

As is the case for all human subjects' research, the informed consent of all participants is essential. At the start of all the interviews, participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study and their verbal consent was recorded. As part of the consent procedure, the participants were informed that the data collected would be held in strict confidence. To ensure that the participants were aware that the tools included questions on highly personal and sensitive topics, the interviewer informed them that some of the topics might be difficult to talk about and they would be free to terminate the interview at any point and to skip any question that they did not want to answer.

Voluntary participation

The participation in the study was on a voluntary basis. No inducements were made. It was explained to the participants that the refusal to participate would not result in any negative consequences.

Physical safety of informants and researchers

The physical safety of interviewees and interviewers is paramount. Care was taken to ensure that participants did not suffer any repercussions because of their participation in violence research. This was ensured by interviewing only one subject per household and not informing the community that the research included questions on violence. If the focus of the study had become widely known—either within the household or among the wider community—the subject of the interview may have become known to a perpetrator of violence. For people experiencing violence, the mere act of participating in a study can provoke further abuse. This may place the respondent or the interview team at risk of violence either before, during or after the interview.

For this reason, the following measures were adopted to ensure that the research topic did not become widely known:

- Interviews were conducted in a private setting. Only very young children (younger than 2 years) were permitted to be present. Where necessary, locations outside the household where the interview could be conducted in private were identified.
- The participants were free to reschedule (or relocate) the interview to a time (or place) that may be more convenient or secure for him/her.
- Interviewers were trained to terminate or

⁶ World Health Organization (2003). Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women. www.who.int/gender/documents/violence/who_fch_gwh_01.1/en/index.html

change the subject of discussion if an interview was interrupted by anyone.

Confidentiality

In addition to normal concerns about privacy, protecting a participant's confidentiality in violence research means ensuring their safety from reprisal. A participant's privacy should be maintained before, during, and after their interview. Much of the information provided by the participants of the study was extremely personal.



Confidentiality of the information collected during the data collection was of fundamental importance.

A number of mechanisms were used to protect the confidentiality of the information collected:

- All interviewers were provided strict instructions about the importance of maintaining confidentiality.
- No interviewer conducted interviews in their own community. No names were recorded. Instead, fictitious names were assigned to the

respondents in field notes. In all analysis steps, these fictitious names were used to distinguish field notes.

- Tapes made of in-depth interviews (qualitative research) were kept in a locked file. Again, no record of the name of the interviewees was kept.
- Care was taken during the presentation of the research findings to ensure that the information presented is sufficiently aggregated so that no one community or individual can be identified. Where quotes were used, sufficient detail was changed to ensure that the source of the information could not be identified.

Minimising participant distress

Due to the sensitive subject matter, in many instances the interview itself provoked a powerful emotional response among the participants.

Where possible, every attempt was made to minimise participant distress and interviewers were trained to be sensitive to respondent's experiences, recognise signs of distress and take appropriate steps to support the respondent and/or terminate the interview. For this reason, care was taken to ensure that all questions were asked sensitively, in a supportive and non-judgemental manner. Interviewers were trained to be aware of the effects that the questions may have on the respondent and the interview was paused when respondents were emotional and distressed. The interviewers provided support to the respondents while reporting their experience of violence.

Disclosure of violence

Given that no harm must arise from research participation, researchers were obligated to protect participants; therefore if participants did not want to report violence, their autonomy was respected.

Referrals for care and support

Researchers had an ethical obligation to refer all participants to appropriate services for victims of violence or abuse regardless of whether they reported experiencing violence. The research teams provided cards with numbers of support services to the respondents⁷

⁷ Innovations for Poverty Action (n.d.). The safe and ethical conduct of violence research: Guidance for researchers and research staff. https://www.poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/publications/IPV_Ethical%20Guidance_Public.pdf

03 Literature Review



The section draws upon existing literature on the nature and magnitude of Home-Based work, violence faced by HBWs and its forms, and legal mechanisms available to HBWs to address violence globally and in the study countries

3.1 Introduction

Recent global estimates peg the number of HBWs at a staggering 260 million. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates from 118 countries, about 147 million women and 113 million men worked from home in 2019, with women accounting for 57 per cent of all HBWs globally⁸. The propensity of women to work from home (11.5 per cent of all employed women) was much higher than that of men (5.6 per cent of all employed men). Of the 260 million HBWs, 86 per cent were in developing and emerging countries and more than one-third (36 per cent) resided in East and South-Eastern Asia. This proportion translates into approximately 94 million HBWs, of which 57 per cent were women. Thus, even though the labour force participation rates for women were lower than for men in most regions, more women than men were HBWs globally.

Often with little education and technical skills, HBWs spend long hours working in labour intensive, low productivity occupations and trades, typically earning very little. Like other informal workers, most of them do not enjoy adequate economic

opportunities, legal rights, social protection or representative voice—referred to by the ILO as the four pillars of decent work. But HBWs face additional challenges. Working from in or around their own homes, HBWs, their activities, and their contribution to the economy remains largely invisible and undervalued. This is particularly true for women, whose economic activities are often dismissed as an extension of their domestic work, rather than being recognised as production for the market that contributes to the economy. Although they remain largely invisible, HBWs are engaged in many branches of industry and represent a significant share of urban employment.⁹

Home-Based work can provide a valuable opportunity to earn income, but it is not decent work for the majority of people who perform it. Furthermore, HBWs are often non-unionised. The lack of collective action and legal and social protection makes HBWs, particularly women, vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, harassment and violence, since they work through informal arrangements and in isolation.¹⁰

3.2 Definitional concerns

The nature of Home-Based work is fluid due to its myriad forms. As Chen and Sinha (2016) explain, HBWs can be self-employed (own-account workers) or subcontracted (piece-rate workers). The self-employed buy their own raw materials and supplies and sell their own finished goods, mainly to local customers and buyers. The subcontracted workers (called homeworkers) produce goods for firms up the value chain, both national and global value chains. They typically do not know the backward or forward links of the chain they

are engaged in beyond the firm or its contractor that directly outsources work to them; this is because they do not buy their own raw materials or sell their own finished goods. But like the self-employed, the sub-contracted have to cover many of the non-wage costs of production (workplace, equipment, utilities, transport) and absorb many of the risks of production (delayed or cancelled orders, unreliable supply of raw materials, delayed payments, rejected goods).¹¹

8 Bonnet, F., Carré F., Chen, M., and Vanek, J. (2021). Home-Based Workers in the World: A Statistical Profile. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 27. <https://www.wiego.org/publications/Home-Based-workers-world-statistical-profile>

9 Chen, M., and Sinha, S. (2016). Home-Based Workers and cities. Environment and Urbanization.

10 ILO (2015). Home-Based Workers: Decent work and social protection through organization and empowerment; Experiences, good practices and lessons from Home-Based Workers and their organizations. International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Indonesia and East Timor. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_436853.pdf

11 Chen, M., and Sinha, S. (2016). Home-Based Workers and cities. Environment and Urbanization. 28 (2), 343-358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247816649865>



It is difficult to make a sharp distinction between contractual and self-employed workers as many women do both kinds of work depending on what is available. Moreover, own account workers might be in a “commercial” arrangement that disguises their dependence.¹²

It is widely assumed that the workforce constitutes either fully independent self-employed or fully dependent employees. However, most Home-Based Workers fall in a grey intermediate zone between being fully independent and being fully dependent. For instance, sub-contracted Home-Based Workers are neither fully independent self-employed nor fully dependent employees. On the other hand, self-employed Home-Based Workers are not fully independent as they have limited access to capital, limited knowledge of markets, limited bargaining power, and limited control in commercial transactions. Home-Based work is not a sector of production; it cuts across the analytical categories of “industry,” “occupation” and “activity status” by which workers are classified.¹³

Given the complexities and specific vulnerabilities of HBWs, it is important to arrive at a holistic and clear definition of this group. This definition has important ramifications for determining inclusion and exclusion of workers in various policies, schemes and programmes for Home-Based work.

Internationally, the ILO Convention on home work (1996) provides a definition of home work as follows:

1. *“the term home work means work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a homemaker*
 - i. *in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer;*
 - ii. *for remuneration;*
 - iii. *which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used,*
 - iv. *unless this person has the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker under national laws, regulations or court decisions;*
2. *persons with employee status do not become homeworkers within the meaning of this Convention simply by occasionally performing their work as employees at home, rather than at their usual workplaces;*
3. *the term employer means a person, natural or legal, who, either directly or through an*

12 Sudarshan, R.M., & Sinha, S. (2011). Making Home-Based Work Visible: A Review of Evidence from South Asia. WIEGO Working Paper (Urban Studies) No. 19. https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Sudarshan_WIEGO_WP19.pdf

13 Chen, M. (2014). Informal Economy Monitoring Study Sector Report: Home-Based Workers. WIEGO

intermediary, whether or not intermediaries are provided for in national legislation, gives out home work in pursuance of his or her business activity.”¹⁴

This definition recognizes workers who work from home but are in a clear employment relationship. Thus, it does not include own-account workers who are generally in direct contact with the market and buy their own raw material. It is difficult to make a sharp distinction between contractual and self-employed workers as many women do both kinds of work depending on what is available. In many cases the employment relationship is ambiguous,

disguised or triangular (or even involving multiple parties), thus difficult to make explicit. Moreover, own account workers might be in a “commercial” arrangement that disguises their dependence.¹⁵

For example, beedi workers in India are required to “buy” the raw material from the contractor and “sell” the finished beedis back to the same contractor. The workers absorb the losses if the raw material is damaged due to natural events such as rains. To overcome these limitations, in South Asia progress has been made to adopt comprehensive definitions by India and Pakistan.

3.3 Gendered nature of Home-Based work

As women the world over still shoulder the burden of unpaid care work, some turn to working from home as a way to combine care responsibilities with paid income opportunities, even if it often results in an extension of the working day. In places where care services are non-existent or inaccessible—for either practical or financial reasons—working from home presents itself as a viable alternative to paid work outside the home. In more extreme instances, women may be stigmatized for working outside the home or even prohibited from doing so. Some countries have laws limiting the free mobility of women in public spaces, which makes working from home the only viable option for them to earn income. In many countries, women’s unequal position in the home and in society creates an available but segmented pool of labour that cannot compete with workers who can engage in traditional waged work outside the home. This is true for workers with disabilities, who may face difficulties or discrimination in accessing work outside the home. The earnings of HBWs tend to be lower, as their pay is affected by their constrained opportunities in the wage labour market and their lower position in the social structure of many countries.¹⁶

While gender is a strong differentiating factor in labour markets like India, it is mediated by one’s class and caste/community position in the society. For example, Unni and Rani (2005) find that:

“The scheduled castes had a higher participation of women both at home and outside as expected. Muslim women had a lower participation both at home and outside it. The odds ratio of a Muslim woman participating in work outside the home was significantly lower than her chances of participating in Home-Based work. The difference was not significant for the scheduled castes where women tended to work equally outside or inside the home. This could be due to the fact that Muslims tend to find self-employed work through social networks while the scheduled castes are more in casual work.”¹⁷

The feminisation of work has important implications for women and the overall household. In order to generate higher incomes, women work long hours alongside shouldering their domestic responsibilities.

14 ILO. (1996). C177 - Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312322#:~:text=The%20national%20policy%20on%20home,2

15 Sudarshan, R.M., & Sinha, S. (2011). Making Home-Based Work Visible: A Review of Evidence from South Asia. WIEGO. https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Sudarshan_WIEGO_WP19.pdf

16 ILO. (2021). Working from home From invisibility to decent work. [wcms_765806.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/media/wcms_765806.pdf) (ilo.org)

17 Unni, Jeemol and Rani, Uma (2005). Impact of Recent Policies on Home Based Work in India. Human Development Resource Centre, Discussion Paper Series - 10, UNDP, New Delhi, cited in Sudarshan, R.M., & Sinha, S. (2011). Making Home-Based Work Visible: A Review of Evidence from South Asia. WIEGO Working Paper (Urban Studies) No. 19. https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Sudarshan_WIEGO_WP19.pdf

Since Home-Based work is mainly a female activity, girl children are more involved in helping their mother. Moreover, full time Home-Based work has two main consequences for women: one is that they are unable to spend as much time with the children as before, affecting their caring capabilities. The second is that the older girls in the family are the ones who start to undertake the care responsibilities of the child, consequently affecting their own schooling. Women working in Home-Based work often suffer from personal

health problems that are work-related. Moreover, when the illness is due to Home-Based work (e.g. toxic materials in incense sticks or pyrotechnics), all the family members are likely to be affected by their home environment, including children. There is evidence in the South Asian cases that women do not use health facilities to seek treatment for such conditions. Additionally, sporadic availability of work and low and irregular pay makes them economically vulnerable.¹⁸

3.4 Violence and HBWs

The workers in informal and unorganised sectors remain at heightened risk of violence due to lack of adequate social and legal protection. However, women workers are disproportionately affected by violence due to the intersection of their gender, unequal status and power relations, insecure working conditions and their high concentration in the informal sector.

When the workplace is a private homes, workers are susceptible to violence due to isolation and a lack of access to complaint and legal recourse mechanisms. The blurring of boundaries between home spaces and workplaces creates multiple vulnerabilities of intimate partner and domestic violence and workplace violence. Since homes are workspaces, the domestic violence spills over to the workplace, and vice versa. Resultantly, women workers have a high likelihood of experiencing violence not just from employers or contractors, but also from family members. The latter is often exacerbated by a woman worker's low earnings.

Many HBWs are sub-contracted and represent the very bottom of value chains. Piece-rate work is frequently accompanied by violence perpetrated by contractors, who can be physically and verbally abusive when low or delayed payments are questioned. Contractors have been known to demand transactional sex in exchange for allocating work.¹⁹ The little money women workers earn for their piece-rate work is, in itself, a type of violence—one that is enforced by contractors

who refuse to pay a decent rate, delay or withhold payments and subject HBWs to psychological violence.²⁰ Thus, violence is used as a way to discipline and control women's labour, both inside and outside of the home.²¹

There is a growing recognition that acts of violence against women are not isolated events but rather form a pattern of behaviour that violates the rights of women and girls, limits their participation in society, and damages their health and well-being. Inequality and power imbalance between men and women in predominantly patriarchal societies are the root causes of gender-based violence, including violence at workplace. These inequalities and imbalances are rooted in harmful social norms and strong views regarding women and men's gendered roles within the family, workplace and society. Gender-based violence is used to maintain the status quo and unequal power relations between men and women. Thus, gender-based violence is both a consequence and cause of gender inequality.

Such violence frequently occurs at the intersection of different types of discrimination based on class, caste, religion, marital status, migration status, disability, maternity, family responsibilities and contractual status, among others. Essentially, this means that although all women are at risk of violence in every society in the world, not all women are equally vulnerable to acts and structures of violence. Some women experience

18 Mehrotra, S., & Bigger, M. (2002). Social Protection in the Informal Economy: Home Based Women Workers and Outsourced Manufacturing in Asia. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and Department of Economics, University of Florence. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/iwp97.pdf>

19 WIEGO (2018). Violence and Informal Work. Briefing Note. https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/ILC_WIEGO_Briefing%20Note%20Violence%20in%20the%20workplace%20EN%20for%20web.pdf

20 Ibid.

21 Bhattacharya, T. 2013. "Explaining Gender Violence in the Neoliberal Era." International Viewpoint, 28 December 2013.

multiple and interlocking forms of violence. This represents both the universality and the particularity of women’s risk of violence given their material conditions, individual attributes and social locations. The same is true for women in informal workplaces. For instance, a Home-Based worker in India belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC) may face gender and caste-based discrimination and violence from her contractors, which may not be the case for her co-workers who are men and women from higher castes. Similarly, in Pakistan a woman from a minority religion may be discriminated against by contractors and sub-contractors.

Therefore, discussions on violence in the world of work cannot be divorced from interpersonal, structural and domestic violence or from violence in public spaces; all intend to suppress and control women’s mobility, sexuality and access to resources. Poverty and deprivation do not necessarily lead to gender-based violence but can be contributing factors to the violence women informal workers experience. Low earnings, dangerous or poor working conditions, and inadequate living conditions leave informal workers at a higher risk of violence in the world of work—both in private homes and in public spaces.²²

3.4.1 Gender-based violence, including workplace violence and its forms

Gender-based violence has many different manifestations, from its most widespread form—intimate partner violence—to acts of violence carried out in workplaces. These different forms are not mutually exclusive; multiple incidences of violence can happen at once and reinforce each other.

The United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as:

“*....any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*²³

22 WIEGO (2018). Violence and Informal Work. Briefing Note. https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/ILC_WIEGO_Briefing%20Note%20Violence%20in%20the%20workplace%20EN%20for%20web.pdf

23 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Proceedings of the 85th plenary meeting, Geneva, 20 Dec 1993. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx>

A World Health Organization (WHO) report further captures the nature of the violent acts that can be physical, verbal, sexual, or psychological, including deprivation and neglect.²⁴

- **Physical violence** includes beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming or killing, or the use of objects or weapons.
- **Verbal violence** can include issues that are specific to a person, such as putdowns (in private or in front of others), ridiculing, the use of swear-words that are especially uncomfortable for the other, saying bad things about the other's loved ones, threatening with other forms of violence, either against the victim or against somebody dear to them. At other times, the verbal abuse may be relevant to the background of the victim, such as their religion, culture, language, (perceived) sexual orientation or traditions.
- **Psychological violence** is an aspect of all forms of violence, since the main aim of being violent or abusive is to hurt the integrity and dignity of another person. Apart from this, there are certain forms of violence which take place using methods that cannot be placed in other categories, and which therefore can be said to achieve psychological violence in a 'pure' form. This includes isolation or confinement, withholding information, disinformation, and threatening behaviour.
- **Sexual violence** includes engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration with another person, whether by the use of any body part or an object; engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person; or causing someone else to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person, including sexual harassment.
- **Socio-economic violence** can involve taking away the earnings of the victim, not allowing them to have a separate income (or making them work in a family business without a salary), withholding food or other necessities, or making the victim unfit for work through targeted physical abuse. In the public sphere it includes denial of access to education or (equally) paid work (mainly to women), denial of access to services, exclusion from certain jobs, denial of pleasure and the enjoyment of civil, cultural, social and political rights.

It is critical to examine how violence in the workplace has been viewed. The ILO code of practice on combatting workplace violence in service sectors, adopted in 2003 by a Meeting of Experts of the Governing Body of the ILO, provides the following definition of workplace violence:

“Any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is assaulted, threatened, harmed, injured in the course of, or as a direct result of, his or her work.”

Within this general definition, the code distinguishes between internal & external violence.

- **Internal workplace violence** is that which takes place between workers, including managers and supervisors.
- **External workplace violence** is that which takes place between workers (and managers and supervisors) and any other person present at the workplace.

“The reference to a ‘direct result [of work]’ is to be understood to mean that there is a clear link with work, and that the action, incident or behaviour occurred within a reasonable period afterward.” It provides the following definition of workplace: “All places where workers need to be or to go by reason of their work and which are under the direct or indirect control of the employer.”²⁵ The definition emphasises a clear link of violence with work.

But the fact that women are disproportionately affected by violence at the workplace makes it a form of gender-based violence. Thus, gender-based violence and violence at the workplace against women must be studied in conjunction with each other as interlinked or overlapping phenomena.

Gender-based violence in the world of work assumes physical, sexual, verbal and psychological forms may be manifested in very specific ways. Some of these have been explained earlier with particular reference to HBWs. Gender-based violence at the workplace may include the following:

- Bullying, physical and verbal abuse from co-workers, supervisors, contractors and employers

24 Krug, E.G., Dahlberg, L.L., Mercy, J.A., Zwi, A.B. and Lozano, R., eds. (2002). World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva: World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42495/9241545615_eng.pdf

25 ILO (2003). Code of practice on workplace violence in services sectors and measures to combat this phenomenon. Meeting of Experts to Develop a Code of Practice on Violence and Stress at Work in Services: A Threat to Productivity and Decent Work, 8-15 October 2003. Microsoft Word - MEVSW-COP-2003-10-0201-1-EN.Doc (ilo.org)

- Sexual harassment and unwanted sexual advances
- Sexual abuse and violence, including ‘coercive’ or transactional sex, rape and sexual assault
- Abuse and harassment around pregnancy
- Psychological abuse and intimidation
- Threats and acts of physical and sexual violence
- Abusive working conditions such as poor health and safety (including equipment safety)
- Involuntary excessively long working hours and unpredictable or late demands to work overtime

Women’s working lives are inextricably linked to their domestic and care roles. As stated earlier, this link is more pronounced in the case of HBWs, who live and work from homes in close proximity to the perpetrator/s. Like all forms of violence, violence faced by women, whether in the domestic sphere or in the world of work, is a gross violation of their human rights and an attack on their dignity and physical and psychological integrity. It has devastating effects on women’s safety, health and well-being, with substantial economic costs for employers and the society at large.

3.4.2 Magnitude

Global and regional estimates on violence have been provided by WHO. Population-level surveys based on reports from survivors provide the most accurate estimates of the prevalence of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. WHO’s 2018 global analysis on the prevalence of violence, conducted on behalf of the UN Interagency working group on violence against women and using data from 2000-2018 across 161 countries and areas, revealed that:

“ Nearly 1 in 3, or 30%, of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence or both. Over a quarter of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (since age 15).”

The prevalence estimates of lifetime intimate partner violence is highest at 33 per cent in the WHO Africa Region and the South-East Asia Region. In addition to intimate partner violence, globally 6 per cent of women report having been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner, although data for non-partner sexual violence are more limited.²⁶

Given the substantial global burden of intimate partner and domestic violence, there have been systematic attempts to estimate its prevalence. However, commensurate efforts have not been made to study the prevalence of violence against women at the workplace specifically in the informal

sector. Various challenges have been reported in estimating violence in the world of work. These include general absence of either national level or occupational level data on this issue; incidents involving violence at work fall outside the scope of health and safety requirements; data is often only gathered on the fatal outcomes of violence; employers do not have appropriate mechanisms in place to record incidents of violence; and reporting procedures do not record the emotional or psychological conditions caused by threats of violence etc.²⁷

There is a dearth of such evidence in the South Asia region. Much of the existing published data

26 WHO (2021). Violence against women – fact sheet. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

27 Chappell, D., & Martino, V. (1998). Violence at work. ILO. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms_publ_9221108406_en.pdf

regarding workplace violence in developing countries is embedded in more general literature discussing human rights issues, and especially rights associated with trade union activities and the exercise of the freedom of association, the securing of safe working conditions and the prevention of the exploitation of workers. Literature on the rights of workers and migrant workers, including freedom from sexual abuse and exploitation, throw light on violence at the workplace to some extent. While a few studies conducted in the region of South Asia provide some direct evidence on violence at the workplace, very few of these focus on HBWs.

A recent HNSA study conducted on HBWs in Nepal established that women faced harassment, physical abuse and violence by family members, and this impacted their work and productivity severely.²⁸ Studies conducted in specific regions of India show prevalence of violence against women in the unorganised sector. Findings from a study conducted in Udupi, India showed that women in the unorganised fisheries sector faced physical and sexual assault and verbal abuse.²⁹ A study addressed the prevalence of workplace harassment and domestic violence in the garment industry in Mexico, Sri Lanka, China and Cambodia showed that of the 5328 workers surveyed, about 9 per cent reported sexual harassment and 10-33 per cent reported emotional abuse at work.³⁰

3.4.3 Impact of violence

WHO has recognised violence against women as a major public health problem. Evidence suggests that violence against women and girls increases their risk of poor health, productivity and psychological well-being. Violence not only has individual impacts but serious repercussions for family, community, employers and the society at large.^{32,33}

It has been recognised that available evidence on workplace violence from South Asia is most probably only the tip of the iceberg and largely focuses on formal sector work. A 2018 report of ILO on ending violence and harassment against men and women in the world of work has revealed that in a majority of 80 countries, work-related violence and harassment provisions apply only to people in an employment relationship. Safe working environments are missing at many informal workspaces, including when the workplace is in the home. Cases of sexual abuse and harassment in such cases have not received enough mainstream social attention or been put to legal scrutiny. The incidences of sexual harassment of informal women workers in workplaces—such as home cum workspaces, construction sites, informal vendor markets, domestic workers at residences, agricultural fields and small-sized factories—go mostly unnoticed.³¹

While evidence of violence at the workplace in South Asia is still limited, fragmented, and often anecdotal, it is sufficient to warrant immediate attention towards the need to explore, understand and document this issue in detail.

Physical consequences of violence include injuries ranging from bruises, fractures and chronic disabilities, injuries to children and deaths. Violence against women may result in unwanted pregnancy, either through rape or by affecting a woman's ability to negotiate contraceptive use. For example, some women may be afraid to raise the issue of contraceptive use with their sexual partners for fear of being beaten or abandoned. As

28 HomeNet South Asia. (2020). Research on Violence against Women in the Context of Home-Based Work in Nepal. <https://hnsa.org.in/sites/default/files/Research%20on%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20In%20the%20Context%20of%20Home-Based%20Work%20Nepal.pdf>

29 Tripathi P., Tiwari R., Kamath R. (2016). Workplace violence and gender bias in unorganized fisheries of Udupi, India. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 7(3): 181-185. . https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305412723_Workplace_Violence_and_Gender_Bias_in_Unorganized_Fisheries_of_Udupi_India

30 Białowska, D., Białowski, P., & McNeely, E. (2020). The impact of workplace harassment and domestic violence on work outcomes in the developing world. *World Development*, 126,104732, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104732>.

31 ILO (2018). Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_553577.pdf

32 WHO (1997). Violence against women Health consequences. <https://www.who.int/gender/violence/v8.pdf>

33 WHO (2012). Understanding and addressing violence against women. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77431/WHO_RHR_12.43_eng.pdf;jsessionid=49ED432FF408DB785F074278390789AC?sequence=1

with unwanted pregnancy, women are vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) because they are unable to negotiate protection. They are prone to illness partly due to lowered immunity caused by stress resulting from the abuse. In addition, self-neglect and increased risk taking have also been implicated.

Psychological consequences of violence include emotional and physical strain, which can lead to suicide. Research suggests that women facing violence endure enormous psychological suffering. Many are severely depressed or anxious, while others display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. They may be chronically fatigued, but unable to sleep; have nightmares or eating disorders; turn to alcohol and drugs to numb their pain; or become isolated, withdrawn and fall into depression.

Effects of violence on productivity and employment of women are grave. Women experiencing violence may have a reduced contribution to society as well as to their own potential self-realisation. Women may be equally intimidated by their partner's violence, which prevents them from advancing at work. The economic impact of abuse may extend to losses in women's earning potential. This may be partly because women who are victims of violence are likely to be anxious or depressed, and unable to perform to the best of their ability. Further, physical injuries to hands, legs, eyes etc. may lead to reduced productivity of women Home-Based Workers.

Intergenerational effects of violence are serious. Children who grow up in families where there is violence may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances. These can be associated with perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life. Boys who have witnessed the same violence, on the other hand, are more likely to be violent toward their partners as adults. Girls who witness their father's or step-father's violent treatment of their mother are more likely to accept violence as a normal part of marriage than girls from non-violent homes. Intimate partner violence has been associated with higher rates of infant and child mortality and morbidity (for example diarrhoeal disease or malnutrition and lower immunization rates).

Societal costs of violence against women are tremendous. A proportion of these costs come from treating serious physical injury. A substantial amount is spent on psychological problems, including managing anxieties and symptoms which happier, more confident, women may be able to tolerate, ignore or shrug off. Direct costs include those incurred by the police, courts and legal services to prosecute perpetrators of abuse; the costs of treatment programmes for men who batter, and other offenders; the medical care costs of treating the direct medical consequences of sexual and physical abuse; and social service costs, including shelters for survivors of violence and child protection services.

It is highly likely that the above mentioned effects of violence will be compounded for HBWs who grapple with poverty, exploitative working conditions and lack of access to legal and social support systems.

3.4.4 Violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

Lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic impacts have increased the exposure of women to abusive partners and known risk factors, while limiting their access to services. During lockdowns, China witnessed a three-fold increase in the cases of domestic violence after

imposing quarantine.³⁴ Complaints of violence against women perpetrated by partners spiked in India during the lockdown.³⁵ Different states in the United States reported an increase of about 21–35 per cent in domestic violence.³⁶ Within days of lockdown, industries—big and small—came to

34 Allen-Ebrahimian B. (2020). China's Domestic Violence Epidemic, Axios. <https://www.axios.com/china-domestic-violencecoronavirusquarantine-7b00c3ba-35bc-4d16-afdd-b76ecfb28882.html>

35 Jagriti. C. (2020). NCW records sharp spike in domestic violence amid lockdown. The Hindu. NCW records sharp spike in domestic violence amid lockdown - The Hindu

36 Wagers S. (2020). Domestic Violence Growing in Wake of Coronavirus Outbreak. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/domestic-violence-growing-in-wake-of-coronavirus-outbreak-135598>

a standstill. Without the backing of social security nets, informal workers, including HBWs, remained at heightened risk of slipping into a vicious cycle of poverty without access to income, food supplies, water and sanitation, efficient healthcare and reliable and feasible financial support. Women who faced domestic violence or harassment were unable to access helplines, access shelter homes or seek help from the police since they were largely engaged in the implementation of the lockdown.³⁷

The increase in violence against women during COVID-19 has brought sharp focus on the issue. Violence has generally been found to increase in

the face of disasters. Situations of humanitarian crises and displacement may exacerbate existing violence, such as by intimate partners, as well as non-partner sexual violence, and may lead to new forms of violence against women.³⁸

The above discussion emphasises that workplace violence against HBWs is commonplace yet invisible, both because of the lack of reporting and the lack of measurement. Evidence on violence in Home-Based workspaces is scanty. But the detrimental and debilitating impact of violence on HBWs cannot be negated.

3.5 International framework for addressing violence against HBWs

Acknowledgement of violence against women as a global social problem came about in mid-1980s. Since then, declarations, resolutions, and regional treaties were passed to address violence. According to the Every Woman Treaty website, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the United Nations, provides the most fundamental international agreement for combating violence against women, as it declares the equal rights of women and men, including the right to personal security.”³⁹

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1981, was the first human rights treaty specific to women and is an essential tool in advocating for women’s equality on both the national and international stage. CEDAW, however, doesn’t address violence and does not include the word ‘violence’ at all. To address the omission, in 1992 CEDAW added General Recommendation No. 19 specific to violence against women.⁴⁰

General Recommendation No. 19 states that “Equality in employment can be seriously impaired when women are subjected to gender-

specific violence, such as sexual harassment in the workplace” (CEDAW, 1992, Article 11, para. 17). It prompted the creation of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, a job solely dedicated to eliminating this violence.

General Recommendation No. 35 states that gender-based violence against women occurs in public and private spaces and all areas of human interaction, including “...the family, the community, public spaces, the workplace, leisure, politics, sport, health services, educational settings and the redefinition of public and private through technology-mediated environments, such as contemporary forms of violence occurring online and in other digital environments” (CEDAW, 2017, para. 20). However, the treaty does not contain general recommendations; while it is an important policy instrument, it lacks the legal weight to get governments to act.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), “calls on governments to adopt, implement, and review legislation to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women, but creates

37 HomeNet South Asia (2020). COVID-19: Impact on Home-Based Workers in South Asia Charter of Demands.

38 Mittal, S., and Singh, T. (2020). Gender-based violence during covid-19 pandemic: A mini-review. *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, 1. <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fgwh.2020.00004> DOI=10.3389/fgwh.2020.00004

39 Every Woman Treaty (2018). Violence Against Women and International Law: An Overview. Website. <https://everywoman.org/violence-against-women-and-the-law/#:-:text=The%20Universal%20Declaration%20of%20Human,the%20right%20to%20personal%20security.>

40 Ibid.

no legal obligation for states.”⁴¹

Apart from this, a number of human rights and regional treaties to protect women in specific situations or regions have come into force, but they remain limited in scope or geographic coverage. Noteworthy human rights treaties to protect women include the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; Convention on the Rights of the Child; and Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Additionally, no regional treaty to prevent and address violence against women has been signed in the South Asia region. Even when combined, these treaties are not sufficient to address all forms of violence against women.⁴²

Likewise, until very recently there was no comprehensive global or international treaty to address violence at the workplace. Thus, violence and harassment are addressed for specific groups in specific contexts through different international instruments of ILO.

ILO INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS	YEAR
<p>1. Declaration of Philadelphia affirms that “all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity”</p>	<p>1944</p>
<p>2. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention No. 111 covers sexual harassment, understood by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) as a form of discrimination based on sex. In its general observation from 2003, the CEACR “urges governments to take appropriate measures to prohibit sexual harassment in employment and occupation” and notes that sexual harassment “undermines equality at work by calling into question integrity and dignity and the well-being of workers...[and]... damages the enterprise by weakening the bases upon which work relationships are build and impairing productivity”</p>	<p>1958</p>
<p>3. Fundamental principles and rights at work include freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; effective abolition of child labour and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation lay down the basic framework for protecting workers including violence.</p>	<p>1998</p>
<p>4. HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 200 requires the adoption of measures “to prevent and prohibit violence and harassment in the workplace” (ILO, 2010, No. 200, para. 14(c)).</p>	<p>2010</p>

41 Every Woman Treaty (2018). Violence Against Women and International Law: An Overview. Website. <https://everywoman.org/violence-against-women-and-the-law/#:-:text=The%20Universal%20Declaration%20of%20Human,the%20right%20to%20personal%20security.>

42 UN Treaties on Violence Against Women (stopvaw.org)

ILO INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS	YEAR
5. Domestic Workers Convention, 189 requires that Members ratifying the Convention ensure effective protection against violence, abuse and harassment for domestic workers (ILO, 2011c, No. 189, Article 5).	2011
6. Protocol to the Force Labour Convention, 029 enunciates measures to prevent forced or compulsory labour, including measures to protect workers, in particular migrant workers, from possible abusive and fraudulent recruitment and placement practices (ILO, 2014b, Article 2(d)).	2014
7. Home Work Convention, 177 and Recommendation, 184 promote equality of treatment between homeworkers and other wage earners and thus have the unstated objective of transforming home work into a source of decent work. Many countries around the world have legislation, sometimes complemented by collective agreements, that addresses various decent work deficits associated with home work. Nonetheless, only ten ILO Member States (none of which are in South Asia) have ratified Convention No. 177 and few have a comprehensive policy on home work.	1996
8. Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 204 provides that States should ensure that an integrated policy framework to facilitate the transition to the formal economy addresses the promotion of equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence, including gender-based violence, at the workplace (ILO, 2015b, No. 204, para.11 (f)).	2015
9. Employment Relationship Recommendation, 198 provides guidance to Member States on guaranteeing effective protection for workers who perform work in the context of an employment relationship, helping to mitigate the risk of misclassification.	2006
10. Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work Convention 190 applies to formal and informal sector and defines gender-based violence, workers and place of work in a comprehensive manner. The proposed Convention makes it incumbent upon states to take measures and implement laws and regulations to protect workers from violence. However, the effectiveness of this Convention will heavily depend on how many countries ratify it and implement it in letter and spirit. As of now, none of the study countries have ratified it.	2019

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 ‘Gender Equality’ aim at achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls; SDG 8, ‘Decent work and Economic Growth’, promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Target 8.8, in particular, states ‘Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants,

and those in precarious employment’. These goals and targets accord primacy to ensuring safety of all workers including HBWs. Therefore, it is imperative for national governments to take concrete steps for protection of HBWs to honour their SDG commitments.

The present legal and policy framework for HBWs in the study countries, however, falls short of assuring decent and safe working conditions.

3.6 Legal provisions for addressing violence against HBWs in India

In 2017-18, 41.85 million HBWs were there in India. Of these, 17.19 million—more than 40 per cent—were women.⁴³ The National Commissions on Labour, set up by the Government of India, and the Labour Acts have addressed the issue of these HBWs in varying degrees. The first National Commission on Labour (1966) mentioned handloom and beedi as the two vocations where Home-Based work is quite widespread. One of the three recommendations of the Commission for beedi workers was that all workers, irrespective of their place of work, should be covered by the minimum wage legislation.

Towards Equality (Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, Ministry of Human Resource Development) in 1974 not only recognised self-employed women and organisations working for their benefit but also laid out action plans on how to encourage women's participation in self-employment activities. The Shram Shakti report of the National Commission for Self-Employed Women (1987–89) and Women in the Informal Sector emphasised the need for the recognition of Home-Based Workers and also called for enlarging the definition of women workers at the time of subsequent data collection efforts.

October 2000 saw the Kathmandu Declaration at the South Asia level, to which India was a party. The Kathmandu Declaration highlighted the need for the formation of a National Policy on Home-Based Workers by each country. The declaration stressed the need for providing minimum protection to HBWs, which would include realisation of their rights to organise, minimum remuneration, occupational health and safety, statutory social protection, maternity and childcare benefit, and skill development. Despite the significant emphasis laid on its importance, there still exists no separate national policy for HBWs. A draft national policy was proposed for this purpose by the Ministry of Labour in 1999-2000, but these initiatives failed to yield any results at that time. However, in 2017, HNSA, in consultation with HBWs' groups and civil society, including researchers and academia, developed a Draft Policy for Home-Based Workers in India. It was submitted to the Ministry of Labour and

Employment but doesn't seem to have moved thereafter.

The Minimum Wages Act has been extended to cover some sections of HBWs, such as the agarbatti (incense sticks) workers, garment workers and the beedi workers. There are, however, a large number of trades in which Home-Based work is prevalent but which are not listed under the Minimum Wages Act. The reference to HBWs in the Minimum Wages Act can be attributed to the fact that the wide definition of a worker primarily accommodates many types of informal workers. In addition, minimum wage happens to be the most important issue to many workers who are in the informal economy. Generally, minimum wages are fixed based on a time rate, a daily rate or a monthly rate, all of which are inapplicable to HBWs.

The enforcement of the Act for the HBWs remains extremely weak. The reasons for the lack of enforcement are well known. The main agencies for enforcement are the labour departments. Most labour departments are set up to attend to the organised sector. These departments are not oriented to cater to the unorganised sector and are much less oriented to the needs of HBWs. Besides, most labour officers find it difficult to reach the workers, and hardly any inspection takes place. Corruption is rampant. In addition, the working of the adjudicating labour courts is such that it takes years to mete out justice. This is the major cause for the non-enforcement of almost all labour laws. There are several sectoral Acts, such as the Beedi and Cigar (Conditions of Employment) Act, Beedi and Cigar Workers (Welfare Fund) Act, and the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Cess) Act, which have been successful, to an extent, in offering protection to HBWs engaged in bidi-rolling. In fact, the Beedi industry is the first sector to have some dynamic labour laws that recognise the Home-Based nature of work prevalent in this sector.⁴⁴

Laws for providing decent and safe working conditions and protecting them from violence, however, still remain elusive. The existing legal provisions to prevent gender-based violence, excerpted from the Legal Service India E-Journal, are delineated below.

43 Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2017-18.

44 <http://www.labourfile.com/section-detail.php?aid=323>

LEGAL INSTRUMENT	PROVISIONS
<p>Constitution of India</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article 15(1) provides that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of sex. • Article 15(3) provides that the state is empowered to make any special provision for women, i.e. the state can make affirmative discrimination in favour of women. • Article 16(2) provides that no citizen shall be discriminated against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the state on the grounds of sex. • Article 23(1) provides that traffic in human beings and forced labour is prohibited. • Article 39(a) requires the state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood. • Article 39(d) requires the state to secure equal pay for equal work for both Indian men and women. • Article 39(e) provides that the state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength. • Article 42 provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. • Article 51-A (e) provides that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
<p>Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013</p>	<p>The Act has included the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 354A provides for sexual harassment and punishment for sexual harassment. • Section 354B provides for assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe. • Section 354C provides for voyeurism. • Section 354D provides for stalking. • The definition of rape under section 376 has been amended. <p>The 2013 Act expands the definition of rape to include oral sex as well as the insertion of an object or any other body part into a woman's vagina, urethra or anus. A man is guilty of rape if he commits sexual intercourse with a woman either against her will or without her consent as enumerated under clauses firstly to seventhly under section 375.</p>
<p>Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005</p>	<p>This act recognises domestic violence as a human rights violation and provides the right of every woman to live in a violence free home according to their wish. The Act provides a definition of "domestic violence" for the first time in Indian law, with this definition being broad and including not only physical violence, but also other forms of violence such as emotional/verbal, sexual, and economic abuse. It is a civil law meant primarily for protection orders, rather than criminal enforcement.</p>

LEGAL INSTRUMENT	PROVISIONS
<p>The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) (POSH) Act, 2013</p>	<p>The Act provides victims with a civil remedy for sexual harassment. The POSH Act recognises that every woman has a right to a safe and secure working environment, free from hostility and humiliation, irrespective of age and employment status. The law covers women working in all capacities whether that may be regular, temporary, ad hoc, or on a daily wage basis.</p> <p>Section 2(p) of the POSH Act defines the unorganised sector as a workplace where an enterprise is owned by individuals or self-employed workers and is engaged in the production or sale of goods or providing service of any kind whatsoever, where the number of workers employed by such enterprise is less than ten. Simply put, a workplace that employs less than ten people is classified under the unorganised sector.</p> <p>The redressal mechanism for tackling complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace in the unorganised sector is found in Section 7 of the POSH Act which discusses the composition, tenure, and other terms and conditions of the Local Committee (LC).</p> <p>The LC is a district level committee having powers equivalent to that of a civil court. It is constituted by the District Officer (who can be a District Magistrate, Additional District Magistrate, Collector, or Deputy Collector) and receives complaints of sexual harassment against the employer or from workplaces having less than ten employees.</p> <p>As per the provisions of the POSH Act, the government is responsible for developing training and educational material, holding awareness programmes, advancing the understanding of the common public concerning the law, publicising the provisions of the Act and conducting orientation and training programmes for members of the LCs.</p>
<p>Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986</p>	<p>The Act has amended The Immoral Traffic (Suppression) Act, 1956. This Act provides for prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation—i.e. for the purpose of preventing and ultimately prohibiting prostitution for women and girls to criminalize sex work. In 2006, the Ministry of Women and Child Development proposed an amendment bill, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2006, that has yet to be passed.</p>
<p>Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986</p>	<p>The Act punishes women's indecent depiction, which implies a woman's image in some way; her form or body and any aspect of the woman's body, so as to cause immorality, degradation, or to deprave, abuse, or harm to public morality or moral standards.</p>

LEGAL INSTRUMENT	PROVISIONS
Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	It prohibits the giving or receiving of dowry at or before or any time after the marriage from women. The Act punishes giving and receiving dowry and penalises demanding dowry or advertising offers of money or property in connection with a marriage. It punishes violence against women by their husbands or their relatives when proof of dowry demands or dowry harassment could be shown.
Indian Penal Code, 1860	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acid Attack (Sections 326A and 326B) • Rape (Sections 375, 376, 376A, 376B, 376C, 376D and 376E) • Attempt to commit rape (Section 376/511) • Kidnapping and abduction for different purposes (Sections 363–373) • Murder, Dowry death, Abetment of Suicide, etc. (Sections 302, 304B and 306) • Cruelty by husband or his relatives (Section 498A) • Outraging the modesty of women (Section 354) • Sexual harassment (Section 354A) • Assault on women with intent to disrobe a woman (Section 354B) • Voyeurism (Section 354C) • Stalking (Section 354D) • Importation of girls up to 21 years of age (Section 366B) • Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman (Section 509)

The absence of a comprehensive policy and law for HBWs remains a major gap in India. The lack of seriousness on the part of government machinery to supervise the effective administration of the POSH Act is reflected in the abysmal figures of existing LCs (only 29 per cent) around the country. Various reasons, such as a lack of awareness about the law, lack of confidence in the complaints and redressal mechanisms, stigma, embarrassment, and fear of reprisal contribute to a very low reporting rate of incidents of sexual harassment at the workplace. Considering that district level LCs are the only recourse for women working in the informal sector, there is an urgent need to ensure the set up and proper functioning of LCs across the country. One of the biggest flaws with the law on sexual harassment at workplaces is the lens through which it is viewed. The POSH Act essentially views the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace as a “women’s issue” and not as

a labour issue. There is hardly any engagement of the Ministry of Labour and Employment with it and the issue is instead handled by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).

This is inherently problematic because, by categorising sexual harassment experienced at workplaces as a women’s issue, the focus is placed largely on women—making women the problem and taking away from the real problem, which is hostile workplaces. This greatly diminishes the importance of the context in which the harassment is experienced: the workplace.⁴⁵

45 Deshpande, Avanti (2021). Does the POSH Law Protect Women Working in the Unorganised Sector? Ungender. <https://www.ungender.in/sexual-harassment-against-women-in-the-unorganised-sector/>

3.7 Legal provisions for addressing violence against HBWs in Pakistan

In recent years, Home-Based work has grown in Pakistan. This growth is due to an increase in the number of women doing Home-Based work, while the number of men in Home-Based work has declined. From 2013-14 to 2017-18, the number of Home-Based Workers increased from approximately 3.59 to 4.37 million. The increase was due to the growth in the number of women in Home-Based work—from 2.67 million in 2013-14 to 3.59 million in 2017-18; this represents an increase from 22 per cent to 28 per cent of women’s total employment. By contrast, the number of men in Home-Based work declined from 925,000 to 786,000 and from slightly above to slightly below 2 per cent of men’s total employment.⁴⁶

To safeguard the rights of these HBWs, the National Ministry of Labour and Manpower and Ministry of Women Development in Pakistan formulated a draft Policy for Home-Based Workers in June 2011. However, soon thereafter the subject of HBWs was devolved to the provinces. Provinces are separately working on HBWs’ bills/legislative procedures. Punjab and Sindh governments proposed policies to protect HBWs in 2017.

The Sindh Home-Based Workers Act was passed by the Provincial Assembly of Sindh on 09 May 2018 and assented to by the Governor of Sindh on 23 May 2018, making Pakistan the only country in South Asia where HBWs were recognised as official labourers. All registered HBWs are entitled to have social, medical, and maternity benefits, compensations and marriages and death grants available to a person falling within the domain of worker and workman envisaged in all Labour Laws including Sindh Industrial Relation Act. However, the country’s three other provinces have not yet followed suit.

There are no comprehensive national laws for protection of HBWs in Pakistan, and the country has not ratified the ILO Convention C177. The legislations that protect women from violence in Pakistan are delineated below.

LEGAL INSTRUMENT	PROVISIONS
<p>Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006</p>	<p>The law separated rape and adultery. The new laws defined rape as a man having “sexual intercourse with a woman against her will or without her consent”. This includes sexual intercourse with a person with a physical or mental disability, or with a person under 16 years of age, irrespective of consent. However, the Act does not include ‘object rape’—vaginal or anal penetration with an object— or oral sex. The Act does not restrict the offence of rape to sex outside marriage, which legally makes marital rape an offence.</p> <p>The Act adds the following pro-women provisions to the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 relating to offences against women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kidnapping, abducting or inducing women to compel for marriage etc. (Section 365-B) • Kidnapping or abducting in order to subject person to unnatural lust (Section 367-A) • Selling persons for purposes of prostitution, etc. (Section 371-A) • Buying person for purposes of prostitution, etc. (Section 371-B) • Rape (Section 376)

46 Akhtar, S. (2020) Home-Based Workers in Pakistan: A Statistical Profile. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 26. <https://hnsa.org.in/sites/default/files/Statistical%20Brief%20on%20Home-Based%20Workers%20in%20Pakistan%20%282020%29.pdf>

LEGAL INSTRUMENT	PROVISIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohabitation caused by a man deceitfully inducing a belief of lawful marriage (Section 493-A) • Enticing or taking away or detaining with criminal intent a woman to have illicit intercourse with that woman (Section 496-A) • Fornication (a man and women not married to each other having wilful sexual intercourse) (Section 496-A) • False accusation of fornication (496-C)
Pakistan Penal Code, 1860	<p>Assault or criminal force of a woman with intent to outrage her modesty (Section 354)</p> <p>Assault or use of criminal force of a woman and stripping her of her clothes (Section 354-A)</p> <p>Molestation with sexual motive (Section 354-B)</p> <p>Insulting modesty or causing sexual harassment (Section 371-B)</p>
Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restraint) Act, 1976	<p>The Act limits the aggregate value of the dowry and presents given to the bride by her parents and the aggregate value of the bridal gifts or presents given to the bridegroom.</p>
Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act in 2010, amended in 2022	<p>The Act provides legal protection to women against harassment at the workplace and reforms the existing legislation regarding women's right to work in Pakistan. However, it did not include HBWs. The Act has recently been amended to include HBWs.</p>
Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2011	<p>The Act addresses incidents of acid throwing.</p>
Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, passed in 2012	<p>The Act prohibits violence in private spaces and mandates a quick resolution of cases within 90 days.</p>
Anti-Honour Killing Act 2016	<p>It declared murders in the name of family honour a criminal offence and sets a tougher penalty.</p>
Anti-Rape Act of 2016	<p>It provides legal aid to victims and prohibits the disclosure of their identity. Importantly, it mandates that the police register a First Information Report (FIR) in the presence of a female police officer, as well as conduct a DNA test with the consent of the complainant as a matter of urgency.</p>
Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2016	<p>The Act aims to protect women from domestic, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, stalking and cyber-crimes perpetrated by their husband(s), sibling(s), adopted children, relatives and domestic employers.</p>

LEGAL INSTRUMENT	PROVISIONS
<p>Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016</p>	<p>The Act provides a comprehensive legal framework to define various kinds of electronic crimes, mechanisms for investigation, prosecution and adjudication in relation to electronic crimes.</p>

The provinces of Punjab and Sindh are taking promising steps for protecting rights of the HBWs by enacting legislations. However, remaining provinces must make similar efforts for protection of HBWs. At the national level, the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act has recently included HBWs. This is a welcome step, but the adequate implementation of Act will be critical to protect HBWs from workplace violence.⁴⁷

3.8 Legal provisions for addressing violence against HBWs in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has about 3.2 million non-agricultural and 7.4 million agricultural Home-Based Workers, according to the 2016/17 Labour Force Survey. Non-agricultural Home-Based work increased by about 1.7 million workers from 2009. The increase was driven by women. Within non-agricultural Home-Based work, the number of women increased from about half a million workers in 2009/10 to 1.7 million in 2013/14, and to about 2.1 million in 2016/17.⁴⁸

Bangladeshi HBWs suffer from lack of legal protection. There are a lot of laws, but none to ensure the rights of the HBWs separately. The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh implies the guarantee of some rights for HBWs, and they can seek redress under the ordinary civil and criminal laws of Bangladesh. There is no law which takes into account their working hours, leave, minimum wages, holiday, maternity benefits, etc.

47 Khan, Maria and Ahmed, Ayesha (2016). The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010: A Legislative Review. Lums Law Review, Vol. 3; 1. <https://sahsol.lums.edu.pk/law-journal/protection-against-harassment-women-workplace-act-2010-legislative-review>

48 Koolwal, Gayatri and Vanek, Joann (2020). Home-Based Workers in Bangladesh: A Statistical Profile. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 25. <https://hnsa.org.in/sites/default/files/Homebased%20Workers%20Statistical%20Brief%20-%20Bangladesh.pdf>

LEGAL INSTRUMENT	PROVISIONS
Constitution of Bangladesh	<p>Guiding principles of the Constitution include fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for dignity of the human beings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State is responsible to emancipate the toiling masses, the peasants and workers, and backward sections of the people from all forms of exploitation. • The State is responsible to ensure the provision of basic necessities, right to work at reasonable wages, right to reasonable rest, recreation and leisure and right to social security. • Work is a right, a duty and a matter of honour for every citizen. Everybody shall be paid for his work on the basis of the principle ‘from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work’. • It further says that the State shall endeavour to create conditions in which human labour in every form, intellectual and physical, shall become a fuller expression of creative endeavour and of the human personality—albeit these principles are not judicially enforceable in the court of law as per provision 15 of the Constitution. However, these principles shall be fundamental to the governance of Bangladesh and shall be applied by the State in making of laws.
Labour Act, 2006	This single statute provides almost the entire labour law-related provisions applicable in Bangladesh. However, it does not apply to HBWs.
Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010	It is a law to protect women and children against domestic violence.
Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980	The Act punishes giving, taking or abetting the giving or taking of dowry.
Prevention of Suppression Against Women and Children Act, 2000	The Act promulgates the taking of stringent measures against crimes oppressing women and children
Penal Code, 1860	Any act that has been defined by law as a crime is punishable by the courts of law. Apart from the Penal Code 1860, many other laws define criminal acts in Bangladesh. All criminal acts are adjudicated by criminal courts and the HBWs, like any other citizen, are under the jurisdiction of the criminal courts. Under the Penal Code, especially relevant for HBWs, are culpable homicide, murder, hurt, grievous hurt, wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement, assault, kidnapping, abduction, rape and theft. These and many other provisions of criminal law apply to domestic workers in the same way in which they apply to other citizens.

The above laws fail to provide a comprehensive legal framework for HBWs. Absence of a policy and exclusion of HBWs from the Labour Act point to glaring gaps in protection mechanism for HBWs. They need strong policy and legal provisions for securing their rights with respect to working hours, leave, minimum wages, holiday, maternity benefits and protection from exploitation, violence and harassment.

3.9 Comparative snapshot of legal framework in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

Table 2. Comparative analysis of legal framework in study countries

Legal Provisions/ Instruments	Bangladesh	India	Pakistan
Ratified ILO Convention 177 on Home Work of 1996	No	No	No
Ratified ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment of 2019	No	No	No
National Policy for HBWs in place	No	No (Draft in place)	No (Draft in place)
Sub-national Policy for HBWs in place	No	No	Yes in Sindh province (Draft in place in Punjab)
National Law on HBWs	No	No	No
Sub-national Law on HBWs	No	No	Yes (Provincial policy and frameworks are there in Sindh, Punjab, Karachi and Baluchistan)
Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace includes HBWs	Yes	Yes	No (Recent amendment in 2022)
Prevention of Domestic Violence Act in place	Yes	Yes	Yes
HBWs included as part of labour surveys	Yes	Yes	Yes (Sub-national surveys)

The matrix above provides an overview of present legal framework in the three study countries.

The matrix clearly indicates that international conventions and comprehensive laws and policies for HBWs have not been adopted in any of the study countries. This uncertain legal framework for HBWs makes them vulnerable to all forms of

exploitation. Therefore, concerted efforts are required to frame and adopt comprehensive laws that factor in the challenging working conditions and accentuated vulnerabilities of HBWs. Once formulated, the laws and policies will need to be effectively implemented so that HBWs can realise their rights of decent work and safety.

04 Findings



This section presents the country-wide findings, followed by cross-cutting and/or comparative findings. Brief profiles of HBWs in each country, their occupational engagements, forms of violence faced, its causes, perpetrators, impact and coping and redressal mechanisms are some of the prominent themes that have been covered in this section.

4.1 Bangladesh

The findings from Bangladesh revealed the experience of violence faced by HBWs, all of whom worked in various activities within the garment sector. These women (20 respondents) viewed Home-Based work as an enterprise that, on one hand, gave them financial independence while on the other confined them in exploitative work relations and conditions.

4.1.1 Profile of HBWs in Bangladesh

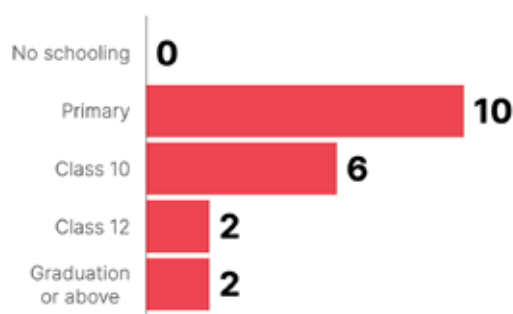
Age: The age profile of 20 respondents in Bangladesh indicated that half the respondents were in the age group of 18-30 years.



Religion: All women respondents in Bangladesh were Muslims. The data on further stratification into various groups was not captured.

Marital status: Of the 20 respondents, 13 were married, four were single, two were widowed and one was divorced.

Education status: Half of the respondents in Bangladesh had studied through the primary level. Six respondents had completed class 10 and two had completed graduation.



4.1.2 Occupation profile of HBWs in Bangladesh

Type of Home-Based work: All respondents in Bangladesh were engaged in various labour-intensive activities of the garment industry. These included fancywork, stitching, stonework, embroidery, and label fitting on garments among others.

Source of contract: A majority of women were provided work by middlemen or sub-contractors. Three respondents went to collect the work from middlemen, while one each was provided work by a co-worker and a contractor.

Hours of Home-Based work: A total of 11 respondents reported that they worked for 4-6

hours/day. Four respondents reported working between 6-8 hours/day, three worked for 8-10 hours and the remaining two worked for more than 10 hours/day.

Income from Home-Based work: All women reported earning less than 200 Taka/day. Some even reported earning less than 100 Taka/day (1.16 USD).⁴⁹

Reasons and benefits of opting for Home-Based work: Almost all respondents from Bangladesh noted that with Home-Based work, they could take care of the household and look after children. The second most common response was that

49 1 Taka = 0.12 USD

one could work from the safety of home and did not have to step out. A few respondents mentioned that through Home-Based work, they supplemented family income. Identifying reasons of opting for Home-Based work, many respondents said that a lack of formal work opportunities and mobility restrictions forced them to take it up. Five respondents quoted that Home-Based work made them financially independent. Two respondents were motivated to begin Home-Based work after observing other HBWs in their surroundings.

Challenges faced in Home-Based work: Most women pointed out that low pay and economic exploitation by contractors and middlemen were

the biggest disadvantages of Home-Based work. A majority of women further noted that occupational problems such as working in dim light, pain in eyes and hands, and backaches made Home-Based work both cumbersome and tiresome. More than half the respondents mentioned the temporary nature of Home-Based work and the lack of job security and employee benefits were other challenges.

“We work for long time in inadequate space and get back pain. Our work also tends to stop suddenly; there is no employee benefit or security.”

-Respondent, Dhaka

4.1.3 Understanding of violence

All respondents agreed that HBWs in Bangladesh faced various forms of violence at home and at the workplace. Many respondents in Bangladesh described violence as an act that harmed women physically, mentally, verbally and at times sexually. They further qualified their answer by explaining that violence taking place at home by family members was domestic violence and violence perpetrated by contractors, middlemen and other workplace stakeholders constituted workplace violence. It is pertinent to note that

about 8-9 respondents mentioned undergoing a training programme on violence, its reporting and response. For this reason, they were able to define violence with ease and did not need to cite examples.

“Violence against women refers to any kind of activities which are harmful for women such as physical, mental, verbal or sexually etc. It impacts women negatively.”

-Respondent, Dhaka

“ *“We face various unusual activities at workplace—it can be verbal abuse, use of slang language, mental pressure, sexual harassment; and violence at home can be physical, mental, financial exploitation.”*

-Respondent, Dhaka

4.1.4 Perpetrators of violence

Husbands, in-laws and family members were recognised as the perpetrators of domestic violence. Contractor, owner of the enterprise, middlemen, money lenders, co-workers and security guards were identified as perpetrators of workplace violence. Here respondents explained that when they went to collect work from the middlemen, they were sexually harassed. Sometimes security guards in the contractors' establishment harassed them and did not let them enter the premises. Respondents in Bangladesh, however, did not identify neighbours and community members as perpetrators of violence.



4.1.5 HBWs lived experience of facing violence in the domestic sphere

While narrating their lived experience of violence in the domestic sphere, respondents noted that they could face different forms of violence at any given point of time. For instance, physical violence was often accompanied by verbal abuse. Likewise, economic violence or gaining control over financial resources was coupled with psychological and emotional violence.

Physical violence: In Bangladesh, while many respondents accepted that they faced domestic violence, they were hesitant to share the details. Those who described the incidents mentioned that they or someone they knew had faced physical violence such as getting beaten by a husband or in-laws.

“Yes, I have faced domestic violence. It was committed by my husband, in-laws and family members. They used to beat me, tortured me both physically and mentally.”

-Respondent, Dhaka

Verbal abuse: Use of abusive (slang) language was identified as a primary form of verbal abuse.

“Yes, I have faced this problem. My husband used to torture me, beat me. He used slang language with me ... and exploited me financially.”

-Respondent, Dhaka

In the above quote, a respondent explained how along with verbal abuse, she faced physical, psychological and economic violence at the hands of her partner.

Psychological and emotional violence: Use of aggressive tone and threats of beating, restricting movement were identified as forms of psychological and emotional violence.

Economic violence: Removing access to financial resources and taking away respondents' earning were identified as forms of economic violence.

4.1.6 HBWs lived experience of facing violence in work sphere

The respondents found strong linkages between economic violence and verbal abuse in the work sphere. They noted that the use of high volume and rude tones to suppress HBWs and deny or delay their wages was a frequent tactic used by the employers or contractors. Instances of sexual violence and harassment were also common.

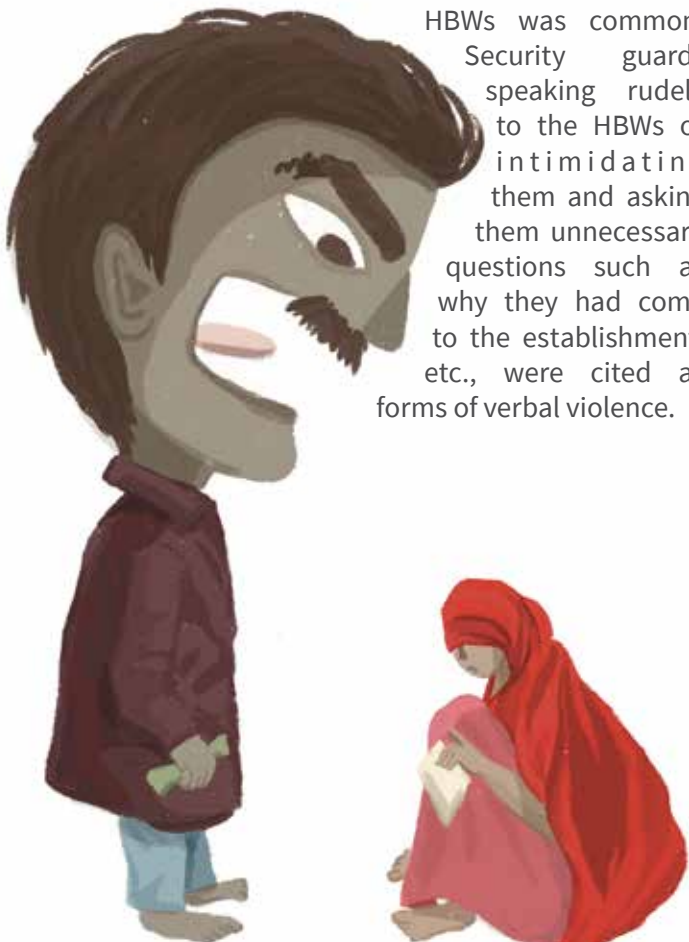
Economic violence: All respondents spoke of economic exploitation they faced. Three forms of economic violence that were delineated by a majority of respondents included low pay, delay in payment, and cutting wages by pointing out defects in the readied items. These forms of violence were shared in FGDs as well.

“It is very common here, we all face the economic exploitation. Middlemen pay us very less, cut our pay in the form of fines and penalties by pointing out mistakes in our work and delay our payment.”

-Respondent, Dhaka

Verbal abuse: A number of respondents noted that while pointing out mistakes, middlemen and contractors spoke to them very rudely. Use of loud and rude tone to suppress the HBWs was common.

Security guards speaking rudely to the HBWs or intimidating them and asking them unnecessary questions such as why they had come to the establishment, etc., were cited as forms of verbal violence.



Sexual violence and harassment: Instances of sexual violence were reported predominantly when the HBWs went to collect raw materials from the middlemen or the lenders. Asking for sexual favours in return for more work, touching hands inappropriately, coming very close or passing lewd comments were some ways in which HBWs were sexually harassed. In one instance, the daughter of a HBW was also harassed by the middlemen.

“Yes, the 13-14 year old girl went to the middleman to bring materials, but the middleman intentionally delayed the handing over of materials. The girl understood his intentions so she left the place with other workers. After this incident, she never visited that place alone.”

-Respondent, Dhaka

The respondents did not mention instances of online violence. Although in the KII with a representative of an NGO working with HBWs, it was clarified that HBWs faced online violence and such cases were being reported. However, the awareness around various forms of online violence among the HBWs was still low and for this reason they did not immediately identify virtual platforms as a medium of perpetrating violence.

Psychological and emotional abuse: Bullying by middlemen and co-workers was noted as a form of psychological violence. It involved targeting one HBW or passing mean comments to denigrate and criticise her work. Blackmailing by middlemen forcing women to extend sexual favours was also described not only as a form of sexual but also psychological violence.

4.1.7 Causes of violence

In Bangladesh most respondents dwelt upon root causes of violence against HBWs. They specifically explicated patriarchy and gender discrimination were two interlinked factors that oppressed women and put them at risk of exploitation and violence.

CAUSATIVE FACTORS

Patriarchy: Many respondents said that because of male domination in the society women were discriminated. They added that in patriarchal societies, men had a position of privilege and women were neglected. As a result, their men had power over women and could exploit them without consequences.

Gender discrimination: Most respondents said that women in the family and communities were accorded low value. They were neglected and taken for granted. Respondents explained that this distorted view of girls and women puts them at risk of violence.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Poverty: In terms of contributing factors, poverty was the most frequent response. The respondents elaborated that women's poverty made them

more vulnerable to violence. Since poor women were not allowed to go out, they had no option but to work from home in exploitative conditions and depend on contractors and middlemen for work.

Perceived imbalance of work household responsibility by family members: As they did in India and Pakistan, the respondents from Bangladesh noted that their families felt that due to Home-Based work, they did not take care of the household. To punish respondents, their husband and in-laws beat them. Thus, women's work and their contribution were not recognised, and they were exploited and humiliated both by family members and employers and contractors.

"Our Home-Based work is seen as an interruption for other work and then family members get angry and verbally and physically abuse us."

-Respondent, Dhaka

Impunity of perpetrators: The respondents explained that many women in their communities summoned up the courage to report violence, but the perpetrators were seldom punished. This made the perpetrators fearless and they continued to commit violence.

4.1.8 Impact of violence

The respondents in Bangladesh agreed that violence impacted them personally. They briefly described the following effects of violence.

Physical health: They noted that incidents of violence could cause headache and hypertension. It was also added that pain in body after physical violence was common.

Stress and psychological effect: The respondents explained that violence and its probability at home or at the workplace worried them. Constant anxiety and worry were reported as effects of violence.

Family life: Disturbance in family life, marital discord and exposure of children to violence were noted as effects on family life.

Work interruption and low productivity: A few respondents said that violence at the workplace and in the home interrupted smooth workflow and lowered productivity. This impacted work speed and provided the contractors and middlemen an opportunity to cut HBWs' wages, resulting in economic exploitation.

Social life: During the discussions, respondents mentioned that violence made them aloof and lonely, and they did not feel like stepping out of the house or participating in social life.

4.1.9 Coping with violence

Despite all challenges, the respondents in Bangladesh showed resilience and courage and mentioned that they tried to reason with perpetrators to stop violence and if that did not work, they raised their voice against it. The three coping mechanisms that appeared recurrently in the discussions with the respondents were:

Silently tolerate violence to conform to familial responsibilities: All respondents mentioned that initially they tried to tolerate violence for the sake of family. They did not raise their voice against violence straightaway to protect the family and children.

Try to mediate: In cases of both domestic and workplace violence, the respondents tried to handle the situation on their own by talking to or reasoning with the perpetrators. This was cited as a potent coping mechanism to demonstrate to the perpetrators that their actions were wrong and indicate that if the violence did not stop, women would take further action.

Raise voice against violence: In cases where violence inevitably recurred, the respondents mentioned that they raised their voice against it and involved senior members of the family or community.

4.1.10 Response Mechanisms

The respondents from Bangladesh were very vocal about reporting and addressing the violence. As mentioned earlier, many of them had undergone training on violence reporting and response. Therefore, they were aware of various response mechanisms for violence.

Reaching out to community leaders: Most respondents noted that they reported violence to community leaders who through mediation or social sanctions against the perpetrators tried to address and prevent various incidents.

“*One of my friends, at first she complaint to known people in the locality. They made them (perpetrator and the friend) understand about the bad effects of violence and advised them to reach a comprimise. When the violence became extreme, she took legal action with the help of one of the local NGOs.*”

-Respondent, Dhaka

Reaching out to helpline: A large majority of study respondents, spoke of reaching out to helpline of victim support centre which provided them psychological support and guided them to take further action.

Reporting to government agencies: A few respondents mentioned that urban support services were effective and other government agencies were helpful in addressing and stopping violence.

Grievance redressal through NGOs: Names of two prominent NGOs were cited by the respondents in addressing violence. These NGOs were found effective in providing legal aid, mediation and survivor support along with training.

“*Yes, various NGOs provide services to stop violence, help the women. They try to counsel the male partner on the effects of violence and also arrange a training programme for women on violence, its prevention and reporting.*”

-Respondent, Dhaka



4.1.11 Impact of COVID-19

Almost all the respondents noted that economic hardship and violence during COVID-19 increased, but none shared their own personal experience of facing increased violence.

4.2 India

The lived experience of HBWs in India brought to the fore complex linkages between patriarchy, gender discrimination, victim blaming and oppressive domestic and workplace relations as major drivers of violence. The intersection of vulnerability to violence with age, marital and socioeconomic status of HBWs clearly emerged. Most respondents resiliently grappled with violence in their unique ways, while becoming a part of unions and grassroots collectives built their agency to respond to violence effectively.

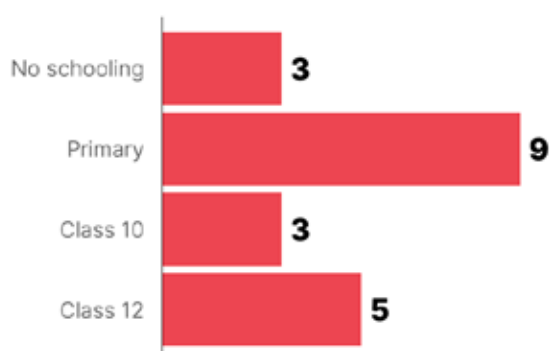
4.2.1 Profile of HBWs in India

Age: In India, of the 20 respondents that were interviewed, half were below 40, while the remaining half were above 40 years. Of these, five were above 50 years.



Religion and castes: Of those interviewed in India, nine were Hindus, six were Muslims, and two were Christians. Three were also Scheduled Caste (SC) Buddhists. Of the Hindus, one belonged to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) and two belonged to Other Backward Castes (OBC).

Education status: Most respondents had completed education up till primary level, i.e. class 5 or maximum class 10. A number of respondents felt that they could not get work in the organised formal sector because of their inability to complete schooling or secure an educational degree.



Marital status: A total of 16 respondents were married. Of these, three were divorced and had remarried. One respondent was divorced, and one was single. The reason for divorce in all four cases was domestic violence and ill-treatment by husband and/or in-laws. Four respondents were widows; these women were above 45 but two of them had lost their husbands in their late 20s and 30s.

Family structure: A majority of respondents (18) were from nuclear families and two lived in joint families. Since all the respondents lived in urban slums in small hutments, they lived primarily in a nuclear set up. Of the two respondents who lived in joint families, one was a widow and another was divorced. They cited the lack of support of a male member as the reason for living in joint families. Both lived with their parents or siblings.

4.2.2 Occupational profile of HBWs in India

Type of Home-Based work: Most of the respondents were engaged in the garment industry and its various supply chain processes. These included tailoring, embellishment work, cropping and cutting hems, and stitching quilts. The second most frequently cited type of work was making household food items such as papads and pickles, followed by jewellery making. A majority of respondents (15) were engaged in more than one type of work. It was explained by respondents that their engagement in multiple types of occupation was determined by the availability of work.

Type of work	No of respondents
Garment Industry	18
Food related	11
Jewellery making	7
Paper Industry	1
Teaching	1
Beautician	1
Pottery	1
Laundry	1
Total	41*

*Total is more than 20 as respondents gave more than one response for each type of work.

Similar trends emerged during the FGDs, where respondents mentioned that a number of women from the study areas were involved in the garment industry and preparing home-cooked foods. Other forms of occupation included finishing work on agricultural tools, flower garland and rangoli making, and bangle selling.

Source of contract: A total of 10 women were own account workers while the remaining were piece-rate workers and four also worked as domestic help. Since a number of respondents engaged in multiple types of work, the own account workers could become piece-rate workers while engaging in different occupation types. At the time of the study, of those engaged in piece-rate work, five respondents sourced work from contractors, middlemen and sub-contractors, two received work from both middlemen and sub-contractors, one each received work from a shopkeeper and a factory. The disparate nature of work ownership and types of stakeholders involved in informal

supply chains were corroborated during the FGDs. The respondents stated that they sourced work from different stakeholders and could be both piece-rate and own account workers at any given point of time.

Hours of Home-Based work: Most respondents reported working 8-10 hours per day in their economic pursuits apart from doing their household work. Four respondents said they worked for more than 10 hours a day. Two respondents worked less than 8 hours. One of these respondents, apart from carrying out Home-Based work also worked somewhere outside. The other respondent was unable to work for longer durations due to absence of electricity.

Income from Home-Based work: The income of a majority of respondents (9 and 8, respectively) was either less than INR 200/day (2.67 USD/day) or between INR 200-400/day (2.67-5.33 USD/day). Only four respondents reported that their income was more than INR 400/day (5.33 USD/day). These findings were validated during FGDs, wherein respondents mentioned that the average income of HBWs in the sampling units was INR 200-400/day (2.67 USD/day). At least three respondents mentioned that Home-Based work was a primary source of income for them.

Reasons and benefits of opting for Home-Based work: The respondents cited poverty and the ability to add to household income as the primary reasons for opting for Home-Based work. Being able to look after home and children and working from the safety of their home were stated as key benefits for choosing Home-Based work. It was evident that HBWs were so tied to their gender roles that they felt looking after children and home was the biggest advantage of doing Home-Based work. One respondent mentioned that due to mobility restrictions imposed by her husband, she chose Home-Based work despite earning meagre wages.

"I choose to opt for work because you can look after the children, can complete all household work and work can also be done. A little money comes in. I sit at home and complete it."

-Respondent, Mumbai

Challenges of Home-Based work: Apart from the above advantages, the respondents detailed at length the challenges of Home-Based work. These included economic exploitation and not getting wages commensurate with the volume of work accomplished. The inability to maintain a healthy lifestyle-in particular because the work interfered with sleep and food patterns and led to occupational health problems-and the temporary nature of work were noted as problems associated with Home-Based work.

“Sometimes I make jewellery [from] 2 kg raw material. But the income is very low (from jewellery making), madam. It’s a lot more work for less money. There’s a lot of work but very little money. Women should at least earn Rs.100/day but they don’t receive it, but I earn INR 300 in a week.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

Occupational health problems reported by respondents included burns to hands while working close to a furnace and breathing problems and allergies caused by working with chemicals. Embellishment and thread cutting work could lead to pain in hands, eyes and headache. Working with zips, metal tags and wires caused cuts and bruises on hands. Sitting for long hours in one place resulted in aches in the lower back and/or shoulder and sometimes the entire body. Since the respondents did not address these conditions, these were likely to become chronic health problems.

“Buckles (curing and adding colour to zip, metal tags in garments) were pulled out of the furnace and were very hot. The hot buckles had to immediately be put on the wire. If he saw us sitting still next to the hot buckles, he (contractor) would get very angry. If you held those buckles, you would get blisters on your hands. But you had to continue to work like that. They could pierce our hands.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

4.2.3 Understanding of violence

Almost all respondents in India barring one agreed that HBWs faced violence. They pointed out that women were vulnerable to violence at home and while engaging with workplace stakeholders. Most of the respondents explained that domestic violence comprised verbal abuse, psychological and emotional and physical violence such as beating, pushing and throwing objects and threatening, respectively by husbands and in-laws. This was cited by as many as 15 respondents. Five respondents mentioned that snatching away money, not giving household expenses or stealing household items were forms of economic violence faced by HBWs at the hands of their husbands and in-laws. Most respondents explained different

forms of violence faced by citing their own examples or sharing stories of someone they knew very closely.

“Yes, economic violence happens. In the back lane, they work on (making) pens. So that person (contractor) did not pay a single worker satisfactorily, in every pen he pointed out some defect and tortured the workers.”

-Respondent, Nashik

A HBW from Nashik talking about the physical violence experienced by her daughter, who was suffering from tuberculosis:

“I used to go to work. My other daughters were very little, he (daughter’s husband) would come and beat her up and take her home by force. He would say, ‘you have to come home.. make dinner for me...’ She had grown very weak, she couldn’t even walk.”

In a particular instance the husband took the daughter back with him despite her sick condition and later on she succumbed to her illness.

Only two respondents identified sexual violence as a form of violence in the domestic sphere. Sexual harassment by relatives and non-consensual sex by intimate partner were given as examples of sexual violence.

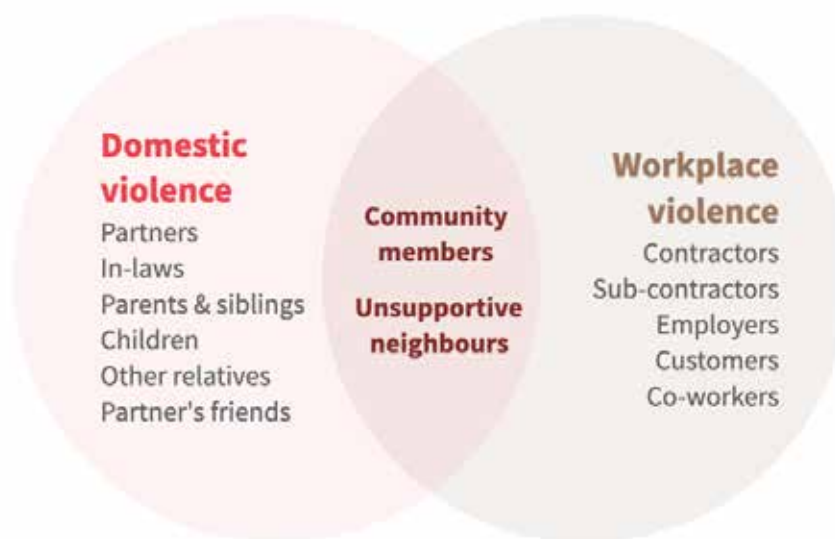
In the work sphere, respondents not only recognised violence that they faced at home by contractors, sub-contractors and customers, but also while they travelled to collect raw materials or deliver the finished products. The respondents

candidly recognised sexual harassment, verbal abuse and economic violence as different forms of violence faced in the work sphere. A number of women recognised harassment through phone as a form of violence.

The HBWs understood their unique vulnerability of having home and workplace in the same space and the intersection between workplace and domestic violence. The respondents explicitly mentioned that violence and lack of support at home put HBWs at risk of workplace violence, where contractors were likely to exploit or sexually harass them.

4.2.4 Perpetrators of violence

Along with forms, the respondents dwelt upon the perpetrators of violence. In the domestic sphere, respondents talked about facing violence at the hands of not just partners and in-laws but sometimes their own relatives, including brothers and sisters-in-law (brothers' wives). A few respondents further spoke of lack of support from their own parents—even parental cooperation with the perpetrators—when they faced violence from their partners or in-laws.



In a few cases, partner's friends could be the perpetrators of psychological and emotional violence. Apart from this, those respondents who were divorced or widowed faced violence from their children as well.

“Even my family...in my home I face violence, I live at my mother's place. There are times when there are tiffs with my brothers, sisters-in-law...they say live like this or live like that. Brothers keep saying things like, ‘you left your home’, ‘you ruined three children's life’, ‘now you have come and sat here, are you leaving them (your children) too?’. They keep taunting me like this, but I do not pay attention to them. I focus on my work; I do not focus on them. That is why I am going to get my own room (accommodation).”

-Respondent, Mumbai

In the work sphere, contractors were cited as the main perpetrators of violence by maximum number of respondents. The own account workers reported facing violence from customers. Two respondents mentioned that co-workers could perpetuate violence against HBWs. Similar views were echoed during the FGDs, wherein respondents said that at work, HBWs were vulnerable to violence from contractors, sub-contractors, customers and employers.

In one of the IDIs in Nashik, one respondent pointed out that since her husband invested money in her Home-Based stitching classes, he would ask her for estimates of her profits on a daily basis and humiliate or verbally abuse her when her students or customers were around her. Since many customers did not pay her on time, the respondent had to constantly quote deflated figures about the quantum of work and profit margins. She felt extremely harassed and noted that if the family members had a stake or

involvement in Home-Based work, even they could perpetuate workplace violence and in such cases domestic and workplace violence intersected.

Further, community members were identified as perpetrators of violence. Unsupportive neighbours in particular were identified as perpetrators of verbal, sexual and psychological violence. This violence took the form of humiliation, spreading rumours, maligning reputation and stigmatising the survivor by neighbours and community, and could be triggered by incidents of domestic or workplace violence. The ensuing arguments could magnify into physical violence. In one particular incident in Nashik, over a small argument, a neighbour pulled the hair of the HBW for over one and half hour, a huge crowd gathered to watch the incident. The hurt HBW had to be taken to hospital after falling unconscious.

4.2.5 HBWs lived experience of facing violence in the domestic sphere

A majority of respondents shared their own experience of facing violence at home. They expressed that at any given point in time, they could face multiple forms of violence including physical, verbal, psychological and emotional violence.

Physical violence: Facing physical violence at the hands of their partners and in-laws was reported by most of the respondents. They reported getting beaten, kicked and being hit by them frequently. One respondent mentioned that she was forcefully pushed out of the house.

“In the nearby maidan (small open spaces in Dharavi slum of Mumbai) my husband had thrown me down and beaten me. That’s how I got through my days. Would anyone put up with that today? No.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

In the above quote, the respondent stressed that not only was she hurt physically but humiliated in a public space.

Verbal abuse: Use of foul language, abusing and taunting were cited as common forms of verbal abuse faced by the respondents. Apart from a partner, family members, primarily in-

laws, verbally abused the respondents. Many respondents mentioned that physical violence was often accompanied by verbal abuse.

“I got married and then I had a son. When I was pregnant with my son, that’s when the hitting and violence started. And he used to drink, and a person who drinks is not in his senses. He kept drinking, I kept thinking he will improve now, improve now...I had three children, but he never changed/improved. Hitting, beating, swearing, wherever he would see me, he would start hitting me.”

-Respondent, Nashik

Psychological and emotional violence:

Threatening and creating fear were identified as key tactics for hurting women psychologically and emotionally. One particular respondent explained that her husband hid/stole her identity documents and stared at her for an entire night with murderous rage to scare and harass her. As mentioned in the earlier section, a respondent’s partner used to repeatedly ask her for profit estimates as he had lent her money for running the Home-Based stitching classes.

The same respondent was also forced to do household chores even when she was sick. She rightly identified these acts as a form of psychological violence.

Maligning reputation and insulting were also recognised as forms of psychological and emotional violence perpetuated by not just family members but also neighbours and community members.



“ Since my husband left, they started taunting me, so I did not like to sit with them (neighbours). I was busy with my classes. So they said, ‘She is very arrogant’. But I did not pay attention. When women are alone, people think it’s easy to commit sexual violence, the incidences of harassment such as gazing at you and talking inappropriately, taunting, making inappropriate gestures, etc. increase.”

-Respondent, Nashik

One respondent noted that she faced discrimination and maltreatment from community members because she was separated, but the community members treated her like a widow and demeaned her during social gatherings.

“People look down on me, think of me as a low life. While some people, when they do auspicious ceremonies, avoid me by considering me a widow; some taunt me.”

-Respondent, Nashik

Restricting mobility was also recognised as a form of psychological violence. The fact that husbands did not let HBWs step out or socialise with others, work outside or talk to friends, neighbours and at times their own family members impacted them

emotionally and precipitated feelings of loneliness and helplessness.

“My husband did not even let me step out of the house or speak to others in the house.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

One of the respondents narrated that her husband had married a second time, and her in-laws approved of the second wife. To harass the respondent and keep her away from the former husband, her in-laws separated her from her children. This incident traumatised her.

Economic violence: Two respondents spoke of facing economic violence at the hands of their husband and son, respectively. Both reported that these male members did not contribute to the household income; instead they took away the respondents' earnings and even sold household items. Incidentally, in both cases the men had alcohol and drug addiction or gambled.

"He (husband) would take one or two utensils from home, sell them and eat and drink. What can I say? He will take away my money too."

-Respondent, Nashik

4.2.6 HBWs lived experience of facing violence in work sphere

Describing the hardships faced at work, most respondents spoke of facing economic violence from their contractors, sub-contractors and customers. The lived experience of HBWs revealed that due to their dependence on contractors and sub-contractors for work, they had to silently and passively deal with various forms of violence inflicted on them in the work sphere.

It is crucial to note that most of these workplace stakeholders were part of HBWs' family networks, neighbourhood and community; therefore, addressing violence inflicted by them was very challenging for the respondents.

Confronting these perpetrators meant that others in the family and neighbourhood would also get to know of the violence faced, putting HBWs at risk of victim blaming.

Economic violence: The most oft-cited form of economic violence faced by HBWs was delay in payments and withholding of dues. In many cases respondents said that they felt harassed when their payments were delayed by the contractors, sub-contractors and customers. They felt helpless and powerless in such situations as, even after repeated requests, the contractors or customers did not pay their dues. Own account workers faced similar problems when customers refused to pay their dues. In such situations friendly or neighbourhood ties with contractors and customers acted as a barrier for HBWs to demand their dues.

A respondent in Mumbai who ran tiffin service said:

The respondents explained that verbal abuse often went hand in hand with economic violence, and they were likely to experience more than one form of violence at any given point of time. For instance, husband and son would begin with verbal abuse to ask for money. Upon refusal, they would become physical, taunt and say mean things and then snatch away earnings or take household items. In these cases, women were able to recognise that they faced verbal and physical abuse with economic violence.

"Our money has been withheld many times. When I ran the bhishi (tiffin service), if I start collecting my dues in Dharavi they will be worth 2.75-3 lakhs. But everyone runs away without paying. Such high unpaid dues...we used to let it go. Brothers, who would eat, would narrate their constraints...and say I heard your constraints, now you listen to mine and just won't pay."

Another respondent from Mumbai noted:

"But there was no proper payment. 'I'll give you the payment in the evening', they (contractors) would say. I would go and ask and then they would say come tomorrow, come day after. That's what he would do. How would I make it work?"

Another form of economic violence reported by the respondents was not getting the money they were promised. In such cases, contractors would not honour the verbal agreement they had with HBWs regarding the payment for a certain volume of work, instead paying much less than what was agreed. This was reported in case of garment-based piece-rate work frequently. To justify lower pay than what was promised, contractors would point out defects in the readied goods or question the quality of work of HBWs.

A few respondents spoke in detail about not getting money commensurate to the work they did. They mentioned that HBWs worked hard but contractor and sub-contractors negotiated much lower pay for the work they did to maximise their own profits. They mentioned that HBWs seldom received the pay they deserved.

“*Yes, women are tortured, blackmailed, and discriminated against for being a woman. Then there are times when women need money, then they (contractors) only give that much money but expect a lot of work. We do so much work and get very less money.*”

-Respondent, Nashik

As mentioned earlier, one respondent's husband repeatedly sought details of her profit estimates as he had lent her money and counted the money she earned. He exercised control over the respondent's earning. This was a form of economic violence related to HBWs' work but was committed by a domestic stakeholder.

Verbal abuse: Few respondents spoke about how economic violence by contractors and customers was coupled with verbal abuse. They noted that to defend their unjust practices, contractors often used foul language, a rude tone and shouted at HBWs. In cases where HBWs raised their voice against economic violence, contractors and customers would get into heated arguments with them and even abused them. The verbal abuse would escalate in situations when due to exigencies at home, HBWs were not able to complete on time.

“The employer very rudely shouted at me that ‘I’ll give you the money when I get it!’...Where would I get the money to pay others?”

-Respondent, Mumbai

“I was walking with a lady (Home-Based worker) and she said, ‘Wait, let me just deliver this finished work’. And when she was delivering it (to the contractor at his shop), he used very foul language with her, I have heard.”

-Respondent, Nashik

Psychological and emotional violence: The respondents noted that contractors perpetrated psychological and emotional violence by criticising and humiliating HBWs in front of neighbours or bad mouthing them among other contractors. This impacted a few respondents severely and

affected their work. They said that because of the bad mouthing, they stopped getting work from other contractors as well.

“The contractor hands over the pieces in the morning at 11 AM and says he wants the pieces ready by 4 PM and because of my personal problems, I cannot complete it. He comes and asks for the piece. I say, ‘Aree, sorry I could not complete it. Wait for an hour, I will complete it.’ He said, ‘I had told you to complete it. How can you do this? Should have let us know that you cannot compete it. Why do you take the work? I would have given it someone else!’ We need the work. We have to speak to them calmly. We are speaking calmly but he is getting aggressive. ‘If you can’t do it, you should tell us. That is why I do not give work to women’ they say that...when things like this happen you know what they do, if there are urgent pieces, a small stock not much quantity, then he will not give it to people like us. He will give it to those who can complete it. This has happened before. ‘She is whiney, she does not make it fast, takes time.’ And they speak harshly about her in front of their colleagues and other contractors saying do not give her work.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

The own account workers shared similar incidents when customers humiliated them.

“Now if you placed an order of 8-10 blouses, and you don’t want to pay for it, so you purposely speak very loudly, create a scene, so that the fees for the service are reduced and you don’t have to pay. Even if they are old customers. ‘You have ruined it, it was such a good material.’ If people outside hear it, then they think you’re not good at work, it slows down the business.”

-Respondent, Nashik

As mentioned earlier, one respondent's husband repeatedly sought details of her profit estimates as he had lent her money and counted the money she earned. He exercised control over the respondent's earning.

While facing different forms of violence, HBWs could seldom raise their voice as they were dependent for work on their contractors, sub-contractors and customers. Due to this indebted nature of Home-Based work, any retaliation put respondents at risk of being branded as a bad or problematic worker and losing future work opportunities.

Sexual harassment: The HBWs admitted that they faced sexual harassment by workplace stakeholders. For instance, the contractors, sub-contractors or customers who came to pick up readied goods from HBWs' places gazed at them or passed lewd comments. Male gaze, in particular, was noted as a form of sexual harassment by most of the respondents. In some cases, the contractors touched HBWs inappropriately or demanded sexual favours for work. Unlike other forms of violence, the HBWs collectively tried to raise their voice against sexual harassment in a number of instances.

"When he (contractor) came to give work, the HBW had to show him a sample first before he placed the order. He placed the sample next to HBW and while she worked on the machine, he would stand too close to her, try to touch her.. so I spoke directly, 'Move aside, move aside immediately.' He committed sexual violence against a lady in the next lane. He pressed her breasts... Women in that area beat him up. So when later he was delaying my payments, I said, 'Look, those women beat you up and almost break your leg, I will wholly break your leg, don't act funny with me.'"

-Respondent, Nashik

The respondents said that even though they worked at home, they were required to step out to collect the raw materials. During their travel, they could be stalked by their contractors or even strangers. This form of harassment impacted their mobility, access to work and made them feel unsafe and insecure. The HBWs also mentioned that if they were stalked or harassed by men on the way, their own credibility and reputation was also at stake. One respondent in Mumbai who was an Urdu teacher said that when she was stalked by a man, she stopped stepping out of the home. She was worried that if people saw that she was being

followed by men her credibility as a teacher would be affected and parents would not send students to her home.

"Home-Based Workers get work at home. But we have to travel to pick up the material and also deliver it once it is done. What if a man or a boy follows us, or keeps an eye on us? He can extract all information about us.. and later on through phone or otherwise he blackmails us... This happened with one other lady who works with me. She used to go to the shop to collect material every day and he started following her. He extracted all information about her at the shop (sub-contractors), who she was, if she was married, if she had kids. And he would knock on her door at night. He did this every night. Because she did not have a husband, just had two daughters. I want to say that men have a very wrong/bad nazar (gaze). And madam, the richer they are, the more problematic they are. Meaning the man who has a lot of money, they are very arrogant."

-Respondent, Nashik

Online violence: Few incidents of online violence were reported wherein women mentioned that they received anonymous calls from men in and around workplace. They were harassed first by phone calls, and this could later snowball into stalking.

4.2.7 Causes of violence



During the interactions, respondents deliberated upon the factors which led to violence. They identified both the causative and contributing factors that could lead to and sustain or increase severity of violence. The responses also revealed intersectionality between these factors and HBWs' own unique circumstances. Patriarchy emerged as one of the root causes of violence. Forms of patriarchy in domestic relations, labour relations and social life was linked to gender discrimination and power imbalance between men and women. Many contributing factors such as culture of silence and normalisation, victim blaming, and internalisation were directly linked to patriarchy and gender discrimination. It is important to note that these factors also intersected with women's socioeconomic characteristics and situation. These have been explained in detail below.

CAUSATIVE FACTORS

Patriarchy, gender discrimination and power imbalance: The respondents pointed out that society favoured men and was patriarchal in nature. Therefore, men in both domestic and workplace spheres exercised control over women's labour and daily lives. Thus, violence was seen as a tool to control, exploit and dominate women in the patriarchal society. To sustain patriarchy and male domination, women's contributions to home and communities were not recognised and their rights were not protected and respected.

The respondents further noted that the patriarchal nature of family, society and labour relations manifested in the form of gender discrimination. Since gender discrimination began from childhood, women were deprived of their equal opportunities to education, participation, skill development and employment, and they were married early. As a result, they remained at a position of disadvantage and at risk of deprivation and violence through

their lifecycle. The fact that women were expected to be subordinate to men and be dependent on them made women vulnerable to violence and all forms of exploitation. It was explained that lack of support from HBWs' own families when they faced violence was also due to patriarchy and gender discrimination, and to the fact that women were supposed to support and respect their partners and in-laws. Despite lack of support, the respondents who had chosen to move out of their marriages due to domestic violence lived in their parental homes and earned a living.

Another factor closely related to patriarchy and gender discrimination was power imbalance between men and women in both domestic and work lives. A number of respondents pointed out that since society supported men, they had more power and privilege, which made it easier for them to exploit and dominate women be it partners, their families or employers or contractors.

“People discriminate against women. They think women should not step out or work, but people should understand that they should give women a chance or motivate them because no one can do what a woman can. But people will trouble women and they are expected to bear it. Because they cannot afford to go behind them (retaliate against the perpetrators).”

-Respondent, Nashik

Unjust value chains: Two respondents recognised that economic violence against HBWs was the result of unjust supply chains, in which those

higher up earned profits and those at the lowest rung were exploited. They noted that contractors and sub-contractors and all those above them tried to maximise their profits, while HBWs who put in so much hard work were paid the lowest sums of money. While respondents agreed that many contractors and sub-contractors may not be earning enough themselves, the tendency was to exploit the HBWs as much as they could to extract maximum profits.

“If the middlemen don’t get money, then he gives a lower rate. And they get women to work at an even lower rate.”

-Respondent, Nashik

“ *“Profits (returns) for this (Home-Based work) are very low. They (contractors/businesses/factories) make a lot of profits. But they get work done from us for meagre earnings. Barely anything.”*

-Respondent, Mumbai

While explaining the unjust nature of supply chains, respondents further noted that unlike in the organised sector, they did not have any bargaining power or collective body to demand their rights or negotiate with contractors. This further put them at risk of economic violence.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Culture of silence and normalisation, victim blaming and internalisation: Communities and families not speaking about violence and considering it normal or perceiving it as an internal family matter were all viewed as factors that sustained violence. Women themselves not speaking about violence as they fear dishonouring their families or fear of getting blamed for their circumstances contributed to violence. The respondents clarified that culture of silence and victim blaming applied to both domestic and workplace violence. Culture of silence was reported as a major barrier to the reporting of violence.

A number of respondents explained that culture of silence persisted because when women raised their voices, they were not only silenced but they were held responsible for the violence they faced.

This victim blaming made perpetrators fearless, thereby perpetuating a cycle of violence. This was specifically true for violence faced in work sphere. Victim blaming was also recognised as a barrier to the reporting of violence.

While examining culture of silence, a few respondents concluded that women continued to face violence as they had to conform to gender and social norms. Some responses indicated that enduring violence for the sake of the family’s honour was necessary, and such women won society’s approval and respect. It became clear that despite facing violence and viewing it as a problem, they endured it due to deeply entrenched patriarchal mind-sets and social norms that condone violence. Difficulty in breaking out of the cycle of patriarchal socialisation and the fear or repercussions made speaking against violence difficult for women.

“They do not want to ruin their reputation. Make it work the way it is... some can’t speak about violence, they have pressures from home. Women cannot speak openly... she has pressures behind her, but she has to protect her family’s reputation.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

Intersectionality and HBWs’ unique position:

While articulating their lived experience of violence, respondents noted that HBWs’ own socioeconomic and personal circumstances and the overlap of home and workspace intensified the effect of causative and contributing factors of violence. Age, marital and socioeconomic status—and their intersection with deeply entrenched unequal gender norms—made them extremely susceptible to violence. For instance, a 50-years-old widow who was a poor HBW who faced violence from her son and exploitation from a contractor mentioned that since she had no support or even the ability to step out to work, she had to put up with her son’s ill-treatment and continue the exploitative Home-Based work. In another instance, a separated HBW said that she was ill-treated by her neighbours in social gatherings and had to be extremely vigilant while interacting with contractors and sub-contractors so they did not sexually harass her, which could lead community members to malign her reputation.

“A woman stays alone with no one to support her. That is why people think that she will dance to their tunes out of fear...Her problem is that there is no one to support her, wrong things will continue to happen to her and no one will stand by her. And out of fear she will do it, right? The society is partial to men.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

Owing to overlap between home and workspace, there was a high likelihood that contractors knew which HBWs faced violence at home. Therefore, the contractors were likely to give such HBWs less work or pay them low wages, or even sexually harass them as the contractors knew the women had no one to turn to for support at home.

“(After facing workplace violence) On top of that, person at home will taunt even more ...people like neighbours and others outside also taunt—and now suppose she tells people that (she faced violence) and everybody finds out about it, how will the society view it? They will say ‘she is this way, she does such things’. Even though she is a nice person, but people will say these things. So they will keep taunting her.

So like this, she will not be able to work. Inside the house, there is trouble, outside the house. And if she does not work, then there is no money.”

-Respondent, Nashik

Further, poverty was recognised as one of the major cross-cutting contributing factors to violence. The respondents shared that the power imbalance between men and women was intensified due to poverty. Feminisation of poverty stood out as a major contributing factor in many interactions. The respondents elaborated that the patriarchal power imbalance was exacerbated for women who were poor. Poverty made women helpless; resultantly they remained trapped in unequal and exploitative personal and work relationships.

Perceived imbalance between work and household responsibilities by HBWs’ family members:

A number of respondents noted that when they worked at home, their partners or in-laws felt that they weren’t taking care of household responsibilities or looking after the children. Those family members failed to recognise the hard work HBWs put in to contribute to the household income. The Home-Based work was regarded as a leisure activity rather than as productive labour, and their earnings were considered supplemental rather than essential income. This perception resulted in domestic violence.

A respondent from Nashik said:

“If the woman is busy with her work, she cannot take out time for the kids; in the Diwali season, if there are too many orders, then she cannot give time at home.. so small reasons create big fights. She is worried that if she doesn’t finish her orders, her customers will leave her... and the husband expects... that when he comes home, the wife should give him tea... or not work... but she is helpless and her mind is split between the two things... There are unlimited problems faced by women.”

Alcoholism, drug and gambling addiction:

Alcoholism or other forms of addiction were identified as a major driver of domestic violence. Many respondents noted that a partner’s or a family member’s addiction to alcohol, drugs or gambling vitiated the environment at home. The addicted member would spend his/her own income on alcohol and take away the respondents’ earnings or even sell household items. He/she would resort to physical violence such as hitting the respondent to take away her earnings.

It is important to note that alcoholism and other forms of addiction were mentioned multiple times by many respondents during IDIs. The theme of alcoholism also appeared during FGDs.

During the FGD in Mumbai, a participant added:
“Sometimes, the husbands who are drunkards, they will start swearing/cussing at the wife for not keeping the food ready on time. So, then many times, they also hit the women. Not everyone is the same.”

Partner infidelity: A few respondents spoke about husbands cheating on their wives as a potential reason for domestic violence. It was added that such men do not like their wives or lose interest in them and resort to violence to harass them.

“He (my husband) had an affair with a woman who worked as a thread-cutter. He had a workshop, and she was a mother of two. But since my husband was involved with that other woman, he ill-treated me.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

In some responses, women said that a wife may be disloyal and have affairs and the husbands would beat their unfaithful wives. Family, community and sometimes women themselves justified violence if wives were unfaithful.

Partner suspicion and instigation by partners’ family and friends: A partner’s suspicion that the wife was involved or friends with some other man could become a cause of violence. These feelings of suspicion could be baseless and very often were fanned by other family members or partners’ friends. A number of respondents felt

4.2.8 Impact of violence

Violence has multiple effects on the lives of HBWs. The study respondents from India elaborated on how violence affects various facets of life, including health, psychological well-being, family life and overall productivity.

Stress, psychological trauma and suicidal tendencies: Most respondents identified negative effects of violence in the form of stress and psychological trauma. They noted that working from home exposed women to both domestic and workplace violence in the same physical space. For this reason, the effects of workplace and domestic violence overlapped and intersected

that husbands’ family and friends prodded the husbands to harass their wives. This led to marital discord, domestic violence and exploitation of women. At times, this could be a single most important driver of domestic violence.

Upon asking why such instigation happened, respondents replied that when the woman was not of the family’s choice or did not submit to the wishes of the husband or his family, then in-laws relied on these tactics. Friends and neighbours also instigated the partner and family members as they were jealous of HBWs. One respondent shared that she came to know that her neighbour was having an extramarital affair. To ensure that the HBW did not talk about it to anyone, the neighbour instead accused her of having an affair, maligned her reputation and instigated the husband, resulting in domestic violence. In many cases women were not even allowed to talk to other men. This posed a challenge for HBWs who are required to interact with various contractors and sub-contractors.

In one of the FGDs in Nashik, participants shared:

“Men are very suspicious. There’s mental suffering as well, madam. They ask questions like ‘Why did you speak with him?’, ‘Why did he come home?’ There are a lot of challenges in life.”

A few respondents themselves contended that women should not step out of the house or talk to strangers or other men as it was not only contrary to their cultural values and moral code, but also triggered suspicion among the partners.

to a great extent and affected their personal and work lives, causing extreme stress, worry and at times hopelessness. Some respondent who faced intimate partner or domestic violence reported that they remained under constant fear of getting beaten or harassed. Suicidal tendencies was reported in cases of extreme psychological trauma. It was reported that women who faced sexual violence felt violated and to end their misery, they considered suicide. Repeated physical violence and verbal abuse by the partner or other family member, especially in cases of alcohol addiction, pushed HBWs to the brink and they tried committing suicide.

A respondent from Nashik described the ordeal of her sister, who faced violence at the hands of her husband:

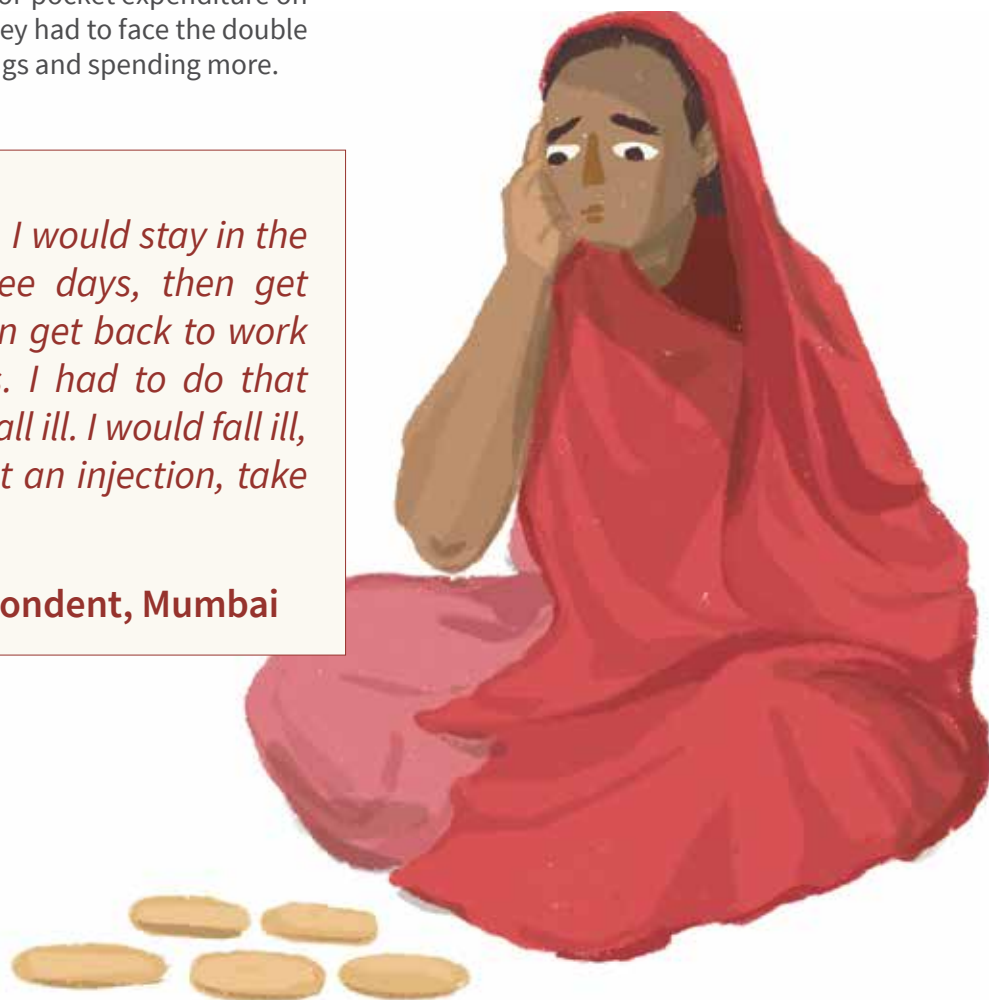
“She once poured rockel (petrol) on herself. The other time she took poison. She has three daughters and a son. We (the siblings) told her, ‘Please don’t do this. You’ve young kids behind you. It won’t make any difference to that drunkard, he will drink more and lay. So let him bathe with alcohol.’”

-Respondent, Mumbai

Low productivity, loss of income, increase in expenditure: The respondents dwelt upon, in detail, how violence lowered their productivity. They explained that violence in both the domestic and work spheres concerned them severely and affected their focus and concentration levels while working. This slowed them down and lowered both the quality of work and productivity. Consequently, if they did not finish work on time, their contractors and sub-contractors became angry and verbally abused them. Violence in the domestic sphere impacted the HBWs profoundly. A number of respondents shared that due to physical violence, frequent illness, injuries and pain, they had to skip work. They had to go to for treatment and incur out-of-pocket expenditure on medicines. As a result, they had to face the double whammy of losing earnings and spending more.

“ *“When I was ill, I would stay in the house for two-three days, then get treatment and then get back to work and make papads. I had to do that everyday. I would fall ill. I would fall ill, go to the clinic, get an injection, take medication...”*

-Respondent, Mumbai



Other than injuries, own account workers facing sexual violence from men in and around the workplace missed or stopped work due to fear of harassment. One respondent related an incident where after being stalked and harassed, she missed work for days together and had to forego the income she could have earned for the sake of her own safety.

“If anyone follows you, it does not mean he is decent; 90 per cent bad men indulge in such behaviour. The parents would say that this is nonsense, why is he following you? If it affects my profession, it will mean trouble for me caused by him, when I have never even spoken to him, nor do I have any need to speak to him. What should I do? First day passed, second day passed, third day passed, in that manner eight days passed. I thought, ‘Allah what should I do?’”

-Respondent, Mumbai

Physical, chronic health problems and injuries:

A number of respondents informed that persistent fights at home affected their physical health. Due to stress, they did not eat or sleep properly. This made them susceptible to weakness, weight loss and frequent illness. The respondents noted that owing to high levels of stress, they would fall ill frequently. Few respondents spoke about chronic health problems they faced due to violence. One respondent cited that during her pregnancy, she was made to do heavy household chores, which later led to arthritis. Injuries and extreme pain owing to physical violence at home was shared by some respondents. One respondent pointed out that physical injuries not only required

medical attention but also impaired their daily life functioning and productivity.

Impact of children and family: Domestic and workplace violence affected HBWs’ family life and most importantly children. The respondents agreed that violence disturbed the environment at home and made women upset. Children could become likely targets of violence themselves at the hands of the perpetrator. The negative effect of violence on children was validated during the FGDs as well. The respondents noted that often husbands, when they were drunk, not only abused the wife but also hit children.

Effectsonsociallife:Afewrespondentsspecifically spoke about how violence affected their social life. Upon facing violence, the respondents feared that if others came to know about it, they would begin victim blaming. Due to the fear of stigma, the women would avoid stepping out of the house, interacting with neighbours or attending social gatherings. It was added that if women faced violence at work, then at home they were likely to face restrictions too. Their husbands could specifically become more suspicious and may not allow them to step out, affecting their social life.

“He would say ‘why do you go here?’, ‘why do you go there?’ I would say ‘tell me if I was doing something wrong. I do not go to do something wrong, and I do not want to do any wrong activities. If you do not like this place, then ok I will not go there.’ Where I feel good, I go there.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

4.2.9 Coping with violence

Discussions during the IDIs and FGDs made it amply clear that HBWs in India faced various forms of violence and it impacted them in complex and intense ways. However, despite a lack of support systems or response mechanisms, many of them showed high levels of resilience and found their own way of coping with violence. It is critical to note that many times respondents relied on more than one way of coping with violence.

HBWs’ unique ways of coping with violence:

The respondents explained that HBWs who faced violence wanted to stop it but due to lacking or limited support systems, they found their own individual ways of dealing with violence.

One respondent mentioned that her neighbour would harass her by peeping into her house and making explicit sexual gestures when she sat near the window to work. Due to fear of reprisal and victim blaming, she could not retaliate directly. She told her elder son in advance that if that man would peep in the house, next time she would shout and slap the son to express her anger. The son cooperated and when next time the man peeped, the woman shouted and hit the son. The man understood that the respondent’s rage was transferred on to her son and felt guilty. He stopped peeping and making sexually explicit gestures and later apologised to the respondent. Similarly, to avoid sexual harassment through the

phone, one respondent stopped using her phone and asked her son to take and receive calls.

“Once you share your number with someone, they will send you all kinds of things (sexual content). So I have made it a habit that I don’t use phones. Or I give my phone to my sons. Yes, that has also happened when I first got a phone... things like speaking with an altered voice... so I decided not to take a phone or share my son’s number (when required).”

-Respondent, Nashik

In another instance, a HBW realised that a man who was stalking and harassing her through repeated phone calls was in her vicinity because she heard background music playing in her community during a festival. She continued to talk to this man on the phone and was able to successfully trace and confront him. After the confrontation, the man did not stalk her again. One respondent said that she assumed a very aggressive body language to confront the man who was harassing her.

Marrying again: Many HBWs noted that they lived in predatory environments where it was difficult for single women to survive, as they were repeatedly harassed by men in and around their work sphere and community. Therefore, two respondents who were divorced felt that for them, marrying again was compulsory. They pointed out that having a male member in the household was important to keep predators and perpetrators in the work sphere and community at bay. These respondents knew that their second husbands could be violent, but since they worked from home and earned their own living, they said they could still resist domestic violence but had to protect themselves from workplace and community level harassment and violence.

Talking to a friend or neighbour: A number of respondents mentioned that talking to a friend or neighbour who they trusted helped. Venting, sharing their agony and just verbalising their experience relieved them and helped them cope with violence. The respondents added that if the neighbours were sympathetic, only then they shared their problems. The respondents who had talked about victim blaming did not mention sharing their stories with the neighbours. A few respondents cited that their own families would judge them for their situation, thence they avoided talking to them about highly sensitive and personal issues such as marital discord and workplace violence.

Talking to a family member/relative: There were very few respondents who mentioned that their parents were supportive, and this really helped them in coping with violence and fights at home. Talking to parents helped, as they provided emotional support to the respondents and tried to resolve the conflict at home by talking to the husband or in-laws.

Conforming to familial and social pressures: Both in IDIs and FGDs, respondents mentioned that to keep their family intact and for the sake of their children, they endured violence. In instances where they felt hopeless, wanted to end their lives or move out of their marriage, the thought of children held them back. They worried about who would look after the children in their absence. Thus, HBWs felt obligated to conform to their familial and societal roles, and their inability to break through these patriarchal norms and pressures made them endure violence.

“Now for example, if there isn’t just the husband and wife but you have kids too, then you look at your kids and move forward. Because we have to look after the kids, feed them on time. Or who will feed them? When you look at the kids, you forget all your troubles and start working.”

-Respondent, Nashik

Faith and spirituality: Three respondents identified their faith in God or a religious teacher as a coping mechanism. They said when they experienced helplessness and suicidal tendencies, praying to God or offering prayers in a temple helped them. One respondent believed that her Guru (religious teacher) helped her in all problems and difficult times, even when she faced violence. Thus, faith and spirituality were considered a potent coping mechanism by some respondents.

Voicing concerns and fighting back: On rare occasions, respondents declared that women summoned up the courage and really fought back instances of violence. These respondents expressed that speaking up, seeking help and fighting with the perpetrator was necessary to stop violence. It was suggested that if HBWs had support (of their family or a collective), then they were more likely to speak up about and report violence. This was specifically true for sexual harassment in the work sphere where HBWs had collectively dealt with it.

One of the participants from the FGD in Mumbai narrated an incident:

“Listen all. I have an instance. Near (the place) where we used to make rakhi, he would give money. The middleman would get commission. Middleman would get it home saying, ‘We bring it for this much, we can give you this rate. If you require work, make it and we will go and deliver it.’ He used to bring work. In some cases, say if you flatter me, I will give you more work. Once we went to him to ask if there was any rakhi making work. My friend would also go to

collect materials [maal] earlier. We needed money, we were troubled, it was difficult to run the home. We went to collect materials; he said come upstairs. He would be calling us upstairs because he would want to be inappropriate with us, right? My friend went upstairs, he said something to her, and she realised that he was behaving inappropriately. ‘He is a rascal! Be careful.’ On that day we beat him up so much. After that we stopped work there and decided that we did not want to work in such places.”

4.2.10 Response mechanisms

Other than coping with the violence, respondents discussed the mechanisms to address or stop violence and their experience of the same. These mechanisms included:

Unions and grassroots collectives: All women agreed that being a member of or having contacts with an organised body (Sangathan) such as HBWs’ unions or a grassroots collective was extremely helpful in addressing issues of violence and other challenges faced by them. All respondents were members of the union. The union was formed by an NGO working on the issues of HBWs in the area. The respondents noted that being a member of union renewed their socialisation processes and helped them realise their identity as a ‘woman’ and as an ‘HBW’. As members of the union, they felt capable of raising their concerns as they derived collective support from the large membership of the union. They noted that they did not feel isolated as they were backed by the union, and this gave them a sense of security and trust.

The respondents mentioned that they reached out to the union to get their dues from the contractors and sub-contractors; and to take action in cases of sexual harassment and domestic violence. The union and NGO helped HBWs in times of economic hardships by providing monetary, food and other assistance. In cases of conflict when police did not cooperate, the respondents took help from the union.

Many respondents noted that union leaders, who were also HBWs, listened to their problems, suggested various courses of action and coached them to make an informed decision. Similar sentiments were echoed during the KII with a representative of an NGO working with HBWs. This person mentioned that unions facilitated a

participatory process of building agency of HBWs wherein their own will, choices and decisions were respected.

“Leaders from the union speak the language of law and have helped/improved women who were suffering depression and facing violence.”

-Respondent, Nashik

“After joining the Sangathan (union) [I realise], we do not have to be fearful, this fear inside me, half the fear has disappeared because of the Sangathana, after joining.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

Collective action: Apart from the union, other women’s groups or collective action by HBWs to address violence both in work and domestic sphere were considered effective by the respondents. Mobilising supportive neighbours and other women nearby to talk to the perpetrator worked in certain situations.

Police: Most respondents mentioned police as a last resort. They chose to go to the police collectively and police intervention was found more successful when the union was involved. In two cases, police intervention was found effective; however, more than five respondents felt that police did not help them adequately. Bribery and lackadaisical attitude to resolve conflict were cited as major challenges in involving police.

Lack of awareness about laws, programmes or helplines around violence: None of the respondents were aware of any laws, programmes or helplines for addressing violence against women. Naturally, they did not cite helplines as an effective mechanism for redressal. In fact two respondents mentioned that if the helplines existed they would take temporary action and the perpetrator could always come back to harass or trouble the women with a lot of vengeance and because of fear of reprisal, they would not like to reach out to helplines.

4.2.11 Impact of COVID-19

A rise in violence against women during COVID-19 restrictions was widely reported by various sources including media. This aspect was also explored during the study. The predominant themes were:

Lack of work opportunities and economic hardship: A wide majority of respondents reported that during COVID-19, the Home-Based work opportunities plummeted substantially, so much so that many HBWs had to run their own income generating activities. For those who got work, the volume and therefore the income decreased substantially. Lack of work opportunities precipitated economic hardships for a large proportion of respondents. There were some who got work, but the work volume reduced and contractors and sub-contractors negotiated lower piece-rates, further reducing their income.

One respondent reported becoming debt-ridden as she had taken a huge loan during the pandemic which she was really struggling to repay.

“Earlier, before the lockdown, I would do it. But since the lockdown was imposed, I have stopped getting pieces to work with.”

-Respondent, Mumbai

Increased violence: A few respondents validated that economic duress and overall stress associated with the pandemic must have led to fights at home. They noted that husband, wife and children confined in houses would have increased the likelihood of fights and domestic violence. However, no respondent explicitly shared that she had personal experience with the increased violence during COVID-19.

“ *“Yes lot of violence must have happened during COVID-19 because there was no work, no money. Kids were at home, husbands were at home. Because of this, women would have had lots of trouble as they have to work at home also. Trouble due to fights is there, corona would have increased violence.”*

-Respondent, Nashik

4.3 Pakistan

The discussions with HBWs in Pakistan revealed numerous ways in which women were harassed and abused at home and through workplace stakeholders. The IDIs, FGDs and KIs revealed that religious institutions, state and society at large were patriarchal in nature and tried to suppress and control women. Mobility restrictions, involvement of husbands in sourcing work, and joint family structure made HBWs vulnerable to violence. Notwithstanding these limitations, many young respondents raised their voices and reached out to police to address violence.

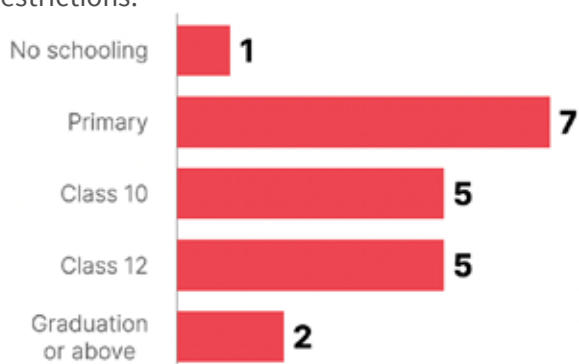
4.3.1 Profile of HBWs in Pakistan

Age: More than half of the study respondents in Pakistan were in the age group between 19-30 years.



Religion: All but one respondent from Pakistan were Muslims, and that one respondent was Christian. Most respondents in Pakistan were from Hazarewal and Arian castes. Other than these, respondents also belonged to Gujjar, Muhajir, Pathan, Kashmiri, Hashmi and Zameendar castes.

Education status: More than half of the respondents had studied up till or above class 10. Two respondents had completed graduation and higher degrees. Only one respondent had no schooling. The respondents in Pakistan stated that despite completing their education, they were not allowed to go out and work due to strict mobility restrictions.



Marital status: Of the 20 respondents in Pakistan, five were divorced, one each were single and widowed; the remaining 13 were married. Of the married respondents, one was divorced and had married again. All six respondents who reported being divorced were in abusive marital relationships and had faced harassment and violence from their husbands and in-laws.

Family structure: More than half of the respondents (11) lived in joint families. These included those respondents who were divorced and lived with their parents and siblings.

4.3.2 Occupation profile of HBWs in Pakistan

Type of Home-Based work: A majority of women were engaged in the garment industry. The types of activities they engaged in ranged from stone and bead work and embroidery on clothes, thread cutting and cleaning, cutting of clothes and stitching. A large proportion of women also took up jewellery making. A few respondents were involved in basket and candle making and papad, jam and chutney making, glass painting and paper bag and envelope making. One respondent ran her own beauty parlour. During the FGDs, a majority of women HBWs reported being involved in the garment industry.

The HBWs in Pakistan were also involved in multiple types of occupational activities depending upon the free time they had and availability of work.

Type of work	No of respondents
Garment Industry	30
Food related	1
Jewellery making	12
Paper Industry	1
Basket making	1
Candle making	1
Glass painting	1
Beautician	1
Total	48*

*Total is more than 20 as respondents gave more than one response for each type of work.

Source of contract: Of the 20 respondents in Pakistan, a majority (16) were piece-rate workers and four were own account workers. The piece-rate workers primarily received work from the contractors, co-workers and sub-contractors. In three cases, the respondent herself or her mother or husband had to bring the work.

Hours of Home-Based work: More than half the respondents reported that they worked for 8-10 hours and sometimes more than 10 hours in addition to household work. However, in the two FGDs, the respondents mentioned that HBWs worked for either 4-6 or 6-8 hours.

Income from Home-Based work: Both during FGDs and IDIs, respondents reported that HBWs earned around 200-400 Pakistan Rupee/day (1.13-2.26 USD/day).⁵⁰

Reasons and benefits of opting for Home-Based work: The most oft-cited reasons for working from home were that it added to the household income, and it was safe and comfortable. The respondents noted that they felt safe working from home as they did not have to commute and face any harassment on public transport. Incidentally, a large proportion of respondents spoke of mobility restrictions as a reason for choosing Home-Based work. They further elaborated that social norms create barriers for women to work outside of their homes. Many respondents said that the families thought that stepping out to work itself would bring dishonour to women. In fact, the society also held a similar perception about women who worked outside in a factory or other establishment. This response was validated during the FGDs as well.

“We work from home because we are not allowed to go outside so this is the only option. Men of our house say they will be humiliated if women of our house go out for work.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Like in India many respondents felt that while working from home, they could look after their children and household but given the mobility restrictions working from the safety of home was the most frequently cited benefit. Two respondents said that working from home involved flexible working hours and they could work as per their convenience.

“A company worker gets tired after work and commuting is a very difficult job, women have to wait in lines and on road for bus and often bear ‘bad remarks’ from people. This is not the case with Home-Based work”

-Respondent, Karachi

Challenges of Home-Based work: Key challenges associated with Home-Based work included high workload and low pay. Almost all respondents felt that they were being paid much less for the amount of work they did, and their wages were

50 1 Pakistan rupee = 0.0057 USD

delayed identifying this as a form of economic exploitation. Occupational problems such as pain in body, backache, weakening of eyesight, frequent illness and consequent health expenditures were reported as problems associated with Home-Based work. One respondent noted that conditions at home were not conducive for work; with no ventilation and proper light, carrying out work was extremely challenging. The respondents in Pakistan were forthcoming in citing physical, verbal and sexual harassment by contractors as one of the challenges of Home-Based work.

4.3.3 Understanding of violence

The respondents unanimously agreed that HBWs in Pakistan faced domestic and workplace violence. They emphasised that all forms of violence including physical, psychological and emotional and sexual violence and verbal abuse were commonplace in their communities. They not only explained various forms of violence but clearly elaborated upon their manifestations.

In the domestic sphere, respondents mentioned that physical violence was widely prevalent. This could comprise beating, slapping, kicking, pinching, pulling hair, beating with sticks, pushing, burning with hot oil, acid attack, burning by iron, throwing objects and forcing the woman out of home. The psychological and emotional forms of violence comprised threats of divorce, and not letting woman see her children and family. On an everyday basis, such violence could be in the form of picking out mistakes and faults in every work or task the woman did at home.

Similarly, verbal violence could constitute using foul language, abuses and offensive words. Use of aggressive and rude tone was recognised as a form of verbal abuse.

“I would make the slightest of errors and my husband would verbally abuse me and beat me.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Several women expressed openly the experience of sexual violence at home including marital rape, child sexual abuse and incest. Notably, they understood that a husband forcing himself on his wife even when she said no was a form of violence.

“A woman in my locality faces workplace violence and harassment many times at the hands of the contractor as he gives her work urgently but pays less. She faces verbal violence. She is sick, has backache, but cannot buy medicines as her wages are less and she has to pay her house rent and other bills, etc.”

-Respondent, Lahore

“Contractors touching hands, physical harassment, use of abusive language, giving threat of losing of work or job, and joint pains etc. are all challenges of Home-Based work.”

-Respondent, Lahore

“Yes, sexual violence within family is there. Marital rape and incest are both there.”

-Respondent, Lahore

The respondents spoke about verbal, sexual, physical and economic violence at workplace. Economic exploitation was widely acknowledged as the predominant form of violence that contractors perpetrated. This manifested in the form of delayed payments; not paying the promised income; forcing HBWs to work on tough deadlines and taking away work or rejecting readied pieces to reduce pay or avoid paying at all.

“Contractors give less wage; we provide them finished orders but at times they don’t give wage at all. Contractors also make excuses and point (to) useless errors in work so that they don’t have to pay HBWs. Often they will provide defected material, but they will blame HBWs for it and won’t give any wage, in fact they deduct money.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Verbal violence pertained to shouting, use of foul language and abuses when the work was not completed on time or while negotiating wages.

Sexual violence and harassment by contractors were widely reported. A majority of respondents said that contractors asking for sexual favours in return for work and more pay was frequent. Stalking, ogling, staring, unwanted calls and two instances of sexual assaults by the contractors against someone the HBWs knew were quoted as other forms of sexual violence. Three respondents

talked about contractors and sub-contractors entering HBWs' homes forcefully, pushing and touching their hands as both physical and sexual forms of violence.

“Contractor would often touch when giving materials or hold hand.”

-Respondent, Lahore

“Once the contractor tried to force himself on my friend. They say things like ‘you make me happy and I will make you happy’.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Psychological and emotional violence by contractors related to blackmailing for sexual favours; pressurising to complete work on time; and threatening to take away work if the HBW does not meet timelines or agree on a lower pay. Taking pictures of HBWs and then blackmailing them were identified as online violence by few respondents.

The respondents in Pakistan, through various examples, mentioned that they could face multiple forms of violence at the same time. While physical violence and verbal abuse in the domestic sphere was common, on the work front, contractors most often resorted to economic violence along with verbal abuse.

4.3.4 Perpetrators of violence

The respondents clearly distinguished between the perpetrators of domestic and workplace violence. Partners, in-laws, relatives and children were identified as key perpetrators of domestic violence. A large number of respondents mentioned that their children also perpetrated violence after observing other adults in the family. Only one respondent mentioned that parents of the HBW could be perpetrators of violence. Two respondents noted that other women of the community talked about HBWs behind their back to malign their reputation; this made the family upset and could contribute to domestic violence.

“Husbands, in-laws, relatives, sometimes children too imitate their father - commit violence.”

-Respondent, Lahore



In the context of workplace, a majority identified contractors as the main perpetrators of all forms of violence. Since respondents at times received work from their co-workers (other HBWs), they also perpetrated violence. While on their way to buy raw materials or deliver finished products, two respondents mentioned that they could face violence from shopkeepers while dealing with them. One respondent mentioned that men around community workers could harass them.

“Shopkeeper, contractor and other Home-Based Workers also commit violence. It can be direct or indirect. I have heard that other HBWs often backbite about each other so that they could move ahead. Contractors often give burdensome work to HBW whom they want to bother.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Those HBWs who sourced work from their husbands and family members were also vulnerable to economic violence. In times of marital discord, the husband or family member could stop bringing work for the HBWs. Thus, boundaries between domestic and workplace violence blurred in such situations.

4.3.5 HBWs lived experience of facing violence in the domestic sphere

The respondents in Pakistan openly spoke about the violence they faced in the domestic sphere.

Physical violence: Most of the respondents in Pakistan had faced physical violence from either partners, in-laws or other relatives. They reported being slapped, punched, kicked, beaten and pushed. This violence could escalate to serious levels and cause serious injuries.

“Once I was taking a shower, the house was locked and my husband arrived early; he had to wait for 5 minutes at the door. He started beating me. My sister-in-laws have also physically abused me, and they tried multiple times to hit me. I would lock myself in a room to avoid them.”

-Respondent, Karachi

“My ex-husband has abused me physically with slaps, punches, pistol and even poured petrol on me once. My mother-in-law always slapped me whenever she wanted to. She also verbally abused me.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Verbal abuse: The respondents reported that physical violence was often accompanied by verbal abuse. Criticising the household chores done, passing mean comments, abusing, shouting and use of foul language were some common forms of verbal abuse that women dealt with at home. Shouting in front of neighbours to create a scene was particularly found humiliating by a few respondents.

“Husband verbally abuse, torture and threaten like ‘if you cannot do this work go to your parent’s house’; use of mean language especially in front of neighbours. It is really not correct and in-laws also do it.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Psychological and emotional violence: Aggressive behaviour coupled with threats of divorce, separating children, cutting access to economic resources and sending back to parents’ house were used as means of psychological and emotional violence. A number of women said their husbands gave them threats of divorce. In the context of triple talaq in Islam, such threats were considered serious and disturbed the HBWs immensely.

In an interview, a respondent from Karachi recounted that after her marriage, her husband took her home and put forth a condition that she will not meet her parents or any of her family members. Her husband threatened to divorce her if she saw her family. She was asked to choose either her children and husband or her parents. She met her parents this year after seven years only because her husband needed to make her a computerized national identity card (CNIC). Her husband required the card to apply for a job.

The inability to see her parents and siblings distressed the respondent.

Many respondents recognised the restriction on mobility and socialisation as a form of violence. The fact that they were not allowed to step out made them feel isolated and trapped. Restriction on socialisation was identified as a potent form of psychological and emotional violence.

Economic violence: The respondents also spoke about facing economic violence from husbands and in-laws. This manifested in the form of HBWs not receiving household and personal expenses. Additionally, those respondents (3) who reported that their husbands had alcohol addiction particularly spoke about facing economic violence as their husbands did not contribute to household expenses and snatched away their earnings.

Similar responses surfaced during FGDs, where the participants explained that husbands took away the wives' income and denied them any economic support or even Home-Based work opportunities.

“My husband doesn’t bear my expenses. He doesn’t even bear the household expenses. At times, I have to bear all the expenses of the house, children and everything else. This creates a lot of pressure on me.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Sexual violence: Unlike India and Bangladesh, many respondents in Pakistan spoke about facing sexual violence from husbands. They recognised marital rape as a form of violence and openly spoke about how they and other HBWs in the area faced

various forms of sexual violence at home. One of the respondents reported that her husband forced himself on her even when she was sick. Another respondent noted that she had heard of husbands bringing other men to the house and asking their wives to sleep with them. Experiences of facing sexual violence at home were validated during the FGDs wherein participants noted that marital rape was indeed a reality for many HBWs.

Online violence: Two respondents spoke about facing online violence by their husbands. In both these cases, the husband used morphed or compromising images of the HBWs' family members to threaten the respondents.

“My husband cropped the photo of my sister and my maternal uncle and placed them together. He sent me on WhatsApp and said that he will circulate it and embarrass my family.”

-Respondent, Karachi



The respondents in Pakistan explained that women at home were suppressed, ill-treated and faced multiple forms of violence. Violence was used as a tool by husbands and in-laws to subjugate wives. Sometimes there was no trigger or reason for the violence, it was simply used to exercise or show control over women.

4.3.6 HBWs lived experience of facing violence in work sphere

The respondents put forth in detail the violence they faced at the hands of contractors, sub-contractors, middlemen and co-workers.

Economic violence: Like India, most women admitted that they faced economic violence ranging from withholding of dues, delay in payments and low pay. Pointing out errors in the finished goods to cut down the pay or wages and forcing HBWs to re-do the work but not paying for overtime were the commonly reported forms of economic violence.

“Challenges are same here for all Home-Based Workers. Payment is not given or not given on time. At times payment is given very late ... e.g., after 4 to 5 months. Women are given 5 rupees (0.028 USD) to put pearls on 4 meter cloth and if it is slightly defected they have to re-do and no payment is given for re-doing it.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Verbal abuse: Some forms of verbal abuse that contractors, sub-contractors and middlemen resorted to were speaking rudely, verbal arguments to negotiate the pay, and abusive language to criticise the work when HBWs demanded their pay.

“Once a contractor used foul words and blamed me unnecessarily. The contractor took the completed work and then unnecessarily rejected it, he said that I would learn my lesson when I am forced to travel back and forth to pick up and deliver the work.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Psychological and emotional violence:

Psychological and emotional violence included threatening and blackmailing. The contractors threatened HBWs with not paying dues or not giving work. HBWs were also blackmailed to complete work on a difficult deadline. If they did not complete the work on time, the contractors said they would spread the word about the delays and their unprofessional attitude towards work around the community.

“Harassing me by not making payments and threatening to not give more work are two things that contractor has said to scare me.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Sexual violence: Various instances of sexual violence at workplace were narrated by the respondents. These included touching hands while giving materials, demanding sexual favours for more pay and/or more work, and touching inappropriately. Contractors also committed sexual violence against children of HBWs. This was reported by two respondents. In one case, the contractor had sexually abused the son of an HBW. During discussions with a few respondents, it was revealed that young girls and daughters of HBWs were highly vulnerable to violence. The contractors had a tendency to become over friendly and flirt with the daughters of HBWs, and they tried to be close to them. This observation was validated during the KII, where it was noted that not only HBWs but their children, particularly girls, should be made aware of the risks of violence they might face.

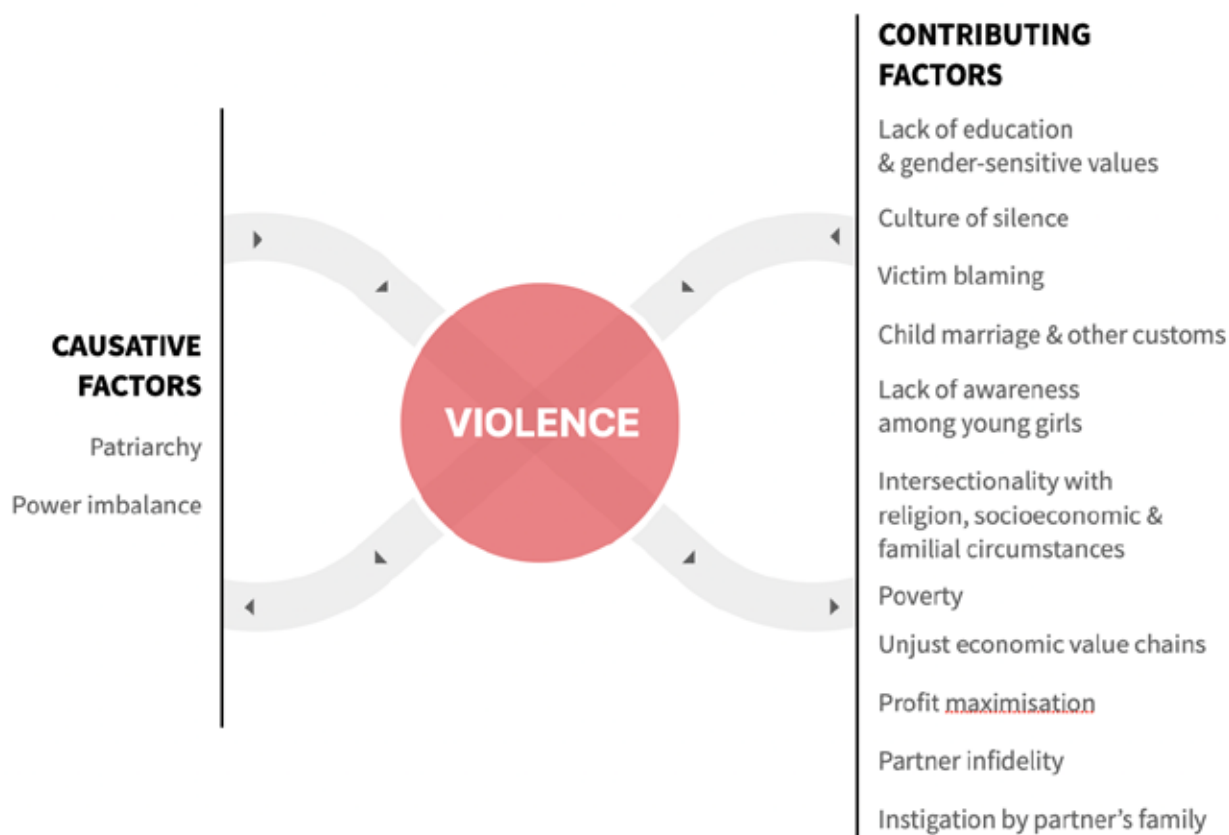
Discrimination: More than five respondents, when asked about discrimination in the workplace, agreed that it happened. They added if they rejected contractors' demands for sexual favours, they received differential treatment as opposed to those women who conceded. The latter were paid more and treated well. Three women said that contractors favoured women of their own community or caste. One Christian respondent reported facing discrimination by the contractors because of her religion. She reported being paid less as compared to others and was ill-treated by the contractor and co-workers.

Online violence: A few respondents spoke about online violence involving contractors, subcontractors and middlemen making blank calls and sending sexual messages and pictures. One respondent was blackmailed by a contractor who had morphed her photo. The contractor was demanding sexual favours from the respondent.

“I heard from someone that contractors take pictures of workers and blackmail them for having illicit physical relations.”

-Respondent, Lahore

4.3.7 Causes of violence



The respondents reflected on various causes of violence against women. HBWs declared that patriarchy and power imbalance between men and women were root causes of violence. It was noted that religion, state and law all supported and sustained men’s position of privilege and women were expected to be subordinate to them. The discussion around causes of violence brought out the following themes.

CAUSATIVE FACTORS

Patriarchy and power imbalance: A number of respondents recognised that society in general favoured men. Patriarchal religious, societal and cultural traditions and practices were found to be conducive to men establishing their dominance to control women. Many women explained that the threat of divorce by men was a cultural custom that denigrated their status and value in society. The respondents added that they faced violence due to a power imbalance between men and women. They noted that men were more powerful and given more importance. Both husbands and contractors enjoyed exercising this power over women. They noted that men’s constant efforts to show their superiority and their expectation that women grease and satisfy their egos resulted in violence.

“Husbands and contractors have big egos, they have more power in society—that is why they are able to exploit women.”

-Respondent, Lahore

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Lack of education and gender-sensitive values, culture of silence and victim blaming:

While exploring the reasons behind violence, three respondents noted that in patriarchal societies, men in positions of privilege were apathetic to the suffering and exploitation faced by women. The lack of education and gender-sensitive values resulted in women and girls being perceived to have low value; this precipitated violence against them. With no recourse or support systems, women usually refrained from speaking up against

violence. This culture of silence due to family pressures, notions of family honour and fear of reprisal made them vulnerable to further violence.

Three respondents spoke about facing workplace violence but not raising voice against it as their partners said that it could jeopardise the family honour. One respondent did not even share the violence faced by the contractor with her husband, as she knew it would become an issue of family's honour and result in the imposition of restrictions on her.

“There is an element of respect and honour attached to women, so they avoid telling their husbands about the violence. Contractors often scare and threaten women HBWs, saying that they would dishonour them and HBWs then remain silent.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Victim blaming also contributed to culture of violence. Almost all respondents identified victim blaming as a reason to tolerate violence and not speak about it. People from the community and women's own family could blame her for the violence that she faced.

“Because of victim blaming, no one speaks up. They are taught to accept the situation rather than speak against it. When a woman tries to defend herself when violence is happening in physical form, she is blamed that she must have raised the hand because... her husband physically abused her. Even their parents ask them to tolerate it and once they have children, they just tolerate it for sake of children.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Child marriage and other customs:

One respondent mentioned that child or early marriage exposed women to various risks. At a young age, a woman does not have agency and capacity to deal or respond to the violence and this gives an upper hand to perpetrators to control and harass her. In another instance, a respondent said that she had a barter marriage—i.e. her husband's sister was married to her brother. To save both the marriages, she continued to face repeated instances of violence from her husband and in-laws.

“ *I have been facing violence from my in-laws and my husband since I got married ten years ago. My marriage was an ‘Exchange’ marriage. I am more educated than my husband and because of this, he treats me badly, emotionally, sometimes physically, mentally, and psychologically. He does not give me ample time and we do not have a good marital relationship. He has not given me my conjugal rights and, so, I have no children even after being married for so long. If I want to get a divorce, my mother, brothers and other relatives stop me from doing so because it will threaten my brother's marriage since this is an ‘Exchange Marriage.’”⁵¹*

-Respondent, Lahore

Lack of awareness among young girls: A few respondents specifically spoke about the lack of awareness among young girls around violence and its forms, which made them susceptible to sexual violence and abuse by contractors.

“They mainly exploit young girls, who are not brave, less educated and do not have enough knowledge, even on sexual violence. They become weak, cannot share such kind of incidences with anyone, even with their mothers, believing that, in turn, they

⁵¹ Exchange marriage is a form of marriage involving an arranged and reciprocal exchange of spouses between two groups or families..

themselves will be blamed for their mistakes.”-
Respondent, Lahore

Intersectionality with religion, socioeconomic and familial circumstances: Discussions with respondents revealed that their vulnerability to violence intersected with their poor socioeconomic and marital status and family structure. It was noted that HBWs who lived in joint families and were poor or widowed were more likely to face domestic and workplace violence. In joint families, women were likely to face more restrictions and victim blaming. The fear of victim blaming in joint families coupled with poverty enabled contractors to exploit HBWs and arm twist them to do work on very low wage rates. Single or widowed HBWs who had young daughters also talked about their accentuated vulnerability to harassment and violence by predatory contractors or middlemen. One Christian respondent explained that due to her religion and minority status, she faced both discrimination and high levels of violence as compared to HBWs of the majority community.

Unorganised nature of work, unjust economic value chain driven by profit maximisation:

Informal or verbal work agreements falling out of the purview of labour legislation made HBWs vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

One of the respondents in Lahore mentioned *“We do not have a written agreement, so contractors exploit our poverty. They try to prey on our young girls and make us slog and yet they do not pay us enough.”*

The respondents in Pakistan, like India, also spoke about the entire value chain being unjust and HBWs facing the brunt of it. They agreed that many times contractors paid them less because they were paid less by their seniors. One respondent remarked that all those who are involved in the informal sector are paid less as those at the higher levels earn more profit. For this reason, HBWs faced economic violence in the work sphere. There were other respondents who said that profit maximisation was the sole aim of the contractors and that is why they exploited HBWs as much as they could.

“We don’t get money on time but when our sub-contractor doesn’t get money from her contractor on time, then how can she give us? So our payment is also delayed.”

-Respondent, Karachi

“Contractors become very greedy; they just want to exploit us.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Partner infidelity and instigation by partners’ family: Four respondents asserted that husbands who cheated on their wives committed violence. They did not value their wives and harassed them. In the context of domestic violence, instigation by the partners’ family was cited as a reason in Pakistan too. The respondents reported that in-laws would instigate the husband by making false complaints, which the husband acted on and punished the wife.

“My husband was cheating on me. Every time he would receive a call and he would leave the house. He denied he was cheating. Then, I caught him cheating. When he was asleep and his phone rang, I picked up the call and heard the voice of a woman. I questioned him, he physically abused me and I had my miscarriage. My husband blamed me for having a relationship with my brother-in-law. He secretly recorded my conversation with brother-in-law, while I was telling him about the abuse I was facing at the hands of my husband. My husband blamed me and said that I should marry my brother-in-law. I tolerated this for a long time before applying for divorce.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Alcohol and drug abuse: Both in FGDs and IDIs alcoholism was specified as major cause of domestic violence. Husbands under the influence of alcohol perpetrated violence on the wives and children.

“Drug addiction or alcoholic, and often times there is no reason. Often times men use family (wife and children) as a valve for frustration, so they commit violence on their children and wife.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Perceived imbalance between work and household responsibilities by family members:

This was reported as a cause of violence in India as well. However, in Pakistan the frequency of this response was higher because the respondents mentioned that their husbands were likely to find multiple reasons for shouting at them and beating them and Home-Based work was one of them.

4.3.8 Impact of violence

Various forms of violence faced by the respondents in Pakistan impacted them in multiple ways. These impacts ranged from stress, suicidal thoughts, health problems and disturbed personal and social life.

Stress, psychological trauma and suicidal tendencies:

Most women verbalised the violence and its impact on their psychological well-being. They spoke about violence causing them stress, anxiety and depression. A number of them felt as if they had become mentally sick and required psychological support. Some even shared that they were so frustrated that they wanted to harm the perpetrator. More than half of the respondents reported that they or someone they knew thought of committing suicide after they were exposed to violence, especially repeated instances of violence. Some even tried committing suicide.

“Due to violence, my brain doesn’t work. I just keep on thinking, I don’t remember anything. I’ll forget everything that you have asked in an hour.”

-Respondent, Karachi

“Once I tried committing suicide but I was saved because my daughter called my brother.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Physical health and injuries: The effects of violence on physical health comprised fatigue, weakness in body and frequent illness. Three respondents mentioned that HBWs suffered serious injuries after being exposed to violence. It was said that extreme forms of physical violence could lead to debilitating injuries.

“Just three to four days ago a woman who lives in my area, her husband hit her and broke her arm and kicked her out of the house. She was asking for expenses and husband wasn’t giving.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Impact on children and family: The effects on children and family life were also cited numerous

One respondent from Karachi explained:

“As a Home-Based worker I have to work from home and I don’t have a separate space for materials, so my husband gets angry at me. Then he would start complaining that I haven’t prepared food on time. This is psychological violence. I believe women are very helpless in our society.”

times during the discussion. The respondents reported that they beat their children in frustration. In other cases, respondents stated that persistent exposure to violence had made the children violent too. These respondents faced violence from their children. The violence disrupted the peace of the family and made the domestic environment tense.

“Family life is disturbed, children also misbehave with the mother seeing their abusive father. They do not go to school and have no interest in education. Many a time their education is also discontinued because the family can’t afford their education.”

-Respondent, Lahore

Low productivity: A large number of respondents, spoke about violence reducing and limiting their productivity at home and in the work sphere. An inability to accomplish household tasks and work responsibilities led to loss of income. Few respondents said that loss of income and inadequate completion of household responsibilities made the husband and family upset and led to domestic violence.

“Given the situation, I do not want to work. But since I have so many financial constraints, I have to work. If I don’t work my husband becomes angry.”

-Respondent, Karachi

Effect on social life: A majority of respondents expressed that violence affected their social life substantially. These effects ranged from restrictions on meeting family and friends; HBWs themselves not stepping out of the house and attending social gatherings to reduced interaction with neighbours due to fear of victim blaming. Two women responded saying that if they stepped out of the house with marks of physical injuries, it could lead to rumour mongering in the neighbourhood.

4.3.9 Coping with violence

Grappling with violence and the culture of silence, the respondents in Pakistan demonstrated tenacity in coping up with violence. They employed a combination of one or more of the following coping strategies.

Talking to a family member or relative:

A number of respondents mentioned that due to a lack of family support, women did not raise their voice against violence. However, all of them agreed that a family's support could go a long way in addressing violence. For workplace violence, husband's support was considered important. A few respondents mentioned that they had supportive parents and shared their problems with them. Two respondents pointed out that since their husband was supportive, they could speak about the workplace violence with them. The husbands then took action and spoke to the contractor, which put an end to the violence.

Talking to a friend: Talking to trustworthy friends and other HBWs who lived close by was recognised as a way of coping with violence. It was said that HBWs could understand the respondents' situation better.

"They (other HBWs) don't go anywhere. They just share with each other but don't specifically go out anywhere for help."

-Respondent, Karachi

Raise voice against violence: Despite a strong culture of silence, a few respondents in Pakistan raised their voice against violence to cope up with it. However, most of the women raised their voice against workplace violence. They reported fighting with the contractor and calling for help from people who were nearby. In cases of domestic violence, four women said that they sought divorce or were considering seeking divorce. Absence of any rehabilitation mechanism was the only factor that stopped these women from applying for divorce. They noted that at least in one instance, they had involved extended family or themselves had tried to stop domestic violence.

Familial roles and pressure: A total of eight women said that they just tolerated violence silently for the sake of their children. These women were trapped in abusive relationships but suffered silently, conforming to their familial role of taking care of children and keeping the family together.



“I have just accepted the situation as it is for the sake of my children. I tolerate it because of my children; otherwise I could have taken some step.”

-Respondent, Karachi

4.3.10 Response Mechanisms

The respondents accepted that owing to a strong culture of silence and notions of honour, formal mechanisms for response were not leveraged to address violence. Regardless of these barriers, it was remarkable to see that so many women courageously tried to move out of their abusive marriages and reached out to police or other forms of response mechanisms, showing immense strength and resilience.

Police: In Pakistan, a number of respondents said that they reached out to police and took legal action to address domestic violence. These are also the women who had sought divorce. They were satisfied with the police intervention and said that adequate action was taken against their husbands to deter them from committing violence again.

Women's groups and collectives: Almost all respondents agreed that collective action was

effective in cases of both domestic and workplace violence, provided women support each other. However, only two respondents reported taking the help of community level women's groups or other HBWs in addressing violence.

NGO: Other than the collective, some respondents spoke about reaching out to an NGO working on issues of HBWs in the area. It was said that an NGO helped them in availing legal aid and address violence at home and workplace.

"I sought divorce. I sought help from the legal aid society and I was linked to (an) NGO."

-Respondent, Karachi

Helpline: None of the women said that they reached out to a helpline, but two respondents knew about the 1043 helpline for women.

4.3.11 Impact of COVID-19

Many respondents mentioned that COVID-19 pandemic worsened their situation. Specific impacts of COVID-19 included:

Scarcity of work opportunities and loss of income: Almost all respondents noted that during COVID-19, there was a dearth of Home-Based work. Many women had to sit idle at home for days with no income. Loss of wages put a number of respondents and families under severe economic duress.

Increased violence: Inability to contribute to household income and the loss of a husband's job intensified the situation at home and gave rise to violence. More than three women talked about specific instances of heightened violence during and due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It usually happens when husbands are jobless. COVID exacerbated the violence because there was no income generation and when there is no money, then husbands get aggressive and they hit their wives. They get physically violent over petty things like if the stove is on high heat and the food is slightly overcooked or if the utensil is burned. Even though they don't do any of the dish washing they use it as an excuse to humiliate their women. They use their hands, broomsticks, sticks and even slippers to abuse women physically. Verbal abuse is a very common thing, they use abusive words towards the entire family."

-Respondent, Karachi

4.4 Crosscutting findings

An analysis of the data from the study countries brought out the following noteworthy commonalities and differences with respect to experiences of violence and implications for programmatic recommendations.

Perception of violence: Respondents of the three countries had an understanding of violence and it was established that physical, psychological, economic and sexual forms of violence were clearly recognised. However, apart from Pakistan, the recognition of sexual violence in the domestic sphere seemed low. Marital rape was not reported as a form of violence in India and Bangladesh. Likewise, while women reported certain instances of online violence after probing, they did not seem to recognise it as a problem on their own. Many respondents were not aware of online violence, its forms and required safeguards.

Intersections of domestic and workplace violence: The responses around the link between domestic and workplace violence revealed that HBWs recognised that when the home was the workplace, it led to an increased intersection of domestic and workplace violence. In an abusive domestic situation, HBWs were not likely to share their experiences of workplace violence with even their family members due to fear of mobility restrictions and victim blaming.

In such situations, addressing workplace violence became extremely challenging. It is necessary to address workplace violence actions at the household or family level.

It also became amply clear that violence at the workplace affected HBWs' family life and vice versa. Across the study countries, the respondents noted that reporting workplace violence at home sometimes led to further accusations and violence by the husband and family. When women remained silent or stopped working, they faced substantial income losses. Reduced income created friction at home and led to marital discord.

The impacts of domestic violence on work were even more pronounced. In all three locations, women reported lowered productivity and concentration levels due to violence at home. Specific instances demonstrated that if HBWs delayed delivery of readied goods, the workplace stakeholders harassed and verbally abused them. In cases where the contractors knew that HBWs faced domestic violence, they would not give them orders or work, fearing that the work would be delayed.



Low or no recognition of HBWs contribution to family income: This is a major contributing factor to violence. The husbands and in-laws' perceptions that women's involvement in Home-Based work made them neglect their household responsibilities is a theme that has emerged across the three study countries. The HBWs admitted that instead of recognising their contribution to family income, their husbands and families accused the women of not allocating enough time for childcare and household responsibilities.

Culture of silence and internalisation: Staying silent despite facing recurring violence at home and from workplace stakeholders emerged as a key challenge. Culture of silence is rooted in social norms that allow violence and normalise it as an everyday phenomenon happening within the household. Violence is not seen as a larger social or human and labour rights issue. Victim blaming, specifically in the case of workplace violence by the family and community, further worsens the situation. This makes it difficult to unearth and intervene in cases of violence. Based on the study findings, a culture that sustained violence seemed to be highly prevalent in the three countries, more so in India and Pakistan. This culture of silence must be broken to address violence effectively.

Firmly associated with culture of silence is internalisation. The respondents from India exhibited the phenomenon of internalisation, wherein women noted that they had to endure violence to abide by acceptable social standards and roles of women. This phenomenon was again rooted in patriarchal social norms that reward women who endure violence with societal approval and praise. Incidentally, in both Pakistan and Bangladesh where Islam is a majority religion with strong patriarchal norms, women did not internalise violence. They explicitly stated that patriarchy and unequal power relations gave rise to violence and women should not endure it. Thus, working with women for gender equitable values and attitudes is deemed important.

Reporting of violence: Culture of silence and victim blaming are responsible for low reporting of violence across the three countries. However, women in Bangladesh shared most instances where they reported violence. This was primarily due to the strong presence of community leaders, NGOs, active helplines and victim support centres. Many respondents in Bangladesh noted that they were trained on reporting and responding to violence. They further attributed high levels of reporting to such training programmes. Similar initiatives must be strengthened across the other two countries.

Response mechanisms: Across the three study countries, merit was seen in collective mechanisms to respond to violence. In India, the HBWs' union had done rigorous work towards agency building of women and reporting and addressing violence. In Pakistan, women's groups were found to be effective to some extent. In Bangladesh, community leaders and local bodies, followed by NGOs which brought together HBWs, were found useful in addressing violence and extending survivor support. In India and Bangladesh, reliance on police was low but in Pakistan women were more amenable to calling police. Apart from community response mechanisms, police sensitisation on issues of accentuated vulnerabilities of HBWs emerged as an area of concern.

04 Recommendations



The study findings clearly identified the root causes and contributing factors of violence against women HBWs. These are akin to widely documented causes of violence, viz. patriarchy, gender discrimination, unequal power relations including unjust value chains and poverty. The contributing factors include social norms that condone and normalise violence or create a culture of silence around it. The absence of a protective legal framework for HBWs, weak implementation of laws and policies for addressing gender-based violence and impunity for the perpetrators are all factors that perpetuate violence.

Effective and synergistic actions that are well coordinated by government and civil society organizations are critical to ensure the protection and safety of HBWs. Both discussions with HBWs and KIIs with representatives of NGOs working with them brought to the forefront a set of recommendations for prevention and response to violence. These have been summarised below.

5.1 Violence Prevention

Ratifying international instruments to prevent violence against HBWs: The three study countries must exhibit a strong commitment and will to protect unorganised workers, including HBWs, by ratifying ILO Conventions 177 on Home Work and ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment at Work. Ratification of these instruments will make it incumbent upon the national and sub-national governments to take necessary legal and policy reforms for the safety and protection of HBWs. For this, it would be useful to have large scale awareness campaigns on the need and benefits of ratification, as well as intensive advocacy efforts with national governments who will have to ratify these conventions.

Adopting and enforcing legislation, policies and interventions: Work on prevention of violence against HBWs must be supported by development of formalised processes such as in legislation or in high-level, cross-sector plans. This is a requirement in above mentioned conventions and other international instruments as well. The literature review highlighted the need to strengthen the legal framework and formalised processes to protect HBWs in the study countries. Therefore, these countries must urgently formulate and adopt legislation, policies and interventions towards zero tolerance for violence against HBWs. The legislators and policy makers across these countries must recognise that violence against HBWs a social issue, labour rights, and more importantly a human rights violation. Therefore, an impetus must be given to creating labour relations and value chains that are equitable and just.

Creating responsible value chains: Value chains that promote gender equity and protection of workers at all levels, including those in the unorganised sector, are critical. The first step in this direction would be to mainstream violence prevention in the unorganised sector in all efforts of labour, women and child development and other relevant departments. These efforts should be supported with funding and other resources, including budget lines and allocations within the national budgets. Most importantly, all policies and programme interventions must be designed through free and informed consultations with rights-holders, the HBWs. Working with various stakeholders involved in informal supply chains, viz., contractors, sub-contractors and intermediaries on the issue of violence, must form part of these interventions. Specific focus should be laid on surveying and compiling a database of contractors, sub-contractors and intermediaries to reach out to them effectively. Sensitising these stakeholders on violence and its impact on work productivity and economic costs is crucial. It is also important to underscore the value and contribution of Home-Based work through numbers and facts in various value chains among these stakeholders. The database of these stakeholders can help in formalising these informal supply chains to some extent and facilitate interventions in cases of violence against HBWs.

Fostering interdepartmental coordination: Violence against HBWs is undeniably a form of gender-based violence, but it has added layers involving unequal labour and economic relations. For this reason, departments of labour and women and child development and other relevant bodies, alongside grassroots collectives of HBWs,

must work in synergy for capacity building, social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) and community sensitisation for preventing violence. Key players across these sectors should be engaged and their actions should be well-coordinated, ideally through a coordinating body.

Embracing non-violent and gender equitable social norms: Patriarchy, gender-discrimination and the culture of silence and normalisation around violence are all related to the deeply-entrenched social norms. Further, domestic and workplace violence perpetrators are most often part of the HBWs' own communities. Therefore, these communities as a whole are required to strengthen non-violent and equitable social norms and practices.

This can be achieved through SBCC⁵² interventions at the individual, household and community levels to underscore why violence is wrong and must be stopped; its impact on women, children and the household; and its social and economic cost for the community and the nation as a whole. These interventions could range from messaging related to violence prevention through home visits, group meetings/sessions and community-based events.

Capacitating and collectivising women and girls to prevent violence: Capacities of women and girls must be built so that they can be empowered to promote constructions of femininity that emphasize autonomy and agency. These capacity-building initiatives, apart from covering prevention of various forms of violence, must also focus on preventing and addressing online violence. They can work towards adoption of gender equitable norms and break the culture of silence. These initiatives should be led by HBWs' collectives themselves.

Unionisation or collectivisation of HBWs into strong and vibrant groups is critical to ensure this. The evidence from this study distinctly establishes that collectively, HBWs can address both domestic and workplace violence because as a group, they wield more bargaining and negotiating

power. Thus, immediate efforts must be made by governments, civil society and NGOs working with HBWs to unionise and collectivise HBWs. This should be coupled with leadership development among women and girls who become champions in preventing violence and ensure the sustainability of these mechanisms.

Involving men and boys in preventing violence: Most respondents during discussions rightly pointed out that violence cannot end unless men and boys are involved. Therefore, it is necessary to build capacities of men and boys to promote non-violent, non-dominant roles and constructions of positive masculinity. (Healthy or positive masculinity is the idea that men can be emotionally expressive, have female friends or mentors, and express their emotions without feeling emasculated.⁵³) Equal and respectful relationships are a prerequisite for preventing violence. All government agencies and non-government organisations working on women's or HBWs' rights must work with men and sensitise and motivate them to denounce all forms of violence against women. Efforts should be made to depict the contribution of HBWs in household work and income generation. For instance, daily activity charts and clocks have been used effectively as part of participatory initiatives developed to sensitise men and boys on the division of labour between men and women.

Measures should be in place to prevent 'backlash' from community leaders, and men and boys, or to respond to it should it occur. Backlash (an adverse reaction to something gaining prominence) may occur if prevention challenges existing gender power dynamics or breaches particular social norms. A useful strategy is to co-opt men and boys as champions of gender equality and project them as supportive partners in addressing discrimination and violence against women.

Equipping government and civil society practitioners working on issues of HBWs and gender-based violence: The practitioners and workers should have access to tools (e.g.

52 "Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)...is a research-based, consultative process that uses communication to promote and facilitate behaviour change and support the requisite social change for the purpose of improving social outcomes.... SBCC is guided by a comprehensive ecological theory that incorporates both individual level change and change at broader environmental and structural levels. Thus, it works at one or more levels: the behaviour or action of an individual, collective actions taken by groups, social and cultural structures, and the enabling environment."

Source: <https://www.comminit.com/polio/content/defining-social-and-behavior-change-communication-sbcc-and-other-essential-health-commun>

53 U-Matter website (n.d.). Princeton University. <https://umatter.princeton.edu/respect-matters/healthy-masculinity>

instructional manuals, campaign materials, curricula, group programmes) and have the skills and knowledge to design, implement and evaluate prevention interventions. In some settings, existing staff are likely to be skilled in responding to those affected by violence. However, prevention can involve some different or additional skills, such as skills in organisational development, community mobilisation and resource development. Activities can include economic empowerment, skill development programmes or implementation of policy changes in day-to-day settings such as schools, workplaces, health services, and communities. Prevention will require skills and knowledge particular to these settings, as well as knowledge of the many causes and forms of violence, and how to prevent it. Because the existing workforce may not have the necessary requirements, investments in professional development and training are an important consideration.

Advocacy to strengthen institutional and community commitments for violence prevention: Civil society organisations and collectives of HBWs should continue to advocate with government, local governing institutions and community leaders to invest, initiate and sustain efforts for violence prevention. Most importantly, they should prioritise violence against HBWs as a key labour and human rights issue.

Reducing harmful alcohol and drug use: Alcohol and drug use has emerged as major cause of violence in the study findings. UN Women's framework for violence prevention has recognised reducing harmful alcohol and drug use through interventions at the individual and community levels as an effective strategy to address domestic violence.⁵⁴ Government and non-government agencies in collaboration should consider providing brief interventions and longer-term treatment for problem drinkers.⁵⁵

5.2 Response

Ramping up response to violence is pivotal for mitigating its consequences and protecting HBWs especially the survivors. The response includes preventing the recurrence of violence (that is, preventing women from being re-victimised and men and women from perpetrating further violence) and/or limiting the impacts of violence through the provision of short- and long-term care and support to survivors. The response efforts, in tandem with the prevention of violence, can have far-reaching outcomes for making homes, workplaces and communities safer for HBWs and women in general. The proposed actions for bolstering response to violence against HBWs include:

Community-based reporting and response mechanism: Culture of silence, victim blaming and fear of reprisal after reporting violence necessitate the creation of community-based reporting and response mechanisms. It was noted that such mechanisms are approachable and can respond in real time as they are close to HBWs' homes. These mechanisms can be steered by HBWs

leaders and collectives, community leaders and local NGOs. Through these mechanisms, conflict resolution, mediation and social sanctions against perpetrators could be ensured without involving legal actors such as police.

Establishing and expanding helplines, online platforms and information sharing: Helplines were found particularly useful in Bangladesh as they were responsive and provided victim/survivor support, including psychosocial support. In post pandemic times, online platforms have also shown the potential for reporting violence in a confidential manner. Establishment and expansion of such helplines and platforms and widely spreading information about these helplines were recommended. It was proposed that these helplines develop the capacity to intervene in cases of economic violence and exploitation faced by HBWs at the hands of contractors and others. Ensuring secure access to response and support: Institutions and systems to respond to individuals affected by violence should be functioning well and there should be linkages between systems

54 UN Women (2015). A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/Prevention_Framework_unwomen_nov2015.pdf

55 World Health Organization (n.d.). Preventing violence by reducing the availability and harmful use of alcohol. Briefing, series of briefings on violence prevention: the evidence. https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/alcohol.pdf

involved in prevention and response interventions. It is essential to improve access to good-quality health, social welfare and criminal justice support services for HBWs who need them—including for reporting violence—to reduce the long-term impact of violence, response and support services are essential. Basic health services, such as emergency medical care for violence-related injuries and clinical care for victims of sexual violence, including post-exposure prophylaxis against HIV in cases of rape when indicated, along with shelters and other safe accommodation options should be in place for survivors of violence.

Providing counselling and social services to survivors and perpetrators can help break the cycle of violence in HBWs' lives and help them better cope with and recover from the health and mental health consequences, including trauma symptoms, of these experiences.

Services including counselling and referrals to protection services such as the police, health care providers, and social welfare workers, and assistance with securing temporary accommodation when necessary, can be steered through community-based mechanisms, but government and civil society organisations must ensure quality and timely provision of these services.

Integrated solutions like 'One Stop Centres', located in medical institutions, could also be explored and promoted. Here survivors can be provided facilities like emergency health care, counselling, police reporting, information regarding short stay homes and rehabilitation as well as legal aid—all at one place. These can prove very useful if efficiently and sensitively run and managed.

Intervening early: Early interventions focus on individuals and groups with a high risk of experiencing/perpetrating violence and the factors contributing to that risk. Identification of such HBWs who have faced violence earlier or are at risk through surveys by government agencies and NGOs working in the area could be accomplished. For these HBWs, arrangements can be made to provide survivors and/or perpetrators response and support services at the earliest opportunity, to reduce negative impacts of violence and prevent reoccurrence.

Creating awareness around response, support services and punitive measures for violence:

Some respondents across the study countries dwelt upon the need to create widespread awareness on response and support services for the violence. They noted that even if these services were effective and operational, a large number of HBWs were not aware of them. This was evident even during the data collection phase as many respondents could not recall the name of any NGO, helpline or support service for HBWs. In addition to this, making perpetrators aware of consequences (punishment and penalties) of violence was proposed. This was considered helpful in deterring the perpetrators from committing violence in future.

Holding perpetrators accountable: Several respondents talked about the impunity of perpetrators as an important factor for perpetuating violence. They strongly recommended taking action against repeat offenders and perpetrators to deter future violence. Social sanctions such as disapproval of violence, openly criticising both perpetrators and acts of violence, and rejecting violence and toxic masculinity at the community level were considered useful. Getting local influential people such as religious leaders, local politicians (if well regarded) as well as national sports and film industry icons to endorse these messages is a useful strategy.

Legal action through the involvement of police was recommended as a measure of last resort, as most of the perpetrators of violence are known to the victim and belong to the same community/area. However, in all circumstances holding perpetrators accountable and setting an example that violence has consequences was firmly endorsed.

Sensitising police and protection functionaries:

In India, reporting violence to police seemed low due to the unsatisfactory intervention, corruption and red-tapism that HBWs encountered when they did involve police. However, this was not the case in Pakistan, where women were more forthcoming in reaching out to the police. Many responses during the data collection implied that police need to be sensitised to the issues of HBWs and domestic and workplace violence. Because of the complex nature of violence that HBWs faced at work and domestic fronts, capacity building of police and other protection functionaries in responding to cases of violence was suggested. Integrating women police officers who have had training on addressing

domestic and workplace violence to conduct intake of violence cases should be considered. The HBWs and their collectives must be involved in the capacity building and sensitisation efforts, which could encompass discussions on domestic and workplace violence that women can face at home, responding to economic violence at workplace, and linking survivors to response and support services.⁵⁶

Sensitisation of public prosecutors and judiciary: Though this issue did not come up specifically during the study, it is also essential to sensitise and build awareness of public prosecutors and judicial authorities to issues of HBWs, in particular their contributions, challenges and issues relating to discrimination and violence.

56 Along with the study data, the evidence for these recommendations has also been drawn from UN Women (2015). A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/Prevention_Framework_unwomen_nov2015.pdf

ANNEXURE 1

Operational Definitions

In line with the above objectives, the operational definitions used in the study are provided below.

Home-Based Workers: By definition, Home-Based Workers are a category of informal sector workers who carry out remunerative work from their own homes or adjacent grounds or premises⁵⁷. The study will include women Home-Based Workers who are 18 or above.

Violence against women: The study uses United Nations definition of violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”⁵⁸

Nature and scope of violence against women: In the context of the present study, nature and scope of violence involve the different forms and manifestation of violence, its severity and frequency of occurrence.

Context of violence: The context of violence in the study includes violence in domestic settings, violence emerging from the workplace, and the relationship or intersection between the two.

Causative factors: Such factors are conditions that produce an effect (in this case, violence); eliminating a cause(s) will eliminate the effect. For example, the root causes of violence are gender inequity and discrimination.

Contributing factors: A contributing factor is any condition that influences the effect by increasing its likelihood, accelerating the effect in time, affecting the severity of the consequences, etc.; eliminating a contributing factor(s) won't eliminate the effect. The contributing factor of violence can be social norms in which violence such as in anger it is ok to hit the partner.

Impact of violence: The strong effect or influence that violence has on a person or situation. The

impact of violence can be multifaceted and complex, including physical, psychological, emotional and economic effects.

Survivor/Victim: “Victim” or “Survivor” is a term for the individual targeted for violence.

Perpetrator: “Perpetrator” is a term for the individual who perpetrates or commits an act of violence.

Coping mechanism: Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Coping is a capacity, a capacity to respond and to recover from something stressful.

Redressal mechanism: Redress means to correct something that is wrong or unfair. For the study, the redressal mechanism includes all those mechanisms which include relief, protection and rehabilitative measures for survivors and punitive measures for perpetrators.

Prevention: Efforts directed at preventing violence before it starts or occurs. For instance, prevention of violence through normative and behaviour change across the whole community.

Response: Actions to identify and support people experiencing violence, with the aim of stopping early signs of violence from escalating, preventing a recurrence of violence, or reducing harm in the longer term. It includes actions to support survivors to stay safe from someone using violence against them. This may be when they are still in the relationship, planning to leave, or have already left.

57 HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) website: <https://hnsa.org.in/Home-Based-workers>

58 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (United Nations, 1993)

ANNEXURE 2

Tools

KII GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS/MEMBERS OF TRADE UNIONS AND NGOS

Researcher Disclosure

Hello! My name is _____. I am from HomeNet South Asia or name of the member organisations which works with Home-Based Workers. I am conducting research on issues and challenges faced by women Home-Based Workers in this area such as their rights, the exploitation and violence they may face. I will be very grateful, if based on your experience you could answer a few questions about their lives. The discussion will take about half an hour to 40 minutes. Your name and identify will be kept confidential. Thank you for giving your valuable time. Since this discussion is very important to us and we do not want to miss out on any point. Therefore, may we have your permission to record the discussion. Please rest assured that this recording will only be used to make field notes and will be deleted after that.

Section 1: Background information

Demographic details

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Gender:
4. Profession/designation:
5. Mobile Number:
6. City and country:
7. Date of interview:
8. Name of the researcher

About Home-Based Workers

9. How do you come in contact or interact with Home-Based Workers?
10. In your area what kind of Home-Based work takes place?
11. Do they hail from a particular community, region or class?
12. On an average how many hours do you/they work?
13. What would be a per day average income of a Home-Based worker?

Challenges face by Home-Based Workers

14. What do you think are some of the most pressing challenges faced by Home-Based Workers in this area? (Probe: on violence- workplace, domestic and community violence)

15. Are women Home-Based Workers prone to violence in this area, if yes, why? (Probe on domestic, workplace and community violence)

Section 2: Violence

Workplace Violence

16. What kind of workplace violence women Home-Based Workers face in this area? Probe on

- Physical
- Mental including fear/threat/blackmailing/harassment
- Emotional Verbal
- Sexual violence
- Financial exploitation
- Discrimination-based violence.
- Cyber/digital violence (Text, photos, pornography)
- Any other

17. Do you happen to know someone who is facing this problem? (Pls don't name them but tell us a bit about the violence they face)

18. How do you come to know about someone (HBW) is facing violence?

19. Who commits this violence? Is it direct or indirect violence? (If there are multiple responses to the question 16, then ask who perpetrates different kind of violence)

20. What are the reasons behind the violence? (Probe: reasons for perpetrator, reasons related to victim or reasons related to the surroundings)

21. How does it impact the workers work and personal life? (Probe: Work productivity, psychosocial and emotional well-being, social life)

- Personal life
- Family/conjugal life
- Work productivity
- Social life
- Psychosocial and emotional well-being
- Any other impact

22. How do they cope with violence?

23. Who do they reach out to when they face violence and why?

24. What form of support was provided? Give examples.

25. Have you or do you know anyone who have effectively addressed workplace violence. If yes, What redressal mechanisms were used?

26. How do you come to know if someone has faced this kind of violence?

27. Is there some mechanism report this kind of violence?

28. What are the redressal mechanisms for Home-Based Workers which they can reach out to when they face violence?

29. Are these mechanisms useful? If yes why and if not why?

30. In your opinion what can be done to address violence against Home-Based Workers?

31. In your opinion what can be done to stop and prevent increasing violence?

32. How can you contribute to stop and prevent this violence?

Domestic violence

33. What kind of violence women esp Home-Based Workers face in the domestic sphere? Probe on

- Physical
- Mental including fear/threat/blackmailing/harassment
- Emotional
- Verbal
- Sexual
- Economic violence
- Cyber violence
- Fear/threat/blackmail
- Any other

34. Do you happen to know someone who is facing this problem? (Please don't name them but tell us a bit about the violence they face)

35. How do you come to know about someone (HBW) is facing violence? Is there some mechanism report this kind of violence?

36. Who commits this violence? Is it direct or indirect violence? (If there are multiple responses to the previous question, then ask who perpetrates different kind of violence)

37. What are the reasons behind the violence? (Probe: reasons for perpetrator, reasons related to victim or reasons related to the surroundings)

38. How does it impact the Home-Based worker's work and personal life? Probe

- Personal life
- Family life
- Work productivity
- Social life
- Psychosocial and emotional well-being
- Any other impact

39. How do workers cope with violence?

40. Who do they reach out to when they face violence and why?

41. Have you or do you know anyone who have effectively addressed domestic violence. If yes, What redressal mechanisms was used?

42. What form of support was provided? Give examples.

43. Do you know any other psychosocial support services or redressal mechanism for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face violence?

44. Are these mechanisms and services useful? If yes why and if not why?

45. In your opinion, what can be done to address domestic violence against Home-Based Workers?

46. In your opinion what can be done to stop and prevent increasing violence?

47. How can you contribute to stop and prevent this violence?

48. Would you like to add anything else that we may have missed asking you?

Laws and policies

49. Are you aware of any laws and policies that protect women HBWs? If yes, do you feel that these laws/policies have positively impacted HBWs in any way?

50. Would you like to add anything else that we may have missed asking you?

Thank you for giving us your valuable time. Inputs and information shared by you will help us understand the situation of Home-Based Workers better!

FGD GUIDE FOR HOME-BASED WORKERS

Researcher Disclosure:

Hello! My name is _____ and this is my co-worker _____. We are from name of the member organisations which works with Home-Based Workers. I am conducting research on issues and challenges faced by Home-Based Workers like you in this area such as their rights, exploitation and violence. I will be very grateful, if based on your experience you could answer a few questions. The discussion will take about 40 minutes to 1 hour. Your name and identity will be kept confidential. Please feel free to share the information. Thank you for giving your valuable time.

Note: Given the sensitiveness of the issue of violence, Please ensure that FGD is conducted at a place which ensures privacy and the fact that no one else comes, intervenes or is able to listen to the discussions underway. Spend ample time with the participants to make them comfortable and establish a rapport with them. They may ask you, how the study will help them, tell them that the findings will help to understand their issues better so that relevant agencies can take required action to address them. Also tell them that if at any point of time they feel uncomfortable or would not like to answer or respond to a particular question they are free to do so. Also keep your referral cards indicating contact details of assistance services they may reach out to handy to give out to the respondents in case they themselves face violence or come across someone who is dealing with it. At the end of the discussion, thank all the participants for their valuable time and inputs. Include a minimum of 5 and maximum of 10 Home-Based Workers as participants for FGD. Since this discussion is very important to us and we do not want to miss out on any point. Therefore, may we have your permission to record the discussion. Please rest assured that this recording will only be used to make field notes and will be deleted after that.

Section 1: Background information

Demographic details

S.No	Name	Age	Education	Profession (own account/ piece-rate)	Mobile number	Area
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						

1. City
2. Country
3. Date of interview
4. Name of the facilitator
5. Name of the note taker

About Home-Based Workers

6. What kind of Home-Based work are you all engaged in?
7. What are the reasons for opting for Home-Based work?
8. What are some of the benefits or disadvantages of Home-Based work?
9. On an average how many hours do you work?
10. What would be per day average income of a Home-Based worker in your area and what piece-rate is provided by the contractors?

Challenges face Home-Based Workers

11. What are some of the challenges faced by Home-Based Workers? (Probe on violence)

Section 2: Violence

Prevalence and understanding

12. Do the **bead activity**. Keep 10 beads and tell them these 10 beads represent all women Home-Based Workers in your area, according to you all how many of these would have faced violence? Ask them to separate the beads on the agreed upon number?
13. What kind of violence do you/they face? (Probe: Domestic, workplace and community)

Workplace violence

14. What kind of workplace violence women Home-Based Workers face in this area? Probe on
 - Physical
 - Mental including fear/threat/blackmailing/harassment
 - Emotional
 - Verbal
 - Sexual violence
 - Financial exploitation
 - Cyber/digital violence
 - Discrimination-based violence.
15. Who commits this violence? Is it direct or indirect violence? (If there are multiple responses to the previous question, then ask who perpetrates different kind of violence)
16. What are the reasons behind the violence? (Probe: reasons for perpetrator, reasons related to victim or reasons related to the surroundings)
17. How does it impact the workers work and personal life?
 - Personal life
 - Family life
 - Work productivity
 - Social life
 - Psychosocial and emotional well-being

- Any other impact

18. How do they cope with violence?

19. Who do they reach out to when they face violence and why?

20. Have you or do you know anyone who have effectively addressed workplace violence. If yes, What redressal mechanisms were used?

21. How do you come to know about someone (HBW) is facing violence? Is there some mechanism report this kind of violence?

22. What form of support was provided? Give examples.

23. Were you/they supported individually or collectively as a group?

24. What are the redressal mechanisms for Home-Based Workers which they can reach out to when they face violence?

25. What are some of the psychosocial support services available for Home-Based Workers which they can reach out to when they face violence?

26. Are these mechanisms and services useful? If yes why and if not why?

27. In your opinion, what can be done to address violence against Home-Based Workers?

28. In your opinion what can be done to stop and prevent increasing violence?

29. How can you contribute to stop and prevent this violence?

Domestic violence

30. Studies show that women are vulnerable to all forms of violence including domestic violence. Is this true for your area?

31. Do you happen to know someone who is facing this problem? (Pls don't name them but tell us a bit about the violence they face)

32. How do you come to know about someone (HBW) is facing violence? Is there some mechanism report this kind of violence?

33. What kind of violence women esp. Home-Based Workers face in the domestic sphere? Probe on

- Physical
- Mental including fear/threat/blackmailing/harassment
- Emotional
- Verbal
- Sexual
- Economic violence
- Cyber/digital violence
- Any other

34. Who commits this violence? Is it direct or indirect violence? (If there are multiple responses to the previous question, then ask who perpetrates different kind of violence)

35. What are the reasons behind the violence? (Probe: reasons for perpetrator, reasons related to victim or reasons related to the surroundings)
36. How does it impact the Home-Based worker's work and personal life? Probe
- Personal life
 - Family life
 - Work productivity
 - Social life
 - Psychosocial and emotional well-being
 - Any other impact
37. How do workers cope with violence?
38. Who do they reach out to when they face violence and why?
39. What form of support was provided? Give examples.
40. Were you/they supported individually or collectively as a group?
41. Have you or do you know anyone who have effectively addressed domestic violence. If yes, What redressal mechanisms was used?
42. Do you know any other redressal mechanism for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face violence?
43. Do you know any psychosocial support services for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face violence?
44. Are these services and mechanisms useful? If yes why and if not why?
45. In your opinion, what can be done to address domestic violence against Home-Based Workers?
46. In your opinion what can be done to stop and prevent increasing violence?

Laws and policies

47. Are you aware of any laws and policies that protect women HBWs? If yes, do you feel that these laws/policies have positively impacted HBWs in any way?
48. Would you like to add anything else that we may have missed asking you?

Thank you for giving us your valuable time. Inputs and information shared by you will help us understand the situation of Home-Based Workers better!

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW (IDI) GUIDE FOR HOME-BASED WORKERS

Researcher Disclosure:

Hello! My name is _____. I/We are from name of the member organisations which works with Home-Based Workers. I am conducting research on issues and challenges faced by Home-Based Workers like you in this area such as their rights, exploitation and violence against them. I will be very grateful, if based on your experience you could answer a few questions. The discussion will take about 40 minutes to 1 hour. Your name and identity will be kept confidential. Please feel free to share the information. Thank you for giving your valuable time. Since this discussion is very important to us and we do not want to miss out on any point. Therefore, may we have your permission to record the discussion. Please rest assured that this recording will only be used to make field notes and will be deleted after that.

Note: Given the sensitiveness of the issue of violence, Please ensure that IDI is conducted at a place which ensures privacy and the fact that no one else comes, intervenes or is able to listen to the discussions underway. Spend ample time with the respondent to make them comfortable and establish a rapport with them. They may ask you, how the study will help them, tell them that the findings will help to understand their issues better so that relevant agencies can take required action to address them. Also tell them that if at any point of time they feel uncomfortable or would not like to answer or respond to a particular question they are free to do so. They can stop the discussion any time if they are not comfortable. At any point of time if the respondent feels discomfort, pause the interview and give them time to stabilise and only if they agree continue the discussion. If you feel the respondent is too overwhelmed, then you may have to halt the discussion and seek another appointment to complete it. Also keep your referral cards indicating contact details of assistance services they may reach out to handy to give out to the respondents in case they themselves face violence or come across someone who is dealing with it. At the end of the discussion, thank all the participants for their valuable time and inputs.

Section 1: Background information

Demographic details

1. Name (Optional):
2. Age:
3. Education:
4. Gender:
5. Marital status:
6. Caste:
7. Religion:
8. Profession (Own account/piece-rate):
9. Mobile Number (Optional):
10. City and country
11. Date of interview
12. Name of the researcher:

About family

13. How many members are there in your family?
14. Who is the head of the family?
15. How many are earning members and how many are dependents?

16. What kind of occupation, earning members are engaged in?

About Home-Based work

17. What kind of Home-Based work are you engaged in and since when?

18. Why did you opt for Home-Based work?

19. Who provides you work? Do you have to collect it?

20. On an average how many hours do you work?

21. What would be a per day average income of a Home-Based worker in your area?

22. What kind of other Home-Based work in women do in your area?

23. What are some of the benefits and disadvantages of Home-Based work?

24. Challenges face Home-Based Workers

25. What are some of the challenges you face as a Home-Based worker?

26. What are the challenges others like you face as a Home-Based worker?

Section 2: Violence

Understanding of violence

27. What is your understanding of violence against women? Can you mention the different forms of violence a woman can face?

28. What is the difference between workplace violence and violence at the domestic sphere?

Workplace Violence

29. Studies and evidence show that women Home-Based Workers often face violence from the people who provide them work? Is this true in your area?

30. Why do you say that?

31. Do you happen to know someone who is facing this problem? (Pls don't name them but tell us a bit about the violence they faced)

32. How do you come to know about someone (HBW) is facing violence? Is there some mechanism report this kind of violence?

33. What kind of workplace violence women Home-Based Workers face in this area? Probe on

- Physical
- Mental including fear/threat/blackmailing/harassment
- Emotional
- Verbal

- Sexual violence
- Financial exploitation
- Discrimination-based violence
- Cyber violence
- Any other

34. Who commits this violence? Is it direct or indirect violence? (If there are multiple responses to the previous question, then ask who perpetrates different kind of violence)

35. What are the reasons behind the violence? (Probe: reasons for perpetrator, reasons related to victim or reasons related to the surroundings)

36. Are there certain times when violence increases such as COVID-19 pandemic?

37. How does it impact the workers work and personal life?

- Personal life
- Work productivity
- Social life
- Psychosocial and emotional well-being
- Any other impact

38. How do they cope with violence?

39. Who do they reach out to when they face violence and why?

40. What form of support was provided? Give examples.

41. Were you supported individually or collectively as a group?

42. Have you or do you know anyone who have effectively addressed workplace violence. If yes, What redressal mechanisms were used?

43. In your opinion what can be done to address violence?

44. In your opinion what can be done to stop and prevent increasing violence?

Respondents' lived experience of workplace violence

45. Did you ever feel vulnerable or at risk of violence at workplace? If yes, can you pls elaborate?

46. How did you deal with the situation?

47. How did it impact you?

- Personal life
- Work productivity
- Social life
- Psychosocial and emotional well-being

48. Did the incident happen again?

49. Who did you reach out to and why?

50. What form of support was provided? Give examples.

51. Were you supported individually or collectively as a group?

52. Do you know any other redressal mechanism for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face domestic violence?
53. Do you know any psychosocial support services for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face domestic violence?
54. Are these mechanisms useful? If yes why and if not why?
55. How can you contribute to stop and prevent workplace violence against Home-Based Workers?

Domestic violence

56. Studies show that women are vulnerable to all forms of violence including domestic violence. Is this true for your area?
57. Do you happen to know someone who is facing this problem? (Pls don't name them but tell us a bit about the violence they face)
58. How do you come to know about someone (HBW) is facing violence? Is there some mechanism to report this kind of violence?
59. What kind of violence women esp Home-Based Workers face in the domestic sphere? Probe on
- Physical
 - Mental
 - Emotional
 - Verbal
 - Sexual including incest
 - Economic violence
 - Any other
60. Who commits this violence? Is it direct or indirect violence? (If there are multiple responses to the previous question, then who perpetrates different kind of violence)
61. What are the reasons behind the violence? (Probe: reasons for perpetrator, reasons related to victim or reasons related to the surroundings)
62. How does it impact the Home-Based worker's work and personal life? Probe
- Personal life
 - Work productivity
 - Social life
 - Psychosocial and emotional well-being
 - Any other impact
63. How do you as a Home-Based worker and others like you cope with violence?
64. Who do you and others reach out to when they face violence and why?
65. What form of support was provided? Give examples.
66. Were you supported individually or collectively as a group?
67. Have you or do you know anyone who have effectively addressed domestic violence. If yes, What redressal mechanisms was used?
68. Do you know any other redressal mechanism for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face violence?

69. Are these services and mechanisms useful? If yes why and if not why?

70. In your opinion, what can be done to address domestic violence against Home-Based Workers?

71. In your opinion what can be done to stop and prevent increasing violence?

Respondents' lived Experience of domestic violence

72. Did you ever feel vulnerable or at risk of violence? If yes, can you pls elaborate?

73. Has a family member treated you unjustly in any way? (Probe: partner, husband, in-laws, siblings, relatives). If yes, can you elaborate.

74. How did you deal with the situation?

75. How did it impact you?

- Personal life
- Family life
- Work productivity
- Social life
- Psychosocial and emotional well-being
- Any other

76. Did the incident happen again?

77. Who did you reach out to and why?

78. What form of support was provided? Give examples.

79. Were you supported individually or collectively as a group?

80. Do you know of any psychosocial support services for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face violence? Pls elaborate.

81. Do you know any other redressal mechanism for Home-Based Workers to reach out to when they face domestic violence? Pls elaborate.

82. Are these mechanisms useful? If yes why and if not why?

83. How can you contribute to stop and prevent domestic violence against Home-Based Workers?

Laws and policies

84. Are you aware of any laws and policies that protect women HBWs? If yes, do you feel that these laws/policies have positively impacted HBWs in any way?

85. Would you like to add anything else that we may have missed asking you?

Thank you for giving us your valuable time. Inputs and information shared by you will help us understand the situation of Home-Based Workers better!

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