Meeting Summary | December 16th, 2024, Expert Workshop on Mapping Gender-Based Violence Solutions

Aparajita, in collaboration with **J-PAL South Asia (J-PAL SA)** convened an **Expert Workshop on '*Collaborating for Change: Solutions to tackle Gender-based violence in India*',** on 16th December 2024 at India International Centre, Delhi. Aparajita, a newly launched initiative by [Mr. Pramod Bhasin](#), is a not-for-profit created solely to further programming and solutions focused on the prevention of sexual harassment. Aparajita intends to work at the intersection of areas including root causes/norms, law and justice, and safety in workplaces, public places, and educational institutions, among several other related areas.

The **key objectives** of the expert workshop were two-pronged: **to share progress on the ongoing work by J-PAL SA and Aparajita on addressing GBV in India**; and **to collaboratively map solutions** and actionable thematic areas for Aparajita to focus on moving forward. The discussions were invigorating and led to a greater understanding of areas worth focusing on over the long term to drive meaningful change in addressing GBV. The following note outlines key takeaways from the discussion:

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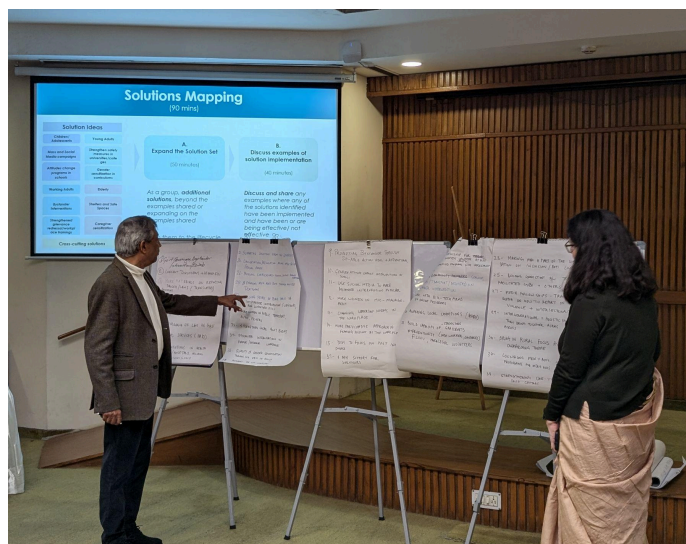➔ [Next Steps](#)

Overview of J-PAL SA and Aparajita's Work in Addressing GBV

J-PAL SA staff provided an overview of J-PAL's work in the Gender sector, highlighted the various policy-research gaps that we seek to address, and presented some of J-PAL's work in taking evidence-based programs to scale. They also presented key insights from their desk review and ongoing primary data to better understand the challenges and gaps on GBV across different spaces, emphasizing the **existing evidence gaps** in the area and the **need for more data and evidence.**

The team **shared progress** updates on the **four work streams** that Aparajita and J-PAL are pursuing, namely:

1. *Landscaping the Problem:* A combination of expert roundtables and desk research, alongside primary data collection in three cities (Jaipur, Delhi, and Bangalore) is underway to understand the prevalence of GBV outside the home in India. The survey has concluded in Jaipur and is ongoing in Delhi and Bangalore, and is expected to wrap up by April 2025.

2. *Open Funding Call:* J-PAL and Aparajita will soon be launching an open funding call to identify and fund innovative programmes and ideas addressing GBV.

3. *Evaluating Promising Interventions*: J-PAL and Aparajita will also jointly work on evaluating the effectiveness of **promising innovations and programs** by conducting pilot studies and randomized evaluations.

4. *Dissemination and Outreach*: Bringing attention to the pervasive issue of GBV through **dissemination events, social media campaigns, newsletters, blogs, op-eds and policy briefs.** To kick things off, Aparajita and J-PAL will be organizing a *Panel at the Jaipur Literature Festival (Feb 2025)* to discuss the survey results and launch the open funding call.

Emerging Focus Areas from the Solution Mapping

The main objective of the solutions mapping exercise was to shed light on the possible ways of addressing the complex issue of GBV, including the thematic areas Aparajita and J-PAL SA should focus on over the long term and plausible interventions that could be considered in these areas to drive forward change.

Participants engaged in a vibrant discussion mapping approximately **40 ideas and solutions** to address the multifaceted issue of GBV. The following table summarizes the **top 5** identified collectively with the experts present during the workshop:

Thematic Area	Specific Interventions	Number of votes
Supporting interventions at the grassroots level	• Build capacity of / strengthen grassroots interventions (case workers, constables, front-line workers, paralegal volunteers) • Supporting solutions from the grassroots	21
Building capacity and legal services	• Mobilizing lawyers as a cohort • Provide Legal services (paid) • Fellowship for women lawyers at the district level	17

Thematic Area	Specific Interventions	Number of votes
Engaging men and boys	- Making men a part of the conversation on inclusion/boys' club - Engaging men and boys through multiple platforms - Counselling men and boys, along with mental health programs for men	15
Bystander interventions	- The government encouraging bystander intervention/rewards - Promoting bystanders through do-able action ideas – aspirational	13
Training service providers	- Training service providers (transport/delivery) on bystander intervention - Involving people in public spaces in bystander interventions (vendors, bus conductors, etc)	6

J-PAL SA and Aparajita will now delve deeper into these five thematic areas, to identify promising interventions through the lens of feasibility, relevance, and scalability; that can also be rigourously tested for impact to deepen our understanding of what works to address violence and sexual harassment against women in India. **A detailed list of all the 40+ solutions, grouped by themes, that came up during the solution mapping exercise is attached as Annex-1.**

Summary of Workshop Discussion

Beyond the discussion during the solution mapping exercise, experts also discussed several relevant thematic areas, which called for stronger action on **increasing incidences of online GBV**, **lack of focus on both prevention measures** and **curative support such as mental health services** and **safe spaces** for women to discuss GBV issues. Experts also emphasized to view **GBV as a continuum**, spreading across boundaries of home and public spaces, online and offline, and preventive and curative. **Concepts** and **definitions** such as what we mean by GBV and whom we count as affected women also warrant **expansion**. A significant part of the discussion shed light on the **legislative aspect** of GBV, this included the call for a more **cohesive and holistic set of laws** that do not compartmentalize different forms of violence. Finally, speakers also discussed **the role that employers** and the **private sector** can play in providing safe mobility solutions for women.

A more detailed summary of all the points discussed under each of these themes is below.

1. **Addressing Online Gender-Based Violence:**
   - Speakers highlighted the challenges in **addressing online GBV** due to the **ambiguity in defining "online public spaces"** and the **anonymity of perpetrators**.

- It was noted that identifying solutions remains complex as there are **limited laws or regulations** to tackle online violence effectively.
- Speakers emphasized the need for greater clarity around **technology-facilitated violence** and suggested collaborations with stakeholders, such as big-tech companies, to put in place relevant measures and solutions.

2. **Role of the private sector in enhancing women's safety:**
   - Participants underscored the role of the private sector in creating safer environments for women, both within the workplace and in public spaces.
   - Examples were shared of how **employer-led interventions**—such as providing transport facilities—can enhance women's safety and increase family confidence in women's mobility or pairing women travelers with other women to enhance feelings of safety.

3. **Addressing gaps in prevention programs for GBV:**
   - It was observed that prevention efforts often receive less attention compared to response and redressal mechanisms.
   - Participants pointed out the need for **unrestricted and longer-term funding to support** preventive interventions.

4. **Encouraging Bystander interventions**
   - Participants highlighted the need to **incentivize bystanders**, especially with support from **government-led initiatives** that encourage individuals to take action when witnessing GBV.
   - It was emphasized that social and behavioural change **nudges** are essential to promote actionable intervention ideas.
   - Speakers underscored the importance of **leveraging social media campaigns** to build a culture of responsible engagement via bystander interventions.
   - Participants noted that bystander interventions should not be limited to strangers but should also include known individuals, such as friends, colleagues, and family members, who can play a crucial role in addressing GBV.

5. **Legal and legislative interventions**
   - Participants observed that current legislative frameworks compartmentalize different forms of violence, emphasizing the need for **holistic and integrated laws**.
   - There remains an urgent need to **expand legal services** provided to survivors of GBV, including strengthening the role of paralegal volunteers and other frontline workers.

6. **Addressing GBV for informal sector workers**
   - Speakers noted that informal sector workers, including domestic workers, remain largely **excluded from legal protections** and grievance redressal mechanisms.
   - This exclusion exacerbates vulnerability for informal workers, requiring immediate attention at both systemic and grassroots levels.

7. **Lack of safe spaces and barriers to reporting GBV**

- Participants discussed the **persistent lack of safe spaces** for women due to fears of professional repercussions, societal stigma, and family backlash, as major deterrents for survivors seeking redressal/ reporting incidents of violence.

8. **Mental Health Support to Survivors**
   - Speakers emphasized the need to integrate mental health support into GBV response programs, including **access to counseling for survivors**.
   - It was also noted that mental health interventions for family members of survivors and for men and boys to address underlying behavioral issues is equally important.
   - It was observed that **holistic care**—combining mental and physical healthcare—must be prioritized in survivor support systems.
   - Speakers observed that most interventions focus on visible forms of GBV, often neglecting less apparent but equally damaging **invisible forms of violence**.

9. **Moving beyond public safety to gender-sensitive/inclusive infrastructure**
   - Participants noted that interventions should focus on building naturally **inclusive spaces** rather than relying solely on safety-centric approaches.
   - Suggestions included designing public areas that are welcoming to women and addressing urban planning gaps to improve accessibility. Integrating an inclusive lens to ensure cities remain **accessible to women across intersecting identities** is crucial. For instance, designing cities for women with disabilities to equally access public spaces with safety and dignity.

10. **Assimilating and disseminating existing evidence:**
    - Speakers highlighted the wealth of data and evidence being generated on GBV but observed that this information remains fragmented and underutilized.
    - There is thus a need to **consolidate existing evidence**, success stories, and research to build a strong **knowledge base for interventions**.
    - Additionally, the consolidated knowledge must be **widely disseminated**, accessible, and used to **inform programming and policy decisions**.

Several insightful inputs were also directly relevant **for framing Aparajita's focus and scope of work**. Experts highlighted the need to ensure Aparajita's focus on **promoting rural voices**, as well as **voices from marginalized communities**, and especially zeroing down on the **intersectional vulnerabilities of women** – which more often than not tends to fall through the fissures of current programming on GBV. Moving forward, Aparajita will further examine the following questions raised during the workshop:

- **Expand the geographic scope**: There is a lack of evidence and data on the prevalence of GBV in rural areas as well, therefore a focus on that geography would be crucial.

- **Defining GBV:** Experts encouraged to think of how GBV is currently defined. GBV/SH is not just eve-teasing, rape, or sexual harassment, there is a need to adopt a broader definition that also accounts for the forced choices that women are pushed to make, beyond safety and mobility. For instance, a woman choosing a sub-par college for higher education owing to safety reasons, could be viewed as violating her rights to pursue quality education.
- **Defining "spaces" in the continuum of GBV:** Experts highlighted the need for a nuanced understanding of "spaces" where gender-based violence occurs, given that GBV exists on a continuum across public, private, workplace, and digital settings. For instance, for informal sector workers, the definition of workplaces and domestic spaces often overlap, presenting unique challenges in addressing violence in these contexts.
- **Defining the target audience for Aparajita**: Speakers discussed the importance of clearly defining the target audience when addressing GBV, emphasizing the need to consider intersectionality. It was observed that women's experiences of GBV are shaped by multiple factors, including caste, class, disability, and other forms of marginalization. Participants emphasized the need for Aparajita to adopt an inclusive approach, ensuring that marginalized groups—such as women from lower castes, women with disabilities, and others—are meaningfully included in its interventions.

Next Steps

- We will now focus on **refining and exploring these five thematic areas** in greater detail, aiming to shape practical solutions addressing GBV. We look forward to updating you with the progress made in the coming months.
- Aparajita and J-PAL South Asia will be organizing a **Panel at the Jaipur Literature Festival (Feb 2025)** to discuss the aforementioned survey results and **launch the open funding call.** You are all invited to join us!
- We are also delighted to share that the **second edition** of our **quarterly newsletter** will be published in **February 2025**. Stay tuned for updates on our ongoing work and **more details on the open funding call**.
- With its network of affiliated researchers, J-PAL South Asia can work with implementing organizations that are undertaking programming and activities to address violence against women and its root causes, **to build research studies (i.e., pilot projects or full-scale randomized trials) to understand the impact of these solutions.** Please get in touch in case you are interested in setting up an evaluation of your program, or if you are interested in exploring any other synergies.

Annex 1: Detailed grouping of solutions and potential themes:

1. Awareness/Information/Training
- Statewide resource directory listing all shelter homes, NGOs, health care facilities accessible etc.
- Work on consent with higher education institutions - qualitative data mapping with young people - consent conversations.
- Curriculum building at schools and universities on GBV - advocating with the government and parallel curriculums in schools.
- Rethink sensitisation for young adults when they get into the workforce.
- Health interventions and sensitisation workshops for the police in cases involving sex workers in urban areas.
- Sensitisation trainings for civic volunteers, police, and hospital staff
- Curriculum building at schools and universities on GBV - advocating with the govt and also parallel curriculums in schools

2. Behaviour change solutions (including with adolescents, men and boys/intergenerational):
- Gender attitude change among adolescents and young adults through educational curriculum.
- Conscious interventions with men and boys.
- Intergenerational and holistic programming.

3. Supporting Grassroots Solutions
- Provide unrestricted and long-term funding to support women-led organisations and collectives working at the grassroots.
- Support solutions emerging from the grassroots.
- Build capacity of grassroots-level caseworkers and first-responders to GBV (e.g., assuming they are gender-sensitive isn't true, even for women).

4. Mental Health support
- Mental health support for survivors - integrating mental and physical healthcare in one-stop centres.
- Counselling for men and boys
- Counselling for victim's family members

5. Legal and Legislative Interventions
- Providing legal services.
- Fund a legal fellowship programme for women lawyers at district courts (allowing them to build a feminist lens to their practice)
- More resources - information and knowledge, materials on judgment, laws, data (legislative aspect)
- Strengthen the role of paralegal volunteers (PLVs), especially since police often misunderstand their role.
- Mobilising lawyers as a cohort to improve and galvanise other lawyers in addressing sexual harassment.

4. Workplace and Policy Reforms
- Changing leadership norms at workplaces (beyond "women at the top," focus on middle managers and leadership norms).
- Making workplace policies participative.
- Policies like POSH are limited to specific complaints and don't track outcomes post-resolution (e.g., continued violence).

5. Bystander Interventions
- Incentives provided by the government to bystanders.

- Bystander action: social behavioural change nudges and promoting actionable intervention ideas.
- Making bystander interventions aspirational through social media campaigns.
- Bystander interventions include not only unknown people but also known individuals.

6. Public Transport and Mobility
- Public transport - extend the focus beyond buses, and into larger gender-sensitive infrastructure.
- More women as cab drivers; advocating for 30% women bus drivers (e.g., with DTC and government).
- Training people in logistics, delivery services, auto drivers, and transportation (mainly informal workers), use their networks to build and implement interventions.
- Potential experiments on women's mobility and LFP? - If we pair one woman with another woman traveller, do they feel safe? If the employer provides transport, does the woman's family feel safer?

7. Addressing Online GBV/ Leveraging Media and Technology
- Image-based sexual offences or abuse - running social media campaigns to raise awareness on the issue and advocate for building regulation around it.
- Technology-facilitated GBV - building data and connections between online and offline abuse.
- Partner with big tech firms on online programmes (via social media campaigns, etc.).
- Media fellowships - training media professionals on reporting GBV and gender intersectionality.

8. Community Mobilization and Identifying Local Champions
- Awarding local champions (e.g., ASHA workers, journalists, ANMs) for driving norm change.
- Strengthen local government bodies and train implementation personnel on the ground.

9. Healthcare System Interventions
- Address GBV within healthcare settings like hospitals and medical care centres.