

“Another Pandemic: Domestic Violence”

Webinar Facilitated by Breakthrough India on ‘Gender & Evaluation Network’

Friday, 10 April 2020 from 3-5pm

Meeting Notes (from Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala and Zainab Ibrahim, Co-leads LFFV Outcome, CARE International)

The webinar included speakers from the following women’s rights / feminist organisations based in India and responding to DV & IPV: North East Network in Assam, Hamsafar Trust in Lucknow, My Choices Foundation from Hyderabad, Jagori from New Delhi, Azaam Premji (legal advice), Swayam from Kolkata, and other activists working directly on cases relating to IPV. There were 363 participants on the call.

Some specific GBV related needs that have emerged / are emerging:

- Support referral systems addressing GBV to get back to functioning more fully as far as possible. Existing local organizations, networks, systems have adapted in many contexts, but with limitations, over-burdening etc. For example, support the availability and the rollout of protocols for all services dealing with GBV, that takes into account Covid risks. For example, safe houses / safe spaces for women and girls on dealing with covid risks while simultaneously still taking in survivors.
- Support the pro-bono availability of legal and judicial services and advice for survivors of GBV in different contexts, particularly for urgent short to medium-term action.
- Facilitate the inter-linking / better coordination of on-the-ground GBV related services and support by state and non-state actors, so that referral between stretched support services could also happen.
- Strengthen capacity of frontline Covid-19 workers at community level on dealing with GBV or referring to appropriate support services
- Ensure continuous assessment of needs and concerns of particular at-risk groups to tailor the medium-term response: women daily wage earners, those with disabilities, LGBTQ, ethnic minorities, migrant workers etc
- In the contexts we work in, monitor related legal and policy changes that can have long-term implications on GBV / VAW, and consider on a case-by case basis the implications for advocacy. (For example, on 4 April, the government of India suspended certain rules that govern the ban on prenatal sex testing and disclosure of sex of foetuses until June 30 due to the ongoing public health emergency. Experts fear the move may cause a spike in selective abortions of female fetuses in India.)
- Post-covid or as controls start to be lifted, there could be an influx of cases of GBV, as more reporting happens, making it essential that all related support systems are back and working to deal with this.
- Post-covid, women could be among the first to lose jobs / be laid off. How can economic empowerment programs be geared to respond to this?