

WOMEN,  
WORK,  
AND VIOLENCE  
IN  
SOUTH ASIA

# WOMEN, WORK AND VIOLENCE IN MYANMAR, NEPAL AND PAKISTAN

SYNTHESISED REPORT

IMC Worldwide

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# Executive Summary

This study seeks to produce vital primary data and secondary analysis regarding the interaction of women's economic activity and violence against women and girls. Research has been conducted in three countries: Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. The project is driven by an ethical commitment to effect positive change in the lives of women. This draft report represents work towards the final deliverable, which seeks to address key points of synthesis and overarching trends across the countries studied.

**Research Aim:** To generate evidence that can enable better decision making in programme and policy design so that women's economic engagement is enhanced while simultaneously addressing VAW.

**Overarching research question:**

How can approaches to increase women's economic engagement also tackle violence against women?

**Research objective:** To evidence the complex, interactive relationship between VAW and WEE, and to build on this understanding in order to provide practical policy and programming advice. This can be broken down as follows:

To understand how violence currently shapes women's economic engagement patterns, and to ascertain how best to address this.

To uncover the complex ways in which earning or generating an income shapes/alters (both positively and negatively) the forms and frequency of violence that women experience, and how this affects their levels of vulnerability.

To assess how approaches to enhancing women's economic activity could support prevention of, protection from and response to VAW, and to ascertain how sociocultural contexts and gendered power relations interact to impact on these processes.

**The findings** reveal a complex relationship between income and violence. The links between economic engagement and violence emerge as a complex web, with instances in which women who earn incomes are at increased risk of violence. Nonetheless, we also see that income builds confidence and self-esteem resulting in greater willingness to challenge violence. For some women, earning an income fosters the ability to leave (or at least to consider leaving) an abusive domestic environment. However, simply earning an income does not guarantee that a woman can do so, as social pressure to remain married is high across all of our country contexts. Additionally many women, even those who are economically engaged, still see forms of domestic violence as 'normal' and are therefore unlikely to challenge it.

Economic engagement often leads to increased tensions within the household, as women across the socio-economic spectrum are expected to continue to fulfil domestic responsibilities even when husbands are not employed. In many cases this leads to arguments and contributes to violent situations. Evidence of male backlash can be seen in situations where women's income directly threatens the traditional gendered norm of the male breadwinner.

Many women spoke of the pressures they experienced because of work. In particular, psychological and emotional stress as a result of disapproval from extended families or communities and an increased risk of sexual harassment as well as fear of getting to and from work safely. Even so, most women interviewed stated they would continue to work even if they did not require the income. They cited increased levels of autonomy and self-esteem as key motivating factors. In summary; while most women were happy to work and experience it as empowering, it does come at a cost and often an increase in violence.

# Structure of the report

**Section 1**, 'Introduction to the Project'.

**Section 2**, 'Country Contexts' offers insight into country contexts in relation to:

- Legislation and access to justice
- Women's participation in work
- Violence against Women

**Section 3**, 'Top-Level Findings' addresses specific themes that we have been asked to address by DFID staff in one or more of the countries studied, either before or after data collection:

- Rural/Urban Differences and Migration
- Intersectional Categories
- The link between Gendered Notions of Work and the Normalisation of VAW

**Section 4**, 'Key Thematic Findings' addresses key issues that emerged from the data itself, as opposed to the critical areas outlined in section 3 which were highlighted by DFID personnel as being of interest.

- Experiences of Traveling to and from Work.
- Honour and Shame
- Work-based Harassment
- The Glass Ceiling
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Backlash at home as a result of economic engagement
- Engagement with women's organisations

**Section 5**: Conclusion and preliminary recommendations.

# Introduction to the Project

This research project was commissioned by the South Asian research hub, and ran from November 2015 to March 2017. The overarching question was: *how can approaches to increase women's economic engagement also tackle violence against women?*

**Definition of Violence Against Women:** “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and/or girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (UN 1993).

This research acknowledges the significant resources directed at programming in the developing world, specifically geared towards improving financial independence of women. Microcredit projects have been most common, but investment has also been focused in vocational training and the creation of safe workplaces. Underlying these interventions is the assumption that women who earn their own income will have control over how to spend it and will be given more leverage to make decisions at household level. In turn this will empower women to take control over other aspects of their lives including building resilience to violence.

## The research sought:

- To understand how violence currently shapes women's economic engagement patterns, and to ascertain how best to address this.
- To uncover the complex ways in which earning or generating an income shapes/alters (both positively and negatively) the forms and levels of violence that women experience, and how it affects their levels of vulnerability.
- To unpack and describe how approaches to enhancing women's economic activity can support prevention of, protection from and responses to VAW.

The research was conducted in three countries: Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. These countries were chosen both because of their potential for interesting comparability and cross learning, and because of the lack of in-depth research on VAWG in each country. This report focuses on presenting the synthesised findings across all three countries, drawing out the key lessons and identifying opportunities for cross learning. At the core of our analysis has been the application of both an intersectional lens and a spectrum of gender-based violence.

The gender-based violence spectrum is a useful tool positioning varying forms of VAW across a spectrum, which also seeks to understand the underlying vulnerabilities that trigger a woman's experience(s) of violence. In other words we have sought to draw out single and multiple experiences of violence and then use the intersectional approach to ascertain if particular women are more or less vulnerable to particular forms because of their age, caste, socio-economic status etc.

Our approach to collecting data was divided into 3 strands designed in order to capture the complexities of contexts, life histories and circumstances all of which play out in a woman's experiences of income generating and violence.



Community study

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Interviews with professional women and men

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Programme study

**Strand 1:** This strand included in-depth community-based studies focused on women (and some men) in the bottom two economic quintiles.

In **Myanmar**, we conducted research with women and men living in Yae Oak Kan village, which borders the Industrial Zone of the Hlaing Tharyar Township in Yangon. This is an area on the outskirts of Yangon where many garment factories are located. In **Nepal**, two sites were selected: Manohara, an area inhabited by large numbers of construction workers and Thamel, which has a concentration of women working in the informal entertainment sector. In **Pakistan**, a neighbourhood of Karachi known as Lyari was selected for study.

**Strand 2:** focused on capturing the experiences of middle/upper class professional women, including entrepreneurs and those working in formal sector organisations. These women were selected through a combination of random and snowball sampling. In **Myanmar** these women were selected in Yangon, in **Nepal** they were from Kathmandu, and in **Pakistan** strand 3 interviewees were selected in Lahore and Islamabad.

**Strand 3:** took an organisational/programme approach, which aimed to capture the experiences of women who are members of specific initiatives that aim to increase their income-earning

capacities.

In **Myanmar** we worked with the UNDP, which is building on its Self Reliance Groups (originally formed with the objectives of household food security and local level poverty alleviation) to further promote women's empowerment and gender equity at the grassroots level, including resistance to VAWG. We also interviewed women involved with Akhaya, a Yangon based organisation that uses business as a way of helping survivors of violence to gain independence and self-confidence.

In **Nepal** we worked with the government's Integrated Women's Development Programme, a government led initiative which works with women in rural districts across the country. The IWDP has been implemented for 30 years by the Government of Nepal. However, in 2009 a component was added to it with DFID's assistance, with the intention of targeting gender based violence. The programme covers 1 million women, who are formed into Self Help Groups. Some of these have been federated into cooperatives, with 1600 cooperatives now spread over different districts of Nepal. Many groups have become defunct, but the government is currently engaged in reviving them.

In **Pakistan** the researchers engaged with the well-established HomeNet programme, which works with poor women in the Lahore area. These women work at home, earning money by doing different types of work, and are of diverse ethnic groups, religions, age groups, educational levels, marital status etc. Participants are engaged in a wide-ranging of work, including making badges for the police, complex embroidery, making clothes, making paper bags and making noodles. All the women are engaged in sub-contracted work whereby orders are brought to their homes by contractors, who specify the time in which the work needs to be completed. Most women interviewed have been engaged in this work for many years.

## ETHICS

A strict ethics protocol was applied, and all data collection was subjected to review by University of Portsmouth and in-country through our country advisory forums. The country and academic leads offered constant supervision of all researchers, which helped to identify particularly sensitive contexts. They provided

support, training and risk mitigation advice. The report structure will follow the main themes that emerged from analysis of data as well as attempting to respond to areas of specific interest raised by DFID personnel.

**Table: Type and amounts of data collected**

Country	Strand 1 Qualitative interviews - Community-based	Strand 2 Professional women	Strand 3 Programme Study	Secondary DHS Analysis	Total
<b>Myanmar</b>	Yae Oak Kan Village, 40 women 10 men	20 women in Yangon	Akhaya 1 focus group around 10 women  UNDP Rural micro credit programme 15 FGs (5 women in each so total of 75 women)  IWoman Phone survey 171 respondents	Data not yet available	326 participants
<b>Nepal</b>	Manohara 32 women 10 men  Thamel 22 women 2 FGs Women Only (14 women in total)	Kathmandu 30 women 10 men	Participants of the IWDPs Programme  70 women and 13 men across two districts  These are broken down as follows: Kaski District Total interviews : 41 Female IWDP beneficiaries: 27 Male: 10 Key informant interviews with IWDP staff: 4  Syangia Total interviews: 42 Female IWDP beneficiaries: 29 Men: 13  937 surveys across 7 districts: Ilam   Chitwan   Kaski   Jumla   Dadeldhura   Bardiva   Sarlahi	Conducted	1,138 participants
<b>Pakistan</b>	Lyari, Karachi 27 women  400 surveys 300 women 100 men	4 women employed by a private sector business who has adopted the code of conduct to reduce work based harassment based in Islamabad.  8 female entrepreneurs in Islamabad and Lahore.	Members of Homenet Lahore  Shadipura 20 women  Gulberg Town 10 women	Conducted	459 participated

# Section 2: The Country Contexts

VAW is widespread in all three countries. This situation is underpinned by patriarchal cultural beliefs and institutions, and by inactive state machinery. Legislation varies across the countries, with the most promising legislative environment and criminal justice mechanisms found in Nepal. There has been recent progress in Pakistan, although there remains room for substantial improvements. Myanmar's recent transition to democracy has enabled positive public discourse to take shape, and this is beginning to impact positively on laws relating to gender.

## LEGISLATION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### Myanmar

Democracy is in its infancy but efforts are being made to introduce the Prevention of Violence Against Women Bill into law, which will include provision against work-based harassment as well as all other forms of VAW. It is hoped that this Bill will be passed and enacted soon.

### Nepal

The new constitution (introduced in 2015) enshrines gender equality as a core goal, including prohibiting work-based harassment. The constitution has now been backed up by donor and government commitment to the GESI (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion) framework. In 2009, Nepal passed its first domestic violence law, the Domestic Violence and Punishment Act, which defines domestic violence as physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse (OECD 2014).

### Pakistan

In 2011, three important Bills were introduced: The Prevention of Anti-Women Practices 2011 Bill, Acid Control and Acid Crimes Prevention, 2011, Bill, and The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2011 were passed by the Senate all of which are considered positive steps to reverse the regressive effects of anti-women laws passed during Zia ul Haq's regime in the 80s. Recently, Punjab government passed the Women Protection against Violence Bill 2016. This, has come under scathing attack by the religious political leaders and clerics declaring it a conspiracy to destroy the family unit and un-Islamic. Currently, there is a heated debate going on between the religious parties and the government on this bill and it is unclear what the future of this law will be like as the government is under immense pressure to appease the clerics and politico-religious parties. In 2010 a bill was passed intended to curb work-based harassment.

Despite these inroads the justice system remains largely inaccessible to women in all contexts with very low reporting of violence and even fewer cases making it to court. In relation to work-based harassment, even with laws in place with so many women earning income in the informal sector their existence offers them little recourse.



# Women's participation in work

FACT: In urban areas of Pakistan, women with decision-making power in the home are 3.7 times more likely to be economically active.

## Myanmar

DHS data has been gathered for the first time, and the datasets have been made available very recently. We are in the process of accessing this data and analysing it in accordance with the analysis previously conducted for Nepal and Pakistan. These results will be communicated post project end.

However, previous information on the labour market does indicate that textiles, clothing and footwear industries are expanding massively with a disproportionate number of women employed in low-paid production line roles. The sector provides around 750,000 jobs, and it accounts for 10% of the country's exports and 44% of Yangon's industrial exports<sup>1</sup>. Trades unions have been permitted since 2012, but as evidenced by the cited news report documents, improving workers' rights is challenging, with activists putting themselves in a difficult position. Our research suggests that poverty itself remains a serious barrier for unionisation. Many women cannot acquire ID or labour cards because they cannot afford to pay for them. This means that they are not officially recognised as workers and therefore have no official workers' rights.

## Nepal

Our findings from analysis of DHS data indicate that rural women are significantly more likely to be engaged in paid employment compared to urban women- with the highest proportion of employed women residing in the rural mountain zone, while the lowest proportion reside in the Terai zone. The alleviation of poverty plays a significant role in women's employment in Nepal, with over 95% of women from the poorest households engaged in income-generating work (this also includes work on family land) compared to 61% of women from richer households who are employed. In addition, the multivariate analysis that explored the determinants of women's work participation indicates that, after accounting for other variables, factors such as residence in a specific ecological zone, household wealth, age and involvement in family decision making have a significant influence on women's participation in work. While factors such as the age of the woman and involvement in family decision making were positively associated with women's employment, household wealth was negatively associated.

## Pakistan

Our secondary analysis of the Pakistan DHS highlights that, overall, 31% of women were employed in the 12 months preceding the survey, but this figure obscures dramatic differences in geography and individual circumstances. A significantly higher proportion of rural women are in paid employment (35.2%) compared to urban women (21.9%), and provincial differences are striking; for example, 55.1% of rural women in Sindh were employed, compared to just a fifth in urban Sindh, while in Baltistan, Khyber and Islamabad, urban women were more likely to be in paid employment compared to those in rural areas.

Poverty is strongly associated with the incidence of employment in both urban and rural areas. The association is stronger in rural areas, where women from the poorest households are more than 8.6 times more likely to work compared to those in the richest. In urban areas the association is more complex, although those from

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.dvb.no/news/features-news/burma-garment-industry-booms-labour-unions-pay-price/74623>

<sup>2</sup> The concept of positive deviance is premised on the observation that in every community there exist specific individuals or groups (the positive deviants) whose unusual but successful behaviours or strategies lead them to better solutions to a problem than those used by their peers. These individuals or groups

the poorest households are almost 3 times more likely to have been engaged in paid work in the previous 12 months compared to the richest.

Overall, better educated women were less likely to be in paid work, but this association is only significant in rural areas, where the likelihood of being economically active decrease significantly for each additional year of education. In urban areas the association between female education and employment was not significant.

Being involved in household decision-making (alone or jointly with husband) was significantly associated with female employment as opposed to education. Economically active women (across the educational spectrum) have more say in household decisions than women who do not earn an income. In urban areas for example, the odds of being in paid work increase by 3.7 times among women who have decision-making power compared to those who do not.

# Violence against Women

Table: Percentage of ever married women who reported violence in the 12 months preceding the survey (DHS 2016).

	Myanmar (2016)	Nepal (2011)	Pakistan (2013)
Total	11.0	17.0	18.0
Place of Residence			
Rural	11.8	16.1	19.4
Urban	8.9	19.6	15.1
Age			
15-24		17.9	
25-34		17.4	
35-49		16.1	
Education			
No education	10.8	21.2	20.3
Primary	11.8	15.1	19.1
Middle		16.8	19.8
Secondary	11.7	8.0	12.1
Higher	4.0	11.0	6.7
Marital Status			
Married/Living with partner	10.7	17.5	17.9
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	14.1	6.3	19.0
Wealth Index			
Richest	7.0	10.6	10.2
Richer	7.4	17.2	13.8
Middle	10.0	20.2	22.2
Poorer	12.9	17.4	21.0
Poorest	16.8	20.10	23.7
Number of Children			
None	14.5	16.0	8.7
1-2 Children	10.0	15.4	18.1
3-4 Children	9.8	18.9	18.5
5 or more children	16.9	19.2	21.3

## Myanmar

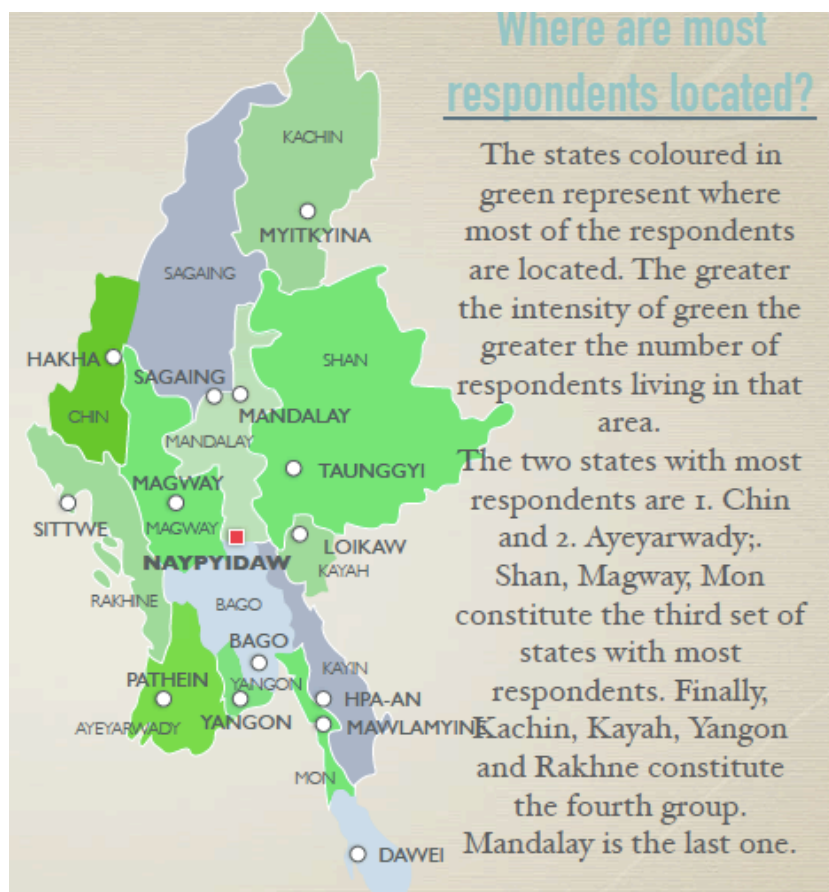
DHS (2015-16) data reports that 15% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence since age 15, and 9% experienced physical violence during the 12 months preceding the survey. It is further reported that 71% of women have never experienced any marital control behaviours by their husbands. These figures certainly appear low considering international figures indicating that 33% of women worldwide have experienced violence. However, social research conducted by NGOs and ethnographic research appear contradictory. The Gender Equality Network (2015) highlights the wide disparity of research findings on VAWG in Myanmar: one study in Mandalay found that 27% of women had experienced physical violence in the last 12 months, and that 69% of women had experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence in the same time period (Kyu & Kanai 2005). Another survey in Yangon found that 19% of women had experienced violence directly, and 53% knew of community or family members who had experienced violence (NCA, DSW and MMCWA 2013). In the Palung ethnic area, a further study showed that 90 % of participants had 'experienced or seen physical violence within families in their communities' (PWO 2011). Ethnographic research suggests that political violence against women has been endemic, that sexual violence is par for the course in all public spaces, and that GBV is particularly extreme amongst internally displaced communities (Skidmore 2003).

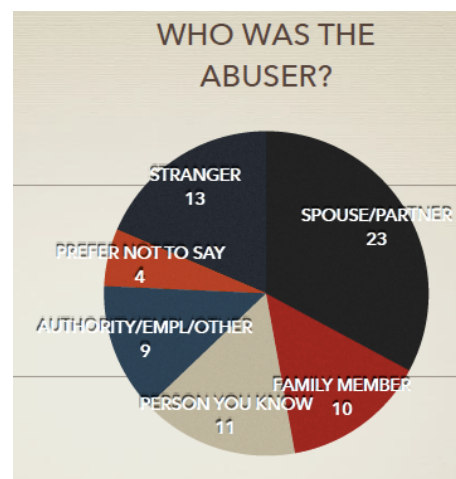
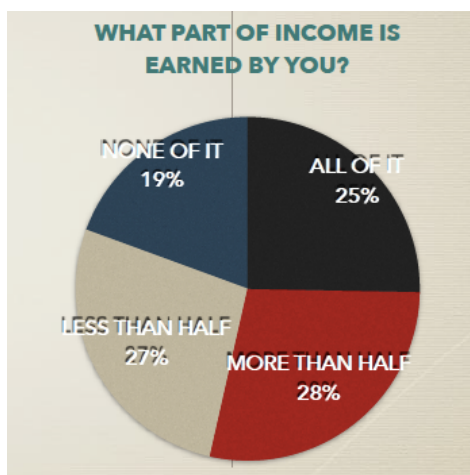
Our own qualitative research similarly suggests that VAWG is commonplace in both urban and rural areas, especially in public spaces, where it is described as endemic. The quantitative data throws interesting light on the high prevalence of violence among rural women in particular. The common use of customary law and corruption exacerbates this issue.

‘If you have one lakh and a pig, you can rape anyone...The law is like that.’ (Participant in Focus Group Discussion, 55, Small Business Owner, Northern Chin State).

For the current research, a quantitative survey was carried out on the ‘Women Inspiring Women App’ during the International 16 Days of Activism. The app-based survey technology is a joint initiative of UNDP Myanmar and May Doe Kabar National Network of Rural Women, with the technical guidance and support of the UN Gender Theme Group. For the current research, the team collaborated with UNDP to adapt the app for our own research purposes. 172 respondents answered the survey in full.

A key finding of the survey revealed that, in the month preceding the survey, 21.5% of respondents had been subjected to emotional or physical violence, 5% to physical and sexual abuse, and a smaller number to economic abuse and online harassment. This is more than twice the figure reported in the DHS survey. 33% of cases of violence were committed by a spouse/partner, family member or a known person, but most of the instances of violence took place outside the home. In comparison with the global figures of 33% of women having experienced violence within a lifetime, these levels of violence are extremely high. Additionally, the predominance of violence outside the home – even when most violence is perpetrated by a known person – points to the social acceptability of violence against women.





## Nepal

DHS analysis suggests that almost one fifth of women have experienced some form of violence by intimate partners in the 12 months prior to the survey. Physical violence was the most cited form of violence followed by emotional and sexual violence by an intimate partner. Analysis of factors associated with experience of violence indicates that, although place of residence was not associated with the experience of violence, residence in specific ecological zones was significant with women from the Terai zone, reporting higher odds of experiencing violence compared to other zones. The women from the richest households in urban areas were less likely to be victims of any form of violence from their husband/partner as compared to women from the poorest households. Women's education significantly reduced the odds of experiencing any form of violence in both rural and urban areas, while women who had witnessed their father beating their mother were more likely to experience violence. In addition, in the multivariate analysis, marital control and experience of witnessing the father beat the mother were significantly associated with experiencing violence. However, no significant association was established between women's work and experience of any forms of violence.

## Pakistan

According to Pakistan DHS analysis, approximately one in three women have experienced physical violence since age 15, compared to 19.2% in the last year.

The unadjusted odds ratios show that rural women are significantly more likely to experience all forms of violence ever, or in the last year. Experience of most forms of violence by employment status show that women who worked in the 12 months preceding the survey experienced significantly higher levels of violence than women who did not work.

Data presented earlier show that rural women are significantly more likely to work than urban women. Multivariate logistic regression models examining the odds of experiencing emotional or physical IPV in the 12 months before the survey, among women that work were conducted separately for rural and urban areas. Factors significantly associated with the outcome were controlled for in the analyses, including alcohol consumption (gets drunk sometimes/occasionally; yes or no); witnessed father beating mother (yes or no); respondent's age (single years); education (single years), number of living children, husband employed (yes or no), husband's education (continuous, single years), province, and household wealth were included in the model. The odds of experiencing IPV for rural women who worked remained elevated but no longer significant at the 5% level.

Notable factors associated with an increased the odds of IPV in rural areas were number of living children. Compared to those with no children, women with children were significantly more likely to experience

violence. Those with five or more were over 3 times more likely to experience violence compared to those with none. Violence was also associated with poverty, with women from the poorest households experiencing a significantly higher odds of violence. Whether a woman had witnessed her father beat her mother was also significantly associated with her experience of IPV. In urban areas number of living children, poverty, witness to parental violence, consumption of alcohol, and having an unemployed husband increased the odds of experiencing IPV.

# Section 3: Top Level Findings

This section addresses specific themes that we have been asked to address by DFID staff in one or more of the countries studied, either before or after data collection.

## RURAL/URBAN DIFFERENCES AND MIGRATION

The research in each country has sought to capture **rural** and urban differences, and to understand how migration may impact on a woman's perceptions of work and experiences of violence. Changes in family structures as a result of migration (from extended to nuclear) seem to be significant in terms of reducing some forms of domestic violence (from in-laws) but bring additional pressures on women, in the form of juggling childcare with work. The likelihood of IPV does not seem to reduce after rural-urban migration. Evidence has not been found of backlash post-migration to urban areas, but there is clear evidence that income earning in rural contexts does in fact cause increases in IPV.

### Myanmar

Migrants in Yangon are more vulnerable to violence than those who have grown up in the city and have family there.

Migration does not appear to be linked to higher levels of intimate partner violence. Many migrant women live in hostels, however, and feel substantially more vulnerable than other women to being attacked by strangers in these residences. Migrants' lack of supportive family structures also prevents them from leaving undesirable working environments.

Migration is also clearly linked to higher concerns about violence in public spaces. Migrants (married and unmarried) report that they experience 'bullying' in their neighbourhoods, as they lack social capital and are viewed by local residents as uncouth outsiders. This 'bullying' ranges in our interviews from name-calling to more severe physical harassment such as slapping and shoving in the streets.

Migration itself does not increase or decrease women's agency and control over their lives. However, when women have migrated to Yangon *before* marriage, this is associated with a stronger sense of independence and decision making power *after* marriage. These women are more likely to maintain remittances to family in natal villages, for example, and state that they have more control over how income is spent.

Migration is not associated in Yangon with greater normalization of violence (greater belief that violence is normal /to be expected). However, rural residence is associated with normalization. Across Myanmar, rural women are more likely than women in Yangon to assume that men are unaware that violence is unacceptable. It is widely believed among rural respondents that men need to undergo training to solidify this awareness. Until that time, rural women tend to suggest that men should be forgiven for violent behavior because they 'know no better'. This view is not replicated by women in Yangon.

The data does not capture a range of religions sufficiently to argue for differences between groups.

### Nepal

Migration from rural to urban areas disrupts extended family structures. Women and men both reported that decisions were now made jointly, and without much consultation with family in rural areas. This, they commented, represented a difference compared to how decisions were made in extended families. Women in particular felt they had greater freedom to influence decisions because of these changed structures. Earning and income was also seen as key to decision making and noted by both rural and urban women interviewed. However the rural women interviewed still claimed that decisions were made collectively and whilst they had more influence because of the money they brought into the house their voice was one among many.

The women interviewed as part of the Thamel study talked frankly about how liberated they felt as a result of moving away from their rural settings. They also talked about leaving their husbands as a major turning point and a moment that enabled them to gain more control over the lives.

*'Although my life is much harder in that I have to be both mother and father to my children I am completely free to make decisions. I have never experienced such freedom, my mind is eased of pressures and strains.'*  
(Informal entertainment worker (bar dancer), 33, Kathmandu).

These changing family structures and women's increased economic engagement certainly seem to feed into a more empowered outlook and heightened sense of control.

### **Pakistan**

The qualitative data in Pakistan has not captured in-depth information relating to migration and rural/urban differences. However, DHS analysis does make clear that VAW is substantially more prevalent in rural areas, and that women in rural areas are also significantly more likely to be economically active.

## **INTERSECTIONAL CATEGORIES**

We have applied an intersectional approach throughout, trying to determine how a range of demographic factors including age, caste and ethnicity may impact both on the need and willingness of women to work, and on their experience of violence. We can see that violence affects all women regardless of intersectional factors, however, in all countries we can see that poorer women and lower women of lower castes and classes in rural areas are more vulnerable to sustained forms of domestic violence. Women in urban areas suffer more intense forms of work-related harassment, both in the workplace and during the work commute. This is largely due to the type of work on offer in urban settings.

### **Myanmar**

Age plays a significant role in terms of vulnerability to violence in public spaces. Younger women are substantially more vulnerable and express greater levels of concern for their safety on public transport and in dark areas.

Class also plays a significant role. While poorer women are exposed far more to violence in public spaces (because richer women tend to travel in private cars), it is in fact richer women who experience greater violence in the domestic sphere as a direct result of backlash. Poor women report that families, who are in need of their incomes, are generally supportive of their work commitments. Thus, household chores are shared and any failure to manage domestic tasks is treated reasonably. Middle class women, in contrast, state that intimate partners are more likely to respond with anger when domestic duties are neglected as a result of their working hours. There are also greater reports among middle class women that men are antagonistic towards women with high incomes who threaten the traditional male breadwinner image.

### **Nepal**

Caste still plays a factor in Nepal in terms of increasing the intensity of violence experienced. Dalit women are the most marginalised. They are exposed to more extreme and harrowing tales of violence with limited options to increase their earning potential. However, our study did not find that actual rates of violence were lower amongst the Brahmin women interviewed. Rather poverty, educational levels and age of marriage were more significant factors. The younger a woman marries the more likely she is to experience IPV.

The professional women interviewed all had university degrees. This group of women articulated their experiences and perceptions of violence in much stronger language. They also acknowledge a much wider range of types of violence women are subjected to. Professional status and wage certainly gave the women we interviewed options which they acknowledged. As we go on to state, operationalising their capacity and resources to leave or confront violence was not automatic.



## Pakistan

Intersectional analysis does not reveal substantial differences in women's experiences of violence, other than a divide between economic quintiles. Although women in middle class society do report a degree of male backlash when they are successful in their income earning activities, the rates of backlash are substantially lower than amongst the poor. Furthermore, middle class professional women also report substantially greater resilience than poor women in terms of their willingness and capacity to challenge violence when they experience it. This is a finding distinctive to Pakistan; it is not replicated in the other countries studied.

## GENDERED CONCEPTS OF WORK AND THEIR LINKS TO VAW

**FACT:** Gendered notions of work appear to go hand in hand with the normalisation of VAW in Nepal and Pakistan, but not in Myanmar.

We have sought to capture the dominance of gendered notions of work and the segregation between what is considered women's work and men's. This division is apparent across sectors and limits the opportunities available for women. The glass ceiling is evident across construction, professional occupations, and the garment sector. Women express frustration about their inability to move up the career ladder, despite training opportunities and the desire to do more skilled work.

Furthermore, gendered notions of work seem to go hand in hand with the social normalisation of VAW in Nepal and Pakistan.

### Myanmar

In the garment sector, notions of women's 'nimble fingers' keep them locked into low paid production line work rather than moving into management or supervisory roles.

Interviewees in the garment sector report that, despite the predominance of women in the factories, the 10% of employees who are male are inevitably given higher status, better-paid job roles. Similarly, middle class women are vocal about the strength of the glass ceiling in Myanmar. In professions as diverse as law, medicine and business, women report discrimination at work, and a widespread assumption that men are more intelligent and more capable of complex tasks.

### Nepal

Women in construction are resentful that their work is harder than men's, and yet they get paid less than male masons. They feel equally capable of doing the work of masons, but fear the harassment they would face if they aspired to do so:

*"We are told by the contractors that the work of masons is for men and not for us, we fear the harassment if we challenge this view too much."* (Construction worker, 32, Kathmandu).

Professional women also talk about limited promotion opportunities: *'In order to get promoted I need to be able to network after work but my family don't like me doing this, they think it makes me unsafe.'* (corporate employee, 37, Kathmandu).

### Pakistan

Interviewees in Pakistan across the economic spectrum are clear that concepts of 'women's work' and 'men's work' are strong. Although women are found in a variety of professional job roles, they note that education

and medical subfields such as gynaecology are easier to gain access to than subfields less traditionally associated with women.

Poor women are adamant that working outside the home is extremely difficult, which is why home-based work is so prevalent in Pakistan. Traditions linked to *purdah* (female seclusion) remain strongly influential in determining the types of job roles deemed suitable for women. Poor interviewees all stated that they would face greater domestic violence if they sought to work outside the home, even if the jobs gained were more economically attractive.

# Section 4: Key Thematic Findings

This section addresses key issues that emerged from the data itself, as opposed to the critical areas outlined above which were highlighted by DFID personnel as being of interest.

## EXPERIENCES OF TRAVELING TO AND FROM WORK

**FACT:** Women in all countries reported feeling physically unsafe while travelling to and from work. This impacts directly on their productivity.

**Myanmar:** Garment workers in Yangon's Hlaing Tharyar area stated that they felt very unsafe crossing and walking the boundary road between the factories and the neighbouring community. The fear in many cases was recorded as extreme, with acknowledged implications for work productivity. For example (and this is in no way an exception), one interviewee stated:

*The fear starts from the moment I get to work, I worry how will I find my journey home. As soon as it gets dark my anxiety rises and I am definitely no longer productive in my work.* (Female garment worker, 22, Yangon).

### Nepal

Women working on construction sites in Kathmandu often travel to and from work with their husbands. As such they are more sheltered from this risk, but are still aware that it exists. For those who cannot travel with husbands, evidence indicates that they have begun to organise themselves to travel to and from work together. This, they claim, has really helped to reduce their anxieties over getting home safely. It has also reduced their very acute fear of being raped by a stranger, in public, on the way home.

*We began talking to each other about our concerns, in particular around being raped. We heard stories of women being raped on their home from work. We always have to put up with teasing on the bus from conductors but it can also be more serious and physical. Now we try and make sure that none of us have to travel home alone.* (construction worker, 36, Kathmandu).

### Pakistan

The women interviewed in Lahore, Pakistan went to efforts to avoid having to work outside of the home for fear of abusive repercussions from male family, including accusations of bad character in addition to physical violence. However there is still acute awareness across socio-economic groups that women are vulnerable as they travel to and from work.

## HONOUR AND SHAME

**FACT:** In all three countries women, even when they have personal economic resources, are likely to remain in violent domestic environments because of social constraints linked to honour and shame.

Honour and shame operate in a number of contexts, limiting women's opportunities for economic engagement outside of the home.

### Pakistan

Interviews in Lyari and Lahore with poor women highlight how honour and shame operates in many instances to keep women confined to domestic home-based work.

*‘The baradari (community) talks, they say she goes out by herself, how can her husband allow her to?’* (Home-based worker, 52, Lahore).

*‘I don’t like to go out of the house to work. Those women who do get harassed, they make boyfriends, working hard means you do it at home. Even if you work outside of the home, you should be careful of your honour.’* (Home-based worker, 24, Lahore).

Another participant stated *‘Community people are jealous of those women who work, they don’t support at all. They say that women are our honour they should not go out, husbands don’t allow their wives to work in factories or hospitals.’* (Home-based worker, 39, Lahore).

Women also talk about not being able to consider leaving even with a health income.

### **Nepal**

Professional in particular women shared their feelings of having limited options to leave an abusive home, even with an income, because of the shame that would be projected towards them by the community.

### **Myanmar**

Like other studies before ours, we found interviewees to be generally reticent when asked to describe their own experiences of domestic violence. This reflects the widespread view that experiencing violence is both embarrassing and personally shameful in Myanmar culture. Additionally, women are also expected to protect the family’s dignity, and as such are often more comfortable in sharing the stories of other people than those of themselves. The shame associated with victimhood is diminished only when women actively engage with women’s organisations, in which they participate in training programmes and mix with other women who have had similar experiences.

*‘When I came [to the women’s organisation] I realized... I did not commit any sin so I do not need to be ashamed. I should hold my head high.’* (Focus group participant, 44, business owner).

## **WORK-BASED HARASSMENT**

Gendered harassment at work is high across all job types, and has direct impacts on concentration and productivity.

Work is gendered, and ‘pushing the ceiling’ results in more intense harassment (see more below). Harassment in all countries takes various forms, from verbal teasing to the threat of physical violence, to sexual suggestions and pressure.

### **Myanmar**

Gendered harassment in Myanmar workplaces was found to be less severe amongst women from poorer quintiles than amongst those in the middle classes. This, however, is likely to reflect the fact that the workforce selected for study in the lower quintiles is women-dominated. Garment factories employ a 90% female workforce, and as such there is less opportunity for sexual harassment in the general working day. This fact notwithstanding, it is evident that there are substantial impediments to positive working conditions in the garment sector.

Women are specifically hired in accordance with their age and marital status; employers seek nimble-fingered young women without personal family commitments. The general view amongst interviewees is that women

in this category, who are not bound by domestic responsibilities, are easier to manipulate and exploit. Factory employees are aware that when they marry or have children they are liable to be fired, and as a consequence they often keep these personal details hidden.

## Nepal

Women working in the corporate sector in Nepal talk particularly about how male verbal harassment and threats from senior colleagues has an acute psychological impact.

*'Some days I really struggle to maintain my concentration, I am just constantly looking around for my boss and trying to work out how I can avoid him. The sexual comments he makes just reduce me to a ball of stress and anxiety'* (lawyer, 45, Kathmandu).

Corporate sector work seems to represent an environment in which harassment is more common compared to other professional sectors such as INGOs, education and medicine. This emerged from our data in Nepal.

In Nepal, all women in corporate employment reported harassment at work. This was not the case for women in the other professions captured

Women who work in unregulated and illegal sectors such as entertainment are unsurprisingly more vulnerable to violence. The women interviewed through Raksha Nepal talked about constant verbal and sexual harassment at the hand of their clients. Despite these experiences they remain resolute that this work is the most profitable available, and therefore that they will continue with it until they reach a point of being able to work for themselves.

*'Whilst the harassment from clients is daily I cannot imagine doing any other work, as this pays much better than anything else I have done'* (sex worker, 22, Kathmandu).

This acquiescence to work-based harassment is clear, and is likely linked to the support that women receive from each other and from being part of a union. Added to this, most of the women interviewed in Thamel have left violent partners and no longer suffer IPV. This may mean they are more able to tolerate harassment at work. This argument though needs to be tested further.

There is evidence that women, in the absence of unions or other formal collectives, work together to combat abuse in the workplace. For example, in an interview with a construction worker in Nepal, she shared a story about how she and her friends had collected together and went to confront a contractor who had not paid them. She went on to state this was common.

## Pakistan

The research in Pakistan interviewed women who work in companies that have implemented anti-harassment codes of conduct, lobbied for by AASHA (the alliance that facilitated the design and passing of the law). Participants in this research believe their work place is safer as a result;

For example, one participant, 44 (divorced with two children), worked in Attock Oil Refinery Limited (ARL) in the human resources department. She joined the company before she got married and had been a part of this organisation for many years: *"I joined ARL before I got married and what really helped me out was that my company gave me accommodation close to my office – when I had my two children, it was easy for me to go home...they also gave me 24 hour help...this was 30 years ago."*

She was very appreciative of her organisation both at a personal and professional level. She stated that even though it was mostly a male-centric profession, it was a *"very safe and friendly environment and I am very proud that ARL has adopted the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law 2010 and trained its staff on it."*

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mental health is negatively affected by increased levels of violence related to work (having to get to work, and harassment whilst there). However, it is also positively affected by women reporting that they feel more confident and independent as a result of earning an income. Women in each country speak of having decision-making powers that they link directly to income

### Myanmar

Women report high levels of anxiety related to the work commute. Fear of rape and robbery are extremely common amongst garment workers, who must work long shifts and have to travel during hours of darkness. Women also reported that they suffer from depression, largely as a result of long working hours and poor working conditions.

Nevertheless, garment workers also report higher levels of self-esteem as a result of earning an income. They report that household relations are more equitable, and that they have better family relationships as a result. Many women also note that, prior to working, they were 'shy', 'timid' or 'naïve'. As a result of their interactions with colleagues and the necessity of spending time outside the confines of the home, they note with satisfaction that their confidence levels have markedly increased. This translates into an increased ability to respond to violent behaviour in public spaces, although not in the private sphere when violence occurs.

### Nepal

Women state (almost across the board in both Myanmar and Nepal) that they would choose to work even if they were not financially reliant on their incomes. This view was expressed by women working in urban and rural areas, and those working in construction and in the entertainment sector, despite the harsh working conditions. We can say, for these women at least, income promotes a sense of empowerment.

*'I cannot imagine not working, I cannot rely on my husband, he might leave one day and then what would I do? Working gives me confidence and self-esteem.'* (construction worker, 41, Kathmandu).

The women interviewed who work in the informal entertainment sector have the most extreme stories of violence. Tales of rape in the hands of Maoist fighters, child abuse and intense IPV were very common. In these stories there is a moment when the women felt they gained control often signalled by leaving their husband and setting up on their own with their children. This turning point was mentioned as important by a number of the women interviewed and is significant to note given the ongoing harassment they experience because of their work.

### Pakistan

Poor women would rather not engage in economic activity. They feel that this is not their 'correct' role as women, but nonetheless feel that they have to earn in order to bolster family income. They fear repercussions of working from husbands who take their money and beat them, out of resentment that their wives have to work. One participant in Pakistan described the lengths she goes to in order to hide her home-based work from her husband, stating that *'he would beat me if he found out, but I have no choice. He does not earn enough money to feed us all.'* (Home-based worker 32, Lahore).

We hear from the women interviewed in Lahore some of the most extreme stories of poor mental health and desperation.

‘One day I downed a bottle of poison when I got tired of my life. When my children were little, if someone said something to my husband (meaning something negative) he would hit me, the fault would lie with someone else but he would take it out on me even though he knew that it was wrong to do this. Then I tried to take my life. I took rat poison, I was taken to the hospital where they pumped my stomach and saved me. Sometimes I just want to leave the world but then I think about what people will say, they will say she left the world for some guy.’ (Home-based worker, 43, Lahore).

‘He hits me whenever he has a fit of rage. In the fourth month of 2015, he broke my knees...it took me two, three months to get better, my sisters came and took me to my mother’s place’. (Home-based worker, 34, Lahore).

## **BACKLASH AT HOME AS A RESULT OF ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT**

**FACT:** Women who earn an income in Nepal are 1.4 times more likely to experience IPV than economically inactive women

Backlash is the negative reaction that women can experience as a result of increased prospects for autonomy (e.g. through increased income). Violent backlash was reported in each of the countries studied, but with significantly different prevalence: backlash is substantially more common in Pakistan and Nepal than it is in Myanmar.

### **Myanmar**

Evidence of backlash to women’s economic activity is negligible amongst the poor in either urban or rural areas. However, there is evidence that backlash is more likely to occur in middle class families where a woman’s income is not required for basic survival. In such contexts, women’s incomes challenge dominant images of masculine breadwinning, and may result in violent responses, especially when women’s traditional duties are not performed as a result of time constraints due to employment. Interviews with organisations engaged with professional women underscore that successful entrepreneurs in particular suffer backlash at home, because they earn more than their husbands. Nonetheless, backlash appears to be less significant a problem in Myanmar than in the other countries studied.

### **Nepal**

Backlash is evident in our quantitative qualitative research with the IWDP in Nepal. For example, our quantitative survey reveals that women who earn an income are 1.4 times more likely to suffer IPV. Our data also shows that, as a result of microfinance cooperatives, women’s income has steadily increased.

## Quantitative Survey: Nepal

**Background:** 937 women were surveyed across seven districts in which the IWDP is operating. Not all the women were part of the programme but the majority of the sample were. Average age of women in the sample was 39 (SD: 11.60) years and almost half had never attended school (47.81%). The majority of the women were currently married (88%) and almost everyone had children (98.16%).

**Work:** The majority of the women (79.62%) were working during the last 12 months prior to the survey.

**Experiences of Violence** Half the sampled women reported having experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. While 50.59% of the women reported having experienced IPV in their lifetime, 49.95% reported experiencing violence from someone other than a non-intimate partner, and 16.44% of the women reported experiencing reproductive coercion from their intimate partner. Among women who reported IPV, life time experience of emotional IPV (42.69%) was most common, followed by physical (31.06%) and sexual IPV (20.81%). For women who reported non-IPV violence, lifetime experience of emotional violence (37.46%) was most common, followed by sexual (30.20%) and physical violence (13.13%).

A larger proportion of working women reported experiencing all forms of IPV and non-IPV over their lifetime as compared to non-working women. For example, 51.74% of working women reported experiencing any IPV, and 51.47% reported experiencing any non-IPV, while 46.07% of non-working women reported experiencing any IPV and 43.98% reported experiencing any non-IPV.

**Potential Evidence of Backlash:** There were statistically significant relationships between the likelihood of working and having experienced different forms of IPV or non-IPV violence after adjusting for a range of socio-demographic, household and other factors, including prevalence of work and violence in the communities where the women lived. The odds of experiencing sexual violence was 1.91 times (OR:1.91, CI: 1.14-3.22) higher among working women, while the odds of emotional violence was 1.56 times (OR: 1.56, CI: 1.03-2.37) higher as compared to their non-working counterparts. Furthermore, working women had higher odds of experiencing physical (OR: 1.93, CI: 0.97-3.84) and emotional violence (OR:1.44, CI: 0.95-2.18) as compared to non-working women.

**Working women are more likely to report instances of violence:** In the multivariate analysis, the odds of reporting any IPV was 1.43 times (OR: 1.43, CI: 0.95-2.16) higher among women who worked as opposed to their non-working counterparts.

**Reproductive Coercion:** Working women were less likely to experience reproductive coercion (15.42%) as compared to their non-working counterparts (20.42%).

### Table summarising the findings from strand 3 quantitative work with the IWDP programme.

Our qualitative interviews reveal that women earning incomes and mixing with men and other women is a cause of concern for families. Families worry that women will behave in a way that will dishonour them. Women interviewed for the IWDP study talk about having to battle family accusations that their income activities have led them to enter relationships with men from other families. They also talk about how their experiences of violence has steadily increased as a result of their business success. This qualitative finding then helps us explain the quantitative data presented above. For example:

*In the early days of marriage everything was fine with my in-laws and husband. Things changed, my husband struggled to find work and moved away to Pokhara he came back only a few times a year. I began selling vegetables and my income grew to the point that I was able to feed and clothe my children just on my income. My husband returned one day and accused me of having an affair "how else could I be so successful if it wasn't with the help of another man. My in-laws did not defend me and so the beatings started. (IWDP Cooperative member, 36, Kaski district)*

## Pakistan



From our small samples, women who work as entrepreneurs and are deemed successful also see their vulnerability at home increase. Evidence here is not voluminous but is backed up by conversations with prominent figures in the local entrepreneur network. One interviewee in Pakistan stated:

*“successful female entrepreneurs threaten the established norm that men are the bread winners. Even in highly educated families with a history of women working and studying women who out succeed their husbands become vulnerable.”* (entrepreneur, 41, Lahore).

We also found that some home-based workers have to hide their income from husbands, who see it as a sign of dishonour.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH WOMEN’S ORGANISATIONS

FACT: Engagement with women’s organisations is the single most important factor driving women’s willingness to challenge violent behaviour

Our data across all three countries highlights the important impact of local women’s organisations and/or networks. At times these networks are peer driven and informal, emerging out of microfinance groups or as a result of working together in a tough environment such as construction or entertainment. The most significant impact comes from organisations that focus on delivering VAW awareness and training.

**Myanmar:** We recorded the important work of NGO Akhaya in bringing women together to share difficult experiences of violence. They subsequently work together to build more resilient futures.

*“In the past, I did not know what to say when someone insults me. After I have attended workshops at Akhaya, I know it is called sexual harassment. I came to know that there is law on that. If someone attacked me, I should not be afraid. I know now what to do, when that happens.”* (Focus group participant, 24, garment worker).

Additionally, networks clearly emerged from the UNDP’s self-reliance groups, and members informed us of how the groups also operate as a source of advice and guidance when other problems arise, including violence.

*“At first, money was lent and paid back. That would be it. But as time goes by, the small SRG group united the members and really created some positive energy. It created the energy “If one falls, then the others have to help that one up.” This is when UNDP had started the gender based violence advocacy.”* (Focus group participant, 34, Rakhine state).

The data strongly suggests that membership of women’s organisations is linked to greater solidarity among women, who offer each other support when violence becomes an issue. Many women report that before their association with these groups, they would have felt too ashamed to leave a violent marriage, and indeed would negatively judge others who did so. Membership of women’s organisations impacts on this tendency strongly, and women speak of having learnt to offer refuge and emotional support to women who need to leave abusive relationships.

### Nepal

The work of local organisations such as Raksha Nepal are critical in terms of leverage that leads to lasting change. As one woman stated; *my life changed for the better when I came into contact with Raksha Nepal* (worker in the informal entertainment sector, 31, Kathmandu). In rural areas and through the formation of finance cooperatives and self-help groups women are able to support each other and build collective resilience to many forms of violence. As one participant interviewed as part of the IWDP research in Nepal stated, *we*

*work together to try and build a better future, one in which we can earn more but also no-longer fear violence.*  
(IWDP cooperative member, 43, Syangja district).

### **Pakistan**

The movement of women in public is strictly monitored, making it very difficult for them to access the support of external organisations, even those locally based. The women interviewed as part of HomeNet report very high and intense forms of violence. The women were eager to talk with the researchers about violence and shared stories between each other. The opportunity to talk about violence was clearly one they appreciated and found, to a limited extent, empowering; this would suggest that the opportunity to share these experiences with skilled and supportive advocates, in safe spaces would bring benefit to their lives.

In Nepal and Myanmar, less so in Pakistan (but the sample was much smaller there) we found that wealthier professional women live more isolated lives. They are not regularly accessing peer networks and there is an absence of organisations that focus on offering support specifically to them. However our data show that they are also vulnerable to a range of violent behaviours.

### **WHAT DO WOMEN SPEND THEIR INCOME ON?**

Women in Myanmar living alone in Yangon and working in the garment sector send their money home to their rural families. In Pakistan and Nepal women are using their income to support children in private education and also to clothe and feed them. In Nepal and Pakistan, compared with Myanmar, there seems to be much less pressure to send money back to rural family members.

# Section 5: Conclusion

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WEE & VAW: TOWARDS A NEW THEORY OF CHANGE

We have not developed a full theory of change but the diagram below depicts the types of linkages and dimensions of a wider enabling environment that we believe our research evidences.

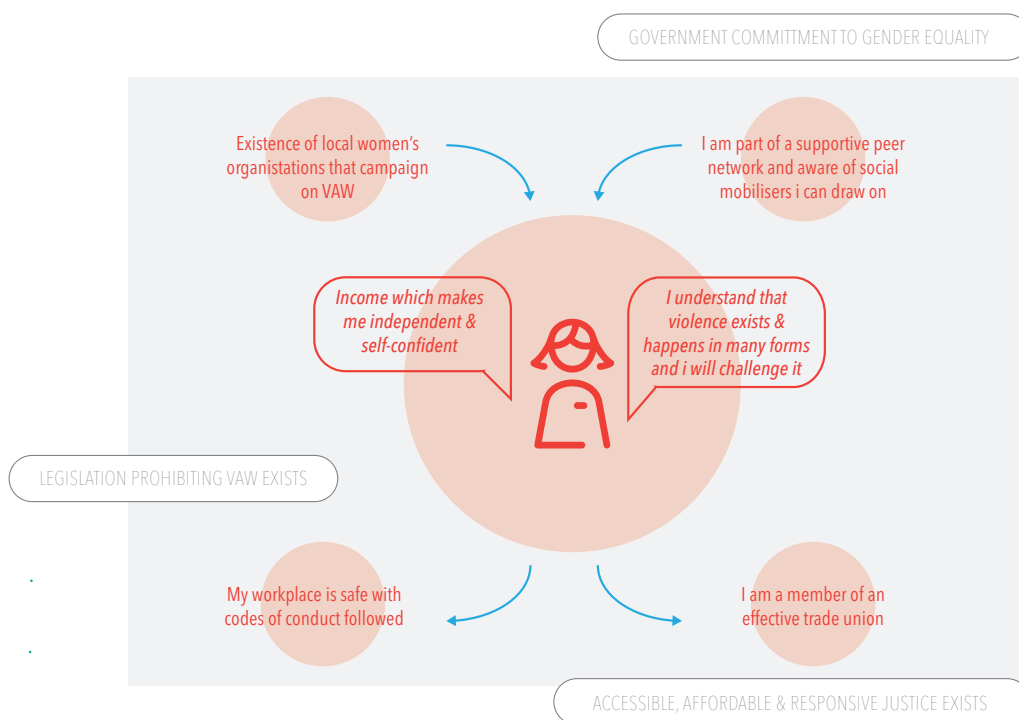
There is no direct or immediate correlation between women's economic engagement and women's perception of violence as wrong (i.e. not a socially acceptable norm) and their subsequent mobilisation to challenge it.

However, we can identify from the data a number of factors that, if in place, are likely to facilitate a process of positive change.

- Engagement with a women's organisation that is dedicated to ending VAW.
- Association with a social mobiliser and/or a strong peer group with positive deviance influence.
- Codes of conduct in the workplace to protect against harassment (to extend to the informal sector and home-based work).
- Strong trades unions.

Other conditions likely to improve working conditions and reduce VAW include:

- Legislation prohibiting VAW.
- Commitment to a national gender equality framework
- Accessible, affordable and responsive justice.



## IS WORK EMPOWERING?

Earning an income does increase confidence and self-esteem, providing an important platform from which violence can be de-normalised and then actively challenged if other conditions are also in place. Income gives

women options, which they recognise and value. Many women who work battle with mental health issues (to differing degrees) due to increased harassment in the work place and at home, anxiety about public safety, overburdening, and health issues caused by unsafe working conditions. Stress often increases as a result of women working, caused by the stress of worrying about possible violence as well as being subjected to verbal harassment by colleagues (mostly male) and at home by family members.

## **SOCIAL NORM CHANGE AND POSITIVE DEVIANCE**

In understanding how social norms around VAW may shift as a result of women earning an income, we need to look at wider patterns of family and community relationships, which are fundamentally gendered. We need in each context to consider how socially acceptable it is for women to earn incomes, and the types of violence they are most vulnerable to. We can then explore links between forms of income generation and different levels/types of violence. In rural Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan women have always been involved in agricultural labour, largely unwaged, although not without economic benefit to families. With the introduction of economic liberalisation and the growth of global markets, some previously unwaged agricultural work has found a market, and so generates income. In Myanmar and Nepal, the UNDP and IWDP programmes seek to support women in capitalising on market opportunities to earn their own income. This income, as already stated, has brought positive benefits in the form of stronger mental attitudes and a sense of autonomy. However, we can also see evidence of male backlash when women are seen as too successful and out-earning their husbands, and/or when family members believe they are no longer fulfilling their domestic roles.

We suggest the use of Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus*, in which communities and households are seen to consist of a set of relationships which are fundamentally gendered and shaped by history. These relationships, in turn, embed behaviours and attitudes that are reproduced through relational structures. The ordering of these relationships and the way in which roles and responsibilities are divided is always in a constant state of flux and vulnerable to external shifts and shocks (economic down turns, environmental disasters, food insecurity as well as development programming). *Habitus* is a more accurate concept than the more frequently used 'mindset'. Mindsets are not static, but rather are influenced by the wider web of relationships underpinned by values and beliefs that themselves shift over time. *Habitus* helps us understand not just the positive impact of women's income generation but also consequential costs.

The relevance of **positive deviance** is clear in these contexts.<sup>2</sup> From within communities, we can see in our data examples of women who must navigate between (a) the consumer desires of their families and the consequent need to build a sustainable income for family security, and (b) accusations of inappropriate and 'unwomanly' behaviour. Figures who are resolutely vocal against such accusations are vital, because they then motivate others who are less empowered and more fearful of the consequences of their income activities and success.

We have already spoken of the evidence that women's organisations at a local level are important in supporting and bolstering women, in pushing them to recognise that violence, in all its forms, is wrong and that they should not tolerate it. These organisations are usually run by an individual whose life story projects them as positive deviants. For example one such story from Nepal:

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of positive deviance is premised on the observation that in every community there exist specific individuals or groups (the positive deviants) whose unusual but successful behaviours or strategies lead them to better solutions to a problem than those used by their peers. These individuals or groups have access to exactly the same resources and face the same challenges and obstacles as their peers.

*I just remember deciding that my life would be different. I refused to let myself struggle as my mother did. Then a cousin rang and said “why don’t you come to the city (Kathmandu) there are so many more opportunities here”. So I left, unmarried and alone and came to the city. After experiencing daily abuse singing in dance bars I decided again that this would not be my life and nor should other women put up with such violence. So, I set up my own organisation and made it my life duty to push for change and see women live secure and good lives. (Menuka Thapa, founder of the NGO Raksha Nepal*

In terms of changing the structures of the habitus in which women live these figures are critical, but cannot operate in isolation.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS COUNTRY LEARNING**

- Continued and expanded support for local women’s organisations and networks. This support should be extended to reach women from groups currently isolated from such networks (e.g. middle-class professional women).
- Increased support for social mobilisers and community leaders through specific GBV training. The social mobiliser initiative in Nepal is a good example of a successful implementation, although more research on this role is needed (see next section).
- Development of codes of conduct to support organisations and business in adopting and embedding anti-harassment laws. Cross learning can be taken from the work of organisations in Pakistan.
- Women only transport schemes should be explored.
- Peer support is clearly critical and efforts should be made within all programme to see spaces for networks preserved or created both the IWDP in Nepal and UNDP in Myanmar represent good examples.
- Anti GBV programming needs to go hand in hand with the promotion of women’s income generation in order to ensure backlash to women’s economic success is limited and responded to.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

- Greater understanding into the nature and impact of work-based harassment and also the so-called gendered glass ceiling. In particular evidence that demonstrates the economic costs of not responding to the psychological impact of harassment and limited work progression options is needed in order to leverage increased commitment from the private sector.
- More research is needed to dig into the motivations and triggers behind the male backlash to women’s income success. Why is evidence of a backlash so high in rural areas compared with similar socio-economic groups in urban settings?
- The role of the social mobiliser needs to be explored. Whilst we have captured the positive impact of this role we need to look into the risk factors associated with this role. Are social mobilisers at risk of harassment because of their role in challenging social norms?
- Longitudinal studies tracking perception change over time. Do attitudes change anyway or can legalisation and new programming, evident in all three countries, act as important triggers? This research would help promote and highlight opportunities for cross learning and understand the complex ways in which change over time takes place.

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