Analytical Framework

This section outlines the analytical framework that we will employ, combining the well-established ecological framework with intersectional analysis and the use of a gender-based violence spectrum.

The social ecology framework

The social ecology framework (also called the ecological framework) is a marked antidote to tendencies in earlier VAW research to cling to single-factor explanations of (and therefore antidotes to) violent behaviour. It presents a picture of violence as inherently multifaceted, produced by the interaction of numerous elements of everyday life at various levels:

> *The social ecology includes the life histories, traumatic scars, and personality factors that men and women bring to their relationships, as well as the context and situational factors that impinge on their day-to-day lives. The ecology also includes messages and norms that friends, family members and social institutions reinforce as appropriate behaviour for men and women, including the acceptability of violence within different context. These norms and expectations are in turn shaped by structural factors — such as religious institutions and ideology, and the distribution of economic power between men and women — that work to define beliefs and norms about violence and structure women's options for escaping violent relationships* (Heise 2011: vii).

The ecological model has been endorsed by numerous development institutions, including DFID (e.g. DFID 2012). There are several ways of conceptualising this framework, but all emphasise the interactive and embedded nature of violence risk factors. Heise (1998, 2011) who has essentially pioneered the ecological approach in relation to VAW, prefers to retain Belsky's (1980) original terminology.[1] Belsky's framework includes four analytical levels, conceived as four concentric circles in which various elements contributing to VAW are located.

Figure 1 Original Social Ecology (Diagram from Heise (1998: 265)
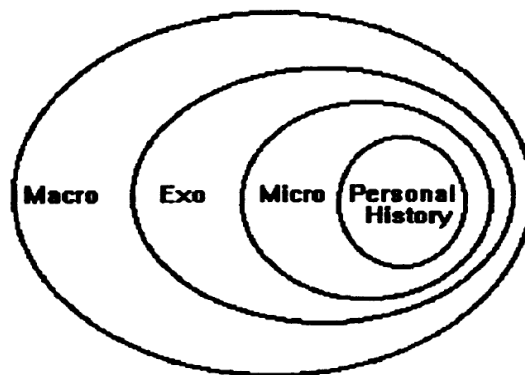
Here, 'personal history' relates to personality and personal experiences that individuals bring to the table; the 'microsystem' refers generally to issues at the household level (i.e. male dominance, control of wealth

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[1] Belsky (1980) created the ecological approach, but used it to analyse child abuse and neglect.

etc.). The 'exosystem' contains matters of local socio-cultural and economic concern (socioeconomic status, women's social networks etc.), and the 'macrosystem' incorporates widespread sociocultural gender concepts/practices and legal frameworks.

'Violence against women and girls manifests at every level of society, from interpersonal and familial relationships, through communities and right up throughout society, including via the state. This is known as the 'ecological model'. Interventions which address only one level of the ecological model or use only one intervention method can achieve results, but these will be limited' (DFID 2012: 8).

These terms (which are admittedly less than intuitive) have sometimes been substituted with alternatives. Kabeer (2014) replaces them meaning-for-meaning with 'individual level', 'relationship level', 'community level' and 'society level' for example. We suggest the terms **societal level (cultural values and beliefs, and their reflections in social institutions such as the law, marriage patterns etc.); community level (the neighbourhood level, or the level at which people socially engage); the household level (the family) and the individual level.** Thus, our understanding of the Social Ecology is as follows:
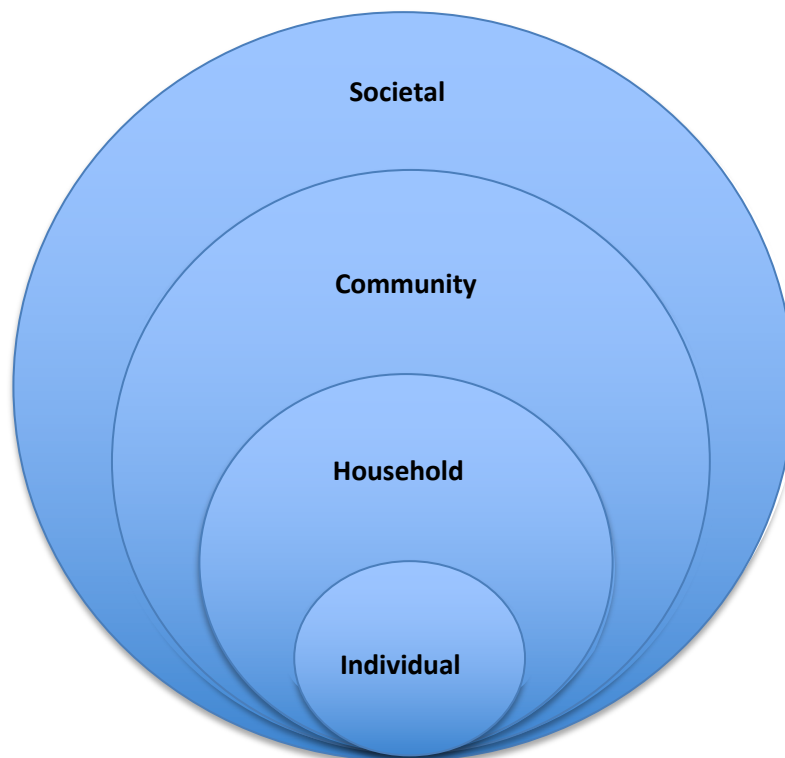

Figure 2 Revised Social Ecology

This framework has many benefits: it may help us to understand the differences between actors within local contexts: to understand the types of factors that are influencing their behaviour and – crucially - how they interlink to provide particular types of outcome (violence/nonviolence, severe/moderate violence, sphere of violence (e.g. home, work, public space), specific forms of violence etc.). This would clearly be of use in the design of programmes targeting VAW, and it underscores the importance of involving both women and men in the process.

Of course, **the fundamental contribution of the ecological framework lies in its focus on the embedded**

nature of VAW. Its presentation demonstrates that everything – from the individual to the community level – is located within (and thus shaped by) culture. This is extremely important, because it highlights the fact that structural changes (such as legal reform) and community-level interventions are unlikely to meet their full potentials unless efforts are also made to address the broader cultural system in which they are located, interpreted and enacted.

Further to this, however, there are also amendments to the ecological framework that we will seek to implement. Firstly, while culture is clearly influential in all aspects of life, it must not be seen as a rigid metanarrative. **Culture is in itself mobile and permeable; it does not simply govern the community, household and individual levels, but is also influenced by them in a process of give and take**. Thus, even if cultural institutions are oppressive *on the whole*, there remains room within the system to challenge those elements. Moreover, it should be noted that **while culture operates to some degree as a metanarrative (albeit a fluid one), its effects on gender relations have multiple intra-cultural manifestations depending on the interaction of various cultural institutions (e.g. caste, class) and contextual factors within local communities and households**.

Intersectionality

We will therefore also incorporate intersectional analysis into the ecological framework, in recognition of the fact that gender is by no means an isolated social category. Rather, it acts to constrain women's freedoms in diverse ways by interlinking with additional categories such as race, caste, class, disability, sexual orientation and age, which contribute further to social, economic and political power inequities. There is therefore no such thing as an 'average' man or woman; men and women's, psychologies and opportunities are affected by issues related to other forms of discrimination and/or social, political and economic disadvantage as well.

Crucially, moreover, **it is vital to view these multiple aspects of oppression as *enmeshed* rather than co-existent or additive**. People do not simply deal with multiple unrelated forms of oppression in their lives; a female Dalit does not suffer caste and gender bias separately, for example, but rather they interweave (along with other factors such as poverty, religious identity etc.) to create the woman's own specific experiential environment. Therefore, the point of intersectional analysis is not to identify and analyse the effects of mutually exclusive categories/identities, or even to find 'several identities under one' (i.e. to analyse how caste and/or race affect forms of gender discrimination etc.). Rather, **the aim is to analyse the 'differential ways in which social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities'** (Yuval-Davis 2006: 205). Furthermore, a truly nuanced intersectional approach analyses structural inequality among women, recognising that women are divided in their attitudes and understandings of violence against "other" women. Rather than just multiple positions, it therefore means complex relations.

Yuval-Davis (2006: 198) also underscores the fact that social divisions are played out on multiple stages, having organisational, intersubjective, experiential and representational forms, and being expressed across sectors, institutions and organisations: laws and state agencies, voluntary organisations, the family and so on (this can easily be translated into the social ecology levels). Actors/entities must therefore be held accountable at all levels from the household to the global. Further to this, she suggests that **many researchers make the mistake of separating structure and culture, prioritising one over the other.** This must be avoided, as both are relational processes and are thus involved in every norm as well as every institutional framework (such as the health and education systems etc.). Underpinning our project's

recommendations will be a consistent awareness of the fact that integrated multi-sectoral approaches that work across all four levels of the social ecology are most efficient in creating change (DFID 2012). Our use of the ecological framework will help to maintain the integrated intersectional perspective that Yuval-Davis (2006) recommends, and which DFID (2012) also stresses. At present, intersectionality is more common in research than it is in policy making, and we will seek to promote it as a core element of our policy recommendations.

The gender based violence spectrum

In conjunction with this, we will also seek to incorporate a gender-based violence spectrum in our analytical framework. In this we build on a legacy stemming from Liz Kelly's (1988) ground-breaking theory of the VAW continuum. Kelly (1988) strove to demonstrate that **violence against women should not be analysed as episodic or deviant acts of cruelty, but rather must be seen as normative and functional**. When researchers concentrate on severe acts of violence, Kelly (1988) argues, they lose sight of the larger web of issues. By focusing on the extreme, there is a tendency to attribute violence either to pathology or abnormality (of perpetrators and/or their victims). This theory insists that **highly visible acts of violence sit at the end of a spectrum of socially endorsed male aggression, coercive behaviour, notions of entitlement and entrenched patriarchal standards**. Likewise, Herman (1981) had argued previously that incest is an exaggeration of patriarchal family norms rather than a contradiction of them, and Scully & Marolla (1979: 316) had contended that rapists 'represent one end of a quasi-social sanctioned continuum of male aggression.' For example, therefore, 'stranger rape' is at the extreme end of a continuum that includes sexist jokes, sexual harassment, intimate intrusions and coercive sex with partners, all of which are part of the everyday lives of many girls and women.

Kelly's (1988) continuum is reflective of the *prevalence* of various forms of gendered insults/bias/abuse, unlike the WHO's (2005) study, which graded the *severity* of violence. Thus, Kelly (1988) does not intend to imply a linear process of violence progression, nor a hierarchy of seriousness or severity according to the harm caused or level of force used (with the exception of violence that results in death). Instead, her continuum concept represents the spectrum of complex and interwoven experiences of harassment, violation, constraint and abuse that women encounter in all spheres of the social ecology, some of which are more common or 'everyday' than others. **The tendency of contemporary research and policy to focus on markedly criminal acts (mostly severe IPV and sexual assault) has taken the focus away from the everyday realities that work together to create an environment which then harbours the potential for violence, and moreover which creates a distinctly difficult environment for women to thrive in, even when physical violence is absent** (remember that, following the UN, DFID (2013) incorporates the infliction of psychological harm in its definition of violence, and therefore violence includes non-enacted sexual harassment threats). In our own research we must therefore strive to acknowledge and explore the full range of gender discrimination that affects women, and which creates an environment in which psychological harm is inflicted and in which physical violence can easily erupt.
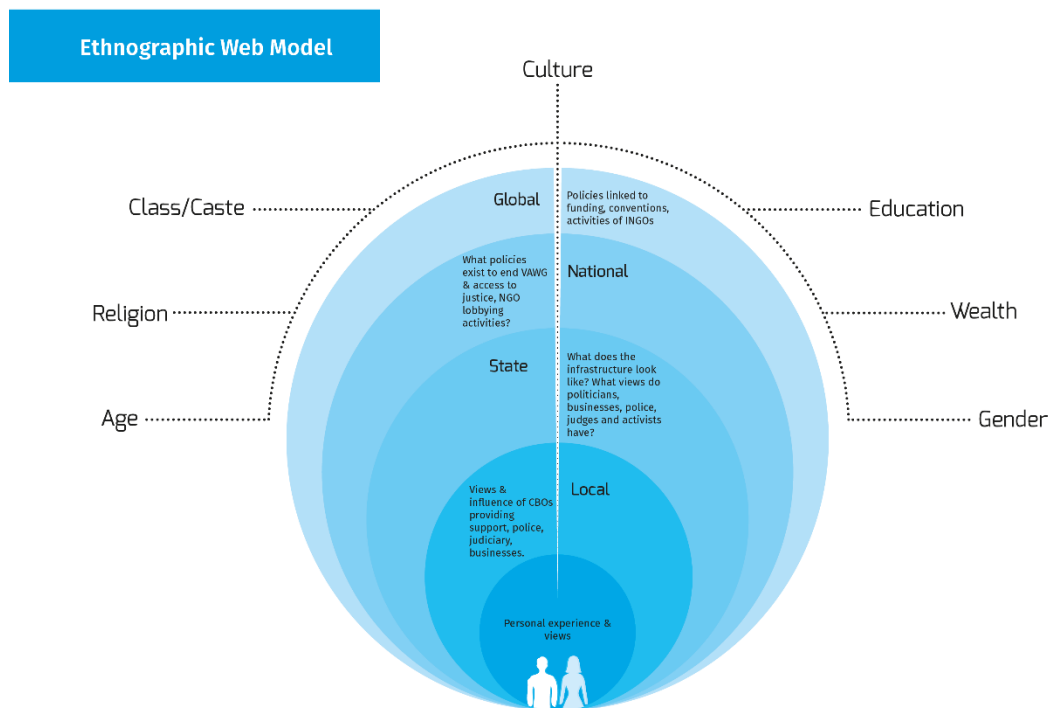
Ethnographic Web Model

Culture

Class/Caste

Global

Policies linked to funding, conventions, activities of INGOs

Education

What policies exist to end VAWG & access to justice, NGO lobbying activities?

National

Religion

What does the infrastructure look like? What views do politicians, businesses, police, judges and activists have?

Wealth

State

Age

Gender

Views & influence of CBOs providing support, police, judiciary, businesses.

Local

Personal experience & views

Figure 3 Ethnographic Web Model

Combining the perspectives offered by social ecology theory, intersectionality and the VAW continuum will mean that we can comprehensively and practically answer our research question through ethnographic research. The ethnographic-web will also allow us to assess the relative impact of actors operating in the different circles (e.g. relative influence of community leaders, local politicians, state level judicial system and government). The combination of these approaches will enable us to extrapolate a complex picture of how gendered norms are embedded and often sanction VAW. It will also enable us to identify tensions and breaks as harmful behaviours are challenged either through economic empowerment (of men and women), better access to justice routes or by other processes of social and cultural change. Understanding the relative influence of these different dimensions is vital if we are to locate specific programme entry points for long-term mind-set change around VAW. It will also enable us to ascertain if these entry points could be similar across different contexts, rural and urban and cross-region. Digging out and evidencing these nuances is vital if clear recommendations are to be made with constructive actions and case studies of good practice.