



# Women, work and violence

Violence Against Women and Women's Economic Empowerment: understanding gender dynamics within domestic, public and work spaces

**Research on VAWG in South Asia**

**DRAFT COUNTRY REPORT: MYANMAR**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research seeks to explicate the relationship between women's income generation and their experiences of violence. We adopt the UN's holistic definition of violence as "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and/or girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (UN 1993).

The research, which was conducted in Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan, was designed to prioritise the adoption of an intersectional perspective. This provides for nuanced analysis of multiple causes and effects of both violence and work, to include women's economic characteristics, migration status, social capital analysis and more. In all countries the research was divided into three 'strands' to promote this intersectional approach. In Myanmar, the details of the strands were as follows:

**Strand 1: Qualitative interviews with women and men in a delineated community area. The area was selected to ensure that community members occupy the lowest two economic quintiles**

The community was selected after substantive scoping and thorough discussion with key local stakeholders. Critical areas for analysis were defined during this process as rural-urban migration and the impact of burgeoning levels of factory employment. After provisional piloting, the area selected was Yae Oak Kan village, which borders the Industrial Zone of the Hlaing Tharyar township in Yangon. This community is surrounded by factories, most of which predominantly hire women.

**Strand 2: Qualitative interviews women from higher socio-economic quintiles, for comparative analysis with strands 2 & 3.**

20 interviews were conducted with professional women living in and around Yangon. These women were all educated to at least degree level and were engaged in professions in various sectors including medicine, the (I)NGO sector, corporate business and entrepreneurial activities.

**Strand 3: Organisational case studies of two women's development programmes: Akhaya and the UNDP's Self Reliance programme.**

The decision to focus our third strand on women who are engaged in empowerment programmes was made in order to assess the impact of associated training and networking on women's experiences of and responses to violence. The scoping phase identified two distinct programmes for analysis. Firstly, we chose Akhaya NGO, a relatively prominent domestic NGO which regularly speaks out in public forums about women's rights issues. KIIs were conducted with Akhaya staff, and we used a focus group approach to engage with women engaged in Akhaya's women's empowerment training.

Secondly, we chose to conduct research with the UNDP's Self Reliance programme, which works across Myanmar to promote women's autonomy. 15 focus groups were conducted with women members from throughout Myanmar, at a pre-organised UNDP gathering in Yangon. These women have been engaged in microfinance activities, and more recently in anti-VAW training. As

‘female leaders’ in the programme, they are essentially trained as social mobilisers to promote and help effect change mechanisms in their local environments.

We also partnered with the UNDP to conduct qualitative research with women from throughout Myanmar. We worked with UNDP to design a survey that was circulated to women using the UNDP’s pioneering mobile phone research app. **This partnership has offered substantive opportunities for uptake.** The UNDP is keen to use the findings of our research in their future programming. Moreover, the government of Myanmar has indicated that it would like to use our survey tool in order to reach out to a larger sample of women as part of its own research on women’s development in the country. We will be engaging with government representatives to facilitate this process.

### **Findings**

Findings from all three strands reveal a highly complex relationship between women’s income generation and violence. Certainly, income generation in itself does not trigger a reduction in violence in either private or public spheres. Confidence gained through work outside the home does translate into greater willingness to resist violence in public, but this does not translate into resisting violence at home.

Women across the economic spectrum are vulnerable to both public sphere violence and IPV, although the poor are more likely to use public transport, where much public violence is experienced. Rural-urban migrants experience greater levels of public sphere violence, and report being ‘bullied’ by the local community in Yangon. Their lack of supportive family structures also prevents them from leaving undesirable working environments.

Domestic violence is normalised across economic, migration and age categories. Poor women experience more IPV in general, but notably women in the higher economic strata are more likely to experience violence that is explicitly associated with “backlash” to income generation. This relates to men feeling that their traditional masculinity is threatened by women’s economic successes.

Membership of a women’s organisation is more significant than income earning for poorer women in terms of building resilience to end/challenge VAW. The supportive social capital fostered by these memberships is central to building confidence to resist VAW, including bypassing the traditional shame associated with victimhood. This shame is not so readily overcome by professional women, who are less likely to engage with organisations with a specific VAW component.

More nuanced data analysis is ongoing, with the final analysis due by mid-March 2017. Uptake activities have been ongoing from the outset. Researchers will present findings at a conference in Yangon on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

# HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS REPORT

This report is divided into five sections:

Section 1 introduces the research concept and design, highlighting our key questions and thematic areas. It then gives detail on our methodology and analytical frames. The final subsection offers a review of what we already know in relation to VAW and WEE.

Section 2 gives detail on the Myanmar context in relation to VAW and WEE.

Section 3 offers the findings from the three strands of our qualitative research.

Section 4 draws an overall conclusion based on a comparison between the data from all strands.

Section 5 makes a number of practical recommendations which we believe to be evidenced by the data. The report ends by reviewing the next steps for the process of more nuanced analysis, and our intentions re. communication, publications and uptake activities.

## 2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

**This reports presents data from the DFID funded research project ‘Women, Work and Violence’. The overarching question was as follows: how can approaches to increase women’s economic engagement also tackle violence against women?**

Significant resource has been directed at programming in the developing world specifically geared towards improving the financial independence of women. Micro-credit projects are the most common but investment has also been placed in vocational training and in 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 have more leverage to make decisions at household level. In turn, prevalent thinking postulates that this will empower women to take control over other aspects of their lives including build resilience to violence.

This research sought:

- (i) To understand how violence currently shapes women’s economic engagement patterns, and to ascertain how best to address this;

- (ii) 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
- (iii) To unpack and describe how approaches to enhancing women's economic activity can 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 research was conducted in three countries: Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. These countries were chosen because of their potential for interesting comparability and cross learning. This report focuses on the findings from Myanmar.

The research was framed around a number of linked themes.

**Firstly, earning an income impacts on relationships within the home:** although much of the intra-household bargaining literature suggests that earning an income increase a woman's bargaining and decision making power other perspectives, especially Sen's cooperative conflict framework, suggests that the outcome is very context-specific. Key questions emerging from this literature include:

- Does a woman have control over her own earnings?
- Does earning an income exacerbate or introduce tensions because it challenges traditional gender norms and power relations?
- In particular, how do husbands, fathers and brothers respond to the earning power of female family members?
- **Secondly, the impact of intersectional features:** we explore whether/how different groups of women are more or less vulnerable to particular types of violence and how this may or may not link to income levels and activities. Whether/how different groups of women are more or less vulnerable to particular types of violence and how this may or may not link to income levels and activities.
- We have sought to identify whether particular social norms can be associated with particular groups of men and women, or if they are widely expressed across the socio-economic spectrum.
- We have attempted to draw out men's attitudes to violence and explore intersectionally whether some groups sanction specific forms more than others.
- We have also tried to pinpoint specific triggers for male violence that may relate to a women earning an income.
- We looked at whether women show resilience to violence and if so, in what ways are they able to do this?
- Can we identify groups (e.g. members of a producing collective, employed by companies proactive in promoting women's wellbeing) who are able to draw on resources or display greater agency to ensure protection from and responsiveness to violence?

**Thirdly, nature, type and conditions of work:** this theme will explore how the specific environment in which a woman earns an income impacts on her sense of wellbeing and experiences of both empowerment and violence.

In order to seek answers, we have explored the following:

- Work location,



- Management styles and composition,
- Relative access to income and assets,
- Access to financial services,
- Access to business development services,
- Level of economic decision making power,
- Amount of unpaid care and household work a woman is engaged in,
- Levels of skill capacity and leadership attributes,
- Access to women's collective action through cooperatives and unions, support services and networks available.

**Fourthly, nature and type of VAW & women's resilience** In our field and case study sites, we mapped (using the VAW spectrum), and analysed intersectionally the range and types of violence that different groups of women are most vulnerable to. We will also mapped the resources available to women to counter, challenge and protect themselves from violence.

**Fifth, Migration and travel:** Rural to urban migration as well as cross border migration is on the rise in each of the study countries; as such, we have sought to capture the impact it has on women's earning capacity and vulnerabilities to violence.

- Are women more or less vulnerable following a move from the village home into a city?
- To what extent do migratory bridges linked to other women from their wider families or places of origin affect women's vulnerability to violence?
- Is income the primary motivation behind migration, and are women also expected to contribute to families left behind?
- What are the income generating activities that newly migrated women are most likely to be engaged in?
- Does migration (in line with other themes) increase or decrease women's agency and control over their lives?

## 2.1 Methodology

In order to answer these questions and explore the associated themes in Myanmar, three strands of research were designed as follows:

### Strand 1 (community study)

- 50 in-depth qualitative interviews (40 women, 10 men) living in Yae Oak Kan village, which borders the Industrial Zone of the Hlaing Tharyar township in Yangon. This community is surrounded by factories, most of which predominantly hire women.
- Interviews typically lasted between one and two hours.

### Strand 2 (comparative study of professional women)

- 20 interviews with middle class professional women living in and around Yangon.
- Interview duration 2 hours on average.

### Strand 3 (organisational study)

- Akhaya NGO: An in-depth focus group was conducted with members of this women's association.
- UNDP: Research with female beneficiaries of UNDP's Self Reliance Programme (locations throughout Myanmar). This strand is both quantitative and qualitative.
  - ⇒ Qualitative: 15 focus groups were conducted at a meeting of 'female leaders' of the self-reliance groups held in Yangon in July.
  - ⇒ Quantitative: A survey was conducted using UNDP's mobile phone technology. This technology takes the form of a points based 'game' in which women answer questions in order to enter prize draws. The survey received 180 responses. Women also submitted voice recordings of personal experiences, in which they discussed anything they considered relevant. These will be qualitatively analysed as we progress with data analysis between now and March.

## 2.2 Data analysis

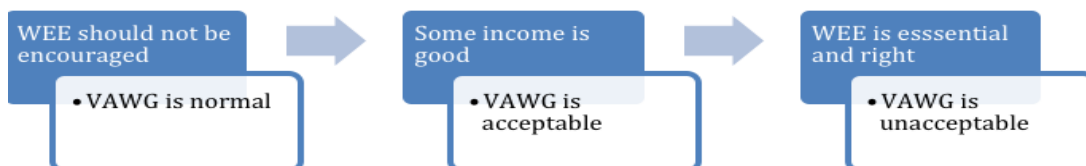
In the analysis of data we adapted and applied two a number of key frames. The social ecology framework is endorsed by numerous development institutions, including DFID (e.g. DFID 2012). It presents a picture of violence as inherently multifaceted, produced by the interaction of numerous elements of everyday life at various levels (e.g. household, community, nation). Its focus on the 'embedded' nature of violence is extremely important, as it highlights the fact that structural changes (such as legal reform) and even community-level interventions are unlikely to meet their full potentials unless efforts are also made to work on and within the broader cultural systems in which they are located, interpreted and enacted.

An intersectional approach recognises 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. 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).

The VAW spectrum builds on a legacy stemming from Liz Kelly's (1988) work, which strove to demonstrate that violence against women should not only be analysed as episodic or deviant acts of cruelty, but rather must be seen as normative and functional within a broad spectrum of abuse. The tendency of contemporary research and policy (e.g.) 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, creating an environment in which it is difficult for women to thrive in.

The attitudes continuum: this way of documenting viewpoints will enable us to understand and evidence any shifts in attitudes towards both women's role as a caregiver and/or income earner and VAW. So, for example, is a woman earning an income, or working outside of the home generally thought of positively or negatively in different contexts? To what extent are forms of VAW normalised? It is likely that many people will express contradictory positions, for example women should earn an income but VAW is acceptable in specific circumstances? So the continuum will enable us at community level to understand what appetite for change exists and

amongst which groups. The very simple example below will of course be made more complex as we proceed.



In applying these frames to our data we find that there is no direct link between income (any form) and greater resilience to mitigating and ending VAWG. We also find that IPV and work-based harassment are the most prevalent types that women in our samples suffer from. Additionally all our informants express intense fear for their own safety travelling to and from work. Fear of rape by a stranger being the most acute concern.

Many of the women we interviewed maintained that a husband beating his wife is normal and something that women must just accept. Applying the attitudes continuum it is clear that work needs to be done in terms of challenging this normalisation amongst women. Our data strongly revealed that engagement with local women's organisation working to end violence is very important and it is in fact the single biggest factor in terms of triggering mind-set change in women (that they recognise different forms of violence as abuse and not normal), and a heightening expression of agency directed at ending VAW. In this article we present these findings and explore the importance of identifying and recognising social capital existing within both formal and informal networks and organisations.

This section first introduces some critical terminology and conceptual perspectives that the research applied and tested. Specifically, it unpacks the terms 'economic empowerment' and 'violence against women.' With more nuanced understandings of these concepts in place, this section of the article then proceeds to a brief summary of the current evidence related to how empowerment and VAW interact in everyday life.

## 2.3 Review of the global evidence

### **Economic engagement vs. economic empowerment: a critical distinction**

Women's economic engagement refers to participation in activities that generate an income. This does not equate with empowerment, which is a holistic concept denoting a process in which an individual is able to access resources and build power and agency - normally increasing decision making power, building self-efficacy and self-esteem, gaining control of assets and generating positive outcomes (see figure 1).

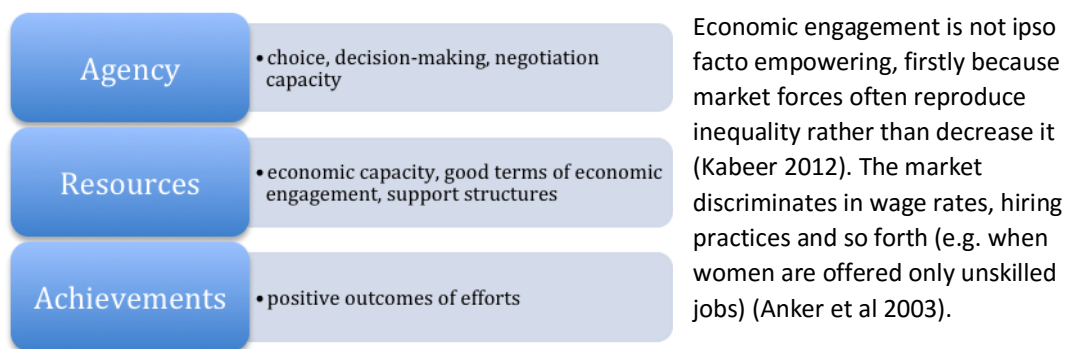


Figure 1 Conceptualising empowerment (Kabeer 2003)

In confusing economic engagement with empowerment, some common (but highly problematic) assumptions are: (i) that women who earn incomes can necessarily maintain control over them, (ii) that women have recourse to social and legal support if their earnings are taken away by others, and (iii) that financial independence makes leaving abusive relationships viable (ignoring social, and perhaps even legal, contexts).

Economic engagement therefore becomes empowering when it contributes not only to economic income, but to the enhancement of women's power and agency and the transformation of social norms (structure) that prevent the exercise of agency.

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## 2.4 Defining violence against women and girls

Popular definitions of violence vary substantially; violence is a concept used to categorise certain forms of interpersonal behaviour, and as such it is subject to sociocultural interpretation. Thus, some acts and structures viewed as violent by western societies may not be viewed as such by others, and opinions about whether/how to challenge them will therefore vary. This diverse understanding of violence also applies to academic research, which frequently operates with different definitions according to discipline (gender studies, law, peace studies etc.).

This lack of clarity across contexts and academic fields can lead to difficulty in cross-cultural approaches to programme and policy design. In research on VAW a broad definition of violence is required, which recognises that violence is both a physical and psychological phenomenon, and that it operates on multiple levels from the personal to the macro-structural. We have chosen, therefore, to follow the example of the What Works Programme in adopting the DEVAW definition of VAW:

**“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; see also Scriver et al 2015: 8).**

The What Works programme (Scriver et al 2015) supplements this definition with a vantage point gained from the social ecology approach. As explained in section 1.3. above, this theoretical perspective facilitates the understanding of violence as multidimensional, with inter-linkages between personal, situational and sociocultural (structural) factors. We will be refining this perspective somewhat through the addition of intersectional analysis, and two VAW spectrums (see section 1.3 for details).

## **2.5 Violence against women and girls: a universal phenomenon?**

This understanding of violence as inherently multifaceted necessitates a cautious approach to arguments concerning the so-called universality of VAW. The main issues are as follows:

In general terms, VAW is an endemic global problem, with over a third of women experiencing VAW globally at some point in their lives (WHO et al 2013). Some theorists do argue that universal (cross-cultural) risk factors for VAW can be identified (e.g. alcohol abuse, young age, external sexual relations, experiencing childhood abuse, growing up with domestic violence etc.) (Abramsky et al (2011). However, while considering universal factors may be helpful, their intersection with diverse features of different sociocultural environments create contextual particularities that must be understood if interventions are to succeed.

VAW is broadly universal, and yet is entirely context-specific in terms of its triggers and manifestations. If it is to be prevented, this complexity must be understood in terms of the interplay of various contextual factors operating from the personal to the structural levels. Gender norms are embedded in complex webs of symbolic and material culture that are reflected in institutional structures such as the media, religious teachings and legal frameworks. These factors combine to create unique environments that perpetuate discriminatory behaviour based on interlinked understandings of ethnicity, race, gender, age class and caste (Fulu & Heise 2015).

Understanding localised manifestations of VAW therefore requires in-depth, context-specific qualitative research (complemented and partially directed by quantitative findings).

## **2.6 What is already known about the relationship between VAW and women's economic engagement?**

Economic engagement (income generation) has a complex and often thorny relationship with VAW. While positive impacts are well known (and perhaps, at times, over-emphasised), research that has been conducted tends actually to present contradictory findings (cf. Vyas & Watts date?) for an overview). Women’s experiences of violence often increase when they have jobs because they face sexual discrimination, intimidation and violence at the workplace, as well as in public spaces during their commute. For some women, the violence experienced at home may also increase due to male backlash, discussed further below. As noted above, this is likely to be linked

to differences in the socio-cultural contexts of the various studies. Although our research in Nepal, Myanmar and Pakistan will be culturally specific, we do have some generalizable information that may be used to shape our investigation of changing patterns across cultures:

## 2.7 Experiences of violence at work

Negative masculinities structure workplace culture in many contexts. These culturally-defined gender concepts 'are reinforced by organisational norms, the behaviour of managers and leaders, a lack of codes of conduct and workplaces dominated by men' (Taylor 2015a: 13).

So-called "female" job sectors also subject women to higher levels of risk. Patterns of horizontal segregation (job roles/sectors in which women dominate) ensure that women are often confined to specific sectors with higher violence exposure (e.g. domestic work, assembly line manufacturing teaching, nursing) (Cruz & Klinger 2011).

Violence at work includes the psychological distress caused by discrimination and bullying as well as physically harmful acts.

The 'world of work' (Cruz & Klinger 2011) also encompasses women's experiences on their way to and from work, and therefore incorporates the harassment that women in all countries face (albeit to varying degrees) in public spaces, including on public transport.

## 2.8 Experiences of violence at home

A consistent cross-cultural indicator for VAW is the contravention of local gender norms (Jewkes 2002), and the failure to maintain cultural expectations of masculinity/femininity. The transgression of traditional gender norms (e.g. through employment and/or earning) may actually lead to increased oppression at home: to violent 'backlash' that seeks to redress the power balance (e.g. Goetz and Sen Gupta 1884).

Relative Resource Theory suggests an inverse relationship between men's economic resources and VAW (Goode 1971), and even more importantly, an inverse relationship between spousal economic disparities and IPV (the greater the difference between a husband and wife's material resources, in other words, the greater the chance of IPV) (McCloskey, 1996; Macmillan and Gartner, 1999). In India, for example, one study finds that 'where wives are better employed than their husbands, physical violence is higher' (Panda & Agarwal 2005: 834), and another highlights the 'frustrations that men felt at their inability to fulfil the socially expected sole breadwinner role...[and] the frustration felt by many men was magnified when they perceived women to be 'getting ahead' or doing well' (Neville 2014: 16). This cultural perspective may help to explain the vastly inconsistent findings of studies that have examined the relationship between women's economic engagement and VAW in various locations (see Vyas & Watts 2009 for an overview).

Gender norms intersect with other issues, including other social divisions including class and caste, life histories, legal frameworks, religious institutions/ideology, local economic structures, marriage patterns and so on, creating varied experiences of violence within countries and cultures. This intersectional focus remains a consistent analytical lens for our research in each country.

# 3 OVERVIEW OF THE VAWG AND WEE CONTEXT IN MYANMAR

## 3.1 The societal level

**National politics:** In November 2015 a national election was held with a landslide victory for Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the NLD. This was an undeniably pivotal moment for Myanmar's politics; with a female Nobel laureate champion of democracy at the helm, and it is likely that important changes will be implemented during the coming years. Optimism must nevertheless remain somewhat guarded, however, because the Constitution still retains a 25% share of parliamentary seats for representatives of the military, which also retains dissolution powers.

Nonetheless, Aung San Suu Kyi's victory would appear to be a clear indication of women's acceptance in national politics. However, DFID (2014) recently flagged up as troubling, the lack of women leaders in Myanmar's public life. In the 2015 election, for example, only 13% of the candidates were women. Reports suggest that women are not widely considered 'leadership material' in Burmese culture (England 2015).

## 3.2 The law

**Domestic violence:** There are laws related to inflicting bodily harm, but none that relate specifically to domestic violence. Domestic violence prevalence is hard to comment upon, because there are no official statistics. However, it is generally accepted that rates are high, and that IPV is considered socially acceptable (USDS 2014). Police are often reluctant to respond to accusations of domestic violence, and court punishments are generally limited to fines.

**Workplace Harassment:** The Penal Code prohibits sexual harassment and stipulates punishments from fines to one year in prison (OECD 2014). However, sexual harassment is common both in public areas (e.g. streets and transport) and at work.

**Rape:** Rape is illegal in Myanmar, but the government does not enforce the law effectively (USDS 2014). Women's organisations regularly report that members of the military are guilty of raping women, both as a weapon of war against ethnic minorities, and as a common practice when women from any community are taken by the military as forced labour, guides etc. (UKHO 2012; Women's League of Burma 2008). However, the Constitution includes a provision granting amnesty to all members of the regime for all crimes, thereby creating what the UN Special Rapporteur calls a 'culture of impunity' for VAW (CEDAW 2007: 50).

**The labour force:** Women's share in non-agricultural wage work is 44.7% (UNDP 2010), up from 41.3% in 2005. Labour laws do not specifically prohibit gender discrimination, thus allowing women to be paid less than men for the same work (UNDP n.d.; USDS 2014). Nonetheless, President Thein Sein legalised labour unions, and there are now numerous reports of NGOs and female workers campaigning for improved employment conditions (Johnson 2014). However, women still tend to predominate in lower-ranked and lesser-paid job roles with notoriously poor

working conditions. Recent factory closures have also raised unemployment levels among women.

**Religion & ethnicity:** Across the country, women have markedly different experiences of the law and gendered practices depending on their religious and ethnic identities. Marriage and divorce are governed by different laws depending on religious background, for example (Gender Equality Network 2013). Women from ethnic minority communities are said to experience much higher levels of domestic violence (OECD 2014); opportunities for Muslims are particularly curtailed.

**Human trafficking:** Trafficking is a serious problem in Myanmar (Meger 2014), with (particularly poor) women being sold to various countries – most often China and Thailand - for forced marriage and/or labour. Trafficking also takes place within the country's borders, and it is reported that the military has been complicit in this (UDSD 2015). The government has not responded by addressing the root cause of trafficking, but rather by placing increased restriction on the movement of women and girls (Meger 2014).

**The Media:** It is unknown at present whether the media could play a role supportive of gender equity in Myanmar. Since the media is heavily censored and controlled by the state, this will largely depend on the will of the new government to address gender issues.

**Freedom of expression:** 'Basic rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly remain tightly circumscribed in Burma' (HRW 2011).

### 3.3 The community level

**Local political representation:** Like at national level, women are also underrepresented in local political bodies. According to a UNDP study, women comprised only 0.25% of village/ward administrators (48 out of 16785 administrators countrywide).

**Customary law:** Women's groups report that customary law often overrides national law in local adjudication of issues related to marriage, adoption, property rights and inheritance rights (e.g. Women's League of Burma 2008). Little is documented about the details of such practices or their prevalence.

**Forced labour:** Women are subject to forced labour in various ways. Perpetrators range from local militias to domestic employers, who seriously curtail domestic workers' freedoms.

**Religion:** community-based religious leaders have a strong influence on the daily lives of ordinary people. However, it is often suggested that Theravada Buddhism has an overt, blanket bias towards men, who are allowed to become monks while women cannot be ordained.

**Access to education and other resources required for skilled economic engagement:** Strong cultural barriers do not appear to be in place to prevent girls' education. According to the UNDP, 'Myanmar has achieved parity in primary, secondary and tertiary education.'<sup>1</sup> However, the CEDAW Committee (2008) voiced concern at the state's 'lack of a comparative analysis of education enrolment rates, dropout rates and literacy rates by sex, ethnic group and/or religion as well as at the state/division level.'

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<sup>1</sup>

<http://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg3.html>

See:



### 3.4 Summary of our Secondary Quantitative Research

During the planning and scoping stages, it was expected that Myanmar's DHS results would be published during this project's lifespan. Unfortunately government delays have prevented the data being made publicly available beyond very basic summary reports, which are not specifically useful to this research. Our quantitative experts from ICRW considered alternative options, including the ILO Labour Force Survey, but these were deemed either insufficient or inappropriate to the project's requirements.

This situation highlights the importance of the contribution of our own quantitative research in Myanmar. This primary work is discussed in section [4.1](#) below.

## 4 PRIMARY DATA FINDINGS



Photo taken by researcher

### 4.1 Strand 1: In-depth Qualitative Interviews with Women and Men in the lower two economic quintiles.

As outlined in the methodology section, this strand focused on capturing the experiences of women (and some men) in the bottom two economic quintiles. Our field-site was Yae Oak Kan (YOK) village, which borders the Industrial Zone of the Hlaing Tharyar township in Yangon. A substantial majority of interviewees are employed by garment factories, with a small minority of domestic workers and street vendors. The findings are given below with extracts from interviews given as illustration.

### 4.2 Snap-shot Summary of Findings

There is very little correlation between earning an income and greater resilience to violence of any form.

#### Experiencing violence:

In relation to the VAW spectrum, it is clear that so-called 'everyday' forms of violence are commonly experienced and accepted as the norm. Types of violence falling within this category include psychological abuse at home and outside, in addition to IPV without resulting physical damage (i.e. shoving, slapping etc.).

All employed interviewees had stories of being verbally harassed in public (on buses, in taxis and in the streets).

The high preference for female factory employees in Myanmar results in it being less common to experience gender-based harassment at work, however, in contrast to other countries under study, poor women in Myanmar note that it is in fact easier for them to gain secure employment than it is for men, who are limited to seasonal work and insecure, poorly paid construction work.

While most women interviewed are employed by factories, it is noted that women working as domestic servants are particularly prone to violence at work, with perpetrators being both male and female employers.

More severe forms of violence are also fairly common, but they are discussed differently. Women in Myanmar are open about their concerns regarding violence in public space: in particular they note increasing regularity of muggings in areas without adequate lighting. Rape is also a substantial concern. Shift-work and overtime contributes to this problem, as women are likely to be commuting after dark.

However, women are intensely private when it comes to discussing personal experiences of domestic violence. Even so, their willingness to discuss the experiences of neighbours and acquaintances underscores the messages currently circulated by local NGOs: that severe forms of IPV are common but considered to be 'normal' and a private matter.

### 4.3 Experiences of employment

It is also clear that a glass ceiling exists in relation to women's progression in the workplace, with this being particularly clear in middle-class interviews.

A large majority of women interviewed believed that earning an income was important both for family welfare and for their self-esteem and confidence. It is felt that employment outside the home increased a woman's confidence to challenge low-level violence in public spaces, including reprimanding men who touch women inappropriately on buses, or who use abusive language in the streets. This does not translate into the private sphere or into the private sphere of friends/acquaintances.

## Experiences related to work

### 4.4 Acceptance of women working

In the interviews with men there was widespread acceptance and support for women working. Women in both poor and middle class sections of society report that their families expect them to work. This reflects the income requirements of the poor. It is notable however that men of all economic strata believe that they would have the right to insist that women work when given the hypothetical scenario of a wife/daughter who preferred to stay at home. This indicates that women's employment does not represent a greater belief in women's autonomous standing.

**"A woman is same (equal) with us. She should work when I work equally. She is not a disabled person. She must do what she can... I won't be happy if she doesn't want to work. Before getting married, I already discussed what we would do next. If we didn't have same thoughts, we**

**would not get married. I love her and I will persuade her to do what I wish.”**

The fact that poor women are able to gain stable employment more easily than men is troubling for men, who strive to see themselves as the head of households and the primary breadwinners (women comprise 90% of factory workers, widely considered the most desirable form of employment for the poor). This imbalance causes threats to masculinity which has consequent impacts on domestic relationships. These dynamics will be addressed in depth within the final report and shorter briefing papers.

A large percentage of interviews were with rural-urban migrants, who try where possible to send money to families in villages. This remittance becomes less likely after marriage and childbirth, but does still continue.

Women noted that there was less need for women to work in their mothers' and grandmothers' generations. When those generations did work it was usually in agriculture, and so the normalisation of urban types of women's employment is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Commitment and investment in children's education (no difference was detected for girls or boys) was very high. Both women and men seek good education and employment prospects for sons and daughters.

#### **4.5 The links between gender and employment opportunities**

**Area of inquiry: do women enjoy access to the same employment opportunities as men? Are they discriminated against in terms of hiring practices, job types or skill division within industries etc?**

While middle class women spoke of substantial inequalities at work, amongst the working classes the situation is more complex because the majority of desirable job roles in factories are dominated by women. These job roles, it should be noted, are badly paid with extremely poor working conditions. Nonetheless they offer a stable source of income which is a key requirement for families in poverty.

**“[A man] gets less than female garment worker gets. Female factory workers get at least 180000 MMK including regular attendance fees. For guys, it is not easy to earn 7000 MMK a day in Yangon.”**

Men therefore complain about a lack of opportunities in comparison to their wives and sisters. This in itself contributes to gender-based tensions when concepts of masculinity are threatened. However, physically violent backlash seems to be less of an issue than more generalised quarrelling, alcohol abuse and depression.

Even so, conditions in garment factories are very difficult for sub-management employees. Their rights are not upheld by the state (despite provisions in law), and many women are unable to acquire labour cards, which prevents them from demanding fair treatment in the workplace. They can be fined for what would be considered reasonable absence elsewhere (e.g. sick days) and can be fired on the spot.

Factory employment discriminates on the basis of age as well as gender. Management are keen to employ women under the age of thirty, and specify that female employees must be single and

without children. Women therefore have to lie in order to acquire employment and are consequently unable to seek appropriate benefits such as childcare. The same treatment does not apply to any of the male employees (men make up approximately 10% of factory employees).

It is also notable that while women make up the majority of factory employees, this is not true at senior management levels, where men are still considered to be more appropriate leaders. The concept of culturally acceptable 'male leaders and female followers' came up repeatedly during the interviews in all economic strata. Men are thought to be natural leaders while women are thought to be inherently unsuited to such roles. This view is less prevalent among younger women than it is among young men and older men and women. Recent rural-urban migrants are also more likely to hold this view than those who have grown up in Yangon.

#### **4.6 The relationship between women's employment and domestic division of labour**

**Area of inquiry: do women who work outside the home face increased pressure due to the combination of traditional domestic duties with newer employment requirements? Or have traditional patterns of domestic labour division shifted to accommodate women's new schedules?**

The majority of men and women stated that women's employment is desirable and, unlike in other countries - that this often also translates into a more equal division of labour at home.

**"Everyone around my neighborhood, the atmosphere is ok. . The one who arrives home early does work house chores without separating chores. So, I don't hear any problem concerning women working around my neighborhood."**

**"As I am a working woman, I can't do all household chores. But my family doesn't bear any grudge against me. They understand my situation. They know they won't have money to spend if I don't earn an income."**

These findings contradict findings of other recent reports, which suggest that the division of domestic labour remains heavily gendered irrespective of men's and women's employment. This issue will therefore be unpacked in more detail during the next phase of analysis. (e.g. Oxfam, Trocaire, CARE & ActionAid 2013).

#### **4.7 Women's willingness to challenge poor working conditions**

**Area of inquiry: Do women actively seek reasonable working conditions? What do women consider 'reasonable'?**

In addition to the fact that they work extremely long hours (which would be considered a health hazard under UK regulations), factory workers complained that they are not allowed to sit down for many hours at a time, that they are forced to eat lunch in the hot sun, and that they suffer from arthritis, joint and back/neck pain because of awkward working positions.

**"We are always watched via CCTV. We can't speak to each other even in lunchtime. If we want to eat some snacks, we have to eat standing under**

### **the sun. Manager is authorised to dismiss a worker in her provisional period without compensating.”**

For the majority of the factory workers interviewed, however, the perceived benefits of employment (e.g. greater financial stability, and in some cases freedom to spend on personal items) far outweigh the health implications of their work. Factory workers also note that they fare far better than those working in construction or masonry work, or street-vendors, for instance. In fact, these women regularly state that they are fortunate to be employed in an area that is *not* damaging to their health.

### **“Some work tiredly at the construction site. For me, I am sewing without sweating.”**

Nonetheless, there does appear to be a gradual shift underway in relation to challenging poor working conditions. Several women spoke of having been ‘brave’ enough to make formal complaints to their managers, and made it clear that this was something that many women would be uncomfortable doing.

### **“To be bold, like me, is not good for a traditional woman in this culture. I might be seen as something like a man, but at least I am determined to get what is fair to me.”**

Thus, while demanding fair treatment is still considered ‘masculine’ behaviour, it is becoming more common. A number of women interviewed also stated that they had been courageous enough to leave jobs in which they felt the working conditions or wages were unsatisfactory.

The concept of unionisation is also growing in popularity. Although the women interviewed were not active union participants, they demonstrated some awareness of union activity in the garment sector, and some noted that they would be willing and even eager to participate in such activity were it organised in their own workplaces. However, poverty itself remains a serious barrier for this type of activity. 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.

### **“It is easy for single women to work outside if they have ID card and good transportation and some money. Some want to work but when they make labour card at labour department and, apply recommendation letter at the police station, they cannot afford to pay for those charges...”**

## **4.8 Work-related violence**

The women varied in their responses in terms of recognising a wide spectrum of violence, including work-based harassment and also in their willingness to challenge it.

### **Violence in the public sphere**

The women varied in their responses in terms of recognising a wide spectrum of violence, including work-based harassment and also in their willingness to challenge it.

## 4.9 Experiences of sexual harassment at work

**Area of inquiry: do women experience sexual harassment or other forms of violence in the workplace? If so, what forms do these take?**

Sexual harassment at work was not mentioned by many of the women interviewed in this strand. As noted above, this is because of the high proportion of female employees in the garment factories, which are the primary source of employment for the interviewees in this strand. However, it was noted in a small number of interviews that women who work as domestic servants are vulnerable to sexual abuse from male employers, as well as to physical violence from women.

## 4.10 Feeling unsafe while travelling to and from work

**Area of inquiry: how safe are women during the commute to work? Does this affect their attitudes to their jobs?**

Every person interviewed emphasised that women are extremely unsafe while traveling to and from work. The most common form of violence is groping and flashing on public transport, particularly on crowded buses.

**“Teasing or touching private parts on the bus is always happening. It is not strange for women/girls.”**

**“I think ten out of ten women experience men touching them on the bus. All women are harassed like this.”**

This type of harassment on buses is a cause of frustration for most women, but does not cause extreme anxiety. However, the fact that most women also have to walk through dark streets during the commute back from work is a source of widespread concern. Women described harrowing experiences of being followed, of having to run away from potential attackers, and even of having to take shelter in strangers' homes in order to escape.

**“He followed me quickly in a dark place. When I had run to a brighter place, I hit him with my steel lunch box and then I ran into the nearest house.”**

Sexual assault, rape and robbery are causes of substantial anxiety for all women who work in factories. Many are afraid to work overtime because of the associated risks of walking home after dark.

**“Some factories are located in desolated place without streetlight. In those places, rape cases are easily happened.”**

**“Some women have to work overtime and they have to come back home late. Moreover, there is no lamppost in desolated street. So, they can experience harms. Although they commute in group, still, they are likely to experience violence like robbery.”**

Furthermore, women usually relate their concerns about safety directly to their ability to be productive at work. It is clear from these interviews that improving worker safety during the commute would be in the interests of employers.

**“If my environment is safe, I can work anytime...But it is not safe to go outside evening or early morning, so, I cannot go.”**

**“I feel afraid if it is dark on the way home. Feeling safe or unsafe can affect our productivity at work. I feel safe only because we commute in a group.”**

#### **4.11 Responses to violence during the work commute**

**Areas of inquiry: do women have specific strategies for dealing with violence on their way to/from work? Are these effective?**

The interviews revealed a number of strategies used by women to try to reduce their risk of harm whilst travelling to and from work. They included: walking in groups, carrying objects to use as weapons (e.g. Safety pins, pins, umbrellas and hard lunchboxes), and asking male family members to meet them at the factory gates.

Many women insisted that they would respond to violence experienced during the daytime, such as teasing in the streets or groping on the bus. Responses range from making loud noises of disapproval to shouting or stabbing a groper with a safety pin. Women also say that they would try to fight back against a more serious attacker.

“I will defend myself when I experience robbery as far as I can. I bring umbrella and lunch box to fight against them.”

However, the fact that the return journey from work is so often after dark makes the idea of retaliation more daunting. While many women showed willingness to resist violence, they also noted that the ability to protect themselves largely depends on physical strength, which women (comparatively speaking) do not tend to have. After dark, when groping and teasing are replaced by fears of robbery and rape, the possibility of successful retaliation is considered minimal. There is therefore a deep-seated fear in most of our respondents relating to their vulnerability to violence in public spaces during commutes in the late evenings and very early mornings (i.e. when dark).

#### **4.12 The links between income generation, confidence levels and responding to violence**

**Area of inquiry: how does earning an income impact upon self-esteem and confidence? Does this translate into new types of behaviour in relation to violence?**

A very large percentage of the women interviewed stated that they would work even if they did not need to. They spoke of the material necessity, in as much as the husband's income is rarely sufficient to support families' basic needs. However, most of the women also noted that earning an income increased their self-esteem and reduced sensitivity.



**“I have to deal with many people when I am working. So I know more about the personalities of people. I also dare to deal with people more. Before, I was just hiding at home.”**

There were clear responses related to the difference in confidence between a woman who earns money and one who does not, but notably the changes in confidence relate more to the public sphere than to one’s own home space.

Despite noting that in Myanmar good manners (for women especially) are related to politeness and ‘mildness’ or ‘sweet-nature’, women were clear that the contact they made with the outside world made through working had enabled them to become stronger and more outspoken when necessary. This translates into an increased likelihood of retaliation to violence in public, including retaliation to violence against oneself and against friends.

**R :If I have money, I dare to speak up.**

**I: If you don’t have money?**

**R: I don’t dare.**

**I: How about violence that your friends experience?**

**R: If I have money, I will challenge violence that my friend experience. If I have no money, I will not.**

Thus, women frequently stated that their experiences of employment have given them the confidence to speak up for a mistreated friend, especially when that mistreatment comes from outside the person’s family (e.g. from superiors at work, or in the streets). They also spoke of their own increased capacity to respond to personal experiences of being touched, grabbed or ‘rubbed against’ on public transport (which is described as the most common form of violence faced by women).

**“I hit them with my elbow or sometimes I stamp on their foot.”**

**“My friends suggested me to bring a pin (to stab gropers on the bus).”**

There are also more practical links between employment and women’s ability to challenge violence. Specifically, it is noted that it is impossible even to file a police complaint without paying money (presumably a bribe). This renders the poor significantly less capable of responding to abuse, and represents a critical issue of governance that needs to be addressed.

**“P: When I have no job, no one pay attention to me. Now, they respect me.**

**I: How has it changed in family?**

**P: Before I got a job, I felt small. I had full of sadness.**

**I: Now, are you more or less likely to challenge violence as a result of earning?**

P: Yes, I think. Actually, we have to pay money when we file complaint.

I: When you didn't have job?

P: I didn't dare to file complaint because I had no money."

#### 4.13 What triggers violence in public spaces?



**Areas of inquiry:** What forms does violence IPV take in the domestic sphere and how common are they?

##### *Blaming the victim*

With very high frequency, the participants in this study lay at least some of the blame for violence on the victims. In particular, it was extremely common in interviews for both men and women to criticise victims for wearing non-traditional clothing.

"In my generation, women wear western style clothes which is not traditional. That invites harm for women."

"Some wear inappropriate dresses that invites men to touch their body."

Stories were also told of women being attacked in their hostel accommodation. Even in these cases, victims were assigned blame for not being careful enough to lock doors or windows.

"Some girls are not aware of their surrounding and they don't mind their behaviour. For example, when they change clothes, they do not check to sure that no one is peeping into room. Those careless women can more experience violence."

It was also common to discuss 'loitering' outside after dark. In particular this concept of loitering relates to the younger generation's dating behaviour: it is common now for teenagers and young people to have boyfriends/girlfriends, and to meet them in secret after dark. Traditionally, being outside after dark is considered dangerous and particularly unacceptable for young women

unless absolutely necessary. It is believed that when young people 'loiter' outside after dark they are frivolously disregarding the dangerous atmosphere of dark streets; this is seen to tantamount to encouraging robbery or other forms of dangerous attack.

#### *Poverty and pressure*

Some interviewees noted that widespread poverty and a lack of employment opportunities leads men to commit violent robbery.

"They are jobless. They only think to rob things from women easily."

Poverty/pressure were not referred to as a reason for other types of public-sphere violence.

#### *Alcohol/drugs*

A large percentage of interviewees cited alcohol as the most important causative factors for Hlaing Tharyar's high robbery and rape rates. Drug abuse also appears to be a growing concern in this area. Numbers of male drug users are said to be increasing, and it is believed that this is both preventing men from seeking work and causing their personalities to become more aggressive.

"There are many boys who drink alcohol, use drugs, and also glue sniffing is popular among young boys. So, they cannot decide what is wrong and what is right."

## Experiences of violence in the domestic sphere

### 4.14 The VAW spectrum in relation to domestic sphere violence?

**Areas of inquiry: What forms does violence take in the domestic sphere and how common are they?**

#### *Normality of domestic violence*

Interviewees were 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. They do, however, confirm that domestic violence rates are very high in the local area.

**“I: How about domestic violence? Has it got worse or better over time?”**

**P: It is normal. It got neither worse nor better. It happens as usual.”**

**“Women experience domestic violence very often in this community.”**

**“Out of 10 women, 9 may experience domestic violence.”**

#### *Forms of intimate partner violence*

In applying the VAW spectrum, it would appear that less severe forms of physical violence (e.g. pushing, slapping) are the most common after psychological abuse. More extreme incidents are rare, but are widely known and discussed. More extreme forms of violence mentioned included stabbing, and severe beating with fists and implements including iron rods.

**“Very recently, a husband drunk and beat his wife's face. And again, beat with kettle until the entire kettle was ruined...”**

There is particular concern about extreme IPV perpetrated upon young women by boyfriends. Stories of rejected boyfriends reacting violently to the end of a relationship are common, as are more general tales of boyfriends abusing girls who fail to act according to boyfriends' wishes.

**“During these years, among young couples, it is popular that boy harms girl. I have heard that a group of boys raped a girl who had betrayed one of them, as revenge.”**

**“Boyfriend asked for money from his girl, but the girl didn't want to [give it]. So, he threatened her with a knife. And then he snatched her necklace. So, she shouted out loud and he stabbed her.”**

### *Contacting the authorities*

Very few women consider contacting the police to be a viable option in cases of IPV. Although they do mention it as a possibility, they also note that the police are usually unwilling to involve themselves in 'domestic affairs' and that the same is true of the wider public. Occasionally neighbours intervene in arguments, but generally speaking people will not intercede if they witness violence against women in the streets.

The police usually favour mediation and negotiation. It is normal for them to 'convince' women to go back to abusive husbands and to try to behave in a way that will not provoke anger. Ward administrators tend to adopt the same approach.

### *Divorce*

Again, very few women raised the possibility of leaving an abusive husband. Some had stories to tell of other women who had done so, but divorce remains stigmatising for women in this area. There is a general consensus that "divorce does not do any good for women" because culturally, women are responsible for maintaining the home sphere. When a woman is divorced she is seen to have failed in this task and will supposedly find it difficult to remarry; when a man is divorced he has simply been failed by one woman and will seek a 'better' one instead. This perspective is gradually changing in the younger generations, but remains prevalent.

## **4.15 Views on what triggers violence in the domestic sphere**

### **Area of inquiry: what are seen to be the key triggers/causes of intimate partner violence?**

#### *Poverty and related challenges to masculinity*

Many interviewees stated that pressures related to poverty, and in particular those related to masculinity, were core causes of violence. Because local factories prefer to employ women, men's roles as primary breadwinners are frequently challenged. The frustrations caused by being able to live up to social expectations, it is said, cause men to 'explode' uncontrollably into violence.

#### *Alcohol*

Almost all interviewees referred to alcohol as one of the central-most factors in IPV. Alcohol is thought to interfere with a man's ability to know right from wrong.

**"Women experience domestic violence very often in this community. Most husbands drink alcohol and this is the main reason for domestic violence."**

"A man who lives next door to me used to harm his wife when he is drunk. Although his wife prepares even nibbles while he is drinking alcohol, he beats or sometimes slaps the face of his wife. His wife never reacts back because she is blamed by her parents-in-law for fighting against him. What is more, the wife has no parents so she doesn't have anyone to rely on. She is a cook at a small restaurant and she has to take care of two daughters."

There is some indication that undesirable behavior under the influence of alcohol is not the fault of the man per se, but is literally 'the alcohol talking.' The alcohol is to be blamed for the violence, while the man is to be blamed for drinking in the first place. This is a noteworthy distinction, however, for men may easily be forgiven if they simply refrain from drinking in future.

## 5 PRIMARY DATA STRAND 2

In order to apply the intersectional approach and understand how earning an income may impact differently on the lives of various groups of women, we conducted 20 in-depth qualitative interviews with middle/upper class women engaged in professional occupations in and around Yangon. All of these women were educated at a minimum to degree level in varied subjects. The women are engaged in a range of professions from the corporate sector, to government, NGO, CSOs, to medicine and teaching, to owning their own businesses. The sample included both married and unmarried women. All 20 women identified as Buddhist.

## 6 EXPERIENCES RELATED TO WORK

### 6.1 Male/community acceptance of women working

Whilst among poor participants there was 100% acceptance and support for women working, a small number of strand 2 interviews related familial dissatisfaction, and even embarrassment about it. This appears to be more likely amongst richer families within the professional sectors, although the small sample size disallows statistical significance.

**“They don’t appreciate women working. My mother doesn’t like it and my brother too. My brothers think they are bread winner as being a man. They can earn for family so wife don’t need to work outside.”**

### 6.2 The links between gender and employment opportunities

Professional women report substantial gender discrepancies in opportunities for employment and promotion. It is common for men to be considered more intelligent and more capable of complex tasks. This attitude is reported by women working in various professions including medicine, law and government service. This perception has been maintained to a significant extent by the state, which until recently refused women entry into certain professions. The following example of discrimination given by a female doctor is typical:

“When I was residency student, I engaged in an operation together with my trainer, and a colleague (male). In that operation, my trainer was head, and my colleague was assistant (Grade-1), and I am Assistant (Grade-2). It is skin graft operation. My trainer operate the patient; a thin

layer of skin is removed. In removing the skin, if it was thick, it can be assumed that it is bad. At that moment, he asked us "Which one do you think boy or girl can best do to remove the thinner layer of skin from the patient?" I replied to him that girls are more precise. But, he commented on me that "No, girls cannot do better in removing the thinner layer of skin. Boys are more precise, and cut the more thinner layer of skin." No sooner I heard it than I was angry although I am very friendly with him."

### **6.3 The relationship between women's employment and domestic division of labour**

As in strand 1, interviewees report that women work, this usually (although not always) results in the sharing of domestic labour.

**"We do not have any specific assignments to anyone for the household chores. If I can help them, I would and if they have time, they would help me. There were no specific tasks assigned."**

However, many professional women also hire domestic servants to help with these tasks. As such there is little tension related to household chores etc.

### **6.4 Women's willingness to challenge poor working conditions**

Professional women do not suffer physically poor working conditions. However, there is no strong tendency to stand up to employers who discriminate by gender, despite the fact that this causes frustration.

# 7 EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC SPACES

## 7.1 Experiences of sexual harassment at work

Very few professional women report experiencing sexual harassment at work. In professions where there are high levels of public contact (e.g. medicine), it is reported that employers are in principle supportive of women's safety provision, but in practice could do much more to prevent violence.

## 7.2 Feeling unsafe in public spaces

As in strand 1, women report concerns about travelling on buses, where they encounter groping and teasing. Professional women are also more likely to take taxis, which they also report to be unsafe. In terms of the VAW spectrum, taxi rides present less frequent but more severe risks. All interviewees are aware that taxi drivers show female passengers pornographic images on mobile devices, and even of attempted abduction.

**“When women take a taxi alone, taxi drivers show obscene video on the cellphone.”**

**“It is widely happened that a taxi driver shows a male organ to a female passenger.”**

Professional women rarely walk to/from work, and are extremely unlikely to be alone after dark. The concern for physical safety is therefore much lower than in strand 1.

## 7.3 Responses to violence in public

Women do reprimand taxi drivers, but also report feelings of helplessness in these situations.

## 7.4 What triggers violence in public spaces?

### *Blaming the victim*

As in strand 1, it is common for interviewees to blame women who experience violence in public spaces. Women are criticised for the clothing choices in particular,

**We, the girls and women, should wear our dress that is suitable to the place and the occasion. Rape case happens not only because of men but also because of girl and women. Some girls and women wear clothes which expose their bodies or some do not know how to behave in front of men.**



### *Male access to the internet*

The majority of interviewees in strand 2 insisted on the relevance of men's access to pornographic images and films through the internet. It is believed that when men look at or watch pornography, they cannot help but be driven to replicate it with women they meet in public.

**“You can watch porn movie on UTube where you can get internet access. Now, Mobile simcard became too cheap. So, even a labourer could afford to buy a phone to watch porn movie. When he doesn't have to work, he might look photos of Zon Zin Zar (nude model). Then, he would find his pleasure from women around him.”**

**“In the past, people cannot easily search something they want to know through internet. The porn website were blocked. But nowadays, people can easily search porn photos or videos easily... So some boys have knowledge about sex and would like to test it. So they will try to test it on the bus.”**

Similar arguments are made in relation to social media. Facebook in particular is discussed frequently as a forum that offers men and boys access to explicit ideas and images that were previously 'unheard of' in Myanmar. There is a general agreement that the internet is bringing aspects of western and Korean sexual culture to Myanmar that the local men cannot help but respond badly to.

### *Alcohol and drugs*

As in strand 1.

# 8 EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

## 8.1 Common forms of violence

As in strand 1, with the addition of child rape.

### **Child rape**

Child rape was rarely mentioned in strand 1 interviews, but is a common point of discussion in strand 2. Many women tell stories of children being raped by neighbours, family acquaintances or family members.

**“I: What do you think why child rape incidents are happening here?”**

**P: It depends on mindset of parents. Some parents don’t understand how to nurture the children...The parents should not keep their female daughter with step-father, uncle and other strange men easily.”**

## 8.2 Views on what triggers violence in the domestic sphere

### *Backlash against women’s income generation*

Violent backlash against women’s income generation is reported as a serious problem amongst professional women. This is in clear distinction to the interviews conducted for strand 1. Whilst the women interviewed did not disclose personal experiences of IPV or other forms of domestic violence senior members of various organisation such as the network of female entrepreneurs reported high levels of what they described as a ‘back-lash.’ They stated that successful women (defined in terms of earning more than their husbands) suffered pressure and often violence from their husbands who felt threatened by their success.

### *Internet and social media*

Interviewees refer to the sexually explicit ideas, images and films available through the internet and social media as a core cause for increased violence in the domestic space as well as in public. Husbands who wish to emulate the practices they witness online force their wives and girlfriends against their will.

### *Alcohol*

Notably interviewees in strand 2 regard alcohol abuse as a reason for violence amongst the poor rather than in professional/middle class households. Although professional men do drink alcohol, this is not considered to be a causative factor in violent behaviour.

**“Some poor men commit physical violence on girl/women or drink alcohol and quarrel with his wife. Some middle standard men don’t**

**commit physical violence. But they will have another girl/woman. So wife will be trouble in mind because of her husband. I think it is different. In poor people, men commit physical violence on women/girls after drinking alcohol.”**

*Jealousy/revenge in premarital relationships*

As in strand 1, there is a strong conviction that premarital relationships are inherently dangerous for women.

**“I hear not long before that a guy killed his girlfriend, hit her eyes and stabbed with a scissor. This happen at the shopping center.”**

### **8.3 Views on how to tackle violence**

Unlike in strand 1, interviewees for strand 2 had several suggestions about how best to tackle violence in Myanmar society. Women universally stated that they had not been provided with information about VAW through their local community environments; any information they had was through family/friends and social media. Social media is the primary source of information both about the occurrence of violence and about ways to address it.

Women were unanimous in their opinion that stronger messages are required at the community level. Three things need to be achieved:

- Both men and women need to be informed of the right to be free from violence, as many think that it is acceptable for men to beat their wives.
- Women need to be offered information on how to deal with violence that they face (i.e. sources of help).
- Men need to be informed of the punishments for VAW available by law.

Interviewees suggested that the most useful avenues to transmit this information would be through poster campaigns, and radio/TV ads and programmes. They also agreed that it is important to impart messages of gender equality to children as early as possible, by including them in textbooks or creating comics.

## 9 PRIMARY DATA STRAND 2

**Our intersectional approach was further strengthened by the inclusion of a third specific interview category: members of women’s organisations. Deeper data analysis to be conducted for the final reports (March 2017) will allow us to set out clearly the implications of membership of such organisations for women’s experiences of and responses to violence. The research for this strand was designed as follows:**

- Akhaya NGO: An in-depth focus group was conducted with members of this women’s association
- UNDP: Research with female beneficiaries of UNDP’s Self Reliance Programme (locations throughout Myanmar). This strand is both quantitative and qualitative.
  - Qualitative: 15 focus groups were conducted at a meeting of ‘female leaders’ of the self-reliance groups held in Yangon in July.
  - Quantitative: A survey was conducted using UNDP’s mobile phone technology. This technology takes the form of a points based ‘game’ in which women answer questions in order to enter prize draws. The survey received 180 responses from women throughout Myanmar.
- Participants in strand 3 represent a mixture of social categories:
- Ages range from 18-78
- Education ranges from none – degree level
- Occupations include unemployed, street vendors, lawyers etc.

Findings of this strand also suggest that there is no direct link between income generation and the ability to avoid or respond to violence. Income generation does contribute to a woman’s confidence levels, but only once these confidence levels have been sufficiently built through membership of women’s organisations and networks.

# 10 EXPERIENCES RELATED TO WORK

## 10.1 Male/community acceptance of women working

The majority of women interviewed for strand 3 reflect the views in previous strands – that women’s work is widely accepted, required and encouraged. However, a minority of women do report that husbands are unhappy with women wanting to seek employment.

**“She is not allowed to work outside home. Husband works. She has to stay at home, do cooking and cleaning. Wife is not allowed to work. Husband said ‘Eat what I earn.’”**

This is particularly driven by community attitudes; even when husbands are happy with women working or participating in women’s organisations, they are often made to change their opinions because of ‘shaming’ by the community.

**“There could be negative impact. Some would tell the husband “Your wife likes to travel away from home. Women should only stay at home and need to take care of the family. They should not be going out”. In the beginning, the husband would agree with the wife but if his parents or the community kept blaming the wife, then he will start to feel negative feelings towards the wife.”**

## 10.2 The links between gender and opportunities to earn an income

**Area of inquiry: do women enjoy access to the same employment opportunities as men? Are they discriminated against in terms of hiring practices, job types, skill division within industries etc?**

Rural women in strand 3 report virtually unanimously that working conditions are discriminatory. Women earn fewer wages for similar work, and are unable to progress into leadership roles in agricultural and construction fields, which are the most common areas of employment.

**“Even working as a construction worker, a woman has to carry bricks, a man has to carry bricks, a man takes breaks to chew beetle and to smoke. A woman does not have time to chew beetle or to smoke. When salary is paid, there is a difference between men and women. To work with tools, I can work with tools as well, but salary is not the same for male laborer and female laborer working with tools. Female laborers always get lesser pay.”**

These women also report that it is difficult for women to access loans and credit outside of self-help groups and specifically tailored women’s microfinance institutions.

## 10.3 The relationship between women’s employment and domestic division of labour

**Area of inquiry: do women who work outside the home face increased pressure due to the combination of traditional domestic duties with newer employment requirements? Or have traditional patterns of domestic labour division shifted to accommodate women's new schedules?**

Participants from rural areas report that, despite working full time, women remain responsible for all household chores. This contradicts findings from urban interviewees in strands 1 and 2. Amongst rural women, it is regularly stated that men would 'lose face' if they were seen to be doing women's household work, which is considered demeaning and emasculating.

#### **10.4 Women's willingness to challenge poor working conditions**

**Area of inquiry: Do women actively seek reasonable working conditions? What do women consider 'reasonable'?**

The members of women's organisations interviewed for strand 3 were aware of their rights as employees. However, the majority stated a general reluctance to challenge poor working conditions, stating instead that they would prefer to take loans to establish their own businesses.

## **11 VIOLENCE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE**

These women have all participated in previous discussions of VAW held by either Akhaya or UNDP. They attribute their awareness that certain behaviours are classified as 'violence' directly to the organisations, noting that prior to joining they did not have any understanding of what constitutes violence, or of what their rights were in relation to abusive behaviours.

### **11.1 Mapping the VAW spectrum: violence in public**

Women were asked to rank the forms of public sphere violence faced in their communities according to:

Frequency (very frequent, somewhat frequent, somewhat infrequent, infrequent, very infrequent)

Perceived severity (very severe, somewhat severe, not very severe, not severe, unimportant). They listed:

Verbal abuse: very frequent, unimportant

Gender discrimination (blocking WEE): very frequent, somewhat severe

Flashing: somewhat frequent, somewhat severe

Trafficking: infrequent, very severe

Rape: somewhat frequent, very severe

Child rape: somewhat infrequent, very severe

FGM: very infrequent, very severe

## 11.2 Experiences of sexual harassment at work

Women in strand 3 report high levels of sexual harassment and violence at work, unlike in other strands. They note that male colleagues regularly try to touch women's bodies, and that male bosses/employers in particular tend to abuse their positions of power.

**“The owner is raping the worker, and sometimes the farmer would rape his worker on the way to the farm.”**

Because employers have more money than employees, they can use their financial superiority to ensure that no charges are brought against them, even if the abused woman approaches the authorities.

**“The employer would use money and bury the case.”**

## 11.3 Feeling unsafe in public spaces

**Area of inquiry: how safe are women during the commute to work? Does this affect their attitudes to their jobs?**

Rural women do not directly relate their lack of safety to work, or to commuting. They do replicate interviewees in previous strands, however, in stating that public transport is a major source of anxiety for women, as a result of teasing, groping and touching.

“After that I have to take bus 204. I was waiting for 30th Street. There was an old man sitting next to me. He kept on asking, “Is it Su Le yet? Is it Su Le yet?” and I was not responding to it. Later I turned around and he showed me his private part. I got very angry, got up and shouted to the bus conductor, “Stop the bus! Look at what is happening here! What is happening to me?” and I hit the man. I did not know where I hit him. All the women came around to see what was happening. The bus conductor told me that I was in trouble and to get off the bus.

When they looked at the man, he had white hair. This was my own personal experience. Then I shouted, “You cannot do such a thing to me. I am not a single woman. I am a mother of two. Do not do such a thing.” And I hit him. I did not know where I hit him.”

The quote above also represents another common thread in this discussion, and one worthy of concern. Women regularly display indignance about being abused in relation to their marital status. In other words, they respond to groping or teasing by responding that they are married and should therefore not be treated this way, suggesting that to abuse a single woman is somehow more acceptable.

The belief in something akin to hypnotism or witchcraft also appears to be fairly common, in that women agree that some men can put women into a trance through the use of their hands, and then rob or rape them. However, this is also explained by other people as being drugged: *“Some people encounter with special effected spices. When they use that on a person, he/she give all he/she has.”*

## 11.4 Responses to violence in the public space

**Areas of inquiry: do women have specific strategies for dealing with violence on their way to/from work? Are these effective?**

As in strand 1, women report that they often carry implements to use in the case of attack, especially when out after dark or when travelling on buses. Such implements range from safety pins to tiffin boxes, and even to sticks or rocks in rural areas.

It is noted that there is little that a woman can do to repel a serious attacker, but that these implements may be used to defend oneself against pickpockets or 'casual touchers' for example.

## 11.5 The links between income generation, confidence levels and responding to violence

**Area of inquiry: how does earning an income impact upon self-esteem and confidence? Does this translate into new types of behaviour in relation to violence?**

Directly reflecting strand 1., participants in strand 3 report that their experiences of engaging regularly with people outside the domestic sphere makes them less shy and more willing to complain about unfair treatment, or to retaliate to catcalls, groping etc.. Again, as documented in strand 1, these women also state that this confidence relates directly to dealing with strangers in public, however, and does not translate into greater assertive capacity in the household.

## 11.6 What triggers violence in public spaces?

**Area of inquiry: to which causes do interviewees attribute public-sphere VAW?**

### *Blaming the victim*

As in other strands, it is common even for women in strand 3, who are well-educated about violence, to lay at least some of the blame for violence on the victims.

**“It is rare that a well-behaved girl encounter that.”**

There appears to be a concurrent belief in two opposing ideologies in this respect; one attitude representing the educated and progressive perspective on VAW imparted by NGO training, while the other harks back to more traditional perspectives on what constitutes 'acceptable' female behaviour. It is not unusual for people to hold simultaneous contradictory opinions during times of change, and this fact is apparent in the strand 3 interviews.

Participants also note that reporting violence remains very difficult for most women due to the negative social connotations.

**“Stereotypes still exist in our community and in mind of women. These stereotypes are not open and clear. For example, In an GBV case, women usually look down on victim instead of protecting to her. These views or thoughts are barriers for women.”**



The respondents do however state that they would like to see this situation remedied.

#### *Poverty and pressure*

As in other strands, participants noted that widespread poverty and a lack of employment opportunities leads men to commit violent robbery.

#### *Stress post-Cyclone Nargis*

Women blame increased levels of stranger violence on stress caused by Cyclone Nargis. They did not go into detail about this, but related it to the destruction of property as well as psychological trauma.

**“In our region, compare to before nargis and after nargis, the rate of rape case has increased after nargis. We had heard this case 1 time out of 10 times in the old days. But after nargis, we heard that case often. Estimated that once in a 3 or 4 months. What we hear nowadays is the case between 4 years old girl and over 40 years old man, daughter 17 years old and dad 40 years old. I heard cases like that.”**

#### *Alcohol/drugs*

As in other strands, women refer to alcohol and drug abuse as catalysts for male violence against women and children. They report that male alcoholism and drug use is increasing, and that it is inevitably linked to violent behaviour both in the form of psychological abuse and physical attacks. A large number of women speak of neighbours and other acquaintances who are beaten regularly by ‘drunkard’ husbands.

#### *Men’s lack of knowledge*

Participants in strand 3 were more likely than those in other strands to blame violent behaviour on men’s ignorance of knowledge about women’s rights and what constitutes violence.

***This is because they don’t know exactly that taking advantage of a girl is a crime.***

The implication is that men can/should be forgiven for acting in abusive manners until they have been exposed to the right training. Once they are aware of how to behave correctly, however, there can be no excuse for violent behaviour. This attitude appears to be more common amongst rural communities than those based in Yangon.

# 12 EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

This section addresses the violence that women face in the household. This largely takes the form of IPV, but can also manifest as violence inflicted by in-laws or children, for example.

## 12.1 The VAW spectrum in relation to the domestic sphere

**Areas of inquiry: What forms does domestic violence IPV take in the household, and how common are they? How severe do women consider specific types of violence to be?**

Women were asked to rank the forms of domestic violence faced in their communities according to:

Frequency (very frequent, somewhat frequent, somewhat infrequent, infrequent, very infrequent)

Perceived severity (very severe, somewhat severe, not very severe, not severe, unimportant)

They listed:

Verbal abuse: very frequent, unimportant

Beating: very frequent, somewhat severe

Spousal rape: very frequent, somewhat severe

Child marriage: somewhat infrequent, very severe

Restraining women (tying up etc.) – somewhat infrequent, somewhat severe

### *Types of domestic violence, their frequency and perceived*

Participants in strand 3 focus groups stated that domestic violence (in various forms) is extremely common throughout Myanmar. As shown above, beating, verbal abuse and spousal rape are all common, while child marriage is considered to be the most severe form of violence inflicted by household members on their kin.

### *Forms of domestic violence*

Participants listed many forms of violence that women experience in the domestic sphere. Some of these are reflective of globally common forms of VAWG, including spousal rape, child marriage, beating with fists and verbal/psychological abuse.

Other forms that were mentioned, although less frequently included:

- Cutting off ears
- Breaking fingers
- Acid attacks
- Stabbing

## 12.2 Responding to violence in the domestic sphere

**Areas of inquiry: how are women most likely to respond to IPV that they or their friends experience? Which types of response are considered appropriate and in which circumstances?**

### *Lack of capacity to respond effectively*

There is general agreement that most women cannot do much to respond to IPV beyond pleading with abusers and/or running away, although occasionally women are known to fight back.

**“Women can do only running away and crying to get relief.”**

**“Sometimes, when women get really angry they physically fight back their husband.”**

Participants suggested that the most appropriate form of response to IPV is to ignore the abuser in order to show her annoyance.

**“As for me, I stop talking to him. As we work together, he has to talk to me first for our business. Women have only that power.”**

However, participants also noted that their preference would be for increased training to be available for men and women, in order to educate families about ‘correct’ behaviour and to empower communities to intervene in domestic affairs where necessary.

### *Contacting the authorities*

Women also note that there is little recourse to justice available through official channels. The police are widely considered to be discriminatory, refusing to register complaints or telling women that they are ‘overreacting.’ This results in women being unable to utilise the law to protect them from abusive family members, and indeed violence levels become worse when men realize that their wives have tried to contact the police.

**“Even if we want to make a report, there is no such thing as one stop service. When we make a report, the police think we are making a big fuss out of nothing and do not take it seriously. In that case, the victim will just let it go. Then the situation will get worse and worse.”**

Village authorities are similarly ineffective, preferring not to intervene in ‘family matters’. Even more problematic is the continued popularity of traditional justice mechanisms for more severe cases of sexual violence. Numerous women reported that village authorities’ responses to rape are dominated by ‘village cleansing’, which involves compensating the community rather than the victim:

**“P: Rape, it is finished after the village had cleaned. Traditionally, ‘the village has to clean’ whether the victim got pregnant or not.**

**I: What do you mean ‘the village has to clean’?**

**P: It means that the village head will make the decision. The perpetrator has to give a pig, a cow, rice, alcohol, pillow, blanket, etc. if the woman got pregnant.**

**I: He does not have to marry her? Is it?**

**P: No need. He has to treat the whole village for compensation. The girl cannot eat..”**

*“A married man touched a girl’s breast. Then the girl informed the village heads. They solved it by treating the whole village. The people in our village think that it can be solved by treating the whole village. They did nothing for the girl.”*

### **12.3 Views on what triggers domestic sphere violence**

**Area of inquiry: what are seen to be the key triggers of intimate partner violence? (What do women think causes violence in the household?)**

#### ***Poverty and related challenges to masculinity***

Many interviewees stated that pressures related to poverty, and in particular those related to masculinity, were core causes of violence.

“They get angry when the family business is not well. They did some work and when it doesn’t come out as expected, they blame on other. Like the old saying, burn your house to rid it of mouse.”

“They get angry when they want a mistress or when business is not well.”

“Those husbands don’t earn well but they want decision making role in the household. But, their wives are leading for family. Men ego leads them to abuse their wives. Then, there become domestic violence cases.”

#### ***Alcohol***

As in other strands, almost all participants referred to alcohol as one of the central-most factors in all types of VAWG. Alcohol is thought to interfere with a man’s ability to know right from wrong.

**“I: So how many do you think there would domestic violence cases because of alcohol?**

**P1: Many**

**P2 A lot**

**P6: Many**

**I: How many will it be in percentage?**

**P1, P2, P4, P6: In a 100, maybe 60% 70%.”**

#### *Son preference*

“They also get angry when a husband wants a son and a wife can’t give birth to one”

Son preference was stated as a cause of violence in strand 3. It was not raised in either strand 1 or 2. In Myanmar culture the birth of a son is considered auspicious, while the birth of a daughter suggests that a woman lacks *hpon* (spiritual capacity). Sons are preferred because they are thought to remain with the family after marriage while girls are sold (though brideprice) to another family. This view persists despite the fact that many daughters continue to support their natal families financially after marriage.

#### *Participation in women’s groups*

When not managed skillfully, participation in women’s groups can actually increase levels of IPV. When men do not receive the same gender training as women, it can cause friction at home when women begin to make new demands for fair treatment or increased personal autonomy.

**They think “this wife was never against to me. Why she is trying to go against me? It is because of that training”.**

## **12.4 Views on how to tackle violence**

### *Training*

It is believed that training on gender equality needs to be given to all sections of communities, including both sexes and different age groups. Only in this way can men and women both be expected to change their behaviour and expectations harmoniously.

“Both the men and women should attend the GBV training. They will get more understanding. And trainings should be in continuous way up to peer training level that allows men and women able to share the knowledge in their respective village.”

“I would go around in the community to distribute small books and explain to them about it. By doing so that they would understand and know how to train their kids.”

### *Social support*

The strongest finding to come out of strand 3 is arguably the message that membership of women’s organisations offers much stronger social support networks than employment or traditional activities. The social capital gained through membership of these organisations enables women to feel strong enough to resist violent behaviour inflicted upon themselves and upon others.

Training offered by these organisations has managed to penetrate the shame traditionally associated with victimhood, and has facilitated the creation of social environments in which women actively care for and support other women who have experienced violence. This is a marked change to traditional responses which shamed victims.

“In the past, I found it difficult to talk about myself. There was a saying that if a man left a woman, she is useless and does not know how to keep a home/marriage. It happened to you if you also had said such a thing to someone in the past life. When I got here, I realized that it was not my place. I did not commit any sin so I do not need to be ashamed. I should hold my head high.”

“The environment should have warmth feedback when they encounter with violence. If a young woman has been faced the violence, people should listen what has happened and keep in secret if needed.”

**“Since first day of the training, we discuss about sexuality and we don’t feel shame each other to talk about it.”**

## 13 STRAND 3 QUANTITATIVE DATA: A SNAPSHOT PRE-ANALYSIS

As part of our strand 3 study in Myanmar we also conducted a quantitative survey using the UNDP's mobile phone technology. This technology takes the form of a points based 'game' in which women answer questions in order to enter prize draws. The survey received 180 responses. Data analysis has not yet been conducted, but a broad snapshot of some basic results are shown in Appendix 1.

## 14 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

This preliminary documenting and analysis of findings, based on the VAW continuum and taking an intersectional approach, has enabled us to draw the following general conclusions. These will be developed to form detailed conclusions post in-depth analysis in February and March 2017.

Women's work is largely considered normal/desirable. This is true throughout Myanmar but especially in urban areas.

The majority of women retain at least equal control of incomes earned.

Women across strands do not make links between work and increased experiences of violence.

Women across strands do believe that engagement with the outside world (through work) increases incidence levels – however, this confidence translates more into resilience/resistance in public than in private.

Migration is related negatively to experiences of violence in public space.

Violence in public spaces is a critical concern for women across strands. Buses, taxis and dark streets are persistent causes of alarm.

Membership of women's organisations is more significant than income generation in relation to women's willingness to discuss violence openly – elsewhere it is considered a private and shameful matter that should not be discussed in relation to personal experience.

Membership of women's organisations creates a supportive network for women which, in addition to anti-VAW training offered by NGOs, facilitates the recognition that violence is neither acceptable nor inevitable.

These supportive networks lead to group willingness to challenge violence at home and in public vocally.

These anti-VAW organisations engage largely with the poor, and we found little evidence to suggest that middle class women are in any way benefitted by them.

Middle class women suffer more intensely than poor women from violent backlash perpetrated by husbands who feel their 'breadwinner' role has been threatened.

Gender based discrimination in employment opportunity exists across economic strata and across job sectors.



# 15 RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

## 15.1 Recommendations

Promoting local women's organisation and building capacity at this level to challenge VAW and advocate for survivors is important and should extend to supporting professional women.

Programmes to challenge the gendering of work are crucial. They need to be designed to suit specific areas within the country, e.g. Addressing the female bias towards factory work in urban centres, gender-based discrimination in employment rules in the garment sector, backlash and mindset change in the middle classes, and more generalised programmes dealing with gendered attitudes to labour division in the remoter districts.

Work-based harassment policies and procedures need to be reviewed across sectors and evidence of good practice identified and encouraged more strongly.

Women only transport schemes are clearly needed.

Official structures that are supportive of women are required. This must target the various levels of community authority, including ward administrators (village tracts in rural areas), police and judiciary.

## 15.2 Next Steps

The strategy for research uptake for this project has the following aims:

- Establish interest in and ownership of the research amongst a broad range of stakeholders
- Raise awareness of the links between VAW and WEE amongst relevant stakeholders
- Inform the design, implementation and evaluation of existing and future programmes
- Share knowledge with researchers and practitioners
- Strengthen capacity amongst national researchers to engage with VAW issues and support women who participate in the research
- Influence policy and practice

As noted in previous reports, the period up to September 2016 represented a phase in which we built our engagement with stakeholders and developed key tools and products to support communication and research uptake. During this period, we focused on sharing information about the project. This involved developing stakeholder engagement and sharing learning about the research methodologies and process. As the findings from thorough data analysis emerge, we anticipate that research uptake activities to the end of the project will concentrate increasingly on the development of specific knowledge products for the national and regional contexts that inform researchers and practitioners and influence policy makers.

The approach we have taken in the last quarter is to shape activities relevant to the research uptake aims by initially holding stakeholder workshops at the national level, where stakeholders from a range of sectors (public, private, NGO, academic and media) are present. Stakeholder workshops took place in Myanmar on June 28th 2016 (39 attendees).

- This workshop enabled us to establish interest and ownership and raise stakeholder awareness, and led to the following immediate outcomes:
- Identification of members for country level advisory forums. These are the key reference for research uptake and dissemination activities for the duration of the project, and are also likely to sustain the influence and impact of the project beyond its completion.
- Insights gained into the knowledge sharing landscape within each of the three countries which are now informing design of knowledge products and dissemination activities
- Development of an initial wider list of relevant stakeholders and contacts who can be influential in sharing the key findings from the research.

In order to inform and share knowledge, we now have a fully established online presence. Our website, [www.gendersouthasia.org](http://www.gendersouthasia.org), shares project news, blogs, articles and resources. It will continue to be developed over the coming months and we have made plans to maintain it beyond the project's lifespan. We are committed to designing engaging digital content that responds to needs of different audiences, provides information about the project, and shares learning and resources related to the research process and findings. As such, we have recently launched a twitter account (@gendersouthasia) and a Facebook community (see [www.facebook.com/gendersouthasia](http://www.facebook.com/gendersouthasia)), so there are a variety of ways in which we seek to keep stakeholders up to date.

Our aim is to reach wide audiences and indeed to connect with global debates and discussions on gender, work and violence. We have also circulated two of our bi-monthly project newsletters to stakeholder lists, in addition to making them available through the website. These globally accessible digital knowledge products will provide value for money communication of learning across the project team, its partners and stakeholders and more widely (including targeting those identified during network mapping sessions conducted at the national stakeholder workshops).

As we progress with data analysis, we will be using infographics on these forums to convey key quantitative messages. We intend also to make use of multimedia to share qualitative findings and insights, drawing on stories from participants and interviews with team members and partners. Once analysis has enabled critical reflection on our tools, we will make the resources developed for the research available as open licensed content. So for example we plan to share the survey questions and guidance notes, and intend to share learning about the process followed for the mobile survey produced with UNDP and the tools used. Subject to ethical considerations we also intend to provide avenues through which some of the research data gathered could be made openly available for others to use.

We also partnered with the UNDP to conduct qualitative research with women from throughout Myanmar. We worked with UNDP to design a survey that was circulated to women using the UNDP's pioneering mobile phone research app. **This partnership has offered substantive opportunities for uptake.** The UNDP is keen to use the findings of our research in their future programming. Moreover, the government of Myanmar has indicated that it would like to use our survey tool in order to reach out to a larger sample of women as part of its own research on

women's development in the country. We will be engaging with government representatives to facilitate this process.

Finally, in order to share knowledge with researchers and practitioners we have identified a range of journals and publications (including open access) through which we will be seeking to publish articles and key findings from the study. This activity will progress as we analyse data more comprehensively. At this stage, with input from the country level advisory forums we will also identify opportunities to develop country specific knowledge products, and relevant events and windows of opportunity to enable the project to influence policy and practice. The end of project regional stakeholder event will provide an excellent opportunity early in 2017 to showcase and share knowledge from the project.

The following knowledge products are planned for Myanmar:

- Key Findings Briefing document.
- An on-line open access university level module on 'Women. Work and Violence' utilising the findings and resources generated by this project. This course will be designed for professional development across sectors and for possible inclusion in university courses.
- Academic Outputs:
  - Two Peer Review Articles
  - Section in the Project Monograph
  - Section in the project's special edition of the journal 'social identities'.

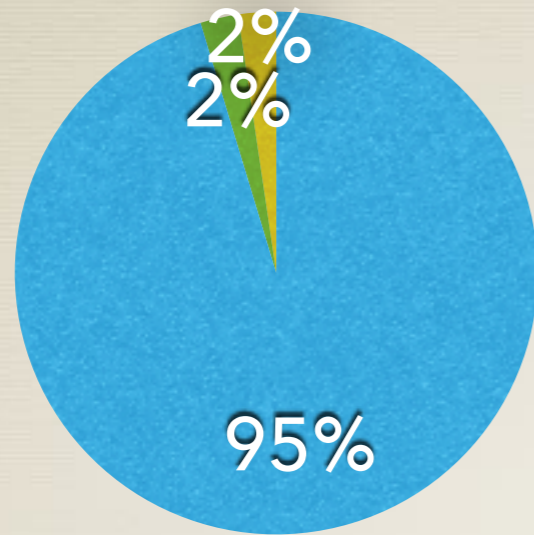
# APPENDIX 1



# 16 Days of Activism Survey on Gender Based Violence in Myanmar

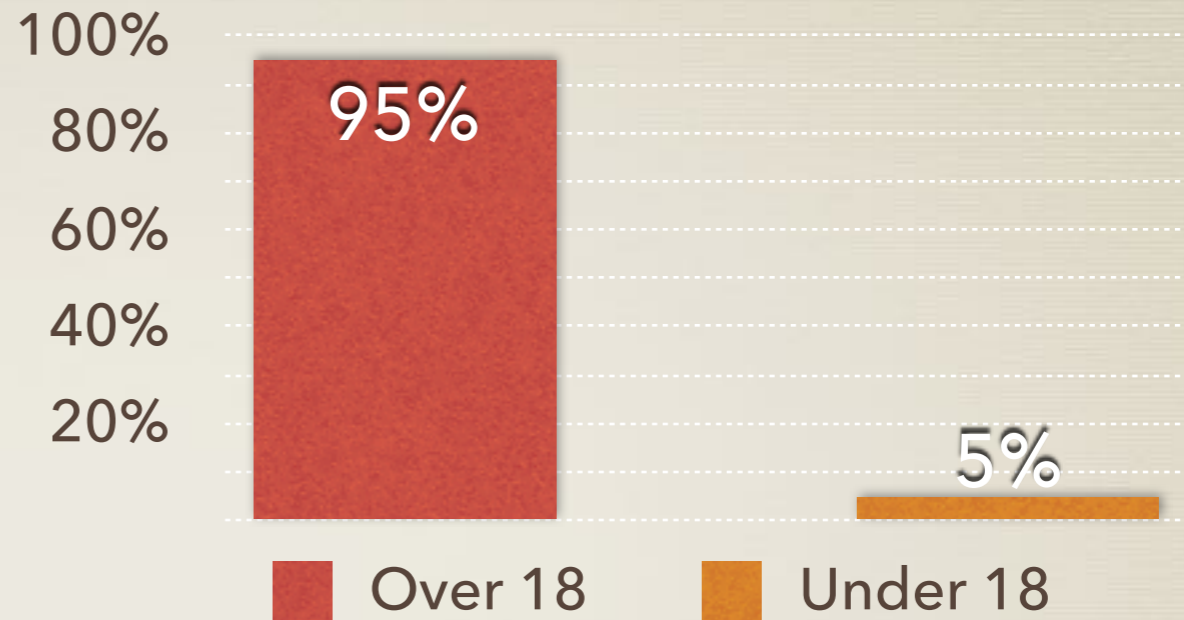
This document is a summary of the results of a survey carried out on the iWomen Inspiring Women App during the 16 Days of Activism. 172 participants answered the survey in full. This was a joint initiative of UNDP Myanmar and May Doe Kabar National Network of Rural Women with the technical guidance and support of the UN Gender Theme Group.

## GENDER

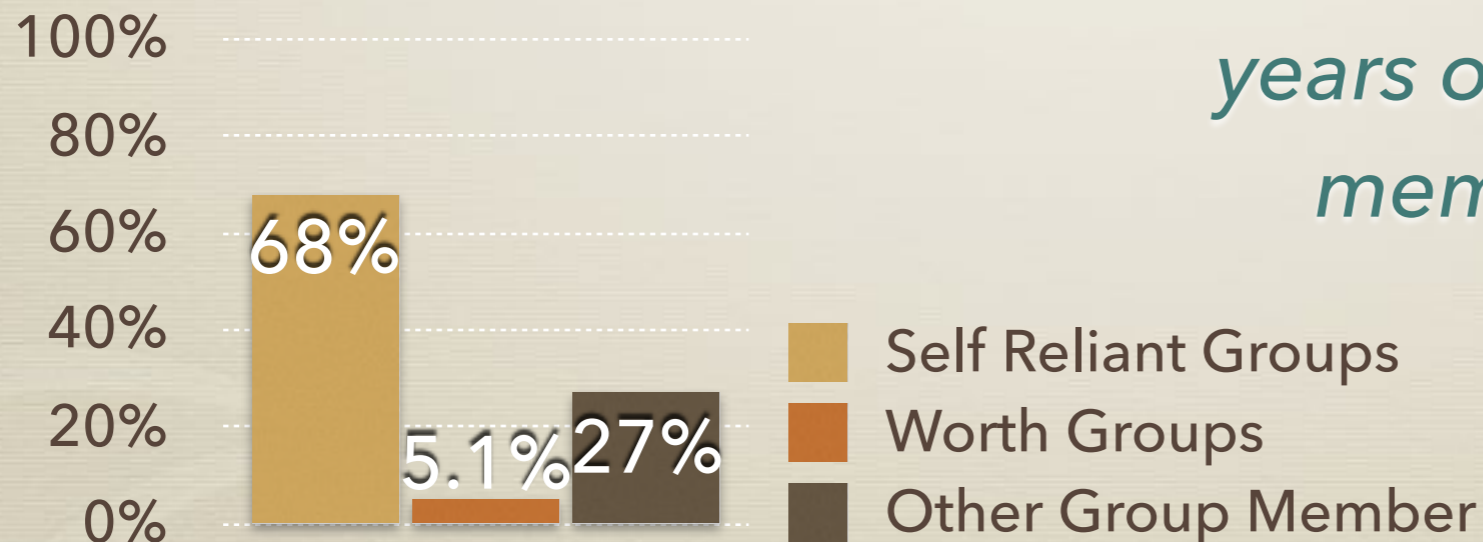


● Female ● Male ● Other

## NUMBER OF PEOPLE AGED OVER/UNDER 18

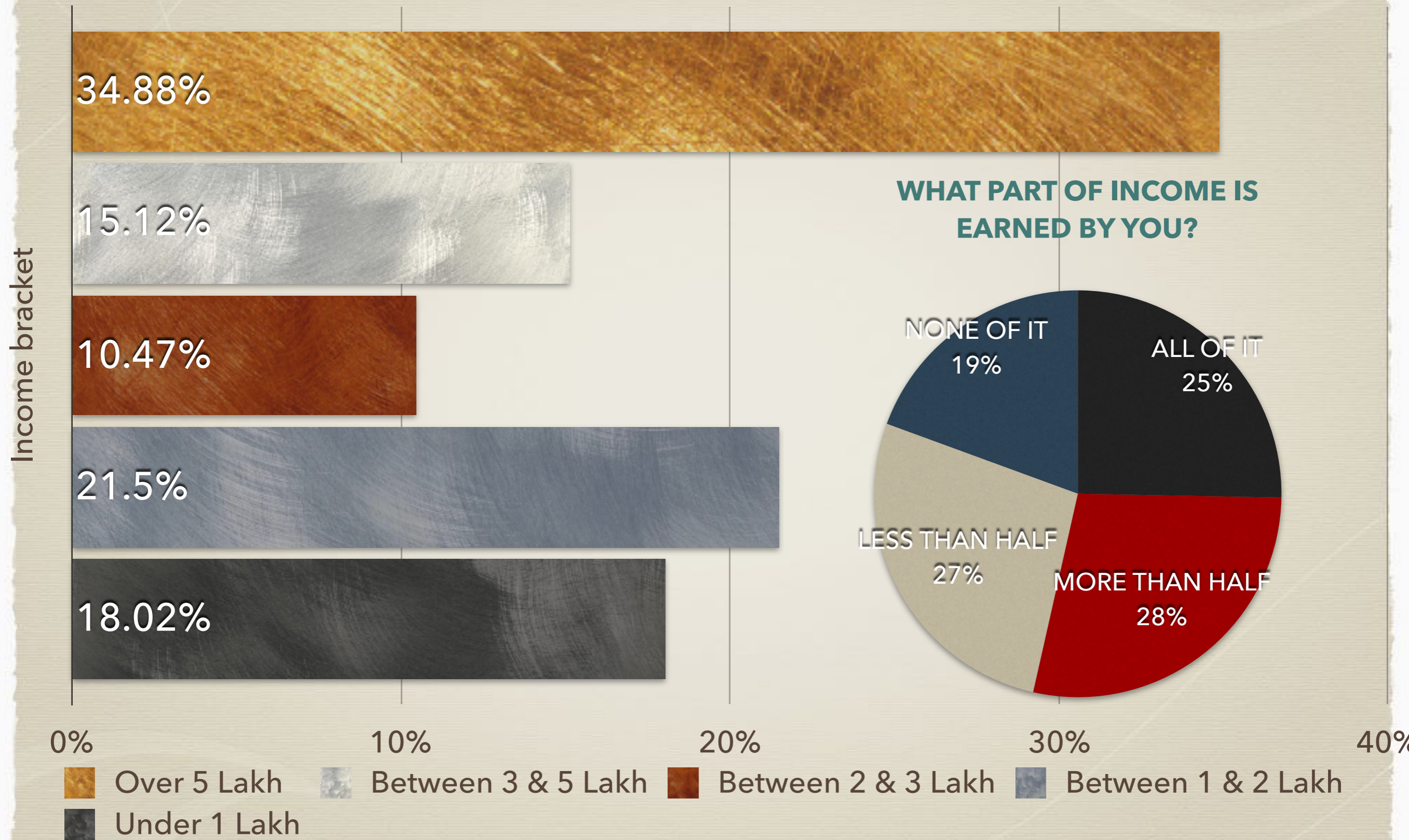


## RESPONDENTS DIVIDED BY MEMBERSHIP

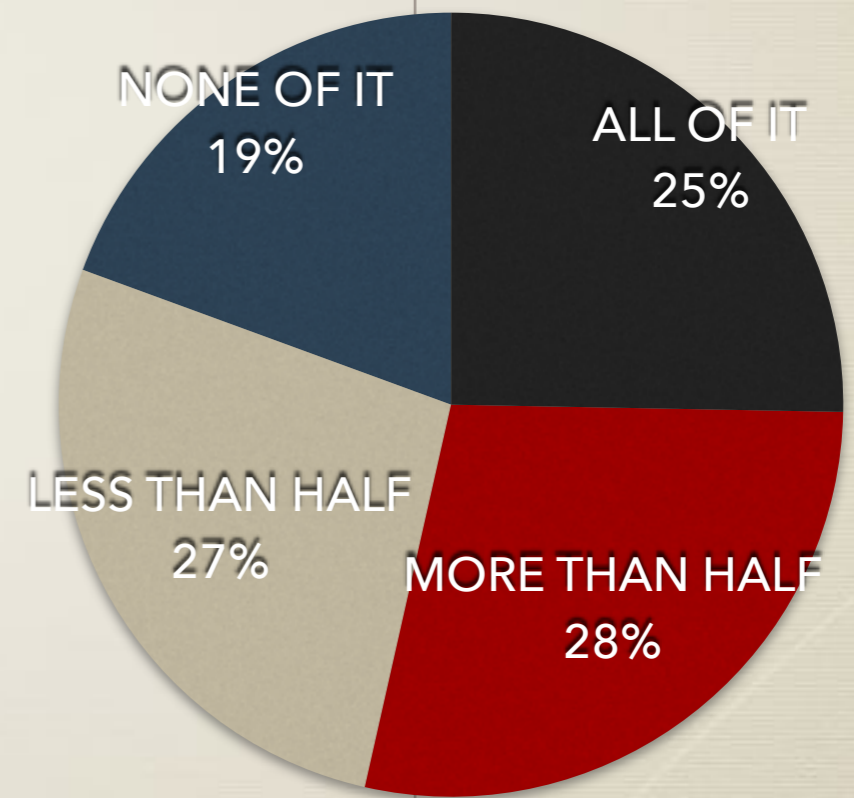


*"The majority of respondents are females aged over 18 years old and are mostly members of SRGs."*

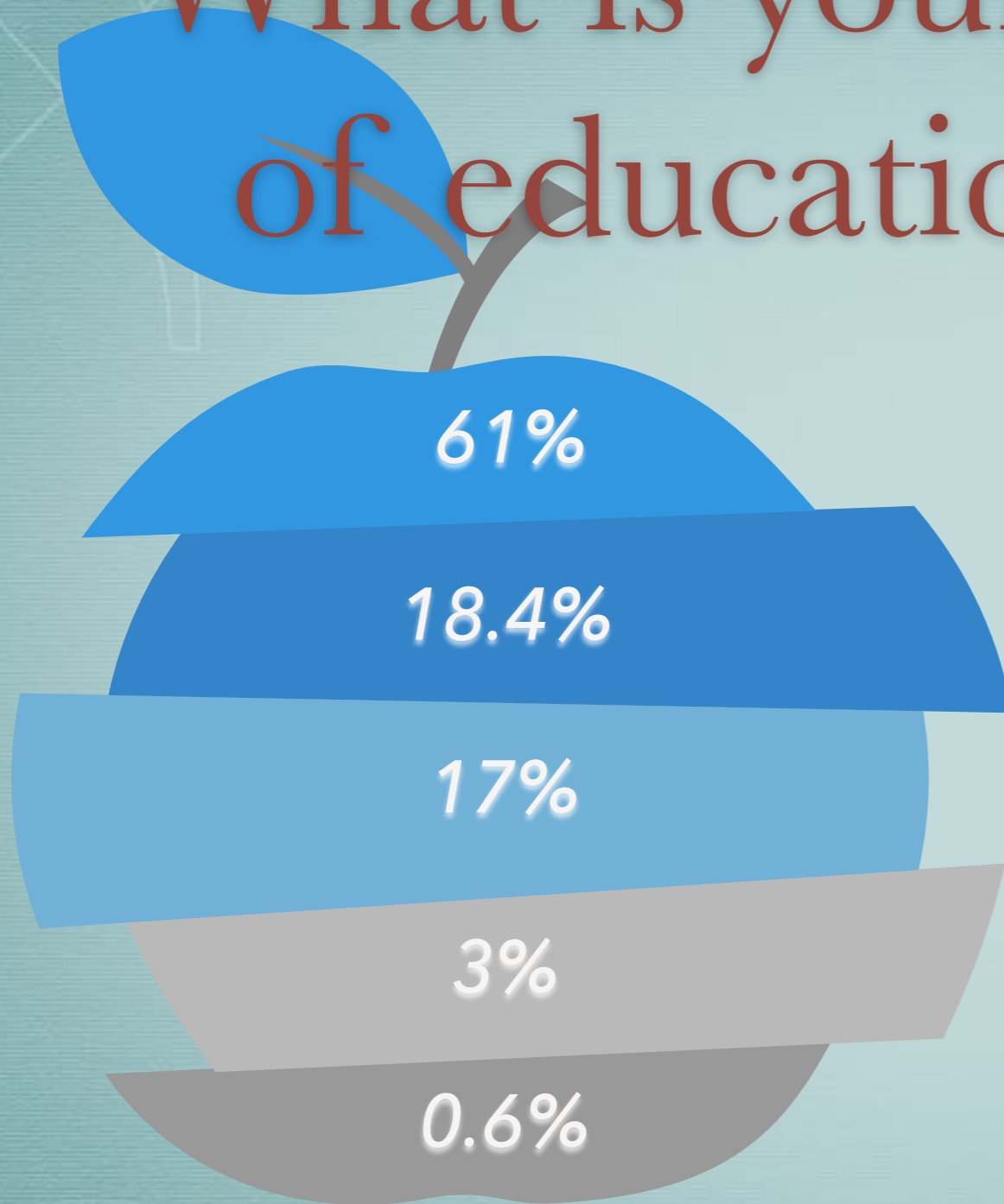
# (HOUSEHOLD) AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME PER MONTH



## WHAT PART OF INCOME IS EARNED BY YOU?



# What is your highest level of education achieved?

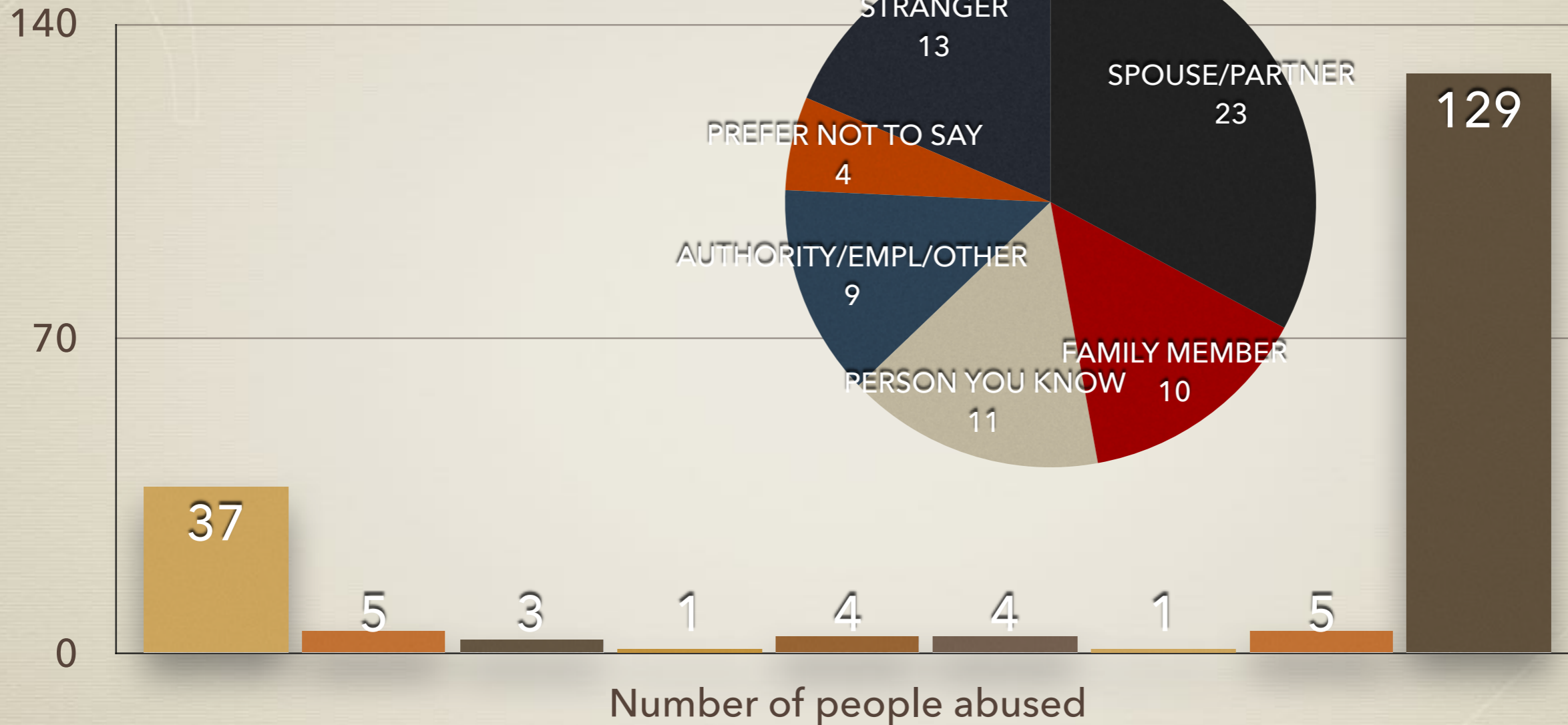


- Bachelor Degree or higher
- High School
- Middle School
- Primary School
- No school



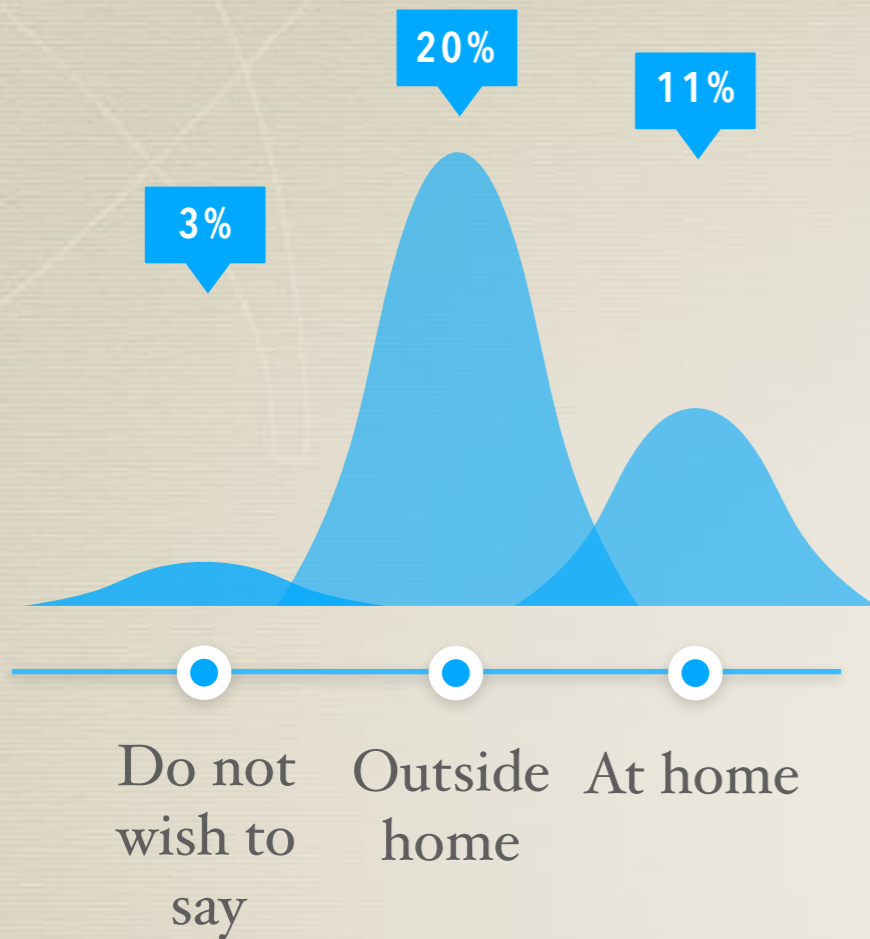
**TYPE OF ABUSE EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST MONTH**

**WHO WAS THE ABUSER?**



*In the past month, from when the survey was taken, **37 women have been subjected to emotional or physical violence.** 8 to physical and sexual abuse and several **others (8)** to economic abuse and online harassment. The **majority (129)** of women hasn't experienced any violence in the past month.*

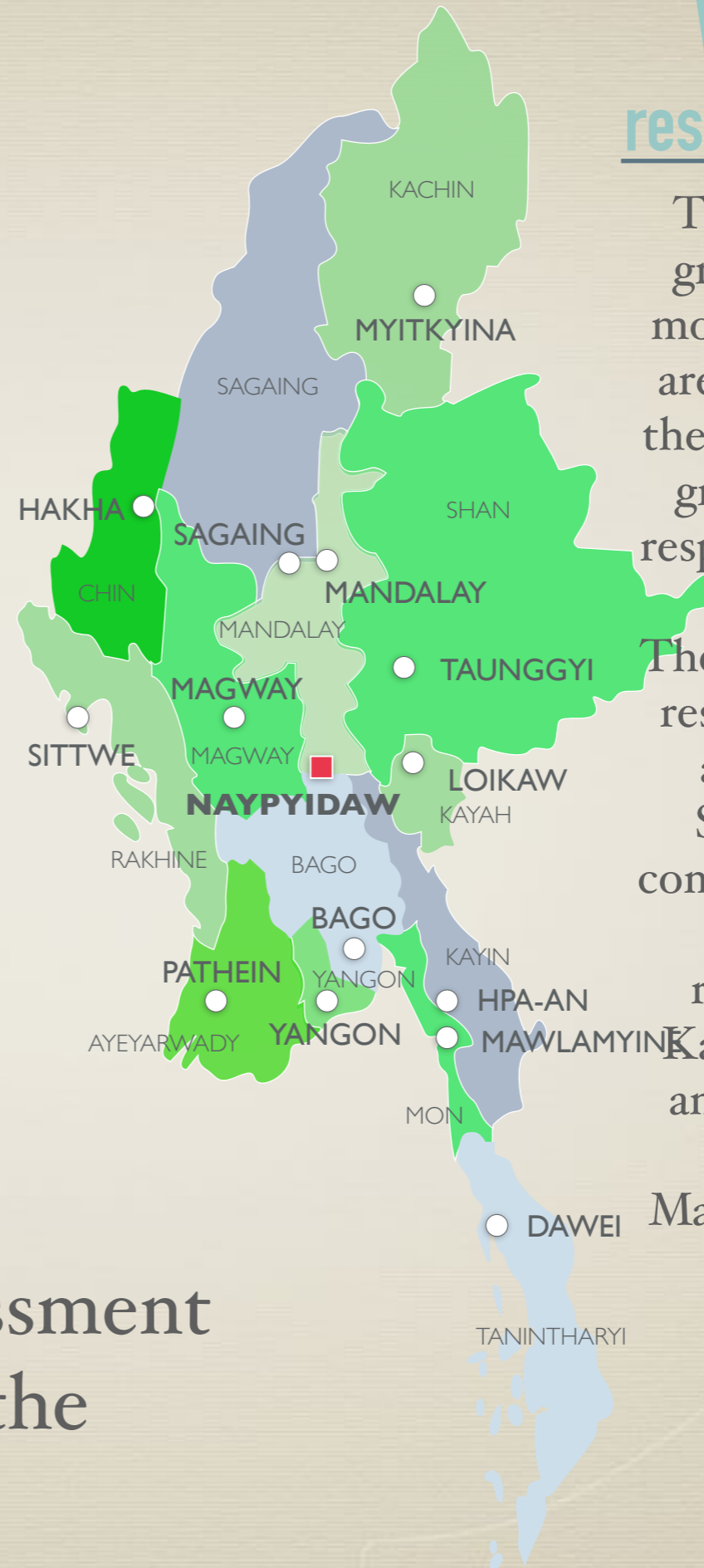
## Where did the violence take place?



**66%**

Of the respondents did not experience any form of harassment in the month prior to when the survey was taken.

## Where are most respondents located?



The states coloured in green represent where most of the respondents are located. The greater the intensity of green the greater the number of respondents living in that area.

The two states with most respondents are 1. Chin and 2. Ayeyarwady; Shan, Magway, Mon constitute the third set of states with most respondents. Finally, Kachin, Kayah, Yangon and Rakhne constitute the fourth group. Mandalay is the last one.

# "WHEN YOU FACED VIOLENCE, WHAT DID YOU DO?"

Most victims of an abuse have reported to:

1. Resist/respond verbally;
2. Told Family, friends, neighbours;
3. Reported to an authority.

02 Told Family, friends, or neighbours

03 Reported to an authority.

1st

After the first three principal options, respondents answered they 'did not know what to do'

This was followed by responses such as  
Did not dare to act.  
Denounced the abuse on Social Media.  
Resisted physically.

2

3rd

4 people responded they didn't tell anyone. Yet a similar amount of people replied that they contacted a village leader, ran away, or sought legal assistance.

01 Verbal Response/Resistance

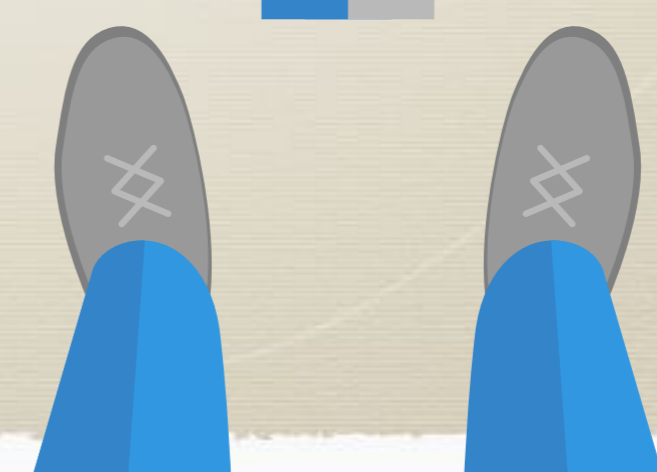
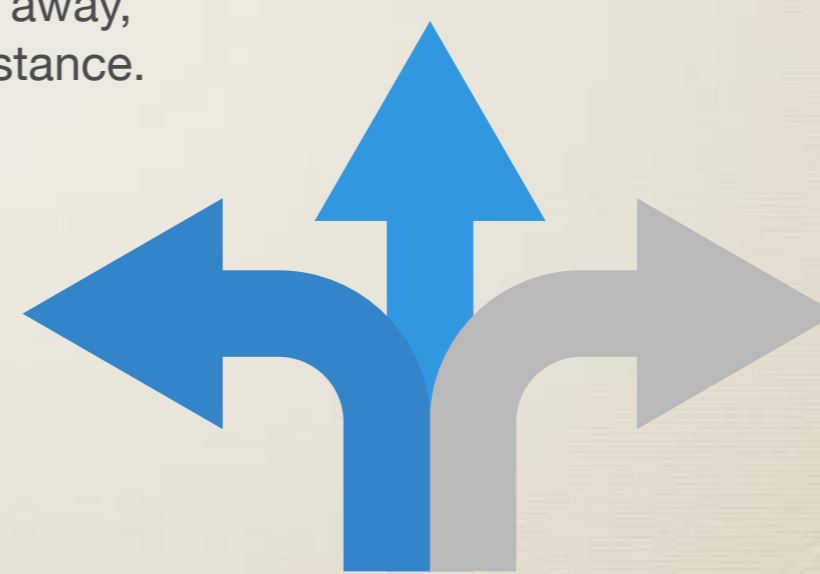
5th

Finally some respondents, sought help from iWomen app, or contacted another women's group

6

Almost no victim answered: sought medical assistance, contacted religious leader, or SRG/TLG/MDK member.

7th



# IN YOUR LIFE HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING FORMS OF VIOLENCE/AGGRESSION?



Emotional/Psychological  
Human Trafficking  
Other forms of violence

Physical Abuse  
Economic Abuse  
Prefer not to say

Sexual Violence  
Cyber Violence  
No viol in my life

# WHAT SERVICE DO YOU SEE AS THE MOST IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT YOU IN SURVIVING VIOLENCE?

01

52 women had no opinion/experience

02

47 women wrote on the 'other' section

03

41 women chose counsellor

04

30 chose social support

11 women chose Doctor

05

9 women chose Police

06

9 women chose religious support

07

2 women chose shelter

08

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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