



VOICE WORK POWER

A training manual for women
home-based workers of South Asia
to address gender-based violence.





VOICE WORK POWER

**A training manual for women
home-based workers of South Asia
to address gender-based violence.**



A HomeNet South Asia Publication

March 2026

Published by HomeNet South Asia (HNSA), a Charitable Trust and a network of home-based worker's organisation across all South Asian countries.

Conceptualised and presented by Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), a Charitable Trust based in New Delhi, working at the intersection of research, policy and action to bring visibility to the gendered dimensions of labour.

Copyright@HNSA

This is an educational material that can be replicated by acknowledging the source.

Designed by Mandeera Baghar, Aastha Jain

FOREWORD

This manual grows out of HomeNet South Asia's long-standing engagement with the everyday realities of violence faced by home-based workers across the region. For HNSA, violence is not an isolated or private experience - it is deeply embedded in unequal labour relations, patriarchal social norms, and systemic invisibility of women's work. Our work has consistently sought to frame violence against home-based workers as a labour issue, a rights issue, and a policy failure, demanding collective, feminist, and worker-led responses.

I would like to acknowledge the Ford Foundation for supporting HNSA's initiative on the prevention of violence against home-based workers in South Asia. This manual is a direct outcome of that partnership and of a shared commitment to advancing justice, dignity, and safety for women workers.

I am deeply grateful to our affiliates and partner organisations across South Asia whose grounded work and lived experiences have shaped this manual. The insights reflected here come from homes, neighbourhoods, and communities where women home-based workers navigate violence alongside unpaid care, insecure livelihoods, and social marginalisation - often with remarkable resilience and courage.

My sincere thanks to the members of the Steering Committee for their guidance and feminist clarity throughout this process. I especially acknowledge the Chair of the Steering committee, Ms. Chandni Joshi, Enforcer of HNSA, and Ms. Firoza Mehrotra, Advisory Board Member for their thoughtful engagement and dedicated commitment. I also thank our affiliate representatives from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka whose collective wisdom strengthened this work. I place on record my deep appreciation for ISST, our affiliate and partner, for developing this manual with sensitivity. Addressing violence requires care as much as conviction, and ISST has skillfully integrated participatory tools that engage with power, patriarchy, discrimination, and the roles of family, state, and society. I also hope that the home-based worker leaders who will emerge as Master Trainers will transform this manual into a living, shared resource.

I am grateful to Ms. Goma Pandey for adapting the Nepali version of the manual, ensuring its relevance and accessibility, and to Ms. Richa Macsuedon, Senior Programme Coordinator, for stewarding this initiative with commitment and care from start to finish.

This manual is not an endpoint. It is part of HNSA's continuous efforts to make women home-based workers visible, valued, and protected. I hope it serves as a tool for dialogue, organising, and action - and contributes to a future where home-based workers can live and work free from violence, with dignity, solidarity, and hope.

Sristi Joshi Malla

Regional Coordinator, HomeNet South Asia

December 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This manual is the result of many collective efforts, insights, and collaborations. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) for entrusting us with the opportunity to develop this resource and for their constant encouragement and support. HNSA's commitment to advancing the rights and visibility of women home-based workers (HBWs) across South Asia has been a guiding light throughout this process.

We also deeply appreciate the feedback and guidance from the Steering Committee, whose insights helped sharpen the focus and relevance of the content, grounding it in the lived realities of women HBWs.

We are grateful to the translators and designers whose careful and creative work ensured that the content of this manual remains accessible, inclusive, and visually engaging. Their contributions have been vital in helping us reach a diverse group of learners and trainers across different contexts.

We stand on the shoulders of organisers and scholars who have worked tirelessly to advance the rights of informal women workers. This manual draws from the foundational work, materials, and frameworks built by collectives and researchers over many years—including the rich experiences and knowledge shared by HNSA and WIEGO. Their work continues to inspire and guide efforts to organise, collectivise, and empower women in the informal economy.

The Nepal version of this Manual has benefitted with the inputs and modifications done by Ms. Goma Pandey. We are grateful to her.

We place on record the role played by Monika Sharma, our Communications Manager is facilitating the translation of the Manual in Hindi, Tamil and Gujarati languages in record time. This helped the Master trainers to refer to the Manual during the TOT to deliver their practice sessions. This has been a collaborative journey, and we wish to acknowledge each other – Dr Jahnavi Andharia, Dr. Rekha Raj and Camellia Reja for the spirit of co-creation, trust, and shared values that made this process deeply meaningful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	i.
Acknowledgement	ii.
Table of Contents	iii.
Activity-Wise Content Table	vii.
Introduction	1
Purpose of the Manual	2
Chapter 1: Foundations of Organizing and Working with Women Home-Based Workers : A gender Transformative Approach	3
1.1 Preparation and General Tips for the Trainers	4
1.2 Developing a Session	5
1.3 Registration Process and Setting the Tone	7
1.4 Importance of Gender Awareness for Home-Based Women Workers	9
1.5 Status of Women	9
1.6 Gender Awareness	10
1.7 Role of Trainers in Empowering Women Workers	10
1.8 Overview of Training Methodology and Approach	10
Number of Activities:	2
Chapter 2: Understanding Home-Based Women Workers	11
2.1 Who Are Home-Based Women Workers?	12

2.2 What Kind of Work Do They Do? What Are Their Working Conditions? -----	13
2.3 What Are the Challenges They Face? -----	13
2.4 How Does Gender Shape Their Work and Lives? -----	13

Number of Activities: 2

Chapter 3: Addressing Gender-Based Violence Experienced by women Home-Based Women Workers ----- 18

3.1 Understanding Institutions of Family, Community, Market and State -----	20
3.2 Care Work -----	22
3.3 Context of Violence Against Women in South Asia -----	22
3.4 Domestic Violence and Violence at the Workplace: The Women HBW Context -----	25
3.5 Access to Resources, Credit, and Social Security: Unequal Control and Gendered Barriers -----	25
3.6 Health and Safety Concerns Specific to Home-Based Work-----	26
3.7 Filing Complaints Under POSH and Domestic Violence Laws: Basic Processes and Documents Required -----	27

Number of Activities: 6

Chapter 4: Revising Gender Basic Concepts ----- 43

Concepts & Definitions: Gender, Gender Division of Labour, Gender Equality and Equity, Gender Identity, Gender Roles, Intersectionality, Disability & Women HBW, Sexuality, Sexual Orientation and Identities, -----	45
Sexual Violence & Harassment, Online Sexual harassment, workplace violence, Intimate partner violence	

Number of Activities: 6

Chapter 5: Empowerment Through Fostering Unity and Collective Strength	68
5.1 What is Empowerment?	69
5.2 Agency, Choice, and Decision-Making	70
5.3 Representation and Participation	70
5.4 Building Self-Confidence and Leadership Skills	70
5.5 Negotiation and Communication Skills	71
5.6 Understanding Rights: Labour Rights, Legal Protections, and Entitlements	71
5.7 Collective action and forming support groups	72

Number of Activities: **3**

Chapter 6: Engaging Men and Communities for Gender Equality	78
6.1 Men and Masculinity - Definitions and Concepts	79
6.2 Different Masculinities	80
6.3 Femininity	80
6.4 Heteronormativity	81



6.5 Role of Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equality	81
6.6 Addressing Harmful Social Norms within Families and Communities	81
6.7 Strategies for Community Sensitisation and Advocacy	82

Number of Activities: 4

Chapter 7: Resources and References	90
--	-----------

7.1 Gender-related Laws and Policies Relevant to Home-Based Workers	91
7.2 Support Organisations and Helplines	91
7.3 Suggested Readings, Videos, and Learning Tools	92

Annexure	93
-----------------	-----------



CONTENT TABLE – ACTIVITIES

Trainer's Note

This table gives you an overview of the topics you can cover as a trainer. It shows the chapter numbers, the suggested activities you can use to engage participants, and the reading material you can refer to while preparing. Use it as a quick guide to plan your sessions, choose the most relevant activities, and ensure you are covering the key points for each topic.

No.	Name of Activity	Chapters	Reference sections	Page No.
2A	Our Work, Our Worth – Understanding Women Home-Based Workers	2	2.1–2.4	14
2B	Reflecting on Agency Through Storytelling	2	2.1–2.4	16
3A	Prevalence and Seriousness of the Gender-Based Violence	3	3.3–3.7	29
3B	Recognising the Invisible Barriers	3	3.2	30
3C	Lifeline of a South Asian Woman (Timeline Exercise)	3	3.1–3.6	34
3D	Rights Match-Up (Constitutional Article Game) – INDIA	Annexure	Annexure II	36
3E	Who Holds Power and Why? – Exploring Patriarchy and Brahmanical Control	3	3.3	39
3F	What Can We Do? – Finding Solutions to Violence Against Women	3	3.7	41
4A	Who Does What? – Understanding Gender Roles, Gender Division of Labour	4	4.1 (b,c,f)	52
4B	Who Gets to Decide? – Gender Equality in Daily Life	4	4.1 (d)	54
4C	Understanding the Intersectionality of Gender	4	4.1 (g,h)	56

No.	Name of Activity	Chapters	Reference sections	Page No.
4D	Understanding Sexual Violence	4	4.1 (j)	59
4E	Understanding Sexual Harassment at the Workplace	4	4.1 (j)	62
4F	Understanding Our Bodies, Our Desires and Our Agency	4	4.1 (i); Annexure IV	65
5A	Where Do We Have Power? – Understanding Empowerment, Agency, and Decision-Making	5	5.2–5.5	73
5B	I Am a Leader When... – Building Confidence and Leadership	5	5.8	75
5C	Know Your Rights, Build Your Group – Labour Rights, Legal Awareness, and Collective Action	5	5.7–5.8	77
6A	What Makes a Man? – Understanding Masculinity	6	6.1–6.2	83
6B	Men and Masculinity	6	6.1–6.2	85
6C	Femininity Then and Now – Exploring Change Over Time	6	6.3	86
6D	Whose Femininity? – Reimagining Gender Norms Through Role Play	6	6.3	88



INTRODUCTION

This manual has been developed as a foundational tool to strengthen the collective voice, rights, and recognition of women **home-based workers (HBWs)** across South Asia. At its core, it is grounded in promoting gender equality as it centers the lived experiences of women workers, challenges systems of inequality, and fosters transformative solidarity.

Rather than offering only technical guidance, this manual aims to support deep structural change. It demands the recognition of women HBWs as workers—not as helpers, hobbyists, or informal contributors, but as significant contributors to local and global economies (WIEGO, 2023). It also seeks to amplify their voices in policy and public discourse, and advocates for their inclusion in national labour frameworks as per global conventions such as ILO Convention 177, which affirms the rights of women HBWs to decent and dignified work (ILO, 1996).

The manual recognises that women HBWs often face layered vulnerabilities—discrimination, economic exploitation, and gender-based violence both within the household and the workplace. It is committed to building awareness, capacity, and collective strength to address these challenges and shift the power balance.

In addition, this manual is designed to offer a comprehensive tool kit to assist in addressing Gender Based Violence among women HBW through training sessions. However, trainers are encouraged to adapt the content based on their local or regional context, the sensitivity of certain topics, the nature and scope of their organisation's work, and the stage their organisation is at in addressing gender-based issues. You may choose to include or omit certain sections as needed to ensure the training is relevant, respectful, and effective. This flexibility is especially important when dealing with topics such as **sexuality** and **masculinity**, which may require a more careful and contextualised approach. We recommend that the Master Trainers discuss with experienced members of their organisation to arrive at a decision about these sensitive matters.

The manual presents 7 core modules, which are divided into the following chapters:

- 1. Foundations of Organising and Working with Women Home-Based Workers : A Gender Transformative Approach*
- 2. Understanding Women Home-Based Workers*
- 3. Addressing Gender-Based Violence Experienced by women Home-Based Workers*
- 4. Revising Basic Concepts on Gender*
- 5. Empowerment Through Fostering Unity and Collective Strength*
- 6. Engaging Men and Communities for Gender Equality*
- 7. Resources and References*

PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

To create a practical, social justice centric resource that strengthens organising, leadership, and collective action among women HBWs. It focuses on their real experiences and helps them understand their rights, build strong groups, and speak up for themselves. The manual also talks about gender inequality and how issues like caste, class, and patriarchy affect HBWs at home and at work. A key part of this manual is building awareness about gender-based violence (GBV) - including domestic violence, emotional and financial control, and harassment by family members, contractors, or buyers. Many women do not report such violence because of fear, shame, or lack of support. Since many HBWs work from home, the place where they work may also be where they face abuse. This manual encourages women to talk about these problems, support each other, and learn how to stay safe and seek help.

Objectives of the Manual

1. Recognition of women HBWs as Workers: To promote wider recognition of women HBWs as legitimate workers who contribute significantly to local and global economies.

2. Amplification of women HBWs' Voices: To support women HBWs in articulating their concerns and demands before policymakers, employers, and society at large.

3. Awareness of Gender-Based Violence: To build understanding of the different forms of gender-based violence - especially those faced by women HBWs—and the intersecting role of patriarchy, caste, class, and digital control.

4. Skill and Confidence Building: To deepen leadership capacities among women HBWs, particularly those in or moving toward leadership roles, and strengthen their ability to mobilise and grow their collective.

5. Championing for Labour Rights and Inclusion: To push for inclusion of women HBWs in national labour laws and international frameworks.

6. Organising for Change: To encourage and equip women HBWs - whether already organised or not—to build or strengthen their own representative organisations.

7. Support for Redress and Dialogue: To provide practical strategies, support systems, and institutional mechanisms to address injustice and build safer environments through community dialogue and solidarity.

CHAPTER 1

Foundations of Organising & Working with Women Home-Based Workers : A Gender Transformative Approach

This chapter sets the foundation for the training. It introduces the purpose of the manual, shares preparatory tips, and guides you through the first session with participants.



01.

Foundations of Organising & Working with Women Home-Based Workers : A Gender Transformative Approach



Dear Trainer,

1.1 Preparation and General tips for the trainers

To prepare for the meeting, you should consider the following:

This Manual is grounded in adult learning principles, valuing the experiences and knowledge participants bring as adults. The methodology we follow is “andragogy” (as different from ‘pedagogy’ which is for children. Adult learning is different from child learning. Adults have a lot of life experiences, and learning is about developing a different insight and engaging in meaning-making to see their lived realities from a new perspective. Hence, please use the flexibility in content, methods, and examples to adapt sessions to suit participant profiles and local contexts. Participatory methods like discussions, role plays, and real-life scenarios help deepen learning. You can choose interactive or information-based approaches based on participant learning needs.

- You must keep about **10 minutes to reflect** on each session and record feedback. Informal assessments can help track progress and reinforce key learnings.
- The manual is meant for **11 hours and 10 minutes** over several sessions carried out in the community at your convenience. Although, if there is limited time, the sessions can be shortened by compressing a few activities or omitting some content. However, the key objectives of the training should be met.
- The training has been designed to include up to **20 participants**.

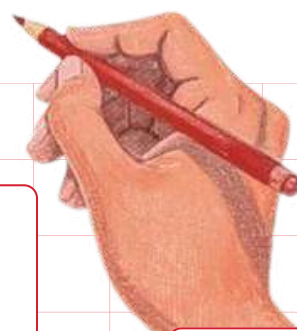


- You should be aware of the profile of the participants beforehand.
- You need to be hands-on and support the participants who cannot write or read, especially in activities which require both reading and writing.
- You can change the methodologies - games, discussions, role-plays, and group work- based on their experience. Moreover, there is also flexibility in terms of the live examples that can be given. You can also share relevant and local experiences to make the training more interesting, interactive, and understandable.
- The content of the training can be tailored to the country/regional context where the training is taking place, or according to the requirements of the organisation and stage at which the women HBWs are.
- The exercises and situations mentioned in the manual have been provided to help participants internalise the concepts and theoretical aspects of the training.
- You can prepare PowerPoint presentations (if there is a facility to project at the training venue) and posters to deliver the content.
- You have the flexibility to lead the training using either an information-oriented approach or an interactive training approach according to the profile of the women HBWs. Interim feedback of the participants can be done at the end of each day or at the start of the next session to gauge how much the participants have absorbed. This can be carried out informally by asking questions like 'What are your reflections from yesterday/previous session?' or 'What was your understanding of yesterday's session/previous session?'
- You must keep about 10 minutes to reflect on each session and record feedback. Informal assessments can help track progress and reinforce key learnings.
- You should maintain a separate diary to note key training points, record trainee needs, document their feedback and questions, and include their own session-wise reflections and observations.

1.2 Developing a Session

Key points to keep in mind while facilitating a session on Gender-Based Violence for Women Home-Based Workers:

Before the Session



01. Decide the session title/topic - make it clear & relevant to the participants.

02. Define the objectives- what main insights or understanding should participants take away?

03. Choose the facilitation method- discussion, group activity, role play, video, etc.

04. List the materials needed- chart paper, markers, sticky notes, handouts, videos, etc.

05. Plan group size- decide how many sub-groups to make, depending on the total participants.

06. Formulate key questions- prepare open-ended questions to guide discussion.

07. Prepare materials in advance- notes, cards, or charts with bold, clear writing.

08. Check readiness with your team- discuss with senior members for tips & improvements.

09. If co-facilitating- decide the speaking order & who will lead each part.

While Preparing as a Facilitator

- Read the manual many times to fully understand the chapter.
- Think about how to explain the content in your own simple words.
- Keep a small notebook with short bullet points for reference during the session.
- Make difficult terms simpler – use local examples or stories, and Google if needed.

Techniques You Can Use

small videos or clips 	slips of paper or sticky notes – blank or pre-written. 	pictures or flashcards 	physical activities & games 
posters or chart papers 	role plays or skits 	live/local examples 	white board writing 
case studies or small stories 	songs, slogans, or solidarity chants 	small group discussion 	short lectures for key legal or factual information 

Making Concluding Remarks

- Always connect the topic, participants' inputs, and the key message you want them to remember.
- Concluding remarks help women HBWs **understand the topic better** and reinforce the main learning points.
- They also allow trainers to **check if participants have understood correctly** and clarify any confusion.
- End with a short summary, affirm participants' contributions, and link the discussion to the next session.



1.3 Introduction and Setting the tone

Instructions for Trainers:

When you give the time for training – please give a time that is at least half an hour prior to the actual time as many women HBWs may face challenges to reach it on time. For those who have come early or on time, you can think of giving them some reading material, pamphlets to engage them or having a coworker who can inquire about their well-being. Participants should feel welcome and feel the warmth of a collective. If some women bring their children, you can think of having some toys or a space where the children can play.

Duration: 30 minutes

This session is more than just collecting names. It's a chance to build trust, solidarity, and respect. Keep the learning environment warm and friendly.

* *Tips: Greet everyone warmly. Assist those who can't read/write. Respect comfort levels - no need to force sharing. Tell them to focus on their sisterhood space and leave behind their families and work. Ask them to be fully present at the moment.*

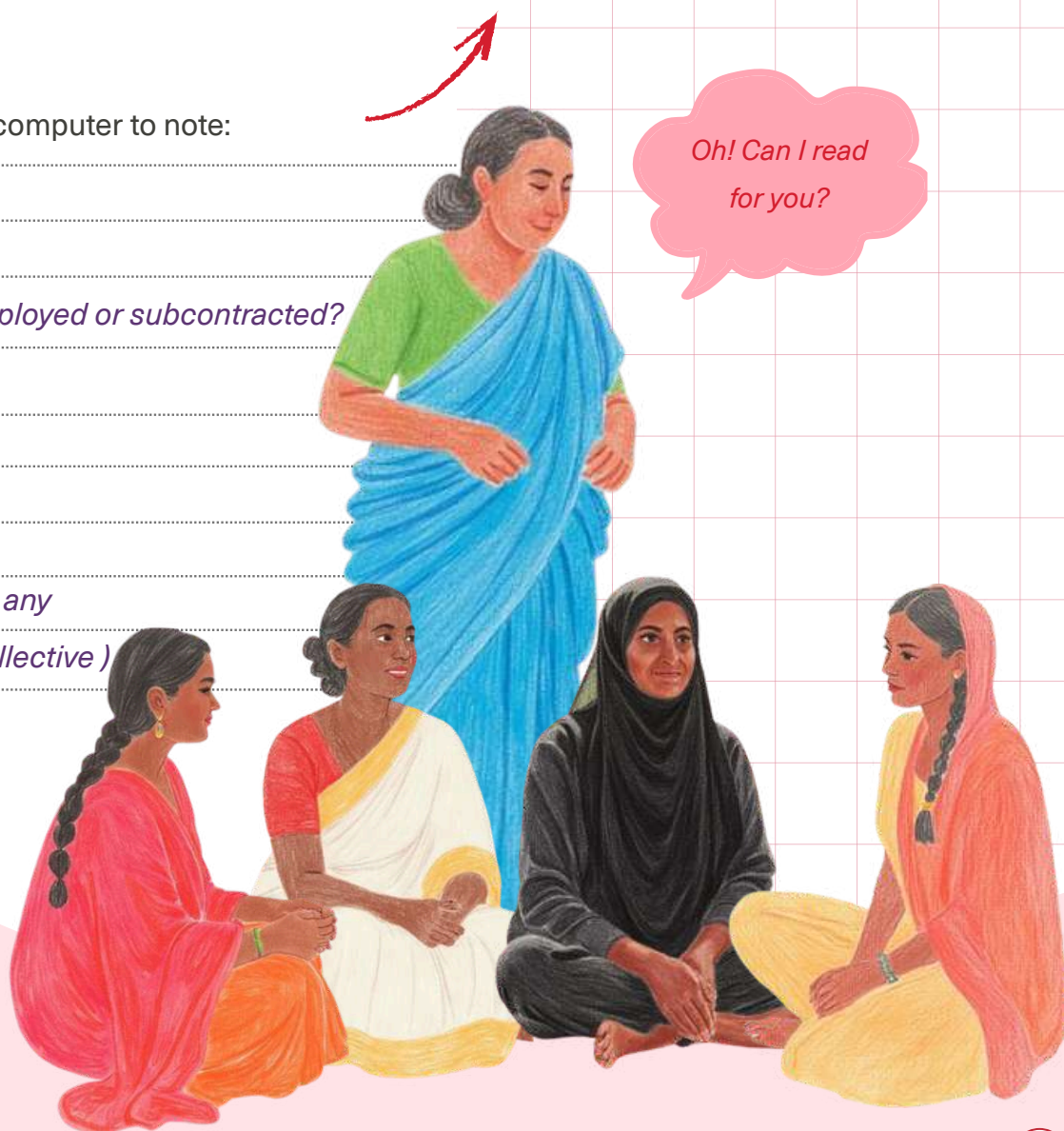
Step 1: Registration of Participants (10 minutes)

Objective: To collect participant information

Trainer's Notes:

Use a notebook, sheet, or computer to note:

- Name
- Address
- Type of work: self-employed or subcontracted?
- Organisation (if any)
- Age
- Education
- Marital status
- Time associated with any (group/sangathan/collective)



Step 2: Song of Solidarity (5 minutes)

Objective: To create a sense of unity and shared space, across religions and backgrounds.

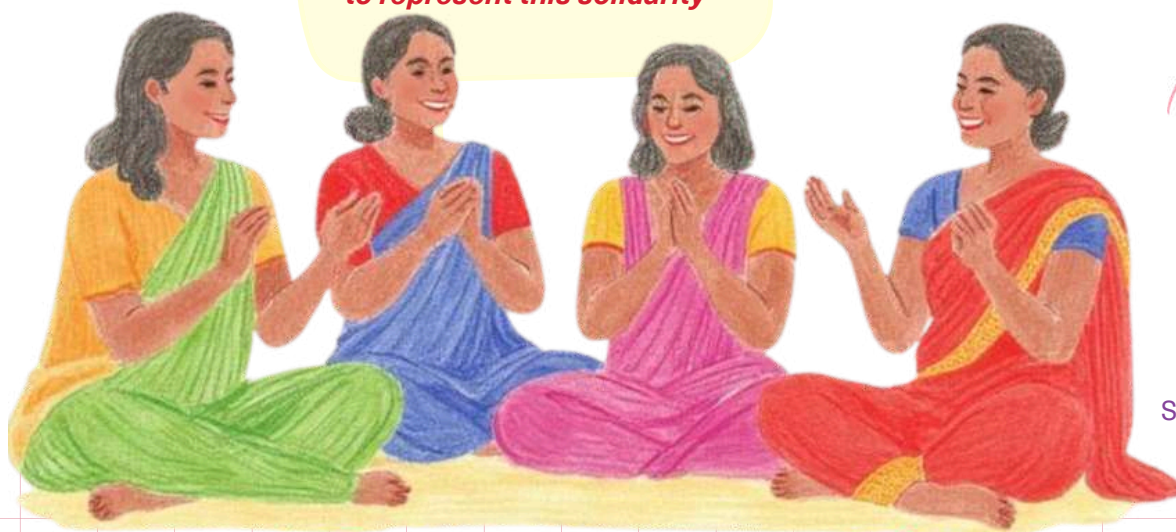
Trainer's Notes:

- Explain that **solidarity songs** help us come together - across caste, class, and religion. These are moments to feel we're part of something larger.

*Tips: Trainers can say something like -
"We all come from different backgrounds
- different religions, regions, and
identities. But in this space, we are
equals. Singing together reminds us of
our shared struggles, hopes, and power."*

*We are here with the common
identity of being women HBWs and
through some songs we create a
sense of solidarity.*

*"We hope over time you know
them by heart like other prayers
and songs or even create songs
to represent this solidarity"*



Scan the QR code to
listen to the song.



You can use:

"Hum Honge Kaamyab"

"Hum Dekhenge"

"Tod Tod Ke Bandhano ko" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKJKQXwrG5Y&t=2s>

Collectives' songs from Jagori, Sangat, Nirantar

- Create a safe, inclusive space from the start.
- Share that we must not only put our thoughts but also allow others to speak and share their thoughts – we must learn from one another as well and not just from the trainer
- Adapt the content and methods based on participants' needs.
- Use your diary to track key points, feedback, and reflections. Kindly make a note of who is shy, is anyone speaking too much and not allowing others to speak.

1.4 Importance of Gender Awareness for Women Home-based Workers

Issues Faced by Women in South Asia

Across South Asia, women including women HBWs face common challenges like patriarchy, poverty, caste/class inequality, and political exclusion. These affect their personal, economic, and social lives.

Women face domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and child marriage which remains widespread in our South Asia region. Many women struggle to access justice due to stigma and weak law enforcement. In many urban, especially smaller towns and rural areas, poor access to education and healthcare limits their independence. Girls are often seen as burdens, leading to neglect, malnutrition, and skewed sex ratios.

Most women work in informal or unpaid sectors like agriculture or home-based work without rights, or recognition. Few own property or have financial control. Politically, while local quotas have increased representation, real power is still limited - especially for Dalit, Adivasi, LGBTQ+, and women from minority communities.

Despite this, women are leading strong resistance movements across the region. Real change needs not just laws, but shifts in social norms, shared care work, and investment in gender equality.

As we work with women HBWs we could offer this broader understanding to the women HBWs we work with. It helps us to realise that we are not alone in our struggles and that there are many women who have become part of collectives, and take leadership to challenge the norms and rules that perpetuate gender inequality.

1.5 Status of Women

The status of women refers to their position in society in comparison to their male counterparts. It varies across cultures and is subject to change over time. The status of women can be understood by analysing factors such as society's attitudes towards women, financial and demographic indicators, participation in paid work, representation in political power, access to health services, and the presence of supportive legal frameworks.

Women's roles in South Asia have undergone many shifts and changes. During the medieval period, women were largely treated as subordinate to men in almost every aspect of life. In the reformist period, women began articulating their rights with support from progressive male allies. During the nationalist movement against the colonial rule, most South Asian countries except Nepal, women are known to have actively participated in the struggle against imperialism. As various countries got Independence, women's presence and voices first significantly reduced from the public sphere. But later with the advance of the women's movement, progressive laws, better investment and NGOs action, women's voices have once again become more visible and heard across various spheres.

There is a need to continuously spread awareness about the need for gender equality across women, marginalised communities. Further, we need to contextualize how discrimination is experienced and how we can use collective strength to push boundaries and change norms that act as barriers to social justice and equality.

1.6 Gender Awareness

Gender awareness is crucial for women home-based workers (HBWs) as it enables them to recognize and challenge the systemic inequalities they experience in their daily lives. Understanding the concept of “gender” helps women HBWs identify how societal norms and roles have historically limited their visibility, opportunities and rights.

In many societies, women are expected to balance unpaid domestic responsibilities with income-generating activities, often leading to overwork. Many women choose to take up home based work as it allows them to take care of their other responsibilities such as fetching water, cooking, taking care of children, the elderly and the disabled in the family. This dual burden is exacerbated by the lack of recognition for home-based work, which is frequently undervalued and excluded from daily conversations and even in labor laws.

By fostering gender awareness, women HBWs can better understand the root causes of their marginalisation, such as patriarchal structures and cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination. This awareness is the first step toward collective action and advocacy for equitable policies and practices.

1.7 Role of trainers in empowering women workers

You play a pivotal role in empowering women HBWs by facilitating learning environments that are inclusive, participatory, and reflective of the women lived experiences. You serve not only as educators but also as catalysts for change, helping women build confidence, develop skills, and organize collectively.

An effective trainer, must employ methodologies that encourage critical thinking and dialogue, enabling women HBWs to analyze their conditions and envision alternatives. This approach aligns with transformative learning theories, which emphasise the importance of challenging existing beliefs and fostering new perspectives.

Moreover, as trainers, you can model leadership by demonstrating empathy, active listening, and respect for diverse voices. By doing so, they help create safe spaces where women HBWs feel valued and motivated to participate actively in their families and neighborhood communities to advocate for social justice and their rights.

1.8 Overview of training methodology and approach

The training methodology adopted in this manual is grounded in gender transformative andragogy, which prioritises the experiences and knowledge of women HBWs. It emphasises participatory learning, where women engage in discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving activities that relate directly to their work and lives.

Sessions are designed to be interactive and adaptable, allowing trainers to tailor content to the specific contexts of the participants. This flexibility ensures that the training remains relevant and responsive to the needs of women HBWs across different regions.

Additionally, the approach incorporates popular education techniques, which focus on collective learning and empowerment. This method encourages women HBWs to share their experiences, learn from one another, and build solidarity, ultimately strengthening their capacity to organise and advocate for systemic change.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Women Home-based Workers

This section provides background knowledge to help you, as a trainer, understand the context and realities of women HBWs. It is not meant to be read out to trainees but will help you prepare to guide the session with confidence, clarity, and empathy.



02.

Understanding Women Home-based Workers



2.1 Who are Women Home-based Workers?

Women HBWs are women who earn money by working from within their homes or nearby spaces, often producing goods or services for someone else. They typically work for middlemen, contractors, or companies, without being formally employed. For example, they might stitch garments, roll incense sticks, or pack products. Even though they are earning money, they are rarely recognised as workers by society or by the government. They are part of the informal economy, meaning they usually do not have formal contracts, fixed employers, or access to benefits like healthcare or pensions. Home Based workers work out of premises that belong to them such as their own house or a common space shared between workers that is not provided by the employer or the contractor.

There are two categories of Home-Based Workers (HBWs):

- Self-Employed HBWs: These individuals work independently, sourcing their own supplies and selling directly in the market. This category includes contributing family members.
- Piece-Rate Workers: Employed by firms or intermediaries, they receive raw materials and work orders, earning based on the number of pieces completed. They are also referred to as homeworkers or subcontracted piece-rate workers.



ILO Convention No. 177, adopted in 1996, recognises and protects the rights of **home-based workers** - those who produce goods or services from their homes, often in informal settings. It calls for equal treatment with other workers in areas such as pay, health and safety, social protection, and freedom of association. The convention urges governments to develop national policies, gather data, and ensure legal recognition for home workers. Though critical for gender and labor justice, especially for women in the informal sector, very few countries have made laws reflecting the guidelines of the convention.

2.2 What Kind of Work Do They Do? What Are Their Working Conditions?

The kinds of work HBWs do vary by region and industry. Some stitch clothes for export, some of them do embroidery and beadwork, while others roll beads, make paper bags, or assemble electrical parts. Although they are doing productive and paid work, they usually work alone or with help from family members, and their workplaces are inside their homes. Their working conditions are often poor: long hours, low pay, and no separation between home and work. They usually get paid by the piece, not by the hour, which means if they're slow, sick, or if a piece is rejected, they may not be paid at all. Many also bear the cost of materials or transport themselves. Often, children or elderly family members also help out, especially during peak work seasons.



2.3 What Are the Challenges They Face?

A major challenge is invisibility. HBWs are often not counted in government labour surveys. As a result, their needs are not included in labour laws or welfare schemes.

Because they are informal workers, they do not have contracts or legal protection. If a contractor stops giving them work or delays payment, they have no recourse. Many workers report being paid very low rates, sometimes as little as ₹1 per piece, and often face deductions for pieces deemed “imperfect”. Payments are often delayed, and there is no transparency about how prices are set.

2.4 How Does Gender Shape Their Work and Lives?

Most home-based workers are women, and that is not a coincidence. Gender norms in many families and communities restrict women’s mobility and control over time. Working from home is seen as a “safe” and “respectable” way for women to earn, especially in conservative or low-income settings.

However, this often means they are doing a double shift: unpaid care work at home—cooking, cleaning, looking after children - and then paid work in the same space. The value of their paid work is often questioned or dismissed by family members, who see it as “side work” or a hobby rather than real employment. This impacts not only their earnings but also their confidence and self-worth. This is because patriarchy considers man the breadwinner and devalues woman’s contribution to the household.

Patriarchal norms also prevent many women HBWs from participating in collectives or speaking up about wage issues. Some people are not allowed to attend meetings or training sessions without permission. This makes it even more difficult for them to organise or fight for their rights.

ACTIVITY 2A

“Our Work, Our Worth” – Understanding Women Home-based Workers

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 2.1 - 2.4 before conducting the exercise.

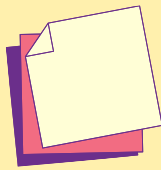
Theme:

Understanding the nature of home-based work; recognising the working conditions, invisibility, and gendered perceptions of women's paid work; and reflecting on the emotional and social impact of such work on Women HBWs.

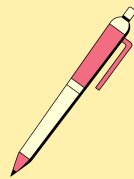
Material Required:



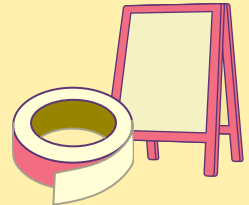
3 chart papers or
large sheets



Sticky notes or slips of paper
(At least 3 per participant)



Sketch Pens or Pen
(One per participant)



Tape or board to
stick the responses

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the space

(Before the session begins)

Stick the three chart papers on a wall where they are clearly visible. Label them with bold and big handwriting:

- **“What Work Do We Do?”**
- **“What Challenges Do We Face?”**
- **“How Is Our Work Seen at Home?”**

Keep sticky notes or paper slips and pens ready for each participant.

Step 3: Individual reflection

Distribute 3 sticky notes or paper slips to each participant. Ask them to write one point on each slip:

Step 2: Introduce the activity

Say to the group: “Many of us work from home, doing all kinds of tasks to support our families. But often, others don't see this as real work. In this activity, we'll think about the work we do, the challenges we face, and how our families or Neighbours see our work.”



**** Encourage participants to write or draw independently and offer support to anyone who needs help in expressing their responses. Say aloud: "There is no right or wrong answer—each of us is sharing our own experience, and that means every answer is valid."**

Step 4: Group Sharing



Invite the women to come and stick their notes on the relevant chart. The trainer can read aloud a few examples from each of the chart – first reading the heading of the chart paper and then the responses to demonstrate acknowledgement of what the women have expressed. Summarise key themes from each of the chart papers.

Step 5: Take feedback

Ask the group:

- **"How did you feel seeing others write similar things?"**
- **"Did this remind you of something in your own home?"**

What kind of Home-based work do I do? "We see many of us do similar work like stitching, rolling, packing"

Challenge I face: Low pay, long hours

How my Family or community sees my work - lack of respect, not important work.

This is not just your story—it's a shared story.

Step 6: Listen and close

Invite 2–3 participants to respond. Acknowledge all contributions warmly. Make note of any recurring reflections for further discussion later in the training.

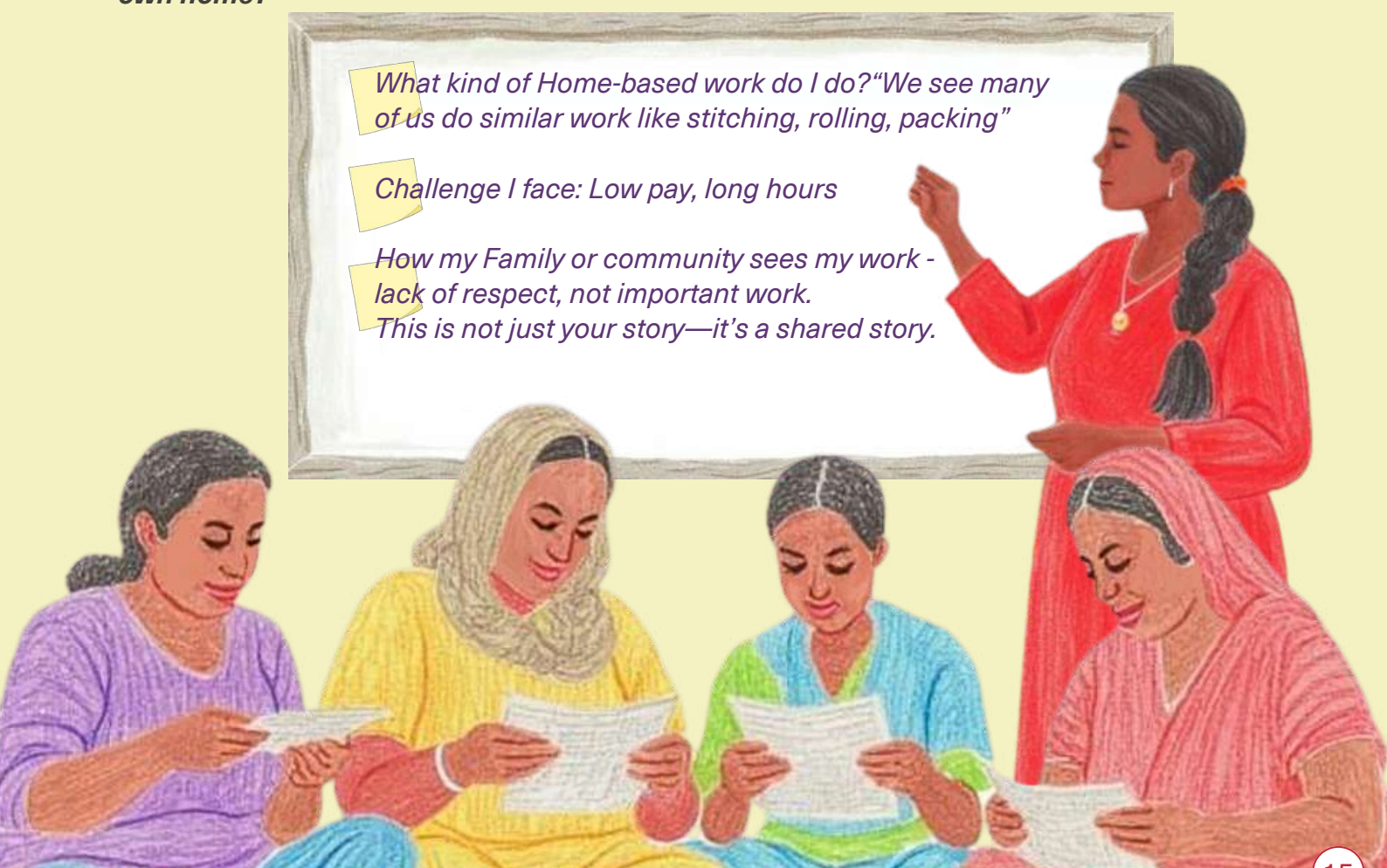
Step 7: Concluding remarks



Say to the group: "This activity shows how important and skilled your work is, even if it's often invisible."

It also helps us understand that the problems we face are not individual failures—they are shared by many of us. It seems unfair and unjust. If we are unhappy about this, together, we can change that."

Affirm & validate everyone's participation.



ACTIVITY 2B

Reflecting on Agency Through Storytelling

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 2.1 - 2.4 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Empowerment, agency, collective identity

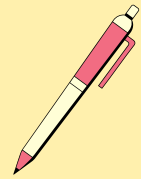
Material Required:



Chart papers



YouTube video
queued and ready



Whiteboard marker pens

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Space

(Before the session begins)

Set up the chart or board with the heading **“Our Power, Shared Experiences.”**

Step 2: Introduce the activity

Trainer says: “We will now watch a short Hindi video about women working together for change. After viewing, we’ll discuss how it relates to your own experiences of acting and deciding—both alone and together.”

Step 3: Play the Video

Trainer brings up the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fViaDJPParBU>

Step 4: Silent Reflection

Ask participants to quietly think about:

- **Do you also face similar issues?**
- **What actions do you think women can take to address these issues?**
- **Have your groups also taken similar steps to address the issues they face?**



Scan the QR code to
watch the full video.

Step 5: Group Discussion



Invite 3 – 4 participants to share their thoughts, using prompts such as:

- ***“Was it done individually or as a group?”***
- ***“Did it shift anything—like respect, income, or voice?”***
- ***“Have anyone of you been a part of such action?”***

The trainer records key points on the chart.

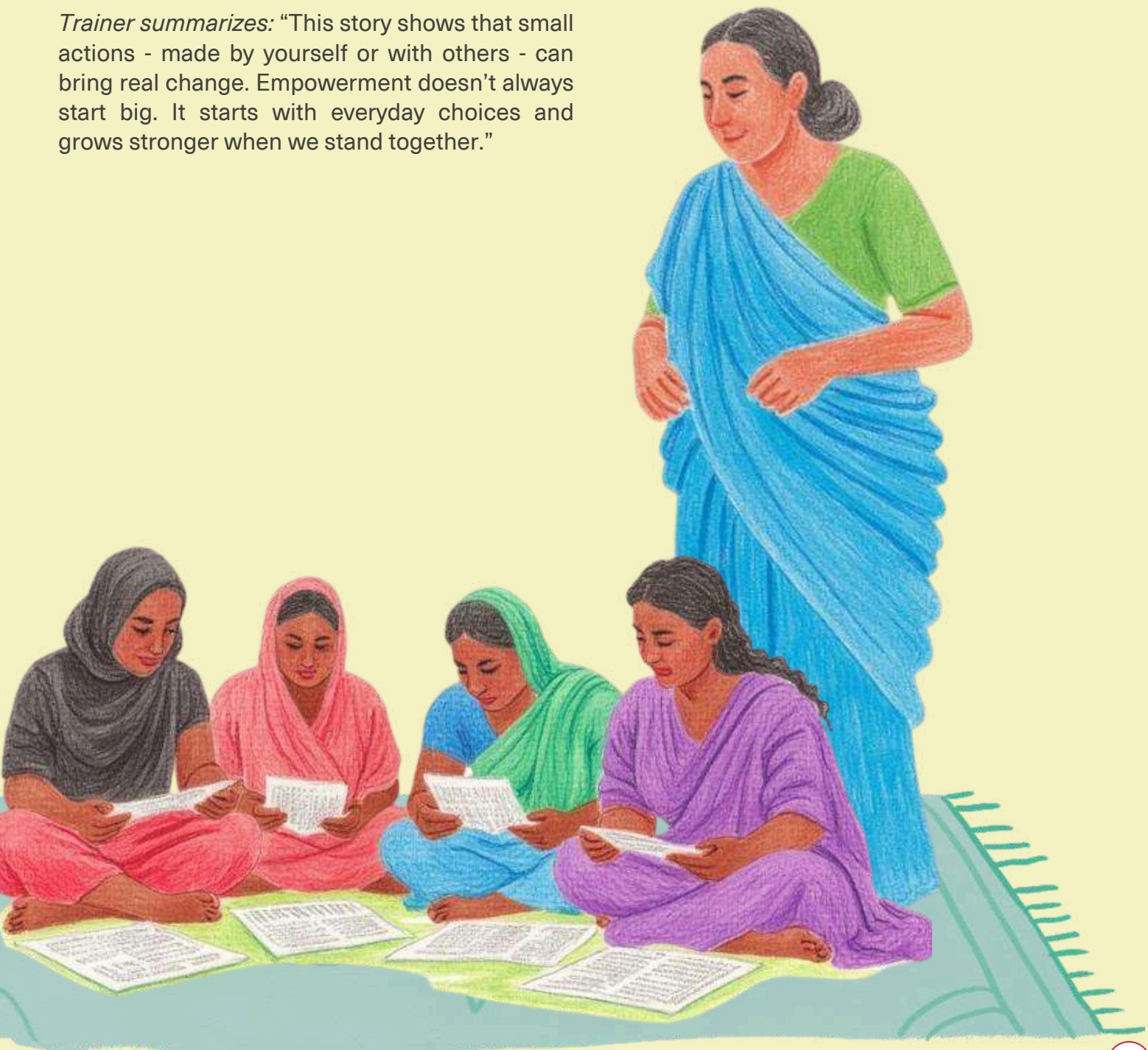
Step 7: Optional

You may draw from the experiences of your own organisation. Consider inviting a senior member or the founder to share how the organisation or sangathan has worked to demand change, what strategies were used, and what outcomes have been achieved.

Step 6: Concluding Remarks



Trainer summarizes: “This story shows that small actions - made by yourself or with others - can bring real change. Empowerment doesn’t always start big. It starts with everyday choices and grows stronger when we stand together.”



CHAPTER 3

Addressing Gender-Based Violence Experienced by Women Home-Based Workers

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved” – Dr. B R Ambedkar

“The day women can walk freely on roads at night, that day we can say that India has achieved Independence” – Gandhi



03.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence Experienced by Women Home-based Workers

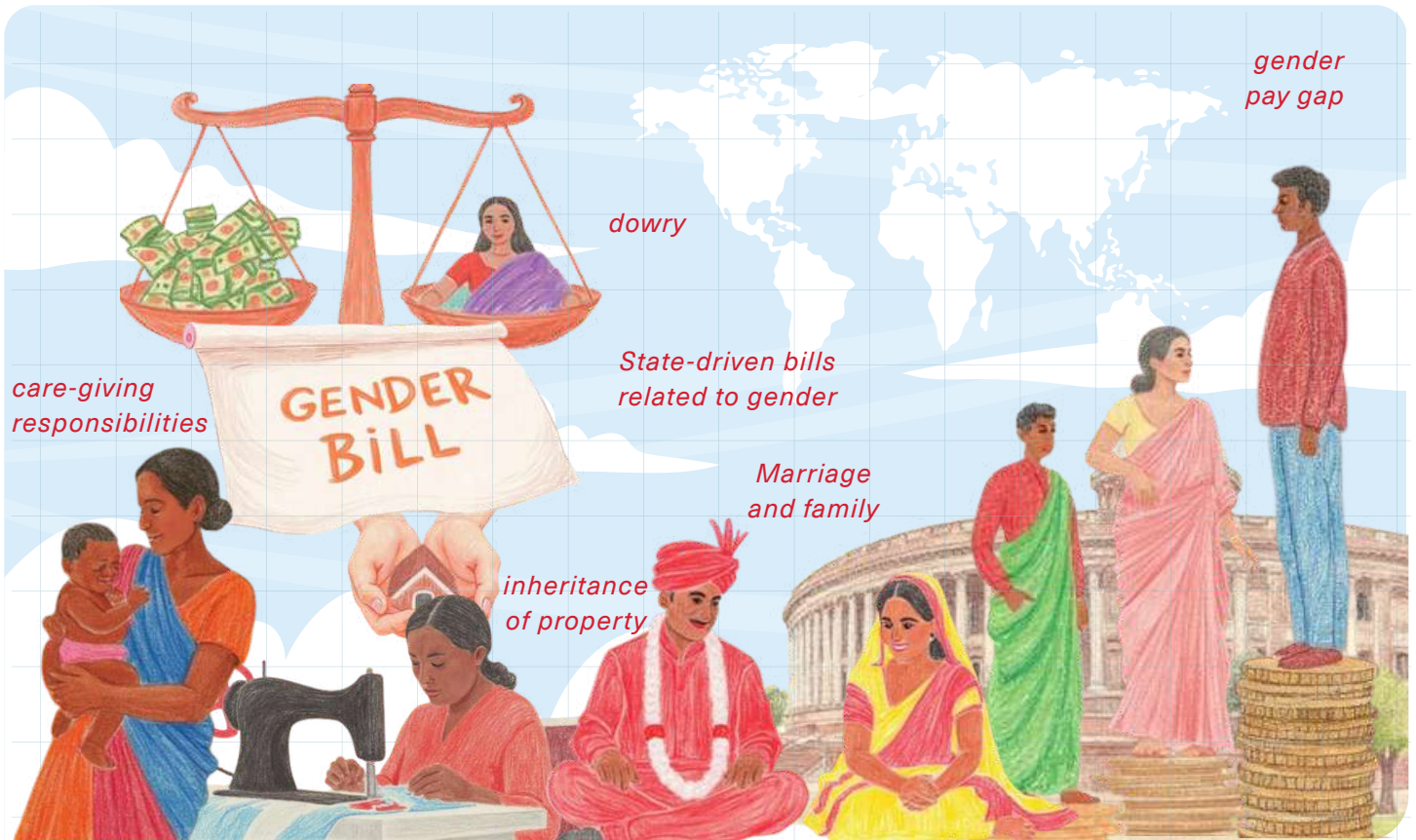


Pre read for Trainers:

This chapter provides an overview of the structural challenges faced by women and gender minorities in South Asia, such as patriarchy, caste and class hierarchies, limited access to education, healthcare, resources, and social security. As a trainer, you are encouraged to reflect on how these multiple and overlapping inequalities shape the everyday lives of Women HBWs. The chapter highlights how home is both a site of work and a site of violence, especially for women, and why recognising the interconnectedness of care work, informal labour, and gender-based violence is essential. Use this chapter to guide discussions on women's agency, access to resources, and the need for gender-transformative support systems. This material is intended to help trainers build a deeper understanding of the broader context in which women HBWs work and live, and to foster collective thinking around justice, safety, and empowerment.

Not all the sections are meant **to be read out to trainees** but will help you prepare to guide the session with confidence, clarity, and empathy. Some sections where definitions are given can be read out when you are concluding the exercises. Pl discuss with your co-trainer beforehand.

3.1 Understanding Institutions of Family, Community, Market & State



Advocates of women's rights have long critiqued marriage as a system that reinforces women's subordinate roles—through the institution of marriage and the family. Marriage and Family are so universal that we believe that these cannot be questioned. However, advocates have pointed out that these institutions are created by humans and the rules of these institutions have heavily favoured male or masculine authority. All human societies have adopted some version of marriage between man and woman and the role of the family, and the community is to groom the young ones to fit into the “ideal” notion of society.

For e.g. in most South Asian countries", dowry is expected to be paid by the bride's family; it is expected that the wife will move to the husband's family, and it is expected that she will take on the surname of the husband. As we saw in chapter 3, work and roles are divided between genders, and this is done through family and community messaging. Care giving is typically to be done by women and if any woman suggests otherwise, she is likely to be labelled as a “bad” woman.

Other institutions - like education, religion, and state will reinforce these gender divisions of work, patriarchal power and authority which upholds male dominance. Sons are prioritised in inheritance and the right to choice, while religious and legal systems may limit women's rights or fail to protect them from violence.

In School books, typically images of women are shown with young children and at home while images of men are shown as working outside the house. Further most school Principals would be male, but the teachers are more likely to be female. Girls are expected to participate in tasks that mirror tasks done at home. For e.g. girls are expected to clean the black board, rooms, and boys expected to run errands. Schools also perpetuate not just gender hierarchies but also caste hierarchies. For e.g. Dalit children are rarely allowed to fetch water for upper caste teachers and sometimes assigned to clean toilets.

Religion as an institution draws from notions of God and spirituality and guides their respective followers to be guided into good behaviour. Religion is based on a range of rituals and practices that differentiate one religion from another. However, there are some common features – it is rare to find women priests, most religions prohibit women from participating in religious activities when menstruating. However, we all now know that menstruation is part and parcel of reproductive function. So, if God granted the ability of childbirth to women, it is questioned to think about why menstruation is seen as taboo, dirty.

State is another institution that is a little complex to understand. While the State often passes laws that can be progressive, the bureaucracy which implements the state program is made of men and women who grow up with gender biases. Hence, we find that women are rarely seen in leadership positions. It is only recently that we have started seeing more women constables and officers in Police.

Finally, the last "institution" that we must understand is the "market". We assume that markets are about buyers and sellers. But when we say, "institution of market", we refer to how goods and services are produced and how they are supplied and sold. It is also about what is valued more and what is valued less. In this institution when we see say - "workers" first the image comes of a 'man', but we all sitting here know that so many women are also working for a wage and as we saw in the previous chapter – there is also unpaid work – which is largely being done by women. We also say that there is a gender wage gap. Even today, at the global level women are paid only Rs 80 when a man will be paid Rs 100 for the same tasks.

Patriarchy is the invisible yet most powerful system operating through these institutions. Through various means the power hierarchy is mostly set in favour of males or systems of masculine authority. It not only normalises the subordinate position of women, it also does not recognise any identity other than male and female. And yet we know that there are large number of persons who for various reasons do not necessarily fit into this binary. Such persons are often targeted and even criminalised, denied basic rights. Such acts also fall under the category of gender-based violence. As we will learn in the section on masculinity and sexuality that acceptance of people who don't neatly fall into male or female categories can lead to a more inclusive and egalitarian society.

Thus, all institutions reflect gender divisions and often play a critical role in maintaining gender discrimination. This does not mean that these have not been challenged.

In this chapter, we will try to understand through various activities how these institutions affect the work of women HBWs.



3.2 Care work

Care work includes unpaid or low-paid activities like childcare, cooking, or caring for the elderly. Women globally do about 76% of unpaid care work. This limits their access to jobs, education, rest, and leadership roles. Even when women work for pay, they often carry a “double burden” of household duties, affecting their health and financial freedom.

Women HBWs often take up work they can do from the home as it allows them to fulfill their care responsibilities towards the children, the disabled, the elderly of the family.

Most women HBWs live in areas that are poorly serviced in terms of basic amenities. This means that as part of their “care work” they also have to find the time to fetch water, standing in queues when ration is provided through the public distribution system.



3.3 Context of Violence Against Women

Violence against women is a widespread and deeply rooted issue in South Asia. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse - and takes place in both private and public spaces. Data shows that crimes against women are increasing every year, with domestic violence being the most reported form. Gender-based violence is often seen as “normal” in many communities, where patriarchal beliefs justify control, punishment, and surveillance of women.

Social norms often silence survivors, especially when the perpetrator is a family member. Fear of stigma, lack of family support, and the fear of not being believed prevent many women from speaking up. Legal protections do exist - like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) in India.

Women from marginalised backgrounds - such as Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, and LGBTQ+ communities - face layered discrimination and are more likely to be denied support, safety, or dignity when reporting violence.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): What and Why?

Gender-based violence (GBV) happens due to unequal power between men and women and deep-rooted gender norms. Women Home-based workers (HBWs) are especially vulnerable because they often work in isolation, depend financially on others, and are not protected by labour laws. Their home—where they work—is also where they may face abuse, including emotional, physical, or economic violence, often by family members or contractors. Because their work is not officially recognised, it's harder for them to speak out or get help.

Gender-based violence (GBV) has profound and long-term impacts on both women and children, affecting their physical health, mental well-being, and social and economic opportunities. Survivors often experience chronic health issues such as anxiety, depression, reproductive complications, and post-traumatic stress.

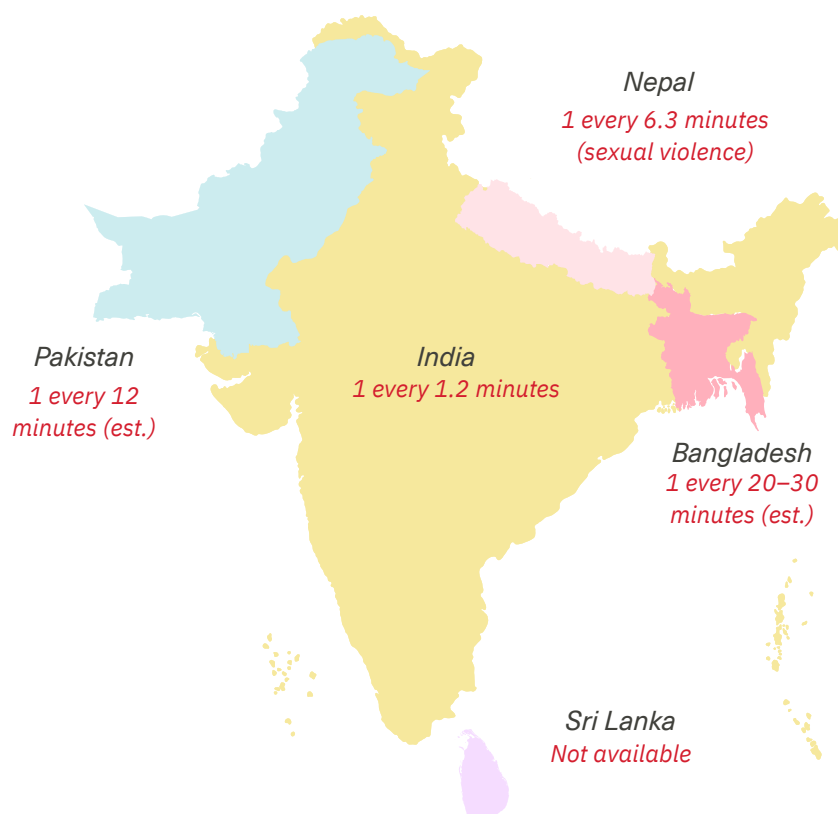
For children, witnessing or experiencing GBV can lead to developmental delays, emotional trauma, and cycles of violence that continue into adulthood. It also disrupts access to education, mobility, and employment, reinforcing intergenerational poverty and inequality. Over time, GBV not only diminishes individual potential but also weakens community resilience and hinders broader societal progress.

Some statistics on violence against women:

Country	Crime Against Women (All Types)	Rape Case	Sexual Harassment	Unnatural Deaths	Maternal Deaths	Violence Against Dalit Women
India	1 every 1.2 minutes	1 every 16 minutes	1 every 6.3 minutes	1 every 15 minutes	1 every 21 minutes	1 every 360 minutes (6 hours)
Pakistan	1 every 12 minutes (est.)	1 every 120 minutes	Not available (underreported)	1 every 540 minutes	1 every 66 minutes	Not available
Nepal	1 every 6.3 minutes (sexual violence)	1 every 150 minutes	Included above	1 every 900 minutes	1 every 1,000 minutes	Not available
Bangladesh	1 every 20–30 minutes (est.)	1 every 315 minutes	Not available (underreported)	Not available	1 every 105 minutes	Not available
Sri Lanka	Not available	1 every 375 minutes	Not available	Not available	1 every 3,300 minutes	Not available

****Note :** This table has been generated using data derived from Chat GPT. Organisations and stakeholders working are kindly requested to share more updated, disaggregated, and accurate data to enhance the relevance, contextual accuracy, and effectiveness of this manual in addressing critical gender justice issues.

Share the data of your country with the participants. You can prepare a chart in advance.



How Can We Address GBV?

At the Individual Level: Women HBWs should be made aware of their rights and the laws that protect them, such as the Domestic Violence Act. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act) is a law that protects women from sexual harassment at their workplace. It covers both formal and informal workers, including home-based women workers, and provides a system for filing complaints through Internal or Local Committees. When women know their rights, they are more likely to report abuse. Support groups and peer discussions can build confidence. Skills like digital literacy or managing money also help them become less dependent and more confident.

At the Collective Level: Women HBWs can come together in groups, unions, or cooperatives to support each other and demand better conditions. These collectives can bargain with contractors for fair pay and safety. At the community level, activities like safety audits and public meetings can highlight unsafe areas and lead to changes in local planning.

For example, a group of Women HBWs did a safety audit and got the municipality to improve lighting and address unsafe practices, in Ahmedabad. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) organised a safety audit between 2015 and 2017 with home-based women workers in low-income neighbourhoods. Through mapping exercises and community walks, women identified unsafe areas such as poorly lit streets and isolated alleys. They presented these findings to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, which responded by installing street lights, repairing infrastructure, and increasing safety measures. This initiative not only improved local safety but also empowered women HBWs to engage with local governance and demand gender-responsive urban planning.

Tackling GBV and the challenges faced by disabled women HBWs needs both personal empowerment and collective action. When women are organised and recognised, they can transform their lives and communities.



3.4 Domestic Violence and Violence at the Workplace: The HBW Context

Home-based women workers often face violence not just in public or workplaces, but inside their own homes. Since the home is both a private and a work space, the boundaries between personal and professional violence blur. Verbal abuse, emotional control, physical violence, restrictions on movement, and digital surveillance are common. Family members may control the income earned through home-based work, restrict interactions with male clients, or disallow participation in collectives or trainings. Online abuse (e.g., phone monitoring, threatening messages) adds a layer of harm. This digital violence is especially dangerous when committed by partners or relatives. These realities demand that homes and digital spaces be seen as workplaces and be included in labor protection and violence laws.

What makes this form of violence especially dangerous is that the perpetrators are often husbands, in-laws, or other close family members - making it hard for women to seek help. Even digital spaces, which should be empowering, are tightly monitored - limiting access to financial apps, communication channels, or peer networks. Since women HBWs work in informal setups, they are excluded from most workplace safety protections.

Recognising homes as legitimate workplaces and extending legal protections to women HBWs is essential. Interventions must include both legal redress and community-based support networks that are sensitive to the unique conditions of women HBWs.

3.5 Access to Resources, Credit, & Social Security: Unequal Control & Gendered Barriers

Women, especially those working in informal and home-based sectors - continue to face major structural barriers when it comes to access and control over essential economic resources. Even when women earn money through their labour or contribute significantly through unpaid care and domestic work, they are rarely the ones who control family assets or financial decision-making.

Land and property are still overwhelmingly owned by men. In many families, even if women inherit land or receive it as dowry, legal titles remain in the names of male relatives. This limits women's ability to use property as collateral for credit or as a base to build long-term security and independence. Without legal ownership or documentation, women are excluded from a range of state services, including farm support, land improvement schemes, and government subsidies.

Access to **formal credit** is also a challenge. Financial institutions often demand proof of income, land documents, or guarantors - all of which many women lack. As a result, home-based women workers frequently turn to informal lenders who charge high interest and exploit their vulnerability. Even when credit is available, it is often in the names of male family members or controlled by them.

Social security schemes like pensions, maternity benefits, health insurance, or disability support are often designed for those in formal employment. This leaves a large proportion of women workers - especially women HBWs - outside the coverage of such schemes. Women may also be unaware of their entitlements, or face difficulties navigating bureaucratic processes.

Moreover, schemes that do exist are not always gender-sensitive. For example, some welfare programmes are built around the assumption that women are dependents of male workers rather than workers in their own right.

To address these challenges, several **gender-transformative solutions** are needed:

- Promoting **joint titles of land and housing** in both spouses' names to ensure secure ownership.
- Creating **credit systems tailored to women's realities**, such as loans without collateral, flexible repayment options, and collective credit models.
- Designing **social protection schemes** that reflect the needs of informal and home-based women workers—such as affordable health insurance, old-age pensions, maternity support, and accident coverage.
- Ensuring **greater outreach and awareness**, so that women HBWs are informed of their rights and supported in accessing schemes.
- Strengthening the role of **women's collectives and cooperatives** in negotiating entitlements, accessing credit, and advocating for inclusive financial policies.

Without secure access to resources and protection, women's labour remains undervalued, and their economic independence undermined. Ensuring access and control over resources is not just about financial inclusion—it is about recognising women as full and equal economic actors.

3.6 Health and Safety Concerns Specific to Home-Based Work

Women Home-based workers (HBWs) often labour in environments that are neither designed nor regulated for occupational safety. Unlike formal workplaces, homes rarely meet basic standards of ventilation, lighting, or ergonomic layout. Women typically work in cramped, dimly lit rooms, sitting for long hours on floors or low stools, often without proper back support, leading to chronic pain, fatigue, and long-term musculoskeletal problems.

Many women HBWs engage in work that involves exposure to chemicals, dust, fumes, or sharp tools—for instance, in incense-rolling, zari work, dyeing, or assembling electronic parts. Yet, they are not provided protective gear, nor are they made aware of health hazards. The absence of safety protocols leads to respiratory illnesses, skin infections, eye strain, and other health conditions that remain unrecognised and untreated.

Compounding this are the emotional and mental health pressures women face while managing the double burden of unpaid care and paid work. Balancing childcare, cooking, cleaning, and eldercare while also meeting production deadlines can cause burnout, anxiety, and isolation. Since their work is invisible and undervalued, women HBWs often lack social support and acknowledgment, further affecting their mental wellbeing.



Another major challenge is that homes are not formally recognised as workplaces in labour laws. As a result, women HBWs are excluded from most occupational health and safety schemes, insurance benefits, or compensation for work-related injuries. There are no inspections, no standard safety guidelines, and no grievance redress mechanisms tailored to their working context.

3.7 Filing Complaints Under POSH and Domestic Violence Laws: Basic Processes and Documents Required

A. Under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 – POSH

This law protects women from sexual harassment at the workplace. For informal women home-based workers (HBWs), the **Local Committee (LC)** is the body responsible for handling complaints, especially when their workplaces are informal, or have less than 10 workers.

Where to File a Complaint:

- If working in an office or factory with 10 or more workers → **Internal Committee (IC)** is the organisation.
- If working from home, or in an informal space with fewer than 10 workers → **Local Committee (LC)** at the **district level** (located in the office of the **District Collector / District Officer**).

with 10 or more workers	with fewer than 10 workers
factory	home/informal space
Internal Committee (IC)	Local Committee (LC)



Steps to File a Complaint:

- **Write a complaint** within **3 months** of the incident (or from the last incident, in case of repeated harassment).
- Submit it to the **IC** in **writing**—can be handwritten or typed.
- **Complainant can request help** in writing the complaint if needed.
- The committee will **investigate** the case and give a decision within **90 days**.



Documents Required:

- Written complaint (signed by the complainant).
- Identity proof (any government ID).
- Any **evidence** (messages, call records, photographs, witness names, etc.).
- If filing through a representative, an **authorisation letter** is helpful.

B. Under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005

This law protects women from **physical, emotional, sexual, economic, and verbal abuse** by family members, including husbands and in-laws. It also guarantees the **right to live in a safe and secure home**.

Where to File a Complaint:

- **Protection Officer** (appointed at the district level).
- **Police station** (file an FIR or ask for help under PWDVA).
- **Magistrate's Court** (directly or through a Protection Officer).
- **Women's helplines, NGOs, or One-Stop Crisis Centres** can help file the complaint.



Steps to File a Complaint:

- File a **Domestic Incident Report (DIR)** through a **Protection Officer** or an NGO.
- Submit the report to the **Magistrate's Court**.
- The court can pass protection orders, residence orders, or monetary relief depending on the situation.



Documents Required:

- Written description or DIR of the violence.
- Proof of identity and address.
- Marriage certificate (if available).
- Medical reports (if physical injury is involved).

ACTIVITY 3A

Prevalence and Seriousness of the Gender Based Violence

20
minutes

Reference: Read sections 3.3 - 3.7 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Understanding the widespread Prevalence and Seriousness of the Gender Based Violence.

Method:

Lecture with use of Chart paper with Data

Material Required:

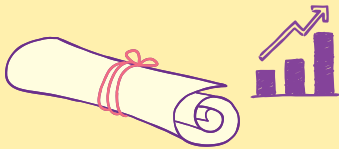


Chart Paper with Data

PROCESS :

Step 1:

Ask the participants to list various acts of violence women HBWs face.

Step 2:

After the participants have given at least 5-6 types of violence faced you can summarise to say:

“Violence faced by women is also called ‘Gender Based violence’ as it is committed due to the gender norms and beliefs that women are inferior to men. This is a widely held belief in the society. It also leads to a large number of women facing various kinds of violence on a daily basis.”

Step 3:

Here refer to the chart with the data given in the Trainers Note- 3.3 and read out the data and simplify it.

Step 4:

Say:

“Through these sessions we will try to understand that Gender Based Violence is not just an action between the perpetrator and the woman or the girl; there are systemic reasons that lead to the grim reality.”



ACTIVITY 3B

Recognising the Invisible Barriers

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 3.2 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

To understand the everyday realities and structural challenges that shape women's status in India.

Material Required:



Six powerful images (You will find them printed out separately too)

IMAGES FOR THE ACTIVITY:



(Photo of a waste worker – Please do not tell the participants before. Let them guess)



(Photo of a woman cleaning dry latrines – collecting human stools - do not tell the participants - let them guess. If they cannot guess, then please tell them)

Questions for Group 1

- What do you see in these images?
- Can you make out the work of the women?
- What caste do you think these women belong to?
- Do we see equal number of men and women doing this work?

IMAGES FOR GROUP 2 :



IMAGES FOR GROUP 3:



(Photo of women travelling with free bus pass in Delhi)



(Photo saying women in Maharashtra demand free bus service)

Questions for Group 2

- What do you see in these images?
- As the Home-based workers are working from home – is it a safe place for women?
- What kind of violence do they face?
- Who are the perpetrators of such violence?
- Do male home-based workers face the same kind of violence?

Questions for Group 3

- What do you see in the images?
- Is free bus service for women announced in some cities/states helpful for homebased workers? If yes, why and if not why?
- Why do you think Govt started such services?

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINERS:

Step 1: Group observation & discussion



Divide participants into four small groups. Give each group two images as given above. And also give them questions for each respective group. and say:

"Look closely at this image. Discuss the questions given within your group."

Let the groups take about 5-10 minutes to discuss. If they'd like, they can note down their thoughts on a chart paper.



- Waste collection and waste segregation is an important task of keeping the cities clean – and yet it is well known that most waste collection is done by dalits and among the dalits mostly women? Manhole cleaning which is done by machines in many countries is still done by humans and that too mostly Dalit men in most South Asian countries.
- It is mostly believed that caste is relevant for marriage and social matters. But the reality is that we find people of certain castes and religions predominantly engage in certain kinds of HBW. A study by ISST in 2009 found the following:

Place	Work	Caste/Religion mostly engage in the work
Patna, Bihar	Chappal Making	Ravidas community (traditional Hindu) + few Muslims
	Flute making	Muslims
	Beedi	Largely drawn from SC/ST/Other backward tribes, most backward castes

Step 2: Group presentations



Ask each group to briefly present what they observed and discussed.

After each presentation, make some remarks drawing from the following points.

Options for Remarks/Observations by the Trainer after presentation by Group 1

- Living in a clean environment is most important for the good health of people.

Just look around your neighborhood and reflect, do you find certain caste communities doing particular kinds of tasks? Does this hold true for home-based work? Are there any caste distinctions found?

Options for Remarks/Observations by the Trainer after presentation by Group 2

Participants are most likely to share that the images are home-based workers, and they too face violence.

Say the following:

For women working in informal settings or in establishments with fewer than 10 employees, Local Committees (LCs) are set up at the district level in both urban and rural areas.

An important aspect of this act is that the definition of sexual harassment is determined by the experience of the complainant—that is, if a woman finds the words or behaviour of the perpetrator sexually offensive, she has the right to file a complaint.

You can either ask them to make a plan to find out about the Local committee in their area or you can give the names and numbers of the LC members they can contact.

Options for Remarks by the Trainer after presentation by Group 3

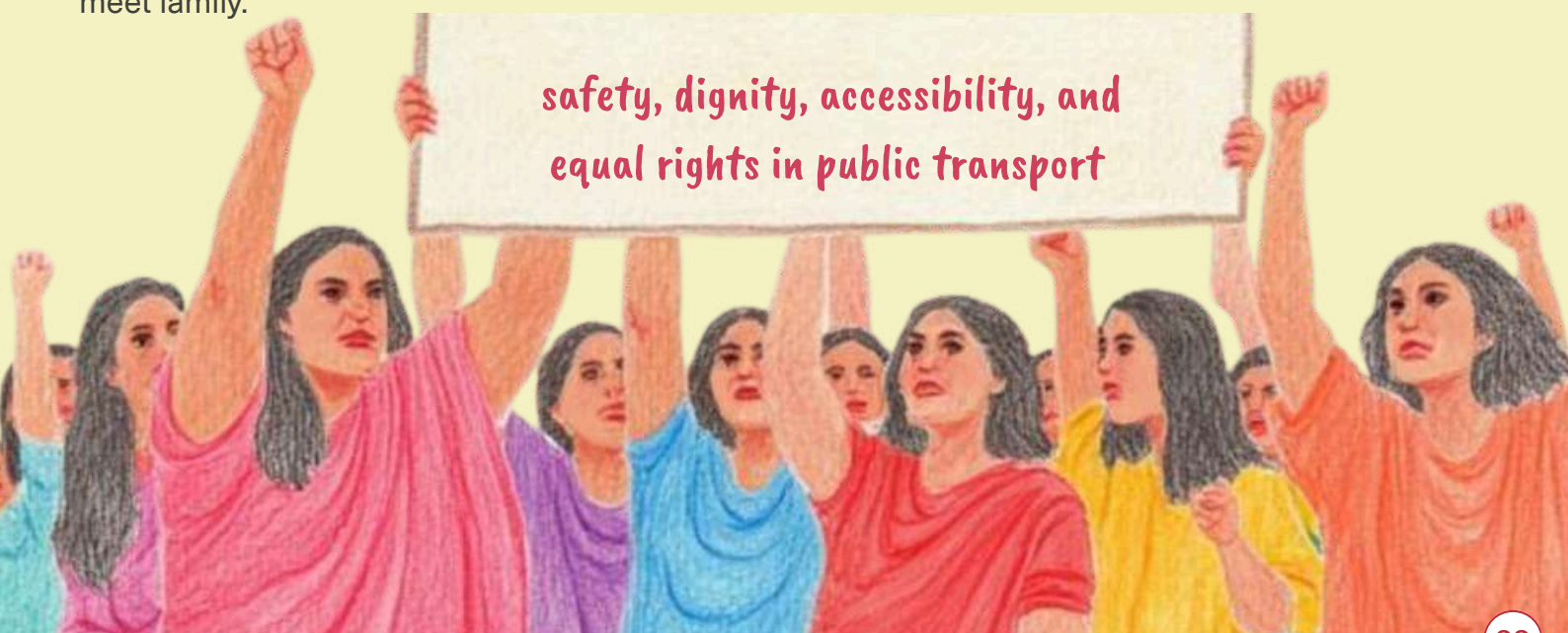
After participants have shared their discussion on importance and significance of free travel, you can state that by providing for free travel – the state or the government is indirectly investing in women and removing the barriers for women to access opportunities. With Free travel, women need not to be dependent on men or money to step out of the house for work or to meet family.

Step 3: Collective reflection & Concluding Remark



After all groups have shared, facilitate a short discussion linking the images. Say:

As women home based workers, they face multiple challenges from different kinds of institutions. In some instances, the state can be supportive by passing women friendly policies. It would be upto us as women HBWs to analyse our situation and collectively decide what kind of programs and projects are required.



Images for Activity 3B



ACTIVITY 3C

“Lifeline of a South Asian Woman” (Timeline Exercise)

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 3.1- 3.6 before conducting the exercise.

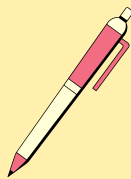
Theme:

Gender, culture, caste, class, and social expectations shape the life course of women in South Asia.

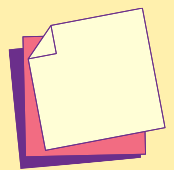
Material Required:



Chart paper



Markers



Sticky notes

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINER:

Step 1: Divide participants into groups

Form small groups of 4–6 participants. Provide each group with a chart paper and markers.

Step 2: Introduce the activity

Say:

“We’re going to imagine the life of a South Asian woman from birth to old age. At each stage, think about the gender-based challenges she may face—like restrictions on education, child marriage, domestic violence, or being excluded from jobs. Also think about how caste, class, religion, or where she lives might change her experiences.”



Step 3: Group work- Drawing the timeline



Ask each group to draw a horizontal timeline of the imagined woman’s life. Mark these key stages:

- Childhood
- Adolescence
- Adulthood
- Old Age



At each stage, participants should note:

- The gender-based challenges the woman might face
- What kind of violence is faced in each stage
- How her caste, class, religion, or region might affect her experiences

Optional (if time permits): Ask groups to also note down:

- What support systems or resistance strategies she may use at each stage

Encourage creativity—groups can add drawings, symbols, or quotes. Remind them this is about imagination & empathy, not technical accuracy.

Step 4: Group presentations



Invite each group to present their timeline briefly to the full group. Ask them to highlight:

- Major challenges at different stages
- Kinds of violence that is specific to each stage of life and which happens across all life stages?
- Forms of support or resistance

Display all timelines on the wall if possible.

Step 5: Feedback questions

Facilitate a discussion using these questions:

- *“What emotions did you experience while creating the timeline?”*
- *“Did any of the challenges feel particularly unfair or preventable?”*
- *“What role does the family, community, or state play in shaping her life?”*
- *“Do you observe if some kinds of violence are linked to specific caste, class, communities?”*
- *“How might her timeline look different if she were from a dominant or marginalized group?”*

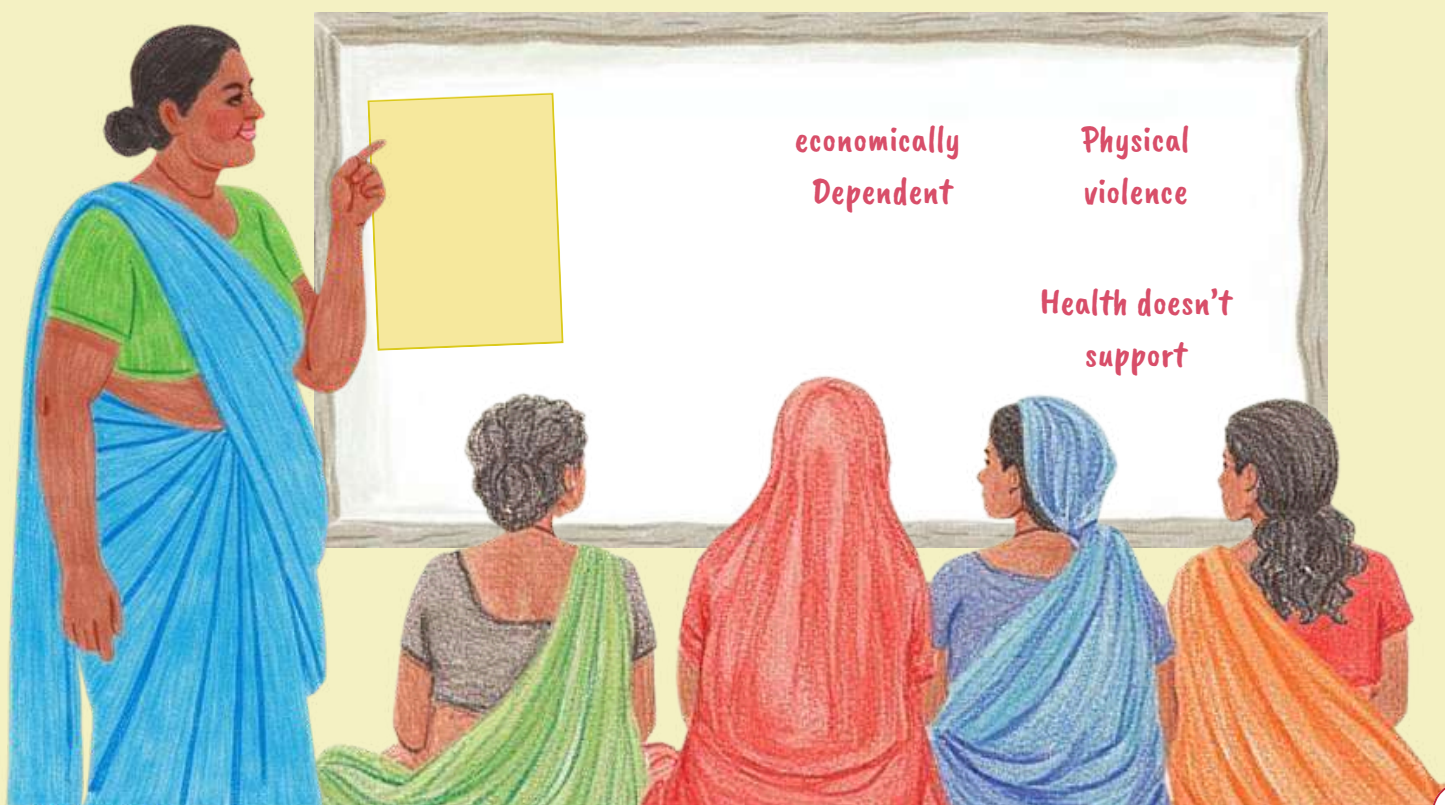
Let 2–3 participants share their thoughts.

Step 6: Concluding remarks



Say:

“This activity reminds us that women's lives in South Asia are shaped by many overlapping challenges—from gender inequality to caste, poverty, and social norms. But women also show resistance and strength at every stage. Understanding women's status means looking at the full life cycle—from birth through elderhood—and paying attention to both structural barriers and everyday acts of resilience.”



ACTIVITY 3D

“Rights Match-Up” (Constitutional Article Game) – INDIA

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections Annexure ii before conducting the exercise.

We have provided illustrative examples from India and Nepal to ground the content in specific contexts. Master Trainers, in collaboration with their organisational leaders, are encouraged to adapt these examples and activities to reflect the realities, challenges, and legal frameworks of their own countries.

Theme:

To help participants understand key constitutional articles that protect women's rights in India.

Material Required:

Article 15



Slips of paper or flashcards with Article numbers (14, 15, 16, 39, 42, 243)

Another set of cards with simplified descriptions or scenarios

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINER:

Step 1: Form small teams

Divide the participants into small teams of 3–4 members.

Step 3: Matching activity

Instruct teams to match each article number with the correct explanation or situation.

Step 2: Distribute materials

Give each team a shuffled set of cards—some with article numbers and some with simplified explanations or real-life examples

Encourage discussion within teams to reason through their choices.

Step 4: Group review & discussion



Once teams are done, bring everyone together. Ask each team to read out their matches & explain them briefly.

As a trainer, confirm or clarify the correct matches & use relatable examples (e.g., maternity leave under Article 42, Gram Panchayat quotas under Article 243) to deepen understanding.



Step 5: Feedback questions

Ask the following questions to the group:

- “Which article felt most relevant to your life?”
- “Were you aware of these rights before this session?”
- “Do you think these laws are implemented in your community?”

Encourage brief sharing from participants.

Step 6: Concluding remarks



Say:

“Nepal’s Constitution provides strong legal guarantees for women’s equality and dignity. But these rights only become meaningful when we are aware of them and use them. Understanding our legal protections helps us challenge discrimination and build more just and equal communities.”

Additional Details:

TABLE 1 : List for Flash Cards

Some important Clauses from the Indian Constitution

Correct match of the Scenario statements

Article 14 – Equality Before Law says everyone is equal before the law. The government must treat all people fairly.

A.

Article 15 – No Discrimination (Caste, Religion, Sex) says no one can be treated badly because of caste, religion, sex, or place of birth.

B.

Article 15 – No Discrimination Against Women says women and men must be treated equally. Being a woman cannot be a reason to deny opportunity.

C.

Article 16 – Equal Opportunity in Government Jobs says everyone must get equal chance in government employment.

D.

Article 39(a) – Right to Livelihood : says the State should ensure that women and men have the right to earn a proper livelihood.

E.

Article 39(d) – Equal Pay for Equal Work says men and women must get equal pay for equal work.

F.

Article 39(e) – Protection of Health says workers’ health and strength must be protected from exploitation

G.



Article 42 – Humane Working Conditions says working conditions must be humane and women must get maternity support.	H.
Article 243 – Role of Panchayat says Panchayats are responsible for local development. Women can raise their issues there.	I.
Article 243 – Women’s Participation supports women’s participation in local government decisions	J.

TABLE 2 – To write on separate cards and give to each group

Scenarios for the activity around constitutional articles

- | | |
|----------|---|
| A | Some home-based workers are refused a government scheme without clear reason. Others doing the same work get the benefits of the scheme |
| B | A contractor refuses to give work to a woman because of her caste is considered as lower caste. |
| C | Women are told they cannot become leaders because they are women |
| D | A woman applies for a job in government funded office but is rejected unfairly while others are selected without proper process. |
| E | A middleman reduces wages, and the worker cannot earn enough for food and rent. |
| F | A woman and a man do the same work, but the woman is paid less |
| G | Women are given harmful work without safety protection. |
| H | A pregnant worker is forced to work long hours without rest. |
| I | Home-based workers go to the Panchayat to ask for support under a livelihood scheme. |
| J | Women workers attend the Gram Sabha meeting and speak about their problems |

ACTIVITY 3E

“Who Holds Power and Why?” – Exploring Patriarchy and Brahmanical Control

45
minutes

Reference: Read sections 3.3 before conducting the exercise.

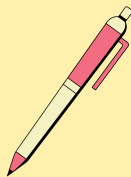
Theme:

Patriarchy, Caste, Gender, Power, and Control over Women's Bodies and Choices

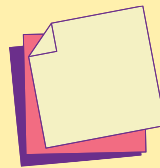
Material Required:



Chart paper or
board



Marker
pens



Sticky notes or
paper slips



3 pre-written role-play
scenarios (see below)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINER:

Step 1: Set the Stage – Introducing the Theme

Explain to the group:

“Today, we are talking about power—who has it, who doesn't, and how that affects women's lives. We'll explore how patriarchy works in everyday life, and how caste and gender combine to control women's choices, especially around marriage, love, or speaking up.”

Define key terms:

- *Patriarchy* is a system where men usually hold more power than women and other genders.
- *Brahmanical patriarchy* is when caste and gender work together—especially by controlling women's freedom and sexuality through rules about marriage, purity, & violence.

Step 2: Power Ladder Activity

who holds
the most
power?

who holds
the least
power?

- Draw a ladder on a chart paper labeled “Most Power” at the top and “Least Power” at the bottom.
- Distribute 2–3 sticky notes to each participant.
- Ask: “In your home, workplace, or community, who holds power? Who has less? Write the role or identity on your note and come stick it on the ladder.”
- (Examples: father, manager, daughter-in-law, widow, landlord, Dalit woman)
- Read out a few examples and ask:
 - “Why is this person at the top or bottom?”
 - “What roles do caste, class, gender, or age play here?”



Step 3: Role Play Scenarios – Understanding Control

- Divide participants into 4 groups and assign each group a scenario:
 1. *Group 1:* Upper-caste girl wants to marry someone from a different caste – but is told by her own parents and friends that it will not work.
 2. *Group 2:* Dalit woman HBW speaks up after being harassed by an upper-caste man when she goes to submit and collect her work from the contractor who lives close by.
 3. *Group 3:* Queer woman from a poor family wants to attend a youth training
 4. *Or Option for Group 3:* A school girl is harassed on her way to School by a boy from her class. They both belong to the same community.
 5. *Group 4:* A local goon sits outside at the local shop and whistles as young women from any community come to buy at the shop
- Ask each group to prepare and perform a 3–5 minute role play showing how control and power operate in the scenario.

After each performance, ask:

- ***“Who was trying to control whom?”***
- ***“What were people afraid of?”***
- ***“What role did caste or gender play in this situation?”***
- ***What forms did control take in this situation?” (Was it emotional pressure, physical threats, social isolation, financial dependency, etc.?)***
- ***Who had the power to decide or speak, and who didn’t?***
- ***“Did anyone challenge the control? If yes, how? If no, why not?”***
- ***What kinds of justifications were given for controlling behavior?” (e.g., honour, tradition, safety, ‘for your own good’)***
- ***How did social norms or community expectations reinforce control***
- ***Were there any silent forms of resistance or negotiation?”***

Step 4: Group Reflection & Discussion



Ask:

- ***“What patterns do you notice in both the ladder and the role plays?”***
- ***“Who usually gets to make decisions?”***
- ***“How do power, caste, and gender overlap to limit some people?”***

Step 5: Feedback Prompt

Ask:

- ***“Did you see yourself or someone you know in these stories?”***
- ***“What would need to change for these situations to be different?”***

Invite 2–3 participants to respond. Appreciate each response and note key points.



Step 6: Concluding Remarks



Say:

“Patriarchy shapes all our lives—but not in the same way. Caste, class, and gender combine to create different experiences of power and control. Understanding this helps us challenge injustice and build stronger, more equal communities.

While the person who commits the violent act is most often a male and the person who is the target is most often a female, it is the patriarchy, the caste system and power hierarchy which operates in our societies is the root cause. Thus, while we have to support individual women who face violence, we have to simultaneously work to challenge the inequality. Our Constitution, as we understood from previous exercises can be our guide in establishing a society where all are equal and everybody can live with dignity”

ACTIVITY 3F

“What Can We Do?” – Finding Solutions to Violence Against Women

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 3.7 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Violence against women (VAW), collective responses, support systems, pathways for redress

Material Required:



3–4 pre-written
scenario cards

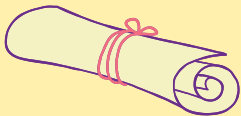
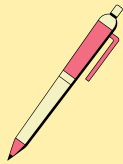
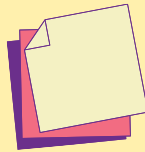


Chart paper
(3–4 sheets)



Markers



Sticky notes or
slips of paper



Tape or board



Optional: sketch pens,
colored paper for
group posters

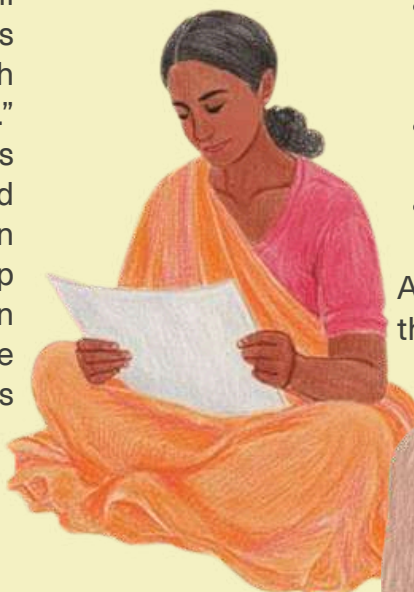
STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINERS:

Step 1: Introduction to the Activity

Say to the group:

“Violence against women is common but often hidden. Women may face violence at home, at work, or in their communities. This activity is not just about identifying problems but about imagining what can be done. Let’s think together about the different kinds of support women can receive—from family, collectives, and the law.”

Mention: “Today we’ll read real-life scenarios and come up with solutions as a group.” and “Only awareness about violence and understanding it can help women speak up about it. When women understand that violence is unacceptable and is not a norm.”



Step 2: Divide into Groups & Distribute Scenarios



- Divide participants into **3–4 small groups** (4–6 people each).
- Give **one scenario card** to each group.

Example Scenarios:

- A woman doing stitching work at home is being abused by her husband, but she has two children and no independent income.
- A young woman worker receives vulgar messages from a male contractor on her phone.
- A daughter-in-law is stopped from going out to a union meeting by her in-laws.
- A teenage girl in the community is being forced into marriage.

Ask each group to read their card aloud within their group.



Step 3: Group Brainstorm – “What Can Be Done?”



Give each group chart paper and markers. Ask them to brainstorm answers to:

- What support does this woman need?
- What actions can she or others take immediately?
- Who can help her? (e.g., sangathan, legal body, family member, collective)
- What role can we, as a collective or community, play?

Encourage creative thinking: solutions can include legal action, collective support, counselling, shifting social attitudes, or peer solidarity.

Groups can choose to write points or make a simple visual presentation using the chart papers provided to them.

Step 5: Concluding Remarks



Say to the group:

“Every act of violence has a solution—but no woman should face it alone. Collectives, community support, legal knowledge, and everyday courage can help bring real change. When we support survivors and speak up against violence, we are building a safer world for everyone.”

Step 4: Group Presentations



Invite each group to come forward and **share their solutions**.

Encourage the other participants to listen carefully and then ask:

- “Can this be applied to our community or sangathan?”



CHAPTER 4

Revising Basic Concepts of Gender

This chapter introduces key gender-related concepts that are essential for building a gender transformative perspective. As trainers, it is important to reflect on your own understanding and biases around gender, sexuality, and identity. This section covers sensitive issues like sexual violence and harassment.



04.

Revising Basic Concepts of Gender



Pre read for Trainers:

This chapter introduces key gender-related concepts that are essential for building a gender transformative perspective. As trainers, it is important to reflect on your own understanding and biases around gender, sexuality, and identity. These concepts may challenge dominant norms, so be prepared to facilitate open and respectful conversations. Share how your own perspective evolved when you first encountered this work and encourage participants to connect these ideas to their everyday lives, work, and struggles. This foundation will help deepen future discussions on gender power, violence, and collective action.

This section covers sensitive issues like sexual violence and harassment. Create a safe, respectful space for discussion - some participants may have personal experiences. Use empathy and in case the atmosphere becomes too tense, say aloud that let's take a few moments to be silent and if required take a break. Keep referral contacts for support services available in the area.

Not all the sections are meant to be read out to trainees but will help you prepare to guide the session with confidence, clarity, and empathy. Some sections where definitions are given can be read out when you are concluding the exercises. Please discuss with your co-trainer beforehand.

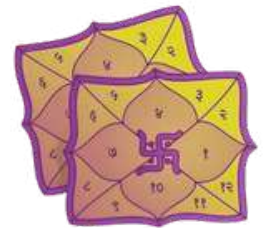
As this chapter covers many basic concepts, you can keep referring to them for subsequent chapters as well.

4.1 Concepts and Definitions



Patriarchy refers to the societal system in which we live today, characterised by both historical and ongoing unequal power relations between women and men. In this system, women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed. This imbalance is visible across nearly every sphere of life, particularly in women's underrepresentation in state institutions, decision-making roles, employment, and industry. Male violence against women is also a defining feature of patriarchy. Women from minority groups face multiple layers of oppression, as factors such as caste, race, class, and sexuality intersect with sexism.

Brahmanical patriarchy is a key theoretical concept, first coined by Uma Chakravarti, used by Dalit scholars to understand Indian—and more broadly, South Asian society. This concept, elaborated from B.R. Ambedkar's critique of endogamy (marriage within the same caste), explains how caste and gender operate together to maintain social hierarchy. Dalit scholars, building on Ambedkar's ideas, argue that Indian society is structured around Brahmanical patriarchy, where power is maintained through caste-based control over women's sexuality. Endogamy serves as a foundational mechanism for sustaining the caste system, with upper-caste women's bodies seen as symbols of caste purity. Their sexuality is tightly controlled through rituals of purity and pollution. In contrast, the bodies of lower-caste women are often treated as sites of violence and exploitation.



a. Gender: Sex and gender are often distinguished as biological and cultural concepts. Sex refers to physical traits and reproductive organs, while gender relates to cultural expectations and roles linked to masculinity and femininity. However, this distinction is not always clear-cut. Both sex and gender are shaped by social processes and cultural norms—they are interconnected and not fixed or purely biological. The use of the term gender signals an understanding that gender identities, roles, and relations vary across cultures and contexts, and that gender inequality is a result of social structures, not biology.

In recent years, this binary understanding of male and female has been increasingly challenged. Movements led by LGBTQI+ individuals and the queer community highlight that identities around sex, gender, and desire do not always align in conventional ways. These movements urge us to rethink the idea that heterosexual, cisgender identities are the only "natural" ones. As trainers, while we may often refer to "men" and "women" in discussions, it is essential to recognise that many people do not fit neatly into this binary. Our approach must be inclusive and consciously attentive to the lived experiences of all gender identities.

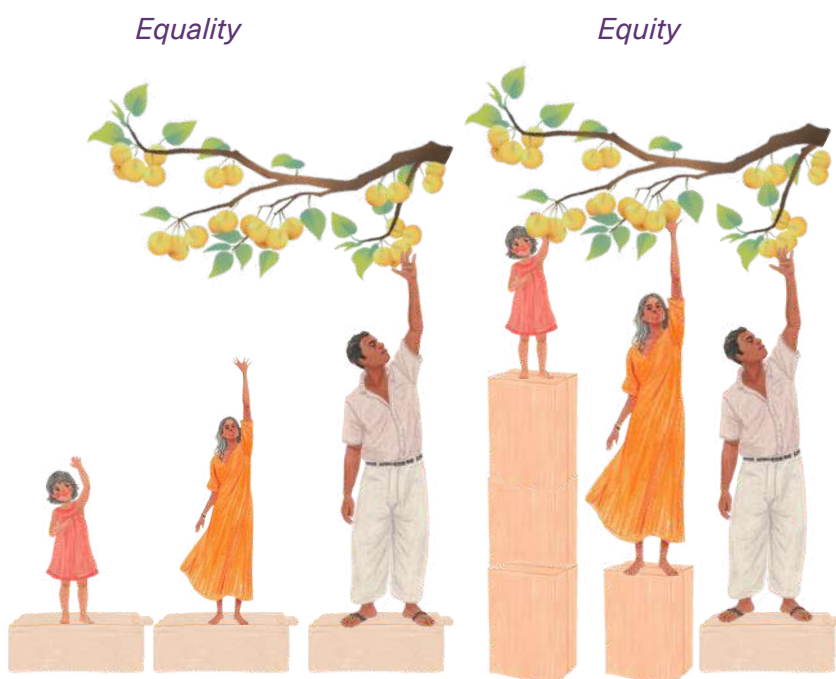
While other factors like age, ethnicity, and class also shape social expectations, gender remains one of the most fundamental and powerful social organising principles in our everyday lives.

b. Gender Division of Labor: Gender division of labour means how different types of work are counted/assigned as women's work and men's work. It is shaped by rules, social norms, and everyday practices that decide who does what—at home, at work, community, and in the market. This division is not natural or permanent. It changes over time and in different places. One common example is how women often do unpaid work like cooking and cleaning at home, but in hotels men are employed to do the cooking, housekeeping in hotels. Earlier women did not work on heavy machines, today some women are flying planes, driving buses, trainers and even rockets.



c. Gender Pay Gap: This refers to the average difference in earnings between men and women / different genders across an organisation, industry, or the broader labor market. It is typically expressed as a percentage of men's earnings and highlights income disparities that exist between genders for comparable work, roles, or contributions.

d. Gender Equality and Equity: Gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for individuals of all genders in every aspect of life. It means that opportunities and entitlements should not depend on whether someone is male or female, disabled or able-bodied, young or elderly, from a lower or upper caste, majority or minority group, or a rural or urban setting.



Gender equity, on the other hand, is the process of being fair to all genders, recognising that different genders have different needs, preferences, and experiences. Achieving equity often requires targeted strategies and measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent a level playing field, especially for women. Equity is a step toward achieving gender equality and social justice.

e. Gender Identity: Gender identity refers to a person's internal understanding and experience of their own gender. This may align with the gender assigned at birth or differ from it. Transgender and intersex people are individuals whose gender identity does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth. Today, there are growing collectives and movements working to amplify the voices, rights, and challenges faced by transgender and intersex people.

f. Gender Roles: Gender roles are culturally defined behaviors considered appropriate for men and women/ respective gender. These roles are performative - meaning that individuals learn how to "act" masculine or feminine based on societal expectations. These include how one behaves, thinks, evaluates oneself and others, and expresses emotions, all in gendered ways.



Disability and Women Home-Based Workers (HBWs)

Women with disabilities who work from home face many challenges because of their gender, informal work status, and disability. Many choose home-based work as it's difficult for them to access regular jobs, transport, or public spaces. However, working from home doesn't always make things easier. They may lack proper seating, tools, or accessible homes, which can harm their health and reduce their work productivity.

They are often left out of training programs or support schemes because these are not accessible - for example, no sign language support for the blind, or ramps for the physically challenged or materials in easy formats. Their work and needs are often invisible in government data and plans.

g. Intersectionality: Intersectionality means understanding how different identities - like caste, religion, gender, and sexuality - combine to shape a person's experiences. These identities are connected and can lead to layered discrimination or privilege.

For example, Dalit women face both caste and gender discrimination, which differs from what upper-caste women or Dalit men experience. Similarly, Muslim women face discrimination based on whether their religion is in the majority or minority in the society as well as patriarchy that operates in the Muslim communities. Women belonging to tribal or ethnic communities face discrimination not just from being marginalised or staying in remote geographies but also from the way patriarchy operates in their own societies.

Thus, people from other religious or LGBTQ+ communities may also face multiple forms of bias. Recognising these overlaps helps us better understand inequality and build more inclusive solutions

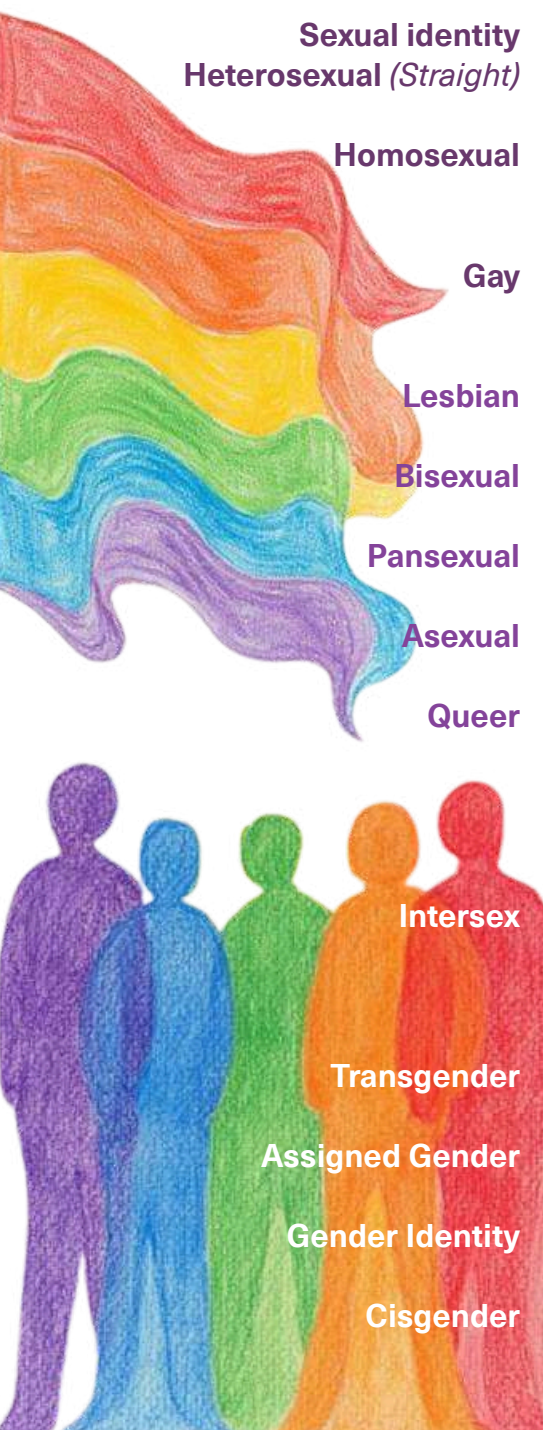
h. Sexuality: Concepts and Understanding: Before conducting the session on sexuality, please keep in mind that it is a sensitive and personal topic for many participants. Ensure that trust has been built in earlier sessions, use respectful and simple language, and allow participants the space to engage at their comfort level. Be attentive to group dynamics and maintain a non-judgmental, inclusive approach. Please refer to the SOP provided in the annexure for detailed guidance and follow it closely during your preparation. (Refer Annexure -3)

The term sexuality does not simply refer to whether someone is male, female, or of another gender, nor is it limited to sexual activity. Sexuality is a core part of human life. It begins at conception, when a person's sex is determined, and continues to develop throughout their life—from childhood to old age.

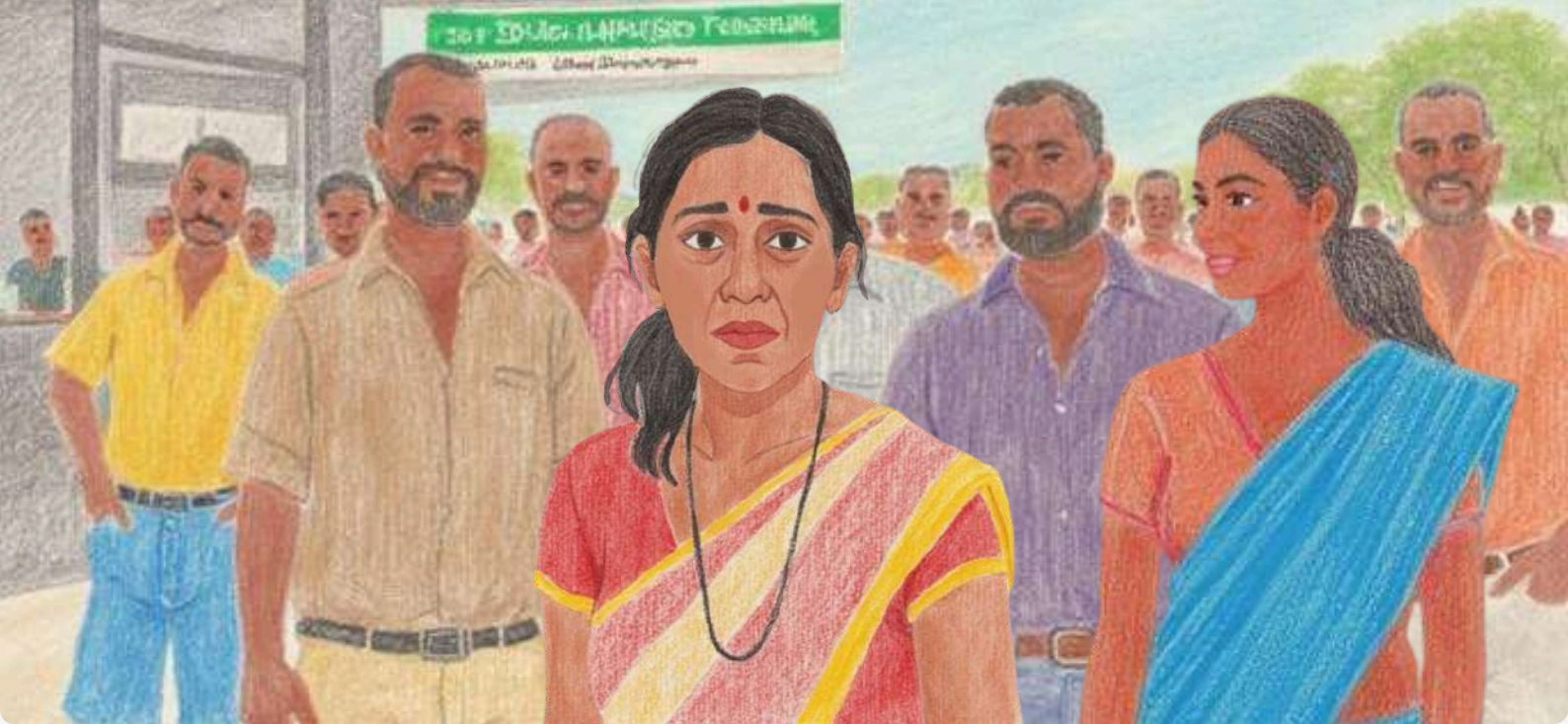
The term sexuality does not simply refer to whether someone is male, female, or of another gender, nor is it limited to sexual activity. Sexuality is a core part of human life. It begins at conception, when a person's sex is determined, and continues to develop throughout their life—from childhood to old age.

Human sexuality is about a person's understanding, feelings, and behaviors related to sex and relationships. It includes things like body parts, how the body reacts, gender identity, who we are attracted to, emotions, and personal experiences. Our culture, religion, and personal values also shape how we think about and express our sexuality.

i. Sexual Orientations and Identities: Home-based workers need to understand sexuality and sexual orientation because gender does not exist in isolation—it is deeply interrelated with sexuality and shaped by dominant norms like heteronormativity. Within the diverse community of women HBWs, there are likely to be individuals who belong to sexual and gender minorities. Having awareness about sexuality and orientation enables workers to recognize the specific challenges faced by these groups and offer support in meaningful, respectful ways. Moreover, just as many workers face marginalization based on caste, religion, or class, sexual and gender minorities too experience systemic discrimination. Building awareness and solidarity across these different axes of marginalization—be it Dalits, religious minorities, or queer individuals—is essential for creating inclusive and empowering worker collectives.



- How a person identifies their sexual orientation.
- Someone who is emotionally or sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.
- A clinical term used to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. It is considered outdated and is less commonly used today.
- A common term for men who are emotionally or sexually attracted to other men. Sometimes used more broadly for people attracted to the same gender.
- A woman who is emotionally or sexually attracted to other women. This is a widely accepted and preferred term.
- A person who is emotionally or sexually attracted to more than one gender.
- A person who is attracted to people of all gender identities and expressions.
- A person who does not experience sexual attraction to any gender.
- An umbrella term for people whose sexual orientation or gender identity is not heterosexual or cisgender. It includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other identities. While once used as a slur, many people have reclaimed it as a positive and inclusive identity.
- People born with physical sex characteristics (like chromosomes, hormones, or anatomy) that do not fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex is a natural variation of the human body.
- A term for people whose gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth.
- The gender of a baby is assigned at birth, usually based on physical characteristics.
- One's deeply held internal sense of being male, female, a blend of both, or neither.
- Describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.



j. Understanding Sexual Violence and Harassment

Trainer's Note: This section covers sensitive issues like sexual violence and harassment. Create a safe, respectful space for discussion - some participants may have personal experiences. Use empathy and in case the atmosphere becomes too tense, say aloud that "Let's take a few moments to be silent and if required take a break". Keep referral contacts for support services available in the area. These can be shared with everyone at the end of the session. You may write the names and numbers on the whiteboard and ask the participants to copy them into their notebook.

Sexual violence refers to any sexual act or an attempt to obtain a sexual act through force, coercion, or without consent. It includes rape, attempted rape, unwanted touching, and any act that violates a person's bodily autonomy - regardless of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. Sexual violence can happen in many forms - touching someone sexually without consent (even through clothing), making threats, or trafficking someone for sex. Consent must be clear, enthusiastic, and ongoing. Anything done without it is violence.

Sexual harassment means unwanted sexual comments, gestures, or advances. It can include situations where someone in power asks for sexual favors in return for job benefits. It doesn't always involve threats or money—fear, pressure, or unequal power can also be signs. What feels like a joke to one person may feel like harassment to another—and both views matter.

Online sexual harassment: Women Home-based workers (HBWs), who often rely on digital platforms and mobile connectivity for accessing work, communication, and markets, face growing risks of cyber sexual harassment. As their workspaces merge with personal spaces, especially through smartphones and social media, they become vulnerable to unwanted sexual messages, threats, and stalking from clients, intermediaries, or unknown individuals. Many women HBWs, particularly from marginalised backgrounds, lack digital literacy and access to reporting mechanisms, making it difficult to recognise, report, or resist such abuse. The stigma around sexual harassment and fear of losing work often silences victims. Addressing cyber sexual harassment requires not just awareness campaigns and digital safety training for women HBWs, but also stronger legal protections, platform accountability, and collective organising to demand safer digital workspaces.

Workplace Violence: You must have previously learnt about 5 types of violence that can be experienced (HNSA training Manual – Addressing Violence Against Women Home-Based Workers (HBWs) during the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Asia)

- **Economic Violence**
- **Emotional Violence**
- **Physical Violence**
- **Verbal Violence**
- **Sexual Violence**

Workplaces have a responsibility to prevent and address sexual harassment. In India, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 requires all organisations with 10 or more employees to set up Internal Committees (ICs) to provide a safe and responsive space for redressal.

For women working in informal settings or in establishments with fewer than 10 employees, Local Committees (LCs) are set up at the district level in both urban and rural areas.

An important aspect of this act is that the definition of sexual harassment is determined by the experience of the complainant—that is, if a woman finds the words or behaviour of the perpetrator sexually offensive, she has the right to file a complaint.

For women home-based workers (HBWs), who often lack formal employers, the Local Committee is the designated body to approach for complaints of sexual harassment, whether the perpetrator is a contractor, intermediary, or buyer.

Rape is any non-consensual sexual penetration, including by a stranger, acquaintance, or within a marriage. Most countries have laws that recognise rape as a criminal offence. Marital rape is violence—it is about power, not intimacy. Not many countries acknowledge marital rape as an offence.

Sexual assault or sexual abuse are broad terms and may be defined differently in law. They include any unwanted sexual contact, like forced kissing, groping, or touching without consent.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) refers to abuse within romantic or sexual relationships. IPV can take many forms:

1. Physical violence – hitting, slapping, kicking.
2. Sexual violence – forced sex or sexual coercion.
3. Emotional abuse – belittling, insults, threats, humiliation.
4. Controlling behavior – isolating someone from loved ones, monitoring movements, or restricting access to work, education, or healthcare.



In India, workplaces are legally required to take steps to prevent and address sexual harassment. **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013** mandates that all organisations with 10 or more employees must set up an Internal Committee (IC) to ensure a safe and responsive mechanism for redressal.

For women working in informal settings or in establishments with fewer than 10 workers, **Local Committees (LCs)** are established at the district level in both urban and rural areas by the District Officer appointed under the Act. An important feature of this law is that the definition of sexual harassment is based on the woman's experience—if she feels that someone's behaviour was sexually inappropriate or offensive, she has the right to file a complaint.

Women home-based workers (HBWs), who often interact with contractors or buyers in informal workspaces, can approach the Local Committee to register complaints of sexual harassment.

India also has a law to protect women from domestic violence: **the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005**. This law guarantees a woman's right to reside safely in her home and protects her from physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. Complaints can be made to a Protection Officer, the police, or the Magistrate's Court.

In addition to legal mechanisms, many countries—including India—have support services for survivors of domestic violence, such as One Stop Crisis Centers and Sakhi Centers. These centers offer services like counseling, legal aid, and awareness building. While some are run by the government, many NGOs also provide such support to help women lead safe and dignified lives.

*Sexual Harassment of Women at
Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition
and Redressal) Act, 2013*

*Local Committees
(LCs)*

*One Stop
Crisis Centers*

*Protection of Women
from Domestic Violence
Act (PWDVA), 2005*

*Sakhi
Centers*



ACTIVITY 4A

“Who Does What?”

Understanding Gender Roles, Gender Division of Labour

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 4.1 (Points b,c,f) before conducting the exercise.

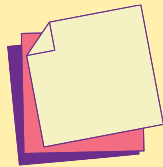
Theme:

Gender, Division of Labour, Gender Pay Gap, Gender Roles

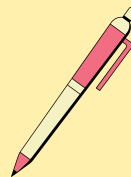
Material Required:



Chart paper or
whiteboard



Sticky notes or paper slips



Markers



Video

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Preparing for session

Draw the following table columns on a chart paper/board –

Men		Women		Transgender Persons	
Paid work	Unpaid work	Paid Work	Unpaid work	Paid work	Unpaid work

Step 2: Introduce the activity

State the following “We know that there are different kinds of tasks that we all do in our families and in the community. Some are paid and some are not paid. Let's look at how does it look for men, women and Transgender Persons

Ask participants: **“In your home and work and the community, who usually does what tasks?”**

Prompt for both paid and unpaid work and also tasks done by children and the elderly In other words – all tasks that occupy people's time in a day.



Step 3: Filling the chart

As participants call out tasks, place them in the respective columns. Add more rows if needed.

Think of tasks that are typically done by women but are they counted (e.g., cooking, stitching, market errands, childcare). You can stop after you have listed at least 8-10 tasks under most categories.

Step 4: Prompts

Ask:

- ***“What do you notice?”***
- ***“Do all tasks get paid?”***
- ***“Which tasks are paid?”***
- ***“Who is doing more unpaid work?”***
- ***“Who gets paid more even if work is similar?”***
- ***“Would like this to change in any way?”***

Step 5: Feedback prompt

Ask participants: ***“Did this activity make you think differently?”***

Note down key points from the group.

Step 6: Video



You may finish the session by showing this [video](#)



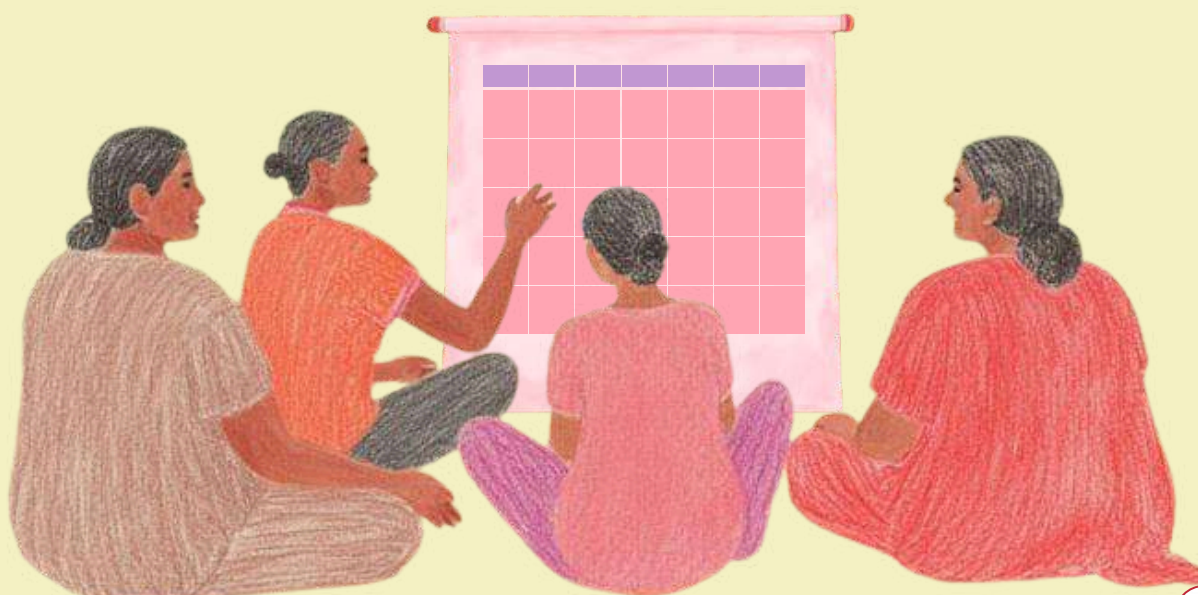
Scan the QR code to watch the full video.

Step 7: Concluding remarks



“Gender roles are socially taught, not naturally. Gender division of labour is the way work is split between men and women in society, where women are usually expected to handle household chores and caregiving, while men are pushed toward paid work outside the home. This unequal division is deeply connected to patriarchy, which values men’s work more and gives them greater benefits. As a result, women face the gender pay gap, take on large amounts of unpaid work, and often have fewer opportunities for economic independence. As you saw in the film, the husband feels hesitant to own up that he does household work due to the patriarchal mindset, where as his wife and mother are actually shown as more welcoming of the men sharing the unpaid household work burden. Women’s unpaid and underpaid work must be recognised and valued. We need to also reflect on how the division came about?”

Many governments conduct Time Use Studies to understand how men and women spend their time on various activities. In India, the latest Time Use Study showed that men do participate in care work, spending an average of 75 minutes per day caring for household members. However, women spent 137 minutes per day on the same, which is more than twice the time spent by men. In terms of unpaid domestic services, women spent an average of 289 minutes per day, while men spent only 88 minutes.



ACTIVITY 4B

“Who Gets to Decide?” Gender Equality in Daily Life

40
minutes

Reference: Read section 4.1 (Point d) before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Gender equality, decision-making, power dynamics in households and workspaces

Material Required:

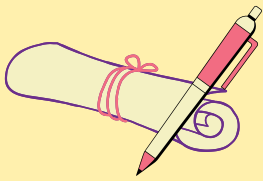
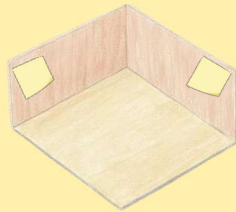


Chart paper &
marker



Two corners marked: “Man
Decides” and “Woman Decides”



5 pre-written
scenario cards

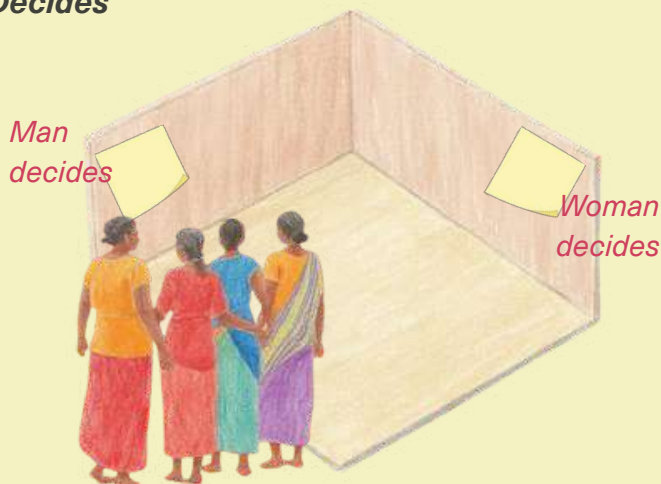


[Video1](#)
[Video 2](#)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Preparing for session

Mark two opposite corners of the room: One as “**Man Decides**”, The other as “**Woman Decides**”



Explain to participants that you will read out real-life scenarios, and they should walk to the side of the room that reflects who usually makes that decision in their home or community.

Once the scenario is ready, stick the card on the board. And add the number of women who walk to man decides and the number who walk to women decides against each card.

Sample scenarios:

- Who decides what to cook at home?
- Who decides whether the woman can go for skill training?
- Who decides how the money she earns is spent?
- Who decides what time she should return home from work?
- Who decides whether she can attend a community meeting?
- Who decides how much the daughter should study?
- Who decides how much the son should study?
- Which school should the daughter go to?
- Whether to complain when there is an incident of sexual harassment?



Step 2

Trainers' Note: It may so happen that not all participants make the same choice. So, ask those who have made a choice that is different from the majority to share how it is in their experience/or in their family? If it is a positive experience that the woman is deciding that it must be appreciated. Her sharing can motivate others to acknowledge that there are women in their own community who are making different choices and acting differently. In other words, they follow different social norms.

Read aloud one scenario at a time, pause for participants to walk to a corner after each one. After each, ask:

“Do you think it is usually this way?”

“Do you agree with this?”

“What would you like to change?”

“How will make this change?”

Step 3:

Ask participants to look around and observe the patterns. Then discuss briefly:

- ***“What do these choices show about gender roles and equality?”***
- ***“Where do we want to see change?”***

Step 4: Feedback prompt

Ask:

“Are there decisions you want to take more control of from today?”

Write down a few participant responses and encourage reflection.

Step 5: Video



Depending on the time you have, you may finish the session by showing one or both these two videos:

Video 1 (20 minutes) -
<https://youtu.be/9HkIP4YkXu4?feature=shared>



Scan the QR code to watch the full video.

Video 2 (7 minutes) -
<https://youtu.be/lEtEBXbdliVA?feature=shared>

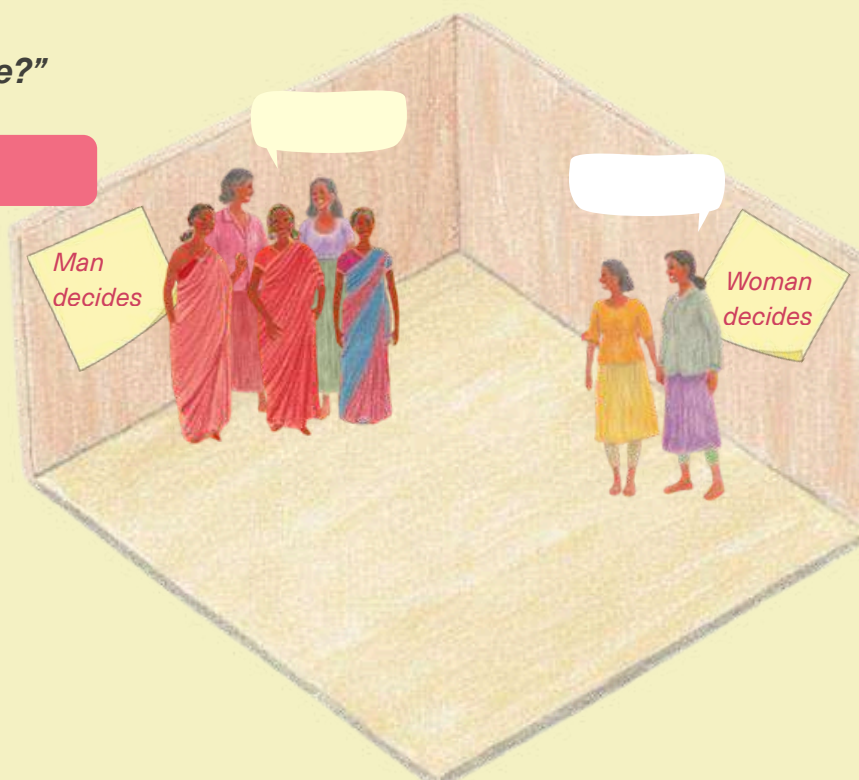


Scan the QR code to watch the full video.

Step 6: Concluding remarks



“Equality starts with everyday choices. Both men and women should have a say in decisions. Your work matters, and your voice matters—in your home and your community.”



ACTIVITY 4C

Understanding the Intersectionality of Gender

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 4.1 (Point g, h) before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Understanding intersectionality through real-life stories of gender, caste, class, sexuality, race, and religion. The aim is to help participants recognise how multiple identities intersect to shape people's experiences of discrimination and marginalisation.

Material Required:



Printed case studies (1 per group)

(Uma, Anju, Mamta, Salma, Amina – real-life inspired profiles)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Group reading & discussion



Divide participants into five small groups and give each group one printed case study. Use these five:

Uma

Uma (28) is a Dalit woman working as a bonded laborer on her landlord's land. Her work begins at 7 am and ends at 6:30 pm. She has three children – two daughters and one son. Her daughters assist her in the kitchen and sometimes in the fields. Currently five months pregnant, she has been unable to see a doctor. She desires to send her children to school but is unsure how to accomplish this. Unfortunately, her landlord sexually abuses her, and she feels compelled to remain silent out of fear of losing her job or facing retaliation.

Anju

Anju, 30, is a skilled home-based worker who does intricate embroidery work for a local garment supplier in Lucknow. She was once a bright student and had hoped to become a schoolteacher, but her dreams were interrupted by an early marriage and motherhood. After her husband left, Anju became a single parent, stitching from home to support her two children. Despite the quality of her work and her ability to meet tight deadlines, the contractor often avoids giving her larger or better-paying orders. He claims she might not be able to handle the pressure due to her "family responsibilities" and says she's "too busy with kids to take serious work." Anju feels stuck, limited not by her skills but by assumptions about her role as a mother. She's now exploring ways to connect with online craft platforms and women's cooperatives that offer more respect and flexibility, hoping to find spaces where her work is valued without being judged for her personal life.

Mamta

Mamta (29) is a trans woman who recently came out. She holds a B.Ed degree that makes her eligible for a teaching job. Since her identity became public through local media coverage, she has been unable to secure employment, as potential employers have been denying her job opportunities. While she does some home tuition, she has to take up piece rate work to make ends meet. When an NGO working in the area called for a meeting of all women HBWs, she attended it but found that the other women HBWs did not interact with her and did not speak to her. She has become depressed and sometimes thinks of committing suicide.

Salma

Salma (35), who works in the development sector, was recently transferred to Pune and is currently searching for a rental house. However, she is facing discrimination, as several Hindu landlords refuse to rent their homes to her because she is a single Muslim woman.

Amina

Amina (45), a black migrant woman from East Africa, lives in a crowded rental colony in Delhi, where she works as a home-based artisan creating beaded jewellery and fabric crafts. After separating from her husband, she began supporting her two children on her own, selling her products through local markets and WhatsApp groups. Despite her skill, Amina faces constant racial and gender-based stereotyping—she is often viewed with suspicion, oversexualised, and judged for her appearance and independence. Contractors hesitate to give her regular work, claiming she “won’t fit in” with local workers. Even in her neighborhood, she is subjected to comments and exclusions rooted in both racism and patriarchy. However, through informal collectives of Dalit and Muslim home-based workers, Amina found solidarity and began sharing her experiences, drawing connections between caste, race, gender, and the policing of women’s bodies and sexuality. Today, she plays a vital role in building dialogue and awareness among marginalised women, using her own life to challenge bias and foster inclusive solidarities.



Ask each group to read their story and discuss:

- **What is happening in this situation?**
- **What are the key challenges this person is facing?**
- **What do these challenges tell us about their intersecting identities?**
- **Who holds power in this situation? Who is being marginalised?**

Move around the groups to support and clarify, especially where participants struggle with unfamiliar identities.

Step 2: Collective reflection & debrief



Bring everyone back together and invite each group to briefly share their story and key reflections.

Ask the following guiding questions to deepen discussion:

- **What are the different identities present in this case?**
- **How do these identities interact or overlap?**
- **Is the person being affected due to just one identity or a combination of identities?**

Encourage participants to reflect on how systems like caste, patriarchy, classism, hatred towards transgender people, racism, and hatred towards Muslims (Islam community) often work together.

Step 3: Take feedback

Ask:

- **“Did any of these stories challenge the way you usually think about gender inequality?”**
- **“Can we say all women’s problems are the same?”**
- **“What are the common elements and what are the differences in the kind of discrimination being faced?” How can we bring an intersectional lens help in improving our organising and campaigns?”**

Invite a few short responses and acknowledge all voices warmly.

Step 4: Concluding remarks



Say:

“Intersectionality helps us see how no form of discrimination exists in isolation. If we removed one identity—like caste or gender—would the oppression still be the same? Likely not. That’s the power of intersectionality: it reveals the layered, compounding effects of multiple marginalisations.

To build fairer systems, we must recognise these intersections and center the experiences of those most impacted. Interventions must go beyond 'one-size-fits-all' approaches and instead listen, adapt, and act in solidarity with diverse lived realities.”

ACTIVITY 4D

Understanding Sexual Violence

20
minutes

Reference: Read section 4.1 (Point j) before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Forms of sexual harassment, Role of power dynamics in shaping abuse, social factors affecting access to justice, Understanding the complexity of survivors' experiences

Material Required:



Printed case studies (1 per group)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Group reading & discussion



Divide participants into five small groups. Give each group one case study from the following:

Asha

Asha, a young woman from a semi-urban background, is a survivor of long-term sexual abuse by a male relative. The abuse began during her teenage years and continued for several years, concealed under the disguise of familial closeness. Asha lived with constant fear—of not being believed, of breaking family unity, and of being blamed for what had happened. Her attempts to speak out were repeatedly silenced by close family members who urged her to "forget it for the family's sake" or warned that reporting it would bring shame and dishonor. As a result, Asha delayed disclosing her experiences for years, internalising guilt and confusion

Sandhya

A young woman working at a petrol bunk was physically assaulted (being physically assaulted can include inappropriate touch, inappropriate comments, asking for sexual favours in return of job security) by her male employer after she resisted his repeated inappropriate advances and refused to comply with his coercive demands. The assault took place during working hours, in full view of co-workers, but few intervened due to fear of losing their own jobs. When the woman approached the local police station to file a complaint, she was met with indifference and suspicion. Officers questioned her character, implied she may have provoked the incident, and discouraged her from pursuing the case. As a woman from a working-class background doing a non-traditional, male-dominated job, she faced multiple layers of stigma—as a survivor, as a low-income worker, and as a woman who dared to speak up.

Shreya

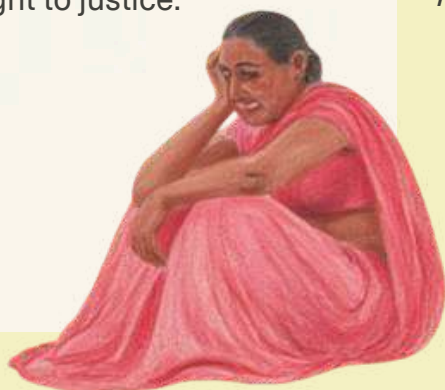
Shreya, a young woman in a committed relationship, had clearly expressed her personal boundary—she wished to remain a virgin until marriage. While she and her partner had engaged in physical intimacy, it was understood between them that sexual intercourse was not acceptable to her at this stage. However, during one such intimate moment, despite Shreya's clear verbal and physical resistance, her partner proceeded to have intercourse against her will. This left Shreya feeling deeply violated and confused, highlighting the serious issue of non-consensual sex within intimate relationships. The case underscores that consent must be explicit, continuous, and respected at all times, and that emotional closeness or being in a relationship does not grant anyone the right to override another person's autonomy or decisions about their body.

Kiran

Kiran, a 17-year-old Plus Two student in a reputed higher secondary school, was known for her academic focus and leadership qualities. One of her teachers, impressed by her performance, began offering her additional support outside regular class hours. At first, Kiran appreciated the guidance, believing it would help her prepare for competitive exams. However, over time, the relationship began to feel uncomfortable. The teacher's messages became more frequent and personal, and he began expecting emotional closeness that went beyond the professional level. Though there was no explicit act of abuse, Kiran felt uneasy and confused about how to respond, worried that rejecting the attention might affect her academic standing. She eventually spoke to a school counsellor, who helped her recognise the importance of boundaries and supported her in navigating the situation.

Nithya

Nithya, a 32-year-old sex worker in a small town, was approached by a client who promised safe, private work for the night. Trusting his word, she went with him to a location where, instead of a routine transaction, she was deceived, brutally gang-raped, and physically assaulted by multiple men. After managing to escape and seek help, Rani approached the local police, only to be met with indifference and moral judgment. Officers delayed registering her complaint, questioned her character, and implied that her profession diminished her right to justice.



Ask each group to:

Read and reflect on the questions:

- **Location of the violent act**
- **Does the survivor know the person who hurt her?**
- **How does knowing or not knowing the perpetrator make it easier or harder for her to ask for help or complain?**
- **Identify the form of sexual violence.**

Step 2: Collective reflection

Bring all groups together and ask each group to share highlights of their case and their reflections. Use the following pointers to guide the discussion:

- *What places are often considered “safe” for women?*
- *Are there any spaces where there is truly no risk of abuse or violence?*
- *How does a survivor's relationship with the perpetrator affect her ability to speak up or seek help?*
- *What challenges arise when the abuser is a family member, employer, or someone in a position of trust?*
- *What can be done to empower women and girls to express their consent clearly and confidently?*
- *What tools, spaces, or support systems are needed?*
- *How can we, as women and community members, support survivors of violence?*
- *What actions—big or small—can help a survivor feel seen, heard, and believed?*

Step 3: Concluding remarks



“Sexual violence does not only occur in public spaces or by strangers. It is often carried out by those in positions of trust - family, teachers, partners, employers—and thrives in silence and power imbalance. Consent is not a one-time act, and it must never be assumed or forced. It must be freely given, informed, and can be withdrawn at any time.

According to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data of 2018 in India, in almost 94 per cent of the cases, the offenders were known to the victims - family members, friends, live-in partners, employers or others, the data showed. When survivors speak up, they must be supported, not ashamed or silenced. Institutions, systems, and communities need to actively challenge victim-blaming, ensure accountability, and create spaces of trust. Justice begins when we believe survivors and stand by them—not just in words, but in meaningful action.”



ACTIVITY 4E

Understanding Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

20
minutes

Reference: Read sections 4.1 (Point j) before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Different forms of sexual harassment in the workplace, and how it can manifest in verbal, physical, and psychological ways.

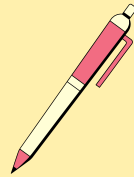
Material Required:



Printed case studies
(1 per group)



Chart Papers



Markers



[Video 1 - Tea Consent Video](#)

[Video 2](#)

[Video 3](#)

[Video 4](#)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Group viewing & discussion



Divide participants into five small groups. Play the video on a common screen for everyone to watch together. After the video, read out a set of reflection questions and ask participants to discuss them within their groups. Encourage everyone to share their thoughts and listen to each other. This group discussion helps deepen understanding by connecting the video's themes to their own experiences.

You may show these videos -

Scan the QR code to watch the full video.

Video 1 - [Tea Consent Video](#)



Video 2 -

<https://youtu.be/vVvOp4l9r20?feature=shared>



Video 3 -

<https://youtu.be/YVkBbgqYlgc?feature=shared>

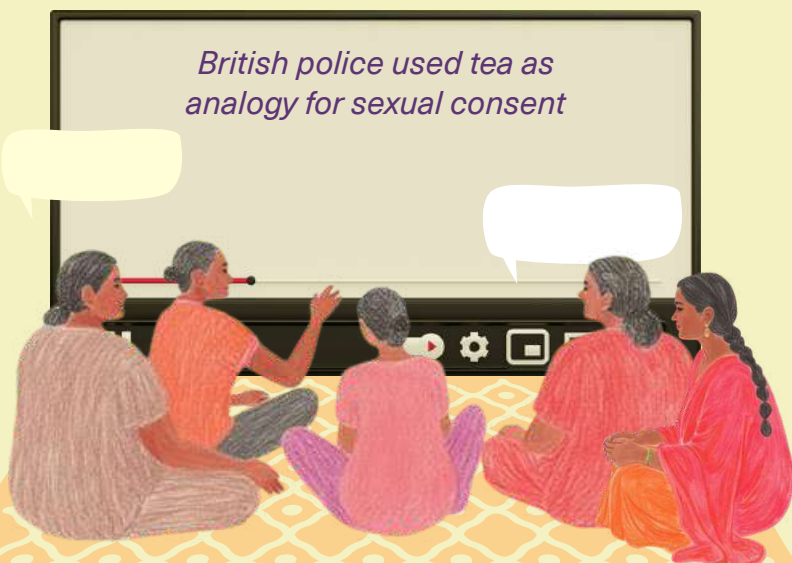


Video 4 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GscQIVJK4YQ>



British police used tea as analogy for sexual consent



Questions after video 1:

- *What did you understand from the tea and consent example?*
- *How can we relate to the idea of consent to our own homes, relationships, or work settings?*
- *Have you ever felt pressured to say “yes” when you really wanted to say “no”? What made it hard to say no?*
- *In what ways is consent important beyond sexual relationships—in care work, community spaces, and family responsibilities?*

Questions after video 2

- *What does this video show us about how women are often taught to stay silent or feel shame about their bodies and choices?*
- *Did anything in the video remind you of your own experiences—whether at home, in your community, or in the workplace?*
- *What kinds of messages about gender and sexuality do women receive from their families and society? How does this affect our ability to speak up?*
- *How can home-based workers support each other in asserting boundaries and talking about consent openly?*

Questions after video 3:

- *What did you think about how the video explained personal space and bodily autonomy?*
- *Were you ever taught as a child that you could say no to physical touch or certain behaviors? Why or why not?*
- *How can we teach our children—especially girls and boys—about respecting consent from a young age?*
- *As home-based workers and caregivers, how can we bring these lessons into our homes & communities?*

Each group should:

1. Identify the form of harassment (hostile work environment, sexual assault, discriminatory environment, public sexual harassment).
2. Discuss the key issues and how power, gender, or stigma influence the experience.
3. Consider how the case could be handled or prevented at the institutional level.

Step 2: Collective reflection

Bring all groups together and invite them to share their case, key insights, and thoughts on what made the situation one of harassment.

Use the following guiding questions to steer the conversation:

- *Whose perspective is often centered in these situations—the victim’s or the harasser’s?*
- *Does harassment always look the same? Can it be verbal, physical, visual, or psychological?*
- *What are the long-term impacts of sexual harassment on someone’s life and livelihood?*
- *What should bystanders or colleagues do when they witness such behavior?*
- *How can organisations create safer and more inclusive workplaces?*

Step 3: Feedback questions to ask participants

- *“What did you learn today that you didn’t know before?”*
- *“How can you support someone who is being harassed at work?”*
- *“What policies or practices should exist to make your own workplace safer?”*



Step 4: Concluding remarks



“Sexual harassment is not limited to physical assault—it includes any unwelcome behavior that creates a hostile, intimidating, or unsafe environment. It could be a joke, a touch, a threat, or an abuse of power. The law in India recognises this through the POSH Act, but cultural change requires more than law—it requires awareness, empathy, and action. What matters most is how the person on the receiving end feels—not what the harasser ‘intended.’

Creating a safe workplace begins with believing survivors, standing against casual sexism, and building structures that hold people accountable. Whether it’s a factory floor, office, or public road—everyone deserves dignity and freedom from harassment.”

*Safe workplace
environment*



Step 5

Please refer to the Pre-Read and share the following while closing the session:

Workplaces have a responsibility to prevent and address sexual harassment. In India, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 requires all organisations with 10 or more employees to set up Internal Committees (ICs). These committees are responsible for ensuring a safe and responsive mechanism for redressal.

For women working in the unorganised sector or in smaller establishments, Local Committees (LCs) are set up at the district level—both in urban and rural areas—by the District Officer appointed under the Act.

An important aspect of this law is that the definition of sexual harassment is based on the experience of the complainant. If a woman feels that someone's words or actions were sexually offensive or inappropriate, she has the right to file a complaint with the IC or LC.

For women home-based workers (HBWs), who often work in informal settings and deal with contractors or buyers, the Local Committee is the appropriate forum to register complaints of sexual harassment.

DISCRETION to be USED: - Trainers are requested to use this section based on the readiness of the organisation to engage with this topic. Kindly discuss with your organisation representatives if you want to conduct the sessions. The visuals for this exercise can be found in the annexure IV.

ACTIVITY 4F

Understanding Our Bodies, Our Desires and Our Agency

40
minutes

Reference: Read 4.1 (Point i) ; Visual in the Annexure IV before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Basic understanding of sexuality, its diversity, and how society influences perceptions of sexual identity and relationships and what we can do about it.

Material Required:



3 printed images representing different aspects of sexuality (e.g., same-gender intimacy, lesbian marriage, virginity norms, diverse gender expression, breaking stereotypes).

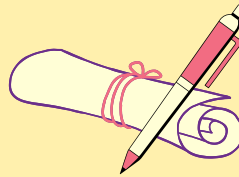


Chart paper and
markers



Video - [Sexuality Is Not Taboo](#)

IMAGES FOR THE ACTIVITY:



- Honour killings have been reported in northern regions of India (mainly in the Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Bihar).
- According to a survey done by the Delhi-based Indian Population Statistics Survey (IPSS) in mid-2009, almost 695 homicidal cases have been registered as honour killings, in India.



STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1

First Show the pictures: One at a time (Set 1 in Annexure IV)

Step 2

Ask the group a question “What do you see in these photos?”. “What can we say about control over women's choices?”

Listen to four or five responses – ideally, they should be able to see that women's choices about marriage are decided by parents, the community, and religious leaders. For e.g. when elders fix child marriage, the community is ok, but if a young boy and girl decide to marry by choice and if the couple are from different castes the community leaders may even kill the couple. Further in many communities if the husband dies – the widows are not allowed to marry; they are not allowed to participate in festivals and auspicious occasions.



Step 3

Show the pictures (Set 2 in Annexure IV)
Ask the participants - “What do you see in these pictures?”

There is likely to be a lot of discomfort or giggles and laughter – It is ok and do acknowledge and ‘Say, yes, in our society, such marriages are not seen as “normal” and are quite rare.

In India, such marriages do take place but are not recognised yet. But the good thing is that the couple is not criminalised any more.

You can then ask, “Have you noticed any such couple in your neighborhood?” Would you like to share?

If someone shares, please listen carefully and respectfully. The effort would be to acknowledge that there are people who feel attracted differently and express it differently compared to the widespread heterosexual relationships we see around us.

Step 4: Show the Video



Video - [Sexuality Is Not Taboo](#).



Scan the QR code to watch the full video.

After the video, ask:

- **Did anything in the video connect with what we discussed when we saw the previous pictures?**
- **Is our identity natural or is it shaped from a very young age?**
- **Do we hear from a young age about - “you are girl – this is what you should do?” “You are boy – you can’t do this.”**

Allow for 4-5 responses.

- **Do we believe that sexual identity is also shaped from a very young age?**

Allow for a few responses.

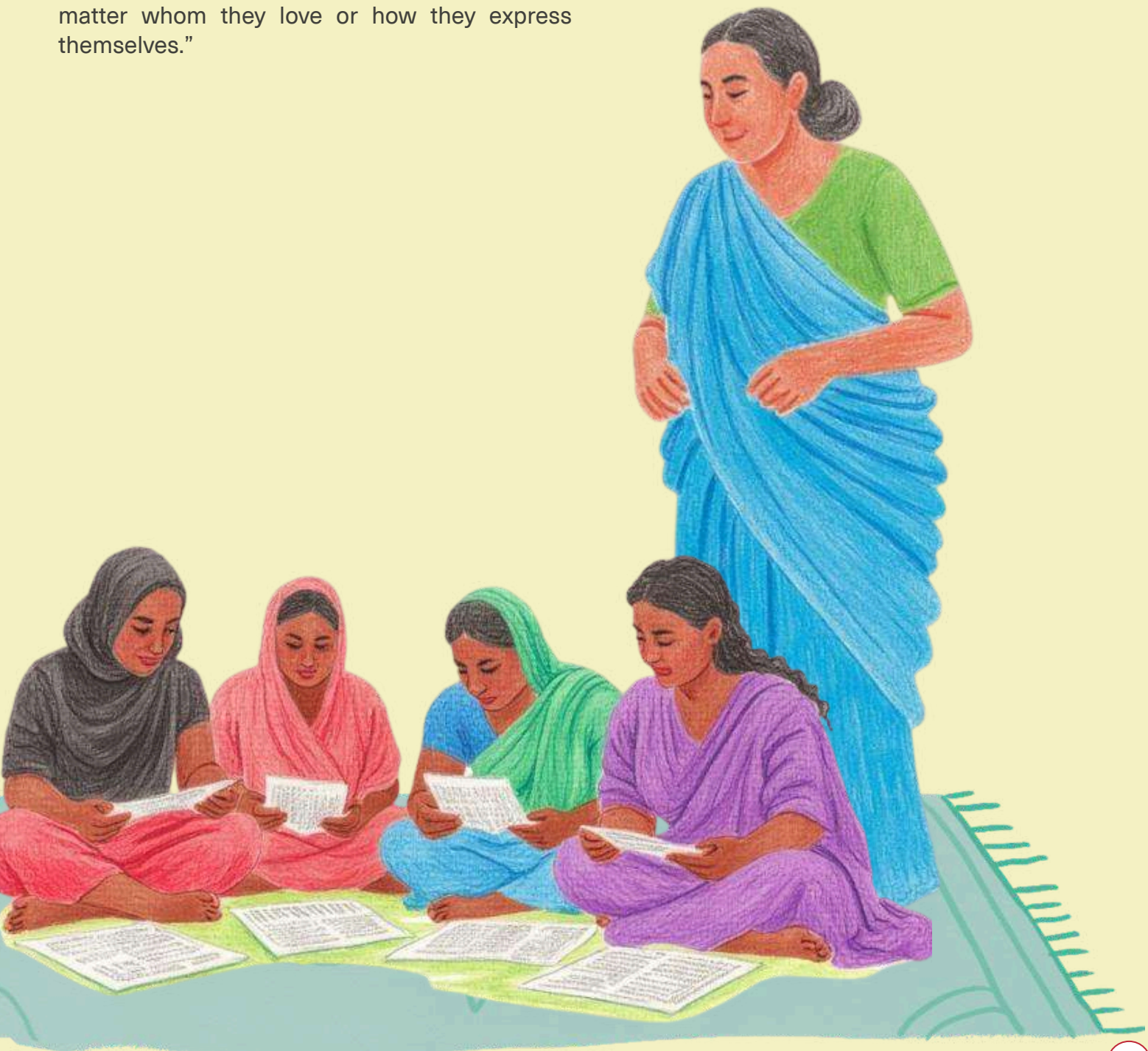
Step 4: Concluding remarks



After a discussion for about 5-10 minutes

Say:

“Sexuality is a natural, diverse, and deeply personal part of being human. Our beliefs and reactions around sexuality are shaped by our upbringing, community, culture, and media. Often, we absorb narrow and judgmental views without questioning them. But sexuality includes a broad spectrum of identities, desires, and experiences—and none of them are wrong. By opening our minds, we create space for dignity, equality, and acceptance for all people—no matter whom they love or how they express themselves.”



Images for Activity 4F



- Honour killings have been reported in northern regions of India (mainly in the Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Bihar).
- According to a survey done by the Delhi-based Indian Population Statistics Survey (IPSS) in mid-2009, almost 695 homicidal cases have been registered as honour killings, in India.



CHAPTER 5

Empowerment through fostering unity and collective strength

This chapter introduces you to an understanding of empowerment grounded in the lived realities of women HBWs. It encourages trainers to see empowerment not as an external gift but as a process of enabling women to recognise and reclaim the power they already possess. Through concepts like agency, decision-making, participation, and leadership, you are invited to create spaces that foster reflection, confidence, and collective strength. The goal is not to teach women what to think or do, but to support them in questioning norms, negotiating for themselves, and building solidarity. As a trainer, stay mindful of your own position and approach sessions with humility, curiosity, and a commitment to co-learning.

Not all the sections are meant **to be read out to trainees** but will help you prepare to guide the session with confidence, clarity, and empathy. Some sections where definitions are given can be read out when you are concluding the exercises. Pl discuss with your co-trainer beforehand.



05.

Empowerment through
fostering unity and collective



5.1 What is empowerment?

A woman's ability to make choices is shaped by her relationships with family, community, and employers. For Women HBW trainers, empowerment isn't about teaching confidence; it's about helping women recognise the power they already have and showing them, they are not alone.

According to **Naila Kabeer (1999)**, empowerment is the process through which those denied choice gain the ability to choose. She describes three dimensions:

- Resources – materials or conditions that support choice
- Agency – the ability to decide, negotiate, and resist
- Achievements – the results of these choices

For women HBWs, empowerment goes beyond skills or income. It includes learning to speak up, negotiate, organise, and challenge gender inequality at home, work, and in the community.

It can begin with small steps like:

- Realising home-based work is valid work
- Making our identity as a Home-Based worker known each time we introduce ourselves to outsiders.
- Demanding payment on time and negotiating for better pay
- Saying “no” to exploitation
- Organising with others for rights

Trainers must create safe spaces where women reflect on their realities, connect their experiences to larger systems of inequality, and imagine new possibilities for themselves and their groups. Empowerment is not giving power—it's removing barriers so women can use the power they already have.

5.2 Agency, Choice, and Decision-Making

Agency refers to the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. It can be active (making decisions) or passive (resisting norms). For women HBWs, exercising agency can be as basic as negotiating fair pay, deciding how to use their earnings, or choosing to join a collective.

Women's agency is often constrained by:

- Lack of access to income or control over it,
- Fear of backlash from men or in-laws,
- Norms that discourage assertiveness or public participation.

But agency also grows through collective spaces - when women see other women question or challenge gendered norms, they begin to reflect, speak up, and take small steps toward greater autonomy.

5.3 Representation and Participation

True empowerment must involve representation - being seen, heard, and counted - and participation - having a seat at the table where decisions are made. Women HBWs are often invisible in public policy and urban planning, but even more so in trade unions and cooperatives.

For women HBWs to move from being “beneficiaries” to being “actors,” they must be encouraged to:

- Attend meetings and forums,
- Speak in community gatherings,
- Take up leadership roles,
- Represent their demands to local authorities.

Participation doesn't only mean being present - it also means being taken seriously. That confidence grows with solidarity, training, and practice.

5.4 Building Self-Confidence and Leadership Skills

Most women HBWs internalise the idea that they are not “leaders” - because society doesn't imagine them that way. They are homemakers, mothers, or workers in the background. Empowerment means helping them reimagine themselves as leaders - capable of speaking, organising, and mobilising. Confidence can be cultivated through:

- Speaking exercises in small groups,
- Peer support circles,
- Exposure to other women leaders from similar backgrounds,
- Recognition and appreciation in community spaces.

Leadership is not just about speaking loudly or leading a rally - it can mean quietly organising five other women, helping them access a government scheme, or supporting someone through domestic violence. These are the forms of leadership.



5.5 Negotiation and Communication Skills

Women HBWs need negotiation skills not only for bargaining with contractors but also within families - with husbands, in-laws, sons, and daughters. Negotiation is often framed as something men do in public life, but for women, negotiating the domestic space is equally political.

Empowering women HBWs with communication tools includes:

- Helping them recognise the value of their labour so they can demand fair wages,
- Teaching them how to say no, how to ask questions, and how to assert boundaries,
- Encouraging them to use mobile phones, WhatsApp, and digital tools safely and confidently for communication and organizing.

5.6 Understanding Rights: Labor Rights, Legal Protections, & Entitlements



Labour Rights and Legal Recognition

Home-based workers are often not recognised as “workers” under conventional labour laws, which are structured around formal workplaces. However, international frameworks like the **ILO Convention 177 on Homework (1996)** emphasise the right of home-based workers to equal treatment and protection. In India, while there is no national law specifically for home-based workers, some sectors may be scheduled and minimum wages decided like for beedi workers, coir workers, handloom workers in several states. But generally they may fall under broader informal worker protections, such as the Unorganized Workers’ Social Security Act (2008). However, lack of implementation and awareness continues to hinder access to these protections.

Legal Protections

Most women HBWs are not covered by minimum wage laws, maternity benefits, occupational safety standards, or grievance redressal mechanisms. Their invisibilised status results in denial of basic protections such as secure contracts, timely payments, and protection from harassment. Subcontracting agents often avoid accountability, and legal systems rarely extend to the spaces where women HBWs operate.

Entitlements and Social Security

Though some women have access to government welfare schemes (such as ration cards, Jan Dhan accounts, or health insurance under Ayushman Bharat), many women HBWs face barriers due to lack of documentation, digital exclusion, and cultural constraints. Schemes like E-SHRAM registration, PM Shram Yogi Maandhan, and various state-level livelihood missions aim to provide pensions, health support, and income security, but they require improved outreach, accessibility, and inclusion. But we must remember that these are schemes and not laws based on workers rights and so can change with the change of every government.



5.7 Collective Action and Forming Support Groups

Need for Collective Mobilisation

Worker-led collectives and unions - such as SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), and HNSA —have played a crucial role in advocating for the recognition, wage rights, and policy inclusion of home-based workers. Understanding rights, therefore, goes beyond individual awareness; it requires collective bargaining power, legal literacy, and policy advocacy to make home-based work visible and valued.

Women HBWs often operate in isolation, lacking visibility, bargaining power, and institutional support. Collective action and support groups have emerged as powerful strategies for building solidarity, asserting rights, and negotiating better working and living conditions. These collectives not only address economic precarity but also challenge gendered power structures and social hierarchies embedded in the informal economy.

Why Collective Action Matters

Women HBWs typically work from their homes, often under piece-rate or subcontracted arrangements. This isolation makes it difficult for them to identify as workers, access legal protections, or demand fair wages. Collective action—through unions, cooperatives, or self-help groups—helps overcome invisibility by enabling a shared voice, mutual support, and political agency.

For instance, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India has successfully organised thousands of home-based workers into cooperatives and trade unions. SEWA's work shows how organising issues such as wage theft, social security, and market access can lead to tangible policy changes, legal recognition, and improved livelihoods. It also highlights how the formation of a collective worker identity enables women to negotiate with contractors, local governments, and state institutions.

Forming Solidarities: Beyond Economic Issues

Support groups and collectives also create safe spaces for women to share experiences of gender-based violence, caste discrimination, digital exclusion, and health concerns—especially in home-based work contexts, where the boundaries between the private and public spheres are blurred. Through peer education, skill training, legal awareness sessions, and shared childcare responsibilities, these groups nurture solidarities grounded in lived experiences.

In South Asia, networks like Homenet South Asia have built cross-border solidarities among women HBWs in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India, advocating for labour-friendly policies and international recognition (HNSA, 2020). Their work is rooted in the understanding that women's economic rights are inseparable from social justice, and that collective organising must be intersectional and locally grounded.

Trainer's Note: Reflection for Trainers

Before facilitating these sessions, trainers must reflect on their own power and location. Are you speaking on behalf of women HBWs, or *with* them? Do your sessions allow women to ask questions, challenge ideas, and reimagine their lives - or are they passive listeners? Empowerment grows not from instruction, but from dialogue and discovery. This means that the trainer's job is not to "give" confidence but to create spaces where confidence can emerge - through sharing, listening, and recognition.

ACTIVITY 5A

“Where Do We Have Power?” – Understanding Empowerment, Agency, and Decision-Making

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections Annexure ii before conducting the exercise.

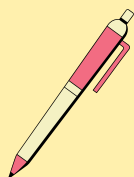
Theme:

Understanding agency and empowerment, recognising existing decision-making power in daily life, Differentiating between spaces of control inside and outside the home.

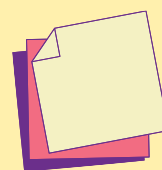
Material Required:



Chart paper
(2 sheets)



Marker pens (2–3)



Sticky notes (10 per
participant)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINER:

Step 1: Prepare the Space

Place two large chart papers in the front of the room, labeled: **“Inside the Home”**, **“Outside the Home”**

Then ask them:

“Based on the list you have made, notice whether you have more list under inside home or outside home.” Also say “There is no right answer – each one of us will have different lists and that is ok.”

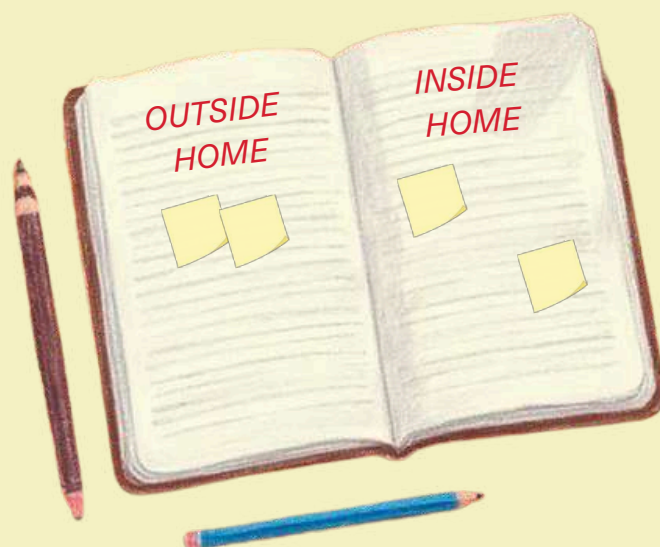
Step 2: Distribute Sticky Notes

Give each participant sticky notes and ask them to think of the past two days of their life and first think and write down in their notebooks all the decisions they took during the past two days. These could be decisions about work they do in the home or their work outside, decisions about family members or others. These can be small and big decisions.

Say - “Make two sections in your note book and write on top in one section – Outside home and on top in the other section Inside Home. Now write the decisions under the appropriate category”

You may need to help the participants to think through what to call a ‘decision.’

If you are having more decisions under inside home, then write on the sticky note inside Home and if you have more decisions under outside home then write outside home on the sticky note given to you. Pl also put your names on the sticky note.



Step 3: Place the Notes

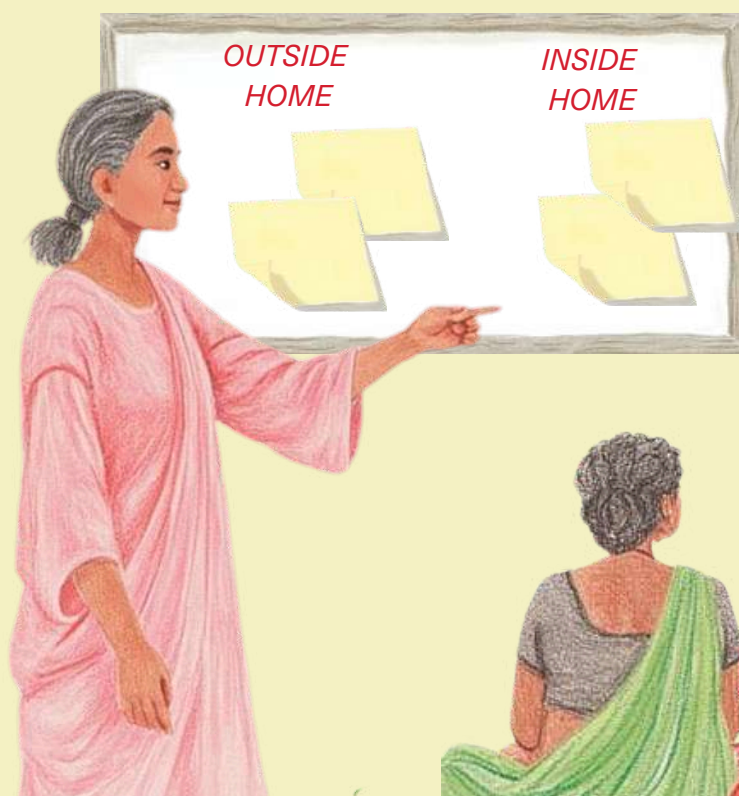
Invite participants to walk up and place each sticky note under either **“Inside the Home”** or **“Outside the Home.”**

Step 4: Facilitate Reflection

Read out the names of one woman at a time from each of the categories. Ask for some women to volunteer to say why she chose to put her name under her chosen category. Request her to briefly share her thoughts. After listening to about 3 women from each category, ask if any other participants have a reason that is different from the ones already shared.

Emphasise:

- Agency exists even in small, everyday decisions.
- Even though we make many decisions, we are told again and again that women cannot think, they have no power and we too start believing it.
- Let us start by first acknowledging that we have power and agency to decide.
- Empowerment is not about giving women power—it is about recognising and expanding the power they already hold.



Step 5: Group Reflection



Ask the group: **“Are there areas where you’d like to feel more powerful?”**

Allow 2–3 participants to respond. Thank them warmly.

Step 6: Trainer Feedback Questions

Ask:

- **“Was it helpful to reflect on where you feel empowered?”**
- **“Did seeing others’ responses affect how you see your own power?”**

Note participant reflections and acknowledge shared experiences.

Step 7: Concluding remarks



Say to the group:

“This activity reminds us that we all make important decisions in our lives—both inside and outside the home. Empowerment doesn’t always come from outside help. It begins when we start recognising our own ability to act, decide, and influence. When we share our stories, we see that we are not alone—and that’s where collective strength begins.”

Affirm everyone’s contributions and validate different forms of agency shared in the room.

ACTIVITY 5B

“I Am a Leader When...” – Building Confidence and Leadership

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 5.8 before conducting the exercise.

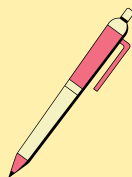
Theme:

Understanding leadership as action, not position, building self-recognition and confidence, Encouraging mutual support among women

Material Required:



*Blank cards or thick paper
(1 per participant)*



*Coloured
pens/pencils*

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINER:

Step 1: Introduction and Distribution

Hand out one blank card and coloured pens to each participant. Say: “Think of a time you helped someone – even in a small way – at home, at work, or in your community.”

Step 2: Writing or Drawing Reflection

Ask participants to write or draw a sentence starting with: “I was a leader when I...”

Encourage a range of examples – e.g. resolving a family conflict, helping someone access a ration card, or negotiating with a contractor. Some may be action they took individually and some actions could be those that took with a few others.

Step 3: Group Sharing & Feedback Questions



Ask:

- **“Did this help you see yourself differently?”**
- **“Would you feel comfortable encouraging another woman in your area to do this?”**

Encourage a few participants to respond and acknowledge each answer with care and warmth.

Invite 3–4 volunteers to share their reflections.

Remind the group: “Leadership comes in many forms – quiet, supportive, caring, assertive. It doesn’t have to be loud or formal.”

Step 4: Trainer Input- Leadership as Action

Say:

“Leadership is not about position, title, or education. It’s about action and care. Every woman here is a leader in her own way. In collectives, we lead when we support each other.”

Leadership and Empowerment can go together when our leadership is not just about putting ourselves first, but when we are in collectives or in sangathan we speak about leadership for social justice. So when we use power with others, when we share our knowledge with others and when we choose to act as a group we are using “power with” or collective power.

Step 5 Concluding Remarks



Say to the group:

“This activity shows us that leadership is already present in our everyday actions. Whether it's speaking up, helping someone, or standing by another woman—these are all acts of leadership. You don't need a position to lead. You only need to recognise your own strength, and support others to do the same. In collectives, this everyday leadership is what creates real change.”



ACTIVITY 5C

“Know Your Rights, Build Your Group” – Labour Rights, Legal Awareness, and Collective Action

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 5.7- 5.8 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Labour Rights, Legal Awareness, and Collective Action

Material Required:



3 scenario cards
(pre-written)



Two signs: “Individual Action” and “Collective Action” (place on opposite sides of the room)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRAINER:

Step 1

Prepare and read aloud short scenario cards (1 per minute), such as:

- A HBW doesn't get paid for 3 weeks of work.
- A contractor deducts money for a “damaged” piece.
- A woman is not allowed by her in-laws to attend a union meeting.

Step 2

For each scenario, ask participants to move to the side of the room where they feel the solution lies – Individual Action or Collective Action. Then ask why. (5 minutes)

Step 3

After 3–4 examples, *summarise*:

“Some actions we can take alone – but real change often needs collective voice and solidarity.” Mention examples like SEWA and HNSA, and how they negotiated with governments and contractors. (2 minutes)

Step 4

Ask participants:

- ***Did you find it helpful to think through real-life situations together?***
- ***Do you see the value of collectives more clearly now?***

Step 5

Say to the group:

“This activity reminds us that while we may face problems as individuals, we are not alone. When we come together, we gain strength to demand fair wages, stand up to injustice, and protect each other. Collective action has always been the most powerful tool for women HBWs to make their voices heard. Groups like SEWA and HNSA have shown that change is possible when women organise.”

CHAPTER 6

Engaging Men and Communities for Gender Equality

More and more women are becoming leaders and feeling empowered as they start to see the barriers they face, understand their own strength, and take action together. Along with these changes, it is also important to understand the role of men in a patriarchal system and how masculinity is constructed through social norms. As we understand these concepts, we can work more effectively to bring about social justice.



DISCRETION to Be USED: Please use this section based on a discussion with the organization representatives to decide which of the sessions to conduct.

06.

Engaging men & communities - For gender unity



In this chapter we understand how to engage men and communities to bring about transformative changes.

6.1 Men and masculinity – Definitions/ Concepts

Masculinity refers to traits and behaviours often linked to men, such as strength, control, aggression, and emotional restraint. It is socially constructed and varies across cultures and time. Men are often expected to act tough, assert power, and sometimes use violence to maintain control. Schools and other institutions can reinforce these harmful ideas, often without realising it.

In patriarchal societies, masculinity is tied to power, maintained through systems like politics, religion, family, and education. However, masculinity isn't a single experience. It's shaped by caste, class, race, and other identities. Some men face pressure to prove their masculinity, which can cause emotional stress and inner conflict.

Masculinity includes both privilege and vulnerability. For example, Dalit men may be oppressed by caste but still hold power over Dalit women. Dalit activists challenge simple views of “powerful men vs. powerless women,” pointing out that caste and gender interact in complex ways.

Not all men hold the same power, and not all women are equally oppressed. Understanding masculinity through an intersectional lens helps us see the layers of both dominance and discrimination more clearly.

6.2 Different masculinities

There are the different types of masculinities:

Hegemonic Masculinity: This is the most common form of masculinity linked to power, control, aggression, and emotional silence. It sidelines other ways of being male and supports patriarchal ideas.

Example: A man who thinks showing feelings or doing care work is “unmanly.”

Subordinate Masculinities: These are forms of masculinity that differ from the dominant norm—like those of queer men, Dalit men, Adivasi men, or men with disabilities. They are often excluded or looked down upon.

Example: Adivasi men working in cities as daily wage laborers are seen as inferior or “backward” by upper-caste urban people, and their culture and work are often disrespected.

Marginalised Masculinities: These masculinities are shaped by poverty and social disadvantage—like those of working-class, migrant, or oppressed-caste men. They face insecurity, exclusion, and constant monitoring.

Example: Migrant men from Bihar or Jharkhand working in construction in cities often live in poor conditions, face police suspicion, and are excluded from urban life—even though they support their families.



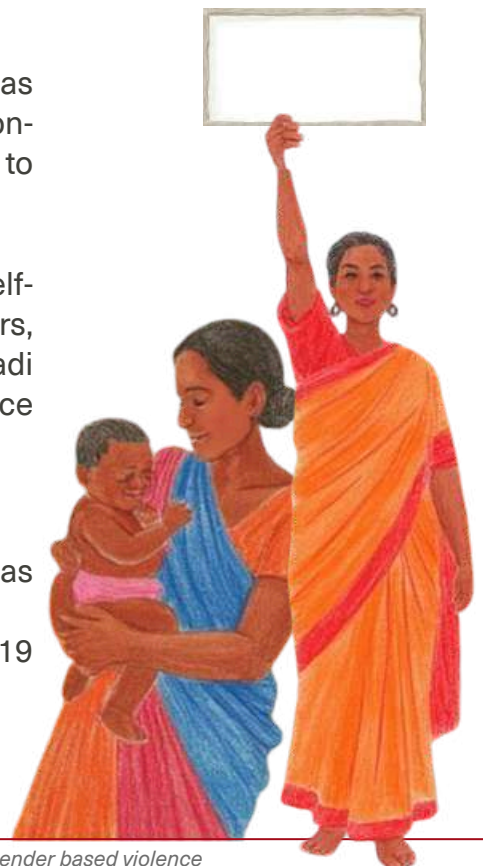
6.3 Femininity

Femininity refers to traits traditionally linked to women—such as care, softness, emotional expression, and exclusion from decision-making. It's often seen as weak or passive and is connected to objectification and even blamed for violence.

But today, femininity is being reshaped through resilience and self-reliance. Women are asserting strength by caring for others, demanding rights, and leading change. From ASHA and Anganwadi workers protesting for fair wages to digital creators claiming space online, modern femininity shows courage and leadership.

Examples:

- **Femininity:** Advertisements often show women only as caregivers or objects of desire, reinforcing limited roles.
- **Resilience:** ASHA workers in Kerala protested during COVID-19 for fair wages and safety, showing collective strength.



6.4 Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is the belief that being heterosexual is the only “normal” way to be. It assumes there are only two genders - male and female - and that everyone should act according to the roles linked to the sex they were assigned at birth. This idea pressures people to fit into fixed gender and sexual roles and makes anyone who doesn’t - like queer, trans, or non-binary people—feel excluded or invisible.

Example: When adults ask children, “Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend?” they assume everyone is straight and reinforce strict gender roles—even through casual comments.

6.5 Role of Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equality

Men and boys can help build gender equality by challenging patriarchy, redefining masculinity, and supporting more equal spaces. Traditional masculinity often links strength with control and emotional silence, which can lead to harm and inequality. But men can show strength through empathy, care, and respect.

At home, sharing tasks like cooking or childcare eases women’s workload and teaches children about fairness. In schools, workplaces, and communities, men can support women’s leadership, speak up against sexist behavior, and be allies by listening and creating space for women’s voices.

Example: Campaigns like MenEngage Alliance and #HeForShe show how men can take action against gender-based violence and support women’s rights.



6.6 Addressing Harmful Social Norms within Families and Communities

Men can play a powerful role in challenging harmful social norms that begin within families and communities. Patriarchal practices—like favouring sons, expecting women to do all care work, or discouraging boys from showing emotions—often start at home. As fathers, brothers, or elders, men can use their influence to question and change these patterns.

Example:

A father supporting his daughter’s education or sharing housework sets a strong example. Men who speak out against dowry, child marriage, or violence help break harmful traditions and show that gender equality is everyone’s responsibility.

At the community level, male leaders—religious, political, or social—can shift public attitudes by speaking up for girls’ rights and gender justice in schools, temples, panchayats, and workplaces.

6.7 Strategies for Community Sensitisation and Advocacy

Effective Community Sensitisation and Advocacy: Effective community sensitisation and advocacy must be inclusive, participatory, and rooted in local contexts. Campaigns using local media—like street plays, folk songs, radio, and posters—can powerfully challenge gender stereotypes and promote equality in ways people relate to.

Spaces like Gram Sabhas offer platforms for men and women to discuss harmful norms. Working with trusted local groups—such as religious bodies, self-help groups, and PTAs—can widen the reach of these efforts.

Community influencers like teachers, ASHA/Anganwadi workers, and youth leaders can act as role models when trained in gender sensitivity and rights.

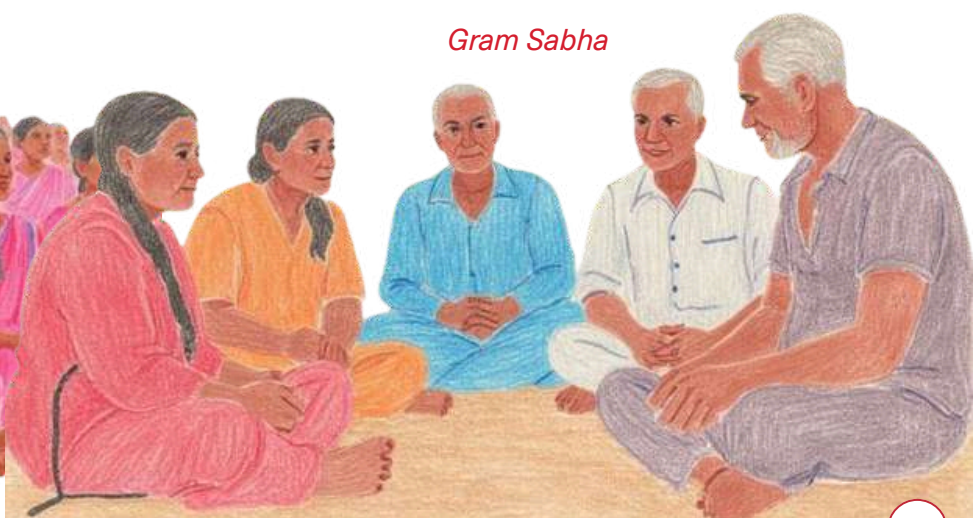
School-based interventions—like gender modules and life skills education—help shape equitable attitudes early. At the same time, policy advocacy at the panchayat level (e.g., gender budgeting, help desks, and women’s safety plans) builds structural support for change.

Monitoring and community feedback ensure strategies are adapted to what works best—building collective ownership and lasting change.

ASHA Workers Rally



Gram Sabha



ACTIVITY 6A

"What Makes a Man?" – Understanding Masculinity

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 6.1 - 6.2 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Basics of masculinity, Types of masculinity

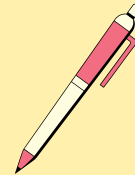
Material Required:



*Chart paper or
whiteboard*



Masking tape



Markers

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Form small groups

Ask participants to form small groups of 4–5 members. Hand each group one sheet of chart paper and a few sketch pens.

Say:

"We're going to explore what society usually expects from men. Please work together and write down qualities, behaviors, or roles that you think are commonly linked to being a man in your community."

Step 2: Group writing & reflection



Give the groups time to list down their thoughts. Encourage them to think about what boys are told growing up, how men are expected to behave, and what is seen as "unmanly."

Walk around and listen to their conversations. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers—just observations from daily life.



Step 3: Group sharing



Ask each group to quickly share 2–3 points from their list. Write down repeated or striking ideas on a board or large sheet for everyone to see.

Say:

"These are common traits or expectations associated with masculinity. Where do you think these ideas come from—family, media, religion, or school? Are these always helpful or fair to everyone?"

Step 4: Debrief and input

Summarise by explaining that masculinity is not natural or fixed—it is shaped by society. Just as certain behaviours, emotions are expected of girls and women, the society has also fixed certain kinds of behaviour & emotions for boys and men. Use this moment to introduce terms like “hegemonic masculinity” and how it relates to power, control, and emotional suppression. Briefly touch on the fact that masculinities are diverse.

Ideally the society should expect all children and adults to be good human beings that are empathetic, respectful and caring.

Step 5: Concluding remarks



“Masculinity is something we learn, and because we learn it, we can also question and change it. Not all men experience masculinity in the same way—class, caste, race, ability, and gender identity matter. We can teach our children and family to recognise that it is not important to be like a man or like a girl but more important to be a good human being.”



ACTIVITY 6B

Men and Masculinity

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 6.1 - 6.2 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

Masculinity is experienced differently by different men based on their social identities.

Trainers Note:

Prepare 4 to 6 simple character cards with brief descriptions.
Each card should represent a different kind of man, for example:

1. A dalit sanitation worker
2. A migrant construction worker
3. A queer man living in a small town
4. A man with disability
5. An Adivasi farmer
6. A college-going young man from a conservative family



STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Form small groups

Divide participants into small groups. Give each group one character card.

Step 2: Group Discussion



Ask groups to imagine the life of their character and discuss:

- **What does “being a man” mean to this person?**
- **What kind of pressures does he face as a man?**
- **How is he treated by other men or society?**
- **Can he express emotions, ask for help, or show weakness?**
- **What forms of masculinity does he embody—hegemonic, alternative, or marginalised? How do these expressions intersect with his social location (such as caste, class, religion, disability or sexuality)?**

Step 3: Group presentations



Each group presents a short summary of their discussion to the larger group.

Step 4: Facilitate discussion

Use these leading questions to guide reflection:

- **Do all men experience masculinity in the same way?**
- **Who gets to decide what the “right” way to be a man is?**
- **What happens to men who don’t or can’t fit the dominant idea of masculinity?**

Step 5: Concluding remarks



Masculinity is not one-size-fits-all. It is shaped by caste, class, region, religion, disability, and sexuality. Some men are celebrated; others are ridiculed or excluded. By recognising multiple masculinities, we can build more respectful, equal, and understanding communities - for both men and women.

ACTIVITY 6C

“Femininity Then and Now” Exploring Change Over Time

45
minutes

Reference: Read sections 6.3 before conducting the exercise.

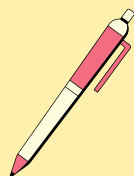
Theme:

To help participants recognise how femininity has been socially constructed and how it is evolving in contemporary society.

Material Required:



Chart paper divided into two columns: “Traditional Femininity” and “Emerging Femininity”



Markers



Images or cards (optional) showing examples of women in traditional and contemporary roles

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Form small groups

Divide participants into small groups (4–6 members per group).

Step 2: Brainstorming Activity

Ask each group to brainstorm and list traits or expectations associated with femininity:

In the first column, write traits traditionally associated with women, such as obedience, dependence, emotional sacrifice, nurturing.

In the second column, write emerging traits seen in women today, such as resilience, leadership, digital literacy, and financial independence.

Step 3: Add examples

Encourage groups to include examples like:

- ASHA and Anganwadi workers protesting for fair wages
- Women-led collectives and community actions
- Women in political power - Sarpanch/ ward leaders
- Women bus drivers.



Step 4: Group Sharing & Discussion



Bring the full group together. Invite each small group to share a few key points from their chart.

Lead a collective discussion using the following questions:

- ***“Which traditional ideas of femininity still dominate your community?”***
- ***“What does ‘strength through care’ mean to you?”***
- ***“Can femininity include assertiveness and independence?”***

Step 5: Trainer Input

Say:

“Gender roles are not fixed—they change over time based on what’s happening in our families, communities, and politics. While traditional femininity has often been about silence or sacrifice, many women today are reshaping what it means to be feminine—by leading, resisting, and demanding justice.”

Step 6: Concluding remarks



“Femininity is not one thing. It can be soft and strong, caring and assertive. It becomes powerful when women define it for themselves. Let us celebrate this shift—not as a rejection of care or emotion—but as a recognition that these qualities are strengths when chosen freely.”



ACTIVITY 6D

“Whose Femininity?” – Reimagining Gender Norms Through Role Play

30
minutes

Reference: Read sections 6.3 before conducting the exercise.

Theme:

How femininity is perceived differently across class, caste, and profession, and to reclaim it as a source of strength.

Material Required:



Role cards with different characters (see below)



Simple props or scarves for enactment (optional)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Prepare material

Create simple role cards with the following characters (you may modify based on local relevance):

- An ASHA worker leading a protest for better pay
- A young woman creator speaking out online against harassment
- A rural woman deciding to leave an abusive marriage
- A domestic worker negotiating wages with her employer
- A student confronting sexist jokes at her college

Step 2: Form small groups

Form 4–5 small groups and assign one role card to each group.

Step 3: Explain the Activity

Tell the group:

“Each group will act out a short scene showing the life of the woman in their card. Focus on how she responds to a challenge or expresses her strength. You will have 5 minutes to prepare and perform.”



Step 4: Group Performances



Each group presents their 1–2-minute scene to the larger group.

Step 5: Group Reflection after every scene



After every performance, ask the full group the following:

- ***“How did this woman express her femininity?”***
- ***“Was she passive or powerful?”***
- ***“What social challenges did she face?”***

Step 6: Facilitate a Discussion

Guide a short group conversation using these prompts:

- ***“Did any performance challenge your idea of what femininity looks like?”***
- ***“Can care and resistance go together? How?”***
- ***“Who defines what is ‘appropriate’ femininity—and who benefits from those definitions?”***

Step 7: Concluding remarks



Say:

“Femininity is not weakness—it can be nurturing and bold, caring and assertive. When women define their own femininity, they push back against control and reclaim their agency. Resistance, care, and dignity are all forms of power.”



CHAPTER 7

Resources and References



07.

Resources and References



7.1 Gender-related Laws and Policies Relevant to Home-based Workers

- The Code on Social Security, 2020 – provisions for unorganised and home-based workers
- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 – rights and mechanisms for informal workers
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 – relevance for economic and emotional security
- The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 (now subsumed) – historical significance and schemes still operating
- National Policy on Safety and Health for Women in the Informal Sector (drafts and state-level efforts)
- ILO Convention 177 on Homework – international standard, India's position, advocacy relevance

7.2 Support Organisations and Helplines

a. National/All-India Helplines

- 181 – Women's Helpline
- 1091 – Police Helpline for Women
- 1098 – Childline (for children in distress)
- One Stop Centers (OSC) and details by district/state

b. State and Local Organisations (Add more and customise per region)

- SEWA Bharat and state chapters
- Homenet South Asia (HNSA) country offices
- Jagori, Delhi – for legal counselling
- SNEHA, Mumbai – support in urban poor communities
- SWATI, Gujarat – rural women's GBV and livelihood support

c. Legal and Social Support Networks (Add more and customise per region)

- District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA)
- Women and Child Development Departments (WCD)
- Police Mahila Helpdesks and Special Cells for Women

7.3 Suggested Readings, Videos, and Learning Tools

a. Short Readings (English only, add Tamil, Hindi and Nepalese)

- Booklets by HNSA on rights of home-based workers
- SEWA's guides on work and dignity for informal women workers
- ISST policy briefs on gender and informality
- "Homeworkers Worldwide" – ILO/WEIGO reports
- Easy-read summaries of ILO Conventions relevant to women

b. Videos and Documentaries

- "If Women Stop, the World Stops" – short film on invisible women's labour
- "Naye Daur Ki Nayi Nari" – video series by Jagori on gender and work
- "We Make Change" (Homenet South Asia) – on home-based workers' collectives
- Local language videos explaining laws like PWDVA, POSH

c. Interactive Tools and Activities

- Gender role charting exercises (SEWA/ISST manuals)
- Body mapping and safety mapping tools
- Role plays scripts for mock negotiation or police complaint filing
- Community theatre videos on gender violence and work rights

Annexure 01

Chapter 1

SECTION 1.3 Introduction and Setting the Tone - Tod Tod Ke Bandhano

Ko <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKJKQXwrG5Y&t=2s>



Chapter 2

ACTIVITY 2B: Reflecting on Agency Through Storytelling

Video 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fViaDJParBU>



Chapter 4

ACTIVITY 4A: “Who Does What?” – Understanding Gender Roles, Gender Division of Labour, and Pay Gaps

Video - https://youtu.be/_rgmvjPg_QA?si=roaSIK0UjUhcTRTN



ACTIVITY 4B: “Who Gets to Decide?” – Gender Equality in Daily Life

Video 1 - <https://youtu.be/9HklP4YkXu4?feature=share>

Video 2 - <https://youtu.be/ltEBXbdliVA?feature=shared>



Activity 4E: Understanding Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

Video 1 - Tea Consent Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gp6allALDHA>

Video 2 - <https://youtu.be/vVvOp4l9r20?feature=shared>

Video 3 - <https://youtu.be/YVkBbgqYlgc?feature=shared>

Video 4 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GscQIVJK4YQ>



Activity 4F: Activity: Understanding Our Bodies, Our Desires and Our Agency

Video - Sexuality Is Not Taboo – Video Link :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mvxd-28ULIU>



Annexure 02: Status of Women in India

Table 01 : Constitutional Provisions

Article	Description
Article 14	Ensures equality before the law and legal protection against women-based crimes.
Article 15	Prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including sex. Article 15(3) allows special provisions for women and children.
Article 16	Ensures equal employment opportunities and prohibits discrimination in public employment.
Article 39	Ensures equal rights to livelihood and equal pay for equal work for men and women.
Article 42	Mandates just and humane work conditions and maternity relief.
Article 243	Reserves seats for women in Gram Panchayats, empowering rural women.

Table 02 : Statistics in India

Category	Data
Female Literacy Rate (2022)	70.3% (Kerala: 95.3%, Bihar: 61.8%)
Maternal Mortality Rate (2023)	80 deaths per 100,000 live births
Female Labour Force Participation (2023–24)	41.70%
Women-Owned Bank Accounts (2023)	39.2% (Rural: 42.2%)
Women in Lok Sabha (2024)	13.6% (74 of 543 MPs)
Reported Rape Cases (2021)	31,677 (avg. 86 per day)
Subhadra Yojana (Odisha, 2024)	₹50,000 over five years for EWS women (21–60 years)

Table 03 : Acts

1	Acts Ensuring Women's Protection
2	Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
3	Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
4	Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
5	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
6	Civil Procedure Code, 1973
7	Indian Penal Code, 1860
8	Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
9	Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
10	Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
11	National Commission for Women Act, 1990
12	Minimum Wages Act, 1948
13	Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976
14	Special Marriage Act, 1954
15	Foreign Marriage Act, 1969
16	Indian Divorce Act, 1869
17	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
18	Guardians and Wards Act, 1869
19	Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

Annexure 03: Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Addressing Sexuality in Gender Training for Women Home-Based Workers

Objective:

To ensure a respectful, safe, and inclusive environment when discussing sexuality during gender training sessions with women HBWs, recognising the cultural, social, and personal sensitivities around the topic.

1. Preparation Before the Session

- **Understand the Context:** Research local norms, beliefs, and taboos related to sexuality, particularly in the communities represented by the women HBWs.
- **Build Trust:** Sexuality should not be addressed in the first session. Establish a safe group dynamic and rapport over earlier sessions before introducing the topic.
- **Consult Organisational Leaders:** Check with community leaders or women's group representatives about appropriate language, tone, and depth of discussion.
- **Prepare Materials Carefully:** Use culturally sensitive, clear, and non-judgmental language. Visual aids should be respectful and easy to relate to.
- **Set Ground Rules:** Include confidentiality, non-judgment, and the right to pass (i.e., not answer or share).

2. During the Session

- **Create a Safe Space:** Begin by revisiting ground rules and reminding participants that all experiences and identities are valid and respected.
- **Use Simple, Respectful Language:** Avoid medical jargon or overly academic terms. Use familiar metaphors and everyday examples.
- **Encourage Voluntary Sharing:** Never force anyone to speak about personal experiences. Affirm all contributions with sensitivity.
- **Link to Everyday Realities:** Connect sexuality to bodily autonomy, health, relationships, work, safety, and rights—issues relevant to women HBWs.
- **Acknowledge Diversity:** Recognise that sexuality includes a range of identities, orientations, and expressions. Do not assume heteronormativity or binary gender norms.
- **Monitor Group Dynamics:** Be alert to discomfort, teasing, or silencing. Intervene gently but firmly to maintain respect.

3. Handling Resistance or Discomfort

- **Normalise the Topic:** Explain why sexuality is an important part of gender and body rights, and how it links to health, consent, and violence.
- **Respond with Empathy:** If someone becomes emotional or resistant, validate their feelings without dismissing the topic.

4. Post-Session Follow-Up

- **Check in with Participants:** Privately follow up with anyone who seemed distressed or particularly affected.
- **Offer Referrals:** Provide contact information of counselors, health workers, or helplines if available.
- **Debrief with Co-Facilitators:** Reflect on what went well and what needs adjustment for future sessions.

5. Do's and Don'ts Summary

Do	Don't
Use respectful, inclusive language	Use shaming or moralistic language
Respect silence or hesitation	Force participants to share or engage
Relate to everyday lived experiences	Assume universal experiences or norms
Provide factual, rights-based information	Spread myths, stereotypes, or taboos
Protect confidentiality and safety	Ignore signs of distress or conflict

Notes:



VOICE WORK POWER

A Training Manual

