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Inclusive Women's Action Plan

A Parellel Report on India's Implementation of
the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

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Preface

Violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations. It is rooted in gendered social structures rather than individual and random acts; it cuts across age, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries; affects all societies; and is a major obstacle to ending gender inequality and discrimination globally (UN General Assembly, 2006).

The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (General Assembly Resolution 48/104 *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, 1993).

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 was a landmark event that set the pace for women’s empowerment. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) standing on the pillars of human rights and gender equality was accepted by India without reservation. 2020 is a landmark year, and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action is a critical time for India to assess its commitment towards advancing the status of women.

This report has been drawn up the Centre for Social Research, an organisation that has been working for the rights of women and girls in India since 1983. In this report we have attempted to highlight four distinct spheres in which women experience violence (domestic, cyber, environmental, and political); outlining the issue, noting the loopholes in the legal and social systems, and proposing action points to combat the issue.

This report is an evaluation of the current landscape, and the progress that has been made thus far on the issue of advancing women’s rights globally, but more particularly in India. The report is laid out in the following sections: the first section will address domestic violence, the second, cyber security, the third, women and climate change. The fourth and final section will address women’s political participation. Each section presents the issue and details the current landscape in India on the same, and is followed by “action points” proposed by the organisation to advance the issue.

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Domestic Violence against Women and Girls in India

Violence against women or gender-based violence is a worldwide pandemic, affecting 1 in 3 women throughout their lives¹. It is one of the most pervasive forms of violence, prevalent across the globe which violates women's basic human rights. The United Nations, defines violence against women as "any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (United Nations General Assembly, 1993)². This section of the report will expound on the topic of domestic violence against women, by focussing primarily on sex selective abortions and intimate partner violence as forms of violence against women. Along with this, it will highlight the work done by Centre for Social Research in the field of violence against women

<i>Violence against women throughout the life cycle</i>	
<i>Phase</i>	<i>Type of violence</i>
Pre-birth	Sex-selective abortion; effects of battering during pregnancy on birth outcomes
Infancy	Female infanticide; physical, sexual and psychological abuse
Girlhood	Child marriage; female genital mutilation; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; incest; child prostitution and pornography
Adolescence and adulthood	Dating and courtship violence (e.g. acid throwing and date rape); economically coerced sex (e.g. school girls having sex with "sugar daddies" in return for school fees); incest; sexual abuse in the workplace; rape; sexual harassment; forced prostitution and pornography; trafficking in women; partner violence; marital rape; dowry abuse and murders; partner homicide; psychological abuse; abuse of women with disabilities; forced pregnancy
Elderly	Forced "suicide" or homicide of widows for economic reasons; sexual, physical and psychological abuse

Image: Violence Against Women: Definition and Scope of the Problem (WHO, 1997)

¹World Health Organisation (WHO), 2017, Violence Against Women, Key Facts, <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/violence-against-women>

²World Health organisation (WHO), July 1997. "Violence against women, definition and scope of the problem" <https://www.who.int/gender/violence/v4.pdf>

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence refers to the wilful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behaviour as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse. The frequency and severity of domestic violence can vary dramatically; however, the one constant component of domestic violence is one partner's consistent efforts to maintain power and control over the other.

Domestic violence is an epidemic affecting individuals in every community regardless of age, economic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or nationality. It is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behaviour that is only a fraction of a systematic pattern of dominance and control. Domestic violence can result in physical injury, psychological trauma, and in severe cases, even death. The devastating physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and span a lifetime³.

Sex Selective Abortions:

Sex selective abortion is the practice of terminating a pregnancy based upon the predicted sex of the infant (female foetus). It was noted that in 2010, 126 million girls were missing due to sex-selective abortions, and it has been projected that by 2020, 142 million women and girls will be missing worldwide. "Gender-based sex selection can be measured using sex ratio at birth, a comparison of the number of boys born versus the number of girls born in a given period. The biologically normal sex ratio at birth can range from 102 to 106 males per 100 females. When many more boys are born than girls, it is a sign that sex selection is taking place."(UNFPA)

The pressure on women to bear sons in India is immense. A lower status is attached to girl children because they are viewed as burdens – largely (though not exclusively) due to the dowry system. Sons, on the other hand, are seen as investments for parents as they are expected to take care of them in their old age. If a woman does not bear a son, her bodily autonomy is violated through the process of sex-selection. It may be argued, in certain instances, that women make the choice to go through the process of sex-selective abortions. However, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the context within which such a choice is being made. The fact that a woman makes this choice in the Indian, patriarchal context, reveals that even though the choice is her own, it has underpinnings of son-preference (Oomman & Ganatra, 2002).

³ National Council for Action on Domestic Violence: <https://www.ncadv.org/learn-more>

The Asian Centre for Human Rights released a report titled “Female Infanticide Worldwide: The case for action by UN Human Rights Council”⁴, which analysis infanticide patterns across continents. According to the report, India has one of the highest female feticide rates in the world, 7548 million “missing girls” in the year 2011. During the period of 1991-2011, the sex ratio declined from 945 to 914 females 1000 males.

Rank	Name of the country	Sex ratio at birth
No.1	Liechtenstein	126 males/100 females
No.2	China	115 males/100 female
No.3	Armenia	113 males/100 females
No.4	India	112 males/100 females
No.5	Azerbaijan	111 males/100 females
No.5	Viet Nam	111 males/100 females
No.6	Albania	110 males/ 100 females
No.7	Georgia	108 males/100 females
No.8	South Korea	107 males/100 females
No.8	Tunisia	107 males/ 100 females
No.9	Nigeria	106 males/ 100 female
No.10	Pakistan	105 males/100 females
No.11	Nepal	104 males/ 100 females

Image: Countries with the most skewed sex ratios, 2016

In India two laws prevent sex selective abortions – Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostics Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selective Abortions) Act, 1994, and Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971⁵. While the latter lays down certain conditions under which an abortion may be allowed, the former act explicitly criminalizes the practice of sex-selective abortions. Along with this, the Act also prohibits the sale of any equipment which is capable of determining the foetus’ sex to any person or laboratory which isn’t registered under the Act. However, even though these laws make sex-selective abortions completely illegal in the country, between 2000 and 2014 12,771,043 abortions had taken place – making the daily average 2,332 abortions a day. The biggest reason for this could be the non-performance of the State Advisory Committees which work on the implementation of the laws. There are no guidelines or measures to stringently monitor ultrasound clinics. These clinics are required to maintain records of scans they perform which are often modified, and the clinics that violate this requirement are let off, with only a small fine. Research has shown that India is missing as many as 63 million women and girls, and more than 21 million girls are unwanted by their families⁶.

⁴ Asian Centre for Human Rights, June 2016 “Female Infanticide Worldwide: The case for action by the Human Rights Council”. <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Femalefoeticideworldwide.pdf>

⁵ The Law Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/sex-selection/india.php>

⁶ The Guardian (2018), “More than 63 women ‘missing’ in India, statistics show. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/30/more-than-63-million-women-missing-in-india-statistics-show>

Research reflects that despite prenatal sex determination effectively being illegal since 1994; sex-selective abortions continue to be prevalent and rampant in India. As mentioned above, this has much to do with poor implementation and enforcement. Meanwhile sex selective abortions and illegal prenatal sex determination have become a multi-crore underground industry – facilitated by the availability of new technologies, which make it easier to discern a child’s sex *in utero*⁷. These findings pose concerning implications for India, where women’s health issues are often neglected as reflected in the country’s high gender gap on health indicators.

Dowry:

The National Family Health Survey (2015-2016)⁸, produced by the Government of India, revealed that every third woman from the age of 15 faces domestic violence. 31% married women experience domestic violence; the perpetrators of this violence are largely the husbands. This spousal violence is mainly physical violence, 27%, and then emotional violence, 13% (NFHS – 4). Many times in India, domestic violence is coupled with dowry harassment.

Dowry harassment can be understood as violence perpetrated on the woman for not bringing in expected amount of dowry at the time of marriage. The Indian National Crime Records Bureau reported 7,621 dowry deaths in 2016, which accounts to approximately 20 deaths per day.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, for the first time, recognised domestic violence to be not only physical, but also sexual, financial, emotional. This Act protects women and girls from facing violence at the hands of their husbands, in-laws, or even their parents. Dowry violence may also be covered under this law. Section 304 B of the India Penal Code also addresses the issue of Dowry Harassment, by recognising dowry related deaths as a punishable offence.⁹

Marital Rape: Currently India is one of 36 countries that permits marital rape. In India, a staggering 94% of rapes are committed by perpetrators known to the victim¹⁰. Hidden from view, are a huge number of women with no legal reprieve: Those raped by their husbands. The exemption to marital rape under existing rape laws dates back to Coverture, an idea from Anglo-American law, wherein “the husband and wife were considered a single entity: the husband.” Following marriage, the identity of women was subsumed by men. The law exempting marital rape has its roots in Sir

⁷ Health Issues India (2019), Sex Selective Abortion in India: it’s worse than you think. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthissuesindia.com/2019/04/18/sex-selective-abortion-india/>

⁸ National Health and Family Welfare (2015-16) National Family Health Survey. Retrieved from <http://rchiips.org/nfhs/NFHS-4Reports/India.pdf>

⁹ Majlis, for IIT Kanpur, November, 2018 “A Comprehensive Guide to Women’s Legal Rights” https://www.iitk.ac.in/wc/data/Majlis_Legal-rights-of-women.pdf

¹⁰ CNN (2015), Marital Rape: why is it legal in India? Retrieved from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/05/asia/marital-rape-india/index.html>

Matthew Hale's statement made in 17th century England – "The husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract, the wife hath given herself in kind unto the husband, which she cannot retract." Women were treated much like property – an offense against one's own property is not considered a crime and so it was considered acceptable for men to demand or force sexual intercourse on women¹¹. Considering the English roots of India's legalisation of marital rape, it is curious to consider the various defences offered by the government to keep marital rape legal, despite numerous petitions and public interest litigations flooding courts challenging the law.

The crux of the government's defence lies on an inherent difference in the culture, tradition, and society of India, in comparison to the West. The law has been justified by the government on numerous occasions – in one instance in 2016 during a discussion in the Indian parliament. The Minister of State for Home Affairs, Haribhai Parathibhai Chaudhary, said, "The concept of marital rape, as understood internationally, is not suitable in the Indian context, due to illiteracy, poverty, social customs and values, religious beliefs and the fact that Indian society treats marriage as a sacrament." Again in 2017, the government stated that making marital rape illegal will "destabilize the institution of marriage, apart from being an easy tool for harassing husbands." On another occasion, the government declared that "What may appear as marital rape to an individual wife, it may not appear so to others."

This view of the government has been adopted despite recommendations to the contrary. Suggestions of the report, "Status of Women in India" by the Pam Rajput committee that advocates illegalisation of marital rape have been ignored – so have the recommendations of the Justice Verma Committee, formed following a gang rape in 2012 in Delhi. Most of the suggestions of this committee were incorporated under the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2013, such as widening the definition of rape to include non-penetrative acts of sexual nature. However, the proposals against marital rape made by the committee were disregarded. The apex court seems to have overlooked the fact that by allowing an exemption for marital rape under rape laws, Article 14 (equality under law) and Article 21 (right to life) of the Indian Penal Code have been violated.

¹¹ International Policy Digest (2019), "Marital Rape in India". Retrieved from: <https://intpolicydigest.org/2019/08/01/marital-rape-in-india/>

COUNTRIES THAT PERMIT RAPE IN MARRIAGE AND/OR ALLOW RAPISTS TO MARRY THEIR VICTIMS TO AVOID PUNISHMENT

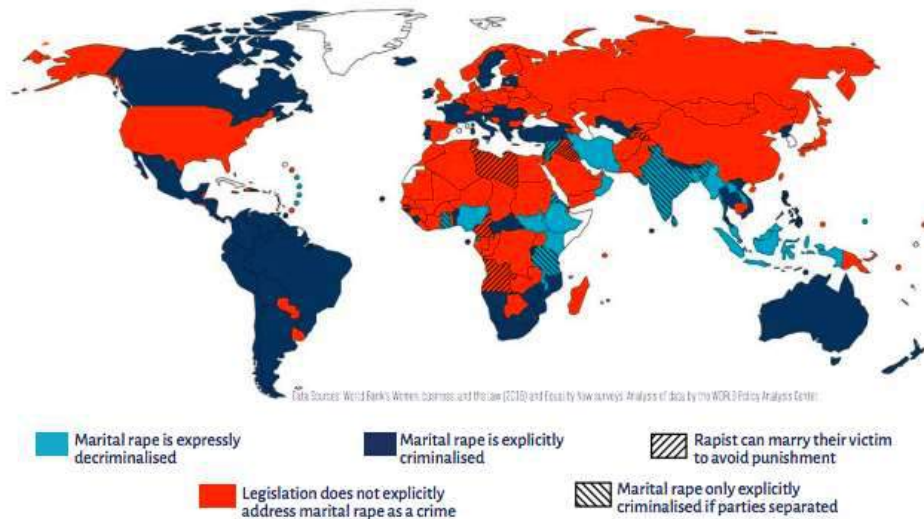


Image: countries that permit rape in marriage and/or allow rapists to marry their victims to avoid punishment. Source: Equality Now, Rape Report 2017¹²

Centre for Social Research on Domestic Violence against Women

The Centre for Social Research believes that crisis intervention is important and the key element in exchange of dialogue, where one gains an insight of another's world and its intent, and in the process, constructing bridges of hope and value. CSR's **four** Crisis Intervention Centres (CICs) in Delhi enables individuals and families experiencing or witnessing violence in their home or elsewhere. CSR provides free, confidential support services such as mediation and emergency assistance.

CSR previously worked on a project called "*Meri Shakti Meri Beti (MSMB)*"; which aimed to educate communities and individuals to put an end to sex selective abortion in Delhi and two districts of Haryana, both in urban and rural areas. The successful response from the project eventually assisted us in 2015 to be declared as the Nodal agency under the BBBP scheme in Ambala, Kurukshetra, Gurgaon, Jhajjar & Mahendragarh districts of Haryana by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India.

After the completion of the Sports for Girl's project, CSR once again initiated its work in the community in the same five low sex ratio districts of Haryana in collaboration with the Netherlands

¹² Equality Now (2017), "Rape Report 2017". Accessed via: https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/equalitynow/pages/208/attachments/original/1527096259/EqualityNowRapeLawReport2017_Spreads.pdf?1527096259

Embassy from August 2018. The team first went for a rapport building meeting with the all the district appropriate authorities including the Women and Child Department and Health Department. Here the team collected the Child Sex Ratio Data from both the departments to identify and focus on at least one low sex ratio village in each block for all the five districts. After short listing the villages, the team has successfully established 8 Chetna Mandalies/ Community Watch Groups (CWGs) to monitor communities' sex-selection activities and raise awareness about related issues. CSR is also actively participating as member in the Central Supervisory Body (CSB), State Advisory Bodies (SABs) of Delhi & Haryana and District Advisory Committees (DACs) of Delhi created under the PC/PNDT Act.

Social Media and Women in India

The Internet in India has a serious gender problem. According to a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), just 29% of all internet users in the country are women. The 42 percentage point "digital gender gap" among internet users in India is far more extreme than the global divide; where across the world, 56% of all internet users were men in 2017, as compared to 44% women (UNICEF, 2017). Smartphones are the primary instruments for many that facilitate access to the internet. While India is the largest growing market for smartphones, women are substantially less likely to own one. In the Mood of the Nation (MOTN) survey, conducted by CSDS in 2018, 4 out of 10 men (38%) reported owning a smartphone, compared to 1 in 5 women (20%). This gap transcends the urban-rural divide as well, as women are less likely than men to own smartphones even in urban settings (Agnihotri & Gupta, 2018). For the most part, this gap is the result of deep-seated cultural barriers, particularly in rural India (UNICEF, 2017). However, as the GSMA 2015 report titled "Bridging the Gender Gap: Mobile Access and Usage in Low and Middle-Income Countries" notes: "security and harassment emerged as one of the top five barriers to mobile phone ownership, and usage, and is a key concern for women" (GSMA, 2015, p.6). Feminism in India (FII) conducted a survey of 500 social media users, 97% identifying as women, 3% identifying as "other" – a category which includes the transgender community, a majority of them under thirty-five, living in major cities, and educated to a college level or above. Among the 500 people who were surveyed, 58% reported having faced some form of online aggression in the form of trolling, bullying, abuse, or harassment. 61% of those who reported abuse, said that it took the form of hateful speech, while 56% experienced derogatory comments about their gender or appearance. 30% of respondents called the experience of being subject to abuse online extremely upsetting. Asked if it affected their personal lives, 15% said that online harassment had resulted in mental health issues like depression, stress, and insomnia. 28% reported that they had intentionally reduced their online presence after suffering online abuse.

What is E-VAW?

"As the internet becomes an increasingly important part of human existence, and a critical space for marginalised populations to make their voices heard, a women's inability to feel safe online is an impediment to her freedom, as well as to her basic human rights" (Global Fund for Women, 2015). However, the problem of online violence and harassment is often overlooked in discussions of violence against women (VAW). Violence against women and girls is one of the most systemic and widespread human rights violations. The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of

liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (General Assembly Resolution 48/104, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993).

Pinto (2017) notes that “Online violence and abuse against women is an extension of offline violence and abuse against women.” It can include direct and indirect threats of violence, such as physical or sexual threats. Ultimately all forms of online violence, have a silencing effect on women, violating their right to freedom of expression. Not only do women censor themselves out of fear of online reprisal, but they may also leave social media platforms altogether.

IT for Change (2017) explores technology-mediated violence against women as “acts of gender-based violence that are committed, abetted, or aggravated, in part or fully, by the use of information and communication technologies”. Their definition argues that this phenomenon needs to be understood for the harm that it inflicts and perpetuates, rather than just through an accent on speech and expression. Acts such as cyber-stalking, non-consensual circulation of sexual images, doxing¹³, etc., are acts that not only affect women’s expression, but also invade their privacy, undermine their dignity, and erode their agency and autonomy. A shift towards a framework that recognises the harm that this form of violence perpetuates, should dissuade “patriarchal quick-fixes” (for instance, advice given to women to “block the number”, advice which discounts the violence). Online violence against women (E-VAW) has adverse effects on victim’s emotional wellbeing, and can also translate into physical danger. The public nature of online abuse, coupled with the reactions of friends, colleagues, and the media can exacerbate the trauma. Women, who face violence online or witness other women facing abuse, often exit or suppress their visibility online. E-VAW can cause women and girls to self-censor or opt out of online use, negatively impacting digital inclusion. The FII survey found that 28% of women, who suffered online abuse, reduced their online presence.

As we have seen in high-profile cases, female journalists, bloggers, celebrities, and politicians are far more likely than their male counterparts to suffer online abuse. The “unseemliness” of being female and opinionated online may cause women to remove themselves from the public arena, or be put off from running for elected office, sharing their opinions or becoming journalists. The Web Foundation (2015) found that women are 52% less likely than men to express controversial views online. Essentially, without being able to use the online space freely, women and girls are far less likely to enjoy the benefits associated with digital technologies, or even recognise the benefits.

¹³Doxing refers to publishing private information, usually contact details, on the internet, with a malicious intent, usually insinuating soliciting sex.

Legislative Framework:

India has no dedicated legislation that deals with E-VAW. Provisions to deal with such violence are scattered across laws. The two main legislative frameworks employed are: Information Technology Act, 2000 (ITA), and the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC). The ITA was originally formulated to encourage e-commerce. Thus, the penal provisions were conceptualised to reduce the risks of online transactions. Amendments have been added later that penalise the publication and transaction of 'obscene' material, including sexually explicit content and child pornography. IT for Change (2017) notes that the provisions are largely replicated from the pre-digital IPC to apply to the online realm. The pre-digital IPC's provisions are most likely to be applied to E-VAW. Through a recent amendment, a provision on stalking was added, which included stalking through digital media. This is one of the only sections in the IPC to explicitly deal with E-VAW.

Police Responses to E-VAW

Troublingly, 36% of respondents who had experienced harassment online took no action (FII). IT for change (2017) noted that "when we conducted interviews with police officials, we saw that overwhelmingly, the onus is put on women to self-police and ensure that private information is not leaked, unlike in economic cyber offences where victim-hood is seen as 'genuine'". These findings of victim blaming by law officials were corroborated by FII's report, which is one important reason that women who experience E-VAW are hesitant to approach the police. FII found that of the 30% of survey respondents who reported the abuse to Indian law enforcement, just 11% said that they were helpful; 51% found them somewhat helpful, and 38% said that they were not at all helpful. Over half (52%) said that the officials do not take complaints of E-VAW seriously.

When approaching the police, oftentimes there is little understanding on the manner in which social media works. Writer and activist Inji Pennu notes that more often than not police tell the complainer to stop using social media. She added, they often do not understand "how online threats can cause serious, even fatal damage, but choose instead to believe that they disappear as soon as the computers are powered down" (Sen, 2016).

In 2015, A Mumbai court sentenced Yogesh Prabhu, a 35 year old man to three months in jail, on charges of cyber stalking. Prabhu was convicted under section 509 of the IPC (word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman), and section 66(E) of the ITA: punishment for violation of privacy. Prabhu was fined INR 10,000 under the IT act, and INR 5,000 under IPC. This was the first conviction in a cyber-stalking case in India, since the laws had come into effect in 2000 (Roy, 2015). Convictions in cyber-fraud cases had taken place, but this was the first case in which "a woman was targeted, stalked, and harassed with obscene material on the internet" – Nandkishore More, assistant commissioner of Police, cyber division (Yadav & Shah, 2015). While this is a tiny

landmark victory – it is important to note that it took fifteen years of the law’s existence before a conviction was made. E-VAW crimes rarely get reported to law enforcement, and when they do, onus is usually shifted to the women.

Social Media Responses to E-VAW:

It is not just local law enforcement that is ill-equipped to deal with E-VAW, social media sites themselves do not offer much support to women who complain about online harassment. While all social media platforms have mechanisms through which harassment can be reported, there is little to no accountability from the platforms (Sen, 2016). Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women’s Association, said reporting mechanisms offer a “completely impersonal experience”. “It’s as though there’s a machine out there, which looks at complaints and makes verdicts on their legitimacy” (Sen, 2016).

Conclusion:

Violence against women and girls in the “real world” is mirrored in the digital sphere, with women being 27 times more likely than men to be victims of cyber violence (Messenger, 2017). Women in the age range of 18-24 are uniquely likely to experience stalking and sexual harassment in addition to physical threats (UN Women, 2015). In many countries, including India, women are reluctant to report their victimisation for fear of social repercussions. 28% of respondents in India said that they intentionally reduced their online presence after suffering abuse online, or witnessing their peers experience abuse online. E-VAW does not exist in isolation, and oftentimes is an extension and forms an integral part of the violence experienced by women and girls offline (RESURJ). Human rights and related freedoms including women’s sexual rights apply in the online world in the same way as they do offline; addressing E-VAW and requires acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities that perpetuate violence.

Globally, and specifically in the Indian context there is a dearth of literature and data that examines why such few women are on social media (as compared to their male counterparts), the effects of E-VAW on women, and also police records of cyber-crimes against women. All this makes it very difficult to accurately gauge the effects of E-VAW including the digital exclusion that it perpetuates on women.

Law enforcement is not trained properly in handling non-economic cyber-crime cases. Much of the dialogue that is perpetuated focuses on protecting oneself from being victimised by not sharing password, blocking harassers’ etcetera. This dialogue is further mirrored by social media networks, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Much of the onus is shifted onto the women. There is

also little communication between relevant national agencies in India and social media networks, who report crimes firstly to their own databases, relying on INTERPOL to share information. Further there are no specific laws in India to safeguard women against E-VAW. While sections in the IPC and ITA can be used in cyber-crime convictions, the express purpose of these laws is not for this. However, while country specific legislation is a key strategy in protecting women's rights in the online sphere, it will not be effective unless it is part of a larger more comprehensive structure, which is multi-pronged and intersectional. What this means is that institutions mandated by the state to provide cyber security and support need to be strengthened, cooperation and collaboration between social media networks and governments needs to be enhanced (social media networks need to stop relying on algorithms as the solution to stopping E-VAW, considering local contexts and dialects, and people who understand the same is incredibly important); further police need to be trained effectively to not dismiss E-VAW, and must also secure proper documentation of the reported crimes.

Women and Environmental Issues

UNFCCC, SDGs AND Women's Participation In Mitigating Climate Change

'Climate change has a greater impact on those sections of the population, in all countries, that are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and/or who have the least capacity to respond to natural hazards, such as droughts, landslides, floods and hurricanes. Women commonly face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change in situations of poverty, and the majority of the world's poor are women. Women's unequal participation in decision-making processes and labor markets compound inequalities and often prevent women from fully contributing to climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation. Yet, women can (and do) play a critical role in response to climate change due to their local knowledge of and leadership in e.g. sustainable resource management and/or leading sustainable practices at the household and community level. Women's participation at the political level has resulted in greater responsiveness to citizen's needs, often increasing cooperation across party and ethnic lines and delivering more sustainable peace. At the local level, women's inclusion at the leadership level has led to improved outcomes of climate related projects and policies. On the contrary, if policies or projects are implemented without women's meaningful participation it can increase existing inequalities and decrease effectiveness.

Parties to the UNFCCC¹⁴ have recognized the importance of involving women and men equally in UNFCCC processes and in the development and implementation of national climate policies that are gender-responsive by establishing a dedicated agenda item under the Convention addressing issues of gender and climate change and by including overarching text in the Paris Agreement.¹⁵

Based on the UNFCCC report and understanding of the current scenario it is observed that women participation at all levels is important if we want to mitigate the effects of climate change such that our environment is conserved for future generations to come. This can be achieved when women are involved in the process of planning to execution. It implies that women empowerment through social, political and an economic sphere is necessary.

'Climate change is increasing temperatures and affecting weather patterns, resulting in environmental degradation and heightened competition for natural resources and arable

¹⁴ <https://unfccc.int/cop25>

¹⁵ <https://unfccc.int/gender>

land. Impediments to agricultural production caused by environmental hazards such as flooding, droughts, and landslides in turn heighten community vulnerability, decrease food security, force students to drop out of school to handle increasing workloads at home, and increase poverty rates.

Of the 68.5 million people forcibly displaced around the world, it is estimated that an average of 21.5 million have been displaced annually because of climate related issues since 2008. In 2017 alone, disasters, floods, and tropical storms displaced 18.8 million people in 135 countries.

While climate change affects everyone, marginalized groups are particularly impacted because of socio-economic problems, such as poverty and limited access to natural resources. As an example, indigenous people make up 15% of the world's poorest and maintain 80% of the planet's biodiversity on their lands, yet are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change. However, it is girls and women who bear the greatest burden of climate change and are disproportionately affected compared to men.'

'Climate disasters have also been shown to increase gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual harassment and violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking. Displacement and migration following a disaster can result in overcrowding and unsafe living conditions in evacuation centers, temporary housing, internal displacement camps, and other shelters. Girls and women become more vulnerable to harassment and violence, while increased poverty and loss of community likewise increases the propensity for violence.' **(Invest In Girls and Women to Tackle Climate Change and Conserve the Environment)**

Studies show that gender equality is important to achieve any goals as the perspective and voices of women is important because they have lived a history of being considered as the major 'care-givers' and 'house-hold managers' and because of their gender roles and responsibilities their understanding of the scenario along with their perspective for improvement must be recorded and considered.

With specific reference to the requirement of tackling with the effects of climate change we need to first accept that it is women from the marginalized communities who have to deal with the daily problems that are caused due to the effect of climate change i.e. be it on the decrease of agriculture leading to reduction in agricultural growth, rise in natural disasters such as drought, famine, erratic rainfalls and deforestation. All these problems lead to an increase in migration and displacement of people from their villages and communities which also lead to higher risks of gender based violence such as sexual harassments, sexual exploitation of women and children and human trafficking. This makes women and children more vulnerable to harassment and violence. Hence this makes it necessary for women to be in the frontline to participate in planning and implementation of policies and agendas for tackling the effects of climate change.

National and International Environmental Movements: Case Studies

The Africa Adaptation Program (AAP)

The Africa Adaptation Program (AAP) addressed women's roles in climate change in Nigeria by boosting their skills and knowledge with regard to climate change impacts, policy, financing, and negotiations. They focused on developing women's leadership in key government ministries related to climate change. Many of the countries involved in the AAP program from 2008-2012 worked to revise budgeting processes so that they included funding focused specifically on the gender-specific needs of many women regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Women's Union in Da Nang City, Vietnam

In advance of Vietnam's 2013 typhoon, 245 homes in the highest-risk communities engaged a local Women's Union to develop storm-resistant shelters in advance. The storm displaced thousands of people from their homes, but no evacuations were needed from those that worked with the Women's Union. Early engagement of this women-led organization in disaster mapping and preparedness was critical to their protection and recovery.¹⁶

The Chipko Movement: India

The Chipko is one of the world known environmental movements in India. This movement focused world attention on the environmental problems of the Alaknanda catchment area in the mid-Western Himalayas. Many struggles were organized to protest against the colonial forest policy during the early decades of the twentieth century. The main demand of the people in these protests was that the benefits of the forests, especially the right to fodder, should go to local people. This movement saw women in the fore-front.¹⁷

The case studies mentioned above show that women participation at national and international level in policy making, disaster management and in movements for protection of natural resources ensures effective decision making and steps towards environmental protection.

Role of Civil Society Organizations in encouraging women's empowerment & enhancing the role of women in reducing the effects of climate- change: Recommendations

“Gender inequalities intersect with climate risks and vulnerabilities. Women's historic disadvantages—their limited access to resources, restricted rights, and a muted voice in shaping decisions—make them highly vulnerable to climate change. The nature of that

¹⁶ **Invest In Girls and Women to Tackle Climate Change and Conserve the Environment:**
https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Deliver_For_Good_Brief_10_09.17.17.pdf

¹⁷ ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

vulnerability varies widely cautioning against generalization. But climate change is likely to magnify existing patterns of gender disadvantage.”

Source: United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report 2007/2008 – Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world, New York, 2007.

There has been a huge gap in the range of population in India of beneficiaries and bearers and unfortunately women have been the part of the latter group and also because of the societal gender role and responsibility women have been the silent sufferer of the impact of climate change which has resulted into depletion of various resources especially resources on which our existence is based i.e. water and food from forests and water bodies which has resulted into forced dislocation from their native lands in search of the same.

Centre for Social Research (CSR) recognises the importance of women's active participation in governance structures and in the management of natural resources, particularly given the increasing impact of climate change. There is a different requirement of water management and conservation at different parts of the country so through our various project activities CSR capacitated women on the various water management and conservation based tools, mechanisms, policies and schemes which helped them to bring change in their own areas by spreading awareness on the need to conserve water. There were women led community based discussions and planning for water conservation in their villages and areas which would also involve structural refurbishment and conservation specifically of the existing traditional water conservation structures. Hence CSR has reached out to more than 500 beneficiaries and more than 3000 indirect beneficiaries through its various projects in rural Rajasthan, Bihar and Nepal.

CSR believes that there are few important suggestions that need to be taken into account:-

- There is a need to come together for governments of the world along with academicians, media, civil society organizations and private sectors to work towards curbing the effects of climate change where women must lead the baton of discussion, planning and execution.
- In order to ensure women representation and participation in resolving climate change issues there has to be bottom up approach that is adopted so that the most effected ones can voice their ideas and opinions.
- Innovative methods need to be adopted to involve the communities in this drive and there is a need to revisit the traditional methods used to conserve the various natural resources as our history is enriched with solutions; so an amalgamation of traditional methods clubbed with new improved technologies can also be employed.

- It is imperative that the governments invest in research, programs and evaluation of the programs with a qualitative approach than a quantitative approach of results.

Women's Political Participation India

Introduction:

According to statistics presented by the World Bank, the world population in 2017 was estimated to be 7.5 billion people,¹⁸ of which 3.7 billion were females.¹⁹ This number accounts for approximately half of the total population. In the same year, the percentage of women in national parliaments across the world was a mere 23.65.²⁰ This statistics ranged from a phenomenal high of 61% in Rwanda to a dismal 0% in countries like Qatar and Yemen.²¹ Despite constituting half of the world population, women have historically been continuously underrepresented in decision making bodies around the world.

This section attempts to evaluate female political participation in India, through a number of research questions. Firstly; why are we advocating for increased political representation of women? Do states with higher percentages of women in national and state legislatures benefit systematically (and if so how)? Or does gender play no role in the social advancement of countries? Secondly; India has primarily attempted to increase women's political participation through the introduction of quotas, primarily the Women's Reservation Bill, which demands a reservation of at least 33% of all seats in the lower house of the Parliament of India (the Lok Sabha), and all state legislative assemblies. However, this bill has been pending since 2008 (the longest pending bill in Parliament), and despite individual political parties stating their desire to pass this bill²². Why has this reservation bill not yet been passed? In conclusion, this paper will attempt to address a third question to outline the way forward: What can we do to increase the representation of women in parliaments?

¹⁸ 'Population, total' The World Bank. 2017. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>

¹⁹ 'Population, female' The World Bank. 2017. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.IN>

²⁰ 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.' The World Bank. 2017. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Rahul Gandhi writes to all state chief ministers from the Congress and alliance parties asking them to pass a resolution in support of the women's reservation Bill: <https://thewire.in/politics/pass-resolution-in-support-of-womens-reservation-bill-rahul-tells-congress-cms>

This section draws on secondary research on political participation: both globally, as well as with specific reference to India. It also draws on extensive primary research conducted by the Centre for Social Research regarding the Women’s Reservation Bill, as well as the organisation’s own experience in advocating for increased female political participation in the country. The report has been laid out in the following manner: the first section focuses on women in Indian politics, with a particular focus on the Women’s Reservation Bill (WRB), the second section will outline the primary research conducted by CSR on perceptions towards the WRB, and analyse the findings. The third section will highlight why there is a need for increased percentages of women in parliament. The fourth section, which will preclude the conclusion, will emphasise the action points and way forward that have been informed by our continued research, work, and advocacy in this field.

Where are the Women in Indian Politics?

In 1987, Gail Omvedt wrote: “the exclusion of women from political power has been more marked than their exclusion from 'productive' work or even property rights. The contemporary era is no different.” Writing in the context of zilla parishad elections in Maharashtra when an “all-woman front” emerged to contest from 24 districts, the author argued that the continued political exclusion of women prevents them from significantly affecting change in terms of combating the violence that these women face in their everyday lives. However, she pointed out how political parties are only motivated to support women candidates only if it is politically advantageous to them²³.

Female political representation in India has consistently been poor, particularly at the national and state level decision making bodies. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1992 secure mandatory 1/3rd female representation in the state Panchayats and municipalities (village level political bodies). In Rajasthan, in fact there is a fifty per cent Panchayat reservation for women. However, while this reservation has increased the number of elected officials in village level governance, that percentage increase has not been mirrored in the state or national levels. Furthermore it is interesting to note, that even though the percentage of elected women representatives has increased, this has not necessarily been translated into more women with political decision making power. The common phrase “sarpanch pati”²⁴ or husbands who wield control in panchayats by making their wives contest, is neither new nor rare²⁵.

²³ Women and Maharashtra’s Zilha Parishad Elections: <https://www.epw.in/journal/1987/47/roots-specials/women-and-maharashtra-zilha-parishad-elections.html>

²⁴ Sarpanch is the title for village level head, and pati is the hindi word for husband. Sarpanch pati refers to a husband whose wife has been elected sarpanch, but wields all the duties and responsibilities of a sarpanch himself, without allowing his wife to participate.

²⁵ “sarpanch pati: the roadblock to women’s political participation”: <https://feminisminindia.com/2017/11/14/sarpanch-pati-womens-political-participation/>

2020: Where are we Now?

Within the past couple of years, mainstream media has been abuzz with talk around the Women's Reservation Bill. Increasing presence of various women's organizations and mass movements, statements by political parties and the individual politicians, and manifestos of political parties for the 2019 election, reflect the rising consensus around the need to increase female representation in politics. Tangible results of advocacy are evident in the statements made by leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, former President of the Indian National Congress (INC), Derek O' Brien of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and individual party members of prominent political parties such as the INC, TMC, BJP, Biju Janata Dal (BJD), among others. Perhaps more telling is the election of 33 per cent women parliamentarians from Odisha, where the BJD fielded 33 per cent female candidates for the 17th Lok Sabha elections.

Today, the 17th Lok Sabha proudly boasts of 77 women parliamentarians, the highest percentage of female representation in the national legislature (14 per cent) ever.²⁶ Within these 77 women, however, there is considerable lack of diversity, on the lines of caste, religion or socioeconomic status. While it is a laudable achievement, the female representation in the Lok Sabha elections is nowhere near satisfactory. When compared to nations like Rwanda, Norway, Finland or neighbours like Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, India lags far behind in female representation.²⁷ Within the country, out of a total 8040 candidates who contested elections, a mere 9 per cent (717) were women, of which only 78 were elected to the Lok Sabha.²⁸ All of this highlights the attitude of political parties and the general populace of India; while political parties are not keen on fielding female candidates, the general population is not keen on voting for them. The caste, religious and socioeconomic composition of elected women leaders highlights the cost of fighting elections as a lower-caste, minority woman. Taking all this into account, India still has a long way to go before representation can be considered meaningfully equitable.

²⁶ "Highest Number of Women MPs in History": What This Means For Women Representation In 2019.' Feminism in India. <https://feminisminindia.com/2019/05/28/women-mps-lok-sabha-2019/>

²⁷ 'Women in national parliaments.' Inter Parliamentary Union. 2019. <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

²⁸ "Highest Number of Women MPs in History": What This Means For Women Representation In 2019.' Feminism in India. <https://feminisminindia.com/2019/05/28/women-mps-lok-sabha-2019/>

Women's Reservation Bill:

The Women's Reservation Bill²⁹, or the 108th Amendment, is the longest pending legislation in parliament. The primary aim of the bill is to reserve 1/3rd of all seats in the lower parliamentary house (Lok Sabha) and the state assemblies for women. Further 1/3rd of the already reserved seats for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women. Whilst it has been recommended that this 1/3rd reservation also be extended to the upper house of the Indian parliament (Rajya Sabha), and to legislative assemblies, this recommendation has not as of yet been incorporated. It is also important to note, that the bill proposes that this legislation only be valid for 15 years, after which the reservation of seats for women would cease to exist.

Opposition to the Women's Reservation Bill:

A 2006 paper by Vicky Randall titled, 'Legislative Gender Quotas and Indian Exceptionalism : The Travails of the Women's Reservation Bill,' provides a broad set of reasons for the opposition to the Bill.³⁰ Out of multiple explanations, the four that seem most salient are explored further. One of her first reasons for why the Bill has failed to become a law is the argument that the Bill itself is 'ill-conceived.'³¹ The various criticisms under this argument range from lack of accountability that results from rotation of reserved seats to too many seats being reserved overall to the 'ghettoization of women representatives' that would result from pitting women against women in reserved seats.³² While these criticisms are valid, it is important to consider the fact that women would be pitted against other women, rather than men, thus providing a platform for candidacy that didn't exist before. Additionally, the rotation of reserved seats wouldn't necessarily decrease accountability as women, who would want to fight for re-elections from their previously reserved constituencies, would have to work to win the trust and support of their constituents, and given that competition would increase after the seat became open.

Another reason for opposition to the Women's Reservation Bill, which has been cited by parties such as the Samajwadi and the Rashtriya Janata Dal, is the lack of consideration for caste conflicts.³³ Parties have opposed the Bill saying that it will be used as a method to promote "already privileged, urban, educated, upper-caste women" as opposed to minorities and lower-caste

²⁹ Full text of the Women's Reservation Bill as introduced in the Rajya Sabha:

http://prsindia.org/uploads/media/Constitution%20Eighth/1211455181_The_Constitution_One_Hundred_and_Eighth_Amendment_Bill_2008.pdf

³⁰ Vicky Randall. "Legislative Gender Quotas and Indian Exceptionalism: The Travails of the Women's Reservation Bill." *Comparative Politics* 39, no. 1 (2006): 63-82. doi:10.2307/20434021.

³¹ Randall, 65.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 66.

communities within the country.³⁴ Looking at the composition of the newly elected Lok Sabha, this claim holds veracity to a certain degree, as the composition reflects a glaring lack of diversity, especially within the female parliamentarians. In the new Bill which is tabled, perhaps politicians should give credence to the demand for quotas-within-quotas, which would reserve a proportion of seats for the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/Other Backward Classes, within the seats reserved for women. This could help increase the diversity of the women who are chosen through reservation, giving space to women belonging to socioeconomically marginalized communities.

Randall cites a third reason, as lack of consensus and support among women themselves.³⁵ However, evidence from contemporary women's organizations and their efforts at mass mobilization for supporting the Women's Reservation Bill suggests a changing landscape. The National Alliance for the Women's Reservation Bill, a national conglomeration of civil society organizations, women's rights advocates, and individuals supporting the Bill, is one of the many mass movements that have emerged as vocal advocates for increasing women's political representation in the country.

The fourth reason, which accurately represents the social opposition to the passage of the Bill, is the pervasive influence of patriarchy in the society.³⁶ This is reflected in the attitudes of many politicians, as well as in the constituents who consistently fail to vote in more female candidates into the Indian Parliament.

National Survey conducted by the Centre for Social Research³⁷:

The Centre for Social Research, a pioneer organisation advocating for the necessity of passing the Women's Reservation Bill – conducted a national survey to analyse public perception of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Methodology:

The survey was designed in the form of five close-ended, straightforward questions so as to maximize the reach of the survey recipients and minimize the time it would take to fill out the survey. The questions are listed in the figure below. Each question was aimed at understanding

³⁴ Ibid., 67.

³⁵ Ibid., 68.

³⁶ Ibid., 69.

³⁷ The analysis of the national survey was conducted by Kamya Yadav (BA Political Science, Princeton University), during her tenure at the Centre for Social Research, all findings have been published in her research paper "Engendering Female Political Participation: Understanding Causes for Underrepresentation, Benefits of Representation, and the Way Forward", July 15, 2019.

different aspects of the social mind-set surrounding women in politics and the political scenario in India at large. While questions about the Bill itself were trying to shed light on the support, or lack thereof, for the Bill, the question associated with the passage and implementation of the Bill was trying to gauge public confidence in the government's ability to table the Bill and get it passed in the Parliament.

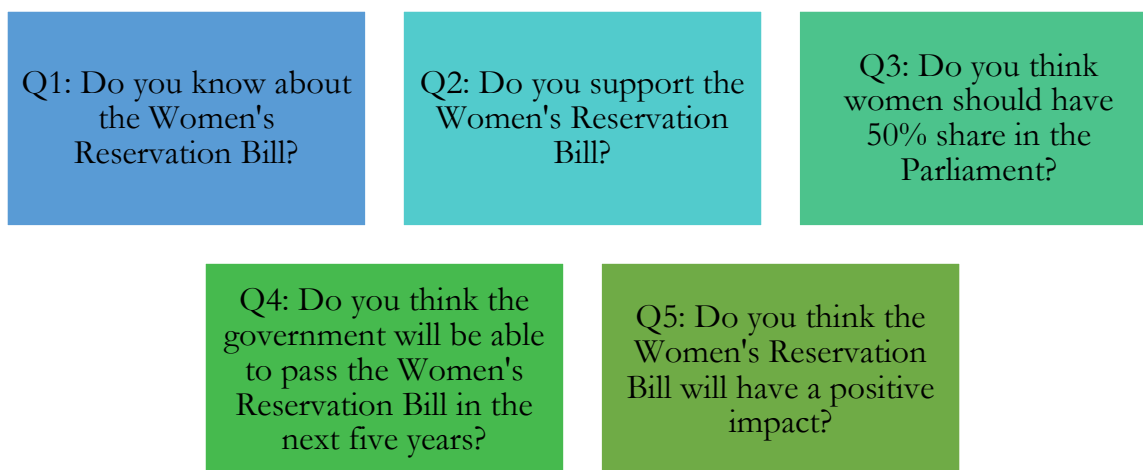


Figure 1: Questions from the national survey on women in politics

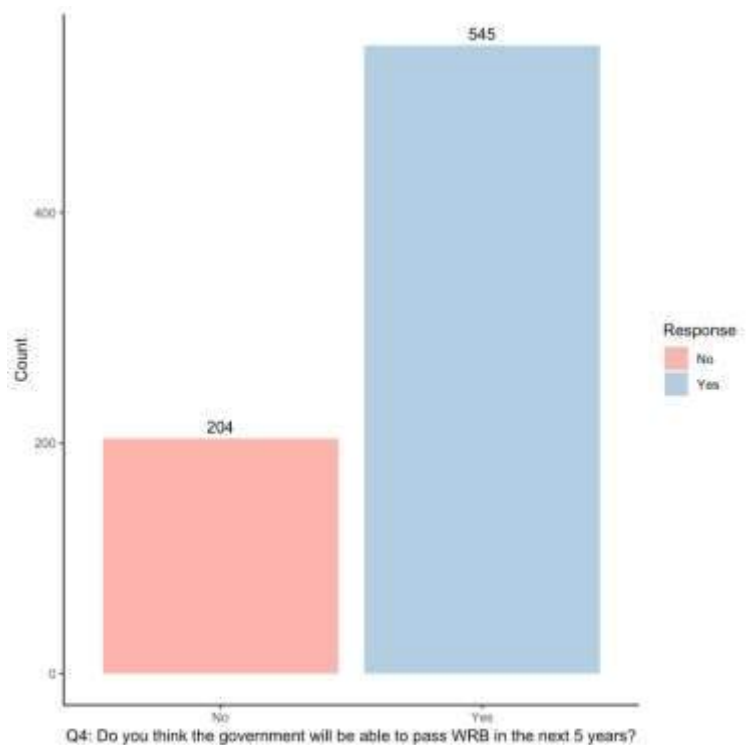
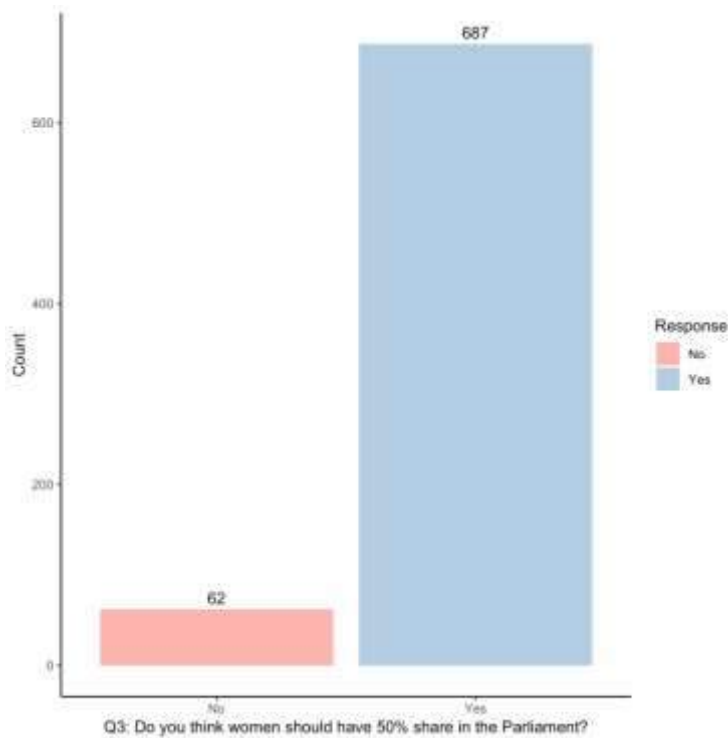
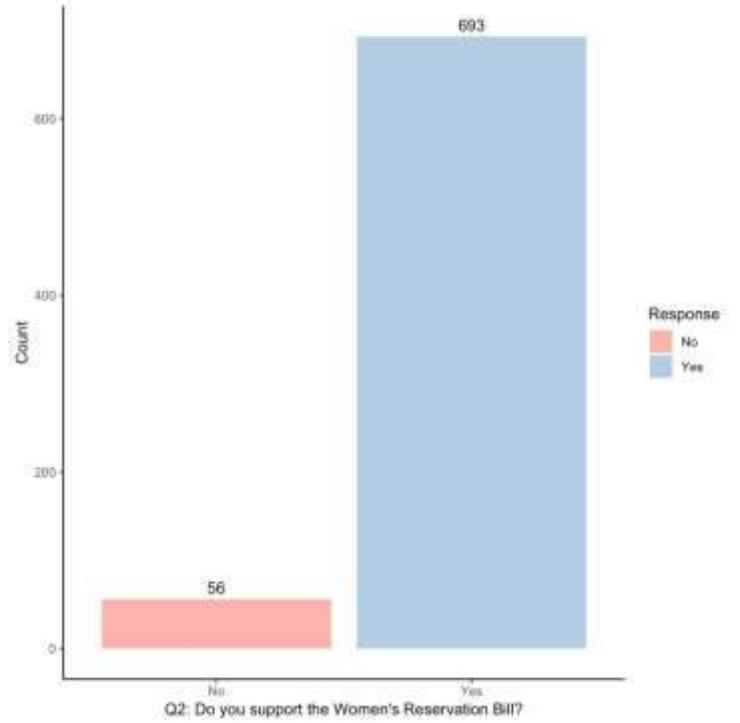
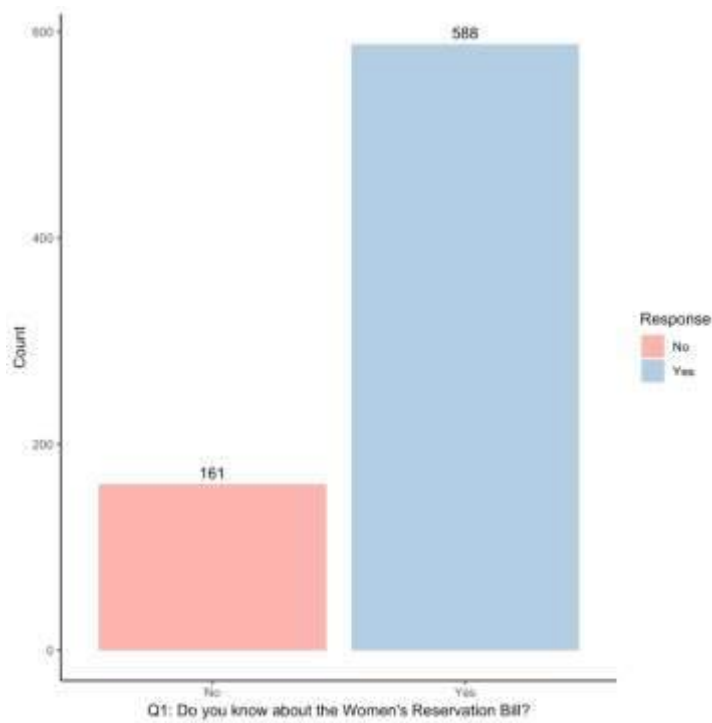
The survey was conducted through multiple mediums and methods. Primarily, the survey was disseminated online through a [Google Form](#), to contacts of the organization, to various civil society organizations and non-profit organizations around the country. These groups further shared it with their networks and individual contacts. Secondly, the survey was conducted offline with partner organizations. Individuals were given offline questionnaires (which can be found in the Appendix), which they either filled one-on-one, or after focus group discussions. In total 749 responses were collected from all different mediums.

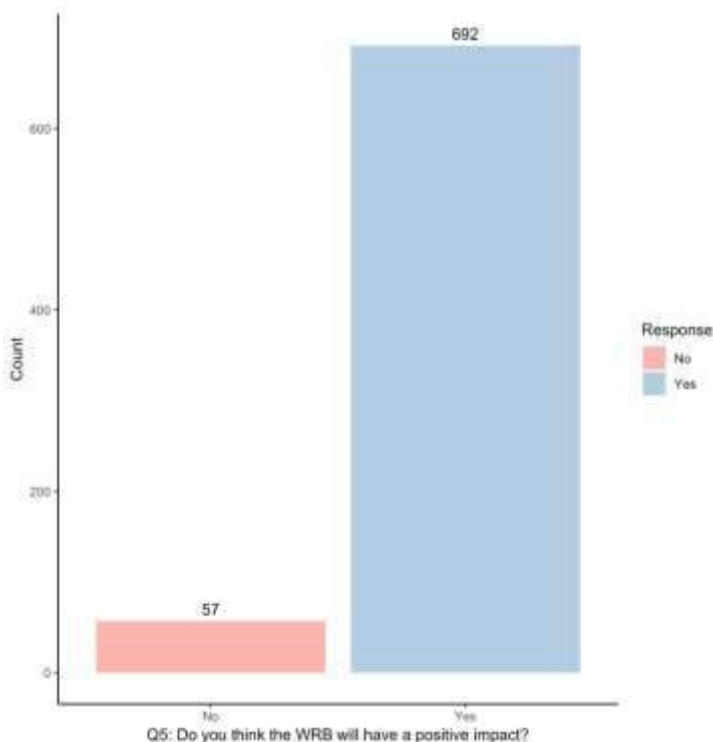
Once the data was collected, simple analysis was conducted to understand the degree of support for the Women's Reservation Bill, whether people believed that women should have an equal share in the Parliament and whether people believed that the current government would be able to bring the Bill to the Parliament and get it passed. The results of the survey are described in the next section.

Results:

The graphs below show the responses per question. Broadly, there is overwhelming support for the Women's Reservation Bill and the Bill is perceived to have a positive impact. In terms of representation in the Parliament, a large number of people believe that women should have half the

share in the Parliament. What is interesting to note, however, is that a significant number of respondents doubted the government's ability, be it due to lack of political will or lack of priority, to pass the Women's Reservation Bill in the next five years.





Approximately 78.5 per cent respondents knew about the Bill; those who did not hailed mostly from marginalized communities of the country. Whether or not they knew about the Bill, either by prior knowledge or upon explanation of the Bill, 92.5 per cent respondents supported the Bill. Moreover, almost 92 per cent respondents believed that women should hold an equal share in the nation's decision-making body. When it came to having faith in the government to pass this Bill within the next five years, more than 27 per cent respondents answered in the negative, an indication of lack of confidence in the government's will to make this Bill a reality.

Through the interactions with marginalized communities, which occurred in the process of collecting responses to the survey, it became evident that many individuals, especially women, were unaware of the existence of such a Bill. For them, political empowerment was not a priority in the face of inequality, poverty, lack of education and healthcare, and discrimination. Among the men who were surveyed, their responses varied from complete support of the Bill, to arguments about election by merit, and reservation being antithetical to the equality women is fighting for. Among the women belonging to the middle class or the upper echelons of society, there were two divergent views. Many women wholeheartedly supported the passage of the Bill, but there were others who made

arguments based on merit, on women needing to wade their way through the crowd without reservations, and those who felt they didn't need reservation.

Further research:

This survey was limited to a five-question, yes/no response, which limited our ability to understand *why* certain people support the Bill, while others opposes it. Through a longer and more substantive survey it would be useful to understand the role which demographics, socio-economic strata and political ideology/leanings affect support for the Women's Reservation Bill.

However, it is important to note that this national, and cross-sectional survey, does provide an overview of public opinion on women in politics in India. Given that this survey shows overwhelming public support for the Women's Reservation Bill, it becomes important to ask why it continues to hang in a limbo within Parliament.

Need for more women in Parliament:

Research has demonstrated that higher percentages of women in parliament have beneficial effects on the population of the country at large. Most significantly, the impacts of having more female politicians are felt in the health and education sectors. A recent paper by Ross Macmillan, Naila Shofia and Wendy Sigle used mortality related data from 155 countries, collected over the span of 24 years.³⁸ It highlighted that nations with 30 per cent or higher female representation, especially those that were lesser developed and weak democracies, experienced significant downturns in four indicators of mortality.³⁹ These four indicators were neonatal, infant, child, and maternal mortality. India's mortality rates have generally been higher than the world average, and if there is a direct correlation between having more women in decision-making bodies and improving mortality rates, increased female representation can only serve to benefit countries.

In addition to simply having more women in politics, it is necessary to encourage more women from lower castes to run for elections. Another study by Irma Clots-Figueras showed that female legislators who were elected from seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes/Tribes and Other Backward Classes in India invested more in health, early education and tended to favour the passage of more "women-friendly" laws.⁴⁰ In developing countries, where issues of gender imbalance pervade all sectors of society, be it education, health-care, professional careers, and politics, it is important to have more women and more lower-caste women in politics. For instance,

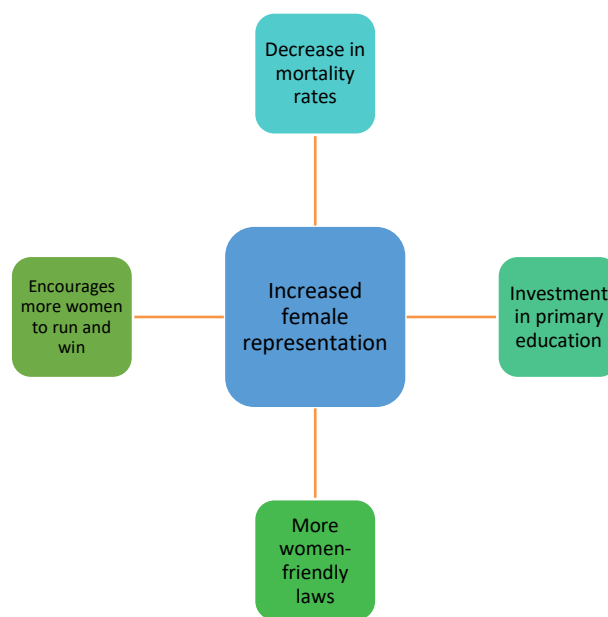
³⁸ Macmillan, Ross & Shofia, Naila & Sigle, Wendy. (2018). Gender and the Politics of Death: Female Representation, Political and Developmental Context, and Population Health in a Cross-National Panel. *Demography*. 55. 10.1007/s13524-018-0697-0.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1928.

⁴⁰ Clots-Figueras, 665.

India would do better by having legislators who can help create laws targeting sexual assault and harassment of women and young girls, which are becoming more and more prevalent every day. Above all this, having more female politicians has a compounding effect on future female representation in legislative bodies. Two different studies, one mentioned earlier by Rikhil Bhavnani, and the other by Thushyanthan Baskaran and Zohal Hessami, suggest a similar conclusion: that seats or constituencies that previously had female representatives, are more likely to elect another female representative in the following election.⁴¹ What this tells us is that watching female candidates run, win elections and then act in power changes the mind-sets of local communities. Just by seeing more women in power, people become more amenable to the idea of the same.

Figure 2: Results of Increased Female Representation



⁴¹ Bhavnani, Rikhil R. "Do Electoral Quotas Work after They Are Withdrawn? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India." *The American Political Science Review* 103, no. 1 (2009): 23-35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27798484>.
Thushyanthan Baskaran, and Zohal Hessami. "Does the Election of a Female Leader Clear the Way for More Women in Politics?" *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 10 (3): 95-121. 2018.

Concluding Comments & Way Forward Politically:

Female political participation has been a topic of conversation and debate throughout the world. As some countries have made headlines as female parliamentarians have taken lead (Finland, Rwanda, etc.), others continue to struggle in this regard, with many barriers preventing women from effectively entering and succeeding in the political arena. The various factors that have been a cause for underrepresentation of women in politics include structural, political, and ideological factors. In a similar vein, the reason why some countries have achieved gender-balanced politics is because of the role played by political parties, women's mass movements, and socio-cultural support for women in politics, and the upheaval of political systems resulting from long-drawn conflicts. These conditions have enabled the adoption and implementation of quotas and reservations successfully.

It is important for countries to improve their gender balance in politics, because it has been proven that an increased number of women in politics positively impacts education and health indicators, along with improving future prospects of political advancement for other women, and the creation of women-friendly policies. In a country like India, it is important to adopt a multi-pronged approach when it comes to increasing female representation. Not only do political parties need to step up their efforts to increase intra-party representation, but civil society organization and the general public need to unite together to form a cohesive mass women's movement to demand political equality. Only when all sectors of the society unite will women attain an equitable status in every country.

The Bill is destined to bring revolutionary changes in the demographic equation in the legislatures, but also will also have far reaching implications on India's social and political indicators. The passage of Women's Reservation Bill is directly related to "SDG- 5" and the gender equality pledge prevailing at national and international forums and with the Indian government being signatory to all international conventions; it will be able to bring about social change institutionally with an exemplary example of ensuring gender equality back home.

Conclusion & Way Forward for India

This report has focussed on four key spheres necessary for the overall advancement of women: domestic, cyber, environmental and political. It is our intention to acknowledge that while many strides have been taken on the topic of women's advancement particularly since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995; there is still much more that can be done. This report is a call for action; and collaboration between civil society organisations, individuals, and government agencies, and international agencies to collaboratively address the topic and work towards concrete reform. The recommendations and action points highlighted in each of the individual sections are jumping off points, and not collaborative measures. Advancing women's rights requires sustained effort on the part of all actors in society.

Comprehensive Action Points

1. The Indian Government needs to produce a white paper in parliament on its efforts to eradicate Violence against Women (VAW).
2. There is a data-deficit. CSR calls for comprehensive and up-to-date gender segregated data in all sectors and government departments.
3. Repeal all personal laws – these are discriminatory towards women.
4. Gender Budgeting needs to be followed more stringently. 30% of the annual budget needs to be spent on the growth and development of women under the gender budgeting provisions. Subsequently there needs to be an increased budget on women related schemes and activities.

Women in Politics:

5. Passage of Women's Reservation Bill in the coming session of parliament
6. At least 1/3rd seats in all internal committees of political parties be reserved for women
7. Increase political representation of women in internal affairs of political parties
8. Inter-ministerial committees on state of women headed by cabinet secretary on line of National Mission for Empowerment of Women
9. Women's increased role in policy/decision making at all levels of Government
10. Political parties providing at least 33% tickets to female contestants

Domestic Violence:

11. Criminalisation of Intimate Partner Violence and Marital Rape
12. Ensure the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 is not diluted.
13. Increase the availability of marriage and family counsellors for pre and post counselling in every hospital.

Public Space Violence:

14. Make available 24 hour hotline services for sexual assault victims supported by trained advocates and counsellors.
15. All pending cases of crimes against women, including rape be transferred to special courts for swift and time-bound justice.
16. Time bound justice for victims of rape needs to be made a priority for the Indian Judicial System. It is recommended that the Judiciary be bound to a strict time period of 2-3 years to produce judgments of rape.
17. Any and all actions of state and non-state actors including police should be penalised for acting against women victims of crime/violence. There should be no exceptions to this.
18. Safe City Structural Changes:
 - a. Better Lighting
 - b. Increased Police Patrols
 - c. Annual Safety Audits – Women Safety Audits
 - d. Safe Transport
 - e. Increased number of working women's hostels/ short stay homes
 - f. Expedited setting up of one-stop centres
 - g. Zero tolerance policy implemented and enforced for sexual harassment of women in the workspace. Ensure a safe, secure, and dignified work environment for women.

Social Media:

19. Use social media for awareness and as an educational toolkit. Use of counter speech through sensitising campaigns.
20. Engagement of youth through workshops on online safety for capacity building

21. Formulation of robust laws that deal explicitly with Violence Against Women in the digital space. Laws need to be enacted that protect women from online bullying, harassment and revenge porn.
22. Policy making and internet governance must recognise that women are not a homogenous group and face diverse issues online. Women's rights activists, leaders, and groups must be part of the design implementation and evaluation of policies, projects and processes that aim to address technology related and online violence against women.

Environment:

23. Engage women as agents of change in the Climate Action agenda. Disasters kill more women than men, and hit women's livelihoods the hardest All forms of gender-based violence against women and girls spike during conflict. Yet women and girls are not just the most affected – they are also powerful agents of change. Evidence shows that when women are meaningfully engaged and their needs addressed, humanitarian action is more efficient and the transition to recovery accelerated.
24. Gender mainstreaming the policy process: we need more women to be involved in climate action policies.
25. Revised and updated National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and specific State Action Plans (SAPCC) that outline specific policies to include women into climate action policies and schemes - particularly addressing target groups of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
26. Streamline modules within the Panchayati Raj Institute that train all incoming elected representatives on climate changes, its manifestations, its effects, and the manner in which it can be combated. CSR has created modules for this purpose before, and also conducted "training of trainers" for the same.
27. Improve capacity of national disaster management offices and other humanitarian stakeholders to intervene effectively to prevent violence, as well as protect and rescue victims during and after disasters.
28. Build capacity of disaster risk management stakeholders to use gender indicators to improve disaster risk management plans.
29. Support women's economic empowerment by adopting measures to protect their incomes generating activity in case of disasters and to aid a quick recovery.

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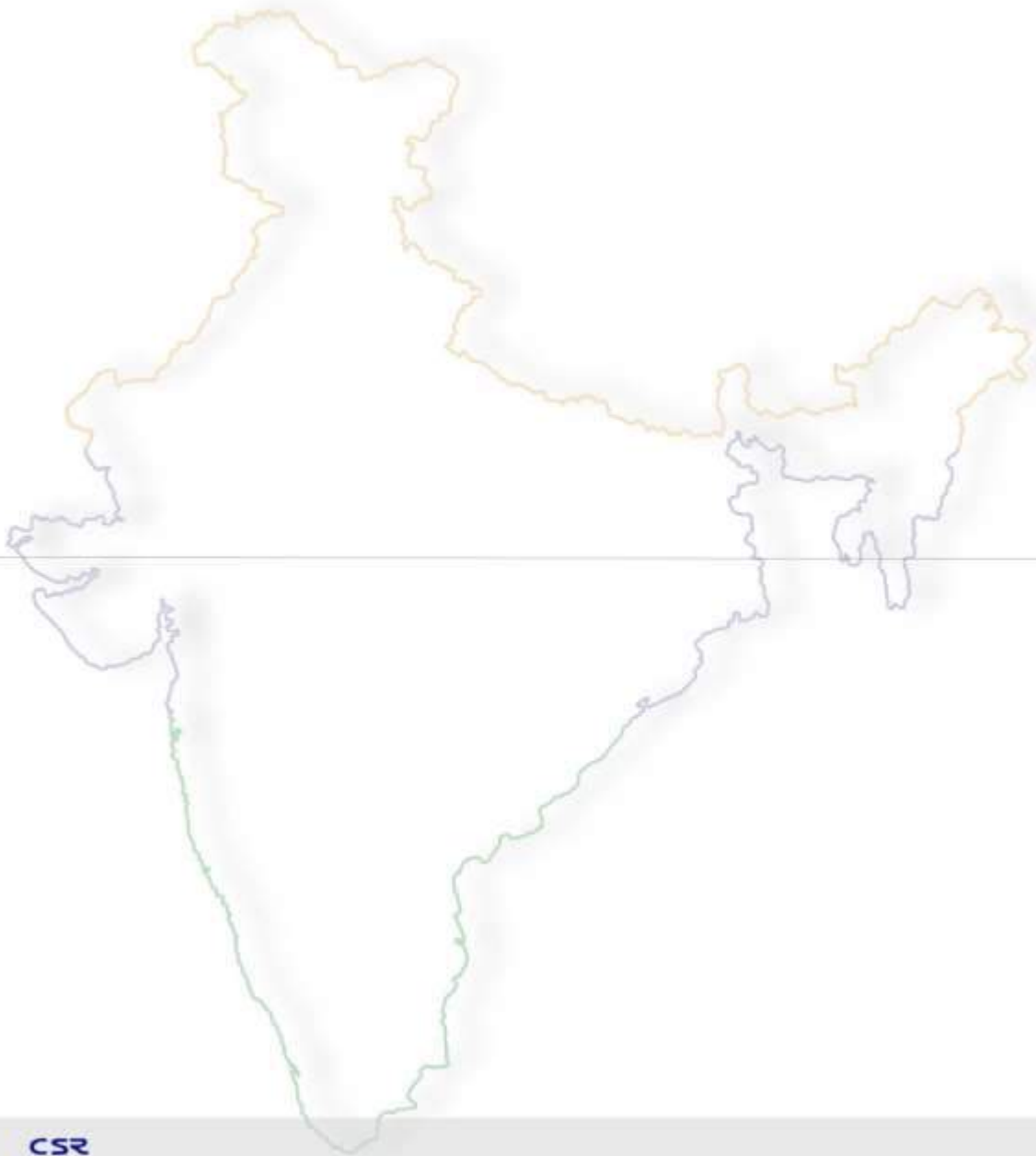
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