

Addressing Violence against Women and Girls in Bihar

The SWASTH Approach



BACKGROUND

Bihar is India's third most populous state with a population of about 104 million, according to the Census 2011, females constitute nearly 50% of the state's population. The level of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the state is extremely high when compared to other states of India. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) – III had revealed that 61% of ever married women and 23% of never married women experience physical and sexual violence in the state. Perpetrators of this violence included husbands, parents-in-law, brothers, sisters-in-law and other family members. Nearly 57% men and women believed that spousal violence was acceptable. The data had also suggested that similar opinions were held by young people. In 2008, Bihar had few agencies working on VAWG redressal and support, and women who faced violence had limited access to these.

The Government of Bihar (GoB) has been committed to tackling VAWG in all forms through its various policies, laws and programmes and hence adopted a broad and systematic approach for women's empowerment. Bihar became one of the leaders in implementing the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005. In 2006, the Bihar State Women's Commission and the Women Development Corporation (WDC) were set up to lead and champion the cause of women's empowerment.

The State Policy for Women's Empowerment is also being implemented by creating livelihood opportunities, running helplines and short-stay homes across the state to support victims of domestic violence.

THE SWASTH VAWG CONCEPT

As part of its Sector Wide Approach to Strengthening Health Programme (SWASTH) programme supported by the Department for International Development (DFID, UK) and the Bihar Technical Assistance Support Team (BTAST), GoB through WDC has been working since 2011 to strengthen the state response to VAWG. This response has been informed by global evidence and leading organisations working on VAWG issues. As part of its planning, BTAST conducted

diagnostic and scoping studies to understand prevailing social norms related to gender-based violence and abuse.

SWASTH has followed the World Health Organization's three-layered prevention of violence model. Under this, primary prevention is done through schools, Self-Help Groups and working with men and youth. At secondary level, routine antenatal screening, counselling and alcohol management are carried out. At the third level, service providers like judiciary, police, helplines and short-stay homes are sensitised.

Global evidence on VAWG shows that at the primary level, school-based communication can change knowledge, attitudes and reduce reported violence against the current partner. In South Africa, a micro-finance approach with training on Intimate Partner Violence IPV reduced the risk of physical and sexual violence by more than half during a period of two years. At the secondary level of violence protection, the protection orders sought from judiciary in the United States had brought significant reduction in threats of violence.

Similarly, regular identification of victims and support provided at the antenatal clinics lowered VAWG in United States. Non-directive counselling to encourage victim self-help lowered the incidence of physical abuse. According to a DFID paper published in 2008, proactive inquiry by health workers and advice to encourage self-help resulted in significant reduction in alcohol consumption by men, leading to the reduction in cases of VAWG.

In India, UNFPA programme (integrated into Government of India's Reproductive and Child Health Phase II initiative) used the health facility



as a significant catchment area for detecting and responding to domestic violence victims and survivors. In a first of its kind in India, hospital-based crisis centre Dilaasa was set up by Mumbai-based Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) for women facing domestic violence. The crisis centre provides social and psychological support, referrals to shelters and legal aid and basic medical care. Initially, the centre started with one government hospital in Mumbai and was then extended to many hospitals. In 1984, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) established a strategic alliance with Mumbai Police for creation of a special cell for women and children. The initiative resulted in increased reporting of cases on VAWG.

Drawing from all such global and local experiences, models and evidences, the gender interventions under SWASTH were conceptualised. Systems strengthening, intersectoral action, policy advocacy, community involvement, use of evidence and adaptive learning, addressing social norms and collaborative co-action have been the key principles of SWASTH’s gender interventions. For example, creation of stronger public systems, protection, legal, health and nutrition services that are gender-sensitive and responsive are critical for a violence-free environment. At the same time, responsive violence-redressal mechanisms like

helplines, short-stay homes and special cells in the police station at the core of the government structure have been key to creating an enabling atmosphere for women and girls.

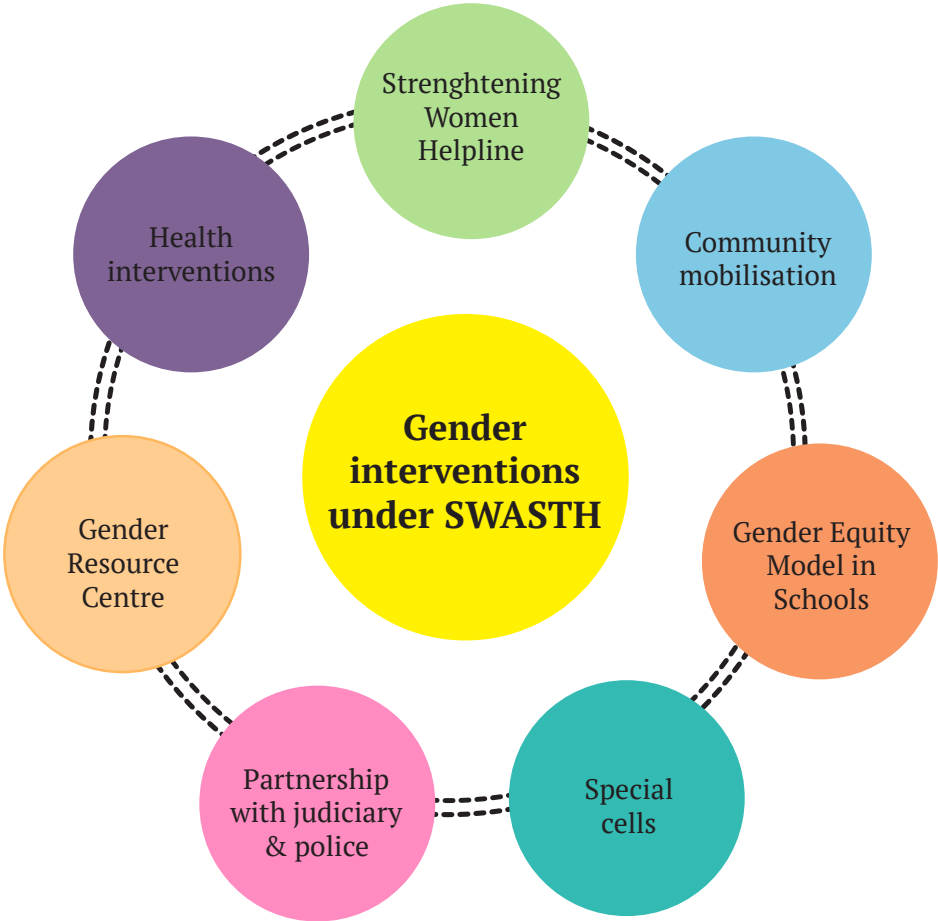
GENDER INTERVENTIONS UNDER SWASTH

Gender is interwoven in the design of SWASTH’s key programmes. For example, women mechanics have been trained under SWASTH to repair and maintain hand pumps. Similarly, Gram Varta driven by women SHG leaders is a community-based approach addressing health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

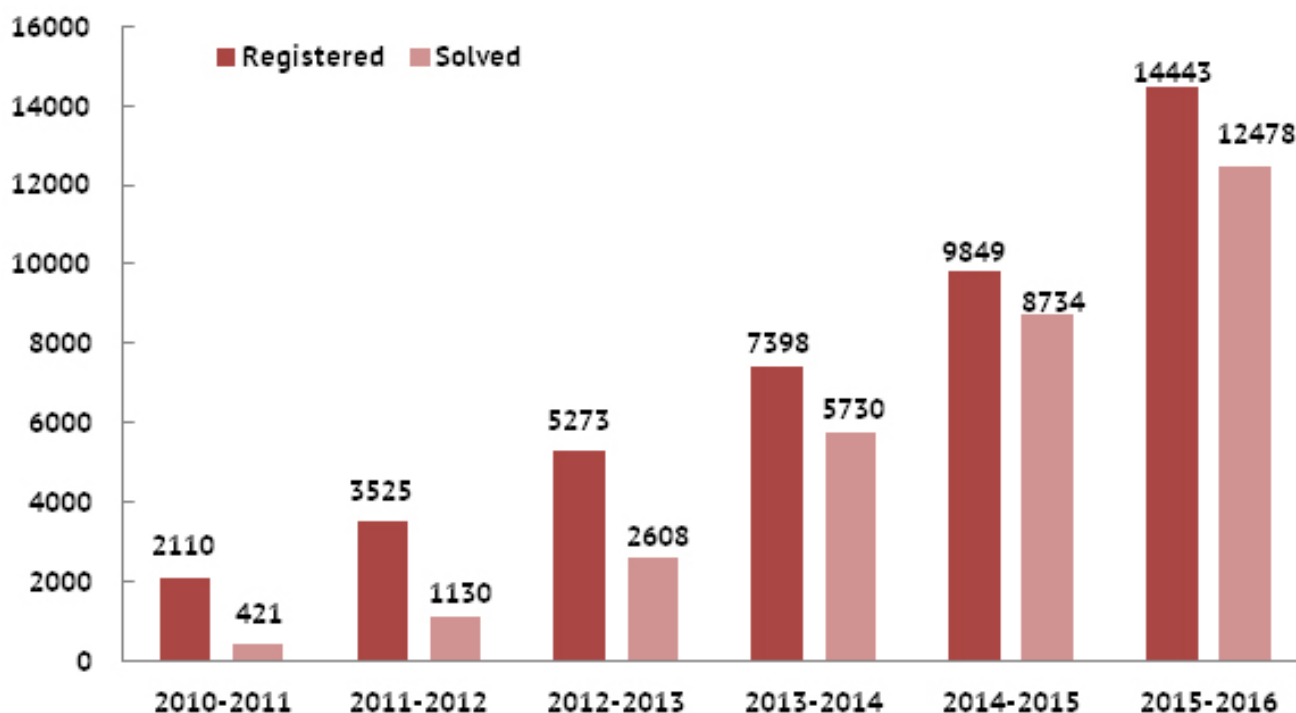
At the same time, Bihar under SWASTH has taken significant steps to protect women facing domestic violence and ensure gender justice. Under the SWASTH programme, WDC was allocated Rs 105.71 crore for implementing and sustaining key interventions such as package of VAWG and Gender, Gender Resource Centre and Gram Varta, and so on. Some of the key gender-based interventions implemented by BTAST include:

Strengthening helplines and short-stay homes

In 1999, GoB set up its first Women’s Helpline Centre in Patna district under Mukhya Mantri Nari Shakti Yojana (MMNSY). With support from local district



Status of cases registered and resolved during 2010-2016 in 9 SWASTH priority districts



administration and courts, women's helpline is for addressing issues of VAWG, especially the issue of domestic violence. In Bihar, the Women's Helpline is a physical space that also registers complaints telephonically, and is one of its kind in the country. In addition to helping victims of domestic violence file Domestic Incident Report (DIR), it provides a range of services including (a) reporting of crimes (First Information Reports or FIRs) in Police Stations, (b) free legal aid, (c) temporary shelter at Short Stay Homes (SSHs) and other organisations, and (d) medical assistance.

Project Manager-cum-Protection Officer appointed under PWDVA, 2005 manages the helpline centre. The Protection Officer is supported by

two Counsellors and three empanelled lawyers to provide legal assistance. Currently, 35 out of Bihar's 38 districts have Helplines managed by the District Protection Officer (DPO). In some districts these are run by NGOs.

A majority of the cases (about 70%) registered at these Helplines are about domestic violence. The provision of one to one and joint counselling is what makes Women's Helplines different from police stations and courts. The services are provided free-of-cost to aggrieved women.

Over the past five years, BTAST has conducted several rounds of capacity building and training for Protection Officers and organised sensitisation programmes on PWDVA, 2005 for police and judiciary. As part of these activities, BTAST has organised exposure visits for Protection Officers to study the best models of Women's Helplines operational in Delhi and Rajasthan, and to bring home best practices that could be integrated in the women helplines in Bihar. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Protection Officers have been piloted in the state, while scaling up is in the process. Besides, BTAST has also supported WDC in the process of developing state rules for the implementation of PWDVA, 2005.

BTAST through WDC has been strengthening infrastructure and



equipment across all helplines and short stay homes. Besides, the state government has approved setting up of women and children friendly model helplines in five districts.

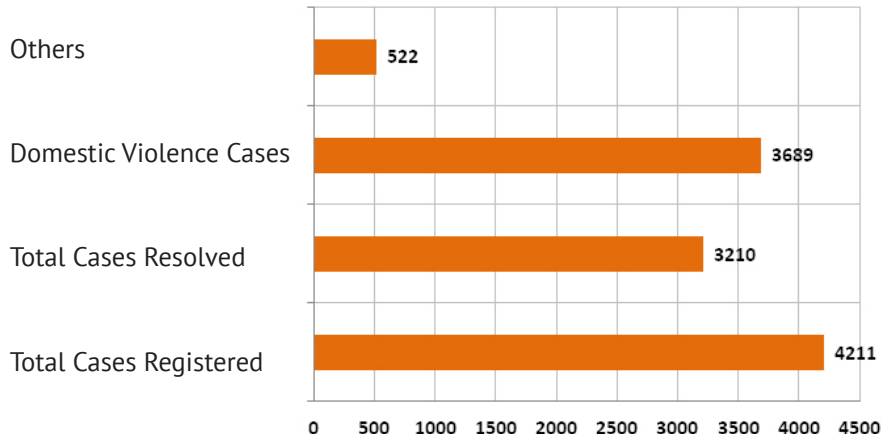
The women's helpline is also an example of close coordination and strong linkage between government departments like police, judiciary, health social welfare department, etc. This kind of engagement of helpline with service providers has helped in ensuring faster case resolution (See graph shown below) and in providing relief to the victim.

Special cells

Special Cells for Women were established in 2013 to provide help and support to victims of domestic violence in Bihar. Based within police stations, each Special Cell is managed by a trained and experienced woman counsellor who advises, supports and guides girls and women who seek help. Set up in 23 blocks of Patna district, these cells were launched by WDC in collaboration with the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Bihar, and with financial and technical support through DFID under SWASTH programme.

Bihar has modelled Special Cells on successful Special Cells of Mumbai, which is a result of partnership between TISS and Mumbai Police. Scale up to 112 sub-divisional police stations in phases was initiated in 2016.

Special Cell for Women-Cases registered and resolved (Mar 2015-Feb 2016)

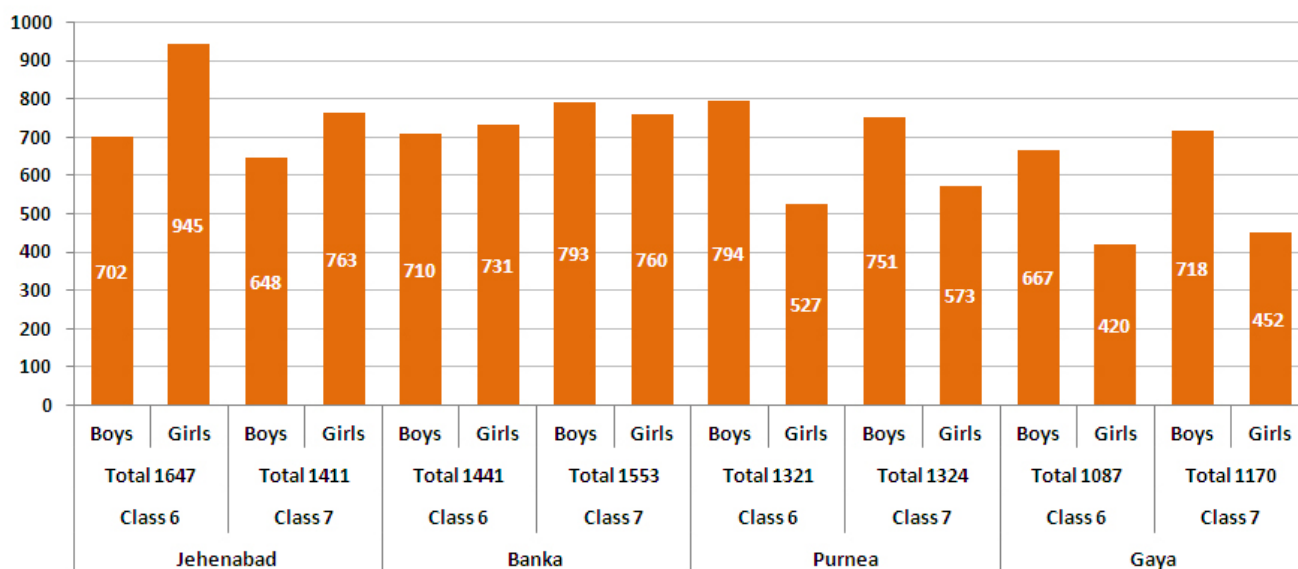


Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS)

The GEMS is an initiative to promote gender equality and reduce violence among middle and high school children using group education activities in the school setting. In order to make children more gender responsive, GEMS is being implemented by WDC and Department of Education, Government of Bihar under DFID-supported SWASTH programme. The main objective of GEMS is to facilitate an understanding of gender equitable norms among school going adolescent children and help curb gender-based violence.

The initiative has been piloted in Banka, Purnea, Jehanabad and Gaya districts of Bihar, covering 10,954 children including 5,783 boys and 5,171 girls. Based on the principle of 'catching them young,' the intervention targets students of Class 6 and 7 of age group 12 – 14 years. As part of this intervention, BTAST has conducted trainings for

Phase - 1: Total coverage - 10,954 (Boys - 5783; Girls - 5171)



the capacity building of teachers and created a pool of master trainers who will play a critical role in sustaining the intervention in future.

In the phase II, WDC has scaled up the initiative to 100 schools in 10 additional districts covering around 35,000 school going children. Besides, efforts are being made to include GEMS module in the school curriculum through the State Council of Educational Research and Training, Bihar.



Gender Resource Centre

The Government of Bihar is setting up a Gender Resource Centre (GRC), which intends to support the coordination and implementation of women's empowerment programmes and schemes in the state. GRC will also support the state in implementing the State Policy for Empowerment of Women in Bihar. The purpose of GRC is to help various departments of GoB to mainstream gender-sensitive policy and programme planning as well as implementation in their regular work.

The GRC will do this through a range of activities that would involve identifying existing policy gaps, undertaking quality research, building local capacities on gender, gender budgeting, supporting implementation of gender programmes and promoting effective planning to ensure effective delivery of gender programmes. The centre will work in areas of research, policy, advocacy, awareness and monitoring and evaluation of gender-related programmes of the government.

SWASTH has developed the vision, objectives, and theory of change for the centre in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), at the University of Sussex, UK. The Bihar GRC is based on similar successful models in Gujarat and Kerala. Besides undertaking to sensitise and facilitate government departments on planning, implementing and evaluating gender sensitive programme, policies and laws, the centre will also work closely with NGOs, academic institutions and experts working in this area.

Community Mobilisation

Various interventions at local and global levels show that community participation, attitudinal and behaviour change are keys to curbing violence against women. Realising the importance

of engaging with communities, BTAST has been conducting community level interventions like folk theatres and debriefing sessions to sensitise communities on domestic violence. Male and female volunteers from the community conduct regular meetings, home visits and act as a referral link and create local grievance redressal forum consisting of SHG members, teachers and the Mukhiya (village head).

In partnership with Bihar Mahila Samakhya, BTAST has piloted this community-based approach in 200 villages of 20 Gram Panchayats of 4 blocks of Gaya and Jehanabad districts. The initiative has been further scaled up to cover 14 blocks in 7 districts of Bihar including the existing 2 districts. The pilot has brought to the table good example of working through the communities in generating awareness, creating local support structures and getting the local district administration support and buy-in.

Partnership with judiciary and police

BTAST under SWASTH programme is facilitating linkages between helplines, police and judiciary to sensitise them about the provisions of women specific legislations like PWDVA, 2005 and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, etc.

The idea is to enhance the registration of cases, resolution and provide relief to aggrieved women. For the purpose, BTAST in partnership with WDC has organised several sensitisation and orientation workshops on PWDVA, 2005 for women Station House Officers (SHOs) of Mahila Thana and Project Manager-cum-Protection Officers of Women's Helpline. Strong linkages have been established with the State and District Legal Service Authority (DLSA) to provide free legal aid to the survivors of domestic violence. Para-legal Volunteers (PLV) are

being engaged at the block and community level for increasing accessibility of helpline service. Training of the trainers has been conducted for Chief Judicial Magistrates (CJMs) and Additional Chief Judicial Magistrates (ACJMs), covering all 38 districts of Bihar. Besides, support is sought to organise quarterly District Coordination Committees for grievance redressal in 31 districts.

These committees include representatives of police, Protection Officers and CSO/ NGO participation.

Health Sector Intervention

In partnership with the health sector and WDC, BTAST has conducted orientation of over 8,000 Frontline Health Workers to identify and screen domestic violence survivors and refer them to health facilities and service providers for support. The health officials at District Health Societies (DHS) have been trained as master trainers to conduct such orientation programmes and training.

The intervention has been piloted in 3 districts of Bihar, covering 37 blocks. Besides, BTAST has supported restructuring and strengthening of WDC at three levels. It covers programmatic restructuring, physical renovation of WDC and incentivisation of WDC for implementing gender initiatives under SWASTH programme.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The implementation of gender interventions under SWASTH programme reflects that strengthening public systems, policies, redressal mechanisms and community engagement are the keys for addressing the issue of gender-based violence against women and girls in Bihar.

Some of the key achievement of gender interventions implemented under SWASTH include following:

- Through package of gender and VAW interventions, BTAST has been able to establish strong partnerships with key government departments and stakeholders working on the issue of gender. This has resulted in ensuring the sustainability of key initiatives like the GEMS model, training of health functionaries to identify master trainers, strengthening of helplines, etc.
- Bihar is a front runner in the implementation of PWDVA, 2005. The state has developed the SOP for effective implementation of the Act. The state rules on implementation of PWDVA, 2005 have been drafted in a consultative process involving key government departments and stakeholders.
- The majority of pilots conducted under the SWASTH programme like setting up of Special Cells, GEMS model and community mobilisation are being scaled up by the state government.
- Pilots were able to successfully leverage the Government of India's Nirbhaya fund for setting up Special Cell for Women.
- Successful interventions have been integrated into the action plans of WDC and Social Welfare Department under the State Policy for Empowerment of Women, Government of Bihar. This will ensure sustenance of key interventions beyond the life cycle of the SWASTH programme.
- Convergence with broader health, nutrition and WASH issues has been critical for the implementation of VAWG interventions.





The document has been written by Tej Prakash Yadav at OneWorld Foundation India with inputs from Gender and Social Inclusion Expert BTAST. The document has been reviewed by BTAST MLE Team.

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