

# Pandemic & Lockdown: Enabling Media as a credible stakeholder against VAWG in India

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# India: COVID-19 Pandemic, Lockdown & Social Implications

## Background



- In March 2020, a total lockdown was imposed on the entire nation, but India being one of the most populated countries had many social implications as soon as people were confined to their homes.
- Panic, confusion, loss of livelihood, inadequate health infrastructure were some of the visible issues while several women and girls were left vulnerable, confined to their houses.
- The hotlines run by NGOs and volunteer organisations were left out from essential services, resulting in which many avenues of immediate help and rescue were lost.
- Most activists and experts feared continuous presence of abuser at homes could result in more violence and less reporting of crime.

# Violence against women and girls in India



Year 2021

46% rise in crime against women in India: NCW

NCW reports

19,953 DV complaints filed between Jan-May 2021

Year 2020

Just in July, 3248 DV cases reported.

- According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), more than 25% of women face domestic violence in India.
- One in 3 women face violence from intimate partners yet only 1 in 10 of these women formally report the offense.
- 2019 National Crime Record Bureau's (NCRB) report, stated daily 10 cases of rape of Dalit Women.
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reports women and girls with disabilities face 10 times more gender violence.

# Role of Media as 'stakeholder'

## Gaps and Responsibilities



- According to a study conducted by the University of Alberta, India produced the largest amount of social media misinformation on COVID-19 between January 2020 to March 2021.
- This indicates the failure to utilise the media effectively during health & humanitarian crises.
- Despite the warnings from civil society members on rise in cases of Domestic violence (DV) within homes, media took longer to acknowledge the problems on-ground.
- Lack of space for gender issues, ability to understand the subject matter by the top-level editors, lack of gender reporters could be some of the reasons for such frequent delayed response.

**Media's role was crucial to spread awareness among the masses, and take right on-ground messaging to the policymakers.**

# Breakthrough's Awareness Campaigns

## 'VIOLENCE IS NOT PRIVATE'



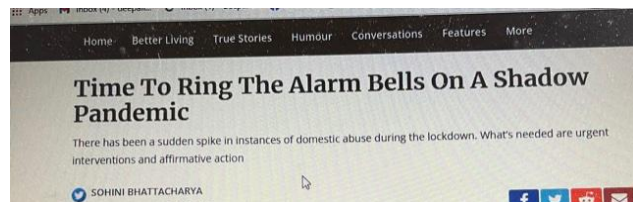
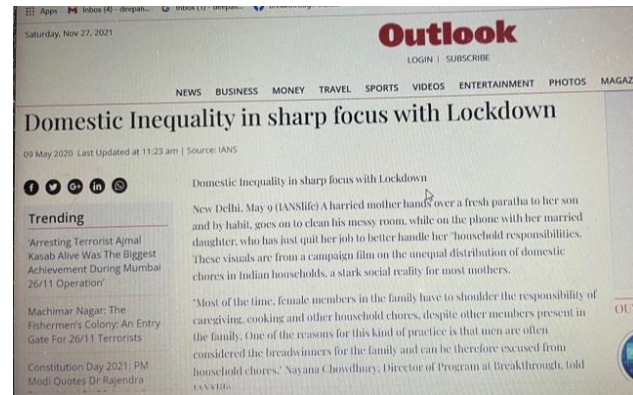
- Breakthrough launched campaigns encouraging bystander intervention in cases of VAWG.
- We collaborated with Twitter India for #EachOneReachOne campaign and engaged with twitter users, influencers, journalists, media houses to create a conversation around gender impact during pandemic. Total engagement: 103370,
- Highlighted Issues:
  - Status of DV during lockdown and post lockdown
  - Culture of violence and role of media
  - What does a post pandemic world for women look like?
- Another campaign, #UniteAgainstDV engaged with several personalities from the TV and film industry to spread messaging around active bystander intervention.
- We were constantly disseminating a collated list of operational DV helpline numbers across India in multiple languages.

# Building the Narratives...

## Intervention



- Media platforms were utilised to share evidence based advocacy articles, press releases raising timely issues pertaining to lockdown and safety.
- We Identified journalists willing to write on gender issues.
- Emphasis was given on usage of appropriate headlines, photo representation and messaging.
- We aligned with partner organisations, collated ground stories. This helped to generate media's interest.



# Goals

## □ Build Media as credible voice, active stakeholder on VAWG



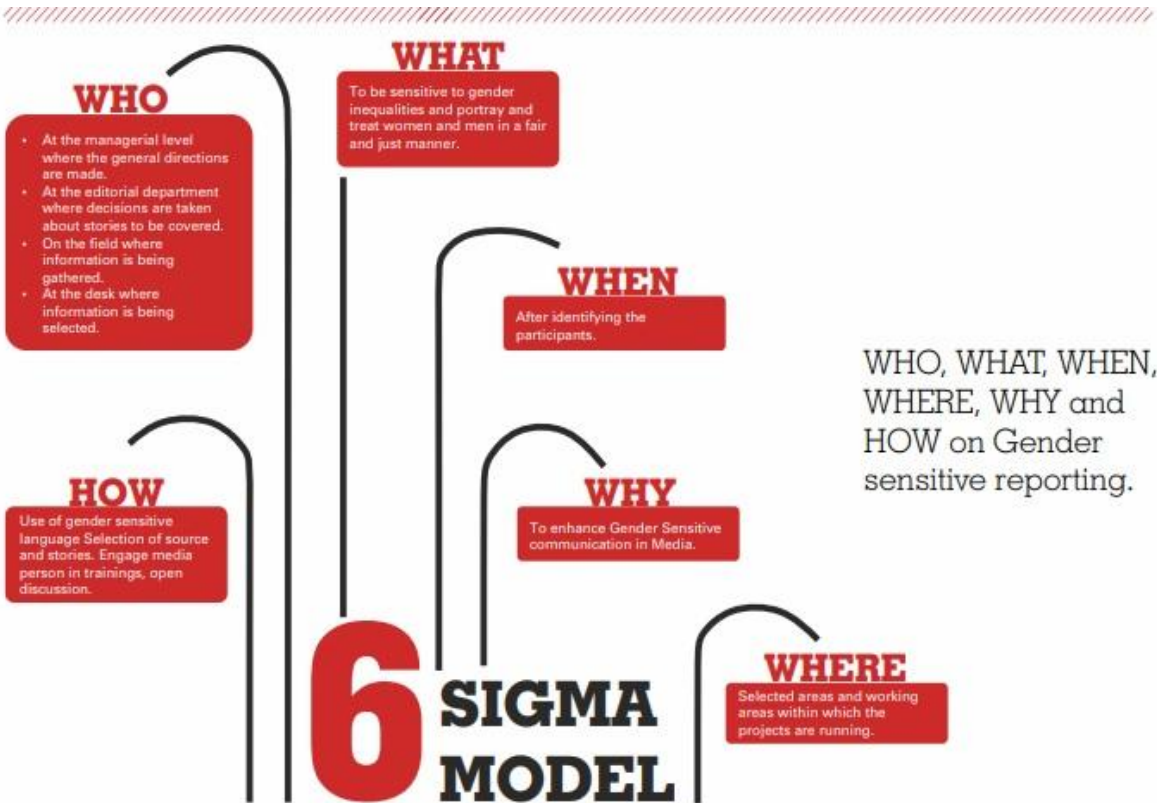
### Use of Images

**Avoid** photos those represent people who face sexual harassment, violence and/ or abuse as helpless victims whose lives have ended or destroyed. Incidences of sexual harassment, violence and abuses are not the "end of the world"



- Over-sensationalisation and misrepresentation of women and girls while reporting on VAWG reinforces regressive cultural norms and perpetuates a victim-blaming attitude.
- Such problematic media practices can be replaced with sensitive and affirming methods that uphold the rights and dignity of survivors of sexual violence.
- Sustained conversations on gender issues is crucial for capacity building on the subject matter.
- Media must recognise its role in making violence against women, girls and other vulnerable sections unacceptable.

# Need for Media Advocacy



- Media advocacy helps to amplify the issue of VAWG and is a strategic use of mass media to push policy initiatives, campaigns and build awareness.
- Breakthrough has developed a guidebook under #RedrawMisogyny to sensitise journalists with appropriate usage of jargon, graphics, images that help to practice ethical journalism while covering stories related to VAWG.
- We have so far trained over 150 journalists through workshops and training sessions in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar and Jharkhand.
- It has been observed that consistent interventions help a journalist perceive stories on VAWG with better sensitivity and balanced coverage.