

# IMPACT REPORT

## TRANSFORMATION EVIDENCE

Giving women and families choices to end domestic violence and to perpetuate a cycle of peace.

JUNE  
2012 MARCH  
2016

# 03

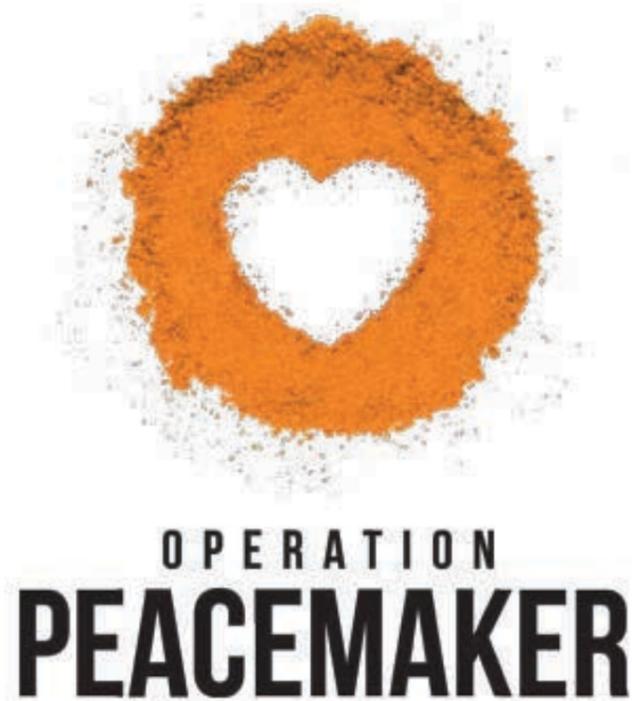
**CUMULATIVE PROJECT DATA**  
4 years of peace in the making

PREPARED BY  
OPERATION PEACEMAKER



# PEACE

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End Violence against women and girls

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**IMPACT REPORT**  
Evidence of Transformation

# ELCA GROBLER

FOUNDER



“

They say a dream is something you want to do, but a calling is something that you have to do, for me My Choices Foundation is that 'calling'. Although we deal daily with broken lives and families, we are blessed to encounter thousands of moments of courage, resilience, wisdom, joy and gratitude expressed by the women, girls and families touched by the My Choices Foundation's, Operation PeaceMaker program. It is with much privilege we reflect and write about the incredible impact of our team.

Our passionate and committed team have established 5 counseling centers across Hyderabad - providing 100 percent free counseling, rights education and legal aid to women and girls facing abuse and exploitation. Jointly our counsellors and PeaceMakers have successfully helped more than 2,264 cases.

Through our School Program, we have reached more than 17,617 school girls, providing a safe environment to discuss difficult topics such as child sexual abuse, child marriage, rape and domestic violence. Our team feels privileged to take on such an important responsibility, resulting in many young girls speaking up about exploitation and abuse in their own communities.

Not only have we provided direct community support, we have also kick-started a nationwide conversation against domestic violence, discrimination and exploitation through our Respect2Protect campaign. The campaign won the Grand Jury Award for Women Empowerment at the Social Media for Empowerment Awards, 2016 and the Special Mention Award at the eNGO South Asia Awards in 2015 and garnered the support of big name celebrities like world #1 batsman, South African cricketer AB de Villiers and Indian cricket captain, MS Dhoni.

Looking back I realise just how much our dedicated team have achieved. Recently their hard-work was affirmed when My Choices Foundation was asked to be the leading partner in establishing a new Safe Home (outside Hyderabad) for women seeking protection from domestic violence and girls who have been rescued from sex trafficking.

We are deeply grateful to every member of our team and we are honoured to be serving thousands of women and girls who have the courage to stand up and speak up against the world's biggest human rights issue - the abuse and exploitation of women and girls.

”





**4** YEARS OF FOCUSSED  
WORK IN TELANGANA

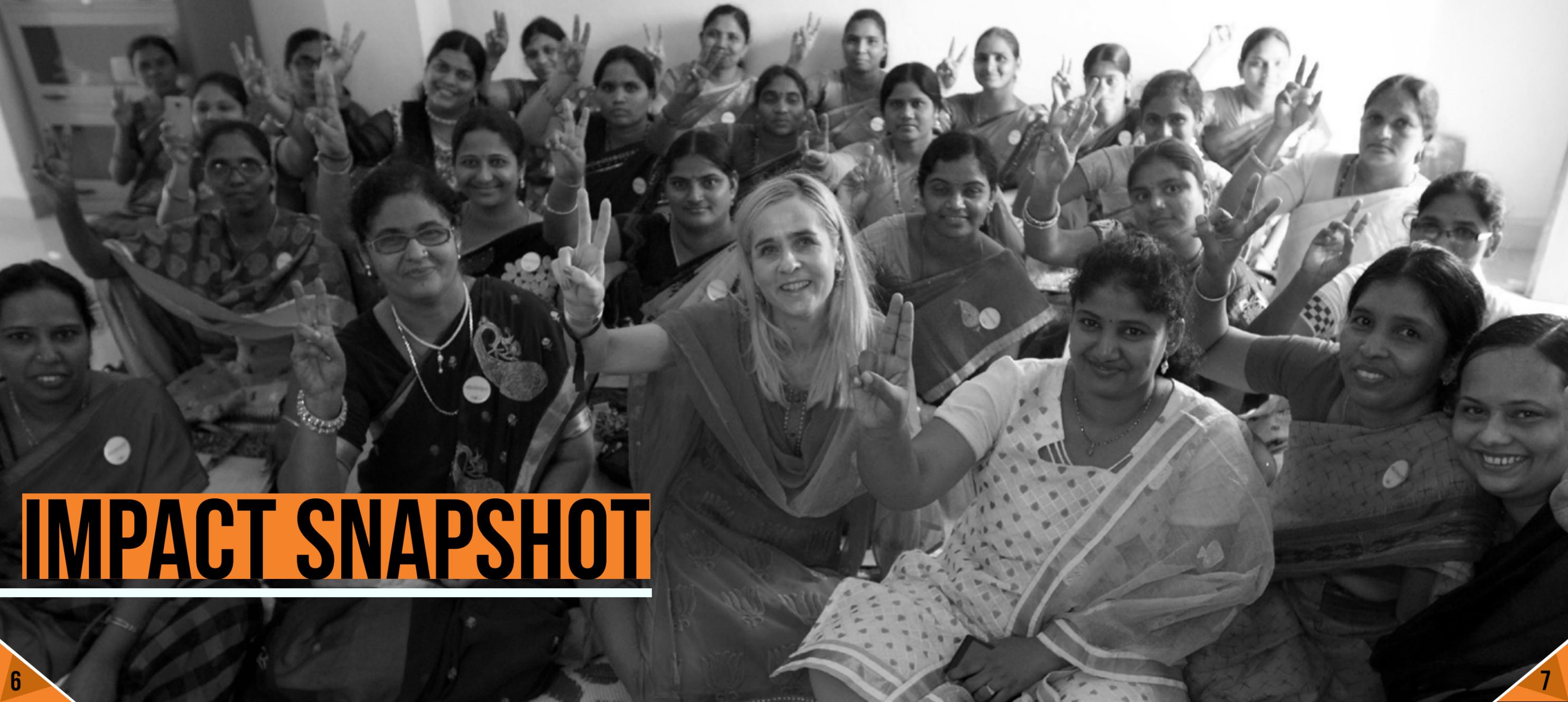
**61** PEACEMAKERS  
**9** COUNSELORS

**2264** CASES RESOLVED

**91,391** FIELD HOURS  
SUPPORTING SURVI-  
VORS

**34,899** WOMEN AND  
GIRLS TRAINED

IMPACTING SEVERAL  
**THOUSAND** OTHERS



# IMPACT SNAPSHOT

# THE CENTIRES

## FALAKNUMA

Our oldest and still our busiest centre that has a reputation for overcoming deeply entrenched societal pressures to include men in the transformation process.



## LAKDIKAPUL

The core location for all training, meetings and seminars.



## WARANGAL

Our most outreach oriented centre, on average reaching 100+ women and girls with rights education each week.



## SECUNDERABAD

Launched in Dec, 2015. Our newest centre, and a response to our client's and team's request that we provide localised support to Hyderabad's twin city.



## GOLCONDA

The source of our most difficult cases involving the most complex cultural challenges to our work. Also the source of some of our bravest PeaceMakers.



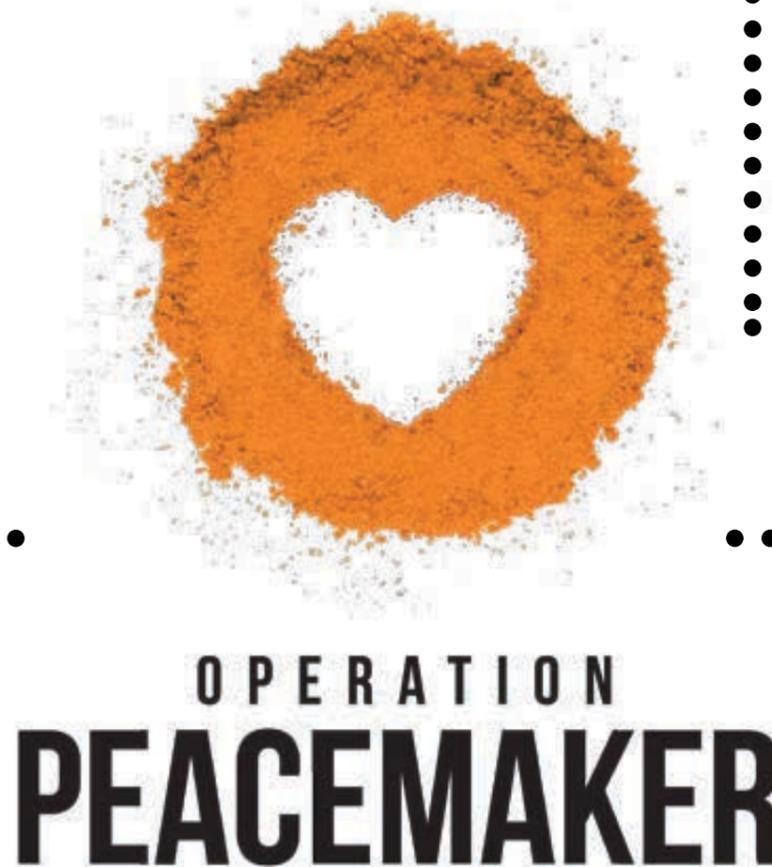
# VISION

Operation PeaceMaker : Working until every woman and girl in Telangana has the knowledge and support they need to make the choice to live a life free of abuse and violence.

## PREVENTION

## INTERVENTION

## CONVERSATION



## SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Operation PeaceMaker School Program aims to prevent abuse before it begins. Over half of Indian children face sexual abuse, and around half of girls grow up to be abused in their marital home. We train girls aged 12-17 on their rights to stay safe from abuse, violence and exploitation, and give them the tools to stand up for themselves and their loved ones. We do this in schools, with the support of teachers and school admin who can help support the girls' choices to stay safe.

## GRASS ROOTS AWARENESS

Our Grassroots Awareness efforts endeavor to create pervasive, community level transformation that supports our individual intervention efforts. Our Grassroots Awareness program is made up of our own Basti (community) Meetings, and Outreach Meetings conducted in partnership with local groups, organisations, employee unions etc. We educate community members on women's rights and legal options, gender equity, and issues of women's and girls' safety. This is one of our most effective efforts in getting women to share their stories and access help through our PeaceMakers.

## SHAKTI PROGRAM

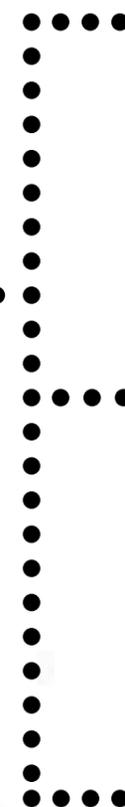
The Shakti Program launched March 2016! Shakti is a long-term mentorship program for adolescent girls designed by Aangan Trust to empower marginalised girls during their most vulnerable years with the knowledge and resources to make choices that keep them safe, and secure their futures. We have started in three areas of Hyderabad, and plan to impact 150-200 girls in 2016.

## PEACEMAKER PROGRAM

Operation PeaceMaker was founded first and foremost to reach those experiencing domestic violence with services that would empower them to share their story, and get help to end the abuse. Indian law supports women looking for protection from abuse, but they require education on the choices available to them, and help to access these choices. A PeaceMaker provides free counselling, rights education and legal aid to victims of abuse and their families. Once empowered, our client guides us on the support she wants and needs.

## MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Our Respect2Protect Campaign, initially launched in March 2015, has had continuing success throughout 2015 and into 2016 becoming a dual award winning campaign. The campaign went viral in India and garnered the support of both India and South Africa's #1 cricketers. My Choices Foundation has become a nationally significant voice in the conversation between men and women on gender equity and women's right to safety. Our social media initiatives have won awards for their deep engagement with stakeholders, and ability to spark change.



# PREVENTION

## SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES PROGRAM



**430** HRS

Spent training school girls



**231** SCHOOLS

Visited



**17,617**

School children trained



**17,282**

Community Participants



**336** MEETINGS

Basti Meetings and Community outreaches conducted



**457** HRS

Spent by peacemakers on awareness events

### HAJERA UNNISA, FALAKNUMA SCHOOL PROGRAM LEADER ON SCHOOL PROGRAM:

Teachers are always more reluctant to talk about gender based violence issues than the students. They are worried that talking about taboo issues like sexual abuse is inappropriate for unmarried girls. The school girls, however, are much more bold and ask us so many questions. Recently a girl in the 9th standard told us on our second visit to her school that her Principal used to behave inappropriately with her and her friends.

She never felt like she could tell anyone, but after our visit she informed her teachers and together they kept the Principle at a respectful distance from the girls. It's incredible to see the change in them once their right to safety and bodily integrity is affirmed!

# PREVENTION

## GRASS ROOTS AWARENESS

### BEENA DORCAS, COUNSELLOR

Our Basti meetings are a shot in the dark, in that they are conducted in communities with geographical relevance to our centres, but not for demographics pre-identified to be experiencing violence. This is why they are such a powerful indication for us of the ground reality. In a recent Basti Meeting in Malkajgiri, our PeaceMaker Lavanya spoke to a group of 25 women. After the meeting, most of the women said they needed help as they were suffering some kind of abuse at home. Since then 7 cases of domestic violence have been registered with Operation PeaceMaker. Statistically, we know that two-thirds of women will never speak to anyone about their abuse, and only 25% choose to get help. In this particular Basti Meeting, those statistics were proven to be true.

# PREVENTION

## SHAKTI PROGRAM



3-5 SHAKTI CIRCLES ESTABLISHED



100-150 GIRLS INCLUDED IN LONG TERM PROGRAMS



PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVT HOMES FOR SAFE HOMES

### ASIMA HABIB

The girls coming for Shakti are completely aware of all the dangers surrounding them. They know about trafficking, they know about the frustrations of getting married young, about sexual abuse, about being harassed by men. What they want from us is the tools and the skills to tackle these perils. They want to know how to be assertive, how to refuse, how to stand up for themselves and the other girls around them.

My vision for these girls is that they are able to do all this and make informed decisions about their lives by the time they graduate from the Shakti programme.



Operation PeaceMaker started the Shakti programme in three areas of Hyderabad to empower our city's most marginalised girls to make informed decisions about their safety and futures. Shakti is designed to intervene in and mentor young girl's lives so that they are shaped by knowledge of their worth, strength and purpose, and not the discrimination they face. We plan to impact 100-150 girls through our Shakti circles in 2016.

Adolescent girls are the most vulnerable group in our society. India has been labeled the most dangerous place on earth to be born a girl because of the neglect and discrimination they face throughout their life. There are a multitude of barriers to their personal and professional happiness and life opportunities such as lack of education, gender discrimination, early marriage, domestic violence and sexual abuse to name a few. Simply put, they do not have equal opportunity to access their own human rights.

We at My Choices Foundation firmly believe that if given the chance, girls will not only change their lives, but also the lives of those around them. Education is the first step towards their freedom because educated and empowered girls are more likely to protect themselves and those around them. Every girl deserves to be raised as a human being and not be subjected to sex selective discrimination. Every girl deserves to be educated and empowered to be able to make her own choices.

Fouzia, an Anganwadi teacher in the Falaknuma area of Hyderabad where one of our Shakti circles is being run says, "Girls here do not feel safe. Most of them are sexually abused, even by their fathers and brothers, and do not know what to do about it."

Shakti has a multifold approach in helping girls, where girls are: connected to a peer network; supported and empowered to recognise risk and develop strategies to resist pressures of child marriage, dangerous work, and being pulled out of school; provided access to services; trained to negotiate for themselves; supported to articulate aspirations and take steps towards achieving their live goals. The peer network that provides the girls a safe space to talk about their lives is the foundation of the Shakti programme. It is incredible to see the girls giving and deriving strength from each other!

# INTERVENTION

## PEACEMAKER PROFILE



61 ACTIVE PEACEMAKERS

**2264**  
CASES RESOLVED



**5.6 CASES**  
PER PEACEMAKER

**5**  
CENTERS



**91,391**  
FIELD HOURS



**10.8 HOURS**  
PER WEEK PER PEACEMAKER

## ARCHANA BRIAN PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

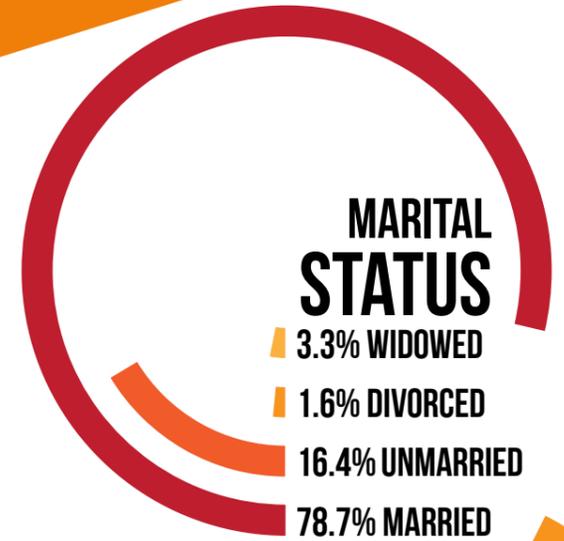


As Program Director it has been such a privilege to lead our team and help it evolve (grow and shrink) in strategic ways. The Warangal Centre team has grown to have a group of 15 of our most passionate and capable PeaceMakers who keep surprising us with their exuberance and dedication. This team has raised the bar in prevention and awareness programs.

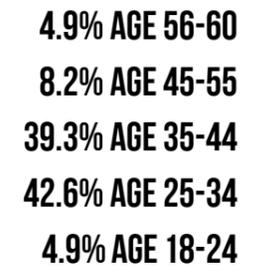
The launch of the Secunderabad Centre this year means we are now serving Hyderabad's twin city in ways that have proved to be as important as we thought it would be. The Centre has quickly become one of our busiest, and has enabled us to meet the needs of clientele of different religious, cultural and social demographics who we had only limited access to previously.

We have also increased the number and the training of our Counsellors so that each of our Counselling Centres is better staffed. Where we previously had to rotate our team so that each Centre had adequate attention from Senior Counsellors, we now have designated Counsellors for each Centre who are using excellent, streamlined processes for case management. India has just one Clinical Psychologist and one Psychiatrist for every million people. Staffing is a huge challenge, and we're incredibly proud to have a robust team of compassionate, fearless counsellors.

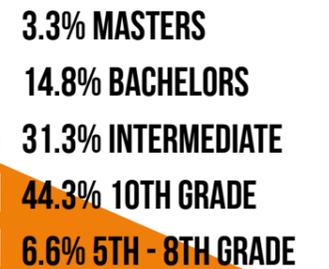
This month, our partnership with the Telangana Police becomes official. We were unofficial partners of the Police in 2015, and due to the high demand for Domestic Violence Counsellors, the police have sought to formalize our partnership so that we can increase support. As an NGO, it is both encouraging to see the government adapting to provide the best possible support to women who need it, as well as validating that the services we provide are being recognised for their value and standard of excellence.



### AVG. AGE



### EDUCATION



PEACEMAKER  
AWARENESS



COUNSELOR  
AWARENESS



SMS HELP  
LINE



ONLINE  
FORMS



DIRECT  
CALL/EMAIL



POLICE  
REFERRAL



DIRECT  
WALK-IN



\*Made based on geographic and /or specialist requirements to trusted partners. Referrals are not included in Impact Data.

# CASE MANAGEMENT

This case flow chart shows avenues for receiving cases, how these cases are supported, and the average timeline until case closure. This page also shows how much of the family beyond the survivor is involved in the counselling process.



SPECIALISED SUPPORT

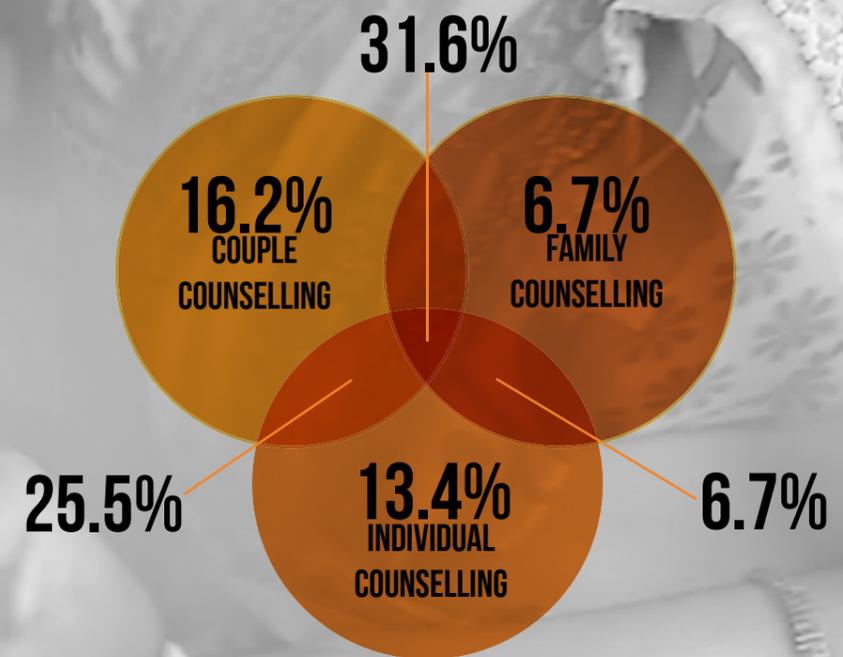
8 SESSIONS - AVG

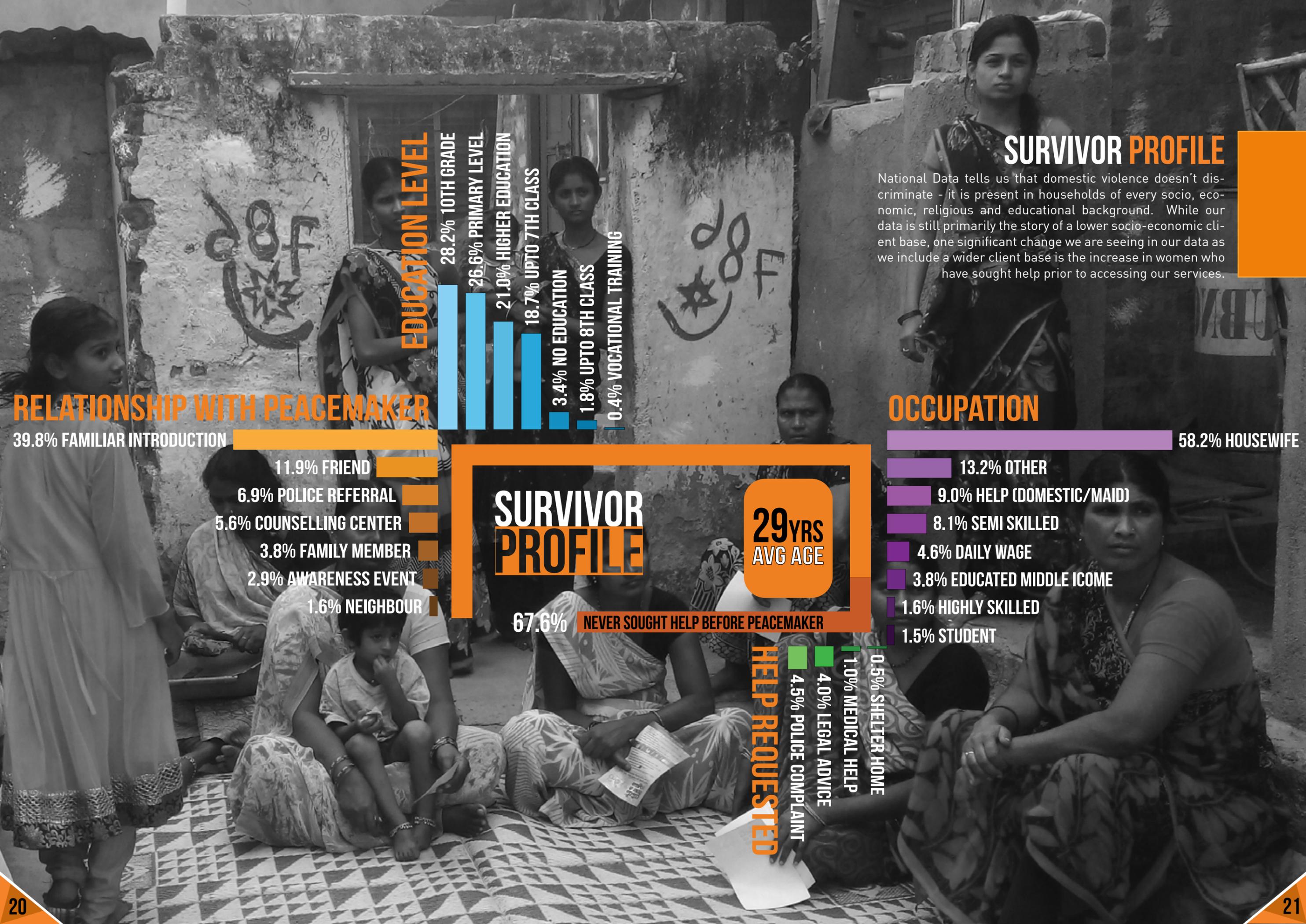


124 DAYS - AVG

75%  
RESOLUTION RATE

1.3%  
of all cases get registered as legal cases. They do not share avg. timelines.





## SURVIVOR PROFILE

National Data tells us that domestic violence doesn't discriminate - it is present in households of every socio, economic, religious and educational background. While our data is still primarily the story of a lower socio-economic client base, one significant change we are seeing in our data as we include a wider client base is the increase in women who have sought help prior to accessing our services.

### EDUCATION LEVEL



### RELATIONSHIP WITH PEACEMAKER

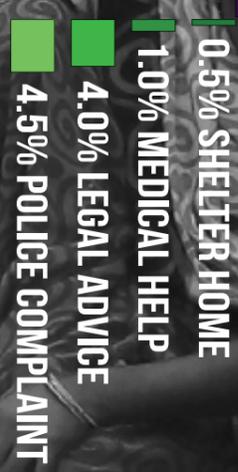


## SURVIVOR PROFILE

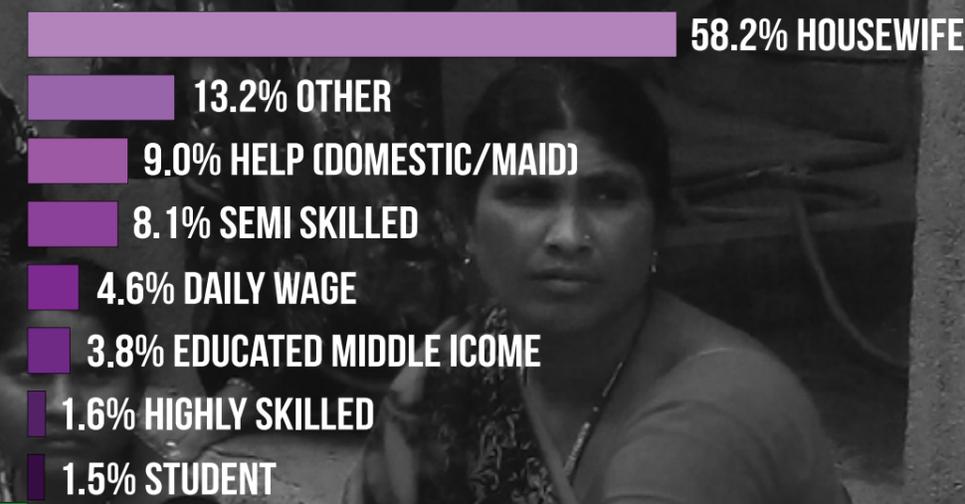
**29 YRS**  
AVG AGE

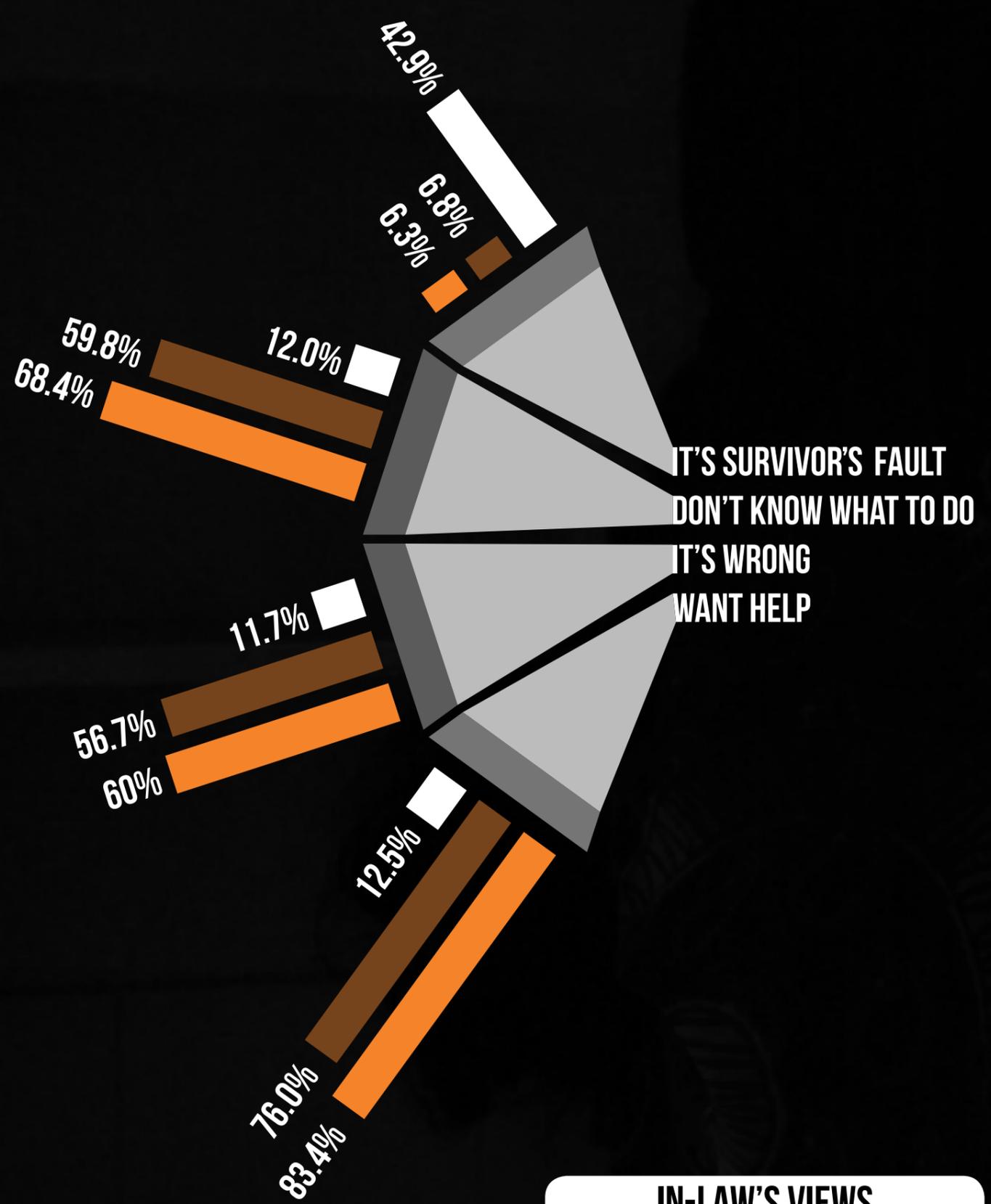
**67.6%** NEVER SOUGHT HELP BEFORE PEACEMAKER

### HELP REQUESTED



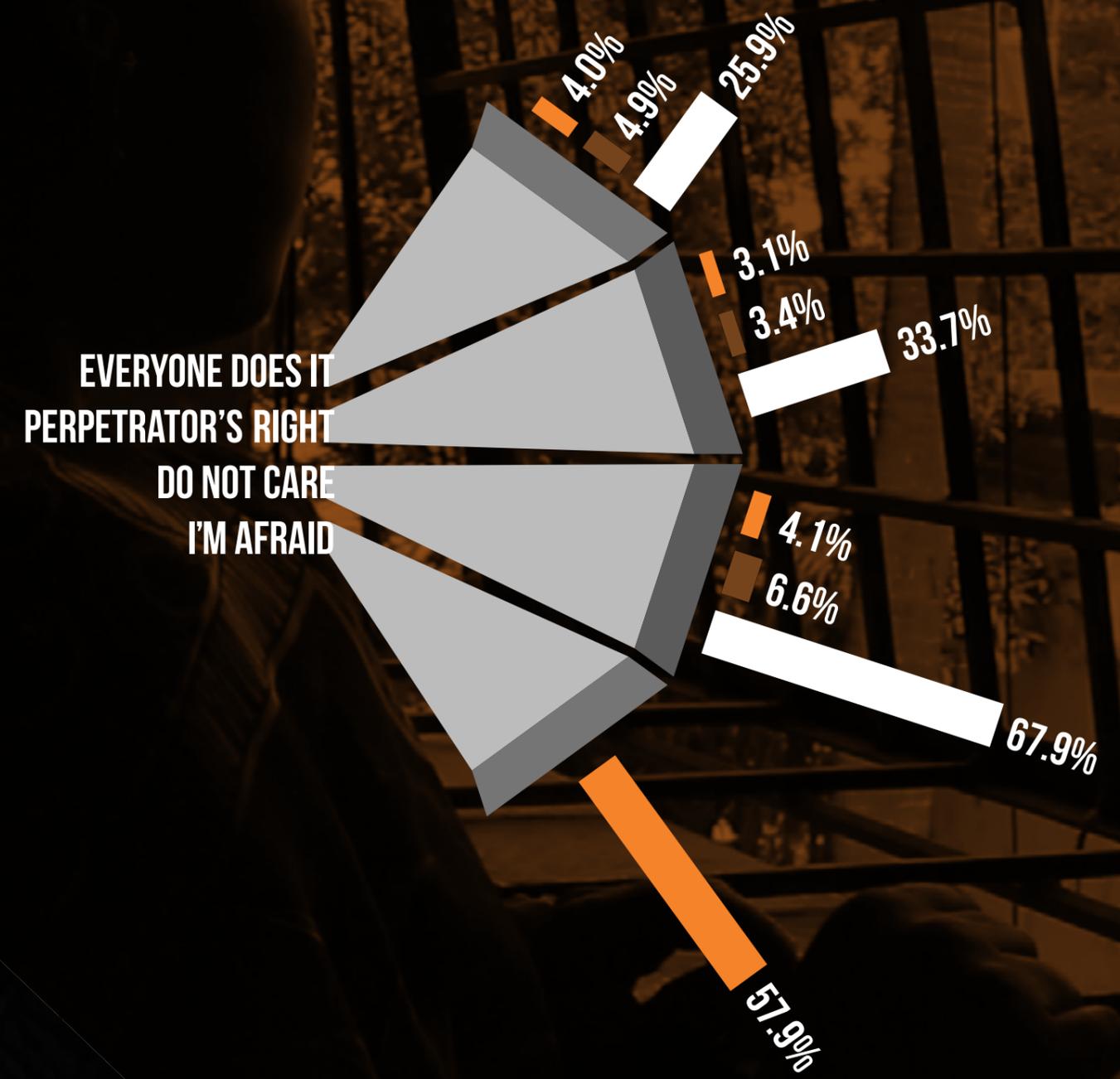
### OCCUPATION





**IN-LAW'S VIEWS**  
**PARENT'S VIEWS**  
**SURVIVOR'S VIEWS**

\* INFORMED BY PERCEPTION OF THE SURVIVOR



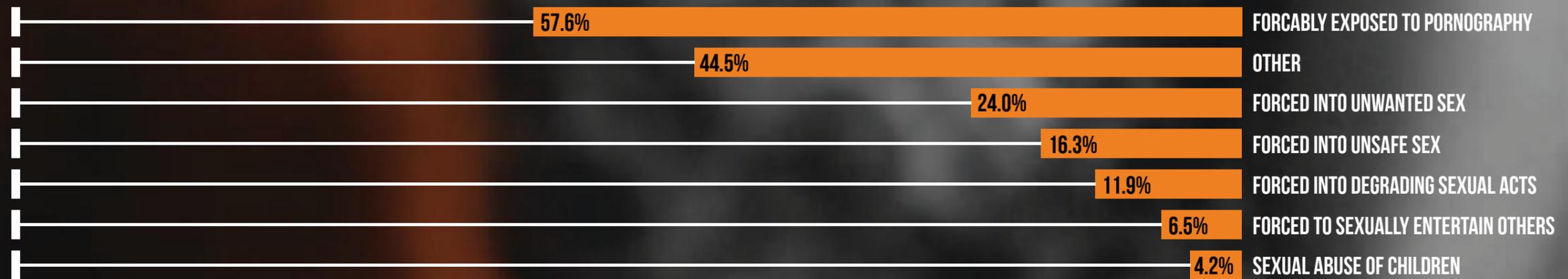
# \* VIEWS ON ABUSE

**SURVIVOR PROFILE**

\*Percentage of sexual abuse reported in our cases is much lower than the reality experienced. Our Counsellors report that sexual abuse is prevalent in around 80% of all cases. Sexual abuse remains a taboo that our clients and even our own PeaceMakers are reluctant to openly discuss, and is therefore under reported even when it may have been a part of PeaceMaker counseling.

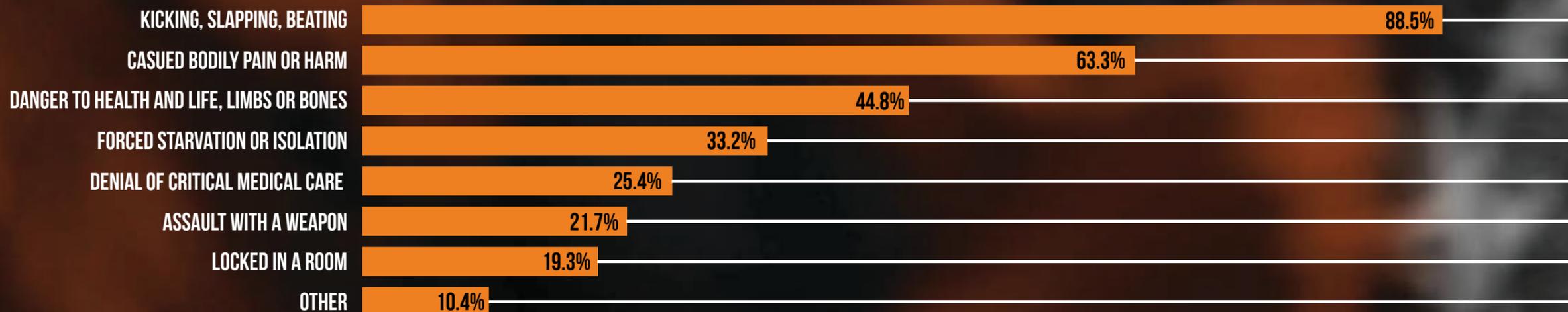


# 14.9% OF TOTAL CASES SEXUAL ABUSE\*



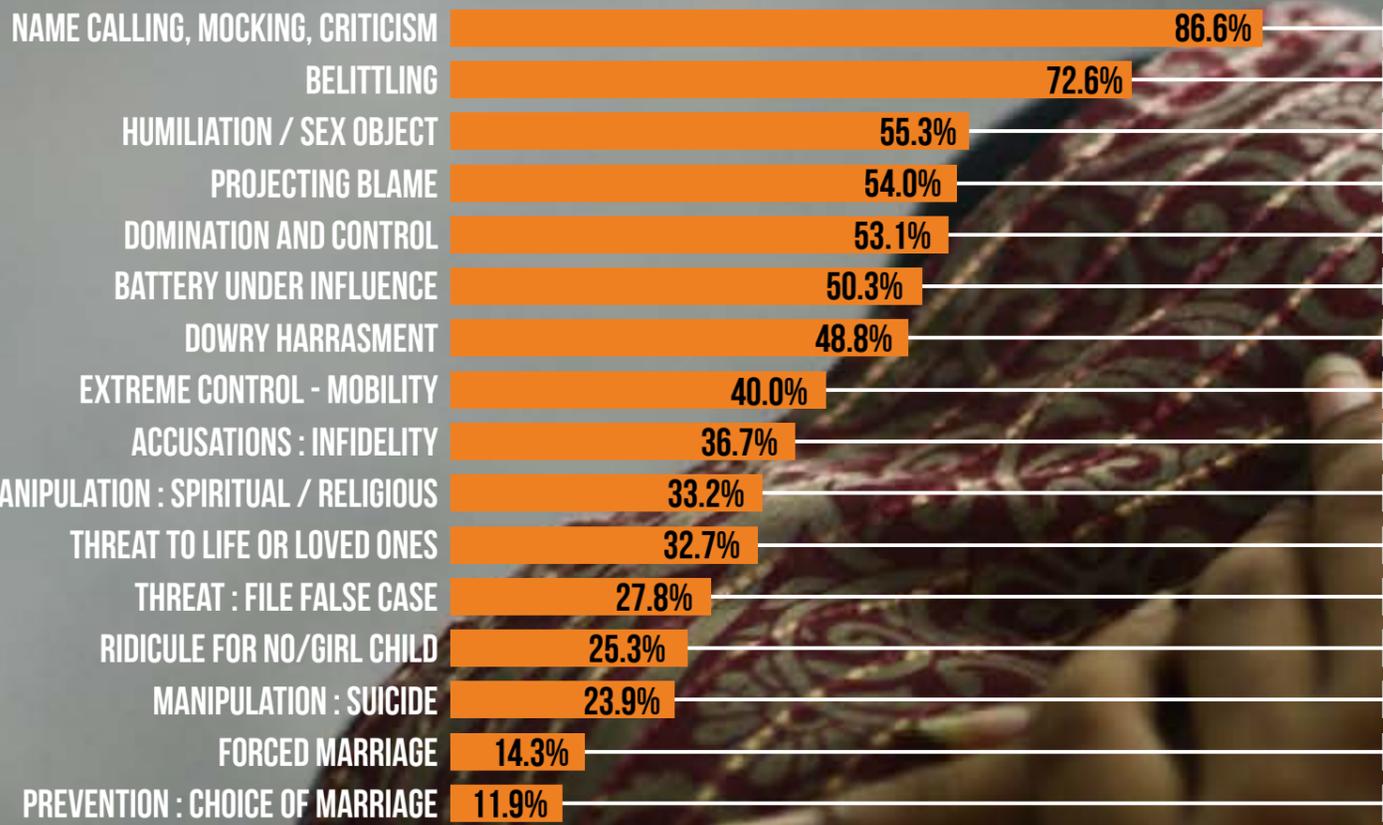
# PHYSICAL ABUSE

58.2% OF TOTAL CASES



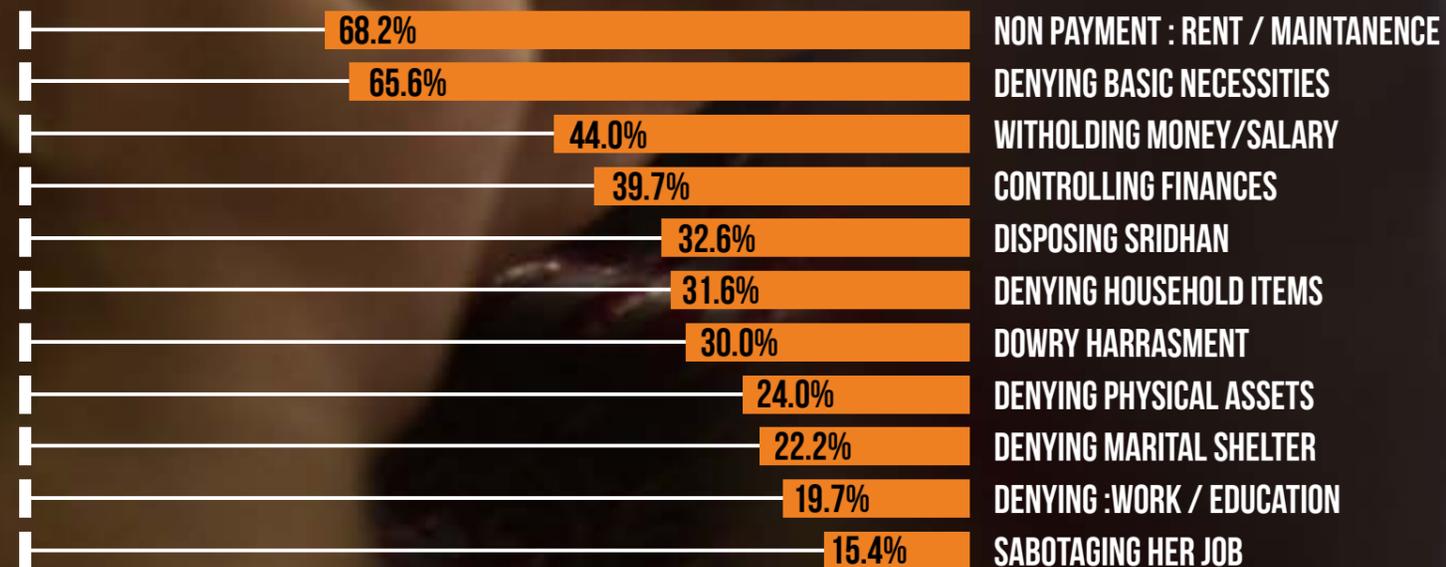
58.2% OF TOTAL CASES

# EMOTIONAL ABUSE



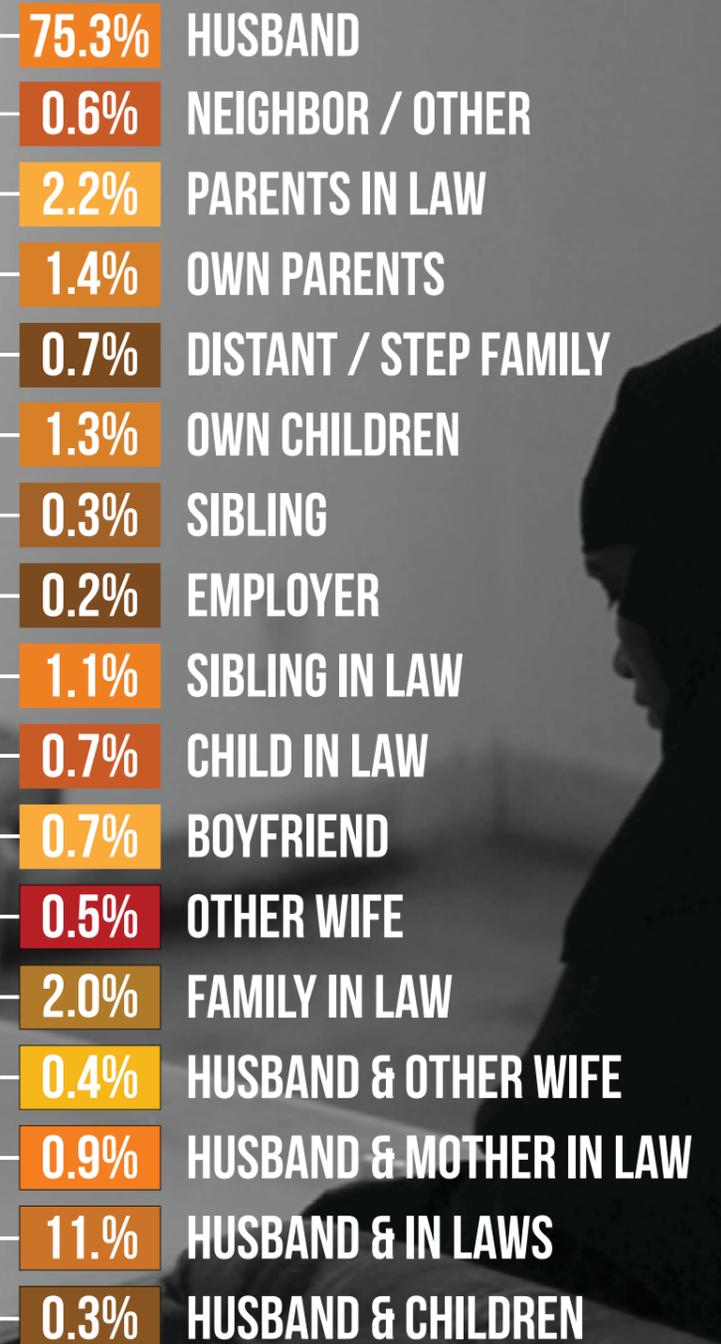
74.0% OF TOTAL CASES

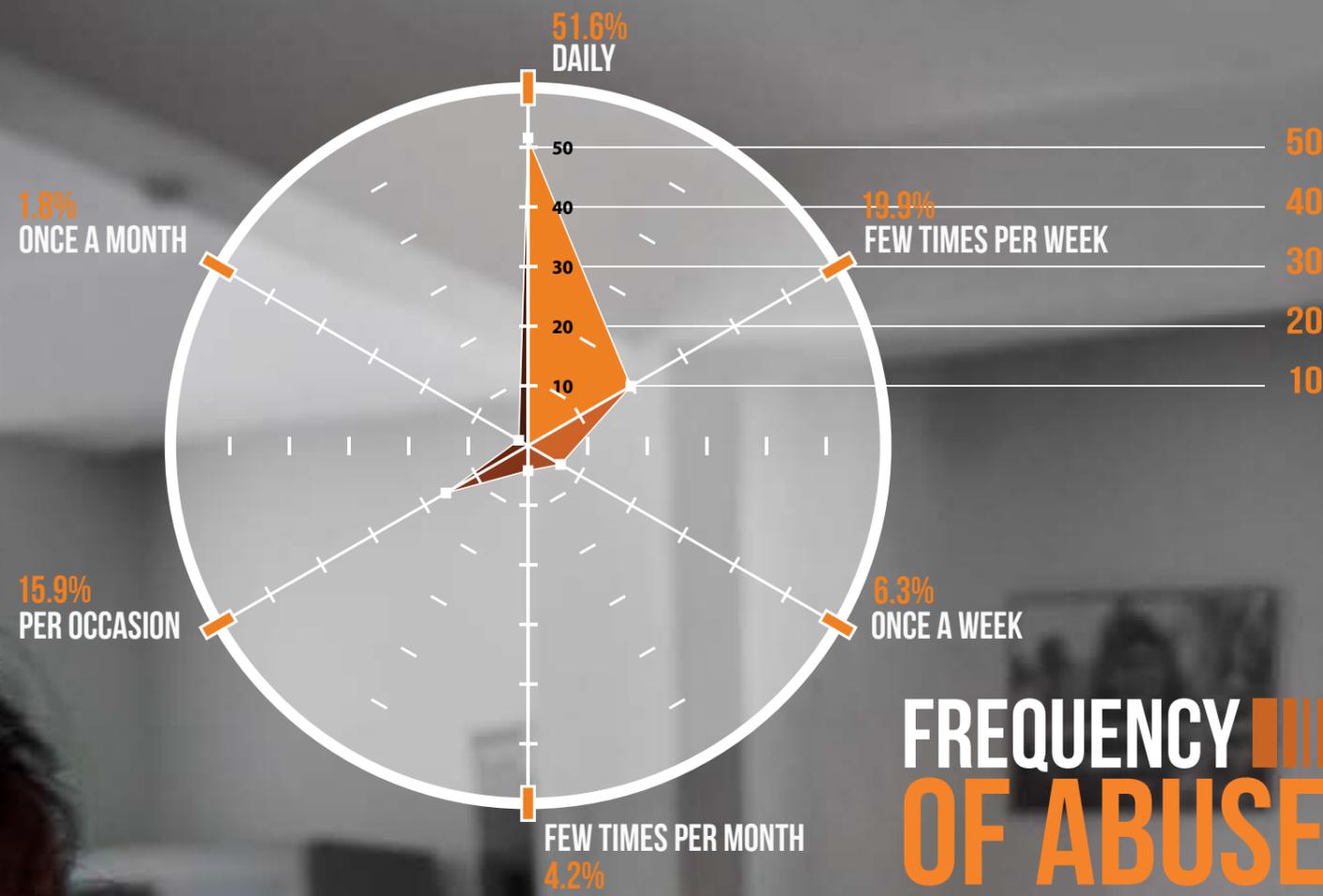
# ECONOMIC ABUSE



# ABUSE PROFILE

In India, unlike many parts of the world, families are very involved in each other's lives. In most cases of domestic abuse the family is aware that it is happening to some extent, and is likely to even be complicit. Social norms around abuse often silence even the most well meaning bystanders. In particular, mothers-in-law of young brides find the presence of another woman in the joint family set up to be a threat to her stature, and are often complicit in abuse.





The culture in India is slowly changing so that dating is becoming a normal practice for much of the country's youth. Consequently, there has been a rise in incidences of dating violence. The difficulty of this slow change is that many of these young women lack the typical support systems of family, friends, and society at large due to the lack of acceptance of the practice of dating. In our experience, these young women are not only at high risk of dating violence, and face the universally common barriers to getting help, but they also face additional barriers due to the secrecy they feel they must keep around their dating lives.

Most young women who come to us for help for dating violence, wish to retain some degree of anonymity, often withholding contact info and even the the degree and intensity of the abuse. What we have learnt from cases that come via online channels like our partner Zariya (a virtual organization that helps women in need by connecting them to various organizations) is that anonymity makes women feel secure and in control of the situation. This means they limit the support we are able to provide them, and they do not access external support networks that could help them. Furthermore, it is difficult to provide support to a young woman without her parent's knowledge or consent because the police prefer to have parental involvement on cases of unmarried girls, even if they are no longer minors.

They do this in an attempt to protect the identity of their partner as well as keep their abuse from becoming the reason their relationship is revealed. Most clients feel that sharing their problem is equivalent to betrayal, and they want to avoid any more damage to the existing relationship.

This has perhaps been our biggest challenge so far in terms of helping clients who choose to remain anonymous. Their reluctance to give out basic details becomes a barrier to the effectiveness of our support. Also, in cases like these, it is very rare that we get a chance to counsel the aggressor and bring about a change in their behavior.

We hope that as digital tools make it easier for young women to access our support services, that they also help us cultivate a culture among the younger generation that believes in building relationships that respect their physical and emotional well being above anything else, even at times their privacy.



# OUR STORIES

SANDHYA, PAVANI AND PALLAVI

My name is Sandhya, and I live to see my daughters become strong, confident, and happy women. They are so talented in English, dance, and art, and they both want to be doctors. I'm working to make that possible.

Back in 2014 I was seriously considering suicide. I had endured 15 years of abuse, at the hands of my husband, and thought that ending my life was the only way to end the abuse. I decided to call suicide helpline Roshini, and they suggested that I get some in person counselling. The NGO they had in their database who would do this for free was Operation PeaceMaker.

I came to the Operation PeaceMaker Lakdikapul Centre, and opened up for the first time about the abuse I was enduring since the second day of my marriage. At first I thought it was normal, but after some time I realised that my husband did not view me as a whole person, but simply someone to do his bidding. Before I could even speak, I cried in front of my Counsellor for nearly an hour because I was so relieved to finally have someone to speak to. That one session gave me so much hope, that I decided I could live through whatever I was facing. I promised my counsellor that I would not take my life, but the turmoil at home became so much that I wasn't able to even access a pay phone to reach out to her for help.

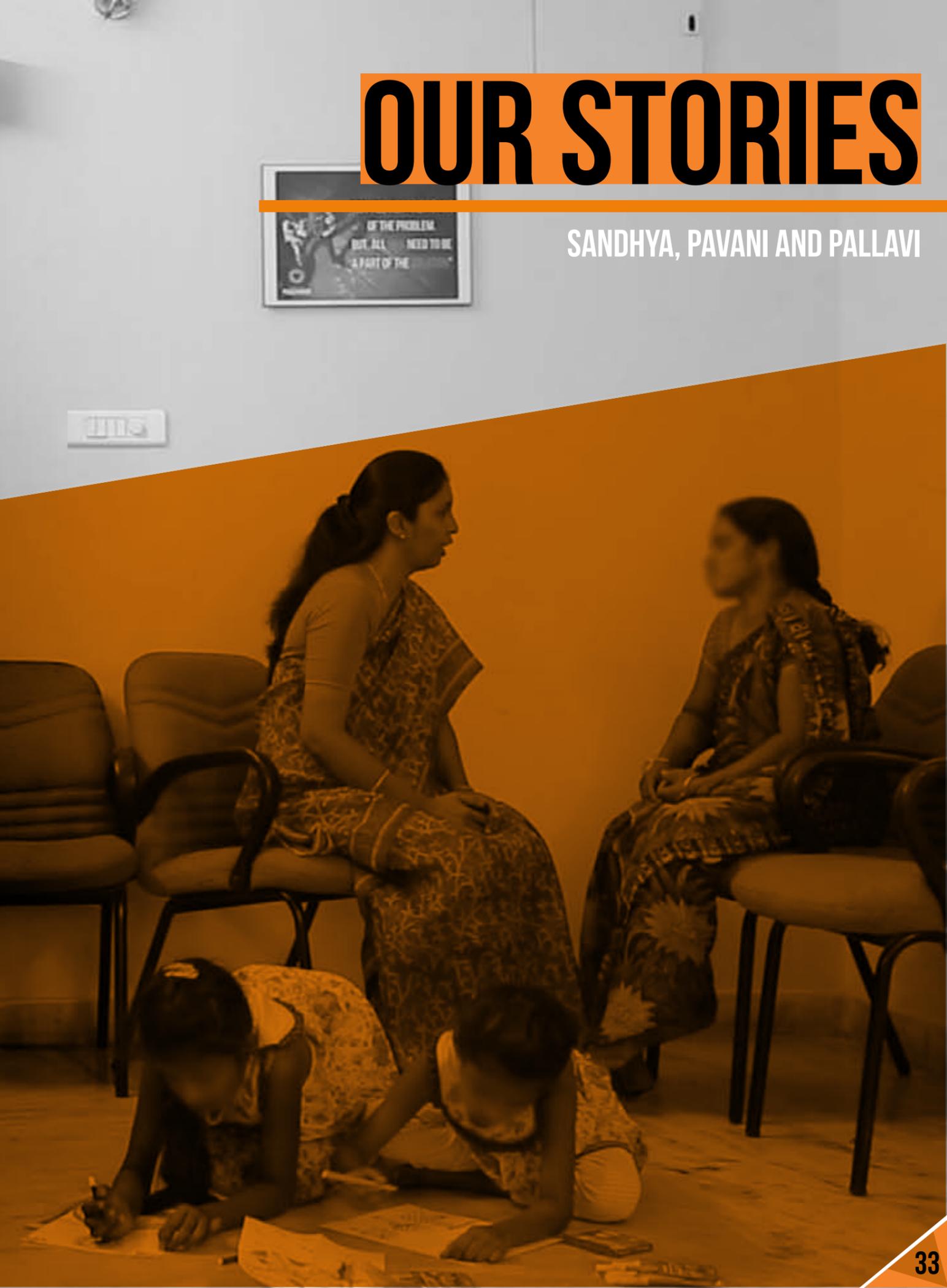
After a year and a half without contact with my

counsellor, I mistakenly reached her when I called one of the numbers in my address book without realising it was her number. When my counsellor picked up, she recognised my voice. She didn't judge me for falling out of touch, but told me immediately how much she still cared for me. At this point my husband's abuse had escalated to attempts on my life and even attempts to pimp me out to his friends to repay his debts. I was so desperate, but so afraid. The only thing I lived for was to protect my two daughters.

In December 2015, my counsellor invited me to visit some safe homes so that when the time came for me to make an emergency exit from my husband's house, I would know exactly where to land. I asked her at this stage, "what if my chance to leave comes during my daughter's exams", and she told me "Exams will come again. You must prioritise your life!" I'm so grateful we were prepared. My chance to move my daughters and myself to a safe home did come during their exams, but I didn't hesitate. I packed a few of our things, and we fled.

We have faced so many difficulties living on our own, but I thank God every day that we are safe from the abuse we used to face at home. My daughters no longer experience daily stress from being witnesses to abuse. My youngest is especially proud of us for making the move to a safe home. I am now working, and providing for my daughters. I will make sure that they always know how valuable they are!

**I CAME TO THE OPERATION PEACEMAKER LAKDIKAPUL CENTRE, AND OPENED UP FOR THE FIRST TIME**



Naheed was 19 years old, and in Grade 11 when the marriage proposal came from Shaik Kaleem (27). Naheed's family had always struggled financially, and she had two younger sisters whose marriages needed to be paid for. The proposal seemed like a huge blessing.

After their wedding, Naheed moved into Kaleem's family's home. She was excited that she was now living in a beautiful house with a maid to look after house hold chores. It was a big change from having to work part time as a mendhi artist to help her family make ends meet.

In her new home, things quickly changed. Her mother-in-law took back all the wedding gifts given to Naheed, began verbally degrading her, and forcing her to work as a maid while no one was in the house. She restricted Naheed's contact with her family and food, and made her work so she would have no time to spend with Kaleem. When she was particularly angry, she would beat Naheed.

Tensions grew as Naheed's mother-in-law worked daily to turn Kaleem against his wife. Kaleem also began to grow frustrated with Naheed as he thought she chose to spend her time on household chores rather than with him.

Naheed felt she couldn't speak up because a new daughter in law and wife would never be respected if she drove a wedge between her husband and his mother. The abuse and stress took a huge toll on her, and her weight dropped to just 35kg (77lbs) in their first year of marriage. By the second year, Naheed says she started having black out moments and there are situations she just can't remember.

Finally a breaking point came when Kaleem's mother convinced the family that Naheed was having an affair and both Kaleem and his brother physically beat Naheed. After this, Naheed ran back to her parent's home. Looking back, Kaleem says he wishes Naheed had spoken up about his mother's abuse early on and insists he would have taken

# OUR STORIES

NAHEED AND KALEEM

pride in standing up for Naheed. Naheed says that Kaleem should have just asked her once about what was going on, and she would have gladly told him.

Naheed finally chose to involve the police, and with their help persuaded Kaleem to get a separate house for them to stay in, away from his family's influence. In their own home, Kaleem and Naheed grew close and within a month announced a pregnancy. After Naheed delivered, a misunderstanding caused Kaleem to lash out at Naheed verbally in front of her family. Naheed's family grew hostile towards Kaleem and in response Kaleem asked for a separation and tried to file the case with the police. This is the point at which the police referred the case to Operation PeaceMaker.

When Kaleem and Naheed reached Operation PeaceMaker, they did not know how they would work things out. Naheed wasn't sure she could trust Kaleem, and Kaleem thought that marriage meant only strife, arguments and family feuds.

The Operation PeaceMaker Counsellor guided the couple to set a 6 month rule not to visit each other's family's and just focus on building their own relationship with understanding of each other. The Counsellor asked them to focus on what they accomplished in their first year of living away from their families, and how much they had achieved. Kareem says this was the first time he felt like he could speak openly without judgment or reprimand for his ideas. This Counseling session also reminded him of what he first thought when he married Naheed: "This is my wife, my life partner. Whatever happens, I have to walk along with her".

With the support of their Counsellor, Naheed and Kaleem have built trust and regained intimacy. It has been one year since their first counseling session, and they now are able to manage healthy relationships with each of their families. Kareem says, "she is my backbone, my support. I know I can count on her for anything." Naheed too says, "He trusts me implicitly with all the household finances and our children. Plus, he is a very doting father, and works hard to provide us with the very best."

"There have also been life lessons", Naheed says, "When I look back, I realize that when I got married I was so naive. 19 is too young. I didn't know how to stand up for myself or how to be assertive. That is why my mother-in-law could walk all over me. I didn't know any better. Naheed says she is going to ensure her daughter completes her education and is at least 25 years old when she gets married. "She should be mentally and physically strong to face all situations."

# OUR STORIES

## PARVEEN BHANU, PEACEMAKER



Mother of three. Beautician. Trainer. PeaceMaker. Parveen Banu seems like a woman who has it good in life. However, it was not always like this.

When Parveen was in school, she was stalked by a man for four years. Her stalker would repeatedly propose marriage, only to be turned down every time. In later years, when marriage proposals from other men would reach her family, Parveen's stalker would invariably find out and ruin the match. He would then harass her by accusing her of being unfaithful to him for even considering the other proposal.

This went on for several years, with no marriage proposals working out for Parveen. It led her to reconsider her stance against her stalker. "It is better to marry someone who loves me," was the thought on her mind when she finally accepted his proposal. The relationship immediately turned bad as her stalker-now-husband turned out to be an alcoholic, who abused her when drunk. Furthermore, he also refused to work. They had three children in quick succession. Parveen says she had no say in whether to get pregnant, it was forced on her. She was also faced emotional abuse from her mother-in-law, who blamed Parveen for her husband's behaviour. "It is all because of you. You can neither handle a family nor a husband," she was told.

When her husband moved to the Persian Gulf, Parveen expected a respite, but this was not possible. Her husband would call incessantly. He would be outraged if she didn't answer his call on the first ring, and would insinuate that she must be having an affair with another man. All of this took a toll on Parveen's health. She was depressed, and over time became obese.

Parveen came across a vocational course subsidised by the government to train as a beautician, and with her husband still out of country, she grabbed the opportunity. With determination and training, Parveen soon started working in a beauty salon for women. The opportunity to learn a skill, work and support her family financially were all hugely empowering opportunities for Parveen, and it boosted her self-esteem tremendously. Her skillful work was noticed by her clients, who soon started to request her for customised services. She also started teaching in the same government-run programme where she had trained. When her husband returned home job-

less, he couldn't ask her to cut off the financial support.

Parveen started to believe in herself. "I can do something," she told herself. It was at this time that Parveen came across the Warangal PeaceMaker recruitment drive. To her, it seemed like it would help improve her marital situation. She didn't think she would ever become strong enough to help other families.

The training to be a PeaceMaker had a strong impact on Parveen. She finally found a group she could share her story with, confide in and relate to. They all wept with her when she recounted her story. Parveen's confidence and self-esteem rose with their support. She worked to lose weight, and fought her obesity and depression. She felt more in control of her life, and believes she is a better mother to her children because of it.

### I DON'T WANT ANOTHER WOMAN TO GO THROUGH WHAT I WENT THROUGH

The changes in Parveen's self-esteem and confidence didn't go unnoticed. Her husband became aware of her assertiveness and self-assurance that developed during the the training programme. He started to keep a close watch on her movements, and would keep asking her where she went. However, none of this deterred Parveen. She didn't feel helpless anymore. Her training taught her how to work with her husband to get peace. She began to get her husband to talk about why he was angry and what was upsetting him, rather than use his fists. He still doesn't have a job, but he no longer has control over Parveen.

As a PeaceMaker, Parveen has already helped support 13 families to find peace and end domestic violence in their homes. She has led 17 Basti (community awareness) Meetings on her own - something most PeaceMakers take months to build up to - in addition to assisting on many more. From an emotionally over-wrought and sensitive personality, she has turned into an enthusiastic and super-confident woman.

Parveen believes her work helps her to do something important for women facing abuse. In the eight years of her marriage, she says she could not find a single person to help her. She looked for help, but no one stepped forward. She feels duty-bound to help other abused women now that the PeaceMaker programme has helped her. "I don't want another woman to go through what I went through," she says.

# CONVERSATION

## NATIONAL VOICE:

We believe that our touch with the ground reality gives us something important to contribute to the national discourse on women's rights. We are committed to using our data and stories to contribute to policy making, government implementation programs, and public debate. Our goal is to provide a practically informed, well educated and above all else, full of hope voice to the national narrative of the cause.

We do this through a few primary avenues:

- Digital Engagement
- Campaigns
- Official Contributions (news, official policy critiques, NGO and government group trainings, etc.)

## RESPECT 2 PROTECT

My Choices Foundation's Respect2Protect Campaign became an organically viral campaign, televised locally and nationally, and debated throughout the country. It started a national conversation on the role of men and boys in ending violence against women and girls, placing them at the centre of the solution, rather than the problem. The campaign has become a 2 time award winner for its contribution to women's empowerment and digital engagement.

## DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT:

Operation PeaceMaker is committed to harnessing the power of technology to shape public perception of the issue of violence against women and girls. We firmly believe that our stories of transformation are significant to cultivating hope that India can change, and that we as individuals can be the catalysts.



## TELL THE STORY

64 MILLION IMPRESSIONS



## ADVERTISE HELP

FOCUS ON DV HELPLINE



## SOCIAL CURRENCY

VIRAL THROUGHOUT INDIA

## 2016 AWARDS

In March 2016, we won the Grand Jury Award for Women Empowerment at the 2016 DEF Social Media for Empowerment Awards in Delhi. There were 266 entries made by the best of corporate, government and civil society campaigns from 8 countries, narrowed down to 66 finalists in 10 categories. This is was a prized accolade, and a huge encouragement for our work to utilize technology to engage men and women in the cause!

# CAUSE HIGHLIGHT

DR. FARZANA, PROGRAM MANAGER

In recent months the criminalisation of marital rape has been a topic of much debate in India. As Program Manager of Operation PeaceMaker, I have first hand experience of the negative effects that this humiliating and degrading abuse has on women of all ages and walks of life.

After much pressure from NGOs and government appointed bodies alike, Maneka Gandhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development has suggested that she will consider amending the necessary laws to criminalise marital rape. However, it is important to note that only last month she claimed that India is not ready to criminalise marital rape due to a number of social factors; including poverty, illiteracy and religious beliefs. She also suggested that there is insufficient evidence of marital rape occurring in India to warrant the government to consider the amendments.

Based on these comments I question the government's understanding of the importance and intention to implement these legal amendments. With this in mind, we must remember that our lawmakers have a duty to uphold and forge a path for citizen's rights to equality and a life free from discrimination and abuse. These aren't superfluous rights, but rights that are enshrined in our constitution and reflected in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which India is signatory to. I am sure that the masses would have said that India was not "ready" for one of the world's most progressive sets of laws for the protection of women from domestic violence. Yet, in 2005, after years of advocacy by stalwarts led by Indira Jaising, Indian law set an example for its people and the world in this regard. In that moment, the purpose of the law was fulfilled to lead its people into an order that serves justice, not the unjust.

Furthermore, if as Ms Gandhi suggested, Indian society is not ready for such change, I would suggest at the very least, this warrants government attention to raise awareness amongst citizens, the police, judiciary and government officials about the need to respect a woman's right to make decisions about her own body.

Regarding the suggested lack of evidence to support the amendment, I point to a recent gender study conducted by International Centre for Research on Women and United Nations Family and Population Fund in India, which shows that 1 in 3 husband admit to forced sexual acts on their wives. Additionally, India's own National Family Health Survey reveals that 1 in 12 women surveyed said they had experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. More than 93% of these women said that they had been sexually abused by their current or former husband.

Sadly, this data is too often reflected in the work that I do with Operation PeaceMaker. Everyday I meet women who have lost their right to consent, leaving them in a position of fear and powerlessness. In almost every case of domestic violence there is also sexual abuse. Our own case data shows that 15% of our clients have faced sexual abuse in marriage, 60% of which who said they were forced to have sex against their will. This figure is so low largely due to two problems we face. Firstly, even women who are ready to work towards ending abuse in their lives do not want to acknowledge or talk about sexual violence. Sex is still taboo. Women feel acute shame talking about it, let alone admitting they have been victims of its misuse. Secondly, our PeaceMakers themselves still feel out of bounds talking about it. They are without a doubt some of the most informed women in their communities, yet they still feel uncomfortable guiding their clients to report sexual abuse in marriage. Our Counsellor case data shows a much higher reporting of sexual violence largely because they do not feel the same cultural burdens to not talk about sexual abuse.

Instead of upholding the family unity at any cost, I ask our government to work towards the bigger goal of creating healthy, peaceful families and provide women with the legal framework to recognise this horrific act and to seek justice.

It is time to join the 104 countries around the world that allow marital rape to be prosecuted under the law and give the wives of India the right to live a life free from abuse and fear.

**IT IS TIME TO JOIN THE 104 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD THAT ALLOW MARITAL RAPE TO BE PROSECUTED UNDER THE LAW AND GIVE THE WIVES OF INDIA THE RIGHT TO LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM ABUSE AND FEAR.**



# 2015/16 HIGHLIGHTS

## **SECUNDERABAD CENTRE LAUNCH:**

Secunderabad Centre launched with its PeaceMaker Graduation in December 2015! Hyderabad and Secunderabad are twin cities, and home to unique religious and cultural demographics. Since our founding four years ago, many of our clients and team members alike have travelled from Secunderabad to reach Operation Peacemaker Counselling Centres. In December 2015, we responded to this need for localised support by launching the Secunderabad Counselling Centre! This centre is proving to be as pivotal as we anticipated, and is operating with its own dedicated team of PeaceMakers and three Counsellors.

## **WARANGAL CENTRE EXPANSION:**

This team was always small, but mighty. Now they have grown from 3 to 15 PeaceMakers and reach around 100+ women and girls with rights education each week in addition to handling their active cases. Our Warangal team has some of the most passionate and courageous PeaceMakers we've ever graduated, and their home city is being slowly transformed because of it.

## **SHAKTI LAUNCH:**

Shakti is a long term mentorship program designed by Aangan Trust, Mumbai to intervene in adolescent girl's lives and provide them with the education and resources to stay safe and work towards the future they dream of. We have already started Shakti in three locations in Hyderabad, and plan to impact 150-200 young girls in this year. For more on this program, make sure you check out our website blog!

## **SAATH SAATH:**

Saath Saath is a Hindi phrase that translates as "hand in hand". It is a pilot initiative, pioneering self help groups for survivors of domestic abuse and violence. The program launched in March 2016 with its first group of seven Operation PeaceMaker clients at different stages in their journey of ending and healing from abuse. We're taking this step by step, walking hand in hand with this small group. You can follow the development closely through our blog!

## **RESPECT2PROTECT:**

My Choices Foundation's Respect2Protect campaign went viral in India in 2015, with impact continuing into 2016. It is a two time award winning campaign, most recently winning the Grand Jury Award for Women's Empowerment at DEF Social Media for Empowerment Awards. This was our second award for digital campaigning, a prized accolade. There were 266 entries from 8 countries, narrowed down to 66 finalists in 10 categories. In our category, there were amazing 9 finalists and 3 winners. We were acknowledged for our consistent campaigning to end domestic violence and child sex trafficking.

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