

Violence Against Women in Politics

**A Study Conducted in India, Nepal and
Pakistan**

CSR



Centre for Social Research



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

Violence against Women in Politics

(A study conducted in India, Nepal and Pakistan)

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Abbreviations

BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CA	Constituent Assembly
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPM	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPN (M)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CPN (UML)	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)
CSR	Centre for Social Research
ECI	Election Commission of India
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
FAFEN	Free and Fair Elections Network
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
IDI	In-Depth Interview
KP	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa
LGO	Local Government Ordinance
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MNA	Member of the National Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
NA	National Assembly
NC	Nepali Congress
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women
NCT	National Capital Territory
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PA	Provincial Assembly
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
RoPA	Representation of People Act 1976
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SP	Samajwadi Party
SAP-PK	South Asian Partnership –Pakistan
UC	Union Council
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UP	Uttar Pradesh
VAW	Violence against Women
VAWIP	Violence against Women in Politics
WSGP	Women Security Pressure Group

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
BACKGROUND.....	14
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS	15
SELECTION OF COUNTRIES FOR THE STUDY	27
STUDY PERIOD.....	31
METHODOLOGY	32
STUDY DESIGN	32
STUDY PARTICIPANTS	33
SAMPLING	34
SAMPLING METHODOLOGY	35
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	36
DATA ANALYSIS	37
STUDY FINDINGS	38
DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	38
NATURE, EXTENT, MOTIVE, AND IMPACT OF VAWIP	40
A. NATURE AND FORM OF VAWIP	41
B. REASONS FOR VAWIP	45
C. PERPETRATORS OF VAWIP	57
D. VICTIMS OF VAWIP	62
E. ATTITUDE TOWARDS VAWIP	65
F. IMPACT OF VAWIP	68
G. PREVENTION OF VAWIP	70
CONCLUSION.....	74
RECOMMENDATIONS	79
ANNEXURE I	82
List of people contacted for in-depth interview in India	82
List of people contacted for in-depth interview in Pakistan.....	83
List of people contacted for in-depth interview in Nepal.....	84
ANNEXURE II	85
Table 1: Percentage of Respondents Agreeing to Type of VAWIP.....	85

Table 2: Perpetrators identified by Percentage of Respondents.....	85
Table 3: Victims identified by Percentage of Respondents	85
Table 4: Reasons of VAWIP identified by Percentage of Respondents	86
Table 5: Attitude of Respondents towards VAWIP	86
Table 6: Opinion of Respondents on Prevalent Norms Affecting VAWIP	86
Table 7: Does VAWIP get justice from police and judiciary?	87
Table 8: Reasons for getting/not getting justice.....	87
Table 9: Result of VAWIP	87
Table 10 Results of VAWIP (by states)	88
Annexure III.....	89
TOOLS FOR RESEARCH.....	89
A. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH	89
B. FGD GUIDELINES	95
C. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDELINES	97
Glossary.....	102

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Violence against Women (VAW) is prevalent in every country in the world and is one of the leading causes of morbidity for women. Among women aged between 15 and 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined. Perhaps the most pervasive human rights violation that we know of today, VAW includes domestic violence in the home, sexual abuse of girls in schools, sexual harassment at work, and rape – whether by husbands or strangers, in refugee camps or as a tactic of war.¹ This violence, which is reinforced by discriminatory cultural, social and economic structures, devastates lives, fractures communities, and stalls development.

South Asia is home to one-fifth of the world's population and it is estimated that one third of South Asian women experience violence throughout their lives.² VAW is institutionalised through family structures, wider social and economic frameworks and cultural and religious traditions. It is a widely accepted method for controlling women. Moreover, it is largely overlooked by law enforcement agencies and is ignored by those in power.

Violence is a common feature of South Asian politics. Candidates and their families as well as voters have routinely faced violence during elections. The violent nature of politics within South Asia often deters women from participating within the political sphere. Politics has also traditionally been promoted as the territory of men and the perceived “masculization” of the political sphere has led to politics being seen as a “dirty” sector that must be “prohibited for women.”³

Violence against women in politics (VAWIP) is violence that occurs within the political sphere but that specifically targets women. VAWIP is used to reinforce traditional social and political structures by targeting women leaders who challenge patriarchy and the prevailing social expectations and norms. It restricts women's mobility and capacity to participate within the political sphere. VAWIP has been defined as:

¹ UN Women (2007) *Say NO – UNiTE to end violence against women*. Available from: saynotoviolence.org/issue/facts-and-figures.

² www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/VAW.pdf.

³ SAP International (2007) *Unfolding the realities: Silenced Voices of Women in Politics* ed. Nepali, Rohit Kumar, Shrestha Prakash, Kathmandu: SAP International.

The connotation of any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women politicians, including threat of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life.⁴

To be more comprehensive, this study extends the definition of VAWIP to include the inability of women to use their constitutional rights to participate in politics as a voter, an activist or an active and engaged citizen.

This study addresses the nature, extent and reasons for violence that inhibits women's political participation within India, Nepal and Pakistan. All three countries have recently elected or are in the process of electing their national law making bodies. Throughout these countries the percentage of women candidates fielded by political parties has increased as has the percentage of female voters, but the percentage of female representatives in the national bodies have decreased over the years. Except for a few chosen female politicians, most of the elected female representatives have a limited or marginal role in important discussions within their political party or within the national decision-making processes.

The constitutions of all the three countries give equal rights to women and do not restrict them from contesting elections. Therefore a legal procedure addressing VAWIP as a type of VAW is available.⁵ However, none of these countries have legislation that deals strictly with VAWIP.

The three objectives of the study are to:

1. Understand the context of violence against women in the three countries related to gender-based violence in elections.
2. Understand the nature and extent of VAWIP, the motive behind such violence, and the effect of this violence.
3. Increase awareness of VAWIP by identifying and disseminating best practices in combating VAWIP through the facilitation of a consultative workshop.

This study employed a mix method approach in order to examine, analyse and understand the extent, nature and reasons for VAWIP as well as to identify best practice approaches to this violence throughout the region. The study involves a detailed review of secondary data followed by primary research to substantiate the former. A sequential approach was adopted, whereby findings from the quantitative survey informed the qualitative research and helped develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of VAWIP. The secondary data analysis

⁴ Ertürkin, Yakın. (2009) UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

⁵ **Constitution of India:** Article 14, 16 ensure equality of status, Article 15 says state shall not discriminate among any citizen on the ground of sex, religion etc.; **Interim Constitution of Nepal** 2063, Article 13; **Constitution of Pakistan:** Article 25.

and qualitative research aimed to discover the underlying motives for the perpetration of VAWIP.

This sample represented the diverse range of stakeholders that included national/state/local actors. It comprised of politicians and other participants who directly engage with the political process, policy makers, implementers, the gate-keepers and finally, the community at large. As the spectrum of VAWIP did not constitute a homogenous group, stratified sampling was adopted to obtain a representative sample.

The study was completed in nine months and primary data was collected over two months. The sample includes, and is representative of relevant stakeholders. The concomitant findings of the study are indicative and not conclusive. However, the study results may be employed to embark on policy level advocacy to influence electoral reforms and facilitate an enabling environment for women's engagement with the political process.

CONCLUSIONS

VAWIP is absent from public discourse in all three countries. Its lack of recognition results from the prevailing patriarchal mind-set and the culture of silence within political parties, government agencies and more broadly, the society. The political system is almost completely in denial of the existence of VAWIP. Further, instances of VAWIP, which are perceived as a form of VAW but are not understood in their fullest dimensions, are sparingly reported by the media during elections.

The study confirms that the existing cycle of VAW is fuelled by gender discrimination and patriarchy. A striking assertion is that the socio-economic divide and the current power structures within India, Nepal and Pakistan are key factors that lead to VAWIP. The research also indicates that religious extremism, and its interconnection with social divisions and power relations, cannot be ignored when understanding VAWIP, particularly in Pakistan. Lastly, it is critical to take into consideration provincial or local specificities when analysing VAWIP. These local differences can influence the forms of VAWIP, the characteristics of the perpetrators of VAWIP, and the community's perceptions or ideas relating to VAWIP within each province/state.

The secondary research finds that violence is a universally accepted feature of politics. The majority of women politicians face impediments and discrimination of various natures and to varying degrees. Violence is entrenched in the deep-seated patriarchal nature of society which prevents women from participating in the political process. Such violence has immense but diverse impact on women who want to actively participate in the process.

The primary research validates these findings and VAWIP is recognised as a manifestation of the wider gender discrimination that occurs within these three countries. It is believed that women face lesser violence if their families make the decision for them to enter politics and their husbands are willing and able to support and protect them. Perpetrators of VAWIP are generally identified as men and can be from the same political party as the affected women or from opposition parties.

The study confirms that women in politics, especially those who are first generation politicians, face violence of multiple types and dimensions and at all levels. Women face the distress of not being allowed to make decisions; they are usually side-lined within political parties, are perceived to be less able to win political seats and as a result are not given tickets to contest elections. Women also experience political isolation for not following party lines that have been drawn by male party members/leaders. They also sometimes face the humiliation of being allotted inappropriate election symbols. Women also risk physical violence and harassment and there are innumerable instances of women politicians (and parliamentarians) experiencing violence during election campaigns and other visits to their constituencies.⁶ Further, women who belong to political families are perceived as representatives of the elite and controlled by powerful males, which does not serve the purpose of women's empowerment. This is reinforced by existing socio-economic divides.

However, all stakeholders across countries, states, categories, age, and gender agree that even though women face the risk of VAWIP, they should contest elections. There was recognition that the paucity of laws addressing VAWIP and the lack of implementation of existing laws inhibits women from exercising their right to participate in the political process.

From our quantitative survey results we can conclude that women do have some agency. They are beginning to make effective choices and are making attempts to transform these into desired outcomes. The reservation of seats for women has benefited women by increasing the number of women in politics, many of whom, having taken baby steps to power, are now confidently striding alongside the males.

During the study the researchers came across many cases where women had carved out their own niche amidst adverse situations. These women were able to circumvent the hardships they faced, and ultimately emerged as winners in their own right. They may not have the freedom to question established values and traditional priorities, yet their ability to think freely and their willingness and courage to reassess the dominance of entrenched norms, shows their increased agency, albeit not in the fullest sense.⁷

⁶ Kumari, Ranjana. (1994) *Women Parliamentarians*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd.

⁷ Definition of Agency of Women used from, Sen, Amartya (2012) *The Argumentative Indian*. India: Penguin Books.

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of this study, across regions and categories of respondents, several suggestions were made to reduce violence against women in politics. These ranged from welcoming positive discrimination in favour of women to strict implementation of laws to prevent VAWIP.

The recommendations have been divided into three categories:

I Law Making

Expansion of Political Reservations for Women

- Extend a minimum 33% reservation at National and State levels, ensuring that it is not seen only as a “quota” system
- Ensure that women are not given just “challenging” seats

Role of Political parties

- Undertake an analysis of Party Manifestos and language to make sure that it is gender sensitive
- Create a more gender friendly environment
- Ensure that no tickets are given to those who have criminal cases, particularly against women
- Enable the inclusion of more women party members in central and selection committees and in Parliamentary committees
- Include more women in policy roles at decision-making levels
- Create and empower Women’s Caucus of Parliamentarians
- Recognise the need to create a safe and secure environment for women

II Law Implementing/ Enforcement Agency

- Undertake a review of all institutions related to the electoral process to promote women’s effective participation in politics
- Election Commission to take steps to recognise protect, promote and institutionalize women’s participation in politics
- Provide for sanctions against non-compliance to policy
- Formalise an effective complaint mechanism
- Undertake gender sensitization courses/ trainings for all stakeholders
- Engage men, particularly at high levels

III Law Influencing Agency (NGOs/Media/Civil Society Organizations/ Academia)

- Create positive pressure groups for political funding and awareness raising of women voters to increase women's participation in politics
- Promote Women's Rights Activist Groups
- Equip women with special political funding
- Create public opinion in support of women in politics
- Launch and sustain mass media campaigns on women's rights highlighting the importance of women's political empowerment
- Promote the political education of women (capacity building and skill development)
- Facilitate political grooming of young politicians
- Promote academic research on VAWIP and on women's leadership
- Establish and sustain support mechanisms for women politicians, such as child care centres, domestic support systems etc.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against Women (VAW) is prevalent in every country in the world and is one of the leading causes of morbidity for women. Among women aged between 15 and 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined. Perhaps the most pervasive human rights violation that we know of today, VAW includes domestic violence in the home, sexual abuse of girls in schools, sexual harassment at work, and rape - whether by husbands or strangers, in refugee camps or as a tactic of war.⁸ This violence, which is reinforced by discriminatory cultural, social and economic structures, devastates lives, fractures communities and stalls development.

The recent public anger over crimes against women, such as the overwhelming number of rape and gang-rape cases in Delhi and cases of violence against women elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent,^{*} has brought the issue of violence against women in South Asia to the forefront of public thought. It has also highlighted the need to address the culture of patriarchy that is deeply imbedded in South Asian society.

South Asia is home to one-fifth of the world's population. For South Asian women, violence or the risk of violence permeates every aspect of their lives from birth to death. It is estimated that one third of South Asian women experience violence throughout their lives.⁹ VAW is institutionalised through family structures, wider social and economic frameworks and cultural and religious traditions. It is a widely accepted method for controlling women. Moreover, it is largely overlooked by law enforcement agencies and is ignored by those in power.

VAW is a disempowering force that “erodes women’s dignity, capabilities and ability to enjoy the full spectrum of their human rights.”¹⁰ This violence negatively impacts women’s health and empowerment and also has strong implications on the health and development of families and societies at large. Several forms of VAW are prevalent throughout South Asia including domestic violence, sexual assault and rape, sex-selective abortions and female infanticide, dowry harassment, honour and Khap killings, acid attacks, and trafficking of women. This violence starts before women are even born and continues throughout their lives. It occurs in both the private and public spheres of society.

⁸ UN Women (2007) *Say NO – UNiTE to end violence against women*. Available from: saynotoviolence.org/issue/facts-and-figures.

^{*} For the purpose of the study we have used the term “Indian Subcontinent” for three countries – India, Nepal and Pakistan.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ertürkin, Yakın. (2009) *UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women*.

In South Asia, as with most regions in the world, women have historically been excluded from the political sphere. To a large extent this marginalisation continues even today in the Indian Subcontinent particularly for those women who are not part of a dominant political family. However, the process of women's participation in political life has begun both as active citizens and community leaders. Women's increased involvement within the political sphere has not been straightforward and many women who have chosen to participate in politics have experienced discrimination, exclusion, marginalisation, harassment and violence.

We have seen many improvements in gender equality and women's participation in society over the last 30 years. Yet, South Asian women continue to experience widespread discrimination and are often marginalised from public life. Politics is accepted as a men's domain within South Asian societies and because of this perceived "masculization", it is considered "dirty" and prohibited for women. The constitutions of the three countries involved in the study give equal rights to women and do not restrict them from contesting elections. Therefore a legal framework addressing violence against women in politics (VAWIP) as a type of VAW is available.¹¹ However, none of these countries have legislation that deals strictly with VAWIP, which is very seldom mentioned in any printed or e-material.

In order to understand VAWIP, we first need to understand political violence at large. Political violence is "the commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain political power."¹² Further, we need to recognise women's inherent vulnerability to violence, which results from gender inequality and the subordination of women. VAWIP has been defined as:

The connotation of any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women politicians, including threat of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life.¹³

To be more comprehensive, this study extends the definition of VAWIP to include the inability of women to use their constitutional rights to participate in politics as a voter, an activist or as an active and engaged citizen.

There is ample evidence of persisting gender insensitivity in South Asia's political culture and it is for this reason that many women dread entering the world of politics.¹⁴ Gender discrimination and the fear of violence inevitably reduce women's ability to make an effective

¹¹ Constitution of India: Article 14, 16 ensure equality of status, Article 15 says state shall not discriminate among any citizen on the ground of sex, religion etc.; Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063, Article 13; Constitution of Pakistan: Article 25.

¹² Moser, Caroline O.N. and Clark, Fiona C. (Eds.). (2001) *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. London: Zed Books.

¹³ Ertürkin, Yakın. (2009) *UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women*.

¹⁴ Nepali, Rohit Kumar and Prakash, Shrestha. (Eds.). (2007) *Unfolding the realities: Silenced Voices of Women in Politics*. Nepal: South Asia Partnership International.

contribution in the political arena.¹⁵ Yet dialogue on this issue has been restricted to basic and largely symbolic discussions of women's right to participate in politics and the importance of women's political voice. There has been little discussion about women's experience in the political sphere. VAWIP has not just been overlooked at the South Asia level; it has also been excluded from most international human rights instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW).

Women's isolation from public and community life contributes to their marginalisation and disempowerment and results in their increased vulnerability to violence. In order to achieve empowerment and equality, there is a strong need for structural change within the political sphere to ensure women's engagement in politics. Indeed, the development and implementation of gender sensitive laws is urgently required to address VAWIP. Women must also take active steps to claim their space within the political dialogue and decision-making bodies.

This study explores the connections between violence and discrimination against women, women's political participation and political violence per se. It is an important body of knowledge for understanding the extent of VAWIP in these three countries of South Asia as well as the attitudes of community members to it. Providing an insight into the perpetrators of this violence and why they are committing it, it focuses on the effect of this violence on women politicians, voters and activists and the impact this has on women's political participation. Therefore, the rationale behind this study is to build a greater understanding of VAWIP by:

1. Identifying its nature and form
2. Analysing people's attitudes to VAWIP and the reasons why people perpetrate VAWIP
3. Identifying the distinguishing characteristics of both the perpetrators and victims of this violence
4. Assessing the extent and impact of VAWIP
5. Identifying ways in which VAWIP may be prevented.

¹⁵ South Asia Partnership International (2009) 'Thematic Report on Violence against Women in Politics' SAP International, Kathmandu.

BACKGROUND

There are several reasons for women's low participation in political decision-making bodies. These include women's social, economic and political marginalisation, discriminatory government legislation and policies, and patriarchal actions that stifle women's active participation in political governance.

The spectrum of VAWIP throughout South Asia stretches from intimidation and character assassination of women in politics to abductions, kidnapping, physical and sexual assault, torture and even murder. According to Ms. Chandni Joshi, former Regional Director of UNIFEM in South Asia, VAWIP is an under explored area and hence remains invisible. She cites patriarchy, the deeply entrenched unequal power structures in society, the lack of economic independence, and the inability on the part of the state to punish the perpetrators as prime factors in perpetuating incidences of VAW, especially in the South Asian context. Since politics is considered a male bastion, women who choose to participate in politics are perceived to be challenging the masculine status quo. Hence, they face psychological and physical abuse. Consequently, VAWIP is in fact, a major deterrent towards the full involvement of women in politics. This violence is pervasive and is perpetrated by a range of actors, including, in some cases, the state. Pakistani Advocate Ms. Rabaiyya Bajwa's presentation at the 2nd Regional Conference on VAWIP held in November 2008 in Kathmandu identified pre-poll rigging as a common tactic used to discredit women candidates. Derogatory and misleading symbols are commonly issued to women candidates in local elections in all three countries which exposes them to ridicule by the general public. During elections, various means are used to prevent women from participating in the political process, including errors in women voter lists, harassment at polling stations, non-availability of ID cards for women, the use of fire arms, and looting of ballot boxes.¹⁶

Violence has been a common feature of South Asian politics and the political sphere has traditionally been promoted as the territory of men. As a result, women have largely been excluded from engaging with, or participating within the political realm. Candidates and their families, as well as voters, have routinely faced violence during elections. VAWIP, as with violence against women more broadly, is usually perpetrated by males as a demonstration of their power and superiority. VAWIP is also used to reinforce traditional structures by targeting women leaders who challenge prevailing social expectations and norms. It restricts women's mobility and capacity to participate within the political sphere.

¹⁶ SAP International (2008) 'Combating VAWIP: Revisiting Policies, Politics and Participation', proceedings of the 2nd South Asian Regional Conference, SAP International, Kathmandu.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

There is a long history of protest against gender-based violence within the social, economic and political spheres. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was a watershed moment in the history of the women's movement, which aimed at achieving greater equality and opportunity for women. Unfortunately, since the Beijing Conference we have seen an intensification of VAW globally.

In the absence of the mention of VAWIP in official records and reports and with a dearth of recorded evidence on the issue, an intensive desktop investigation of records, reports and research studies related to VAW, women in politics, violence in politics was conducted to understand the background to violence faced by women, particularly those in politics. The discussion on existing violence, women's participation in politics, the challenges faced by women in politics, and the attempts to regulate such violence can be assigned to three conceptual categories – Structural, Institutional and Functional.

The **structural** category includes discussions regarding the structure and edifice of the society at large and the legal, political and economic structures of individual countries. Women take the toll of violence because of their low status in society, which limits their ability to get involved in politics. Violence and fear of violence plays a huge constraint in their engagement in political process.¹⁷ There is a complex link between VAW, women's political participation and women's involvement in public life that can increase her vulnerability to violence. Women who are isolated from public and community life have an added vulnerability to violence. Conversely, those who are involved in community groups and have access to legal protection, counselling and advice have a decreased vulnerability to it. However, having a bigger role in decision-making can also have negative impact for women as they can be perceived as a threat to men's superior status.¹⁸ As such, increasing women's participation in public life and politics either as politicians, women's rights activists or voters can lead to women being specifically targeted by the perpetrators of violence.¹⁹

In most cases, the state fails to support women who experience violence and an accountability gap exists. Virtually all countries are ill equipped to track this accountability gap because they do not recognize VAW, despite its prevalence as a governance issue.²⁰ VAW is indeed a failure of governance, as is the under-representation of women in politics. Governments would do well

¹⁷ Kellow, T. (2010) *West Africa: Assessing Women's Political Participation in Liberia and Sierra Leone*. London: International Alert.

¹⁸ WOMANKIND Worldwide (2008) *Speaking Out: Promoting Women as Decision-makers Worldwide*. London: WOMANKIND Worldwide.

¹⁹ Action Aid (2010) *Destined to Fail? How Violence against Women is undoing Development?* London: Action Aid.

²⁰ Ibid.

to recognise how the two issues are linked: violence against women acts as a structural barrier to women's participation in politics and public life.²¹

An increase in women's representation in law-making bodies may lead to changes in the way parliamentary politics functions as well as to policy outputs. However, the case of Rwanda shows that whilst an increased presence of women in law-making bodies may result in women's issues being raised more often than before, it does not necessarily translate into policy outputs.²² Thus, a pseudo change may not lead to women's effective political participation. However, enacting women-friendly legislations would bring more meaningful change to women's lives. Therefore, there is a serious need to look beyond the numbers and to instead, measure how severe the lingering obstacles encountered by women are and thereafter assess women's political effectiveness.²³

A vast body of literature shows the effect of patriarchy on women's political participation. The State is also an agency that reinforces patriarchy just as other structures of society do, such as kinship and family, class, caste, religion, ethnicity, and educational institutions. Though women's role in post-conflict peace negotiations in Nepal (and in countries like Rwanda, Afghanistan, Guatemala and Burundi) has been effective, the medium or long-term impact of expanded participation in peace processes is yet to be established. Nepal saw a significant increase in women's representation in political bodies immediately after the Peace Accord of November 2006 but it did not continue for long as the patriarchal political system subordinated women's participation.²⁴ Satisfying patriarchal insecurities is one of the aims of VAWIP.²⁵

A large part of existing research deliberates on the **institutional** factors that influence VAWIP. These include individual institutions/units through which the structure manifests itself such as political parties, religious groups, police, judiciary, family, and the media. These institutions either perpetrate VAWIP and/or interpret it as an invisible form of VAW. This section also includes efforts of institutions/agencies, especially UN agencies that have worked extensively for increasing the participation of women in politics and peace-keeping in the conflict-affected areas as well as South Asia Partnership (SAP) International. These institutions develop indicators of success and monitor the participation of women in politics in the conflict-affected countries, thereby attempting to increase women's participation in politics.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Devlin, C. and Elgie, R. (2008) 'The Effect of Increased Women's Representation in Parliament: The Case of Rwanda' *Parliamentary Affairs*. 61(2): 237-264.

²³ Kellow, T. (2010) 'West Africa: Assessing Women's Political Participation in Liberia and Sierra Leone' International Alert: London.

²⁴ UNFPA (2010) 'State of the World Population 2010, From Conflict and Crisis to Renewal: Generations of Change', UNFPA: 88.

²⁵ SAP International (2009) 'Thematic Report on Violence against Women in Politics' SAP International, Kathmandu.

State institutions' inability to confront political violence and intimidation is coupled with poor reporting that obscures facts and is insensitive to past incidences of such violence against women in politics. This tendency of governments to overlook VAWIP deters many women from participating in politics within their country.²⁶ In Nepal, women played active roles during the 10-year armed conflict between government forces and a Maoist insurgency. Further, after the signing of the peace agreement in 2006, the interim constitution introduced women's rights as fundamental and pledged non-discrimination on the basis of gender.²⁷ However, Human Rights Watch reports that there are insufficient protections in the current legal framework, which effectively denies women equal rights with respect to acquiring and conveying citizenship. In the post-conflict society, extensive discretionary power has been given to local officials and patriarchal values have led to widows, abandoned women, and women married to non-nationals, being denied access to full citizenship rights.²⁸

The UN Security Council (UNSC) and different United Nations agencies, such as UN Women (former UNIFEM) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) have identified VAW as a factor that deters women from participating in politics. Their reports have discussed the inherent relationship between VAW and governance. They have shown VAW as a consequence of the failure of governance and have looked for ways to monitor and control such violence.

In 2007, UNIFEM looked at the different challenges facing women participating in community level politics. This included their exclusion from male-dominated decision-making forums, their lack of access to funding, their exclusion from formal peace building processes, the resistance amongst communities to initiatives that challenged cultural traditions, and the risk to their personal security.²⁹ In 2008, UNIFEM highlighted the need for reliable data to build national accountability to address VAW. Election violence was also discussed in the report, which notes that "Governments still have a long way to go to find effective means of addressing election violence and other forms of intimidation targeting women."³⁰

In 2010, UNSC adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on women and peace and security. The UNSC Resolution 1325 addresses the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and recognises the under-valued and under-utilised contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace building. It also stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ UNFPA (2010) *State of the World Population 2010, From Conflict and Crisis to Renewal: Generations of Change 2010*. New York: UNFPA.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch (2010) *Discrimination against women and children in Nepal's citizenship laws*. Human Rights Council Resolution 20/4.

²⁹ UNIFEM (2007) *Women Building Peace and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict-Affected Contexts, A Review of Community-Based Approaches October 2007*. New York: UNIFEM.

³⁰ UNIFEM (2008) *Who Answers to Women? Gender & Accountability. Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. New York: UNIFEM.

Indicator 12, which focuses on the percentage of women who are registered to vote, those who actually vote, those who are parliamentary candidates, those actually in parliaments and those in ministerial positions, monitors women's political participation in conflict affected areas.³¹

The same year UNFPA reported on women, peace and security, highlighting the role that women in peace movements in war-torn countries play in reducing VAW. Its State of World Population Report focused on the struggles of women leaders in conflict affected countries, showing that women often engage vigorously in informal peace building and policy related activities.³²

Many attempts were made to challenge the structural features of the socio-political devices that create and perpetuate VAWIP. Such efforts to alleviate VAWIP are mentioned under the **functional** category.

Feminist movements around the world have challenged patriarchy and taken up a variety of issues at the activist and academic level, including addressing violence against women and promoting an increased space for women in political decision-making. The women's movement in Sweden, for example, has struggled for gender equality since 1845 but now has 45 per cent female presence in the national law-making body. However, it was only in late 1980s that the focus shifted towards power and influence, when the fight against disproportionate representation began. In India the movement for women's political rights started in the period between the two World Wars. Women leaders argued that the presence of women in legislative assemblies would ensure that "children grow up to be splendid, healthy, educated efficient and noble sons and daughters of India..."³³ In India this movement has traditionally been urban based and middle class in character. However, recently a home grown women's movement known as the Gulabi Gang, challenged the patriarchal norms of the society by addressing violence against women, particularly domestic violence, in marginalised rural communities. However, their focus was not on women's political participation. Seldom have any women's groups in South Asia voiced their concern about VAWIP, though increased political participation as voters and candidates have been on the agenda of many.

South Asia Partnership (SAP) International, one of the first organisations to recognize and discuss VAWIP as an issue, published a thematic report on this in 2006 that defined various forms of violence. This report included short case studies of VAWIP in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Kenya, the Philippines, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. SAP also developed a guidebook on promoting and implementing a surveillance system to monitor, document,

³¹ United Nations Security Council (2010) *Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 April 2010*. S/2010/173. Available from: http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Indicators/sg_report_on_1889-op17.pdf.

³² UNFPA (2010) *State of the World Population 2010, From Conflict and Crisis to Renewal: Generations of Change 2010*. New York: UNFPA.

³³ Basu, Aparna (2008) 'Women's Struggle for the Vote' *Indian Historical Review*. XXXV (1).

communicate, refer and advocate against VAWIP.³⁴ In the same year SAP Pakistan conducted a situational analysis to understand the status of VAWIP in national level politics in Pakistan. It recommended policies, mechanisms, and actions to address the issues of VAWIP, which are detailed extensively later in this document.³⁵

Some researchers* are of the view that feminist rethinking of politics and democracy can catalyze women's effective participation and challenge the structures of patriarchy that limit political action and social mobility. These researchers suggest that a lack of education, a lack of knowledge of the laws, and other socio-cultural, economic, and political factors limit women's participation in politics.³⁶ They promote gender quotas as a crucial component of strategies that would empower women to participate in the political system. They also suggest that quotas might make women more visible and increase the self-efficiency of women representatives. However, they do not suggest that this will necessarily lead to any substantive change in institutional priorities and state accountability.³⁷ Increased participation of women in the electoral process has been successfully engineered due to the training and support provided by many NGOs.

Different forms of violence facing women in politics, from physical to psychological, were discussed online by an e-discussion group *iKNOW politics*.³⁸ This e-group was focused on serving the needs of elected officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, students and other practitioners interested in advancing women in politics. The group, with participants from Kenya, Ecuador, Sweden, Iraq, Southeast Asia and South Eastern Europe identified the root causes of VAWIP as persisting cultural stereotypes, abuse of religious and traditional practices, patriarchal societal structures in which economic, political and social power are dominated by men, and the perpetuation of women's traditional role as the followers of male political leaders. The group recommended several measures to reduce VAWIP including:

- Formation of interest-based solidarity groups between women
- Running parallel women's electoral campaigns
- Providing free advice on issues related to human rights and human development
- Collecting data on harassment and violence against women

³⁴ SAP International (2006) *VAWIP Surveillance System: A Guidebook*. Kathmandu: SAP International.

³⁵ SAP International (2006) *Violence against women in politics – Pakistan's perspective*. Kathmandu: SAP Pakistan.

*Joti Sekhon and Neema Kudva.

³⁶ Sekhon, Joti. (2006) 'Engendering Grassroots Democracy: Research, Training, and Networking for Women in Local Self-Governance in India'. *NWSA Journal*. 18(2) (Summer, 2006): 101-122.

³⁷ Kudva, Neema. "Engineering Elections: The Experiences of Women in "Panchayati Raj" in Karnataka, India". *Culture and Society*. 16 (3). Toward Gender Equity: Policies and Strategies (Spring, 2003): 445-463.

³⁸ International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2007) *Eliminating Violence Against Women in Politics* [Online] 10 -14 December, 2007. Available from: <http://iknowpolitics.org>.

- Lobbying for legislation against harassment and political violence based on gender
- Instituting quotas for women at all levels of political, policy and decision-making processes
- Undertaking measures to ensure the physical security of women in politics
- Training of election monitors and placing monitors in all constituencies where there are women candidates
- Creating awareness of Security Council Resolution 1325 at the grassroots level

The Election Commission of India (ECI) requires that all candidates list their criminal offences on their nomination papers. The Association for Democratic Reforms, an Indian NGO, published a list of Members of Parliament (MP) and Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) who declared that they had been charged with violence against women (including rape, assault and outraging the modesty of women) but were still fielded by major political parties.³⁹ In many cases, the general public does not access these reports and candidates with criminal charges and criminal records are still elected and able to reach the law making bodies. 30 per cent of the members of the 15th Lok Sabha of India have criminal cases against them. Two members have declared that they have been charged with crimes against women, such as cruelty and intent to outrage a woman's modesty.

However, criminalization of politics is not the only reason for the limited participation of women in politics.

In electoral politics, discrimination is evident at three levels:

- i. Gender discrimination within the electorate, results in women being less likely to be elected and to being less respected even if elected.

In the past three general elections in India, there has been a relative increase in the number of women contesting elections, yet the percentage of women elected, has steadily fallen.

Table A: Percentage of elected women in the 2009 general election in India

Year of Election	No. of Women Contested	No. of women elected	Percentage of women who won
1999	284	49	17.25
2004	355	45	12.67
2009	556	59	10.42

³⁹ Association of Democratic Reforms (2012) 'Several MPs/MLAs with declared cases of Rape/other crimes against women'. Available from: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/Crimes-against-women-Cases-pending-against-lawmakers/articleshow/17701369.cms>. December 20, 2012.

The percentage of women who were successful in winning their seats in the 2009 general elections in India was a meagre 10.6 per cent of all women candidates. Women were elected to lead only 2.5 per cent of the constituencies in the Indian Parliament. About 79 per cent of women contestants in the same election did not get the required votes to save their deposits. Interestingly, Uttar Pradesh (UP), the state which is perceived to have high levels of electoral violence, had the highest representation of women being sent to the national law making body.

Table B: Percentage of elected women over total seats in three states of India in the 2009 general election

	No. of women contested	No. of women elected	No. of women deposit forfeited	% of elected women over total seats in state
India	556	59	441	2.5
NCT of Delhi	18	1	16	4.76
Karnataka	19	1	16	1.19
UP	100	13	76	5.42

Though many women did venture into electoral politics, the electorate chose to elect more men to the Parliament.

In India, there has also been an increase in the percentage of women voters over votes polled, increasing from 53.64 per cent in 2004 to 55.82 per cent in 2009.

In Pakistan too, the numbers of female voters and contestants have increased in the past two elections. In its 2013 election, the voter turnout for women was an unprecedented 40 per cent of all votes.⁴⁰

Table C: Comparison of women voters, contestants and elected candidates in the past two elections in Pakistan

Year of Election	No. of women voters	No. of women contested	No. of women elected
2008	35,606,360	195	25
2013	37,597,415	448	16

In Pakistan although more women contested in 2013, the percentage of women who won, fell from 12.8 per cent in 2008 to a mere 3.75 per cent in 2013.

The increase in women voters and contestants has not led to an increase in the number of women elected to law making bodies in these countries. It is important to understand the

⁴⁰ European Union Election Observation Mission Pakistan, 2013, Preliminary statement.

reasons for this confidence deficit among voters (including women voters) towards women politicians. Further, there is a need to assess the extent to which wider gender discrimination is responsible for these results.

ii. Gender discrimination within political parties results in women being marginalised within the party. There is reluctance to field women in elections and women are less likely to be allotted a ticket or to be respected as a partner in decision-making within the political arena.

The perception that women are not viable candidates means that political parties that aim to win a larger number of seats do not want to risk their chances by nominating women as candidates.⁴¹ Statistical records reveal only a marginal increase in the number of women candidates fielded during elections in the last few decades.

Table D: Comparison of participating and winning women contestants in selected political parties in the last three general elections in India.⁴²

Year of Election	INC		BJP		NCP		BSP		CPI/CPM	
	Contested	Won	Contested	Won	Contested	Won	Contested	Won	Contested	Won
1999	51	14	25	15	0	0	11	1	4/5	1/3
2004	45	12	30	10	5	2	20	1	2/8	0/5
2009	43	23	44	13	7	2	28	4	4/6	0/1

Table D demonstrates that for most of the main parties in India there has been a minor increase in the number of women candidates who have been allocated tickets over the last 3 elections. The Indian National Congress party (INC) is the only party to show a reduction in the number of tickets allotted to women candidates over the years. However, the increase shown by other political parties is minimal and the majority of tickets in all parties are still allotted to men. It is difficult to understand why there has not been a bigger increase in the number of women who are given the opportunity to contest elections and the reasons why political parties' deny women their right to participate in politics. It is almost tempting to deduce that the party requires a woman leader in order to consider increasing the number of tickets allocated to women. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which is headed by Ms. Mayawati, has consistently increased the number of women candidates, even though the percentage of women who win

⁴¹ UNDP (2011) *Understanding Electoral Violence in Asia*. Bangkok: UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre.

⁴² Election Commission of India (2009) Participation of Women in National Parties. Available from: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/archiveofge2009/Stats/VOLI/18_ParticipationOfWomenInNationalParties.pdf. Election Commission of India (2004) Performance of Women in National Parties vis-à-vis Others. Available from: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/StatisticalReports/LS_2004/Vol_I_LS_2004.pdf. Election Commission of India (1999) Performance of Women in National Parties vis-à-vis Others. Available from: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/StatisticalReports/LS_1999/Vol_I_LS_99.pdf.

their seats has not increased significantly. However, the same rationale does not find weight in the case of INC. In spite of the party being led by the highly powerful Ms. Sonia Gandhi, both the number of women contestants and the winnability of women have steadily declined.

iii. As a consequence, there has been very little increase in the number of women in the formal law making bodies⁴³ at both the national and state levels.

Women’s role in the sphere of decision-making has so far been insignificant to have any kind of multiplier effect.⁴⁴ As seen above there has been very little increase in the number of women in formal decision-making bodies between 1999 and 2009. This holds true for, women politicians at both the national and state levels. The 2009 general election holds the distinction of electing the highest number (59) of women ever to the national law making body. Out of the three states included in the study, Delhi holds the distinction of electing the highest number of women (14.29 per cent).

Table E: Percentage of seats won by women candidates in 2009 general elections in India

States	No. of seats	No. of Women		% of seats won by women
		Contestants	Elected	
Delhi	7	15	1	14.29
Karnataka	28	10	2	7.14
Uttar Pradesh	80	61	7	8.75

However, at the state level, women’s representation in the legislatures is abysmally low, lower than their numbers in the Parliament. The highest representation of women at the state level is 15 per cent in the state of Punjab and the worst is Goa, which has no woman representative.⁴⁵ The above discussion leads us to question what it is that inhibits women from exercising their right to participate in the political process at various levels. This also initiates the debate on what influences the prevalence and types of violence faced by women in politics.

Violence does not only prevent women from entering politics but it also extends to those who have been chosen as the people’s representatives. The marginalisation of elected women representatives is a common way of alienating women and of demonstrating that women are not welcome in the “male” domain of politics. At the local level (Councils/Panchayats) women are excluded from decision-making processes despite being elected members of governance

⁴³ For the purpose of the study we refer to all Parliaments (known by different names) as National Law Making Body and the state/district/province is referred as ‘State Law Making Body’.

⁴⁴ NIAS, NAWO, IWID (2004) *Baseline Report on Women and Political Participation in India*. Kuala Lumpur: International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific.

⁴⁵ TNN (2012) Only 55 women elected from 690 seats in 2012 state polls. *The Times of India*, 8th March 2012. Available from: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-08/india/31135398_1_assembly-elections-mlas-new-assemblies.

bodies.⁴⁶ Historically women have not been allocated space as decision-making partners in the political arena or even in political parties. In India, the nature of women parliamentarians' political participation demonstrates that women elected members are generally restricted to discussions on women's issues, such as the anti-rape bill and women's security and safety. It is important to understand why women are given a smaller space in political discussions despite being elected as representatives of their constituencies in the same way that their male counterparts are. With such anomalies, it is vital to take cognizance of how on-going discrimination against women makes it more difficult for women to achieve results for their constituencies. Many communities do not recognise the difficulties facing women leaders and continue to believe that men are more successful in achieving outcomes for the community. This reinforces the widespread preference for electing males.

Politics in the Indian Subcontinent has a reputation for being aggressive and violent. Candidates, their families, and voters are often exposed to violence during elections. This violence can also continue after elections and can force women politicians to quit their political career.⁴⁷ The aggressive nature of politics is often used as a justification for excluding women from engaging with politics, whilst violence is also used as a mechanism to threaten those women who choose to participate.

It is also necessary to investigate the responses of the political and judicial systems to cases of VAWIP, as well as the strategies adopted by women and governments to overcome incidences of VAWIP.

SAP was supported by UN Women to conduct conferences on VAWIP in South Asia in 2006, 2008 and 2010. The conferences analysed the policy environment throughout the region as related to women's political participation, and consolidated the various mechanisms that women use to cope with VAWIP. They also presented a South Asian media perspective on VAWIP and synergised policy influencing actions in the region.

The Kathmandu Declaration 2008 was made during the South Asian Regional Conference on Violence against Women in Politics.⁴⁸ It highlighted demands for a zero tolerance approach towards VAWIP in order to enhance the meaningful participation of women in political governance.⁴⁹ The declaration made several demands including:

⁴⁶ Institute of Social Sciences. *Panchayat Update*: February 2012. Available from: www.issin.org/PRU-English-February-2012.

⁴⁷ SAP International (2008) 'Combating VAWIP: Revisiting Policies, Politics and Participation', Proceedings of the 2nd South Asian Regional Conference. Kathmandu: SAP International.

⁴⁸ SAP International (2008) 'Combating VAWIP: Revisiting Policies, Politics and Participation', Proceedings of the 2nd South Asian Regional Conference. Kathmandu: SAP International.

⁴⁹ SAP International (2008) 'Declaration - Combating VAWIP: Revisiting Policies, Politics and Participation', proceedings of the 2nd South Asian Regional Conference, SAP International, Kathmandu.

- A minimum of 33 per cent quotas for women for elected positions at all levels of governance
- Direct elections for women in all elected positions including reserved seats/quotas
- Repeal of all discriminatory laws and replacement with universal civil/criminal codes that treat all citizens equally, irrespective of their gender, caste or religious persuasion
- The election commissions to ensure a comprehensive and appropriate code of conduct so as to prevent abuses, such as surrogate male nominations and prevention of women from voting
- Condemnation of any incidence of violence against women in politics, cutting across party politics
- Special electoral laws to be framed to address electoral violence, including VAWIP, since this is a phenomenon that affects all South Asian countries.

All women have the right to participate in politics, to express their opinions, and to influence the development of their communities. Women's full and equal engagement with politics is essential for the realization of inclusive governance systems. It is also vital for addressing gender discrimination and gender-based violence throughout the Indian Subcontinent. There is an increasing need for women to claim their political space and for governments to facilitate women's participation in politics. To do this, governments need to create an environment where gender-sensitive laws that prevent VAWIP can be developed and their complete implementation ensured. However women's capacity to participate in politics without fear of violence is a long way from being realised. The limited understanding of VAWIP is compounded by the lack of structures to address violence against women and more broadly, violence in politics. Further research is required to understand the extent, nature, and reasons for VAWIP. This research must address the motives behind VAWIP, the effect of this violence, the role of gender discrimination in VAWIP, government responses to VAWIP and best practices for combating such violence.

The Centre for Social Research (CSR) has partnered with UN Women to undertake this comprehensive study analysing the nature and prevalence of VAWIP in national, state/provincial and local elections. In addition, this study identifies best practices in combating this violence in India, Nepal and Pakistan and makes recommendations for action that must be taken to address this issue.

The three objectives of the study are to:

1. Understand the context of violence against women in the three countries in relation to gender-based violence in elections, using secondary data

2. Understand the nature and extent of VAWIP, the motive behind such violence, and the effect of this violence, using primary research
3. Increase awareness of VAWIP by identifying and disseminating best practices in combating VAWIP through a consultative workshop

The findings and recommendations will be used to develop policy briefs as well as for policy level advocacy to influence electoral reforms and create an enabling environment for women's engagement with politics.

SELECTION OF COUNTRIES FOR THE STUDY

India, Nepal and Pakistan have been selected for the study in line with the requirement that the countries involved in the study will hold national elections in the coming two years. India is the largest democracy in the world and has a mature election process which dates back to the pre-independence period. Conversely, Nepal is a very new democracy. Since its founding Pakistan has experienced an on-going struggle for its democracy, which is threatened by military power and the influence of religious fundamentalists.

All three countries have multiparty systems but they have been ruled by parties with different political ideologies and ethos. In India, it is primarily secular parties that have formed government (communist parties have large followings in two states). Pakistan has been governed by religiously moderate parties as well as by an Islamic socialist party (under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) that turned into a secular right wing party (under Benazir Bhutto). For the first time in the history of Pakistan, power has now been passed from one democratically elected government to another.

Women's equal status is guaranteed under the constitution in all three countries. However, in reality, women's political marginalisation and other forms of gender discrimination continue to be the norm. In this context, customary practices and laws conflict with formal legislation and gender discrimination persists, in many cases unabated, in all three countries.

India has mandated a 33 per cent reservation for women at the local (Panchayat) level of governance (through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments). Since the implementation of this reservation, women's political participation in local self-governance has increased substantially. Indeed, the emergence of effective women leaders has led some states to voluntarily increase the reservation of seats for women to 50 per cent. At present, out of the approximately 28.18 lakh elected representatives at the Panchayati Raj level, 36.87 per cent are women.

With the proposed Constitutional amendment to enhance reservation for women in Panchayats at all tiers from 1/3 to at least 50 per cent,⁵⁰ the number of elected women representatives is expected to rise to more than 14 lakh.⁵¹

Yet the country's discriminatory practices/laws continue to deter women from taking on leadership positions. Further, in many cases husbands and other male family members act as proxies on behalf of the elected women. This defeats the purpose of quotas for women's

⁵⁰ Agencies (2011) Cabinet approves 50% reservation for women in Panchayats. *The Indian Express*, 21st July. Available from: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/cabinet-approves-50--reservation-for-women-in-panchayats/820460/>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

participation and inclusion in public politics, which is one of the objectives of the 73rd Amendment Act.

In Nepal, the interim constitution also mandates 33 per cent participation of women in politics. As a result, women's representation in the dissolved Constituent Assembly (CA) reached just over 33 per cent. However, there are few provisions that protect women from discrimination and there are no administrative or regulatory structures to enforce laws related to the political participation of women. Interestingly, in Nepal discrimination against women starts at the pre-poll stage with the voters' list. Though women constitute about 51 per cent of the country's population there are less women voters (49 per cent) than men when the voter list is prepared.⁵² Further, according to an Action Aid study, *Destined to Fail (2010)*, 26 per cent of women candidates faced violence in Nepal's 2008 elections.

Since its formation, Pakistan has experienced extensive violence within the political sphere. Five major players in Pakistani politics have lost their lives since partition and the development of the Pakistani state. Both women and men have been the targets of this violence. Prominent women politicians, who have suffered violence, include the country's former Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto as well as minister and activist Ms. Zille Huma Usman. Both women were assassinated in full public view.

India, Nepal and Pakistan all have wide gaps between women and women's social, economic, and political status. This results from discriminatory socio-religious practices which impact the status of women. India and Pakistan have long and connected histories of fighting for gender equality and women's empowerment. Both countries share the same foundation of women's rights movements as they were initiated in the colonial era prior to partition. In fact, the women's rights movement within British India was originally started by men. However, women joined the movement in the late 19th century. This movement has some very notable successes, including the abolition of *sati* and the promotion of women's education.

The basis for political participation of women was set during the Indian independence movement. However, there was no follow up or determined attempt to widen the political base by integrating women into political processes after independence. The *Swadeshi* movement during 1905 to 1908 marked the beginning of women's participation in nationalist activities. Thousands of women joined in the salt *Satyagraha*, which is "generally remembered as the first time 'masses of Indian women' got involved in the struggle for Independence."⁵³

⁵² UNESCAP (2000) Report on the state of women in urban Local Government, Nepal Report (Page #8). Available from: <http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/reports/nepal.pdf>.

⁵³ Kumar, Radha. (1997) *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Several women's organisations such as the Ladies Picketing Board, *Desh Sevika Sangh*, *Nari Satyagraha Samiti* and *Mahila Rashtriya Sangh* were formed to mobilise women to participate in nationalist activities. Women's groups organised and participated in processions, pickets, and *charkha* spinning. The spirit of the freedom movement is reflected in India's Constitution, which is focused on individual rights and non-discrimination based on caste, class, and gender. While women joined the independence movement, they still grappled with issues related to the scope of women's political participation and women's franchise and leadership roles in political parties, both in the pre and post-independence eras. Consequently organisations such as the All India Women's Conference and the National Federation of Indian women came into being effect to address issues around women's empowerment. After India became a republic, these organisations worked to ensure that women were able to access their rights as citizens of free India.

Historically, women leaders in Nepal have contributed equally with men to establish democratic processes in Nepal. Some noted women leaders in Nepal are Mangala Devi Singh, Sahana Pradhan, Shalilaja Acharya, and Asta Laxmi Shakya. But, in spite of these efforts, women remain underrepresented in political parties. The women's movement in Nepal has a strong history of fighting gender oppression. Leaders such as Mangala Devi Singh and Sahana Pradhan have spearheaded the campaign for women's rights. However, the women's movement gained particular impetus only after the restoration of democracy in 1990. Reports indicate that party membership is generally non inclusive, and women representatives appear to have a token presence and are often not invited to attend party meetings. Moreover, the central committees of the national parties and other political parties have had no more than three to five women members. Further, in 2013 there was only one woman in the special class, which totalled 52 seats of Nepalese civil service. All the remaining seats were occupied by men and women occupied only 8.92 per cent of the third class posts, which totalled 10,143 seats.⁵⁴

With the birth of independent India and Pakistan, women's rights and equality were written into the countries' legal frameworks. Both Constitutions guarantee equality to women. They became signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 (where gender is a cross cutting theme) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Pakistan signed CEDAW with the condition that it will not draft any policy and/or law which is repugnant to Islamic principles.⁵⁵ Both India and Pakistan are party to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Social Charter in 2007 (Article VI deals with the Promotion of the Status of Women).

⁵⁴ The Government of Nepal (2013) *The Nepalese Journal of Public Administration* (124th issue). Available from: <http://www.moga.gov.np/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Prashsan%20124.pdf>

⁵⁵ Aurat Foundation (2012) Pakistan NGO Alternative Report on CEDAW. Available from: <http://www.af.org.pk/publication-detail.php?id=7>. Page 17.

Despite women's rights being enshrined in India, Nepal and Pakistan's legislative frameworks, VAW continues across different layers of society. State interventions to address violence, including the development of women friendly legislation has been impaired by a lack of support from religious and caste groups. These groups use the traditional values of their respective religions/castes to legitimise VAW and gender-based discrimination more broadly. VAW also has a huge economic cost that is borne by the State, and developing countries like India, Nepal and Pakistan can hardly afford such a cost.

It is time now to seize the momentum and demonstrate that violence against women and girls is not only human rights or public health issue, but an economic and development issue, slowing economic growth and undermining efforts to reduce poverty.⁵⁶

As we have discussed, the treatment of women within India, Nepal and Pakistan's political spheres, mirrors wider social and cultural gender discrimination. Indisputably, the violent nature of politics within these countries creates an environment of fear and mistrust of the political sphere that leads to women's marginalisation from politics. The criteria for choosing the following three Indian States (Delhi, UP and Karnataka) for the study are the following: Reported levels of violence were high for UP, low for Karnataka and medium for Delhi. While Karnataka and Delhi were going to polls in 2013, UP had gone to polls in 2012. In the past UP had a Dalit woman Chief Minister and Delhi also has a woman Chief Minister. Karnataka had declared reservations for women candidates in PRIs as early as 1985. While this selection represented the National capital and regional states, it also represents the centre and the North and South states, scaling the length of the country.

In Nepal, the three districts chosen are Kathmandu, Kaski and Rupendehi, where reported levels of violence are medium, high and low respectively. Another criterion has been the geographical and geopolitical division of the country; whereas Rupandehi is a border district in the Tarai region, adjacent to the state of UP in India, Kaski is in western Nepal situated in the hills. The ethnic groups in the three districts are also different. Kathmandu being the capital district has a fairly politically dynamic and cosmopolitan population. The Magar and Gurung ethnic groups who are popular for their bravery as Gorkhas are from Kaski district. In contrast, Rupandehi is occupied primarily by the Madhesi and Tharu ethnic groups, who speak the Awadhi language of neighbouring UP.

Pakistani provinces identified for the study are Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Reported level of VAWIP such as killing women politicians (Zille Huma Usmani and Benazir Bhutto), barring women from voting or expressing threats were

⁵⁶ World Bank Group (2013) Anstey, Caroline. 'The Price of Violence against Women and Girls'. World Bank Group. March 7, 2013.

high for Punjab and KP. General elections as well as by-elections are expected in 2013 in all the selected areas. Several women politicians who had been extremely active in the women parliamentary caucus as well as women activists are based in ICT (official residence), Punjab and KP. Furthermore, KP is a province with rampant militancy where military operations have been conducted. While this selection represented the National capital and provinces it also represents the North-West, and East Provinces to bring out the diversity. These identified provinces are most easily accessible in view of security concerns.

STUDY PERIOD

The study refers to the incidents of VAWIP that occurred during 2003 to 2013. The literature review extends beyond this period to elicit the historical reference. Nevertheless, the other methods of data collection were limited to the past decade. During this period India faced two general elections for the 14th and 15th Parliament in 2004 and 2009 respectively. In Nepal after the dissolution of Parliament in 2002 the country faced general chaos. This was followed by a CA election in 2008. In Pakistan, parliamentary elections were held in October 2002, after which the Pakistani political system remained highly fragmented and volatile. The assassinations of the first woman Prime Minister and the Minister for Social Welfare (Punjab) took place during this period in the year 2007. Pakistan went to general elections in 2013, where a democratically elected government followed the previously elected government.

METHODOLOGY

The study design, sample, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and data analysis for the study are discussed below.

STUDY DESIGN

Research on VAWIP is in its nascent stages. Some of the methods used in the previous studies conducted on VAWIP, include case studies, interviews, discussions, review of constitutions, mapping, recent examples on VAWIP and surveys to collect views and to analyse factors encouraging women's participation in politics without violence.

This study employs a mixed method approach in order to examine, analyse and understand the extent, nature and reasons for VAWIP. The study involves both quantitative and qualitative (including literature review) methods. The mixed method approach has been accepted as being superior to a single method design because the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods deepens the understanding of processes, attitudes, and motives. The mixed method approach also capitalises on the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods while offsetting their different weaknesses.

A sequential approach was adopted, whereby findings from the quantitative survey informed the qualitative research and helped develop a deeper understanding of VAWIP. The qualitative research aimed to discover the attitude towards and the underlying motives for the perpetration of VAWIP.

The study began with a comprehensive literature review that addresses women's participation and inclusion in politics and women's political empowerment. The literature review also analysed the context of VAWIP in all three countries. The study explored available resources including research conducted on women in politics, articles written in journals on VAW when information on VAWIP was not sufficient, national/state policy documents and discussions and anecdotal experiences of women politicians, their family members, and women (potential voters) from the community. Media reports both in print and electronic forms were examined on recent acts of violence reported against women in politics and women activists. Election Commission reports and data from the three countries that list and review complaints of VAWIP and violation of codes of conduct were examined.

The qualitative survey included a range of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to ensure that the views, knowledge, and understanding of the different categories of respondents were fully incorporated. The interviews and discussions also helped to analyse the

incidents of VAWIP within electoral processes. Structured questionnaires were used to access VAWIP at all levels of politics. This contributed to our understanding of the nature and reason for this violence, coping strategies, responses from political systems and the effect of VAWIP on other faculties. This method recognised the extent and nature of violence by discussing experiences of VAWIP by the extended community that participates in the election process. The findings were compared to data collected from women and men in rural and urban areas.

The quantitative survey aimed to gain a deeper understanding of VAWIP by reaching those who had directly or indirectly experienced violence within the electoral process. The data from the quantitative survey strengthened the findings of the qualitative research and provided statistical evidence on the extent of VAWIP in the three countries. The survey focused on the participants' experience of violence throughout election campaigns and during the election process and included questions on the type and extent of violence. For current and former elected representatives, the survey also addressed their experiences of violence after being elected.

CSR, in consultation with UN Women, identified partner organisations in Nepal and Pakistan that have work experience in the areas of women's political participation and ending violence against women. These partners were responsible for collecting primary data and collating secondary data on violence against women in politics within their countries.

The research design concentrates on the first two objectives of the study. A consultative workshop will be conducted at the end of the study to increase awareness of VAWIP and where best practices in combating VAWIP will be identified and disseminated.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

For the qualitative survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders including election commission officials, police personnel, policy drafters, elected members, and activists/advocates/lobbyists. Separate FGDs were conducted with women and men from rural and urban communities that recently experienced electoral violence (particularly against women) or were more prone to experiencing electoral violence.

The quantitative survey aimed to reach a wider range of people, including current and former elected women and men representatives in each country, electoral candidates who had participated in elections, their family members, and activists and campaigners who faced violence directly or indirectly during the electoral process.

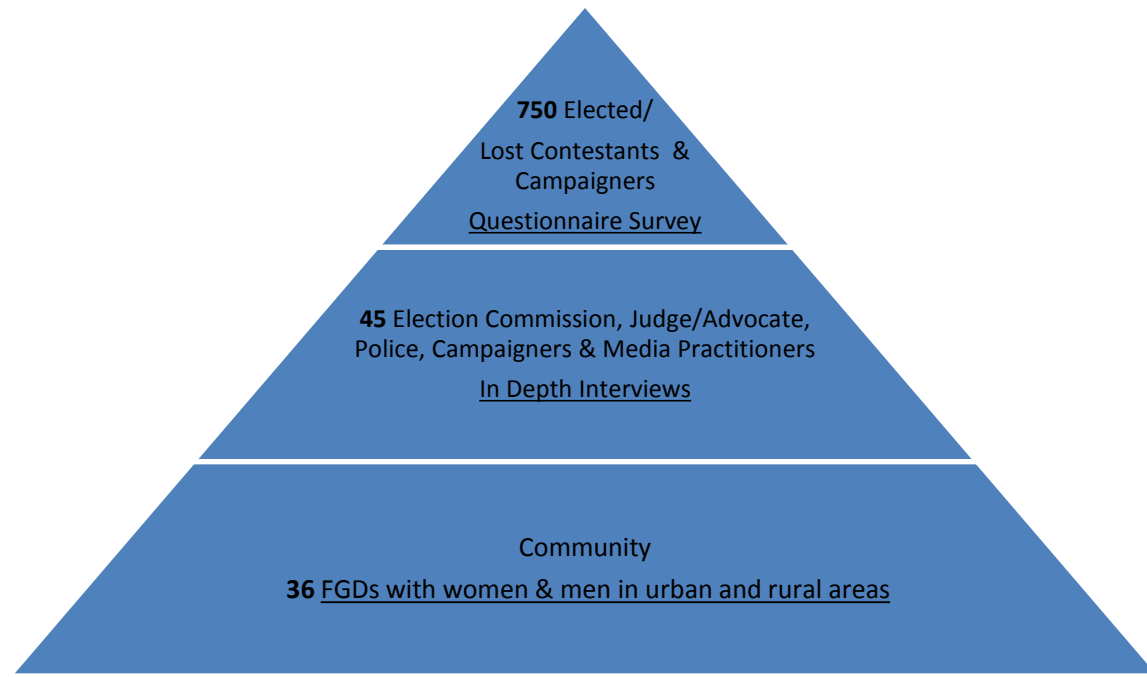
SAMPLING

The sample design for the study was stratified and purposive. This sample includes national, state and local actors. Given the nature of the issue, qualitative enquiry allowed us an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind VAWIP. Interviews with policy makers, election commission officers and police personnel brought out the reported extent of violence and the response of the political system to the reported cases or acts of VAWIP.

Following was the sample of each state/district/province per country:

Stakeholders	No. of FGD (with participants)	No. of In-depth Interview	No. of respondents in survey/state
Election Commission Official		1	1
Police Personnel		1	1
Policy drafter /media		1	1
Elected member		1	1
Campaigners/Activist/Advocates		1	1
Urban women	1		10
Rural women	1		10
Urban men	1		10
Rural men	1		10
Elected candidate (female)			20 (22 in UP, India)
Elected candidate (male)			20 (22 in UP, India)
Political candidates (not elected)			20 (22 in UP, India)
Campaigners/activists/families of electoral candidates			20 (24 in UP, India)

A. Total Qualitative Sample Size



Since the study has been conducted over six months with the primary purpose of identifying the extent, nature and reasons for VAWIP so as to arrive at a better understanding of attitudes towards VAWIP, the sample size of primary research has deliberately been kept small. The primary research is only being used to validate the secondary findings in the three countries. It is expected that the findings of this study will create the way for a more detailed engagement with the issue of VAWIP.

SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

This sample represented the diverse array of stakeholders that included national/state/local actors. It comprised of politicians and other participants who directly engage with the political process, policy makers, implementers and gate keepers and finally, the community at large. Since the field of VAWIP did not constitute a homogenous group, stratified sampling was adopted to obtain a representative sample.

Deliberate or purposive sampling was used since we sought participants from several specific, predefined groups mentioned. The study team identified pre-defined groups (as outlined in the

above table) with the purpose of exploring the extent and nature of VAWIP in the three countries.

The recruitment of respondents was done in the constituencies that reported violence. These constituencies were identified using police data, Election Commission information, and media reports. The field agency staff used a screening/recruitment questionnaire that identified respondents having experienced the effects of VAWIP directly or indirectly.

Area sampling was conducted covering the constituency for both FGDs and surveys to ensure an illustrative sample. Given the nature of the issue, qualitative enquiry allowed for an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind VAWIP.

For the survey, women and men who had experienced violence (directly or indirectly) and were willing to discuss their experiences were recruited. UP being India's largest state and also known to experience high rates of electoral violence had a sample size of 90 in the quantitative survey. The other two states (Delhi and Karnataka) had a sample size of 80 each.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A Field Research Agency (FRA) working in the identified districts and having a good rapport with the community was hired for collection of data. A meeting was conducted with the community members to understand the objectives of the study and the rationale behind it.

Ethical considerations have remained an important aspect of qualitative research projects. At one level, ethical considerations involve gaining informed consent from the research participants. Within the context of this study, the importance of this lay in victims (people having faced violence) who were among participants. Hence informed consent from the participants was sought.

Considering the sensitive nature of the themes and issues this study explores, it was important to assure the participants that their participation would not expose them to any risk. Moreover, they were also informed that their participation would need to be voluntary and that complete confidentiality would be observed by using pseudonyms if required. Consequently, the knowledge or information they shared has been kept anonymous. Within this context the participants were provided with full information regarding their participation in the study.

Permission to access records in government departments/ministries was sought from government officials. Informed consent was also taken from participants in the government departments/ministries before proceeding with the interview.

DATA ANALYSIS

The identified field agency that was responsible for collecting the data also transcribed the data before it was submitted to CSR. Transcribed data of in-depth interviews, FGDs and literature reviews was read thoroughly and coded to identify emerging themes and their relationship to the main objectives of the study. This thematic content analysis has been used to list common themes in order to give expression to the communality of voices and perspectives across participants of the study. For the quantitative survey, SPSS was used to analyse data.

The entire study was completed in nine months and the primary data was collected over two months. The sample includes, and is representative of relevant stakeholders.. The concomitant findings of the study are therefore indicative and not conclusive. The study results may be employed to embark on policy level advocacy to influence electoral reforms and to facilitate an enabling environment for women's engagement with the political process.

STUDY FINDINGS

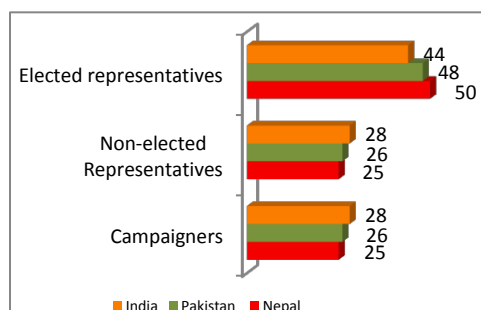
Our research study confirms that the existing cycle of VAW is fuelled by gender discrimination and patriarchy. A striking assertion is that the socio-economic divide and the current power structures within India, Nepal and Pakistan are key factors that lead to VAWIP. The research findings from Pakistan indicate that religious extremism and its interconnection with social divisions and power relations cannot be ignored when understanding VAWIP. Particularly for Pakistan it is critical to take into consideration provincial or local specificities when analysing VAWIP. These local differences can influence the forms of VAWIP, the characteristics of the perpetrators of VAWIP and the community’s perceptions or ideas relating to VAWIP within each province/ state.

At the structural level, VAWIP needs to be understood in the context of patriarchy in all its socio-cultural ramifications and how it influences social relations. At an institutional level VAWIP reflects the structure it emanates from. Therefore, family, marriage, religion, law and law enforcing agencies and other institutions work on the same principle and in the attempt to maintain social order, govern social customs and behaviour patterns in any society. In the context of VAWIP the social institutions reinforce the dominant structural patterns of patriarchy and women’s subordination. The discussion here refers primarily to the functional aspects of VAWIP as our study findings reflect the nature, forms and reasons for VAWIP while highlighting the attitude towards VAWIP. The study findings have also attempted to reveal and critically analyse its manifestations in society in order to overcome VAWIP.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Following is the profile of respondents for the study in India, Nepal and Pakistan:

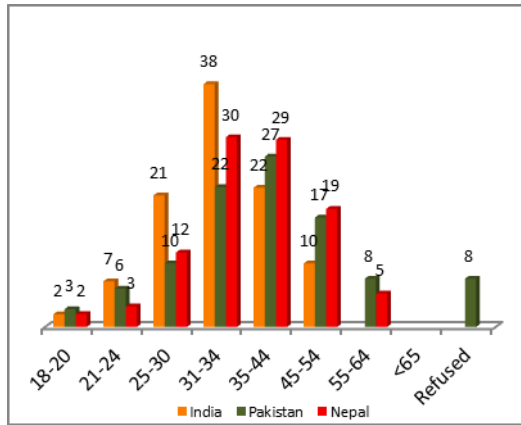
Fig. 1: Percentage of Respondents (by categories)



In all the three countries, most of the quantitative survey respondents were elected representatives and both female and male elected representatives were required as respondents. Nepal had a perfect score (50 per cent) of elected representatives while India and Pakistan had to substitute three per cent and one per cent respectively in the remaining two categories of non-elected representatives and campaigners to bridge the deficit in the planned number of respondents. Their busy schedule and/or refusal to participate in such a survey were the two

major reasons for their unavailability in both the countries. A detail of categories of respondents in the in-depth interview (IDI) is mentioned in Annexure I.

Fig. 2: Percentage of Respondents (by gender)



A gender balance was sought among the respondents of the survey. However, the percentage of male respondents was more than the percentage female respondents in all the three countries. The highest was in Pakistan (58 per cent) followed by Nepal (53 per cent) and India (51 per cent). In Pakistan, there were not enough women campaigners (directly linked to low presence of female in political parties) and many of those present were “worried” to talk about this topic as it was considered sensitive.

Deliberate sampling was used for the identification of respondents of IDI, which included four female and 11 male respondents in India, four female and nine male respondents in Nepal, and five female and ten male respondents in Pakistan.

Separate FGDs were conducted with women and men in rural and urban areas.

Fig. 3: Percentage of Respondents (by age)

In India and Nepal most of the respondents were between the ages of 31-34 followed by those between 35-44 years. However, in Pakistan the highest percentage of respondents were between 35-44 years followed by those between 31-44 years. In Pakistan, eight per cent of respondents refused to mention their age groups.

No information on age was collected for the respondents of IDI since a deliberate sampling method was used for their identification. All FGD participants were between the ages of 18 to 65 years.

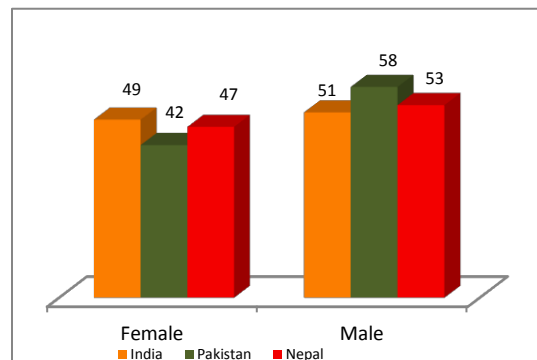
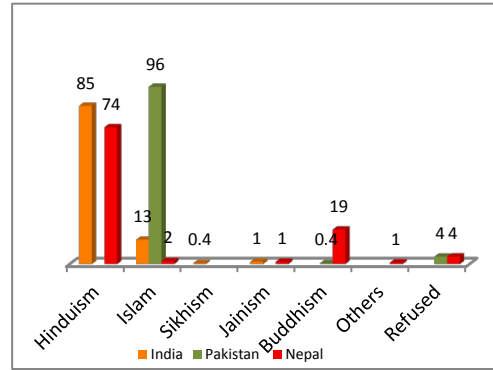


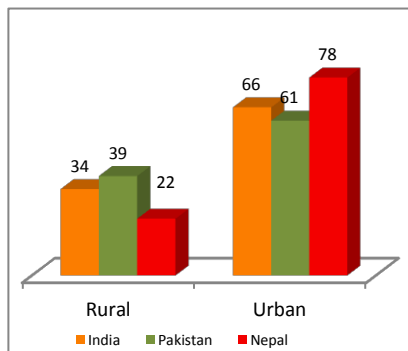
Fig. 4: Percentage of Respondents (by religion)

Religion also plays a significant role in politics in the sub-continent. Therefore the religion of respondents was recorded. There were large percentages of Hindu respondents in India (85 per cent) and Nepal (74 per cent) and none in Pakistan. Muslims were the largest respondents in Pakistan (96 per cent) followed by India (13 per cent) and Nepal (two per cent). In Nepal, 19 per cent of the respondents were Buddhists.



No information on religion was collected for the respondents of IDI and FGD since a deliberate sampling method was used for their identification.

Fig. 5: Percentage of Respondents (by location)



About two thirds of the participants in the study were from urban areas. The members of national and state/provincial/district law-making bodies reported their location to be urban besides those who were from the local bodies.

Location was not a criterion for identifying respondents of IDI and an equal number of FGDs were conducted in rural and urban areas.

NATURE, EXTENT, MOTIVE, AND IMPACT OF VAWIP

Since this is one of first studies of its kind on VAWIP, the availability of secondary data on the topic is very limited. However, relevant findings from secondary data related to VAW, violence in politics and women in politics have been used alongside primary research, using opinions and experience of stakeholders involved in the political process to understand the following aspects:

- A. Nature and form of VAWIP
- B. Reasons for VAWIP
- C. Perpetrators of VAWIP
- D. Victims of VAWIP
- E. Attitude towards VAWIP

F. Impact of VAWIP

G. Prevention of VAWIP

A. NATURE AND FORM OF VAWIP

There is a general lack of consensus among political theorists about the nature of political violence. Another difficulty is in attempting to identify violence that is specifically “political” as distinct from other types of violence. Some political theorists identify violence in a favourable light⁵⁷ and glorify violence as it implants the seeds of revolutionary transformation⁵⁸ of human society. Others, who believe that political violence is destructive, consider it as dis-equilibrating and illegitimate in the social system as a whole.⁵⁹ However, when this relates to violence against women there is no evidence in secondary sources to show that it has been glorified.

The study found that VAWIP is underpinned by the concentration and centralization of the patriarchal mind-set within Indian, Nepalese, and Pakistani societies.

In Pakistan, the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) studies give a list of the forms of violence faced by women within the party or while sitting on the Union Council (UC), National Assembly (NA), Provincial Assembly (PA) or in the senate. This violence included side-lining, refusal to involve women in budget discussions and manifesto drafting and the passing of derogatory remarks.⁶⁰

The most widespread forms of VAWIP according to the stakeholders interviewed related to expectation of **sexual favours** and the threat of violence rather than actual physical violence. The in-depth interviews with stakeholders (except the politicians), across countries, categories and regions brought out the expectation of sexual favours and the insinuation of sexual misdemeanour, as the most rampant and pervasive forms of VAWIP, albeit without much discussion or explanation.

Character assassination also persisted in relation to the expectations of sexual favours, but was also identified as a tool to seriously damage the reputation and achievements of a woman in politics with the desire to reduce her public support. Netra Prasad Panthi, Ex-CA Member from Rupandehi in his interview during the study, suggested that “when men fail to find fault in women's activities or progress, they raise questions on women's chastity”. Ashish Tripathi, a

⁵⁷ Fanon, Frantz. (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. Fanon mentions ‘national liberation’ as violence which is both necessary and beneficial.

⁵⁸ Sorel, Georges. (1999) *Reflections on Violence*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁹ Social and Economic Studies. Mars, Perry. (1975) ‘The Nature of Political Violence’. Social and Economic Studies: Jamaica. 1975.

⁶⁰ National Commission on the Status of Women – Pakistan (2010) ‘Gender review of political framework for women political participation’. NCSW. 2010.

journalist with the Times of India (Lucknow*) in his interview with the researcher stated, that “sexually laced comments are very common against women in politics”. He cited the example of a male member of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) referring to an opposition (Samajwadi Party) woman contestant, Nafisa Ali, during an election speech in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections in Lucknow, India, saying "look at her white hair...had SP brought Aishwarya Rai (former Miss World and Bollywood actress) to Lucknow, I would have enjoyed more."⁶¹

In Pakistan several women politicians such as Nilofar Bakhtyar, Hina Rabani Khar and Sherry Rehman have also experienced the weight of the “rumour” regarding their character while being high in the political echelon. To compound this, no official statement was ever given by their party to support them and condemn this form of violence.

Disrespect for women is a common feature in the subcontinent. Nabindra Raj Joshi, elected CA Member in Nepal openly denies women’s right to participate in political decision making by saying “when we don’t seek the opinion of even mother and wife at home do you think we should look for women’s consent to make important decisions?” This admission in itself degrades the position of women when they leave their homes to enter the political world.

Verbal harassment also has many commonalities with the issue of character assassination and is widespread throughout the sub-continent. Many comments similar to those of Netra Prasad Panthi and Ashish Tripathi were recorded by the researchers during IDIs and FGDs in all countries. IDIs suggest that on the road to success, female politicians face a much tougher challenge than men. They must simultaneously fight off accusations of being too stern or severe as well as suggestions that they are demonstrating their immorality or sexual deviancy by smiling at men who are not direct relatives. Conversely, male candidates with these qualities would be considered strong and engaged leaders.

Verbal harassment is also commonly experienced not only by women participating in politics but also by female relatives of male representatives. A female partner can be referred to as a "50-crore-rupee girlfriend,"⁶² which upholds traditional gendered expectations. However, this does not necessarily extend to male family members.

The nature of verbal harassment is such that it can invite only reactions and not precautions by the victim. Derogatory comments about women are also often used as a way of legitimizing certain arguments or positions. Comments on national television debates like “I don't have to

*Capital city of State of Uttar Pradesh in India.

⁶¹ Tripathi, A (2009) Akhilesh Das's sexist remarks evoke EC action. *The Times of India (Lucknow edition)*, 18th April. Available from: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-04-18/lucknow/28034487_1_sexist-remarks-bsp-candidate-akhilesh-das.

⁶² Agencies (2012) Narendra Modi labels Shashi Tharoor's wife a 'Rs 50 crore girlfriend'. *The Indian Express*, 30th October. Available from: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/narendra-modi-labels-shashi-tharoor-wife-a-rs-50-crore-girlfriend/1024013/>.

listen to you...till yesterday you were dancing on television * and today you have become a politician" exposes the politician's patriarchal mind-set as well as his perception that slandering a woman's character is an appropriate and effective way to prove his point.⁶³

The FGDs addressed the issue of gender-based social expectations being placed on women who participate in politics. Women in urban UP cited the portrayal of woman politicians as daughters, sisters, or daughters-in-law and the donning of patriarchal symbols such as the veil (*ghoonghat/hijab*), vermilion (*sindoor*) and marriage necklace (*mangal sutra*) as mere masks to avoid attacks on their personal character. This point was reinforced by NDTV reporter, Ravish Kumar in New Delhi, who pointed out that women politicians while visiting their constituencies, use the veil to keep up the tradition of the *bahu* (daughter-in-law), while daughters and "sisters" are allowed to be without their heads covered, all following the set standards so as not to upset public patriarchal mind-sets.

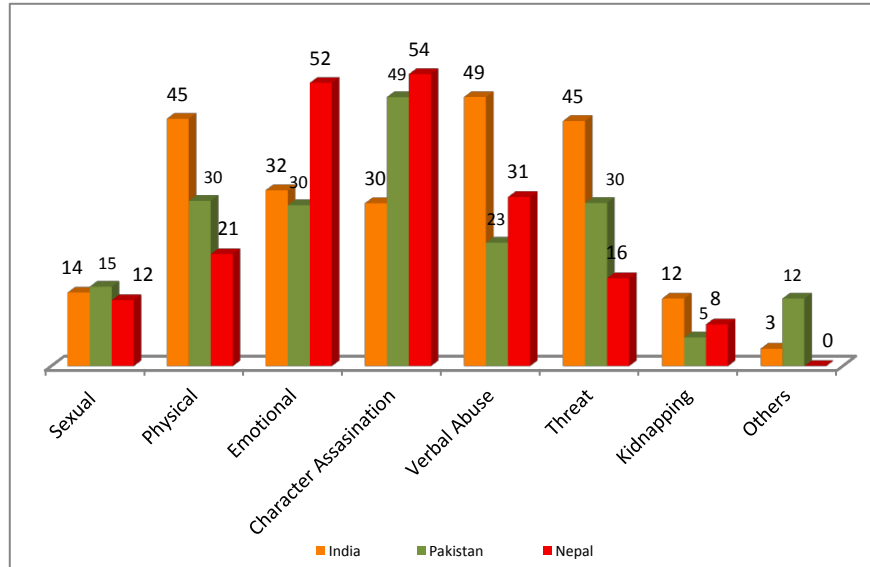
Threats of violence are also used throughout India as a way of restricting women's political participation and reinforcing male politicians' dominance and superiority. Pramila Nesargi an ex-MLA and Advocate from Bengaluru stated that "a woman candidate may be subjected to threats within her political party when a senior leader may decide against canvassing for her." This claim was reinforced by politicians from Bengaluru and Delhi who also claimed that the threat of violence can be used to create hurdles and difficulties for women candidates within political parties.

Emotional blackmail is often used against women both in the private and public spheres and women are humiliated or insulted for reasons including their actions and behaviour. In her interview with the researcher, a female advocate from Delhi emphasized that emotional blackmail is common across the Indian subcontinent, particularly in the private sphere, and "women [are] expected to fulfil their domestic responsibilities before they cross the threshold and move into the public sphere. "Yet, emotional violence in the public sphere is more difficult to decode as women are subjected to subtle forms of intimidation, isolation or control. In many cases women may appear to comply with emotional abuse. However, this is more reflective of their increased vulnerability to violence, and the reduced self-confidence that results from sustained emotional abuse, rather than any weakness in their character.

Results of the quantitative survey show that the spectrum of VAWIP in the subcontinent stretches from verbal harassment, character assassination and threats of violence to kidnapping and physical and sexual abuse.

*This comment was on BJP MP Smriti Irani who became famous for her role of a virtuous daughter-in-law in a daily soap on TV
⁶³ <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/smriti-irani-moves-court-against-sanjay-nirupam-over-sexist-remarks-against-her/314558-37.html>. Also available on You Tube with key words: Sanjay Nirupam Demeaning Smriti Irani on ABP News.

Fig. 7: Survey Responses to Various Types of VAWIP (in percentage)



Answers in each category may not add up to 100% due to multiple answers

While physical violence, verbal abuse and threat of violence are higher for India, character assassination is seen as a greater threat in Pakistan and Nepal. Denial of the right to vote, compelling to vote, denial of the right to contest elections, denial of access to resources, sidelining, denial of education and especially political education, denial of easy access to polling station, lack of women staff in women polling stations, threats, kidnapping and killing were some other forms of violence quoted by the participants in the qualitative survey in all three countries. The denial of the right to vote was identified during the research as a common form of VAWIP experienced by women voters. The denial of the right to join a political party or to contest elections has also been quoted in IDIs by activists while referring to the constraints faced by women candidates.

Interestingly, sexual abuse was not seen as a prevalent form of VAWIP by the elected and not-elected political candidates and campaigners who responded to the qualitative survey. It is unclear if this reflects the reality or if it is because it is a taboo to talk about such issues that makes elected/non-elected representatives reluctant to talk about sexual harassment. However, it seems that a rule of silence still prevails as few elected representatives mentioned sexual violence, whereas it was clearly stated by the FGD and IDI participants.

B. REASONS FOR VAWIP

There is a coherent setting up of a binary opposition between the state and patriarchal forces on the one hand and the political participation of women on the other. In her book “Women and Politics in the Third World” (2005), Haleh Ashfer states that the “masculinisation” of politics is a historical fact. She argues that men have taken upon themselves to be the “providers” for their families and consequently anything remotely to do with power falls in their space, which is predominantly public. Conversely, “women have been relegated to the private sphere, subsumed within the household, headed by the individual male.”⁶⁴ Ms. Chitralekha Yadav, the former Deputy Speaker of Nepal Pratinidhi Sabha expressed her concern over the dominant role played by the “3Ms” (money, muscle and mafia) and the “3Gs” (gold, guns and goondas or mobsters) in politics of South Asia.⁶⁵

In her article on women in politics Eleanor Roosevelt, the longest serving First Lady of the United States of America, deliberates on the qualities of women leaders, highlighting the “use of charm and good looks as a weapon.” The article also mentions the “lack of confidence among women,” which deters a mass following, which could be sought by political leaders in a democracy.⁶⁶ Similarly, some scholars have analysed women’s activities in terms of an “ethic of care” and maternal thinking, arguing in positive and perhaps rather romantic terms, that women bring to activities in the public sphere supposedly “female” values of caring, mothering and peacefulness.⁶⁷ Therefore, whether gender stereotypes and roles are at the basis of violence in politics still needs to be investigated.

The literature shows that in Pakistan, apart from gender discrimination, factors that have badly affected women’s political participation include women’s lack of faith in the political system, internal displacement due to military operations, religious extremism or religiosity and the changes related to local government in KP.⁶⁸

It may therefore be said that there is a major ideological divide amongst those who promote and support women’s political empowerment, women’s right of expression and association, their access to the public sphere, to politics, their presence at decision making levels and those who support a certain gender ideology that relies on a “sexual division of labour that defines

⁶⁴ Ashfer, Haleh. (Ed.). (2005) *Women and Politics in the Third World*. New York: Routledge.

⁶⁵ IBN LIVE (2013) Smritilrani moves court against Sanjay Nirupam over sexist remarks against her. IBN Live, 8th January. Available from: <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/smriti-irani-moves-court-against-sanjay-nirupam-over-sexist-remarks-against-her/314558-37.html>.

⁶⁶ Roosevelt, Eleanor. (1940) Women in Politics. *Good Housekeeping*. January, March, April 1940.

⁶⁷ Ashfer, Haleh. (Ed.). (2005) *Women and Politics in the Third World*. New York: Routledge.

⁶⁸ Bari, S. (2012) Keeping the people away from LG legislation. *The Express Tribune*, 20th September. Available from: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/439356/keeping-the-people-away-from-lg-legislation/>.

women's roles in the private arena of home and men's role in the public sphere"⁶⁹ and that confines women to their role as obedient mothers, wives, or daughters.⁷⁰

The present study investigates the issues restricting women's participation in politics and the dynamics of socio-political inequalities affecting women in politics. Analysing the data from primary research, the following factors can be mentioned as reasons for VAWIP:

- Patriarchal mind-set
- Women are perceived to be subservient to men
- A dichotomy between women's role in the public and private sphere
- Lack of implementation of laws on equality
- Lack of support from police and judiciary
- Low political education
- Decline in 'moral' values

1. Patriarchal mind-set

Patriarchal values are widespread across the subcontinent and political structures and processes are underpinned by these ideals. As discussed earlier, patriarchy is extremely detrimental for women and has resulted in systematic gender-based discrimination, marginalization and violence. Women's exclusion from politics is one of the results of this culture of patriarchy. Diminishing the contributions of legendary women leaders "mardani/macho" Queen of Jhansi⁷¹ is another example of this culture although she has been appreciated for her bravery in famous poems. Cultural and historical bias in the subcontinent continues in the use of idioms like "wearing/gifting bangles," which arise from the patriarchal obsession of society in India, Nepal and Pakistan. Such literature and language depict patriarchy to be man-made, which has developed historically by the socio-economic and political processes in society.⁷²

Due to the patriarchal mind-set, women are often side-lined in politics. One of the key barriers to women's political participation and presence in the public life is the profound patriarchal and autocratic nature of political parties. Men act as "the gatekeepers of politics"⁷³ and most of the prominent political parties are run by dynasties and extended families.⁷⁴ This is coupled with

⁶⁹ National Commission on the Status of Women (NSCW) – Pakistan (2010) 'Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women'. NCSW. 2010.

⁷⁰ SAP International (2006) *Violence against women in politics – Pakistan's perspective*. Kathmandu: SAP Pakistan.

⁷¹ Queen of Jhansi Rani Lakshmi Bai fought the British Forces in India in a 'War of Independence' in 1857. A poem was written in her praise by Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, a noted Hindi poet.

⁷² Human Rights, Gender and Environment: Foundation Course. Ray, Suranjita. (2013) 'Understanding Patriarchy' University of Delhi. Available from: www.du.ac.in/fileadmin/DU/Academics/course_material/hrge_06.pdf.

⁷³ NSCW – Pakistan (2010) 'Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women'. NCSW. 2010.

⁷⁴ Sharif for PML-N, Wali Khan for ANP, Bhutto for PPP.

the decision makers from the political parties not allocating enough funds for women to perform in politics which leads to women being considered “unelectable” by both party and voters. As voters, women have been denied their basic right to vote in several instances, with the complicity of political parties.⁷⁵ Free and Fair Elections Network (FAFEN) Elections Observation Report for 2013 identified 15 incidences of women being barred from voting⁷⁶ “under implicit understanding among candidates and community leaders.”

In his interview with the researcher, a police officer from Karnataka demonstrated the common perception that women were unsuited to the dirty nature of politics. He stated that “today politics is about illegal activities, law breaking, bribing, and alcohol...all this cannot be done by women.” He also claimed that women’s exclusion from politics was an act of protecting the “innocent from evil.” This confirms that patriarchal and patronizing attitudes are still levelled at women politicians and that these attitudes are key reasons behind women’s exclusion from decision-making bodies and positions of authority. However, women politicians pay the ultimate price for this simplistic view of women as “innocent” as they are marginalised from political processes and are not taken seriously within the realm of politics.

Patriarchy also promotes systematic disrespect for women. When challenged about the achievements of his government, the Transport Minister of the Government of UP argued that the former government led by an “ugly” woman⁷⁷ * was in power for multiple terms and therefore was not comparable to his government. The minister referred to the physical characteristics of the female leader in order to highlight women’s inferiority as decision-makers and leaders and to set himself and his government apart from her incompetence. This is a common tactic used by male politicians and women’s actions, clothes and physical appearance are scrutinised far more severely than those of men.

Women as a group face extensive discrimination. In March 2010, SP Chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav remarked that "The Women’s Reservation Bill, if passed in the present format, would provoke young men to whistle in Parliament."⁷⁸ Further, those from marginalised groups face multiple oppressions in society, when caste, class and sexuality intersect with sexism. For

⁷⁵ APP (2013) ECP Should Not Certify Results if Women Barred from Voting: FAFEN. *Pakistan Today*, 11th May. Available from: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/05/11/news/national/ecp-should-not-certify-result-if-women-barred-from-voting-fafen/>.

⁷⁶ Free and Fair Election Network (2013) Observation of General Election 2013: Key Findings and Recommendations: FAFEN, 22nd May. Available from: [http://www.electionpakistan.org/assets/publication/bb90e-FAFEN-Election-Observation-Report---Key-Findings-and-Recommendations-\(22-May-2013\).pdf](http://www.electionpakistan.org/assets/publication/bb90e-FAFEN-Election-Observation-Report---Key-Findings-and-Recommendations-(22-May-2013).pdf).

⁷⁷ HT Correspondent (2013) Minister creates storm, calls Maya ‘ugly’; BSP wants action. *The Hindustan Times (Varanasi edition)*, 13th June. Available from: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/lucknow/minister-calls-mayawati-ugly-bsp-wants-action/article1-1075629.aspx>.

* The ex-Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh was a woman.

⁷⁸ Deep Ashok, A (2013) Kill Bill Yadav’s cameo in Women’s Quota, Lokpal. *India Today*, 16th December. Available from: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/women-reservation-bill-mulayam-singh-yadav-women-protesters-samajwadi-party-lokpal/1/331487.html.html>

example, in November 2010, Mulayam Singh Yadav claimed that “rural women will not benefit from the Bill because they are not as attractive as those from the affluent class.”⁷⁹

This patriarchal mind-set extends to undermine the position of women in power. “The elected Councillor from our community has no identity of her own, all her work is being handled by her husband” was the unanimous opinion of community in FGD (Rural Delhi). However, many other respondents across categories, including ex-DCP and current ADGP Karnataka, were of the opinion that women need to take control and be more assertive when they take positions of power.

The deep impact of the patriarchal mind-set on women’s participation in politics was confirmed by the quantitative survey. Nearly every second respondent in Nepal (54 per cent) mentioned that a key reason for VAWIP is that “men do not want to lose to women.” Similarly in India, 53 per cent of respondents felt that the main reason for VAWIP was to show that men were stronger. Further, more than one in every three respondents in Pakistan (36 per cent) maintained that keeping “politics as a male domain” is a key reason for VAWIP. Please refer to [Table 4](#) for more details of the survey.

2. Women are perceived to be subservient to men

In the contemporary world of structured human organizations, politics is the ultimate level of decision-making in the public sphere of human activity. Women’s expected subservience is an essential marker of patriarchal controls.⁸⁰ It constitutes a socially accepted behavioural trait that generally runs counter to the demands of political decision-making. A study found that violence against women increases when women start to play a greater role in decision making. This was due to the perception that women’s involvement in decision-making was resulting in a shift in power dynamics which was threatening the status of the perpetrators of violence.⁸¹

The long and convoluted history of women protesting against the on-going violence they experience in all spheres, including political spheres, is evident in the history of the subcontinent. Even liberal and visionary leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru have questionable records regarding women’s political participation. Nehru was quoted by Corbridge describing ladies working for the advancement of the poor as “ladies visiting slums to relieve their conscience by the performance of good and charitable deeds.”⁸² He goes on to quote Dr.

⁷⁹ Rural women not attractive, won't gain from women's quota bill: Mulayam. IBN Live. Available from:

<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/rural-women-not-attractive-wont-gain-from-womens-quota-bill-mulayam/304819-37-64.html>

⁸⁰ Samarasinghe, Vidyamali. (2000) ‘Subverting Patriarchy? Leadership and Participation of Women in Politics in South Asia’. *Ethnic Studies Report*. XVIII (2) July.

⁸¹ WOMANKIND Worldwide (2008) *Speaking Out: Promoting Women as Decision-makers Worldwide*. London: WOMANKIND Worldwide.

⁸² Jawaharlal Nehru (The Hindustan Times, October 1920), as quoted by Corbridge et al (2005) *Seeing the State: Governance and Governmentality*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly debate of 22 January 1947, mentioning that “the first task of the Constituent Assembly is to provide every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop *himself* (emphasis added) according to his capacity.” Later he would state to the Constituent Assembly “on 26 January 1950 we are going to enter a life of contradiction...in politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality.”⁸³ The history of the sub-continent would probably have been different, given the power of influential and extensive democratic record of India, if the leaders in the Constituent Assembly were more passionately gender sensitive than to provide only “equal status” to women in the Constitution.

The reservation of seats in the local bodies in the Indian subcontinent has enabled educated and talented women to enter politics. If groomed, these women can also become potential candidates for state and national law making bodies. However, owing to their subservient status, many of these women have also been labelled as “proxy women” who have been placed in the local council as stand-ins for their husbands, who might even participate in the meetings in their place.⁸⁴ One of the reasons for such a label is their financial dependence on their families which reduces their autonomy as political representatives.⁸⁵

The present study finds that women are perceived to be subservient to men and inferior decision-makers. Mr Sabin Shrestha, Executive Director of Forum for Women in Nepal states, that the Maoist People’s War, which was revolutionary in bringing change in Nepali politics, included a huge number of women as 40 per cent of the combatants in the conflict were women. In fact, women have been the forerunners in political movements that bring about a political transformation. However, they remain underrepresented in influential positions and at decision-making levels. Shrestha also emphasised that Nepal has undergone extensive political transformation in a short period of time – namely the Panchayat system, the multiparty system, the monarchy and now the republican system. There are strong hopes that this new system will be seized as an opportunity to increase women’s participation in politics. However, the prevalence of VAWIP is a barrier in achieving the goal of increasing women’s participation in politics. Further, the lack of women’s political participation also leads to VAWIP continuing.⁸⁶ A female politician from Delhi reflected a similar sentiment, stating that “often women are just put off by the masculine discourse of active politics and may decide to stay away.” In the primary IDIs and FGDs women expressed their desire to invalidate male dominance and found

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Dahlerup, Drude. (2005) ‘Increasing Women’s Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas’. In: Ballington, Julie and Karam, Azza (Eds.). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Sweden: International IDEA Publication.

⁸⁵ Jafar, K. ‘Reservation and Women’s Political Freedom: Candidates’ Experience from Three Gram Panchayats in Kerala, India.’ *Social Change*, 43(1): 79–97.

⁸⁶ WOMANKIND Worldwide (2008) *Speaking Out: Promoting Women as Decision-makers Worldwide*. London: WOMANKIND Worldwide.

ways to do so. All respondents of IDIs in KP (Pakistan) quoted purdah as one of the main impediments to women's participation in politics. FGDs participants in KP acknowledged that "the problem is that even if women go to cast their vote, they are not independent, they do what their husband or father tells them to do." In contrast, some women respondents in India claimed that "We listen to what our husbands have to say but at the polling booth the final decision is ours!"

More than half the respondents in India (53 per cent) closely followed by those in Pakistan (45 per cent) feel that women's families should decide whether they can participate in politics. Only 21 per cent of the respondents in Nepal agree to such an intrusion on women's freedom. However, an overwhelming 92 per cent of respondents in Nepal agree that women should not ignore their domestic responsibilities even as an elected candidate. 56 per cent of respondents in India and 39 per cent in Pakistan agree that women should only be given a ticket against men when they are sure to win the seat. Once again, Nepal differs and only seven per cent from Nepal agree with this assertion. However, there is a great similarity among the respondents from all three nations when questioned about the role of husbands' support in preventing VAWIP. A large percentage of respondents (87 per cent in India, 80 per cent in Pakistan and 92 per cent in Nepal) felt that a husbands' support was necessary to prevent or reduce VAWIP. Please refer to [Table 5](#).

3. A Dichotomy between women's role in the Public and Private Sphere

Since the definition of woman in the context of VAWIP is generally understood to be "women politicians" it is necessary to reflect upon the process of becoming a woman politician and clarify the connection between VAW and VAWIP as well as the experiences of a woman and a woman politician. The journey that a woman must take to become a politician and her status as a woman politician includes both private and public spheres of her being.

However, the public/productive sphere is often the male preserve, and the private sphere, identified interchangeably as the reproductive or the domestic sphere, is the designated space for women. Dr. Ranjana Kumari in her study on Women Parliamentarians of India mentions that the "woman politician" who is a parliamentarian often fluctuates between two situations, at times the "politician" in her takes precedence over the "woman" and at other times it is the woman. Thus, she describes the woman politician as a curious whole, who has to continually face the dilemma of either taking a stand from the vantage point of a woman activist or a politician, wherein the former may be the latter but the latter may not necessarily be the former (the woman politician may not be the activist).⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Kumari, Ranjana. (1994) *Women Parliamentarians*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd.

The dichotomy of the public-private domains defines politics as a male prerogative.⁸⁸ A host of cultural norms, traditions and myths successfully keep women out of the public sphere of politics. Also domestic and reproductive responsibilities tend to be time consuming leaving women with little time, energy or space to get involved with the political activities of the public sphere. Politics in the sub-continent is directly regulated by the gender stereotypes prevalent in our societies. Women are perceived as “mothers, sisters and wives,”⁸⁹ which relegates them to the domestic sphere and prevents them from taking on the role of politician or office holder. Culture and gender biased perceptions can explain men’s opposition to women’s empowerment and are directly connected to women’s participation in the public and political sphere and their capacity to demand their right to public space. The study found that men in urban Delhi and UP accepted that the family is responsible for holding back the woman who desires to step into politics.

Conversely, since men are considered to be providers, the burden to perform in the public sphere looms largely on them. As the policeman in UP (India) put it “husband of a woman politician is left with two choices, either wag his tail or take [the] reigns in his own hands.” Therefore, to escape the ridicule of the society, the husband must find a more profitable income for himself. Consequently, women are either not allowed to enter politics or they prefer to stay out of politics so as not to disturb the peace at home.

Some statements during the FGDs clearly exposed this dichotomy of the public and private domains. In Punjab, Pakistan male participants were divided in their opinion on this. While about half of them were of the opinion that “VAWIP would not happen if women stayed at home, where they are protected,” the other half were of the view that “it was necessary for women to enter politics so that they could access power, enhance their protection and hence create a better society.” SAP Pakistan’s study also presents a case study in which a woman who contested and won local elections claimed to be supported by her husband and son and yet faced violent family obstruction.⁹⁰ The fact that *home* was defined and quoted as a *safe place* by several FGDs participants, raises concern as it contradicts the increasing level of domestic violence in the country.⁹¹ This prevalence of domestic violence has also been pointed out in the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee to Pakistan’s fourth periodic report at its 54th session (11 February – 1 March 2013), in which the CEDAW Committee expressed “its concern at the high prevalence of domestic violence and marital rape and at the absence of clear legislation criminalizing such acts.”

⁸⁸ National Commission on the Status of Women – Pakistan (2010) ‘Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women’. NCSW. 2010.

⁸⁹ SAP International (2006) *Violence against women in politics – Pakistan’s perspective*. Kathmandu: SAP Pakistan

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Aurat Foundation (2012) *Annual Report - Violence Against Women*. Pakistan: Aurat Foundation. 2012.

In the quantitative survey, nearly every second respondent (53 per cent) in India and more in Pakistan (63 per cent) and Nepal (71 per cent) agree that violence within the family increases when women are not able to perform their domestic responsibilities due to external responsibilities. It is therefore clear that women's primary responsibility is still perceived to be their domestic duties and 70 per cent of the respondents in India, 78 per cent in Pakistan and 92 per cent in Nepal felt that women should not ignore their domestic responsibilities even after being elected. Please refer to [Table 6](#) and [Table 5](#).

4. Lack of implementation of laws on equality

VAW is generally considered to be a law and order issue where hierarchies among crimes are created and accepted as normal. Prioritizing sexual violence in comparison to other forms of violence gives the message that some forms of violence are accepted.⁹² This also leads to the neglect of other forms of violence the women face. Considering VAWIP to be of low importance and turning a blind eye towards incidences where women are deprived in their public and private lives to participate in politics has led to its (VAWIP's) unchallenged growth.

In Pakistan, with the rise of religious fundamentalism and the practice of Hudood*, the study looks into the effect of religious fundamentalism on VAWIP. The Hudood Ordinance, which was intended to implement Islamic Sharia by enforcing punishment, mentioned in the Quran, has led to many incidences where women subjected to rape/gang rape were eventually accused of zina (extramarital sex) and incarcerated.⁹³ According to a report by the Pakistan National Commission on the Status of Women:

An estimated 80 per cent of women in jail in 2003 were there because they had failed to prove rape charges and were consequently convicted of adultery. Little wonder then that many victims commit suicide rather than live with the 'shame' of having been raped. Laws need to be strengthened but even more importantly, our collective mind-set needs to be overhauled. At present, there is a silent endorsement of rape as a means of punishment and revenge, and this is made possible by the objectification of women. The media and NGOs can change attitudes at the grassroots level by shifting the focus away from the victim and towards the unacceptability of the act.⁹⁴

During, between or following the military dictatorships, legislation or the absence of legislation, coupled with a patriarchal religious interpretation, has regularly been used to victimize and "control" women and deprive them of their fundamental rights. Certain other legislations such

⁹² SAP International (2006) *Violence against women in politics – Pakistan's perspective*. Kathmandu: SAP Pakistan.

*Please refer to Glossary for meaning

⁹³ National Commission on the Status of Women – Pakistan (2003) 'Report on Hudood Ordinances: 1979'. NCSW. 2003.

⁹⁴ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/162477/the-stigma-of-rape>.

as Qisas or Dyat⁹⁵ are the direct legacy of the military dictatorship and rely on conservative religious interpretations that are still being used to violate women's rights and keep them away from the public and political sphere. The Qisas and Dyat Acts elevate elements of traditional justice to statutory law, encouraging out-of-court settlements in accordance with local customs often involving monetary compensation. The result has been that such killings seldom lead to conviction and imprisonment. The promulgation of the Qisas and Dyat Ordinances in 1990 was a leading reason for the subsequent rise in such killings.⁹⁶

The Government of Pakistan has demonstrated political will to promote and support gender equity and women's political participation through the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and CEDAW. The country also has constitutional provisions that address women's equality including Articles 25, 32, 51, 140–A. The Representation of People Act (RoPA) also includes quotas for women representation whilst the introduction of Local Government Ordinance (LGO) Act in 2000 mandated for 33% representation of women in local level politics.⁹⁷ This has been paralleled by other pro-women legislation aimed at addressing widespread gender inequality and discrimination. However the NCSW Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women, states that “through the amendment in the LGO, the overall number of local councillors at the union council was reduced from twenty one to thirteen which negatively impacted on women's numerical strength in the system that came down from 36,066 to 24,528.”⁹⁸

Similarly, the recent provincial amendments related to the LGO Acts in KP or in Punjab, in which no more than 10 per cent reserved seats for women was envisaged, an insufficient representation of women from minorities was noticed. This along with the absence of the LGO Act for ICT, constitute a blatant violation of women's political rights by the state that uses legislation as a major abusive tool.

Additionally, in Pakistan, the reservations expressed by the Pakistani government regarding CEDAW,⁹⁹ its constant refusal to sign the CEDAW Optional Protocol, the recent merger of the Ministry of Human Rights, now reduced to a simple wing under the Ministry of Law and Justice by the newly elected government are not positive signs for women's political empowerment.

The results from the present study show that there is a gap between the official position put forward by the state, which promotes an environment of equality, and the perceptions of those who actively participate in the political process, including candidates and the community at

⁹⁵ Aurat Foundation (2012) 'NGO Alternative Report on CEDAW – Pakistan'. Aurat Foundation. 2012.

⁹⁶ Knudsen, Are. (2004) *Licence to Kill: Honour Killings in Pakistan. Norway*: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

⁹⁷ National Commission on the Status of Women – Pakistan (2010) 'Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women'. NCSW. 2010.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Aurat Foundation (2012) 'NGO Alternative Report on CEDAW – Pakistan'. Aurat Foundation. 2012.

large. There was an overwhelming response from the respondents in all FGDs that politics is a game of power and the powerful are preferred over the powerless. Further, there was general agreement that women are intrinsically powerless and are excluded from the group that has the controls and command.

5. Lack of support from Police and Judiciary

For the police and the judiciary, it is power that begets power. Women's relationship with the police and the judiciary is consequently problematic. Pramila Nesargi, a political activist and lawyer from Karnataka mentioned that:

The lack of access to justice is a product of our inability to bridge the accountability gap, as we do not recognize violence against women, despite its prevalence, as a major governance concern.

She further reinforces this point by stating that in India "we have adequate laws to prevent VAWIP; it is in their implementation that the problem lies." Similarly, Shree Prakash Upreti, a judge from Kathmandu adds that "more than insufficiency, it is lack of commitment and organizational capacity of institutions to implement the existing law."

The much exposed case of a policeman slapping an advocate for women's safety in Delhi further highlighted the difficult relationship between police and protestors/advocate. The Joint Commissioner of Delhi Police (Women's wing) in the IDI declined to answer any question related to the equation between police and women advocates. The masculinity of the police force (with Delhi Police reeling under a shortage of women personnel),¹⁰⁰ their gender insensitivity, and the further victimization of people who report crimes all dissuade women from registering cases of VAWIP. The nexus between the largely masculine police force and male politicians, who vehemently protect their space, is reflected in the number of cases of VAWIP being in the courts of India (Advocate, UP).

In Nepal, the support of the police and judiciary is also difficult to ascertain. Durga Ghimire, a Woman's Rights Activist from Kathmandu describes their "insensitivity and indifference" towards women's issues and suggests that this insensitivity is rising as verdicts of many cases of VAW do not favour women.

There is also some stigma attached to going to the police station (even to register a complaint). This was identified as a hindrance by FGD participants in Pakistan. They also highlighted the involvement of police as perpetrators of VAWIP. The consequent fear factor that is generated

¹⁰⁰ SHARMA, K (2013) Women police officers in Delhi claim they are overworked, underpaid. *India Today*, 7th August. Available from: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/female-cops-of-delhi-police-claim-they-are-overworked-underpaid/1/298364.html>.

by approaching police, acts as a deterrent to women filing cases against VAWIP. This encourages the perpetrators to continue violence unabashedly.

This is confirmed by the quantitative survey in which 53 per cent respondents in India, 65 per cent in Pakistan and 44 per cent in Nepal agree that current laws are not adequate to prevent VAWIP. However, 81 per cent of respondents in India, 69 per cent in Pakistan and 74 per cent in Nepal are of the opinion that it is the implementation of laws that is the issue, not lack of adequate laws. The fact that more respondents (48 per cent) in Pakistan believe that when religious *diktats* are not followed, violence is bound to occur, as against 36 per cent in India and 18 per cent in Nepal, refers to the role played by religion in politics in the three countries. It will therefore be doubly difficult to demand woman's right to participate in political process sans violence in Pakistan than in India or Nepal. Please refer to [Table 5](#).

Approximately two in every three respondents in Pakistan (65 per cent) and every second person in India (54 per cent) believe that the police do not respect women's right to participate in violence-free politics. Further, 63 per cent of respondents in India and 70 per cent in Pakistan feel that the high incidence of VAWIP results from most cases of VAWIP going unreported. More than half the respondents in both India (55 per cent) and Pakistan (54 per cent) agree that the rate of acquittal is very high in VAWIP cases and less than half the respondents (41 per cent in India and 45 per cent in Pakistan) feel that women get support from the Police or Judiciary in cases of VAWIP. Please refer to [Table 5](#).

6. Low political education of women

An important factor that inhibits women's full and equal exercise of their right to vote is their lack of knowledge and understanding of political systems or about the impact that political initiatives and policies will have upon their lives. Failure to understand the rights, responsibilities and opportunities for change conferred by franchise also means that women are not always registered to vote.¹⁰¹ The political parties exploit the political illiteracy of women. "Poverty of political education shows itself in intolerance, bribery, intimidation, election rigging and politics with bitterness."¹⁰²

A large majority of the respondents across all stakeholder categories felt that low political education leads to the inability of women to identify their rights. The majority of community members, regardless of their gender, state and rural-urban distribution, were of the opinion that improving women's political knowledge and skills was the best way to improve and increase women's political participation.

¹⁰¹ CEDAW, 11th session (1992) Comments on specific articles: 2(f), 5 and 10(c).

¹⁰² Akinwumi, W. and Ohyoma, O.B. (2006) 'Political Education: The Panacea For An Enduring Democracy.' *Nigeria World*. Nigeria.

The results from the quantitative survey also show that a large per cent of respondents in India (87 per cent), Nepal (92 per cent) and Pakistan (80 per cent), including women and men, agree that support from the husband is necessary to prevent VAWIP. Please refer to [Table 4](#).

About three in every four respondents in India (77 per cent), half of respondents in Pakistan (53 per cent) agree that most women have no political education/skills and therefore their husband or father has to take up the proxy position. While Nepal is different again as only 23 per cent agree with the statement. Please refer to [Table 4](#).

7. Decline in ‘moral’ values

In all democratic countries, wherever they are situated, a struggle for power, for perpetuating the safe citadel and keeping at bay the opponents or critics is ubiquitous. However, this is expected to be within the confines of morality which is often the unwritten rules of a code of conduct laid down by the society,¹⁰³ right or wrong, it is synonymous with ethics. Extending this definition to politics, the study maintained that what is right and just, or born of sound principles of gender equity and **designed to promote the social good** is moral, and what is wrong and/or merely expedient is immoral.

In 2011, the ECI decided to limit the election expenditure in both Parliamentary and Assembly elections. In the *Lok Sabha* elections no more than Rs. 40 lakhs could be spent in a constituency with 25 lakh electors. This amount is extremely small in comparison to what is actually spent during an election by contestants, a large portion of which comes allegedly from industrialists. A Background Paper on Election Reforms (December 2010) refers extensively to the Report of the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution of 2002, which mentions that the sources of some of the election funds to be unaccounted criminal money in return for protection.¹⁰⁴ While the use of such funds becomes the foundation of the whole super structure of corruption,¹⁰⁵ criminals (even with heinous crimes against women) find their way to law making bodies.

All stakeholders consulted in India and many in Pakistan and Nepal discussed the issue only to point out that there has been a decline in moral values of the politicians which has also affected the voters. This point was highlighted by a police official in Karnataka who stated that the “reservation [of seats] for women is a good start but we need to clean up politics and make fund raising for elections transparent, only then can we set the stage for women’s active participation in politics.”

¹⁰³ Definition of Morality, Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2011).

¹⁰⁴ Government of India. Ministry of Law and Justice (2010) ‘Background Paper on Electoral Reforms.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

The disintegration of society and the misinterpretation of Islam which leads to the decline in “moral values” also emerge as a reason for increased VAWIP in Pakistan. Respondents agreed that VAWIP is inevitable when religious diktats are not followed. However, they did not necessarily agree with the extremist/fundamentalist point of view that leads to this situation. In the FGDs and IDIs many respondents, across regions, expressed the opinion that the will to prevail by those who would like to keep women in a subordinate position will even misconstrue the teachings of Islam to prevent women from taking up positions of leadership and power.

The above discussion was supported by the quantitative survey in which 63 per cent of respondents in India, 58 per cent in Pakistan and 70 per cent in Nepal agreed that the decline in “moral values” also leads to VAWIP.¹⁰⁶

C. PERPETRATORS OF VAWIP

The above discussion on reasons of VAWIP helps to create a perspective of the potential perpetrators and/or victims (discussed later) of such violence. It may extend well beyond the political actors (of same party or opposition party), law enforcement agencies like the police, religious groups and other civic bodies to include the family and general public.

In his article “Democracy and Violence”, Narayan Badri observes that politics has retained its feudalistic character in the subcontinent even after becoming independent and democratic:¹⁰⁷

In local bodies at the grass-roots level of democracy, many *gram pradhans* have become powerful by grabbing land and resources meant for the welfare of the people they represent. Fear of these muscle men has led to a shrinking of the space for dissent and discourse in democracy. The murders of Superintendent of Police Narendra Kumar in Morena, (Madhya Pradesh, India) and more recently, the Deputy Superintendent of Police Zia-ul-Haq in Kunda in UP (India) by the mafia is indicative of how far these miscreants, many of them patronised by political parties, and is able to influence decisions to favour them.

Similarly in Pakistan male politicians particularly feudal landlords, and industrialists at a local level, ensure that their power and political “reign” are not challenged¹⁰⁸ by stopping women from accessing and participating significantly in the political process. The effective and meaningful participation of women seldom stands a chance in such conservative and violent situations.

¹⁰⁶ Please refer to Table5 in Annexure II.

¹⁰⁷ Narayan, Badri. (2013) ‘Democracy and Violence’. *Economic and Political Weekly*.XLVIII (14), April 06, 2013.

¹⁰⁸ Pakistan *Pattan Development Organisation* (2013) ‘Draft Country Report: Changing space: A Report based on Case Studies of Women Councillors.’

In some cases even the ECI, by mistake if not by purpose, has overlooked the non-participation of women in elections and the reasons for it. Women of an entire village named Sehrua (district Lakhimpur) in UP (India) were not allowed to cast votes as it would violate the “purdah”, the age old tradition symbolising family honour and prestige.¹⁰⁹ By not allowing women to exercise their rights as free citizens of India the men (people in the area) were perpetrating violence against the women from their own community. A few places in Pakistan and India barred women from voting, showing zero per cent turnout of female voters. This has not been deemed sufficient by the Election Commissions to declare the elections null and void in the concerned constituencies.¹¹⁰

Ascertaining who perpetrates VAWIP is extremely difficult. The denial of this violence by authorities means that there is limited data on the extent of violence. Data on the perpetrators of this violence is also not available. However, according to Ravish Kumar of NDTV, anecdotal evidence points to a host of people, including members and followers (who are sometimes goons) of political parties. According to him, formal education is not a significant criterion for either perpetrating or facing violence in Indian politics. “Political party goons and people who are not of the same caste of the party leader could be the most likely perpetrators.”

However, Narendra Babu, a politician from Karnataka unequivocally stated that “women members of his own party feel threatened about their names being slandered if they do not have a ‘Godfather’ in the party.” This statement was corroborated by the results of the quantitative survey where more than half the respondents in Nepal (63 per cent) and India (58 per cent) and 40 per cent in Pakistan, agreed that members of the same political party were responsible for VAWIP.

The research points out the prevalence and dominance of political dynasties, feudalism, and caste politics, as against participatory politics in the subcontinent.

In Nepal, the Maoists struggle to power with an ideology raises the interesting question of whether women in such ideological outfits face violence in their journey to power. It seems that here too women have a subservient status; there is ample evidence of violence, such as rape, murder, mental torture or attack on her self-respect during the Nepalese People’s War. Women cadres of Maoists were sexually abused by the security forces and their male comrades.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Tripathi, A (2009) Where voting is a taboo for women. *The Times of India (Lucknow edition)*, 14th May. Available from: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-05-14/lucknow/28156247_1_cast-vote-gram-pradhan-purdah.

¹¹⁰ Tripathi, A. (2009) Where voting is a taboo for women. *The Times of India (Lucknow edition)*, 14th May. Available from: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-05-14/lucknow/28156247_1_cast-vote-gram-pradhan-purdah.

¹¹¹ Sarup, K. (2005) Women in Conflict Exploited Sexually. *World Security Network*. (19th May). Available from: <http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/Other/Sarup-Kamala/Women-In-Conflict-exploited-sexually>
ONCHR (2012) *Nepal Conflict Report*, October 2013. Geneva: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for

Analysts Judith Pettigrew and Sara Shneiderman say that despite an ideological commitment to gender equality, there is a clear gap between rhetoric and practice.¹¹² While the People's War brought a new dimension in the struggle for women's rights, by bringing women to mainstream politics *en masse*, as never before, it failed to prove that women comrades were safe in their fight for equality. During this period, Maoists ranks were victimized by both the state security force as well as the Maoist cadres themselves.

In India, UP is a very interesting study in gender relations. Gender discrimination is rampant in the state. Yet, it also holds the distinction of giving the country its only female Prime Minister, first female Governor, and a female Chief Minister, who thrice came to power. When discussing this contradiction, a male Politician from UP highlighted the importance of support from male family members for women to succeed in politics. He stated:

Politics is equated with power and women who are not wives or daughters of powerful men are not capable of handling such power because they are considered second grade in our families. When they are not allowed to leave their homes how would they join the politics and how would they handle power?

In Pakistan, a patriarchal mind-set and discriminatory gender ideology are used and supported by religious extremists and religious militants who try to forcefully impose through party agreements or *jirga* decisions (a *jirga* is a tribal assembly of elders which takes decisions by consensus) or via threats and/or terrorist acts. It acts as a political and societal project that does not grant women any place in the political process,¹¹³ neither as voters, party workers, candidates, nor as elected representatives.¹¹⁴

Nepalese women experience rampant violence. A UNICEF (2001) research shows that 66 per cent women face verbal abuse and 33 per cent emotional abuse, while the perpetrators are mostly family members. It is difficult to distinguish between violence against women in politics and the day-to-day violence that women face. Durga Ghimire, an activist from Kathmandu, admits that:

Human Rights. Available from:

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/NP/OHCHR_ExecSumm_Nepal_Conflict_report2012.pdf.

¹¹² Pettigrew, J. and Shneiderman, S. (2003) 'Women and the Maoist: Ideology and Agency in Nepal's Maoist Movement'. *Himal South Asian*. Available from:

https://www.academia.edu/482425/Women_and_the_Maobaadi_Ideology_and_Agency_in_Nepals_Maoist_Movement.

¹¹³ Khan, Azam (2013) Elections 2013: 'Dir women disenfranchised for security reasons'. *The Express Tribune*, (20th May).

Available from: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/551731/elections-2013-dir-women-disenfranchised-for-security-reasons/>

¹¹⁴ AGENCIES (2013) Millions of Pakistani women barred from voting due to Taliban, taboos. *Pakistan Today* (25th April).

Available from: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/04/25/news/national/millions-of-pakistani-women-barred-from-voting-due-to-taliban-taboos/#sthash.5yn38zsn.dpuf>.

Religion creates a cultural environment and it makes a bar around a woman. It is not always easy to cross the bar for women and make a decision for her. This forces her to be limited to her residence and be dependent on male family members.

Religion, ethnicity, culture, law, tradition, history and social attitude limit women's participation in public life. Their world is mediated through men. Cultural patterns confine and shape the perception of people. Therefore there is an inside/outside dichotomy due to which the distinction between violence against women in politics and the day-to-day violence cannot be made out. This phenomenon makes clear that violence against women and girls is not just a consequence of the sex they are born with. VAW needs to be understood as a much broader social issue and not be limited to a "women's issue." It needs to be situated in the full spectrum of prevailing oppressive practices.¹¹⁵

A woman's low status in the local bodies is evident from the way decisions regarding public projects and distribution of funds are dictated by the male members of the family; women may also face discrimination from other male members of the Panchayat.¹¹⁶ As discussed earlier (in Public Private Dichotomy as a reason for VAWIP) FGDs in northern India show that the family is responsible for holding back the woman who desires to step into politics. However, they suggested that they had women's goodwill at heart. Male family members restricted women from entering politics on the pretext of preventing them from being exploited by more powerful people. However, when a seat is reserved for women, the same family would not hold female family members back from contesting elections. In this case, women would be encouraged to contest the election in order to keep the seat "in the family" and the rewards of being in power would continue to be enjoyed by the men in the family. In many cases women are forced to fight elections against their will only to keep the seat within the family.

The reality of VAWIP is in fact summarised in one of the women's comments during the FGDs in Pakistan, "what women face at home, they face the same in politics". Even after being elected, and in cases where women are the breadwinners, women are still expected to fulfil the traditional roles of cooking, cleaning and washing for the family. The men from rural UP said that they did not mind "their women" joining politics. However, women can only undertake roles and responsibilities once their duties as wives and mothers are completed. These duties include obeying the commands of their husbands, preparing food, washing, and cleaning. The men from urban Delhi and UP were less forthright about this expectation but they also suggested that women's responsibilities within the family did not change after being elected. Men as perpetrators of violence very easily cross the threshold from domestic violence to VAWIP when violence is committed against someone who is trying to fulfil their political/

¹¹⁵ Rajbhandari, R. (2013). 'The Big Picture. Republica.' 20th June, 2013.

¹¹⁶ Institute of Social Sciences. *Panchayat Update*: February 2012. Available from: www.issin.org/PRU-English-February-2012.

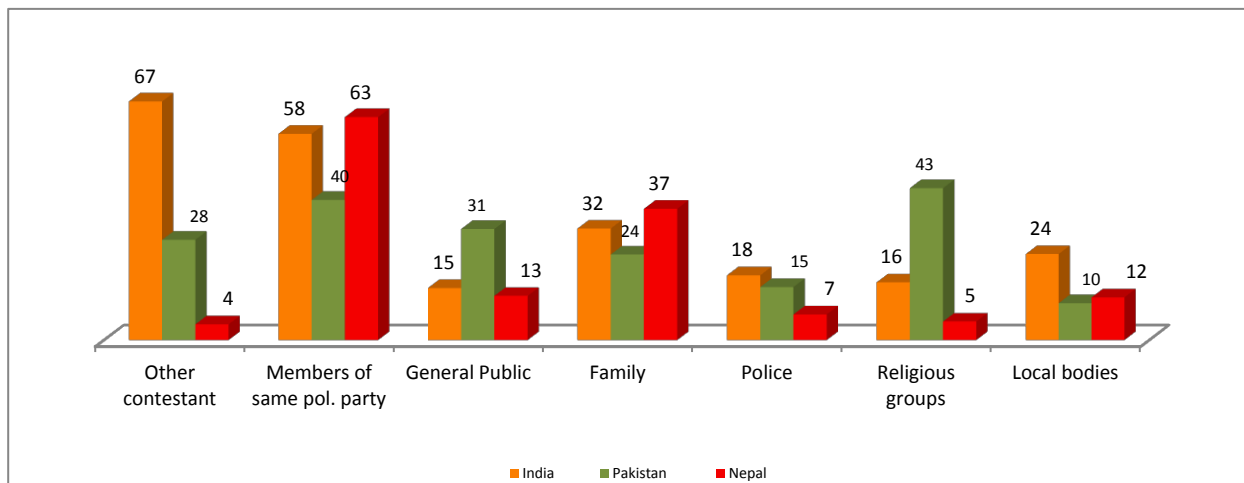
professional responsibilities. “When male politicians spend time away from home it is considered dedication but when women do it then she is being irresponsible...it is so easy for men to make the rules which favour them!” was the opinion of a woman politician from Delhi.

In a move that was claimed to promote women’s political empowerment, some political parties have created women’s wings. But according to several women elected representatives these women’s wings are seldom involved in the party’s strategic decision making process. A woman activist from KP, Pakistan was of the opinion that the representatives from the women’s wing are not called when a strategic decision is being made or when the party drafts its manifesto and code of ethics. The concept of the women’s political wings in itself has generated a debate amongst pro-women stakeholders. Some see this structure as another form of discrimination against women that isolates them further, while others believe it is one of the key strategies to promote women’s access to the political sphere. During the IDIs, a lawyer and political party campaigner from ICT, Pakistan stated that “women’s real political empowerment should enable them to enter politics without any segregation. The women wing is counter-productive as it side-lines them officially.”

At the government level, women’s access to the political sphere and decision making is limited. Few women become ministers or secretaries and when they do, they are perceived as women belonging to “political families.”

It is also important to understand the Pakistani legal framework within a historical context that gives little room for human rights -particularly women’s rights- and democracy and that makes the Pakistani state quite autocratic, patriarchal and gender discriminatory in nature. As a country, it experienced a violent birth, a series of military dictatorships, and several military *coups d’etat* before managing to maintain -for the first time- a democratically elected government through its full tenure during 2008-2013. During, between or following these dictatorships, legislation or the absence of legislation coupled with a patriarchal religious interpretation, has regularly been used to victimize and control women and deprive them of their fundamental rights. Women in FGDs in ICT and KP (Pakistan) stated that “mullahs/Islamic religious heads want women locked behind four walls”, or that “mullahs are ignorant, they think women in politics is un-Islamic but they do not understand.”

Fig. 3: Survey Responses to Various Perpetrators of VAWIP (in percentage)



Answers in each category may not add up to 100% due to multiple answers

Respondents of the quantitative survey in India (58 per cent), Pakistan (40 per cent) and Nepal (63 per cent) identified “members of the same political party” as perpetrators. However, in India respondents marked “other (party/independent) contestants” (67 per cent) as the primary perpetrator. “Family” as perpetrator was validated by the quantitative survey: 32 per cent in India, 24 per cent in Pakistan and 36 per cent in Nepal agreed that the family was responsible for perpetrating violence on women in politics. In Pakistan, misinterpretation of Islam is also an issue. While nearly half of the respondents (48 per cent) agree with the statement that “When religious diktats are not followed VAWIP is bound to happen” they do not agree with the extremist/ fundamentalist point of view. In KP and ICT (Pakistan) religious groups (43 per cent) are seen as the leading perpetrator of VAWIP followed by members of same political party, while in India it is the other contestants followed by members of the same political party (40 per cent). Respondents identified the “general public” (31 per cent) and “local bodies” in India (24 per cent) as perpetrators of VAWIP.

D. VICTIMS OF VAWIP

Central to the commitment of “women and power and decision-making” that was made by 189 countries at the Beijing conference, was the goal of achieving a gender balance in political

representation and decision-making. Responses from the women movements were varied but the most important one was to advocate for laws preventing all kinds of discrimination and violence against women.¹¹⁷ However, despite positive effects of the Women's Movement, the study shows that gender-based violence in politics still exists throughout the sub-continent. There are innumerable instances of women politicians (and parliamentarians) being manhandled during election campaigns and other visits to their constituencies.¹¹⁸

The existing degree of women's political freedom, which is essentially constituted by the reservation, does not promote them to contest in unreserved seats. In India, though a quota for lower castes has been reserved, there are additional disadvantages of being from these castes and contesting from unreserved constituencies. In addition, the gender gap in politics is entwined with the wealth gap. "Though reservation for women in local bodies has skyrocketed their participation in the politics of South Asia, it hasn't always meant the inclusion of poor women."¹¹⁹ A few women politicians, like Mayawati and Mamata Banerjee are exceptions, who started their political journey from a humble background and made it to the top in their respective political parties. This is not the case with many other women from the poorer sections of the society. Across the three countries, socio economic inequalities are seen as a major deterrent to women's participation in politics, particularly in local governance, which is marked by the absence of allocating sufficient resources to women councillors.¹²⁰

Furthermore, most of the present day women politicians are not the first generation in politics. Since they come through family connections, their candidature can be seen as a useful example in assessing the impact of a family's engagement in local politics.¹²¹ This also provides the candidate with some degree of protection against VAWIP from external sources.

Rampant poverty, lack of education, denial of information and basic human rights, that are described and measured via human development indicators, directly impact women's political empowerment. Poor, illiterate, disabled and/or women from minorities, divorcees, widows, usually have little or no say in the political process. Women's subordinate position in the family and society, as a result of the discursive divide of the public-private, is the key ideological

¹¹⁷ Dahlerup, Drude and Fransisco, Josepha 'Gigi'. (2005) *Gender, Governance and Democracy*. ISIS International- Manila Publication in collaboration with the Women and Gender Institute.

¹¹⁸ Kumari, Ranjana. (1994) *Women Parliamentarians*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd.

¹¹⁹ Shoot, Brittany. (2010) *From Slum to Statehouse*. Available at: www.mediabistro.com

¹²⁰ National Commission on the Status of Women – Pakistan. (2010) 'Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women'. NCSW. 2010.

¹²¹ Jafar, K. 'Reservation and Women's Political Freedom: Candidates' Experience from Three Gram Panchayats in Kerala, India'. *Social Change*, 43(1): 79–97.

barrier to women's political participation in local governance. Women in general do not have educational qualifications, independent financial means or social capital to enter politics.¹²²

As with discrimination and violence against women more broadly, it was evident that poor women, those from lower castes, and those new to politics, were the most at risk of violence. Young women who were in their twenties and those who are not from a political family also face a higher risk of being targeted by violence. In a very candid discussion, the retired Chief Election Commissioner of India, Mr. S. Y Qureshi, agreed that the poor always bear the brunt of violence, in politics and otherwise, because economic deprivation robs people of their ability to fight back.

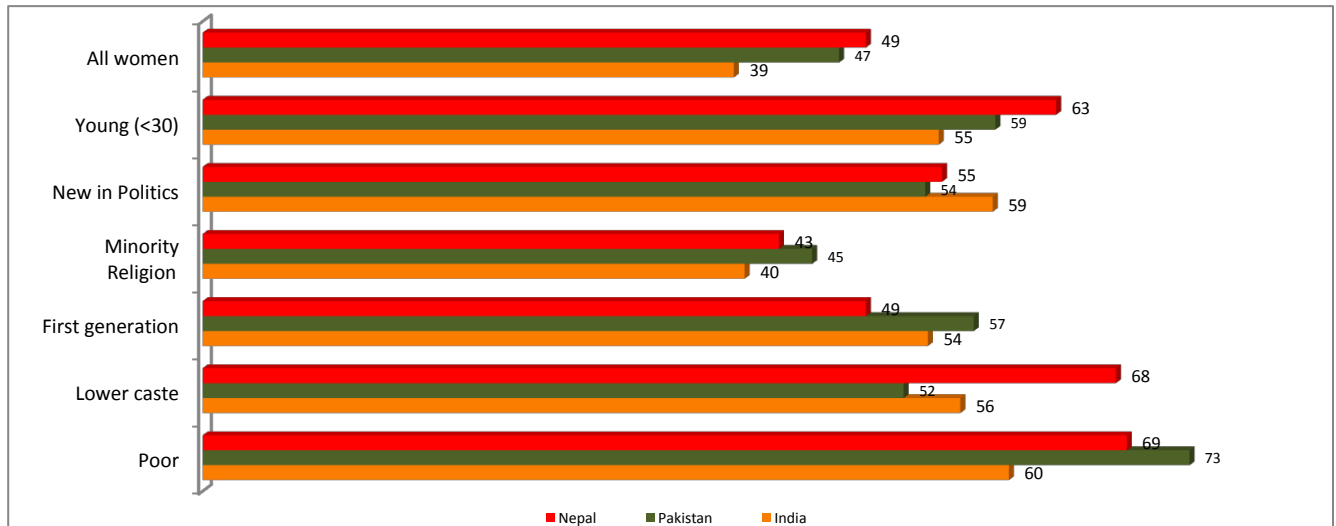
Advocate Siddharth (UP, India) was categorical about the victims of VAWIP. He stated that since the 77th Amendment to India's Constitution in 1994, which followed the reservation of seats for women at the Panchayati Raj level, there has been a clear entitlement for women from scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST). As a result of the 77th Amendment, these SC/ST women have been targeted the most by political violence. He cited Article 243 D of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees the proportional (based on actual population) reservation of seats for SC and STs in every Panchayat, the sub-reservation of 33 per cent of seats for SC/ST women, and 33 per cent reservation to all women (including SC/ST women) candidates, further the reservation of 33 per cent of seats for women as Panchayat leaders.¹²³ Advocate Siddharth argued that women from higher castes who contest elections may face violence from men from higher castes. However, women from lower castes risk violence from men from their own caste as well as men from upper castes. A similar point was raised by men in the FGD conducted in urban Delhi. These men cited an example whereby Kiran Kumari, an SC woman contestant from their area, faced verbal abuse and harassment and was also made to touch the feet of men during her campaign for the seat of councillor. This is corroborated by the quantitative survey where 56 per cent of respondents in India identified lower caste women as victims of VAWIP.

FGD participants in Punjab (Pakistan) frequently stated that the problem lies with political family dynasties. "If you are not one of them you find it difficult to enter politics, especially as a woman." In Pakistan, being from a minority community also attracts violence. In the FGD conducted in ICT (Pakistan), Christian men declared "All minorities contributed to the creation of Pakistan, but now, where are we in the political process and where are the women from minorities? Nowhere!"

¹²² National Commission on the Status of Women – Pakistan (2010) 'Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women'. NCSW. 2010.

¹²³ The Constitution of India (1949) Article 243D.

Figure 4: Survey Responses to Various Victims of VAWIP (in percentage)



Answers in each category may not add up to 100% due to multiple answers

Most of the respondents from the quantitative survey did not feel that violence in politics targeted “all women” or “women of minority religions”. There was a clear perception that some women are more vulnerable to violence than others. “Poor” women were identified as victims of VAWIP by the highest percentage of respondents in all three countries, 60 per cent in India, 73 per cent in Pakistan and 69 per cent in Nepal. “Lower caste” was the next factor identified by respondents in India (56 per cent), Pakistan (52 per cent) and Nepal (68 per cent).

E. ATTITUDE TOWARDS VAWIP

It has often been noted that politics is a man’s game and government a men’s club. For women, participating in politics it is not a simple matter of taking up a new activity. Rather, it is participating in activities and institutions designed and populated primarily by men.¹²⁴

The above statement highlights the fundamental challenges a woman has to face while in politics. The patriarchal attitude and the perception of men as natural and superior leaders and decision-makers, increases her difficulties by many folds. These patriarchal beliefs are central to women’s marginalisation from politics and their discrimination within the political sphere.

Though Constitutions of all three countries have given women the right to contest elections, yet traditional power hierarchies are tilted in favour of men and resist giving space or recognition to women’s attempts to be part of the political scenario. Although there are women Sarpanches who have taken the initiative and made remarkable changes on behalf of their constituencies, it is widely acknowledged that generally elected women representatives face

¹²⁴ Shapiro, Virginia. (1984) *The Political Integration of Women, Roles, Socialization and Politics*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

many facets of gender discrimination.¹²⁵ Gender attitudes impact the perception of women to carry out their roles as elected representatives.¹²⁶

All respondents of the primary research (qualitative) across countries and stakeholders agreed that women should contest elections. However, varied reasons were cited, including, it being her right, a tool of development, helping to change the system and even protecting her. Validating the study “Promoting Women as Decision Makers” by WOMANKIND Worldwide¹²⁷ an Advocate Sarala Kumari Pande in Nepal’s Kaski district mentioned that it is essential for more women to contest elections to protect herself and other women from the violence a woman faces when she is disempowered.

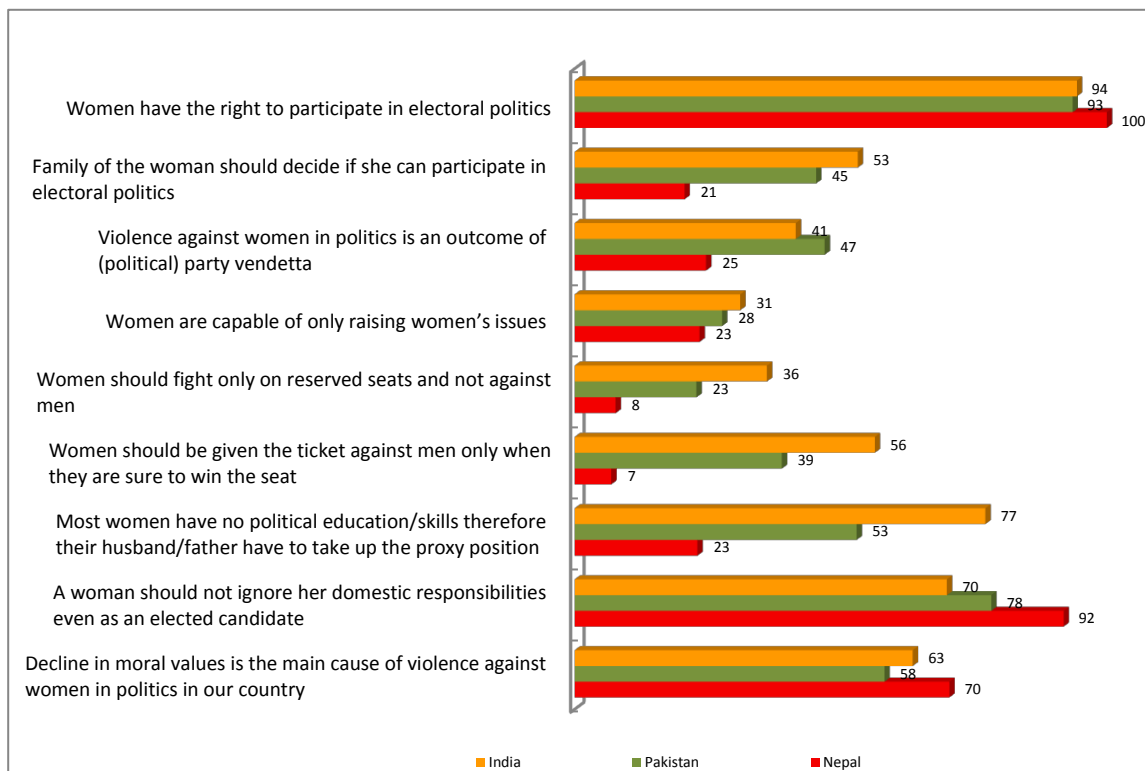
Gender discrimination was the central theme around which discussion of VAWIP revolved in FGDs in both rural and urban India. Participants of FGDs lacked knowledge of the political process. The capability of and access to the elected women representatives were also challenged by the FGD participants sometimes, illustrating their own limitations and traditional bindings. Discussing how gender discrimination in Nepal leads to VAWIP, Durga Ghimre cited the example of Ms. Urmila Aryal of CPN-UML who was not allowed to contest the post of president of the party's women's wing and her consequent resignation before joining UCPN(Maoist).

¹²⁵ ICRW and UN Women (2012) *Opportunities and Challenges of Women’s Political Participation in India*. New Delhi: ICRW and UN Women. 2012.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ WOMANKIND Worldwide (2008) *Speaking Out: Promoting Women as Decision-makers Worldwide*. London: WOMANKIND Worldwide.

Figure 5: Survey Responses to Attitudinal Statements related to VAWIP



Answers in each category may not add up to 100% due to multiple answers

The legislative frameworks in South Asia have addressed VAWIP in very contradictory ways and the research confirms the need to review the legal system in order to counter VAWIP in a more adequate manner.¹²⁸ All (100 per cent) respondents of the quantitative survey in Nepal agree that women have a right to participate in electoral politics followed by 94 per cent in India and 93 per cent in Pakistan. However, 53 per cent in India, 64 per cent in Pakistan and 44 per cent in Nepal were of the opinion that we do not have adequate laws to prevent VAWIP. A large percentage of respondents (81 per cent India, 69 per cent Pakistan and 74 per cent Nepal) feel that it is not the inadequacy of laws but lack of rigorous implementation of laws that leads to VAWIP. Please refer to [Table 6](#).

The winnability of female candidates was brought up repeatedly by an elected member of UP and was identified as a deciding factor for getting a ticket in Indian electoral politics. This was corroborated by the quantitative survey, in which 56 per cent respondents agreed that women should be given the ticket against men only when they are sure to win the seat. However the respondents in Nepal (8 per cent) and Pakistan (23 per cent) think differently.

¹²⁸ Suggestions on women empowerment for election manifestoes of political parties. Aziz, Naheed and Abdullah, Tahira. (2012). Aurat Foundation. Available from: http://www.af.org.pk/pub_files/1365680811.pdf.

The proportional representation system followed in Nepal has helped to increase the role of women in the CA and today over 33 per cent women of different ethnic groups, cultures and geographical regions of Nepal are part of the decision making process. However, as seen earlier, when it comes to women's domestic responsibilities, Nepal goes back to traditional thinking and expects, even more than its neighbours, Pakistan and India, that women first fulfil their domestic responsibilities as they require the support of their husbands. In the quantitative survey, 84 per cent in Nepal agree that gender discrimination leads to the prevalence of violence in politics as against 38 and 73 per cent in India and Pakistan respectively. Please refer to [Table 6](#).

F. IMPACT OF VAWIP

The response to VAWIP oscillated between rejection of the occurrence of violence, indifference to violence or being completely helpless. There is a complete denial of VAWIP amongst members of the bureaucracy, police, and election commissions. The official position of these institutions is to deny that violence is occurring. This position, aiming to protect the state from criticism, was propagated by most government stakeholders. A Police Officer from Karnataka went so far as to suggest that he had never come across a case of VAWIP in his entire career. The representative from the ECI reiterated this point, stating that "in my tenure all elections have been free, fair and transparent and no incidence of VAWIP has been reported."

However, representatives from the legal profession and those in active politics vocalised the issue. The community at large consisting of those who participated in the FGDs are divided in accepting the existence of VAWIP. While in principle it is agreed that women should actively participate in politics, there is no consensus on the occurrence of VAWIP and the resultant political isolation of women among law makers, law enforcement personnel, or those who participate actively in politics. "Women should be ready to face violence if they wish to be in politics – men also get killed then why a woman shouldn't?" was the response of the Councillor from UP. The community at large including those who participated in the FGDs are divided in their response to VAWIP. While women in FGDs in the village of UP that had seen political killings in the last panchayat elections, seemed completely helpless in stopping what they called "men's issue," men in the village saw the violence as a "risk people willingly choose."

The role of the State regarding women's political participation is often contradictory. While the law grants women the right to vote, enter and/or form a political party, contest elections and undertake political and state responsibilities thereby supporting the process of women's empowerment. On the other hand, it prevents women from exercising their fundamental right to access political and public life by allowing *Khap Panchayats* in India and through Qisas and Dyat Ordinance in Pakistan, which determines how women must behave in public life. This severely curtails their freedom in general and political participation in particular.

The impact of VAWIP ranges from personal to public. Incidents of VAWIP in Pakistan, in the past, have not excluded those belonging to the most influential families and the very elite group. Therefore it is understandable that those with no backing of the political elite are expectedly dissuaded to participate in the political process. In India, violence against women reported extensively by the media after the gruesome rape and murder of two girls in Delhi, was still fresh in the minds of FGD respondents in India. The resultant fear fanned by the apathy of political leaders and violently arrogant nature of men could be clearly heard in their responses. Agreeing to the fact that politics is a violent space, women in both rural and urban Delhi were divided in their opinion regarding women's participation in politics. Women in UP were more resilient, having seen examples in Mayawati (a Dalit woman) who thrice became Chief Minister of the state, Phoolan Devi (a brutally abused Dalit woman who later turned dacoit) become a member of Parliament and other historical figures (including Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi) fighting for their place in politics.

The marginalisation of elected women representatives is also common. At the local level (Councils/Panchayat) women are often still excluded from decision-making despite being elected members of governance bodies.¹²⁹ Inequity faced by women makes it is harder for them to fulfil their role and attain positive results for their constituencies. Many communities do not recognise the difficulties faced by women leaders and are unable to comprehend how a Panchayat member/councillor can be so powerless. As a result, the community's preference for electing males continues as they are perceived to be more successful in achieving outcomes for the community. The emphasis on female representation minus empowerment has become a toothless act.¹³⁰

This is corroborated by the quantitative survey showing that half (51 per cent) the respondents in Delhi felt that VAWIP leads to women not wanting to enter politics. Karnataka was the most reticent with 36 per cent respondents believing that VAWIP leads to a decline in women's participation in politics, including voting. The resilience of women in UP is corroborated by the quantitative survey. Out of the 21 per cent respondents in India who feel that violence increases the resolve of women to enter politics, 27 per cent were from UP. Refer to [Table 10](#). Only eight per cent respondents in Pakistan and three per cent in Nepal feel that violence increases women's determination to enter politics, which demonstrates the effectiveness of VAWIP as a tool for preventing women from engaging with the political sphere. Refer to [Table 9](#). This validates the discussion above regarding the hold of power elites in the politics of Pakistan.

¹²⁹ Institute of Social Sciences. *Panchayat Update*: February 2012. Available from: <http://www.issin.org/PRU-English-February-2012>.

¹³⁰ SAP International (2007) *Unfolding the realities: Silenced Voices of Women in Politicised*. Nepali, Rohit Kumar, Shrestha, Prakash, Kathmandu: SAP International.

In Pakistan 21 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that VAWIP leads to women deciding against participating in the political process and the figure for India is 20 per cent and for Nepal is 46 per cent. Refer to [Table 9](#).

G. PREVENTION OF VAWIP

The Women Security Pressure Group (WSPG) was constituted in 1991 in Nepal. This organization was set-up by political leaders to fight against all types of violence against women. It also showed great leadership and contributed to the election of women parliamentary members in the election of 1991.¹³¹ Initially, there was a complete lack of women in the drafting committee for the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007. After protests by women activists, four women were included in the drafting committee.¹³²

Most political parties avoid the issue of the reservation of seats for women in parliament and state assemblies, while indicating that they offer tickets to a number of women. In the recent elections in Pakistan, the Awami National Party declared it:

Will continue efforts to increase Women’s Participation in decision-making at all levels to a minimum of 33% representation in Political Parties, Parliament, Provincial Assemblies, local government, public services, superior judiciary, public commissions and boards etc.¹³³

The Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) proposed a catchy plan: “The Way Forward, Power to Women,” proposed to bring a “law for political parties to commit to an additional 10% quota for women while selecting candidates on general seats”.¹³⁴ Even Pakistan’s Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) proposed a short but focused gender policy aiming to protect women’s political rights by:

Ensuring significant and meaningful participation of women at all levels, and highlighting the need to reform education to counter gender discrimination by revising and improving texts book and curricula to remove gender based stereotypes.¹³⁵

All these manifestoes should be seen in the present perspective where too few women are being granted seats across all parties.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Women Caucus of the Constituent Assembly, Translated by IDEA. Women’s Right and Agenda to be incorporated in the new Constitution (Draft).

¹³² The Asia Foundation (2010) Preliminary mapping of gender based violence; Nepal. Available from: [asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/GBV Mapping Nepal](http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/GBV_Mapping_Nepal).

¹³³ Awami National Party Election Manifesto (2013) Available from: awaminationalparty.org/main/

¹³⁴ Pakistan Peoples Party Election Manifesto (2013) Available from: www.nation.com.pk/editorials/16-Mar-2013/ppp-manifesto.

¹³⁵ Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf Election Manifesto (2013) Available from: insaaf.pk/AboutUs/Manifesto/tabid/138/Default.aspx.

The Women's Parliamentary Caucus, in Pakistan, has been a platform that has created solidarity among women parliamentarians to address VAW in general and sometimes VAWIP. The caucus worked with civil society, legal experts and academics to draft legislation and to sensitise the government, male policy makers and the general public about the burning issues related to women's rights. The caucus was also extremely useful in engaging male parliamentarians to lobby with their counterparts, or with other party members. The example of the work done by women parliamentarians to get the Comprehensive Acid and Burn crime Bill tabled in the National Assembly in December 2012,¹³⁷ significantly illustrates this positive outcome.

The FGDs with women in the rural areas of India brought in questions on women's political decision-making capacities, given their marginalisation from decision-making in other social spheres, including within the home. The greatest form of violence as mentioned by women was their socio-psychological conditioning where they would not dare to oppose their husband/father/*Khap Panchayat* on issues related to women and otherwise. If they did, they would not win. The real change would be when women cross this psychological barrier and start demanding their rightful position in the society and politics of the country. The more women come out and are a part of the political process, the more the possibility of acceptance. This, over a period of time, would lead to acceptance of women in decision making roles and a consequent decrease in VAWIP. However, some stakeholders cautioned that "the mould of 'power' can be rebuilt; women do not have to become 'men' in order to become successful politicians."

In most of the IDIs, the onus was placed on women to prevent VAWIP and to initiate the 'right kind of political environment' by citing the examples of the Gulabi Gang, who used their *lathis* (sticks) to challenge the patriarchal norms of the society; and of *Kaimoor Kshetra Majdoor Kisan Mahila Sangharsh Samiti* who fought to free the Bundelkhand forests of Naxals. Most stakeholders in UP and the Ex-Chief Election Commissioner of India were categorical in stating that women have to protect themselves in politics, because politics is inherently violent and even men face violence in politics; "just as cheating cannot be justified even when everyone in the classroom is cheating, women will have to bite the bullet (struggle against violence) if they want to clean the political scenario" was the response of Ashish Tripathi, a journalist with Times of India's Lucknow edition. The gradual emergence of women leaders at the Panchayat level, subsequent to the reservation in local bodies, brings to the fore the effectiveness of women in positions of decision making, simultaneously sending a larger message of equality to the

¹³⁶ Express Tribune on 12th April 2013 reported 'Seven women are going to fight for general seats in the National Assembly (NA) from K-P – of these, five are independent candidates. Only one will stand from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) of the 12 seats allocated to tribal areas'. Online: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/534466/political-parties-only-field-three-women-on-general-seats/>.

¹³⁷ ASF-Pakistan (2013) Khan, Valerie. Position Paper on Acid and Burn Violence Legislation. March 2013.

society, that women can also contribute to the polity and nation building. Rural women in the remote corner of our countries may not have the freedom to question established values and traditional priorities, yet their ability to think freely, their willingness and courage to reassess the dominance of entrenched norms show their increased agency,¹³⁸ albeit not in the fuller sense.

Existing laws and procedures of the Election Commissions have been partially successful in curbing VAWIP (as mentioned in the earlier sections on “Reasons of VAWIP” and “Perpetrators of VAWIP” in the report). IDIs with ECI officials in New Delhi and Lucknow revealed actions that had been undertaken, such as, extensive mapping and monitoring of criminals in every district, a month long model code of conduct, a 24x7 video watch of all candidates, in order to monitor and curb threats, violence, and money laundering. Voter Awareness Campaigns in the urban and rural areas, engaging eminent residents, the National Cadet Core (NCC) and the National Service Scheme (NSS) in the development of election communication plans and monitoring of the situation by District Magistrates, were measures that were deployed for increasing participation and preventing violence in elections.

In Pakistan, there are a few instances in which the judiciary has actually played a positive role in countering the apathy and violation of women’s political rights. Justice Dost Mohammad Khan from the Peshawar High Court ordered re-polling in the polling stations for women where no votes or a negligible number of votes were cast during by-elections in 2013 in two National Assembly constituencies -- Nowshera-I and Lakki Marwat. Additionally, the Court “directed the ECP to prepare recommendations for the Federal Government for making drastic changes in the RoPA 1976 to ensure a maximum participation of women voters and punishment for the people involved in barring them from exercising their fundamental right.”¹³⁹ Representation of women in the judiciary in Pakistan is very weak therefore women do not engage and participate in the legal process and hence get excluded. According to an article by Sarmad Ali in the Asian Human Rights Commission journal, the percentage of women working in civil services in Pakistan is 5.4 while the representation of women judges in superior courts is 2.91 per cent as against the 33 per cent required by the UN Beijing Conference of 1996 to which Pakistan is a signatory.¹⁴⁰

A vast majority of the participants in the FGDs actually described police as VAWIP perpetrators as they are perceived to be a “part of the problem”, “too politicized”, who are “reluctant to register FIRs for VAWIP” and in most cases, “do nothing against it.” Quantitative data validated

¹³⁸ Definition of Agency of Women used from: Sen, Amartya (2012) *The Argumentative Indian*. India: Penguin Books.

¹³⁹ Shah, Wasim Ahmed (2013) PHC orders re-polling for women. *The Dawn*, (27th August). Available from: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1038663/phc-orders-re-polling-for-women>.

¹⁴⁰ Asian Human Rights Commission (2013) Ali, Sarmad, ‘Gender imbalance in Pakistan judiciary’, Forwarded News, Asian Human Rights Commission. Aug 7, 2013.

the above view: 54 per cent in India, 65 per cent in Pakistan and 48 per cent in Nepal agreed that “the police do not respect women’s right to participate in violence-free politics.” This is a reason for women not wanting to report VAWIP cases, thus increasing the chances of more VAWIP: 63 per cent in India, 70 per cent in Pakistan and 83 per cent in Nepal were of the opinion that “the reason behind the high incidence of VAWIP is that most cases go unreported. “Refer to [Table 6](#).

Stating that women see and comprehend issues in a different manner, a Councillor from UP mentioned that for a man, security may mean police and army battalions, but a woman sees security in access to education and clean drinking water for children. He argued that a representative democracy, which excludes half the population from the decision-making tables, is not real democracy at all.

CONCLUSION

By virtue of being absent from almost all public documents, the term VAWIP has become more significant and noteworthy. A complete denial by the political system results in instances of VAWIP being sparingly reported in the press and media during elections. The absence of VAWIP from public documents results from the culture of silence that originates from the fear of violence, isolation and ridicule within political parties and the society in general, which prevails in the three countries.

The media in these three countries effectively highlight the prevalence of certain forms of VAW, such as rape, honour killing, domestic and acid violence. However, the issue of VAWIP remains invisible and is reported inadequately because of the lack of an international definition of VAWIP that is recognized and addressed explicitly in government documents and the media. It is perceived as a form of VAW but it is not understood in its fullest dimensions; where a plethora of issues related to VAWIP remain unspoken.

The secondary research establishes that violence is a universally accepted feature of politics and VAWIP is present in varying degrees all over the world. VAWIP is entrenched in the deep-seated patriarchal structure of society which inhibits women from acquiring power, and where the perpetration of such violence is a way to sequester women from the public space. The primary research shows that VAWIP is an attribute of gender discrimination and that the patriarchal society in these three countries makes women's position subservient to men. It is through various institutions such as the family, marriage, religion, law and law enforcing agencies and other institutions that VAWIP reflects the social structure that it originates from. Therefore, a woman is likely to face less violence when her family takes the decision for her to enter politics and her husband supports her and is willing to protect her. Though it is fairly evident from the research, that perpetrators of VAWIP are men, whether as their own party members or those in opposition, VAWIP does have a strong and lasting impact on women who want to actively participate in the political process.

The findings of the study indicate the functional aspects of VAWIP, how it is experienced on a day-to-day basis by women who wish to engage with the political process. The study confirms that women in politics, especially those who are first generation, face violence of multiple types, dimensions and at all levels. Gender discriminatory, autocratic, patriarchal and elitist mind-sets prevail within the family, political parties, law enforcing agencies and the public. Forms of VAWIP such as character assassination, physical violence and even sexual harassment have been mentioned during the research by women party workers and elected representatives. For sexual harassment, it seems that a rule of silence still prevails, as very few

elected representatives mentioned it, whereas it was clearly stated by participants of FGDs and IDIs. Women face the distress of not being allowed to make decisions, usually side-lined within the party, not given a ticket, portraying low winnability, facing political isolation for not following the line drawn by male party members/leaders. Women politicians (and parliamentarians) have even been manhandled during election campaigns and other visits to their constituencies. The study depicts that women may not be in a position to clearly reject their roles as prescribed by patriarchy, but they may undermine some of the deep-rooted elements of patriarchy itself, by cleverly using their designated roles as wives and mothers to transform the system itself. For instance, at the national level women have created political spaces for themselves through kinship ties and are identified through these ties to the dominant males—as mothers, wives and sisters. In such cases, women do not question their female identity as dictated by patriarchy. However, women belonging to political families are perceived as representatives of elitist groups, controlled by powerful males, which does not serve the purpose of women’s empowerment. A lack of solidarity among women, due to the socio-economic divide also emerged during the study.

However, all stakeholders across countries, states, categories, age and gender agree that even though the woman faces the risk of VAWIP, she should contest elections.

Though limited information was available in the secondary research on various factors that may be responsible for VAWIP and its manifestations in her public and private spheres of life, the primary research, which focused on factors that inhibit women from exercising their right to participate in the political process, shows that the paucity of laws and the laxity to implement these to prevent VAWIP, were liable for this. There are hardly any cases in court challenging VAWIP for the fear of violence in her private domain and political isolation in the public domain; the unreported cases keep increasing the consequential violence, reinforcing the vicious cycle.

Response of the Political System

No action to eradicate VAWIP is mentioned in the literature, including that of bar associations, unions or corporate entities. The study investigates the role of *the State/political parties/women/system* to overcome VAWIP. Absence of sufficient numbers of women parliamentarians to pass laws to end VAWIP, lack of any clear guidelines in Election Commissions and police directives, the lackadaisical attitude of police in providing security and other assistance to the women in politics, all point to the failure of the political system to curb VAWIP.

Though stakeholders talked about the Women Wings of political parties, they agreed that they were excluded from strategic decision making in the party. In fact, the concept of women

political wings in itself generated a debate among pro-women stakeholders. Some see this structure as another form of discrimination against women that isolates them further, while others believe it as one of the key strategies to promote women's access to the political sphere.

The Election Commissions of the countries also illustrate some barriers, such as their inability to take stringent measures to arrest the violation of women's political rights. The elections with zero per cent turnouts of female voters could not be declared null and void by ECs of both India and Pakistan. In the three countries, one of the barriers to woman's political participation, is the autocratic nature of political parties

The inefficiency, apathy and silence of the police (to a large extent), judiciary (to some extent) and the military (in Pakistan) to prevent and respond to VAWIP, are confirmed by the study. Institutions, that are in fact supposed to safeguard women's participation in the political life, either demonstrate a gender imbalance in their work force, and work essentially in favour of those in power, or are avoided by the victims, who know all too well that there will be no help from them.

Nepal has passed through a turbulent period, where it experienced serious *ideological changes* and subsequent violent clashes to reach democracy. While studying the issues related to VAWIP, the verdict on Nepal became clear. Even though women have fought shoulder to shoulder with men in the People's War, they continue to be vulnerable in Nepalese politics. The deep rooted patriarchal values are widespread in most Nepalese areas; Nepal's ideological war against VAWIP is far from being over.

In the case of Pakistan, religious fundamentalism, taking advantage of the Hudood Ordinance and the Qisas and Dyat Ordinance, have served to severely regress women's rights, including their participation in politics. The fundamentalist view of interpreting and implementing the country's law has robbed women of their fundamental right of equality provided by the Constitution of Pakistan.

In Pakistan a caucus of women Parliamentarians even seeks support of male members of Parliament to provide support to the cause of VAWIP.

Response to the Political System

During the study, the researchers came across many elements where the women have carved out their own niche amidst adverse situations, where they have taken initiatives to circumvent their hardships and emerge as winners.

From our study findings, we can conclude that women do have an agency and are beginning to make effective choices and efforts to transform these into desired outcomes.

The reservation of seats for women does increase the number of women in politics, many of whom, have taken baby steps to power, and are now confidently striding alongside with men. We heard many stories of successful women politicians at the local level who “get things done” even if they have to involve husbands or other males in the family. In her own private space though, she may continue to fulfil the traditional role of a women, involved in cooking, cleaning and washing for her family, while being engaged in active politics.

To conclude, we may say that manifestations of social and economic disparities related to gender inequality have affected the gender equilibrium of politics, leading to a deprived political agency, of particularly those women who are not connected to a political family. Notwithstanding the judgement of many male stakeholders about the inherent violent nature of politics and which women would need to contend with as well, the question still remains about the manifold difficulties faced by a woman in politics, given generations of a subservient existence, which are a direct result of patriarchy. In the absence of a scale to measure the anguish and distress caused by having to relegate her desire to lead and actively participate in the public sphere, the re-elected women politicians stand as a measure of progress and satisfaction, both for the politician and the voters.

The contradiction in the various types of legislation that were passed in Pakistan regarding women’s rights, VAW and VAWIP, the prevailing gender ideology, the patriarchal and fundamentalist thinking and interpretations of law and religion, along with the economic inequalities that put women in a dependent secondary position, are key structural barriers that women must face and overcome to exercise their political rights.

Despite several positive signs, the research confirms the inefficiency, apathy and silence of the police, judiciary and the military (in Pakistan) to prevent and respond to VAWIP. Institutions that are in fact supposed to safeguard women’s participation in the political and public life are politicized and patriarchal and work essentially in favour of the power elite. Too often, the protector becomes the perpetrator or its accomplice.

Overall, the research depicts an on-going power struggle that has given birth to the process of transition to enhance women’s political rights and challenge traditional norms and structures. Despite severe obstacles, such as cultural resistance, gender discrimination, patriarchy, religious extremism and religious misconceptions and unequal socio-economic power structures, most of the respondents were in favour of women’s presence in the political sphere.

Women were seen as catalysts and agents of change, who deserve to be supported in accessing the public sphere safely, by community members. The need to work on structural and

institutional reforms to change the daily reality and challenge the male gate keepers of the political and public sphere clearly emerges from the research findings. A new political and economic order is expected and demanded by women, activists and community members in order to promote gender equity and women's political empowerment.

Consequently, acknowledging barriers that inhibit women from exercising their political rights is essential. Equally, it is also imperative to reflect and build upon the fractures of those barriers that created opportunities and led to certain good practices. This balance in perspective is essential to understand the nature, extent, motive and effect of VAWIP in order to develop further relevant recommendations and effective strategies to protect and promote women's political empowerment, a significant step towards achieving gender equity.

But the process of the participation of women in the political process in South Asia has just begun. It will take a while before women reach their full potential in active politics. This is recognized and accepted by the community at large. Positive discrimination, in the form of reservation for women, special courses that provide political skills to women politicians as well as women voters, the increasing number of women politicians as role models, are steps in the right direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of this study, across regions and categories, several suggestions were made to reduce violence against women in politics which ranged from welcoming positive discrimination in favour of women to strict implementation of laws to prevent VAWIP.

The role of the state to reduce the number of VAWIP cases becomes essential, where existing electoral and legal systems need to be scrutinized. New procedures can be devised to prevent, and eventually eliminate VAWIP. Electoral systems specifically designed to bring together political actors from different groups to negotiate positions that move beyond their narrower interests have a better chance of breaking down entrenched social cleavages that promote conflict.¹⁴¹ Similarly effective and timely resolution of conflicts related to VAWIP to inculcate more confidence in women would be of key importance to prevent VAWIP; curbing the 3 Ms and 3 Gs of politics can be productive measures to prevent VAWIP.¹⁴²

VAWIP can be mentioned as a sub-category of VAW. There needs to be an analysis of existing policies to prevent VAW as well as the creation of new policies that can minimise the gender divide so as to prevent any long term impairment of social cohesion and legitimacy of democracy.¹⁴³ The role of the police and judiciary in curbing criminal activities needs to be reassessed in the light of VAWIP cases that go unreported.

Therefore, a councillor recommended “sensitizing men in politics, the police and the judiciary at all levels, political education of the masses and recognizing talent more than gender, so that we create not just a gender just society but also a society that will ultimately be less aggressive and violent. “By accepting and appreciating the women’s perspective, we will by extension, lead the way towards prevention of VAWIP.”

At the end of the Consultative Meeting on Violence against Women in Politics held in Kathmandu on 20 September 2013, the workshop participants met and submitted the Outcome Document with Recommendations to the Honourable President Shri Ram Baran Yadav of Nepal.

The recommendations have been directed to different arms of government – law making, law implementing and enforcing (including judiciary). There are also recommendations for law influencing agencies, like NGOs, media, Civil Society Organizations and academia.

¹⁴¹ UNDP (2012) *Understanding Electoral Violence in Asia*. UNDP, 2011.

¹⁴² South Asian Regional Conference (2008) *Combating VAWIP: Revisiting Policies, Politics and Participation*. Report of 2nd South Asian Regional Conference. 2008.

¹⁴³ The African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (2010) Höglund, Kristine and Jarstad, Anna K. (2010) *Strategies to prevent and manage electoral violence: Considerations for policy*. Policy and Practice Brief – Knowledge for Durable Peace. Durban. 2010.

I Law Making

Expansion of Political Reservations for Women

- Extend a minimum 33% reservation at the National and State levels, ensuring that it is not seen only as a “quota” system
- Ensure that women are not given just “challenging” seats

Role of Political parties

- Undertake an analysis of the Party Manifesto and language to make sure that it is gender sensitive
- Create a more gender friendly environment
- Ensure that no tickets are given to those who have criminal cases, particularly against women
- Enable the inclusion of more women party members in the central and selection committees and in Parliamentary committees
- Include more women in policy roles at decision making levels
- Create and empower Women’s Caucus of Parliamentarians
- Recognise the need to create a safe and secure environment for women

II Law Implementing/ Enforcement Agency

- Undertake a review of all institutions related to the electoral process to promote effective women’s participation in politics
- Election Commission to take steps to recognise protect, promote and institutionalize women’s participation in politics
- Provide for sanctions against non-compliance to policy
- Formalise an effective complaint mechanism
- Undertake gender sensitization courses/ trainings for all stakeholders
- Engage men, particularly at the high level

III Law Influencing Agency (NGOs/Media/Civil Society Organizations/ Academia)

- Create positive pressure groups for political funding and awareness raising of women voters to increase women’s participation in politics

- Promote Women's Rights Activist Groups
- Equip women with special political funding
- Create Public Opinion in support of Women in Politics
- Launch and sustain Mass Media campaigns on women's rights highlighting the importance of women's political empowerment
- Promote Political Education of Women (capacity building and skill development)
- Facilitate political grooming of young politicians
- Promote academic research on VAWIP and on women's leadership
- Establish and sustain support mechanisms for women politicians, such as child care centres, domestic support systems etc.

ANNEXURE I

List of people contacted for in-depth interview in India

Delhi:

Election Commission of India	Mr. Akshay Raut
Media	Mr. Ravish Kumar (NDTV)
Politician	Ms. Smriti Irani
Police	Ms. Suman Nalwa (Jt. Commissioner of Police)
Ex-Chief Election Commissioner	Mr. S. Y. Qureshi

Uttar Pradesh:

Election Commission	Mr. Jaitley
Media	Mr. Ashish Tripathi (The Times of India)
Advocate	Mr. Siddharth
Politician	Name withheld
Police	Name withheld

Karnataka

Advocate	Mr. Dhananjay
Politician& Lawyer	Ms. Pramila Nesargi
Politician	Mr. Narendra Babu
Police	Name withheld
	Name withheld

List of people contacted for in-depth interview in Pakistan

ICT

Election Commission	Name withheld
Media	Mrs. Myra Imran
Advocate/activist	Advocate Mazhar Akram
Politician	Senator Farah Aqueel
Police	Name withheld

KP

Election Commission	Name withheld
Media/activist	Mr. Qamar Nasseem
Advocate	Ms. Rukhshanda Naz
Politician	Name withheld
Police	Name withheld

Punjab

Election Commission	Name withheld
Media	Mr. Mureed Abbas Jatoi
Advocate/activist	Mr. Waheed Ahmad Chaudhry
Politician	Mr. Shakeel Labar
Police	Name withheld

List of people contacted for in-depth interview in Nepal

Kathmandu:

Election Commission	Dolakh Bahadur Gurung, EC Member
Media/Activist	Durga Ghimire
Politician	Nabindra Raj Joshi, Elected CA Member
Police	Jhapa Kumari Panthi, Inspector

Rupendehi:

Election Commission	Upendra Raj Gyawali
Media/Activist	Sita Marasini, Activist
Advocate	Shaligram Banjare, Lawyer Shree Prakash Upreti, Judge,
Politician	Netra Panthi
Police	Raj Kumar Baidhwar

Kaski

Election Commission	Ghanashyam Bhandari, DEO Chief
Advocate/Lawyer	Sarala Kumari Pande
Politician	Ganesh Timilsina, CC Member
Police	Bidur Khadka, Superintendent of Police

ANNEXURE II

Table 1: Percentage of Respondents Agreeing to Type of VAWIP

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Sexual	14	15	12
Physical	45	30	21
Emotional	32	30	52
Character Assassination	30	49	54
Verbal Abuse	49	23	31
Threat	45	30	16
Kidnapping	12	5	8
Others	3	12	0

Table 2: Perpetrators identified by Percentage of Respondents

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Other contestant	67	28	4
Members of same pol. party	58	40	63
General Public	15	31	13
Family	32	24	37
Police	18	15	7
Religious groups	16	43	5
Local bodies	24	10	12

Table 3: Victims identified by Percentage of Respondents

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Poor	60	73	69
Lower caste	56	52	68
First generation	54	57	49
Minority Religion	40	45	43
New in Politics	59	54	55
Young (<30)	55	59	63
All women	39	47	49

Table 4: Reasons of VAWIP identified by Percentage of Respondents

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Politics is male domain	34	36	10
To show men are stronger	53	17	10
Men don't want to lose	13	22	54
Men are afraid of women in power	36	22	17
To stop women from participating in politics	34	22	8
To protect women from dirty politics	29	8	4
Women make bad politicians	9	4	11
Political/electoral rivalry	24	12	22

Table 5: Attitude of Respondents towards VAWIP

Attitudinal Statements	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Women have the right to participate in electoral politics	94%	93%	100%
Family of the woman should decide if she can participate in electoral politics	53%	45%	21%
Violence against women in politics is an outcome of (political) party vendetta	41%	47%	25%
Women are capable of only raising women's issues	31%	28%	23%
Women should fight only on reserved seats and not against men	36%	23%	8%
Women should be given the ticket against men only when they are sure to win the seat	56%	39%	7%
Most women have no political education/skills therefore their husband/father have to take up the proxy position	77%	53%	23%
A woman should not ignore her domestic responsibilities even as an elected candidate	70%	78%	92%
Decline in moral values is the main cause of violence against women in politics in our country	63%	58%	70%

Table 6: Opinion of Respondents on Prevalent Norms Affecting VAWIP

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
We do not have adequate laws to prevent VAWIP	53%	65%	44%
Implementation of laws is the issue, not lack of adequate laws	81%	69%	74%
The police do not respect women's right to participate in violence-free politics	54%	65%	48%
The reason behind high incidence of VAWIP is that most cases go unreported	63%	70%	83%
The rate of acquittal is very high in VAWIP cases	55%	54%	74%
VAWIP results in their political isolation	73%	64%	65%
Violence against women in politics results only when there is too much electoral rivalry	48%	42%	42%

Gender discrimination leads to the prevalence of violence in politics	38%	73%	84%
VAWIP within the family increases when she is not able to perform her domestic responsibilities	53%	63%	71%
VAWIP occurs because women provoke it	39%	34%	28%
Support from the husband is necessary to prevent VAWIP	87%	80%	92%
When religious diktats are not followed VAWIP is bound to happen	36%	48%	18%
Women do not participate in politics because they are afraid of consequent violence	66%	60%	67%

Table 7: Does VAWIP get justice from police and judiciary?

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Yes from both	41%	45%	29%
No from Both	27%	29%	54%
Police: Yes Judiciary: No	2%	13%	3%
Judiciary: Yes Police: No	27%	18%	8%
Don't Know	2%	3%	3%
Refused	1%	0%	2%

Table 8: Reasons for getting/not getting justice

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Police and Judiciary are overworked	2%	9%	3%
There is general apathy towards crimes against women	27%	13%	46%
System works for people in power	27%	24%	19%
Other	0	0	0
Don't Know	0	6%	2%
Refused	0	1%	5%
Missing	45%	47%	24%

Note: One respondent in Pakistan answered 'Others'. His reason was corruption.

Table 9: Result of VAWIP

	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Women do not wish to enter politics	20%	21%	46%
Women's political participation reduces including voting	14%	29%	39%
Women become more isolated in politics	24%	20%	3%
Women's issues not given importance	20%	20%	4%

Resolve of women get stronger	21%	8%	3%
Refused	0	2%	5%

Table 10 Results of VAWIP (by states)

	India			Pakistan		
	Delhi	UP	Karnataka	ICT	Punjab	KP
Women do not wish to enter politics	32.50	16.67	12.35	21.67	18.46	20.00
Women's political participation reduces including voting	0.00	5.56	35.80	32.50	23.08	27.69
Women become more isolated in politics	21.25	26.67	24.69	17.50	26.15	16.92
Women's issues are not given importance	26.25	24.44	9.88	15.00	24.62	24.62
Resolve of women becomes strong to enter politics	20.00	26.67	16.05	7.50	7.69	9.23
Other (Specify)				3.33	0	3.08
Don't know				2.50	0	0
Refused			1.23	0.83	0	0

Annexure III

TOOLS FOR RESEARCH

A. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is _____ and I am from _____. We are conducting a survey on violence against women in politics. May I ask you some questions? (If the respondent is willing then proceed further)

All of your answers will be treated as strictly confidential, and none of the survey results will be reported in a way that can be traced back to you. Your participation is voluntary, but very important if the survey results are to be accurate. You don't have to answer any question you don't want to.

It is important that you are alone when answering the questions so that you can have peace to think your responses through thoroughly and not be influenced by anyone else.

IF YES, CONTINUE INTERVIEW
IF NO, RESCHEDULE INTERVIEW

Name of Respondent.....

Address.....

Mobile.....

State: Delhi.....1 UP.....2 Karnataka.....3

Category: Elected.....1 Non Elected.....2 Campaigner.....3

A Respondent Background

1. Gender

Male1

Female.....2

To begin, please tell us a little bit about yourself. These questions will help us classify your responses with those of others like you. We will not use this information to identify you in any way.

2. Could you indicate in which of the following age categories you belong?

18 to 20.....	1
21 to 24.....	2
25 to 34.....	3
35 to 44.....	4
45 to 54.....	5
55 to 64.....	6
Over 64	7
Refused.....	99

3. Which Caste do you belong to?

Scheduled Caste.....	1
Scheduled Tribe.....	2
Other backward Caste.....	3
General Category.....	4
Don't Know.....	98
Refused.....	99

4. Which religion do you follow?

Hinduism.....	1
Islam.....	2
Sikhism.....	3
Buddhism.....	4
Jainism.....	5
Other.....	97
Don't know.....	98
Refused.....	99

5. What is the highest level of schooling that you have attained?

Upper Primary (5 th to 7 th)	1
High School (8 th to 10 th)	2
Higher Secondary (IX and XII)	3
Technical education.....	4
Bachelors.....	5
Masters.....	6
Higher Education.....	7
Not literate.....	8
Other (Please Specify)	97
Refused.....	99

6. Which of the following categories best reflects the monthly household income? (Total income earned by all those living in your home)

Less than Rs. 10000.....	1
Between Rs. 10001 to Rs.25000.....	2
Between Rs.25001 to Rs. 50000.....	3
Between Rs.50001 to Rs. 100000.....	4
Above Rs. 100000+.....	5
Refused.....	99

7. Which of the following best describes you?

Working for pay (FULL TIME- up to 40 hours per week).....	1
Working for pay (PART TIME - fewer than 40 hours per week).....	2
Not employed at the present time.....	3
Not able to work.....	4
A student.....	5
A home maker.....	6
Retired.....	7
Refused.....	99

8. Where do you reside?

Rural.....	1
Urban.....	2
Peri-urban area.....	3
Urban slum.....	4

B Type of VAWIP

9. When you think of violence against women in politics, what types of violence come to mind?

DO NOT READ LIST

Rape/ Sexual Harassment.....	A
Physical abuse (Pushing, shoving, slapping etc.).....	B
Emotional abuse.....	C
Character assassination.....	D
Verbal abuse.....	E
Threat.....	F
Kidnapping.....	G
Others(Please Specify)	97
Don't know.....	98
Refused.....	99

C Perpetrator of VAWIP

10. Who are the perpetrators of violence against women in politics?

Other contestants.....	A
Members of political parties.....	B
General public.....	C
Immediate (Husband, In-laws, children) / Extended family.....	D
Police.....	E
Members of religious groups.....	F
Members of local bodies.....	G
Other (specify).....	97
Don't know.....	98
Refused.....	99

D Ranking of VAWIP

11. Rank the following 1-4 from the most common form of violence against women in politics (1) to the least common (4)

Physical abuse.....	1
Sexual abuse.....	2
Emotional/psychological abuse including threats.....	3
Financial abuse (denying money/public funds for contesting).....	4
Other (specify) _____	97
Don't know.....	98
Refused.....	99

E Reasons for VAWIP

12. Why do you think people perpetrate violence against women in politics?

DO NOT READ LIST

a) Politics is a male domain.....	A
b) To show men are stronger.....	B
c) Men don't want to lose to women.....	C
d) Men are afraid of women in power.....	D
e) To stop women from participating in politics.....	E
f) To protect women from dirty politics.....	F
g) Women make bad politicians.....	G
h) It is not personal, it is political/electoral rivalry.....	H
i) Other (specify).....	97
j) Don't know.....	98
k) Refused.....	99

F Victims of VAWIP

13. Do you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the following statements?

S. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
1.	Incidents of violence in politics are higher for women from low income groups			
2.	Incidents of violence in politics are higher for women from lower caste			
3.	Incidents of violence in politics are higher for women who do not have family members in politics.			
4.	Incidents of violence in politics are higher for women of minority religion in that area			
5.	Incidents of violence in politics are higher for women who are new in politics			
6.	Incidents of violence in politics are higher for women who are under 30 years of age			
7.	All women are equally susceptible to incidents of violence in politics			

G Attitude towards VAWIP

14. Do you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the following statements?

S.No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
1.	Women have the right to participate in electoral politics			
2.	The family of the woman should decide if she can participate in electoral politics			
3.	Violence against women in politics is an outcome of (political) party vendetta			
4.	Women are capable of only raising women's issues			
5.	Women should fight only on reserved seats and not against men			
6.	Women should be given the ticket against men only when they are sure to win the seat			
7.	Most women have no political education/skills			

	therefore their husband/father have to take up the proxy position			
8.	A woman should not ignore her domestic responsibilities even as an elected candidate			
9.	Decline in moral values is the main cause of violence against women in politics in our country			

H Reason

15. Do you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the following statements?

S. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
1.	We do not have adequate laws to prevent VAWIP			
2.	Implementation of laws is the issue, not lack of adequate laws			
3.	The police do not respect women's right to participate in violence-free politics			
4.	The reason behind high incidence of VAWIP is that most cases go unreported			
5.	The rate of acquittal is very high in VAWIP cases			
6.	Violence against women in politics results in their political isolation			
7.	Violence against women in politics results only when there is too much electoral rivalry			
8.	Gender discrimination leads to the prevalence of violence in politics			
9.	VAWIP within the family increases when she is not able to perform her domestic responsibilities			
10.	Violence against women in politics occurs because women provoke it			
11.	Support from the husband is necessary to prevent violence against women in politics			
12.	When religious diktats are not followed VAWIP is bound to happen			
13.	Women do not participate in politics because they are afraid of consequent violence			

I Police and Judiciary

16. When violence against women in politics occurs, do women get justice from police and judiciary?

Yes from both.....	1
No from both.....	2
Yes from police but no from judiciary.....	3
No from police and yes from judiciary.....	4
Don't know.....	98
Refused.....	99

If the answer for the above question is **1/98/99** skip to **Q.18**, otherwise continue.

17. What is the reason for the above?

Police and judiciary are overworked.....	1
There is general apathy towards crimes against women.....	2
This is not against women but the system works for people in power..	3
Other (Specify).....	97
Don't know.....	98
Refused.....	99

J Impact

18. What is the result of violence against women in politics?

Women do not wish to enter politics.....	1
Women's political participation reduces including voting.....	2
Women become more isolated in politics.....	3
Women's issues are not given importance.....	4
Resolve of women becomes strong to enter politics.....	5
Other (Specify).....	97
Don't know.....	98
Refused.....	99

B. FGD GUIDELINES

Focus on extent, nature of VAWIP using experience of community in FGD

A Ice Breaker

- i. What do you remember of the last elections held in your constituency?
- ii. Which candidate/party won?
- iii. Did any woman contest the elections? Is this a reserved constituency for women?
- iv. Was there any violence in the elections?
- v. Do you think there is VAWIP? Why do you say so?(Probe for traditional mores, gender stereotypes)
- vi. When are the cases of VAWIP reported – when elections have been declared, when party distributes tickets, during campaign, during voting, during counting, after elections?
- vii. Do you think it happens in other places too? (Explore LS, assembly or panchayat)

B Patriarchy and violence in politics and Manifestation of VAWIP

- viii. Should women fight elections? Why/why not?
- ix. Has there been an increase in women's participation in politics?
- x. According to you who has been a successful local woman politician? If not local then state/regional/national? Why do think so?
- xi. Do you think that this woman politician experienced violence? What kind of violence? (probe for physical/sexual/psychological/threat)Who do you think was responsible for this violence and why?
- xii. Do the perpetrators target any specific group/profile of women in politics?
- xiii. Are you aware of any other kind of violence in politics (investigate if there is denial of voting/participation of women in political process and why)
- xiv. Has gender discrimination increased the prevalence of violence in politics? Would this violence have happened if the politician was a man?
- xv. How does VAWIP impact the victim? (probe for political isolation, gender insensitive laws, status of women in eyes of police, change in family dynamics)

C Police and Judicial handling of VAWIP

- xvi. What was the role of police in responding to cases of VAWIP?
- xvii. Why do you think incidents of VAWIP occur? (probe for patriarchal nature of politics, inactive police, delay in justice, apathy towards women and influence of Power elite)

D Extremism

- xviii. Do you think religion has any role in VAWIP? Please elaborate (Probe hindrance in political participation)
- xix. Is there any VAWIP in Ideological movements (Maoist)? Why?

E Conclusion

- xx. What measures can be taken to prevent VAWIP?
- xxi. Are women more deprived of political education, meaning lack of awareness of political processes and complications as compared to men? Why do you think so?
- xxii. In your opinion is there forced candidature of wives or other female relatives in reserved constituencies?

C. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Focus on nature, reason, coping strategies, response of system and the effect of violence on other faculties.

A. ELECTION COMMISSION

1. According to you, is there VAWIP? Do you remember any particular incidents of VAWIP in the last three elections?
2. When are the cases of VAWIP reported – when elections have been declared, when party distributes tickets, during campaign, during voting, during counting, after elections?
3. Is VAWIP more at the panchayat/state/national level? Why?
4. What kind of VAWIP did you come across in the last three elections?
5. In your opinion what are the causes of VAWIP?
6. How do the following impact women's participation in politics? (Probe for violence)
 - a. Traditional mores
 - b. Gender Stereotypes
 - c. Religious fundamentalism
 - d. Ideological movements
7. According to you, is VAWIP prevalent only during elections or is it also common during other aspects of her political participation?
8. Do you think gender discrimination is the main reason for this or is it simply a feature of electoral violence?
9. What is the effect of VAWIP on women's participation in politics? (Probe for denial to vote/participation)
10. In your opinion, what strategy should be adopted by the state/system to overcome VAWIP?
11. What, in your opinion, is the role of political parties in VAWIP?
12. Do you think it is important for women to contest elections? Why do you think so?
13. In your opinion, what changes should be brought in Election Commission's code of conduct to overcome VAWIP?
14. Do you make any special arrangement to overcome incidents of VAWIP? Please elaborate.

B. POLICE PERSONNEL

1. According to you, is there VAWIP in your state?
2. What in your opinion are the reasons of VAWIP?
3. What kind of VAWIP did you come across in the last three elections?
4. What in your opinion is the role of political parties in VAWIP?
5. Do religious fundamentalism and/ideological movements have any effect on VAWIP? How?
6. Is VAWIP more in panchayat/state/national level politics? Why?
7. When are most cases of VAWIP reported - when elections have been declared, when party distributes tickets, during campaigning, during voting, during counting, after election?
8. How do the following impact women's participation in politics? (Probe for violence)
 - Traditional mores
 - Gender stereotypes
 - Religious fundamentalism
 - Ideological movements
9. What is the effect of VAWIP on women's participation in politics? (Probe for denial to vote/participation)
10. Do you think it is important for women to contest elections? Why do you think so?
11. According to you, is VAWIP prevalent only during elections or is common during other aspects of her political participation?
12. Do you think gender discrimination is the main reason for this or is it simply a feature of electoral violence?
13. In your opinion, what strategy should be adopted by the state/system to overcome VAWIP?
14. Is women's deprivation of political education an important reason for her inability to deal with violence against them in politics?
15. Is there any way that law can check forced candidature of wives or other female relatives in reserved constituencies?

C. LAWYER

1. According to you, is there VAWIP?
2. What, in your opinion, are the reasons of VAWIP?
3. What are the various kinds of VAWIP that you are aware of?
4. What, in your opinion, is the role of political parties in VAWIP?
5. Do religious fundamentalism and/ideological movements have any effect on VAWIP? How?
6. Is VAWIP more in panchayat/state/national level politics? Why?
7. When are most cases of VAWIP reported - when elections have been declared, when party distributes tickets, during campaigning, during voting, during counting, after election?
8. How do the following impact women's participation in politics? (Probe violence)
 - a. Traditional mores
 - b. Gender stereotypes
 - c. Religious fundamentalism
 - d. Ideological movements
9. What is the effect of VAWIP on women's participation in politics? (Probe for denial to vote/participation)
10. Do you think it is important for women to contest elections? Why do you think so?
11. According to you, is VAWIP prevalent only during elections or is common during other aspects of her political participation?
12. Do you think gender discrimination is the main reason for this or is it simply electoral violence?
13. Do you think the present legislations are enough to counter VAWIP?
14. What are the types of legislations you would like to see to arrest VAWIP?
15. Can you please narrate a case depicting judiciary's attitude towards VAWIP?

D. ELECTED MEMBERS

1. According to you, is there VAWIP?
2. What, in your opinion, are the reasons of VAWIP?
3. What are the various kinds of VAWIP that you are aware of?
4. What, in your opinion, is the role of political parties in VAWIP?
5. Do religious fundamentalism and/ideological movements have any effect on VAWIP? How?
6. Is VAWIP more in panchayat/state/national level politics? Why?
7. When are most cases of VAWIP reported - when elections have been declared, when party distributes tickets, during campaigning, during voting, during counting, after election?
8. How do the following impact women's participation in politics? (Probe violence)
 - a. Traditional mores
 - b. Gender stereotypes
 - c. Religious fundamentalism
 - d. Ideological movements
9. What is the effect of VAWIP on women's participation in politics? (Probe for denial to vote/participation)
10. Do you think it is important for women to contest elections? Why do you think so?
11. According to you, is VAWIP prevalent only during elections or is common during other aspects of her political participation?
12. Do you think gender discrimination is the main reason for this or is it simply electoral violence?
13. Do the power elite play a role in VAWIP?
14. In your opinion are the police and judiciary apathetic towards women? Why do you say so?
15. What is the effect of VAWIP on a woman politician's career (Probe for political isolation, gender insensitive laws, family dynamics, denial to vote/participate)
16. What would be your suggestion to a woman politician who has faced VAWIP? What should she do?
17. Most of the political parties have a women's wing; what role should they take in combating VAWIP?
18. How do you think a woman should choose her seat for fighting elections? (Probe for reserved vs. open constituency). Do you think she should contest a male or a female?
19. Have you ever faced violence? If yes, can you please narrate the incidence?
20. Is women's deprivation of political education an important reason for her inability to deal with violence against them in politics?
21. Is there any way that law can check forced candidature of wives or other female relatives in reserved constituencies?

E. CAMPAIGNER/ACTIVIST

1. What in your opinion are the reasons of VAWIP?
2. What are the various kinds of VAWIP that you are aware of?
3. What in your opinion is the role of political parties in VAWIP?
4. Do religious fundamentalism and/ideological movements have any effect on VAWIP? How?
5. Is VAWIP more in panchayat/state/national level politics? Why?
6. When are most cases of VAWIP reported - when elections have been declared, when party distributes tickets, during campaigning, during voting, during counting, after election?
7. How do the following impact women's participation in politics? (Probe violence)
 - a. Traditional mores
 - b. Gender stereotypes
 - c. Religious fundamentalism
 - d. Ideological movements
8. What is the effect of VAWIP on women's participation in politics? (Probe for denial to vote/participation)
9. Do you think it is important for women to contest elections? Why do you think so?
10. According to you, is VAWIP prevalent only during elections or is common during other aspects of her political participation.
11. Do you think gender discrimination is the main reason for this or is it simply electoral violence?
12. What kind of violence does an activist face when she advocates for a cause?
13. How often does this happen?
14. What is the effect of such violence on a woman activist/politician's career (probe for political isolation, gender insensitive law, family dynamics, denial to vote/participate)
15. What would be your suggestion to a woman activist/politician who has faced VAWIP? What should she do?
16. What would be your suggestion to the police/ judiciary responding to cases of VAWIP? How should it be tackled?
17. How do you think a woman should choose her seat for fighting elections? (Probe for reserved vs. open constituency). Do you think she should contest a male or a female?
18. What changes would you like to see in the system to decrease such violence?
19. Have you ever faced violence? If yes, can you please narrate the incidence?
20. What is the role of women's wing of a political party in opposing VAWIP?
21. Is there any role played by power elite in VAWIP?
22. In your opinion are the police and judiciary apathetic towards women? Why do you say so?

Glossary

Bahu	Daughter –in-law
Beti	Daughter
Bahenji	Sister
Dalit	Untouchables (lowest in the ritual hierarchy in the Hindu community)
Dyat	Financial compensation paid to the heirs of a victim. In Arabic, the word means both blood money and ransom.
Ghoonghat	Veil
Hijab	Veil
Hudood	Hudood Law intended to implement Islamic Shari'a law, by enforcing punishments mentioned in the Quran and sunnah for Zina (extramarital sex), Qazf (false accusation of zina), Offence Against Property (theft), and Prohibition (of alcohol consumption)
Jirga	Tribal assembly of elders which takes decisions by consensus, particularly among the Pashtun people
Mangalsutra	Necklace worn by married Hindu women
Mardani	Ascribing women with masculine character
Mullah	Islamic Religious Head
Panchayat	Political council in rural area comprising of 5 local elected members
Purdah	Veil
Qisas	Islamic term meaning "retribution" and follows the principle of an eye for an eye
Sangh	Forum
Samiti	Committee
Sarpanch	Village Head
Shari'a	Code of law derived from the Quran
Sindoor	Vermillion
Swadeshi	Home country, Indigenous
Zina	Unlawful sexual intercourse under Sharia law



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

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