



सहज

महिला तथा बालबालिका सेवा केन्द्र  
तौलिहवा, कपिलवस्तु

# A New Normal

An outcome harvesting report on transforming harmful social norms and improving accountability in Nepal

## About SAHAJ

Strengthening Access to Holistic, Gender Responsive, and Accountable Justice in Nepal (SAHAJ) is a project within the UKAID's Integrated Programme for Strengthening Security and Justice. The project aims to reduce vulnerability towards different forms of gender-based violence (GBV), particularly against women and girls, by breaking the culture of silence around GBV and increasing access to security and justice services. It is a partnership with VSO, International Alert, Forum for Women, Law and Development, Antenna Foundation Nepal, Emory University, Samagra and Mahuri Home.

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# Foreword

Nepal is a nation of 110 ethnic groups and 55 languages. Its histories, cultures and traditions go back hundreds of years and feature many social norms some of which were essential for human survival. However, as times changed, some of these norms became archaic. Globalization, the world wide web, and accessible technologies created new realities for the Nepalese people. The Nepalese people are working towards a new normal that represents present-day values of this Himalayan nation, its constitution, its laws and regulations. It is working to transform the social norms that cause harm, especially to women, girls, and minorities and establish mutual social accountability.

Over a decade, International Alert had been using the outcome mapping and harvesting approach to identify challenges; inform programmes on mitigating risk; document small to big changes; reflect on the significance of changes and the organization's contribution in realizing them. This approach was used to address social accountability for SAHAJ and identify causes of gender-based violence; improve capacity and accountability of the security and justice system; and enhance access to security and justice services among at-risk women, girls, and the marginalized in Nepal. Periodic reviews of what worked or what did not and why provided opportunity for adaptation that made the project's interventions more relevant, effective and efficient.

Likewise, a community score card tool has been used to bring key stakeholders including local political, religious, cultural and social leaders, Nepal Police, local government members of the judicial committee and community people on a single platform, discuss and transform harmful social norms, build mutual accountability and enhance access to security and justice for women and girls.

Through this report, International Alert is pleased to present outcomes mapped and stories harvested in 33 municipalities of Province 2 and Lumbini Province where SAHAJ project was implemented. I believe that these changes will help design future programmes that strengthen social stories and lessons accountability and enhance access to security and justice for women and girls in Nepal.

I would like to thank Mr. Niresh Chapagain, Programme Manager of International Alert, for taking a lead in integrating outcome mapping and harvesting approach throughout the project duration and ensuring high quality and stakeholder participation. I would like to thank Mahendra Mahato, Prativa Rai, Parishma Chhetri, Saroj Bhushal, Bishnu Nepali, and Kabiram Bantha Magar for their tireless efforts to effectively implement the SAHAJ project.

Thanks are due to everyone at SAMAGRA and Mahuri Home, specially the 33 social mobilisers who directly engaged with stakeholders and beneficiaries to harvest positive changes taking place on the ground. Special thanks are due to Mr. Pallav Ranjan for editing the report.

I would especially like to express my gratitude to VSO Nepal for support in making the project a success, Nepal Police and the entire MIPP team for providing continuous feedback and strategic guidance, and UKAID for trusting our initiatives.



Rabina Shrestha  
Country Director

## A. Abbreviations

CSC	Community-police Score Card
CPPC	Community Police Partnership Committee
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IEC	Information Education and Communication
JSP	Justice and Security Provider
MIS	Management Information System
OCED	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOSC	Out of School Children
PSA	Public Service Announcement
SAHAJ	Strengthening Access to Holistic, Gender responsive and Accountable Justice in
Nepal UNWO	United Nations Women's Organization
WCSC	Women, Children and Senior Citizen Service
WHO	World Health Organization

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# 1. Executive summary

Harmful social norms and gender and domestic violence are facts of life that a significant number of women and girls live with in Nepal. 52% face discrimination within the family and 75% face a life without legal framework on civil rights.<sup>1</sup> Within this context, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom (FCDO)/ UKAID funded Strengthening Access to Holistic, Gender Responsive, and Accountable Justice in Nepal (SAHAJ) from December 2018 to May 2021 to tackle the root causes of harmful social norms and improve the capacity of security and justice systems to provide protection and service to the at-risk population in Nepal, particularly women and girls.

...harmful practices are sustained by social norms – collective beliefs about what people expect from each other. Recent attention to using social norms theory to achieve change emerged, in part, from the realization that changing harmful practices through factual information and economic inducements alone is not effective (Gelfand and Jackson 2016; Kumar et al. 2015).<sup>2</sup>

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Studies that evaluate the effectiveness of interventions that challenge norms supportive of violence are rare. Rigorous evaluations of such interventions are feasible, but they face a number of challenges, including clearly isolating the effects of the interventions from possible confounding factors and poor understanding of the mechanisms underlying changes in cultural and social norms.”<sup>3</sup>

With such great need for evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions, SAHAJ undertook a strong research approach to the project. It used evidence-based outcome harvesting tools that closely monitored, documented, evaluated, and scored the interventions, resources and time put in, and assessed expected, unexpected outcomes, failures, and opportunities. The outcomes that were harvested were reviewed within and beyond the project’s scopes and their significance and maturity was investigated and measured.

SAHAJ worked in thirteen districts of Lumbini Province and Province 2 from December 2018 to May 2021. Careful documentation and evidence show that it was able to make inroads into breaking the silence surrounding harmful social norms. Voices are raised against gender- based violence more frequently and

clearly in the areas that the project was active. Partnerships among stakeholders improved. Police, communities, local governments, civil society, religious, cultural, social bodies and leaders are working together more.

With acknowledge shortfalls in security and justice such as the ones pointed out by the United Nations as in “All the countries of the region should have training for their police forces on how to combat violence against women in general...”<sup>4</sup> the project took on a strong partnership with Nepal Police at all levels to achieve change and support gender-based violence victims and survivors.

Due to this effort, case referral has strengthened and the project improved capacities of relevant actors. Security and justice are now supported through effective referral of cases between the police and judicial committees. Data, training, policy documents, equipment, institutionalized funds and processes improved community-police partnership. This resulted in greater number of survivors seeking justice, especially women and girls from marginalized communities have more confidence and approach the police and judicial committees on their own without mediators to seek security and justice.

SAHAJ was able to reduce violence because of greater awareness and education that has brought about Behavior change in men, women, institutions, and communities. Improved response to calls for help by the police and local governments, police, and judicial committees who have become more proactive.

The project was able to address harmful social practices that are traditional as well as modern in nature. Harmful beliefs, activities, and attitudes such as child marriage and cybercrime have been addressed and there has been some change in negative social norms. More households, communities, educators, religious and social groups now acknowledge that there is violence against women and girls.

“...women’s experiences of the formal support systems are, at best, unpredictable – and sometimes were found to be obstructive and unhelpful too.”<sup>5</sup> Through the project’s activities, security and justice providers were able to internalize the experiences that gender and domestic violence victims and survivors go through and behavior changes have taken place for the better.

Ownership of the inclusion and change process has been accepted by the police, judicial committees, civil society organizations, youth clubs, school management committees and other security and justice service providers as per the evidence that has been collected.

However, there still remain many opportunities for the action against violence against women and girls across Nepal and in areas that SAHAJ worked in. Centuries of negative social norms cannot be wiped away through a couple of years of effort. On top of this, new dangers are manifesting with globalization, access to the internet and pervasiveness of the cyberworld.

Partnership with local and provincial governments is a must as well as coordination and empowerment of security and justice providers. Prevention can take place through better awareness and education, economic empowerment, and changing social norms. Security and justice seeking behavior and support for those who seek such service need to be robust, efficient, and effective.

The work of the project has addressed somewhat the objective of addressing harmful social norms and improved security and justice seeking behavior. It has also opened a lot of opportunities to make the lives of women and girls in Nepal better.

## Rs. 100,000 for girls who achieve bachelor's degree

In a landmark decision, Marchawari Rural Municipality became the first local government in Nepal to offer young women and their families a Rs. 100,000 incentive when they achieve bachelor's degrees. The municipality is in SAHAJ working area and the municipal authorities have been participating regularly in the project's activities.

Based in remote southwest Terai, this area in Rupandehi is working to impact and reduce female feticide, school dropouts, discrimination, and violence against women and girls.

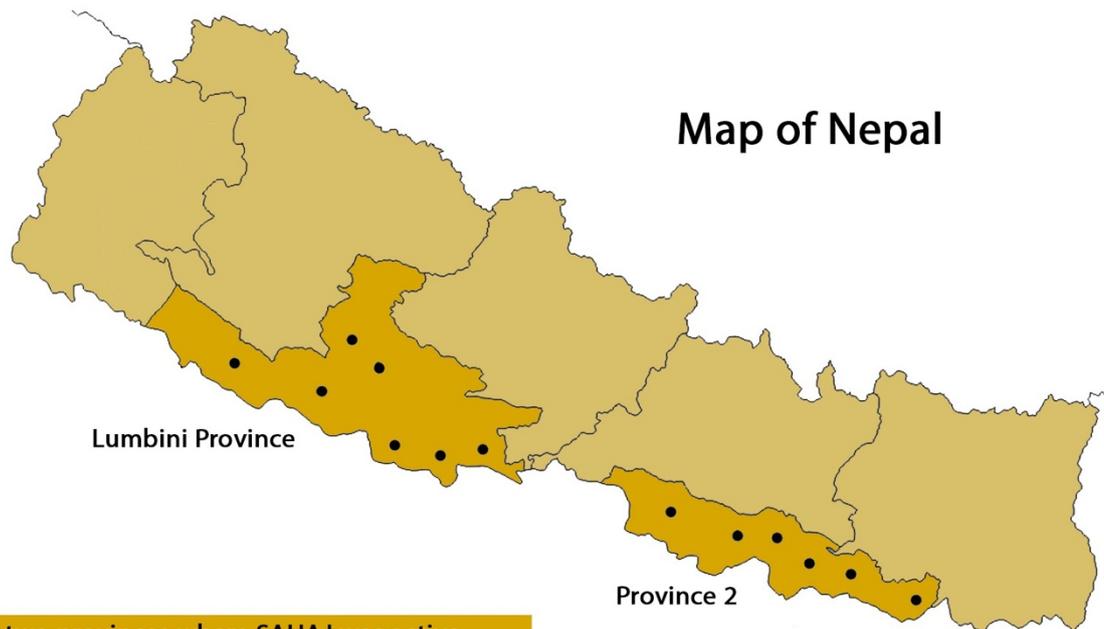
Families and girls often felt that their education had reached a conclusion when they completed grade

10 or 12. This incentive is set to help them aim higher in terms of education.

This decision will be further supported with the first higher education establishment to offer bachelor's degree set to start operation in Marchawari. Families will no longer need to send their daughters to other Nepalese cities such as Kathmandu or Pokhara or to Indian centers to pursue higher studies.

The seventh rural municipality meeting of fiscal year 2020/2021 has approved the guidelines for the disbursement of this incentive and two applications have already been registered.

## 2. Context



**13 districts in two provinces where SAHAJ was active:**  
Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahotari, Sarlahi, Bara, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Kapilbastu, Dang, Banke, Pyuthan, and Rolpa

### 2.1 About SAHAJ

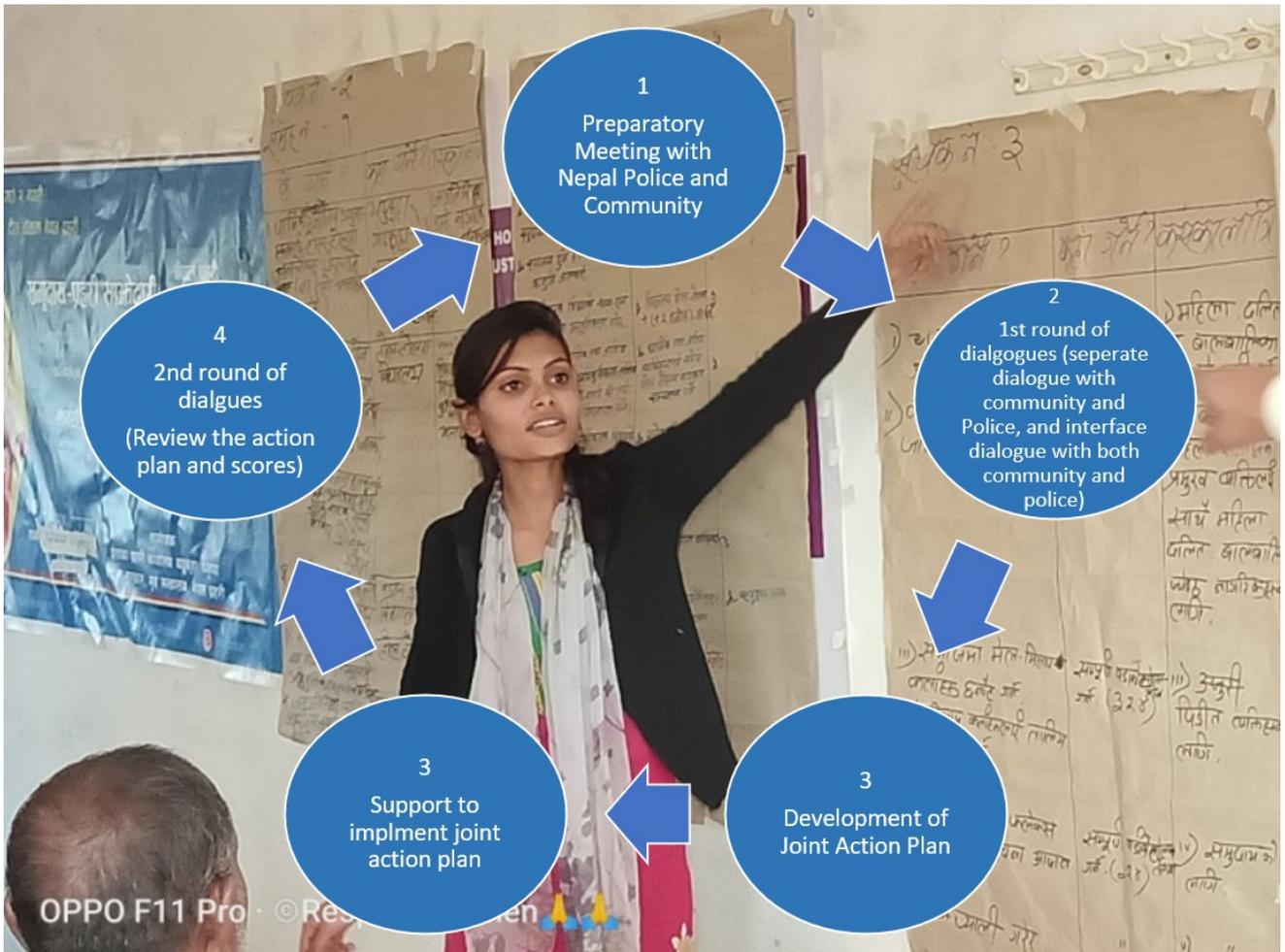
Strengthening Access to Holistic, Gender Responsive, and Accountable Justice in Nepal (SAHAJ) was funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom/UKAID from December 2018 to May 2021 to tackle the root causes of gender-based violence and improve the capacity of security and justice systems to provide protection and service to at-risk women and girls in Nepal through family centered, school centered and grassroots based accountability approaches.

The project was implemented in thirteen districts of Province 2 and Lumbini Province in Nepal. Featuring a strong operational research component, the project provided evidence on what works to change social norms and strengthen community-police relationship within a changing federal context.

It developed collaborative relations between demand and supply sides through security and justice mapping; periodic monitoring of judicial verdicts and their effectiveness in the implementation process; Community Score Cards (CSC); workshops on survivor-centered approach among security and justice actors; on-the-job guidance to the police, and strengthening of referral mechanism between justice and security providers.

### 2.2 Social norms enable violence

Many social norms in Nepal allow and enable gender-based violence. Violence in the home is usually private allowing men to think that violence is a good way to “discipline” women and make excuses such as the violence is not as bad as other options could be. The private nature of this violence limits the scope for outside intervention. Supremacy of the informal community – including community elders, mediators and religious leaders – can encourage violence. Should a dispute arise or an accusation made, the informal community wields significant influence in the justice and security process. Communities are not favorable towards women and girls when they accept gender-based violence or makes excuses for it. Security and justice are hard to achieve under these circumstances as external institutions, like the police, often engages with influential members of the community in order to resolve disputes. When harmful identities are combined with lack of education and economic independence, the situation worsens dramatically. Many women and girls across Nepal and the world are victimized and suppressed. They are stopped from speaking out about the violence perpetrated against them by powerful social norms. The culture of silence established by societal and familial norms needs to be broken and justice seeking behaviors encouraged.



Security and justice sectors need to be responsive, respectful, efficient, and effective. Some harmful social norms addressed by SAHAJ follow:

- **Suppression of women and girls in the name of social harmony.** The norm: It is believed that women and girls should remain docile and keep their anger and dissatisfaction under control for the sake of harmony within the family and society. Women who speak out against husbands and in-laws are not a good fit. Women are born with greater patience, acceptance, and tolerance, so they should go the extra mile and tolerate discrimination and violence.
- **The family's place in the community and its honor is all important** so women and girls should take extra care to make sure what they do and talk about their needs, ideas, sexuality, and beliefs and hamper the respect for the family in the community. While it is acceptable for boys and men to behave in risqué manners, female members of the family have to be extra careful and honorable.
- **Men should control the family and speak on its behalf in the community.** Most of the 110 ethnicities of Nepal are patriarchal. Men have the authority to make decisions in the home and speak for family members in the community. Their decision is to be accepted by all family members. This makes it even more important for men and boys to be engaged in addressing GBV issues.
- **Psychological, verbal, nutrition, financial, and physical sacrifices and punishments are acceptable.** Violence against women who do not obey men's decisions is acceptable, to raise their voices on GBV incidents. Men are considered respected by women when they silently fulfil all their demands and decisions including accepting their violent behaviour.
- **Outsiders, especially men and boys, should not intervene** in GBV as it is a private matter within the family and it is up to the men and women within the family to sort out the situation. In case of incidents at school, it is better to join another institution rather than sully the child's "reputation" and respect for the family in the community.
- **Families prefer to handle GBV cases among themselves** and social elders rather than address them through the police. Police may not address incidents as women may drop the case and return to their families,

their participation may not be appreciated, or their involvement could cause community-based conflict.

- **Elders, in-laws, and men know best. Boys and girls especially are taught to be respectful.** Fear of retaliation and victimization stops them from speaking with or reporting to formal JSPs because processes can be lengthy, they may not have support for the near future, and they are financially dependent.
- **Teachers and school administrators feel that GBV is entirely a family matter and are unwilling to take responsibility in case the family retaliates against them or the child even more harshly.** School administrators, principals, and school management bodies may attempt to cover up incidents to protect their colleague's or school's reputation.
- **Police are involved in GBV incidents only when they are reported.** JSPs do not make proactive effort to identify and address such issues. Previous practice of reconciling gender and domestic violence has set unwanted examples with the perpetrator of violence going free rather than facing legal repercussions. Even today, JSPs appear to give less of a priority to GBV cases. Social accountability needs to be entrenched within communities among men, women, political, administrative, religious, cultural, and elders among others as well as justice service providers to achieve sustainable security and justice.

## 2.3 SAHAJ and social accountability

In order to achieve social accountability that can result in security and justice, mapped local security and justice actors, services, referral mechanisms and access within the federal structure. Implementation of judicial decisions and verdicts were monitored and gaps in service delivery and commitment of stakeholders identified. Curriculum on the role and responsibility of justice and security providers (JSPs) and positive social norms was led by beneficiaries and used for training. Need-based hardware and communication material involved procurement, construction, and delivery plans. Operational guidelines, memorandums of understanding, information, and orientations were prepared. JSPs updated the Management Information System (MIS) and enhanced service delivery and mitigated discrimination, particularly against the marginalized.

Workshops on survivor centered approaches built capacity of JSPs, WCSC and OOSC. GBV related laws and policies were developed and topics such as psychosocial counselling; social norms that lead to GBV within households; findings of assessments; roles of security service provider and procedures for GBV cases; best behavior recommendation for JSPs; challenges and the way forward were covered.

On the job guidance to police and other JSPs was piloted. Self-examination of social norms included concepts of masculinity and the role of men in bringing about change. Capacity of service providers was focused upon. Advocacy activities targeted local and provincial authorities through regular communication, meetings, technical backstopping, quality oversight, and workshops at local and provincial levels. Advocacy strategies, action plans for the inclusive and sensitive laws, and policies related to GBV, access to justice, gender-sensitive budgeting, and improved service delivery were covered.

Information on various services is easily available to GBV survivors and those at risk. Knowledge products and IEC material were developed on GBV related laws through hoarding boards, leaflets, pamphlets, radio PSAs in Nepali and local languages. Learning and good practices; social norms and GBV related messaging; roles of security service provider; and procedures related to GBV cases were shared. Referral mechanisms were set and promoted. Referral pathways between JSPs – including one-stop crisis management centers and policies – were prepared and improved. Dialogues, engagement and collaboration between communities and JSPs increased and cooperation and trust among service seekers and providers promoted awareness and confidence to report cases to relevant service providers. Understanding of the issues related to security and justice increased; prevailing issues and expectations within communities were shared; with victims, survivors and community reporting their issues to relevant service providers.

JSPs visited communities, including marginalized groups, community leaders and students. Collaboration increased, all stakeholders were motivated, learning opportunity was provided. Good practices were reinforced. Inclusive consultation program involved local political, social, religious, and traditional leaders including women and JSPs. (*Continues on page 13.*)

## SPECIAL FOCUS

# Community Score Cards

Community Score Cards (CSCs) bring together the demand side (service seekers) and the supply side (service providers) and allow them to jointly understand existing status of norms, processes, and perceptions. They allow stakeholders to come to mutual understanding, make action plans, collaborate and seek future opportunities for partnership.

Community Score Cards serves as a two-way participatory tool that helps in the investigation of harmful social norms and their consequences. Identifying the nature of norms and their harm, causes, impacts and potential remedies allow for effective data collection as well as documentation of project results.

Community Score Cards were used during targeted events to grade the performance of the police, the community, judicial committees, and others. Social accountability dialogue was involved and the use of community score cards helped investigate existing status of collaboration between service providers (police and justice institutions) and service seekers (the community).

Indicators set on the cards were discussed and elaborated; stakeholders graded perceived performance of the actor being discussed; grades were reviewed collectively; stakeholders took part in dialogue to understand the rationale behind these scores and helped clarify the ground situation, present challenges and potential solutions.

Based on the scores resulting from the Community Score Cards, dialogue was undertaken, action plans were arrived at and sanctioned and continuous improvements took place based on clear data on before and after evidence of what worked and what did not work.

*The use of Community Score Cards results in greater coordination between stakeholders, decrease in differences and disagreements, and increased cooperation. Our school was able to improve its educational offerings because we were able to work together better.*

*Ghanshyam Thapa,  
Chairperson, Shree Panch  
Mahendra  
Janata Secondary School*

*Seeking out social issues such as gender-based violence, identifying topics important to the common good, and the bringing together spread out stakeholders in one place has become a lot easier through the use of the Community Score Card.*

*Dipak Kumar Ranabhat,  
Mayor, Bagmati Municipality*

*Community Score Cards have led to the understanding of collaborative leadership among prominent people in this region.*

*Even business people like us are speaking out against gender-based violence now.*

*Akchya Lal Shah, General  
Secretary, Municipal Chamber of  
Commerce and Industry, Sarlahi  
District*

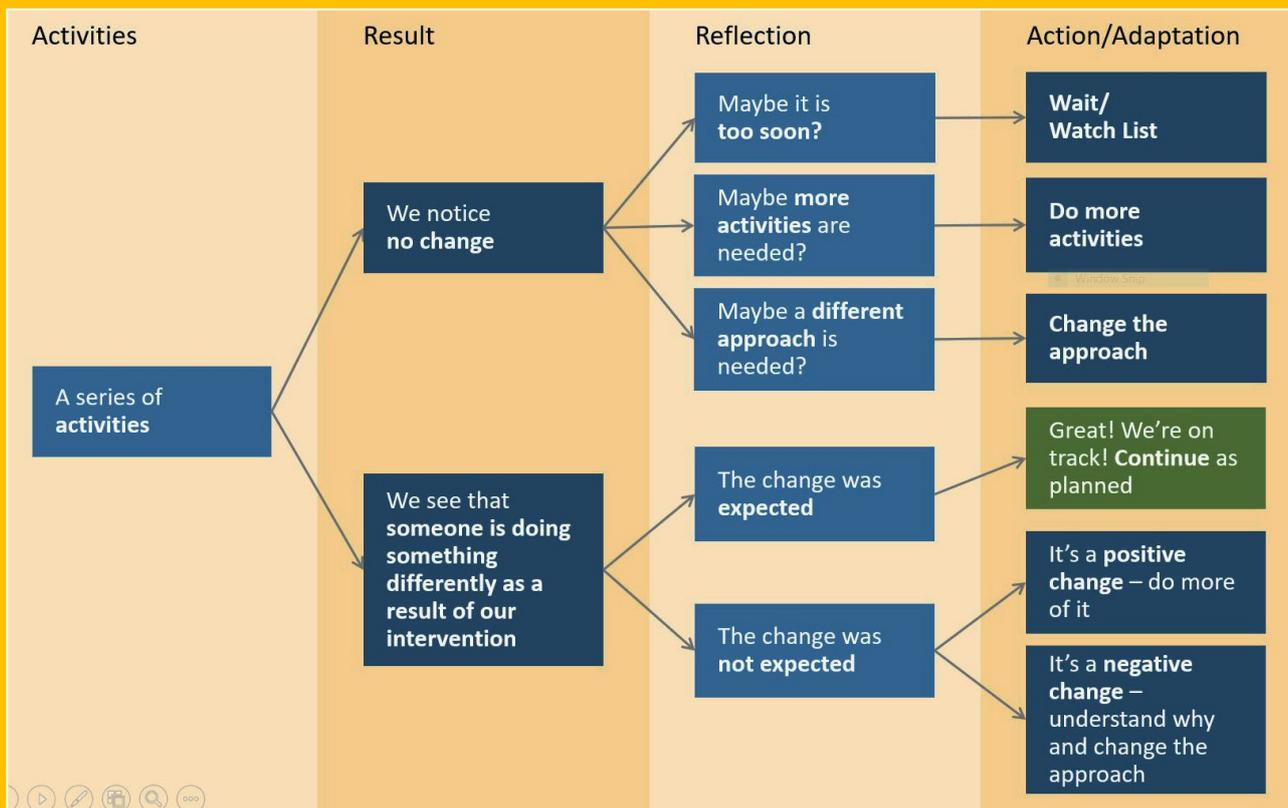
## Behind the scenes: Evidence based outcome harvesting

With such great need for evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions, SAHAJ undertook a strong research approach to the project. It used evidence-based outcome harvesting tool that closely monitored, documented, evaluated, and scored interventions, resources and time put in, and assessed expected, unexpected outcomes, failures, and opportunities. The outcomes that were harvested were reviewed within and beyond the project's scopes and their significance and maturity was investigated and measured.

The outcome harvesting process acquired who, what, when, where, how, the contribution of the project, and the evidence. During reflection sessions, harvested outcomes were evaluated for maturity and evidence and significance versus resources invested by SAHAJ. Outcomes were then analyzed for significance of outcomes versus the contribution of stakeholders: desired situation (high significance and with contribution of stakeholders) leading to potential for replication; need for resource leverage (where significant outcomes occurred but there was lower contribution by stakeholders); where contribution was high but the outcomes were of low significance. Major lessons learned by the project were used to correct upcoming actions based on "before and after" socio-political context analysis. Watch lists of small changes were created and significant changes were reported, especially towards the end of the project.

While reviewing outcomes, strength of evidence was a special focus and poor evidence and immature outcomes were discarded. Mature outcomes with weak evidence were reviewed and evidence sought to further strengthen claims while immature outcomes with strong evidence was also included for further reflection. The outcomes on the watchlist, their relevance to the project, and other key aspects were processed through multiple quadrants that periodically watched progress or devolvement based on significance as well as contribution to the outcomes. Resources were leveraged and value for money and time investment measured. Replication possibilities in project as well as non-project areas was explored and lessons learned documented.

## Outcome harvesting, the process



***Only 22 service seekers visited the police station over five months. Covid impacted people's mobility, social gathering, and our service delivery. Some of us were infected and we, too were trying to stay safe. SAHAJ provided masks, sanitizer, gloves, boots, face shield and thermal guns so we could reach out to the people. Within the next month, we served 30 service seekers.***

*Ram Kumar Yadav, In-charge, Jhutki Police Station*

Consultations covered GBV prevention and response, role of participants, support to victims and survivors while seeking justice, supportive attitude while dealing with the GBV cases, and reduction of societal stress on survivors. Role of stakeholders in transformation of social norms such as local governments; ward offices; police; youth, women, and civil society groups; community-police partnership program committees and other collaborators involved consultations and the making of action plans. Identifying activities, target areas, group, modality of events, timelines, cost and other details.

## **2.4 Social accountability and Nepal Police**

Need for social accountability and sensitivity have been within Nepal Police framework for over half a century. It was in 1955 that the Police Act of Nepal emphasized better relationship with the community in order to achieve effective security. In 2007 and 2008, social accountability and public hearings became a requirement for all service providing government agencies as stipulated by the good governance act and regulation. In the early 2010s, police guidelines and regulations further reinforced the community and social accountability aspects to policing.

Over the years Nepal Police has been holding public hearings and interactions to improve trust among service seekers. However, as one-time interactions can be limited, SAHAJ worked with closer settings, sustained dialogues, mutual cooperation, and joint measures between the community and the police to establish mutual accountability and improved service performance.

Campaigns by Nepal Police like "Police My Friend," "Police in Our Community," and "Service with a Smile" have addressed social accountability but the "trust deficit" and significant challenges remain. Search Nepal research stated in 2016 that 76% of the population in the Terai does not interact with or contact the police even when there is need. Therefore, a lot more needs to be done at the grassroots level to establish healthy, reliable and strong relationship between the police and the community.

***The problem of violence is a problem for all of us. We need to do what we can to make things safer so our city acted and we created a legislation and procedures for a safe house where those in need of security and justice can take shelter.***

*Ramdas Dhauju, Member of Ward 1, Bara*

Nepal Police as the primary security organization in Nepal was a key stakeholder of the SAHAJ project. SAHAJ documented and intervened in the treatment and behavior of the community; it worked to improve the trust levels of the police within communities; willingness of community members to report crimes and provide support during investigation; police facilitation of victims while they were lodging complaints; coordination and collaboration between police and the community; regularity of interactions between them; response and sensitivity towards GBV cases; support extended by the police to local judicial committees among other things.

Tools and methods such as the Community Score Cards, meetings, dialogues, workshops, were used to bring the community, judicial committees, Nepal Police and other stakeholders more effective in breaking the silence surrounding violence and encourage justice seeking behavior among women and girls.

## 2.5 Major achievements

SAHAJ was able to make a marked contribution towards social accountability related to violence in terms of breaking the silence related to GBV and encouraging justice seeking behavior in the wards that it worked in. The project identified strengths of security and justice systems as well as opportunities and challenges through collaboration between service seekers and providers.

It prepared indicators related to mutual accountability of community members and security and justice actors. Grassroots communities joined forces with security and justice actors for capacity development resulting in higher quality services. Services that should be made available to the poor and the marginalized as per provisions of the law were shared. Practice of

documenting questions raised around quality of service, plans, commitments, and action plans was established. Harmful social norms and their impact on gender-based violence were investigated including their nature, causes, consequences and potential remedies. Review of previous practices led to the development of a field manual.

A systematic process of non-confrontational dialogues between the community and the JSPs, joint indicator setting for good performance, accountability standards, common scoring process and collaboratively designed and implemented improvement plans is gradually expected to enhance the partnership and mutual accountability between communities and JSPs. This more intimate and close setting of the accountability dialogues will help foster stronger ownership of processes and generate a greater sense of responsibility towards each other and benefit community security.

### 3. Intervention and change

SAHAJ intervened in thirteen districts in three provinces of Nepal. It worked with local and provincial governments, Nepal Police, civil society, political, religious, and social leaders and the general community in order to address harmful social norms. The nine key intervention areas of the project and the outcomes that resulted through its work are presented.



## 3.1 Break the silence

### Voices rise against harmful social norms more frequently and clearly

Victims and survivors who suffer harmful social norms often do not speak up, particularly if they belong to repressive communities in Nepal. This leads to a culture wherein violence can continue and perpetrators are emboldened. Attempt to break this silence required internal change and the instilling of confidence in the individual and connecting them to proper security and justice mechanisms so they would not suffer the consequences of speaking out.

SAHAJ involved a diversity of people, especially women and children and the minorities, in speaking out about harmful social norms. From closed Muslim communities to migrant women living in slum settlements, school and college going teens to victims of the civil war and Dalits, the voices that were raised were persistent and confident whereas the same voices before the implementation of the project were largely silent, suppressed by the culture of dominance and dependency.

The examples presented in this chapter share the stories of people who took part in the project's activities, grew in assurance and spoke up in manners that changed their lives and those of others around them.

#### 3.1.1 Women leaders emerge from Muslim communities

Rajbiraj has a large Muslim community. Much that goes within this community stays within the community. Even if there is violence against women and girls, not much comes out as they are usually not allowed to participate in public events by their families.

Rehan Khatun, 33, is a Muslim woman and a resident of ward number 6. She has been fighting on behalf of victims of gender-based violence within her community. She reports that change has come. "I believed women and girls should think only about housework. We should not go outside, mix up with other people. Only men should participate in meetings. I suffered, endured, violence against myself. I did not protest what was happening to me, let alone to other women in the community. I was not interested in issues like child marriage and its consequences."

Now a secretary of the city-level Gender Based Violence Control Network, she works with other women who have changed, like Sanju Rai. They are recognized and appreciated as women leaders and they say SAHAJ has helped them and many others realize the harm being caused to their communities by the silence surrounding gender-based violence and negative social norms.

As they distribute leaflets and pamphlets on legal provisions related to child marriage and gender-based violence; as they hold dialogue with political, religious, and social leaders, activists and the general people; as they lobby for gender equity and equality, they say their

work is bringing about real change, that their hard work is paying off. Note the local government and the municipality also knows the value of the work they do and invite them to meetings and events.

Rehan and Sanju report that victims are taking their cases to the police. When they find out that a child marriage is about to take place, they orient the family on legal repercussions and take the initiative to prevent such marriages. They go with victims to the police and demand security and justice.

This is the result of training on harmful social norms, laws and regulations, and procedures that can be taken in case there is gender-based violence. Inter-religious dialogue has shown them the problems and solutions that exist within different religious communities.

#### 3.1.2 Better access to justice among migrants in slum settlements

Meanwhile, Jitpur Simara Metropolis of Bara District is connected to Nepal's most important East-West Highway. A migrant city, it boasts of a population that probably represents all 77 districts of the nation. It features a wealth of diverse languages, cultures, and religions.

Since the people come from far and wide, a marked proportion of women are also far away from societal and familial support structures, making them more vulnerable. The men often find work in industries and factories while women are engaged in domestic work. Lack of education and awareness is particularly high and since most of the people here earn a daily wage, they are physically and economically at risk.

If a husband, employer, landlord, abuses them or creates problems for them, they do not know anyone to turn to. The problem is particular highlighted in tribal and squatter settlements where many of the migrants chose to live in.

Activities organized by SAHAJ in collaboration the local police have raised the level of awareness among women and the community, boosted their confidence, encouraged them to speak out and lodge formal complaints with security and justice providers.

People's representatives and the police report that gender and domestic violence was mostly not reported until they were able to go out and tell members of their community that gender-based violence is not only a matter of our own homes. Women can go out. What neighbors say when they go to the police should not be placed ahead of their own safety and security. Going to the police is actually less troublesome than suffering gender-based violence. They also helped members of the community know of that victims and survivors have do not have to spend a lot of money to get security or justice.

While there was a time gender-based violence was rampant because victims were afraid to seek security and justice and only major incidents came to the police, it is no longer acceptable that such incidents are kept quiet or settled informally by influential people within the community.

A sustained campaign involving information diffusion and activities involving the community was conducted by SAHAJ in partnership with the stakeholders such as the police and judicial committees and over time, this sensitized the community enough for them to break the silence and ask for help. "Beatings and other physical abuse are reported to the police. Cases related to gender-based violence are passed on to the judiciary. The wall of silence is gradually breaking," commented Ram Das Dhauju of the SAHAJ Project Advisory Committee. "Police are reaching the doorsteps and developing a habit of seeking justice and discouraging perpetrators of violence has become easier."

Orientations on how to register complaints with judicial bodies, services provided by the police, a wider public dialogue, legal clinics, digital hoarding boards and television broadcasts, activities under the Community Police Partnership Committee program, Govinda Puri Chief of the Area Police Office and his personal intervention helped bring about change. In the fiscal year 2018/2019, there were 216 complaints of which 53 were received within 8 months of project implementation.

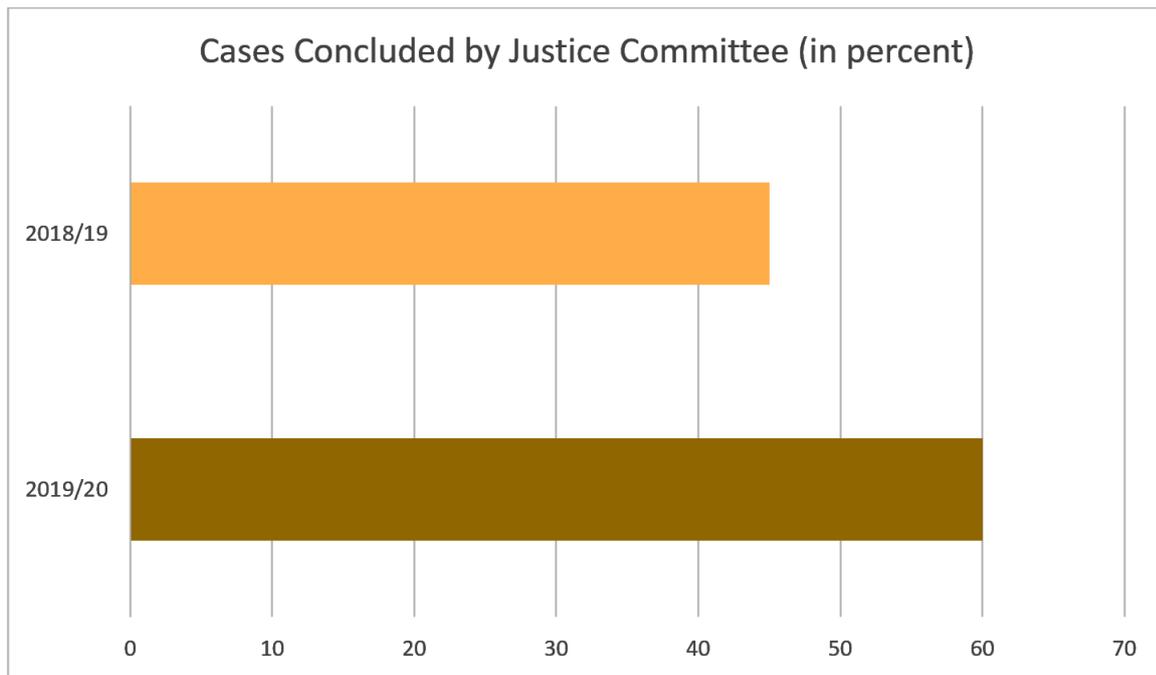
***After learning what local governments in Lumbini Province have done, the people's representatives here have realized that it is their responsibility to make strong policies. We have analysed that we are lagging behind. "We are ahead in terms of infrastructure, just look at our school and birthing centre, but they have done more in terms of legislation," they said.***

*Krishna Mohan Kapad, Ward Chairperson, Brahmapuri village municipality 5.*

### **3.1.3 Minority teenage girls speak out against gender targeted bullying and abuse**

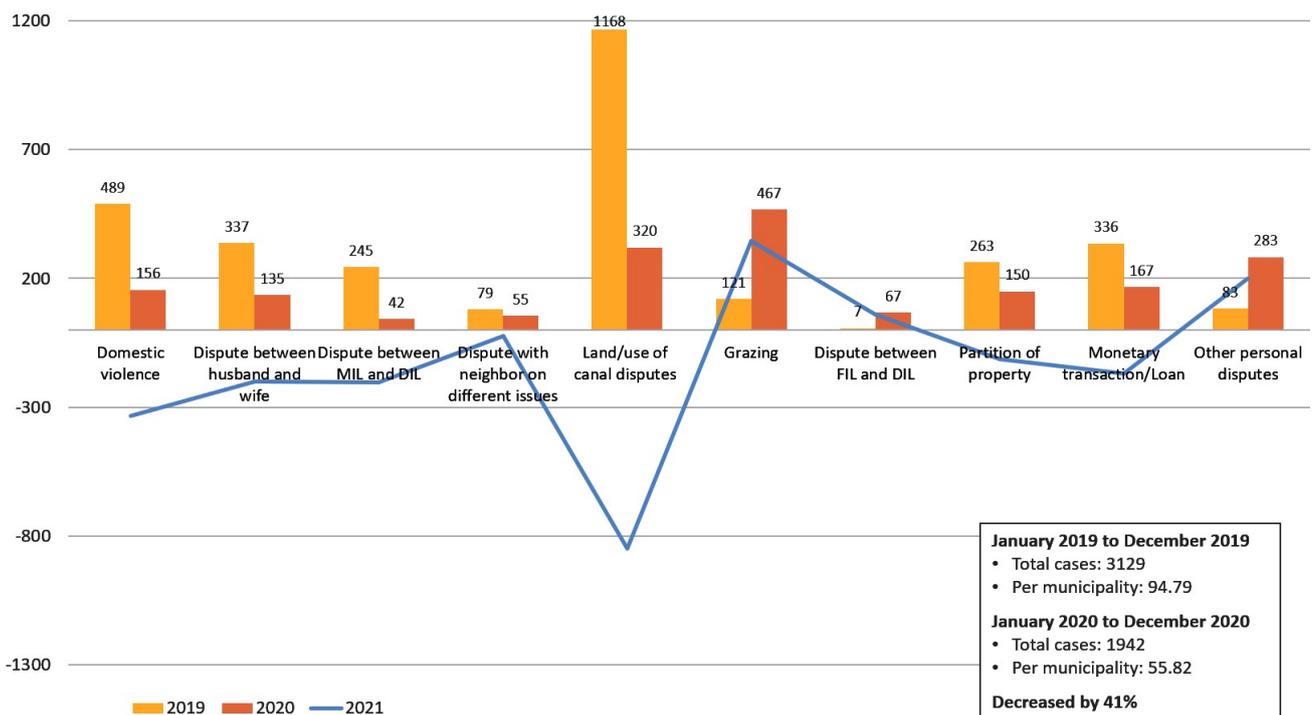
Women and girls of Tribhuvan Nagar deep in rural Terai do not venture out of their homes and school areas. The men in their families have mostly gone abroad for foreign employment. It is often considered that if there is any kind of violence against them, it is their own fault and instead of receiving support, they are ostracized by their immediate community. It is believed that they should stay out of sight and almost in hiding. When a woman or girl tries to bring out incidents of violence, attempt to share that they are being abused or victimized they are discouraged by their own family members and the society in general from speaking out. In one case, when a girl complained that she was having problems, her father and the rest of the household blamed her and told her to keep quiet. From the next day, she should be monitored more carefully, her father said.

After participating in an orientation program on how to file a complaint with the judiciary, a 16 year old who was in school decided to complain about the violence that she had been suffering. *(Continues on page 19.)*



*There has been a steady increase in awareness levels, greater numbers of people speaking out over harmful social norms, more cases registered with the police and judicial committees. There has also been an increase in referrals by the police and the judicial committees as per the nature of the cases that they are supposed to handle by law.*

*Above, judicial committees have the legal mandate to cover civil cases while the police have the legal mandate to cover criminal cases. The graph on top shows the increase in percentage of the cases concluded by the judicial committee in Bijuwar, Pyuthan Municipality. Below, cases registered with the judicial committee in 33 municipalities of province 2 and 5.*



After an informal meeting with the ward chairperson and the in-charge of Tribhuvan Nagar police post she was no longer a victim. Similarly, there was a time when the girls in the community kept their eyes down and suffered as the armed police and men and boys teased them as they went to school or college. They were hesitant and scared to walk alone on the streets. "If we told anyone, because we were afraid that they would humiliate us further. We thought that it would be better to avoid those paths altogether. After some of them decided to complain, not the paths are safer and the offenders have been put on notice.

In a predominantly Muslim community like Bramhapuri village, when one teenager speaks to the police, the local government, or other authorities, others are emboldened and women and girls understand that they no longer need to tolerate humiliation or violence.

SAHAJ collaborated with the local government and police, providing training on harmful social norms, legal provisions, and support that can be received. Interaction programs on the judicial process and direct contact with the police, District Police Office School Liaison Program, Community Police Partnership Program helped bring about change in the community.

### **3.1.4 Women affected by the Maoist insurgency start talking to the police**

Bhimsara Rana is 28-years-old. She comes from a district that was a hotbed of the Maoist insurgency. She witnessed much suffering, death and violence both from government security forces and the rebels. She and many others like her had a very negative perception and mistrust of the uniform.

Because she lived in times when the community could not be trusted because of spies from both of the warring sides, she continued to keep away from the society in general and did not want to talk to the police or government or representatives of the civil society.

The SAHAJ facilitator who invited her to take part in a community event faced an uphill task and when she was persuaded her participation in the event was very quiet. During the first phase testing of the community score card but the then police in-charge Yagyamani Vedic and the SAHAJ team persisted and continued to involve her and others like her in various activities under the Community Partner Police Program.

Bhimsara's unwilling participation turned to enthusiasm and like her, other women too, felt that

they were realizing new ideas through these activities. Bhimsara Rana comments, "In order to be human, in order to think of a better life for our families, to have security, it is important to have the police. It is even more important to seek justice with security and justice providers when someone is wronged.

Over time, she and the other participants felt better and more comfortable listening to the police and interacting with them. As her confidence grew, she was able to talk to the people in authority and also began helping others. She and other women became involved in a campaign that encourage people not to tolerate injustice by thinking positively about the police and justice providers.

Bhimsara's transformation from being a silent witness to injustice to becoming advocates of security and justice is an important achievement of the project and its stakeholders. Interaction programs, training, awareness campaigns, street dramas, orientations on justice and security, social values, celebration of International Women's Day, folk song program, fairs played a role in changing the culture of silence among many people in Rolpa and other project areas.

### **3.1.5 A Dalit woman speaks out for her rights**

Nilam Kumari Kurmi of Kapilvastu Municipality, ward 7, was married at the age of 16 and gave birth to a son. Soon after, her husband started beating her and in place of helping her, her mother-in-law and brother-in-law began verbally abusing her as well. In order to make things better, she took out a two hundred-thousand-rupee loan and sent her husband abroad for work. However, he came back and soon after she became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter, he passed away.

The domestic violence she was facing escalated and home became untenable so she left and started living with her mother. Nilam Kurmi was 23 with a son and a daughter. Because she did not have her citizenship papers, the birth of her children could not be registered, therefore she asked her mother in law for help. Despite many requests, the mother-in-law refused to apply for citizenship on her behalf.

Realizing that she needed help, she visited her local government offices and the district police office and talked to women's rights activists. The police took the mother-in-law to the police station and they came to an agreement that she would help Nilam apply for her citizenship certificate. Though the District Police Office, Kapilvastu, women's rights activists, and people's representatives were present when the agreement was prepared, nothing happened.

## 3.2 Improve partnerships among stakeholders

### **Communities, police, judicial committees, local governments, civil society, and religious, cultural, social bodies and leaders work together more**

In order to reduce pervasive harmful social norms such as child marriage and online abuse of women and girls, different components of the community need to work together in a consistent and sustained manner. Coordination, orientation, creation of a safe sharing place, bringing together of at-risk section of the community, people's representatives, security and justice providers, counselors, and other related individuals and institutions built strong partnerships.

Appreciative dialogue was fostered by different tools such as the community score card which led to self-realization and reflection among service providers as well as service seekers. Members of the community understood that security providers are a key component of their lives and helped by sending food when police personnel caught covid, they stood up and became witnesses when called upon, and supported the investigative process of the police.

Local government worked with the people directly and interactions between the people's representatives and the community became more issue focused rather than party focused. Realization that civil cases and criminal cases were different while participating in project activities led to favorable opinion of the local government's judicial committees taking over of civil cases. A cross-section of the community helped victims and survivors of harmful social norms.

#### **3.2.1 Police and community participation reduces underage marriage**

In many parts of Nepal, girls are married before the age of 20, the legal age of marriage. In order to implement the law related to early marriage, the District Police Office launched a three-month action plan that would battle child marriage and sexual violence. SAHAJ was an active participant in preparing the action plan and its implementation and conducted training, preparation and interaction with the District Police Office.

*The capacity of both the service providers and service seekers has improved. Involving the municipality's judicial committee staff in the training has helped our work and made it more effective. Data collection and management is now more systematic.*

*Vice-chairperson of Judicial committee*

One hundred forty-three adolescents and their parents were involved in the multi-generational dialogue against child marriage. Siraha municipality also joined in forming a task force to reduce child marriage. Other organizations in the district were invited to partner in the effort and implement a quarterly action plan.

The practice of police officers attending marriages when the bride or groom was under 20 stopped, more attention was given to reports that child marriages were about to take place, and in January 2020 alone 20 child marriages were stopped in different parts of Siraha district where as only 40 child marriages had been stopped over the past two years.

#### **3.2.2 Local government takes initiative in the field of security and justice**

Bramhapuri village municipality is on the border with India. The population of Brahmapuri is mostly Madhesi, Dalit and Muslim. Many here believe that they are only safe from violence if they stay within their communities. Despite having two permanent police posts in this municipality, no one asks for police help from the community.

Local government representatives participated in SAHAJ activities and realized that security and justice also need attention and decided to allocate a part of their budget to the Community Police Partnership Committee (CPPC).

Villagers, too, participated in a training on how to facilitate the administration of justice. “We learned a lot about security and justice and its need,” says village chairperson Binod Kumar Sahajyu. The local government paid Rs. 135,000 (the entire cost of transportation) for an exposure tour organized by the project and provided financial assistance for a conflict reconciliation training.

### 3.2.3 Stakeholders provide justice to victims of violence

Siraha is a border town where harassment of women and girls and violence against women are perceived to be high. In 2020, a 6-year-old girl was raped and as treatment was not possible locally, multiple stakeholders came together to supported her treatment in Kathmandu-based Kanti Children’s Hospital paying for ambulance fees, medication, hospital stay and other expenses.

Thankfully, her health improved and as the family needed a steady income to fight poverty, SAHAJ provided a grant and training with which they started a small vegetable business. Siraha Municipality, OCMC, District Police Office, WOREC Nepal and other organizations have also been supporting the child and her health care. Training has been provided to women and adolescents from local

marginalized communities on the law related to gender-based violence and they have been taught how they can file complaints.

### 3.2.4 A cooperative lobbies the local government to build a safe house

Jitpur Simara Municipality’s executive had passed various acts, rules and regulations successfully, yet it had not formulated policies to address gender-based violence. Meanwhile, Simara Women’s Savings and Credit Cooperative was pushing for the construction of a shelter for the victims of gender-based violence. On 7 and 8 November 2020, SAHAJ held an orientation on gender-based violence policy and law where participants made presentations before an audience of stakeholders including the city’s deputy mayor and executive members. During another orientation (held on 23 December 2020) on Local Gender-based violence Prevention Fund by the project, the local government representative announced that Rs 1.5 million was being allocated for the safe house. Further, the local government formed a five-member committee to look at acts, policies, and other rules and regulations with its executive member Shobha Karki acting as its convener. *(Continues overleaf.)*

## A different curriculum for Fridays

Fridays are very different in the schools of Kapilvastu District. With a large population of Muslim, Madhesi, Tharu, Dalit, marginalized and backward communities this district has opted to make use of the text books compiled by SAHAJ using material generated by Nepal Police during Friday.

Problems that impact day to day living of children, teens and families are addressed by the text book. When needed, police personnel and project personnel interacted with the school going young people and took classes and special sessions to highlight harmful social norms and how they can be addressed.

Cybercrime, pornographic music and content, child marriage and abuse, and gender-based violence are among issues that were shared with young people eliciting a great response from the children. School management committees, educators, and the District Education Office recognized the value

of such a curriculum and made it compulsory for all schools to use it during Friday. Young people were initially surprised when police, project, and outside people accompanied their teachers in class. They were excited to learn of things more relevant to their immediate lives and were enthusiastic about addressing issues within their families, neighborhoods, and communities.

The effort is expected to bring lasting change to Kapilvastu and herald a new way of thinking for the next generation of change makers who are better educated on harmful social norms and how to minimize their impact as well as play a positive role in spreading social awareness and change. Communication between young people, their teachers, school administrators, parents, communities now directly involve the police, conflict management, psycho-counseling, community score cards, observation tours to police offices and local governments, orientation on policies, rules and legal provisions, and positive energy.

*I felt the police and justice authorities were far too strict and hard-hearted. Now I have a better understanding of police work and why due process is required. We were trying to get the local government to build a safe house for women for more than four years. It needed SAHAJ to take local security and justice providers on an exposure visit for them to agree to construct a safe house for women and girls!*

*Anita Lamsal, Chairwoman,  
Simara Women's Saving and Credit Cooperative*

This initiative made clear that the local government wished to address gender-based violence in a meaningful way. Moving forward, the local government engaged with orientations, training, seminars, exposure exchanges, and interactions on harmful social norms, policy and legislation, and gender-based violence prevention fund meaningfully.

### **3.2.5 The people work with local governments and police to end the role of middle-men**

The District Police Office, in coordination with SAHAJ, Community Police Partnership Committee, and other stakeholders, involved members of the community in social accountability dialogue and interaction. The District Police Office assisted by publishing leaflets to inform the general public about the Gender Based Violence Act. A total of 94 women, adolescents and teenagers from wards 1 and 7 of were trained on Gender Based Violence Act and Complaint Process. One of the purposes of the actions was to build confidence within the community regarding the importance of reaching out to security and justice providers without the involvement of middle-persons or go-betweens. Communities were tired of people incited by others to file erroneous or falsified complaints. They were also tired of the practice of middle

men taking money from service seekers in government premises in the pretext of influence security and justice providers and promising quick service.

Therefore, it has been a practice of local governments and the police to encourage service seekers to file complaints without go-betweens much to the relief of the general public. Such middle men are now banned from entering government office space and police actions are changing things for the better for the people of Siraha. Many people in wards 1 and 7 are filing complaints without using intermediaries now.

According to Shashi Mitra Rishi, member of the district coordinating committee, people did not know of the existence of Women, Children and Senior Citizens Service Center where they could get help. SAHAJ helped increase awareness regarding its existence and function. Inspector Bechan Yadav says 11 cases of domestic violence have been registered in ward 1 and seven in ward 7 this month alone while only a total of 21 cases were registered in the whole of the last fiscal year.

### **3.2.6 Increased access to police for women affected by violence**

Due to the dialogue program between the police and the community held on 2071-10-21, the affected people have become aware of the access to social justice. The ward chairperson, chief administrative officer of the municipality, ward members, police and the community were on one platform. One affected woman, who was suffering from domestic violence, shared that she had problems as her mother-in-law not allowing her to use the toilet and hand pump at home. As she had five daughters, the woman was having serious problems because her children did not have access to clean water and the toilet either. Now her situation is better. She can use toilet and the domestic violence and mental stress is reduced. She can use clean water for food and washing.

Since many marginalized women do not go out of their homes, they suffer domestic and mental violence silently. Getting such opportunities to raise their voice in front of people's representatives, local governments, police, civil society organizations and religious, cultural, and social leaders empowers them. Working together, these entities can grant access to simple but important things to the people such as access to hand pumps and drinking water even as they find big solutions that impacts communities and the nation as a while.

### 3.3 Strengthen case referral and build capacities

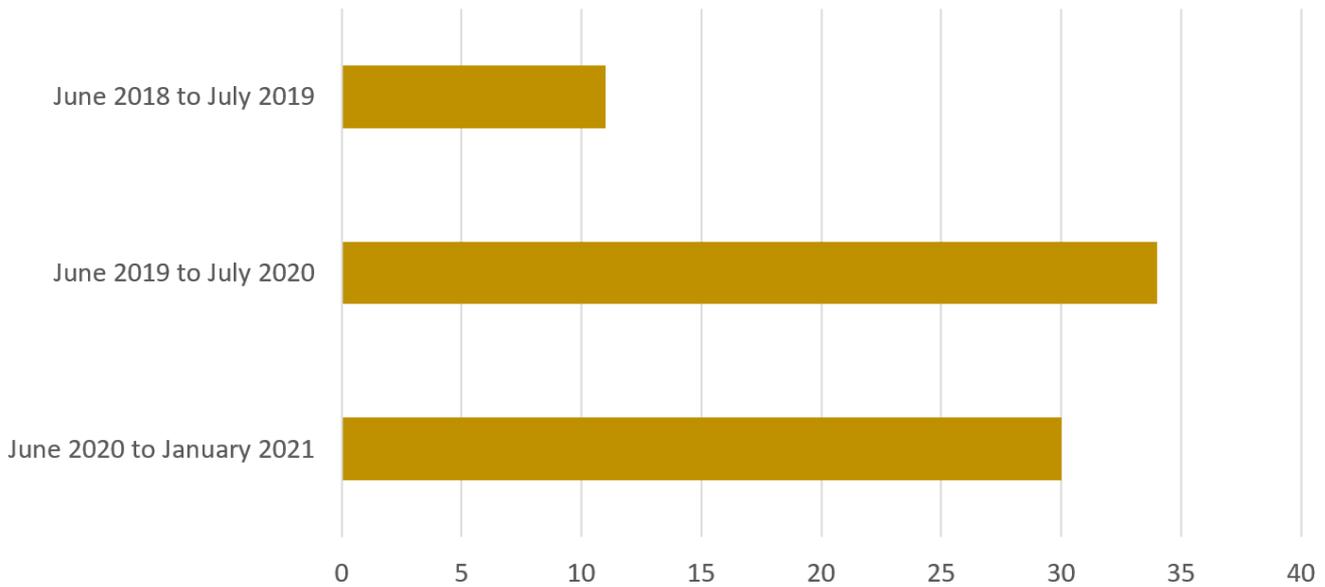
#### **Security and justice are supported by effective case referral, data, training, policy documents, equipment, institutionalized funds and processes**

The Referral Pathway Guidelines to Address GBV play an important role in the facilitation and administration of justice within communities. It is the mandate of Nepal Police to handle crime related cases while civil cases are handled by the judicial committees within local governments. Since this is relatively a new development, security and justice providers are still understanding which cases they should take and which should be referred to other justice authorities.

The project worked to support the capacity building of the recent judicial committees providing equipment and construction, supporting the development of policy documents, and encouraging formalization of processes. Eighty percent of local governments that were in the SAHAJ framework have endorsed the referral process with the remaining finalizing the processes to do so. When and where the referral pathway is effectively used, it has helped ease the burdens on the police allowing them to focus on criminal investigation and security.

The referral pathway has the potential to influence and support other areas and reduce harmful social norms. For example, this tool can be used to support the safe houses that are being built for women who require security as well as facilitate the gender-based violence funds that have been made compulsory for local governments.

Civil cases brought to the judicial committee



### 3.3.1 There is greater ease in administering justice

Traditionally, the courts were in charge of handling both civil and criminal cases with the police supporting investigation. However, that changed when the constitution of Nepal, Good Governance Act, and Good Governance Regulations gave local governments authority to handle civil cases through the judicial committee. Provincial, district and local governments have been undergoing a process of learning, training, and putting together the justice process all over the country, including in Pyuthan District.

According to Prakash Khatri, in-charge of the Area Police Office, Bijuwar, there was no co-ordination between the police and the judicial committee in resolving cases. While the police were to handle criminal cases and the judicial committee the civil cases, they, too, were confused and were handling all types of cases and did not know which cases to handover and which mechanism to use.

As SAHAJ worked with the Pyuthan Municipality security and justice services, the process of forming the judicial committee, its significance and authority under Section 47 A and B of the Local Government Operation Act 2074 were discussed. Article 47 A and B of the Local Government Operation Act 2074 clearly defined the judicial committee role, responsibilities, and jurisdiction. These documents were used to orient, train, and set plans, processes and mechanism with the participation of local government, people's representatives, police, and other stakeholders.

***I grew up here and learned social and political values in this community. So I know that they discourage gender-based violence related incidents from coming out. I internalized the seriousness of GBV and now I am more accountable towards the victims, taking personal interest in forwarding cases to the police and the courts.***

*Binod Kumar Sah, Chairperson, Brahampuri Rural Municipality*

Shanta Acharya, deputy mayor and coordinator of the judicial committee and Prakash Khatri, in-charge of the Area Police Office, said that they are now much clearer regarding police and judicial committee functions and the referral pathway. There is greater coordination between the two entities in delivering justice to service seekers and a monthly meeting further reinforces the sharing of information. "This will make justice faster, more efficient, less costly and save time," commented deputy mayor of Pyuthan Municipality.

### 3.3.2 Attitude and behaviour change in the police improves security and justice

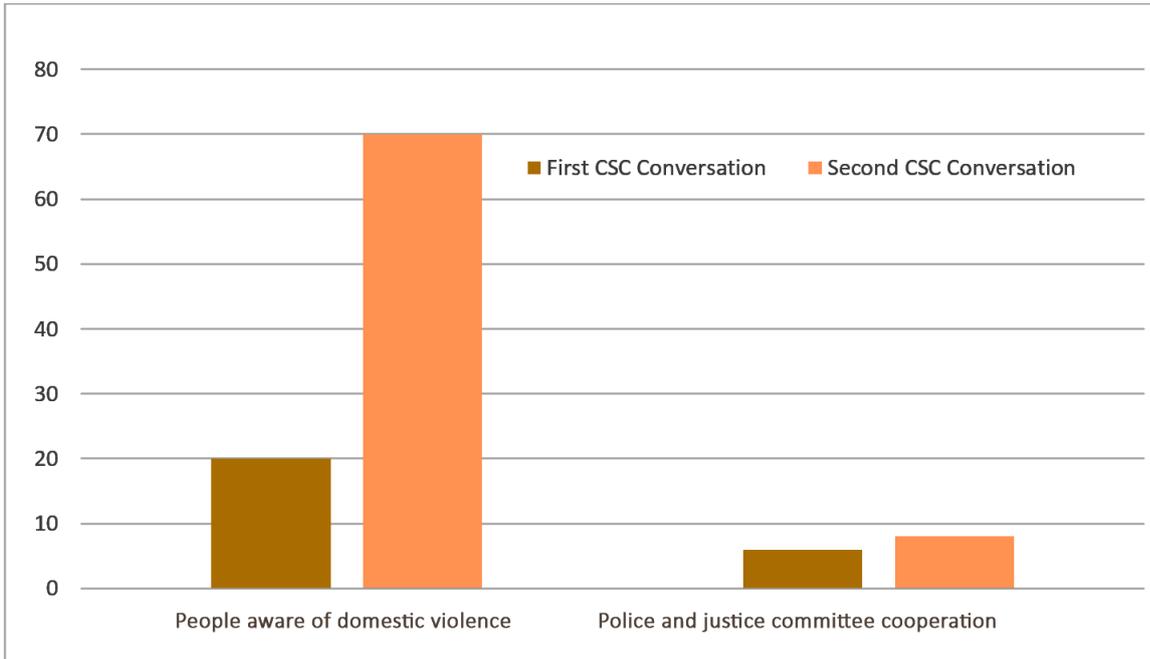
Communities openly complain that the police are unaware of their responsibility even as victims are asked to seek help from them. In order to address the situation, Nepal Police, SAHAJ and other stakeholders analyzed the situation. Measures were taken such as increasing patrol and improving communication, engaging more with rural areas of the Madhes, conducting interactive sessions, stepping up training, and encouraging victims to speak with the police by greeting their arrival, taking them to separate rooms for consultation, and making offerings of water. Police worked one-on-one with victims to help them and give their counseling even when they were not receiving support of their own family members. For example, the police helped a young woman to register a case though the parents of the victim did not want to go to court. The young woman appreciated the counseling of the police and decided to seek justice in court. This was marked as a situation where the community appreciated the role of the police. In the past, police used to reprimand the victim or ask them to settle the situation outside the court, they said.

### 3.3.3 Performance of the judicial committee has improved

Kawasoti Municipality is developing as the district headquarters and is faced with many opportunities and challenges as it transforms. Though there are 98 registered mediators in the Kawasoti Municipal Judicial committee, not all of them were active. Minor disputes were referred to the judicial committee for resolution from the wards and this created a huge workload for the committee. Greater understanding of procedure, lack of faith among justice seekers resulted in many cases going to the police and to the courts.

In order to improve things, the referral pathway came in very useful as did consultations and advice. Computers and electronic technology provided by SAHAJ helped significantly. The roster of mediators was refreshed, they were trained and activated. The pressure on the judicial

Before and after CSC, Kawasoti Municipality, Parasi District



committee decreased as most of the cases were settled in the wards. Increased coordination between the police has made it easier to discuss cases and make effective decisions. The cases to be registered with the judicial committee were decided quickly and the faith of the general public increased.

Plans were developed and implemented. Technical assistance was provided. When comparing the data between municipalities, efficiency and performance of the judicial committees has increased.

**3.3.4 Confusion of jurisdiction between police and judicial committee is addressed**

When the judicial committee started working on cases, there was confusion between the police and the local governments on the nature of cases they would handle. There was confusion in some locations with the local governments and the police unsure of their areas of jurisdiction. SAHAJ brought the police, the judicial committee and other stakeholders together organizing meetings, seminars and orientations and involving experts who could better clarify the situation. The referral pathway was the most viable solution to handling the situation. Most local governments have now appointed legal advisors to support the judicial committee.

With the police increasing their vigilance as they selected cases and referred others, the municipality also began to refer cases to the police. Due to the continuous meetings

of the community representatives, judicial committee and the police to discuss various incidents and assess the shortcomings, improvements are being made and action is being taken. Cases were handled with greater speed and justice provided leading to greater satisfaction among justice seekers. Police Inspector Deepak Babu KC said that it was good that local government and judicial committee is functional and this is due to federal structure of government which allows local bodies to do much of the work. It is easier to work with the local government to achieve security and justice, he said.

**3.3.5 The community is learning who to approach: the judicial committee or the police**

Though the project has operated only for two years, it was implemented at a key time. In Rapti Rural Municipality of Dang District disputes were traditionally reported to the police. Civil cases as well as criminal cases went to them. The first challenge was to address the confusion between the police and the local governments on how the cases should be differentiated. As local governments and the police started working together and understood each other's jurisdictions, it was very interesting that the community was also learning through the project activities regarding the difference. Instead of just going to the police, there has been an increase in people going to the judicial committee to resolve disputes that are civil in nature. Coordination between the police, judicial committee and other stakeholders of the community resulted in awareness of the varying responsibilities of

### 3.4 Improve community-police partnership

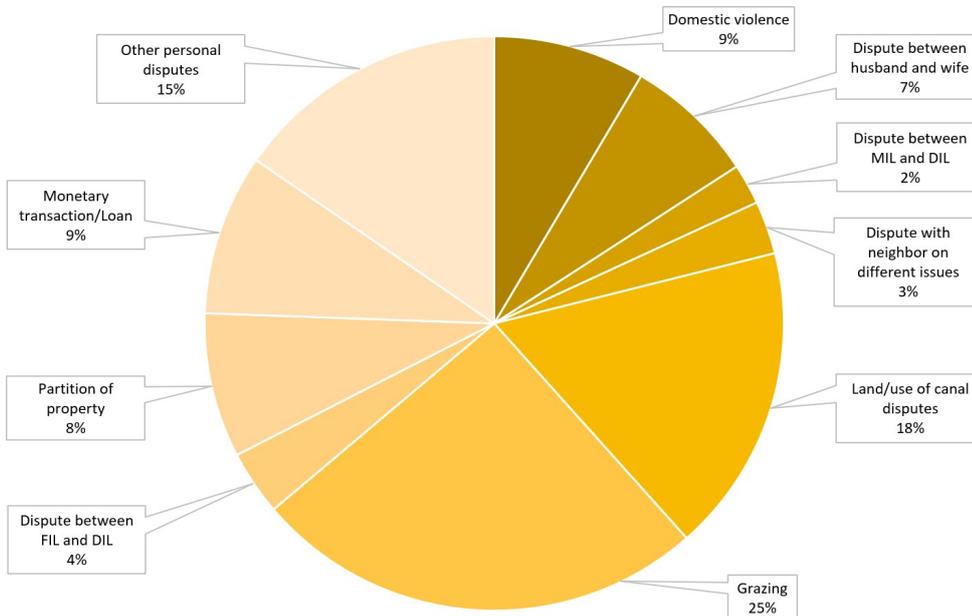
#### As communities work with the police, security and justice delivery becomes faster and better

Even educated and affluent people across the world feel nervous when they interact with the police or justice providers. In rural Nepal, the problem is worse having been exacerbated by the ten-year insurgency that cost thousands of lives, injuries, and mental scarring. The project worked to improve the perception of the police through information, direct interaction, and activities that led to greater understanding of those providing security and justice in Nepal.

This led to more positivity within communities and the public leading to greater numbers of women and other victims seeking justice without the involvement of third parties. The difficult hill and mountain terrain of Nepal, remoteness of settlements, bad weather conditions, bad or non-existent road networks all combine to make things difficult for security and justice response especially during emergencies.

Human and system induced delays were reduced when responding to calls for help. However, victims and survivors continue to complain that they have a difficult time eliciting response even when there are in the offices of security and justice providers. Therefore, the project worked with the police, local government administrators, people’s representatives and justice personnel to increase empathy, understanding, and reduce the time taken to provide service to those in need.

#### Cases registered with judicial committees in 2020



#### 3.4.1 Cooperation between police and the community

Bhalwari Maharajanj is a relatively new municipality. In the context of the Madhes Andolan uprising of the mid-2010s that consumed the Terai, there was much negativity towards the police. Residents of the municipality were mostly afraid of the police while the rural community believed that the police provided service to the larger centers and would not listen to them. The interaction and learning activities of SAHAJ was given continuity in urban as well as rural areas of the

municipality and has increased cooperation between the police and the community. Police personnel were directly involved in its public awareness programs at schools, villages, and public gatherings. When on patrol, they listened to the advice of the community score card meetings have been meeting with community leaders and social workers to gather information on the condition of the neighborhoods and to create a positive environment for security seekers. An atmosphere of trust has now been created for women, children, youth and senior citizens to come forward on

their own without using go-betweens to seek security and justice. The number of people seeking help from the police has increased, the police are always present at the main intersections and participate actively in social work.

#### 3.4.2 Citizens donate to the police

Jeetpur Simara is a sub-metropolis of Bara District. It features important industries of Nepal. Parts of the community believes in philanthropy and distributes food items to orphanages and old age homes. Even when covid started spreading in the community, this practice continued. In the meanwhile, in prisons of Bara and in police stations as well the virus was spreading. It infected local government staff, people's representatives, and security personnel. Simara Savings and Cooperative Society acted to let the police know that the community was thinking about them at a time of crisis and fear.

They started a campaign of support for the police and collected various food items and had them delivered to the police office. J.P. Karna, sub-inspector at the Simara Area Police Office as well as all police personnel were touched by this generosity of the people, "I used to think that no matter how much we do, the people only find ways to blame the police, this had never happened in my life before, I was so happy," he said. When asked why the cooperative decided to run a campaign for the police, its officials said that they were very impressed when they participated in SAHAJ activities.

#### 3.4.3 Dialogue calms religious infighting

Disputes arises sometimes between individuals, families, neighbors and in this case between two communities of Jaleshwarnath Municipality. Ward chairperson Surendra Panda played a constructive role in order to calm down and solve the dispute which had escalated into violence in partnership with security and justice providers in the communities. Religion and deep-rooted traditions and beliefs that may transcend centuries such as Hindu and Muslim factionists have led with violence not only in nations such as Pakistan and India but also in Nepal. Such engagements increased during various festivals, including Dasain when people consume alcohol and let their guards down, sometimes taunting other religious or cultural groups. SAHAJ led the conversation in the presence of security and justice providers along with community leaders, religious leaders, other human rights groups and political activists to help calm down the repetitive situation and addressing the issues through positive dialogue. The police helped by taking a lead role in the conversations, increasing patrols, decreasing tensions, gaining the respect of the communities and

helping the people increase tolerance for each other's religions.

*This is the first time that local community members have given us such warmth. This was a very positive experience for me.*

*Kamal Bahadur Shahi, justice worker*

#### 3.4.4 Increased coordination between citizens and police

In Pyuthan many people were not very clear as to where the police office was, the services it provided, and how to get help. Citizens did not fully trust the police or were afraid of them. After being involved in the project meetings, the police started door-to-door campaigning and conversation with the people. The community also began to humanize the people in uniform. SAHAJ activities were conducted simultaneously with the police and the people in order to increase closeness and cooperation.

The approach of the police towards the citizens has changed. Disputes between women are solved by women police. According to Bijuwar police data, the number of people registering complaints has increased. Citizens says that they are satisfied with police visibility, attitude and service. They say they can now raise their concerns without fear. Coordination and monthly meetings between Pyuthan Municipality, Community Police Partnership program and the judicial committee stress the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the people as security and justice is provided.

#### 3.4.5 Nepal Police and the community work to help service seekers apply for security and justice

One of the reasons to discourage go-betweens in the security and justice sector was the heavy presence of middle-men who charged victims hefty fees to fill forms, make applications, and influence the security and justice process. The government has discouraged such presence from all public offices. Instead, police personnel themselves help those who cannot read and write or those who do not know how to fill forms and make applications.

Since the process of filing the applications can be tedious with those seeking security and justice having to get the application verified at different levels, some of the victims returned without registering their cases. With a change of process, the police in Area Police Office, Simara, are now helping service seekers by writing their applications and helping them fill their forms. So far, 53 applications have been registered as opposed to 27 last year.

### Covid infected police personnel as of October 2020

	Total Police (Posting)	Actual Number	PCR Test		COVID Positive	
Province 2	5,761	4,500	1,337	30%	335	7%
Province 5	5,344	5,116	1,304	25%	363	7%
Province 5 (H)	1,031	789	95	12%	10	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,136</b>	<b>10,405</b>	<b>2,736</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>7%</b>

### GBV case registration before and during the pandemic

	No of Dist.	Before Pandemic (15 Dec - 15 Mar 2020)		During Pandemic (15 Apr- 15 Jul 2020)		Status
		Total Case	Case/ District	Total Case	Case/District	
Province 2	6	609	101.50	540	90.00	-11%
Province 5	5	336	67.20	600	120.00	79%
Province 5 (H)	2	30	15.00	17	8.50	-43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>75.00</b>	<b>1157</b>	<b>89.00</b>	<b>19%</b>

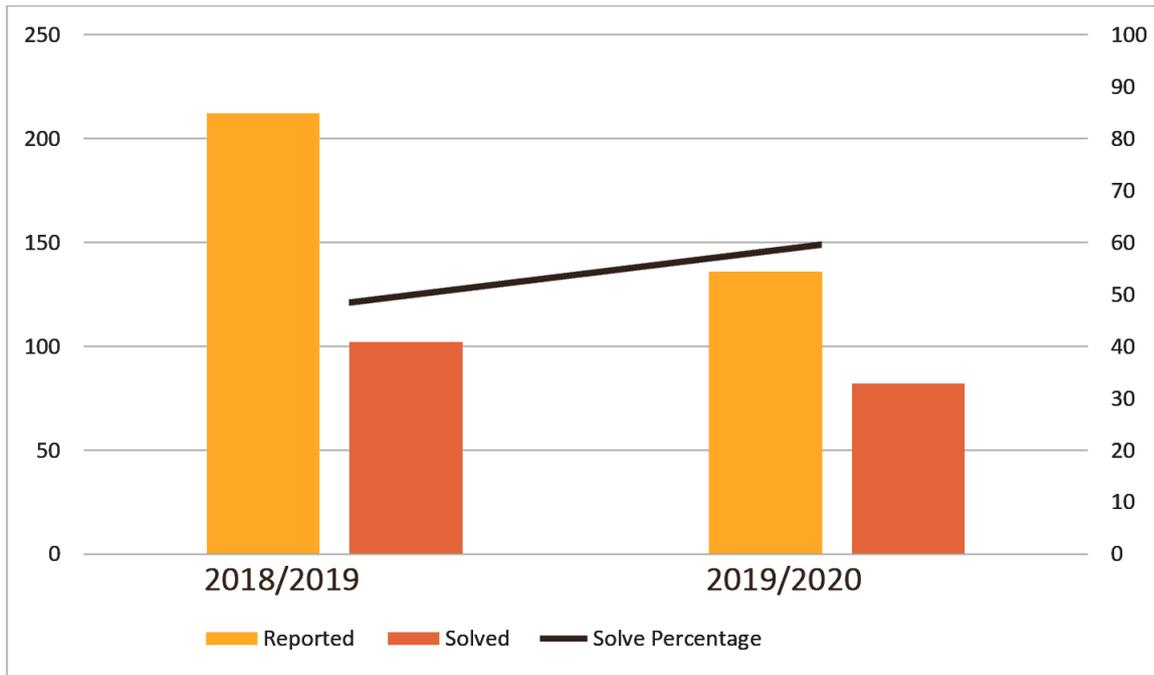
### Other case registration before and during the pandemic

	No of Dist.	Before Pandemic (15 Dec - 15 Mar 2020)		During Pandemic (15 Apr- 15 Jul 2020)		Status
		Total Case	Case/ District	Total Case	Case/District	
Province 2	6	696	116.00	803	133.83	15%
Province 5	5	734	146.80	476	95.20	-35%
Province 5 (H)	2	11	5.50	9	4.50	-18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1441</b>	<b>110.85</b>	<b>1288</b>	<b>99.08</b>	<b>-11%</b>

### Economic support was provided to women at risk

SAHAJ provided financial support to women at risk so they could become economically independent. Support of Rs. 30,000 helped women started enterprises such as grocery shops, beauty parlours, food stalls, tailoring shops, and initiate animal homesteading with chicken, goats, cows, and buffalos. SAHAJ helped the women train in small business operation, gain skills in their particular area of interest, provided follow-up training and help when the businesses did not pick up as expected. Second phase support was also provided to help them secure their business and income for the longer term. The aim of the fund is to help women at risk become financially independent and less prone to be victimized in a nation where a large proportion of the population suffers poverty. Having their own incomes will allow women at risk to make decisions related to their own health care, nutrition, education, and mobility.

GBV cases reported to the police vs. cases solved



Safe houses come into operation

Safe house for victims of gender-based violence has been established in Rolpa as well as eight other locations. Women can seek secure shelter at the safe house by obtaining a letter from the police or the judicial committee. Their operation is supported by the concerned municipalities, the mayor’s office, the District Police Chief’s office with some contribution from SAHAJ and other non-government organizations. A joint meeting on how to use the safe house in Rolpa involved representatives from all municipalities and funds were committed by all patriating municipalities for its operation. Safe house chairperson Tirtha Acharya said that was easier to get financial and other help because of data showing the effective use of the safe house.

*After getting advice, including from SAHAJ, the executive board passed the Gender Based Violence Control Act 2077 and the Preshan Pranali Procedure 2077. Additionally, the Emergency Security Housing Service Center Operation Procedure 2077 was approved to help victims of violence.*

*Binod Kumar Sah,  
Chairman, Brahmapuri  
village, Sarlahi*

Funds for gender-based violence survivors

Gender Based Violence Prevention Fund has been supporting victims and survivors for the past three years. Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan Municipality disseminated information on the fund to the victims through social organizations, stakeholders and ward offices. Eight victims received direct assistance from the fund supported by the federal government. The fund supports psychological and medical care as well as economic rehabilitation of victims.

### 3.5 Prevent violence

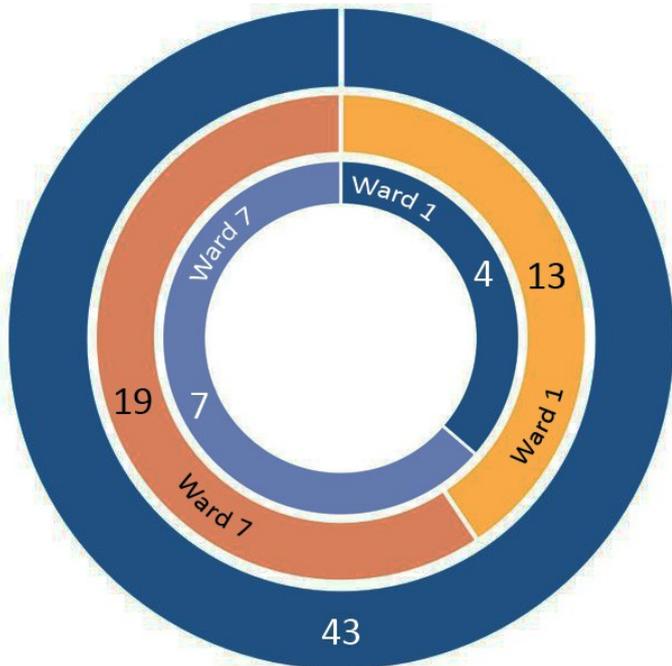
#### Traditional and modern harmful beliefs and attitudes such as child marriage, vulgarity in songs and cyber safety are addressed

Whether it be inappropriate songs blaring over loudspeakers causing distress to women, children, and families and inciting violence or traditional beliefs that discriminate against mother who have given birth to daughters, there are many incoming harmful norms and others that have been entrenched in Nepalese society for hundreds of years.

Many of these were addressed through radio, television, and print media as well as orientations, meetings, and workshops as well as full blown campaigns targeting schools, religious groups, youth clubs and other influencers by SAHAJ. Effort was made to bring women out of closed communities so they could seek help if needed, school children were educated on where and how they can protect themselves from online predators and a wide variety of methods and groups were targeted in order to prevent violence caused by harmful social norms.

A concentrated and sustained campaign was undertaken against underage marriage. From girls of religious minorities stopping their proposed betrothal to priests asking the age of the young people that they are being asked to marry, there is greater recognition that young people need to mature before they are able to take on adult responsibilities.

#### Domestic violence reported in Siraha



■ July 2018 to June 2019  
■ July 2019 to June 2020  
■ July 2020 to January 2021

#### 3.5.1 Justice inside the home is addressed

In Pratappur Rural Municipality, Nawalparasi, Asho Kurmi is working to reduce harmful social norms inside his own home after attending SAHAJ activities. The practice of most parts of Nepal, and particularly the Terai, is that women are in charge of all household work. They start work very early, “those who wake up late bring ill fortune to the home,” and work until late at night. The men themselves may choose to wake up later, do not need to help with household work, “men in the kitchen and men using the broom bring great shame to the family.”

Asho is helping his wife with housework, washing, cleaning, and taking care of the children for the traditional practice is that women do most of the work related to the upbringing of the children in the family. “It is a harmful social norm to make women do all the work around the home,” he says. “We need to prevent these from causing harm.” And indeed, the image of men lounging about while the women work is the established normal to see in rural as well as urban settings around the country.

As others in the community watch the family, some feel that it is not manly for male members of the family to do such work while many women and families find what Mr. Kurmi is doing is inspiring. “I hope that this will encourage other men in the community to also take him as a role model and help their families,” comments a facilitator.

### 3.5.2 Cyber abuse has been addressed promptly

Shantinagar Rural Municipality, Dang. The girl was shy. She was alone. She was only 17. She came to the police station to file a case against the abuse she was facing on social media. Usually teens from marginalized communities do not speak about abuse that takes place against them online for the fear of retaliation against them by the perpetrators, their own families, and the community.

She filed a cybercrime complaint with the police office who gave her security, privacy, fair investigation, and ultimately, she was able to get justice. With the advent of the world wide web and its pervasiveness across the country, young women like her are often targeted for abuse and exploitation. While a few stand up to their abusers, most are victimized, exploited, blackmailed and ostracized by their families and the community.

The project addressed cyber bullying, porn revenge, and other aspects of online safety and potential solutions and ways out to prevent young people from being victimized. Adolescents became more sensitized about cybercrime and know that abusers can be tracked down even if they are using fake names and identification online. Those at risk and those prone to make use of this dangerous method of abuse were both informed about the seriousness of the crime and the potential punishments associated with such activity. SAHAJ conducted adolescent orientations, interaction on social media and its problems, and shared legal options and repercussions of internet or phone call related abuse. After she received justice and support, two more girls of Shantinagar sought protection from cyber abuse and were provided security and justice.

### 3.5.3 Action against porn music played over loudspeakers

Prevention of fights, eve teasing, abuse and potential violence within communities involved SAHAJ in addressing modern harmful norms as well as traditional ones. Weddings, birthdays, special ceremonies, including religious ceremonies are marked by blaring music played over loudspeakers (sometimes multiple ones) in the Terai region, especially in Siraha region. The loudness is a disturbance to babies, students and professionals at work already but tolerated as a part of the culture. However, when disc jockeys, some of them brought in from India, started playing pornographic music to intoxicated crowds in conservative neighborhoods whole communities were upset but for a long time nothing was done about it. When SAHAJ organized a public hearing on security and access to justice for the general public, the issue was raised.

*When my husband beat me and my sister, I went to police they asked me to file a complaint. When I told them that we didn't know how to write in Nepali they helped me write the complaint. They then called my husband and mother-in-law and mediated so I would no longer be physically attacked.*

*Roshan Khatun, survivor*

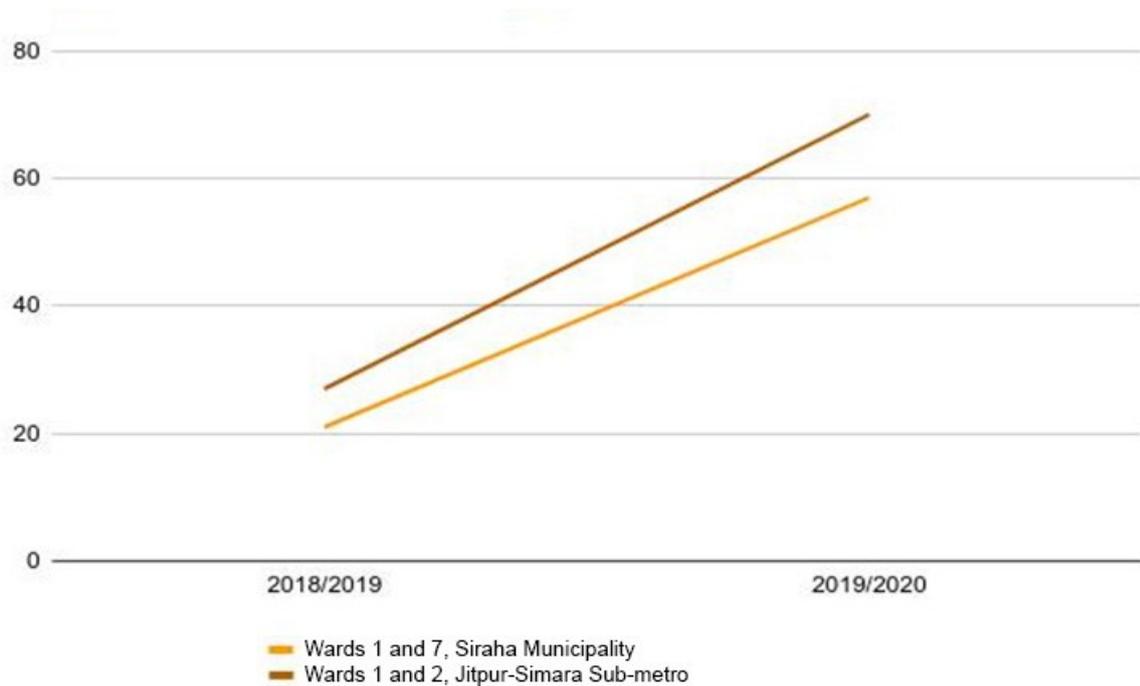
Nepal Police, the local government, district administration office, local media and the civil society along with SAHAJ partnered on a district-wide campaign urging all the 17 wards of the district to ban such music throughout the district. IEC material was distributed in communities on legal provisions related to sexual violence, religious leaders from different areas supported the initiative and five DJs were detained for breaking the code and action taken. A civic hearing was held with the support of SAHAJ with victims sharing that they faced sexual violence every day due to such obscene songs and everyone agreed that their communities were safer because the practice was controlled.

### 3.5.4 Communities protest child marriage by not attending such marriages

Despite laws forbidding early marriage, some families are willing to marry off their children early. Many people in the community now ask the age of the bride and the groom when the marriage invitation card is delivered to them. Jaslarya, a Magar priest, did not attend the marriage of his neighbor's daughter who was married before she turned 20.

It has been well publicized that child marriage is a crime and those aiding and abetting this type of union can face criminal charges. A two-day training was provided by VSO and International Alert to sensitize religious leaders and community leaders on the harmful social norm. Emphasis was placed on Nepalese legal standpoint and religious texts. They were informed regarding their accountability to the law and potential consequences that they could face. Impact of early marriage on young people was stressed and everyone attending were taken on board on the battle

## Rise in gender-based violence cases registered with the police



against this practice. Priests of different religious sects who marry young people have now taken to asking the age of the proposed bride and groom before agreeing to perform a marriage ceremony leading to decrease and prevention of this harmful social norm.

### 3.5.5 A Muslim teen stops her marriage

A Muslim girl from Saraswati rural municipality was due to be married. Her family had her arranged her wedding. However, she protested and pointed out that child marriage is illegal. She acted against her family and while the issue was settled out of court and the proposed marriage canceled. This young girl had participated in a SAHAJ orientation on child marriage and shared with her mother what she had learned. During the discussion with family members, she was able to speak out clearly and make a logical argument based on health, safety, and legality of the step that her family had taken.

In order to further education related to child marriage and sexual health, SAHAJ has launched various activities in schools in partnership with the police. Students who participate in these sessions learn about harmful social norms, child marriage and violence against women.

### 3.5.6 Women are emerging from closed communities

Many communities and homes in Nepal, especially in marginalized and traditional communities do not allow women to leave the home and the community. This allows many harmful social norms to fester inside closed doors. Therefore, it is important to involve the communities so women and girls and other at-risk populations can reach out and communicate and seek justice if required.

With issues such as the migration of husbands to other nations in search of work leaving women vulnerable to abuse at home; abuse and exploitation by husbands at home; lack of financial independence, education, and health services; lack of awareness as to where they can reach out for help if needed, SAHAJ made significant effort to create a situation where women and girls could come out of their homes and interact with the outside world. Orientations and interactions have been held in areas that would involve women and girls in closed communities, information has been made available as to where and how they can get help from security and justice providers. While only five women had lodged complaints with the police over two years a dozen women have lodged complaints over the recent past.

As women's participation has increased, so has their self-confidence and they have begun to coordinate with each other to prevent violence against themselves.

## 3.6 Transform harmful social practices

### **Violence against women and girls is better acknowledged within more homes, religious and social groups, structures and communities**

Positive change has taken place in many homes with roles of women and girls expanding into education, business, professions, social and political work. Traditional communities have accepted and encouraged the exploration of their children, spouses and elders after changing their views through the use of tools such as the community score card.

Instances of mainstream religious leaders standing up to decrease harmful social norms, male family and community members working actively to support women and girls, the project receiving the help of the media to address important issues, young people lobbying for change, and individuals, families, communities changing for the better are many.

Multiple partners of the project, justice providers and seekers, independent actors contributed to decrease harmful social norms across three provinces and 18 districts that were involved. SAHAJ interventions resulted in realization among many individuals and groups that there is need for the society to move forward positively.

#### **3.6.1 Muslim religious leaders stand up against harmful social norms**

Young people from Muslim communities often study in village madrasas and masjids rather than mainstream schools. They are often told what goes on inside their homes and communities need to stay within their homes and communities. Information and help should not be sought outside for it will hurt dignity and honor.

Therefore, the role of Muslim religious leaders in Brahmapuri to take initiative in the fight against harmful social norms is an important landmark. Stepping away from the traditional approach belief that everything in our society and culture is the best, they have taken to speaking up against gender and domestic violence.

Stepping away from the blanket belief that anything that changes established family and social structure is not good, they have started addressing harmful social practices and rejecting cultural and ritual aspects that are against the law and human decency. Muslim religious leaders and members of the community who did not attend outside activities are now a regular part of SAHAJ programs and events.

Dialogue has taken place within Muslim communities, social recognition of gender-based violence has taken place, members of the community have attended orientations, meetings and workshops. They have prepared street drama and partnered with community police partnership programs. The religious leaders say that they have been influenced by the two-day training and other activities organized by the project with its partners. They say the education that is being imparted is working and behavior has changed and an

environment has been created wherein harmful beliefs and practices can be addressed.

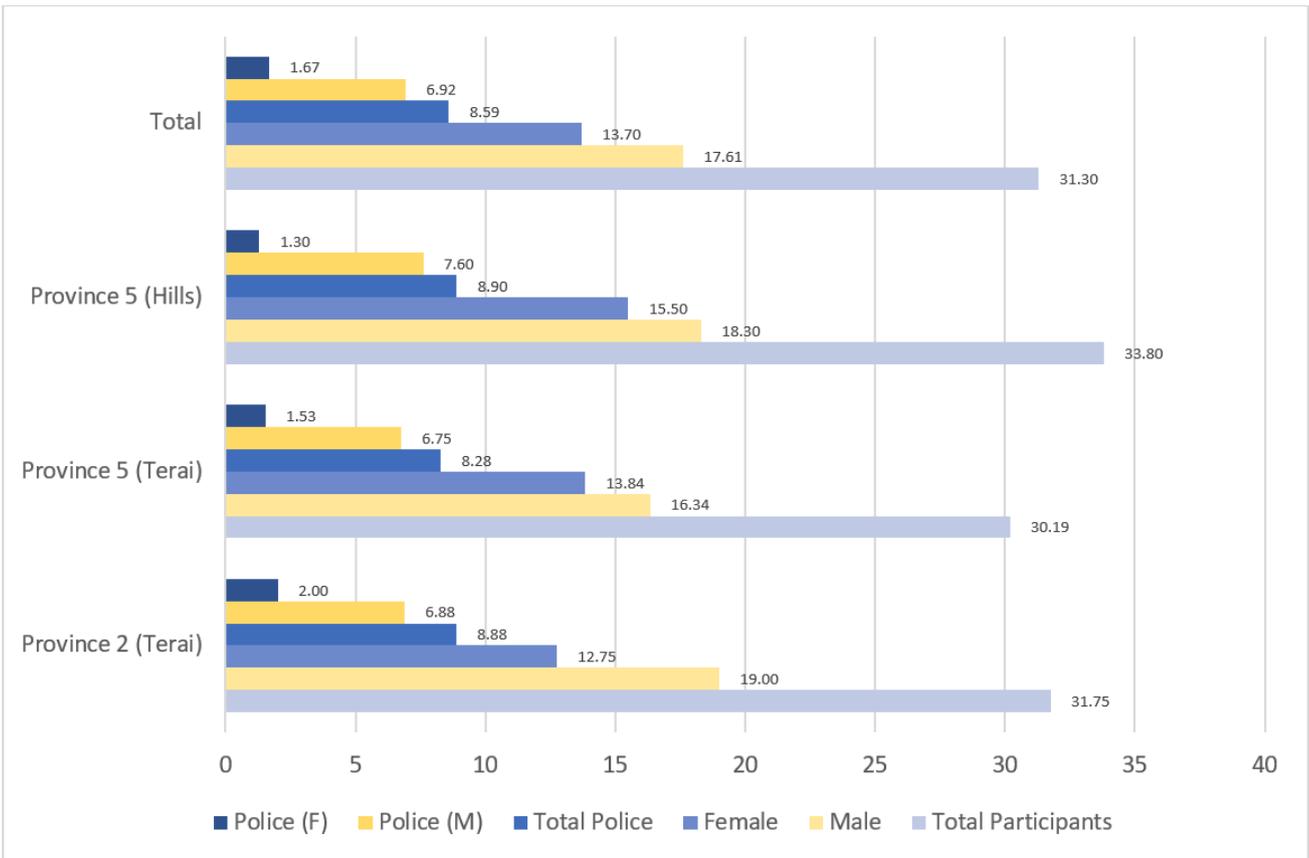
#### **3.6.2 Social leaders are at the forefront**

Child marriages are taking place in Rajgadh, Saptari, due to lack of public awareness. The local government and its judicial committee has also shown initiative in putting a stop to these practices. Besides mass communication, it involved 440 women, men and children in awareness activities. The Community Police Partnership Committee is a partner of this effort conducted different activities in many settlements and villages. Young people are advised to contact toll free number of the District Police Office for immediate response to the call for help.

***Narul Haq Ansari,  
chairperson of Nuriya Faizane  
Raja Madarsa singles out  
parents who discriminate  
between sons and daughters.  
He has clinic at Brahmapuri  
Chowk. He says, "People who  
commit violence should be  
socially excluded. I cannot do  
that on my own but at least I  
can exclude them from the  
services I provide through my  
clinic."***

*Gita Sharma, ward 2, Jitpur Simara*

Involvement in CSC activities, a breakdown



*We always go to the police asking for help, we expect them to find solutions to our sorrows and pains. But we rarely think about what they go through. After participating in community score card activities and listening to what the police have to say, I now know a lot more about the challenges they face.*

Community leaders are also discouraging people from seeking justice from the panchayat for major cases: a gathering of elders and the respected would settle such disputes through a public gathering in the past. The municipal government of Rajbiraj has also been conducting programs on child marriage and gender-based violence. A relationship between the community,

the police and the judicial committee has improved and there has been a reduction in instances of child marriage.

**3.6.3 Hindu and tribal religious leaders are a part of the effort**

Rajbiraj is the oldest and largest municipality of Saptari inhabited by a mixed community. The root cause of the violence is the pervasive harmful social values established in the communities here. Pandit and purohit priests have a major influence in Rajbiraj. They, too, are very concerned and in order to make lives better, they have taken a lead bringing change. SAHAJ trained 30 pandits and shamans of Rajbiraj and Tilathikoiladi and has organized multi-ethnic, multi-religious dialogues.

Today Hindu priests and tribal shamans refused to conduct marriage ceremonies if the proposed bride is not 20, accepted as legal by the laws of Nepal. Their support has led to the police stopping a number of underage marriages. They have taken to reporting gender and domestic violence and promoting respect for women and children. They were a part of the effort which led to the banning of pornographic music played over loudspeakers during marriage and other social ceremonies. They have started sharing information on what procedures to follow and who to approach if they come across

victims and survivors of violence in their community. Women who were set on fire, women accused of being a witch, and other cases have benefitted from their positive involvement.

#### **3.6.4 Men show commitment to change**

A father of four daughters and married to a Muslim woman, he takes care of his daughters at home while his wife earns money working outside the community. Like him, Ram Prasad Poudel believes that women are not the only ones who should be taking care of cleaning the home, cooking and washing, taking care of children and household pets and animals.

With most households in rural communities owning chicken, goats, and even cows and buffalos, all of this takes a lot of time and effort. Men's involvement in this work would result in better quality of life for everyone concerned, he feels. After attending SAHAJ activities, his world view has changed, he says as he looks after the children, cooks, and eats together with his wife. While eating together should not be remarkable, it is the established practice in many homes of the Terai that the men eat first while the women wait for them.

His wife comments that her life is easier now and she appreciates the help from her husband. She hopes other men in the community will follow the example set by her husband and help their wives and take care of their families better. Over a 16-day campaign against gender-based violence, Triveni Rural Municipality of Rolpa District declared men as GBV Champions for their contribution to the improvement of the lives of women and girls.

#### **3.6.5 Teenaged boys take up the brooms**

Two teenaged boys of Rapti are contributing inside the home. They have taken up the broom and sweep their homes, they help in the kitchen with the cooking, they wash clothes. This is very different from the norms of the community where they live.

Boys are considered special by families and study and play while the girls of the family take care of household work. Taking up the broom, washing dishes and clothes and cooking is considered undignified for men and boys. They usually get the better and more expensive food, clothing, and education. This form of discrimination is that the two teens are fighting against.

***The police did not come to our settlement regularly. They only came if there was a criminal incident. Now they come to meet us and conduct public awareness events and talk about the services that they can provide.***

*Random attendee of a community-police awareness event, Pyuthan Municipality*

After attending a 2-day training on life skills for adolescents by SAHAJ, the two boys realized that they, too, did not help out at home. They understood that this way of doing things had to change. Because they were going against family and social norms, they first had to convince their family that what they were doing was right. After getting over the initial shock of seeing their boys doing housework, the family is now proud of what they do and appreciates their initiative.

#### **3.6.6 Housewives are awarded**

On the concluding day of the 16-day campaign against gender-based violence, a housewife of Yashodhara in Kapilvastu District, Kavitri Nau, was awarded and her work recognized by the municipality, SAHAJ and its stakeholders and the community.

Kavitri Nau used to be confined to the house. She lived indoors, cooked and fed her children and family, and did not talk to people outside the family. She was very active, she was teaching her daughter how to sew and assuring that her boys and girls all went to school.

When she participated in project activities, she decided that time had come for change. She began advocating gender rights and walked across her community with a campaign bag at her side. Everyone in the community and outside point out to her as the burka wearing woman who is bringing change to the community, fighting for justice and assuring safety of women and girls. After an intensive discussion at the municipality, it was decided that her work and dedication should be honored.

## 3.7 Build the capacity of key stakeholders

### **Support local governments, police, judicial committees, political-religious-social representatives, the civil society, and the community in general during a time of rapid development**

A key achievement of SAHAJ was to build the capacity of a diverse group of partners, justice seekers and justice providers. Nepal was changing rapidly as a nation. Federalism was being put into practice, provinces were being strengthened, responsibility of governance at the grassroots was being handled by local governments.

However, there is need for technical support and capacity building at the grassroots. Many people's representatives had been elected for the first time, policy-legislation formulation was a new practice for many of them, development of procedures and guidelines had not been done, data management was a challenge and with key actors not having experience and relevant education, there was a great need for support.

SAHAJ was able to help local governments and people's representatives, security and justice seekers and providers, the general public through targeted activities and interventions. From managing information, sharing how policies and laws can be developed and implemented, to assisting youth as they sought to help their communities, the project played a significant role in building the capacity of key stakeholders.

#### **3.7.1 Organization of judicial committee data**

Cases and their details were not documented in a systematic way while filling up the judicial committee's decision monitoring form in Yashodhara Rural Municipality, Kapilvastu. All cases were written down in one register so it was a challenge to get the information. Decisions made of a case were found in writing. The order in which cases were heard and the mediators who were to be assigned was not done systematically either. There was the impression that mediation should be conducted by the judicial committee. Coordination between the police and the judicial committee was weak. There was a backlog of 36 cases.

After the data was organized and made systematic, the backlog was cleared in a month. Files had been created according to the nature of the cases and the decisions recorded in an accessible manner. The roster of mediators was updated and their raining levels marked. Capacity had to be built and knowledge shared regarding the duties and legal jurisdiction of the judicial committee, including that of administrative staff.

Since not everyone in Nepal can read or write and some people's representatives may also face these challenges, legal information had to be imparted in a way that could be easily understood. Standardization of judicial process, management of justice delivery, and documentation process was achieved. The judicial committee vice-chairperson commented that, "Capacity of justice providers, administrators of the justice process, and justice seekers improved as did the effectiveness of our work due to this SAHAJ intervention.

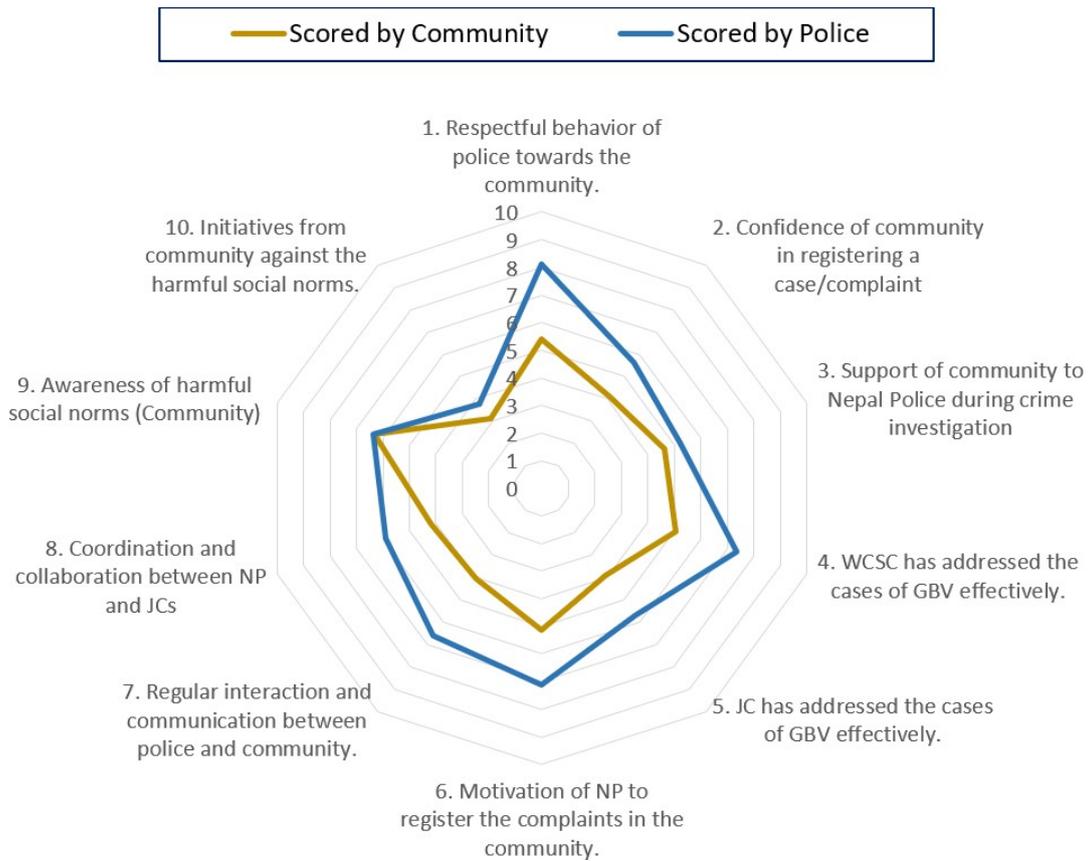
#### **3.7.2 Policies for a rural municipality**

Bramhapuri Rural Municipality tried to settle all cases in their own municipality. Women did not want to go public with their problems for fear of what their community would say. Families would much rather prefer to keep things quiet. Therefore, there was need to develop a system that would engage the whole of the citizenry. They spent two years of prioritizing physical infrastructure such as roads and drainage. Its representatives knew that the local government could make policies and legislate but everyone's attention was focused maximum budget allocation for their wards so they could gravel roads, build bridges and canals and show their constituents physical proof of their achievements.

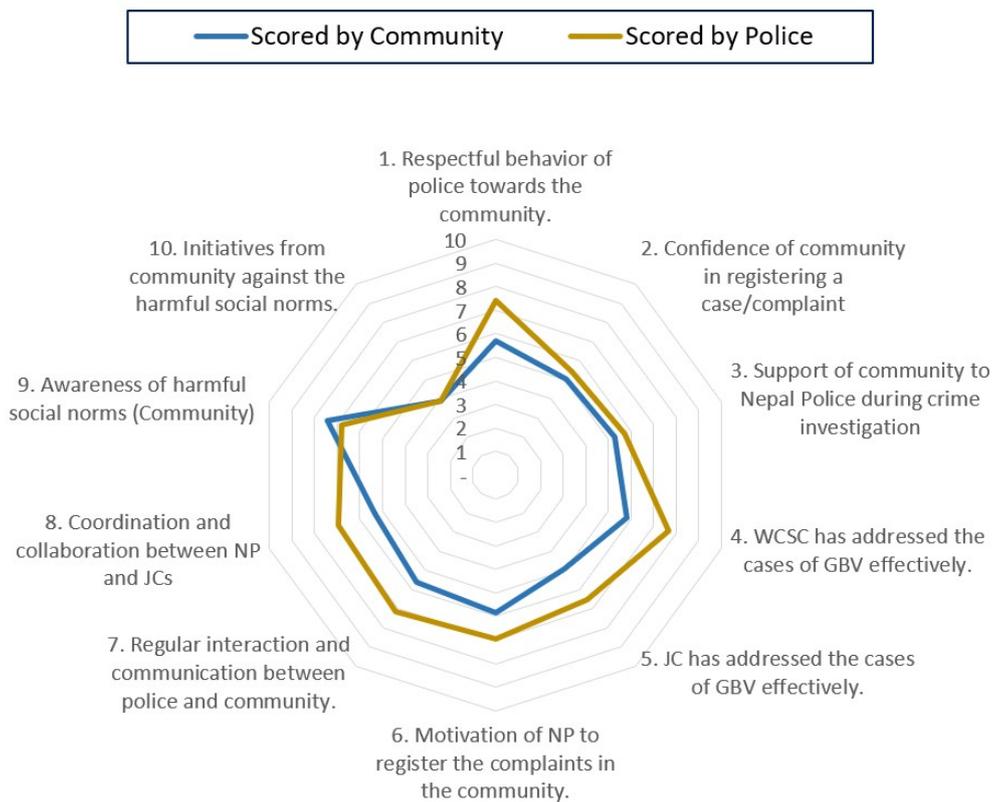
After participating in various activities organized by the project, local government representatives began to understand that it was their responsibility to form municipal policy. During the exchange program of December 2019, they heard and studied policies and laws of various local governments. During review, ward chairpersons said that Bramhapuri was lagging behind in terms of legislation and policy formation.

Faced with the need to minimize gender-based violence in the municipality, they collaborated with SAHAJ in early 2020 created a roster of mediators. They also passed the Gender Based Violence Control Act, created procedures, and passed the Emergency Security Shelter Operation Procedure.

### Community score card results, phase 1



### Community score card results, phase 2



People's representatives felt that the formation of these policies made Bramhapuri Rural Municipality strong. The judicial committee also found the use of these policies and legislation helped them to make decisions.

E-learning exchanges visits, community score card implementation, workshops and seminars on mediation, meetings, orientations, emergency safety, acts and procedure technical assistance, and material assistance has also been provided by the project.

### 3.7.3 Buddhabhumi implements policies and laws

Buddhabhumi municipality faced increasing gender and domestic violence and began formulating policies and laws to increase access of those at risk, victims, and survivors to security and justice. While the policies and laws came into place, procedures were not put in place to administer them effectively. As a result, though the municipality was well-intentioned, it had difficulties implementing security and justice in an accessible manner.

*Women rarely went to the police seeking help and even women who went asked me to accompany them. They do not come to me anymore as the police help them process the complaint for them. I am happy to see this very positive approach from the police as many women in our community do not know how to read and write and need help.*

*Shobha Karki, activist*

Working with SAHAJ, they worked on step by step procedures, published them, placed them online, and made them accessible so those in need could understand and use them. Since the policies and laws were already formed and in place, the effort to inform seekers and providers of security and justice had to be made aware as to where they could seek information. Dedicated to

providing effective service under a one-stop system, they formed a working committee that upgraded procedures, made new guidelines and disseminated this information to a wider population.

### 3.7.4 Women leaders are trained and know their rights and responsibilities

Hastakala Rai is a housewife. When she was elected to the position of a ward member of Gaushala Nagar Municipality she had difficulty understanding and solving problems, debating, and giving effective service to her constituents.

When SAHAJ was implemented in her municipality, she started attending its orientations, training, exposure visits, and other activities. She learned how to discuss issues, objectives, and solutions and deal systematically with problems using an adaptable process. She learned to be resilient in the face of challenges and think practically. She learned more about harmful social norms and what she could do for women and girls and marginalized people. Her ways of working, speaking, behaving and processing improved.

This led to her being more effective while reducing stress and avoiding conflict. She knew her responsibilities. Her conversations and presentations before the public improved as she learned to stay on topic and address the matter in an informed way. She said that she was scared to speak, found it difficult to listen to criticism, and thanked SAHAJ for helping her and other women and girls in the community. She said meeting fellow women leaders, forming women's groups, and resisting gender and domestic violence had made a stronger and her work more meaningful.

### 3.7.5 Aware, funded, and trained: youth make a difference

Despite the spread of covid, Siraha Youth Club is distributing information on how to stay safe from the corona virus and reduce the gender and domestic violence during the pandemic. They have set up a stall at the main square of Madar Bazaar next to the Indian border distributing free masks and sanitizers. The stall also broadcasts a radio jingle and distributes pamphlets on avoiding infection and staying safe if infected as well as how to get help if there is gender-based violence are being distributed by the young people. SAHAJ stocks the masks and sanitizer for the youth club while providing management training and covering costs related to reaching out to the wider community using mobile carts.

## 4. Discussion of opportunities

### 1. Planning, policy making, and formation of legislation to implementation

SAHAJ came into action at a time local governments were beginning to form plans, policies and laws. It was a phase when technical support and expertise were very important.

SAHAJ was designed to fill this gap and help local governments as they formed plans, policies and laws. The project's involvement allowed the formation of gender friendly, victim centric, service seeker-provider dialogue guided plans, policies and laws at the local level.

The timeliness of the project will have long term influence at the local, district, and provincial levels of government. The project serves as a good example as to how facilitation of government policy from the grassroots upwards can be facilitated in order to achieve lasting change.

However, as new plans are implemented and gender friendly, victim centric, and service seeker-provider based policies, gazettes, and laws come into being, the project comes to an end opening up the opportunity for a new or existing entity to step in and help in the implementation process. Technical support, expert interventions are required so these new ways of doing things can have far reaching consequences.

### 2. A wealth of technical expertise

At this time, the project makes available more than 300 trained local human resource who can facilitate local governments if they can be mobilized. With an understanding on how to assist people's representatives and administrators in planning, policy-making, drawing up gazettes, and formulation of legislation, they can make contribute to local, district, and provincial development.

Since much has been done during a short period, there is opportunity for analysis of the status of police-community partnership and access to security and justice allowing a new or existing entity to provide continued support in planning, policy and legislation while providing help with implementation where technical support and learning are required.

### 3. The people friendly outcome harvesting tool

In a country where the large percentage of the population is dependent on agriculture, the project's outcome harvesting tool is akin to the farming process. Planting the seeds, taking care of the saplings, identifying the prospects, weeding out the problems, putting in the correct fertilizer, watching carefully as the crop grows to make sure it is not harmed and has proper care, letting the harvest mature, and reaping the benefits.

This allegorical approach was easy to understand for the local people making the tool highly effective. The process shows in a simple way where outcomes can be impacted and allows reasoning for diverse stakeholder contributions leading to local resource leverage. Using the outcome harvesting tool, the civil society can be trained in this modular process sequential mapping of the work taking place in this sector can be analyzed and a clearer way forward can be arrived at.

### 4. A deeper and more meaningful conversation using CSC

The Community Score Card (CSC) prove itself to be a very successful tool when used for police and community understanding and coordination, so much so that local governments embraced it for their own use. Municipalities such as the Triveni Rural Municipality in Rolpa District have included the CSC in their local gazettes The executive committees of several municipalities include the CSC in their policies.

Unlike traditional dialogue, the CSC is sustained, allows non-confrontational sharing of concerns and ideas, and initiates meaningful dialogue therefore the reason for local governments interest in giving continuity to the use of this tool in their development process. In the meanwhile, this opens the door to a technical program that can support local governments as they explore and expand its use at the community level. Having already committed to investing financially in implementing the use of the community score card, they will need support in training local level representatives and administrators in its use as well as a roster of experts who can help them.

## 5. Nepal Police and its initiatives to engage with the community

Nepal Police created the Community Police Partnership Committee (CPPC) in the third quarter of 2018. The objective of the CPPC was to foster collaboration between the public and the police and help build trust within communities. SAHAJ involved the CPPC as a advisory member of the project and this allowed the committee to reach out to the project's 37 local government partners and become involved in more than 300 community activities.

The committee involvement has been very rich in SAHAJ project areas and they aspire to be as effective in other areas as well. Findings of different research shows that crime investigation, access to and willingness of witnesses, and reach of the police into public/communities improved and the role of go-betweens reduced due to this participation.

The CPPC will continue needing support to be able to sustain and expand the work that has been initiated. Technical support, financial support, and activities can take place in the 37 buildings constructed for community engagement by UKAID or support can be provided through Nepal Police Headquarters and Provincial Governments.

## 6. New openings along the referral pathway

The referral pathway has allowed for the marginalized, in particular, to receive security and justice support. The referral pathway

***I knew that I was a victim. I also knew where I should go. My mind was being eaten by how I would reach out and get help when I got to attend a SAHAJ event. I watched the police there and what they said stayed in my mind. I collected confidence and went to the station.***

*Rashmi Shrestha, survivor*

has already been endorsed by 80% of local governments with the remaining preparing to do so. The governments that have endorsed the referral pathway need to be engaged with for a recommended 12 months so they can fine tune its use. Projects like SAHAJ have shown that the referral pathway can be implemented in rural areas very well. A recent act stipulates that a GBV fund be created within all local governments. The referral pathway can support the fund's functioning as well as that of safe houses that have been or are being created.

## 7. Institutionalizing constructive exchange of ideas

Solution oriented collaborative dialogue allows those involved in the conversation to concentrate on the central problem and potential solutions. Because traditional dialogue which can lead to confrontation and may not result in compromise or positivity, organizations like International Alert have institutionalized collaborative dialogue.

Conflict sensitivity training has been provided to local stakeholders on how constructive dialogue can bring together different political, religious, economic polarities and the local governments have taken ownership of the new process and may need help in making proper use of the method.

# Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> OECD; Gender, Institutions and Development Database; 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Cislighi, B., Denny, E.K., Cissé, M. et al; Changing Social Norms: The Importance of “Organized Diffusion” for Scaling Up Community Health Promotion and Women Empowerment Interventions; 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Liverpool JMU, Centre for Public Health and the WHO, Series of Briefings on Violence Prevention: Violence Prevention: the Evidence, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective; Commission on Human Rights; United Nations Economic and Social Council; 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Tracking Cases of Gender-Based Violence in Nepal: Individual, institutional, legal and policy analyses; University College London (UCL) with Centre for Research on Environment, Health and Population Activities (CREHPA); Dr. Sarah Hawkes, Dr. Mahesh Puri, et al; 2015.