



WHITE PAPER

Domestic Violence Stakeholders Summit NEW DELHI

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STAKEHOLDERS SUMMIT, NEW DELHI

The **Invisible Scars Foundation (ISF)**, in collaboration with the **Centre for Social Research (CSR), India**, successfully hosted the first edition of the **Delhi Domestic Violence Stakeholders Summit (DDVSS) 2025** on **March 1st, 2025**, at the **Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi**. The summit convened professionals, experts, and stakeholders from Delhi NCR, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan to foster dialogue and develop actionable solutions for combating domestic violence and abuse.

This **full-day event (10:00 AM – 5:20 PM)** featured two panel discussions, a roundtable session, and an interactive "Wish Expression" activity. Discussions centered on critical issues affecting domestic violence survivors, particularly **shelters and sustainable livelihoods**.

Panel 1 – Safe Shelters: Examined the challenges within existing shelter systems, including restrictive regulations, inadequate facilities, and the need for survivor-centered spaces that promote long-term rehabilitation.

Panel 2 – Livelihoods: Explored economic barriers faced by survivors, emphasizing skill development, financial independence, and employment opportunities.

Roundtable Discussion: Experts engaged in a facilitated discourse to propose policy and programmatic solutions aimed at improving survivor rehabilitation through shelter access, livelihood support, and systemic coordination between law enforcement, the judiciary, and NGOs.

Wish Expression Activity: Participants were invited to share their aspirations for an ideal future free from domestic violence. This session concluded with poetic reflections by Gayatri Kaushal and Shalini Shrinet, highlighting the emotional and societal dimensions of the issue.

The summit aimed to **break the silence surrounding domestic violence** and **encourage constructive discourse** to drive meaningful policy and social reform. Key insights and recommendations from the event have been documented in a **comprehensive white paper**, which will be submitted to the **National Commission for Women (NCW)** for policy consideration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

1. Context	4.
2. Background and Objectives of the Summit	5.
3. Challenges Faced by DVA Survivors	6.
4. Welcome Address & Introduction by Host, Ekta Viiveck Verma	7.
5. Chief Guest Address: Jyotsna Roy	8.
6. Chief Guest Address: Smt. Asha Devi Pandey Ji	9.
7. Guest of Honour Address: Dr. Ranjana Kumari	10.
8. Panel Discussion 1: Safe Shelters	12.
9. Panel Discussion 2: Model Livelihood	13.
10. Roundtable Discussion: Economic Empowerment of Survivors & Initiatives to Improve Coordination Between Police, Judiciary, and NGOs	15.
11. Wish Expression Session	18.
12. Poem Presented by Gayatri Kaushal	19.
13. Poem Presented by Shalini Shrinet	20.
14. Way Forward	22.
15. Glimpses of Our Event	24.
16. Acknowledgements	25.
17. Participants' Names & Organisations	26.
18. About Invisible Scars Foundation	29.
19. About Centre for Social Research, India	30.
20. ISF Services & Helpline Info.	31.

GLOSSARY

DDVSS: Delhi Domestic Violence Stakeholders Summit
DV: Domestic Violence
DVA: Domestic Violence and Abuse
GBV: Gender-Based Violence
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

CONTEXT

Statistical data from two Times of India online articles—"After rise in '21, domestic violence cases fall in '23" (Jan 5, 2024) and "Dowry torture, domestic violence remains serious worry: NCW Data" by Ambika Pandit (Jan 2, 2025)—indicates a decline in domestic violence complaints in 2023 after a surge during the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Commission for Women (NCW) reported 28,811 total complaints of crimes against women in 2023, down from over 30,000 in the previous two years. Of these, 6,304 were related to domestic violence, compared to 6,970 in 2022 and 6,633 in 2021.

Between 2019 and 2024, domestic violence complaints peaked in 2022 at 6,986 cases. Although numbers have declined, they remain above pre-pandemic levels (2,960 in 2019 and 5,297 in 2020). In 2024, the highest proportion of complaints originated from Uttar Pradesh (54%), followed by Delhi (9%), Maharashtra (5.1%), Bihar (4.8%), Madhya Pradesh (4.2%), and Haryana (4.1%).

Domestic violence remains a grave human rights violation, irrespective of statistical reductions. Even minimal occurrences represent a systemic failure and a significant breach of individual dignity and security. Beyond the immediate harm to survivors, domestic abuse disrupts families and communities, particularly impacting children exposed to violent environments, leading to long-term psychological and behavioral consequences. The economic toll is substantial, with global estimates reaching \$1.5 trillion in 2016 (2% of global GDP), while in India, losses range from \$479 million to \$880 million annually.

Addressing this crisis necessitates a multi-faceted approach, including legal reforms, safe shelters, survivor economic empowerment, and widespread awareness campaigns. The Domestic Violence Stakeholders Summit aims to bridge systemic gaps, foster collaboration, and drive sustainable solutions to both support survivors and dismantle structures that enable abuse.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Background

The **Delhi Domestic Violence Stakeholders Summit (DDVSS) 2025**, held on **March 1, 2025**, at **Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi**, examined systemic barriers to supporting **domestic violence survivors**, particularly in **shelter access and economic independence**.

While the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005**, provides legal, medical, and psychological support, **patriarchal biases, institutional inefficiencies, and inadequate enforcement** hinder its effectiveness. **Victim-blaming, legal skepticism, and lack of awareness** further discourage survivors from seeking help.

Shelters, meant as safe havens, often impose **restrictive rules** and lack adequate **resources, funding, and trained staff**, limiting long-term rehabilitation. Similarly, **economic dependence, financial abuse, and workplace discrimination** prevent survivors from achieving independence.

The summit aimed to **develop survivor-centered solutions**, advocating for **inclusive, rehabilitative shelters and livelihood opportunities**. It sought to **bridge systemic gaps** and inform **policy reforms** to ensure comprehensive support for survivors.

Objective

The **Delhi Domestic Violence Stakeholders Summit (DDVSS) 2025** sought to unite key stakeholders to address two critical challenges: **limitations in shelter homes** and **barriers to sustainable livelihoods for survivors**.

The discussion focused on **reimagining shelters** to provide **secure, rehabilitative spaces** that empower survivors rather than restrict them. It also examined **economic challenges**, emphasizing the need for **livelihood opportunities** to ensure financial independence.

Beyond theoretical discourse, the summit aimed to generate **practical, survivor-centric solutions** that can be implemented in social sector settings, fostering **policy reforms** and systemic change.

CHALLENGES FACED BY DVA SURVIVORS

Unhabitable Shelter Homes

Shelters for domestic violence survivors often fail to provide the **safe, rehabilitative environment** they are meant to ensure. Many are **underfunded, overcrowded, and lack trained staff**, limiting their ability to offer meaningful support. **Restrictive rules**, such as limitations on mobility, employment, and communication, further isolate survivors, and hinder reintegration into society.

For many women, the **greatest deterrent** is separation from their children, forcing them to choose between **safety and family unity**. LGBTQ+ survivors face additional **exclusion and discrimination** due to a lack of inclusive policies. The absence of **long-term, community-integrated housing solutions** often leads survivors to return to abusive environments.

Addressing these gaps requires **reforming shelter models** to prioritize **autonomy, accessibility, and holistic rehabilitation**, ensuring survivors can rebuild their lives with dignity.

Challenges To Livelihoods

Economic dependence is a significant barrier preventing domestic violence survivors from achieving long-term security. Many face **financial abuse, disrupted careers, and limited work experience**, making it difficult to secure stable employment. **Workplace discrimination and social stigma** further restrict opportunities, particularly for women lacking formal education or vocational training.

Without **sustainable livelihoods**, survivors remain vulnerable to returning to abusive environments. Addressing these challenges requires **targeted skill development, financial inclusion, and employment initiatives** to empower survivors and facilitate economic independence.

WELCOME ADDRESS & INTRODUCTION

Ekta Viiveck Verma, Invisible Scars Foundation Foundation

Ekta Viiveck Verma, founder of the **Invisible Scars Foundation**, opened the summit by sharing her journey from personal experience to advocacy. She highlighted how domestic violence extends beyond physical abuse to **emotional and psychological harm**, often leaving survivors isolated and unheard. Recognizing the need for structured support, she **transformed Invisible Scars Foundation** from a small online group into a formal network providing **legal aid, mental health counseling, and survivor assistance**.

Ekta emphasized the importance of **collaboration** over competition among NGOs, advocating for a **unified approach** to supporting survivors. She discussed key initiatives, including **Project Fearless**, a partnership with **Urban Company** that provides **legal, mental health, and financial support** to over 13,000 women. She also highlighted the **Rahat Crisis Center**, a hospital-based support model for survivors.

Stressing that domestic violence is a **systemic issue requiring sustained intervention**, Ekta underscored the summit's goal: to **develop actionable solutions** addressing survivors' **economic empowerment and access to safe shelters**. She emphasized the need for **long-term solutions over short-term fixes**, noting that domestic violence is not a single event but an ongoing crisis requiring **continuous support and structural reforms**. The Invisible Scars Foundation Foundation has already conducted summits in **three states** and aims to expand to other states to build a **broader support network for survivors**.

Ekta concluded her address with a **call for collaboration**, urging stakeholders to **share resources rather than compete for limited funding**. She stressed that the issue of domestic violence is **too vast and complex for any single organization to address alone**. A **united effort among NGOs, the private sector, and government agencies** is essential to creating a **comprehensive support system** that empowers survivors and ensures they have the **resources and confidence to rebuild their lives**.

Following her address, Ekta introduced **Jyotsna Roy**, a distinguished **social scientist** with over three decades of experience in **institutional strengthening, capacity building, and community empowerment**. Roy has worked extensively in **gender equality, policy advocacy, and**

post-conflict rehabilitation, focusing on women's rights, displaced communities, and social justice initiatives. Her expertise spans multiple developing nations, where she has led programs on **gender-responsive governance, economic empowerment, and violence prevention.** She has collaborated with **government agencies, international organizations, and grassroots movements** to advance systemic reforms and improve support structures for vulnerable populations.

Roy holds degrees from **Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)** and internationally recognized institutions and has received multiple certifications in **participatory gender audits, human development, and leadership training.** Her contributions have been instrumental in shaping policies on **women's economic independence, access to justice, and social welfare,** making her a **key advocate in the fight against domestic violence.**

CHIEF GUEST ADDRESS

Jyotsna Roy

Jyotsna Roy began her address by reflecting on the **significance of the term "Invisible Scars Foundation,"** emphasizing that domestic violence is not just a single act of abuse but a long-term issue that leaves deep psychological, emotional, and physical wounds. She underscored the **urgent need for sustained support,** highlighting how survivors often struggle to access quality counseling and mentoring due to financial constraints and systemic inefficiencies. She pointed out that trauma frequently manifests in **physical and mental health crises,** with some survivors experiencing extreme emotional distress to the point of becoming unresponsive.

Roy stressed that **economic independence is central to a survivor's ability to rebuild their life.** Many survivors, despite holding academic qualifications, face barriers in securing stable employment due to a **lack of financial resources, disrupted careers, and social stigma.** She emphasized the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in bridging this gap by linking skill development programs with employment opportunities. However, she cautioned that **supporting survivors requires a strong foundation of self-care,** drawing an analogy to securing one's own oxygen mask before assisting others.

Illustrating the **systemic failures survivors face,** Roy recounted two

incidents. In one case, a woman seeking a bank loan for financial independence was instead subjected to inappropriate advances by a bank official, demonstrating how **insensitivity and exploitation** often replace meaningful support. In another instance, a woman confronting her abusive husband at his workplace was publicly humiliated, highlighting the **institutional disregard for survivors' dignity and justice**. These examples, she argued, reflect the **deep-rooted failures of institutions to provide safe and supportive environments for women seeking autonomy**.

Roy called for **greater sensitivity across all sectors**, emphasizing that survivor support should extend beyond NGOs and government programs to include the **private sector, local communities, and financial institutions**. She advocated for **scaling up support networks** and implementing **survivor-centered interventions** in states such as **Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura**, where systemic support structures remain weak.

She concluded by stating that **violence against women is deeply embedded in social and cultural norms**, requiring not only **individual recovery but systemic transformation**. She called for **collaborative action among government agencies, private sector organizations, and civil society** to establish sustainable solutions. True progress, she argued, depends on **addressing both the immediate needs of survivors and the long-term structural challenges that perpetuate domestic violence**.

CHIEF GUEST ADDRESS

Asha Devi Pandey Ji (Nirbhaya's Mother)

Asha Devi Pandey Ji began her address by expressing gratitude to Ekta Viiveck Verma and acknowledging their long-standing association, which began during the **Nirbhaya case**. While her primary advocacy focuses on supporting **rape survivors**, she highlighted the **alarming prevalence of domestic violence**, particularly in **Uttar Pradesh**. She emphasized that **domestic violence often originates within the home, making conflict resolution and prevention crucial**.

She stressed that **men must also receive counseling** to understand the underlying causes of domestic violence. Instead of allowing **jealousy, frustration, or misunderstandings** to escalate into abuse, she argued for the **promotion of open dialogue and mutual respect** within families. She underscored the **home as a place of security**, stating that while one may

stay in a luxurious hotel, true comfort and belonging should come from one's own household. However, **when a woman is forced to leave due to abuse**, she must have access to **shelter homes that provide dignity and support** rather than making her feel like a burden.

Asha Devi Ji raised concerns about **victim-blaming** within shelter homes, where survivors are often labeled as **difficult or at fault for their circumstances**. She recalled the **COVID-19 pandemic**, when many women, **especially those from marginalized communities were evicted from their homes** due to financial instability or social discrimination. Her team worked with **families and law enforcement** to mediate conflicts and help women reintegrate into their households rather than being forced into shelters. She emphasized that the **goal should not be dependency on shelters but ensuring that women feel safe in their own homes**.

Criticizing the **government's response to gender-based violence**, Asha Devi questioned the **effectiveness of the Nirbhaya Fund**, which was intended to establish **one-stop crisis centers for survivors**. She recalled raising these concerns with the **President of India**, who assured her that the issue would be addressed. However, despite reports of new centers and allocated funds, the **persistence of domestic violence and sexual assault highlights systemic shortcomings** in survivor support.

She concluded by advocating for a **fundamental shift in societal attitudes**, arguing that **prevention should take precedence over shelters and legal remedies**. **True gender equality must begin within the home**, ensuring that women do not have to **fight for safety or acceptance**. She reaffirmed her commitment to working with organizations like the **Invisible Scars Foundation** to build a society where **women are secure, respected, and empowered within their families and communities**.

GUEST OF HONOR ADDRESS

Dr. Ranjana Kumari, Director of Centre for Social Research, Social Activist, Prolific Academician & Writer

Dr. Ranjana Kumari began her address by rejecting the need for formal introductions, asserting that **real impact matters more than titles**. Expressing gratitude for the opportunity to speak, she underscored the **gravity of violence against women** and the systemic failures that allow it to persist.

Illustrating the **harsh realities of domestic violence**, she shared the story of **Sumitra Devi**, a woman abandoned by her husband and forced to sleep in a cowshed in **Mehrauli, Delhi**, for three days. With no access to employment or medical care, she was eventually brought to Dr. Ranjana's center by other women from her village. Over time, Sumitra became **a leading counselor**, providing critical support to survivors at all hours. Her transformation exemplified the **resilience of women** and the **need for structured, long-term interventions**.

Dr. Ranjana questioned why, despite decades of advocacy, **women must still fight for their basic rights**. Even after landmarking global conferences such as **Nairobi, Beijing, and UN summits**, the demand for **shelter homes** persists. She argued that while the **Indian Constitution guarantees equality**, power structures remain deeply entrenched in **male-dominated family and societal systems**. Even women who achieve **professional or political success** face precarious positions dictated by **patriarchal control**.

She critiqued **deep-seated cultural norms** that reinforce gender inequality, pointing out that families often invest heavily in **daughters' weddings** but hesitate to give them an **equal share in property**. Even when women claim their legal inheritance, they are pressured to **compromise or avoid family disputes**. She recounted the experience of a **female CEO**, whose father insisted on managing workplace conflicts on her behalf, reflecting a broader societal belief that **women require male intervention**.

Calling for a **fundamental societal shift**, Dr. Ranjana urged women to **assert their rights with confidence rather than seek permission**. She emphasized that hard-won legislative victories—such as the **Domestic Violence Act (2005)** and the **establishment of the National Commission for Women (NCW)**—are being undermined by **underfunding and leadership gaps**. Women must **demand accountability** and **challenge systems that perpetuate inequality** rather than waiting for change.

She also highlighted the **normalization of domestic violence**, citing a study where **49% of women justified spousal abuse** in certain circumstances. This mindset, she argued, **must be dismantled through education, awareness, and legal enforcement**. Women should be taught to **resist the first instance of abuse**, assert their autonomy, and demand respect.

Dr. Ranjana concluded by emphasizing that **true empowerment requires economic independence, political representation, and social reform**. Women must **claim their rightful space in all spheres**, from **financial security to leadership positions**, to break the **cycle of violence and dependence**.

PANEL DISCUSSION 1 – SAFE SHELTERS

Moderated By Gayatri from Friedrich-Ebert-Shiftung India

Panelists - Smritikana Ghosh Paul (STOP), Gayatri Kaushal (Sankalpit Foundation), Naseem Khan (CEQUIN), Arshiya (One Future Collective)

Ekta Viiveck Verma opened the discussion by emphasizing the **need to redefine shelter homes**, as survivors rarely choose them willingly. Many enter shelters out of necessity, yet these spaces often fail to offer **true security and rehabilitation**. The panel, moderated by Gayatri from Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, featured Smritikana Ghosh Paul (STOP), Gayatri Kaushal (Sankalpit Foundation), Naseem Khan (CEQUIN), and Arshiya (One Future Collective), each contributing insights into the challenges within shelter systems and the urgent need for reform.

Smritikana Ghosh Paul highlighted the **intersection between domestic violence and human trafficking**, stressing that **violence against women is deeply rooted in regressive social structures**. While shelters provide temporary refuge, many suffer from **underfunding, overcrowding, and inadequate support services**, preventing survivors from achieving long-term stability. She also raised concerns about the **exclusion of marginalized groups**, particularly **LGBTQ+ individuals**, who often lack access to safe shelter.

Naseem Khan addressed **legal barriers to residence rights**, explaining how the **2006 Supreme Court ruling on shared households** complicates survivors' ability to remain in their marital homes, particularly when property is owned by in-laws. She noted that many **NGO-run shelters face financial instability**, with some shutting down due to **delayed government funding**, further limiting safe housing options.

Arshiya discussed the **challenges faced by LGBTQ+ survivors**, emphasizing that **most shelters cater only to cisgender women**, leaving many without support. Even within existing facilities, **violence and discrimination remain pervasive**. She advocated for **inclusive policies and community-based interventions** that allow survivors to access help without leaving their familiar environments.

Gayatri Kaushal provided a perspective on Haryana, where **patriarchal norms are deeply entrenched**, and survivors often **have nowhere to turn after escaping abuse**. She stressed that while the **Domestic Violence Act (2005)** grants women the right to residence, many are still **forced out of their**

homes, increasing their reliance on shelters that fail to offer long-term solutions. The panel also discussed **what an ideal shelter home should look like**. **Naseem Khan** shared an example from the **United States**, where **rape crisis centers incorporate therapy animals** to create a sense of safety. She suggested that **Indian shelters should prioritize mental health services, legal aid, and skill-building programs** to support survivor reintegration.

Smritikana Ghosh Paul called for **less restrictive shelter policies**, proposing a **"No Questions Asked"** approach, allowing survivors to return if needed without stigma. Many women leave abusive situations but are **forced to return due to financial constraints**, and shelters should remain an accessible option for them.

The session concluded with a **proposal to rename shelters as "safe houses,"** a suggestion put forward by **Jyotsna Roy**, a social scientist with extensive experience in **post-conflict rehabilitation**. Drawing from her work in **Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Sudan**, she stressed that **confidential and secure spaces** are essential for empowering survivors.

The discussion underscored the **need for policy reforms, increased funding, and more inclusive shelter models**. Panelists emphasized that shelters should **not merely serve as temporary escape spaces but as centers for empowerment, healing, and long-term stability**.

PANEL DISCUSSION 2 – MODEL LIVELIHOOD

The discussion on **livelihoods** focused on the **economic challenges faced by domestic violence survivors** and the importance of **financial independence in breaking cycles of abuse**. The panel, moderated by **Dr. Manasi Mishra**, Head of the Research and Knowledge Department at the Centre for Social Research (CSR), featured **Ekta Viiveck Verma** (Invisible Scars Foundation Foundation), **Seema Devi Ji** (Sarpanch, Jhirandiya Village, Alwar), and **Rakhi Sharma** (Counselor, CSR).

Dr. Manasi Mishra outlined CSR's **structured skill development programs**, which train women in **security services, digital literacy, office administration, and entrepreneurship**. These programs, aligned with **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) standards**, provide **certification and job placement opportunities**, particularly in **Delhi and Gurgaon**. She emphasized that **economic self-sufficiency is critical for survivors' long-term security and dignity**.

Ekta Viiveck Verma stressed that **financial independence is essential for breaking the cycle of abuse**. She highlighted **training programs in digital marketing and remote work**, developed through partnerships in **Chandigarh and Hyderabad**, which allow survivors, especially **single mothers**, to earn a living without compromising their safety. She also discussed **entrepreneurship initiatives**, which support women in establishing **small businesses in fashion, jewelry, and food services**, ensuring **long-term financial stability** beyond reliance on charitable assistance.

Seema Devi Ji, drawing from her experience as **Sarpanch of Jhirandiya Village, Alwar**, discussed the **impact of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** in empowering rural women. Many women in her village have successfully launched **dairy businesses, goat farming, tailoring, and small-scale agriculture**, providing them with sustainable incomes. She highlighted the **crucial role of microfinance and government-backed loans**, explaining how **low-interest loans from banks such as SBI, starting at ₹2 lakh and increasing to ₹5 lakh based on repayment performance** have enabled women to expand their businesses. **Financial literacy and business management training**, she noted, have helped these women move beyond **subsistence living to economic self-sufficiency**.

Rakhi Sharma emphasized that **economic stability directly influences a survivor's ability to leave an abusive situation**. Many women lack confidence after prolonged abuse, making **career mentorship programs essential**. She stressed the need for **emotional and psychological support alongside financial aid**, as survivors often struggle with self-doubt when attempting to re-enter the workforce.

During the **Q&A session**, panelists addressed concerns about **career gaps** in survivors' work histories. **Ekta Viiveck Verma** shared strategies to bridge these gaps by engaging **HR professionals in mentorship programs**, helping survivors **identify flexible career paths** suited to their unique circumstances. She stressed the importance of **non-traditional job opportunities**, citing the **rise of female cab drivers and security guards** as examples of **expanding employment prospects for women**.

Following the panel, **Viiveck Verma** introduced the **roundtable discussion**, transitioning from **structured panels to an interactive problem-solving session**. He encouraged participants to **bring forward solutions and engage in collaborative discussions on domestic violence, economic empowerment, and systemic change**.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION:

Engaging the Experts in the Audience to Provide Solutions for the Critical Issues, Initiatives for Economic Empowerment for Survivors, Strengthening Coordination—police, judiciary, and NGOs.

Moderator – Viiveck Verma, CEO, Invisible Scars Foundation Foundation

The **roundtable discussion**, moderated by **Viiveck Verma, CEO of Invisible Scars Foundation Foundation**, focused on **collaborative strategies to enhance legal support, economic empowerment, and institutional coordination** in addressing domestic violence. Unlike the structured panels, this session fostered **interactive problem-solving**, encouraging participants to share **practical solutions** rather than theoretical discourse.

Bhaskar Kumar Agrawal (Helping Human Rights Foundation) proposed a **coordinated legal advocacy effort**, suggesting that participants draft **letters to district judges advocating for improved policies and survivor support mechanisms**. He emphasized the need to **expand this initiative beyond Delhi** to states like **Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab**, ensuring a **nationwide push for legal reforms**.

Indu Prakash Singh (City Makers Mission International) highlighted the **urgent need for grassroots collaboration and networking**. He introduced the **'No Violence Against Women' WhatsApp helpline**, initially created for women but later expanded to support **transgender individuals**. He called for the **establishment of a 24-hour crisis helpline**, noting that survivors often struggle to access assistance late at night.

Dr. Manasi Mishra (Centre for Social Research) stressed that **structured skill development programs** are essential for survivors' long-term financial stability. She detailed CSR's **initiatives in security guard training, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship**, emphasizing the importance of **job placement partnerships** to ensure sustained employment. She also underscored **education as a key tool in breaking cycles of violence**, citing cases where **girls were forced to drop out of school due to a lack of access to secondary education**.

Ekta Viiveck Verma (Invisible Scars Foundation Foundation) called for **stronger corporate partnerships** to provide employment opportunities for survivors. She highlighted **successful remote work initiatives in digital marketing and customer service**, which have **enabled single mothers and**

abuse survivors to work from home safely. She urged private companies to actively recruit survivors and establish **mentorship programs** to help them regain professional confidence.

Gayatri Kaushal (Sankalpit Foundation) discussed the **challenges survivors face in patriarchal regions like Haryana**, where women seeking legal protection are often **perceived as troublemakers** rather than individuals asserting their rights. She advocated **community-based interventions to shift social attitudes and increase acceptance of survivors in their local environments.**

Rakhi Sharma (Centre for Social Research) emphasized that **financial insecurity often forces survivors to remain in abusive relationships.** She proposed the creation of **mentorship programs connecting survivors with professionals who can guide them toward career development.** She also stressed the **importance of providing both emotional and financial support**, as many survivors face **psychological barriers to rebuilding their lives.**

Shalini Shrinet (Mera Rang Foundation) highlighted the **role of media in shaping public perceptions of domestic violence.** She criticized how **survivor stories are often sensationalized rather than framed in an empowering manner.** To counter this, she proposed **sensitivity training for journalists**, ensuring that survivors are **represented with dignity and respect** in media narratives.

Shalini Sharma (Jagori), a psychologist, emphasized the **importance of proper counseling services for survivors.** She noted that while **police stations and courts claim to provide counseling**, these services often **lack trained professionals and survivor-centered approaches.** She argued that counseling should **empower women to make informed decisions, rather than pressure them to reconcile with their abusers.** She also discussed the **crucial role of legal documentation**, citing a case where retrieving school certificates strengthened a survivor's legal claim for child custody and financial support.

Jitendra Kumar Jha (The Jurists, Law Offices) addressed **deficiencies in the legal aid system**, recalling a case where a survivor felt lost **even after the Supreme Court upheld the death sentence for her attackers.** He argued that **legal aid is ineffective when provided by undertrained or disinterested lawyers**, calling for **greater accountability in legal aid committees and stronger government oversight to ensure survivors receive competent legal representation.**

Brijendra Singh Chauhan (Pragati Path) shared his experiences in **Varanasi**, where he helped survivors access **government-backed vocational training programs**. He highlighted the **success of women-owned businesses in fruit processing, pickle making, and food production**, demonstrating how **entrepreneurship can provide survivors with financial independence without requiring them to enter corporate workplaces**.

The discussion concluded with **Viiveck Verma** reiterating the importance of **ongoing engagement beyond the event**. There was a unanimous consensus that **advocacy, networking, and financial empowerment programs** should be **expanded and sustained** to ensure that survivors receive **long-term, meaningful support**.

NAMES OF SPEAKERS IN THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Viiveck Verma – Moderator, CEO of Invisible Scars Foundation
Bhaskar Kumar Agrawal – Helping Human Rights Foundation
Indu Prakash Singh – City Makers Mission International
Dr. Manasi Mishra – HoD, Research & Knowledge Division, Centre for Social Research, India
Ekta Viiveck Verma – Director, Invisible Scars Foundation
Gayatri Kaushal – Founder of Sankalp Foundation
Rakhi Sharma – Counselor, Centre for Social Research, India
Shalini Shrinet – Head of Mera Rang Foundation
Shalini Sharma – Psychologist from Jagori
Jitendra Kumar Jha – Advocate, The Jurists, Law Offices
Brijendra Singh Chauhan – Pragati Path

WISH EXPRESSION SESSION

The **Wish Expression Session** provided an interactive platform where participants voiced their **aspirations for a future free from domestic violence**. Moderated by **Viiveck Verma**, the session encouraged attendees to share **personal reflections and transformative ideas** rather than engage in debate.

Dr. Manasi Mishra expressed her wish for a world where people **consider the consequences of their actions before inflicting harm**, envisioning a truly **gender-just society where survivors are not further victimized**.

Gayatri Kaushal shared a deep personal account of **her family's struggle with inheritance rights**, highlighting the **urgent need for gender equality in property laws**. She recounted how her father intended for all his children, **daughters included** to have an **equal share**, yet **bureaucratic and societal barriers complicated the process**. Her mother's insistence on fairness ensured justice, reinforcing the importance of **equitable legal frameworks** for women.

Naseem Khan called for a **societal reckoning with outdated customs**, advocating for **public acknowledgment and redress for historical injustices against women**. He emphasized that **harmful traditions must be left behind** to create a more **progressive and inclusive society**.

Shalini Shrinet, a poet and activist, performed a compelling piece urging **women to break free from societal oppression and reclaim their identity**. Her poetry evoked **powerful imagery of dismantling patriarchal structures and embracing empowerment**.

Gayatri Kaushal presented a poem inspired by a young girl's question about **why dowries take precedence over education**. Her piece **challenged cultural norms that devalue daughters**, advocating **equal opportunities in education and inheritance**.

The rapporteur, **Ketaki Ruchika Singh**, expressed a wish for **universal access to mental health services**, stressing that **psychological support should be available to all, regardless of economic status**.

Another audience member, **Vatsala**, emphasized the **importance of complete freedom for women**, arguing that **even small restrictions in daily life such as movement and decision-making reinforce patriarchal oppression**.

The session concluded with reflections on equality, justice, and systemic change, leaving participants with a collective sense of responsibility and hope for a future free from domestic violence.

POEMS PRESENTED BY GAYATRI KAUSHAL AND SHALINI SHRINET

Gayatri Kaushal

Stop calling us the burdens of another home. Stop calling us someone else's wealth. Give us an equal share in the property.

We are not meant to be sent away to another household. We are not the vessels of another home. We are your children, just as much as your sons are.

If a son is the torchbearer of the family, then I, too, am the Lakshmi of this home. We do not need dowry, extravagant clothes, or gold jewelry. Why spend an entire lifetime saving up for our weddings? Why do parents spend their whole lives worrying—Which family will we marry into? How grand will the wedding procession be? How many guests? How many cars? How lavishly will the groom's chariot be decorated?

Why do parents endure a lifetime of stress, saving every penny, Mothers quietly buying small trinkets—an earring here, a necklace there—And saying with a hopeful smile, "My daughter is growing up; we'll collect bit by bit, so everything is ready for her wedding."

And we, their daughters, when asked to try on these ornaments, Obediently wear them and admire ourselves in the mirror. Sometimes we even say, "Ma, if it were just a little bigger, it would look even better."

But why do we never say, "Ma, why don't you and Papa invest this money in my education instead?" Perhaps I could study, get a job at an IT company, and my annual salary could be worth more than Papa's lifetime savings.

"Jewelry can be artificial, Ma, but education cannot." "You can always buy imitation ornaments, but there is no imitation for knowledge."

So why are you preparing to sacrifice my dreams?

From the moment we understand the world to the day we are married, We hear the same words over and over—"You belong to another home, you are someone else's responsibility, you are the family's honor, you are someone else's possession."

Why? My brother and I were born from the same womb—Why is he the heir to the family, and I, an outsider?

This tradition is flawed. And we reject it.

We are not someone else's burden. We are not someone else's wealth. We are not just the family's honor or a thing to be given away.

We are individuals. We have souls of our own. We are not someone else's property.

I want the same freedom as my brother. I want an equal share of the land. I want an equal right in my father's property.

And when you grow old, Mother and Father, You will not have to live month after month in different sons' homes. You will stay with us, your daughters. We will care for you in your old age. We will be there for you in your final moments. We will carry out your last rites, And immerse your ashes in the sacred Ganga.

And you will reach the same peace, As if a son had done it.

Yes, perhaps some traditions will change. But so will the fate of daughters.

Shalini Shrinet

Set out on a journey to find yourself, Why do you despair? Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

So set out on a journey to find yourself, Why do you despair? Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

The chains wrapped around you— See them not as shackles, but as garments. These chains will melt, Transforming into scriptures of change. So why do you despair?

Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

When your character is pure, Then why must you suffer this fate? The sinners have no right to put your purity to the test. So why do you despair?

Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

Burn to ashes the web of cruelty, You are not the gentle flame of a prayer lamp, You are the raging torch of fury. So set out on a journey to find yourself, Why do you despair? Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

Raise your veil like a flag, Even the sky will bow before you. If your veil falls, The earth itself will tremble. So why do you despair?

Go on, for even time seeks your existence, Aashadeep.

The chains wrapped around you— See them not as shackles, but as garments. Let them melt and forge them into scriptures of change. So why do you despair?

Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

When your character is pure, Then why must you suffer this fate? The sinners have no right To put your purity to the test. So why do you despair?

Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

Burn to ashes the web of cruelty, Burn it until nothing remains. You are not just the gentle glow of a prayer lamp, You are the raging torch of fury. So set out on a journey to find yourself, Why do you despair?

Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

Raise your veil like a flag, Let the sky itself bow before you. If your veil falls, The earth itself will tremble. So why do you despair?

Go on, for even time seeks your existence.

—Aashcharya

NAMES OF PERSONS WHO PRESENTED THEIR WISHES

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WAY FORWARD

To strengthen support for domestic violence survivors, a **coordinated multi-stakeholder approach** is essential. The following measures must be implemented to ensure **effective intervention, legal support, and economic empowerment**:

- 1. STRENGTHENING LEGAL AID AND NGO NETWORKS:** NGOs should register under legal provisions that allow them to **file reports and provide structured assistance** to survivors. A **nationwide network of service providers** must be established to ensure **accountability and efficiency** through **digital case tracking and structured intervention models**.
- 2. EXPANDING COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS:** A structured **multi-organization network** should be developed to **streamline resources, prevent duplication of efforts, and promote collective action** rather than isolated initiatives. Clearly defined **operational boundaries** will be crucial to maintaining **efficiency, transparency, and ethical standards**.
- 3. HOSTING REGIONAL SUMMITS FOR EXPANSION:** State-level summits should be organized to **engage more stakeholders**, fostering knowledge-sharing, resource mobilization, and collaborative strategy-building. These summits will contribute to the development of a **nationwide survivor support system**, ensuring regional challenges are addressed effectively.
- 4. ENHANCING DIGITAL CASE TRACKING & INTERVENTION STRATEGIES:** A **centralized digital tracking system** must be implemented to **monitor legal aid, shelter assistance, and rehabilitation services**. This will reduce **bureaucratic delays** and ensure survivors receive **timely and consistent support**.

5. ADVANCING FINANCIAL & LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMS FOR SURVIVORS: Economic independence is key to ensuring long-term security for survivors. Expanding livelihood programs, remote work opportunities, vocational training, and financial inclusion initiatives will enable women to become self-sufficient and less vulnerable to returning to abusive environments.

These measures will establish a sustainable, survivor-centered support system, ensuring survivors receive holistic, long-term assistance that empowers them to rebuild their lives with dignity and independence.

WAY FORWARD

Achieving meaningful progress in addressing domestic violence requires sustained collaboration, policy reforms, economic empowerment, and public awareness initiatives. The following strategies must be prioritized:

- 1. SUSTAINED COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL:** A unified approach among NGOs, legal professionals, private sector stakeholders, and government bodies. It is necessary to create a comprehensive survivor support system. Coordinated efforts will ensure efficient resource allocation, streamlined services, and greater impact.
- 2. POLICY AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS ARE NEEDED:** Interventions must go beyond short-term relief and focus on long-term policy changes to improve access to legal aid, financial support, and safe housing for survivors. Institutional frameworks must be strengthened to facilitate the effective implementation of laws and protection mechanisms.
- 3. EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ECONOMIC STABILITY:** Survivors must be provided with sustainable employment opportunities, entrepreneurship training, and financial aid to break free from economic dependence on abusers. Access to vocational training, remote work options, and microfinance opportunities will enable survivors to rebuild their lives with independence and dignity.
- 4. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Transforming societal attitudes toward domestic violence requires consistent awareness campaigns, education programs, and active community participation. Public engagement will help create a zero-tolerance culture for abuse while challenging victim-blaming and stigma.
- 5. COMMITMENT TO ACTION AND FOLLOW-THROUGH:** Discussions must lead to tangible action, ensuring that advocacy, structured interventions, and survivor-centered policies continue beyond the summit. A robust nationwide framework must be developed to guarantee that every survivor has access to comprehensive, long-term support.

By implementing these strategies, stakeholders can drive **systemic change**, **enhance survivor protections**, and create a society where domestic violence is neither tolerated nor ignored.

GLIMPSES OF OUR EVENT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We appreciate the dedication and support of every individual and organization whose contributions played a vital role in making the Delhi Domestic Violence Stakeholders Summit a meaningful and impactful event. Their collective efforts ensured the success of this gathering, fostering critical discussions and collaborations that will drive lasting change.

We thank all attendees for their active participation, thoughtful insights, and willingness to share their experiences. Their engagement enriched the conversations and strengthened the collective mission to address domestic violence with effective solutions. We acknowledge the invaluable role of both familiar and new participants, whose presence and perspectives created an environment of learning, connection, and shared commitment to advocacy and action.

We are especially grateful for the dedication and hard work of the organizing team, whose meticulous planning and execution ensured the smooth flow of the event. We extend our thanks to the following responsible parties:

OUR PARTNERS

Hosts – Invisible Scars Foundation and Centre for Social Research, India

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GUESTS OF HONOUR AND CHIEF GUESTS

Dr. Ranjana Kumari, Director, Centre for Social Research, India

Ms. Jyotsna Roy, Social Scientist & Centre for Social Research Board Member

Asha Devi Pandey, Nirbhaya's Mother and Founder of Nirbhaya Jyoti Trust

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Moderators: Gayatri, Dr. Manasi Mishra, Mr. Viiveck Verma

Panelists: Gayatri Kaushal, Naseem Khan, Smritikana Ghosh Paul, Arshiya, Seema Devi, Rakhi Sharma, Ekta Viiveck Verma, Dr. Manasi Mishra

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SPARSH, Jagori Women's Resource Centre, TERI SAS, Deepalaya, One Future Collective, University of Delhi, Helping Human Rights Foundation, Pragati Path, Deep Shades, Aawaaz Foundation,, Invisible Scars Foundation Foundation, Centre For Social Research, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, Sankalp Foundation, Bhavi Nirman Society, Daftee, Nav Nirman Evam Paryavaran Kendra, City Makers International, SAMVAD Advocacy, Prod, The Jurists, Law Offices, CFAR, Toli, Institute for Social Development and Disaster Management, Asmita Social Welfare Association, Justice and Development Foundation, Centre For Social Research, Pravah, Sarthak Charitable Trust, Raahat Crisis Centre, CEQUIN, Prod, Maryada Shiksha Samiti Jajwar District Bundi, Jagori, Mera Rangg Foundation, Ramola Bharat Charitable Trust (STOP), Aura Aarini Foundation, Adhita Foundation, Asmita social welfare Organisation, Goonj, Srinagaar, Crea, Magic Bus Foundation

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ABOUT INVISIBLE SCARS FOUNDATION

Invisible Scars Foundation is a survivor-led initiative providing **legal aid, mental health support, and crisis intervention** while advocating for **policy reforms and systemic change**.

Founded by **Ekta Viiveck Verma**, it began as an **online support group** and grew into a structured organization focused on **empowering survivors through awareness, resources, and direct intervention**. It collaborates with **NGOs, legal professionals, corporate partners, and government agencies** to build **comprehensive survivor-centered support systems**.

Its flagship initiative, **Project Fearless**, launched with **Urban Company**, offers **mental health support, financial literacy, and legal aid** to over **13,000 women professionals**. The **Rahat Crisis Center** integrates **hospital-based assistance**, providing survivors with medical, legal, and psychological support.

Committed to **breaking cycles of abuse**, Invisible Scars Foundation advances **shelter policy reform, stronger legal protections, and economic empowerment**. Having conducted **domestic violence summits in three states**, it aims to **expand nationwide** and strengthen its survivor support network.

Through its initiatives, Invisible Scars Foundation **challenges social norms, strengthens institutional responses, and fosters safe spaces where survivors can heal and rebuild their lives with dignity**.

ABOUT CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH, INDIA

Founded in **1983**, the **Centre for Social Research (CSR)** is a pioneering organization dedicated to **women's rights, gender equality, and social justice**. Through **policy advocacy, research, and grassroots initiatives**, CSR works to **empower women, prevent gender-based violence, and promote systemic change**.

With over **40 years of experience**, CSR has played a crucial role in **legal reforms, capacity-building programs, and community interventions**. Its initiatives focus on **skill development, leadership training, crisis intervention, and economic empowerment**, ensuring **gender inclusivity in policy implementation**. CSR actively collaborates with the **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India**, to implement the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** program, promoting girls' education and welfare.

CSR is accredited with the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, reinforcing its role as a **globally recognized advocate for gender equality**. It partners with **government agencies, international organizations, academic institutions, and civil society groups** to advance **gender-sensitive policy reforms and legislative advancements**. Its extensive research has shaped **laws on domestic violence, workplace harassment, and political representation**, strengthening institutional accountability. Through strategic partnerships, CSR has **expanded its efforts beyond national borders**, engaging in **global advocacy, knowledge exchange, and best-practice implementation** in addressing gender-based issues.

Committed to **strengthening institutional responses to gender-based violence**, CSR continues to advocate for **women's rights, improved access to justice, and long-term solutions for gender equality**. By extending its efforts across **rural and urban communities**, it strives to **create a society where women can live free from violence, discrimination, and socio-economic barriers**.



INVISIBLE SCARS FOUNDATION

Impacting 20,000 Domestic Violence & Abuse Survivors

SERVICES WE OFFER

Survivor Support

FIRST LEVEL SUPPORT

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

LEGAL COUNSELLING

SKILLING/LIVELIHOOD

LITIGATION SUPPORT

SHELTER SUPPORT

MISCELLANEOUS

Sustainable Ecosystem Building

AWARENESS

CAPACITY BUILDING

POLICY ADVOCACY

If you or someone you know is facing
Domestic Violence & Abuse,
Reach out for Support!

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Mon-Sat 9am-9pm

