

**Evaluation Research Study of the Counseling Units at Special Police
Units for Women and Children
(Special Cells), New Delhi
(2016)**

Executive Summary

1. Background

The story of the Special Cells is located in a rich and dynamic history. While analysis and critique was the bedrock of the engagement of the women's movement with the State, the partnership led to some remarkable outcomes-formulations of women centred laws, policies, and programmes, creation of a separate Ministry for Women and Child (MWCD) Development, and above all bringing women's issues and gender and equity concerns centre stage.

The issue of custodial rape was one of the first public protests against VAW, which initiated the engagement of the women's movement with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to bring to the fore complexities of VAW, in particular domestic and family violence. As the convolutions and multiple dimensions of violence began to be unravelled changes in the CJS, and new sections of law have been introduced in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) (specifically 498A & 304B, to address dowry-related deaths).

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) 2005 has been a major milestone in this regard as in law there is now recognition of the critical role of support and counselling for women survivors of DV. Consequently a provision has been made for the role of volunteers, voluntary organisations and community-based organisations (CBOs). Within this overall context, the police system too responded and initiated some sporadic, reactive and experimental efforts such as the setting up of vigilance committees, all-women police stations, Crime against Women Cells (CAW Cells) and counselling centres within police stations.¹

The first Special Cell was set up for women and children in 1984 in Maharashtra as a strategic collaboration between Mumbai Police and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. This was a first of its kind intervention in the country to provide professional support services to women and children facing domestic violence. A unique feature was the location of the Special Cell within the office of the Commissioner of Police of Mumbai city. This location was to prove a key determinant of the development of the Special Cell as it established the commitment of the Police to addressing the thorny issue of VAW.

The Special Cell for Women and Children (hereafter, Special Cell) is one such effort aimed at redressing cases of VAW. It is a service provided to women survivors by trained social

¹ Mission Statement and Monitoring Indicators for Special Cells for Women and children 2004, TISS included in Background note for NCW 2014

workers, located in the police system with a clear understanding that VAW is a crime and that it is the responsibility of the State to prevent and counter it. The strategic location within the police station aims to lead to a more co-ordinated, coherent and in-depth response to the issue by integrating social services within the police system.

After a successful partnership with the Government of Maharashtra across the state, TISS set up the Resource Centre for Interventions on Violence Against Women (RCI-VAW) in 2007 to scale up its work on VAW across the country. Further the interest and support received from other organisations working for women's rights, as well as multilateral/ international funding agencies, gave a fillip to the RCI-VAW to scale up TISS's work on VAW issues. This Resource Centre extends support for capacity building and advocacy needs of Special Cells in Maharashtra and other states too. The support is in terms of capacity building of other stakeholders to work on VAW with the State system, and to initiate and advocate for institutionalisation and strengthening of Special Cells across the States. Special Cells Maharashtra and RCI-VAW therefore remain organically linked FAPs (Field Action Projects) of TISS as well.²

The Special Cells³ are units with trained social workers within police stations, providing psycho-socio-legal services and serving as a nodal point for women facing violence. Their key features of the Special Cell model include:

- **Working within the police system:** The location of Special Cells helps them gain legitimacy, increase accessibility for women, and better coordinate the police's response to violence; the police being the first point of access for the survivor in the criminal justice system.
- **Providing a holistic response to VAW:** The cell workers address a victim's immediate needs in a crisis, and work with the woman to empower her to take action and protect herself from violence in the future; they also provide the necessary referrals for other services.
- **Applying a pro-woman approach:** Special Cells provide a much needed alternative to the pervasive patriarchal attitude and apathy that a woman faces whether she approaches her family, community, police or other groups for support.

The design of the Special Cells in Delhi was envisaged to locate trained Social Workers within the Crimes against Women's Cell. An MoU was signed to this effect between the three partners – NCW, Delhi Police and TISS. Work at the Special Cell was initiated with a month-long training of police personnel in 2008. Since then the Crimes against Women Cell has been restructured. The CWC itself was renamed as Special Police Unit for Women and Children - SPUWAC. Over a time period, the SPUWAC added other services such as Mediation services and then the Special Cell got re-designated as the Counselling Unit. As per the MoU between NCW, Delhi Police and TISS, six trained social workers were initially appointed to the SPUWAC Headquarters in Nanakpura, New Delhi to provide psycho-socio-

² Tata Institute of Social Sciences : RCI -VAW Draft Report on Data from Monitoring Reports 2015 of the Delhi Special Cell for Women (2008-2014).TISS

³ RCI-VAW TISS note for NCW, 2015

legal services to women facing violence. In 2010-11, the services of the social workers were also extended to two other SPUWAC units (Pitampura and Malviya Nagar) for similar crisis intervention.

Box 1: Strategic aims of the Delhi Special Cells⁴

- Giving visibility to violence against women and legitimizing the violated woman's concerns and needs within a pro-woman perspective.
- Working with the individual and the larger system simultaneously within the context of trained social worker practice.
- Developing a strategic alliance with the police system for a more coordinated, coherent, and in-depth response to violence; and integrating social services for violated women within the system.
- Engaging with the woman in problem solving through process oriented work to empower her.
- Providing social services within the criminal justice system focusing on socio-legal aspects of the issue of violence against women.
Achieving the above within the framework of the ethics and values of the profession of social work, and through services provided by trained full time social workers”

The basic objectives of Special Cells are as follows

- ✓ Provision of Counselling
- ✓ Referrals to medical, psychiatric, educational and vocational services
 - Police assistance
 - Placement in institutions
 - Legal aid
- ✓ The Cell to serve as a Liaison between police and other organizations for women and children
- ✓ Create critical awareness among women, professional groups and general public, on the atrocities committed against women and children
- ✓ Document the work of the Special Cell for critical review and reflection
- ✓ Develop material for training, programme and policy on Violence against Women, specifically for social workers and police persons.

There are multiple aspects and expectations of the role of the social worker in the Counselling Unit in the design of the Special Cells in Delhi:

- Negotiating for non-violence with various stakeholders
- Building support systems
- Engaging police help
- Facilitating Legal aid
- Providing emotional support and strengthening the psychological self
- Development counselling
- Advocacy for group entitlement
- Re-establishing women's relationships with their economic assets

⁴ Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2006; p:2; Project Report: “Special cell for women and children” , January 2010

- Arranging shelter
- Working with men in the interest of violated women

2. Purpose, Objectives and Methodologies

It is in this background and the interest of the Delhi Government to expand the Special Cells initiative across the city that the National Commission for Women (NCW), New Delhi commissioned this evaluation research study of the Special Cells in Delhi, in order to assess the effectiveness of the strategy to inform advocacy efforts with Government and others for introduction of similar interventions in other contexts/locations as well.

The mandate of the evaluation study is to provide:

- a) Information on the impact of the programme in the lives of the women who use the services of the Special Cells and to describe how their life situations may have changed;
- b) Determine the utility of these services to Police and other stakeholders in strengthening their response to women and children survivors; and
- c) Identify key aspects/features of programme coordination and organisation systems that enable sustenance of quality service provision to survivors of violence
- d) Provide substantive data about the scheme's impact from users and stakeholders and provide programme managers information related to improve service delivery.

The findings of the evaluation will be used for programme process and quality strengthening (including training) and also for structural advocacy in best interests of the programme on larger VAW issues, with the respective State and Central Governments, by NCW.

The specific objectives of evaluation of the Special Cells in Delhi were:

- To document the pathways by which women experiencing violence reach the Counselling Unit at the SPUWAC.
- To examine the manner and extent to which the Counselling Unit at the SPUWAC is able to match the needs and expectations of women survivors of violence.
- To ascertain the outcomes of women survivors who access the Counselling Unit two years after they have registered at the SPUWAC.
- To determine the extent to which the social workers at the Counselling Unit meet the stated objectives of the Counselling Unit.

Research Methodology and approach

Box 1 : Steps followed to undertake the study

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preliminary meeting with TISS team ▪ Submission of proposal to NCW ▪ Approval and sanction by NCW ▪ Preliminary introductory meeting with Delhi Police and TISS team – discussions on methodology, sampling, tools, data collection process, timeline, ethical considerations etc ▪ Development and review of research tools |
|--|

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pretesting of tools in two locations▪ Permission from the Police to conduct the study▪ Orientation of team▪ Data collection▪ Data cleaning and tabulation▪ Analysis and writing draft report▪ Finalisation of report |
|--|

Approach to the study

ERU adopted a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This involved primary as well as secondary data collection. The primary data was elicited from interviews with survivors (former and current), counsellors, police personnel and other stakeholders. The secondary data review involved screening and accessing all the registers, files and computerised records pertaining to client women (survivors) who approached the Special Cells in Delhi during Jan 2013- Dec 2015. The finalisation of the period and clientele to be reviewed was decided in consultation and discussions with the TISS team and the officials in the SPUWAC Unit as above.

The Research Team

The Research Team comprised of 6 members, composed of two Senior Consultants, 2 Senior Researchers from ERU and 2 Field Researchers. All members of the research team have vast experience of working with women, and on issues of VAW and have a deep knowledge of qualitative research methodologies.

Development of research tools and rolling out the study

The ERU team developed the draft interview schedules (tools) for the survivors, social workers, police and mediators. These were shared with the TISS team and the Police in the first preliminary meeting in Nanakpura. The consent forms too were shared with the police at the same time. The tools were revised based on detailed feedback received from TISS. The consent forms (Annexure 3) were translated into Hindi so that the survivors could easily understand them.

The set of In-depth Interview Tools developed for primary data collection were:

- Interview schedules for different stakeholders, (special cell social workers, mediators, enquiry officers, police officials heading the SPUWAC, representatives of the NCW and other organisations) with open-ended and closed questions.
- Interview schedule with current survivors (with standardised instruments, open-ended and closed questions).
- Interview schedule with past survivors (with standardised instruments, open-ended and closed questions).

Ethical considerations

The Research Team was oriented regarding ethical concerns as per the guidelines of WHO document titled Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence against Women (WHO, 2001)⁵, as suggested by TISS. This ensured that:

- The participation by survivors and other stakeholders in the evaluation study was entirely voluntary.
- Interviews with, and observations of, survivors were conducted only after informing them about the purpose of the study and obtaining consent from them.
- Social workers contacted the current and former survivors and requested them to come to the Special Cells on dates convenient to them obtain consent before researchers interviewed them.
- Interviews were conducted in spaces providing privacy and safety to the women. Research participants had the right to opt-out at any stage during the interview and a few of them even did so.
- In case of unintended events occurring during the data collection period, social workers were on call, and research investigators were provided referral numbers.
- Data gathered has been anonymised other than for the purpose of selecting a sample. Confidentiality has been maintained in all aspects of the evaluation.

Area and Sampling

In Delhi the sample was selected from two Counselling Units at Nanakpura and Pitampura, which dealt with around 3245 cases of women survivors during the period December 2009 to November 2014. An analysis of the monitoring reports compiled by Social Workers of the 2 units showed the achievements over a period of 5 years.⁶

Table 1 : Nos. of Survivors' Cases (2009-2014)

	Dec 2009- Nov 2010	Dec 2010- Nov 2011	Dec 2011- Nov 2012	Dec 2012- Nov 2013	Dec 2013- Nov 2014	Total
New registered cases	527	646	597	631	844	3245
One time interaction	1499	2224	1386	217	154	5480

Source: Monitoring Report of TISS 2015

Sample size

According to the table above, number of survivors' cases registered in the two Special Cells in Delhi, in the last three years shows average for 3 years 631 in 2012 -13. So taking the median average of 631 cases for 2013-14, 15% of 631 would be 94.65. Hence a rounded figure of 98 (in case some do not participate or cannot come for interviews), cases per Special Cell unit was suggested by TISS. During 2011-2014 around 58 survivors' cases per month were handled.

⁵ Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety 2001 Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence against Women. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organisation.2001

⁶ TISS Monitoring Report 2015

As per the agreement with NCW and TISS it was decided that the sample size for the study would be 196 cases, equally divided between old and new cases, representing around 15% of the average number of new 631 cases handled by the Special Cells in 2013-14.

To understand the current experience of the survivors of violence regarding engagement with the Counselling Unit, a sample of women who approached the Counselling Unit during July – December 2015 were invited to participate in the evaluation. To capture the experiences of survivors who had registered earlier, those survivors who had registered from July 2013- June 2015 were approached for interviews.

The sample of 196 survivors was selected from the survivors who had approached the unit two years prior to the time of data collection, i.e. from January 2013 to December 2015. A systematic random sampling method was used to select the sample. Using the list of clients registered during the period mentioned, every sixth case was selected to yield a 15% sample. The sample selection process had to be repeated several times as some of the shortlisted survivors could not be contacted, or were unwilling to be interviewed. In order to get the requisite number of cases the sample selection process was repeated to get the desired number of sample size, by preparing four back up lists for each Cell.

The Table below provides the list of diverse stakeholders interviewed as well as the number of interviews that were conducted during the course of the study.

Table 2: Interviews to be conducted

2 Special Cells in Delhi – Nankpura and Pitampura		
	Cases 15% of 631 registered; every 6 th case	
A)	Cases registered prior to data collection (approximately 24 months) from July 2013- June 15 (old)	96
	Cases registered during data collection period (approx. 6 months = new cases) July 2015- Dec 2015	96
	Sub total A	192
B)	Social workers (from 2 cells)	5
	Mediators 2 from each cell	4
	Key informants from NCW (2); Women org./SSH/PO (4)	6
	Sub total B	15
C)	Police officials heading CWC/SPUWAC	2
	Sub total C	
	Total Interviews	224

(Note: ERU was not permitted to interview police personnel under category C for the study).

Data Collection and process

- Daily schedules for interviews of survivors were obtained in advance from Social Workers so that a number of survivors could be interviewed each day.
- The women survivors were interviewed initially jointly by teams of a senior researcher along with the field researcher. After a few such interviews the entire team conducted the

interviews on their own. Interviews of other stakeholders such as counsellors, mediators and police personnel were conducted by the senior investigators.

- Daily team sharing, completion of schedules/ notes was conducted in post data collection meetings, before the data entry was done.
- Secondary data was accessed from the case intake registers, files and computerised records at the Special Cells and other records.

Interviews with Social Workers (5) were conducted at the Special Cells. Four Mediators were interviewed – 2 at Rohini Court and 2 at the Special cells. All the social workers were currently working in the 2 cells. Interviews with select police officials (2) were held to understand their perceptions about the Special cells, and the ways in which this programme can be strengthened. Detailed Case studies of 10 survivors have been prepared. The Researchers did not have the permission to interview police constables and EOs.

The primary data was obtained through IDIs conducted in Hindi with the survivors and others too. The survivors were all explained the purpose of the interview and were given the consent form in Hindi. They read it and then both the survivor and the interviewer signed them. In the case where the client could not read, she was read out the consent form prior to the interview. In some cases survivors refused to sign and gave verbal consent only which was duly noted by the researcher. Copies of English consent forms were also available in case any survivor wished to use one. The survivors were clearly informed about the confidentiality of the interview and the data recorded before commencing the interview. The identity and anonymity of clients was and will be maintained through coded interview schedules – having serial number, case intake number and police registration number. All data from interviews and registers/ computerised records was anonymised prior to analysis.

The 9 case studies were identified by the researchers to show how the survivors emerged as exceptional women in dealing with violence and struggling with the post violence experience to emerged as changed women. They were selected keeping in mind the following points - agency of the survivor in facing the challenge of violence -

- agency of survivor from difficult circumstances
- timeliness and quality of inputs by the special cell
- factors that influence her agency - family, education, economic autonomy etc
- linkages and other facilitation for the survivor to break out of her situation
- impact of counselling and other services of the cell
- spaces for own decision making, self expression and desire to break out of the mould.

Data compilation and analysis

The data from the interview schedules was entered electronically into datasheets that were created to translate the recorded data into digital form in Excel. The format was coded for qualitative and quantitative data, with provision for notes and observations. After individual entries of each interview, the entire quantitative data was tabulated for each Special Cell separately – one for Nanakpura and the other for Pitampura – for preliminary analysis. The

first phase of error checking was done by examining the sheets manually. Subsequently the data captured was put through a validation sheet which highlighted the areas of logical data-entry mistakes. The Consolidation sheet was created where all the data from various sheets was arranged in a tabular format. Further, tables were analysed by using the various analytical functions. Filters were applied to the data to obtain summarised values for the New and Old survivors' cases to do a comparative analysis. Textual data was extracted for further qualitative analysis. Then the two sets were combined for overall analysis. Similarly, the qualitative data was collated from the schedules. This collated data was used to develop the tables and graphs etc for analysis and to draw inferences from it.

3. Findings

During the past eight years, the Special Cells pilot in Delhi has shown that institutionalisation of Social Work within the Police Department system can work and counselling unit aspect can work and is doable.

The affirmative action and sensitisation of police to women's issues through the model has been illustrated through the pilot. The Social Workers have been provided the physical space for rendering psycho-socio support services for violated women to achieve justice. The trained team of officials, EOs, social workers and staff at different levels in the police system have supported the SPUWAC units to respond to VAW. They have been able to provide emotional, physical, and legal spaces for survivors, where they can seek redressal for their needs and concerns pertaining to marital discord, within a facilitative environment. There is adequate infrastructure to provide space for the work and make the survivors feel comfortable, especially at SPUWAC Nanakpura. Systems and procedures have been drawn up to facilitate and regulate the intake of cases and provide assistance to the survivors (though hierarchical and vertically set down as per police department systems).

The survivors, by and large are satisfied with the quality of counselling given by Social Workers. The pilot project also demonstrates the coming together of social work services within the Criminal Justice System and a process that at least visibilises VAW. In a state like Delhi, with a high incidence of domestic and public crimes against women the Special Cells are a critical requirement, even though their services are primarily for marital conflicts. Their expansion to other districts is a right step forward. The pilot illustrates that the model is ready for expansion, albeit with some changes measures and preparations. .

There are inter- linkages with the DCW, NCW, police *thanas* and the courts through various mechanisms that have been evolved in the Police system, though others need to be cultivated in the interest of survivors' requirements. Police *thana* referrals to the Cells are a common occurrence apart from references by the community and other people. Through the Special Cells the Police, to some extent, has worked towards ensuring violence-free and safe homes for women and their children. While at one level physical and emotional violence is being addressed, there is still the need for addressing economical and sexual violence and also to address cases of non-marital domestic violence.

3.1 Accessibility and Availability of Counselling Unit at the SPUWAC

Most of the survivors accessing SPUWAC are from the lower economic strata and 60% of women interviewed had attained education up to and below class 12; and also more than half of them were not earning, so they were dependent on their marital/natal families. Even for coming to the Cell most of them were accompanied by someone from the family. They came to know about the Cell through word of mouth and didn't know about 1091 Helpline. In many cases women made distress calls to 100, which they did not find very effective. Though the majority of them did not encounter any hurdles in coming to the Special Cells (also because in most of the cases survivors came to Cell after moving out from site of violence), some of the survivors did face opposition and impediments from different quarters. These challenges continue even as they engage with the Cell during the course of their cases. Some survivors constantly felt threatened by their husbands, who were present outside the Police station, but did not attend the counselling session. At times they even harassed them through phone calls and messages to make them withdraw their complaints.

Though very few survivors come in a state of apparent emergency, almost all cases need emotional support, but the processes and procedures involved delays their direct interaction with Social Workers. Unlike in Maharashtra Special Cells where the survivor first meets the Counsellor and other processes follow, in Delhi the women are referred by the EO to the Counsellor which might take 2-4 visits by the survivor, thereby delaying any immediate counselling assistance to her. What follows is that survivors have to repeat their case to the EO and the Counsellor separately. As EOs reports are not shared with the Counsellors, she has to make her own notes/ entries in the Case Register. Follow up of cases is taken up by the EOs only, which they share them with the Senior Police Officials. The survivors feel that the processes and procedures are extremely long drawn, especially in cases of severe violence where immediate action may be required. As shared by survivors and endorsed by Social Workers, on several occasions women wait for the joint counselling session only to learn that the respondent is not coming and a new date is given to her. They get anxious and feel harassed as some of them have to juggle between job, housework and children to make it for the dates.

3.2 Expectation of Survivors, their needs and outcomes of cases

Primarily the expectation of survivors from the Cell is to stop the violence being inflicted upon them. While half of the women interviewed wanted the Cell's intervention to end violence, others sought support for other reasons ranging from counselling, seeking maintenance/financial support from husband, reconciliation or judicial separation. The majority of survivors sought counselling assistance in negotiating, reconciling with spouses and their families to stop further violence. *Counselling was the most effective intervention that provided comfort and confidence to the woman. They said that they did develop the 'himmat' – courage, to confront the situation in future. The emotional support and sharing of their experiences reduced the burden of guilt that "it was their fault". The fact that someone listened patiently to their story of violence was relief at first instance.*

Most of the women wanted to stay in their marital homes to 'make their marriages work', as they had been enculturated to do so. There were also cases where women had decided to live separately but were suggested to reconcile with the husband for sake of the family, children and their own future. While some of the women cases whose cases had been reconciled were satisfied with the decision taken, some saw it as a compromise and were dissatisfied after the reconciliation. This was particularly so when the physical abuse experienced by survivors was intensive. Parental pressure often compelled survivors to make compromises in their marriages, so as to agree for reconciliation. This is largely in the context of the prevalent social norm that 'women have to adjust'. Some survivors are unable to move out of the marital homes for reasons of not having the financial resources, or lack of natal family support to cope with the existing situation. The inhibiting factors for not seeking assistance for violence were: fear of being thrown out and becoming homeless, economic survival, fear of children not being permitted to move out with her, threats to her life and life of her natal family members. Thus survivors continue to brave it out in the matrimonial home – revert back through unconditional reconciliation.

As shared by the survivors, social workers and mediators, and endorsed by the research team, survivors were economically dependent upon either their husband or father/brother. Survivors require financial assistance for themselves and their children which is not easy in the matrimonial home or the natal home as they have not been capacitated that way. They still have many miles to go before they can attain freedom from emotional, economic and verbal violence. They need to be empowered economically and emotionally to take charge of their lives. Survivors are not given sufficient/ any information on livelihood options to be economically independent. The fact that they continue to undergo economic constraints as they have no income or earnings of their own is one form of violence. They are unable to meet expenses for litigation or even for coming for counselling sessions to the Cell.

Most of the survivors said that the physical violence stopped (90% cases) as soon as they left the marital home and moved back with their parents. Those survivors who continued to live in marital homes continued to face violence (some to a lesser degree after the Cell's interventions). Even emotionally and mentally, when the violence has been severe they find it difficult to cope with everyday life. *Counselling can help to an extent, but women do need to connect with other sorority/ support groups, which they need to be linked with to recover from the violence holistically.*

A large number of survivors who sought assistance, had been advised by their private lawyers that registering their case with the Special Cell will strengthen the case in the court. This was even reported by the Mediators that about 90% survivors, who had registered their cases, engaged private lawyers and sought the help of the Cells too. Though a large number of cases reported economic violence (lack of financial resources, without her own personal earning or income) by husband/marital family no strong steps were being taken by the Cells (besides reconciliation). Women who also reported sexual violence by husbands reconciled without any counselling with husband on addressing issues of sexual violence. Some survivors wanted counselling to be extended to their husbands, parents in law and other family

members. This is because when/if the matter gets resolved, the survivor returns to the same abusive environment, so their attitudes and behaviour should be more positive towards her.

For spouses who repeatedly refused to come for joint or independent sessions/ meetings, women felt that some kind of pressure, threat/punishment needs to be imposed. An overwhelmingly large number of women interviewed spent hours waiting for their husbands who never arrived for counselling. This was even reported by Counsellors, Police Inspectors and Mediators. Though the Cell is a conciliatory body some measures need to be taken up for ensuring that respondents appear on the said date for counselling. Also there is no follow up action being taken by the Cell after women return post reconciliation to their marital homes. The Social Workers did mention about holding some awareness camps in schools, and going into the community for awareness earlier. Neither the Social Workers, nor Mediators nor Inspectors reported any linkages with health/hospital/medical assistance; emergency shelters etc. These are strictly under the domain of the Police Officials.

The emotional support and confidence instilled by Counsellors greatly helped the survivors to deal with and resist violence in many instances. The Cells' services are largely limited to only 'counselling' by the Social Workers and mediation referrals are facilitated for those survivors who seek maintenance or divorce. From the cases interviewed it was observed that neither the Social Workers nor the EOs are sufficiently trained in psycho-social counselling, whether of survivors or their spouses and families. In some cases the husband's family retains the survivors' documents and papers like education degrees and identity documents. This creates hurdles for her from carrying on with her studies, or getting a job, in the duration of her case.

Responses from survivors indicate that they do require gender sensitive, quick and readily available referral services. They do not have the means or the finances to access them, many times due to lack of mobility too.

For survivors, referral services for physical health/mental well being and equally employability, are a criticality to not only empower them, but also to help develop a sense of self worth. Very often they feel bad about being dependent on their parents or brother/s for economic sustenance and health care of themselves and their children. This leaves the whole arena of developmental counselling unavailable for survivors to enable them to reconstruct their situation outside the family norm, if they desire to turn around their lives. So while the emotional strengthening and confidence building does take place, simultaneous inputs for personal development are equally essential to make the survivors' struggle to lead a better life with economic and decision making autonomy.

3.3 Effectiveness of Counselling Unit

Survivors who accessed the Special Cells were no longer willing to be victims of physical violence – in fact some said they would hit back. Some became firm in their decision making – to seek justice through the court, take up a job, enhance their education etc though this process was influenced largely by their natal family. Those whose cases were under mediation and some others became more aware of their legal rights in the context of their

cases. However, the battle for freedom from economic, emotional and mental violence continues for them until they get addressed with other support mechanisms. Eager to pursue their lives by going in for higher education, some professional training or job and becoming financially independent. Financially and emotionally survivors want to carve out a new life of their own. In cases where reconciliation had taken place positively, women appeared cheerful. Some came with their husbands for interviews and both expressed their happiness to be back together again.

Many respondents required information with regard to laws to help them move on. Most of all they need clarity on the procedures for lodging FIR for 498A and its implications. If they do not have documentary proof it is difficult to lodge an FIR, as it is a criminal case. The Social Workers therefore, in the above context, would like to be capacitated in the knowledge of legal norms and processes. They do need to know what is happening with mediation or with the IO's investigation/ counselling. At least have shared notes prepared by I.O and vice versa. The process of counselling, both EOs and Social Workers could be helped with de-stressing workshops to enable them to get over the work stress.

Most survivors considered the SPUWAC Cell to be a space for reconciliation; irrespective of the issue- such an impression reflected the manner in which counsellors handled complaints. As observed, in some cases Social Workers also brought in their personal biases while advising survivors. Given the time pressure and case work load, Social Workers seemed detached from the process and seemed to be engaging mechanically without any thorough discussion with the survivors as was observed by the researchers.

Some clients who were employed said that they found it inconvenient to attend sessions on working days – the Cells do not open on Saturdays and Sundays. They had to take leave or take time off from work and many times this was not possible. Weekends would work out well for them for coming to the Cell. A few others said that the Cell should remain open in the evenings, so that they come after work. Information on the number of cases registered per day reveals that the numbers increase on Fridays and Mondays, as weekends the Cell remains closed.

Many of the respondents, irrespective of outcome of case or stage, said half of the cases coming to the Special Cell would be resolved if the husbands and their families were spoken to in a stern way. There is no fear of law or action and therefore the husband and his family unabashedly continued to behave in the same manner.

In the context of the above, the core of the Special Cell concept will need to be safeguarded within SPUWAC. In keeping with the objective of “saving the family”, focus of the counselling unit is primarily reconciliation. This approach, at times, is at the cost of the survivors' safety, as it does push her back into the abusive situation as before. When a survivor reconciles to live with her husband and/or his family she should be enabled to live there with autonomy, dignity and respect, not as someone who they have to keep because they have been told to do so. Each and every attempt to reconcile the couple has to ensure that the ‘family being saved’ is one where the rights of all members, especially the violated

women and children are protected. The fundamental principle towards case resolution is to ensure the survivors security, well being and foster her autonomy.

3.4 Institutional arrangements and effectiveness

In the management of the Special Cells there is a systemic hierarchy and vertical linkages to channelize services to survivors, though no horizontal linkages among the three units of Special Cells- the police EO, the social worker and the mediator. This horizontal communication across the three is imperative as the cases, at least some of them are moving across all three in sequence or otherwise from EO to mediators directly. Or even from EO to Police Counsellor to Social Worker and then back to EO or Mediator. Though each unit sends monthly reports to DCP/ACP for review separately, separate instructions/ guidelines are issued for action to each unit, there is no joint meeting or review across the units (EO, SW and mediators).

In structure, the Special Cell is designed to combine the critical counselling skills of the Social Workers along with legal support from Mediators and Police. The Social Workers have to do a sharp balancing act within the police system as they are located in the Counselling Unit, but are not from it. This leaves a feeling among them that they are placed to handle a specific task with the specific role of the Special Cell. It appears that they are needed by the system, though not a critical part of it. This is even so for the Mediators who come in and render services on a short term basis as consultants. This raises some questions of the extent to which counselling as a critical part of the Special Cells is being appreciated by the system. It also brings forth the consideration of the principle of the Special Cell design objectives - of ensuring and enabling the survivor's self determination as underpinning the work of the Special Cells. The autonomy and empowerment of the Social Workers is as critical as that of the survivors who come to seek support. Clearly this is an area that needs further discussion and work.

4. Areas requiring attention

Upon reviewing the observations and suggestions elicited, certain gaps have been identified which need to be recorded here so that they may be addressed by the NCW, Police Department and TISS after joint consultations. Basically they are issues which have emerged as lessons from rolling out of the pilot and have direct implications for the next phase of expansion.

The figure below lists some of the key issues under various categories that need to be taken on board and addressed in the next phase. The teams at various levels are already aware of them. These need to be reviewed internally to be addressed for empowering and assisting the survivors in the best possible way through the Special Cells.



Currently, the Delhi Special Cells model is placed at the right juncture to introduce and to engender fresh inputs with learnings from other Special Cell models, which are operational in states like Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Each model is different and unique, based on the states' initiatives and support mechanisms drawn from various departments. It would be worthwhile for the Delhi Police and NCW to study them and adapt what would be workable in Delhi SPUWAC Units too. These would help to strengthen the Cells further, especially as 11 new Cells are coming up to cover all districts of Delhi. In the perspective of the New Empowerment Policy for Women, NCW will be in a position to draw upon the schemes and programmes for single and working women for facilitating linkages with the Police to strengthen the special Cells.

5. Some Recommendations for the Programme

The recommendations herein are for the purpose of addressing some of the issues that have emerged after rolling the pilot for a considerable period. They do require to be reviewed for joint action in order to make the Special Cells programme successfully sustainable in the long term, keeping the violated women in focus. Since there are three key partners the recommendations are specific to each – the Police Department, NCW and TISS. The first is the implementer for delivery of services to the violated women, the second is the support agency for inclusion of Social Work Services within the Criminal Justice System and the third is the ideological force behind the concept of addressing VAW within the government. Since each stakeholder has a key responsibility to fulfil, there are separate recommendations for each agency, though the coordination among the three is crucial in the perspective of reaching out to and empowering the violated woman to stand tall on her own eventually.

One common thread that binds all the 3 key players is a shared perspective and understanding of what is the key principle that underpins the whole initiative ie. Ensuring and enabling women to take an informed decision and not to push the prevalent stereotype that the marital home alone is the place for a woman. This is an area that needs continuous reiteration and strengthening. And the importance of counselling in this

process is pivotal, since it is the primary need of a survivor when she contacts the Special Cell.

Police Department

The SPUWAC headquarters may consider the following steps drawn from the study -

- Facilitate the formation of a Core Group within the Department under the DCP - CAW, to review the issues and recommendations of the Evaluation Study Report for reviewing and revising systems and strategies for Special Cells, in consultations with TISS and NCW.
- Develop a system of joint Quarterly Review meetings including the Social Workers, EOs and Mediators, which will even help in the analysis of issues being faced in dealing with certain types of cases, and the resource support being given and used by the different stakeholders.
- Facilitate Social Workers to analyse cases/ data etc to visualise trends and develop new strategies along with the Enquiry Officers to handle such cases. The older/senior Social Workers could also be included as team members in planning/training of the newer ones to strengthen the Counselling Cells, Data analysis and management of cases and referrals.
- In view of the needs of the survivors, take steps to organise a referral network with other government departments for survivors to access skill development courses in the local area, to become economically independent. For this a Referral Group can be constituted to help develop a data base and contacts for referral services. They will assist in developing partnerships for arranging for the needs of survivors.
- The Referral Group will help facilitate /explore linkages for economic development, health, education and training resources for survivors. Referral services for the perpetrators who are alcoholic / substance abusers is also imperative as survivors situation often does not improve is she goes back after reconciliation. The physical abuse commences after a short hiatus if the husband is an alcoholic or a drug abuser. He needs help too if the violence at has to stop.
- Organisation of two to three refresher workshops or trainings fro EOs and Social Workers annually. This will even help in reviewing and monitoring the good practices and the issues that come up.
- For information dissemination the SPUWAC Units needs to a) inform about its services more widely and b) access documents/ materials on women's rights, laws, employment opportunities, education training from other government departments/ NGOs and agencies to share with survivors, NCW can help facilitate this for the Police.
- In view of the above there is need for Policy decisions to upgrade the operations of Special Cells -
 - Some alternative arrangement, so that clients can come on weekends and after office upon their convenience. An alternate off, instead of Saturdays, or else off days could be staggered.

- Appointment of a few male Counsellors – to work with spouses / partners who are rigid and adamant in harassing survivors.
- Joint meetings with EO, Social Workers and Inspectors for review and monitoring and resolving issues.
- Revival of home visits in select critical cases to review the situation of the survivor in her marital home, follow up on cases of severe violence/ critical cases, if the survivor has not moved out of marital home or when she goes back after reconciliation – joint visits by EO and Social Worker.
- Consider the position of a Director (who reports to DCP-CAW) especially for Special Cells for supervision and management. The person would have specific responsibilities for - review and monitoring of all Special Cells, coordination with NCW and TISS for capacity building, refresher courses, linkages with other stakeholders, advocacy/ information dissemination, data base development and analysis and systems revision/ development.

NCW

NCW as a national level institution for women's rights and issues has a key role to play for the Special Cells, both nationally and at Delhi state level. For Delhi Special Cells NCW can consider:

- Setting up a Joint Review/ Monitoring Committee for Special Cells – Delhi. And at India level a National Advisory Group can be constituted. The Review/ Monitoring Committee may review the Special Cells on a half yearly basis with members drawn from a) National Advisory Group, b) Police Department c) TISS and others. This Committee would have a two year term and would have old/ new members appointed every 2 years. NCW should participate in the setting up of the Referral Group by the Police.
- Develop a directory of resource organisations/ government departments which can be accessed by survivors. Social Workers may be introduced to organisations/ agencies and have regular contacts with them through the police and NCW. This will not only enable but even empower the survivors to access services such as training for seeking employment, health related consultations, for seeking some employment or starting home based work. Access to these services will widen their sphere of interacting with other women to change the course of their lives towards autonomy and self reliance. The materials can be accessed from other departments/ organisations too.
- NCW can undertake to print/ disseminate materials on VAW, Legal Rights of women and children, information about Special cells, posters and stickers for the information of the public to enable them to access the services of the Special Cells. The public/ community (particularly men) will be made aware that VAW will not be tolerated by women. Both advocacy and outreach are critical to help women come out and seek justice for themselves and their children.

- NCW, Police and TISS need to come together to plan and strategise as to how to strengthen the Special Cells to both impact women's lives positively and to empower them to change the course of their lives if violence is to be a non negotiable in their lives. The focus on the principle approach of the Special Cells of assisting the violated woman in every way and the whole area of development counselling will need to be retained.
- NCW will be required to facilitate adequate financial resources for a committed time frame in order to make the Special Cells in Delhi sustainable. The resources should be allocated for not only Social Workers, but even for capacity building, review and monitoring, linkages/ networking, information sharing and dissemination as well as for advocacy. This will be possible under new Policy for Women 2016.
- As a key institutional player, NCW can make provisions or organise to have an interstate sharing workshops/ seminars to share experiences of different models of Special Cells. It can facilitate Delhi Police and Social Workers teams to visit other models to see plan for the Special cells in Delhi with refreshed guidelines.
- In partnership with TISS and Delhi Police, NCW may draw up short term and long term action plans to ensure that the Special Cells to fulfil their objectives by being more accessible for women affected by violence, as they are being set up in each district of Delhi. At the same time they need to reach out to the women affected by violence to enable them to move out of the cycle of violence.

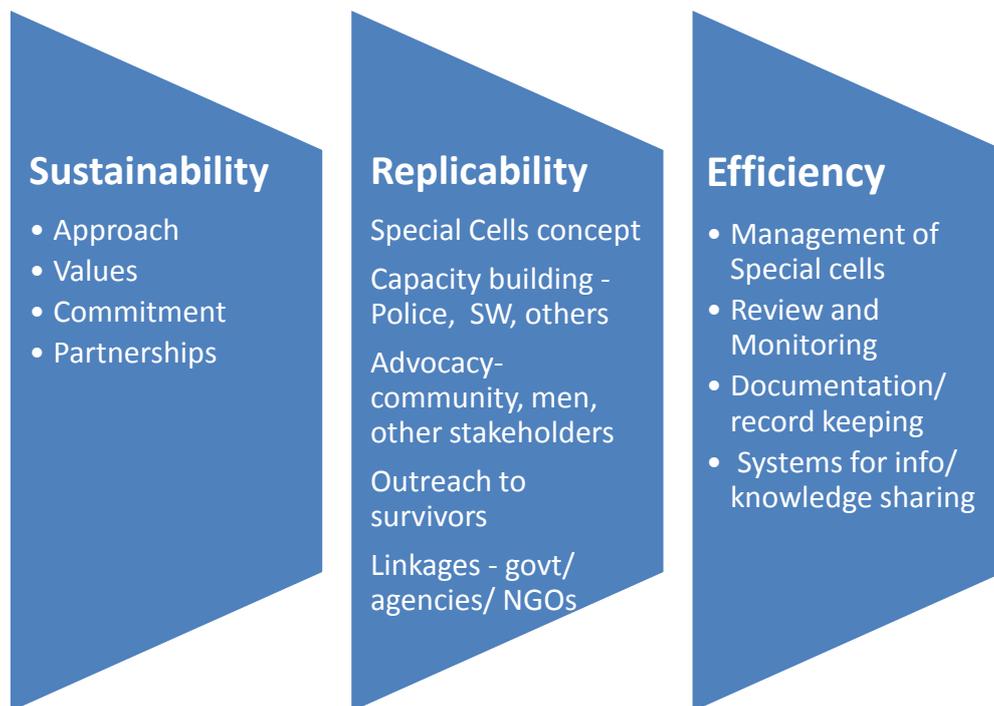
TISS – RCI-VAW

As in academic institution, and as the birth organisation of Special Cells TISS, particularly RCI-VAW, has played a key role and will continue to render valuable support to Special Cells, both nationally and for Delhi. The recommendations for TISS therefore are more wide ranging as follows:

- TISS should be invited as a permanent member of the National Advisory Group along with the police and NCW. For the present even at state level RCI- VAW has a critical role to play which will have to be defined during consultations.
- RCI-VAW should extend support to the Police in reformulation of guidelines for setting up/ operationalising Special Cells in Delhi. It should also help in incorporating new practices that have worked in other state models too after the exposure visits of the teams should the need arise.
- The TISS team could assist in developing and sharing guidelines for joint training of EOS/ Social Workers. A compendium for Social Workers has been developed, but it also needs to be supplemented with participatory training methodologies and resource materials.

- TISS could also assist to form a local Resource Support Group for VAW comprising of gender experts, trainers, and academicians in order to facilitate NCW and the Police to facilitate capacity building of Social Workers and EOs from time to time by providing refresher inputs and help to review the programme at least half yearly.
- It is time now that TISS should consider render support in setting up mechanisms and systems for review of Special Cells half yearly, as this has been done by the RCI-VAW, but not every six months. With the added number of Special Cells, more intensive inputs and hands on support is required to sustain the expansion of Cells in every District of Delhi.
- TISS could perhaps engender the larger issue of data analysis with the police team to examine the trends in the types of violence women are undergoing and the impact that the Cells are making in their lives through their outreach. This will help to reflect on what is needed and how evolve strategies to meet the needs and expectations of women.
- In partnership with NCW, TISS could organise learning – sharing workshops among neighbouring states having Special Cells to enrich the process of cross learning not only among Social Workers, but among the interstate WCD and Police departments as they are one who facilitate the Special Cells in the states.
- Facilitate the Police department to disseminate research findings within the SPUWAC Units among the personnel, the mediators and the judiciary through different means – workshops, seminars etc.

Many more suggestions have come up from different stakeholders, which certainly need to be taken into account for long term sustainability of the pilot as programme. All suggestions may not be workable or doable in the immediate future, However, they need to be kept in mind for incorporation into the programme at the appropriate time, with due consultations at various levels with stakeholders. At the same time efforts are required to mitigate the gaps to ensure sustainability, replicability and efficiency of the future Special Cells programme with continuing adaptations over time. Nevertheless the key approach, the perspective and the values of the programme towards violated women/ survivors will have to remain as a non-negotiable. The following points do need consideration as they are likely to impact the long term vision and mission of the Special Cells through sustainability, replicability and efficiency of interventions.



What has come forth quite sharply from the interviews and the data is that survivors clearly need and are accessing the Special Cells to resolve issues of violence, including other concerns in their marital homes. More women in the 20-35 years age group are approaching the Cells, within a year of their marriages. And they are quite aware of how they should be treated and what they expect in the marital home. They are aware of their rights as a person, even if it is only through the media (may not be in great detail). It has emerged from the sample that the newer survivors registered are more aware and they want to seek justice in a “fast track mode”. As against 2-3 decades earlier more women are having the support of their natal families in resolving marital issues. Parents are willing to have their daughters back and support them even if there are questions from the community and economic pressures do compel them. There is also an attitudinal shift among survivors – they want to give the negative marital experience a chance, but do not want to let it impact their lives or that of their children’s negatively in the long term. They do want to get on with their lives in a positive way, even it means a struggle for livelihoods and economic sustenance. And lastly, with the social shift towards nuclear family norms women would rather stay separately with the husband, rather than with in-laws. In joint families the oppression is doubled – by the family and the husband, so at least in the nuclear family she has to bear the violence from one person, which she thinks she can handle if it is not excessively overboard.