Breaking the Shackled Silence: Unheard Voices of Women from Kandhamal

Saumya Uma

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National Alliance of Women - Odisha
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Material from this book maybe used, duly acknowledging the source
To all the women and girls in and from Kandhamal

who spoke to us despite many adversities,

and to many more who could not.
I SEE YOU THROUGH MY TEARY EYES

I see you through my teary eyes
As you hide in the turmeric fields
And behind jackfruit trees,
And drink the rainwater droplets
From leaves and rocks in the forest,
Fearing for your life and that of your young ones.

I see you through my teary eyes
As you hear the burst of gas cylinders
And watch your home dissipate into ashes –
The home you built so lovingly with your own hands.
I see you numbed by the bleak present
That blinds an uncertain future.

I see you through my teary eyes
As the mob comes to rape and humiliate you,
And the men whom you served
Are transformed into voyeurs or malignant beasts.
I see your anger, fear, hurt, shock and dismay
As they tear your body apart with hate-filled eyes.

I see you through my teary eyes
As you get petrified of crackers and complete silence,
Darkness and bright light, lonely and crowded roads;
Of the shouting of slogans and myriad things that are a flaming orange;
Of fire, knives and swords, of the sound of traffic on the road.
Perhaps this is the peaceful existence that they claim?

I see you through my teary eyes
As you watch with anguish your husband, son or brother
killed by a mob and his body dismembered,
and plead with the callous police to recover the flesh and bones
So that you may bundle them in a polythene bag
For a dignified burial.

I see you through my teary eyes
You young girls with a life of dreams,
Scarred by a violent past; pursuing education at all cost,
Meandering your way through
harassment, poverty and a lack of access to information,
Tugged between your aspirations and familial responsibilities.
I see you through my teary eyes
While you hide under a dark staircase with a hundred girls,
Rosary and bible in hand, and a prayer on your lips,
Ready to sacrifice your life, yet fearing brutal rape,
as you hear the mob burn, loot and destroy
All that you created and nurtured.

I see you through my teary eyes
You old women abandoned in the village
When the young limbs fled to the forest;
As you braved the rains and the cold on cruel footpaths,
Before reuniting with half your family,
Your body weakened, and eyes brimming with despair and desolation.

I see you through my teary eyes
As they poison your wells, burn your documents,
Kill your cattle, steal your vehicle,
Loot your grains and money,
Stripping you of your dignity in a relief camp,
Snatching away the social ladder and digging your grave instead.

I see you through my teary eyes
As you perform your maiden role in the theatre of justice,
In a strange place filled with saffron sharks,
Forced to speak in an alien language,
Hounded by their lawyer, even as your own turns a blind eye.
Perhaps this is what the rule of law is all about!

I see you through my teary eyes
As they perform the façade of reparations,
Throwing you bits of leaves for a whole forest lost,
Taking no steps to eliminate your fear,
Yet branding you as selfish and devious,
And your decision to flee as a personal choice for financial gain.

I see you through my teary eyes
As you adorn their glossy statistics,
And are used to showcase their success in
NREGA, NHRM, SHGs, MDM -
Policies and schemes that
Hardly touched or changed your life.

I salute you – the girls and women of Kandhamal
For your brave smiles in the midst of a bleak future,
For generously offering me black ginger tea and chivda
Even when you have nothing for your next meal;
For teaching me the power of love and inner strength.
You are my motivation to work and my inspiration to live.

- **Saumya Uma**
  March 2013
# CONTENTS

**Foreword** ................................................................. (i)
**Acknowledgments** ......................................................... (ii)
**Abbreviations** ............................................................ (iii)

I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1
   1.1 Context ................................................................. 2
   1.2 The Communal Nature of the Violence in Kandhamal ............ 3
   1.3 Salient Features of the 2008 Violence ............................ 4
   1.4 Rationale of this Study ............................................. 5
   1.5 Objectives .......................................................... 6
   1.6 Methodology ....................................................... 7
   1.7 Constituencies ..................................................... 8
   1.8 Challenges and Limitations ....................................... 8

II. WOMEN SPEAK: NARRATIVES OF WOMEN AFFECTED BY THE VIOLENCE .... 10

III. THE VIOLENCE - THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN SURVIVORS .............. 29
   3.1 Women’s Experiences During the Attacks and Afterwards .......... 29
   3.2 Sexual and Gender-based Violence ................................. 31
   3.3 Experiences of Adolescent Girls .................................. 34
   3.4 Experiences of Elderly Women ..................................... 34
   3.5 Experiences of Hindu Women ...................................... 35
   3.6 Role of Hindu Women During the Violence and its Aftermath .... 36
       Summary of Findings ............................................... 39

IV. IMPACT OF THE VIOLENCE ON WOMEN’S LIVES .......................... 41
   4.1 Mental Trauma ..................................................... 41
   4.2 Financial Status and Livelihood .................................. 42
   4.3 Housing .............................................................. 44
   4.4 Engaging with State Institutions and Officials .................... 46
   4.5 The Struggle for Justice .......................................... 48
       Summary of Findings ............................................... 51
V. SIX YEARS ON: A REPORT CARD ON WOMEN AFFECTED BY THE VIOLENCE . 57
  5.1 Threat to Personal Safety .................................................. 57
  5.2 Physical and Mental Health Concerns ........................................ 58
  5.3 A Financial Quicksand: Resources, Livelihood and Housing .................. 59
  5.4 Access to Education for Adolescent Girls ..................................... 64
  5.5 Hindu Women’s Perceptions of the Christian Community ....................... 65
  5.6 Christian Women’s Perceptions of Hindu Women ............................... 66
  5.7 Peace Initiatives and the Existence of Peace .................................. 68
  5.8 Views on Peace .................................................................. 70
  5.9 Views on Justice .................................................................. 70

Summary of Findings ........................................................................ 73

VI. THE PATH AHEAD .................................................................... 75
  6.1 Observations on Issues of Serious Concern ....................................... 75
    6.1.1 Repatriation / Resettlement / Social Re-Integration ....................... 75
    6.1.2 Safety and Security of Women and Girls .................................... 76
    6.1.3 Performance of the Criminal Justice System ................................. 77
    6.1.4 Socio-economic and Cultural Rights .......................................... 78
    6.1.5 Reparations ..................................................................... 79
  6.2 Possible Courses of Action – Immediate ........................................... 80
  6.3 Possible Courses of Action – Long Term ........................................... 82
  6.4 Conclusion ........................................................................... 82

Annexure I: Summary of Focussed Group Discussions ........................................ 84

Annexure II: Compilation of All Known Incidents of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Against Women and Girls ............................................................ 95

Glossary .................................................................................... 101
FOREWORD

In December 2007 Odisha witnessed an unprecedented communal violence in Kandhamal district. The fire that was ignited on the eve of Christmas of 2007 simmered for a long time and flared up again in August 2008 after Swami Laxmananada Saraswati’s killing. The fire of hatred and violence almost engulfed the whole of Odisha. Violence took lives of many poor and innocent people. Properties of both poor and rich were destroyed. In the midst of this violence and hatred many of the real culprits escaped.

The National Alliance of Women – Odisha responding to the situation did two fact finding studies immediately after the first phase violence in 2007. It got involved in providing relief and peace building processes after 2008.

NAWO – Odisha also raised some specific issues pertaining to women who had been widowed during the communal violence or faced sexual and physical violence.

But during our involvement in relief and peace building processes we realized that most of the efforts did not really have any feminist perspective. The dominant paradigm of damage assessment never looked at violence or conflict from a feminist lens. As such the voices of women from conflict or violence zone is very feeble or absolutely silent. In such a context we thought of documenting the communal violence of Kandhamal from a women’s perspective – how it affected them, what role they played in protecting themselves, their family, their community, what it means to be in the midst of violence, what it means to be a part of aggressor group, what it meant to be part of an aggrieved community. How they felt when their neighbours, friends were hounded. How violence/ conflict affected different categories of women from both the side. Thus the present study is an effort to document the communal violence from a women’s perspective. The document carries case studies as narrated by women.

Our sincere thanks to Ms Saumya Uma who agreed to do the research and write the report.

We hope this report will help the administration as well as civil society organizations to look at conflict from a feminist perspective.

– Pramila Swain
Convenor
National Alliance of Women, Odisha
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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS – Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ANHAD – Act Now for Harmony and Democracy – a non-profit organization based in Delhi
ANM – Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA – Accredited Social Health Activist – community health workers appointed by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as a part of National Rural Health Mission
BDO – Block Development Officer
BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party – political party of the Hindu Right
BPL – Below Poverty Line
CRPF – Central Reserve Police Force
Cr. PC – Criminal Procedure Code, 1973
DM – District Magistrate
DSP – Deputy Superintendent of Police
DNAtest – DeoxyriboNucleic Acid test – done, among many things, to prove the identity of a dead person
DTP – Desktop publishing
FGD – Focussed Group Discussion
FIR – First Information Report
FRA – The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 – commonly called The Forest Rights Act
HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRLN – Human Rights Law Network
IDPs – Internally Displaced Persons
IO – Investigating Officer
IPT – Indian People’s Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights
MARG – Multiple Action Research Group
MDM – Mid Day Meal scheme
MLA – Member of the (state) Legislative Assembly
NAWO – National Alliance of Women
NCM – National Commission for Minorities – a statutory body
NCW – National Commission for Women – a statutory body
NGO – Non-governmental organization
NHRC – National Human Rights Commission – a statutory body
NPT – National People’s Tribunal (on Kandhamal)
NRHM – National Rural Health Mission – a government programme that aims at strengthening state health systems
NREGA – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005
OBCs – Other Backward Classes
OSAP – Odisha State Armed Police
PIL – Public Interest Litigation
PP – Public Prosecutor
P.S. – Police Station
RAF – Rapid Action Force – a type of paramilitary force
RSS – Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh – National Voluntary corps, the ideological organization of the Hindu Right
SC – Scheduled caste
SC – Supreme Court
SCC – Supreme Court Cases
SHG – Self-help group
SIT – Special Investigating Team
SP – Superintendent of Police
ST – Scheduled tribe
TPDS – Targetted Public Distribution Scheme
UN – United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
VHP – Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council)
Vs – Versus
WILPF – Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom – a non-profit organization based in New York and Geneva
WISCOMP – Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace – a non-profit organization based in Delhi
WRAG – Women’s Research and Action Group – a non-profit organization based in Mumbai
INTRODUCTION

On 23 August 2008, Swami Lakshmananda Saraswati – a Hindu religious leader - and his four disciples, including a woman, were killed in his *ashram* at Jalaspeta, Kandhamal district in Odisha. The following day onwards, an unprecedented and gruesome violence was unleashed against the Christian minority community in the district. The attacks were widespread, across several blocks and villages in the district of Kandhamal, and were executed with substantial planning and preparation, as indicated by the meetings held by the perpetrators prior to the violence, the financial and other forms of assistance secured months prior to the violence.1 The violence was targeted mainly at *dalit* Christians and *adivasis*, and persons who supported or worked with the community.2 A precursor to this violence was an attack, albeit of a smaller scale, in December 2007, in the same district.3

According to government figures during the violence from August to December 2008, in Kandhamal district, a total of 39 persons were killed, including 2 police personnel and 3 rioters.4 Human rights groups estimate that around 100 people were killed, including disabled and elderly persons, children, men and women.5 More than 600 villages were ransacked;6 at least 5600 houses were looted and burnt; at least 54000 people were left homeless;7 295 churches and other places of worship, big and small, were destroyed; 13 schools, colleges, philanthropic institutions including leprosy homes, tuberculosis sanitoriums, and offices of several non-profit organizations were looted, damaged or burnt.8 About 30,000 people were uprooted and lived in relief camps and continue to be displaced. During this period about 2,000 people were forced to renounce their

1 As observed by the National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal. For more details, see National Solidarity Forum, *Waiting for Justice* - Report of the National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal (New Delhi: 2011), p.172 (hereinafter referred to as the NPT report)

2 Ibid

3 The National Commission for Minorities, in its report after a visit to Odisha on 6-8 January 2008, observed that during the attacks that took place between 24 and 27 December 2007 in various places in Kandhamal, Christian properties such as parish churches, village churches, convents, presbyteries, hostels, a vocational training centre, a leprosy centre, and scores of shops and houses were destroyed. The NCM further observed that Hindu-owned properties were also destroyed though the number is a fraction of the losses sustained by Christians.

4 Statistics cited to the author by Mr. Jai Narayan Pankaj - the Superintendent of Police, Kandhamal District - on 26 June 2013

5 A list of 75 persons killed during the violence was submitted to the Supreme Court by Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Bhubaneswar in February 2009, the details of which can be found in Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal: A Blot on Indian Secularism* (2009), Delhi: Media House at pp. 29-31. The Archbishop stated that the total killings would be approximately 100, but a compilation of the complete list was impossible as many villages were very sensitive, hostile and inaccessible.

6 NPT report, Prologue

7 Ibid

8 Ibid
Christian faith. More than 10,000 children had their education severely disrupted due to displacement and fear.\(^9\)

The value of movable and immovable property lost is unknown, as there has been no official estimate of the same. A recent impact assessment in three sample villages covering 122 families, indicates the value of total property and livelihood-related loss at around Rs. 2,28,76,486 while the average loss suffered by each affected family is Rs. 1,86,280.\(^10\) The report acknowledges that this too is an underestimation of the actual loss suffered, as loss of access to healthcare and basic services, transportation costs, loss of education, psychological trauma, injury and disability, breakdown of community and social structures, loss of access to places of worship and permanent loss of livelihood have not been included in the study.\(^11\) There has been no official estimate of those who suffered severe physical injuries (not leading to death) and mental trauma.

1.1 Context

Odisha, situated in eastern India, is one of the poorest states of the country. Kandhamal is one of the poorest districts of Odisha, being in the 29\(^{th}\) position among 30 districts on Human Development Index, prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Kandhamal has a high percentage of two of the most marginalized ethnic groups – Panas and Kandhas. Panas, designated as a Scheduled Caste (SC), constitute about 17% of Kandhamal’s population. Over 90% of them are Christians. They are poorer than the Kandhas as they have substantially less access to resources, and hold only a small percentage – 9% - of the cultivable land. The Kandhas, designated as a Scheduled Tribe (ST), constitute about 51% of the district’s population. They are primarily animists and do not fall in the category of religion as a social phenomenon in the same way as Christians, Muslims and Hindus.\(^12\) Being one of the most disenfranchised communities, they have been the target of attempts at religious conversion, both by Christian missionaries and Hindutva forces.\(^13\) Kandhas own about 77% of the cultivable land in Kandhamal.

Land has been a contentious issue among the two most marginalized communities in Odisha.\(^14\) This is particularly so in Kandhamal district, which has only 12% cultivable land; 71% forests and the remaining area is barren land. The land owned by STs was sought to be protected through the Odisha Scheduled Areas Transfer of Immovable Property (by Scheduled Tribe) Regulation Act 1956, which was further amended in 2002 to regulate all land transfers from STs to non-STs. A study conducted by a government research institution refutes the theory of land grabbing by Panas from the Kandhas, and that sundhis (caste Hindus) were responsible

\(^9\) Ibid

\(^10\) Unjust Compensation– An Assessment of Damage and Loss of Private Property during the Anti-Christian Violence in Kandhamal, India, published by Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources, and Housing and Land Rights Network (Bhubaneswar: 2013), at p. 22

\(^11\) Ibid

\(^12\) Saumya Uma, Kandhamal: The Law Must Change its Course, edited by Vrinda Grover, published by Multiple Action Research Group (MARG), (New Delhi: 2010) at p. 29

\(^13\) For the purpose of this paper, ‘Hindutva forces’ means groups that are inspired by the goal of Hindu nationalism and the creation of a Hindu state. These include Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bajrang Dal (BD) and Durga Bahini.

\(^14\) Crossed and Crucified: Sangh Parivar’s War Against Minorities in Odisha, Report by PUCL – Bhubaneswar and Kashipur Solidarity Group (Delhi: 2009) at p. 22
for land grabbing. Yet it has been widely believed (through hate rumours) that the violence in Kandhamal was a result of Panas’ grabbing of land owned by Kandhas.

Another reason for the violence, as cited by government officials, is the fake certificates made by SCs to grab the benefits accorded to STs through government policies and schemes. Due to the definition of Scheduled Castes in the Constitutional (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 issued by the President of India and subsequent amendments to the same, SCs who convert to Christianity loses his / her SC status upon conversion, while STs continue to retain their ST status even after a conversion to Christianity. In the context of the unjust character of the law, an allegation has been made that the Panas use fake certificates to avail of benefits intended for SCs despite their conversion to Christianity. The Superintendent of Kandhamal, in an interview with the author on 26 June 2013, stated that among over a 1000 complaints, less than 12 persons have been arrested upto 15 April 2013, following the procedure directed by the Supreme Court in Kumari Madhuri Patil vs Assistant Commissioner. The jury of the National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal observed that since the SC status is directly related to entitlements and benefits in government policies and schemes, a loss of the status deters conversion to Christianity and thus furthers the objective of the communal and divisive forces.

1.2 The Communal Nature of the Violence in Kandhamal

The Odisha government has been categorical in reiterating that the violence in Kandhamal was ethnic in nature – that is, it was a result of conflict between the Panas and Kandhas, consequently excluding the role of Sangh Parivar or a targeting of Christians in the violence. On the other hand, the National Commission for Minorities was unequivocal in its observation that the violence was “undoubtedly communal in nature and people were attacked on the basis of their religion.” The National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal, headed by Justice A.P. Shah (retd.), also observed that “the carnage in Kandhamal is an act of communalism directed mainly against the Christian community, a vast majority of who are dalit Christians and adivasis; and against those who supported or worked with the community.”

Conversions to Christianity take place all over India, including in the Kandhamal district of Odisha. Christianity has been an Indian religion for many centuries. Religious conversions in India are not restricted to Christianity alone. While active proselytisation by some church groups and denominations do occur in Odisha, the Indian People’s Tribunal, which addressed the issue of religious conversions in Phulbani district, pointed out that overwhelmingly, conversions to Christianity did not occur with the intent of destabilizing the Hindu or other communities. It

15 Ibid at p. 27
17 NPT report, supra n. 1, at p. 172
18 Report of the visit of the Vice Chairperson, National Commission for Minorities, to Odisha, 21-24 April 2008 at page 2, para 2; Report on the visit of the Vice Chairperson, National Commission for Minorities, to Odisha, 11-13 September 2008, at para 2
19 NPT report, supra n. 1 at p. 172, para A1.
also mentioned that the content and program of church-based education did not foster communal hatred or divisiveness in thought and deed.\textsuperscript{21} Since the 1980s, it was asserted that Christian missionaries are forcibly converting persons. Using this as a basis, anti-Christian violence started occurring, accompanied by a \textit{Ghar Vapasi} (return home) ritual performed by Hindutva forces. Through this ritual, persons who had converted to Christianity were “re-converted” to Hinduism. In 1996 and thereafter, India has witnessed a spate of anti-Christian violence, including attacks on priests, nuns and pastors as well as church-based religious and charitable institutions. Odisha, in particular, has had a horrific history of anti-Christian violence. The burning alive of Graham Staines and his two minor sons in Manoharpur village of Keonjhar district of Odisha in 1999, and the gang-rape of a Catholic nun in Mayurbhanj district a month later are examples of such vicious attacks.\textsuperscript{22}

Experts state that the silent work to ‘Hinduise’ dalits and adivasis through religious-cultural mechanisms and manipulations has intensified in the last three decades. Swami Lakshmanananda, a VHP proselytiser, was recruited by Hindutva forces in the 1960s, to supervise the Hinduisation of Phulbani district.\textsuperscript{23} His effort was three-pronged: a) bringing non-Christians, mainly adivasis, into the fold of Brahminical Hinduism, through coercive methods; b) punishing dalits and adivasis who had converted to Christianity; and c) “reconverting” dalits and adivasis who had previously converted to Christianity, back to Hinduism through the \textit{ghar vaapasi} ritual.\textsuperscript{24} These aggressive interventions caused fissures within the community, creating an atmosphere of divisiveness, mutual suspicion and hatred among the two most marginalized communities - adivasis and dalits - who, irrespective of their religious affiliation, had hitherto led a peaceful life in coexistence.

The National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal observed that members of Hindutva organizations including the \textit{Bajrang Dal}, \textit{Vishva Hindu Parishad} (VHP), \textit{Durga Vahini} and the \textit{Rashtriya Swayamsevik Sangh} (RSS) were identified as the perpetrators in all victim-survivor testimonies as well as fact-finding reports and studies.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{1.3 Salient Features of the 2008 Violence}

Unlike the 2007 violence, the 2008 violence in Kandhamal was widespread, across several villages and blocks. Some of the main features of the 2008 violence were as follows:

- The attacks were executed with substantial planning and preparation. The victims-survivors witnessed that meetings were held by the perpetrators prior to the violence and financial and other forms of assistance sought to support the violence;

- The availability of weapons with the perpetrators, the organised mob, the availability of burning material and the arrangement of vehicles to carry away looted property also

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Communalism in Odisha}, report of the Indian People’s Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights (Mumbai: 2008), p.49 (hereinafter referred to as the IPT report)

\textsuperscript{22} Graham Staines was an Australian missionary. In January 1999, he and his two minor sons were burnt alive by a mob led by Dara Singh. Jacqueline Mary, a Catholic nun, was gang-raped in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha in February 1999.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Communalism in Odisha}, Report of the Indian People’s Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights (Mumbai: 2006) at p. 45

\textsuperscript{24} Presentation by Dr. Prasad Sirivella. See NPT report, at pp. 46-47

\textsuperscript{25} NPT report, supra n. 1 at p. 172, para A1.
indicate the planning and preparation involved in these attacks;26

- Killings and attacks were brutal in nature, and targeted the young and the old alike;
- Burning and destruction of property (residential, official and religious / charitable institutions) was also a predominant form of violence;
- Moveable property was looted; valuable documents and certificates related to educational and professional qualifications, land and property ownership were deliberately destroyed in order to lower the socio-economic status of the victim-survivors;
- Evidence of the attacks were systematically destroyed in order to scuttle the processes of justice and accountability; and
- Human rights defenders and social workers were targeted for their role in assisting victims with aid, relief, rehabilitation and process of justice. The NPT found these to be deliberate acts, intended at cutting off assistance to the victim-survivor community and isolating them.27

1.4 Rationale of this Study

The National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal, held in Delhi in August 2010, observed as follows:

During the attacks, women and girls were targeted for sexual violence, humiliation, brutal physical assaults or threats thereof. The jury observes, with deep concern, the silence that prevails in matters of sexual assault, at various levels including documenting, reporting, investigating, charging and prosecuting cases. Though witness testimonies indicate that sexual violence was rampant during the attacks, there are very few reported cases, and an even smaller number that have been registered and are pending in the courts for prosecution. It is the duty of the State and members of civil society to document incidents of violence against women and seek legal redress for them.28

There have been many fact-finding reports and publications on the extent of damage and devastation caused by the violence. These have largely focussed on the number of killings, brutality with which members of the Christian community were killed, and the damage and destruction of religious places and other buildings, homes and shops. Indeed, in the years subsequent to Kandhamal violence, there have been some attempts to document the voices of women and girls from the ground and viewing the violence through their eyes. Reports by Loyola college - Chennai, Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work - Mumbai and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in collaboration with Women in Security, Conflict Mitigation and Peace (WISCOMP) have provided some accounts of women’s experiences, as narrated in the early months and years after the violence. This was followed by a chapter on gendered violence in the report of the National People’s Tribunal in 2010.29 The present study, through community conversations with affected women on the ground, seeks to further complement and build upon the existing

26 NPT report, p. 173, para B4
27 NPT report, page 173, para B5
28 NPT report, supra n. 1 at p. 173
29 NPT report pp 64-86
documentation on the impact of the violence on women, and women’s responses to the same. In addition, it examines their present status – six years after the violence, and highlights what more needs to be done to restore the survivors to at least the standard of living that they enjoyed prior to the violence, if not better.

The present study documents the narratives of women victim-survivors. It records their experiences, fears and insecurities and their engagements with government institutions and social/community structures. It examines and seeks answers the following questions: Driven away from their homes and lands, deprived of their loved ones, and forced into poverty and social ostracism, how have the women coped with issues of survival, housing, livelihood, physical, emotional and financial insecurity, with few resources and even fewer skills? What are women’s experiences in traversing justice processes and peace initiatives, and the myriad challenges they have faced to their personal dignity and security, as they assert their human rights? This study, therefore, records women’s experiences, and aims at making women’s voices visible, in order to map their experiences, highlight the complex challenges they have faced and acknowledge their contribution to the post-conflict processes of justice, peace and social reintegration. The study seeks to analyse the violence through the lens of gender, situated within a framework of patriarchy at the state, religious and community levels.

Additionally UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820 and other related resolutions were framed to ensure women’s voices in situations of conflict, and to reassert the importance of women’s participation in conflict resolution and management. However, the Government of India has been slow in the application of these resolutions to India, on the ground that technically there is no ‘conflict’ in India. As a result, the standards set by these resolutions have not been integrated into government policies, programmes and schemes and remains only on paper. This study is an attempt to operationalise the essence of such resolutions, by emphasising the need for participation of women in conflict resolution and peace in Kandhamal.

1.5 Objectives

This study attempts to document and analyse women’s experiences of the violence, with a particular emphasis on

- Sexual and gender-based violence;
- Engagement with criminal justice processes;
- Experiences with state institutions and government officials;
- Experiences of adolescent girls, elderly women and Hindu women;
- Role of Hindu women during the violence and its aftermath

In addition, it examines the impact of the violence on women and girls, and their present status, including

- Personal security, physical and mental health;
- Socio-economic and cultural rights (such as housing, livelihood, education, cultural/religious);
• Status and specific needs of adolescent girls and elderly women;
• Perceptions of women about the ‘other’;
• Views on peace and justice

In its concluding part, the report indicates possible courses of action for the future.

1.6 Methodology

This study is an action research that is qualitative in nature. The collection of primary data was done through a combination of one-to-one interviews as well as focussed group discussions (FGDs) with affected women from both the adivasi and dalit Christian communities in the villages of Kandhamal. In addition, group discussions were also held with Hindu women in some villages of Kandhamal to understand and document their experiences and perceptions. Women and girls who participated in the in-depth interviews and FGDs were identified through the method of purposive sampling.

Additionally, an interview with key government officials such as the Superintendent of Police of Kandhamal district and the District Collector were undertaken, in order to understand and document the present responses of the district administration to the challenges faced by the victim-survivors, particularly women and girls. For this study, informal consultation was also held with individual lawyers who have been handling criminal cases pertaining to the women that we interviewed. This was for the purpose of a clearer understanding of the status of some of these cases that had been tried at the Fast Track courts in Phulbani, sessions court in Cuttack, and other courts across the district of Kandhamal.

The study is predominantly based on the field work for collection of primary data, which was done during a period of 5 days in March 2013 and 10 days in June 2013. The report has also incorporated some of the information gathered and findings arrived at from conversations with women survivors of the violence in March 2011, by a coalition of women’s groups at the national level. Some of the in-depth interviews were done in 2011, and a follow up was done in recent months to document the present status. In addition, records of women’s experiences, as documented by members of NAWO-Odisha since the time of its engagement with the Kandhamal violence in December 2007, have also been used where relevant.

Complementing the interviews and the FGDs, the study has also relied upon secondary sources such as published reports, articles, judgments, legislations and their commentaries. It also reviewed reports of Indian organizations, campaigns and movements, government policies, orders and directives, as well as sources from international law where relevant.

Being an action research, this study was not intended to be a one-way process that was aimed only at documenting and analysing women victims-survivors’ experiences of the violence and their status today. Through this study, an attempt has also been made to reach out to the women, assure them of...
our support and solidarity, facilitate their psychological and physical well-being, and guide them in accessing government schemes and benefits. Efforts are being taken to organize group counselling for traumatized women, and to find jobs for some of them who require the same on an urgent basis. In addition, steps are also being taken to share the findings of this study with the Kandhamal district administration and the state government in general, in order to positively contribute to a betterment in the status of women who are adversely affected by the violence in Kandhamal.

This study has abided by the principles of feminist and human rights research, such as confidentiality, privacy, dignity and an objective risk assessment. Since a threat to most of the interviewees who participated in an indepth interview was perceived, steps have been taken to withhold their identity from this document in order to pre-empt any danger to them and / or their family members.

1.7 Constituencies

The district of Kandhamal is divided into twelve blocks. Out of these, conversations with women were held in seven blocks of Kandhamal, namely Phiringia, Tikabali, K.Nuagam, G.Udaygiri, Raikia, Daringbadi and Balliguda. These are among the blocks that were more adversely affected during the violence. This study is based on conversations held through FGDs with approximately 200 Christian women, 80 Hindu women, 12 adolescent girls, 11 elderly women and 17 single women across 14 villages and resettlement sites, primarily in Kandhamal but also extending beyond. 3 FGDs were conducted with adolescent girls, 1 FGD with elderly women and 2 with single women to document their specific experiences and needs. Please see inner cover page for the geographical coverage of this study and Annexure I for a summary of the FGDs held.

The constituents for this study also included 17 women with whom an in-depth one to one interview was conducted. These include

- middle aged and elderly women whose family members had been killed in the violence;
- single women of varied age groups, affected by the violence;
- women and girls who had been attacked / threatened with an attack during the violence and have faced an imminent risk to their life and personal security;
- women whose family members have been forcibly converted to Hinduism at the time of the violence;
- nuns and other female workers in the church and Christian organizations; and
- women social workers who have assisted the affected community.

1.8 Challenges and Limitations

Given the fact that many women have migrated to other districts of the state or other states, or are in hiding, with very few persons having access to them, it has been extremely difficult to trace, identify and reach out to the women who could potentially participate in this study. Predictably, this process was even more challenging, in the case of women and girls who have faced or witnessed sexual assault during the violence in Kandhamal.
One of the biggest challenges has been to ensure that the personal security of women and girls, who participated in this study, and their families, is not compromised in any way. Many of them continue to receive threat through direct / indirect means and / or perceive a threat to their lives and personal dignity. Some continue to be in hiding, away from the site of violence as they had experienced. Others have moved to neighbouring areas and tried to start life afresh, but continue to be vulnerable to threats of attacks. Some wanted us to use their names and photographs, as they are frustrated living a life of fear; others were clearly reluctant and apprehensive. There is a fine balancing that had to be undertaken between the women's own assessment of their personal security and our assessment of the same.

We believe that the readers would be more interested in the salient points that women communicated, braving the difficult situation and the continued fear and threat of attacks. In the interests of their security, and to pre-empt the possibility of them being identified and further targeted, this report withholds the identities of the women who conversed with us. We have assigned a pseudonym to all women who participated in the in-depth interviews. The name of the villages where the FGD took place has been also withheld unless it is relevant to the narrative. The photographs used for this report have also been chosen with utmost care so as not to expose any woman or girl to possible risk.

The analysis and findings of this study are based on a representative sample. Hence this study is not comprehensive in nature, but is indicative of the lived experiences, present status and challenges faced by women and girls from victim-survivor communities. It has the potential to be used as a pilot study for a more comprehensive, all-encompassing study of the status of women in post-conflict Kandhamal.

Due to the large distances between various blocks in Kandhamal, coupled with a paucity of time, more villages and blocks could not be covered in this study. Almost all the interviews and FGDs were conducted in either Oriya or Kui or a combination of the two languages. Despite the best efforts taken to diligently document the conversations with women with utmost accuracy, it is possible that some crucial information has been missed in the process of translations and transcriptions into English.
WOMEN SPEAK:
NARRATIVES OF WOMEN AFFECTED BY THE VIOLENCE

This chapter reproduces excerpts of the narratives of women, who spoke to us about their experiences at the time of the violence and thereafter. Each woman conversed with us at length, vividly describing the terrifying moments during the violence, her coping strategies and her present condition. The excerpts of the narratives have been carefully chosen to give the readers a glimpse of varied experiences of women in the context of the violence in Kandhamal and capture their varied emotions and present status. Some are ordinary villagers who have suffered an extraordinary loss of a family member, killed in brutal ways; others were sexually assaulted and continue to be traumatized; some others were hounded by mobs because of their work with the victim-survivor community; some are nuns entrusted with the responsibility of protecting inmates and the religious institutions; some underwent forcible conversion to Hinduism. Each woman’s experience is different, just as each woman’s response to the traumatic incidents in her life is also different.

The narratives illustrate that a) the violence targeted women from both the adivasi and dalit Christian communities; and b) Hindu men and women too were adversely affected by the violence, particularly where they were seen as assisting the Christian community. The narratives further indicate that women and girls have been subjected to varied forms of sexual assault and threat of such assaults. This highlights the intersection of gender and religious identities, whereby sexual assault and the threat of the same are used as weapons of intimidation, humiliation and a reinforcement of the subordinate status of women belonging to a religious minority.

The identities of the women who conversed with us have been withheld, for their own safety and security. The profiles of the women whose narratives are contained in this chapter are as follows:

AB 1: An adivasi Christian, aged about 32 years, whose husband was killed
AB 2: A dalit Christian, aged about 30 years, whose husband was killed
AB 3: A 70 year old Hindu woman, whose son was brutally killed
AB 4: A dalit Christian, aged about 35 years, whose husband was killed
AB 5: A dalit Christian aged about 50 years, whose son was killed in the violence
AB 6: A dalit Christian, aged about 45 years, whose husband was killed in the violence
AB 7: A social worker, aged about 30 years, who was sexually assaulted
AB 8: A Hindu woman aged about 32 years, who was sexually assaulted
AB 9: A dalit Christian, aged about 34 years, who was sexually assaulted and also a witness to the sexual assault of another girl

AB 10: A 60 year old Christian woman whose family was forcibly converted to Hinduism

AB 11: A dalit Christian woman, aged about 43 years, who worked a local women’s rights activist

AB 12: A Hindu social worker aged about 40 years

AB 13: A Christian social worker, aged 30 years, working with a community-based organization

AB 14: A dalit Christian social worker, aged 23 years old, working with a community-based organization

AB 15: A nun heading a Christian institution

AB 16: A nun heading a Christian institution

AB 17: A nun and women’s rights activist
Livelihood is the Biggest Concern for Me – AB 1

I am an adivasi Christian, aged about 32 years. My husband was killed in the 2008 violence. He was a carpenter and did masonry. My husband and I were Christians while the rest of my husband’s family were Hindus. I have three sons, one of whom was studying in a hostel away from Kandhamal prior to the violence. On 25 August 2008, a cousin brother of my husband, who lived in the same village, came looking for him, took him to the forest and killed him. We were all fleeing from our village at that time. I did not witness the murder, and came to know about my husband’s death six days later, when I was in the relief camp. I went with five women, looking for my husband in the forest. His legs, hands and head had been cut off. I went to get the police and on my return with the police, I found that his head had disappeared from the spot. Later I found the head hanging on a tree. His body was sent for post mortem and a report was given. When his body was returned to me after post mortem, it was late evening and raining heavily. The villagers did not give us enough space and mud for an individual burial, and did not help us dig a grave. So I buried my husband’s body along with AB2’s husband’s body in the same grave.

I received Rs. 2 lakhs from the state government and Rs. 3 lakhs from the central government as compensation for my husband’s death. Out of that, I have spent over Rs. 2 lakhs on construction of my house, my daily expenses while living in the relief camp for two years and my children’s education from 2008 till now. I had cerebral malaria and incurred hospitalization expenses for the same. I have kept some money in a fixed deposit for my children’s future. Although my house was listed as fully damaged, I received only Rs. 35,000 as compensation as I have been unable to rebuild my house.

I am not able to return to my village, as the villagers are angry with me for having lodged a complaint in the police station for the killing of my husband, and for pursuing the case in court. There was an attempt to rape my sister-in-law when she returned to our village, after accompanying me to the police station. Ours was the only Christian family in the village. When I tried to return to the village recently, I heard taunts from neighbours who said there was a plan to kill me, and I should protect myself. I fear for my security.

I have never been to school and am not literate. Prior to the violence, I used to make leafplates and sell them, and also had a small piece of land where I would grow vegetables. After the 2008 violence, I am unable to get any kind of work as the Hindus do not employ us. Local organizations have assisted me in developing my skills, and enrolled me in a tailoring course. However, I am not yet qualified enough to work independently as a tailor. When my children come home on holidays from their hostel, I would like to give them good food but I have little money, which is fast depleting. Livelihood is the biggest concern for me.

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31 A part of this interview was conducted in 2011 by a coalition of women’s groups at the national level, elaborated more in part 1.6 of this report. A follow up interview was done in 2013 to understand and document her present status.

32 The Odisha government awarded a construction assistance of Rs. 20,000 for partial damage and Rs. 50,000 for full damage of houses, Vide order of the Revenue and Disaster Management Department, available at http://Odisha.gov.in/revenue/kandhamal/Kandhamal.htm, accessed on 17 March 2010. The assistance amount was paid in instalments and was conditional on construction of the house. For an analysis of the implementation of this assistance, please see Saumya Uma, The Law Must Change its Course, edited by Vrinda Grover, MARG: New Delhi, 2010 at pp. 80-81.
I am a dalit Christian woman, aged about 30 years, whose husband was killed in the 2008 violence.

On 25 August 2008, a mob, holding lathis, axes, knives, guns, petrol and kerosene, entered our village and started destroying and burning the houses of Christians and killing them. I ran with my husband, two daughters and other family members to a nearby jungle to save our lives. The mob searched my house for my husband as he was working in the local church, and they wanted to kill him. We stayed in the jungle for two days. Thereafter, along with my husband and daughters, I tried to escape to the nearest town in a bicycle to save our lives, but we were caught on the road by a violent mob. Some persons in the mob called others from Hindu communities in nearby villages, who joined them in a little while. All of them gathered around my husband. I fell at the feet of several of them, begging and pleading with them not to kill my husband. I told them “cut his hands and legs if you want, but let him live. My daughter is physically challenged, how can she live without a father?” The mob did not listen to me. One person hit on the neck of my husband with an axe, while another stabbed him on his belly. Five others cut his body into three pieces. Somehow I escaped from the place with my children, but observed the horrifying incident from a distance. Other men from the mob dragged my husband’s body by a rope, and burned it with some pieces of wood, straw and kerosene in a nearby place. After they killed my husband, the mob started searching for me and my daughters, and said, “let’s find her and rape her”.

I was paralysed with fear so I could not report about the incident to the police the same day. I gave a complaint the subsequent day, and named about 12 persons in the mob that I knew who were responsible for killing my husband. I have deposed in court several times. I was threatened for giving testimony in court, and was told that I would be raped in the market place. Only two of the persons I named have been convicted. Many others have not even been arrested yet.

I continue to fear for my life and the safety of my daughters, who are now living in hostels. I was in hiding for several years during the court case, and continue to live in hiding, like a fugitive. In the place where I live, I do not mix with the neighbours, as I am worried that they would communicate with my husband’s murderers and tell them where I live, and they would come to attack me.

I have studied up to Class VII and want to work and support myself. I fear loneliness, but how long can people stay with me? Who will support me life-long? I pray a lot and that gives me strength, and I am learning to stay by myself.

33 A part of this interview was conducted in 2011 by a coalition of women’s groups at the national level, elaborated more in part 1.6 of this report. A follow up interview was done in 2013 to understand and document her present status.
My Own Community Killed My Son – I Have Lost Everything — AB 3

I am a Hindu woman, aged about 70 years. My husband and son were Hindus. Only my daughter married a Christian. My only son was tall and healthy, extremely friendly and helpful to everyone in our village. He was just and would not keep quiet if something unjust happened in his presence. My husband passed away some years before the 2008 violence. I lived with one of my two daughters and my son in the village. When my son heard about the death of Swami Lakshmananda, and news that Christians may be attacked in villages, he gathered other men from our village, in order to safeguard our village. He assured the Christian families in our village that they would make sure that everyone remained unharmed.

When the violent mob approached our village to kill Christians and burn their houses, he questioned them as to why they were attacking Christians and what harm had they done. The mob got angry and warned him that if he came in their way, he would be killed too. Due to his continued opposition to the violence, and support to the Christians, the mob got angry. They cut his legs, hands and penis, and left him in a pool of blood. I was with him at that time. Can you imagine how a mother would have felt when her son repeatedly told her that he was going to die? I was totally helpless. I banged on the door of my Hindu neighbours and pleaded with them to help me, but out of fear that they too would be attacked, no one opened their doors. The Christian families had fled into the forest by then. I sat with his body for three days, safeguarding it from dogs. The police arrived after that and took his body away. I had lost consciousness by then. I was carried to a relief camp, where I regained consciousness.

Thereafter, arrest warrant was issued against persons who killed my son. When I was in the relief camp, I started receiving threats, saying that if I told in court that I saw my son being killed, and gave testimony against the concerned persons, my entire family would be killed. For nearly two years, I, along with my family, moved from place to place. We were in hiding due to the threat to our lives. Even now, we face subtle threats, as the case is pending in court. If I am called to court, and I am still alive then, I will tell the truth in court.

Who killed my son? My own community – the Hindus – our own people were against us. I am still very angry for the gruesome manner in which they killed my son.

I do not get widow’s pension. I have no house in my name. I wish I could die in my own house. I am not interested in returning to the village where my son was killed. My neighbours were present but no one helped me. The village holds only bad memories for me. I had a house and land in the village. Maybe it has been taken away by others. I don’t know and I don’t really care. If my son was alive, and they had broken down our house, we would have both built it together. Now that they have killed him, I have lost everything.
My Husband Was Killed in a Few Minutes,  
So what is the Guarantee in Life? — AB 4

I am a dalit Christian, aged about 35 years. My husband and I led a happy married life. My husband worked as a pastor and had good relations with both Christians and Hindus in the village. On 26 August 2008, a violent mob of 300-400 persons, equipped with various weapons, and shouting slogans, approached our village. My husband forced me and my four-year old son to flee to the forests, while he hid closeby in a turmeric field. I did not go into the forests but stayed behind bushes with my son, from where I could see my husband. The mob started searching for my husband, looted and burnt our house. They found him in the turmeric field, dragged him into the community hall in our village, and started assaulting him. I saw them slitting his throat. They also cut his leg into pieces. They left his body on the ground that night. The next morning, they returned to the village and burnt his body. Only I saw the burning dead body. Somebody informed the police and the police arrived at the spot two days later, searching for my dead body, as they thought I too must be dead. The officials collected my husband’s bones and ash in a plastic bag, and took me and my son to the police station. The police asked me to write what I had seen but I was too traumatized, and extremely frightened to mention the names of the perpetrators then. I did so subsequently.

In court, the defence lawyer kept aggressively asking me questions, and repeatedly said “Your husband was not killed”. I replied to him “It appears that you were there at the place of the incident, that’s why you know he was not killed. So please bring my husband back.”

Every year, I go to the village where my husband was killed, on his death anniversary. The Hindu neighbours in the village are very angry with me, as I gave testimony in court against the persons who killed my husband, resulting in some of them being convicted. I know that many more persons responsible for killing my husband are roaming freely. I do not live in the village where I lived with my husband, as I have nothing left there now. I have kept my son in a hostel away from Kandhamal. For the last five years, I go to his hostel to meet him, but I do not bring him home. I stay with my parents and take care of them as I am their only child. I make a small living by giving tuitions to children.

I have lost everything. I have no interest in life now. I don’t think and worry much about the future. My husband was killed in a few minutes, so what is the guarantee in life? There is neither safety nor peace. I have left everything in the hands of god. All I know is that I have not died after the 2008 violence. Even if I have less money for my son and me now, at least we are not dying of hunger. My son frequently asks me about my husband. I tell him “your father is in heaven. Someday, we will go there”. I have not told my son how he died, but seeing me cry, I think my son has a fair idea that he was brutally killed.
When I See Persons Who Killed My Son,  
I Do Not Feel a Sense of Hatred or Anger —AB 5

I live in my village with my husband. I have two daughters and a son now. In December 2007, our village faced some violence. Thereafter my husband was arrested, on the false allegation that he killed an adivasi in our area. He was released only in June 2008. In August 2008, my elder son, aged 16 years then, who was studying in Class X and lived in a hostel, had come home to meet my husband.

On the day of the violence, we all had lunch. We heard about the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda and that the Hindus would attack us. We were told that men would be killed and women would be raped. All around our village, they were waiting with guns. As a precaution, all Christian men gathered in one place, and all Christian women in another place. The violent mob entered our village and dispersed into many lanes. They attacked us with guns and my son was shot at and died of bullet injuries. Two other men were severely beaten up – one was killed and the other survived.

For two years after my son’s death, I could not come to terms with his death, and I would cry often and remain depressed. Subsequently I involved myself in church activities along with my husband, and that has brought me some solace.

Even now, RSS presence is strong in areas around my village. Sometimes when we go to church, I have faced threat from some RSS supporters. We are told “We will not let you Christians live here. We will drive you away.” But I cannot live a life of fear. If I am killed, it is for the sake of God. We are helpless. The bible says “because of me, you will be persecuted; because of me, people will hate and kill you.”

Whatever happened to my son has happened. What can I do about it now? Now, when I see the persons who killed my son, I do not feel any sense of anger or hate. Law took its own course, some persons were punished under law, but the ultimate justice is from God. I try to sing songs, read the bible, pray and involve myself in church activities. Reading the bible gives me a lot of peace.
The Self-Help Group has Given Me Strength to Cope With My Husband’s Killing — AB 6

I am a dalit Christian, aged about 45 years. My husband and I had a love marriage. We were married for nearly 25 years. He worked as an assistant to the pastor (dharam pracharak). He would go to various villages attached to the church, meet families and conduct prayers.

At the time of the 2008 violence, a violent mob entered our village and shouted “You Christians killed Swami Lakshmanananda”. I heard loud noises and shouts. I also heard loud slogans being shouted, like “Jai Sriram” and “Bharat Mata ki Jai”. I fled to the forest along with my husband, three sons and two year old grand daughter. We stayed in the forest for more than a week, returning home during the nights. I saw what the mob did with a nun. They dragged her on the road and raped her. We women in our village were terrified. We hid behind jackfruit trees and in turmeric fields.

I had a cylinder in my house. When the cylinder burst, I knew that my house had got burnt. I heard many loud blasts, the burning of asbestos. All this happened during the daytime. The mob attacked my house twice. First time they came and burnt my house. After some days, the mob again came and destroyed what remained.

Although we survived the violence in August 2008, my husband perceived a threat to his life. He told me that a day will come when he would be murdered. He started having tension and fear and was unable to think clearly. He went and prayed at many churches and met many priests, and he asked them to pray for him as there was a threat to his life.

In December 2008, when my husband and son were travelling to meet a person, they were stopped by a mob which recognized that he was a Christian, and worked actively in the church. They dragged my husband into a village. My son was also severely beaten up, but he escaped, climbed up a tree and watched the entire incident. He phoned me and informed me, and then went to the police station and lodged a complaint. We went to the village the next day with the police but we did not find his body. The following day, the police took the police dog with them. It went to the jungle and river. In the river, a log had fallen and on the log, I saw the jacket that my husband wore. But we could not locate the body. One of the persons in the mob was arrested by the police, and upon questioning, he told the police the exact area where they killed my husband, and how they burnt his body on a big rock after pouring kerosene, and mixed the ashes in the river. He also told them that they put the bone of a cow as a symbol at the place where his body was burnt. My husband usually took a rosary in his pant pocket. The police searched the river after more than a month and found a piece of the rosary and a piece of bone. A DNA test was done to verify that the bone was my husband’s. We then buried the bone.

My son became very affected by what he witnessed. He continues to be on medication. I continue to feel a lot of tension and am unable to eat properly, even though it is five years since my husband was killed. When my husband was alive, I used to work as a daily wage labourer. After his death, I am not able to work due to physical and mental illness. However, I get inner strength to cope with life from members of the SHG that I am associated with.
If This is the Way Our System Works, Why will any Woman Pursue Justice When She has been Sexually Assaulted? — AB 7

I am a social worker, who worked for the welfare of underprivileged communities in Kandhamal. I shared a good relationship with both Christian and Hindu communities prior to the 2008 violence. On that fateful day when we heard that a mob might attack our village, I, along with my colleague, hid in the jungle during the day. However, at night, we stayed in the house of a Hindu family who gave us shelter. Although it was risky, we were unable to stay in the jungle at night and hence returned to the village. The next morning, the mob approached the place where we were hiding. Someone must have informed them that I was hiding there. The mob dragged me to the road, hurling many abuses, assaulting me severely on my back, neck and chest. They first wanted to kill me. Then someone in the mob suggested they rape me. The violent mob dragged me into a building, where they tore part of my dress and undergarments, and I was gang-raped. The men subjected me to gross forms of humiliation. Afterwards, I was taken on the road in a half-naked condition. I sought the help of police who were standing on the road, but they refused to help. They were simply silent witnesses to the violence and humiliation that I was being subjected to.

Thereafter when I went to the police station to lodge a complaint, I was asked to remove the rest of the dress and hand it over to the police, as they required the same for forensic examination. I said I would do so, provided they give me something else to wear. The police, without any humane feeling, informed me that I had to arrange for another set of clothes myself. In that condition, with all the trauma that I had been through, how could I go out and buy another set of clothes? Some kind person who was not from the police force, brought me another dress to change into.

The police also dissuaded me from lodging a complaint, by repeatedly asking me “Do you know the consequences of what you are doing? Are you fully aware of the implications of lodging a complaint of gang rape?” If this is the way our legal system works, why will any woman pursue justice when she has been sexually assaulted? After going to the police station, I was constantly on the move for several months, hiding in different places, identifying myself by different names, as I was worried for my personal safety.

I was extremely traumatized by the incident. For several months, I could not sleep – I would fall asleep and suddenly wake up in fear, due to memories of the gruesome incident. There are many nights when I would wake up 3-4 times in the night out of fear. I could not sleep alone and constantly needed a female companion to be next to me. Loud noises and the sounds of crackers would frighten me. Seeing men and crowds would frighten me. Even the sound of a leaf falling to the ground would frighten me. I think I am overcoming the fear slowly, learning to deal with my trauma better. I sleep better now, though I cannot forget the incident. I feel betrayed by the people that I served through my social work.

My aim in life is to help women. I am focussing my attention on studies, as I want to equip myself with knowledge to reach out to and help women. I want to study law. I want my story to be told, as it may inspire and give strength to other women who have had similar experiences.
They Raped Me Because  
My Uncle – a Christian – Had Not Converted — AB 834

I am a dalit Hindu woman. I have studied upto Class IX. I am the oldest of six children to my parents, and had gone to my grandparents’ village to visit them. On that fateful day, at night, some RSS activists barged into my home. One of them informed me that they were going to take revenge on me as my uncle had not converted to Hinduism though he was given several deadlines. Before I could understand what was going on, they picked me up by force and started carrying me to the jungle. I started shouting and screaming for help, but no one intervened to save me. They dragged me from the village to a jungle. Around 25 people were present in the mob, wearing tilaks and saffron head bands, with their faces partially covered with a mask. They looked extremely frightening. They carried knives and other weapons and shouted slogans such as “Jai Shriram!” “Jai Bajrangbali!” I pleaded with them not to rape me. But they said “even if you are a Hindu, your uncle is a Christian, and he has not converted, so we cannot leave you.”

4-5 men raped me after discussing with each other as to who will rape me first. I lost consciousness. After about three hours my grandparents with another person came searching for me, found me and carried me home. The mob had struck on my head and also cut me on my hand. Later on, other RSS members approached me and persuaded me not to file a complaint since it was a question of shame for the woman. Since I am born and brought up in the village, I could recognize some of the attackers. The attackers removed their mask before they raped me. Earlier, they would to respect me. I was shocked that they took revenge on me for my uncle’s refusal not to convert to Hinduism.

My life has changed after the traumatic incident. I was in hiding for several years after the incident. Even after nearly five years, I am traumatized, sad, depressed and struggling. I cannot forget the incident, no matter how hard I try. I feel ashamed. I continue to be fearful of darkness, loneliness, loud noises and men. I cannot sleep properly at night. I have had several health problems including gynaecological problems and malaria. I have also lost a lot of weight.

I am confused and do not know what to do, as I am fearful of everything and have lost my confidence. I got a job in an institution where I had to take care of children, and I was offered a decent salary, accommodation, clothes, food and medicines. But I felt lonely and I returned. I was recently offered a job in Kerala for tailoring, but I was fearful of travelling alone, being with strangers, with no friends around. So I did not go. Out of confusion, frustration and anger, I decided to return to my village, sit at home and do nothing. However, I am not happy here either. I am not at peace with myself. I am not the same person that I was, any longer.

34 A part of this narrative has been derived from National Solidarity Forum, *Waiting for Justice* - Report of the National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal (New Delhi: 2011), pp. 66-67 in order to avoid repeated trauma for the woman in recalling the assault.
I am a dalit Christian, aged about 34 years. I have never gone to school. I live in my village with my children and my husband’s brother’s family. My husband works in Chennai. I have two small children aged 6 years and 10 years, and I have also taken care of my husband’s children from his first marriage – two daughters who are now married, and a third daughter who is studying in college.

Our village was badly affected during the December 2007 violence. My entire family ran into the jungles when a mob entered our village to attack the Christians. I had recently undergone a family-planning operation, and the wound had not healed. Due to physical exertion, it turned septic and I required several days of medical assistance subsequently.

On the day of the incident in August 2008, I had taken my children and gone to the house of my sister-in-law’s daughter, Usha, who was also living in the same village. My husband and other family members were at home. A big mob of attackers got into the colony and dispersed in different directions. 7-8 persons attacked Usha. I hid myself under furniture in her house, and watched her being attacked. After some time, the mob saw me, dragged me out and started attacking me. Usha and I were being attacked simultaneously within a distance of less than 50 metres. I saw Usha fall. Her clothes were being pulled and she was stripped. Men - when they are handling women - do they have any sense what they are doing and how they handle them? They were playing with Usha as if she was a football. They did the same with me.

She resisted. The attackers got angry; they were shouting, looking for kerosene, found it, and burnt her. At the same time, I also fell down. They were severely assaulting me on my head, back, abdomen and legs. I fell down unconscious, and I don’t know what happened or who took me to the hospital. I regained consciousness in the hospital. I had stitches on my head. My body was aching all over.

If I think about the incident even now, I start crying a lot, and I get a headache. I was being assaulted in the presence of my children, and my children were also being assaulted, and were crying a lot. Even as I was falling unconscious, I remember hearing the children’s cries. I am very angry about the incident but feel helpless. What can I do? I am worried about my children and their future.

Now I am unable to do any household work. I keep falling ill. The day before, I went to pluck some mangoes to make a pickle. I fell ill with fever, and now, I can hardly get out of my bed. I am living on medicines. Due to fear, I rarely step out of my home. Fear has become my life now.

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35 Name changed to protect the identity of the girl
In the Satsangs, I Would Close My Eyes and Pray to My Own God — AB 10

I am a Christian, about 60 years old. My husband is a Catholic priest. I have two sons – one works as a priest. My village was very badly affected during the 2008 violence, with several Christians being injured and killed. Soon after we heard the death of Swami Lakshmanananda, many people came to me and asked me to run to the forest, as a mob was planning to attack my family, destroy our house and kill us. On 25 August 2008, when a big mob attacked our village, equipped with many weapons, and shouting slogans, we fled to the forest. Most of the elderly people stayed in the village and the younger ones fled to the forest. Since my husband is a priest, we knew that he would be targeted, so with great difficulty, we ran to the forest. We stayed there for four days. All the Christian houses in our village were looted and valuable documents destroyed. We watched from the forest as our houses burned. During the nights, we returned to our village to sleep and left for the forest in the morning. The mob came to our village more than once.

After four days, the mob caught my husband and four other men. There were at least 1000 people in the mob. I could see many familiar faces in the mob – they lived in the same panchayat, in the nearby villages. I also saw Hindu women in the mob. They did not speak to me. My husband and four other men were forcibly taken to a temple nearby for conversion to Hinduism. We wives were also taken to the temple. I was terrified about our own safety as well as about what the mob would do to the men. I was in shock and not in my senses when I was being taken to the temple.

Sandal paste was applied on a sword and then on the men’s foreheads. The mob made me and the other women stand behind our husbands. Some persons from the mob gave my husband and other men some coconut (prasad) to eat. The mob was very happy that they were ‘converting’ us. They asked us to give them a written letter, stating that we had converted out of our own free will. When we were reluctant, I, my husband, the other Christian men and women were taken to the forest. I was terrified that they were going to rape and kill us. I asked the mob why they were taking us into the forest. I told them that if they kill us, they should simply cover our bodies but not throw our bodies out of the forest. In the forest, we were forcibly made to write that we became Hindus voluntarily. Thereafter we were released.

Every Sunday, for six months, we were forced to go to the temple for satsang. From the relief camp, I was going regularly as I thought I may be killed if I didn’t go. My husband, the other men and their wives also attend the satsangs. In the satsangs, everyone would sing bhajans, meditate and pray. I would close my eyes and pray to my own god.

In a place near my village, many Hindu women went with lathis to attack the police and prevent them from arresting their husbands. As I was attending satsangs, I was also expected to join the women with a lathi. I declined to go, saying that I was boiling paddy.

Now I continue to practise Christianity in my village. During Christmas and Easter, due to the presence of CRPF officials, we feel safe enough to celebrate.
They Threatened to Rape Me and My Daughter in the Middle of the Market — AB 11

I am a dalit Christian, aged about 43 years. I have three sons and one daughter. I worked as a women’s rights activist, and headed a registered women’s organization. I was active in a self-help group. The organization was also active in anti-liquor work, for which I worked closely with the police, tahsildar, collector, sub-collector, panchayat leaders, magistrates and other government officials. During that time, I was appointed the Special Police Officer, for the specific purpose of assisting the police in operations such as detecting the illegal manufacture of alcohol.

On 24 August 2008, when we came to know about the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda, and heard rumours that Christians may be attacked, I did not think that anyone would attack me and my family as we had done no harm to anyone, and as we lived very close to a police station. When the funeral procession with the Swami’s body passed by the road next to our house, we stood far and watched the procession. That night, we suddenly saw and heard a mob approaching our house. The mob had 100-150 persons and was equipped with many weapons such as swords, axe, sticks and guns. Some persons from the mob shouted to me: “You are doing a lot of leadergiri. Come, we will cut you into pieces. Bring your daughter, we will rape you and her in the middle of the market”. They said many things in very vulgar language, which I am unable to repeat. I narrowly escaped the attack by a few seconds. Otherwise I do not know what the mob would have done to me.

We ran out of our house through the back door, crossed our fields and into the forest. We stayed there for five days. I was terrified as the attackers had followed us into the forest. They looted all our articles, and burnt down our house.

Last year, when I returned to my village to meet my uncle, a shop owner called my uncle and said “Tell her that I will cut off her breasts, insert a sword in her vagina, cut her into pieces and pack her in a bag and throw her in the river. Where will she go?” My uncle told me this, and I complained in the police station. The police doubted me and asked “How do we know that you are telling us the truth?” I called my uncle to substantiate, after which the shop owner was called to the police station. He admitted threatening me, and made a written promise to the police, that he would not threaten me ever again, and that he should be punished if he did so.

In 2008, when the mob threatened to rape me and my daughter, my daughter was 14 years old. She was shocked and traumatized. We have had to give her several years of psychiatric treatment. She is still under medication. She is now married to a Hindu boy. She is pregnant and her husband is posted in the same place. I constantly fear for her welfare.

Even now, I am under threat. I am very discreet about where I go. When I go to the village, the attackers taunt me by saying “when the fox becomes mad, it runs to town, but where will it go? We can catch and kill it anyway”. I have not rebuilt my house in the village as they threaten to break my house again if I rebuild it. I did no wrong to anyone, yet I am running away, hiding from place to place and living like a criminal; they did so many horrible things, and they are roaming around like bulls!
I am a Hindu social worker. My husband and I separated many years ago and I live with my two sons. Before the 2008 violence, I worked in a registered non-profit organization for 15 years. The organization was headed by an adivasi Christian. My younger son also worked in the organization for 7 years. We were given a small house by the organization, which was attached to the office, and we lived there. The nature of my work was social empowerment, working with Hindus and Christians on malaria, HIV/AIDS awareness, self-help group formation etc. In addition to working in the organization, my son had recently opened a shop, with 4 computers, 20 mobile phones, a DTP machine, a rubber stamp making machine, a photocopy machine and other electronic items to provide a variety of services to the people. Our shop had become popular in the area and we were well-known for helping people.

In August 2008, the first attack was on the organization’s office and our house. All the computers, furniture, electrical and electronic equipment from the office were looted and the building set on fire. They did the same with my house. The violent mob returned after some hours, and looted all the electronic equipments in my son’s shop, and burnt it. We were building our house, under construction, at the time of the violence. All the bricks and sand was also looted at the time of the violence. We fled to the forest and thereafter, were in hiding at different places.

The violence hit us very hard financially. My son had taken a bank loan of Rs. 1 lakh for his shop, just prior to the 2008 violence. We are unable to repay the loan now. We received no compensation for the house as it was not in my name but in my organization’s name; we received no compensation for the shop as it was situated in a government building and we could not produce the relevant records; all the educational certificates of my younger son were destroyed in the attack, so he is unable to find a job. Now we lead a hand-to-mouth existence, depending on my parents and brothers to send us groceries and financially support us. Since the last four months, we have not been able to pay the rent of this small house that we live in. Today the house owner has asked us to vacate.

After the violence, due to mental trauma, I fell severely ill. I have lost a lot of weight; suffer from gastric problem, stomach ulcers, diabetes and pancreatitis. I have spent more than Rs. 1.5 lakhs on my medicines. My elder son disappeared for some months at the time of the 2008 violence. I gather that he had been severely assaulted. After he returned home, his behaviour was different. He was diagnosed to be schizophrenic. I have no money for his medical treatment.

As part of my work at the organization, I had helped form at least 200 SHGs. I taught them how to go to the bank and how to manage their finances. Now when they see me, they ask me to return to the village. But how can I return when I know that these women were also part of the mob? I know that at that time, there was a diktat given for all Hindus to participate in the attacks, so the women had to participate.

I am terribly depressed. What wrong did we do? We only helped people from all communities - Hindu and Christian. Why did our own people do this to us? I am worried as we are unable to repay the loan. I feel terrible, begging my family for money. The condition that I am in today, it is better to die than live.
What is the Pleasure that Men Get out of Humiliating and Torturing Women? — AB 13

I am a Christian aged 30 years. I have been working with a community-based organization since 2003. I have two children, aged 14 years and 8 years. The organization works for the empowerment of poor persons from both Hindu and Christian communities. At the time of the violence, my work was more office-based.

On the evening of 24 August 2008, soon after I heard the news of the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda, one old woman told me that a mob was planning to kill me and my children, so I should flee. On 25 August 2008, in the afternoon, another woman heard a mob shouting “Find AB 13! We will rape and kill her”. I was informed. Along with 4-5 other colleagues, I was terrified and remained in the office of our organization. One by one, my male colleagues, took their bikes and left the office. I was alone with one colleague. At that time, I received a phone call that a violent mob was approaching the office to burn it, and that I should immediately leave the place. I quickly locked all the doors, shut the windows, locked the main gate and rushed out of the office premises. 2-3 minutes later, a big mob of about 3000-4000 persons arrived, with many weapons and sticks, shouting slogans such as “Hindu hindu bhai bhai, Jai Sriram, Bharat mata ki jai”. The mob had many local persons who were familiar with the area. I was on the other side of the road, watching the terrible incident of the mob looting, breaking, destroying our office and setting it on fire. Since there were so many of them, they completed the destruction in 20-30 minutes. I also saw them burning some churches in nearby area.

I was terrified. I rushed home, picked up my children, and along with my husband and his other family members, we all fled to the jungles. We were running around in the jungles, trying to protect ourselves. I was carrying my daughter in my arms. At one point, I was tired and could not run anymore. My husband’s brother scolded me saying “You are lagging behind. Run along with us. If the mob catches and rapes you, we cannot show our face in society.” He also blamed me, saying it was because of my work in the organization, that I was being targeted. While in the forest, I received news that one of my female colleagues may have been caught by a mob in a village. I was worried that she would be raped and killed.

After the violence, I could not sleep for a month. I kept thinking about all the incidents. I was stressed. I, along with my family, was in hiding, and moving from place to place. With no food, no clothes, nothing to sleep on in the rainy season, it was very traumatic to take care of small children. I continue to be under depression and suffer from insomnia.

I heard about the gang rape of a nun. I think I narrowly escaped being raped and killed. When I think of the women who had been raped, I think that if the mob had caught me first, maybe those women would have been spared. I have started hating men for the gruesome things that they do to women. I keep wondering - why do men rape women? What pleasure do they get out of humiliating and torturing women?

I work on promoting women’s rights now. I try to assist women and girls who have survived sexual violence – both at the time of 2008 violence and afterwards. I am convinced that they have a right to justice and to lead a dignified life.
I was paralysed with fear whenever I thought of how I was chased by the mob to be raped and killed. — AB 14

I am a dalit Christian social worker, aged 23 years. I joined a community-based organization in 2006 as a community coordinator. My work included helping people in various villages for livelihood options, health, education and environment, and in raising their awareness on health issues. I worked closely with both Christian and Hindu communities.

On 23 August 2008, I had gone to a village on work. Hindus and Christians live in the village. I stayed back in the village that night as it was raining. On 24 August 2008, in the morning, I saw the villagers brought out a television, which showed news of the Swami’s death. One by one, the Christian families started coming to me, asking me to go with them and stay in their houses, as the Hindus were planning to attack me. I assured them that everyone in the village loved me like a daughter, and that no one will harm me. That evening, I heard loud noises as the funeral procession of the Swami passed by the village. Someone from the mob shouted “Catch that girl AB 14!” I froze with shock, and realized that they would attack me as I was a girl. I started inching towards the Christian houses, even as more and more people tried to get me to join them in watching the procession. My mind was not working as I was terrified. I fell into a drain and became unconscious. I regained consciousness in the house of a Christian family, after some Christians had searched for me and found me unconscious in the drain. I had scratches on my face and legs.

At that time, the mob started searching for me at the house where I was staying. So I fled into the jungle along with other Christian families. The Christian villagers were worried that the mob may sexually attack me. 20-25 persons from the mob followed us into the jungle, to search for me. Some Christian villagers were with us to protect me. I was hiding and running around in the forests for three days, trying to protect myself from the mob. From the jungle, I saw a violent mob destroying the church and Christian houses in the village. I saw pregnant women struggling to flee. I saw some people being attacked by the mob just as they were fleeing into the forest. These incidents terrified me. After three days of running and hiding, I felt exhausted, dehydrated and weak. My body was bruised, clothes torn. I climbed up a hill and entered into another village. Just as I was drinking water there, the mob arrived, searching for me. Some persons in the mob tried to attack me and my companions with bows and arrows, hand bomb and gun. I again ran into the forest, crossed a deep river with the help of a rope and escaped.

My mother and brothers had heard that I was raped and killed. When I arrived home, they refused to believe that I was alive. They could not recognize me in the condition that I was in – full of injuries and in torn clothes. I had no strength to talk, and could only write to them, saying who I was. I physically recovered in a few weeks, but was traumatized for more than a month and could not sleep. I was paralysed with fear whenever I thought of how I was chased by a mob to be raped and killed.

Now, I have overcome my trauma to a large extent. I do not have any hate towards the mob. However the incident has affected me, maybe permanently. I now work with another organization, but continue to do community work, assisting women survivors of sexual violence.
Can You Imagine the Anxiety I Felt in Protecting 165 Girls from a Violent Mob? — AB 15

I am a nun, aged about 60 years, heading a Catholic institution in Kandhamal for the last eight years. The institution was established several decades ago, and has a school upto Class X, sisters’ quarters, a chapel, orphanage and health centre.

On the evening of 24 August 2008, when we heard of the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda, we were frightened. On 25 August 2008, we were terrified when we came to know that the funeral procession would be passing by the road adjacent to our convent. By then, we had also heard that other churches and convents had been attacked in Kandhamal, and set on fire by violent mobs. There was no electricity and it was raining heavily at that time. I sent away the watchman because what can he do as a single person in the presence of a mob?

The sisters’ quarters are in the front part of the compound. I thought that those would be destroyed first, so I instructed that we bring all the valuables in the quarters to other sections of the convent. I had 10 sisters, 15 helpers and 165 girls in the convent at that time, as it was school time, not holidays. The girls were in the boarding school within the convent. Can you imagine the anxiety I felt in protecting 165 girls from a violent mob? I was worried about the safety of us nuns, but terrified about the girls’ welfare. I got the gate of our building locked, moved all the girls to the building where there was an orphanage. I thought that we would all be safe there, as the mob will not harm the babies. One or two of the nuns stationed themselves in other places in the top storey of the building, to watch the road. The children were crying and we were quietly consoling them.

After some hours, a huge mob appeared on the road, loudly shouting out so many slogans. They repeatedly banged on the big gate of our building, asking us to open. It was frightening to see such a huge number of them, equipped with weapons. I felt totally helpless and prayed to god to protect us. Somebody shouted from the crowd, asking the mob not to do anything to the convent. Thereafter, the mob went away.

I think the mob did not attack our institution because the local Hindus used our health centre, and their children were studying at our convent. I cannot imagine what the persons in the violent mob would have done to us and our girls if they had entered our convent.
It was a Nightmare, Watching the Violent Mob Attack Our Convent — AB 16

I am a nun, aged about 62 years, heading a Catholic institution in Kandhamal for more than six years. The institution has a free medical dispensary, computer training centre and a hostel for girls. Both my convent and I personally, were deeply affected by the December 2007 and August 2008 violence.

On 24 December 2007, in my convent, we were only four nuns including me and 3-4 workers. Most of the children had gone home as it was school holidays. It was about 6 pm when a violent mob of more than 600-700 persons approached our convent, shouting slogans. Since it was winter, it was dark. The mob entered, well-equipped and prepared with weapons. They destroyed all the Christmas decorations, and systematically went to each part of the building, gathered all the prayer articles and other valuable things, and set them on fire. They set fire to different parts of the convent. Two sisters were in one part of the building, I along with another sister and a worker was in another part of the building. The two sisters hid under a staircase. The mob found them there, and started dragging them to a room to rape them. At that time, one old man from the mob intervened, and allowed the nuns to escape. They jumped out of the gate and escaped.

I was in another part of the building. I thought they must have been charred to death, so I cried and went to the seminary chapel to pray. The mob approached the chapel, so we hid in a small room meant as priests’ dressing room. They kept searching for us, constantly asking “Where are the sisters?” The other nun with me was young, so I was worried as to what they may do to her. The mob set every nook and corner to fire, and the fire entered the room where we were hiding. It was dark, full of smoke; we couldn’t see each other; we were getting suffocated. We could hear loud banging and breaking noises as the violent mob destroyed everything. I was worried that the roof will come down on us, and was mentally prepared to die. We found a small window, opened it slowly, put our mouths there for fresh air. After the mob left, some seminary boys came and rescued us. At that time, our entire convent was on fire. The mob had come fully prepared with weapons and equipment, to create maximum destruction in minimum time.

After the December 2007 violence, we received Rs. 6 lakhs as compensation from the government. With that and other help, we reconstructed the building. We had recently inaugurated it, when the August 2008 violence took place. This time, many of the valuable things within the convent were looted. The destruction was less visible than the previous time. No one was hurt as the sisters received information in advance, and fled to the forests. I was on the road, in an RSS-owned vehicle with a Hindu driver, driving from another block to my convent in Kandhamal. The driver heard news of Swami Lakshmananananda’s killing, told me that the Swami was not a good man, and that the driver did not want me to be killed. He drove me out of Kandhamal district with great difficulty. At one place, when we were trying to cross over to another district, Hindu youth had obstructed the road, setting tyres on fire. I pretended to be sick, and told my driver to say that I had to be taken to the hospital. They allowed us to go.

God wanted to save me, that’s why I am alive today, although I was mentally prepared to die in both instances. I never thought our convent would ever be attacked. I felt miserable and helpless seeing our convent burnt down completely. It was a nightmare, seeing the violent mob attack our convent.
I was Threatened with Rape for Assisting Women Survivors in Kandhamal — AB 17

I am a Christian woman from Kandhamal, aged 39 years. I became a nun at the age of 24. My family lives in Kandhamal. After the August 2008 violence, I started working in Kandhamal, to help affected women and girls. In the initial months, my work was in the relief camps – speaking to women, comforting them, helping them overcome the trauma, and addressing their basic needs.

The district administration did not allow people associated with Christianity to meet the affected people in the tents, so I went there to give women medicines. The women faced extreme fear, anxiety, grief, depression, sorrow and anger. As a nun and as a woman, I tried to understand their situation with compassion, and help them to the extent I could. I frequently counselled them in an informal manner. I was also busy distributing relief materials to women and girls to take care of their specific needs such as undergarments, clothes and sanitary napkins.

Apart from relief camps, I also started going to the parishes to speak to women. In one parish near Phulbani, women were so frightened that they refused to come to the parish church to meet me. In some of the other places, women’s faith in god was shaken as they had faced so much of violence and experienced immense trauma during the violence. My role was to help the women overcome their fear, encourage them to understand the situation better, to forgive those who perpetrated the violence on them, to accept the reality and start thinking about the future. Many women were terrified to return to their villages. I would encourage them to return, by making them conscious of the fact that they had an equal right to live in their motherland, just as persons of other religions do.

The three years that I worked in Kandhamal were full of risks. Most other nuns were frightened to work on the field in Kandhamal. I started wearing ordinary clothes so as not to be identified and targeted as a nun. However, ordinary people that I worked with knew my identity as a nun. There were times when I had to travel long distances alone, sometimes at night, sometimes through forests, to go from one parish to another to meet women. I was concerned about my own welfare, and many times, during travel, I wondered if I would be killed. I tried to be prudent about where and how I worked.

Once, when a delegation from the European Union visited Kandhamal, my brother received a threat through a phone call, asking him to stop me from continuing my work in Kandhamal, or else I would have to face the consequences as the nun from K.Nuagam had faced (gang rape). I was threatened with rape for assisting women survivors of Kandhamal! My family was extremely worried about my safety, and would pressurize me to stop my work. I told my mother that since she had sacrificed me to become a nun, she should not worry about whether I was alive or dead; that I belonged to the god and church, and that it was my duty to be with the affected people when they needed my help.

For me, forgiveness and pursuance of justice are not contradictory. I encourage women to forgive, but also guide them to engage with law and justice processes for what is due to them under the law of the land.
THE VIOLENCE - THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN SURVIVORS

This chapter discusses and highlights the violence and its aftermath, through the perspective of women and girls, and re-constructs the violence as experienced by women and girls in Kandhamal.

The violence in December 2007 and August 2008 were not spontaneous. A feeling of hatred and contempt for the Christian community, combined with a sense of superiority, among Hindus, facilitated the violence. In some villages, such prejudices existed for several years prior to the violence, when Christians were made to feel as secondary citizens. As a woman from Kandhamal said:

*For about 12 years prior to the violence, we used to get taunts and be harassed in the villages – when we did our daily activities like collecting water. Sometimes we weren’t allowed to bring water from the same area as the Hindus. We used to be taunted, saying “Why are you living here? Why don’t you go to Europe?*

3.1 Women’s Experiences During the Attacks and Afterwards

Many women received prior information that their village was going to be attacked, often from Hindu neighbours or well-wishers. As a result, they could save themselves and flee into the forests in time. Women often hid behind turmeric plants and jackfruit trees if they were unable to reach the forest when the mob attacked their village; sometimes they have had to be in hiding in such places the entire night. Some pretended to be dead to save themselves from the mob. One woman saved her own life in a unique manner - when a mob chased her, she started dropping her sari on the road, and the sanitary napkin that she wore fell on the road too. She continued to run to save herself. The mob was convinced that she was mentally challenged, as she had intended, and stopped chasing her.

Many women felt a fresh lease of energy as they fled into the forests, tripping several times, falling over the rocks, having bruises from the wood and thorns, running to save themselves, without food or water. The survival instinct was very strong. AB 17 explained how many pregnant women struggled to run into the forests to save themselves from the mob; one woman gave birth deep inside the forest, and she had no cloth to cover her new-born. The women who were with her tore parts of the *sari* that they were wearing to keep the mother and child warm, and protect them from the rain. Women from a village in Phiringia block described how pregnant women and women with infants faced tremendous difficulty in fleing to the forest.

When running into the forests to escape from the violent mobs, the families were sometimes separated; sometimes groups of women, along with children, inadvertently went deep into the forest, and were terrified of finding their way out, of being attacked by mobs and animals, and of surviving without food or water. Some women fell down while running into the forest, and sustained injuries. A woman fell on her back and had a deep back pain that lasted many days; another had fractured her arm and had to undergo treatment. Sometimes mobs chased the women into the forests. One woman from a village in Tikabali described how a group of women fled to
the forest and were in hiding in a place that was full of ants, which were biting them. However, they were paralysed with fear and could not move, and only prayed to their god to save them.

Many elderly women were unable to run into the forests; elderly persons were often left in their homes, at the mercy of the rampaging mobs, in the hope that the mobs would not attack them. Most women returned to the village at night, and went back to the forests in the morning to hide. When their houses were set on fire and after the mob had left the village, women have sometimes returned to their houses and doused the fire, and were able to save some of their belongings. Some women buried their important documents into the soil before they fled into the forests; others gave them to Hindu neighbours for safe-keeping.

Since the forests were in hilly areas adjoining the village, the women were able to witness the attacks on their village by violent mobs, while they were in the forests. They were able to vividly describe how the mob looted and burnt their houses and damaged the village churches. Almost all the mobs that the women had seen were in large numbers, with a minimum of 300-400 persons, equipped with swords, axes, bujali, pharsa, crowbars, lathis, guns, bow and arrows, trishuls and other weapons, crude bombs and petrol / kerosene. They were wearing saffron headbands and tilaks and shouted slogans. In one village, where killings had taken place, there were reportedly at least 2000 persons in the mob. The mobs mostly comprised of men from within the village as well as many from outside. The men from within the village were able to identify Christian houses and property for looting and burning. Some mobs had Hindu women from within the village and nearby villages too. There seemed to have been a diktat that every Hindu household should volunteer one member to join the mob; many Hindu men and women who were found to be part of a mob were reportedly forced to join the violent mobs.

In a systematic manner, in each of the villages that was attacked, the mob would loot the Christian houses, burn them using gas cylinders from the house or kerosene / petrol that they brought with them, and damage / burn the churches. The destruction was caused within a short span of time. The mob returned to some villages for a second and third time in the days that followed, and caused further destruction. Many of the petrol pumps in Kandhamal reportedly had no petrol, as the mobs had forcibly taken petrol from the pumps in order to burn houses and buildings in the villages. This indicates a level of planning and preparation.

The pastors, priests and nuns faced targeted attacks as they were seen as the symbols of Christianity. When the mobs attacked convents and Christian institutions, they would search for the nuns. When they attacked the villages, they would search for the pastors and priests who lived there. However, ordinary Christians were not spared either. Most were killed in a brutal manner and their bodies dismembered or burnt in order to destroy evidence. Forced conversions to Hinduism were rampant during the violence. Those Christians who did not convert were brutally killed or injured; those who converted did so out of fear and helplessness, and were forced to attend satsangs and participate in the attacks. Some who had been forcibly converted to Hinduism now continue to practice Christianity and celebrate Christian festivals.

Once in relief camps, women were traumatized when separated from their families, as they were worried about their family members’ fate. Identifying and re-uniting families across different camps became an important exercise. When fleeing persons arrived at one relief camp, if there was no place in the same, the CRPF would take them to another camp nearby. Many adolescent girls, in the process of being taken by CRPF from one camp to another, were reportedly molested
/ sexually assaulted. In the relief camps, no relief materials were given to meet the specific needs of adolescent girls, pregnant women, women with infants and middle-aged women, including undergarments, sanitary napkins and nutritious food. In some instances, the relief camps were overflowing with people, and some families did not have a place to stay there. For example, AB 6 and her family had to stay under a plastic roof in their own village to protect themselves from the rain, as their houses had been burnt down. Such persons were given rations from the relief camp (rice, dal, sugar, kerosene etc.)

Women reported that in the relief camps, many families who were unknown to each other – men, women, adolescent girls, youths and children – were forced to live under one tent, leading to frequent quarrels and misunderstandings due to lack of space and privacy. Many women had stayed in the relief camps for a period of 1-2 years, spending two successive Christmas in the relief camp. Some were able to migrate to Bhubaneswar and other cities within Odisha, or migrate out of the state, especially the men. Many more men seemed to have moved out of Kandhamal, both in search of a livelihood and also out of fear, as they felt that Christian men would be targeted more. Conversely, more number of women, with their children and with elderly persons, stayed in the camps. During the time that they lived in the camps, many women received compensation for the killing of family members as well as house damage, and some started re-building their houses. Those who were unable to return to their villages out of fear of their safety, or threats emanating from the Hindu community, moved to rehabilitation sites such as in Nandagiri, or to other towns and cities outside Kandhamal.

### 3.2 Sexual and Gender-based Violence

When some of us from the research team met and conversed with women victims-survivors in the past, predictably, they were not forthcoming in speaking about sexual and gender-based violence. Clearly the possibility of social stigma was weighing strongly in their minds. In 2011, when some FGDs were held with women survivors, they referred to a few instances of sexual assault but gave no details. In 2013, during FGDs and individual interviews, sexual and gender-based violence emerged as a common thread among many conversations.

Women who worked with victims-survivors soon after the violence, including from the NAWO-Odisha team, opine that during the attacks, sexual and gender-based violence took place in a widespread manner, and women and girls were traumatized by their experiences; however, many were reluctant to talk about it due to a sense of shame, fear of the attackers, fear of social stigma and fear of a strained relationship with their families. AB 17, who worked specifically among women and girls in the relief camps, recalls many instances of varied forms of sexual assault and harassment that the victims-survivors narrated to her, after they overcame the initial trauma. As the immediate focus at that time was to provide relief material to meet the specific needs of women and girls, and to help them address the trauma that they experienced, attacks on women and girls could not be documented.

The individual, in-depth interviews with a range of women in this study illustrate the systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence by the attackers. At the time of the attack, those who could not flee into the forests and were caught by mobs were sexually assaulted and subjected to humiliation and torture, as in the case of AB 7 and AB 9. Sometimes women were raped as a revenge for their family members’ refusal to convert to Hinduism, as in the case of AB 8. When the men were attacked to be killed, the mob would also search for their wives with the intention of raping them, as narrated by AB 2. Women social workers and activists were often threatened...
with rape, gang rape, rape in a public place and rape of their daughters if they assisted women victim-survivors of the violence or if they testified in court against the perpetrators, as in the case of AB 11, AB 13, AB 14 and AB 17. When convents and Christian institutions were attacked by mobs, they would specifically search for nuns, with the intention of sexually assaulting them, as narrated by AB 15 and AB 16. The perpetrators targeted nuns, who undertake an oath of virginity and a total dedication to god, for sexual brutality, as a way of desecrating and denigrating the entire religion, and to subjugate shame and instil fear among the believers of Christianity. Sexual assault of Christian women including nuns highlights the inter-section between patriarchy and religious bigotry.

During the FGDs too, women victims-survivors spoke about sexual and gender-based violence. A woman from Salia Sahi said that a mob that attacked her village, killed her uncle and were searching for her in order to rape her. Members of the mob had searched for her in the relief camp too. She explained that she had been targeted because she was “a very devout Christian, who attended church every day and was active in church matters.” Two women from a village in Phiringia block narrated how, as they escaped from the mob, and were trying to go to Bhubaneswar, they were caught by four drunk men who threatened to cut their breasts. The men had reportedly said “We will cut your breasts in the same manner in which your people cut down our mataji”. The women reportedly fled from the place, and the men were in too inebriated a condition to chase and catch them. Women from another village in Phiringia block narrated an incident in which a young girl - Mary – was escaping from her village accompanied by her mother, grandmother and aunt. She was caught by a violent mob, which tried to rape her. The mob also attempted to kill three male members who had accompanied them. We were told that all of them escaped, and that the girl is now married and has two children. In a village in Tikabali block, Binita - a young woman in her late 20s – narrated her experience as follows:

> There was a lot of mist. I was running to the forest with my child. The members of the mob were wearing sindoor and black colour all over their face, and wearing saffron head bands. They followed me into the forest. There were many men and women who were running helter skelter in the forest, and it was difficult to make out who was who. Some men kept calling me to go to them. I initially thought they were my well-wishers. Then I saw vaguely their saffron bands despite the mist. I was terrified and ran away from them. I have no idea what they would have done to me if they had gone to them.

It was obvious that the fear of sexual assault was all-pervasive, due to a variety of reasons. They had heard of such incidents in the context of the violence – such as the gang rape of a nun; as women and girls, they knew that they were likely to be targets of sexual violence; additionally some had witnessed sexual assaults on other women and girls; some had heard mobs shouting “kill the priests and rape their women”. The fear was substantially lesser among elderly women, but was more pronounced among adolescent girls.

During our conversations with women from the FGDs, we were told of some instances of sexual assault which had been suppressed by the families, and where legal recourse was not sought as a conscious decision. We also received unconfirmed reports about sexual attacks on other nuns, which were not reported to the police. It is possible that the ordeal of one nun who reported the sexual assault on her to the police, and the vicious attacks on her by a section of the public, political parties and the media, deterred and silenced other nuns and ordinary women who had undergone a horrific experience of a similar nature, from seeking legal redress.
A few instances of gender-based violence on men were also narrated. A mention was made of Binod Pradhan who was stripped naked and paraded in the village by a violent mob. He was reportedly rescued before he could be further harmed. AB 3 told us that her son’s penis had been cut by a violent mob for intervening in the attack on Christians. Fr. Bernard Digal, who was brutally attacked by a mob and left to die, said that he was found naked on the soil, by two villagers, whom he requested for clothes to cover his body.36

Even during peace times, the statistics of reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence can only give an indication of the extent of violence, but cannot be relied upon for its accuracy as there are many unreported incidents of attacks. This is more pronounced in contexts of conflict, where women and girls are on the run for several days and weeks, trying to save their lives and that of their loved ones. In the post-violence phase, women’s loss of their family members, house, property, livelihood and issues of survival often gain more predominance, relegating women’s experience of sexual and gender-based violence to the backdrop. Seen in this context, although only a few cases of sexual assault against women had been officially registered with the police and have proceeded to trials, that is clearly not indicative of the reality of women’s experiences.

Human rights activists have suspected, since the time of the violence, that the scale of sexual and gender-based violence was perhaps larger than what met the eye. The HRLN report, in December 2008, had warned: “there are several other reports of sexual assault and molestation and it is highly likely that many other such cases have gone unreported due to the shame attached.”37

The report of the WILPF / WISCOMP study made the following observation:

When talking to the DG and the Collector we asked if there had been incidents of sexual violence, and if so also rape. It seemed from those talks as well as the interviews with the victims that there had been such incidents... It is well known that many women are too traumatized to even mention let alone report a rape to the police. The shame and also stigmatizing from the society is a huge hindering, and the victims need to get help by trained people. We strongly recommend that resources are allocated to this important purpose...38

The Loyola College report and Nirmala Niketan College report, which were presented at the National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal in Delhi in 2010, make references to instances of sexual and gender-based violence. Similarly, testimonies of victim-survivors before the Tribunal also referred to, and in some cases, elaborated on attacks against women which were clearly sexual in nature. The final report of the Tribunal observed, with deep concern, the silence that prevails in matters of sexual assault, at various levels including documenting, reporting, investigating, charging and prosecuting cases. It


further observed that witness testimonies indicate that sexual violence was rampant during the attacks.\(^{39}\)

We believe that it is both the duty of the government and civil society to document such attacks against women, and seek legal redress where possible. For this purpose, this study has attempted to compile all known incidents of sexual assault. A range of sexual violence has been covered, including rape, gang rape, and rape with murder, sexual mutilation, and attempt to rape, forced nudity, molestation and threat of various forms of sexual assault. Prior to the present study, at least 27 incidents of various forms of sexual assault had been documented / reported. Through the present study, details of at least 14 more incidents have emerged. Needless to say, the list is far from being exhaustive, and is merely indicative of the widespread nature of such violence. Please see *Annexure II* of this report for a list of known incidents of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls.

### 3.3 Experiences of Adolescent Girls

Adolescent girls recalled their days and months of fear during December 2007 violence and August 2008 violence. They narrated how they fled into the forests and stayed there for many days, and that they took shelter in Christian-dominated villages. Some had stayed in the fields and others in jungles for upto a week without food, they said.

One of the major repercussions of the 2008 violence on the lives of adolescent girls has been the disruption of their schooling. Four girls from Nandagiri said that they had lost one year of schooling due to the violence, as they stayed in the relief camp and were unable to give their examinations. Four girls from a village in K.Nuagam block said that their schools had been converted to relief camps, and their books and all learning materials had been burnt during the 2008 violence. They too lost a year of studies in this process. They also said that for almost two years, they lived in their school (which had been converted into a relief camp) and studied there.

However, there was no disruption in schooling for those girls who stayed in a hostel prior to the violence, particularly if they were living outside Kandhamal. Upon rejoining government schools 1.5 years after the violence, they were reportedly provided books and school bags by the school.

Girls from Daringbadi block said that they had heard about the sexual assault on a nun, and were terrified that they would be attacked too. They had been strictly instructed not to go anywhere alone, not even to collect water or firewood. A year or two after the violence, when schooling resumed, adolescent girls had experienced sexual harassment. Girls from Nandagiri referred to taunts, adverse comments and harassment by both Hindu and Christian boys, but against the backdrop of the anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal, they feared the harassment by Hindu boys more. One girl from another village said that upper caste Hindu boys had “harassed” her after the 2008 violence, but was unwilling to divulge further details of the harassment.

### 3.4 Experiences of Elderly Women

Conversations with elderly women gave an indication of their experiences of the violence and its aftermath. Some women were unable to flee to the forest when the mob attacked their village, and stayed in their homes or hid in their Hindu neighbours’ homes and protected themselves. Others, particularly those who had prior notice of the attack, were able to flee to the forest.

\(^{39}\) NPT report, p. 173
Budduli Nayak, an 80 year old woman, narrated how she fled to the forest before the violence. Her three sons also fled but she was unable to locate them in the mayhem. She stayed in the jungle for four days, squeezing her sari in the rain and drinking the water. She was reunited with her sons subsequently.

Sumitra Nayak, another elderly woman, narrated how she had undergone an eye surgery just before the violence commenced, and hence her vision was limited. She fled to the forest, and was separated from her family. Subsequently, as her house had been burnt down, she was unable to return to her village. She slept in the verandahs of other people in the winter and rainy seasons, and begged people for food, as she was unable to work. It was only a year later that she was united with her daughter and son-in-law, who have been taking care of her thereafter.

Damayanti Nayak, another elderly woman, has a 35 year old daughter, who became mentally challenged subsequent to the 2008 violence in Kandhamal. She has received no compensation for the total damage to her house. Damayanti is herself unable to do any work to support herself and her daughter due to chronic pain in her legs. She receives a widow pension of Rs. 200 a month, and a supply of rice, sugar and kerosene through a BPL card. Since this is inadequate for her survival, she begs and eats.

In a village in Tikabali block, women narrated how an old couple – Lalji and Mandakini – were sleeping in their house when they were attacked by a mob. The old man Lalji, succumbed to his injuries in hospital, while his wife Mandakini, has lost her ability to speak after the incident, due to shock and trauma. She now lives with her daughter in Phulbani, they said.

Due to the violence, families separated, the sons fled or migrated to other places, leaving the elderly women to fend for themselves, either in relief camps or in villages where they have faced hostility. For example, Manjulata Nayak has three sons, who left for Cuttack and Bhubaneswar soon after the violence broke out. Her house in the village had been destroyed, and she had to live in a tent upto 2011-12. She shared the tent with Sikkali Nayak – another elderly woman – and her son. Neither woman have received the compensation for damage to her house. In all probability, due to their age and lack of mobility, they were unable to make several trips to government offices to avail of the compensation, which could have helped secure a roof over their head.

3.5 Experiences of Hindu Women

Hindu women and their families were also affected by the violence, albeit in a different manner. In a village in K.Nuagam, Hindu women recalled the 2008 violence in Kandhamal, and described how they fled to the forests during the nights and returned to their homes during the day. They also feared being attacked by a mob, and were anxious that their husbands may be arrested by the police.

In another village, the women described the difficulty in obtaining food for their family members as all the shops were closed, and they could not go to the market. Their mobility was severely restricted due to fear of personal safety, and they could not go to the temple, hospitals or to the rivers to bathe. Since their husbands fled into the forests, the women had to manage the household responsibilities including taking care of children and elderly persons. They recalled that their husbands lost their jobs, and the police and CRPF forces questioned and assaulted them. In a Hindu community in Barakhama village, the women explained that they could not go out on
work during the violence, they could not get any jobs, and work under the NREGA had stopped, adversely affecting their livelihood.

Fear of arrests by the police was a recurring theme in the conversations. Hindu women from one village referred to their husbands fleeing into the forests to avoid being arrested by the police. The women in a Hindu colony of Barakhama village said that the Christians made false allegations against their children, as a result of which the police were trying to arrest their children and they had to be hidden in the forests.

Contrary to the narratives of Christian women, Hindu women across the villages where we held conversations reiterated that Christian families and their property were attacked by mobs that consisted of persons from outside their village. For example, Hindu women in one village from K.Nuagam block said that they had seen mobs approaching their village from a nearby village, and that they poured kerosene and burnt the Christian houses. However, the women were unable to explain how the Christian houses could be identified by a mob of “outsiders”.

Alternatively, as in the case of Barakhama village, the Hindu women alleged that the Christians had broken / burnt their own houses in order to claim compensation from the government, and that the Christians were to be blamed for the violence perpetrated against them.

In Brahmanigaon, although it has been established through many reports that the pandals put up for Christmas celebration were pulled down by members of the local Hindu community on 24 December 2007, which led to the commencement of tension and violence, the Hindu women claimed that it was the reverse. They further described at great length, the peace initiatives taken in the next two days by the Hindu community, to which the Christians allegedly did not respond favourably, leading to them burning Hindu houses on 27 December 2007. While the burning of houses of either community is a condemnable act, the Hindu women’s description of the mob as consisting of 8000-10,000 Christians remains unsubstantiated by governmental and non-governmental reports.

The mobility of young girls was severely affected in the Hindu communities too, in the months soon after the violence. In one village, women told us that they restricted their daughters’ mobility for a month, and feared for the welfare of their daughters for nearly a year thereafter. The fear was heightened by the fact that many of them had heard a rumour that the police had misbehaved with and raped girls in the neighbouring villages.

3.6 Role of Hindu Women during the Violence and its Aftermath

Hindu women’s role during the attacks was varied and disparate, as narrated both by Christian and Hindu women during the FGDs and individual interviews. In some villages, Hindu women had declined to help the victim-survivor families out of fear, and shut their doors when mobs attacked Christians and brutally injured / killed them – as in the experience of AB 3. In some instances, Hindu women have helped the mobs identify Christian houses and property for attack, and have been complicit in the attacks. Victim-survivors narrated how Hindu women would enter the forests on the pretext of collecting firewood, find out who were hiding and inform the perpetrators. In some instances, groups of Hindu women were seen obstructing the police, equipped with lathis, preventing the police from entering their villages and arresting their husbands and sons for the violence. In one incident, a

40 See report of the visit of National Commission for Minorities to Odisha, 6-8 January 2008
group of Hindu women caught a Christian girl with the intention of killing her (as narrated to us by AB 1). Many women narrated that they had seen Hindu women as part of the mobs that attacked their village. During incidents of forced conversion too, Hindu women constituted part of the mob that terrorized, threatened, and forcibly subjected Christian men and women to rituals of conversion to Hinduism. A case in point is the experience of AB 10.

In one of the adversely affected villages, Christian women said this of the Hindu women:

…they were with the mob. They helped them. They participated in preparatory meetings held outside our village, where they planned how to kill us and burn our houses. They helped the attackers. We feel that is the reason why the violence took place, why so many of our houses were burnt and our family members killed.

In another village, the victim-survivors said:

At the time of the violence, they didn’t help us. They remained in their houses. They were with the perpetrators. They knew the village was going to be attacked, they were part of preparatory meetings, but they didn’t inform us. Only our houses got burnt. Theirs were untouched. They didn’t help us in re-building our house, or help us to get work.

In other villages, Hindu women have helped their Christian neighbours and safeguarded their moveable property including cattle, grains and valuable documents. A Christian woman, AB 11, whose house was looted and burnt down during the 2008 violence says that her important documents, including certificates of professional excellence, were saved only because she left them with a Hindu neighbour, who returned them to her a few years after the violence. Another woman, AB 10, whose village bore a brunt of the 2008 violence, said that while the jewels, furniture and vessels in their house were looted by a violent mob, and all documents in the house set on fire, she had kept her land patta in her Hindu neighbour’s house for safekeeping when the mob attacked, and hence it was saved from destruction.

After the violence, when Christian families were hiding in the forest, some Hindu women have provided them food, shelter and clothing to the best of their ability, within the limits of their own financial constraints. For example, the Hindu women in one village said that they offered food to their Christian neighbours – rice, dal, chivda and sugar – for three days. They said that they had cooked food, gave blankets when they were fleeing and even bought new clothes for them for Christmas. They said that the Christian families have subsequently returned to the village, and that they have formed SHGs with Christian women.

Many women, during FGDs, narrated that their Hindu neighbours had heard of plans to attack Christian families in the village, and alerted them to flee to the forests. In some instances, Hindu boys who had been part of preparatory meetings held prior to the attack reportedly ran back to the villages and helped Christian families escape into the forests before the violent mobs arrived. One woman from Piragada village said that two Hindu boys from her village and neighbouring village asked them to flee. She said: “If they had not informed us, and we had been present in the village when the mob arrived, many of us would have surely been assaulted or killed.”

An elderly Christian woman in a severely attacked village recalled the role played by a Hindu man in trying to protect their village by mobilizing other men, and assuring the inmates of the
village that they would be safe. The man was later killed by a violent mob when he opposed and questioned their attack on Christians. The woman said that she considered him as her own son and was deeply affected by his death.

As is typical of two most marginalized communities fighting for government entitlements, some Hindu women from a village in Tikabali block reportedly approached the police, asking for relief materials for them too, since their husbands had fled to the forests and their livelihood had suffered too. The police had allegedly refused to extend the relief materials to Hindu women.

Social relationships among women of the two communities prior to the violence seemed mutually-dependent and healthy in many of the villages where we spoke to the women. For example, in one village in Raikia, Christian women said that till the time prior to the violence, women from both the communities would have joint gatherings during births, funerals, marriages and festivals. In several villages in Raikia and Phiringia blocks, we were told that the families were mutually dependent on each other for livelihood – the adivasi Hindus, in particular, owned land, on which dalit Christians worked.

How do we then rationalise the fact that in some villages, the Hindu women turned against their Christian neighbours with whom they had shared a close bond with for generations? Perhaps the role of Hindu women during and after the violence across several villages depended on the extent to which they had been influenced and controlled by members of Hindutva groups, and indoctrinated with their ideology of hate and violence in the months prior to the violence.
Summary of Findings

- Many received information in advance about the attack to their villages, through Hindu neighbours or well-wishers.

- During the violence, women and girls fled into the forests, and strived to survive, without food or water. Elderly women, pregnant women and women with infants underwent tremendous difficulties surviving in the forests.

- Women witnessed the violent mobs from the forests; they were able to vividly describe the size of mobs, names of some persons in the mobs, the slogans they shouted, their appearance and their destructive acts. Many have witnessed attacks on women.

- Most women said that the mobs consisted of some persons from their own village, along with many more from outside. The role of the ‘insiders’ was to identify Christian houses and property.

- Destruction was undertaken in a systematic manner, using kerosene / petrol or gas cylinders. The mobs attacked some villages more than once, in order to ensure complete destruction.

- The pastors, priests and nuns faced targeted attacks as they were seen as the symbols of Christianity.

- Women and girls faced a range of sexual and gender-based violence, including gang rape, rape, attempt to rape, forced nudity, molestation, sexual harassment, threat of rape and sexual mutilation. Nuns and wives of pastors were specifically targeted for such attacks. Many witnessed attacks on other women and girls. These attacks were not isolated instances, but were widespread and systematic, intended at subjugating, shaming and instilling fear in the Christian community.

- The fear of sexual attacks was all-pervasive.

- A few incidents of sexual and gender-based assaults on men were also reported.

- In the relief camps, no relief materials were given to meet the specific needs of adolescent girls, pregnant women, young women with infants and middle-aged women.

- Adolescent girls’ schooling was disrupted; many dropped out of schools or were forced into early marriages, due to fear of personal safety. Other girls faced a severe restriction of their mobility.

- Elderly women suffered greatly during the violence, as many were helplessly abandoned in their villages, and separated from their families subsequently.
- Hindu women and their families were also affected by the violence, but in a different manner. Their normal life and mobility were disrupted.

- Hindu women’s role during the attacks was varied and disparate. To a large extent, they have been complicit in the attacks, or were mute spectators and failed to help their Christian neighbours subsequent to the violence. Many had actively prevented the police from arresting their husbands and sons. They also participated in mobs that forcibly converted Christians to Hinduism during the violence. In some instances, Hindu women helped their Christian neighbours.
IMPACT OF THE VIOLENCE ON WOMEN’S LIVES

Just as women’s experiences of the violence do not necessarily mirror that of men, the impact of the violence on women’s lives is also coloured and conditioned by the gendered roles that they play in society.

4.1 Mental Trauma

As expected, most women underwent extreme forms of trauma soon after the violence, as they had witnessed their loved ones being killed, their houses being burnt, their church being desecrated, by mobs that came in high numbers equipped with various deadly weapons, exhibiting their aggression and hate through the slogans they shouted. As AB 17, who assisted women in the relief camps, described:

*Women were howling, crying loudly, unable to articulate their experiences in words; they were terrified to speak anything and were numbed into silence. Some of them simply embraced me and continued to wail. During the nights, the women would stay wide awake, sitting and looking up at the dark sky for hours together. They were terrified that they may be attacked again. They had nightmares as and when they fell asleep. The memories of the horrific incidents they had witnessed continued to haunt them for many weeks and months.*

Her description is echoed in the WILPF and WISCOMP report, which observed as follows at the end of January 2009, five months after the violence: “…women appeared to be traumatized and many women were still wailing and depressed, and unable to coherently express themselves.”41

Women whom we conversed with in most of the villages told us that for several months and years afterwards, they were frightened of loud noises, crackers, shouting of slogans, darkness, processions and crowds. The fear seems to have been pronounced for those who witnessed the killings of their loved ones by violent mobs. AB 16, who had witnessed a violent mob breaking and setting fire to her convent, said that for several weeks thereafter, the nuns who had been in the convent at the time of the attack would become quiet, depressed and fearful from the evenings onwards, which was the time of the attack. She herself was extremely fearful of “loud breaking sounds”, she said. AB 11 narrated how she would be frightened of scenes of shouting and violence on the television, and would switch it off immediately.

A group of four women including AB 1 and AB 2, whose husbands had been killed during the violence, shared their feeling of not only fear, but also loneliness and depression. They said that they found it easier to cope with their situation in life when they were together; but when they were alone, they kept recalling memories of killings of their dear ones.

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Victim-survivors of sexual assault have faced acute trauma that continues to impact them in adverse ways till date. As AB 9 expressed:

_Fear has become my life now. I live in fear all the time. I am fearful of stepping out of the house. Even when vehicles pass by, I am fearful. Most of the time, I have sleepless nights. If a man is drunk and is shouting on the road, I am fearful. I am fearful of groups of men standing and talking, even if it is my own family or community. I am fearful of loud noises, including processions and horns of vehicles. Some days, I call my sister-in-law who lives next door, to sleep with me at night as I am afraid._

Some women also experienced extreme anger and hatred towards the perpetrators. For example, AB 1 said:

_Recently I saw a person who had killed my husband, and I was so angry that I felt like killing him. I want to learn driving, become a driver, kill at least one murderer of my husband and then escape in the car._

AB 4 expressed anger towards the perpetrators as well. She said:

_When the persons who killed my husband were in front of me, I wanted to kill them. Even now, I have that anger in me, but I know it is not good. Out of my husband’s killers, only 5 of them are in jail. I don’t know if they are actually the persons who killed him but they are in jail. Others were also involved in the killing of my husband but they remain in the village._

Some lamented that they had lost their self-confidence after the violence. AB 11 said that prior to the violence; she had good contacts with the district administration and local officials, and would think that she could face any problem, however grave. However, now she is fearful and unsure of her own abilities.

Shock, sorrow, fear, anger, hatred, helplessness and loss of self-confidence: perhaps this can summarize the impact of the violence on women's mental well-being. Their present mental health status is more elaborately discussed in the next chapter of this report.

4.2 Financial Status and Livelihood

The violence drastically reduced the financial status of adivasi and dalit Christian families in Kandhamal, as was perhaps intended. A woman from Bettikola village, presently in the Nandagiri rehabilitation site summarized the situation as follows:

_In our village, I had a piece of land that I could cultivate. I grew fresh vegetables and fruits. We had a big house. Our village was surrounded by forests and hills, which were ideal for the cultivation of haldi (turmeric) and ginger. We made our living through forest produce. We had no tension about our livelihood, we could be independent and we had nutritious food in plenty. We may not have accumulated enormous wealth, but we certainly led a dignified life and did not have a hand-to-mouth existence._

The looting of moveable property, destruction of immovable property coupled with the deliberate destruction of educational certificates and land-related documents, has deeply crippled the financial well-being of the victim-survivor community.
For AB 12 – a Hindu social worker whose house and shop had been burnt down - the drastic reduction in her financial status has been agonizing and humiliating. She states:

As I did not get any compensation and have lost my job, house and shop, my family has been reduced to being paupers. I find it difficult to ask my family for money. My parents, brothers and sisters all give me money for our survival. My parents give me money every month when they get pension. If I was financially sound, and they gave me money, I would not feel bad, but now they are giving me money because they are expected to take care of me, for my food and medicines. So I feel miserable. We have never lived like this… I have never faced this kind of a situation, where everyday, money lenders are approaching me and demanding that I return the loan we had taken for my family’s survival.

Unjust Compensation

Compensation amounts paid by the government to victim-survivors have been unjust in more ways than one. For house damage, some have received no compensation; others have received compensation for half-damage although their houses have been fully damaged – the determination of which has been made in an arbitrary and ad hoc manner; many said that they have received the full amount from state government and not from the central government;

Those who received compensation for re-building their houses faced immense difficulties as they used the first instalment for expenses related to basic survival (food, clothing and medicines) instead of commencing construction; since payment of further instalments was conditional on the commencement of the construction, they automatically became ineligible for further instalments of compensation.

Receipts of the compensation amount for death and house damage have sometimes caused fissures within the joint family. In at least two instances, we heard from older women that their daughters-in-law left their village with the compensation amount that the government paid for the killing of their sons, leaving them without any financial security. It is possible to understand that young women with small children would be in dire need of the compensation amount, in order to survive in a town or city away from Kandhamal, and to educate the children. The old parents of the deceased, on the other hand, continue to reside in the village, where the living expenses are less. We also heard from some young widows that their brothers-in-law who lived in the village, have misappropriated the compensation amount for damage of the house in the village. That too is understandable, since the house was often one where the joint family resided. It is possible that there were instances of men marrying young widows with the intention of misappropriating the compensation amount. This aspect could not be adequately explored in the present study.

A large amount of moveable property was looted or destroyed by the violent mobs. These included jewellery of the women, cash savings of women through SHGs as well as utensils and vehicles that women and their family used. The state government failed to compensate for losses to moveable property, which caused a further blow to the financial status of victim-survivors, particularly single women with dependent children. A 2013 survey estimates the average loss of moveable property suffered by each family is more than Rs. 1,80,000.42

42 Unjust Compensation – An Assessment of Damage and Loss of Private Property during the Anti-Christian Violence in Kandhamal, India, published by Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources, and Housing and Land Rights Network (Bhubaneswar: 2013), at p. 22
The government also failed to compensate for injuries sustained during the violence, that did not result in death. For example, a woman told us that she had spent more than Rs. 1 lakh on her arm, which was fractured and severely injured when she fled into the forest. In the case of AB 9, who was severely assaulted on her head, back, abdomen and legs, apart from being sexually assaulted, she was admitted to a hospital for several weeks, and her family struggled to pay the medical expenses. Such expenses have caused further financial hardship to women and their families.

**Loss of Access to Land**

Women’s relationship with their land has been adversely affected by the violence. For example, in a village where at least 50 out of 85 families had land in their names prior to the violence, about 20-25 families continue to own land subsequent to the violence. Others have been dispossessed of their right to land. The women said that they used to cultivate turmeric, but the perpetrators dug their land and took away all their turmeric. Now, after the violence, they have not cultivated turmeric out of fear. In two villages in Phiringia block, women had purchased land and taken trees on lease from adivasis, but before they could get the patta (land deed), the August 2008 violence broke out. Thereafter they lost their right to the land.

Some women reported that those Christians who had converted to Hinduism were able to live in the villages and have access to their lands. In some instances, women have fled from their village with their children after their husbands were killed in the 2008 violence, but the husband’s family, which continued to stay in the village, has been able to access the land and cultivate it.

**Financial Loss Through SHGs**

Women were additionally affected by the forced dissolution of the SHGs that they were a part of. In a village in Raikia block, the women said that prior to the violence; they had 7 SHGs and had saved amounts ranging from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 2 lakhs. However the passbooks have been burnt during the violence and the concerned persons have moved to Bhubaneswar, so the savings are lost.

One SHG group from a village in Phiringia block had taken a kerosene dealership. In August 2008, the group had 900 litres of kerosene in their possession. When their village was attacked, the mob grabbed the kerosene and used it to burn the Christian houses and the village church. The SHG reportedly lodged a complaint with the police and its members went to a Fast Track court in Phulbani and testified. Although some of the accused persons were convicted and punished with a year of imprisonment, the court did not award any compensation for the financial loss caused by the violence. The SHG had invested Rs. 40,000 in the kerosene dealership through a bank loan, which they were unable to repay subsequent to the violence. Now the group has been forced to take another bank loan to repay the prior loan. This is an illustrative case of how the violence has trapped women in a vicious cycle of poverty.

**4.3 Housing**

Issues that arose, in relation to compensation for house damage / destruction, have been highlighted in the section above on ‘Compensation’. Non-receipt and inadequate receipt of compensation amounts for house damage have led to a situation where the victim-survivors do not have houses. In the case of a village in Raikia block, many Christian women are not in a
position to repay money that they had borrowed from moneylenders, to meet their survival expenses after the violence. Women from a village in Tikabali said that for several years after the violence, some families had to make makeshift houses out of plastic tents, and live in them on the paddy field, as they were unable to re-build their houses.

Among those who have returned to / stay in Kandhamal, some have faced considerable hardship in re-constructing their houses, due to threats from members of the Hindu community. AB 12 was in the process of building her own house, while staying at staff quarters, when the August 2008 violence began. The raw materials for the house, such as brick and sand, were looted by the mob. AB 1 was unable to return to her village due to threat to her life, and instead, her father offered her a piece of land in his village for her to build herself a house. However his brother and his sons had been resisting her effort. AB 2 tried to start re-building her house, which had been reduced to rubble, five years after the 2008 violence. However, the presence of perpetrators of her husband’s killings frightened her, and she abandoned the thought of building her house, and left the village immediately. AB 11 attempted to return to her village and re-build her house, but has been threatened by the perpetrators and their supporters that it would be broken down again; hence she has abandoned the idea and merely visits her parents in Kandhamal.

Hindu women in Brahmanigaon village spoke at length about how their houses had been burnt by Christians in December 2007. They said that they had fled to the forests at the time of the attack, and thereafter stayed in a relief camp for several months, before rebuilding their houses. Hindu women in Barakhamba village believe that the Christians had broken their own houses, in order to claim compensation from the government, and thereafter falsely alleged children from Hindu families of destroying their houses.

Re-entry into the village has sometimes been possible for women, and sometimes not. The rehabilitation sites such as Nandagiri become important for women who are unable to return to their homes due to fear for personal safety. Nandagiri is a rehabilitation site for victim-survivors of the Kandhamal violence that has been showcased by the Odisha government. The state government has provided land in the name of each resident, as well as water and electricity, while various denominations of the Church have assisted families to build their houses. Nandagiri is situated in the middle of hills and forests, in an isolated open space, with no security. The nearest town is G.Udayagiri – at a distance of 4 km. About 72 families live here. They have come mainly from the villages of Bettikola, Dakkopola, Kilakia, Jimangia, Laburi, Ratangia and Kottulumba, and are unable to / frightened to return to their villages. The houses have been built by Catholic Charities, Caritas and Believers’ Church. Three denominations of Christians live here – Catholics, Believers and Baptists. Both adivasi and dalit Christians live together.

Predictably, all the houses and pieces of land (on which the houses are built) are in the names of male members of the family, except in the cases of single women. Each house consists of one room of approximately 10 ft x 15 ft, irrespective of the size of the family, with tin roof and no attached toilet. There are common toilets that have been constructed. There are two tube wells that supply water to the entire site. Prayer halls for various denominations of Christians have been built. There is no primary health centre at the rehabilitation site; only an ASHA worker who keeps medicines.

Others opted to flee from the district of Kandhamal and settle down in the slums of Bhubaneswar. Salia Sahi is a slum area in Bhubaneswar, which has around 100 slums, with a population of not
less than 2,50,000. One person informed us that originally, about 12,000 families from Kandhamal had settled down in this area after the 2008 violence. Thereafter, many families migrated to other places or returned to Kandhamal, as a result of which an estimated 1500 families (approximately 75,000 people) reside in the slums at present. The slums have narrow roads, small rooms with asbestos sheets and poor sanitation facilities.

The present status with regard to housing rights of women is more elaborately discussed in Chapter V of this report.

4.4 Engaging with State Institutions and Officials

Many women were forced to engage with state institutions and officials for the first time, in the wake of the violence in Kandhamal – a responsibility that was often assumed by male family members in peace times. For illiterate women with little knowledge of administrative procedures, who were dealing both with the trauma of the loss of loved ones / property as well as fear of the Hindu community, this could not have been an easy process. However, the experiences of the women were varied.

AB 4 spoke to us at length about how, after her husband had been killed by a violent mob, and her house completely damaged, she had to run from pillar to post to get her name included in the damage list of the government. She said that she had to make several trips to the office of the BDO, and that it was only in the last survey that her name was included, and that too for half-damage, when her house had actually been completely destroyed. She had further difficulties in obtaining the death certificate, legal heir certificate, caste certificate and many other documents, for each of which she had to make several trips to government offices, and pay bribes for their issuance. She said that it took her two years to complete the required documentation related to her husband’s death, in order to claim government entitlements.

AB 12 too had a negative experience with various government authorities. After her house and her son’s shop were burnt down, and his educational certificates destroyed, she had written letters of complaint to the police, sent Under Certificate of Posting. This was in response to an announcement by the SP that letters of complaint could be sent by post, as many victim-survivors had fled Kandhamal and were living in different parts of the state. Despite having received a receipt for the letter, the SP’s office had denied receiving or registering the complaint. When AB 12 approached the BDO for compensation, the office insisted on registration of the complaint. AB 12 showed us a bunch of letters written by her to the BDO, SP of Kandhamal, Collector, Sub-Collector, Chairperson of State and National Human Rights Commission, as well as the State Minorities Commission, over several years from the time of the violence. Yet, she had received no response from any of the institutions. She further said that in one instance, her son’s name had featured in the damage list drawn up by the revenue department, which would have entitled them to compensation. When her son approached the relevant authority, he was told that the compensation had been paid to his wife, although he had never married!

In a village in K.Nuagam block, the women found the BDO and Tahsildar to be unresponsive to their problems and reluctant to assist them. AB 11, who testified in court about the involvement of an influential person in the violence, said that the BDO tried to discourage her from being a witness, saying that he (the accused) was so powerful that he could crush and kill her. She said that she had lodged a complaint with both the Collector and the SP of Kandhamal for protection,
as she was being threatened as a witness. However, no witness protection was accorded to her. The Tehsildar reportedly threatened her that he would lodge a case of illegal occupation of adivasi land against her, with the view to preventing her from giving testimony in court. The local panchayat samiti official had also informed AB 11 that she overheard persons discussing that she would be killed. Thus, in the case of AB 11, it appears that many government officials colluded in discouraging her from giving testimony in court, thereby obstructing the course of justice.

In contrast, AB 1, who was an adivasi Christian and whose husband was also killed in the violence, a letter from the Kui Samaj ensured that she obtained the required documents and certificates with ease. Being an adivasi, she was also able to obtain patta for the land owned by her husband prior to his death. In a village affected by the 2008 violence, the women said that the BDO, Collector and Tahsildar had been very helpful.

Women’s experiences with the police were at both ends of the spectrum. Most women were critical about the role of the police during and after the violence. AB 6 was critical of the police, stating that they did not pro-actively investigate her husband’s killing, and were able to find his rosary and bone from a river more than a month after the killing. AB 7 had no faith in the police, after their insensitive treatment of her when she went to the police station after she had been sexually assaulted. Her experience was particularly negative as the police tried to discourage her from lodging a FIR, and filing a letter of complaint about police inaction and their standing as silent bystanders during the assault. AB 11 said that her house was adjacent to a police station, as a result of which she was confident that they would not be attacked; yet a violent mob attacked her and her family members’ right under the police’s nose, so to speak. Hence she suspects police complicity in the attack.

Women in a village in Raikia, where three persons had been killed, narrated their experience with the police:

_After the attacks, we contacted the police. But they did not come on the first three days. On the fourth day, I went to meet the sarpanch, who then called the SP. But the SP asked “should I attend to the relief camps or to the many villages that were affected?” …After six days, the CRPF arrived at our village and removed the bodies. Thereafter we left for the relief camp…Subsequently, some have been arrested and some are not. The persons who participated in the violence have not been arrested, so why should we trust the police?_

Women from a village in K.Nuagam block expressed faith in the CRPF but not the state police, as the police officials ran away when the mob attacked them in August 2008, and failed to protect them from the rampaging mob. They further had no faith in the SP, BDO and Collector, as they had submitted a memorandum to these officials with regard to stopping the sale of liquor. According to the women, these officials promised to act, but did nothing. The women also said that the police force was corrupt and that some officials had a good rapport with the liquor mafia.

However, in the experience of AB 4, the police had been extremely helpful, when her husband was killed and she was hiding in the forest, and the attackers had cut trees and obstructed her from escaping. She says that she owes her life to the police personnel, who rescued her and took her to the police station for setting the law in motion for her husband’s killing.
The presence of CRPF officials was comforting and reassuring to most victim-survivors soon after the violence, when the fear of further attacks was high. In one village, the women said that soon after the violence, their houses had been burnt down and there was no place in the relief camps. However they agreed to stay in a school in their village only after the CRPF arrived at their village. Thereafter they stayed in the area for close to two years. Many women also feel safe during the time of Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas, due to the deployment of CRPF in and around their villages – particularly those villages which were brutally attacked during the 2007 and 2008 violence.

Interestingly, a group of adolescent girls said that they were extremely fearful of the CRPF who have been deployed in their area. They said that they avoided going alone to the forest to collect firewood or to the river to collect water, in the presence of CRPF personnel, as they had heard of two incidents of sexual assault of women by CRPF personnel. These assaults had taken place during combing operations for Naxals, she said. Another group of adolescent girls though, held a contradictory view and said that the CRPF behaved well with them. Women also said that in the relief camps, they had seen some CRPF personnel flirting with adolescent girls. Some of these reportedly led to marriages, while others led to sexual exploitation of the girls.

4.5 The Struggle for Justice

The experience of engaging with the police, public prosecutors, defence lawyers and the judge is never easy for any woman. For women who had been traumatized by the violence, and whose lives continued to be in danger, the difficulties are exacerbated. Almost all women who were part of this study and had engaged with processes of justice had negative experiences; it was the degree that varied. Some excerpts from various women’s narratives are reproduced below:

- The court was out to harass me. In court, the defence lawyer was trying to confuse me and threaten me, by asking the same question again and again. He tried to provoke me with questions like by “what is your mother’s husband’s name?” alluding that her character was bad. Other irrelevant questions he asked included: “Why are you Christian? From when are you a Christian?” The defence lawyer repeatedly accused me that being a witness was a “earning source and profession”. He also kept making statements about how bad Christians were. The judge did not intervene.

- The defence lawyer repeatedly asked me irrelevant questions, such as “How much have you studied?”. He must have asked that question at least 50 times. He repeated the same questions in a twisted way, by which I felt harassed. Finally the judge got very angry and warned the defence lawyer not to prolong my cross-examination and waste the court’s time.

- When I was sexually assaulted, I did not sleep for one night. When I went to court, I did not sleep for three nights...The rape trial is much more painful and humiliating than the actual rape.

- The PP would talk well to me till the case commenced in court. But during the proceedings, he was not helpful and supportive at all. He kept quiet even when I was being threatened in court. Although it was an in camera proceeding, there were 25-30 lawyers present for the defence, and only 2-3 in my support. They too were silent spectators.

- I must have gone to the court to testify at least 20 times as there were many accused, and not all were arrested at the same time. Each time an accused surrendered or was arrested, I was re-called to court to testify to his participation in the attack. On each occasion, the court was filled with
people, most of who were supporters of the accused and looked frightening… On some occasions, a supporter of the accused showed gestures in the court with his hands, indicating that my head would be cut off, and that I would be cut into pieces. He had positioned himself in such a manner that the judge could not see him but I could. I was terrified, especially because I could not see a single person in my support. My husband was made to stay outside the court. Only the PP remained and he was very quiet. Two lawyers who were in my support were frightened and left the court.

- When I went to court, I was very frightened as I am illiterate. Yet I wanted to have the accused persons punished for killing my husband. The defence lawyer asked me many questions in an aggressive manner, in a loud voice, so I started crying in court. The PP was very quiet. The judge stopped the lawyer from harassing and intimidating me.

While cross-examination is an important aspect of the right to fair trial, it could have been carried out in a more humane manner, and ought to have been regulated by the judge to ensure that the witness was not intimidated, harassed or humiliated. One woman narrated how she was cross-examined from the morning till evening for two full days. At the end of the second day, she was extremely exhausted. On the third day, when the cross-examination continued, she informed the judge that she could not stand in the witness box any longer. It was only after two full days of 8 hours’ testimony, that the court provided her a chair in the witness box!

One woman said that the judge in a Cuttack sessions court was sometimes supportive, and at other times threatening. When she made a mistake in answering a question posed to her in court, as she was unable to understand the question properly, the judge reportedly shouted at and scolded her.

A witness narrated the manner in which she was frequently threatened by the supporters of the accused. One of the supporters told her in court: “Do you know that you cannot cross Tikabali from Phulbani? Where will you go?” hinting that she would be killed. She said that the same evening, she returned home alone by the same road. When we asked her if she had complained to the judge about being threatened, she said that she did not know that she could complain to the judge; if she knew, she would have definitely complained to him.

One woman, whose testimony was crucial for the prosecution of persons accused of killing her husband, said:

I could not speak in Oriya properly, as I am more comfortable in Kui, but the judge did not allow me to speak in Kui, so I couldn’t express properly, and the court officials constantly misunderstood what I tried to say. I cried in court because of this. My advocate (the Public Prosecutor) was not present in court on some occasions when I was examined. The PP had asked me to speak in Kui but the judge did not permit it as he will not be able to understand.

Since many witnesses would have been more comfortable with Kui than Oriya, surely having an interpreter in court is a logical step that could have been taken, in order to serve the ends of justice?

Some women have gathered extraordinary courage while in court, perhaps spurred by the determination to ensure that the perpetrators are punished. One woman said:
I was so nervous before I went to court to testify, that I fainted twice. But once I was in court, there was nothing that frightened me. I told the truth, without thinking of any negative consequences to me or my children... The defence lawyer asked me how I felt. I replied that I felt the same way that he would have, if his wife had been killed before his own eyes. He asked me how my husband was killed. I pointed to the two accused who were present in court, and asked the defence lawyer to ask them what they did to my husband.

A woman told us that in the trial for the killing of her husband, her six year old daughter had testified against an accused person as she had witnessed the killing. The woman was terrified as to what her daughter may say in court. The accused, who enjoys considerable political clout, reportedly changed his dress thrice, appeared once without tilak, once with a tilak, in order to confuse the girl in court. Yet, at all times, the girl had consistently pointed to him as the person who had killed her father. The woman said that the judge cried when she testified about her father’s death. The girl had reportedly testified in an open court, which was filled with supporters of the accused persons.

As one woman narrated:

When I went to court as a witness, I was questioned for more than two hours. After I gave my testimony, I was retained in court the entire day because there was a threat to my life. My advocate and the judge discussed this. At the end of the day, the judge orally instructed the police to protect me, and told the police that if they let me go, they should ensure that I am safe. I used to appear in the court each time I was issued a notice. I used to travel each time from my plastic tent...I entered the court each time with police escort. In court, many RSS persons were sitting. Earlier, I was frightened but after some time, I felt more comfortable in court. There were no threats from advocates. I felt secure due to the support of the church and police escort.

The challenges that women overcame to go to court on each instance and testify even when they faced an imminent threat to their lives and that of their children, indicates their unshakeable determination to obtain justice. Various civil society groups and church-based institutions have played an important role in protecting some of the key witnesses, and in providing the women with much-needed moral and psychological support outside the court. What appeared lacking though, was the presence of a strong team of committed, experienced criminal lawyers at the district court to assist the prosecution, and to protect and advance the rights of the witnesses, including women. Pursuing justice from the courts for the violence and advancing arguments on behalf of survivors, including women, had been largely left to lawyers from the victim-survivor community; the local Bar Association in Phulbani made no attempt to provide legal assistance to victim-survivors, especially women. There were no legal aid lawyers who could be entrusted with the cases of women survivors and to act in their interest during the prosecutions.
Summary of Findings

- Most women underwent extreme forms of mental trauma soon after the violence, such as shock, sorrow, fear, anxiety, anger, helplessness, loneliness, depression and a loss of self-confidence.

- Victim-survivors of sexual assault have faced acute trauma that continues to impact them in adverse ways till date.

- The looting of moveable property, destruction of immovable property coupled with the deliberate destruction of educational certificates and land-related documents, has deeply crippled the financial well-being of the victim-survivor community.

- Many women lost access to their lands, as well as savings made through SHGs.

- Compensation amount paid to the women and their families by the government (for damage to their houses and for the death of family members) has been unjust, arbitrarily determined, ad hoc and grossly inadequate. The government has paid no compensation for loss of moveable property, injuries that were sustained during the violence (not resulting in death) including various forms of sexual assault.

- Receipts of compensation for death and house damage have sometimes caused fissures within the joint family.

- Women who returned to their villages have faced many challenges in trying to rebuild their houses, due to inadequate compensation amount given by the government, and threats from members of the Hindu community. Women in rehabilitation sites such as Nandagiri and slums in Bhubaneswar such as Salia Sahi have also faced challenges related to housing.

- Women have struggled to repay money that they borrowed from the moneylenders, to meet their survival expenses after they had lost their livelihood due to the violence.

- Experiences of the women affected by the violence, in engaging with government officials and state institutions were varied. Most had negative experiences with the BDO, Tehsildar and officials at the Office of the Collector; local government officials had reportedly tried to dissuade and discourage some women from testifying in court.

- A majority of women’s experiences with the police has been negative. According to the women, the police a) had failed to protect them from the rampaging mobs; b) had been complicit with the perpetrators; c) insensitive and failed to perform their duty when the women approached them for registering their complaints; d) failed to arrest many of the perpetrators pursuant to their complaints; and e) conducted investigations in a callous and disinterested manner.
Many women opined that they had more faith in the CRPF officials than in the police. Some were fearful of both the police and CRPF. Some CRPF personnel had reportedly indulged in sexual exploitation of girls residing at the relief camps.

Women’s experiences in engaging with justice processes were fraught with difficulties and challenges. However, most women interviewed expressed a determination to pursue justice.
Adolescent girls at a resettlement site interact with our team

Adolescent girls affected by the violence, from Daringbadi block

Conversing with Hindu women from a village in Balliguda block

Conversing with adolescent girls at a village in K.Nuagam block
Focussed group discussion with survivors at a village in Phiringia block

Conversing with Hindu women from a village in Daringbadi block

In conversation with Hindu women at a village in K.Nuagam block

Women survivors of forced conversion to Hinduism, at a village in Raikia block
Focussed group discussion with survivors at a village in K.Nuagam block

Survivors of a village in K.Nuagam block speak to our team

In conversation with survivors at a village in Tikabali block

Women survivors at a resettlement site

unheard voices of women from kandhamal
Focussed group discussion with survivors at a village in Raikia block

A broken church at a village in Phiringia block

Machines used by women survivors for making leaf plates

Sewing machines used by women survivors for stitching leaf plates
This chapter discusses the present status of women affected by the violence in Kandhamal, based primarily on the narratives of women and girls who participated in the present study.

5.1 Threat to Personal Safety

Nearly five years after the violence, personal safety continues to be a major concern for many women and girls who were part of this study. Women who have given testimony in court are today bearing the brunt of the threat to personal safety. Many of them continue to be in hiding, which is a major reason why their identities have been concealed in the present report.

One of the women described the stark reality in the following words: “I did no wrong to anyone, yet I am running away, hiding from place to place and living like a criminal; they did so many horrible things, and they are roaming around like bulls.” The threats appear to be actual and imminent. As a result, women have become introverts, minimising their interactions with others, restricting their own mobility and freedom to work, in their effort to protect themselves. A woman, who was formerly an active worker for the promotion of women’s rights, is now unwilling to continue the work as it may place her in a limelight, and expose her to a threat to her personal safety.

The women, who courageously testified against perpetrators, including some who enjoy considerable political clout, are today extremely anxious about the welfare of their children, particularly daughters. An elderly woman from Kandhamal who was threatened several times with gang rape and brutal killing at the time of the 2008 violence, is now worried for her daughter who is married, as her daughter’s husband has been posted in a village in Kandhamal and her daughter lives in the village. The sub-text to this anxiety is the threat made to many women witnesses that their daughters will be sexually assaulted as a revenge for their decision to give honest testimonies in court.

Women, who have not engaged with processes of law and justice, fear a threat to their personal safety too. In a group discussion that we had with women in Salia Sahi in Bhubaneswar, we asked the women as to what stopped them from returning to their villages in Kandhamal. The response was this: “If we are alive, we can do something for our survival. Will we ever get the life of people who have been killed? Life is most important for us. By returning to Kandhamal, we would be risking our life.” A woman whose husband is a pastor, has been specifically told by her parents living in Kandhamal not to return to the district, as priests and pastors continue to be soft targets for attacks. Another woman whose husband had been a Hindu, converted to Christianity and became a pastor, is also anxious about her family’s personal safety, as they had been angrily hounded and chased by a mob in Kandhamal that was determined to kill them.

Women who have returned to their villages in Kandhamal too fear for their personal safety. In a village in Raikia, Christian women told us that they have no place for safely going to the toilet. Women in many villages told us that they go in groups whenever they have to go to the river to
collect water or bathe or when they go to the forest to collect forest produce. They also said that sometimes, drunk men at night speak in filthy language about Christians and threaten to attack them.

Adolescent girls from the Christian community live with a sense of acute fear for their safety. Girls who pursue education are forced to travel long distances to their schools / junior college using public transport, as their own village often has only primary school. As a girl from the victim-survivor community said: “We all face fear in moving around after the violence, as we have been threatened with rape by the Hindu boys. Now they do not threaten us any longer but we still feel a fear.” Some girls from Daringbadi block (which has a high Naxal presence and consequently a high concentration of CRPF personnel) expressed fear over the CRPF personnel, more than over the Hindu boys and men in the community that they live in.

One may wonder why the women do not seek police protection. However police protection is not a viable option for women who have little trust in the police force. This has been discussed more elaborately in part 4.4 of the preceding chapter.

### 5.2 Physical and Mental Health Concerns

The violence in Kandhamal has had an adverse effect on the physical and mental health of women. Almost all the women with whom we did in-depth interviews continue to suffer from health problems caused by the violence. Besides physical injuries, they now suffer from a range of health issues such as high or low blood pressure, diabetes, gastritis, stomach ulcers, acidity, tuberculosis, heart ailments and gynaecological problems such as irregular / abnormally frequent menstrual cycles and white discharge.

By the women’s own admission, these problems surfaced soon after the violence, and are linked with their state of mind. The deep anxiety caused by being violently uprooted from their environment, and the mental trauma caused by the violence and its aftermath is palpable. As AB 3 told us:

> After my son’s death, I stopped eating and was depressed for many months. I couldn’t stop crying. I couldn’t forget the incident. I couldn’t come to terms with the loss of my son. As a consequence of not eating, and my state of mind, I suffered from many ailments – gastrics, high BP, TB... I continue to be on medication, and need a lot of money for medical expenses.

For AB 12, whose house and shop were burnt down during the violence, she said that she was “in tension all the time, and would go hungry for many days at the time of violence and subsequently, in hiding”. She developed gastric problem, which led to peptic ulcers. She now suffers from pancreatitis, and also high diabetes. One of her fingers was amputated, and her other fingers are swollen, as a result of which she is unable to do the simplest of household chores.

Many women continue to suffer from psycho-somatic ailments, such as constant and chronic headache, backache, body ache, fever, sleep disorders, drastic loss of body weight and loss of appetite. As a survivor of sexual assault told us: “Now I am unable to do any household work. I keep falling ill... I can hardly get out of my bed. Sometimes my legs and hands become numb, and I cannot move them any longer. I constantly have headache. I am living on medicines.” Some women that we conversed with suffer from sleep disorders and are dependent on sleeping pills.
A few women, particularly AB 7, AB 13 and AB 14 now have a renewed and strengthened resolve to continue their social work among women, after the violence. Most women however have lost their self-confidence and motivation to work. Besides, many women continue to be traumatized and in a depressive state of mind. Today, women victim-survivors of the violence continue to be fearful of darkness, loneliness, silence, loud noises, processions, crowds, men, shouting of slogans, violent acts depicted in the television, among others, and are generally fearful of the outside world. They are in urgent need of trauma and psycho-social counselling.

A group discussion held with six elderly, single women living in and around Nandagiri, all above the age of 65 years, highlighted their specific needs. Hardly any of them have earning children living with them, as the children have left for Cuttack or Bhubaneswar in search of better livelihood options. All the women suffer from health problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems, gastric, reduced eyesight and cataract. Most receive a widow pension which is a paltry sum of Rs. 200 a month, and some receive entitlements through a BPL card – highly inadequate to meet their medical and nutritional needs. All of them appear malnourished and face extreme poverty. Although some of them have job cards under the NREGA, these have no relevance to them in their present physical condition. Today, money and facilities to address their health problems are of prime importance to elderly women who have been adversely impacted by the violence. Free health check ups and free distribution of medicines, along with a substantial increase in the widow’s pension could assist the elderly women a great deal.

The health of women affected by violence is further exacerbated by the lack of nourishing food, clean water and sanitation, as well as a feeling of fear, anxiety and insecurity. Ironically the women who suffer from such health problems belong to the poorest of the poor sections of society, and have little money to meet their medical expenses. Inability to address their health issues through timely and quality intervention has led to an aggravation of physical and mental health concerns, creating a vicious cycle that the women are trapped in.

5.3 A Financial Quicksand: Resources, Livelihood and Housing

Challenges faced by women with regard to their financial status, housing and livelihood soon after the violence has been elaborated in Chapter IV of this report. The present status of women on these issues is as follows:

Impact of Non-Payment / Inadequate Payment of Compensation

Five years after the violence, the non-payment and inadequate payment of compensation continues to be a matter of concern to the women. Those who received no compensation, and lost their houses, moveable property and livelihoods – as in the case of AB 12 – are in a financially precarious position, as they have incurred a loan of over Rs. 3 lakhs, with little repayment capacity. For those who received a compensation of Rs. 5 lakhs for death of a family member (mainly husband or son), the amount is grossly inadequate to compensate the loss of a lifetime’s earnings, more so in the context of the present day’s cost of living. Most women that we spoke to, who received Rs. 5 lakhs compensation, have not more than Rs. 1.5 -2 lakhs left in their bank account now. The remaining amount has been spent on reconstruction of their house where possible, food, clothing, house rent, medical expenses and children’s education expenses since the time of the violence. This amount too, is depleting fast, they said. How will the women survive with their families on Rs. 2 lakhs, and for how long? This ground reality is in stark contrast to the approach of the district administration, which informed us that almost all disbursements have been done, and
that only 10-20 persons’ compensation is pending, related to the Central government’s payment. The district administration clearly sees no further responsibility with regard to compensation or rehabilitation of victim-survivors of the violence.

Challenges to Regaining Access to Land

Many women who have fled from their villages and are unable to return due to fear, have lost their access to the land that they owned. Even though the women did not own large pieces of land, the land provided them with a constant supply of nourishing vegetables and fruits, which they are now deprived of. In many instances, women do not know what has happened to their lands, and presume that it has been misappropriated by Hindus in their village and used as their own. The government has made no concerted attempts to facilitate the return of such lands. Those who have returned to their villages and are in possession of their lands, face a constant threat from members of the Hindu community. Those living in rehabilitation sites such as Nandagiri, or in slums such as Salia Sahi, have no access to land for cultivation. In Nandagiri, on being questioned about their land in their villages, the women said:

Many of us have lands in our names in the villages. However we have not returned due to fear of further violence and harassment; some of our relatives in the village converted to Hinduism, so they stay in the village without fear. From some villages, all the Christian families have moved to Nandagiri, so we have no contact person in the village to ask to look after our lands. We haven’t tried to return to our villages and cultivate our land, as the Hindu villagers may poison our bullock and cow. Also, our villages are so far away, so how can we take care of our land?

Few Options for Livelihood

Many women who live in their villages reported about restricted access to the forest now, due to threats posed by members of the Hindu community. For a community that is primarily dependent on forest resources such as wood and leaves for its survival, this is nothing but a slow poison. In villages where Christians and Hindus were inter-dependent for their survival, divisive ideologies have drastically reduced the options of livelihood and pushed the Christians to the fringes of existence. As summarized by one woman from Phiringia block:

Before violence, we had good relations with adivasi Hindus, and we used to work on their lands. Now, after the violence, that doesn’t happen. So we do not get jobs.

Women face immense difficulties now in cultivating their own land, as narrated by women from a village in Tikabali block:

Since last 5 years, we are not cultivating though some of us have a little land, as we don’t have bullocks. Bullocks are with the Hindus; earlier they used to come and plough our fields. Now they are refusing to work with Christians, so we are unable to cultivate. We do not keep any cows or goats, as we are scared that the Hindus may ask us why we have cows and create a conflict.

Women in rehabilitation sites such as Nandagiri face immense challenges with regard to livelihood. In the absence of any cultivable land, the only option is to go to G.Udayagiri town, which is 4 km away, and work as a daily labourer in private construction companies. On days when they get work, they earn Rs. 100 a day, out of which Rs. 10 is spent on transport. The remaining Rs. 90 is
used for food for the entire family for the day. Women told us that some days, when they get work, they would have two meals, and on other days when they do not get work, the family would starve. Some women said that in the last one month, they were able to get a job only for 7-8 days. Women are also involved in making leaf plates and marketing them on their own at G.Udayagiri town. They receive a paltry sum of Rs. 5 for stitching 80 leaf plates!

Women-headed households face acute financial hardships, as pregnant, aged women and women with young infants are unable to engage in intensive work involving physical labour. In comparison, those families where male members work as drivers or are employed in other salaried jobs, are better off financially. Women in Nandagiri said that they have one SHG which previously had 35 members, but it now has only 10 members. This is an indication that women are unable to save, and thus unable to join the SHGs. Women in a village in K.Nuagam block too told us that after the violence, they are barely able to save Rs. 10 per month.

When asked what the government could do to improve the livelihood options for the women living in Nandagiri, their response was as follows:

*If the government gives us goatery, hen and ducks, we can earn our livelihood from that. We don’t want cows. We don’t have many livelihood options now. Earlier we used to collect firewood and sell, collect sticks for broomsticks. Now we have to go for daily wage labour.*

In Salia Sahi, among the 15 women that we met with, most were not working as they had small children or suffered from health problems. Two worked in housekeeping and one in domestic work. The women’s husbands worked as a mason, security guard or driver. Most families are staying in a room each in Salia Sahi, and paying Rs. 1500 per month as rent, and earned a monthly income of not more than Rs. 4000. Prior to the violence, they had their own house, a piece of land on which they grew vegetables and paddy, water from rivers and well, and abundant forest resources in Kandhamal. In Bhubaneswar, the families are struggling to make ends meet, with the high cost of living. Of grave concern is an unconfirmed report from some sources that some of the adolescent girls and women from Kandhamal have taken to sex work in areas close to Salia Sahi, in order to financially support their families.

Livelihood is a major concern for single women whose husbands were killed during the violence. A group of four such women said:

*We had approached the Collector some years ago to ask for jobs, as livelihood is crucial to us. We said we are ready to do any job, including work as a sweeper. The Collector said that he was unable to provide jobs for so many widows who were uneducated. We also approached the Collector for a piece of land that we could cultivate and make a living, but he refused. The government had promised jobs to all women whose husbands were killed in the violence, but no such thing has materialised.*

When queried if there were any rehabilitation packages available for the victim-survivors over and above the compensation, especially provision of soft loan for women to start a small business, the District Collector of Kandhamal answered in the negative, and said that skill training was being given to youth and girls when they approached the Collectorate requesting the same. There appears to be a looming gap between government schemes and policies, and needs felt at the ground level.
Despite Kandhamal being projected as a success story in relation to NREGA, the job entitlement through NREGA has brought little reprieve for most of the women who were interviewed in this study. Reproduced below are some narratives on NREGA, derived from across villages in Kandhamal:

Many of us have job cards under NREGA. Some of us got a maximum of 10 days work in a year under the NREGA – for digging the drain. That too was after asking many times. Last year, we got only 1 month job under NREGA. All our cards have remained with the Gram Saathi, who does not live in our area. – in Nandagiri

Many of us don’t have job cards. Only 13 of us have (out of 60 families). Though we applied many times for job cards, these were not issued to us. Those of us who have job cards, we have asked for jobs. We want to work but we are not allowed to work there, as all Hindu families were working there, and the contractor is a Hindu as well. Many of us didn’t know how to go to the government office to apply for the job card; we didn’t have the money to go to the BDO’s office to apply for it. We feel isolated and insulted. The contractor is allowing only Hindus to work. - a village in Raikia block

We have job cards but didn’t ask for jobs this year as the contractors make the payment late. If we work this month, we get the payment after 6 months, and that too with a bribe…Three of us gave bribes to get a job card under NREGA. The contractor receives the sanctioned money but he releases it to us in instalments that are delayed. For each instalment, we have to pay a bribe, so it is a loss for us. The job cards are in the name of our husbands; they receive the payment and they pay the bribe. For Rs. 10,000 payment, sometimes we have to give a bribe of Rs. 4000-5000. Some of us still have dues from last year’s work. – a village in K.Nuagam block

Most of us have job cards but we do not get jobs. Besides, how can we, as old women, carry heavy loads as part of NREGA work? – a village in Tikabali block

We all have job cards, but last year, we worked for 3 months. We still have not got any payment for it. Since we didn’t get money last time, we are not asking for further jobs under NREGA. – a village in Phiringia block

As the narratives above indicate, women face various problems in relation to NREGA across the district. In contrast, women in a Hindu village in K.Nuagam block said that all of them have a job card under NREGA, and that they had been given road construction work.

**Government Response to Issues Faced under NREGA**

In response to our narration of the problems faced by women affected by the violence, under the NREGA, the District Collector of Kandhamal, Mr. Bhupinder Singh Poonia, said that out of the entire population of Kandhamal of 7 lakhs, 1,60,000 or more have job cards, which is much higher than other districts. He said that Kandhamal was the fourth highest district in success with regard to NREGA, and that they were under a pressure to spend the funds under NREGA. For this reason, he assured that whoever applies for job, they will be happy to issue the job card and also give them work. As far as he knows, he doesn’t think there are any pending cases for issuance of job cards. He emphasized that the work participation for women is 52% in the district; under the job card, 45% women are obtaining jobs, out of whom 77.36% are SC/ST. He did not have statistics
indicating the number of SC and ST Christian women who had availed of their right to work under NREGA.

He said that the administration was trying hard to motivate people to apply under NREGA. If there are specific instances where no jobs have been given, his administration would gladly look into the issue. He further said that the practice of bribery with regard to the payment under NREGA is impossible, as money is deposited directly into the bank or post office account of the person who has worked. If the money is withdrawn from the account and paid to persons as bribe, the district administration has no control over it. He said that they could only ensure that the money reaches the account of the person who works. Moreover, many monitoring mechanisms are in place to track each rupee of payment made, through internet and phone calls, and there are grievance mechanisms in place, he said. He further ruled out the possibility of part payment, saying that a muster consists of 6 days and 1 day rest, and the payment has to be made at the end of 7 days. He admits a delay in payments to post office accounts, and that the administration was trying to reduce the delay.

Given the fact that the district administration is keen to issue job cards, provide jobs and disburse funds under NREGA, a social audit on the impact of NREGA on women affected by the violence in Kandhamal appears to be urgently required. This could highlight the obstacles to the proper implementation of provisions of the NREGA, and be highly beneficial to the women victim-survivors as well as the district administration.

Access to Other Government Entitlements

Women are heavily dependent on BPL cards for basic necessities such as rice, dal and sugar.

As narrated by women in Phiringia block:

*There is no income for us, so it is impossible for us to take care of our families. Only boys are going to Bhubaneswar and Kerala for work. We aren’t sending the girls. We have no land. We purchased land and trees from adivasis. Violence happened before we could get the patta. Now we are depending on BPL cards.*

In a village in Tikabali block, women said that only some people have BPL card and get 25 kgs of rice for Rs. 1. Only 4-5 people (out of 60 families) get their entitlements under the Annapoorna scheme. They get 3 kgs of sugar only once in 2-3-4 months, but not regularly.

In Salia Sahi, many women have no BPL card as the card was lost or burnt when they fled from Kandhamal, and they have not subsequently applied for it as it meant returning to Kandhamal to complete the procedure. In a village in K.Nuagam block, Christian women said that most of them did not have a BPL card. Recently, some had applied but have not been issued yet. 29 families (out of 85 families) received a temporary card, which they call a *dhanga card*, under which they receive 25kgs of rice. Its validity expired in October 2012. In Nandagiri, 21 out of 30 women present at our meeting did not have a BPL card. Some had the *dhanga card*, under which they received rations, but this facility was discontinued in October 2012.

43 As explained by the District Collector Mr. Bhupinder Singh Poonia, what is called the ‘dhanga card’ is a ration card issued to riot-affected families by the central government; it entitles a family to 25 kgs of rice; its validity expired in October – November 2012.
Contrary to this existing reality, Hindu women in Barakhama village said that when 70 BPL cards were issued recently, 55 were given to dalit Christians while only 15 cards were issued for Hindu families, while Hindus are in 9 wards and Christians live only in 1-2 wards. They contended that this was evidence that the district administration favoured the Christians and ignored the Hindus! They further contended that the Christians were financially in a much better position than them.

On one hand, it is obvious that two marginalized communities are competing with each other for government entitlements, which are so essential for their survival. On the other hand, it appears that women from Hindu communities are under a false notion that the Christians are financially in a better situation, while their reality, as outlined above, is stark. One wonders if divisive forces are responsible for giving feeding such falsities to Hindu women, with the intention of creating fissures in the relationship between Hindus and Christians in villages.

Housing

Salia Sahi – a slum in Bhubaneswar that houses many families of victim-survivors from Kandhamal - has been becoming notorious for criminal activities over the past few years. An 8 feet x 10 feet room in Salia Sahi is given on a rent of not less than Rs. 1500 – extremely expensive for any family from Kandhamal with little resources. As one woman summarized: “In our village, everything was free – free land, free water, free forest…Here, we need to pay even to wash our own faces! Whether we have any money to eat or not, by the end of the month, we have to keep money ready for the rent.” However, women have prioritized personal safety over financial issues, and are stretching beyond their means to continue living in the slum.

The present status of women living in Nandagiri – the government rehabilitation site – is precarious. A slow improvement in the facilities is visible. For example, arrangements have been made for a teacher and headmaster to address the educational needs of children up to Class V; a primary school is under construction. Health facilities however continue to be dismal, with the nearest health centre 4 kms away in G.Udayagiri town. The major challenge for women living in Nandagiri today is that they feel insecure and fearful of another attack. Although the entire colony consists of only Christian households and they do not have to face the day-to-day taunts and harassment from Hindus as they had faced in their own villages prior to the violence, the open, isolated area in which the colony is situated, has heightened their sense of insecurity. They gave an instance of an incident in March 2013:

The day before yesterday, police and persons from the Naidu Commission came here. We got scared of the police, as we thought there is a possibility of violence again and ran away to the jungles. The police told us: “Why are you afraid? Before killing you, they have to kill us first.” Some of us felt assured by this statement, but others were frightened as they thought that the attackers are out to kill us again. The entire day, we didn’t cook food out of fear. We don’t have any faith in the police as at the time of violence in 2008, they didn’t help us.

Many victim-survivors who are unable to return to their villages in Kandhamal now reside in rented houses in the larger towns of the district. Needless to say, meeting the expenses of house rent each month is a daunting task, especially for single women with reduced livelihood options.

5.4 Access to Education for Adolescent Girls

From the conversations with mothers as well as adolescent girls in Kandhamal who are victim-survivors of the violence, it appears that many adolescent girls have been admitted to hostels /
boarding schools in the interest of their physical safety and security. Others were married off at a young age, soon after the violence, in the interests of their safety. There is no known survey on how many Christian girls have been admitted to hostels subsequent to the violence, and how many girls permanently discontinued education subsequent to the violence. Many girls are currently studying in Christian-run institutions where schooling and boarding fees are subsidized but not waived. The parents, with a substantially lower standard of living after the violence, are struggling to meet the expenses of their daughters’ education.

At Nandagiri, children from Class VI onwards have to go to school at G.Udayagiri town by public transport. Four girls study in college and travel long distances from Nandagiri each day. Many others have reportedly dropped out of school. For those girls who continue to live in their villages after the violence, the mobility appears to have reduced considerably after the violence, though the degree varied from family to family, village to village. For example, the Christian girls from a village in K.Nuagam, who participated in this study, continue to receive unwelcome comments from Hindu boys on the way to school and in school. However, their coping mechanism is to ignore such comments.

Adolescent girls from the Christian community in Kandhamal continue to drop out from schools, due to various reasons. Louisa from Daringbadi block said that her village school has only upto Class VII, and that although her parents wanted to send her to a hostel for higher education, she was unable to get admission in a boarding school, as a result of which she has had to drop out of school. Kamalini, a resident of another village in Daringbadi block, said that although she was eager to pursue studies, her parents and other family members have forced her to stay at home due to concerns about personal safety. If this is the impact on adolescent girls in a block that was relatively less affected by the 2008 violence, one can only imagine the increased adverse impact on girls in villages and blocks that have witnessed gruesome incidents of killings and sexual assault.

From our conversations, we deduced that the adolescent girls and their mothers understand the importance of education. Though the women are extremely worried about the safety of their daughters, who travelled by public buses to their colleges, they feel helpless in stopping any form of sexual harassment, and have advised their daughters to protect themselves and to ignore insinuating comments from Hindu boys.

5.5 Hindu Women’s Perceptions of the Christian Community

In a village of K.Nuagam block, the Hindu women believe that Christians were attacked during the 2008 violence because some of them had killed Swami Lakshmanananda. They further opined that if another killing of a similar nature took place, violence against the Christians was likely to erupt again. In another village too, a majority of women echoed the belief that Christians had killed Swami Lakshmanananda, and hence their houses and churches were burnt down, and Christians were killed. However, one Hindu woman from the same village voiced an insightful opinion:

_The government hanged (Ajmal) Kasab 4 years after the Mumbai terror attack, but our (Odisha) government is yet to find out who killed Swami Lakshmanananda – the Christians or Maoists. So how can we believe who killed him? If 5 or 10 Christians were involved in the killing, the government should identify them but not cast aspersions on all Christians. Unnecessarily all innocent Christians have faced the impact of the violence, and so have we. The government should realize this and take_
steps against the real culprits. If Jalaspeta ashram was burnt, are we to believe that people from our village went there and attacked? This is totally a government failure.

Hindu women from another village pointed out the differences between themselves and Christian women as follows:

a) their worshipping style is different;

b) they go to church even during menstruation;

c) they are not clean;

d) they do not practise untouchability; and

e) they do not bathe in the morning, and enter the kitchen and cook food without bathing.

Clearly these are misconceptions and prejudices that could potentially hinder the process of peaceful co-existence of women from the two communities.

Hindu women seem to resent the Christian community in Kandhamal, based on a mistaken notion that the government has provided the community with many benefits. In some villages, the Hindu women referred to government assistance and security (through the OSAP and CRPF) provided to the Christian community. Women from a Hindu community in Barakhama also spoke, with a clear tinge of bitterness, of how they were frequently going to court for cases falsely lodged against their children by the Christian community.

In keeping with popular belief, the Hindu women also echoed the view that Christians and Maoists worked hand-in-hand. Some women from Brahmanigaon said that immediately after a Hindu boy was assaulted in their village, the Maoists put up a poster (in support of the assault), hence they are unable to decipher if the Christians or Maoists attacked the boy.

The response from Hindu women across various villages was similar. It is no coincidence that the Hindu women in each of the villages that we spoke to said that satsangs are held frequently in their villages, and that Hindu festivals and rituals such as Lakshmi pooja, Durga pooja and yajnya are celebrated at a large scale, with many visitors from outside the village. In some villages, some women were active participants of Durga Vahini, and have travelled to Bhubaneswar and other places for meetings.

5.6 Christian Women’s Perception of Hindu Women

On probing their views about Hindu women, some Christian women answered:

Hindus practice untouchability and do not touch us; Christians are more clean, more qualified, have better fluency in communication and in languages, and are more articulate. Hindu women don’t mix with people. If they sit with us, they will have a bath and only then, enter their houses.

AB 1 lamented the deterioration in the relationship among Christian and Hindu women, in the following words:
Prior to the violence, Hindus and Christians used to drink water from the same well in my village. We would go to the forests together to collect leaves, wood and other products. We would celebrate festivals together, work on each other’s farms, and help each other. After the violence, we are not allowed to pick forest produce, and we cannot take water from the common wells.

Similarly, Triveni from a village in Tikabali observed that prior to the violence, Hindu women and Christian women were together in SHGs, and Hindu women would participate in Christian festivals. Subsequent to the 2008 violence, Christian women and Hindu women have separate SHGs; Hindu women do not participate in Christian festivals any longer.

In villages where Hindu women had participated in the attacks, or provided information to the mobs that facilitated attacks on Christian families and houses, bitterness and a sense of betrayal about the Hindu women remain. For example, in a village in Raikia block, the Christian women said:

At the time of the violence, they were with the mob. They helped them. … For two years after the violence, they didn’t talk to us. For the last one year, they have started talking to us. But we don’t know what is on their minds… When they received the notice from the court, out of fear, they started talking to us as we had lodged complaints with the police… It is almost five years after the violence now, but none of them came to apologize to us for burning our houses or leaving us in distress. Till the day they apologize in a meeting in the presence of all, we cannot believe them or trust them.

In Nandagiri, some women told us that they had not returned to their villages to cultivate their land, as the Hindu villagers may poison their bulls and cows. They categorically said that they had no faith in the Hindus in their villages.

In Salia Sahi, women expressed a reluctance to return to their villages due to a deep suspicion about the intent of the Hindu community. In the words of Christina:

Superficially they are asking us to return to the village, but slowly they will kill us – by not giving us work. How do we get back the complete trust that we had in them? We lived together as generations from our grandfathers’ time, and in spite of that, they could do that to us. Now how do we trust them? We have no trust in them; the trust is broken; we won’t get back the trust in Hindu women.

In one village, Brindavati, a resident, said: “It is only in the last few months that Hindu women are coming and talking to us, otherwise it has been like Pakistan and India. Some of our Hindu neighbours look at us as if we are tigers.” Philomena from the same village said that the Hindus get rice, sugar and chuda from the government, which they cook and eat, so that they can attack the Christians.

AB 4 stated that all the Hindu neighbours were involved in the attack and had identified her husband as a Christian, as attackers from outside the village did not know the religious identity of her husband. However she was able to rationalize that the Hindu community is not homogenous. She said that though she was angry with those Hindus who were responsible for her husband’s death, she questioned why she should be angry with those Hindus were not from her village.

In short, most Christian women continue to have a strong feeling of hurt and deep suspicion about the Hindu women.
5.7 Peace Initiatives and the Existence of Peace

We enquired from women about peace initiatives and the existence of peace in their communities now. In two villages in Tikabali block, women said:

Yes, there was a peace committee here, but none of us were members in the committee. It was set up by the government soon after the violence. Sarpanch and other members asked us to stay peacefully. We don’t know if the members of the peace committee were RSS / Bajrang Dal members. After that, there has been no violence... Every year on December 25 and at the time of other Christian festivals, CRPF forces do the patrolling.

In another village, the Hindu women said that the Christians had returned to the village after the violence and that they were living peacefully. (We confirmed from our own sources that this was true). They said that though a peace committee was set up in the months soon after the violence, through the initiative of the District Collector and the BDO, the peace committee was defunct as the village has been peaceful, and they were not in need of the committee any longer.

In Brahmanigaon, a group of Hindu women told us that they lived with the Christians as brothers and sisters. The peace committee in the village was active, with the participation of many Hindu women including the woman sarpanch. However, from the conversation with Hindu women, it appeared that Brahmanigaon continued to be a sensitive area with very fragile peace, where the smallest of acts between Christians and Hindus had the potential to spark off a fresh spate of violence. The women narrated two such recent incidents – a cricket match where a Christian boy was beaten up by some Hindu boys, and another where a Hindu boy who was collecting bricks in a tractor was assaulted. In the case of the assault of the Christian boy, the Hindu community reportedly paid Rs. 25,000 to the affected family as fine for breaching peace.

The women of Brahmanigaon also asserted the role of women in establishing and maintaining peace. They said that as mothers, they did not want any violence, and that it was up to them to convince their husbands and sons not to fight. They opined that likewise, Christian mothers should discourage their husbands and sons from indulging in violence.

In a village in Raikia block, the women confirmed that peace committee meetings were held, but that the committee was not functioning properly. In a village in K.Nuagam block, the women said:

Yes, Peace committee was formed by Sub-Collector. It was difficult to sit in a meeting along with the attackers. Twice, the attackers refused to sit in the meeting. Third time, they gave a written undertaking that they won’t repeat the violence, and will not create any problems to Christian families. None of the women were in the Peace Committee, only the men went and sat in the meeting. The Committee didn’t do its work properly. Now there are no more meetings held.

In two villages in Phiringia block, the women told us that for them to feel totally peaceful and secure, the Hindus should return what they had forcefully taken (land, money and trees). A victim-survivor from Phiringia block responded:

We have no property at all. We only have our life with us. We are fearful that they will take that away from us. What will happen if they kill families with small children? Who will take care of them? Would you call this a state of peace?
Women spoke of continued harassment to Christians in the villages. In a village in K.Nuagam block, women said that they were forced to pay *chanda* to the Hindus when they had a Hindu religious festival or ritual. A Christian woman from Barakhama village said:

*Every year, during Christmas time, the situation is tense and police, CRPF personnel are deployed in our village. The Hindu right wing people have a big meeting, a huge feast and procession right outside the village, which creates fear in all of us. There may be another incident of violence, as predicted in the Bible. They even say now, that we will not allow the Christians to live over here, we will drive them away.*

Women from a village in Raikia said that at present, though they were all living together in the same village, the Christian women fear the Hindus and the two communities do not interact with each other. How can peace exist in this situation, they wondered. In a village in K.Nuagam block, women said that though there is no overt form of violence now, it did not mean that peace exists.

The victim-survivor community from two villages in Tikabali block emphatically said that they feel peace only in front of god, and that the violent mob was Satan's people. They asked: *“On the outside, it looks peaceful, but what we know what’s going on inside?”* One of the victim-survivors, whose husband was killed in the violence remarked: *“Unless and until Hindus’ mindset towards the Christians changes, there will be no peace. I am hopeful that it will happen and we will all live together peacefully.”*

Christian women are emphatic in saying that the absence of overt violence cannot be equated to peace, as it is only superficial in nature. In response to this, the District Collector said that peace committees exist at every level in sensitive areas. Before Christmas, cultural conventions for interaction and information between all sections were being initiated. Youth clubs called *antaranga* have been formed, which has the participation of boys and girls who are trained. He said that the administration was in the process of expanding the initiative to ensure that there are some *antaranga* members in each village, who can dissipate minor tension between religious groups before it erupts into violence. The *antaranga* groups play an active role in reducing the tension, he said. He also said that several integration camps were being held, festivals were being celebrated jointly and joint meetings were being organized to ensure peace.

In our interactions with the affected women, strangely, they made no reference to *antaranga* groups or their activities. In enquiring from the activists working in the area, we were told that *antaranga* groups are not active any longer, and are fast becoming defunct. From the villages where we held discussions for this study, it appears that peace initiatives of the district administration have been successful to varying degrees in different villages. In villages that were hard-hit by the violence, there is a continuing need for confidence-building measures to be put in place.

We also queried the District Collector on what effort was being taken by the administration to ensure women’s participation in peace initiatives. He admitted that it was not 50%, and that the participation varied, depending on where the peace meetings were being held. At the village level, many women participate in the peace meetings because of easier mobility, he opined, while at the block level and district level, the participation was minimum. He assured us that continuous efforts are being made in this regard. He also said that there is an in-built mechanism to ensure women’s participation. PRI members automatically become peace committee members. Since PRI has 50% women, automatically women’s participation is ensured, he explained.
5.8 Views on Peace

Women's and girls’ views on peace differed from village to village, based on their own experiences. For Christian girls from a village in K.Nuagam, peace means “living in harmony with other communities as in the past, without violence, harassment or taunts, including from Hindu boys”. The Christian girls from Nandagiri too emphasized on peaceful coexistence of Christian and Hindu families as the essence of peace. Menaka from Nandagiri articulated peace ‘within’ and ‘outside’ in the following manner:

“For women, there is no peace – either at home or outside. At home we have to face the demands of children and violence from husband. Outside, we have to face the fear of violence from the Hindu community. I told my husband that one day, he will realize that what he is doing is wrong. Then he again started beating me.”

In a village in Raikia block, Christian women said that for them, peace meant Hindus and Christians, SCs and STs living together in harmony. To Christian women from another village, peace meant harmonious coexistence among all castes, classes and religions, with no violence, harassment, taunts, bad comments, discrimination and prejudice of any kind.

The views of Hindu women on conflict and peace are somewhat different. In one village, the women spoke about alcoholism by men within their families, domestic violence related and unrelated to alcoholism, and identified these to be major threats to their peace. In another village too, Hindu women said that peace means an absence of alcoholic activities in the village. They spoke at length about their acts of resistance to their male family members’ consumption of alcohol, and to shop owners and alcohol manufacturers.

From our conversations with women, it was obvious that for the victim-survivor community, which has borne the brunt of prejudices, harassment, violence from and hatred by the Hindu community, living in communal harmony seems to be an essential component of peace. However, for the women in the Hindu community, freedom from domestic violence and harassment from men within their community appeared to take predominance, over the need for peaceful coexistence with other communities.

5.9 Views on Justice

Prior to this study, we were informed that Christian women do not wish to pursue justice as they believe in forgiving the attackers. This hypothesis has been proven untrue by all the courageous stories of women, who testified in court despite serious threats to their personal safety, discussed in greater detail in section 4.5 of this report. However, we thought it fit to probe further to understand what motivated them to pursue justice, and whether they were satisfied with the outcome of processes of justice.

Most women said that some of the perpetrators were convicted and undergoing imprisonment, but others were freely moving around, with no fear of law, and have not been arrested. In AB 1’s words: After punishment in Phulbani court (10 years imprisonment), the 5 accused went on appeal to High Court and they obtained bail. What is the point in punishing them and letting them out on bail? Other women echoed the same question.

In a case related to the killing of AB 1’s husband, all the accused were acquitted as crucial witnesses had turned hostile during trial. However, when asked if she continued to have
faith in processes of justice, she said: “I will encourage all women to lodge FIR. If they threaten the woman, we will again lodge FIR about the threat. We will not leave them free.” AB 2 expressed satisfaction that the persons who had killed her husband had been convicted and awarded punishment. However, persons from her village, who informed the mob about their whereabouts, and who are responsible for her situation today, are roaming free, she said. It they are punished too, she would be satisfied with the justice process. An old woman who witnessed her son being brutally killed and his body cut into pieces, said: “I have never met the killers and do not want to meet them. If I am called to court, and I am alive, I will go and say what happened. Justice will be done anyway. They will get punished, in their own way, for what they did to my son.”

Echoing this viewpoint, another woman whose son was killed, said: “God will give us justice. Law took its own course, and a few of the perpetrators were convicted and punished for 3 and 5 years for killing my son. But the ultimate justice is from god.”

Another woman, who has been deeply affected by the sexual assault of at least three women that she knew, was unable to articulate what justice should be, but clearly expressed her dissatisfaction at the outcome of the justice process. She opined:

For sexual assault, it is not sufficient for the perpetrators to be imprisoned for life or even punished with death. Even if they give compensation to the woman, will it undo what they did to her? Will it undo the impact that was made on her due to the attack? Nobody can change that, so what justice can be done? The women remain in hiding as if they are the criminals; their relationships are strained; engagements and marriages are broken for no fault of theirs; they live a life of fear; they are shunned by their communities. The only identity that the woman carries with her for many years is that of being a raped woman. Is it justice to throw bits of money to her a few years later? Is that what we call justice?

Since compassion and forgiveness are important principles in Christianity, and many victim-survivors are devout Christians, the study examined women’s views on whether the effort to forgive and the pursuit of justice were contradictory in nature.

According to a Catholic nun:

Justice is also very important, but when there is any problem – we should try to solve within first. Justice through courts is only a last resort. For killings, rape, burning of houses and other crimes – the Jesus Christ taught us to forgive. To err is human but to forgive is divine. We should learn to forgive and forget, not let the wounds fester. The attackers should feel that we still love them. A Christian should follow word by word, what the Christ said. Only then, he / she can live peacefully and happily.

Contradicting this viewpoint, another Catholic nun, who assists women in pursuing justice and is presently studying law, said as follows:

Being a nun, I teach compassion, peace and forgiveness to the women that I work with. It is true that Jesus asked us to forgive our enemy; but Jesus never asked us not to pursue the course of justice. Our religion teaches us to feel compassion for the perpetrator, but also says that he / she should undergo a process of reformation. The Bible also says that justice should flow like a river,
and that wherever there is justice, there is god because god can never be unjust…Forgiving does not mean forgetting. I encourage women to assert their citizenship rights, and to get their dues under law, as anyone else would get – compensation, government entitlements, land, house. I help women access reparations.

Clearly, women have varied viewpoints about what justice is and what it should be, and how justice should be delivered for the heinous crimes committed by the perpetrators. Some are frustrated with the apparent absence of justice; others are more satisfied with it. Some have probably abandoned the pursuit of justice due to their inability to withstand the pressure of the opposition; others have had the tenacity to pursue it to its logical end.
A Summary of Findings

- Personal safety for women and girls continues to be a major concern.

- The violence has had an adverse impact on physical and mental health of women and girls, including on single women, elderly women and adolescent girls.

- Many women have lost complete access to land due to fleeing from their villages at the time of the violence. For those women who have returned to their villages and are in possession of their lands, face continuous threat from members of the Hindu community.

- Women have few options for livelihood, both at rehabilitation sites as well as in slums away from Kandhamal. Those who have returned to their villages face economic boycott of differing degrees.

- NREGA has brought no reprieve for Christian women who have been affected by the violence. Many issues related to implementation of the same were highlighted.

- Women are heavily dependent on BPL cards for provision of rice, sugar and dal. However many have not been issued the BPL card.

- Housing is a major concern for women. Women who fled to the slums of Bhubaneswar after the violence, have prioritized personal safety over financial issues, and are stretching beyond their means to continue living there. In rehabilitation sites, women feel insecure and vulnerable to attacks. Many women who have returned to Kandhamal face immense threats in rebuilding their houses in their villages, and many are forced to live in rented houses in larger towns.

- Education of adolescent girls has suffered greatly, stemming from a fear of personal safety of the girls. Due to fear of personal security, many girls continue to drop out from school or get married at a young age. Those who pursue education do so with a varying degree of risk.

- Hindu women are active in Durga Vahini, satsangs and other programmes organized by the Hindutva forces. They have resentment towards members of the Christian community. They perceive Christians to be killers of Swami Lakshmanananda, as persons colluding with Maoists and have a mistaken notion that the government has provided them with many benefits.

- Christian women feel anger, bitterness, sadness and a sense of betrayed by Hindu women’s participation in the violence; they have a deep mistrust and fear towards the community now.
• Peace initiatives of the district administration have been successful only in some villages. In villages that were hard-hit by the violence, there is a continuing need for confidence-building measures. Peace initiatives have largely excluded women.

• At present, although there are no overt acts of violence, the peace appears to be fragile and superficial, with an underlying layer of potent fear and helplessness to possible recurrence of violence.

• For Christian women and girls, living in communal harmony is an essential component of peace. For the women in the Hindu community, freedom from domestic violence and harassment from men within their community appeared to take predominance, over the need for peaceful coexistence with other communities.

• A majority of the affected women are passionate about and committed to pursuing justice.
The Odisha government, since the time of the violence, has termed the 2007 and 2008 violence as ‘ethnic’ in nature, though the National Commission for Minorities and other bodies have found the violence to be targeted violence against people, based on religious identity. This is more clearly discussed in part 1.2 of this report. Some women survivors of the violence had this response to the government claim of ‘ethnic violence’:

If what happened in Kandhamal in 2007 and 2008 was ethnic violence as government claims, why were Christians killed and why were churches destroyed? Why were pastors, priests and nuns attacked? Why were both ST and SC and Christian houses burnt down in the villages, but not those of SC or ST Hindus?

It is a matter of serious concern that the state government is in a state of denial about the communal nature of the violence; naturally, its responses to the violence would be coloured by its understanding of the violence, which, has percolated to the bureaucracy and administration. This has scarcely benefitted the victim-survivors, as the findings of this study have shown. Additionally the district administration is under the notion that all survivors of the violence have been rehabilitated and re-integrated substantially in their villages, and that status quo ante has been established. Clearly, there is a failure to understand that the health-related, economic, legal, social and cultural ramifications of communal violence on the targeted community run deep and extend to many long years, and that sustained government intervention is imperative even after five years, to restore the victim-survivor community to a life with dignity.

6.1 OBSERVATIONS ON ISSUES OF SERIOUS CONCERN

6.1.1 Repatriation / Resettlement / Social Re-Integration

A major issue today is of many thousands of families that left Kandhamal after the violence and have not been able to return, due to fear. They have been struggling to make ends meet in places away from Kandhamal, because they feel safer in such places. On the other side of the coin are families that have returned to their villages, and who live in constant fear of the Hindu community, and are subjected to verbal taunts and harassment of varying degrees. There is no overt violence now, but if sections of the people continue to feel insecure and fearful of another attack, can we really term Kandhamal to be peaceful? In the words of the Christian women, peace in Kandhamal is fragile and superficial. However the district administration thinks otherwise.

The District Collector opines that there has been a total success in ensuring that the affected families return to Kandhamal, and that except for a small number of families living in rehabilitation sites (such as in Nandagiri), all those who migrated out of Kandhamal have done so by choice, in search of better options for livelihood. He further clarified that the families may have left Kandhamal out of fear, but subsequently, they are reluctant to return as they are earning better wages now, outside Kandhamal. He added however, that those with lands in Kandhamal, have certainly returned. He reiterated that security was not a problem in Kandhamal, and that even if
one Christian family wanted to return to their village, security could be provided. There appears to be a wide dichotomy between the Collector’s presentation of the situation, and the experiences shared by the women during and documented in this study. This needs further examination.

The approach of the district administration in failing to consider the challenges, threats and fear experienced by the victim-survivors of the violence violates the letter and spirit of The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.\footnote{The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, dated 11 February 1998. These have been drafted by a Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General. These guidelines are not part of any international convention that requires ratification by countries. While the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement do not constitute a binding legal document, they reflect and are consistent with international human rights law and international humanitarian law and have become widely accepted at the international, regional and state levels.} The Guiding Principles emphasize the right of IDPs to voluntarily return to their places of habitual residence, or to re-settle voluntarily in another part of the country. The state authorities have a corresponding duty to establish conditions for such a voluntary return, fully respecting the safety and dignity of the IDPs.\footnote{Principle 28(1) of the Guiding Principles, ibid} The state authorities have a further responsibility to assist returned and / or resettled IDPs to recover, to the extent possible, their properties and possessions which they left behind at the time of displacement, and where such a recovery is not possible, to provide adequate compensation or another form of just reparation.\footnote{Principle 29(2) of the Guiding Principles} There has been no visible effort on the part of the district administration to facilitate a return of houses and lands left behind by the victim-survivors, when they fled from their villages out of fear for their personal safety.

6.1.2 Safety and Security of Women and Girls

Several unreported incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls during the violence, came to light during the course of this study, and have been documented in this report. There has been an attempt to compile all known incidents of such forms of violence.\footnote{See Annexure III} While this is only the tip of the iceberg, the compilation indicates that SGBV and threats of SGBV against women and girls were not “occasional aberrations” but were used systematically by the perpetrators in order to shame, terrorize and subjugate the Christian community, as well as to scuttle processes of justice. Many women who have participated in this study continue to be in hiding and perceive a threat to their bodily integrity.

The attacks and threat of sexual and gender-based attacks on women and girls, violate constitutional guarantees of life and liberty, equality and non-discrimination on the ground of sex; and other international standards, including the UN Convention on Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW). It further violates UN Security Council resolution 1820 which condemns the use of sexual violence as a tool of war, and declares that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide.\footnote{UN Security Council resolution 1820, dated 19 June 2008.} This report reiterates that such violence could significantly exacerbate the conflict, impede peace processes and the process of reparations for victim-survivors in Kandhamal. Therefore it is requested that the state and district administration adopt steps to effectively address systematic sexual and gender-based violence that deliberately targets Christian women and girls, and women assisting the survivor community.
Despite several requests, no statistics has been provided by the office of the Superintendent of Police (SP) – Kandhamal, with regard to crimes against women that were registered in the context of the violence. The SP states that there are only two registered cases of rape, which may be factually correct. However, it is important for the police force in Kandhamal to acknowledge the high number of unreported incidents of sexual assaults during the violence, and introspect on how women and girls may be encouraged to report such attacks and seek the help of the police with confidence in future. Introspection is also required on the level of sensitivity (or otherwise) with which the police force has handled these two cases, and the survivors of violence in particular, and how this maybe substantially improved.

Despite a rampant threat to witnesses, particularly women, at the investigative, trial and post-trial phases, the SP was unable to share with us any specific efforts taken by the police to protect witnesses or relevant directives in this regard. He informed us that if there was a direction from the court to the police or a request by any witness, the police has given protection; no details on the type of protection given, the duration for which it was given and the number of women it was given to were available. He was not aware if any witnesses were given protection at the investigative stage as most of the investigations had been completed when he took charge as the SP of Kandhamal. At least one woman who participated in this study spoke of making a complaint to the police for threat to her as a witness; two other women said that the judge at the Fast Track court in Phulbani had orally directed the police to give protection to them, as they faced threats for testifying in court. According to the women, no concerted action has been taken by the police. While it is imperative to have a law on witness protection, it is equally important to have accountability mechanisms in place for police officials who fail to discharge their duty to protect civilians, including women, with due diligence.

6.1.3 Performance of the Criminal Justice System

The legal system’s treatment of women who are traumatized by communal violence leaves much to be desired. From the experience of women in this study, and from narratives of victim-survivors in other reports, it is obvious that in a majority of instances, members of the police force carried an institutional bias and a callous attitude towards the victim-survivors, and either failed to discharge their duty or discharged it in a mala fide manner. Accountability for such culpable acts of commission and ommision is an issue that requires to be pursued rigorously.

The criminal justice process for the Kandhamal violence is of grave concern. Although the SP of Kandhamal points out that there has been a higher level of conviction for the Kandhamal violence than the national average, success lies not only in the outcome but also the process. Witness protection measures are not in place, leading to rampant threatening of witnesses, particularly women witnesses; translation and interpretation services were not provided in the Fast Track courts for women who were comfortable speaking in Kui; in camera trial was not held when a girl aged six testified about the killing of her father by the accused; court atmosphere in the Fast Track Courts was extremely hostile, with a high number of supporters of the accused flooding the court, and an aggressive approach by the defense lawyers. The conviction rate for rioting cases, according to National Crime Research Bureau, is 21.5% while the conviction rate for Kandhamal violence, as on 1 May 2013, was 29.18% As of 26 June 2013, the conviction rate had reduced slightly to 28.5%. Source: Office of the Superintendent of Police, Kandhamal district, Odisha.
PP was a mute spectator, rather an active prosecutor. Influential persons, who were accused in multiple cases, managed to obtain bail promptly and threaten the witnesses. Illiterate women who have had no court exposure in the past, were subjected to trauma in and out of court. Not even the transport costs that witnesses are entitled to under the Cr PC were paid to them.49 Much of this could have been controlled by sensitive and pro-active judges, with a commitment to the Constitution and the rule of law, using the existing provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code. The issue is one of political will in ensuring that fair trial standards are adhered to during the criminal trials.

The poor response of the criminal justice system in the context of the communal violence in Kandhamal requires a serious introspection. Such introspection could contribute to law reform initiatives, particularly on communal and targeted violence, and on witness protection. The experiences of women in their engagement with processes of law and justice, as documented in this study, can potentially contribute to an integration of gender concerns within such initiatives.

6.1.4 Socio-Economic and Cultural Rights

Women affected by the violence in Kandhamal continue to face physical and mental health concerns. In particular, mental health concerns have been largely ignored. Many women and girls have experienced various forms of sexual assault, and continue to live with a sense of shame and low self-esteem. The national discourse on “rape as worse than death”, which has percolated to the village level, has impeded the process of reparations for such women. The factors that have contributed to and aggravated the health status of women and girls include a lack of nourishing food, absence of timely medical interventions due to non-affordability of the same, lack of clean water and sanitation, lack of livelihood options and anxiety. It is pertinent to note that these are factors that could have been promptly addressed through adequate compensation and rehabilitation packages, that would have respected, protected and promoted their life with dignity. In addition, the effective implementation of government schemes such as the Targetted Public Distribution Scheme (TPDS), Annapoorna Yojana50 and Antyodaya Anna Yojana51 and the concerted application of these schemes to victim-survivors and their families could substantially address the issue of lack of nutritional food among women, and health concerns stemming from the same.

Women’s loss of livelihood options is intrinsically linked to their loss of access to lands and forests, threats faced in cultivating their own lands, as well as the socio-economic boycott by the Hindu community in the villages where they live. Many women, who had savings through SHGs, have incurred huge losses due to the violence. There has been no effort taken by the administration to compensate such losses. Women-headed households, single women, pregnant women and elderly women bear the brunt of this dismal situation. The patriarchal approach of providing a man

49 Criminal courts are also obliged to order payment of reasonable expenses incurred by the witness or complainant for attending the court, as per S. 160 of the Criminal Procedure Code. In Nandini Satpathy vs. P.L.Dani (1978) 2 SCC 424, the Supreme Court reiterated the mandatory nature of this provision.

50 It is a government scheme for destitutes above 65 years of age, who are not covered in state or central social security pension scheme. They are issued special green ration cards, and entitled to 10 kgs food grains per month, free of cost.

51 It is a government scheme targetting the poorest of the poor in rural and urban areas, to whom a yellow ration card is issued. They are entitled to 25 kgs food grains per month per family, at the rate of Rs. 2 per kg of wheat / Rs. 3 per kg of rice.
(seen as the head of the family / breadwinner) with a job is grossly misplaced in addressing the livelihood concerns of women affected by the violence in Kandhamal. Apart from the various problems that women face with regard to jobs under NREGA, discussed more elaborately in part 5.3 of this report, NREGA jobs involve intensive manual labour, and are not best-suited to women who are pregnant, ill, weak or elderly. There is a need to identify and allot jobs under NREGA that are better-suited to such categories of women. Positive interventions of the district administration on these issues are urgently warranted.

The right to housing is as much an entitlement for the woman as for the man. The allotment of houses in rehabilitation sites in the names of male members of the family is an abhorrent practice, and contravenes the constitutional guarantee of equality and non-discrimination on the ground of sex. Women have faced immense hardship in rebuilding their houses in Kandhamal, and are more vulnerable to threats and harassment by members of the Hindu community. In rehabilitation sites, the challenges are different – a deep sense of insecurity as well as absence of livelihood options exists. One wonders why, schemes such as the Indira Awaas Yojana\(^52\), despite their stated priority to “women in difficult circumstances, including widows, those divorced or deserted, women victims of atrocities and those whose husbands are missing for at least three years, and, women headed families”,\(^53\) have not positively impacted the women affected by Kandhamal violence. The effectiveness of the role of panchayats in implementing such schemes – without bias and discrimination - is an issue that warrants examination.

It is heartening to see the importance accorded to education of many adolescent girls by their parents, despite risk to the personal safety of the girls. Many such girls are studying in Catholic convents and educational institutions. However, the extent of drop out of adolescent girls from schools, the lack of mobility of adolescent girls subsequent to the violence, and the inability of parents to admit their daughters in boarding schools / hostels are issues of concern. The high drop out of adolescent girls has also corresponded with early marriages of such girls, due to fears of their safety, as told to us by women. The effective implementation of government schemes such as the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya\(^54\) is crucial for furthering the access to education of girls from SC and ST communities through the provision of residential schools. In addition, a rigorous implementation of the SABLA\(^55\) scheme among adolescent girls of families affected by the violence could ensure that their nutritional and health status is addressed, while simultaneously upgrading their home skills, life skills and vocational skills.

6.1.5 Reparations

The gender-blind approach, with which relief packages were distributed soon after the violence, was matched by the dismal conditions in the government-run relief camps, where medical assistance to pregnant and just-delivered women was clearly absent. These are clearly indicative

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\(^{52}\) A flagship scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development, and aims at providing assistance to BPL families who are either houseless or have inadequate housing facilities for constructing a safe and durable shelter.


\(^{54}\) The scheme was introduced by the central government in 2004 and subsequently integrated in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme to provide educational facilities for girls belonging to SC, ST, OBCs, minority communities and families below the poverty line in Educationally Backward Blocks.

\(^{55}\) Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) is also known as SABLA, and is initiated by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development.
of the indifference of the State government to the plight of women victim-survivors. Such acts are violative of the right of victim-survivors to a life with dignity and equality, as guaranteed by Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Indian Constitution; and the right of all IDPs to an adequate standard of living, as recognized UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998.

Compensation amount paid to the women and their families by the government (for damage to their houses and for the death of family members) has been unjust, arbitrarily determined, ad hoc and grossly inadequate. There can be no justification whatsoever for the government to exclude moveable property or injuries not resulting in death, including sexual assault, from the purview of compensation. Similarly, the losses of savings of members of SHGs were also not compensated, causing further financial hardships to women. The callous manner in which compensation amounts have been doled out and their denial to many women, including those who were subjected to sexual assault, defeat the very purpose of compensation – to repair the harm and loss caused to victim-survivors. Failure to recognize sexual assault as a ground for compensation has led to women’s and girls’ experiences of such attacks being disregarded and rendered invisible. The compensation amounts have certainly done very little to restore women affected by the violence to a life with dignity, safety and security. As observed by the jury of the National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal, the absence of a comprehensive rehabilitation package has prevented the victim-survivors from being restored to a life of dignity. Allotment of jobs on compassionate grounds, and disbursement of interest-free loan for rebuilding of houses are specific measures that could potentially benefit widows, single women and women survivors of violence, and restore them to a standard of living that they had enjoyed prior to the violence, if not a better one.

Reparation means and includes restitution, compensation and rehabilitation. It also includes measures that make amends, such as reintegration, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. Under established standards of international law, all victims and survivors have a right to reparations. Seen in this light, in the context of state response to Kandhamal violence, it would be fair to conclude that the government has done little to fulfil the rights of restitution of women affected by the violence, and has failed to discharge, with due diligence, its responsibilities in this regard.

6.2 POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION – IMMEDIATE

As an outcome of the findings of this study, possible courses of action by government agencies and civil society are outlined below:

a) Assess and compensate for the loss of moveable property, including savings of women through SHGs, and for injuries sustained during the violence, not resulting in death;

b) Assist women in the recovery and return of the lands that women and their families had abandoned at the time of violence;

c) Apply the provisions of NREGA and other livelihood schemes of the government to women of the affected community, with no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion or gender.


57 Vahida Nair, Representation on the Topic of Reparation, before the Justice Verma Committee, New Delhi, 20 January 2013
Act against those engaging in such discrimination; identify and allot jobs under NREGA that are better-suited to women, particularly those who are pregnant, physically ill, weak or elderly;

d) Implement widow pension schemes and provide government jobs on compassionate grounds to women whose husbands were killed in the violence; provide soft loans for commencement of small businesses; enhance amount of widow pensions on par with other states, in order to ensure that widows can live with dignity;

e) Implement measures to rehabilitate women and girls affected by the violence, including expenses for medical treatment, trauma and psycho-social counselling, provision of sustainable livelihood, allotment of jobs on compassionate grounds, disbursement of interest-free loan for rebuilding of houses, provision of educational or vocational skills necessary to equip them with a sustainable form of livelihood and provision of safe and secure housing; ensure that allotment of lands and houses are on the names of the woman/joint names of woman and man, as applicable;

f) Identify unreported cases of sexual and gender-based violence, and ensure their registration, investigation and prosecution;

g) Take pro-active measures to prevent threat of sexual and gender-based violence to women survivors and their daughters, involved in various proceedings related to the Kandhamal violence, as well as to women human rights defenders/social activists who assist them;

h) Arrange trauma and psycho-social counselling for the women victim-survivors, particularly those who have experienced assaults/threat of assaults to their own person or witnessed assaults on their family members;

i) Compensate and rehabilitate women and girls subjected to varied forms of sexual assault. They should be compensated for the attack on their dignity and sexual autonomy, physical injury and mental anguish suffered, loss of educational and employment days, loss of educational, economic and social opportunities, and expenses incurred towards engaging with processes of justice and accountability,\textsuperscript{58}

j) Arrange camps for free health check-up, and free/subsidized supply of medicines to women in the villages, rehabilitation and resettlement sites;

k) Issue a special health card for riot-affected victims to all women affected by the violence, which would entitle them to free or subsidized medical services at government hospitals;

l) Distribute nutritious food at subsidized cost;

m) Take a concerted effort to include and facilitate participation of women in peace committees and peace-building initiatives at the village, block and district level;

n) Conduct a social audit on the impact of NREGA on adivasi and dalit Christian women in Kandhamal;

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\textsuperscript{58} Ibid
o) Conduct a social audit on the benefit of schemes on livelihood, housing, land and education initiated by the state and central government on women and girls affected by the Kandhamal violence;

p) Initiate a comprehensive assessment by the National Commission for Women and National Commission for Minorities on the status and needs of women and girls affected by the violence, with appropriate recommendations to state and central agencies; and

c) Initiate a comprehensive assessment by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, on the educational status and needs of children, including adolescent girls, and recommend appropriate remedial measures to state and central agencies.

6.3 POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION – LONG-TERM

The possible courses of action in the long term, indicated below, warrant the concerted effort of government agencies in collaboration with members of civil society. They are aimed at creating a law and policy framework that would better respond to the challenges faced by women in contexts of communal violence.

a) Create accountability mechanisms for government officials who fail to discharge their duties with due diligence, including in promptly responding to and protecting women and girls, registration of their complaints related to sexual and gender-based violence and other crimes, investigation and prosecution thereof and in providing reparations in contexts of communal violence;

b) Formulate and implement policies to provide reparations to women affected by communal violence, including but not limited to sexual and gender-based attacks. Such policies could include compensation, restitution and rehabilitation as well as guarantees of non-repetition of the violence and public acknowledgment of the harm they have suffered;

c) Formulate and enact a law on communal and targeted violence that integrates gender concerns;

d) Formulate and enact a law on witness protection with an integration of gender concerns; and

e) Incorporate the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into the national policy framework of India, which addresses aspects including the rights and specific needs of women IDPs.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The responsibilities of the state government towards women victim-survivors of the Kandhamal violence are yet to be discharged fully with due diligence. The government’s assumption that the women affected by the 2007-2008 violence require no further assistance is not supported by ground realities. The Christian community in Kandhamal in general, and the women in particular, have been pushed to the fringes of existence by a callous state and a community that aggressively asserts their subordinate status, based on an ideology of hate and violence.
The responsibility to uphold justice, rule of law, constitutional guarantees and principles of democracy, without any discrimination on grounds of sex, caste, religion or class, rests squarely on the government. There is an urgent need to restore the citizenship rights of members of the affected community. Government initiatives taken in the last five years have contributed towards a semblance of a return of the victim-survivor community to status quo ante; however, such initiatives have a potential to be strengthened immensely, and need to include gender-specific measures. With existing financial resources, human resources and the power to reach remote pockets of the district, the state government in general, and the district administration in particular, is best-suited to undertake this initiative.

The role of civil society groups, human rights defenders and social activists has been immense in assisting the women and girls affected by the violence. This is more so in view of the constraints in human and financial resources faced by them, as well as imminent threats to their own safety and security. In addition, the timely intervention and support of Church and church-based institutions and organizations has contributed to the empowerment of women and girls affected by the violence, in myriad ways.

Today, the women pro-actively strive to heal themselves of the wounds of violence. If their anguish is a poignant reminder of the brutality of the violence, their struggle is an inspirational proof of their innate strength. It is imperative that governmental and non-governmental agencies support their struggle, in furtherance of constitutional principles of equality, justice and the right to a dignified life.
ANNEXURE I

SUMMARY OF FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)

**FGD 1**

**Venue:** a village in Raikia block

**Profile of participants:** 40 adivasi and dalit Christian women

**Profile of the village:** It is a village consisting of about 260 Hindu families and about 60 Christian families. This village was severely affected during the 2008 violence, with the killing of three persons. There are unconfirmed reports of the rape of a girl from this village, which her parents concealed due to possible repercussions on her. It has a mix of Hindu and Christian households, living next to each other. The narrow lanes and poor accessibility to the nearest town increased the adverse impact on the victim-survivors during the violence.

The women heard that their village was going to be attacked and fled to the forests. A mob of about 2000 persons, armed with many weapons and shouting slogans, consisting of Hindus from within the village, from nearby villages and outside, attacked this village. All the Christian houses had been burnt down after the moveable property had been looted and property and other documents destroyed. Three men were killed – some within the village, and some while escaping from the village. Some women had witnessed the brutal killings, in which the bodies had been dismembered; others saw the bodies after the mob killed the men and left the village. The Hindu neighbours had reportedly participated in the preparatory meetings for the attack, and were among the violent mob, helping them and conspiring with them. Three women from the group had gone to court as witnesses, and their experience was largely negative. Their experience with the police has also been negative, as the police did not arrive for three days after the killings, to take the bodies for post-mortem examination, and as subsequently, only some perpetrators were arrested. 12 Christian families have not returned to the village after the violence, due to threat to their personal safety, and inability to rebuild their houses. The women had saved Rs. 10,000 – 2 lakhs through SHGs, which they lost due to the violence. The Hindu and Christian women in the village had shared a healthy, cordial and close relationship prior to the violence. Now they barely talk to each other; their relationship is strained due to mutual suspicion and fear. All the Hindu families and only 20-25 Christian households reportedly have the BPL card. Only 13 of the 60 Christian families have a job card under NREGA. Despite repeatedly applying for BPL and job card under NREGA, they have been denied the same. Even out of the 13 Christian families with a job card, very few have received jobs under the NREGA. From the Christian community of this village, 25 girls study in schools and 4 girls in colleges in Raikia and G.Udayagiri; the women are anxious about their own safety, as well as the safety of the girls, who continue to face sexual harassment from Hindu boys. Nearly 5 years after the violence, some houses that were destroyed are yet to be rebuilt.
**FGD 2**

**Venue:** A village in K. Nuagam block

**Profile of participants:** 30 Christian women, mostly dalits.

**Profile of the village:** It is a village with a majority of Dalit Christians, living for over 50-60 years. It has 80 families of SC Christians, 5 families of ST Christians and 10 Hindu families. The village is flanked by a village consisting of Hindu OBCs on one side, Hindu ST-dominated village on the other side, and villages with a strong RSS influence nearby. The attacks on this village was from both sides.

The women said that at the time of the violence, they fled to the forests. They heard the loud slogans of the mobs. All the Christian houses were burnt down by violent mobs; moveable property was looted, and their cattle (cow, sheep and goats) killed. The Hindu families did not help them at the time of the violence and remained in their houses. The relief camp was unable to accommodate them. After the CRPF arrived at their village, they had confidence and stayed in a nearby school in the village. They stayed in the school for two years, and depended on government supply of food materials. Some have not received full compensation. Presently, most women work as daily wage labourers, in stone quarries. Only 2-3 families were given jobs under NREGA in 2012. Many have job cards but have not asked for jobs due to corruption and delayed payments. Some families have BPL cards and health cards. Atleast 50 out of 85 Christian families owned land prior to the violence; now atleast half of them have lost their lands, as they have been occupied by the Hindus. The village has only a primary school, so adolescent girls travel to Balliguda, Sarangod, Phulbani, Kajuripada and Daringbadi for high school and college. The women have no fear of the CRPF and no faith in the police, tahsildar or BDO as they did not help soon after the violence. A few cases have been registered against perpetrators for house destruction, but the women were fearful and reluctant to give further details. Peace committee meetings were held a few times, and resulted in a written undertaking by attackers – a guarantee of non-repetition of the violence. Women were excluded from the meetings. The women continue to feel a sense of fear, of being raped, physically attacked and killed, particularly when they go to the mountains and forests.

**FGD 3**

**Venue:** A village in Phiringia block

**Profile of participants:** 25 women from one village (Village A), and 4 women from another village (Village B), of Phiringia block

**Profile of the villages:** Village A – consists only of Christian families, and is flanked by Hindu villages on both sides. It was attacked in the 2007 and 2008 violence. Village B is situated 8 km away from Village A, with about 25 Christian families and 75 Hindu families. It was adversely affected in the 2008 violence.

In Village A, the churches were attacked and destroyed, and paddy, rice and grains of the residents were looted in the 2007 violence. During the 2008 violence, all the houses were burnt down, through repeated attacks four times by violent mobs spanning over a few days. The attackers were from
nearby villages. All the women fled to the forests on knowing about the impending attacks from two Hindu boys. Three pregnant women from the village struggled to flee into the forests too. Two women from the group were sexually assaulted while fleeing from the relief camp to Bhubaneswar. The women had also witnessed the sexual assault on a young girl from a neighbouring village. In Village B, almost all the Christian houses were burnt down. Many women had received only Rs. 20,000 compensation though their houses were fully destroyed, and have struggled thereafter to re-build their houses. Many women in the group admitted to marrying their daughters off soon after the 2008 violence, or discontinuing their college due to fear of personal safety. Women from both the villages incurred huge losses through their SHGs at the time of the violence - including from kerosene dealership. They have no land, and their livelihood has been adversely affected by the violence, as Hindus who had employed them on their lands refused to do so subsequent to the violence. They depend on government entitlements based on BPL cards. Most families of women have job cards under the NREGA, but they have not received payment for 3 months of work done a year ago, hence they are not seeking further jobs under NREGA. The men work as daily wage labourers, and the women make leaf plates and sell firewood, with difficulty as the adivasi Hindus are barring their access to forest resources. They insist that peace in the villages is fragile and superficial. Their experience with CRPF has been positive, but their engagement with the police and legal processes has been negative. Women continue to be fearful of their personal safety and that of their daughters. According to them, a return of their lands, money and property which was looted / destroyed during the violence, accompanied by a guarantee of non-repetition of the attacks, would establish peace.

FGD 4

Venue: a village in Tikabali block

Profile of participants: About 25 dalit Christian women

Profile of the village: Has 60 Christian families out of more than 200 families. This village was severely affected during the 2008 violence, with attacks by mobs.

The village faced an attack by a violent mob (of 1000-1500 persons) on 30 August 2008 – six days after the commencement of the violence. The mob had many persons from outside the village and some from within. The women had kept their valuables in the village school, but the mob received information and burnt down the school. An elderly couple who were unable to flee and who stayed in their house were burnt; the husband died and the wife, due to shock, lost her ability to speak after the violence. All their houses were completely burnt down and moveable things looted or destroyed. Many received no compensation at all; some received only the state government’s compensation amount and not that of the central government, or vice versa. Those who received found the amount inadequate to re-build their houses; as a result, many lived in the paddy fields in temporary shelters till a year ago. Some witnessed CRPF men flirting with / abusing the vulnerability of girls in the relief camp. Subsequent to the violence, the women have stopped cultivating their lands out of fear, and as adivasi Hindus do not lend them bullocks for cultivating their lands. Only some families have BPL cards. Women of both the communities had joint SHGs prior to the violence, but separate ones now. There is an increased polarisation of the two communities subsequent to the violence. Some women have been subjected to threats and intimidation for having lodged complaints of house destruction and being witnesses in court.
They feel fearful yet helpless, at satsangs and processions taking place in or around their village. The women have shared a good relationship with the BDO, CRPF, collector, tahsildar and the police, and found them helpful.

**FGD 5**

**Venue:** a village in K.Nuagam block

**Profile of participants:** 20 Hindu women, 3 Hindu men; all are Oriyas (OBC and other castes)

**Profile of the village:** mixed village with Hindu and Christian families.

During the violence, there were no killings in the village. The Christian families fled into the forest as they were fearful of the attacks. Most returned subsequently. There are unconfirmed reports that during the 2008 violence, one Christian died due to heart attack, out of fear of the violent mob. The Hindu women apparently gave the Christian women cooked food, blankets, clothes and provisions for cooking for some days after the violence. According to them, the attackers were from outside their village. However there are 35 cases against Hindu boys in the village, which are pending in various courts. The Hindu women faced difficulties after the violence as they could not go to the shops, market or temple. Mobility was restricted due to fear for personal safety. Their husbands fled to the forests to escape arrests by the police. The women were forced to single-handedly take care of their families, including children and the elderly. The husbands lost their livelihood. CRPF and the police allegedly questioned and assaulted them. For one year, they were unable to access hospitals. The women believe that Christians killed Swami Lakshmanananda but denounced the killings and attacks on Christian families as a revenge. Peace committee meetings were held earlier, through the initiative of the BDO, Collector and civil society groups. Presently, the women’s families do not have land in their names; they allege that adivasi Christians do, and they drive the Hindu women out of the lands. All the families have job cards and were allotted road construction. They are in possession of the health cards, but have not benefitted from its facilities so far. Presently they have SHGs along with Christian women, and share a healthy relationship with them. According to the women, peace means a stoppage of alcoholic activities and violence on women due to the same.

**FGD 6**

**Venue:** a village in K.Nuagam block

**Profile of participants:** about 40 women, all Hindus

**Profile of the village:** 44 households in the village, almost all of them are Hindus. Reportedly, no Christian families live here now.

The women said that during the violence, the Hindu men in their village fled to the forests to avoid being arrested by the police, while the women managed the households, children and the elderly. The women too were frightened of the police, as they had heard rumours that the police had attacked and raped women. So they would flee to the jungles at night, and return home during the day. However no violent mob and no police came to their village. No cases are
pending against any person residing in this village. There are 15-20 adolescent girls from the village, who are studying in Swami Lakshmanananda’s ashram, government’s ashram schools as well as in schools under Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya scheme. The women feared for the safety of the girls, and restricted their mobility for a year. They are not sure of the exact cause of the violence but think that it must be because of Swami Lakshmanananda being killed by Christians. They anticipate another spate of communal violence may occur if another such killing takes place. Satsangs are being held every Thursday in this village since 1986-7, during which they read the Bhagavad Gita, sing songs and sometimes the pramukhs (priests) visit the village and speak to them. Religious leaders from Jalaspeta and Chakkapad visit their village once a month, and yaguya is being held every poornima (full moon day). The women listed out the differences between Hindu and Christian women, including that the latter are not clean – as they go to church during menstruation and enter the kitchen in the morning without bathing. To the women in this village, peace means freedom from alcohol consumption and domestic violence by men with or without consuming alcohol. They have two SHGs, which prepare leaf plates, using sewing and pressing machines; they receive Rs. 10,000 a month for the same, which they have deposited in the bank in a fixed deposit.

**FGD 7**

**Venue:** a village in Daringbadi block

**Profile of participants:** 6 Hindu women, out of which two are involved in government institutions dealing with local governance.

**Profile of the village:** It was affected during the 2007 violence. The block has a majority of adivasi Christians, and has a strong Maoist influence. According to reliable reports, on 25 December 2007, Christian houses and church were burnt down. Two days later, a counter-attack by Christians took place, and Hindu houses were burnt. In the 2008 violence, Daringbadi block was tense but was not directly affected. During the 2008 violence, the village was not directly affected or attacked. The women are emphatic that the Christians were responsible for commencement of the communal tension that resulted in the destruction of 7 churches and several Hindu houses during the December 2007 violence. They spoke at length about the peace initiative undertaken by members of the Hindu community and government officials (police and the BDO), and said that Christians did not participate in the peace committee meetings, and subsequently attacked the Hindu houses. At the time of the attack on their houses, the women fled to the forests, stayed there for 3 days, stayed in a school for a week thereafter, and received relief packages from the government and non-profit organizations, as well as compensation amount from the government. The peace committee in this village continues to be active, with a participation of women members, including a woman sarpanch. The village faces communal tension based on everyday interactions (such as cricket matches) between Hindu and Christian youths. The men in their families work as small traders, and labourers. Women, through 9-10 SHG groups, are engaged in haldi trading. The women perceive Christians and Maoists to be working hand-in-hand. They have satsangs, lakshmi pooja, savitri pooja and celebrate all Hindu festivals in a grand manner. They say that they have no ill-feelings about Christians, and that members of the two communities live as brothers and sisters. They emphasized on the need for Christian mothers to convince their husbands and sons not to fight and resort to violence, just as they do.
**FGD 8**

**Venue:** A village in Balliguda block

**Profile of participants:** 10 Hindu women

**Profile of the village:** A big village of more than 2000 families, divided into colonies based on caste and religion. It was attacked during the 2007 and 2008 violence.

The women said that they peacefully lived with Christians, but that the Christians falsely implicated their husbands and sons of participating in the violence. As a result the women hid them in the forests. They continue to go to court with regard to those cases. According to them, the Christians broke their own houses for the sake of claiming compensation, and that Christians were responsible for the violent attacks on them. At the time of the violence, the Hindu women too were inconvenienced, their mobility curtailed, they feared their personal safety, livelihood lost and access to basic health services was limited. The women strongly feel that the government favours Christians and discriminates against Hindus and gave examples to support this viewpoint, including the issuance of 55 BPL cards to dalit Christians and 15 BPL cards to Hindus. Health services are poor; the men work as daily labourers and the families lead a hand-to-mouth existence. The women opine that Christians are in a better situation, as they received compensation, jobs and their churches were re-built. The women are active in *Durga Bahini* – and some have gone to Bhubaneswar for the meetings. They have *satsangs* in the village, and are active in *laxmi pooja* and other Hindu festivals, which they celebrate in great pomp and show.

**FGD 9**

**Venue:** Nandagiri

**Profile of participants:** About 30 women belonging to various denominations of Christianity, mainly from Bettikola, Kilakia, Kutulumba, Dakapalla, Ratangia, Laburi and Jimangia villages.

**Profile of the site:** It is a government rehabilitation site in G.Udayagiri block, where about 72 families have been residing. They are families who are fearful of / unable to return to their villages after the 2008 violence. They have stayed at Nandagiri since 2010.

One woman’s nephew was brutally assaulted by a violent mob; most women’s houses had been completely burnt down and movable property looted by the mobs. Many women had attempted to lodge FIRs soon after the violence, but reportedly the police refused to register the FIRs. Most of them have built their houses in Nandagiri through the compensation amount from state and central governments, combined with a donation of land by the state government, and an assistance for house construction by the church. Many of the women owned land in their villages; however, they have not returned to their village due to fear of further violence and harassment. Some of their relatives in the village converted to Hinduism, so they stay in the village without fear. From some villages, such as Bettikola, there has been a complete exodus of Christian families, and the fate of their lands is not known. Many women do not have job cards under the NREGA. Those who do were able to get jobs under NREGA for an average of 10 days, and some for a maximum of 30 days in 2012. Their job cards are with the *Gram Saathi*, who does not live in Nandagiri. Most
work as daily wage labourers in private construction work in G.Udayagiri. However the availability of work is unpredictable; on days when they get no work, their families starve; women who are ill and elderly are unable to undertake such jobs. Some women are involved in making leaf plates. 21 out of 30 persons do not have BPL cards. The women have one SHG, which earlier had 35 members; it presently has only 10 members, indicating an inability of women to save money. A primary school is under construction in Nandagiri. For secondary school and college, students have to travel to G.Udayagiri town (4 kms away) or beyond. After the violence, many children have dropped out from school. Many girls had been studying and residing in government-run ashram schools and church-run boarding schools even prior to the violence. However the women expressed tremendous difficulty in paying the school fees now, after the violence and due to a loss of livelihood. Health facilities in Nandagiri are poor – only the provision for an ASHA worker who keeps a stock of medicines. The women continue to feel a sense of fear and insecurity, as the area is open and isolated; it has a concentration of Christians; there are no police or security personnel deployed; and it could be an easy target for violence again.

**FGD 10**

**Venue:** Salia Sahi

**Profile of participants:** 10 Christian women from Kandhamal, who fled the district after the 2008 violence and have settled down in Bhubaneswar

**Profile of the place:** Is a slum in Bhubaneswar that is spread over 215 acres of land, with about 14,000 families and a population of more than 1 lakh. As with any other slum, Salia Sahi has narrow lanes, makeshift huts and poor drainage / sanitation system. Poor families from all the 30 districts of the state have resettled here, including those families that survived the violence in Kandhamal. It is the largest slum in the entire state and is nicknamed the “Dharavi of Odisha”.

Reportedly there are more than 10,000 people from Kandhamal who live in the slum; however the women do not have contact with most of them. The women who participated in the FGD were original residents of villages in Raikia, Tikabali and Chakkapad blocks of Kandhamal. Women’s experiences of the violence, fleeing into the forests in fear, traumatic experiences in the forests and thereafter in the relief camps were discussed. One woman’s husband had been brutally killed during the violence; another woman’s uncle’s leg was cut off by a violent mob; yet another woman’s aunt had “disappeared” when she returned to her village from the relief camp for harvesting her crops. One woman said that some months prior to the violence, when she and her neighbours went to church in their village, the Hindu men would shout at them “We will rape you! We will rape your daughters!” All the women were working in cultivation as well as made a livelihood through forest products, while in Kandhamal. In Bhubaneswar, some women work as domestic workers or housekeepers; others are not engaged in any remunerative work due to illness or small children. The children of many of the women study in a convent nearby. The women have moved to Bhubaneswar due to the violence, and find it more peaceful than in Kandhamal. Many have not applied for a new ration card, BPL card, voter ID card or health card (after their old one was destroyed during the violence). The procedure requires that they return to their area of origin to obtain a replacement of these documents, which the women are fearful of doing. For this reason, they have waived their entitlements under government schemes. Some women were able to get ownership of land in Kandhamal under the Forest Rights Act prior to the
violence; since they fled from their village, they do not know the fate of those lands. Some women’s parents-in-law are utilizing the land for cultivation, for their own subsistence. Atleast 3 of the 10 women continue to face imminent threat of attacks if they returned. They explained how they struggle to make ends meet, as Bhubaneswar is an expensive city as compared to Kandhamal, and many things were free in their village. They have to pay a room rent of Rs. 1500 a month, immaterial of their earnings for the month. Despite this, the women are reluctant to return to Kandhamal due to a combination of fear of personal security, a lack of livelihood options and a sense of resignation about the present condition. With an absence of trust and deep suspicion in the Hindu community in Kandhamal now, they do not feel any motivation to return to the district.

**FGD 11**

**Venue:** a place in K.Nuagam block

**Profile of participants:** 4 adolescent girls from the dalit and adivasi Christian community, residing in 3 different villages of Daringbadi block. 3 girls are 17 years old and 1 girl is 18. All have studied from Class VIII to Class X.

**Profile of the villages:** The villages were not directly influenced during the 2008 violence. They have a strong Maoist influence.

One girl was not interested in further studies; one girl’s parents were unable to secure her admission in a boarding school; another girl’s parents have discontinued her education; yet another girl did not clear her Class X exams and will be attempting the same again. All the girls experienced fear during the 2007 violence, and had hid in the forests. They recall, in 2007, that many huge groups of people in saffron clothes would visit their village and shout loudly, which made them frightened. They experienced a severe restriction on their mobility for several months. They had heard of attacks, including sexual attacks, on women and were terrified. They believe that the violence took place because the Hindus were jealous of Christians’ grand celebration of their festivals. They have studied in co-education schools, and do not recall any instance when Hindu boys had sexually harassed them. Presently they are not frightened of Hindu boys but are terrified of CRPF personnel, as they have heard rumours that they had sexually assaulted some women. All girls want to learn tailoring and become fashion designers.

**FGD 12**

**Venue:** a village in K.Nuagam block

**Profile of participants:** 4 adolescent girls, all Christian; all are presently studying – three in Class XI and one in Class X.

**Profile of the village:** Same as in FGD 2

One girl was studying in Class VI and the other three girls were studying in Class VIII when the 2008 violence took place. They fled to and stayed in the forests for two weeks, following which they moved to a school near their village that had been converted into a relief camp. They lost
one academic year, as all their books and reading materials had been burnt down, and they were unable to give their examinations in 2008. Their studies was further disrupted as their school was converted into a relief camp. For almost two years, they lived in the school while studying there. One girl was sexually harassed by upper caste Hindu boys from a nearby panchayat soon after the violence, but did not wish to give further details. All the girls experienced restrictions in mobility as they had been threatened with rape by the Hindu boys. Now the girls are not threatened but they continue to feel a sense of fear. They face sexual harassment from Hindu boys to and from school, as well as in school. The families of the girls are supportive in their pursuit of education; however they have told the girls that they are helpless and cannot stop the Hindu boys from sexually harassing them, and have advised the girls to protect themselves and ignore the boys’ taunts and comments. All the girls want to become nurses and take up nursing courses after completing Class XII, outside Kandhamal.

**FGD 13**

**Venue:** Nandagiri

**Profile of participants:** 4 adolescent girls, all Christians

**Profile of the village / site:** same as FGD 9

The girls are studying in Class VI, VIII, X and completed XII. All are studying in girls’ school / college. When a violent mob attacked their villages, they fled to the forests and thereafter to relief camps. They stayed in the relief camps for a period of 1.5 years. One of the girls lives in a hostel, and hence her studies did not get disrupted. For the others, they lost one academic year, as they were unable to give their exams in 2008. They face sexual harassment from both Hindu and Christian boys. Parents did not stop them from going to school but suggested that they ignore such comments. Two of them want to become a teacher, one wants to become a Collector and one a singer.

**FGD 14**

**Venue:** Nandagiri

**Profile of participants:** 6 elderly Christian women, all above the age of 65, all single.

**Profile of the village / site:** same as FGD 9

Hardly any of them have earning children living with them, as the children have migrated from Kandhamal in search of livelihood. Some women have adult daughters / sons who are dependent on the women. Most appeared mal-nourished and face extreme poverty. All suffer from health problems such as weak eyesight, body pain, headaches, weakness, high blood pressure etc. Though some have job cards under NREGA, these mean nothing to them as in their present physical condition, it is not feasible for them to work and earn a living. They expressed that the widow pension and entitlements through BPL card are inadequate to facilitate their life with human dignity. They said that the perpetrators roam before them, and have not been made accountable by law. Soon after the violence, they were fearful of the perpetrators but now, they face them...
bravely. However, when they drink and shout angrily, the women feel frightened and insecure. The elderly, single women feel that an increase in widow pension as that is the only way in which they have live a dignified life, as they have no energy to work and earn a living. They are in dire need of money for basic needs such as food, shelter, clothes and medical assistance. They wish to live independently rather than with children and their spouses. Some expressed that they wish to die in their own houses.

**FGD 15**

**Venue:** Nandagiri

**Profile of participants:** 5 Christian single women, some of whose husbands were killed during the violence, between the ages of 40 and 55. They travelled to Nandagiri from various villages of Tikabali block, in order to participate in the FGD.

One woman’s husband – a pastor – was killed during the 2008 violence. Other women’s husbands had died prior to the violence. All of them faced grave financial losses as their houses had been burnt down and moveable property looted. Most of them received Rs. 20,000 – Rs. 30,000 as compensation for partial damage of their houses, which they found highly inadequate for reconstruction. In addition, one woman’s attempt to re-construct her house in her village was stopped by members of the Hindu community. One woman’s name was not included in the list drawn up by the government, and hence she did not receive any compensation for damage to her house. The woman whose husband was killed during the violence received Rs. 5 lakhs as compensation. Most of them are physically weak and unable to undertake jobs to financially support themselves. For this reason, they are almost entirely dependent on government schemes such a the BPL card and widow’s pension. Most women receive a widow’s pension of Rs. 200 a month, which they find highly inadequate to meet their basic expenses. All of them have BPL cards, through which they receive rice, sugar and kerosene at subsidized rates. Two of the five women have dependent sons living with them. As single women, all of them face various challenges – financial, psychological, medical and social - for their survival.

**FGD 16**

**Venue:** a place in K.Nuagam block

**Profile of participants:** 12 single women of varying age groups, from villages of K.Nuagam and Daringbadi blocks

Two women in the group received no compensation at all for house damage. Three women received Rs. 20,000 for partial damage to the house. They said that many valuables and other moveable property were looted from their homes by violent mobs, causing them extreme financial hardships. However, they have not been compensated for the financial loss. Four women and their families are unable to return to their villages, and have built their houses in another village, where they do not get water and other facilities. Three women have migrated from K.Nuagam block to Daringbadi block, where they live in rented houses. 11 out of the 12 women have BPL cards; most of them have job cards under the NREGA. However, the job cards are not useful to the elderly women as they cannot work. The other women who are willing to work have not been given jobs
under the NREGA though they have repeatedly asked for the same. None of the 12 women had any family members who were killed by the mob; however, all of them heard and saw the violent mob and fled to the forest. Some said that they saw many women (300-400) in the mob. They spoke of one Christian man, who had been stripped of his clothes and paraded naked in the village by a violent mob. However, he was rescued through the intervention of elders in the village. The women said that adolescent girls were frightened to go to school, as they feared for their personal safety. Three of the women have registered complaints in police stations for damage to their property, out of which one woman has testified in court. She was threatened thrice in order to prevent her from testifying in court. None of the 12 women have been members of any SHG.

FGD 17

Venue: In a village in Raikia block

Profile of participants: 5 elderly Christian women, whose families had been forcibly converted to Hinduism during the 2008 violence

Profile of the village: Same as in FGD 1

Around 28/29 August 2008, a violent mob attacked their village. The mob consisted of at least 1000 people, including Hindu women from nearby localities. Most Christians in the village had anticipated the violence and sought refuge in the forests. The mob broke and destroyed all the Christian houses in the village, and looted the furniture, valuables (gold and cash) as well as stainless steel utensils. The mob also burnt all valuable documents such as patta of land, and burnt their clothes. Further, the mob burnt and destroyed cups, chalice and priestly garments of one of the priests at the time of his first ordination. During the violence, the violent mob caught the husbands of the women. One of the 5 men was a Catholic priest. Some women were in the village while others were in the forest. They ran to be with their husbands as they were fearful of what the violent mob would do to their husbands. The five women and their husbands were forcibly taken to a temple nearby for conversion to Hinduism. Sandal paste was applied on a sword and then on the men’s foreheads. The mob made the women stand behind our husbands. Some persons from the mob gave the men some coconut (prasad) to eat. The mob was very happy that they were ‘converting’ the families. The women’s husbands were forcibly made to sign a letter stating that they had converted out of their own free will. Subsequently they were compelled to attend and participate in satsangs for six months. Though they were sitting physically in the satsangs, mentally they thought of their god, and they prayed and sang thinking of their god. They attended the satsang as they were frightened that they may be killed if they did not. Due to the ‘conversion’ to Hinduism, one woman was compelled to join the Hindu women with lathis to prevent the police from arresting their husbands. However, she managed to excuse herself. They returned to their village from the relief camp about six months after the violence. Thereafter, they gradually started going to the church. Although all the five women have continued to practise Christianity thereafter, they found the experience frightening and had worried for their own safety and that of their husbands.
### ANNEXURE II

#### COMPILATION OF ALL KNOWN INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL & GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

*(Please note that this list is indicative and not exhaustive)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place/Other Details</th>
<th>Description of Incident</th>
<th>Source¹</th>
<th>Present Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. K.Nuagam block</td>
<td>Gang rape of a Catholic nun</td>
<td>Varied</td>
<td>3 convicted, 6 acquitted, trial pending against many other accused in Sessions court, Cuttack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bapolomandi Village, Tikabali block</td>
<td>Gang rape of a Hindu woman in revenge for her uncle’s refusal to convert to Hinduism</td>
<td>The survivor testified <em>in camera</em> before the NPT</td>
<td>Trial transferred to Berhampur sessions court, proceedings not concluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dudukagaon village, Tikabali block</td>
<td>Raped and killed, along with her husband</td>
<td>Testimony by the son, Narasingho Digal in NPT</td>
<td>Transfer petition (for transfer from Balliguda to Cuttack) pending in the High Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Padampur – Bargah district</td>
<td>Suspected gang rape and forced nudity of a Hindu adivasi girl before being killed</td>
<td>Testimony by Nicholas Barla in NPT</td>
<td>FIR registered only for murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Barakhama village, Balliguda block</td>
<td>Forced nudity and attempt to gang rape a teenaged girl; she sustained 60% burns as the mob burnt her with kerosene</td>
<td>Testimony by Indira Digal and Chanchala Nayak in NPT</td>
<td>FIR registered for outrage of modesty with Boijnath Nagar police station, Berhampur; present status of case not known</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<td>6. Gudrikia Chanchedi village</td>
<td>Rape and murder of a 55 year old woman by five young boys</td>
<td>NN College report, case study no. 48</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mundanaju village, Raikia block</td>
<td>Rape of a girl, on whom petrol was poured subsequently and burnt. She was hospitalized.</td>
<td>NN College report, case study no. 52</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Magadangia village, K.Nuagam</td>
<td>Girl raped, suffered from anxiety and fear</td>
<td>Narrated by her mother to NN College team, NN College report, p. 57</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Muningia village, K.Nuagam block</td>
<td>Girl raped by mob when she was fleeing to the forest. Subsequently married. She continues to suffer from chest pain; no medical treatment given as the family did not want others to know of the rape</td>
<td>NN College report, case study no. 11</td>
<td>Complaint made, no perpetrators arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Bogadi village, K.Nuagam block</td>
<td>Attempt to rape 18 year old girl by a mob consisting of RSS persons, when she went to get rice from the Public Distribution system. Her father rushed to the spot, intervened and prevented the rape</td>
<td>Loyola College report, case no. 4; NN College report case no. 41</td>
<td>Police at Sarangod police station did not FIR or arrest persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Katadi village, Tikabali block</td>
<td>Threat of rape to woman and her daughter</td>
<td>Testified at NPT</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hatapada Sahi village, Raikia block</td>
<td>Threat of rape, gang rape in public, sexual mutilation – to woman and her daughter as she testified in Fast Track court</td>
<td>Testified at NPT; NN College report</td>
<td>Application given for police protection; but no protection given</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>13. Riabhanja village, Tikabali block</td>
<td>A woman was caught by a mob with her husband; the mob pulled her sari and threatened her with rape, forcing both of them to convert to Hinduism</td>
<td>NN College report, case study no. 15</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Near Sarangod village, K.Nuagam block</td>
<td>In February 2009, a 21-22 year old Christian girl was gang-raped by Hindu boys from Sarangod and Lankagod villages. She spoke to her sister on phone and informed about the incident; she committed suicide the same night</td>
<td>Activists working on Kandhamal, NAWO-Odisha</td>
<td>No post mortem examination was done, and she was quietly cremated as her family did not want to reveal about the attack on her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Barakhama village, Balliguda block</td>
<td>On 25 Dec 2007, a 16 year old girl, along with other girls, had fled into the forests, but tried to return to her village as she heard the news that all her family members had been killed. On the way, she came across a group of RSS and Bajrang dal members who sexually assaulted her (she says ‘outraged her modesty’). She was ‘pulled and pushed and misbehaved’. One of the boys applied sindoor on her forehead and then sexually assaulted her saying he was marrying her. She escaped from the mob to her village and found her family members alive</td>
<td>NAWO-Odisha</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Kamberkia village, Sudra gram panchayat</td>
<td>On 27 Dec 2007, a Hindu man tried to rape a 16 year old Christian girl as she was taking a bath in the river near her village. He continues to threaten her and threatens that he will forcibly marry her</td>
<td>NAWO-Odisha</td>
<td>Did not inform police out of fear of him and other members of the Hindu community</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Relief camps</td>
<td>Sexual abuse / harassment by Hindu men and police personnel, when women were having a bath; they had no privacy</td>
<td>NN College report, p. 82</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Gunjiwadi village, K.Nuagam block</td>
<td>Hindu men urinated in front of her; threatened her with rape, made suggestive gestures of raping her while they were fleeing into the forest</td>
<td>NN College report, p. 38</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Mondasoru village, Raikia block</td>
<td>A girl was raped, she was burnt with petrol by a mob; she survived and was admitted to a hospital; a Catholic institution based in Berhampur paid for her treatment</td>
<td>NN College report, p. 38</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. AB 1</td>
<td>Attempt to rape her sister-in-law by a mob which was angry because she went to police station to lodge complaint of killing</td>
<td>Present report</td>
<td>No complaint lodged with police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. AB 2</td>
<td>Attempt to rape her after killing of her husband by a mob</td>
<td>Present report</td>
<td>No complaint lodged with police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. AB 9</td>
<td>Molestation, attempt to gang rape and severe assault of a young woman with two children.</td>
<td>Present report</td>
<td>No complaint lodged with the police regarding this incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. AB 13</td>
<td>Chased by a mob, which threatened and planned to rape and kill her</td>
<td>Present report</td>
<td>No complaint lodged with the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. AB 14</td>
<td>Chased by a mob, which planned to rape and kill her</td>
<td>Present report</td>
<td>No complaint lodged with the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. AB 16</td>
<td>Report about two nuns on whom an attempt to rape was made</td>
<td>Present report</td>
<td>No complaint lodged with the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Description of Incident</td>
<td>Place/Other Details</td>
<td>Present Status</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>FGD 1</td>
<td>Woman whose husband’s brother was brutally killed, was threatened with rape and murder for testifying in court.</td>
<td>AB 17</td>
<td>Present report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 3</td>
<td>Report about a young girl, her mother, grand mother and aunt who were caught by a mob while they tried to escape from their village. There was an attempt to gang rape the girl.</td>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Present Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 3</td>
<td>Two women from a village, while fleeing, were threatened by a drunk group of men that their breasts would be cut off, and were told that they would cut the two women’s bodies in the same manner in which the Christian community had cut their mataji.</td>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Present Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 4</td>
<td>A mob chased a young woman into the forest and tried to call out to her in the mist, with the view of raping her.</td>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Present Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 10</td>
<td>A woman described that when a mob attacked her village, her uncle was killed and the mob searched for her to rape her.</td>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Present Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 12</td>
<td>Threat to rape and kill the women and their daughters, by Hindu men, when the women went to church prior to the violence.</td>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Present Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34. Threatened with rape for assisting women survivors of the violence.
35. Woman whose husband’s brother was brutally killed, was threatened with rape and murder for testifying in court.
36. Report about a young girl, her mother, grand mother and aunt who were caught by a mob while they tried to escape from their village. There was an attempt to gang rape the girl.
37. Two women from a village, while fleeing, were threatened by a drunk group of men that their breasts would be cut off, and were told that they would cut the two women’s bodies in the same manner in which the Christian community had cut their mataji.
38. A mob chased a young woman into the forest and tried to call out to her in the mist, with the view of raping her.
39. A woman described that when a mob attacked her village, her uncle was killed and the mob searched for her to rape her.
40. Threat to rape and kill the women and their daughters, by Hindu men, when the women went to church prior to the violence.
41. Threat of rape of Christian adolescent girls by Hindu boys.
GLOSSARY

1. **Adivasi** – literally means “original dwellers / inhabitants” and refers to indigenous people.
2. **Anganwadi** – anganwadi workers are employed by the Department of Social Welfare to distribute nutrition supplements to pregnant women and children, and to provide non-formal education for children upto 6 years of age, under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).
3. **Anganwadi kendra** – centre where anganwadi workers are employed.
4. **Annapoorna Yojana** – A centrally sponsored scheme, that provides 10 kg of food grains free of cost each month for old destitutes who do not receive the old age pension.
5. **Antaranga** – a youth mobilization programme for promoting communal harmony and peace in the villages of Kandhamal.
7. **Ayah** – maid / nurse.
8. **Bajrang Dal** – a militant organization of the Hindu Right which takes its name from the monkey god.
9. **Bhabi** – sister-in-law, a term used with respect by men to address women who are unrelated to their family, in villages.
10. **Bhai** – brother.
11. **Bhajan** – Hindu religious song.
12. **Bharat Mata Ki Jai** – a slogan that means “Victory to Mother India”.
13. **Brahmin** – The upper most caste in the Hindu caste hierarchy.
14. **Bujali** – sharp and lethal weapon.
15. **Chakkapad** – place in Kandhamal district where Swami Lakshmanananda established his ashram.
16. **Chanda** – a colloquial term for a bribe or a forced donation.
17. **Chandan** – sandalwood paste, often applied on the forehead; a symbol of Hinduism.
18. **Chivda** – crispy beaten rice, a popular snack in Odisha.
19. **Dal** – preparation of pulses, is an essential dish for most Indians.
20. **Dalit** – literally means “broken people”; refers to persons belonging to a category at the lower end of the caste system, who are considered “untouchables” and treated in an inhumane manner.
21. **Dhanga card** – a term used by laypersons to refer to a ration card issued by the Central government to riot-affected families, which entitles the family to 25 kgs of rice.
22. **Dharm Pracharak** – one who propagates religion.
23. **Durga** – a Hindu goddess symbolizing power and courage.
24. **Durga Vahini** – a militant women’s organization of the Hindu Right.
25. **Ex gratia** – literally means ‘out of grace or kindness’; in law, an ex gratia payment is one that
is made without recognizing any liability on the part of the person / institution that is making the payment.

26. **Ghar Vapasi** – literally means “return home”; refers to rituals conducted by Hindutva forces to convert or re-convert a person back into the Hindu fold.

27. **Gobar Pani** – urine of the cow, considered sacred in the Hindu religion.

28. **Gram panchayat** – local self-government at the village level; an elected body.

29. **Gram Rakhi** – village guard, a representative of the government in the village.

30. **Haldi** – turmeric

31. **Harijan** – literally means “children of god”, a name given to the “untouchables” by Mahatma Gandhi.

32. **Hindu rajya / rashtra** – Hindu nation.

33. **Hindutva** – ideology and political formation of the Hindu Right.

34. **Hindutva forces** – Sangh Parivar (see below).

35. **In camera** – closed door proceedings in court, where spectators are excluded or their entry is restricted.

36. **Jai Bajrangbali** – literally means “Victory to monkey god” – used both as a greeting and in slogans by the Hindu Right.

37. **Jai Sriram** – literally means “Victory to Ram” – used in slogans by the Hindu Right.

38. **Jalaspeta** – place in Kandhamal district where Swami Lakshmanananda had established an ashram – and where he was assassinated on 23 August 2008.


40. **Kandhas / Kandhos** – one of the oldest tribal communities of Odisha, mostly belong to Scheduled Tribes.

41. **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya** - A scheme introduced by the central government in 2004 and subsequently integrated in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme to provide educational facilities for girls belonging to SC, ST, OBCs, minority communities and families below the poverty line in Educationally Backward Blocks.

42. **Kui** – a language spoken in Odisha by members of Kui tribes in the hills of Odisha, and by Kandhas in Kandhamal.

43. **Lakshmi** – a Hindu goddess of wealth.

44. **Lathi** – long heavy wooden stick, often used as a weapon.

45. **Leadergiri** – showing qualities of leadership (with a negative connotation).

46. **Mahila Samiti** – women’s forum.

47. **Mala fide** – in bad faith.

48. **Mataji** – mother.

49. **Nandagiri** – a rehabilitation site for victims of the Kandhamal violence, established by the Odisha government in G.Udayagiri block.

50. **Panas / Panos** – community consisting mainly of dalits, many of whom are Christians.

51. **Panchayat** – village level elected body.

52. **Patta** – a document related to ownership of land.
53. **Pharsa** – axe-like lethal weapon.
54. **Post mortem** – refers to a medical examination of a deceased person to determine the cause of death; also called autopsy.
55. **Puja / Pooja** – a Hindu ritual performed as an offering to deities.
56. **Prasad** – food eaten / other items distributed in a Hindu temple, believed to have god’s blessings.
57. **Ram / Rama** – name of a Hindu god.
58. **Salia Sahi** – a slum in Bhubaneswar, considered to be the largest slum in Odisha, to which many victim-survivors of Kandhamal violence migrated to in 2008.
59. **Sama** – A resource group for Women and Health, a non-profit organization.
60. **Sangh Parivar** – refers to the collective Hindu Right organizations – including RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini and BJP.
61. **Sari** – garment worn by Indian women.
62. **Sarpanch** – democratically elected head of the panchayat / local self-government at the village level.
63. **Satsang** – an assembly of persons associated with Hinduism, who read and dialogue on religious scriptures, Hindu culture and tradition; also used by the Hindu Right to promote the ideology of hate and violence.
64. **Shakha** – branch / unit.
65. **Shudras** – the lower most caste in the Hindu caste hierarchy.
66. **Sindur** – vermillion powder smeared on the forehead – a symbol of Hinduism.
67. **Swami** – religious teacher in Hinduism.
68. **Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati** – a Hindu religious teacher who was closely associated with the Hindutva forces, assassinated on 23 August 2008 in Kandhamal.
69. **Tangia** – sharp-edged axe-like weapon.
70. **Tehsildar / Tahsildar** – a gazetted officer of the Government of India, in charge of adminitrative services of a tehsil / taluka – a cluster of villages - in a state.
71. **Tilak** – a mark worn on the forehead, used as a Hindu symbol.
72. **Trishul** – a bladed, sharp weapon, often used as a violent Hindu symbol.
73. **Yagnya / Yajnya** – Hindu ritual of sacrifice, with a fire in the centre of the offering ground, and items offered to the fire.
74. **Yatra** – procession / journey.
75. **Zilla parishad** – district council - local government body at the district level.
Women survivors of the Kandhamal violence
Six years after the Kandhamal violence of 2008, justice and peace remain illusive to survivors of the violence. This report documents and analyses the violence and its aftermath as seen and experienced by women. It examines the present status of women and girls affected by the violence, vis-a-vis their enjoyment of Constitutionally-guaranteed civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Drawn from conversations held with over 200 women and girls across 14 villages in 7 blocks of the Kandhamal district, and in resettlement sites in Kandhamal and beyond, this report accentuates the hitherto unheard voices of women from Kandhamal.