



# How to prevent Violence against Women and Children in Bangladesh: Recognise, be aware and know who to call

## The current situation

Violence against women and children in Bangladesh has spiked since COVID-19.

Even with restricted mobility because of lockdowns, 25,607 complaints of violence against women were reported to BRAC's Human Rights and Legal Aid Clinics between January–October 2020.

11,298 cases of violence against women, including child marriage, were reported by BRAC Community Empowerment Programme between January–October 2020. This is 24% higher than the same period in 2019.

Members of BRAC's polli shomaj (community-driven committees) prevented 530 child marriages between July–September this year. This is 219% higher than the same period in 2019.

We can all play a role in preventing violence against women and children. This document is a toolkit to help you to recognise violence, be aware of your rights and know who to call.

## Recognise it: What is violence?



### Physical violence

Intentionally hurting or trying to hurt someone through hitting, kicking, or using any other type of physical force to cause pain, harm, danger to life or impair the person's health or development.



### Psychological violence

Verbal abuse, insult, humiliation, intimidation, neglect or making any statement which can mentally hurt someone. This also includes harassment or interfering in a person's freedom, movement, involvement or disclosure of personal views or opinions, or motivating someone towards suicide.



### **Sexual violence**

Physical unwanted touching ranging from rape, marital rape to molestation. Verbal harassment, psychological harassment ranging from gestures, staring, stalking, cyber harassment, blackmail, building relations under false pretences or any other sexual act which abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates someone's dignity.



### **Cyber violence**

Intentionally or unintentionally attacking a person's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. This commonly happens through social media.



### **Child marriage**

A marriage where one or both people are underage (under 21 for males and under 18 for females). Young girls are at particular risk of physical, verbal and sexual violence and vulnerable to physical violence from their partners and partners' families.



### **Domestic violence**

Any type of physical, verbal, emotional or economic repression that occurs in a family or through a former partner. People do not need to live in the same house.



### **Economic violence**

Limiting access to funds or credit, controlling access to healthcare, employment, education or agricultural resources or excluding someone from financial decision making. This also includes discriminatory traditional laws about inheritance, property rights or use of communal land.



### **Human trafficking**

Human trafficking is selling, buying, recruitment, receipt, transportation, transfer, or harbouring of any person for sexual, labour or any other form of exploitation either in or outside of Bangladesh.

## **Be aware of your rights: What are the key laws about violence?**

Violence against women and child marriage are regarded as punishable offence in our criminal code and have specific punishments.

### **The Constitution of Bangladesh**

Mandates equal treatment to all of its citizens, putting special emphasis on equality of women and men.

### **The Penal Code 1860 and Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (amended in 2003)**

Contains penalties for rape, criminal intimidation, provoking suicide, words and gestures which, depending on nature of offence and severity, punishment may extend from one year to capital punishment and fines.

### **Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010**

Provides protection orders to ensure violence-free family relationships.

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### **The Digital Security Act 2018 read with Section 499 of Penal Code (Defamation)**

Penalises for cyber crimes and harassment with imprisonment of 3–5 years and fines.

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### **The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017**

Provides punishment for up to two years with fines.

### **High Court guideline to prevent sexual harassment**

Guidelines on sexual harassment and formation of committees at educational institutions and workplace.

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### **High Court directives (18 directives) in prosecution of rape victims**

Directs police officers to register cases without delay, investigation officers to complete investigations as early as possible and that everyone must keep the identity of victims confidential.

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### **High Court verdict on prohibiting ‘two finger test’ on rape victims**

Prohibits the controversial “two finger test”. Directs that health protocols need to be followed and victims must be examined in the presence of a female police officer, relatives and a female physician.

## **Who to call: Who can I reach out to if I want to report violence?**

**109**

Violence against Women and Children

**1098**

Children Helpline

**999**

National Emergency Helpline

**16430**

Free Government Legal Aid Services

**01320042055**

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Hotline

**01320000888**

Police Cyber Support for Women  
([cybersupport.women@police.gov.bd](mailto:cybersupport.women@police.gov.bd))

**You can also contact your local BRAC Human Rights and Legal Aid Clinic.**

See [here](#) for clinic locations. Clinics are open Sunday–Thursday 8:30 am–5:00 pm.

# If someone has been raped:

Firstly, concentrate fully on the person, and:

**Call for help. 109 or 999.**

**Collect evidence.** Evidence such as clothing and hair is critical in incriminating the rapist. Ensure the person does not shower until medical tests are done.

**Take the person to a district or medical college hospital within 24 hours.**

Not all sub-district medical complexes or private hospitals are equipped to get medical tests done. The person must be taken to a suitable medical facility to conduct necessary medical tests.

**Lodge a case.** Go to the nearest police station. If the police refuse to file the case,

call the helpline again and file a complaint to the court. Do not go for settlements bypassing the legal process. Any attempt of out-of-court settlement or negotiation with the rapist is prohibited by law. If the person faces intimidation or pressure from the rapist or local influential people, contact a local victim support centre.

**See a counsellor.** The impact of sexual violence takes a far greater toll than just physical injuries. The person could feel intimidated, ashamed, depressed or attempt to end their life. The person should be introduced to a counsellor who can provide professional support.