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# INTERSECTING INJUSTICES:

## Marginalisation and legal barriers in sexual violence cases across South Asia

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# Sexual violence in South Asia

Sexual violence remains a pervasive and deeply entrenched reality for countless women and girls across South Asian countries. Official data reveals a troubling rise in reported cases over the years, a trend that, while partly reflective of increased reporting, also underscores the systemic nature of this violence. This reality demands urgent and

sustained action. Legal reforms must be prioritised, and the implementation of existing laws and policies must be significantly strengthened to ensure that survivors of sexual violence are not just heard, but truly supported and protected in their pursuit of justice.



Credit: Gopal Dahal



# Marginalisation in South Asia

For most women and girls in South Asian countries, accessing justice<sup>1</sup> in the aftermath of sexual violence is not just arduous but also deeply traumatic. This burden becomes even heavier for those from marginalised communities, who face compounded layers of discrimination based on caste, sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, language, religion, marital status, age and other intersecting identities. These forms of exclusion, particularly affecting Dalit, Adivasi or Indigenous women, and women and girls with disabilities, are systemic and deeply rooted in social, cultural and institutional power structures.

**Dalits** are one of the most historically oppressed communities in South Asia, subjected to systemic discrimination and exclusion under the caste system. With an estimated 210 million living in South Asia,<sup>2</sup> experiences as Dalits vary across the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, but one common thread is that of persistent marginalisation and denial of some basic human rights, including access to education, healthcare and dignified livelihoods.<sup>3</sup> In some countries, legal safeguards exist<sup>4</sup> but they often fall short in practice. Reinforced by entrenched social and cultural norms, institutional apathy and a lack of accountability, the multiple and intersecting forms of oppression based on both caste and sex place Dalit women and girls at significantly higher risk of violence, exploitation and exclusion.<sup>5</sup> Apart from being forced into the most demeaning jobs, Dalit women are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation and are often victims of trafficking and

sexual slavery.

Many **Indigenous communities** can be found in most South Asian countries, with varying terminologies and legal recognition. They face severe and entrenched forms of discrimination, marginalisation and violence largely due to increased pressure on land and natural resources from extractive industries and large-scale development projects, which threaten their traditional ways of life, rooted in nature and community.<sup>6</sup> Such projects, often carried out without their free, prior and informed consent, have often led to human rights challenges,<sup>7</sup> including increased sexual and other forms of violence<sup>8</sup> from non-Indigenous men, even those who are from law enforcement.

**Women and girls with disabilities** face severe barriers, including in relation to socio-economic matters. Structural barriers to education, healthcare and justice, compounded by harmful societal attitudes and a lack of disaggregated data, create an environment where violence against women and girls with disabilities remains pervasive, normalised and too often ignored. Sexual violence against women and girls with disabilities is most often perpetrated by individuals who are closest to them, such as caregivers, relatives or neighbours.<sup>9</sup> Since many women and girls with disabilities depend on others for daily care and mobility, this relationship of dependency creates an unequal power dynamic that exposes them to coercion and abuse. The reliance on caregivers not only increases their vulnerability to sexual violence but also silences

1 Equality Now, 2024, Sexual violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors – 2024 update, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexual-violence-in-south-asia-legal-and-other-barriers-to-justice-for-survivors/>

2 Asian Parliamentarians Forum on Dalit Concerns, 2014, <https://www.ncdhr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/APFDC-Information.pdf>

3 International Dalit Solidarity Network, (undated), Dalit Women, <https://idsn.org/key-issues/dalit-women/>

4 In India, sexual assault against a Dalit and Indigenous woman or girl committed with the knowledge of her caste or tribal identity are considered as caste-based atrocities under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act criminalises. In Nepal, Article 24 of the Constitution of Nepal explicitly prohibits caste-based discrimination. Moreover, the Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011 prohibits caste-based discrimination, but does not contain provisions like those in India. Bangladesh's draft Anti-Discrimination Bill is still in a draft stage. Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka have laws for people with disabilities. Some of these laws may not be in alignment with the Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities. Even where the legislation may be in alignment like in Nepal, the implementation within justice institutions may be limited.

5 Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, 2021, Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexualviolencesouthasia/>

6 National Council of Women Leaders, 2024, Beyond rape: Examining the systemic oppression leading to sexual violence against Adivasi Women, <https://www.ncwl.org.in/ebook/beyond-rape/>

7 Human Rights Council, 2016, Human Rights Council discusses causes and consequences of violence against Indigenous Women and Girls: Violence against indigenous women and girls <https://www.ohchr.org/en/2016/09/human-rights-council-discusses-causes-and-consequences-violence-against-Indigenous-women>

8 UNICEF, 2013, Breaking the silence on violence against Indigenous girls, adolescents and young women, <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/breaking-silence-violence-against-Indigenous-girls-adolescents-and-young-women>

9 Women Enabled International and UN Women Access to Justice for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J\\_WWD\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J_WWD_BRIEF.pdf)



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them from reporting, as perpetrators frequently exploit this dependence to maintain control and impunity. Women and girls with disabilities are at greater risk of being confined in private homes,<sup>10</sup> sometimes chained or tied to heavy objects such as beds, which further limits their ability to seek help. There is also no independent oversight with respect to unregulated institutions and abuse, such that women and girls with disabilities rarely have the means to speak out about any violence they face.<sup>11</sup> The difficult hill terrains and long distances to cover to reach law enforcement and support services from rural areas create additional geographic isolation.

**Economic vulnerability and social exclusion** further amplify these risks, not only increasing the likelihood of sexual violence, particularly when perpetrators belong to more dominant or powerful groups, but also drastically reducing the chances of accessing justice. For example, single women (widows, separated and unmarried mothers) in Nepal can be denied the ability to pass citizenship rights to their children, increasing their general vulnerability and access to certain services, which can also make access to justice on behalf of such children difficult. In Nepal, women from the Madhesi<sup>12</sup> communities face both geographical and ethnic marginalisation, while Muslim women face religious discrimination. Women in informal sectors,

such as fisherwomen, indicated in consultations in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, domestic workers, agricultural labourers and those working in the adult entertainment sector often lack workplace protections and become vulnerable to sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

Access to justice for all, including marginalised communities, is a core principle in international human rights law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Article 2 & General Recommendation (GR) No. 33 highlights state responsibilities for ensuring access to justice for women, including through gender-sensitive procedures, legal aid and protection from secondary victimisation. GR No. 33 also highlights the importance of removing barriers such as cost, language, physical access and lack of legal literacy that disproportionately affect marginalised women. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Article 13, emphasises the right to effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through procedural and age-appropriate accommodations. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Articles 5 and 40, recognises the right of Indigenous peoples to access justice systems and to fair and equitable resolution of disputes, including

<sup>10</sup> Women Enabled International and UN Women Access to Justice for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J\\_WWD\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J_WWD_BRIEF.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Perspectives shared during the webinar, “Overcoming barriers: Experiences with supporting women and girls with disabilities in rape cases in South Asia,” 28 August 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Madhesh region along the southern part of Nepal bordering India handed over to Nepal through British-Nepal Treaty in 1816. Communities here face racial discrimination, slavery, along with denial of rights.

respect for their customs and traditions. Article 13 emphasises the right of Indigenous peoples to use their own languages in legal proceedings.

Based on existing research and ongoing discussions in the region with members of the communities described above, the following are some specific challenges that women and girls from these communities face:

- **Inaccessibility of institutions:** Dalits, Indigenous women and women with disabilities often live in remote or underserved areas, such as the Adivasi/Indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill Tract (Bangladesh), tea gardens (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) and Dalits in remote and inaccessible areas. The geographic inaccessibility of key justice sector institutions, such as police stations, medical facilities and courts, constitutes a significant structural barrier.<sup>13</sup> It often impedes timely reporting, medical examinations and legal redress.
- **Costs:** The direct and indirect costs of reporting a case can impose substantial financial burdens, including associated travel, accommodation, and lawyer/court fees, and could also result in a loss of income for days spent in court, for example. Without legal aid or some form of early compensation, such costs often deter those, particularly from marginalised communities, from continuing with a case.
- **Ineffective and inadequate support:** There is no holistic, wrap-around support for victims/survivors of sexual violence, whether they choose to pursue a case or not. For example, although legal aid mechanisms<sup>14</sup> may be available, in practice, victims and survivors from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are frequently unaware of any
- **Legal aid provision or how to access it.** In addition, specialised services, such as sign-language interpretation, are not often offered, referrals to counselling are not usually made, and victims/survivors of sexual violence are infrequently updated or, in the worst cases, misinformed on the status of proceedings.<sup>15</sup> For women and girls with disabilities, this lack of information is also due to formats that might not be accessible to them.<sup>16</sup>
- **Lack of female officers:** The inadequate number of female personnel generally in these institutions, who are sensitive towards the issues of marginalised women, exacerbates the problem, deepening mistrust in the system and contributing to secondary trauma.<sup>17</sup>
- **Accessibility barriers:** Police stations, courthouses and legal aid offices remain largely inaccessible to women with certain forms of physical disabilities. Many lack ramps, lifts, or adapted facilities, and when such features do exist, they are often poorly maintained or remain inaccessible when needed. For women with disabilities living in rural areas, these obstacles are magnified by long travel distances and the high cost of transportation. Little to no support exists for women and girls with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities to help them understand and navigate the justice system.
- **Perceived credibility:** While there is a general tendency to disbelieve women's claims of rape, complaints from Dalit, Indigenous women and women with disabilities are at times dismissed or face undue delay in their registration.<sup>18</sup> Relevant aspects of the crime or sections of the applicable law(s) are not included in complaints. For example, in India, sections of The Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act are excluded

13 Findings from consultations held on sexual violence and marginalised communities in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, June - August 2025

14 Exploring legal aid mechanisms for survivors of sexual violence: Lessons from South Asia - Equality Now. (2025, October 31). Equality Now. <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/exploring-legal-aid-mechanisms-for-survivors-of-sexual-violence-lessons-from-south-asia/>

15 SAMAJ, 2025, Exploring legal aid mechanisms for survivors of sexual violence: Lessons from South Asia; <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/exploring-legal-aid-mechanisms-for-survivors-of-sexual-violence-lessons-from-south-asia/>

16 Women Enabled International and UN Women Access to Justice for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J\\_WWD\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J_WWD_BRIEF.pdf)

17 World Economic Forum, 2024, The gender gap in South Asia's judiciary is growing - here's why we need to close it; <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/gender-gap-south-asia-judiciary-justice>

18 Human Rights Council, 2016, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Rights, Thirty-first session, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/31/56>; Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, 2021, Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexualviolencesouthasia/>



from the complaints.<sup>19</sup> Misreporting by the police in the First Information Reports becomes an issue which is often detrimental to the victim/survivor in pursuing the case.<sup>20</sup> Women and girls with disabilities are often viewed as asexual or hypersexual and as a result less credible victims and witnesses in cases of sexual violence, which translates into greater impunity for the perpetrators.<sup>21</sup>

- **Attitudinal biases:** The insensitive, and often prejudicial, conduct of police personnel and medical officers is often an extension of existing socio-cultural and structural power asymmetries, particularly where law enforcement officers belong to socially dominant groups and the complainants originate from marginalised communities.<sup>22</sup> Dalit women in Bangladesh, Nepal and India report that police at times refuse to register complaints or conduct investigations,

especially when the suspects are not Dalit or have business or political connections. Dalit survivors frequently report being dismissed, mocked or re-victimised at police stations. Even when cases are filed, law enforcement officers have been reported to fail to collect evidence or deliberately delay investigations, allowing perpetrators to evade accountability.<sup>23</sup> Marginalised survivors are routinely subjected to secondary victimisation through insensitive interrogative procedures, repeated appearances in court, multiple recountings of the incident, disclosure of sensitive information, including the identity of the victim or details of the incident, whether directly or indirectly, which may lead to the withdrawal of complaints.<sup>24</sup> In some instances, survivors are coerced into extra-legal settlements, including judicially or socially sanctioned outcomes such as the so-called “marry the rapist” arrangements.<sup>25</sup>



Credit: © Shurid Bhai/ShuridGraphy

19 National Council of Women Leaders, 2022, Caste based sexual violence and state impunity, <https://www.ncwl.org.in/ebook/caste-based-sexual-violence-and-state-impunity/>

20 Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, 2021, Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexualviolencesouthasia/>

21 Women Enabled International and UN Women Access to Justice for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J\\_WWD\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J_WWD_BRIEF.pdf)

22 Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, 2021, Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexualviolencesouthasia/>

23 The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) “Bangladesh: Access to Justice”.

24 National Council of Women Leaders, 2022, Caste based sexual violence and state impunity, <https://www.ncwl.org.in/ebook/caste-based-sexual-violence-and-state-impunity/>

25 South China Morning Post, 2025, Rape accused in India granted bail to marry victim, sparks fury at ‘patriarchal’ courts, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/lifestyle-culture/article/3312116/rapist-india-granted-bail-marry-victim-sparks-fury-patriarchal-courts>

- **Lack of specialist training:** The lack of systematic and sustained training for law enforcement personnel on applicable national legal provisions and international human rights standards relevant to sexual violence cases increases the scope for personal biases to become the driving force. This often results in irrelevant questions about the victim's clothing, behaviour and alcohol consumption, among other issues and a tendency to disbelieve, and even blame, the victim/survivor, rather than to carefully examine the actions of the alleged perpetrator in accordance with the elements of the crime. The oversight function of law enforcement agencies in South Asian countries is generally not well-defined.
- **Language barriers:** Women and girls from the Indigenous and Dalit communities may not speak the language of the dominant sections of society<sup>26</sup> and law enforcement might not speak minority languages. For example, in Sri Lanka, while Tamil is a language that law enforcement personnel should be conversant with, the reality is very different. With respect to disabilities, information provided on the internet often does not meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, with no mandatory requirements for public or private institutions to make them accessible.<sup>27</sup> In Nepal, court proceedings are conducted exclusively in Nepali, despite the constitutional right to use one's mother tongue, which prejudices Indigenous women whose first language is not Nepali. Indigenous survivors and their advocates may find it hard to communicate in Bengali, particularly when describing sexual violence, a topic

already difficult to discuss in their mother tongues. Some women may rely on court-appointed interpreters, but the confidentiality clauses within existing laws may not explicitly extend to interpreters, therefore creating a possibility of compromising confidentiality and discouraging reporting.<sup>28</sup> This language gap continues into the courtroom, where legal processes are rarely translated into Indigenous languages. Consequently, survivors face misunderstandings, procedural errors and even humiliation,<sup>29</sup> further entrenching their marginalisation within the justice system. Women with speech and/or hearing impairments have been documented to face exclusion in legal proceedings.<sup>30</sup> Firstly, survivors who communicate in sign language and need an interpreter often cannot access one due to limited availability among law enforcement and during criminal proceedings.<sup>31</sup> Many, in any case, do not know formal sign language and can communicate only through caregivers. Courts and police rarely allow these trusted support persons to assist them. The Women with Disabilities Development Foundation in Bangladesh documented cases where rape survivors with hearing or speech disabilities were denied the right to file a criminal complaint because police claimed they could not understand the victim.

- **Absence of disaggregated data with reference to marginalisation:** Except in India,<sup>32</sup> none of the other South Asian countries maintains caste, ethnicity and disability disaggregated data related to crime data, which could invisibilise the barriers to

26 Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, 2021, Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexualviolencesouthasia/>; Findings from the consultation on "Sexual Violence Against Women across Marginalized Communities in Bangladesh: Social and Legal Challenges," 14 August 2025

27 UNRPD, 2024, Situational analysis of the rights of persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka, <https://unprpd.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/SriLankaSitAn.pdf>

28 Findings from the consultation on "Sexual Violence Against Women across Marginalized Communities in Bangladesh: Social and Legal Challenges," 14 August 2025

29 Findings from the consultation on "Sexual Violence Against Women across Marginalized Communities in Bangladesh: Social and Legal Challenges," 14 August 2025

30 Women Enabled International and UN Women Access to Justice for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J\\_WWD\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/A2J_WWD_BRIEF.pdf)

31 Perspectives shared from the webinar "Overcoming barriers: Experiences with supporting women and girls with disabilities in rape cases in South Asia," 28 August 2025.

32 India disaggregated data on crimes against women on the basis of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and not on disability and other intersectionalities.



justice and therefore not provide evidence to law enforcement policymakers that specific changes are needed.

- **Procedural delays:** Delays in conducting medical examinations,<sup>33</sup> the lack of sufficient and adequately equipped forensic laboratories, prolonged court proceedings due to a significant backlog of cases, including rape cases,<sup>34</sup> despite statutorily prescribed timelines,<sup>35</sup> the lack of witness protection mechanisms are just some examples that lead to lower conviction rates as compared to other communities.<sup>36</sup>
- **Social stigma against and community power over rape survivors:** Stereotypes of hypersexuality or asexuality with respect to women and girls with disability,<sup>37</sup> concerns over so-called family honour and future marital prospects, and community-imposed imperatives to preserve social status often undermine survivors' dignity and access to justice. "Compromises" for the sake of the family or community are common where the victim/survivor is forced to change their statements<sup>38</sup> or withdraw from the process. Such "compromises" are often pushed by extra-judicial or traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, such as *khap panchayat* in India or *shalish* in Bangladesh,<sup>39</sup> to negotiate cases as per their own understanding and are sometimes reached without consulting the victim/survivor<sup>40</sup>. This adds to the impunity accorded to dominant perpetrators, continues discrimination against marginalised groups and is at best rarely interrogated by law enforcement.

- **Lack of awareness campaigns and legal literacy:** With low educational levels and little exposure to, or power to engage with, governmental mechanisms, victims/survivors from marginalised communities are often unaware of the available legal remedies with regard to sexual violence.
- **Lack of prioritisation by governments:** The lack of large-scale awareness-raising campaigns regarding legal equality and provisions for legal remedies in respect of sexual violence means marginalised communities are unlikely to be reached in broad numbers, which contributes to some extent to the low information available to them. Chronic underfunding of holistic support services and critical justice system components, such as legal aid and properly trained law enforcement personnel, adds to the overall problem.

33 Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, 2021, Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexualviolencesouthasia/>; National Council of Women Leaders, 2024, Beyond rape: Examining the systemic oppression leading to sexual violence against Adivasi Women, <https://www.ncwl.org.in/ebook/beyond-rape/>

34 National Council of Women Leaders, 2022, Caste based sexual violence and state impunity, <https://www.ncwl.org.in/ebook/caste-based-sexual-violence-and-state-impunity/>

35 In Bangladesh, Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (WCRPA), amended in May 2025, established Special Tribunals for child rape cases, reduced investigation periods to 15 days and trial duration to 90 days. "CEDAW: Bangladesh State Party Report" 24 September 2025 at para. 9.

36 International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2022, Civil society report for the 4th cycle of India's Universal Periodic Review, <https://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/UPR-India-2022.pdf>

37 Human Rights Watch, 2018, Invisible victims of sexual violence: Access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in India [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/india0418\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/india0418_web.pdf)

38 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, Opening the Door to Equality: Access to Justice for Dalits in Nepal, December 2011, [https://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/English/reports/HCR/2011\\_12\\_07\\_Opening\\_the\\_Door\\_to\\_Equality\\_E.pdf](https://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/English/reports/HCR/2011_12_07_Opening_the_Door_to_Equality_E.pdf)

39 Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, 2021, Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and other barriers to justice for survivors, <https://equalitynow.org/resource/reports/sexualviolencesouthasia/>

40 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, Opening the door to equality: Access to Justice for Dalits in Nepal, December 2011, [https://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/English/reports/HCR/2011\\_12\\_07\\_Opening\\_the\\_Door\\_to\\_Equality\\_E.pdf](https://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/English/reports/HCR/2011_12_07_Opening_the_Door_to_Equality_E.pdf)



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## Recommendations to South Asian governments

- **Recognise the vulnerability of women and girls from marginalised communities** and enact a special law where one does not already exist to counter discrimination of Dalits, marginalised and Indigenous communities. The existing laws that specifically address issues of marginalised communities can be strengthened to include penalties for perpetuating discrimination against any community.
- **Align existing laws on people with disabilities with international standards**, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ensure that specific and reasonable accommodations, along with adequate budgets, are integrated into the justice system.
- **Introduce new programmes to prevent sexual violence against women and girls from marginalised communities** and enable greater access to justice for any breaches, particularly in remote areas, for example, by the introduction of state-run mobile courts or mobile legal aid camps backed by required budgetary allocation.
- **Review existing guidelines, protocols, and standard operating procedures for investigating rape cases**, as well as evidence gathering guidelines, and align them with international standards.
- **Make regular and repeated mandatory trainings for law enforcement personnel on rape law and international standards**, reasonable accommodations where needed, with gender equality, disability-inclusive and victim-centred approaches. Regular monitoring of the effectiveness of these trainings in terms of compliance, with repercussions for any discriminatory behaviour, must also be integrated.

- **Include reasonable and specific accommodations for women and girls with disabilities**, bringing cases of sexual violence together with other gender sensitive measures, including basic infrastructure, for example, the presence of designated lifts and toilets for the specific use of victims/survivors in courts.
- **Monitor cases pendency** and find ways to clear any backlog of cases that also deliver justice, for example, dedicate sufficient time in the week for dealing with sexual and gender-based violence cases.
- **Conduct research to identify the specific bottlenecks causing delays in case resolution** and implement properly funded, comprehensively addressed systemic changes to address these delays.
- **Disaggregate all data on crimes against women and girls on the basis of sex, gender, caste, indigeneity, ethnicity and disability**, keeping in mind ethical standards. Correlate the data to map out areas prone to violence and develop a comprehensive system for prevention and assistance to victims/survivors, making it promptly and freely available to all stakeholders, including civil society actors.
- **Undertake national awareness raising programmes on stereotypes related to rape victims/survivors**, marginalised communities, laws and support services in local languages to be broadcast through mass media.
- **Develop more effective information-sharing and coordination mechanisms among justice actors**, utilising an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach.



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## ABOUT SAMAJ

The South Asian Movement for Accessing Justice (SAMAJ) is a regional coalition of 17 individuals and organisations from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives, united in their mission to end sexual violence and strengthen access to justice for survivors in the region. Formed in 2024, SAMAJ aims to respond to the legal and systemic barriers to justice in South Asia, by fostering collective, cross-border action to drive meaningful legal and policy change.

SAMAJ works to address deep-rooted legal inequalities by advocating for comprehensive legal reform, ensuring survivor-centred responses, and promoting the inclusion of marginalised communities in South Asia. Through collaborative research, shared advocacy, and strategic partnerships, SAMAJ is creating a unified platform for knowledge exchange, policy influence, and survivor-led change across the region.

The coalition's work includes a focus on women and girls from disadvantaged communities such as Dalits, Adivasi/tribal or Indigenous, religious minority or minority language communities and those with physical and intellectual disabilities, who face more discrimination in accessing justice as a result of these intersections.