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The New ‘MASVAW Men’: Strategies, Dynamics and Deepening Engagements. A Case Study of a Networked Approach to Challenging Patriarchy Across Institutions in Uttar Pradesh

Jerker Edström, Thea Shahrokh and Satish Kumar Singh

August 2015

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THE NEW 'MASVAW MEN': STRATEGIES, DYNAMICS AND DEEPENING ENGAGEMENTS. A CASE STUDY OF A NETWORKED APPROACH TO CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY ACROSS INSTITUTIONS IN UTTAR PRADESH

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Partner information

Centre for Health and Social Justice, India

The Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) is a civil society institution working on issues related to health and social justice. CHSJ seeks to strengthen accountability of public health systems and health governance through research, resource support and advocacy. It is a registered charitable trust and has its headquarters in New Delhi. CHSJ works as a resource organisation on reproductive and sexual health and rights as well as gender and masculinities for enhancing insights and skills among policymakers, practitioners and civil society organisations to take leadership in a process of change that will ensure greater social justice.

Institute of Development Studies

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is well known for its progressive gender research, knowledge sharing and teaching, and for the central role it has played in the conceptual shift from a 'women in development' to a 'gender and development' focus, as well as for critically bringing sexuality and masculinities into gender theory, research and practice. Originating in feminist thought and practice and seeing the personal as political, the work of IDS and of the Gender and Sexuality Cluster is supported by robust yet innovative participatory, reflexive methodologies and approaches. IDS engages progressive stakeholders and partners across movements, disciplines and domains in the generation of high-quality research that challenges gender and sexuality 'myths' and stereotypes, and contributes to transformative policy, practice and activism.

Abbreviations

CHSJ	Centre for Health and Social Justice
DFID	Department for International Development
FGD	focus group discussion
GBV	gender-based violence
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
MASVAW	Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
UK	United Kingdom

Executive summary

Uttar Pradesh is ranked second among Indian states in 'crimes against women', which includes rape, abduction, dowry-related deaths, mental and physical torture and sexual harassment (Government of Uttar Pradesh 2006: 130). The majority of such crimes against women are committed by family members, but this gendered violence and inequality also permeates the broader economy, systems and structures that govern everyday life. During the past 10–15 years, the issue of gender equality has been raised by civil society and government, and there have been some positive changes too. Yet, there is increasing fear among some men about decreasing opportunities as a result of women's empowerment, reflected in the evolution of 'men's rights' organisations, with anti-feminist agendas (Chowdhury 2014). Bucking this trend, since 2002, a growing group of men have built an engagement for addressing gender-based violence (GBV), in Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women, or MASVAW. This case study explores the role of men and boys in addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) through collective action; a collaboration between the Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) in New Delhi, the network MASVAW in Uttar Pradesh, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the United Kingdom (UK). This partnership grew in an attempt to problematise and politicise the way the terms of the debate were being set in the broader field of engaging men in addressing GBV in the development field.

This case study looks specifically at the MASVAW campaign's experience in Uttar Pradesh in order to explore *the dynamics of a networked and institutionally nested approach to collective action*; one which is not based within one organisation, but which is nevertheless nested *within and across* institutions. In jointly planning the study, three central questions were agreed as the focus of this research, namely: (i) in what ways is MASVAW's networked and institutionally nested approach to addressing gendered violence with men and boys *appropriate and effective in the Indian context?*; (ii) given that MASVAW is a 'campaigning network', covering multiple levels, institutional settings and strategies, how can we best understand the *dynamics of their networked approach?*; and (iii) what contributes to MASVAW's *successes*, in which ways, and what *missed opportunities* can be identified to strengthen the approach?

Conceptual approach

The approach to this study of MASVAW is an interactive, participatory peer-enquiry. Drawing on key insights from feminist theory, research on masculinities and on power, MASVAW's collective action is explored against a critical understanding of 'patriarchy' as a 'dynamic system' in which we are all involved. Focused on the importance of developing critical consciousness through collective action, the approach draws on insights into how policy influence can be wielded through contestation, linking: the role of actors and networks, set in constellations of institutional interests, to the (re/)framing of evidence and policy narratives. Focusing down on three institutional settings of MASVAW's campaign (work in universities, in the local Panchayat governance bodies, and with youth in local communities), the study explores four dimensions of the Uttar Pradesh context. It does so by applying a set of four gendered lenses on: (i) 'male centeredness' (in a representational or sociocultural dimension), (ii) 'male privilege' (in a material and institutional dimension), (iii) 'male supremacy' (in an ideological and political dimension), and (iv) 'male order' (in an epistemological or 'evidential' dimension). The first three are readily linked to the feminist calls for *recognition*, *redistribution* and *representation*, whilst the fourth calls for a pro-/feminist '*reframing*' of evidence, knowledge and study method.

Study method

Based on a mapping of issues in addressing SGBV with activists of MASVAW (Shahrokh *et al.* 2015), the research was undertaken between August and December 2014 in Uttar Pradesh. The team developed a methodology for collective, qualitative and emergent inquiry, using a range of mixed methods: one in-depth group analysis workshop by 12 MASVAW activists, exploring and fine-tuning the identified research questions; ten semi-structured key informant interviews; four guided focus group discussions; and participant observation by researchers. In total, 50 local participants took part: 21 women and 29 men. The methodology offers unique advantages, such as relatively direct reflection and analysis and the ability to capture how processes and outcomes are perceived by different stakeholders from different vantage points, reframing questions and reflecting on the learning process itself. Triangulation of perspectives enables the building up of a nuanced and multidimensional account of a shared – if contested – reality. Findings are illustrative rather than definitive, and sometimes provocative rather than conclusive, thus resisting a male ordered and positivistic approach.

Analysis

In exploring the question of how MASVAW's networked and institutionally nested approach to addressing gendered violence with men and boys may be appropriate and effective in the Indian context, the analysis centred on how MASVAW is 'building and nurturing activism across different settings'. There are multiple entry points for MASVAW engaging men – and pathways for nurturing action – on gender inequality, but there are also some common elements that connect personal experience, critical reflection, political action and structural change.

Five common steps to mobilising men: First, 'politicising the personal': the importance of disclosing personal experiences to peers and 'role modelling' how to engage differently as men has been key for mobilising men. Second, 'beyond the personal': one key feature is adopting a dynamic, yet structural analysis of patriarchy, where gender-based oppression becomes seen as intersecting and working through caste and social class in activists' own lives. Third, 'self-identification through critical consciousness': acknowledging that this change is a personal and emotional process means that mechanisms to support the internal sense of self and confidence are important in the process of reconstructing both personal and collective identities as activists for gender equality. MASVAW is made up of informal bonds among like-minded peers, which has contributed to their becoming more confident in themselves and in their roles. Fourth, 'deliberate, directed collective action': this strength enables collective action in response to specific cases, in support of those exposed to gendered injustice. Fifth, 'sustaining momentum by observing and describing change': activists also noted that where they see change in the lives of people around them and feeling able to support others, their motivation is strengthened.

Building new constituencies for change: An important 'inroad' for mobilising members and expanding the movement has been a focus on 'youth'; particularly visible in the community outreach work, both in and out of school. The framing of young men as 'agents of change' involves two key aspects, namely: (a) their more open minds as to questioning traditional gender roles and inequalities, and (b) a type of demographic momentum effect, as more enlightened young cohorts gradually shift prevailing norms, by numbers and over time. Another dimension to this latter effect appears to be tapping into a gradually changing make-up of families, with smaller and more nuclear families becoming more possible in Uttar Pradesh, as compared to the traditional set-up where young families typically reside with the husband's parents, or extended natal family. Here, again, role modelling is seen as important, as they point to real improvements in their lives to validate their dissidence, in the face of resistance.

Institutional transformations from within: Another key feature of MASVAW's approach is the way that specific institutions are targeted, and used, not merely as 'sites' where to carry out the work, but also as institutions to leverage for their own implications on gender justice. On the one hand, activists in the university are using their role in teaching to make visible the structural dimensions of patriarchy in order to raise awareness and recruit new members; on the other hand, they have also challenged their institution to establish anti-harassment committees. Similarly, whilst activists in the Panchayats are using the provisions of women's representation in these local bodies to support women representatives (e.g. through lobbying other male representatives) and to support women to utilise the space of the forum to become 'heard' (within this traditionally male-centred public space), both Panchayat members and local school teachers have challenged and lobbied their institutions to provide for gender-sensitive and safe, separate lavatory facilities for women and girls (thus reducing *de facto* institutional forms of gender discrimination). Importantly, it was also found that institutions have been used strategically against each other to wield pressure for redress on cases of GBV.

Gender-relational alliances of change: MASVAW's work in solidarity with women – for women's rights – provides a gender-relational dynamic crucial to their political approach, from interpersonal to institutional alliances. This is critical for MASVAW in order to learn across gendered perspectives; seeing manifestations of male supremacy as informed by experiences of women's subordination, or male privilege from a perspective of facing discrimination. Thus, the analysis of gender injustice was seen as deepened when working together. A number of women met also highlighted the importance of women and men coming together 'as a common group', although recognising that a space for men only within the campaign also remains essential to its purpose. Formal relationships have been started with a number of women's organisations working to support women survivors of violence and these partnerships were seen as transformative also in that they aim to recognise and promote women's positions of leadership, which itself shifts the male activists' perceptions of their own types of leadership roles in agitating for gender justice.

Structures of constraint to progressive change: In all the settings studied, *resistance and backlash* to MASVAW men agitating for changing gender norms came from both families and their broader home communities. It was also clear that the formal institutions, within which the activists live and work, provided sources of *institutional resistance*, sometimes co-opting progressive agendas to shore up their basic day-to-day functioning. We saw several examples of the former, where activists faced ridicule from community members or estrangement from families, although – crucially – this can be mitigated by activists' peer solidarity. The university itself provides an example of institutional resistance, where MASVAW has addressed institutional management around policies and procedures with the establishment of 'progressive' anti-sexual harassment committees, whilst it appears that the function of these anti-harassment committees is broadly seen as having been *co-opted* to primarily safeguard the reputation of the institution itself, with both the disincentives for reporting and pursuing cases and the common outcome of 'compromise'. As to the internal workings of the Panchayats, it was clear from women representatives met that even a 50 per cent proportional representation was seen as insufficient for them to be heard in the male-centred culture of the institution.

MASVAW faces a number of other *challenges and tensions* as well, including in the area of allying with women's organisations: it was suggested that many organisations are engaging women through a 'welfare' approach, as a patriarchal co-option of a 'progressive' cause; there is suspicion from some women that groups like MASVAW are not legitimate, or that men's groups may divert the resources away from women's organisations; and, some representatives of women's organisations highlighted that women cannot be full members of the campaign, asking what this might mean for the future of MASVAW's work with women.

Recommendations for MASVAW

- A key question is: 'To what extent does "men" need to remain the defining – or exclusive – category?' A re-visioning and realigning of MASVAW's make-up and partnerships could be held in dialogue with women to ensure the process reflects the politics.
- MASVAW should build on the approach of combining a dynamic structural analysis with personalising the political with examples from activists' own lives, e.g. through developing accessible materials in Hindi for explaining complex ideas with real-life cases.
- Further development of practical methods for intersectional analyses is flagged as a need, to support new work with *dalit* groups, with children and for older people.
- MASVAW should build on its advances in addressing various institutions, by developing ways of documenting co-option of progressive policies, whilst protecting the safety of its members, by drawing on peers across institutions (e.g. in media), or student projects.
- Balancing further growth with support for new members will mean working out how to nurture mentoring connections, as the campaign branches into new settings.
- Action research could enable further in-depth exploration of what is working. For example, the issue of transitions within the network (e.g. students into leaders).

Implications for broader practice and policy

- With little current constructive engagement of men in policies and laws against gender discrimination, policies should frame the role of men as equal and responsible partners.
- There is a need to create an enabling environment in the cultures and systems of institutions, for progressive policies to be effective, especially on GBV.
- Policy needs to create the opportunity to support progressive strategies for sustained awareness amongst men to challenge inequitable systems and cultures driving SGBV.
- But, men and boys must not be treated as homogenous groups – intersecting markers of identity and experience must be recognised in engaging men/boys as agents of change.
- Resist facile frameworks where men's engagement gets instrumentalised and co-opted through notions like 'men-streaming' gender, or reinforcing men's roles as 'protectors'.
- Challenge the instrumental and binary constructions of gender and the common misconception that 'funding gender equality' simply means 'funding women's groups'.
- Protect funding for progressive, effective work on women's empowerment; but crucially,
- Escalate investments in gender equality work overall, as it is fundamental to social – and societal – development, and to achieve goals of social justice for both women and men.

1 Introduction

Every man should be a MASVAW man!

This was the closing thought by a women's rights activist in response to a final interview question about recommendations on future directions for the work of the MASVAW (Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women) campaign in Uttar Pradesh. Her statement is reflective of how something important has been catalysed through a growing group of men who have, since 2002, built an engagement for responding to gender-based violence (GBV) across parts of Uttar Pradesh and beyond.

What makes this particular group of men in India become perceived by some representatives of governmental and government-sponsored women's empowerment programmes, feminist academics and women's rights organisations as embodying a particular kind of positive or progressive male identity that demands equality? Why do some other women's development groups reportedly view them with suspicion? Is this a reflection of who they are, or more about how they work and/or why they do what they do? What can we learn from them?

This case study sets out to document a collaborative process of analysis and exploration of the role of men and boys in addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) through collective action. This research is undertaken between the Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ), New Delhi; the network MASVAW, Uttar Pradesh; and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK. Since the Beijing platform for action 20 years ago, there have been increasing calls for engaging men and boys in stopping GBV and inequality. Simultaneously, the fields of women's empowerment, men's engagement and queer politics have meandered through a plethora of contestations and debates around the 'who?' the 'why?' and the 'what?' of men and masculinities in gender equality. It is within this evolving discourse that this current research partnership grew in an attempt to problematise and politicise the way the terms of the debate were being set; the historical context of which is outlined in Annex 1.

This case study also contributes to a wider initiative generating knowledge and action on the issue of activism against gendered violence in Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone and South Africa. The case studies in this series take contextually relevant approaches to learning about the role of men in collective action against SGBV, and have diverse entry points for analysis. This case study will look specifically at the MASVAW campaign's experience in India in order to explore the dynamics of a networked approach to collective action which is not based within an organisation, but is nevertheless nested within and across institutions.

This focus comes from the recognition of four key points, namely:

1. the various limitations of programmatic or one-off training projects/approaches to change men's attitudes and behaviours
2. the need for moving the focus of work with men on gender equality 'beyond the personal' whilst making the 'personal political'
3. the need for rooting processes of change in contextual understanding and context-specific 'institutional settings'
4. the understanding that social processes are dynamic, change over time and across life cycles (Das and Singh 2014; Edström, Das and Dolan 2014).

A collaborative analysis and mapping of the issue of SGBV, patriarchal inequalities, and the role and contribution of MASVAW in challenging gender inequality was carried out between MASVAW, CHSJ and IDS in Varanasi in 2014 (Shahrokh *et al.* 2015). Three central questions were derived in that mapping and which provide the focus of this study:

1. In what ways is MASVAW's networked and institutionally nested approach to addressing gendered violence with men and boys *appropriate and effective in the Indian context*?
2. Given that MASVAW is a 'campaigning network', covering multiple levels, institutional settings and strategies, how can we best understand the *dynamics of their networked approach*?
3. What contributes to MASVAW's *successes*, in which ways, and what *missed opportunities* can be identified to strengthen the approach?

The remainder of this report begins with Section 2 outlining the background to and context of gendered violence in the state of Uttar Pradesh, in India, and the evolution of MASVAW's approach as a collective response. Section 3 maps out the case study approach, subdivided into two sections: one on the conceptual and analytical framework, and the other on the methodology (including ethical considerations and caveats).

Section 4 presents the main study findings on MASVAW's networked and institutionally rooted approach to addressing gendered violence. The findings relate to the first two central research questions (above) and are divided into two sections: the first section focuses on entry points (for mobilising and engaging men), resistance and backlash across three settings, in order to explore how MASVAW's approach may be appropriate and effective in the Indian context; the second section explores questions of dynamics, alliances and ways of sustaining the work to help us better understand the dynamics of their networked approach.

Section 5 addresses the third research question on perceived enablers, obstacles and potential solutions, by providing an analytic synthesis of the findings in Section 4, set against the conceptual framework. Section 6 then concludes and closes this report, drawing some lessons and proffering recommendations for future practice and research.

2 Background: gendered violence and MASVAW

2.1 Gendered violence in Uttar Pradesh

Women in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh in India face extreme marginalisation and discrimination. Caught in a feudal-patriarchal system, women and girls are subject to ritual segregation known as '*purdah*', and their bodies are often the battlegrounds for many wars – between communities and clans, over inadequate dowry settlements, or even in the matter of population control. Uttar Pradesh is ranked second among Indian states (after Andhra Pradesh) in 'crimes against women'; this definition includes rape, abduction, dowry-related deaths, mental and physical torture and sexual harassment (Government of Uttar Pradesh 2006: 130). With 7,910 cases in 2012, Uttar Pradesh accounted for 22.2 per cent of the total incidents of reported kidnappings and abductions of women at the national level, and 27.3 per cent of dowry deaths nationwide (NCRB 2013). The majority of such crimes against women are committed by family members. Survey research in Uttar Pradesh shows that 42 per cent of ever married women have experienced violence from their partners (IIPS and Macro International 2007); figures from International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) research show 72.8 per cent of men reporting having perpetrated intimate partner violence, and 62.5 per cent of women having ever experienced any form of violence by a partner (Nanda *et al.* 2014).

This gendered violence and inequality penetrates the economy, systems and structures that govern everyday life. For example, only 2.6 per cent of women in Uttar Pradesh own property in their own name (Agarwal 2006). Furthermore, when women are engaged in political institutions they often face backlash from men, including their family members who work to control their decision-making and enforce patriarchal rules, such as wearing traditionally symbolic clothing in order to maintain women's subordinate position (UN Women 2014). In other examples, this social control has excluded whole communities of women from exercising their right to vote on the grounds of *purdah*, in Uttar Pradesh (Tripathi 2009). There are concerns that constitutional reservations for women in Panchayats have not reduced their risk of violence, with women participating through sub-reservations for lower castes experiencing high levels of violence, including within their caste (UN Women 2014). Men and women across India face deeply entrenched and institutionalised discrimination through the caste system (HRW 2007).

During the past 10–15 years, the issue of gender equality has been raised by civil society and government in relation to women's empowerment, and there have been some changes: women's literacy rates have increased by 20 per cent between 1991 and 2001 (Government of Uttar Pradesh 2006); and the need for an empowering approach to women's education is being recognised, for example through the Mahila Samakhya programme promoting education for women's equality. Furthermore, in 2007, policy revisions were undertaken aimed at increasing access to school for children in more isolated rural areas. The same positive changes, however, cannot be seen in relation to control over property, mobility or sexuality. In addition, where women may have seen gains, for example in terms of access to work, this is often reliant on patronage relations, and the norms regarding 'appropriate' work for women, and *purdah*, limit women to the least remunerated occupations (Kantor 2009). Research by ICRW (Nanda *et al.* 2014) showed that out of six states Uttar Pradesh has the highest proportion of inequitable attitudes, with 54 per cent of men expressing rigid masculinity, defined in part by controlling behaviour and highly negative gender attitudes; this was confirmed by reports by women.

There is also increasing fear among men about decreasing opportunities and resources as a result of women's empowerment. There are anxieties about men's decreasing control over women, of losing their leadership positions, and being left behind by gender equality which is deemed as harmful for their interests; this is reflected in the evolution of so-called 'men's rights' organisations in Lucknow and across India who hold an anti-feminist agenda (Chowdhury 2014).

2.2 MASVAW: a political movement on violence against women

Feminist organising and movement building has enabled processes of social change that advocate rights and accountability in ending gender inequality globally. As a state-wide campaign that works at multiple levels to raise awareness, transform gender norms and challenge institutions that uphold inequality, MASVAW is a political project and movement. MASVAW is grounded in feminist principles of redressing gender inequalities and empowering women and subordinate groups through critical consciousness-raising, challenging dominant and oppressive patriarchal norms.

The MASVAW campaign grew out of dialogue between men and women engaged in addressing women's health rights in Uttar Pradesh and 'the conscience of a shared responsibility for dealing with... [violence against women]... stirred into action a movement' (MASVAW 2012a). Founding members were associated with SAHAYOG, a non-profit organisation working on these issues. From the outset, MASVAW held significant value to their allies in the women's movement, who supported the development of their approach to engaging men in ending SGBV; both as direct contributors and as critical friends (Das and Singh 2014). MASVAW holds that it is the responsibility of men *and* women to ensure a society free of gendered violence. Gender is not used as a single dimension of analysis but is seen as intersecting with class, age, caste, education, and the distribution of power in relation to experiences of social justice and difference. MASVAW highlights the importance of men's self-reflection on how their actions challenge or reproduce inequalities harmful to both men and women (MASVAW 2012a). Having spread to schools, universities, villages and urban communities, MASVAW groups are active in 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh and three districts in the neighbouring state, Uttaranchal.¹

As outlined above, the MASVAW campaign's grounding in institutional settings is of particular interest. This issue has begun to be explored through MASVAW's involvement in the pre-existing three-country initiative called Mobilising Men in Institutional Settings. The Mobilising Men initiative asks the question: 'What can men do to work with women in challenging the institutionalised nature of gender and sexual violence?' It is an approach towards addressing gender inequality and violence through working with men to create change-makers in institutional settings.² In India the programme has been led by CHSJ, engaging directly with MASVAW on activities focused in three main sectors: university campuses, where gender and sexual violence is widespread; local government, which play a key role in the enforcement, or lack thereof, of the Domestic Violence Act; and human rights work with *dalit* communities, which previously has failed to adequately address the gendered nature of violence against them (Greig with Edström 2012). In Uttar Pradesh the work with MASVAW has focused specifically on institutions of higher education and in Panchayat settings.

¹ See Annex 2 for a fuller description of MASVAW's origins, emergence and formation.

² Mobilising Men is a programme to confront SGBV in institutional settings by engaging men as gender activists within the institutions to which they belong. Since 2010, IDS has partnered with civil society organisations in India, Kenya and Uganda to develop the programme, with support from the United Nations Population Fund.

3 Case study approach

The overall approach to this case study on MASVAW's networked approach to addressing gendered violence in Uttar Pradesh is an interactive and participatory peer-enquiry across local to global levels, built on ongoing engagements and a shared evolution of thinking on the topic. In this section we first describe the conceptual framework which the main authors have established through these ongoing collaborations and in conversation with the activists from MASVAW in 2014. We then turn to the methodology along with its strengths and caveats.

3.1 Conceptual framing

The original vision for establishing the men's alliance, MASVAW, came out of key actors' close engagement with feminist and human rights movements and their analysis of the systemic injustice of high levels of violence against women in the Indian context. Whilst meeting with some progress in terms of legislative protection for women, it can be argued that this individualised and gender binary framing of gendered violence has led to certain drawbacks. These include drawbacks such as: divisive debates – including resistance and co-optation from anti-feminist 'men's rights' movements (Chowdhury 2014) –, framing women as essentially passive victims *versus* men as perpetrators, and detracting attention from other structural and institutional processes driving gendered violence. A central problem in this simple binary framing has been the equation of sex with gender, mapping masculinities onto men and linking this to a 'naturalised' sense that it is individual men who perpetrate violence; in contrast with mapping femininity onto women, linking this to passivity and victimisation. Within this binary system, men's positive engagement in gender equality often means developing alternative and less violent male *identities* and *norms* of masculinity, by appealing to 'protective' ideals of masculinity (set against women's 'vulnerability'), without challenging the binary, or systemic male supremacy more fundamentally.

'Gender norms' reflect collective beliefs about behaviour and performances and play a key role in individuals' constructions of their identity; this construction interacts with the beliefs and attitudes of 'others' which is reflected in their words and actions (Butler 1990). As such, how MASVAW men engage in gendered performances, and the role of positive and more equitable dynamics between men in peer networks is clearly relevant and remains centrally important in their understanding of change towards gender equality.

Yet, an essential first step in framing men's relation to gendered violence and inequality is complicating 'the personal' and exploring the reality of diversity, complexity, contradictions and multiple possibilities in men's gendered personal identity (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Connell 1995). The same problem exists in generalised constructs of 'women', so we must dislocate both 'masculinity' from men and boys and 'femininity' from women and girls in order to understand the vast diversity that exists in different peoples' lives (Halberstam 1998; Sluggett 2011).

A second crucial step for practically mobilising men for gender equality involves exploring the particularities and lived features of their context 'beyond the personal', such as in the formal and informal institutions in which people live their lives; thus personalising a rooted political analysis (Cornwall, Edström and Greig 2011). A third step then involves strategically forging alliances across movements – and perspectives – for finding common objectives in collective action for social and gender justice (*ibid.*). Context-specific gendered practices are deeply embedded in social dynamics and relations of power, particularly with reference to groups of other people. History and culture play an important role in shaping how different men and women think about themselves, others and the related power hierarchies. Das and Singh (2014) emphasise the interplay between divisions of religion and nationalism with culturally

conservative gender regimes in South Asia providing for a fraught and complex social, political and economic context. As such, they articulate the notion of a South Asian consciousness and an understanding of cultural traditions as critical for community-level interventions.

Thus, set within a historical context of various evolving institutions, gender norms serve to 'organise' societies and 'legitimise' roles, and the distribution of power and resources into gender orders. As a result, these norms are not easy to address and change 'directly', or from the outside. In their analysis of how change happens in working with men to dismantle patriarchy, Das and Singh (2014) argue that changes are instead required in institutional and distributional 'rules of engagement' from within societies. They argue that 'social dissonance' needs to be catalysed by nonconforming men and women who have the conviction to take a lead to challenge the existing order. They similarly caution that men's activism may be accepted in the short term under the justification of the 'benevolent paternalist', or protector. Since systemic gender inequality is deeply embedded in power structures, further reflection on power itself and influence is also needed.

Whilst there are many ways to conceptualise 'kinds' of power – beyond 'power over' – (e.g. VeneKlasen and Miller 2002) or 'spaces' for influence, and more or less visible 'forms' of power (Gaventa 2006), a common framework for linking individuals to power structures is the 'ecological framework' from individual through social to institutional/structural factors, at micro-, exo- and macro-systemic 'levels' (Heise 1998). A more useful variant of this framework for analysing gendered power orders is the 'four Is framework' where change is analysed at internal (personal), interpersonal, institutional and ideological levels (Greig with Edström 2012: 46). This approach is helpful because it politicises the domains in which gender inequalities are constructed at individual and collective levels, and helps us name the ideologies that are reinforced by diverse institutions, and that play an active role in people's internalising gender roles and identities in their everyday lives.

However, one needs to be careful not to conflate levels of context – 'nearest-to-furthest' – with causal chains and hierarchies, as the levels are in a sense abstractions of interconnecting aspects (personal, social, economic and political) of the same reality (Krieger 2008). For example, the ideological domain is where social norms of male supremacy become embedded and legitimised in power relations, which affects how gender roles and beliefs are internalised. Hence, a more useful way to think about the contextual features people operate within may be Nancy Fraser's (2009) multiple 'dimensions' of gender orders – social/cultural, economic/material and political/ideological – as a basis for the feminist call for redress in terms of 'the three Rs'; recognition, redistribution and representation. This moves away from deterministic hierarchies of causation which leave little space for 'agency' or understanding how people act upon the less visible aspects of structural contexts; furthermore, these dimensions allow us to locate structural problems in political terms of 'power', with available solutions.

Feminist academics have established conceptions of 'empowerment' that confer a process of critical consciousness raising on inequalities and injustices in a process of change that sees 'transformation' as a central goal. As Allen (1999: 18) outlines, the feminist approach to 'empowerment' reconceptualises power as 'the ability to empower and transform oneself, others, and the world'. The process of women's empowerment involves recognising patriarchy as the ideology that legitimises male domination and oppression, and in turn challenging this (Batliwala 1994). Batliwala (1994) emphasises that this process of change involves raising consciousness of women's rights to equality and justice, arguing that women's movements and collectives play an important role in bringing women together for mutual learning and empowerment. Batliwala's analysis of the process of empowerment (grounded in perspectives of other feminists from the global South) further emphasises that, where movements and organisations of women (alongside men) are politicised and

collectively act for change, both the condition and position of women can be transformed (Batiwala 1993 in Sardenberg 2009).

Against the backdrop of this feminist framing of gender-unequal systems of power as *patriarchal*, how then do conceptions of critical awareness and consciousness relate to the transformation of *men's* own assumptions and practices within this system? An appreciation of hierarchical relations *between men* and their different ideals of masculinity (or 'masculinities') and of 'hegemonic masculinity' is also essential for exploring gender inequality, and – especially – the role of men within this. Connell (1995) drew attention to many subordinate masculinities and how these can have highly ambivalent relationships to male supremacy (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985). This opened up new possibilities of engaging with men in disrupting patriarchal power systems and to frame new questions, such as around men's social exclusion, sexuality and intimacy, or on violence and trauma within men's own lives; ideas that have been reflectively operationalised in the work of CHSJ and MASVAW in India (Das and Singh 2014).

The development of the concept 'hegemonic masculinity' gained a lot of traction in terms of explaining the role of masculinity in oppressive gender orders and relations, including its oppression of subordinate men (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Nevertheless, the concept is often misunderstood in policy and programming, suggesting that men simply aspire to – or emulate – some hegemonic 'violent' ways of being men, or that their failure to live up to such hyper-masculinity automatically results in 'men's crises', expressed through violence against women and/or children. The concept is perhaps more appropriate to exploring the role of masculinities in patriarchal gender orders as *historically evolving dynamic systems*, composed of hierarchical power relations and multiple, interlinking masculinities in a dominant 'hegemonic masculine bloc' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). This hegemony 'embeds certain notions of consent and participation by the subaltern groups' (*ibid.*: 841) which does not in itself imply violence, but often operates through incentives, rewards and domination. Nevertheless, contradictions and stresses experienced by men and boys engaged in these power dynamics can also lead to risk-taking, violence and other negative outcomes, and as such the divisive nature of social hierarchies needs to be recognised (Das and Singh 2014).

MASVAW's collective action will be explored against this critically reflective approach and understanding of patriarchy as a dynamic system. Feminists have also argued that developing critical consciousness through collective action – and through multiple context-specific pathways – contributes to women's empowerment to challenge the actors, institutions and systems through which patriarchy is embedded (Cornwall and Edwards 2013). Analysis by Keeley and Scoones (2003) on how policy changes, and how influence can be wielded through contestation, links three key interconnecting elements: the role of actors and networks, set in constellations of political and institutional interests, to the (re-/)framing of evidence and policy narratives. They describe three interconnected themes for how policy is framed and re-framed: (1) as a reflection of structured political interests, (2) as a product of agency, actors and networks engaged in a policy area, and (3) in relation to overarching power-knowledge relations that frame evidence and practices in particular ways. These aspects of change reflect the importance of making visible how knowledge is framed, by who and the underlying power dynamics of this in driving alternative discourses and political realities.

Further analysis of systemic patriarchal gender orders as dynamic, evolving systems can enable deeper links to the different dimensions of disadvantage faced by women in patriarchal orders with the 'male' forms of oppression rooted in masculinities. Alan Johnson (1997) likens patriarchy to an organic life form, through the metaphor of a tree, with four roots feeding and shaping the formation of systems, communities, and individuals, etc. These roots are described as male dominance, male centeredness, male identification and an

obsession with control and order. Edström (2014) slightly reframes Johnson's three 'Ms' with direct reference to Fraser's three feminist 'Rs' and calls the fourth root 'male order'. This is connected with Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) ideas of a hegemonic masculinities bloc struggling to maintain dominance, and rooted in the Foucauldian idea of knowledge-power, with Butler's (1990) use of 'phallogocentrism' as a male-centred reductive, binary way of thinking and a positivistic standard for any claim to knowledge, hard facts or evidence, automatically occluding other – less masculine – possibilities.

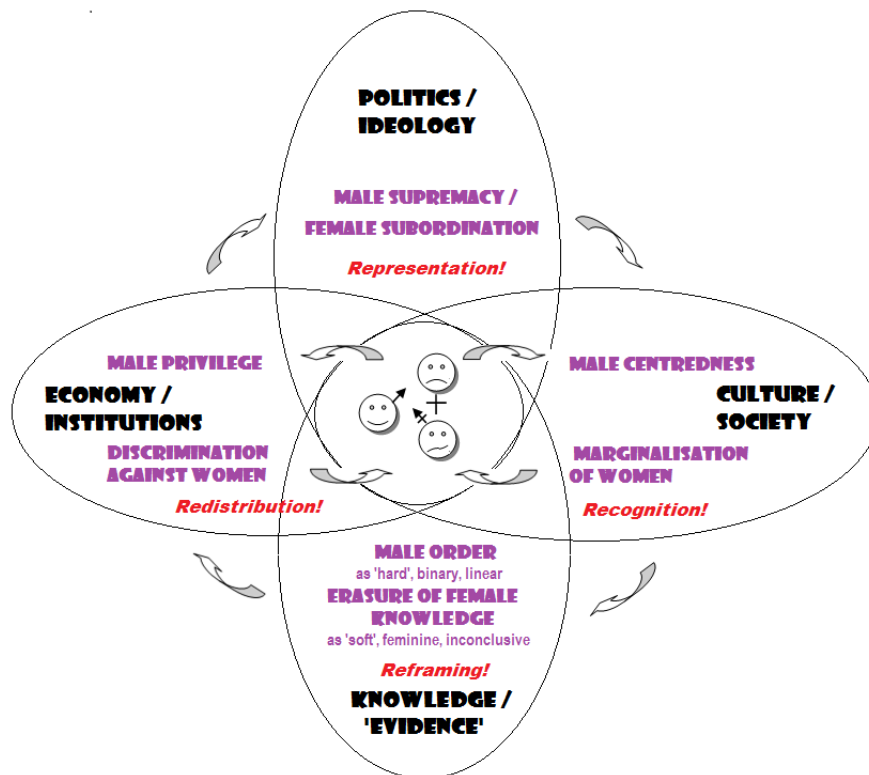
Focusing down on Fraser's (2009) types of dimensions and adapting Johnson's (1997) four roots of patriarchy, Edström (2014) links these to key feminist insights into gender injustice:

- 'Male centeredness' (in a representational or sociocultural dimension) needs to be exposed, revealing the *marginalisation* of women's and marginalised groups' perspectives.
- 'Male privilege' must be mapped, measured and abolished (in a material and institutional dimension), with its multiple forms of *discrimination* against women.
- 'Male supremacy' must be acknowledged honestly (in an ideological and political dimension), if our long and chequered history of *subordination* of women and lesser males, marked by misogyny and related supremacist ideologies, is to be overcome.
- 'Male order' (in an epistemological dimension) needs to be deciphered and disrupted, as it provides the binary operating code and deep-level syntax of patriarchal knowledge-power, with its *obfuscation* of alternative constructions of meaning and sense as nonsense.

Whilst the fourth epistemological dimension of 'male order' responds to Fraser's concern to unearth the 'deep structures' of gender injustice and is perhaps the most conceptually abstract, it is yet relevant to the MASVAW activists' reframing of their understanding and approach, as well as to the approach and methodology of the study itself. Whilst the first three dimensions are readily linked to the feminist calls for *recognition* of, *redistribution* for and *representation*, respectively, attention to the fourth dimension calls for a pro-/feminist '*reframing*' of evidence, knowledge and study method, which is touched on more in Section 3.2.

Figure 3.1 provides a schematic framework of multiple dimensions of a patriarchal context for gender interactions between individuals, communities and institutions being both shaped by and acting on their contexts. As MASVAW is a campaigning network, across many institutional settings and strategies, the *dynamics of their own networked approach* become centrally important in responding to this evolving, and adaptive system of patriarchal hegemony.

Figure 3.1 Dynamic interactions of gender inequity in multiple dimensions of patriarchy



Source: Authors' own.

3.2 Methodology

This case study was undertaken between August and December 2014 in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. Based on an initial joint mapping of issues in addressing SGBV and of questions for research with a core group of activists of MASVAW (Shahrokh *et al.* 2015), the team developed a methodology for collective, qualitative and emergent inquiry. The methods used included an in-depth, collaborative group analysis workshop by MASVAW activists exploring the identified research questions, which was complemented by semi-structured key informant interviews, guided focus group discussions (FGDs) and reflective participant observation. In total 50 local participants took part (21 women and 29 men).

Based on a review of the literature on SGBV in Uttar Pradesh and India more broadly, as well as through a mapping process with MASVAW activists, three key institutional settings of work were chosen for exploration and around which detailed research questions were formulated: (1) in the university; (2) at community level (including through schools); and (3) in the Panchayat, the latter a traditional (but officially recognised and regulated) institution for local self-governance. The main interpretive lens for the study was the perspectives of different groups of male activists within the MASVAW network, but the study also considered perspectives of other selected stakeholders and groups of community members – particularly the perspectives of women linked to the work in communities, Panchayat and in the university. Given the aim to understand the dynamics of MASVAW's networked and institutionally rooted approach to challenging gender inequity with men (as laid out in the sections above), participants were purposefully sampled in relation to these institutional contexts; participants at the community and Panchayat level were contacted through the

MASVAW activists within the core focus group and at the university through the lead MASVAW coordinator in this institution.

The *qualitative* methodology involved: (a) four FGDs with 28 participants in the different settings; (b) individual interviews with ten key informants; (c) a collaborative analysis workshop with 12 activists; (d) triangulation of perspectives across the different groups; as well as (e) reflective observation by researchers of dynamics and behaviours in the local contexts and settings where the work took place.

Table 3.1 Sample of research participants, by gender and method

Research method	Research participants
Focus group discussions	University students: six women; six men Community/Panchayat: eight women; eight men
Key informant interviews	University staff: three women; two men Women’s non-governmental organisations (NGOs): four women Panchayat: one man
One-day collaborative workshop	MASVAW activists: 12 men

Semi-structured interview guides responding to the key research questions (outlined in the introduction, above) were developed with the activist team for the interviews and FGDs (see Annex 3). A core interview schedule was adapted for each stakeholder group to enable cross-comparison of responses. Field notes were kept to record researchers’ observations and discussions of dynamics in the local settings.

The methodology was not intended to generate quantification of a statistical nature, nor was it designed to verify allegations of gendered violence, or judicial redress in individual cases, etc. Rather, it was chosen because it offers other unique advantages, such as relatively direct reflection and analysis from the field and the ability to capture how processes and outcomes are perceived by different stakeholders from different vantage points, reframing questions and also reflecting on the learning process itself. The triangulation of perspectives enables the contrasting of subjective positions in order to build up a nuanced and multidimensional account of a more shared reality. To the extent that findings build up a consistent picture, they can be seen as illustrative rather than definitive, and sometimes provocative rather than conclusive.

The analysis was iterative and emergent in that it evolved in relation to the different stakeholder interviews and group discussions, including an in-depth workshop with MASVAW activists which enabled participatory analysis through group deliberation.

3.2.1 Ethical considerations

Informed consent was gained from participants in relation to all of the data collection processes (see Annex 4); this included the option to anonymise contributions. The research was undertaken in the local language of research participants – Hindi – with direct translation between researcher and participant, as well as in English on occasion and only when participants chose to do so unprompted. Research data were managed by IDS and stored in a password protected system to ensure confidentiality for participants. Researchers aimed to ensure that practices were informed by local cultural and social norms, and accountable to research participants. The research process aimed to ensure that the knowledge generated would be relevant to and useful for MASVAW activists and diverse stakeholders working to address SGBV in Uttar Pradesh. MASVAW activists and CHSJ have ongoing relationships

with the institutions, communities and organisations involved in the study and are committed to sharing research findings back with the participants in these contexts.

3.2.2 Study limitations

Some familiar biases and limitations in any study of this kind need to be named: one source of bias might be expected from certain respondents' potential impressions that researchers might leverage resources from their organisations for specific responses. To reduce such bias, explanations in connection with seeking informed consent clarified the independent nature of the research. Furthermore, the views of researchers may privilege certain perspectives. To mitigate such bias, interview teams were set up as pairs, or in threes, in order to cross-check impressions and scripts after interviews, as well as during analysis of the data and in writing up. A third limitation in the study is its local scope and scale, in so far as drawing more generalised conclusions is concerned. However, as this is an in-depth case study of local dynamics rather than any attempt at a representative 'survey', this should not be seen as a problem and lessons drawn can still be useful for reflection on similar issues in different contexts.

Given the topic and the specific membership of the networked members in the case study, an important potential bias to consider as a caveat is the 'male centeredness' of the main group studied (the 'MASVAW men'), as well as of the study team. This was partially mitigated by our framing of relevant types of methodologies (as qualitative and triangulating multiple perspectives), partly addressed by the inclusion of a woman in the core study team and the *explicit inclusion* of women's perspectives – alongside men's – through FGDs (in all-female groups) and key informant interviews with selected women. This was agreed through reflective discussions about the risks and limitations of male centeredness during the initial reflective movement mapping and research planning workshop.

Finally, another form of bias might be expected from the purposive selection of participants (individuals connected to MASVAW's work in different ways), which may skew the range of views in a direction supportive of MASVAW's work; through 'speaking with the converted', as it were. This would be true for women and men alike. To some extent, adopting a critically reflective framing and approach mitigates this problem, whilst the triangulation of perspectives facilitates validation and honesty. It was also made clear that the research was not an evaluation, but rather aimed at learning about dynamics and drawing lessons for strengthening the approach. Taken together with the fact that selected participants are generally better informed about the work, than would be randomly selected individuals in the settings, these considerations significantly reduce the impact of this potential bias, although not completely.

4 Study findings

In this section we present the main findings from this collaborative research and analysis in two sections, further divided into subsections. We start with the entry points for the work of the campaigning network, and different types of resistance and backlash encountered. The second main section goes into the network's internal dynamics, different kinds of alliances formed and strategies for politicising, nurturing, growing and sustaining the work. Section 5 then summarises some of the key obstacles and 'enablers', and proposes potential solutions as informed by activists, community members and the core research team.

4.1 Entry points, resistance and backlash

A primary issue in the work of MASVAW is the entry point: 'How do you mobilise and engage men and boys in challenging violence against women, or in contesting a gender order which essentially privileges men?' This also begs the question, 'How do those involved perceive the problem of gendered violence and inequality, in the first place?' Other questions arise, too, such as 'What are the types of resistance to engagement on gender equality for men?', or 'If and when they do engage to oppose gendered oppression and violence against women, what forms of backlash do they encounter?' We explore these questions by the three settings described.

4.1.1 The university setting, as a bastion for thought leadership

Based on two FGDs with students, and interviews with male and female staff as key informants, gender-based violence, as an issue in the university, is often understood to be one about physical violence and – as such – less recognised openly as a major issue in this setting. On the other hand, emotional violence, 'harassment' and more general discriminations against female students and staff are recognised as significant issues more broadly, if differently by different stakeholders. These broader forms of harassment and discrimination are seen to have changed significantly in recent years, although change is also seen as limited and slow. One male social work teacher reflected that 'in '94–96 girls and boys were firmly segregated in and out of the classroom, but now it's much more mixed – both in university and on the street.' He then qualified this by noting that 'in other ways, we still have miles to go.' Nevertheless, it was pointed out that male and female university staff are now often good friends, which was said to not be possible before. In a mixed group discussion with female and male students, the participants argued that there has been increasing pressure from the students on issues of gender equality and harassment and that there has been an increase in reporting in incidents by girls. Male students also explained how male activists are increasingly benefitting from 'more respect', whereas they used to be belittled for their work and for working with women.

For teachers, mental and emotional harassment was emphasised as prevalent. As a female teacher noted, 'there are always comments from men, you are not able to promote yourself [and] they may go to personal character assassination, which is particularly damaging for women.' This type of oppressive and aggressive masculinity was also recognised as affecting some male teachers, particularly in the context of intersecting caste or class differences, as she pointed out that 'men will break down other men and women in order to get ahead and to excel themselves in the institution.' One teacher of psychology argued that the 'social structure and patriarchal system [is] reflected in the institution,' arguing that whilst there are only three women Assistant Proctors next to 17 men, 'women are doing all of the work: those duties which have benefits are given to the men, only those that need more dedication are given to the women' and concluded that 'women's work is not respected.'

In terms of the students then, male students who were active with MASVAW on campus reflected that, whilst there is now mixed gender participation in classes, 'there is usually gender segregated seating' and that this is not only institutionalised but also reinforced by many students themselves, as there is 'some ridiculing of male students sitting with the female ones or vice versa.' They also complained that there is little space for discussion of personal issues, 'which gets ridiculed as "gossip" and not serious by the teachers.' These male students generally came across as far more aware of actual harassment and intimidation of female students than did many of the university staff. Their examples included that: 'The body language of [some] male staff is seen as very objectifying of women, treating them as if anybody should be ready to entertain them...'; various kinds of comments are passed on female students' dress (as not being sufficiently traditional); there is 'emotional abuse'; and, even, that there is 'exploitation of girls on the pretext of offering marks or admission notes... – where, literally, exploitation equals demands for sex.'

In terms of incidents specifically *between students*, they talked about fights between male and female students (with the boys harassing the girls), with boys sharing personal photographs of female students seen as an important issue. Beyond interpersonal dynamics between individual boys and girls, they also pointed to male students as discriminating against girls on a more self-interested political level, recounting a recent experience of a female student who stood as candidate for election as student union representative: 'She was blocked by male students, because she was not seen as "mobile" or able to represent – and fight for – their interests.'

A group of female students interviewed in a focus group broadly corroborated these impressions and, in the last example, pointed out that girls also face discrimination from other female students, as 'there is a belief that "good women" would not stand in the election.' In an unexpected twist on gender-based exploitation between students and staff, a female student explained: 'When male students go for help with work with the male teacher they say "no" and when the same request is asked [by the male student] of the female teacher, she will say "yes"; she *has to help because she is a woman*' [italics added]. The culturally pervasive and ideologically legitimated female 'role' as supportive and submissive to men gets infused within the institutional setting, despite the different formal and age-related roles of student as subordinate to teacher. She explained that 'the boy students know this and exploit this.' Furthermore, in relation to dealing with harassment, the female students pointed out that 'saving yourself from sexual harassment is [seen as] the girls' responsibility; it is her fault that she is being harassed!'

In contrast – and with the exception of some teachers interviewed who are more actively engaged with MASVAW – several staff members involved in management at the university did not recognise sexual harassment as a significant problem amongst the students, between staff, or between staff and students. A recently appointed male Assistant Proctor (involved with student disciplinary issues) said that he had not '... heard of any cases here. No harassments either...' and that gender inequality 'in the classroom... is at a very micro level of gender-based segregation... [and that]... male teachers favour male students and vice versa – in some cases.' He then qualified this by adding: 'A few female students also get favours from male teachers – for example if they are very beautiful...' A female teacher interviewed, who was also a member of the university's anti-sexual harassment committee, acknowledged that 'there is teasing of female students by the male students,' but claimed categorically that 'non-teaching staff or teachers don't harass,' which was in clear contradiction with accounts from the students.³

³ Important to interpreting these answers may be the fact that the male Assistant Proctor had come into the room during the interview with the female teacher (committee member) during her interview, to sit and wait for also being interviewed. This may well have compromised the 'safety' and 'open confidentiality' of the interview space and it became apparent that the Assistant Proctor had not been selected by the researchers. As the broader context of the university visit was fairly fluid, however, no conclusion can be drawn in regard to how this might have come about.

Against this backdrop of how the issue plays out in the university setting, then, *how do the activists themselves frame the issue in engaging men and boys?* MASVAW activist leaders perceive and present the issue of violence against women as a symptom of an oppressive patriarchal system, rather than a stand-alone issue, and therefore also see challenging this unequal system as the prime objective. However, this can be a difficult entry point and, as one activist put it: 'We don't start by talking patriarchy, but focus first on GBV and then explore its root causes.' As elaborated by Professor Sanjay, the nodal leader in the network based at the university:

We start with talking GBV in the university, but then [we talk] theory, like Engels' On the Origins of the Family and Private Property... Most students understand the theory and agree, but then some will challenge you with counter-examples, etc. We try to explain that most women are not in such positions of power and privilege. Then I shift to discussing socialisation and how social norms can shift. If they ask 'how?' I explain with very specific things like marriage laws and systems, etc., and illustrate with personal examples from my own life.

Whilst MASVAW was initiated as a campaigning network enabling men to stand up for 'stopping violence against women', their evolving experience has led to a more politicised critique of gender inequality and patriarchy in the Indian setting, which remains a fairly rare approach for a men's group in any setting and is not without its challenges. Professor Sanjay explained that cultural 'rituals... are practised by women within a patriarchal social system. When you talk about VAW [violence against women] they say that most of the women face this violence by [other] women, and... that women are the problem.' He countered this, explaining that 'it is about the patriarchal system...' and that '... [as] MASVAW we are working within the university to take action against those who are increasing gender-based violence within the system.'

Building up their mutually supportive network through the university has involved the mobilisation and engagement of peer teachers. The role of nodal thought leaders was very apparent in the study, as has been the emphasis on raising reflective consciousness, by drawing on personal experience as the inroad for making the work both personal and political. For example, one MASVAW activist in the Department of Sociology who was involved in the Mobilising Men project, explained: 'We have been coming across the experiences of violence, but not the opportunities to reflect on them. Meeting Professor Sanjay, there was an opportunity to come together and think about them.'

Several shifts described at the outset of this section have made a difference to engaging men in the struggle for gender equality. The increased female student involvement and mobility are seen as having been positive, as is the increased level of female staff involvement and the establishment of anti-sexual harassment committees (despite some shortcomings with these, discussed below). There appears to be greater openness to male involvement in gender equality by students and staff, evidenced by increased 'respect' for activist students.

Nevertheless, several serious *obstacles remain*, some which are being partially circumvented and others which are not yet deemed surmountable. For example, some of the barriers, such as to female students' inability to attract votes for student union elections, were analysed as – in this case – deeply rooted in the cultures of political parties (said to enter the campus to insert themselves in the student politics and this arena being used as a training ground for political careers), as well as linked to cultural notions of appropriate femininity for girls (as inconsistent with the mobility, security and aggressiveness required of canvassing candidates).

In terms of challenges for the activists themselves, one MASVAW member argued that ‘a lot of them [the challenges] come from our families; relatives, parents, in-laws, neighbours who mock us and call us like more feminine.’ He also pointed out that, in workshops, whilst ‘some teachers may appear progressive, but when you visit their homes they don’t seem to practice those values.’ The dissonance between the public and private sphere was a recurring theme as a challenge. A central activist in the university revealed: ‘In my case, I had to leave my family with my wife, because my father didn’t accept my work and my arguments in his house.’

Ramesh, another long-term active leader in MASVAW at the Department of Social Work had not witnessed violence against women in his own family, but was exposed to it at the university, which was very shocking to him. He had the opportunity to engage in MASVAW workshops and increased his understanding of the impact on both men and women of the violence. As he did get more involved in women’s rights issues, he actually received threats from his broader parental family, including that he would not get his ‘family share of the property’. Whilst he had not been close to his mother earlier, she then came to support him and he now understands the issue of how activities impact women, which has helped him to change how he supports his own family. His father has even started learning from him, of which he feels proud. By taking on caring for his own daughter, he has also found that she is more attached to him than he ever was with his own father, so he explained that he has ‘learned firsthand how this is profitable.’

For many activists, the family remains a difficult area to negotiate and a source of resistance and personal conflict. Mahendra, having been with MASVAW for over a decade, was – like many of his peers – motivated and politicised from earlier personal experiences. Growing up in the shadow of a very patriarchal father (and Panchayat leader) and witnessing caste and gender-based discrimination; seeing his aunt being beaten whilst being silenced and powerless to intervene; and, even, seeing the injustice of a daughter of the head of an anti-GBV organisation (which he had briefly joined in 2002) being forced into an arranged marriage. Whilst MASVAW has provided a home for his activism since 2003, he explained that:

I have tried to change my own behaviour with my wife and daughter... but sometimes I find that it is very difficult to change within the larger family. I face the norms sometimes and... the wife and children will also support the... patriarchal rituals and festivals that stereotype the gender norms, and I do not want to be involved in this...

As we can see, a recurring theme amongst the activists was one of seeing ‘the family’ as the prime institution for gendering socialisation and for naturalising patriarchy through personal ties that bind; that is, through a weaving together of ideology, culture and institutions at the most intimate level, which is also what necessitates politicising the struggle as personal.

But, the obstacles are not limited to the private sphere or the sociocultural gender norms and patriarchal ideologies brought into campus from the community and the staff or students’ homes. The *university as an institution* – set within the broader institutions of Varanasi and Uttar Pradesh – is itself embodying a complex set of obstacles and opportunities. This can be conceptualised in term of institutional culture and narratives, the policies and processes in place relating to gender equality and violence, as well as institutional interests and power dynamics.

As described further above, the *institutional culture and narratives* at the university appear to remain male-centred, marginalising and devaluing female staff and students’ work and perspectives, to a large extent importing broader social and cultural values onto the campus. In the words of one female teacher: ‘This is a very traditional university, so we have to

observe males and females to protect ourselves against rumours... we get criticised for mixing students. We have to be very careful...'

On the one hand, the campus is seen as progressive and secular, whilst there is also a lot of emphasis from staff that 'this is a traditional setting' on the other; for instance, in regards to many staff attitudes to gender segregation and appropriately traditional dress for girls. Yet, the 'academic professionalism' of the university offers activists and students an important space to challenge tradition and culture, through reasoned argument, activism and appealing to theory.

In the area of *institutional processes and policies*, the work of MASVAW in the Mobilising Men initiative has enabled the activists to push for and support the establishment of anti-sexual harassment committees. This is no doubt a relative success and an important step in terms of progress, as it offers a formal route for recognition, representation and redress, holding perpetrators to account. Yet, due to the sensitive implications for careers and legal potentials, the work of the committees needs to be highly confidential, which makes it more vulnerable to co-option by institutional interests and provides resistance to openly holding duty bearers to account. A female teacher and committee member explained: 'We've had two cases of reported harassment between... students... [They] compromised in both cases. The male student apologises and swears not to repeat the behaviour. The girl then drops the case.'

When asked about follow-up, she explained that this was not done, adding 'it would have to come back to the committee. The boys were not monitored. Neither were the girls.' In the group discussion with male students, one young man summed up the situation: 'Teachers and students come forward [reporting cases], but other staff don't want to get involved, because the administrative machinery doesn't support it. They insist on compromise, as does the family.'

Institutional interests and power come into play here beyond the work of committees or specific policies, both in reported cases and to prevent cases of harassment reaching the committee. A university Professor and committee member explained: 'Even when it [harassment] does happen this does not come out in the light. The perception is that it is bad women that let this happen... When there are issues, the cases get quashed. The women have no option: They want to finish the year [finish their education], so they will not report the violence.' He further explained how institutional interests relate to the broader community and family interests to achieve these 'compromises'.

Yet, for all its challenges, the institution – as a seat of learning and a symbol of secular progress, aiming to project modern Indian values – also provides MASVAW with a space to use theory and policy for advocating progressive social change. Furthermore, as a transitory training ground it provides an environment where young activists can develop into advocates and leaders beyond the walls of the institution; be it into schools and communities, into media and business, or into the local Panchayats, which are some of the settings we turn to below.

4.1.2 Community settings, and the new young MASVAW men

It is in the multifaceted arena of a specific community context where gender inequalities play out most intimately in social interactions within institutions like the family, interacting with institutions of health or learning (e.g. schools) and cultural (e.g. religious) institutions, the latter which prescribe customary rituals for 'marriage', 'births' and festive occasions.

MASVAW's work at the community level involves both work aimed at young men and boys (in school and out of school) and work with local community institutions such as the

Panchayat (elected local representative bodies) or various government institutions and civil society forums. It also involves engaging to support women's groups in the community. In this subsection, we focus primarily on the former aspect – the network's activities with youth and young men – and we turn to the latter in the following section, focusing particularly on the Panchayat. As in the previous subsection, we start with exploring how gendered violence and inequality is perceived of by community members and activists, and with how it is seen as changing. We then explore inroads taken by activists working with young men, followed by challenges and obstacles faced.

In separate FGDs with male and female rural community members, the situation with gendered inequality and violence was characterised in very consistent terms. Key features noted included that there is a gender-based difference in opportunity for education, as well as in child rearing, both in terms of differential feeding and treatment more generally. There is a strong son preference and restrictions for girls, including on their clothing. It was also noted that there is a male-centred right to males taking key decisions in the family and the head of the household is typically a man. Boys were said to have more freedom and mobility, whilst girls, or young women, 'cannot sit in the teashop or go to the market [unaccompanied],' which could easily trigger gossiping along the lines that the 'woman isn't any good, or the man cannot control the woman.' Mobility is traditionally controlled and women should remain in the house.

At the same time, perceptions of gender equality and women's rights were also said to be gradually changing. The men's focus group in the community argued that 'there has been a change towards equality in education for the girls and the boys.' This seems to be reflected in how parents value girls and boys, and they suggested that '...a daughter's birth was [earlier] a sad occasion. But now people are celebrating them almost equally.' They added that early marriage has decreased and that 'there has been a support for change through this government subsidy for girls' education.' It was also noted that girls now have greater mobility (particularly associated with bicycles) and that, with more 'higher education of the girls... this has moved from women just having literacy... [to] also being involved in decision-making.' They noted that consent from girls in marriage is increasingly common and that 'the last two to three years have seen girls refusing to marry.'

These changes were broadly corroborated by a separate focus group of women (most of whom belong to a self-help group and are linked to MASVAW, through their male partners). The group gave a range of examples of recent change, such as: 'Three years ago women were kept in the house, but now it's changed. Now I can be very vocal... [and]... my husband helps in cooking. Also, there is less emphasis on women covering up.' Another woman reflected: 'Now my husband cares for me when I'm ill and for the children. I can go to meetings.' One woman, in speaking of the role of their self-help group, said: 'I used to be very scared of feudal people outside. Now I am fearless and I can go to court, because of the women's group.'

In terms of gendered violence, the group of men involved with MASVAW pointed out that abusive language against women is very common. They reflected that there are 'men who support the women, but [also that] if she is [seen to be] wrong, then she gets beaten...' They added that community members still get very suspicious 'if a woman is taking with a man, or is visited a few times.' They explained that girls are commonly harassed and 'touched' whilst going to the market, to school, or walking in empty places. They also mentioned 'a case when there was a rape' and how the MASVAW 'group came together to make sure there was follow up to the case.' Again, the women's group broadly corroborated this, highlighting the role of their own self-help group and collaborating with their MASVAW men in changing things. One participant reflected that 'there used to be a lot of violence in the family... but with our meetings and bringing husbands along things started to change.' Other reflections included: 'Early on, there was huge violence including from mothers-in-law' and another

woman added that 'once, when we decided to support the beaten woman, we decided we would come together and beat him up. But, then we realised we should socially boycott the perpetrator's family instead. That worked.'

So, in this context, *how do MASVAW community activists themselves analyse gendered violence?* In a group-work analysis by outreach activists of MASVAW, the root causes and drivers of gendered violence in the community were seen as located within a complex set of cultural/traditional, social and formal institutions. The overall male supremacy in the ideology of Hindu culture was highlighted by describing how 'the husband is [seen as] the god... If he is happy, then he will protect you; if he is not happy then he will destroy [you].' This was described as 'a dangerous concept in the Hindu mythology.' Furthermore, they pointed out that 'there is a belief that the father is the carrier of the heredity [and] there is a belief that women are weaker and... subordinate.'

At the level of the institutionalised male privileges in family-based rules of engagement in the community then, they described how 'the distribution of workload [is] based on... gender [and that] all property and resources are controlled by the man.' They also pointed to the social importance to the family of 'the honour of girls; families have to favour this.' This was said to curtail women's sexual and reproductive rights, choice and wellbeing as 'women cannot express their own sexual desire, [or] they are seen as... bad...' and that 'the control of how many children [a woman has]... [is] by the man.'

Clearly then, the role and rules of 'the traditional family' in regulating and enforcing norms on gender and sexuality are absolutely central, as is the role of the culture and religion in legitimising this. Furthermore, formal institutions of the state are also seen as institutionalising these inequities, securing a systemically material discrimination against women. The activists pointed out that, according to the tradition, 'at the time of marriage, women should be lower than men, so to maintain this social norm the state also plays a role: we have the law that age at marriage for girls is 18 and for men is 21.' This has an apparently common patriarchal justification in that women's 'life expectancy is much less than... men's [life] expectancy; ... [so] the women can start earlier...' and '...you can [only] get out from the relationship after you die.'

So, against this understanding, *how do MASVAW men engage other men in the community to address gender inequality?* The activists aim to create a group of 'responsible men and boys' within the community through a snowballing reach-out and identification. They explained that they 'are looking at those men and boys that are gender equitable and that are not discriminatory within the community in terms of class and caste.' In other words, gender discrimination is understood to also intersect with broader discrimination, inequality and oppression in society. They aim to change themselves and inspire other men within the context of the community, the Panchayat and the other institutions in the community.

They target particularly *young* men within and out of school, both directly and indirectly through the education system: 'We are working to develop communications materials within the school [and] within the university.' Specifically, they identify peers within the schools and other institutions, who share their 'ideology against violence and [for] gender equality.' They then work to build the skills and change the perspectives of these identified young men and boys, who become 'training groups'. They explained that 'these trained young men and boys will then host meetings within their own communities, and their schools and colleges – these are called supporter groups.' The MASVAW activists support these training (or supporter) groups to run small sessions and to develop projects and initiatives themselves.

As with the MASVAW activists in the university setting, most community-based activists spoke of personal experiences of recognising patriarchal inequities in their lives and often facing struggles to break the mould in their own journeys, usually facing resistance – and

often sanctions – from their own parental/natal families. Peer support between activists and ‘role models’ was highlighted as essential in maintaining the work and expanding the network. For example, one activist, Shishir, described his own entry into the field and experience of resistance:

When I was a student I was introduced to the MASVAW ideology, and this was fascinating... something different. It motivated me to do something, especially with the young boys... The next milestone is when... I had the opportunity to join an organisation working on this as a full time staff, and... I was able to do that work with the MASVAW ideology... My final milestone... I got married... The challenges in the personal life... [are] with the parents – they expect us to follow the cultural rituals... within Hinduism and the family...

However, along with the very resilient forces of resistance to change, some changes in the community context are also seen to feed into the traction of MASVAW’s work; particularly so for younger men and their partners. The men’s focus group in the community noted in particular that ‘there is resistance from older people who see the breakdown of culture, [whereas] the younger people are happier.’ This was also seen as related to gradually changing family structures for new families forming. It was explained that ‘earlier there was a head of the family – a joint [extended] family... [but] now it is becoming more nuclear, and people are responsible for the immediate family.’ So, whilst it interlinks with the work in universities and Panchayats, the community activists – targeting younger men and boys – frame their main strategic entry points as related to a new kind of family, schooling and seeing the younger generation as change agents, which is also how they envision getting around the obstacles and resistance over time.

4.1.3 Panchayat settings, and seeing beyond the 50 per cent

In a sense the Panchayat represents the interface between the community and the state, an elected forum of community representatives addressing day-to-day issues of concern in the community, whilst not being a formal part of the government itself. The role of the Panchayat came up in different ways in different situations in the fieldwork, but it is important to note that a planned FGD with Panchayat members was derailed by the unanticipated arrival of the husband of the head of the block Panchayat (above the district in the hierarchy), which brought an end to the planned open FGD. Whilst informing the research team’s participant observation of power dynamics at these levels, this nevertheless somewhat restricted the range of perspectives informing this analysis.

However, from meeting and interacting with several male and female Panchayat members through the broader community FGDs with men and with women, as well as core activists involved in the broader framing, the sense was that Panchayat members have a similar understanding of the issues of gender inequity and violence, as do other community members; that is, even if how some members talk about it may differ in some respects. For example, one district-level male Panchayat member (who was interviewed as a key informant) did not see the broader issues of gender inequality reflected in the institution itself. Or, at least, he appeared to take a fairly formalistic, quantitative and male ordered view reduced to equal representation in membership, as he argued that ‘there are no issues of gender inequality in the Panchayat. Within the institution everyone is equal; in the Panchayat there are 50 per cent women as village heads,’ indeed adding that even ‘the block head (*block pramukj*) is a woman, and this is reflected across all levels through the 50 per cent reserve.’

Arguably, this may not be seeing the whole picture, as the proportional representation aspect of this institutional dimension may not guarantee equal voice and influence, unless you factor in the sociocultural aspects of male centeredness and supremacy in the broader local

culture. Indeed, the performance of the husband of the female head of the block Panchayat arriving and rearranging our schedule spoke volumes about men's ability to wield power through their women even within this formalised community institution. Indeed, female Panchayat members, speaking during the community women's focus group took a very different view on the matter, one of them arguing that 'there is more need for women's representation. 50 per cent is there, but it needs more, because very powerful people – men – are there.'

In terms of mobilising male members of the Panchayat, a key informant noted that 'the role of Ram Prakash as coordinator has been important,' highlighting the importance of personal relationships and that 'there is a sense that help is there; that there is support from other people to do the work on these issues, and this mobilises others...' He explained that 'the examples of MASVAW help to reinforce that people can change, and that there is support to do so.' He also added that 'there is... support available to Panchayat members on how they can present the issues; one example is safety, and privacy in using toilets.'

Other community members reflected on shifts which have made a difference to responding to SGBV, with both limitations and positive roles for the Panchayat as an institution. At one level, the formal recognition and top-down enforcement of proportional representation in numbers has made it easier to get men on board. In reflecting on how the community is responding to instances of harassment and violence, the FGD with men (which also included Panchayat members) put an emphasis on the increased demand for joining advocacy efforts and building social pressure in a changing environment. One participant argued that:

Everybody wants to support advocacy. If this case does not go forward then the message is not heard. Then they try to make the judiciary respond. People come to demand the justice. The Panchayat is not well placed to respond, so the justice system must be the place where this happens. As the environment is changing this is possible.

It was also added that in specific cases of reported GBV, 'the Panchayat... [is] showing support. This puts pressure on the administration to respond. The media is supportive and this creates pressure on the police as well.' Hence, the Panchayat was described as one recognised avenue for making social claims on the formal institutions of the state.

As already suggested, however, there were several *constraints or obstacles* with the Panchayat as an institution, as well. A key constraint, as noted by the women's group, is the fact that proportionally gender-equal representation does not automatically translate into 'equal voice', or meaningful representation. Aside from the broader ideology of male supremacy and the male-centred culture, another part of the explanation for this relates to how class or caste-based differences intersect with gender in this patriarchal system, as well as the co-option and male control of some women representatives (serving particular family, class or caste interests) and, potentially, a broader co-option of this progressive policy of representation to shore up a fundamentally patriarchal culture sufficiently consistent with traditional ideology.

A serious challenge for MASVAW within the Panchayat setting appeared to be rooted in the fact that MASVAW is an informal, horizontal and egalitarian network intervening in this formalised hierarchy. The male Panchayat key informant suggested that:

MASVAW has to be associated with the Panchayat at every level, to address the hierarchy. Each committee on the Panchayat has space for an NGO [non-governmental organisation], so they should nominate MASVAW onto committees to support the work in the future. There is not active participation in the Panchayat

because it is a formal organisation so there needs to be a formal role for MASVAW in the institution.

So, the Panchayat as a venue offers a formalised and recognised institutional domain in which to intervene for MASVAW men, who have developed a strategic way to reach and influence a network of male representatives and support women in the process.

Nevertheless, the contradictions and differences in the make-up of MASVAW next to that of the Panchayat present serious constraints, so strategies to overcome or circumvent them clearly need to stretch beyond this domain. Section 4.2 takes us onto the more nuanced questions of the dynamics, alliances and sustainability of MASVAW's campaign – within and across these domains – to challenge patriarchy in Uttar Pradesh.

4.2 Dynamics, alliances and sustenance

MASVAW is an initiative that is contextually rooted and thus responsive to the changing social, political and economic structures, policies and norms that fuel gendered inequalities and violence. As such, MASVAW is organised as a 'campaigning network', covering multiple levels, institutional settings and strategies. This section now turns to the dynamics of this network, and how the relationships, structures and connections that are embodied in the campaign contribute to MASVAW's emergent theory of change for 'dismantling patriarchy'. We move from looking specifically at the different institutional, or contextual, 'domains' to the lessons that can be gleaned across these contexts, and importantly from the way that they interact.

The MASVAW approach has been articulated as a tree with roots that ground the activists in their own social and political reality, and branches that enable multiple pathways towards change. This is supported by the trunk, which is the goal of addressing patriarchal inequality in the lives of women, men, girls and boys. This tree-like nature of the campaign means that personal change in the lives of individuals is connected to local contexts as well as the institutions, systems and structures that make and uphold policy frameworks and gender norms. One activist is connected into the campaign in multiple ways, and their action spans from the interpersonal across multiple collectives; for example, at the community level a private school teacher – having graduated from university 'awakened' to gender injustice by MASVAW thought leaders – is now a part of a MASVAW activist group that works collectively to agitate against cases of violence. They work with men in their community to critically reflect on their gender roles and inequalities within their immediate environment and they work with teachers within their workplace to engage networks of teachers to critically reflect on gender inequalities in their institution. Their activism is embodied in their way of engaging with the world and enables each activist to connect to processes of complex change in a way that is most relevant to them.

4.2.1 Nurturing and politicising the personal within the movement

MASVAW takes a pro-feminist approach to activism that promotes a personal and political connection to the process of change. The journey of the MASVAW activist connects the individual to the ideological dimensions of dismantling patriarchy and this is reflected in individual actions and interpersonal relationships, as well as in public political acts. As outlined in several examples above, MASVAW activists may face isolation, resentment and rejection from family and community as a result of their action to challenge gender norms.

Acknowledging that this change is a personal and emotional process therefore means that mechanisms to support the internal sense of self and confidence are important for MASVAW activists. Mahendra, an activist from the core activist focus group, spoke of the way in which documenting and sharing personal stories enabled self-reflection and mutual learning on 'issues of norms and socialisation' as stories are discussed:

When we create any story, it is when we have learned from other people. When [anonymous] has heard your story, he feels compelled to talk to me, and I feel proud to share my practices. So, our internal support gives us support to take action. If my story is documented and my family members know that they have this story... they can use it to provide feedback to us and to the campaign on our action. The documentation supports our knowledge to support our work with other MASVAW men, and also to reflect upon ourselves and our own work.

This self-reflection was also articulated as important in the process of reconstructing the personal and collective identity of MASVAW activists, and the claiming of a position as an activist for gender equality. The personal and collective connection to an evolving ideology for addressing gendered inequalities and the finding of a space to engage on these issues has been extremely powerful for MASVAW activists. One activist from the core focus group explained that he 'was searching for a platform', and when he came into contact with MASVAW 'there was an opportunity to work on the issue.' Another stated that when he 'came across the concept of MASVAW, which was based on the principle of non-violence' he was 'able to find a sustainable form of gender equality,' which he felt he had not seen before.

Across their different institutional domains, MASVAW members have found strength and solidarity in the partnerships and relationships built through their involvement in the broader movement. The support which the activists provide to each other mitigates the marginalisation and isolation that can evolve as a result of backlash from family, friends, community and institutions, at a deep and personal level. These multiple forms of backlash are often more or less automatic means of resisting activists' individual and collective actions to disrupt the dominant, traditional and accepted rules and norms that govern gender roles and identities. The interactions within MASVAW, however, have enabled activists to become 'more aware and confident' in themselves and their roles in society, as one activist explained, adding that 'this is what enables me to continue with MASVAW.' Activists also noted that where they see change in the lives of people around them, their motivation is strengthened.

4.2.2 Institutional settings as cornerstones for disruptive change

Within MASVAW the relationships with diverse institutions provide an important grounding for the political vision of the campaign, in that 'institutions and legislation are also an issue in holding up the system of patriarchy' in the way that 'they try to maintain the current system,' as one activist put it. As noted above, institutional cultures and narratives, processes and policies – along with associated interests and power asymmetries – reinforce and reproduce gender inequalities in these settings, over time. For MASVAW activists, this reflects the significance of driving change within these structures and they consistently emphasised the importance of institutional engagement for addressing 'the system' of patriarchy. One activist noted that when 'Panchayat and religious institutions are showing support' in addressing violence, then 'this puts pressure on the administration to respond' and where 'the media is supportive... this creates pressure on the police as well.' In other words, whether or not 'reform' is a realistic medium-term goal (notwithstanding the important successes with anti-harassment committees, etc.), institutions can be engaged, influenced and also used against each other strategically.

Activists are cognisant of the complex dynamics at play within these settings, and spoke of the subtle uses of power in the institutional context and how this affects the 'impact' of their activism. Even where the issue of gender inequality is publicly acknowledged, institutional actors can be seen to be working to maintain patriarchal privilege internally. In relation to the media it was asserted that, 'they support in the public, but behind the backdoor then they are patriarchal,' and – within academic settings – whilst male staff were said to 'show concern; on the academic platform, people talk about it – in a politically correct way,' they were said to not always reflect this through their behaviour in the workplace. As such, internal champions

are playing an important role in raising awareness and catalysing engagement on issues of gender inequality within institutional systems. In the university setting, MASVAW activists include university staff in challenging male-centred systems, to address discrimination against women within the workplace. Professor Sanjay, the MASVAW coordinator within the university, was consistently referred to as driving action on addressing gender inequality within institutional policy and practice, as well as engaging students meaningfully on these issues through his curriculum.

Within the different institutional settings, MASVAW's strategies are not disconnected from gender inequality in the social/cultural context, and the interplay between people's personal and professional realities was openly discussed. For example, students work with young men within the community as their peers and in order to reach the 'root of where patriarchal norms and attitudes are maintained,' as one put it. The husband of a female head of the block-level Panchayat (referred to above) also spoke of the interconnection between the personal and political actions of members working towards gender equality. This was also reflected in the specifics of the dynamics of violence and harassment within institutions; for example, where female students report harassment, women staff at the university highlighted that for some 'people put pressure on the family to withdraw the claim' and in one case 'the social pressure put upon her has meant that the case was not reported to the sexual harassment committee.'

Recognising, understanding and exploring these relationships between culture, society, ideology and institutions enables MASVAW's activism to create learning loops: that is, connections drawing lessons about the different social and cultural dimensions of their settings and across institutional domains. Male students within the university setting, for example, related the inequality in women's participation in student elections to the under-representation of women in the Panchayat, and how the same societal norms meant that 'men always think that their leaders should be stronger, and [that] they need that leader to be able to save them, [whilst] they feel that women are not able to take on that role.'

MASVAW's strategies for activism emerging from within these institutional settings take an increasingly holistic approach to working for change, analysing and working with – and/or against – these different social, cultural and institutional dynamics. Activists (including teachers) are working within primary and secondary schools to integrate progressive gender equality education to contribute to the developmental process of students' socialisation, at the very ages when children are establishing their attitudes and behaviours in relation to social norms and values. Students and staff from different academic settings have also emphasised the importance of deepening and extending the way in which concepts of gender and equality get deployed and explored in the pedagogy of teaching institutions, as one feminist academic outlined, 'if they can engage this in their pedagogy, then there is opportunity for this to become embedded over time.' Female students within the Department of Social Work and engaged with MASVAW also argued that 'each department needs to work on the issue of gender discrimination with their students... There are spaces to discuss these issues in the social work department, but not at the wider university level.'

These aspirations and propositions – also echoed by activist academics interviewed – promote a form of disruptive but measured activism that works within the institution (and its rules and processes) to address and challenge the deep structures of inequality embedded in the ideas, norms and values, as well as in differently valued disciplines' divergent forms of 'knowledge power' that the current system maintains.

4.2.3 Gender relations, alliances and transformative change

MASVAW works in solidarity with women and for women's rights agendas. Across the different institutional domains and levels of the movement, women and men are constructing alliances for change, from interpersonal to institutional.

One MASVAW activist from the community setting outlined what he described as a contradiction in men working for gender equality without mutual learning: 'if we only tell [women] what is wrong/right, then we become powerful.' In order for mutual solidarity to be built, he argued, 'there needs to be a space for women also to discuss the issues and... learn.' From this starting point, he explained, men and women can then 'talk to each other and hold each other accountable for gender equality.'

Opportunities for shared learning and action for gender equality have emerged across the campaign. For example, within the university setting, alliances across departments – as well as between male and female staff – are critical for working effectively with students to help disrupt the gendering performances of their pre-existing learning processes and to transform the pedagogy and institutional environment into one of equal opportunities for all. In the community setting this was visible between MASVAW activists and their partners who were engaged in women's economic empowerment organisations, as well as those who were representatives in the Panchayat.

On addressing SGBV, a more formal relationship has been instituted with a number of women's organisations that work to support women survivors of violence, including legal, medical, social mediation and other services. MASVAW works with these organisations both at the level of referral in cases of violence, documentation of cases and also on strategies for primary prevention (such as community sensitisation and participatory education where each partner works with men and women respectively to ensure men and women are engaged within that context) or secondary prevention, through mediation and negotiation in cases of separation or reconciliation.

The relationships with women's organisations were highlighted as integral for MASVAW in order to learn across gendered perspectives, experiences and ideas. Activists argued that, where meaningful partnerships are built, working with women's rights organisations and feminist groups can strengthen the accountability of the campaign and the transformative potentials of the activism. As Pravesh, a MASVAW activist of the core group outlines:

There is a need to work with women's organisations to get the evaluation, identify the need, and help us to monitor the work of MASVAW. A lot of learning comes from feminist groups. If only men were discussing on the issue behind closed doors, then there is suspicion... Which means [we need] close alliance building.

Women's rights representatives and MASVAW activists outlined that central to the integrity of this alliance is mutual learning in order to work towards a kind of change that reflects the challenges and aspirations of both women and men in working towards gender equality. The analysis of issues was seen as being deepened when working together.

MASVAW activists highlighted how they envisage their alliances and partnerships with women's organisations as transformative in that they aim to recognise and promote women's positions of leadership. The MASVAW activists expressed how the representation of women within their partnerships must support new ways of being and doing that enact the egalitarian relationships that they are trying to achieve in wider social contexts, as Santosh, an activist from the core focus group outlined:

In the relationship we learn to acknowledge, celebrate and engage the leadership of the women. We may say that we want leadership of women, but [if] with our body language, or issues... raised... we are not actually accepting this... [that claim rings hollow.] Working with women's organisations helps us to show publicly the recognition of women's leadership.

This point was also highlighted in relation to the political positions of feminist organisations, and although there may be multiple positions on a particular issue, the autonomy of each organisation is respected, if the alliance is able to commit to working towards a common goal. This recognition of and support for women's leadership was prevalent within community and institutional contexts, where MASVAW actions are working with men and women within a village to support women's representation within the Panchayat and within academic institutions to support women's equal participation in decision-making on gender issues.

4.2.4 Challenges and tensions in reciprocal solidarity

The importance of reciprocal solidarity between MASVAW and women's organisations was raised on a number of occasions. However, a number of challenges and tensions were prevalent throughout the discussion.

MASVAW core activists highlighted that ideological questions arise where groups and organisations are engaging women through a 'welfare' approach as opposed to a politicised, rights-based agenda. They argue that there is a tension that these approaches risk diluting a more 'radical approach to politicise masculinity, and challenge power structures,' in the words of one activist. He expressed concern about how 'these welfare approaches can also be conservative and promote traditional values of being a woman.' This notion of a patriarchal co-option of a 'progressive' welfare approach was echoed by a feminist scholar and close long-term critical friend of MASVAW, Madhu, who argued that 'there are a lot of organisations working with women, but in a very limited way, just violence – domestic or child abuse –, [but] not patriarchy and masculinity.' She emphasised that women's organisations need to be engaged in a dialogue on breaking down binaries of masculinity and femininity and ensuring a focus on 'how we can change the situation for men and women, towards gender equality.'

An activist from the core MASVAW group working in the university setting outlined that although many central universities have funded 'Centres for Women's Studies, women in leadership positions within these contexts can be very traditional and patriarchal and they find me too radical, because I openly discuss patriarchy and sexuality, etc., with the students.' He argued that their beliefs promote women to be 'educated and earning, but they shouldn't be challenging the system.' Also, it was argued that 'with some colleagues at the university, they may dislike gender-based hierarchies at work, but not be analysing their own behaviour and rituals supporting the system.' These concerns were raised both by men within, and women allied to, the MASVAW campaign and they highlight a keen understanding of how progressive agendas can get co-opted and depoliticised within official processes of institutionalisation, and a deep commitment to the integrity of the political project of challenging deeply held normative patriarchal beliefs around gendered roles and identities.

Tensions also arose from the perspective of some women's organisations whose representatives highlighted that although there is a commitment to transformative partnerships, women cannot be full 'members' of the campaign. Rather, critical friends and allies. Some asked about what this might mean for the future of MASVAW's work with women, or about how women might be recognised more meaningfully, with their knowledge and contributions represented more meaningfully within the campaign. A number of representatives from women's organisations also highlighted the importance of women and men coming together as a common group, and for women to be recognised as a part of the campaign, although with recognition that the space for men within the campaign to critically reflect and raise consciousness 'as men' remains essential to their purpose.

It was shared by MASVAW activists that there is a challenge of suspicion from some women's organisations 'that may think that groups like MASVAW are not legitimate,' or are

working towards 'a protectionist as opposed to a transformative approach.' They shared a number of concerns that have been raised by women's groups, including a fear that men's groups may try to divert the resources that are available for the women's organisations and that 'in the patriarchal structure, will not these men's groups try to use this network for their own profit; won't they start working towards the men's benefit?' Furthermore, a related fear was whether this might 'contribute to the depletion of the work with women.' A MASVAW activist in the community setting also highlighted that 'working with men is easier!' and that it is integral that MASVAW reflects on this in creating an enabling environment for women's mobilisation, asking:

How does this [MASVAW activism] relate to transforming the social context in order to enable women's empowerment?... for women to go out of the house for three days of training this is almost impossible, even though their economic opportunity and education has increased.

Activists also spoke of the importance of analysis of intersecting inequalities in their work, such as age-related differences, in order to ensure that the rights of all are realised. A community activist highlighted how work towards gender equality often concentrates on women and men of productive age and that 'through the empowerment processes, care work for older people is being left out' and that 'there is a need to work with children on gender equality.' These impacts on diverse sections of society are an important concern for MASVAW, and one member spoke of examples where activists are working with 'dalit groups and child rights [groups] that are confused about gender issues.' In these instances intersectional analyses have been used as a way of identifying how different power inequalities are interrelated, and to find common agendas on challenging patriarchy.

4.2.5 Sustaining an evolving movement for gender equality

The shift towards a focus on patriarchal inequality reflects the campaign's commitment to a longer-term social project. In that sense, and the fact that the campaign sits outside of an organisational boundary, this means that the trajectory of the campaign is long-term and one that is embedded in societal processes of change. This importance of time is shown in the way that MASVAW activists are evolving the campaign vision and mission in response to their understanding of the changing context, and how the articulation of patriarchy responds to new forms of injustice and marginalisation as power orders change, for example in the contemporary politics of nationalism and modernity unfolding in diverse ways across the state.

As an autonomous campaign, core activists emphasise the flexibility and fluidity of MASVAW and how this enables possibilities of working in ways that the activists feel most meaningfully affect change. As one activist put it: 'For NGOs they need continuous resources and reporting, which depend on their own programmes.' However, access to the systems, structures and resources of formal civil society organisations can be valuable for different forms of capacity building and strategic engagement. The sustainability of the campaign therefore relates deeply to the nature of internal dynamics and alliance building, and how this supports the resources and capabilities of campaign activists and partners.

Alliances are integral to the dynamism, reach and depth of the network. MASVAW's alliances reflect a theory of change that suggests a mimicking of the systemic nature of patriarchal power and control and the need to work across multiple actors, networks and institutions to infiltrate and influence discourse, to challenge and shift power in affecting change. Allies in the feminist movement have become strong partners and have contributed to major gains in knowledge and influence, where those partnerships have been robust. In other relationships, this has meant working with institutions such as the media to challenge their position and connect them – or individual media professionals – to the campaign ideology. The alliances

in MASVAW have been established over many years in order to build the trust necessary for collective action to affect change. Moving forward, MASVAW is asking how partnerships can be built with diverse actors in order to ensure that the intersections between class, caste, religion, ethnicity, age and sexuality are engaged in addressing the inequalities that penetrate social contexts, and people's everyday lives.

The importance of ongoing learning and reflection in the evolution of the MASVAW idea is critical if the campaign is to respond to a dynamic and adaptive conceptualisation of patriarchy. One MASVAW activist in the core group articulated the learning journey through the campaign thus: 'When the work with men started, we were working with men for gender equality. However, this is about men *IN* gender equality, not *FOR* gender equality. It is not work with men for women only, but for men's own relationship with gender.'

Another activist shared his thoughts on some of the barriers that they experience as a result of the patriarchal system in their own process of change: 'Sometimes we men are going to change ourselves, but our partner is very patriarchal, so sometimes that change can be used to increase men's power as well. So, there is need to challenge women's patriarchal constructs in our lives.' The MASVAW campaign is grounded in supportive relationships of critical reflection and learning, starting from the point of engagement for men joining the campaign. As one activist explained: 'the participatory strategies that we use, engage the context in the way that the participants are thinking about change.' This builds ownership and understanding, and over time nurtures an environment of sharing and learning.

MASVAW activists articulated, however, that the learning journey enabled through this research study has itself highlighted the importance of cycles of learning, reflection and action within the campaign to ensure that strategies, ideas and relationships are refreshed, challenged and redefined, as learning develops. One activist outlined that 'through evaluation and reflection it will help in thinking about how we use that methodology in the future,' whilst another added that 'we need to ensure that the outputs and learning from earlier events are implemented in the next set of events to ensure that they are creating influence in the way that we are working.'

The question of documentation and knowledge production was a recurring theme across the institutional settings and stakeholder groups. MASVAW activists from the core focus group spoke of some of the challenges they face in documentation. One activist stated that, although documentation is important for informing the strategies of the campaign, 'our priority is to document the work of the organisation that is funded; and this work is not funded... so it is difficult to find the time to do the documentation.' Another outlined that 'the strategies are also changing very quickly, so it can be very challenging to document how and why you are making a particular decision.' A woman representative from the university setting highlighted the importance of understanding the change MASVAW is contributing to, and she asked: 'Is harassment increasing, or is access to information supporting men and women to speak out?' She argued that understanding this more deeply is important for shaping future work. Women's organisations and MASVAW activists also highlighted research as an important learning strategy within the campaign; specifically to document the partnerships between women's organisations and MASVAW more meaningfully in order to learn what enables, constrains and sustains these alliances.

Mobilising knowledge flows between activists over the lifecycle of the campaign was outlined as important for ensuring that activists and partners are growing with the evolving ideological vision. One MASVAW founding member highlighted that continued training and capacity building on concepts and critical reflection are necessary, for both supporting MASVAW activists over time, but also in enabling new constituencies of activists to emerge. Another founding member of MASVAW spoke of the challenges for new members 'in our process of change towards taking a political and patriarchal [*sic.*] approach,' in that without adequate

training and support 'they don't have an idea of the sequence of discussion, they talk about gender, but they are not able to talk about patriarchy as a root cause of violence.' He added that 'there is a need to organise continued training with our activists in order to be able to understand these issues.'

This was corroborated by Madhu, a feminist and critical friend of MASVAW, who raised the concern that 'in the university and college settings, sometimes students just come jumping and join without having conceptual clarity of what they are doing.' It was suggested that for a long-term effort, mentoring is important, and that learning must be supported by accessible materials in Hindi. Her aspiration is 'to see MASVAW in the future, [as] a strong group of men able, critical, and sensitive asset to spread the message.' She emphasised that, since this is a long-term commitment, that means working 'intensely and consistently with a specific group of men and boys to ensure that this is deeply embedded in their work. The short engagements in NGOs do not have the same effect.'

Strategies that were identified that support the ongoing learning of MASVAW activists relate to their engagement with the wider social, political and cultural context. Seminars debating concepts and issues of gender equality, and trainings on gender analysis led by feminist organisations, were outlined by a number of activists as platforms through which knowledge has been constructed. Furthermore, in the university setting, students are encouraged to get involved in action research at the NGO level, which both contributes to the work of the organisation and enables the students to deepen their understanding of the issues, as well as to build their capacity to undertake research. Similarly, both male and female students are encouraged to support women's rights organisations to write up case studies as a way of consciousness-raising on the issues of patriarchy in society. Once again, this strategy reflects the interplay between the different institutional domains and provides opportunities for experiential learning that makes these linkages in practice.

MASVAW activists in the core focus group, and who have been involved in the campaign from the outset, spoke passionately about the importance of growing new leadership to support the sustenance of the campaign. Personal connections are central to the strength of the MASVAW campaign, and one activist identified that mentoring relationships ensure the 'responsibility to support the understanding of the issue, [and] building the leadership capacity in the junior members to sustain the capacities in the campaign.' He identified this as a responsibility of longer-standing activists to 'create space for the junior members' to develop within the campaign.

5 Discussion: elements for success, obstacles and ways forward

In this section we summarise our analysis of findings in Section 4, with reference to the first two research questions and through the lens of our theoretical framing in Section 3. From this we focus on our third and final (synthetic and forward-looking) research question for drawing particular attention to some of the key ‘enablers’ and obstacles, as well as suggesting potential solutions. We then close the report with a brief conclusion, with key recommendations for future practice and learning, in Section 6.

Here we address the question ‘*What in particular contributes to successes, in which ways, and what missed opportunities can be identified to strengthen the approach?*’ To address it we focus on two constituent sub-questions:

- What are some of the key elements of success and the most important building blocks?
- What identified constraints could be addressed with alternative or additional approaches?

5.1 Building and nurturing activism across different settings

The reality of MASVAW’s activism is that there are multiple entry points for engaging in and pathways for nurturing individual and collective action. Within this complex picture there are some important elements that connect personal experience, critical reflection, political action and structural change. As outlined in the following example, it is these dimensions that we will explore in detail below, emphasising with whom, and through what strategies change can happen.

Box 5.1 Building blocks for mobilising activists in the university setting

In the university setting, key elements of success in terms of entry points for mobilising men were the ability to reach students, as well as peer teachers, with an analysis of the problem of gendered violence *as experienced* in their daily lives, *but interpreted and backed up with theory* and reflective learning. That is, engaging critical young minds within the setting of the university as a strategic institution of learning and progressive thought. Starting with (i) addressing specific types of gendered violence directly, but then (ii) linking it to actual personal examples from activists’ own lives, as well as (iii) exploring ‘root causes’ through taking a structural approach to analysing patriarchy were key features in this inroad to mobilising these men, and turning many into activists.

5.1.1 Politicising the personal

The importance of disclosing *personal experiences* to peers and ‘*role modelling*’ how to engage differently as men on the issue has been a key building block for mobilising men. It has been facilitated by combinations of: making the issue personal as well as one of social justice; with not equating the violence and oppression to men or boys; yet keeping an uncompromising focus on the systemic nature of male supremacy and privilege. Judging from activists’ accounts, building such *critical consciousness* appears to be engendering a sense of *nonconforming agency* and *solidarity* in the response; that is, solidarity with women and girls as well as with other men and boys dissenting from patriarchal inequity. As a result,

however, activists very often also face isolation, resentment and rejection from family and community as a backlash, described above.

Another important aspect of the personal and solidarity-based approach to challenging structurally embedded traditions and patriarchal inequalities relates to *how gender-based oppression becomes seen as intersecting, cutting across and working through caste and social class in their own lives*. This is brought out by pointing to – often through members’ personal experiences and examples – how friendships and intimate relationships across these axes of social difference can illustrate solidarities transcending social difference and injustice by analogy, how it can bring home the visceral reality of multiple forms of discrimination (or privilege), and how it can unify their analysis of patriarchal oppression and violence as structurally embedded in hierarchical relations of supremacy and subordination.

Acknowledging that this change is a *personal and emotional* process therefore means that mechanisms to support the internal sense of self and confidence are important in the process of reconstructing both personal and collective identities as MASVAW activists, and in the claiming of a position as an activist for gender equality. MASVAW is itself made up of informal bonds; a form of ‘glue’ that binds the relationship among like-minded activists. This in turn has contributed to activists becoming more confident in themselves and in their roles in society.

Across their different institutional domains and local settings, they have found strength and solidarity in the partnerships and relationships built through their involvement in the broader movement. This strength enables *collective action* in response to specific cases and in support of those exposed to gendered violence and injustice, often women. Their activism is embodied in their way of engaging with the world and it enables each activist to connect to specific processes of complex change most relevant to them. They also noted that where they see change in the lives of people around them and feeling able to support others their motivation is strengthened.

5.1.2 Constituencies of change

Another important ‘inroad’ for mobilising members and expanding the movement has been a *focus on ‘youth’*; particularly visible in the community outreach work, both in and out of school. Activists (including teachers) are working within primary and secondary schools to integrate progressive gender equality education to contribute to the developmental process of students’ socialisation. There are strong links with the university work here, as many of the community activists have graduated from that setting and retain strong, regular contact across the network. The framing of young men as *agents of change* involves a number of aspects: one is their more open minds as to questioning traditional gender roles and inequalities (especially before becoming too set in terms of families, work commitments and self image) – a type of demographic effect, with more enlightened young cohorts gradually shifting prevailing norms, by numbers as they mature.

Another dimension to this appears to be tapping into a gradually changing make-up of families, with smaller and more nuclear families becoming more possible in Uttar Pradesh, as compared to the larger, more traditional set-up where young families typically reside with the young husband’s parents, or extended natal family. Here, again, role modelling is seen as important by the activists, as they can point to real benefits and improvements in their own lives and relationships to validate their dissidence from tradition, and point to other peers stepping out of old norms to demonstrate the possibility of different and more mutually supportive intimate relationships in families, despite resistance. Within this intergenerational dimension role modelling across generations is also important, as more senior MASVAW members also appear to provide a deep sense of support and inspiration for the younger men.

5.1.3 Institutional transformations for gender justice

Yet another key feature of MASVAW's approach is the way that *specific institutions are targeted, and used*, not merely as 'sites' where to carry out the work, but also as institutions with their own implications for gender justice. By addressing inequities within the specific institutions, such as the university, schools or the local Panchayats, members are both *using* their institutional positions to leverage impact through the institution, as well as *challenging* their institutions to address materially discriminating structural injustices within them. Activists in the *university*, for example, are using their role in teaching to make visible the structural dimensions of male privilege and discrimination against women and girls in order to raise awareness and recruit new members.

Activists in the Panchayats are using the provisions of women's representation in these local bodies to support issues of concern to women representatives (e.g. through lobbying other male representatives), as well as supporting women to utilise the space of the forum to become heard, within this traditionally male-centred public space. On the other hand, the university activists have challenged their own institution to establish anti-harassment committees, for example, whilst Panchayat members and school teachers in the community have challenged and lobbied their institutions to provide for gender-sensitive and safe, separate lavatory facilities for women and girls; in both cases, further reducing *de facto* material forms of gender discrimination within the institutions.

Using institutional settings and processes both as cornerstones *and* as levers for disruptive change provides an important grounding for the political vision of the campaign, in that institutions and regulation also hold up systems of patriarchal gender inequality. Furthermore, as noted, institutional cultures and male ordered framings of evidence and knowledge, their processes and policies – along with associated political interests and power asymmetries – reinforce and reproduce gender inequalities in these settings, over time. Whether or not major 'reform' is a realistic medium-term goal (notwithstanding the important successes, such as with anti-harassment committees, etc.), institutions can be engaged, influenced and also used strategically against each other, as discussed in Section 4.2.2.

Activists are broadly aware of the complex dynamics at play within their settings, and spoke of the subtle uses of power in the institutional context and how this affects the 'impact' of their activism. Even where small advances get co-opted or compromised, new dimensions of the problem, however, can get revealed and contested in light of such failures (e.g. women not being heard effectively in the Panchayat or students reporting sexual harassment and seeking justice instead facing resistance and pressure for compromise).

5.1.4 Gendered relations and alliances of change

MASVAW's work in solidarity with women – and for women's rights agendas – provides a *gender-relational dynamic*, crucial to their political approach. Across the settings studies, women and men are constructing alliances for change, from informal and interpersonal to institutional ones. Activists described the logic for this as rooted in the contradiction in men working for gender equality without mutual learning with women. This allying with women and women's organisations is critical for MASVAW in order to learn across gendered perspectives; appreciating manifestations of male supremacy as informed by specific experiences of subordination, or male privilege from a perspective of facing discrimination; the analysis of the issues in gender injustice was seen as being deepened when working together. It is also important to note that a number of women interviewed highlighted the importance of women and men coming together as a common group, although with recognition that the space for men within the campaign also remains essential to its purpose.

In the university setting, alliances between male and female staff – as well as across departments – are critical for working effectively with students to help disrupt the gendering

performances of their pre-existing learning processes and build a learning environment of equal opportunities. In the community setting MASVAW men support their partners, who are engaged in women's economic empowerment organisations, as well as those who are representatives in the Panchayat. In addition, formal relationships have been instituted with a number of women's organisations that work specifically to support women survivors of violence, collaborating at the level of referral in cases of violence, documentation of cases and also on strategies for primary prevention or secondary prevention, through mediation and negotiation in cases of separation or reconciliation. Partnerships with women's organisations were also seen as transformative in that they aim to recognise and promote women's positions of leadership, which shifts the male activists' perceptions of their own types of leadership roles in agitating for gender justice.

5.2 Structures of constraint to the process of change

In all the settings studied, *resistance and backlash* to MASVAW men agitating for changing gender norms came from both families (for activist teachers and students alike) and their broader home communities, on the one hand, and from some peer students, teachers and Panchayat members, on the other. Furthermore, it is clear that the formal institutions within which the activists (and students) live and work provided sources of *institutional resistance*, sometimes co-opting progressive agendas or narratives to shore up their basic day-to-day functioning. We saw several examples of the former, where activists faced ridicule or estrangement from families and communities, though mitigated by peer solidarity, as discussed.

In the case of institutional resistance, the university itself provides an example of an institutional setting where MASVAW has addressed institutional management around policies and procedures with the establishment of 'progressive' anti-sexual harassment committees – as an institutionally sanctioned way of holding perpetrators to account. Yet, it appears that students and some staff see the function of these anti-harassment committees as having been *co-opted* to primarily safeguard the reputation of the institution itself, with both the disincentives for reporting and pursuing cases and the overwhelmingly common outcome of 'compromise'. Whilst we did not get the chance to pursue the internal workings of the Panchayats in sufficient detail, it was clear from women representatives met that even a 50 per cent proportional representation was seen as insufficient for them to be heard.

The functioning of the institutions cannot be appreciated in isolation from the social and cultural dimensions of the settings or the ideological underpinnings of the patriarchal features of this social order, and it is, of course, also conditioned by the cultural and social norms and traditions within the broader community. For example, MASVAW activists described the common practice that husbands of women representatives often take up their seat in the Panchayat, to represent them, when they are not available (e.g. due to traditional feminised care 'responsibilities'). Indeed, our interaction with the husband of the female head of the block Panchayat during field interviews demonstrated the ease with which he was seen as coming in to speak in her place.

MASVAW faces a number of challenges and tensions in the area of allying with women's organisations. It was suggested that many groups and organisations are engaging women through a 'welfare' approach, as opposed to through a clear feminist political agenda. This was described as a patriarchal co-option of a 'progressive' cause and it was suggested that many women's organisations need to be engaged in a dialogue on breaking down binaries of masculinity and femininity. It is important to note that these concerns were raised both by men within, and by women allied to, the MASVAW campaign.

Another challenge noted in relating to women's organisations was the suspicion from some that groups like MASVAW are not legitimate, or that men's groups may divert the resources

away from women's organisations. As working with men is easier for MASVAW members, reflecting on how they can best work to transform the social context in order to enable women's empowerment is clearly important. Some representatives of women's organisations allied to MASVAW highlighted that although there is a commitment to transformative partnerships, women cannot be full members of the campaign, asking what this might mean for the future of MASVAW's work with women.

6 Recommendations and implications for future practice

MASVAW's sophisticated recognition of the nuanced interplay between structure and agency in the process of change and their commitment to making the reconstruction of gender order and opposing male supremacist ideology a personal struggle are impressive. The structural and dynamic analysis is not only informing the personal politics and activism of the members, but has also helped them to root the campaign within institutions and to start working on – and across – structures and cultures dynamically. This ideological integrity no doubt stands them in good stead, particularly in the face of backlash and where support for the idea of gender equality, whilst ostensibly accepted, is often co-opted within a paternalist mode and within the parameters of pre-existing institutional interests and logics.

Patriarchal structures, norms and values are deeply embedded in Uttar Pradesh, with feudalism and traditional beliefs sustaining their impact and influence even within a changing context. The 'dismantling' of patriarchy therefore for MASVAW is a social and political project, and one that must be sustained over time. This final section therefore maps out recommendations for MASVAW and peer campaigning networks, alongside broader implications for policy and practice on the issue of men's collective action in addressing SGBV.

6.1 Recommendations for MASVAW and peer activist networks

- The interplay between *the dynamics of the evolving ideology of 'dismantling patriarchy'* and *the structure of the network, patterns of collaboration and the political 'we' of the campaign need further consideration*. A key question for the future is: 'To what extent does "men" need to remain the defining – or exclusive – category?' This re-visioning and realigning of partnerships should be in dialogue with women to ensure that the process of change reflects the gender-relational approach that is being engaged. This also involves the difficult area for MASVAW in challenging how some women in this field are themselves compromised by patriarchal power structures.
- *MASVAW should build further on the approach of combining a dynamic structural analysis with personalising the political examples from activists' own lives*. Part of this may involve developing accessible materials in Hindi for breaking down complex ideas with real-life illustrations. As part of this, further development of practical methods for exploring intersectionality was flagged as a need.
- *The importance of analysing intersecting inequalities has been highlighted in the MASVAW campaign*, such as age-related differences. Care work for older people and work with children on gender equality were both identified as areas in need of development. For example, some activists are working with *dalit* groups and child rights groups which are often unclear about issues of gender inequities. Intersectional analyses have been used as a way of working on this, but further development of practical methods for this was flagged as a need.
- *MASVAW could build on its advances in addressing various institutions, by developing ways of monitoring and documenting – in patriarchy audits – instances of co-option of women's empowerment or harassment policies (for example), to hold the institutions to account more publicly, whilst protecting the safety of its members*. This could possibly be done by drawing on peers across institutional settings, such as in the media or through student projects.
- *Balancing further growth of MASVAW with sustainable renewal and support for new members coming into the campaign needs careful attention*. The impact of

MASVAW's work can be seen in relation to the issue-creation and agenda-setting (focused on change in institutions as well as behaviours at multiple systemic levels). It is important to work on developing approaches on how these ideas are transmitted to new members. The use of educational institutions for nurturing younger members is both strategic and appropriate but, as the campaign branches into other institutions, retaining close mentoring connections is important. The role of personal relationships in MASVAW's agility and peer support in the face of patriarchal backlash is critical here.

- *Investing in innovative ways of understanding the dynamism and nurturing the sustainability of the campaign is integral for future action.* Action research approaches, for example, could enable further in-depth exploration of what is currently working, as well as enabling 'experiments' with and exploring of new ways of working. The issue of transitions between nodes of the network, for example students into leaders, and wider 'alumnus' is important for locating pathways of empowerment for activists.

6.2 Implications for broader policy and practice

MASVAW is challenging the meanings that underlie key policy debates and dominant notions about gender in development in India. This dissident knowledge is relevant at multiple levels, and the norms they are challenging at the local level are also reinforced in national and global discourse on women's empowerment.

Key challenges that MASVAW is making have important implications for how development could be 'done' better. The wider policy and practice audience are encouraged to draw lessons from this, such as:

- With little current constructive engagement of men in policies and laws against gender discrimination, policies – such as on sexual and reproductive health and care – should frame the role of men as equal and responsible partners.
- There is a need to create an enabling environment in the cultures and systems of institutions, for progressive policies to be effective, especially on GBV.
- Policy needs to create the opportunity to support progressive strategies for sustained awareness amongst men to challenge inequitable systems and cultures driving SGBV – approaches like MASVAW's – and political strategies to challenge inequitable systems that maintain oppressive attitudes and behaviours addressing the structural violence and institutional inequalities which are fundamental in shaping SGBV.
- Do not treat men and boys as a homogenous group – recognising the intersecting markers of identity and experience is important in both engaging men and boys as agents of change and exploring the personal connection to political action.
- Resist facile frameworks where 'men's engagement' projects become instrumentalised and co-opted through managerial notions like 'men-streaming' gender and reductive notions of evidence and planning that come with large-scale, officially mandated women's development programmes.
- Challenge the hierarchical and divisive instrumental and binary constructions of gender and reform the development sector's attachment to the flawed and heteronormative gender binary, with its reductive misconception that 'funding gender equality is equivalent to funding women's groups'.
- Enable and support pro-feminist work building a consciousness that men can and often do have personal investments in challenging oppressive gender orders, in direct collaboration with women's organisations.
- Protect funding for progressive, effective work on women's empowerment; but crucially,
- Escalate investments in gender equality work overall, as it is fundamental to social (and societal) development and to achieve goals of social justice for both women and men.

Annex 1 Evolving collaborations to dismantle patriarchy

In 2007, Jerker Edström linked up with Andrea Cornwall at IDS, and consultant Alan Greig, to engage a broad group of thinkers and activists on '*politicising masculinities*' in gender and development (Esplen and Greig 2008; Cornwall *et al.* 2011).

Meanwhile, CHSJ had grown out of the feminist NGO SAHAYOG in India, establishing itself as an NGO and starting to support activist chapters, such as MASVAW (also growing out of SAHAYOG), over different parts of India in the early 2000s (Das and Singh 2014).

After a first meeting between Satish Kumar Singh and Edström at the first ever Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys, in Rio de Janeiro, 2009 (jointly running a skills-building session on activism with men), IDS and CHSJ partnered with two other organisations from Kenya and Uganda, and with consultant Alan Greig, to develop and implement a two-year United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-funded programme on Mobilising Men in Practice: Challenging Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Institutional Settings (Greig with Edström 2012).

Case studies in this series are also being undertaken with these partners: Men for Gender Equality Now (MEGEN) in Kenya and the Refugee Law Project (RLP) in Uganda.

The partnership continued under a Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)-funded programme on Gender, Power and Sexuality in which the organisations continued to document the work and deepen the analysis of men and gender inequality towards a refreshed and more explicitly pro-feminist focus on 'Undressing Patriarchy' as fundamental to grappling with men's roles in building gender equality; not merely as structural or immovable, but also as political, dynamic and historically evolving in contested engagements (Das and Singh 2014; Edström, Das and Dolan 2014; Hawkins *et al.* 2013).

Annex 2 MASVAW's origins, emergence and formation

The following presentation of MASVAW's origins, emergence and formation has been reproduced with permission from the authors with limited editing of the original grey literature (MASVAW 2012a).

What is MASVAW?

The conscience of a shared responsibility for dealing with and possibly eliminating such acts of victimisation stirred into action a movement called Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW). It is a campaign, a movement – not a project or an NGO – which gives both the strength and uniqueness to it. It is a relatively new concept in India – working with **men** on violence against women. Its members are determined to bring about a change within themselves and in other men to raise their voices against the traditional patriarchal values and challenge the stereotypical notions of what it means to be a man.

MASVAW attempts to provide men with a space to explore a different way of 'being men', and to understand how equitable gender relations can benefit both men and women. It encourages men to confront traditional attitudes regarding gender roles and exercise of male power and become agents for change in their community. It also helps men recognise the myriad forms of violence against women, accept personal responsibility, and learn non-violent ways to manage their anger and interpersonal conflict. MASVAW men operate from the principle that men, being the primary holder in patriarchy, also need to be the primary agent of change in establishing a gender just society. They promote change in male-dominated norms in the community and institutions such as the home, the workplace, educational institutions and Panchayats (local councils).

MASVAW men speak up for women, think about women, and work with women. Its members include youth in university and colleges, rural adolescents, school and university teachers, people in media, social activists, academics, and local elected councillors in rural areas. It trains and supports them to make changes at a personal level, form groups to raise their voices against violence against women and gender inequality through agitations, campaigns, media reactions, public debates, discussions, workshops and seminars.

The origins of MASVAW

The MASVAW campaign evolved within SAHAYOG, which has been promoting women empowerment in the framework of rights since its inception in 1992. Besides being the secretariat of MASVAW network, SAHAYOG also functions as a resource centre for work with men and boys.

In 2001, a year-long campaign, called HISAAB or Hinsa Sahna Band (Stop Tolerating Violence – Demand Accountability), was concluded by women's groups in Uttar Pradesh. It aimed to make violence against women an issue of public concern so that the state and citizens could be made to take cognisance of the enormity of the violation of women's human rights. During the campaign many participating men realised that violence against women was not merely a 'women's issue' but a larger social issue and that men have a bigger role and responsibility towards stopping gender-based violence.

In October 2002, the consultation in the capital city Lucknow of Uttar Pradesh gave concrete shape to the realisation that men must also be actively involved in opposing violence against

women both as individuals and as part of institutions. The consultation also tried to demystify how these organisations ensured gender equality in their own management. After the consultation, a series of workshops covering gender violence against women, sexuality and masculinity were organised.

The consultation highlighted that before involving men and boys in a movement towards gender equality, there is a need to first understand them and their perspectives. It was also important to understand the consequences of women empowerment – How do boys and men and girls and women deal with empowerment, how does it change gender relations? How do women change because of empowerment and how do men react to it? These discussions resulted in the need for all the participating organisations to work together to find a collective answer.

A follow-up workshop was organised in December 2002 with 42 men. By then it was clear that personal development and self-reflection was the first key towards the desired change in the society. It was also realised that men create restrictions and societal pressures. Hence, there was a need to reduce the privileges enjoyed by boys and men, by showing them advantages of being gender equitable and help them reduce their dominance by sharing power equally with women and girls.

A platform was needed to raise these issues publicly and advocate them with the authorities. The need for a new identity led to the formation of a group named Men's Association for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW). The word 'association' in the name was seen as inappropriate by many people as it might lead to a power struggle with the women's groups. Therefore, it was replaced by the word 'action' and thus MASVAW is now known as Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women. The focus was on self-action, highlighting the need to change the self first.

Thus, the network MASVAW was launched with 49 NGO partners in Uttar Pradesh and four in the Uttarakhand state (before 2001, Uttarakhand was a part of undivided Uttar Pradesh state). The process of the campaign began with meeting the rural youth, students in schools and colleges, the Panchayats' (local elected councils) representatives, and the owners of small and big industrial enterprises employing women.

Initially this group held trainings for men, where they realised that not all men are violent and they certainly were not born violent. But it was also true that men remained quiet and did not speak out against violence happening around them; that in a sense legitimised violence against women.

How MASVAW took shape

Within one year of MASVAW's inception, it was realised that the group's activities needed to go beyond training of NGOs. MASVAW needed to work directly with the target groups and stakeholders, i.e. men. This meant that first MASVAW needed to find ways in which it could connect with men and then find entry points to work with them. Keeping this in mind, MASVAW's initial strategy was to work with the following men:

- men as perpetrators, targeting their behaviour with women
- men in peer groups, targeting their behaviour with friends
- men in positions of authority.

To take this strategy forward, MASVAW identified youth, men in the middle and older age groups, and eventually young boys and adolescents.

Today, around 175 voluntary organisations, 20 education institutions (universities, degree colleges, intermediate colleges, technical institutes), media representatives of mainstream media from 20 districts and around 500 other individuals including social activists, advocates,

teachers, students, etc., from 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh, India are members of MASVAW. It is a unique campaign by male activists who have decided to bring about a change within themselves and in other males to remove gender injustice. It now includes youth in university and colleges, rural adolescents, school and university teachers, media people, social activists, academicians and local elected councillors in rural areas.

MASVAW members are proving that even in the most patriarchal society, there are men who are non-violent and want to establish a gender equitable relationship. MASVAW provides them support to be able to take a personal and where necessary, a public stand against violence against women in their society. It has created an environment of understanding and warmth where boys and men can vent their emotions.

MASVAW also attempts to change social norms around gender inequality and violence against women through the 'Sixteen Days of Activism' and grass-roots International Women's Day celebrations, as well as innovative approaches with young men and boys in educational institutions. Youth are encouraged to debate, paint, discuss films and engage with other youth and men towards building a deeper understanding of the issues of violence against women and gender inequality. MASVAW has also been mobilising media persons who could shape public opinion, and tried to convince them that sensational reporting of crime against women needs changing in favour of gender justice.

At the organisational level, what has worked for MASVAW is its informal structure, which gives it flexibility. Working at different levels, in cities and villages, with different age groups and classes, has broadened its reach. MASVAW believes in involving boys at a young age and influencing them with values of gender sensitivity and non-violence. Girls and women also take part in the campaign, helping both the sexes to learn about mutually respectful relationships. Supporting boys and men in this journey has been crucial.

Being part of global networks on working with boys and men to promote gender equality and to end violence, such as MenEngage, has given the campaign a global identity and international exposure.

Annex 3 Focus group and interview question guide

This interview schedule was adapted to reflect the contextual specificity of each stakeholder group:

1. How do gender differences/inequalities look in this context?
2. What types of harassment and gender-related violence occur amongst people here?
3. Has this changed at all over the last ten years?
4. How do different community members/institutions respond to this?
5. How does your work relate to addressing these issues?
6. How did you learn about MASVAW?
7. What is MASVAW's role in working with your organisation/group/this context?
8. How relevant and appropriate is it to this context?
9. How would you describe MASVAW's partnerships? Are these important, and why?
10. Does MASVAW's work make a difference here? If it does, how? (What works well and what doesn't work so well?)
11. Who is being helped and benefits from this work? Are some people being left out?
12. Are there (other) missed opportunities here which could strengthen the approach?

Annex 4 Ethical consent form

Collective action with men and boys against gender-based violence in India Consent form to participate in the study

STUDY DESCRIPTION (AIMS, CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES OF STUDY)

This study aims to explore – through an in-depth case study – where men play or have played significant roles in relation to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in India. In turn, this is intended to help improve information access and to inform strategies of relevant actors (including activists and policymakers) addressing this issue, with meaningful involvement of men and boys, and to facilitate the forging and strengthening of strategic alliances for gender justice to address SGBV. In addition to India, similar projects are or will be conducted in five other countries, including Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Sierra Leone.

In all countries the work is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The project is conducted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK and the Centre for Health and Social Justice.

We are not employed by DFID or any other government or funding organisation.

INFORMATION ON CONSENT

We are asking: *'Would you agree to participate in this research by answering some questions in a group discussion?'*

LIST OF RESEARCHER AGREEMENTS

- You are under *no obligation to agree* or to give up your time.
- You are also *free to stop* answering the questions and (*ask us*) to leave at any point.
- If you are agreeable, you can *decide whether you want what you say to be kept anonymous* (the latter case in which we would not link your name to your comments in the report).
- If you do not mind letting us link your name to your statements, you can choose for us to use just your first name or your full name.
- All documentation *notes are kept confidential* (i.e. we keep the notes and papers documenting the learning safely and nobody else has access to them).
- If you are HIV-positive or a survivor of violence and you choose to tell us of your status, this information will be kept strictly confidential, unless you expressly indicate otherwise.

Please ask us/me for more explanation now if there are any points that you are unsure about.

I agree to participate in the study:

Signature/thumbprint:
Date:

Signature of documenter:

Tick as appropriate:

- I do not mind if my first name and surname are linked to my comments
- I do not mind if my first name is linked to my comments
- I do not mind if my comments are recorded
- I wish what I say to remain anonymous
- Other – please tell us how you would like to be quoted/referred to: _____

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