

# Formal versus Informal Help: Impact of SAFE on Help Seeking by Physically Abused Women in Dhaka Slums

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# Background

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- 15% - 71% of ever-partnered women experience physical or sexual violence worldwide (WHO, 2005)
- Disclosure is generally low (21-66%) (WHO, 2005)
- Though formal sources of support are emphasized and promoted use of these sources are lower than that of informal sources
- Evidence is thin on how interventions effect help seeking

# The context

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- Physical IPV in Bangladesh:
  - National rate 49% (BDHS, 2007)
  - Rate in urban slums 62% (UHS, 2006)
- 66% never disclosed their experience
- Only 7% ever sought help from any sources
- 2% sought help from a formal source (Naved et al., 2006)

# Objective

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This paper aims to explore the help seeking pattern of physically abused women and see the impact of SAFE on help seeking

# Growing up safe & healthy (SAFE): The intervention

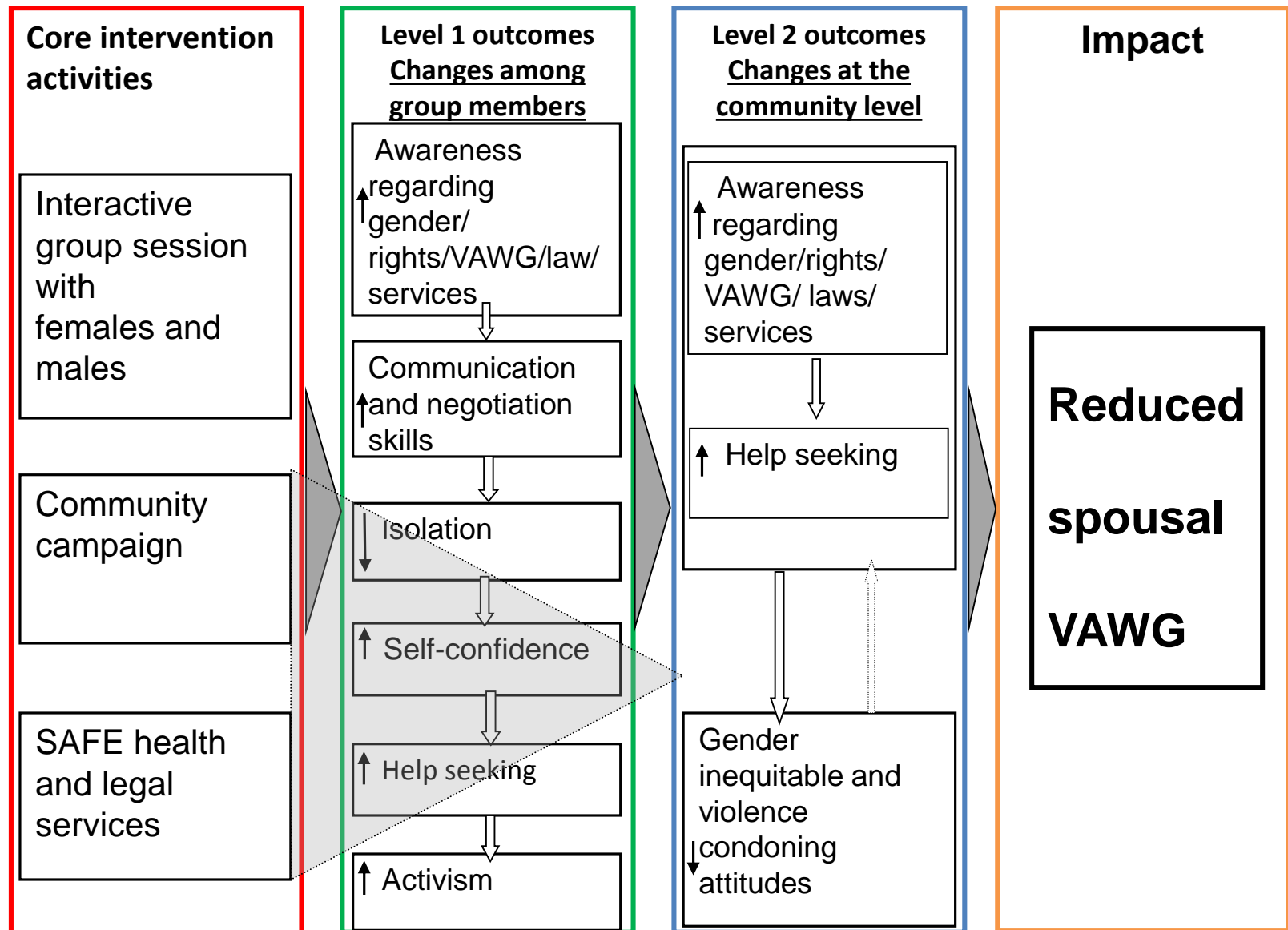


SAFE is an integrated multi-sectoral, multi-tier intervention addressing sexual & reproductive health & rights & VAWG in Dhaka slums.

Project partners:

- icddr,b (lead)
- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)
- Marie Stopes Clinic Society
- Nari Maitree (We Can Alliance)
- Population Council

# SAFE's theory of change



# Basic approaches in SAFE



- Rights-based
- Multi-sectoral involving
  - Health and
  - Legal sectors
- Multi-tier involving
  - Individuals and Groups
  - Communities
  - Society
- Integration of prevention & response



## Study site and target group

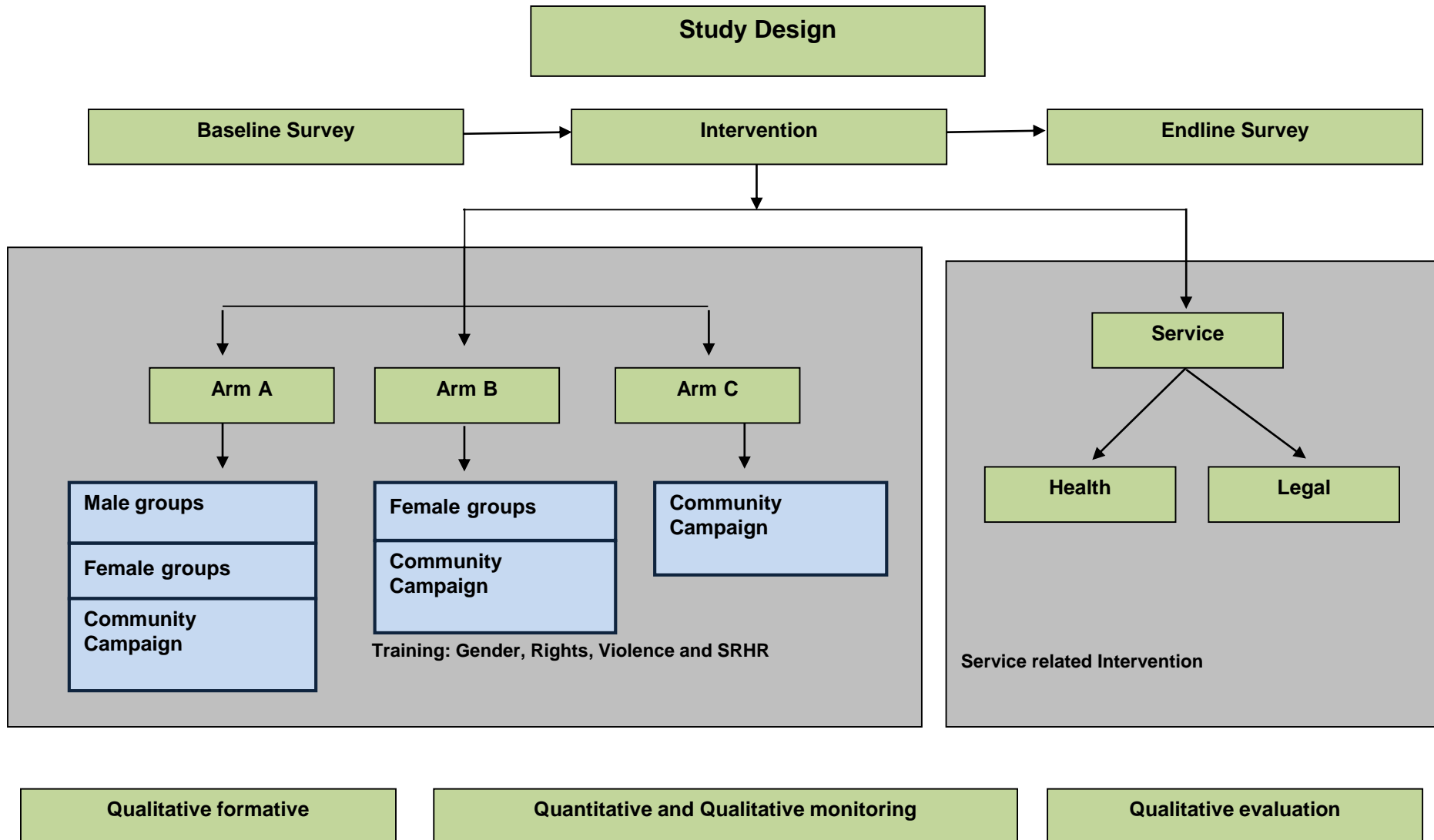
- Study site – 19 slums within 2km from Marie Stopes Clinics in three areas of Dhaka city
- Target groups -
  - Females aged 10-29
  - Males aged 18-35
  - Community leaders
  - Different stakeholders  
(e.g., judiciary, police, health sector, line ministries, society at large)



# Intervention components

Group Level (600 groups)	Community Level	Societal Level
<p>13 two-hour participatory group sessions over 20 months on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender, rights &amp; VAWG</li> <li>• SRH &amp; rights</li> <li>• Legal rights, remedies</li> <li>• Available services</li> <li>• Life skills</li> </ul> <p>* Attendance=5.9 sessions/group member</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community orientation and orientation of community leaders</li> <li>• Recruitment and engagement of community activists</li> <li>• Celebration of special days (drama, filmshow, rally, etc)</li> <li>• Display and distribution of BCC materials</li> <li>• One stop service center:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Health services &amp; referrals</i></li> <li>- <i>Legal advice and representation</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitization lawyers, judges, prosecutors, police</li> <li>• Sensitization of health professionals and marriage registrars</li> <li>• Policy advocacy with judiciary, police, line ministries, NGOs, etc</li> <li>• Media campaign using TV and radio</li> </ul>

# SAFE evaluation design: RCT



## Sample size by arm: Baseline (2012) and Endline (2014) surveys

Arms	Baseline		Endline	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Arm A (Community+ Female + Male)	1487	537	1504	542
Arm B (Community + Female)	1491	532	1560	536
Arm C (Community)	1480	548	1517	542
<b>All Arms</b>	<b>4458</b>	<b>1617</b>	<b>4581</b>	<b>1620</b>

# SAFE surveys and analysis

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- Mapping and household listing of 19 slums
- Formation of 234 contiguous clusters using natural or artificial boundaries with 50-100 households in between clusters as buffers
- This analysis includes currently married women (n=5,336)
- Difference-in-difference analysis was used for assessing impact

## Number of qualitative interviews and FGDs conducted for evaluating SAFE's impact in Dhaka slums and legal service uptake

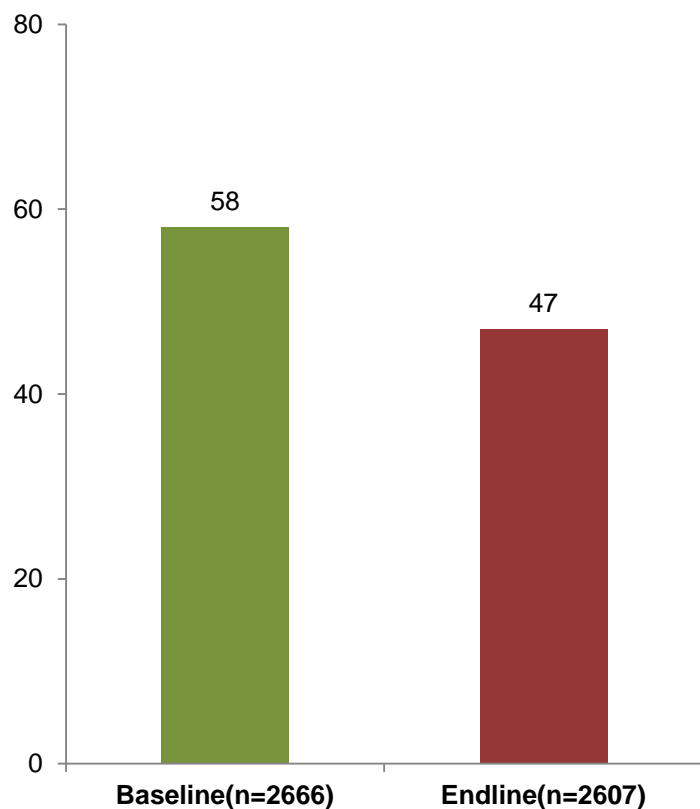
Tools	Female		Male (age 18-35)		Total
	Married (age 15-29)	Unmarried (age 15-19)	Married	Unmarried	
In-Depth Interviews	34	33	21	10	98
Key Informant Interviews	5	2	3	1	11
Focus Group Discussion	3	2	2	1	8

- Records from 75 cases who accessed legal service provided by SAFE were also analyzed

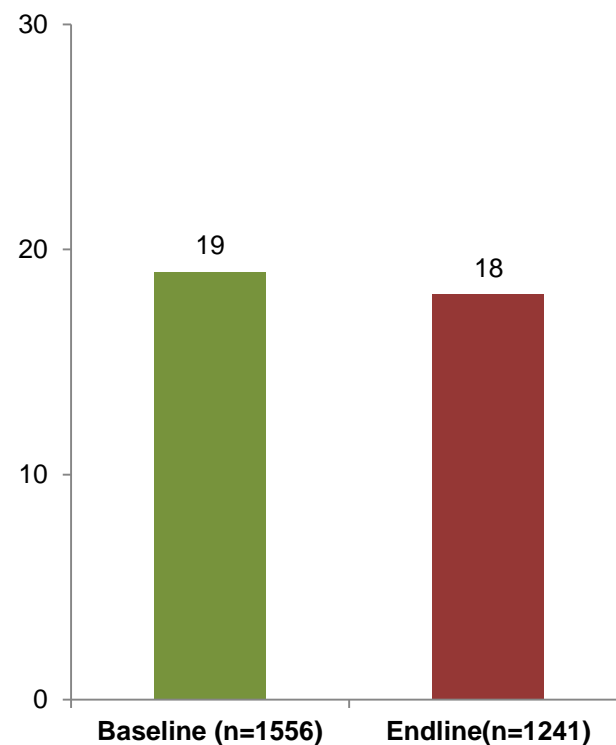
# Background characteristics of sample

Characteristics	Baseline (n=2,666)	Endline (n=2,670)
Age (%)		
15-19 yrs	18	17
20-29 yrs	82	82
Education (%)		
No education	27	21
1-5 yrs of education	42	45
>5 yrs of education	30	34
Ever employed (%)	56	66

# Prevalence of spousal physical violence and help seeking by females aged 15-29 in Dhaka slums

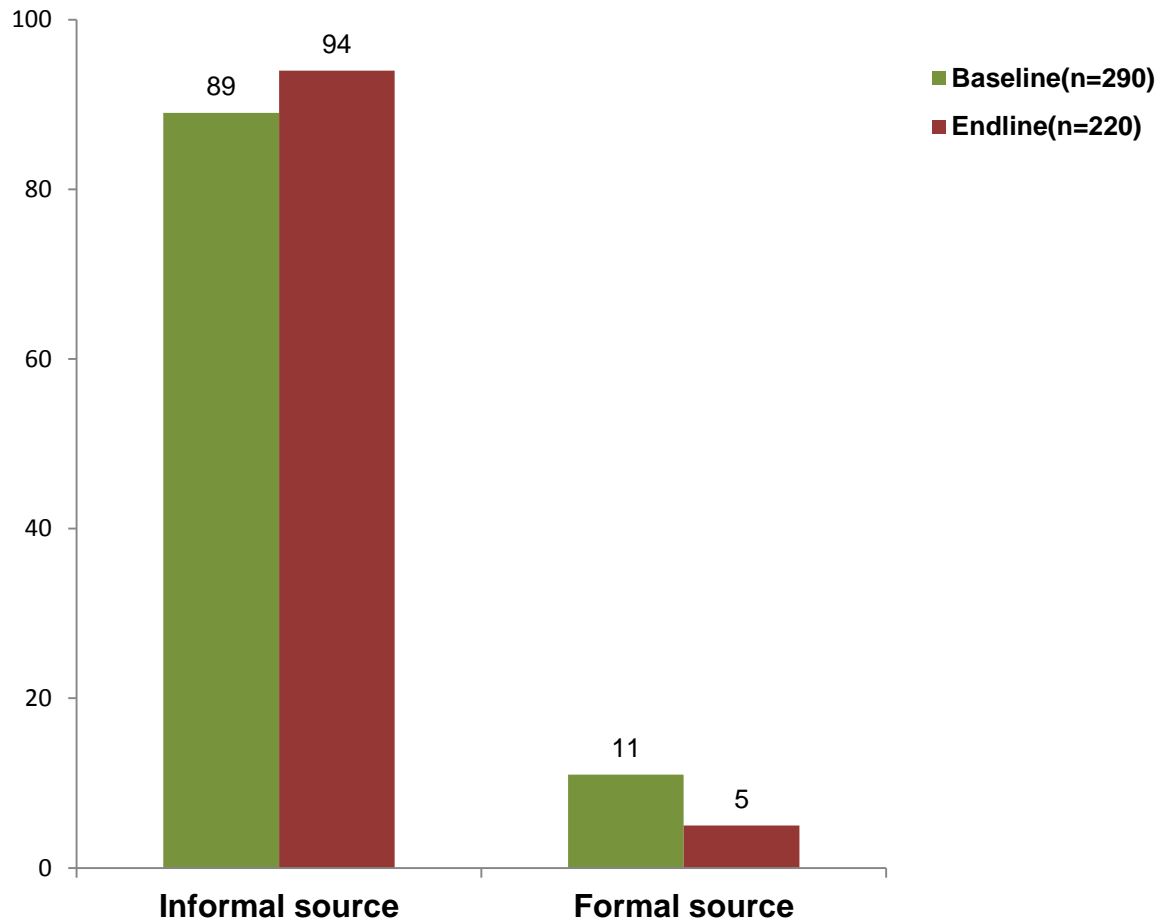


Physical violence



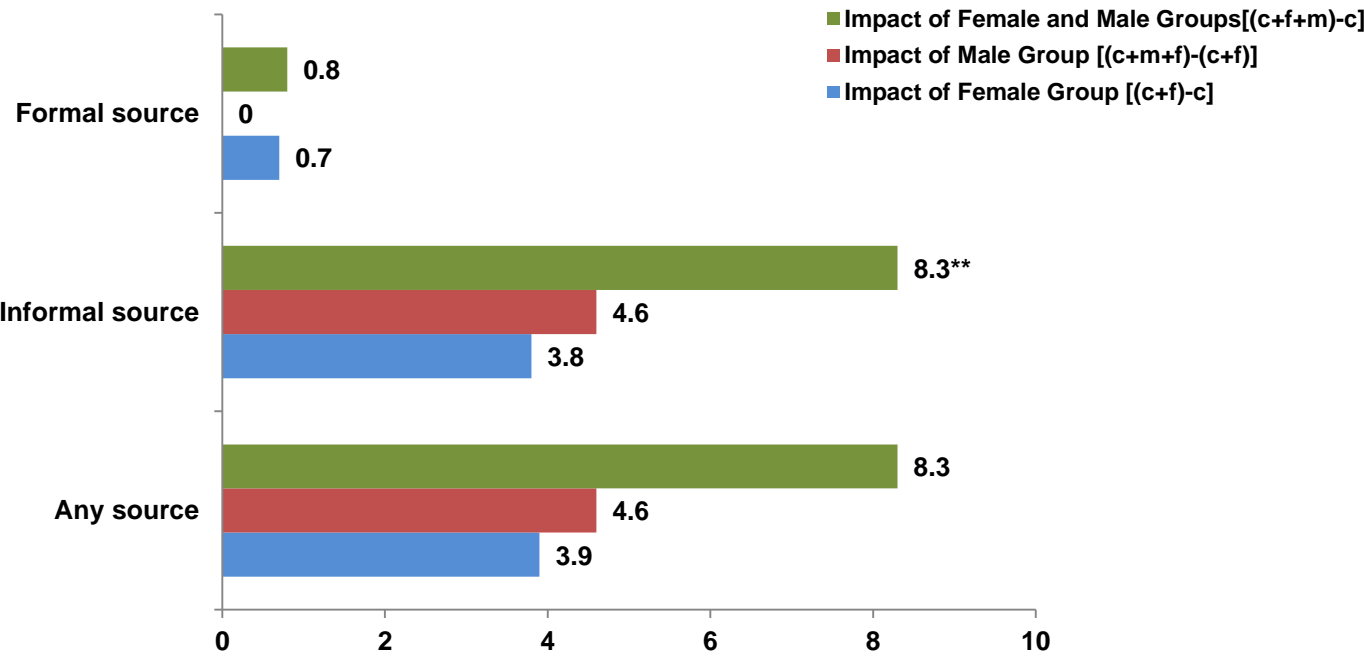
Help seeking

# Sources of help





# Impact of SAFE on help seeking by physically abused women



c + f + m = Community mobilization, female and male group intervention  
 c + f = Community mobilization and female group intervention  
 c = Community mobilization

\*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1



## SAFE encouraged disclosure & help seeking

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*“Almost all of those who attended the group sessions gained the courage necessary to speak out.*

*The group members have changed;  
they now come to us for help.”*

*In-depth interview, CCM, married woman*

## Formal versus informal help

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*“I advised her (an abused woman) to go to SAFE office for legal services. However, suggesting women to take legal action does not always make them access such services. They are slum dwellers. They prefer to protect their marriage no matter if they (the husbands) beat them or tear them apart. They know that reporting to the police would result in husband’s arrest. The legal system will cause a lot of harassment even if a fair verdict is reached at the end.”*

*In-depth interview, married woman*

## Uptake of SAFE legal service

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- Women sought legal service as last resort (e.g., when physical or economic violence was severe)
- More than half of them finally backed out from taking any legal action
- >50% of the rest preferred to continue the marriage by solving the problem through mediation
- 10 women agreed to file litigation (out of 30)
- 3 women got divorced using support from SAFE (out of 30)

## Conclusion

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- When both formal & informal support is offered informal sources are preferred by the survivors
- Formal services are accessed by very few survivors as a last resort
- Targeting men is critical for creating an enabling environment and boosting informal help seeking
- Strengthening not only formal support systems, but also the informal ones is important for catering to the needs of the survivors

# Acknowledgements

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- We acknowledge with gratitude the commitment of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) to SAFE
- We are grateful to the slum population who participated in SAFE
- We are thankful to all the project staff for SAFE a success

# icddr,b thanks its Core Donors

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Canada<sup>🇨🇦</sup>

