



FID Series

"Key impact results"

Training police officers in the Indian state of Bihar to tackle gender-based violence

How can the police improve its response to gender-based violence over the long term? This is the issue addressed by a police training program launched in the Indian state of Bihar. A research team is working in partnership with Bihar's state government and police force to assess the impact of an immersive training program, aiming to sensitize police to gender-based violence through artistic expression, role-play and group discussion, on police officers' attitudes, skills and behaviors, the quality of care provided to victims and, more broadly, professional practices and the institutional response. The findings will inform the design of more effective training programs to help change police behavior and challenge the entrenched social norms that prevent victims of gender-based violence in India from receiving proper care. The evaluation will also be used to develop an appropriate and coherent institutional response to this issue.

Research team

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Key impact results

The results demonstrate that the immersive training program has a positive and lasting impact on police officers' attitudes, skills and practices when dealing with cases of gender-based violence. One year after completing the training, police officers were found to provide better support and were less likely to blame victims for these crimes, while also referring them to specialist services more frequently. The evaluation also highlights that this positive impact goes beyond the trained officers themselves, improving the working environment for female police officers and changing practices within police stations.

+0,10 standard
deviation

improvement in police officers' skills, attitudes and behaviors when dealing with gender-based violence.

-15 percentage
points

decrease in the proportion of police officers who blame the victims for these crimes.

+ 8 percentage
points

increase in the proportion of police officers who refer victims to the appropriate services and explain the options available to them.

-0,39 standard
deviation

reduction in self-reported anxiety among female police officers, indicating an improvement in their working environment.

Impact study methodology

An experimental evaluation was conducted across 419 police stations, randomly assigned to either a training group (217 stations) or a control group (202 stations). The program's impact was assessed via pre - and post-training surveys of 3,526 male and female police officers, as well as audits of decoy experiments with simulated victims. These audits were carried out in 185 police stations, where female assessors posed as victims and

evaluated the quality of support provided.

The impact evaluation addressed three research questions

01

What impact does the program have on police officers' skills and behaviors in response to gender-based violence?

02

Have these changes led to real-world improvements in the care and support provided to victims of gender-based violence?

03

Did the changes observed have a positive and lasting impact on professional practices and the institutional response to gender-based violence in the state of Bihar?

1. What impact does the program have on police officers' skills and behaviors in response to gender-based violence??

The training program lastingly improves police officers' knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding gender-based violence. Police officers have a better understanding of the laws and technical procedures involved in these cases (**+0.09 standard deviations**) and their attitudes towards gender-based violence improved (**+0.10 standard deviations**). Trained police officers develop greater empathy and are better able to see things from the victim's perspective (**+0.09 standard deviations**). They give greater credibility to victims' statements and take greater responsibility for supporting them. These gains are particularly significant among police officers who demonstrated the most negative attitudes prior to the training.

2. Have these changes led to real-world improvements in the care and support provided to victims of gender-based violence?

The training program leads to a tangible and lasting improvement in the quality of support provided to victims of gender-based violence. Decoy experiments carried out one year after the training demonstrated that police officers were less likely to dismiss reported crimes, or to view them as a waste of time (**-7 percentage points**) or as false reports (**-8 percentage points**). They are also less inclined to blame victims (**-15 points**), ask fewer questions that suggest victims are at fault (**-14 points**) and are more likely to refer them to specialist services (**+7 points**), while explaining the options available to them (**+8 points**). These findings, observed through audits under real-world conditions, highlight the lasting and positive impact of the training on their professional practices.

3. Did the changes observed have a positive impact on professional practices and the institutional response to gender-based violence in the state of Bihar?

The training helps to improve the general working environment by disseminating new professional practices within police stations, creating a ripple effect that goes beyond the trained officers. Eight months after the training, female police officers working at these police stations stated that their working environment had improved (**-0.39 standard deviations**) and reported fewer incidents of harassment (**-0.06 standard deviations**). In police stations where a higher proportion of officers had completed the training, they also reported more positive relationships with their male colleagues (**+0.18 standard deviations**) and lower anxiety levels (**-0.42 standard deviations**). Furthermore, the assessment has revealed that new practices for supporting victims are shared between colleagues, and continue to be applied even when police officers are transferred elsewhere. The training program helps to change norms and behaviors within police stations, thus improving police officers' ability to handle cases of gender-based violence and support victims in a more consistent and respectful manner.

Perspectives

Outside of the specific context of policing and gender-based violence, this research demonstrates that training programs focusing on socio-emotional skills, attitudes and professional norms may be an effective way of improving the quality of support provided to victims of gender-based violence. Discussions are underway with local institutions in Bihar and nationwide to explore the potential of these findings and the lessons learned from the impact evaluation.

Find out more

Recherche

Amaral, S., Borker, G., Prakash, N. & Sviatschi, M.M.

Debiasing Law Enforcement Officers: Evidence from an Expressive Arts Intervention in India. Working paper (2026 - publication à venir)

Cody Mello-Klein

“To combat gender bias in the police, they got cops to role play. It was shockingly effective.” Northeastern Global News (2026).

Media

[Video of the detailed presentation](#) of the research project and its findings by the research team

[Report on police training](#), by ABP Bihar, 2024.