



Research Article

Support needs of survivors of violence against women in urban India: a prospective analysis of client records

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Plain language summary

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Violence against women harms individuals, community, and society. Supporting survivors requires a combination of skills and resources and involvement of multiple institutions. We aimed to document the range of responses that a counselling service should be able to provide, based on direct experience of working with survivors predominantly from urban informal settlements. At non-government counselling centres in Mumbai, we analysed records collected by counsellors supporting survivors of violence. We examined how women knew of the services, how they described their concerns, what they said they expected, and what was provided. We looked at the numbers of clients who required crisis intervention, police action, legal input, and medical, psychological and psychiatric support. Almost half the clients had been encouraged to attend through community outreach. Clients described intimate partner violence, domestic violence by a family member other than their partner, or both. Common forms of violence reported were emotional, economic, and physical. Many reported episodes of neglect, coercive control, and sexual violence, and most had survived three or more forms of violence. One-third required crisis intervention and home visits from counsellors, and one-fifth needed legal support. Demand for services was substantial. Key concerns for counsellors were coping with their heavy workload, skills in responding to women's experience of multiple forms of violence and their desire to stay in relationships, skills in emotional support, ability to undertake and act on risk and mental health assessment, and effective engagement with health, police, and legal services.