

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

# Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities in India



**Invisible Victims of Sexual Violence**

**April 2018**



## Who we are

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

We are called Human Rights Watch.



We work to make sure everyone in the world is treated fairly and gets their rights.

## What is this report about?

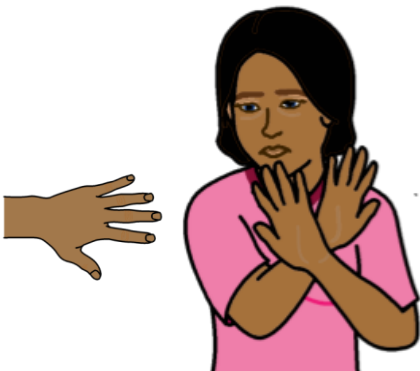


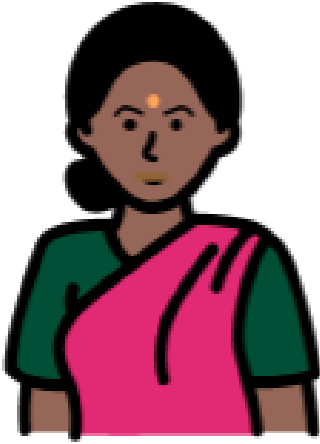
This report is about women and girls with disabilities in India.

It is about sexual violence that can happen to them.

Sexual violence is when someone forces them to have sex or do sexual things without asking if they want to.

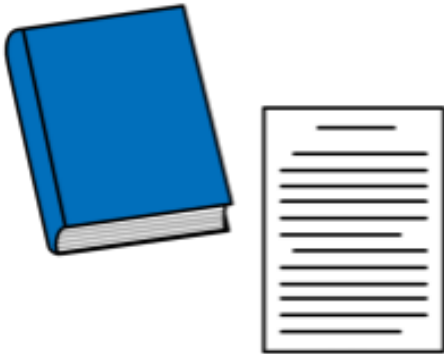
Rape is a kind of sexual violence.





Women and girls with disabilities in India often experience sexual violence.

We looked into what happened to 17 women and girls with disabilities in India who experienced rape.



This report tells you what we found out.

## **What problems do women and girls with disabilities in India experience?**



Many women and girls with disabilities do not get the help they need if sexual violence happens to them.

There are many reasons for this.

## Speaking up about sexual violence



Many women and girls with disabilities can find it hard to:

- move away from danger or call for help
- know that a crime has happened to them
- tell other people what happened



## Help from the police and courts

The police and courts may not know how to help women and girls with disabilities.



For example, the police may not believe women and girls with disabilities because of their disability.

The police may even laugh at them or say mean things to them.

The police:



- may not do anything about what happened even if they have information about the sexual violence
- may not write down about a woman or girl's disability so they can get the right support
- may not know how to ask a woman or girl with disabilities what happened to her or how she wants to communicate



## **Support for women and girls with disabilities**



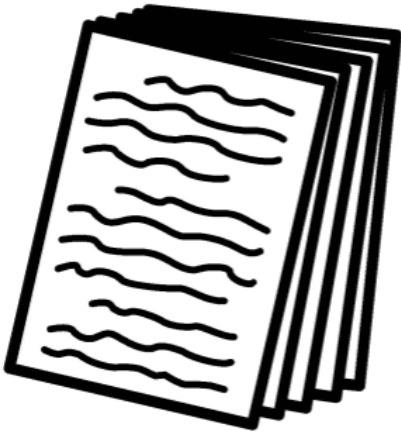
Many women and girls with disabilities do not get the right support if sexual violence happens to them.

They have a right to this support just like any other person.



For example, women and girls with disabilities should have:

- support to communicate and understand what is happening



- support to cope and feel better



- information about their rights

## Health care



Women and girls should get medical care right away if sexual violence happens to them.

This is to find out what medical treatment they need and what happened to them.



Health staff may not explain medical tests to women and girls with disabilities or ask if it is OK to do the tests.

This can make women and girls with disabilities very scared.



Some health staff give women and girls medical tests on their private parts.

But they do not explain what will happen or ask if it is OK.



These tests should only be done if women and girls really need them for their health and if they say it is OK.

The tests should not be done to check if women and girls have had sex before.

## What the government in India has done so far



The government in India has promised to make sure that all people with disabilities get their rights.

They signed a document about this in 2007.



Since then the government has made some new laws and rules about:

- the rights of people with disabilities
- the rights of children who experience sexual violence



In 2013, the government changed the law about sexual violence.





The new law makes it easier for women and girls with disabilities to get help if they experience sexual violence.

For example, the law now says that women and girls with disabilities can:



- report sexual violence to the police at home or another place they choose
- have someone to support them to report the crime and go to court



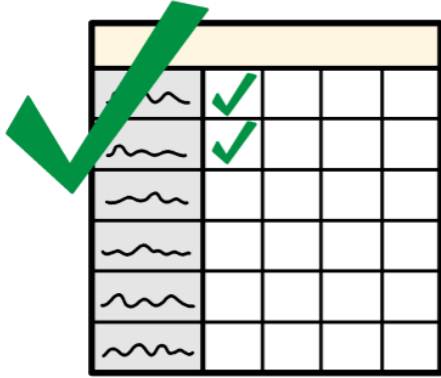
- speak about what happened by video

But many of these changes have not happened yet.



This makes it very hard for women and girls with disabilities to get the help they need.

## What we think should happen next



The government in India should work with people with disabilities and other experts to make the following changes:

### **Speaking up about sexual violence**

Make sure women and girls with disabilities can get help right away if they need it.



For example, set up a special phone line for women and girls to call if sexual violence happens to them.

And make sure this phone line can be used by women and girls with different disabilities.

## Easy information

Make sure women and girls with disabilities get information they can understand about:



- their rights
- what to do if sexual violence happens to them
- support they can get
- medical tests they can get

## The police and courts



Make sure the police write down if women and girls have a disability so they can get the right support.



Make sure women and girls with disabilities understand what the police write down.

Get more women police officers with the right training.

## The right support

Make sure all women and girls with disabilities get the support they need.

For example, this may be:



- medical care right away
- support to cope and keep safe



- someone to support them to understand information or use sign language



- advice to help them get a lawyer for free
- support to speak up in court in a way that is safe for them



- enough money to pay for going to the doctor and help they need to cope

## People who can help women and girls get the right support

Make sure there are support people who know how to:

- find out if someone has a disability
- give women and girls with disabilities the support they need



The support people can work with:

- the police and courts
- groups that help women and girls keep safe
- health staff in hospitals and medical centers



## Training

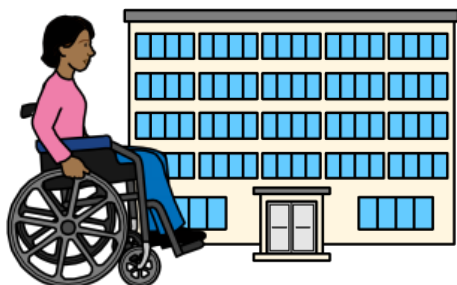
Make sure staff get training about the rights of women and girls with disabilities and how to support them.

For example, there should be training for:

- the police, judges and court staff
- people who work to keep children safe or support women and girls
- doctors, nurses and other health staff



## Buildings and support services



Make buildings and support services easy for all women and girls with disabilities to use.

For example:

- police stations, hospitals, medical centers and courts
- homes for women and girls to stay in if violence happens to them
- special phone lines to call if women and girls need help



## Medical tests

Only do medical tests that women and girls need.

Make sure health workers ask the woman or girl if they can do any tests.



## Information for the government

Get better information about sexual violence against women and girls with disabilities.

