

# GEETA

SUBMISSION: INQUIRY INTO THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

COLOUR  
FILMS

Geeta Documentary

Submission to the Human Rights Sub-committee  
of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign  
Affairs, Defence and Trade

Parliamentary Inquiry into the Rights of Women  
and Children

Date Submitted: 16 December, 2022

[www.geetafilm.com](http://www.geetafilm.com)

# GEETA DOCUMENTARY ACID VIOLENCE & THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN





# FORWORD

**Geeta Documentary welcomes the opportunity to make a submission into the Inquiry of the Rights of Women and Children. This submission is in addition to our presentation to the Inquiry on 23 November 2022, and our Question on Notice following the presentation.**

Throughout our journey making the Geeta documentary we have found ourselves in a unique position to witness the lives and day to day struggles of two acid attack survivors - Geeta and her daughter Neetu - as they attempt to rebuild their lives, overcome social isolation and contribute to a global campaign - STOP ACID ATTACKS.

Through this experience we have seen the devastating consequences faced by survivors, their ongoing medical issues, risky surgeries, the financial burden on them as they attempt to rebuild their lives and the complete failure of the judicial system to provide timely and adequate support.

We have also seen new laws being introduced in India, the positive impact of compensation schemes and the power of education and social campaigns to shift behaviours.

Geeta and Neetu's experience is not unique. Acid attacks happen in Australia and all over the world.

For this reason we feel compelled to join Geeta and Neetu in their campaign to highlight the need for prevention of acid violence and use our film to encourage the Australian government to join other countries in creating law reforms and raising awareness.

Acid violence is a weapon of choice that is selected by perpetrators because it is cheap, accessible, does maximum physical and psychological damage and is a crime that is difficult to prosecute. Globally, 80% of the attacks are on women.

Prevention is essential.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** Funding research and data collection to identify incidence and risks of acid violence and threats to disfigure using acid in Australia,

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** Review and impliment laws to ensure police and judges have adequate powers to prosecute these crimes, increase sentencing, class acid as a 'dangerous weapon' and consider measures to restrict sales of acid without a license.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** Include compensation, long-term medical care and rehabilitation of acid attack survivors in all policy, service provision and law reform.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** National Plan of Action to incorporate acid violence and threats to disfigure as a form of coercive control, intimidation and emotional abuse in relation to family and intimate partner violence.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** Multi-lateral co-operation in the prevention of acid violnce and and law reform



# ABOUT GEETA



"I love my face.  
I don't have a problem  
with my face"  
(neetu)





## Logline

“Geeta” is a vibrant, raw, and honest film about a mother’s heartfelt attempt to change her daughter’s destiny and challenge social norms.

## Synopsis

Almost 30 years ago, Geeta Mahor was asleep with her three young daughters when her husband, Inderjeet, crept into their room and threw acid on them. Geeta was badly injured, two-year-old Neetu ended up severely scarred and almost completely blind, and eight day old baby Krishna tragically passed away.

But Geeta and her daughter Neetu are not what you expect of women battling poverty, dispossession, pariahdom and patriarchy. They are vocal, they are funny, they are active, they are fearless, and they live their lives in the urban slums of Agra with gusto, hope and an uncompromising determination to rewrite their futures.

Set against breathtaking Agra landscapes, unpopulated parts of the Yamuna river, and above all the pace and texture of ordinary life in Agra, this is a film that dives deep into the truth of what it takes to create long-term, lasting change. Director Emma Macey-Storch is not out to tell a typical story of rags to riches, abuse to justice, activism to heroism; instead, Geeta lets the characters lead us into a complex, contradictory and vulnerable story that opens up more questions than it offers answers. Whether it’s Geeta’s desire to have Neetu regain her eyesight and independence, her battle with a property developer intent on stealing their land, or Neetu’s own soaring ambition to become an activist against domestic violence on a global stage, all of the uncertainties and power imbalances unfold without interference or shaping from the camera’s lens. And the biggest and most sobering question of all is one we ask from the very beginning: how does the continued presence of Inderjeet in Geeta and Neetu’s lives square with the independence and agency they are seeking as members of activist movement Stop Acid Attacks and in their role as members of the revolutionary SHEROES Hangout cafe?

Through shadowy backstreets, busy household scenes, protests in the heart of the city, family dramas and family celebrations, we slip into the lives of these two incredible women as welcome guests who are trusted with everything – the traumas of the past and the travails and triumphs of the present. Indeed, you get the sense that this is how the filmmakers saw themselves – not as shapers or curators of a story but as observers and trusted friends. And the result is a story that Geeta and Neetu tell on their own terms - about their power, their victories, their defeats, their vulnerabilities, without filters or mediation.

Through Geeta and Neetu’s story, deeply entrenched local issues of gender, caste and class are also exposed. For example, their neighbours’ bewilderment at their fight for acceptance and independence, and shock at their victories, illuminate the norms expected of women of their caste, class and circumstances. Furthermore, their story also complicates the more universal narratives about domestic violence, particularly when it comes to the question of why women

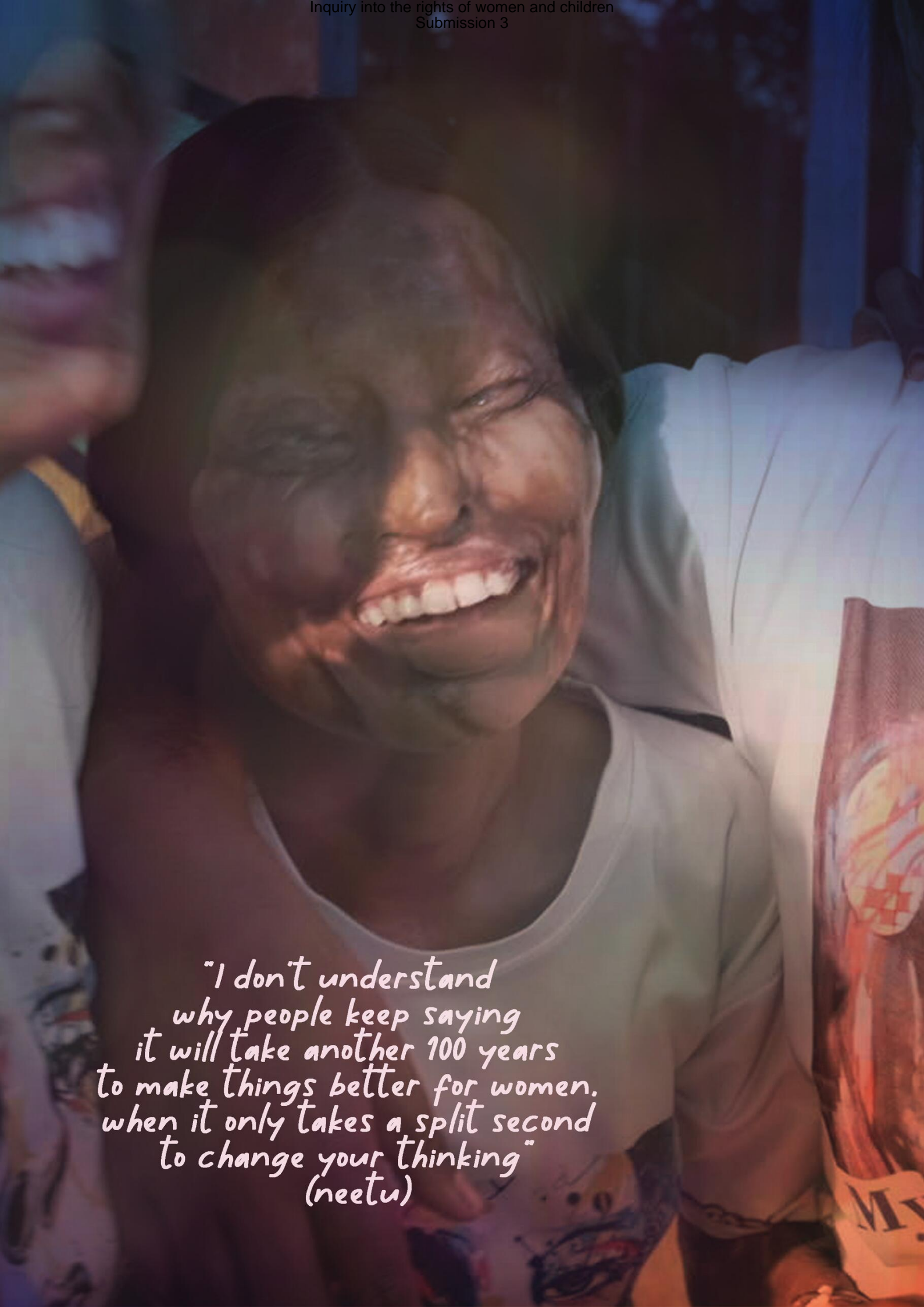
often don't have the option to leave a violent partner. And the toxic cultural norms that underpin the actions of perpetrators are laid absolutely bare in Inderjeet's bald confession to camera: that he committed the attack because 'men get more status if they have sons'.

But in amongst all of this are many moments of joy and hope. Neetu and her friend's duet on a balcony overlooking the Taj Mahal; their session of cooking, gossiping and daydreaming about being on Oprah; Geeta and Neetu's witty, merciless banter about their local Goliaths; the easy camaraderie between Neetu, Geeta and the other acid attack survivors at SHEROES hangout.

While the resulting film doesn't shy away from the horrors the women have endured, its focus is squarely on Geeta's powerful love for her daughter and their shared determination to chase their dreams.

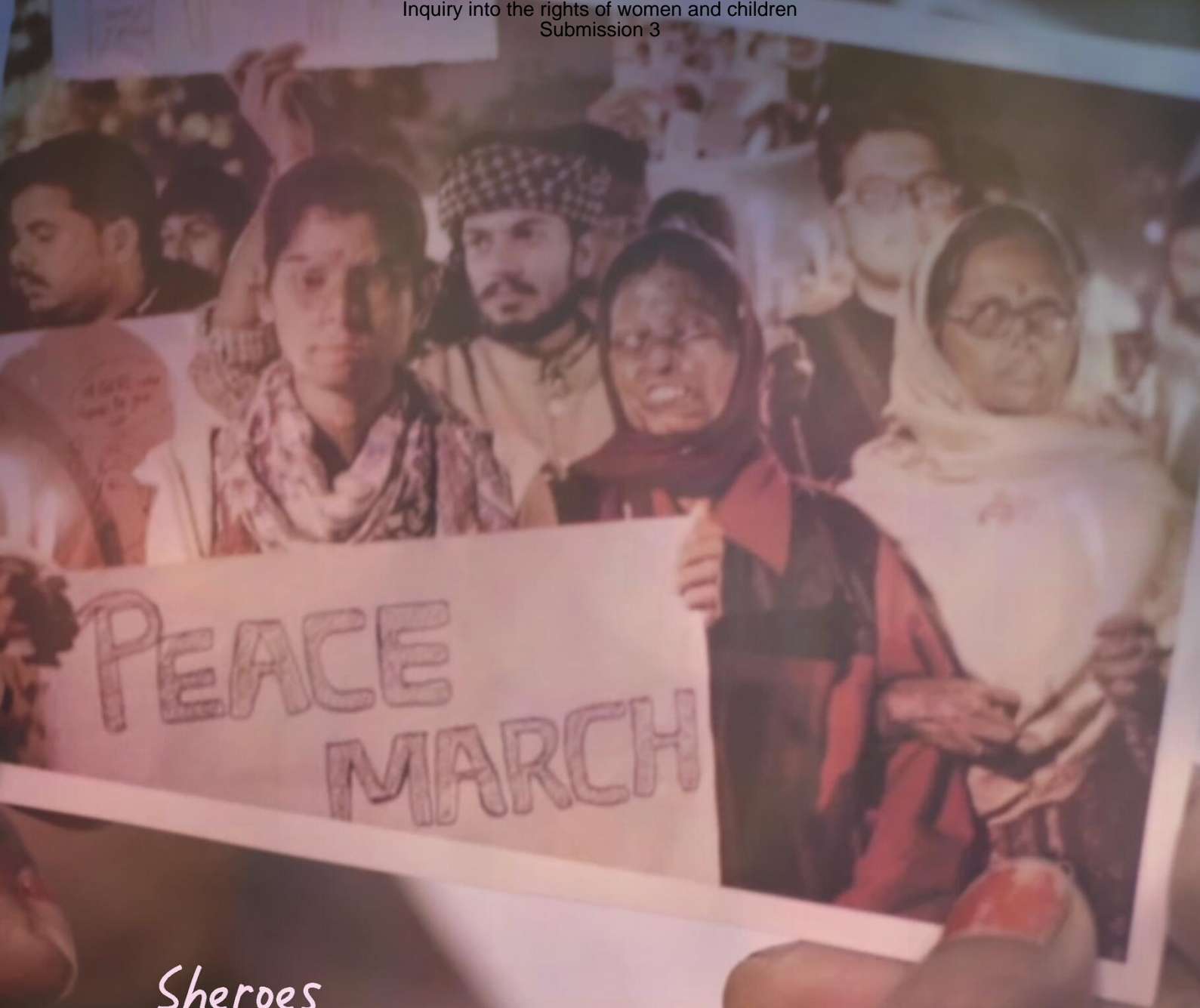






*"I don't understand  
why people keep saying  
it will take another 100 years  
to make things better for women.  
when it only takes a split second  
to change your thinking"  
(neetu)*





## Sheroes

In Agra, India, situated behind the monumental Taj Mahal, there is a cafe called SHEROES HANGOUT, run solely by an inspired team of women who proudly refer to themselves as “fighters” and “Sheroes”.

Back in 2013 Geeta and Neetu came to know about the Stop Acid Attacks (SAA) movement, made up of a collective of journalists, university students and other survivors, who were demonstrating to ban the open sale of acid in India.

*“I sat on hunger strikes and many protests and people supported me and recognised the fact that I was not doing it for myself but for lots of other girls.” (Geeta)*

*“Everyone in the campaign wanted Neetu and me to move to Delhi, but I asked if instead we could set up a tea shop in Agra, so that me and my daughter and other survivors could earn our livelihood. That’s how it happened.” (Geeta)*

Nine years on, Sheroes is a multi-award winning social enterprise with nearly 1 million followers worldwide.

# Advocacy

Neetu and Geeta have been part of the *Stop Acid Attacks* (SAA) movement since 2013, and have taken part in street protests, hunger strikes and media campaigns to lobby for legislative change across India. The achievements of SAA include:

*Amendment to the Criminal Law Act December 2013* to include acid attacks. The Act amended several provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, and the Criminal Procedure Code. As a result of this amendment, several new offenses have been recognised and incorporated into the Indian Penal Code, including acid attack (Section 326 A & B).

*The Karnataka Victim Compensation Scheme Amendment 2015* to include compensation for acid attack survivors. The compensation ranges from Rs. 3 lakhs (\$6,000 AUD) minimum compensation to Rs. 8 Lakhs (\$16,000 AUD).

*Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016*, to recognise disability from a sociological perspective rather than a medical one. It recognises 'acid attack victims' as persons with a specified disability. This allows survivors to get a disability certificate. Those who have 40% or more 'disfigurement', are entitled to reservations in government jobs. They are also entitled to other benefits, including free education for their children.

*Creation of Sheroes Hangout Cafe and Rehabilitation Centre, Agra, 2014*, that currently employs 35 acid attack survivors and supports approximately another 100.

Stop Acid Attacks has also lobbied for free medical treatment for acid attack survivors, longer sentences for perpetrators, and a quota of free university places for acid attack survivors and access to government jobs.



## Campaigns

*Spot of Shame* was created by Stop Acid Attacks in 2015 to inspire people across India to leave a Spot of Shame stamp in their cities, their towns and known locations where girls have been burnt with acid, molested or abused. The idea was to “mark the spot” so groups could hold small demonstrations or silent protests to raise awareness of the crimes.

*Hunger Strike* at Jantar Mantar, Delhi, 2014 was created to demand a charge sheet be created within 15 days of an attack, fast track specialist courts for acid attack victims, the strict implementation of the regulation of open sale of acid in shops and harsher sentences for perpetrators. Geeta and other acid attack survivors were arrested (despite their peaceful protest), causing an international sensation.

## Awards and Recognition

- *The NCPEDP – MINDTREE Helen Keller Award* for Role Model NGO's working in disability sector, 2020 in Chhanv Foundation, Stop Acid Attacks and Sheroes Hangout's work for disability rights.
- *Nari Shakti Puruskaar 2016 – Women Empowerment Award*, Honorable President of India to SHEROES HANGOUT Cafe.
- *Appreciation Award*, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee and Department of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India, for SHEROES HANGOUT Cafe.
- *BOBS Award – Best of Online Activism (Social Change)* by Deutsche Welle, Germany 2016 for Stop Acid Attacks Campaign.
- *'Outstanding Women Award' 2014*, presented by the National Commission for Women to women who have shown leadership, courage, resourcefulness, and willingness to sacrifice for others, especially in promoting women's rights for Sheroes Hangout Cafe.
- *Facebook Award* for Stop Acid Attacks campaign reaching 1 million followers for Sheroes Hangout and the Stop Acid Attack Campaign.



*"I was born  
to a powerful mother"  
(neetu)*







*"No matter what  
happens, with all my  
heart, I keep fighting  
until the end"  
(Geeta)*



# ACID VIOL- ENCE



*"All I want is for my  
daughter to be independent  
and not rely on anyone"  
(Geeta)*







*"When I was three years old my father threw acid on me because he was upset that my mum was not giving birth to any boy child. My mum and I have gone through so much because of this attack that I wish no other person, in the world to have to face it. An acid attack takes away a persons ability to work and live independently, go to school and reach their potential. Everyone needs to join together to stop this!" (Neetu)*

## ACID VIOLENCE IN THE WORLD

Globally, there are thousands of acid attacks a year, but it is a crime that often goes unreported for fear of reprisal with 80% of the attacks being directed towards women.<sup>1</sup>

The victims of acid violence are usually women and children, and attackers often target the head and face in order to maim, disfigure and blind. The impact of acid violence ranges from serious lifelong injuries and disfigurement, to death.<sup>2</sup>

Global research, led by Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI), has concluded that acid survivors need long-term access to a holistic program of medical support, rehabilitation, and advocacy, with many survivors requiring up to 80 operations in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

Acid violence is a worldwide phenomenon that is not restricted to any race, religion or geographical location.

Research has found that there are approximately 3000 acid attacks across Europe every year.<sup>4</sup>

## ACID VIOLENCE IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia acid attacks happen but there is a complete absence of formal data, despite media coverage of incidents.

In 2022 alone, there have been three acid attacks in Sydney and Adelaide.<sup>5</sup>

- Between, 2009 and 2022, there have been 21 known cases of acid attacks.<sup>6</sup>
- Approximately 30% of acid attacks in Australia are family violence related and predominantly targeted on women and children.<sup>7</sup>
- Threats to disfigure and burn either by acid violence or setting alight are commonly used in a family violence setting in Australia as a form of coercive control, intimidation and emotional abuse, and may be a precursor to more serious forms of physical violence, but more research is needed to understand the prevalence and the risk factor.<sup>8</sup>
- Acid is a weapon of choice and there is no evidence that acid attacks are linked to any cultural, religious, ethnic custom or belief.

*"When I was in Australia two acid attacks happened.  
I felt very upset hearing about this happening in Australia.  
It made me realise acid attacks are happening  
everywhere. No one is safe from this violence.  
Not even in Australia" (Neetu)*





## REPORTS IN THE MEDIA

**2009** Two Sri Lankan foreign students attacked with acid in Sydney during a home invasion, ABC News online, Sri Lankans 'petrified' after Sydney acid attack, 18th May 2009,

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-05-18/sri-lankans-petrified-after-sydney-acid-attack/1686912>

**2010** Young wife taken out of Australia and attacked with acid. Personal account of case manager.

**2010** Mother and son attacked with acid in suspected domestic dispute but attacker never brought to justice, The Age, Mother and child burned in acid attack by Megan Levy, November 2, 2010.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/mother-and-child-burned-in-acid-attack-20101102-17ar6.html>

**2010** The Age, Boy, 9, quizzed after toddlers burnt by acidic liquid, by Paul Miller, August 9, 2010.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/boy-9-quizzed-after-toddlers-burnt-by-acidic-liquid-20100809-11syv.html>

**2012** Chinese student attacked with acid and then hit over the head with a hammer by another student in Sydney. Indian Express, Chinese student in acid, hammer attack in Australia, October 12th, 2012.

<http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/chinese-student-in-acid-hammer-attack-in-australia/1015890/>

**2013** Three men throw acid on a 62 year old male motorcyclist, ABC NEWS, 'Police hunt gang behind highway acid attack on motorbike rider', September 22, 2013

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-22/police-hunt-motorway-acid-attackers/4973382>

**2014** Monika Chetty acid attack. Attacker never found 'Traumatising, painful': Son desperate for answers over acid attack death of mother By Sally Rawsthorne, September 3, 2018

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/traumatising-painful-son-desperate-for-answers-over-acid-attack-death-of-mother-20180903-p501er.html>

**2014** Deranged thug threw acid on another man he intended to beat up. Herald Sun, Man hurt in bizarre acid attack outside Dandenong home, court told, by Wayne Flower, October 5, 2014

<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/man-hurt-in-bizarre-acid-attack-outside-dandenong-home-court-told/news-story/2d20de0fa46de3c61093cce5c1ad1dfa>

**2016** The Age, Drug addict jailed for unprovoked acid attack that 'disfigured' victim, by Rick Goodman, May 9, 2018

<https://amp.theage.com.au/national/victoria/drug-addict-jailed-for-unprovoked-acid-attack-that-disfigured-victim-20180509-p4zeb7.html>

**2018** Wife attacked with acid by husband, Attacker deported (account of case worker)

**2019** Two women attacked with acid. The Age, Two women hospitalised after 'substance' attack near Dandenong by Zach Hope and Michael Fowler

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/two-women-in-hospital-after-substance-attack-20190426-p51hed.html>

**2020** Herald Sun, Bundoora Square: Jayden Patterson accused of acid attack, April 27, 2020

[https://www.heraldsun.com.au/subscribe/news/1/?sourceCode=HSEWEB\\_WRE170\\_a\\_GGL&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.heraldsun.com.au%2Fleader%2Fnorth%2Fbundoora-square-jayden-patterson-accused-of-acid-attack%2Fnews-story%2Ffe289abde27d311f0230cfb24559ec469&memtype=anonymous&mode=premium&v21=dynamic-low-control-score&V21spcbehaviour=append](https://www.heraldsun.com.au/subscribe/news/1/?sourceCode=HSEWEB_WRE170_a_GGL&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.heraldsun.com.au%2Fleader%2Fnorth%2Fbundoora-square-jayden-patterson-accused-of-acid-attack%2Fnews-story%2Ffe289abde27d311f0230cfb24559ec469&memtype=anonymous&mode=premium&v21=dynamic-low-control-score&V21spcbehaviour=append)

**2022** news.com.au, Man charged over acid bath death in north Paramatta, February 1, 2022

<https://www.news.com.au/national/nsw-act/crime/woman-found-in-north-parramatta-acid-bath-identified/news-story/149db1fe9f0b19adaf769a8100ed555f>

**2022** Nine News, 'South Australian man left with serious burns after alleged acid attack', May 11, 2022

<https://www.9news.com.au/acid-attack>

**2022** 'Sydney acid attack' by Stephanie Convery, The Gaurdian, April 15, 2022

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/apr/16/sydney-acid-attack-woman-taken-to-hospital-after-being-assaulted-by-three-men-in-face-masks>



*"Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today"*

The UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres has also stated, *"achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world"*.<sup>9</sup>

## UNITED NATIONS AND ACID VIOLENCE

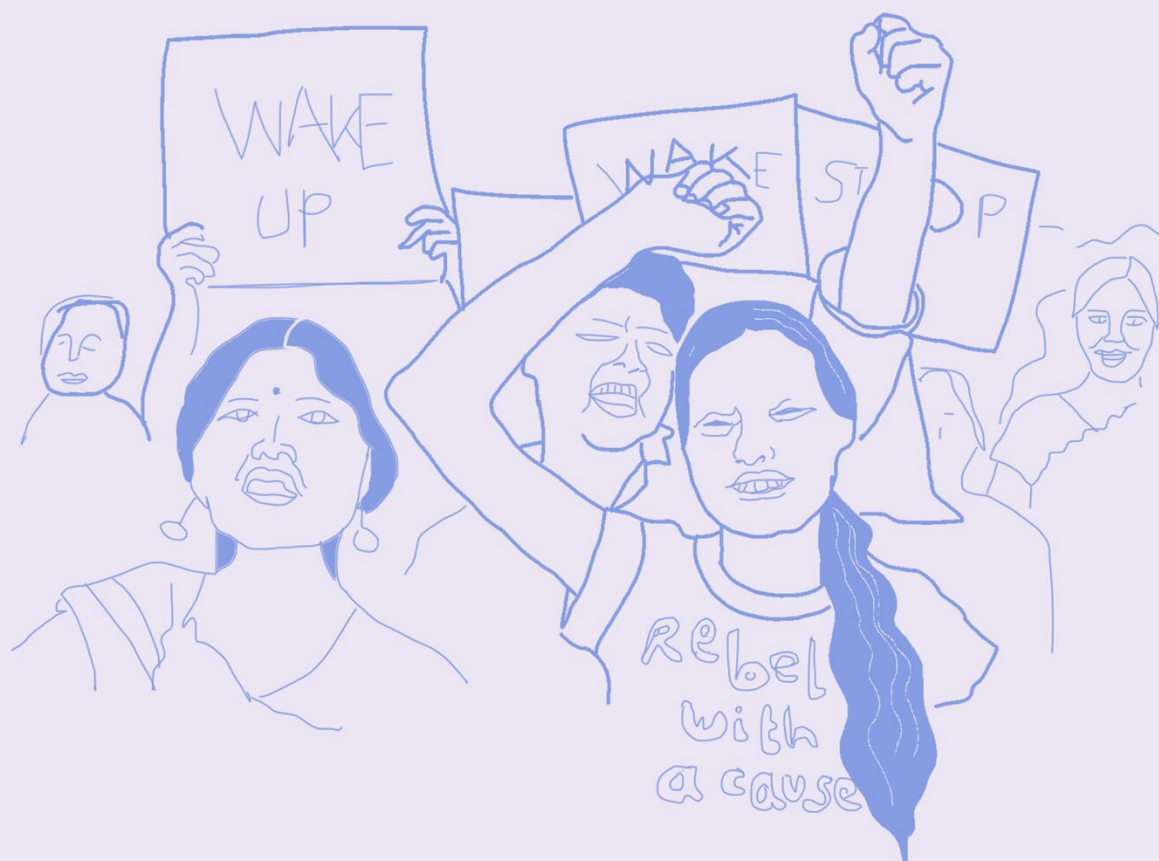
Through extensive research, the UN has identified violence against women and girls as a major obstacle to the fulfillment of women and girls' human rights and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>10</sup>

In 1989, the Committee recommended that States should include information in their reports on violence and measures introduced to deal with Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women (General recommendation 12, eighth session).<sup>11</sup>

In 1992 General Recommendation No.19 was made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that directly referenced acid attacks as known practices for perpetration of family and gender-based violence. Articles 2(f), 5 and 10(c).<sup>12</sup>

In 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General's created UNiTE by 2030 campaign with a view to End Violence against Women by 2030.<sup>13</sup>

UNiTE calls on governments, civil society, women's organisations, young people, the private sector, the media, and the UN system to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.<sup>14</sup>



## UNITE 2030 RECOMMENDATIONS

UNiTE focuses on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices (including acid violence).

In 2009, the United Nations published a supplement to *The Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women*, outlining a number of recommendations to address “harmful practices” against women.

The Handbook included the following recommendations on acid attacks:

### 3.3.6.1 Defining Acid Attacks

Legislation should:

- Define an acid attack as any act of violence perpetrated through an assault using acid.

### 3.3.6.2 Considerations for criminal offenses related to acid attacks

Legislation should:

- Establish a specific acid attack crime,
- Criminalise the unlicensed sale of any type of acid,
- Regulate the sale of any type of acid, and
- Mandate medical personnel to report any case of bodily harm caused by acid to the police.

National governments hold the ultimate responsibility for introducing and implementing laws and policies around acid violence against women and girls in line with the UN recommendations mentioned above.



*The story of Geeta and Neetu is a stark reminder of the dangers of gender discrimination, the impact of violence and why these campaigns are so important. (Emma Macey)*



## WHAT ARE OTHER COUNTRIES DOING ABOUT ACID VIOLENCE?

### COLOMBIA

Globally, Colombia has had one of the highest per capita rates of acid attacks: on average 100 attacks per year. Most of these attacks were against women in their 20s and 30s; the majority perpetrated by men.

In 2016, under a new law, anyone using any kind of "chemical agent" to physically harm another person was introduced in Colombia. The punishment included a minimum sentence of 12 years behind bars. If the victim was permanently disfigured, the sentence increased to 50 years.<sup>16</sup>

### BANGLADESH

Acid violence first emerged in Bangladesh in the 1990s, with scores of spurned or jilted men throwing sulphuric or nitric acid in the faces of women who rebuffed their advances to "spoil them" for anyone else.

In 2019, Bangladesh introduced new laws to combat the crime, the result has been a rapid drop in cases of acid attacks. According to the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), there were just eight attacks following the introduction of laws - well down on the 494 cases reported in 2002.<sup>17</sup>

### UK

In the UK acid attacks increased by 500% between 2012-2016 with 917 attacks recorded in the UK in 2017. Since 2018, it is illegal to possess potentially lethal acid without a license in the UK, acid attacks are considered a dangerous weapon in sentencing laws, and perpetrators can face up to life in prison.

The Offensive Weapons Act 2019 was the first piece of UK legislation to refer to corrosive substances in a criminal context and made it an offence to possess a corrosive substance in a public place and to sell certain harmful corrosive products to under 18s.<sup>18</sup>

### INDIA

In India, the work of Geeta, Neetu, their friends, The Stop Acid Attacks movement, Sheroes Hangout, and The Chhanv Foundation has seen new laws covering acid attack criminal definitions, acid sales, disability rights and compensation being introduced.<sup>19</sup>

Hugh Kennedy, a perpetrator of an acid attack in Glasgow in 1834, is one of the earliest accounts of an acid attack in the world.<sup>20</sup>

*Did you know?*

## MEXICO

Law for the prevention and re-classification of acid attacks as a serious crime, is currently being considered by the Mexican Congress. Many law makers and survivors are asking for acid attacks to be re-classified as attempted femicide.

To date, only two of Mexico's thirty-two states have classified acid attacks on women as attempted femicide

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/acid-attacks-mexico-women/>

<https://www.theyucatanimes.com/2020/02/acid-attacks-in-mexico-corrosive-gender-based-violence/>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/survived-acid-attacks-mexico-uniting-call-violence-rcna1616>

## UGANDA

The general law on criminal offences in Uganda, the Penal Code Cap 120, creates the offence of acid violence and describes sentencing for perpetrators. Specifically, Sec. 216 (g) provides that perpetrators of acid or burn violence intending to maim are liable to life imprisonment.

[https://www.acidviolence.org/assets/uganda\\_asfu\\_situational\\_analysis\\_report\\_final\\_nov2011\\_1.pdf](https://www.acidviolence.org/assets/uganda_asfu_situational_analysis_report_final_nov2011_1.pdf)

<https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2020/02/burnt-to-the-bone-ugandas-acid-attack-survivors-seek-justice/>

<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2021/12/un-women-uganda-and-partners-call-for-ending-acid-attack-violence-in-uganda>

## CAMBODIA

After several highly publicised acid attacks in Cambodia, the government in 2012 passed the Law on Regulating Concentrated Acid to curb the availability of acid used in attacks and to provide medical care and legal support to victims.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/02/04/what-hell-feels/acid-violence-cambodia>

<https://www.voacambodia.com/a/human-rights-watch-demands-treatment-justice-for-cambodia-acid-attack-survivors/4775266.html>

## OTHER LINKS

<https://news.trust.org/item/20220330143242-r7jm8/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/04/people-who-carry-out-life-changing-acid-attacks-face-life-sentences>









## ECONOMIC COSTS OF ACID ATTACKS

In 2018 it was widely reported that Acid Attacks Cost Britain £60 Million Every Year

ASTI and economics consultancy firm Frontier Economics estimated each attack cost 63,000 pounds, and predicted the total cost between 2015 and 2020 would be about 345 million pounds.

[https://www.frontier-economics.com/media/1138/20180709\\_economic-impact-of-acid-attacks-in-the-uk\\_frontier.pdf](https://www.frontier-economics.com/media/1138/20180709_economic-impact-of-acid-attacks-in-the-uk_frontier.pdf)

The report looked at costs to the health service, including medical and psychosocial support, costs to the police, judicial and penal systems, and the cost to victims of lost earnings and reduced productivity.

Jaf Shah, Executive Director of ASTI, said he hoped similar studies could be done in other countries to persuade governments to invest more in tackling the crime.

*"As an organisation, we [ASTI] are trying to make a clear case for intervention based on the damage done to survivors, but we know governments quite often determine policies (based) on the impact on the economy," Shah said.*

Global Citizen report: <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/acid-attacks-cost-britain-60-mil-a-year/>

*"I want people to see my film so they can understand the seriousness and life-long impact of acid violence on a survivor and why laws are important to prevent these attacks. We owe it to future generations to do everything in our power to remove these crimes from existence" (Geeta)*





## ACTION NEEDED IN AUSTRALIA

We need to learn more about acid violence in Australia – both in threats to use acid or actual attacks.

**Research and funding** is urgently needed to collect data on attacks and threats to disfigure with acid. Research is also needed to identify where there are gaps in data in Australia - which could assist in our learning more about the incidence of acid violence and threats to use acid in Australia. These include:

- Improving record-keeping within hospital and police reports, coroners' reports, on the MARAM family violence system, and the documentation of migration/bilateral related incidents.
- Introducing and strengthening legislation
- Understanding the motives behind acid attacks and how they relate to other serious crimes,
- Analysing how to reduce access to acid and other corrosive substances,
- Examining why convictions for acid attacks are so low and how to increase the rate of convictions,
- Discovering approaches to best support those whose lives have been affected by acid attacks. and
- Considering media blackout on reporting acid violence to reduce copycat attacks.

We need to collect data to understand the need for:

- Potential law reform (for example new classification of crime, Poisons' Acts, and ensuring Australia is fulfilling its obligations to UN Conventions and Treaties
- Police, judges, medical practitioners training and awareness raising, and
- Updates to sentencing recommendations relating to acid attacks.

*"What are we waiting for? If not now, when?" (Neetu)*





# END NOTES

## FOOTNOTES

1. ActionAid (website), Acid Attacks, 1500 acid attacks a year (asti)
2. Acid Survivors Trust International (Website), What is acid violence and why does it occur?
3. Acid Survivors Trust International (Website),
4. Acid Survivors Trust International (Website),
- 5 -7. Our research across multiple media reports
- 8 Interview with family violence case workers and researchers
9. UN Women (website), The UN Secretary-General's Message on International Women's Day, UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres 1 March 2018.
14. United Nations, About Us. [www.un.org/en/about-us](http://www.un.org/en/about-us)
11. General recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Recommendation No. 12 (eighth session, 1989)
12. General recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1992 Recommendation 19 (11th session, 1992)
13. UN Women (website), UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign.
14. UN Women (website), About the UNiTE campaign
15. Supplement to the Handbook for. Legislation on Violence against Women. "Harmful practices" against women, 2009, Economic & Social Affairs
16. USA today, 'Colombia cracks down on a horrific wave of acid attacks against women' by Simeon Tegel Jan 20, 2016)
17. The Straits Times, 'Tough laws sharply reduce Bangladesh acid attacks on women', Nov 4, 2019

18. Vice Online, Acid Attacks in the UK, Sadly are not going anywhere, August 2018.

19. Chhanv Foundation website, What we do.

20. The Guardian, Acid attacks were a stain on Victorian Britain. Now they are returning. By Ian Jack, 11 February, 2017.

## BACKGROUND

We would like to extend thanks to the Chhanv Foundation in India who have generously shared their knowledge on acid violence with us and supported the filming of the Geeta documentary.

Further references to the information referred to in this submission has also been collated from the following publications.

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Sheroes Hangout Facebook, Facebook Award, Chhanv Foundation, 2017

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### **Geeta Documentary Submission**

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# APPENDIX

## GEETA DOCUMENTARY

Additional Evidence - Submission: Inquiry into Rights of Women and Children

16 December, 2022

GEETA APPENDIX: ADDITION ONE

Free Translation

LAW 1773 OF 2016

(January 6)

Official Gazette No. 49,747 of January 6, 2016

CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC

By means of which article 116A is created, articles 68A, 104, 113, 359, and 374 of Law 599 of 2000 are modified and article 351 of Law 906 of 2004 is modified.

**THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS**

DECREES:

ARTICLE 1. Add article 116A to Law 599 of 2000, as follows:

Article. 116A. Injuries with chemical agents, acid and/or similar substances. Whoever causes damage to the body or health of another, using for this purpose any type of chemical agent, alkali, similar or corrosive substances that generate destruction when coming into contact with human tissue, will incur a prison sentence of one hundred and fifty ( 150) months to two hundred and forty (240) months and a fine of one hundred and twenty (120) to two hundred and fifty (250) current legal monthly minimum wages.

When the conduct causes deformity or permanent damage, partial or total, functional or anatomical loss, the penalty will be two hundred and fifty-one (251) months to three hundred and sixty (360) months in prison and a fine of one thousand (1,000) to three thousand ( 3,000) current legal monthly minimum wages.



If the deformity affects the face, the penalty will be increased by up to one third.

PARAGRAPH. <UNENFORCEABLE paragraph>

Jurisprudence Validity

Previous Legislation

PARAGRAPH 2. The attempt in this crime will be governed by article 27 of this code.

Jurisprudence Validity

ARTICLE 2. Eliminate the third paragraph of article 113 of Law 599 of 2000.

ARTICLE 3. Modify article 358 of Law 599 of 2000, which will read as follows:

Article 358. Possession, manufacture and trafficking of dangerous substances or objects. Whoever illegally imports, introduces, exports, manufactures, acquires, has in his possession, supplies, traffics, transports or eliminates a hazardous, radioactive or nuclear substance, waste or residue; or acids, alkalis, similar or corrosive substances that generate destruction when in contact with human tissue; considered as such by international treaties ratified by Colombia or current provisions, will incur a prison term of forty-eight (48) to one hundred and forty-four (144) months and a fine of one hundred thirty-three point thirty-three (133.33) to thirty thousand ( 30,000) current legal monthly minimum wages.

The penalty indicated in the previous paragraph will be increased by half, when as a consequence of some of the described behaviors there is a release of nuclear energy, radioactive elements or pathogenic germs that endanger the life or health of people or their property. ..).

ARTICLE 4th. Modify the second paragraph of article 68A of Law 599 of 2000, which will read as follows:

“Article 68A. Exclusion of criminal benefits and subrogated. The conditional suspension of the execution of the penalty will not be granted; house arrest as a substitute for prison; nor will there be any other benefit, judicial or administrative, except for collaboration benefits regulated by law, as long as it is effective, when the person has been convicted of an intentional crime within the previous five (5) years.

Nor are those who have been convicted of fraudulent crimes against the Public Administration; crimes against persons and property protected by International Humanitarian Law; crimes against freedom, integrity and sexual formation; fraud and breach of trust that fall on State assets; massive and habitual collection of money; misuse of privileged information; conspiracy to commit an aggravated crime; money laundering; foreign bribery; domestic violence; qualified theft; extortion; aggravated homicide contemplated in numeral 6 of article 104; injuries caused by chemical agents, acid and/or similar substances; unlawful breach of communications; unlawful violation of communications or correspondence of an official nature; human trafficking; apology for genocide; personal injury due to anatomical or functional loss of an organ or member; forced displacement; migrant smuggling; front man; illicit enrichment of individuals; seizure of hydrocarbons, their derivatives, biofuels or mixtures that contain them; receiving; incitement to commit a crime; use or release of dangerous substances or objects; manufacture, import, trafficking, possession or use of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons; crimes related to drug trafficking and other offences; espionage; rebellion; and forced displacement; usurpation of real estate, counterfeiting of national or foreign currency; fictitious export or import; tax evasion; refusal of reimbursement; aggravated contraband; smuggling of hydrocarbons and their derivatives; aid and abetment to the employment, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines.

The provisions of this article shall not apply with respect to the substitution of preventive detention and the substitution of the execution of the sentence in the events contemplated in numerals 2, 3, 4 and 5 of article 314 of Law 906 of 2004.

PARAGRAPH 1. The provisions of this article shall not apply to the probation contemplated in article 64 of this Code, nor to the provisions of article 38G of this Code.

PARAGRAPH 2. The provisions of the first paragraph of this article shall not apply with respect to the suspension of the execution of the sentence, when the personal, social and family history is indicative that there is no possibility of the execution of the sentence...).

ARTICLE 5. ACCESS TO THE FILE BY THE VICTIM AND HIS ATTENDING PHYSICIAN. The National Institute of Legal Medicine will immediately provide all the information required by the treating physician for victims of attacks with chemical agents, acids, alkalis, similar or corrosive substances that cause destruction when in contact with human tissue, which is necessary to establish the medical procedure to follow and thus prevent the damage from being even more serious.

ARTICLE 6. The duration of the sentence for the crime typified in the first article of this law, added to the aggravating circumstances provided for in article 119 of the Penal Code, shall be adjusted to the provisions of article 37 of the Penal Code.

ARTICLE 7th. The National Government, through the Ministry of Health, will formulate a public policy for comprehensive care for acid victims within six months from the issuance of this Law, guaranteeing access to comprehensive medical and psychological care.

Go to start

ARTICLE 8. VALIDITY. This law is effective as of its publication and repeals all provisions that are contrary to it.

**The President of the honorable Senate of the Republic,**

LUIS FERNANDO VELASCO CHAVES.

**The Secretary General of the honorable Senate of the Republic,**

GREGORY ELJACH PACHECO.

**The Speaker of the honorable House of Representatives,**

ALFREDO RAFAEL DELUQUE ZULETA.

**The Secretary General of the honorable House of Representatives,**

JORGE HUMBERTO MANTILLA SERRANO.

REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA-NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Publish and comply.

Given in Bogotá, D. C., on January 6, 2016.

JUAN MANUEL SANTOS CALDERON

The Vice Minister for the Promotion of Justice of the Ministry of Justice and Law, in charge of the functions of the Office of the Minister of Justice and Law,

ANA MARIA RAMOS SERRANO.



GEETA APPENDIX: ADDITION TWO

**TRANSLATION of Public Policy for Women and Gender Equity Baseline - City diagnosis Bogota Global**

PAGE 1

Public Policy for Women and Gender Equity Baseline - City diagnosis  
Bogota Global

PAGE 2

PPMyEG - Baseline - City diagnosis global bogota  
© District Secretariat for Women, 2022

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PAGE 19

Psychological violence

Percentage of women who declare having suffered violence according to type and percentages according to frequency in the last two years and the aggressor

Received humiliating phrases 25.4

Threats with weapons or attack with chemical agent – 15.6%

Impediment to meet with friends or with your family – 8.6%

Request for images or videos intimates and threatens to publish in social networks 1.9%

Among those who stated that they had suffered some act of psychological violence:

Frequency in the last two years (clockwise diagram)

More than three times – 19.3%

No time in the last two years – 51.9%

Two or three times – 12%

Once – 16.8%

PAGE 20

Aggressor (among those who were once victims)

Received humiliating phrases (the last time)

Ex-Partner 31.3%

Current Partner – 22.1%

Mother or Father – 20.5%

Another person or relative - 9%

Boss – 8.6%

Daughter/Step-0Daughter – 4.3%

Other Persons – 17.7%

Threatened with weapons or attack with chemical agent

Thief or offender – 63.4%

Ex-Partner 13.6%

Current Partner – 3.7%

Other Persons – 20%

No Information – 0.6%

Impediment to meet with friends or with your family

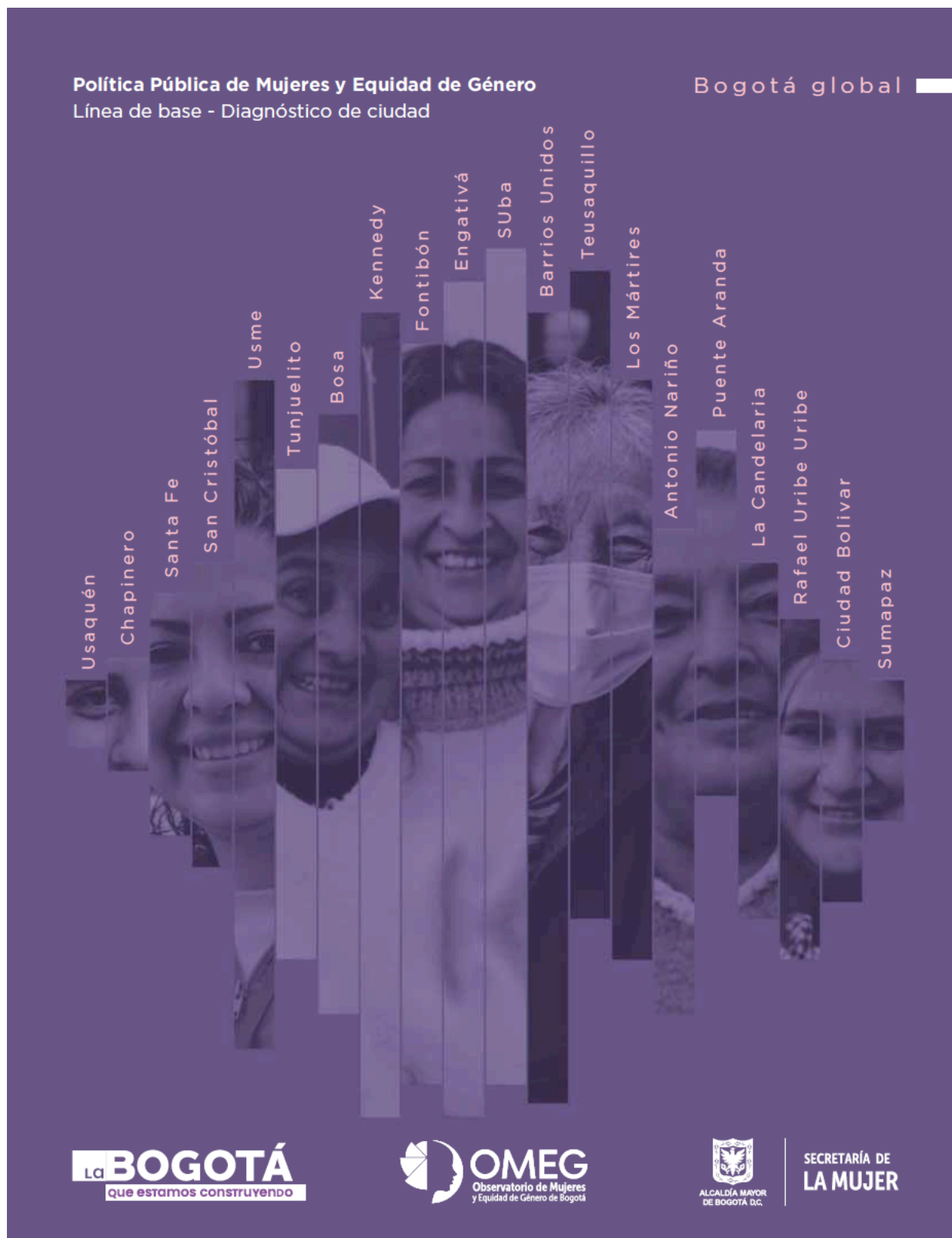
Ex partner 43.8%  
Current partner 35.9%  
Daughter/stepdaughter 5.8%  
Mother or father 5.1%  
Others 8.2%  
No information 3.5%

Request for images or videos intimates and threatens to publish in social networks

Friend or friend of a friend 25.5%  
Ex partner 23.0%  
Another person and/or his relative 7.7%  
Others 45.2%

The highest number of women who declared: • • • • Having received humiliating sentences (you are useless, you never do nothing well, you are a brute) is found in La Candelaria (42.9% of the total women in that locality), followed by Puente Aranda (34.6%) Threats with weapons or attack with a chemical agent, in La Candelaria (27.1%), followed by San Cristóbal (23.8%) Impediment to meet friends or family, in Engativá (13.0%), followed by Santa Fe and Usme (11.9% in both) Request for intimate images or videos and threaten to post on social media, in Teusaquillo (6.4%), followed by Los Mártires (4.5%)





## **PPMyEG - Línea de base - Diagnóstico de ciudad** Bogotá global

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DISEÑO Y DIAGRAMACIÓN

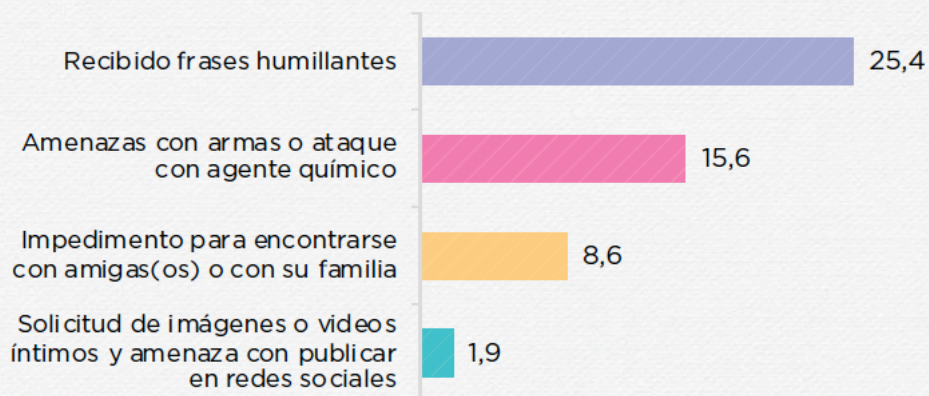
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## Violencia psicológica

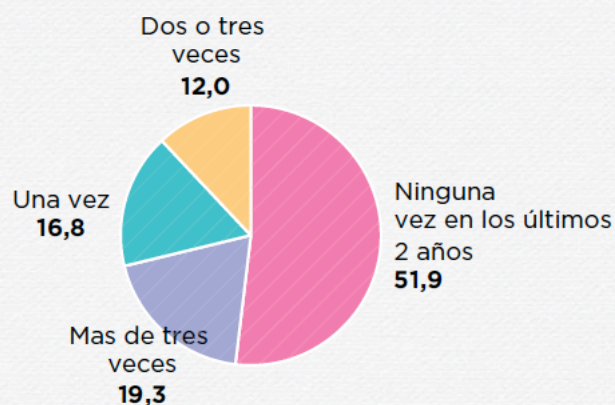
Porcentaje de mujeres que declaran haber sufrido violencia sexual según tipo y porcentajes según la frecuencia en los dos últimos años y la persona agresora

### Violencia psicológica



Entre quienes manifestaron haber sufrido algún acto de violencia psicológica:

### Frecuencia en los dos últimos años

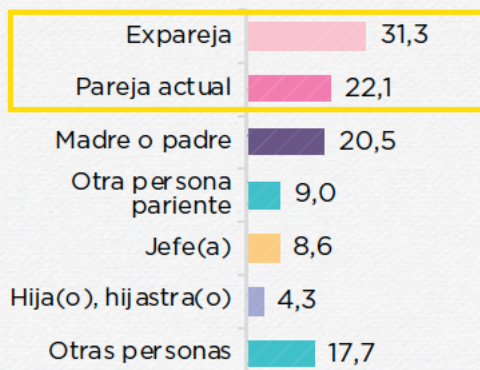




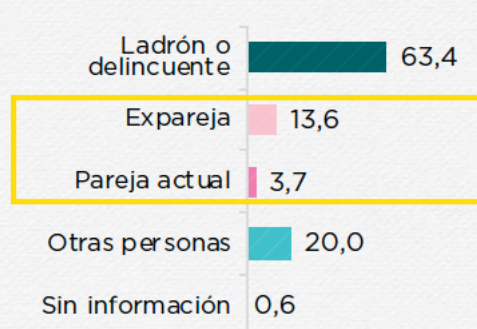
Derecho a una vida libre de violencias - Bogotá global

Persona agresora (entre quienes alguna vez fueron víctimas)

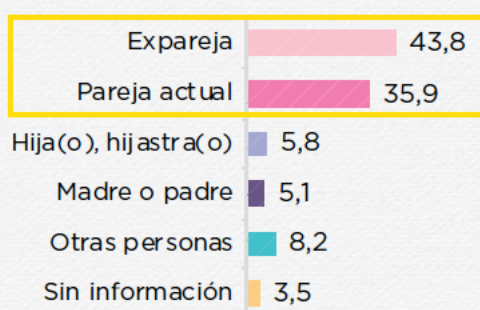
**Recibido frases humillantes  
(la última vez)**



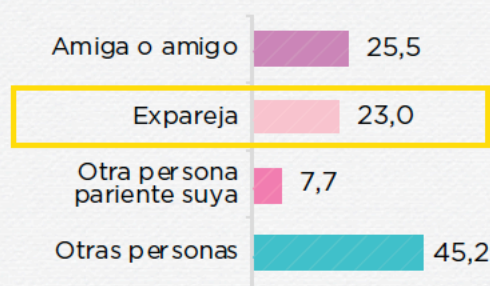
**Amenazado con armas o ataque  
con agente químico**



**Impedido encontrarse con  
amigas(os) o con su familia**



**Solicitud de imágenes o videos  
íntimos y amenaza con publicar en  
redes sociales**



La cifra más alta de mujeres que declararon:

- Haber recibido frases humillantes (usted no sirve para nada, usted nunca hace nada bien, usted es una bruta) se encuentra en **La Candelaria (42,9%)** del total de mujeres en esa localidad, seguida de **Puente Aranda (34,6%)**
- Amenazas con armas o ataque con agente químico, en **La Candelaria (27,1%)**, seguida de **San Cristóbal (23,8%)**
- Impedimento para encontrarse con amigas(os) o con su familia, en **Engativá (13,0%)**, seguida de **Santa Fe y Usme (11,9% en ambas)**
- Solicitud de imágenes o videos íntimos y amenaza con publicar en redes sociales, en **Teusaquillo (6,4%)**, seguida de **Los Mártires (4,5%)**