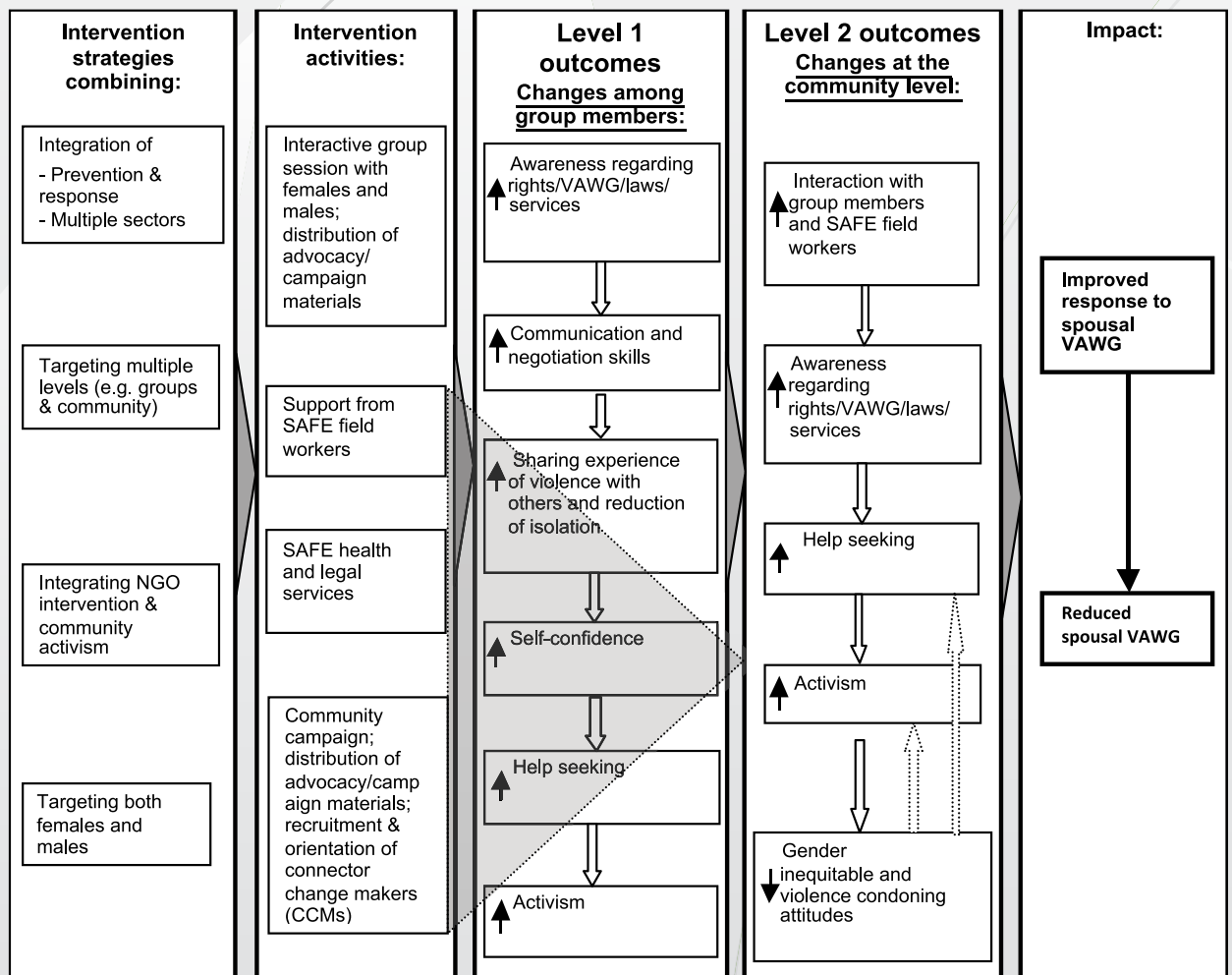


# Pathways of change to reduce spousal violence against women and girls

The pathways through which spousal violence can be reduced remain minimally explored in low income settings despite the fact that formulation of effective policies and programmes largely depend on an understanding of them. With this in mind, the SAFE evaluation included data collection and analysis to identify pathways of change in SAFE intervention areas.

The pathways of change (Figure 1) gleaned from qualitative data elucidate the contribution of SAFE intervention components in reducing spousal violence against young women and adolescent girls (VAWG) in Dhaka's slums.

Figure 1: Pathways of change in spousal violence against women and girls in SAFE intervention areas



### Level 1 outcomes: Changes among group members

Among the SAFE group members, knowledge building, sensitisation, support and services drove the reduction of spousal violence.

- Knowledge imparted through group sessions raised group members' awareness of women's rights, VAWG, laws preventing VAWG and services for VAWG survivors.
- SAFE group sessions created social spaces encouraging young women and adolescent girls to speak about experience with spousal violence, thus, reducing their isolation.
- Group members became self-confident, voiced their experiences and shared coping mechanisms with the group.
- Communication and negotiation skills were promoted, enabling many group members to address spousal conflict strategically.
- Many survivors sought help from community volunteers, group members, and SAFE field workers, who often provided effective support.

### Level 2 outcomes: Changes in the community

Community-led activism was the main vehicle steering positive changes in communities. Community volunteers, SAFE field workers and SAFE group members contributed to these changes.

- Interaction between community volunteers and group members with non-group members helped defuse VAWG knowledge and awareness.
- Community-wide anti-violence campaigns reinforced non-group members' knowledge and awareness.
- The presence of organisations addressing violence through community-based interventions and service points enhanced positive outcomes.

"Earlier I could not understand how to deal with thrashing by [my] husband. I used to think there is nothing I can do. Now, if he beats me or insults me in public I get back to him at a later point in time and try to make him understand that he should not mistreat me, particularly in public, which is humiliating. This I learned from the group sessions. This strategy has reduced violence in my life."

**A community volunteer**

"Four or five of us used to go and talk to men who used to beat their wives. ... We told them 'Why do you fight? Why do you abuse your wives? Do you know that this is harmful?' ... The bad ones used to tell us that it is their personal matter and wanted to know why do we care? We used to inform our Apa (female SAFE field worker). Apa used to come and talk to them. After that things would improve a bit. ... We have received a lot of assistance from SAFE. The women field workers supported us. Now, men understand that it is risky to abuse women too much."

**A group member**

### In summary

SAFE provides evidence on the pathways through which spousal violence against women and girls can be reduced. The findings suggest the following:

- An integrated intervention is effective in changing gender inequitable attitudes and reducing spousal violence against women and girls
- Group sessions are critical in diffusing change among group members
- Activism involving community members is key in diffusing attitudinal and behavioural change from groups to the community
- Presence of NGOs is necessary to achieve positive results in addressing spousal VAWG.