




**CREATING [ ] SPACES** TO TAKE ACTION ON VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS



**IMPACT  
STORIES**

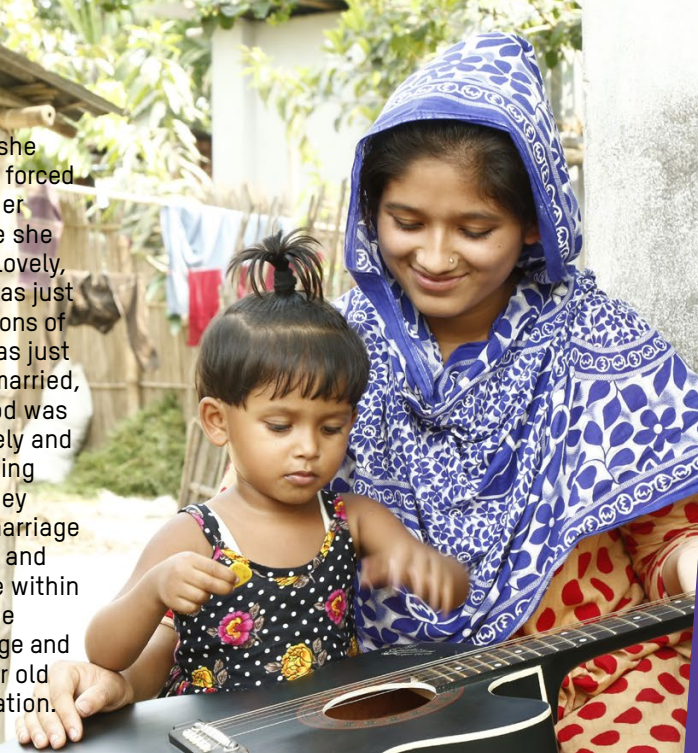
A woman wearing a blue headscarf and a blue patterned top is smiling. She is holding a silver tray filled with fried, golden-brown snacks, some of which are in clear plastic bags. The background is a dark, textured brick wall. A large purple triangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text. A white banner is at the bottom left, and a quote is enclosed in green brackets on the right.

< **SHAMPA**, 30, is from a village in Birampur, Dinajpur. Shampa participated in a skills training provided by Pollisree, a Creating Spaces partner, and learned how to start her own business making a local snack. Shampa has been running the business for 7 months and is earning more than she ever has. Thanks to Pollisree, Shampa is able to support herself and her family, which has helped stop the violence in her household. Not only does Shampa feel economically empowered, she has seen a change in her family life and her husband:

**BANGLADESH**

His attitude is changing gradually. Now that I earn money, I participate in making changes for my family. If I say something to my husband now, he listens to it carefully.

> **RUBINA** was married when she was just 12 years old and was forced to quit school. Her grandfather arranged her marriage before she was born. Rubina's mother, Lovely, was also married when she was just a child as were three generations of women before her. Faridul was just a child when his sister was married, he looked on as her childhood was stolen from her. Rubina, Lovely and Faridul have joined the Creating Spaces Community Group. They work together to end child marriage and violence against women and girls. Rubina now has a voice within her home and community. She advocates to end child marriage and is determined that her 3-year old daughter Jhim gets an education.



## CREATING SPACES PARTNER: **POLLISREE**

Since 1987, the organization Pollisree has worked in Dinajpur, Bangladesh, in close collaboration with local government at district, sub-district and union levels. Pollisree organizes opportunities for youth to become change makers and to actively work to stop violence against women. Pollisree also concentrates on the effective implementation of state policies and laws that empower women and strengthen institutions.



We cannot change the past, but we can change the future. We can show the villagers that it takes the whole family to end child marriage

Faridul, Lovely and Rubina | Above: Rubina and her daughter, Jhim | Photo: Abir Abdullah/Oxfam

> **KHURSHIDA PARVIN JOLY** is a lawyer who has dedicated her career to fighting for women's rights in her community. Through her work at the District Judge Court in Dinajpur, Khurshida works with women who have experienced domestic violence or sexual harassment. As one of only 12 female lawyers in Dinajpur, Khurshida herself has battled discrimination but continues to be a voice of advocacy and support to young women in her area. Reflecting on her participation in the project, Khurshida started to see change:

When I get the feedback or a call from them, I think the awareness has built up among them. When the community people come to me breaking their own circle, want to know about the law, want suggestions from me what they should do next, I think this is a result of Creating Spaces.



Photo: Abir Abdullah/Oxfam



Photo: Atul Loke/Oxfam

## INDIA

### CREATING SPACES PARTNER:

### THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN (NAWO)

NAWO is a feminist alliance with a strong district base and considerable experience in working with youth and gender issues. They work extensively on early marriage and domestic violence issues, with an excellent track record of advocacy and campaigning at the state level. NAWO has members in all districts and a network of 234 organizations and individuals in Odisha.

### AFTER FIVE YEARS IN AN ABUSIVE

**MARRIAGE**, 23-year old Sonali visited a support centre to seek help. She was married at 17 and was physically and emotionally abused by her husband and his family. Through Creating Spaces partner NAWO, Sonali connected with a social worker who helped her leave her abusive husband and gain custody of her two sons. Sonali is currently fighting for child support payments from her husband. Sonali's advice to other young women:

Be strong and believe in yourself. After going to the support center, I learned about the different types of violence against women and learned that it is not acceptable. Now, I tell other women who face violence where to get help

Ever since Creating Spaces started, people have understood that girls should be 18 before they get married. That they need to go to school and should get some independence. I will help the other women leaders and support them – my work is for the village.

**CREATING SPACES PARTNER:**

**ASTITWA SAMAJIK SANSTHAN**

Astitwa Samajik Sansthan is one of only a few organizations that works with women from Muslim and Dalit communities in the Muzaffarnagar district of Western Uttar Pradesh. Their interventions reflect a strong feminist consciousness. Astitwa's committed and passionate team consists of women who themselves have experienced domestic violence. The organization works closely with relevant stakeholders including police, religious leaders and elected representatives.



< **SHAKUNTALA HARPAL** is a Dalit leader in Harichandrapur Village, where Creating Spaces partner NAWO works. Shakuntala helps women who experience violence seek justice and support services, helps widows get access to their pensions, and mentors the girls in her village to stand up for their rights.

Photo: Atul Loke/Oxfam



## INDONESIA

### CREATING SPACES PARTNER:

### YAYASAN TUNAS ALAM INDONESIA (SANTAI)

Founded in 1988, Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI) has extensive experience working with youth and children in West Nusa Tenggara, particularly in conducting advocacy to end child marriage at the village and district level. They work to fulfill the rights of children and youth through developing alternative education, and as an agency in the provincial referral system. SANTAI creates strong linkages between its research, advocacy work and service providers.

< **FEBY** participated in a training led by SANTAI that focused on how to prevent and handle cases of VAWG and CEFM. Feby worked with a local family, village chief and local police in her area to support a young girl who didn't want to get married. Through her advocacy and intervention, Feby and the community were able to successfully return the girl to her family and back to school.

I joined SANTAI in 2017. I was involved in socialization activities as well as capacity building activities for cadres. I am still involved in many activities, and recently stopped a case of child marriage.



Photo: KPI/Oxfam

**CREATING SPACES PARTNER:  
KOALISI PEREMPUAN INDONESIA (KPI)**

KPI, also known as the Indonesian Women's Coalition, is the largest network of Indonesian women working together for women's rights in Indonesia, with a membership of over 30,000 women spread across 22 provinces. Members come from various backgrounds and the coalition brings together women gender justice activists from a range of smaller civil society organizations across the country.

< **IN APRIL 2018**, 18 women who work with women's rights organizations, including Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, met with the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, at the Presidential Palace in West Java. They called on the President to publish policies that have direct impact on the fulfillment of basic rights, especially policies to prevent and stop child marriages.

> Her participation in Creating Spaces youth training programs has given 16-year old **HAFIFAH** the confidence to talk about how to prevent VAWG and CEFM in her community. She regularly speaks to her parents, neighbours and friends about the harmful impact of CEFM.



Photo: LBH APIK Makassar/Oxfam



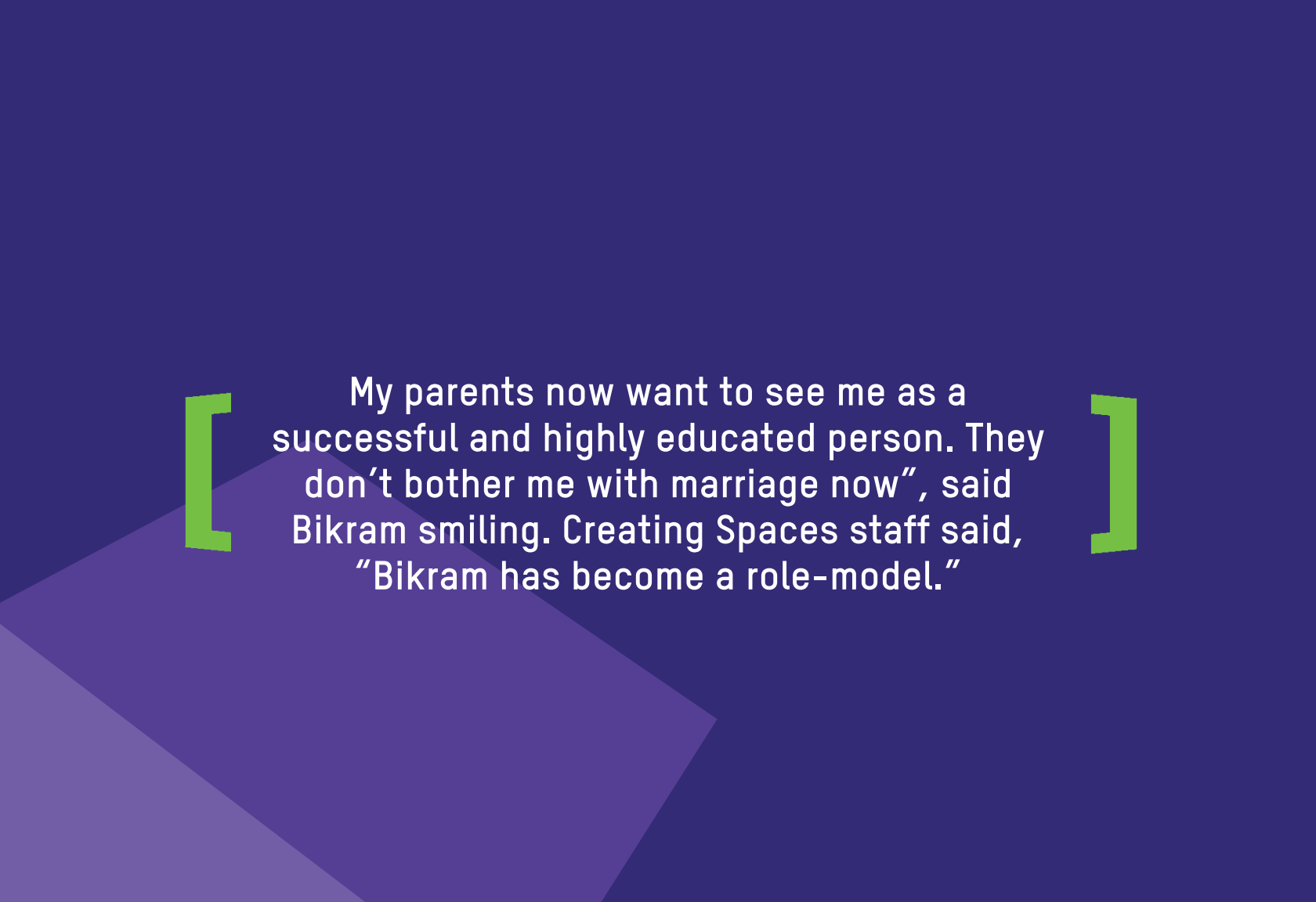


**NEPAL**


**CREATING SPACES PARTNER:  
SOCIAL AWARENESS CONCERNED  
FORUM (SAC)**

SAC is a small development organization that works on child and women's rights, social mobilization, income generation, women's empowerment, democracy and governance, health rights and capacity building. SAC refers and reports cases of VAWG to relevant district police offices and other organizations with safe houses, shelters and other support services.

< **BIKRAM** is a 16-year old student in Banke who actively participates in many of the extra-curricular activities organized by the Social Awareness Concerned Forum Child Clubs supported by Creating Spaces. He won first place in an essay writing competition about child marriage. Shortly after, his parents told him that they had arranged a marriage for him. Bikram refused and threatened to go to the police because he was underage and wanted to continue his studies. His family was upset with SAC staff for influencing their son, but after explaining to Bikram's parents that child marriage was illegal and would harm their child, Bikram says...



My parents now want to see me as a successful and highly educated person. They don't bother me with marriage now", said Bikram smiling. Creating Spaces staff said, "Bikram has become a role-model."



**SYED**, the Director of Education for the Government of Punjab, participated in a workshop focused on gender equality led by Aurat Foundation under Creating Spaces, and wants to see the training expanded to adult literacy centres in the district. Reflecting on his participation, he said “I have never considered the issue of gender based violence seriously, but after this discussion I have realized that violence against women affects us all in various ways and it is not a private matter.”

## PAKISTAN

Photo: Zain/Oxfam

### CREATING SPACES PARTNER:

#### AURAT FOUNDATION (AF)

In operation for more than 30 years, Aurat Foundation (AF) is Pakistan’s largest rights-based citizen network. Their mission is to create, facilitate and strengthen civil society groups and networks to promote trust and collaboration among citizens, mobilizing public pressure for women’s empowerment in the country. The organization spans 120 districts in the country, and has established 2,600 Information Network Centres, 110 District Coordination Committees and 73 Citizen Action Committees. At the national level, its legislative watch groups promote supportive legislation for women and lobby against discriminatory laws.

After participating in a Aurat Foundation workshop in Pakistan supported by Creating Spaces, a female government officer stated that: “This is the first time we have been given such an in-depth orientation about the legal framework around the existing pro-women laws. Now I feel I have a responsibility to provide the much-needed services to gender based violence cases being reported to our police station.”



Photo: Zain/Oxfam

< **IBAD ALI JATALA** is the assistant director in the Social Welfare Department, and participated in an inter-provincial exposure visit organized to identify common challenges, best practices in reducing CEFM and gaps in implementation: “I will now apply a gender lens to review my current work, and will try to create an environment that is more responsive towards the specific needs of survivors of violence. Moreover, I will take the same message to my superiors to develop organizational gender responsive goals.”

**SHAHNAZ**, a member of the Women’s Protection Forum, was surprised when she received a wedding invitation because she knew the bride was underage. Equipped with information she had learned through the Creating Spaces training, Shahnaz decided to take action to prevent the marriage. She met the family and tried to convince them to delay the marriage, but they did not agree. Shahnaz then came back to her forum and enlisted the help of other women leaders. They took brochures and other information material to the family and discussed the Anti-Child Marriage Act and told them that legal action can be taken against both families. The family agreed to delay the marriage until their daughter is 16, the legal age in Punjab.

**AFTER LEARNING ABOUT THE HARMFUL IMPACTS OF CEFM** and VAWG, a local Imam (religious leader) from Dadu, Sindh delivered a series of sermons during Friday prayers about ending CEFM, women’s rights to inheritance and girls’ education.

I will now take consent from the girl, before carrying out a nikah (marriage ceremony) and will verify her age through her identity card.



< **MIA**, an 18-year-old former student is one of 70 young people who was mentored by United Youth of the Philippines Women (UNY-Phil) to be a youth leader. Even after leaving school, Mia continues to participate in Creating Spaces activities so she can help others.

## PHILIPPINES

Photo: Aprit Abello-Bulanadi/Oxfam

### CREATING SPACES PARTNER:

### UNITED YOUTH OF THE PHILIPPINES WOMEN (UNY-PHIL WOMEN)

is a women's rights organization and has an established presence in Maguindanao province and strong relationships at the local level. Since being established in 1990, the organization's focus is on human rights and has played a strong role in developing the Bangsamoro Women's Agenda for the Bangsamoro Basic Law. They run a women's centre, which also acts as a shelter for women and girls who have experienced violence. Their mission is to promote women's rights to proper education and health care, to educate women on their rights as an individual, and to mobilize Bangsamoro women to participate in planning and decision-making for a just and humane society.

I really want to be a teacher. That's why when our student government adviser requested me to speak in front of the Parent-Teacher Association meeting about the effects of early marriage, I was both worried and excited. Worried that the parents might misunderstand me and excited because I get to say what I feel and think about the issue.

**CREATING SPACES PARTNER:**

**PHILIPPINE LEGISLATORS'  
COMMITTEE ON POPULATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT (PLCPD)**

Established in 1989, the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) has expertise in legislative policy, particularly in relation to women's rights. PLCPD mobilizes legislators to advance substantive legislative proposals on population and human development. They also establish partnerships to create avenues for broadening people's participation, linking them to legislators, and raising public awareness. The organization provides technical assistance to legislators, and undertakes communications and policy campaigns.

< **HONOURABLE  
BERNADETTE HERRERA-DY**  
is a politician, leader  
and influencer who  
participated in a Creating  
Spaces training on  
advocacy, child marriage  
and the role of student  
leaders led by the  
Philippine Legislators'  
Committee on Population  
and Development (PLCPD).  
Reflecting on the impact  
of early marriage in  
society, Herrera-Dy  
stated:

Photo: April Abello-Bulanadi/Oxfam

When we provide the spaces for young girls to maximize the available opportunities for social, economic, and political development, we allow them to make meaningful contributions to society. They are barred from these pathways when they become wives and mothers too soon.



**OXFAM**

Canada

**CREATING SPACES** aims to reduce violence against women and girls and child, early and forced marriage, through coordinated prevention and response in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and Philippines. Across these countries, Oxfam works with local partners, predominantly women's and women's rights organizations. We support our partners in an integrated approach, acting on multiple levels - individual, community, institutional and societal - to support lasting change towards norms and behaviors that allow women and girls to live free from violence.

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**ON THE COVER:** Pollisree officials pose as 'empowered women' in Rangpur, Bangladesh, as part of Oxfam Canada's Creating Spaces project.  
Photo: Abir Abdullah/Oxfam

**ON THE BACK COVER:** Julie Devi, community mobilizer working with the Creating Spaces project.  
Photo: Atul Loke/Oxfam



Canada 

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