

Report: *Where Do We Go From Here – Reimagining Responses to Image-Based Abuse*

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Organised by: Point of View, Alibag

Introduction

The workshop “*Where Do We Go From Here: Re-Imagining Responses to Image-Based Abuse*” was organized by Point of View on **1–2 September 2025** and facilitated by **Kushal**. This two-day workshop created space to think about how image-based abuse is understood, experienced, and addressed in India. It aimed to imagine new responses that are empathetic, inclusive, and focused on the needs of survivors. People from different backgrounds came together to look at current systems, share their experiences, and explore possible solutions for the future.

Futures Literacy and Setting the Context

The workshop started with a session on **Futures Literacy**, which is about how we imagine and prepare for the future. The discussion looked at how fast technology is changing, the lack of media literacy in NGOs and government work, and the absence of consent in collecting biometric data. Participants also spoke about the responsibility of digital platforms, the risks of doctored images, and how to protect vulnerable groups. They stressed the need for inclusivity and accountability without placing too much burden on individual users.

Understanding Image-Based Abuse in India

The sessions highlighted how **image-based abuse in India** is often not studied from a local perspective, as most research comes from the Global North. This means Indian realities are often ignored. Survivors’ voices are rarely heard, and the language used to talk about non-consensual images is usually based on morality, focusing on shame and modesty. Insights from **Tech Sakhi’s helpline data** showed that more than half of the calls on tech-related gender-based violence were about image-based abuse, often linked to fake

profiles, hacking, or misuse of images. Discussions also showed how fear of family and social rejection plays a big role in how survivors experience harm.

Community-Specific Experiences

Different communities face unique challenges in managing their images online. **Sex workers** must constantly manage their digital images as work and personal spaces overlap. **Lesbian women** often hide images through secret apps to stay safe, while **trans persons** face added risks during their transition period. **Queer and trans people** are especially vulnerable to violence through memes and humour-based online content. These cases raised questions about how violence should be defined and measured when it comes to online harms.

Reflections on Current Responses

The workshop also looked at **how image-based abuse is currently being addressed**. NGOs and government helplines provide some support, but many gaps remain. NGOs, especially those who can escalate cases directly with platforms like Meta, were seen as more effective in getting action, though challenges still exist. Other forms of support, such as reporting on platforms, family involvement, community responses, crisis intervention, and peer support, were also discussed. These responses had both benefits and risks. A common theme was the need to shift away from approaches based on morality and instead build systems rooted in empathy, dignity, and survivor-led action.

Imagining Alternative Futures

Participants then worked on **imagining future responses**. They explored ideas where survivors are decision-makers, platforms are designed to be more inclusive, and justice is defined in broader ways beyond the state. One key idea was a **community-owned safety dashboard**, which could act as a live system to create awareness, prevent harm, and provide support. The tool was imagined as both digital and physical, giving survivors multiple choices for help and also offering space for people who cause harm to take responsibility and work on change.

From Imagination to Action

On the second day, the focus was on **turning ideas into action**. Participants thought about how to improve current systems and how to make new ideas practical. They suggested

stronger collaborations across sectors, using ethical tech support, and creating shared values of justice and gender sensitivity in all responses. The discussions also underlined the need to build constructive relationships with the state while keeping community voices at the center of prevention and redressal.

Closing Reflections

The workshop ended with a group exercise where participants imagined future possibilities together. They were encouraged to think differently about violence, justice, and accountability. The discussions pointed to the need to break harmful links between honour, sexuality, and caste, and instead create responses that are inclusive, caring, and easy to access. The main learning was that problems around image-based abuse may not have simple solutions, but they can be handled through ongoing dialogue, community support, and creative approaches that keep survivors at the heart of every response.