How India Is Failing Its Women, Ctd

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Nita Bhalla highlights what is perhaps the most horrific crime against women on the subcontinent – acid attacks:

Nine years ago, three men broke into Sonali’s home in the east Indian city of Dhanbad as she slept, and threw concentrated acid over her face. The highly corrosive chemical caused 70 percent burns to her face, neck and arms and melted away the skin and flesh on her nose, cheeks and ears – leaving her almost blind and partially deaf. Sonali, who was a 17-year-old college student at the time of the attack, had rejected their sexual advances for months and when she threatened to call the police, they took their revenge.

A recent paper (pdf) explains why acid attacks in India are increasingly common:

Acid attacks occur at high rates in Bangladesh, India, and Cambodia because the acid used to perpetrate attacks—such as sulfuric acid and nitric acid—is cheap and easily available. Neither India nor Cambodia has enacted laws to regulate the easy availability of acid or criminal laws to adequately punish perpetrators of attacks. On the other hand, Bangladesh enacted two laws in 2002—one that heightens criminal penalties and improves criminal procedures and another that attempts to decrease the availability of acid. Acid attacks are on the rise in India and Cambodia, but have decreased by 15% to 20% in Bangladesh each year after the country adopted specific laws to address acid violence.

Meanwhile, some Indian women are taking matters into their own hands:

Navdeep, a housewife in Ludhiana, said she had a shotgun at home for security when her husband was working away from home, and recently bought a lighter pistol for use outside the house. "A lot of lower-class men, they harass women, so a gun is very good way of telling them to back off. If I am coming home late at night on my own, it is very necessary. Even if the police come, it is too late," she said.