



Report Partnerships for Forward Looking Strategies on Women's Safety and Rights in Delhi

Organised by Jagori

**24 May 2016
Amaltas Hall,
India Habitat Centre,
New Delhi**

For limited circulation only

Published by

JAGORI

B-114, Shivalik, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi 110017

Phone: +91-11-2669 1219/20

Telefax: +91-11-2669 1221

Jagori Helpline +91-11-2669 2700, 8800996640

Email: jagori@jagori.org

Website: www.jagori.org, www.safedelhi.in

Published in May 2016

Acknowledgements: UN Women, Safetipin, Y P Foundation, UNICEF, Action India, CWDS CFAR, SANGAT, CBGA, NACDOR, Breakthrough, ICRW, IHD, CHRI, University of Delhi, Hazard Centre and others.

Design & Layout by Mahabir

Report
Partnerships for Forward Looking Strategies on Women's Safety and Rights in Delhi
Organised by Jagori

24 May 2016
Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Brief Background:

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 11: "Make Cities Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable." comes at a time when cities are expanding rapidly. In fact, by 2030, an estimated 60 percent of the world's population is predicted to be living in urban areas. The New Urban Agenda (2016-zero draft), has highlighted among other issues, the need to develop an eco-system of services and human settlements with increased participation of the community, deepening democratization processes and work towards accountable governance. It is hoped that city governments will co-create cities with its urban residents.

For India specifically, the amount of people living in slum areas is expected to rise to 104 million people by 2017. Currently, Delhi has approximately 15 percent of the urban slum population in the country. The increase could result in further decay of infrastructure and lack of opportunities and human rights for those forced to live in these areas. With this, women's safety is particularly compromised.

Within the impoverished housing in the city, women often have to resort to public spaces for using the restroom, which creates a distinct vulnerability to sexual harassment and assault. This is exacerbated by the sheer lack of women's public restroom facilities throughout the National Capital Region. Out of all of the toilets in Delhi, only an estimated 4 percent of them are designated for women, many without maintenance or are locked during evening hours. The case in slum areas is significantly worse in infrastructure and availability. This severe lack of infrastructure poses a safety concern for women as well as a health problem with dehydration and unsanitary bathroom conditions.

Gender safety in an urban context is critical as Delhi starts to transition into a "smart city" under the new government initiative to create more inclusive, healthier cities with better infrastructure. Recently, the Indian President declared women's safety a "sacred duty of society as a whole. We must respect the right of women to equal opportunities and a dignified life". The current Delhi Chief Minister went a step further in naming women's safety a top concern for his government.

Delhi is among the cities projected as extremely unsafe for women. Three out of five women experience violence in India ; Delhi accounts for approximately 21 percent of all crimes against women despite having less than 1.4 percent of the Indian population. In the 2013 NCRB report, Mumbai came in a distant second in gender-related violence. When examining rape and sexual assault, Delhi had a 27 percent increase in reporting from last year. The issue hit a recent peak in tension after 3 minor girls were raped in Delhi in less than 24 hours from March 24th to March 25th during the Holi celebrations. These are not isolated cases either. While some of the statistics can be attributed to an increase in reporting, they do not explain the whole story.



Today, India is still ranked 130th in the world in gender equality according to the Gender Development Index by the United Nations. And as for women's safety, Delhi ranks as the fourth least safe city in the world in a study comparing international cities' safety to women. Delhi ranked particularly low in this study in the sector of transportation, something that has been a large issue since the widely known Delhi gang rape case of 2012. Since then, Delhi transportation sectors have claimed to install CCTV cameras, guards on public buses, and a women's-only section in the city metro. However, the last mile connectivity - travelling from the metro or bus station to your point of Destination - is still problematic and unresolved. This was emphasized in the Uber rape case in Delhi, when the company was put under fire for neglecting to require GPS trackers, background checks and panic buttons.

This lack of safety in transportation and throughout the city has serious consequences on the movement and freedom of women in the city. For India, this problem has translated to a lower workforce overall. Some studies indicated that the female labour work force participation went from 36.9 percent in 2005 to 27 percent in 2013; today it is estimated to be around 20 percent. Delhi's female employment rate lies 8.6 percentage points lower than the national average, including formal and informal employment. This creates an even-further divide between payment and job opportunities between Indian women and men. And these safety and employment concerns are elevated for single women living in Delhi who stated that commuting was the most dangerous daily concern behind occupying public spaces and even being at home alone. In analyzing the results of a recent study (Nag, 2016), we find that, in Delhi, women not only feel unsafe in public spaces but single women in the capital feel threatened in almost every context.



In the meanwhile, the Delhi Government has proposed a Charter of Women's Rights Bill, (draft 2015), based on the (late) Justice Verma Committee report, that aims at strengthening the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) by giving it more administrative and judicial powers. DCW also manages the helpline number 181 and has dedicated vehicles and services for women in distress across the 11 districts of Delhi.

The State Government has also piloted some key steps such as installation of CCTV cameras, police pickets at strategic points in campuses and emergency response vehicles, self defence training programmes, construction of public toilets, registration checks for private cab services and others. Delhi Police initiatives include Women's Helpline Numbers including an Anti-Stalking Service and the recently launched "Himmat" Mobile Safety App for women. Greater patrolling and increase in women police has been proposed.

Jagori has been working with women to claim their rights to the city. The World Charter for the Right to the City recognizes that the right to the city interconnects and is interdependent with all recognized international human rights conventions. It was conceived as an integrated right. Thus, it is inclusive of the right to land, ways of subsistence, work, health, education, culture, housing, social protection, security, healthy environment, sanitation, public transportation, leisure, the right to information, water and access and supply of domestic and urban public services, justice, the right to association and free speech, and planning and management of cities.

There have been several civil society and community initiatives in the last few years, including data collection in Delhi by CBGA/Jagori, ICRW, IHD, Safetipin, CHRI, and others. Awareness campaigns for citizens and young people have been undertaken on scale. The women's movement has challenged protectionist approaches to women's safety focusing on women's autonomy and freedoms.

Jagori has been at the forefront of the safe cities campaigns and initiatives undertaken in Delhi since the last decade. It has worked in several communities with civil society partners (ICRW, YP Foundation, Pravah, CYC, CHSJ, Delhi University, Sangat, OBR campaign network, Intach, SNSS, Samarthyam, Action India, CFAR, NAB and others). These efforts have been supported by key partners over the years (including the Delhi Govt; UN Women, UN Habitat, IDRC, WICI, Huairou Commission, Roland Berger Foundation, etc.). We have supported studies and initiatives in Guwahati, Kerala, Mumbai, Bangalore, Lucknow, Jharkhand, Gujarat and other cities.

The consultation was called with the hope of addressing:

- Key findings from new studies undertaken
- Highlighting key challenges and opportunities to take this process ahead, and
- Discussing strategies and ways forward to building stronger links and partnerships for collective actions.

Geetha Nambisan, Director, Jagori

Geetha extended a warm welcome to all and provided a brief overview of Jagori's work. She highlighted the work on ending Violence against Women and Girls and the initiation of safer cities campaign in 2004. Initially the focus was on highlighting sexual harassment in public spaces and later in partnership with UN Women and the Dept. of Women and Child, several initiatives were undertaken. This also included the campaign, 'Awaaz Uthao' - that catalysed community responses and built leadership of women and girls to address violence free lives. Subsequently, post Nirbhaya campaigns, several government departments and organisations in Delhi addressed women's safety in their ongoing programmes and budgets. She urged that there is need to collectively reflect on what has worked and the challenges that need to be confronted as well as look at the additional data from recent studies and explore the possibilities of collaborating for greater impact.

Panel I - Women's Rights and Access to Public Spaces in the City: Constraints and Challenges

Moderator: Suneeta Dhar, Jagori and **Panelists:** Dunu Roy, Hazards Centre, Kalpana Viswanath, Jagori

Dunu outlined two broad streams in Jagori's approach towards ensuring safer cities. The first being that of Gender sensitization and building capacities, conducting safety audits, and engaging with various stakeholders like Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) staff, Delhi Police, etc. He underlined the need for a systematic evaluation to assess the impact of these interventions. He stated that establishing the right to the city was among the second stream of efforts. This is an integrated right and it includes right to work, housing, essential services, etc. Not discounting the fact that a gender lens could be employed in evaluating these rights, he remarked that these rights are not only gender specific. Thus the question of women's rights cannot be divorced from that of labour rights.

Dunu further observed that technical solutions such as increased security measures (CCTVs, mobile apps, etc.) do very little to change the oppressive and exploitative structures that surround people especially those on the margins. While one can appreciate the changes that the Transport

Department has made with respect to the new low floor type of buses, the huge concern are the costs and therefore the dramatic shrinkage in the number of DTC buses plying on Delhi's roads. The numbers have shrunk considerably and cause many difficulties to the working class especially living on the periphery where there are no other forms of transport. He was also alarmed by the highly unregulated para-transit services like Uber and Ola.

Lastly, he said that while trying to establish safety for all the city dwellers in general, and women in particular, it is important to understand the nature of the city. Post 2000, cities have been declared as engines of growth which means that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country is driven mainly by the cities. Delving deeper into this concept, he talked about Kuznets Curve (inverted U) that says that with the rise in GDP, inequality will first increase and then will start declining only after achieving a certain level of GDP allowing trickle-down of the benefits. He also cited some studies that have shown that the productivity of a rural-urban migrant multiplies by four times whereas the cost of labour doesn't increase as much. This is a factor sustaining the exploitative informal sector, concealed unemployment of women, etc. Such a scenario lays the ground for the emergence of a 'violent city'. Thus, to ask for niches of non-violence will not bear any results. He concluded by saying that the discourse should move to be about 'right to what kind of city' rather than being simply about the 'right to the city'.

Kalpna emphasised the use of the phrase 'gender inclusive cities' rather than safer cities, as safety is only one of the areas of concern when talking about right to the city. She expressed concern over the discourse on women's experiences in the cities being largely around fear. That it is not just the actual incidence of violence but also the sense of fear created that restricts their mobility and choices. In her view, this 'fear-mongering' is limiting for women and curbs their access to public spaces. She highlighted the need to acknowledge that women see the cities as spaces of opportunities and choose to be in cities.

Unfortunately the onus of ensuring safety still falls upon women themselves and there is a perception of women as 'victims'. This thus shapes and defines the way women see the city and that is what has to change. Enhancing women's right to the city is a process of changing the ways public spaces and infrastructure are conceived, designed and planned. She highlighted the intersecting vulnerabilities faced by women with respect to class, caste, age, migrant status etc. Public spaces need to be designed to foster gender and other forms of equity and promote people's engagement and inclusion. Talking about the condition of resettlement colonies, she raised the need to unpack the implications that lack of adequate services has on the women and girls in these colonies.

She laid out four pillars of safety strategies designed by Jagori: generating knowledge and evidence; gender inclusive urban design; infrastructure and delivery of services; policing & legal framework; and supporting community initiatives.

She shared some of the outcomes of Jagori's work on the issue of safer cities since 2010 like the Joint initiative with UN Women as a part of the Global Safe Cities Programme; Formation of a Women's Safety Committee within the government under the Chief Secretary; Development of gender guidelines by UTTIPEC Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure (Planning and Engineering) Centre for street design; undertaking of safety audits by community residents and the expansion of the safer cities programme to over 14 other cities. She also highlighted some of the developments post December 2012 in the legal and policy domains; the Criminal Law (Amendment) 2013, institutionalization of women's desks in police stations, a more responsive system to survivors of violence - Delhi Commission of Women provision of vans and counselling and legal support

in every district and the increased media attention on cases of violence against women. She also mentioned that the Delhi Government held a Special Assembly Session on women's safety in August 2015.

Highlighting global initiatives, she mentioned the 5th goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015 that focuses on gender equality and empowerment of women, and the 11th goal that speaks of sustainable (inclusive, safe, resilient) cities and communities; and the Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda to be discussed at Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016. She concluded by talking about the need to mainstream safety with a holistic approach rather than an instrumentalist approach.



Suneeta highlighted the fact that it is crucial to underpin the political contexts that marginalise women and communities. That services need to be upgraded and despite commitments, as of now there is move towards creating only 36 one stop crisis centres – rather than 6000 – as committed initially by the government. She also said that there is need to hold the State accountable and to ensuring far deeper collectivisation of efforts.

Panel II- Key Findings from Recent Studies

Moderator: A. K. Shiva Kumar, Advisor, UNICEF

Panelists: Kanika Kaul, CBGA; Devika Prasad, CHRI; Manoj Bandan, IHD

- a. Safety of Women in Public Spaces in Delhi: Governance and Budgetary Challenges: Kanika outlined the framework of the study undertaken in collaboration with Jagori that aimed at analysing the implication of Delhi's governance and fiscal architecture on women's safety; governance and budgetary concerns in key sectoral interventions for women's safety; and design and budgetary allocations of key interventions for victim support.
 - » Budget allocation for women's safety: The total government spending as a proportion of State's GDP on interventions for women's safety in Delhi is lower than most states. Moreover, the transparency in budgets of Delhi Police, DTC, hospitals and the Municipal Corporations in terms of disaggregated data on various spending was found to be limited.
 - » Challenges in key sectoral interventions: The study revealed human resource shortage in police force in addition to infrastructural constraints like shortage of vehicles, forensic labs, etc. A spatial inequity in police presence as well as provision of public transport across Delhi was noted. The condition of Global Positioning System (GPS) devices and CCTV installations was disappointing and deployment of marshals/home guards not adequate. The issue of homelessness has not received due priority in government policies. The night shelters didn't fare well in terms of gender responsiveness due to reasons like inconvenient locations, poor hygiene, lack of privacy and so on.
 - » Victim support: Although a number of important schemes were in place for victim support including help-lines, residential support, compensation etc, some key concerns were flagged pertaining to restrictive guidelines and design of the schemes, low budgetary outlays, human resource shortage, non-utilisation of funds, etc. With respect to responsiveness of public hospitals to VAWG, it was found that most hospitals do not have dedicated wards or designated doctors for treatment and care of survivors of violence.

There were policy recommendations which included, expanding the scope and coverage of one stop crisis centers, addressing spatial inequity in services like policing and public transport, increasing women's representation in Delhi Police and DTC, etc.

Crime Victimization and Safety Perception: A Public Survey of Delhi and Mumbai

Devika defined the scope of the study as encompassing aspects like crime experience; reporting and police response; and perceptions of safety in the two cities of Delhi and Mumbai.

- » **Crime Experience:** The study presented a spatial as well as a temporal distribution of the crime incidences. Theft was the most commonly experienced crime in both the cities. The time bracket of 12 pm to 6 pm emerged as the most dangerous with the maximum rate of crime incidences. Most thefts in Delhi take place in residential areas; while in Mumbai, most take place on public transport. Physical assault was the second most commonly experienced crime in Mumbai while in Delhi, it was sexual harassment. Both the crimes of assault and sexual harassment occur mostly in open areas or on the streets. Overall, high income households were less affected by crime. Non-Marathi speakers in Mumbai and non-Hindi speakers in Delhi were comparatively more vulnerable to crime.
- » **Reporting and Police Response:** Less than half of the households who experienced one of the seven crimes under study reported crime to the police. Only half of the reported cases were registered as First Information Reports (FIRs). Reporting of sexual harassment was the lowest in both cities. While most of the victims of sexual harassment in Delhi knew the perpetrator by sight, in Mumbai, the perpetrator was not known to the victim. In Delhi, none of the cases of sexual harassment reported were registered as FIRs. In Mumbai, low income households had the highest rate of reporting while high income households had the highest in Delhi. Only one-third of Delhi households and half of Mumbai households were satisfied with the police response to their crime complaints.
- » **Perception of Safety:** Mumbai residents see the police more positively; in Delhi perceptions were split between positive and negative. In both cities, the crimes most feared were closely related to actual incidence. Households in Delhi begin feeling unsafe, in their own neighbourhoods much earlier in the evening than in Mumbai.

Women in Delhi: Risks, Rights and Perceptions - IHD

Manoj shared the findings of the IHD Survey (2015) on perceptions of crimes and women's safety in Delhi followed by the findings of the focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with women in Delhi.

- » Findings of the Survey: In the immediate locality, most women felt safe during daytime and night alike. However, in the city at large, most women reported to feel unsafe. With respect to the security situation of women and girls, the perception of most of the respondents was that there has been no significant change in the last 5 years. During the last 2 years, the incidence of crime against women in the locality was reported to have remained the same by most.
- » Findings of the FGD: A differential nature of mobility among different classes along with varied perceptions of 'safe' and 'unsafe' was noted. Only grave crimes like molestation and rape were considered reportable while crimes like staring, passing remarks, whistling deliberate touching, etc. were perceived as 'soft' crimes and thus, not-reportable. Stalking was identified as a moderate crime and considered reportable only to family/friends and not to the police. Other factors like identity of the perpetrator, place of crime occurrence, etc. also determine the reportability of a crime. Crowded sites like market places, deserted stretches, under construction and abandoned buildings, cinema halls, wine shops, slums (for upper and middle class girls), railway tracks, public toilets, open defecation and public bathing sites were identified as prominent risk zones. Some everyday strategies of negotiation included selective use of routes, 'appropriate' dressing, avoiding deserted areas during odd hours, securing helpline numbers, moving in groups, taking busy routes while travelling at odd

hours, strategic use of bags/handbags to avoid physical touch while travelling, etc.

Some of the policy implications of the study were expanding and improving slum infrastructure; emphasising safety infrastructure; and institutionalising fear reduction.

Discussions: The participants appreciated the presentations and made important suggestions with regard to situating the studies in the broader structural context. They suggested the need to conduct that also studies focus on men and their perceptions. The group also highlighted the need to examine the ethical questions around how data was collected and what questions were asked. A suggestion was to create a network of researchers so that there is some standardization in the data being collected and ensure that gaps and methodological errors are addressed.

Dr. Shiva Kumar flagged the need to be extra careful when interpreting perception studies on safety. Cautioning against the focus on policing, street lighting, CCTV installation, etc. as means of ensuring safety for women, he recommended going to the roots of the problem and bringing in fundamental behavioural changes in the society so that everyone learns to treat each other with respect and dignity.

Panel III- Perspectives from the Ground

Moderator: Anju Pandey, UN Women

Panelists: Manak Matiyani, TYPF; Renu Addlakha, CWDS; Priyanka, Breakthrough; Bijaylaxmi Nanda, Miranda House; Deepak, CFAR; Kriti Agarwal, Safetipin

This session was executed in two rounds. In the first round, the participants flagged key challenges faced while working towards safe cities, while in the second round they provided recommendations on specific strategies.



Manak Matiyani, The YP Foundation: Drawing on the experiences of the youth belonging to sexual minorities groups, Manak raised concerns pertaining to the legitimacy of their existence in view of the law (IPC Section 377) that criminalises homosexuality. Lack of access to services like transgender friendly toilets; difficulty in accessing seats reserved for women in public transport by trans-women, etc. are some of the challenges faced by the LGBTQI community in navigating the city safely. Sharing the findings of a youth led safety audit conducted in Lucknow, he said that only one adolescent friendly health clinic was found in the entire city. Lastly, the lack of constructive and meaningful inclusion of various groups (LGBTQI, youth, etc.) in designing the city was raised as a challenge.

Although recommendations are often sought from women and LGBTQ community, they are seldom implemented. Collecting real time data based on experiences of people in navigating the city and accessing services; mapping public spaces/campaigns/ services that encourage the engagement of different kinds of people with the city; innovating ways to seed conversations around sensitive issues were some of the strategy recommendations made.

Renu Addlakha, Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS)-Disability Rights.

Renu began by expressing concerns over clubbing various types of disabilities/impairments in the body into a single box. It is important to disaggregate disability into various categories like hearing

impairment, mobility impairment, visual impairment, etc. Juxtaposing these categories with the frame of gender will facilitate in identifying the issues faced by persons with disability in navigating the city. The nature of spaces being dark, deserted or unsafe is not the only constraint to mobility of women with disability but the accessibility of spaces determined by presence of ramps; tactile paths, etc. also control their mobility. She raised the issue of dignity that is violated on an everyday basis in case of persons with disability due to inaccessible toilets, lack of special instruments in hospitals for examining women with multiple disabilities, etc.

Renu further suggested mainstreaming disability in the plans and programmes along with introducing disability budgeting. She also recommended inclusion of people with disabilities in various research and decision making bodies to bring in the experiential component as well as to ensure fair representation.

Bijaylaxmi Nanda, Miranda House. From the Campus

Bijaylaxmi highlighted five key concerns:

- » ‘Democratising the urban spaces’- this relates to availability and affordability of services for the youth, for example, public health services, nutritious food, water, quality education, etc. Besides, accessing places for entertainment and recreation is also a challenge faced especially by young women.
- » ‘Deconstructing the discourse’- young women are rejecting the protectionist discourse exemplified by campaigns like Pinjra Tod that are questioning the institutional honour connected to Victorian timings. However, with the shrinking number of public institutions, the spaces that are conducive to such negotiations are simultaneously shrinking, which poses a major challenge.
- » ‘Diversity’- students coming from the north-eastern region and other non- Hindi speaking regions get ghettoised and are more vulnerable to facing sexual violence and racism.
- » ‘Digital space’- young women do not just inhabit the physical space but have existence in the virtual/ cyber space as well where they face a considerable amount of violence and humiliation.
- » ‘Demand’- students questioning the institutions are facing backlash in the form of threats of rustication, suspension and even police action. Thus, creating a legitimate space for demand without the fear of hostile response is a challenge.

Strategies proposed by Bijaylaxmi included putting pressure for more public funding in various services like transport, housing, health etc; creating gender friendly modules in the education system; institutionalisation of participatory decision making processes and fair representation of students in various bodies; independent monitoring and evaluation of policies; and finding ways of negotiating the creation of non-negotiables.

Deepak, Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) Community Perspective

Deepak shifted the gaze from safety in public space to the violence in private space which is an area more difficult to intervene in. He also talked about the need to sensitise children from an early age to be safe and be able to respond to violence. He then brought everyone’s attention to the repercussions feared by people that hinder reporting of violence.

With respect to strategies, Deepak suggested creating and strengthening crises centres. In addition, he also talked about giving importance to informal support systems constituted by family and acquaintances. Helpline numbers and mobile apps as security measures in case of safety in public space were also flagged. Campaigning to encourage immediate response (like bell bajao) was another suggestion he made.

Priyanka, Breakthrough - Role of Social Media

Priyanka began by pointing out that the momentum of the online universe is expansive which is both an advantage as well as a challenge. She then shed light on some of the roles of social media in providing a platform for accomplishing change in normative and cultural mindset, disseminating information, etc. Moving on to the challenges, she listed short-attention span of the social media users as one. Mobilising people on the digital space and scaling their engagement is also a challenge in addition to difficulty in tracking actual behavioural change and impact.

Priyanka suggested that the various campaigns on social media should be backed by research and relevant data. The tone of the message should be set keeping in mind the target group (eg. preachy messages or those with a moral stance are more likely to be negatively received by the youth). Creating partnerships and collaborations for repeated and consistent online campaigns; content and trend analysis, mapping of audience, etc. were some of the other suggestions made.

Kriti Agarwal, Safetipin - Using data to build safer cities

Kriti explained that the perception of safety changes with location. She drew everyone's attention towards the fact that the issue of women's safety never gains priority in the agenda of the Resident Welfare Associations of gated communities. Lastly, she expressed concern over the potential of the design of cities in ensuring women's safety being highly underestimated.

Recommendations included engaging the diverse pockets of the city in urban designing and pressurizing the municipal corporations to ensure this participation; taking into consideration the needs of expecting mothers, persons with disability, etc. while designing the cities; sensitising not just the lower income groups but also the middle and the high income groups; and bringing more men on board in the discussions on women's issues.

Discussion

A number of key suggestions were made by the participants like addressing the issue of safety in the public and private spaces more cohesively; critically questioning the emergence of online e-commerce companies that has resulted in reduced presence of women in the public; taking into account the historicity of change, etc. A participant raised concern over the need to segregate spaces in order to get women open up about issues like menstrual hygiene and flagged the necessity to reconcile these differences. Stress was laid upon the need to bridge the gap between the old and the new generation of activists by recognising and reaching out to initiatives like Pinjra Tod, Blank Noise, Why Loiter, Girls at Dhaba and so on.

Anju summarised the major threads of the panel discussion. She stressed that safety could only be an entry point in stirring a discussion on the right to the city and the concern should go beyond safety. She also highlighted the need to keep the discourse on safety within the context of 'equality and rights' rather than 'respect'.

Panel IV- Way Forward towards Collective Action

Moderator: Pamela Philipose, Senior Journalist

Panelists: Vrinda Grover, Senior Advocate; Rajni Tilak, National Confederation of Dalit Adivasi Organisations (NACDOR); Radhika, Lawyer's Collective



Pamela outlined some key points to roll off the discussions.

Vrinda steered the conversation around 'right to safety' as an exercise of citizenship rather than looking at 'safety' and 'rights' separately. One's location in terms of various identities (gender, class, caste, sexuality, and ability/disability) is important in determining the effectiveness of the right to safety. While engaging with the issue of law, policy making, planning, etc. it is critical to decide whether we want to place our demands in the paradigm of 'respect and dignity', 'protectionist actions' or in the framework of 'freedom, equality and liberty'. In view of urbanisation, a phenomenon that is only going to rise, the issue of the rights of women in their habitat is immensely important to look at.

She referred to the processes that took place post December 2012 incident as the culmination of years of feminist engagement in multiple ways (activism, research, academics, etc), that has foregrounded a discussion on inequality and discrimination that underpin the pervasive VAWG. It has also been successful in gaining media attention on the issue and has forced the government to at least pay a lip service to the issue if not more. However, ensuring that the discussion remains feminist and doesn't get steered into a protectionist discourse remains a challenge according to her. In this direction, ensuring that our understanding is constantly revisited, informed and sharpened is required.

Appreciating the younger generation of activists for raising the bar when demanding equality, she expressed concern over the backlash be it on social media (trolling) or in the legal sphere (slap suits). At the same time, she said that this push back or resistance from the system is indicative of the fact that the system is feeling the pressure and gives all the more reason to continue fighting back with determination. Vrinda elaborated the importance of street movements in forming alliances that bring in more clarity in our thoughts and demands. She also commented upon the selective reporting in media where dowry deaths have stopped gaining attention in totality.

She concluded by reiterating the need to collectivise our efforts and ensure that it is feminist politics that is informing the movement. She also raised the need to resist women from becoming merely a vote bank and politically shape their demands.

Radhika presented the Amicus Curiae brief framed by the Lawyer's Collective and presented to the Supreme Court in the matter of Nipun Saxena Vs Union of India. After the gang rape and murder of Nirbhaya in December 2012, a host of five petitions were filed in the Supreme Court dealing with the public transport system; accountability of various public authorities; victim compensation; witness protection; and other issues surrounding the process of investigation, prosecution and trial in cases of sexual harassment.

The brief has addressed the change in the law right from pre- Mathura case to post- Nirbhaya case. It also presents a critique of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 and makes recommendations. It has examined the scenario of infrastructure, failure in public transport, safety of women in cities, women in policing, media attention, education and awareness, sex offenders' registry, medico-legal care for survivors, digitisation of the criminal justice system among other things. Although it has been over a year since the brief has been presented to the Supreme Court the petitioners are still struggling to get a dedicated time from the court to hear the matter. Radhika concluded by requesting everyone to read the brief and invited suggestions on the issues dealt with in the same.

Rajni pointed out the need to look at the disparate geography of Delhi while talking about women's safety in the city. A huge part of the city is composed of slums, relocation settlements and low- income neighbourhoods where the living standards are extremely inferior. The students

living in these neighbourhoods are devoid of the basics such as a conducive environment to study peacefully and are forced to spend money on reading room facilities. She also shed light on the commercialisation of education exemplified by hubs like Mukherjee Nagar in north Delhi that make education inaccessible to the poor, especially women. Thus, poverty impacts civic rights and lack of safety negatively affects a woman's personality development. She raised the issue of complete absence of women in the Delhi Cabinet and for diverting funds meant for the welfare of Scheduled Castes to subsidize electricity in the capital.

As a way forward, there is a need to revive street movement and activism in raising these demands collectively. She made a very important point about the rivalry/hatred among the various classes of women due to their varying conditions that should inform our strategies. She concluded by highlighting the importance of mainstreaming the efforts of small organisations working at the grassroots/community level.

Discussions

One young women participant shared her experience of facing online violence with threats of rape and acid attack on social media for being a part of the 'kiss of love' campaign, which escalated to stalking and sexual harassment in real life. Another participant presented a contrasting image of social media by sharing her experience of using the online platform to compel authorities in taking action against an aggressor after initially having refused to act on it. Several suggestions were also made like creating a dialogue between activists and researchers on the critical political question of structural changes forming the context of our demands for equality; having collective efforts rather than fragmented ones in order to address the issue of safety centrally; framing a blueprint of our collective demands; bringing on board as many men and women from different strata of the society in this endeavor, etc.

In her concluding remarks, Pamela expressed concern over the retributive approach reflected by the creation of registry of sex-offenders and flagged the need to be conscious of human rights. Revisiting the history of Mathura Rape Case that changed the notions of consent and sexual violence, she reiterated that street action and thinking should go hand in hand to strengthen the movement.

The consultation ended with a commitment of creating a fora for such discussions across communities and the younger generation. There were suggestions to take this forward and build a network to take forward some of the work on the ground.



B-114, Shivalik, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi 110017
Tel: 011-26691219/20 Telefax: 011-26691221
Helpline: 011-26692700, 8800996640
Email: jagori@jagori.org Website www.jagori.org