Can We Make Our City Safe for Women?
- A Report on an Experiment in Mumbai
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Preface

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities

Akshara has been working in the realm of gender inequality and violence for nearly two decades. Through our work we have tried to raise public consciousness on gender inequality, and partner with social movements, organizations, local governments and individuals to prevent violence against women and empower them. We believe that meaningful change and empowerment cannot occur if we work with women alone and hence we strive to partner with both women and men to facilitate a transformation in gender relations.

Mumbai has always been perceived as a relatively safe city for women and girls in the country, a city that does not impinge on their freedoms of expression, movement and access to opportunities. However, violence against women in the public and a private realm is a harsh and often overlooked reality of Mumbai. Akshara has tried to bring the issue of violence and safety into the mainstream, through violence prevention initiatives which collectively form our Safe City Campaign. It would be difficult to mark the beginning of the Safe City Campaign as it is a culmination of two decades of work with women at the grassroots level.

In 2011, Akshara collaborated with Hindustan Times for a survey on the level of women’s safety in Mumbai. The survey revealed that 95% of female respondents had faced sexual harassment in public places, and thus reiterated the need to address the malaise of violence and harassment. Since then on, sexual harassment has been the subject of many of our campaigns, interventions and training programs. All these initiatives collectively form our Safe City Campaign for Mumbai. In the last couple of years, we have also seen a gradual shift in public consciousness on the issues of safety and violence. This shift has enabled us to establish partnerships with various stakeholders working towards the common goal.

Since a lot of our work deals with changing perspectives, attitudes and beliefs, translating actions into words and measuring its impact are challenging. This report is a glimpse into our journey towards establishing a safer Mumbai, and the steps we have taken to realize this vision, thus far.
Why focus on women and girls?

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Mumbai

Home to more than 13 million people, Mumbai is the most populated city of India and is also its financial and commercial capital. The metropolis boasts of the most diverse collection of people in the Indian subcontinent, resulting in a cosmopolitan city with a unique verve. In spite of its economic progress, Mumbai does not fare well when compared to other alpha cities of the world. Hence, in the last decade or so governance and planning have increasingly been focused on transforming Mumbai into a world-class city, resulting in massive investments in infrastructure and beautification projects that serve a small percentage of the population. A city’s progress cannot be measured in terms of economic growth alone; equally important is the quality of life it offers to people, which is measured by improvements in public health, education, safety and security, employment, dignified working and living conditions, ensuring clean air and water, and inclusivity.

Time and again we have heard the rhetoric of Mumbai being a safe city for women. However, the sense of freedom and comfort it offers women should not be confused with safety. Violence and crime against women are on a sharp rise here, just as in other parts of the country. A 2011 survey conducted by Akshara in collaboration with Hindustan Times revealed that 95% of female respondents (4,255) have faced sexual harassment in public places. A recent report by Praja Foundation shows that there has been a sharp increase in violence against women in 2012-13: while rapes have increased by 57%, molestation cases have gone up by 43%, as compared to the previous year. Whether this rise in violence is due to higher incidence or increased reporting, safety in Mumbai can no longer be taken for granted. Can a city be called world-class if women continue to live under the fear of violence and must tolerate sexual harassment in the name of “ched-chaad”, which impinges on their freedoms to live, walk, work, play, dress, and express themselves?

Why focus on women and girls?

- They account for nearly 50% of Mumbai’s population
- Their experiences with violence are gendered, and hence different from most forms of violence. While gruesome acts such as rape form one end of this spectrum of violence, everyday actions- sexual harassment in buses, trains, and streets lie at the other end.
- A city that is safe for women and girls is safe for all its citizens.

State of Policing and Law & Order in Mumbai, November 2013
Section 1: A Safe City for Women

Box 1: A safe city for women and girls

- A city where women and girls can enjoy public spaces and public life without fear of being assaulted.
- A city where violence is not exercised against women and girls in either the home or the street.
- A city where women and girls are not discriminated against and where their economic, social, political, and cultural rights are guaranteed.
- A city where women and girls participate in making decisions that affects the community in which they live.
- A city where the state guarantees the human rights of all people without excluding women and girls.
- A city where the state and local government take actions to provide attention, prevention, and punishment for violence against women and girls.
- A city where the state and local government guarantee women's and girls' access to justice.

(Source: UN Women’s End Violence against Women Now Campaign)

Safety is an experience of security and freedom from violence in our daily lives. It fosters a feeling of well-being that encourages greater mobility and interaction between people, and equal access to spaces and opportunities for all. “Women’s safety also includes freedom from poverty, and ensuring that women have safe access to water and sanitation services, as well as other public infrastructure and amenities. Freedom from abuse, domestic violence and sexual harassment at the workplace are also essential ingredients of women’s safety. Finally, a sense of self-worth, along with financial security and independence, are also seen as integral to women’s safety.”

Right to the City

The movement for a safe city is founded on the belief that women have an equal right to a city. While women in urban areas enjoy greater freedoms than their rural counterparts, they continue to be compartmentalized in all walks of life. It is a commonly overlooked fact that usage of space is not neutral and there are gender dimensions to the use of public services, amenities, and transport. It is important to consider these differences in planning for a safe and inclusive city for all, especially vulnerable groups such as women, senior citizens, street children, migrants etc. A visual scan of open spaces, public grounds, maidans, and gullies across Mumbai will reveal a male domination in the use of these spaces, which indirectly impedes access to them.

UN-HABITAT, WICI et al. 2008
Moreover, experiences of women in urban areas also differ to a great extent by age, socio-economic background, culture and ethnicity, occupation, and so on. Hence, all women are unable to enjoy their right to the city in equal measure.

Creating safe cities for women entails installing women-friendly infrastructure that encourage usage of spaces by women; effective policies and stringent measures to prevent and reduce crime; efforts to increase women’s participation in all realms of society by enhancing their feelings of security and self-worth; and building a social consciousness of respect and dignity for women that would translate into reduced crime, violence and marginalization of women.

As citizens of Mumbai, women and girls have a right to access and enjoy all public spaces and this right must be protected by the State, by exploring factors that impede access, movement, and participation in city life. Hence, the State should take the responsibility for protecting women’s right to the city by implementing policies that prioritise gender inclusivity. In addition, women and men both should work to advocate for this transformation at an individual and collective level.

**Global and Local Context**

While the concept of safe public spaces for women and girls has been around since the 1970’s, comprehensive planning at a larger scale is a relatively new area of activism. UN Women, Women in Cities International, UNIFEM and UN-HABITAT are all coordinating several programmes across the world in cities such as Dar e Salaam, Delhi, Rosario, Petrozavodsk, Cairo, Kigali, Quito and Port Moresby.

In India, the Safe Delhi Campaign is being implemented by Jagori, and the Safe Trivandrum initiative by Sakhi and UNIFEM. Other initiatives include – the Safe City Pledge by Blank Noise, which is a community/public art project that seeks to confront street sexual harassment.

http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/240-what-inititatives-have-been-developed-to-date.html?next=241
Our Vision for Mumbai

Our vision of a safe city is closely linked to an inclusive one. We envisage a gender-inclusive city in which women enjoy:

- Freedom from gender-based violence and fear
- Freedom of Movement - access to all public spaces at any time
- Equal access to social, cultural, and economic opportunities
- To participate in and influence social change

Figure 1: Our vision

The Safe City Campaign for Mumbai is a step towards realizing this vision. It is an initiative to foster a safer environment for women in the city. Our programs focus on violence and crime mainly in the public arena - ranging from sexual harassment, staring, touching, lewd comments and stalking to sexual assault and rape. Due to the multi-dimensional nature of safety, action is required by all stakeholders in a number of areas. Therefore, it is important to build partnerships to canvass support on the issue of and through this campaign we aim to partner with the State, local bodies and civil society to realize our vision.
Chapter 2: Safe Mumbai Campaign

The scope of our Campaign has encompassed creating public awareness about women’s safety, advocating with the State, public service providers and law enforcement agencies for a safer city, violence prevention initiatives, and creating a repository of resources on violence against women by collecting information, data and training material. In this Chapter, we share our experiences of working on various aspects of safety in Mumbai, and findings and lessons from them.

Milestones

2008
- Launch of 103 Helpline
- Over 200 police personnel trained

2011
- HT-Akshara survey on sexual harassment
- Right to Pee Campaign
- Launch of standupagainstviolence.org

2012
- 30,000 visit installation at Kala Ghoda
- Over 50 Safety Walks
- 'Blow the Whistle' Campaign

2013
- Training of 750 BEST employees
- Launch of Harassmap Petition to Chief Minister with 30,000+ signatures
- Recipient of 'Celebrating Changemakers' Award by HT

2014
- Consultations for Development Plan
- Round-Table conferences with HT
- Review of 103 Helpline

Figure 2: Milestones in Akshara’s safe city campaign for Mumbai
Public Spaces and Transit Systems

Being a woman means always having to be on your guard everywhere, whether in trains, buses, footpaths, markets, and colleges. In crowded or isolated places, day or night, women are constantly told to be aware of their surroundings and ‘be safe’. In the name of “ched-chaad” and playful advances, sexual harassment has in many ways received a cultural sanction in our society. One of the biggest challenges in our work on sexual harassment has been to get people to acknowledge its gravity and speak out against it.

Safety Walks – Mumbai

Armed with data on sexual harassment in Mumbai (2.2.1 Survey with Hindustan Times), we launched a campaign to make public places in the city safe for women, in collaboration with other organizations, citizen’s groups, Hindustan Times and students. We used Safety Audits and Walks as a tool to collect information on the current state of safety in different parts of the city. A Safety Walk is a walk conducted by a group of people (mostly women) in a selected area and involves the observation and recording of physical and social aspects of the area by the participants. The project began in June 2012, and in the course of a year around 50 walks were conducted across all wards in the city. Hundreds of people were trained for the safety walk, who then conducted and participated in the audits. The locations were identified to cover all zones in Mumbai - East, West, North, South and Central, streets, all modes of transport, open spaces and public sanitation facilities.

Image 1: Workshop on Safety Walks

We found that a combination of factors influence women’s perception and experience of safety in an area. In all the public spaces audited, it was found that while women scarcely used deserted streets and lonely skywalks for fear of being stalked or

Method of safety walks in Annexure X
List of audits conducted in Annexure X
molested, crowded subways, station roads and marketplaces were hardly a respite for them. Crowds lend a level of anonymity to harassers and it becomes very difficult for women to identify or catch them. The infrastructure at most places was severely inadequate as well. The approach roads to stations were poorly maintained, pavements were uneven and broken, and drains were found to be open. Unorganized and unplanned construction work in busy areas such as markets and outside railway stations resulted in narrowing down of road space, overcrowding and chaos, and a lack of escape routes.

**Figure 3: Factors that impact women’s safety**

**Factors that impact Women's Safety**

**Physical Characteristics:**
- Dim Lighting
- Poor infrastructure
- Inadequate maintenance of public spaces
- No proper signage or information
- Lack of emergency services
- Lack of public toilets
- Absence of police/security guards

**Social Characteristics:**
- Crowding and rushing in public areas
- Flashing, staring, lewd remarks, gestures, sexual harassment
- Presence of alcoholics, drug addicts
- Lack of visible/effective policing
- Men loitering in groups

**Usage of Spaces:**
- Men thronging an area individually or in groups
- Limited presence/usage by other women
- Lack of people in an area
- Encroachment by illegal vendors
- Advertisements in open spaces reducing visibility

In conclusion, although problem areas and recommendations vary across wards, the principal factors associated with perception of lack of safety are relatively similar across Mumbai. These include poor lighting, uneven footpaths, isolated areas, lack of ladies public toilets, male-dominated spaces, and lack of visible police presence. In addition to making provisions for better lighting and general infrastructure to address the physical factors outlined above, there must be a concerted and well-rounded effort to address the social factors.
We conducted 5 FGDs with women from low-income backgrounds and different wards across Mumbai. The discussions were centered on the participants’ experiences and perceptions related to safety in their communities, along with suggestions to improve safety.

**Women’s Perception of Safety**
In all discussions, women expressed that they felt unsafe in both public spaces and their homes. They acknowledged that dealing with sexual harassment and abuse was an everyday occurrence and something they had become accustomed to dealing with.

**Types and Nature of Harassment Women Face**
The types of harassment brought up in the discussions ranged from inappropriate comments, staring, molestation and groping to sexual abuse, rape, gang rape, abduction and murder. Spaces where harassment was most common: outside of school, in public toilets, at bus stops, railway stations, in trains, at home, and at workplaces (early morning workers, domestic workers).

**Does Harassment vary with Woman’s Identity?**
A woman’s identity plays an important role in influencing her experience. Therefore, age, socio-economic background, marital status, employment status are some of the factors that determine these experiences. A single woman made the point that “single women are looked upon as public property and if they are poor rag pickers it gets worse.” Early morning workers also discussed the importance of their livelihoods and how concern over their job often prevented them from taking action against sexual harassment they faced at work. Female entrepreneurs that were members of the self-help group in Dharavi expressed that their livelihoods gave them a greater sense of control and empowerment.

**Coping with Harassment**
In most discussions, the debate around coping mechanisms began with the idea that women were on their own in terms of coping with sexual harassment. Some women held the belief that they could not depend on any person or institution to defend them or help them. There were a few notable reasons why women did not fight back: fear of retaliation by the perpetrator (either towards themselves or their daughters), and fear of losing their jobs (if the perpetrator was their boss). Women also talked about their responsibility to “protect themselves” by wearing certain types of clothing, which led to discussion about women being blamed for being victim to harassment.

**Prevention of Harassment – Recommendations**
The most basic recommendations were the addition of street lights and lights in public toilets, as well as fixing broken roads and making water facilities available in the toilets. Other suggestions included sensitization of young boys as well as police to prevent gender based violence, and increase reporting/hold perpetrators to justice and promoting the use of technology in order to call/raise an alarm in case of attack.
At Akshara we have always believed in partnering for change, by collaborating with stakeholders towards the common goal of a gender-neutral and violence-free society. Our association with the law enforcement agencies of Mumbai and Thane has been one such partnership, which has laid the foundation for many successful campaigns. Two of our campaigns – Leher and Campaign for 103, have focused on the role of law enforcement agencies in reaching out to women in situations of sexual harassment and violence through helplines and emergency response services.

The idea for the Leher campaign emerged from a research study that we conducted on the issue of street sexual harassment in 2006. In the course of the study, we came across widespread sexual harassment, with 60% women students facing some sort of street sexual harassment in Mumbai and Thane. Akshara approached the Thane Police along with our partners, the Special Cell for Women and Children and India Centre for Human Rights and Law regarding the issue in November 2007. The city police took note of the issue and allocated one of their control room numbers 2554 3535 for street sexual harassment complaints. Leher is an initiative by Akshara to get young people from colleges to pitch in to spread the word on the Helpline.

**Campaign for 103**

The success of the Leher campaign in Thane encouraged us to campaign for a helpline in Mumbai. The police machinery responded by instituting a dedicated emergency police helpline for women, children and senior citizens in February 2008. A new three-digit number ‘103’ was allocated for the helpline, making it easier to recall and dial in case of emergencies. Our belief was that the helpline will enable women to exercise their right to feel safe without compromising on their right to movement and play a preventive role as the presence of police in a basti or neighbourhood is noted by the public. In the last six years, we have worked on the helpline in the following areas:

- Train women police constables (call-takers) on issues of gender rights,
- Evolve categorization of offences and liaise with the technical team,
- Recommend documentation and reporting processes, and
- Popularize the helpline through concerted publicity campaigns

We have been very active in our efforts to publicize the helpline through print and electronic media using innovative mediums such as displaying helpline information on mobile vans, trucks, and in movie theatres.
Nearly six years into its operation, the helpline has received over 3.6 lakhs calls till date. Mumbai Police has been able to reach out to thousands of women in distress through the helpline. Recently, we have conducted a review of the helpline in collaboration with them. The review has brought forth areas in which the helpline can be strengthened further and reach out to a wider audience.
Right to Pee Campaign

A Survey of Public Sanitation Facilities for Women in Mumbai

According to the Census report of 2011, Mumbai is home to more than 12,478,447 people, consisting of 6,736,815 males and 5,741,632 females. Such a densely populated city with a large slum population requires an estimated 50,000 public toilets. However, the city has only 200 operational toilets and 231 work orders have been issued for new public toilets. To understand the disparity between the needs and available sanitation facilities, we conducted a survey in collaboration with the Right to Pee network in Mumbai. The Right to Pee Campaign demands a right for women to have Clean, Safe, Free Public urinals.

The motivation behind the survey was to get a comparative understanding of men’s and women’s accessibility to public toilets, and collect both quantitative and qualitative information.

- Survey was carried out in collaboration with MCGM
- Was conducted from November 2011 to March 2012.
- Sample sites were selected randomly from areas covered by partner organizations.
- Survey focused on number of toilet seats and facilities available in public toilets for men and women, maintenance of toilets and user charges for the services.
- A total of 129 toilet blocks were visited by representatives of partner organizations, accompanied by MCGM personnel to authenticate observations and data collection.
- 39 sample toilet blocks were visited in M East ward and 15 in M West ward. In N ward – 43 public toilet blocks were visited whereas 8 toilets were surveyed in G North Ward and 24 in G South Ward.

**Findings**

A total of 1,770 toilet seats are available in the surveyed areas. Of these, 1,033 cater to men and only 737 seats are for women. Moreover, the surveyed areas had 86 bathrooms for men and only 35 bathrooms for women.

1. **Maintenance**

- Lack of basic facilities such as water and electricity
- As per circular number 01694 published by BMC, dated 30th April 2011, Public toilets should be equipped with facilities like soap, mirror, and wash basin. But these facilities were either lacking or in unusable conditions.

http://theory.tifr.res.in/bombay/amenities/sanitation/waste-disposal.html

Right to Pee is a network of 35 different social, non-profit, non-governmental organizations in Mumbai.
As per circular number 01694 published by BMC, dated 30th April 2011, Public toilets should be equipped with facilities like soap, mirror, and wash basin. But these facilities were either lacking or in unusable conditions.

No proper drainage line for wash basins, and segregated waste disposal. Disposal of used sanitary napkins was serious problem in almost all toilets.

All pay & use toilets are supposed to maintain complaint books, which were missing from most toilets.

The standard of cleanliness and maintenance at most railway toilets and urinals is deplorable and they are only used under emergencies.

2. Fees

The public toilets are under control and supervision of the solid waste management of BMC and circular number 01694 dated 30th April 2011 clearly indicates that these public toilets should have free of charge urinals for women. However, the organizations looking after the maintenance of toilets blocks demand high user charges per use.

Local bodies have not publicized the free use policy and hence there is a lack of awareness regarding it.

High user charges (anywhere between Rs.1-5 per use) have indirect health implications such as reduction in consumption of liquids, health risks from holding back etc.

Out of 129 toilet blocks, Notice boards stating “Free Urinal for Women” were found in 26 blocks only.

3. Security

Security emerged as a major concern in surveyed toilet blocks. In some toilet blocks, there was no partition between women and men toilets, leading to a lack of privacy. In the night or odd times of the day, women hesitate to use the facilities unaccompanied since several toilets have male attendants. In most cases, attendants were not in uniforms and did not have valid identity cards as well.

Findings from the survey were submitted to BMC along with 50,000 signatures supporting demands of the campaign. Over the last two years, a lot of advocacy has been done to lobby with civic authorities. Two significant developments have followed:

The issue has been acknowledged in the Maharashtra Policy for Women, 2013, which states that a public toilet block for women should be constructed every 2 km. Secondly, there is finally a financial allocation by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai in the form of a ‘Gender Budget for Sanitation 2013-14’, which promises to construct toilets for women in crowded places.

In September 2013, Akshara’s Community Video Unit prepared a short-film ‘urinals’ to raise further awareness on the issue.

http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/sanitation-anddignity/article5160791.ece
Training for BEST employees

BEST bus service ferries millions of commuters across the city daily and comes a close second as Mumbai’s lifelines after local trains. However, packed buses mean that women are at the receiving end of touching and groping. The HT-Akshara survey 2011 also revealed that sexual harassment is most common in buses. In such a scenario, bus drivers and conductors can play an important role in making bus transit a safe and harassment-free experience for female commuters.

These findings prompted us to partner with BEST Undertaking’s Transport Division to conduct ‘Gender Awareness’ workshops for drivers, conductors and inspectors. In the course of six months starting July 2013, our team conducted workshops for 750 employees of the BEST Undertaking, including conductors, drivers and senior inspectors.

The training sessions focused largely on the issue of sexual harassment, linking it with gender discrimination that commonly exists in our society even today. The session dealt with definition of sexual harassment, types of sexual harassment, legal remedies and survey findings of Akshara. A combination of film screenings, group discussions, presentations, and role-play were used to facilitate the training. Many important questions were raised by participants during the group discussions. Preventive steps and interventions to combat sexual harassment faced by women commuters were discussed in the training sessions. We collected feedback on the workshops from participants as well.

We are collaborating with BEST on an awareness campaign across BEST bus depots that will reach out to all employees.
2.2 Awareness and Engagement

Violence against women, particularly sexual harassment, has been the focus of several of our initiatives. We have tried to create awareness regarding these issues through publicity campaigns, large-scale surveys and crowd-sourced platforms to collect and disseminate information on the subject.

2.2.1 Survey with Hindustan Times

The Hindustan Times- Akshara study was done across the city from 8-23 November 2011. The survey was conducted in the western, eastern, southern and northern region and looked at the various elements in and around these regions that contributed to several safety hazards. Issues like stalking, crowded market places, lonely skywalks and railway stations, dark subways, presence of illegal activities, poorly maintained public toilets, lack of security and unguarded college campuses were addressed in the process. A statistically selected sample of 4,255 women in the age group of 15-55 years and 776 men above 18 years were interviewed using questionnaires.

Findings

Results of the Survey contradicted the popular belief that Mumbai is a safe city for women.

- 95% of women had been sexually harassed or assaulted
- 99% considered sexual harassment to be the foremost personal safety risk in public spaces.
- 68% women did not do anything about the harassment
The western region has been found to be the most unsafe for women. Till November 30th, the police had registered 47 rape cases, 145 molestation cases and 66 cases of eve teasing or street sexual harassment in the western region alone. This was followed by the northern, eastern and central regions. The southern region emerged as the safest with the least number of cases of violence against women.

Findings from the survey gave us a more precise understanding of the level of safety in different parts of the city, and the factors that contributed to the lack of safety in these areas. As a result, it helped us design interventions keeping in mind the local context of different areas.

**Stand Up Against Violence**

The western region has been found to be the most unsafe for women. Till November 30th, the police had registered 47 rape cases, 145 molestation cases and 66 cases of eve teasing or street sexual harassment in the western region alone. This was followed by the northern, eastern and central regions. The southern region emerged as the safest with the least number of cases of violence against women.

Findings from the survey gave us a more precise understanding of the level of safety in different parts of the city, and the factors that contributed to the lack of safety in these areas. As a result, it helped us design interventions keeping in mind the local context of different areas.

*Is this really happening to me?*

*Did I do something wrong?*

*Should I have been more careful?*

Therefore, we set up a website www.standupagainstviolence.org where people can name the violence they or their close ones face. The website motivates survivors to confront violence and not suppress it. It also provides guidelines for taking concrete steps, and hence is an attempt to break the cycle of violence and find solutions.

Our message is clear: Stand Up Against Violence

The website contains a state-wise repository of Support Organizations that individuals can connect with for counselling, skill training, legal aid, and advocacy. It contains an updated list of contact numbers of all police stations and outposts. The website been translated into three regional languages, increasing the target audience to non-English speakers as well. It has seen one lakh plus hits monthly in 2012-13, while the overall number of hits was 2,174,128.

**When No One Is Looking – a Retrospective**

With the idea of spreading awareness regarding the rampant issue of sexual harassment in public places, Akshara collaborated with a student of Rachana Sansad,
Payal Arya, to display an interactive installation “When no one is looking – a retrospective” at the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, 2012. The installation expressed the agitation faced by women because of the harassment in local trains, at bus stops or while walking on streets. The idea behind the installation was that its interactive nature would have a far reaching effect in making men and women revisit reality.

It consisted of a long ‘L’ shaped dark passage. As visitors walked through it, there were hands that brushed against their body. Their reactions were captured using cameras and record books placed at the exit. An estimated 30,000 people visited the installation during the festival. It was featured widely in newspapers such as The Times of India, Indian express, Nav Bharat Times as well. The experience of walking through the passage evoked strong reactions from visitors, both men and women.

Women came out of it screaming and some were just really disturbed by the entire experience and affirmed it as “reality” “horrifying” “fact”. Some came out angry and agitated.

“sahan hot nahi ani sangata hi yet nahi.” (This is something one can’t bear, yet unable to speak up against)

“God!!How my heart thumped and this was make believe. I can’t even begin to imagine how an actual victim would feel.”

“It was a glimpse of what a girl goes through at any place in this claustrophobic country. Disgusting!”

“A very interesting way to depict a daily aspect of life for women today. Makes a lasting impact.”
Akshara launched ‘HarassMap-Mumbai’ in September 2013 - an online platform for citizens of Mumbai to speak out against harassment and mobilize community efforts towards the issue. Harass Map is an out of the box tool to collect information on women's experiences of sexual harassment, which often get unrecorded. The idea was an adaptation of the original HarassMap launched in Cairo in December 2010. It is a crowd map designed to report cases of any kind of sexual harassment (physical/verbal/visual) and unsafe areas in the city. This provides us with data to take informed actions by lobbying with local governing bodies for women and girls’ safety. 144 reports have been filed on the platform till date.

Log on to Harass Map – Mumbai to report harassment/unsafe areas.
Campus Safety

Box 3: Sexual Harassment in Colleges

“Sexual harassment, especially amongst youth, has a sinister cultural sanction that is difficult to challenge. Usually seen to be an inevitable part of youth culture, in the form of ‘eve teasing’ of girls by boys, and made popular through mainstream films and songs, sexual harassment is a common but insidious form of violence against women. What is ‘eve-teasing’ exactly, and when does it become sexual harassment? Is it really as harmless as it is made out to be? What is the impact it has on women and their experience of college life and of their workplaces? In many instances, beyond just leaving a bitter taste in the mouth, it is known to be traumatic, humiliating, and a violation of a woman’s right to safe colleges, safe universities and safe public spaces.”


In 2006, we carried out a research study in 45 colleges in four zones across Mumbai – South, Central, Northern and Western, surveying 935 people; of which over 880 were students and the remaining were faculty. The survey was conducted using questionnaires and qualitative interviews and respondents were asked questions in four broad areas: their understanding of what constituted sexual harassment, who the perpetrators were and what the motivation behind this kind of behaviour was; the prevalence of sexual harassment from personal experiences or as witnesses; the impact of such harassment on women and knowledge of redressal mechanisms such as Women’s Development Cells; and lastly whether these were being used in tackling problems of sexual harassment. Shocked by the staggering number of instances of sexual harassment in educational institutions, we have focused on campus safety through a number of our programs. We have laid emphasis on engaging with both young men and women through these programs.

Training Programs

In 2004, we launched an avant-garde online course on gender Screened which was aimed at young people interested in learning about gender rights and equality. The course was meant to serve the twin purposes of teaching internet skills and gender rights. It focuses on gender and feminism, women’s movements, violence against women, and current debates on women’s issues. Over the years, the course has been redesigned to specific themes such as gender-based violence, sexual harassment and role of women’s development cells, for students, lecturers and officers of the Indian Administrative Service.

Recently, we have launched a course on Sexual Harassment and the Grievance Committee, in collaboration with RCWS. The course is designed to acquaint participants with sexual harassment in colleges, University’s policy on sexual harassment, and role of grievance committees in handling cases of harassment. The first batch of the course was conducted for 25 lecturers of SNDT University of Mumbai, in November 2013.
Jagar Janivancha Survey 2013

We have been working with NSS units in several of Mumbai’s colleges for the past 9 years, under the aegis of the Central NSS Department. In 2013, we linked our work with the ‘Jagar Janivancha Scheme’ of the Department for Higher and Technical Education. The scheme was launched by the Government of Maharashtra to address sexual harassment in colleges and encourages institutions to ensure female students’ safety on campus. The colleges with the best plans under the scheme will receive cash prizes from the Department. As part of the program, we trained a select group of NSS students in 8 colleges to take initiative in gathering suggestions from a larger student body, creating campaigns and student actions from August to December. NSS students surveyed other students, faculty members and admin staff to gather information on safe and unsafe areas in their respective colleges, instances of harassment and so on. They recorded their own observations as well.

Table 1: Participants in Jagar Janivancha Survey 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>We Club Members</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Staff Members</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ambedkar college</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>57</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.C college</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>54</td>
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<td>L.S. Raheja college</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.D college</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.A.D.A.V college</td>
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<td>50</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.J college</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.I.W.S college</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>435</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are happy to share that students are presenting survey findings along with recommendations to their respective college principals and are taking an active interest in pursuing these recommendations to foster a safer environment in their college premises.

http://www.rcwssndt.org/
Engendering Development

“Planning and designing safe public spaces for women and girls is the process whereby urban planners, designers, architects, women, grassroots and other community actors collaborate to make the physical features of public spaces safe and welcoming for women and girls.” As part of the process of engendering city-level planning and making Mumbai a safer city, our attempt has been to build partnerships with other women’s groups, citizens, experts, and local governing bodies to facilitate a participative dialogue on development. Accordingly, we have organized and participated in a number of consultations.

“Can We Make Mumbai a Safe City for Women?”
(21st August 2012, MIG Club, Mumbai)

The Consultation was organized as an exchange of ideas and experiences of safety in Mumbai, with an agenda of formulating an action plan to address the growing violence against women. It was attended by 54 participants – representatives from women’s groups, NGOs, citizen’s groups, urban planners, experts and individuals.

Areas addressed in the Consultation:

- Theme of Safe City,
- Engendering City Development, and
- Strategizing for Women’s Safety.

Image 8: Speakers at the Consultation on Making Mumbai a Safe City

It was an insightful session, with interesting talks by speakers followed by discussions which also brought forth various strategies and recommendations to make Mumbai safer. We talk about these recommendations in Chapter 3.

**Petition to Chief Minister of Maharashtra**

The horrifying incident of a 23 year-old photojournalist's gang rape at Shakti Mills in 2013 stirred a debate on the lack of safety in Mumbai. Piecemeal efforts are no longer sufficient to address the security concerns of such a densely populated mega city and we urgently need a Comprehensive Action Plan which brings together the departments and bodies of the government and citizens groups together and covers infrastructure, education, cultural, media interventions as well as police and judicial changes. Therefore, we launched a petition ‘Chief Minister of Maharashtra: #MakeMumbaiSafe for women’, addressed to CM Sheri. Prithviraj Chavan. We received a tremendous response to the petition which was signed by over 33,000 people - online through change.org and offline.

We met the Chief Minister along with a delegation of women’s groups and activists with the petition on 3rd December 2013. The petition was well received, and the CM expressed his concern about the issue of women’s safety in the city, and the need for a comprehensive plan to address the problem.

![Image 9: Dr. Nandita Shah of Akshara presents petition to CM of Maharashtra Mr. Prithviraj Chavan, along with delegation of other organizations](http://www.change.org/en-IN/petitions/chief-minister-of-maharashtra-makemumbaisafe-for-women)
The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) is in the process of formulating the next 20-year Development Plan for Greater Mumbai, for the period 2014-34. The plan seeks to create a spatial framework to address the city's requirements for affordable housing, securing land for public purposes, and improving quality of life in an inclusive and sustainable manner. However, a detailed study of the preparatory study for the plan has revealed that a gender perspective is completely missing from the current draft. Since women use and benefit from the city in different ways from men, and have unequal access to it, the 20-year planning horizon should take this disparity into account while planning.

a) Engendering Development Plan 2014-34

Consultation on 21st May 2013, Ravindra Natya Mandir, Mumbai
We organized a consultation with other organizations and experts to discuss ways in which a gender perspective can be incorporated into the vision principles of the plan, and applied it to different urban sectors and services.

Concrete suggestions on engendering city planning came up in the areas of livelihood, transport, health, education, essential and community services, housing and public places.

http://www.mcgm.gov.in/irj/portal/anonymous/qlPreparatoryStudiesReport
b) Development through a Gender Inclusive Lens

Consultation on 21st January 2014, BMC F South Ward Office, Mumbai

Following our involvement into the dialogue on the Development Plan, we were approached by the MCGM to organize a consultation between them and women’s groups, NGOs and experts. This was a positive development as it showed the Corporation’s willingness to initiate a participatory process in the formulation of the plan. The consultation was attended by 78 participants, including officials from Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), experts, media persons, and representatives from women’s organizations, NGOs and individuals. Experts from various fields gave talks on engendering livelihoods, transport, housing, public amenities and the role of the plan in addressing women’s safety concerns.

Many important issues in the context of Gender and the Development Plan were raised in the Consultation and we were able to communicate our concerns directly to the MCGM. Representatives from the Corporation in attendance acknowledged several of the concerns raised by participants, and were amenable to their suggestions as well.
Chapter 3: Recommendations

A comprehensive approach to improve the safety and security of a city should account for gender differences in spatial use, design spaces and transit systems with a gender perspective; and incorporate gender considerations into operations, law & order and governance. In the end, safety will depend on how spaces and systems are built, operated, managed and used.

We need to conduct safety audits on a larger scale across the city so that existing spaces and services can be made safer for public use. Moreover, development of spaces and new transit systems need to have safety built into their designs and operations.

A Comprehensive Checklist

Here is a generic list of factors to assess whether the design and management of a place focuses on women’s safety concerns.

The list can be adapted depending on the local context and requirements of different places.

1. Overall Design
2. Isolation
3. Visibility
4. Lighting
5. Signage
6. Movement Predictors and Entrapment Sites
7. Maintenance
8. Management and Security

Towards Safe Public Spaces

Open Spaces (parks, grounds, beaches etc.)

- Proper signage put up at entry and exit points and at various points along the way
- More street lights, brighter lights and maintenance of lighting
- Presence of security guards to ensure that people are not harassed and that the infrastructure is not broken or misused
- Install phone booths and display emergency helpline numbers
- Police patrolling to encourage use of open spaces by women and girls
- Safety measures such as proper fencing, barricading, closing entrapment routes
- There should be enough bright lighting facing the shore
- There should be exclusive areas for senior citizens and pregnant/feeding mothers
- Programs and policies for community grounds that provide incentives for girls to play there safely – i.e. girls cricket leagues, times/zones for girls to use the space
- Clear garbage from markets so that there is more space for people to walk
- Designated area for vendors and hawkers to prevent overcrowding
- Install CCTV cameras in closed spaces
Public Sanitation

The present condition of existing public sanitation facilities in the city is deplorable. There is an urgent need to:

- Set up public urinals at a distance of 1-2 kms, especially along highways and all arterial roads
- Improve the conditions of the toilet facilities in terms of the cleanliness, proper waste disposal and management systems
- Install portable toilets for ladies until clean, functional toilets can be constructed
- Fix broken windows, doors, and dysfunctional door latches on toilets to ensure privacy
- Construct women and men's toilets at a distance from one another or ensure proper partition between the two
- Allocation for public toilets maintained by communities should be encouraged in low cost and slum housing areas
- Provide for measures for safety such as deploying women attendants
- Use of facilities should be free of cost, levy fine on facilities charging users

Towards Safe Public Transit

Transport needs should be planned with focus on large number of commuters who are walking and using public transport, along with gender audits of existing and proposed public transport infrastructure.

Public Transport

(Railways, Bus Services, Skywalks, Bridges, Subways and Approach roads)

Transport needs should be planned with focus on large number of commuters who are walking and using public transport, along with gender audits of existing and proposed public transport infrastructure.

- Improve lighting and implement sustainable plan for the maintenance of proper lighting, repair malfunctioning lights
- Include 24 hour public phone booths in isolated areas
- Increased patrolling of platforms, bridges and skywalks
- Proper signage boards indicating entry, exit points, emergency exits, and location of nearest police chowkis
- Installation of CCTV cameras
- Display helpline numbers at the entry and exit points and places along the way
- Maintain clean, hygienic public toilets with sufficient privacy and female attendants.
- Tree branches to be cut and maintained so that visibility is not obstructed
- Construction work should take place in a phased and organized manner so that people's movements are not disrupted and chaos is not created during peak hours
- Skywalks should be made free of hoardings and advertisements so that the visibility is not blocked from the street
- No loitering or hanging around these areas for any other purposes
- Ramps should be installed to make them usable by people with disabilities
• Plan approach roads to stations, with lanes for commuters, areas for hawkers, auto and taxi stands and shops.
• Voice announcements in buses to aid visually impaired passengers
• A road network that focuses attention on connectivity from new transport nodes to interior areas i.e. approach roads/feeder roads

**Streets and Pavements**

• Proper maintenance of roads, toilets, and waste management
• Design streets to improve walking and encourage cycling
• Footpaths should be designed to include dead zone, uninterrupted walking zone and multi-utility zone for hawkers etc.
• Development Plan should include street design guidelines for supporting walking and cycling infrastructure: Street lighting, vending, seating, garbage bins, bus stops and shelters, signage and pedestrian way-finding, on-street parking
• Active police patrolling
• Ensure that areas where people wait for public transport are well-lit.
• Ensure that main car parks are well-lit and supervised at night.

**Others**

• Request stop programme for bus services which allows female passengers travelling alone to request that bus drivers stop and let them off between bus stops. This allows passengers to walk shorter distances from the bus to their destination.
• Affordable and safe alternatives to public transit should be made available to women and girls during times when service is not available or limited. This allows women to move around freely at off-peak hours. Mechanisms that could be put in place to accommodate such movement include rideshare programmes, specialized taxi programmes, community car rental programmes, and bicycle renting/sharing programmes.
• Night shelters for women at major transport hubs, designated waiting rooms at railway stations.
• Re-evaluation of fares and operations to make public transport more flexible and affordable for women (especially buses)
• Linking project approvals with compliance of recommendations from gender audits
• Interlinking parks, open spaces and creating contiguous space for walking
• All transport including walking should be made disabled friendly
• Build concrete roads through slums to improve security
Towards Safer College Campuses

The Supreme Court directive of 1997 was a path-breaking one, because it not only acknowledged that women are harassed, but defined it and placed the onus of preventive action on the employers or authorities. In keeping with the Supreme Court’s directive, all organisations have to create structures for identifying and redressing sexual harassment. In addition, the design and usage of spaces within educational institutions need to be considered as well. We recommend:

• Survey of college spaces to identify areas where harassment is most common
• Install CCTV cameras to monitor students’ activities
• Policies to encourage use of gym facilities etc. by female students
• Two-tier system of redressal: one tier to function at the college level and the first step will be a Counsellor who supports students and holds discussions with them. The college WDC committee should deal with cases of sexual harassment only between students and not those involving lecturers or principals. The second tier is to function at the university cell level which will consider cases between students and lecturers, between lecturers and between students, lecturers and the karmacharis.
• Workshops for Students and Lecturers to spread awareness regarding sexual harassment, Women Development Cells etc.
• Student Patrols to patrol campus to prevent sexual harassment within college premises especially in canteens and secluded places
• Appointment of Counsellor
• Capacity Development for Women’s Development Cells

Towards a Gender Inclusive City

Here we focus on issues that need to be addressed at a larger level, through public policy tools such as the Development Plan of Mumbai.

Livelihood

• Recognize all types of informal sector livelihoods and provide basic services for all modes of livelihoods
• Creation of innovative public spaces accommodating various livelihoods
• Creation of separate space for small scale production areas in slums as well as in the city (small scale industries)
• Recognizing the need for hostels for working women and allocation for the same
• Reservation of space for vendors in markets and naka workers.
• Collect data and information on availability of crèches/day-care centres in Mumbai and accordingly reserve spaces for them based on requirements
• Disincentivize industrial closure and shift in land use to prevent loss of jobs
• Greater public/common work and training spaces for women in informal settlements
• Allocation of land for training centres where skill-based training can be imparted, to give a boost to women’s participation in formal sector employment.

Health
• Review, upgrade infrastructure and service delivery as per NUHM
• Increase in number of maternity wards and hospitals
• Allocation of rooms in hospitals to handle cases of domestic violence
• Development Plan should talk about the numbers of health facilities with proper segregation of private, municipal or charitable health facility
• Recognized land for charitable hospital, which should be given on the basis of poor population of the ward
• Health care facilities should be proportionate to population present in each ward with consideration for increase in population.

Education
• The public school system must be augmented to meet aspirations of all children in their preferred language
• Open spaces attached to Schools with sport facilities for girls
• Recognize and allocate land for higher education and vocational training centers
• Creation of spacious schools to accommodate students from pre-school to Standard 10th
• Proper sanitation facilities for girls especially in public schools

Housing
• Creation of affordable housing for all
• Recognized demarcations of slums as the affordable housing for EWS and Commercial development of these plots should be avoided
• Creations of more playgrounds
• Recognize 10% of housing for EWS in new colonies
• All new constructions and colonies should have a mixed income and cultural groupings
• Open spaces in high rise buildings should be encouraged instead of closed ‘virtual’ ones
• Concessions given to redevelopment projects under sections 33 (7), (9), (10) must be linked with quality of life and safety factors such as space between buildings, fire regulations, provision for community spaces
• Greater flexibility in user rules of public spaces such as gardens, playgrounds, recreational spaces. Both men and women employed in informal sector are able to use these areas only in the afternoons away from work. However, these places are inaccessible during the afternoon.
• Transit-oriented development in the DP should take women’s mixed use of space into account

Towards greater Public Awareness and Mobilization

Raising public awareness on the need for safer cities remains a big challenge even today. Although it has received attention at all levels from the media to civil society and government in recent times, there is a need for greater understanding of the underlying factors that influence safety. “There are two main areas to focus on when raising awareness about safe cities for women. First, there is general public awareness, which involves widespread understanding and acknowledgement of the issues on a societal level. Second, there is self-awareness, which occurs when individuals understand how the concept of safe cities for women affects them personally.” Our collaboration with Hindustan Times has been instrumental in raising awareness about this issue, and keeping it in the eye of the public.

Mobilization needs to be accompanied by collection of information and data on the situation at the ground level. We need better surveying and reporting mechanisms to gather information and gender-disaggregated data which can be used to inform planning and governance.

• Coordinated, long-term awareness campaigns on violence and harassment
• Safety audits to identify areas/ neighbourhood which have poor quality or badly located public toilets, broken pavements, open garbage dumps, unlit car parks, and non-functional street lights
• Expansions of advertising campaigns to promote awareness of support services such as 103 help line
• Enrolling interested college students to expand efforts such as publicity campaigns, safety audits, facilitation of discussions on questions of gender between male and female college students
• Initiatives to “occupy ” spaces and organize events for women in public spaces to increase visibility of female users of open spaces
• Use of spatial maps to identify safe and unsafe pockets in the city
• Mapping of support services for women

Dealing with Harassment:
Change is a long-drawn process and in the meantime harassment will continue to be a harsh reality in the lives of women. Here are some ways in which women can speak out against this harassment:

Back Off! How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers, Martha Langelan
• Do the unexpected: Name the behaviour. Whatever he has done, say it, and be specific.
• Hold the harasser accountable for his actions. Do not make excuses for him; do not pretend it did not really happen. Take charge of the encounter and let people know what he did. Privacy protects harassers, but visibility undermines them.
• Make honest, direct statements. Speak the truth (no threats, no insults, no obscenities, no appeasing verbal fluff and padding). Be serious, straightforward and blunt.
• Demand that the harassment stop.
• Make it clear that all women have the right to be free from sexual harassment. Objecting to harassment is a matter of principle.
• Stick to your own agenda. Do not respond to the harasser’s excuses or diversionary tactics.
• Reinforce your statements with strong, self-respecting body language: eye contact, head up, shoulders back, a strong, serious stance. Do not smile. Timid, submissive body language will undermine your message.
• Respond at the appropriate level. Use a combined verbal and physical response to physical harassment.
• End the interaction on your own terms, with a strong closing statement: ‘you heard me. Stop harassing women’.
• In case of harassment at workplace or organizations inform a trusted colleague and try to ensure that s/he is an eye or ear witness to a situation where you are being sexually harassed. This will be useful to file a formal complaint. Explore the different avenues available to file a formal complaint if necessary.
Looking Ahead...

Our aim is to scale up the Safe City campaign in 2014, to reach, engage and establish partnerships with a wider audience of stakeholders.

Coming up...

- Comprehensive Plan for Mumbai - Collaboration with Hindustan Times for a series of round tables which will focus on different aspects of urban safety and security through the lens of prevention and redressal.
- Bring safety into focus at Ward level, by having a dialogue with Ward Corporators
- Continue engagement with preparatory studies of Mumbai’s Development Plan 2014-34
- Work on strengthening 103 helpline along with Mumbai Police and scale up publicity and awareness campaigns
- Conduct Impact Assessment of training of BEST employees

An attempt to make a metropolis like Mumbai safer seems like a herculean task at the onset. While bringing about awareness and changes in attitudes and systems is a long-term process, addressing physical impediments to safety such as installing more lights on a street or a sign board on a skywalk can be done overnight. It is important that we include women’s voices in the decision-making process of planning cities, as well as partner with men and boys, to work towards a common goal.

Our work is far from over and we hope that in the course of our journey, women and men from all walks of life, will come forward and join us to build a safe an inclusive Mumbai for all.
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Annexure

Safety walks methods

Survey methods

Maps
### Table: List of Safety Walks conducted by Akshara across Mumbai

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>TYPE OF AREA</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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<td>Streets, Grounds, Centres</td>
<td>Prabhadevi BMC School to MHADA Ground</td>
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<td>Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Chowk to Lower Parel Station</td>
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