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PRIA



Participatory Safety Audit in Sonipat

“Mapping safety in the community”

Violence against Women (VAW) is a global phenomenon prevalent in all societies. Neither is this a new issue, nor is it restricted to any single class, community, society or country. Gender based violence is one of the most brutal consequences of the economic, social, political and cultural inequalities that exist between the sexes. It was in the aftermath of the brutal gang rape of a para-medical student in Delhi in December 2012 that India awoke to see hundreds of people cutting across, class, caste, gender, age, occupation take to the streets in protest of this heinous act and a condemnation of the increasing violence against women. The youth were at the front of the mass agitation that shook the country. They were demanding answers; they sought change and most importantly, they were ready to be a part of the change that they wanted in their lives and in the lives of those around them.

During that time, Society for Participatory Research (PRIA) was working on the issue of violence against women in Haryana. Seeing the youth in action wanting to work towards the cause, PRIA initiated the Kadam Badao Campaign. This campaign was launched with the purpose of providing youth with a platform to make their voices heard in influencing changes.

As a step towards addressing the issue of violence against women in Sonipat, there was also a felt need to understand the safety issues for girls in these spaces and the attitudes and mindsets existing within individuals residing within these spaces. Thus local level animators¹, along with youth members of Kadam Badao conducted a safety audit in 20 villages, 20 community level schools and 2 universities in Sonipat. The audit was done in 2013 and spanned over a period of two months.

Campaign area					
Block	Kharkhoda	Gannaur	Murthal	Gohana	Sonipat
Villages	Rohna	Laleli	Rajpur	Mohana	Rehmana
	Rohat	Bhogipur	Kami	Gadi Hakikat	Mahra
	Jharothi	Rajlugaddi	Bhurri	Khanpur Kalan	
	Anandpur	Shehzadpur		Kasandi	
		Sandalnewada			
		Sandalkhurd			

¹ Animators are the field facilitators responsible for field level community work for PRIA projects

Findings of the safety audit in Villages



All places

The most shocking finding of the audit was that 25% of girls and 5% boys said that their entire village was unsafe. Several girls reported having been molested inside the **temple**. They even shared incidents of sexual harassment by priests.

Results of the safety audit have indicated that while girls do not feel safe in **open spaces** because of the fact that it is so lonely and isolated as they are the spaces where men and young boys prefer to go to drink, the feeling of insecurity is particularly high when they are in crowded spaces in the open. Some boys mentioned that these spaces were unsafe for girls but only because they were far from the village. They felt that it was particularly unsafe at night as there are no lights.

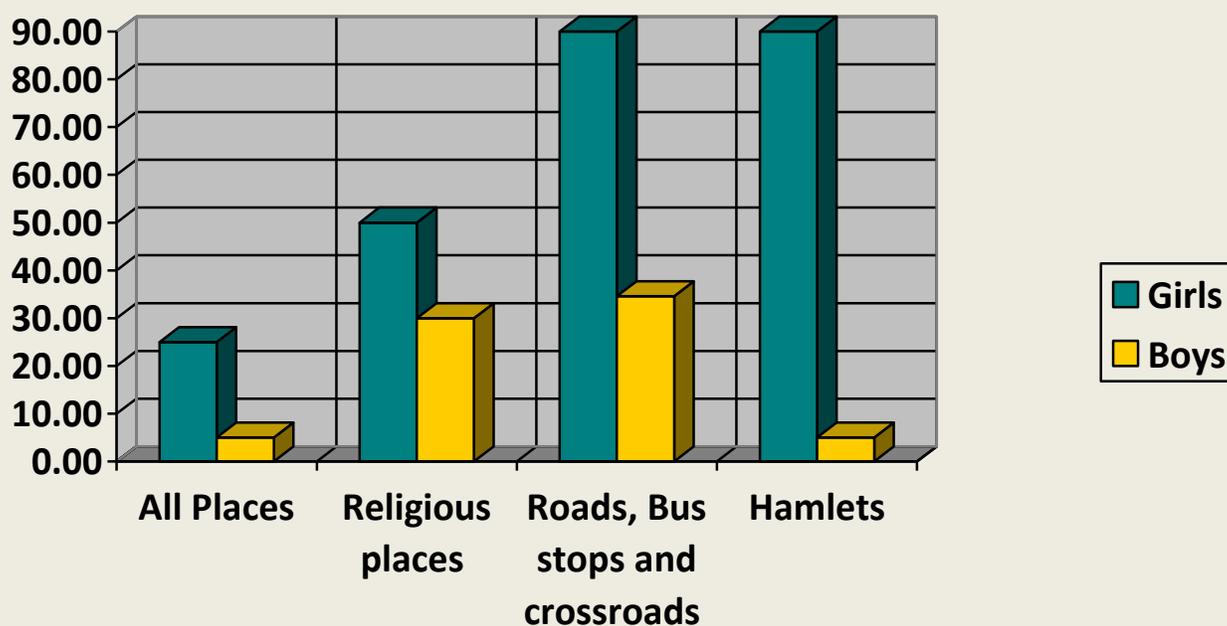
Girls have reported that **Chaupal**² was only safe during the day up until 11:00 am in the morning, while the aanganwadi centre was open. It becomes an unsafe space as soon as the center closes. **Roads, Bus stops, crossroads (entrance to the village)** were considered to be unsafe by girls primarily because of the presence of boys and the crowds. Girls however opined that the bus stops are especially unsafe areas because people from other villages also frequent these spaces.

“We are not safe anywhere including in their own homes.”

10% girls were uncomfortable walking through other **hamlets**³ but felt safe in their own hamlet as it was familiar territory. 90% of the girls felt however, that all hamlets were unsafe. Girls felt that **cemeteries** are isolated, so “bad” incidents are most likely to occur there. Men sit and drink there and it is also very easy to stay hidden in the darkness of the cemetery at night. But men disagreed however and added that cemeteries are safe for girls as it is a quiet place.

² A chaupal is traditionally a central place of gathering, usually situated in the middle of the village. It is also a popular venue for community led activities in the villages such as the gram sabha, marriage parties, political rallies etc. The aanganwadi is situated in/near the chaupal in most of the villages.

³ Hamlets are settlements usually clustered around castes. In most cases, the settlements of the upper castes will be situated around the main resources of the village and the hamlets belonging to the lower castes will be situated further away



The bar graph above compares the percentage of both girls and boys who considered these places unsafe.

Closed spaces in the village:

- ❖ **Sarpanch⁴'s house** is only safe when his wife is present. The sarpanch's house was unsafe for girls because it is crowded with strong presence of men.
- ❖ **Alcohol shops** were considered to be the most unsafe safe by the girls in all the villages. While a fairly large number of boys on the other hand also felt that it was an unsafe space, some however did not see why girls would feel unsafe around the alcohol shops as men only went there to buy the liquor. They also felt that the alcohol shops were unsafe for girls only at night.
- ❖ **Police station:** Data from the safety audit revealed that none of the girls considered the police station to be a safe space. On the contrary, they marked it as being a highly unsafe space

⁴ The word 'Sar' means head and 'panch' means five, put together; they mean the head of the five member village level statutory institution of local self-government called the panchayat (village government). This individual is elected by all the people of the village. The sarpanch, together with the other elected 'panchas' or members constitute the panchayat. The sarpanch is also the focal point of contact between government officers and the village community.



“All wrong things happen in the police station only. Police men themselves drink and are found drunk sitting outside the police station passing comments at girls who are passing by. If we tell the sarpanch the sarpanch's son himself is found with them”



“The police stations are crowded and they have been stationed for the purposes of providing safety to the citizens of the community. So it is safe.”

- ❖ Interestingly, girls from more than half of the sample size of the study said that the **Doctor's clinic** in their village was unsafe because unfamiliar people are present there, the doctor is a male and the ambience is not conducive.
- ❖ **School:** While a majority of boys and some girls felt that schools were moderately safe areas; 90% of the girls were of the opinion that the schools were by and large unsafe spaces especially after school hours because of the presence of boys. Girls also reported that they are often stalked by boys from the school and some girls even mentioned that boys write “bad things” on pieces of paper and put it in their bags.

“Boys wink at us and pass comments as we cross their classrooms”

They also said that post school hours, from the village also boys go to the school to play sports and it often becomes a place for drug use. Therefore these girls not only face the threat of harassment and actual harassment from their student peers but also from other boys of the village who come to their school.

Findings of the safety audit in Academic Institutions

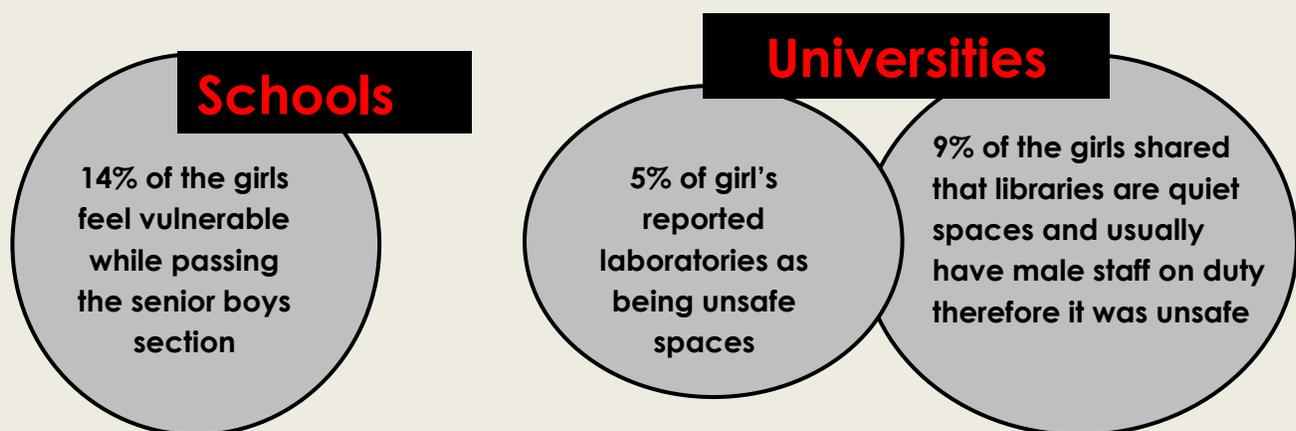
After conducting the safety audits and attitude assessments in different villages, the baseline safety audit was extended to schools and universities in six clusters of Sonipat district namely Gohana, Sonipat, Kharkhoda, Murthal, Gannaur and Gohana blocks.

A total of 1856 students (872 boys and 984 girls) from 22 institutions (including 20 schools and 2 universities) participated in this study. This exercise aimed at capturing the responses on safety parameters in and around the premises of these specific institutions. The findings of the safety audit are as under:

❖ Administrative units:

According to them, the presence of teachers and administrative staff responsible for maintaining discipline reinforces a sense of safety in such areas but the presence of male teachers inside the common staff rooms makes them feel unsafe.

❖ Educational sections:



❖ Recreational facilities including Playgrounds /Stadiums/auditoriums /halls:

The chances of getting harassed by a boy’s mob in the playgrounds were felt to be a high probability by the girls; which was the primary reason for them to avoid being in these spaces, even if they were in a group; as individuals the insecurity and vulnerability was higher.

❖ Toilets and drinking water:

Crossing the boy’s toilet to go to the girl’s toilet was another serious are of concern expressed by the girls.



❖ Entrance/Transport and school neighborhood:

35% of the girls reported that the road to school, parking area and school entrances as being unsafe places as groups of boys stand around these spaces and harass the girls as they enter or leave the school. Another 14% said that these areas were safe only when there were no boys present.

Conclusion

Discussions with girls, boys, men and women across 20 villages and 22 educational institutions reaffirms the fact that even institutions are not sacrosanct when it comes to the issues of safety and security of women and girls.

The safety audit also established that girls perceive the presence of boys and men in any particular space as a threat to their safety, including within the home and schools.

Eve teasing and sexual harassment in the form of comments, stalking, staring, leering, winking, whistling and touching were the most highly reported forms of violence by girls.

Boys on the other hand had an entirely different understanding of safety for girls. For them, all crowded spaces were safe for girls especially areas where there was a presence of boys and old men.

Source: PRIA 2015, Internal document “Final Baseline Safety audit report” submitted to Ford Foundation.



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