SAFE CITY PROGRAMME
WOMEN SAFETY
AUDIT REPORT

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Women and girls face violence, sexual harassment and abuse on the public transport, on the streets, markets, homes, workplace and the educational institutions. Women's fear of violence restricts their movement, limiting their use of public spaces, their movement from their homes resulting in denying the full enjoyment of ranges of human rights.

The rapid pace of urbanization has caused new challenges for governments, and their populations as well as social scientists and the social activists. The urban spaces provide new opportunities for people's living, but at the same time reinforce existing inequalities and often create new ones. Consequently, there is an increasing concern about women's safety in cities over the past few years.

Creating safety involves much more than just responding to violence. It is important to create the conditions by which women are able to move safely without fear of violence or assault. Research has shown that many factors play a role in determining women's access to the city, including the structure of the public spaces, community involvement, etc.

In today's world, women's safety in public spaces is becoming a growing concern. In Nepal, the safety of women in public places has not been considered as a serious issue. The women's safety audit (WSA) has been an important tool to reveal the nature and causes of safety threat in public places.

This study is a joint program of UN Women, Action Aid Nepal, DidiBahini and Safe City Collation team carried out on the WSA in one selected ward in each of four districts in Nepal, namely Dhading, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok and Bhaktapur to assess the state of women's safety in public places. In all the districts, audits were conducted by trained volunteers. Numerous supports were received from the various stakeholders and volunteers in the district.

Key Findings

The information and data gathered from the WSA provides empirical evidence on women's safety issues in public spaces of Nepal. The findings of the study show that the absence of access to quality services, such as public transport, streets and streetlights, electricity, public toilets, market, education and employment opportunities, safety and security are of great concern for different categories of women who participated in this study. Teasing, winking, whistling, stalking, eve teasing is a constant reality across the four districts. Violence remains a persistent feature of many women's lives.

53% of the women feel unsecured while travelling on public transport and walking around the bus stand. 63% of the respondents fear of travelling on public transport and share that it is one of the most unsafe means of transport. 73% of the women consider that their personal security is affected simply being a female. Abuse of smart phones and cc cameras are rampantly seen in VAW. Public harassment has become a normal phenomenon in the lack of awareness. Women and girls are discouraged to report the causes because of lack of effective policies and the mechanisms. Those who report the case are not able to get proper justice, discouraging the other victims to report the cases. Therefore, the perpetrators get favourable space for increased harassment in the public places. Moreover, the growing tourism is encouraging drug and alcohol addiction, street vendors, brokers, and sex market thereby directly affecting the women's security.

The public safety of women and girls have to be understood from a rights perspective and must be included in planning, with a focus on right to mobility rather than restrictions on women. Public services, including women friendly infrastructure, streetlights, efficient transportation with special seating arrangements for women and strict safety norms with respect to harassment should be facilitated. Women and girls have a right to enjoy the streets, parks, public vehicle, public toilet, marketplaces and neighbourhoods of their city not just for work but also for fun.

Recommendations

Reforming gender friendly laws and policies

- ◆ Legislations relating to safe public spaces for women and girls should be in place with an assurance of their effective implementation.

- ◆ Adopt a strategic plan and programme to address the issues of safe public spaces for ending VAW in public spaces.

- ◆ Enforce Domestic Violence Act, and Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act to ensure the safety of women and girls in public spaces, and ensure effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the laws, policies and strategies.

- ◆ Conduct orientation and sensitization programmes to develop common understanding of women, girls, men and boys and other related actors and stakeholders on the existing laws and policy.

Improving knowledge and information sharing mechanisms on women's safety issues

- ◆ Promote gender friendly environment in school and colleges for women and girls. Women and girls' education to be promoted for making them self-reliant and self-confident. Specially, the adolescent needs to be aware of their mental and physical changes.

- Training and discussion sessions on sensitive issues should be conducted among different age groups and professions, including security personnel, men/boys, women/girls, public servants, teachers, parents and transport associations. The program should focus on the general awareness of:
    - VAW and women's safety
    - Right to safety in public spaces
    - Knowledge about the legal provisions
    - Attitude and behaviour of individuals.
- The parents and family members should be aware of and educated about the needs of their children. Frequent communication and counselling support should help share and open up their problems. The office bearers of the Municipality/ Local government institution should be aware of and sensitively responsive to the status of women/ girls in their working periphery.
- The awareness on legal provisions clearly had some influence on response to and reporting of violence. The UN agencies, AAN, Safe City Collation Group, stakeholder and partners are suggested to explore ways to disseminate the message to the larger audience that could drive changes in their behaviours.
- The Government should mainstream the safe public space plan in its regular programme and strengthen the mechanism for proper implementation of existing laws and policies.

Improving police patrolling and security vigilance for women's safety

- It is required to increase the number of police patrols in both busy and quieter areas to stop violence and crime in public spaces.
- Public services, such as hotline services, women police cell for the survivors of violence against women and girls should be in place.
- Strengthen capacity of the service providers, including police officers to understand and respond properly to the cases of violence against women and girls in public spaces and take actions against the perpetrators of sexual harassment without blaming and intimidating women and girl victims.

Improving attitudes and behaviours related to women's and girls' right to enjoy safe public spaces

- Men and boys, girls and other stakeholders should be mobilized for promoting transformative social norms, attitudes and behaviour and enhance their capacity to prevent sexual violence in public spaces.
- Focus on sensitizing public transport employee's, such as driver, conductor and related institutions to make them aware of and responsible for the security of women and girls during commuting. The survey findings indicate that the public transports and their stations, such as bus, tempo, microbus and taxi stands are the most unsafe places for women and girls.
- Self-defence classes should be conducted for women and girls for promoting their safety.
- Wall paintings, posters and pamphlets, and announcements in public spaces should be taken place to reduce violence in the vulnerable areas.
- Strengthen the capacity and engagement of women's and community group organizations, like Mahila Adhikar Manch (MAM) to fight against VAW in public spaces.

- Promoting transformative popular education programs, like street dramas, songs, animated comic books, advertisements, mobile applications, etc.

Strengthening gender sensitive support mechanisms in the public services

- As per the findings of the survey, only 11% of the victims seek help from police for legal support because victims do not feel secured and confident in the formal legal and security structure. They even do not feel safe and secure to seek support from family and community. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop a gender sensitive support mechanism at all levels mentioned below:
    - Special police beats in public road to complain about violence in public vehicles,
    - Special cell on sexual harassments in public space in the cities,
    - Strengthening the women cell in all police offices,
    - Informal support networks (available to support women to walk during the evening in the lonely street).
- Strengthen focused program interventions as per the need of the specific target groups, time and locations based on the evidences generated by the study. The study suggests following groups to target:
    - Age group: Female and Male (15-25)
    - Students or job holders who need to frequently travel using public vehicle
    - Informal sector women
    - Location: public vehicle, streets, and social networks
- Conduct dialogue among government, public service providers, communities and their agencies to identify existing unsafe public spaces/cities issues and find appropriate responses.
- Organize campaign and intensify communications to stop gender based violence and harassment on the public spaces.
- Hold regular meetings between the police and community groups to encourage participation of especially women and girls. This method can help to reduce mistrust between the two stakeholders. The increased confidence can help women to report their situation with police and prevent future incidents.
- Promote psychosocial counselling mechanisms for the survivors of violence against women and girls.

Improving women friendly infrastructure for safer public spaces

- Develop women and girls friendly infrastructure and services targeting roads, public vehicles, and social networking. For example, advocacy could target having bigger bus, which only take passengers based on its seating capacity. Some suggested advocacy objectives could be:
    - Large bus or public vehicle that strictly follow passenger per seat rule
    - More number of public vehicles
    - Wider foot path and streetlights
    - Develop a building code for market, college and school and other public spaces, ensuring gender friendly public spaces

- ◆ Women friendly toilet in many places of public spaces
- ◆ Designated parking and waiting spaces with seats available for women and girls

- One of the top priorities of the State should be promoting better infrastructure and management of security system at all levels of public places. Narrow, dark and isolated streets have been reported as one of the most unsafe and vulnerable spaces for women and girls. Therefore, improved infrastructure, safety measures and installation and maintenance of public lighting, extending lighting reach to all streets, parks, communities, public transport stops as well as to other relevant public institution such as schools, universities can be one of the immediate responses. Some long-term solutions include:
    - ◆ Incorporate contents related to gender based violence and sexual harassments in the school curriculum, and in the induction courses of police, military, government and private offices.
    - ◆ Work with schools and colleges to make boys as well as girls adequately aware of and informed about it.
    - ◆ Targeting awareness and advocacy that relate to the socialization process (starting with the family)
    - ◆ Advocacy to encourage people (observer or individuals other than the victim) to raise a voice and support victim in case of violence
- Publish and disseminate widely the IEC materials related to safe public spaces for women and girls.

Regular monitoring of gender and safety responsive public spaces

- Establish gender responsive public services to ensure women safety and security in public spaces. Safe space needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis to track, identify gaps and ensure quality activities and referrals. Monitoring the safety of the space is also an important consideration in our context.
- Establish and strengthen the referral mechanism to report the cases of violence against women and girls to ensure speedy justice.

The significance of a safe and secured environment is best articulated through the hierarchy of needs postulated by Abraham Maslow that places safety and security next in line to basic physiological needs. Maslow's theory of motivation suggests that individuals must move along a hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, love/belongingness and esteem) in order to reach the pinnacle that is self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The Maslow theory of needs is highly relevant in a debate that speaks of promoting women's human agency, ensuring their empowerment and capacitating them to reach their full potential, all of which are integral components to the concept of self-actualization. The present safety audit was carried out to uncover the various contextual issues surrounding the safety of women in public places that consequentially disable women from realizing and reaching their potential.

Quality of life of an individual depends on the conditions over which urban life develops. Open and public spaces are seen as vital for people's interactions, health and well-being. People from different age groups, gender and backgrounds need public spaces for different purposes and uses. While using these spaces, people assume certain risks and prepare themselves to handle these risks or to avoid using these spaces altogether. It is now an accepted fact that men and women perceive risk differently. Women and girls are often targets of violence due to their vulnerability, and this vulnerability perpetuates their position in society. It also influences largely on their perceived risk. The perception and decision depends on various factors like physical, psychological and social. In the majority of Nepalese cities, women and girls face violence not only in homes and in relationships, but also in public spaces because of poor urban design and poor management of public spaces. The reasons may be the threats, intimidation, harassment, sexual attacks or rape, which prevent women from their mobility in the city.

For many women and girls around the world, just passing through a public space, such as a market, a crowded street or traveling on a bus cause for great anxiety. The threat of sexual harassment can be terrifying and have lingering psychological impacts and consequences. Unfortunately, patterns of sexual abuses in the urban public spaces are often seen as an unavoidable part of urban life. Therefore, these spaces are not recognized as a problem by either local governments, enforcement agencies, or the public.

Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces are an everyday occurrence for women and girls around the world, both in urban and rural areas, and in the developed and the developing countries. Women and girls experience and dread different kinds of sexual violence in the open spaces, including undesirable sexual comments and assault. It happens on avenues, in and around open transportation, schools and work environments, out in the open sanitation offices, water and food distribution destinations and parks. This reality decreases the opportunities for development of women and girls, diminishing their capacity to take an interest in school, work and open life. It confines their entry to basic administrations and their pleasure in social and recreational lives. Likewise, it adversely affects their wellbeing and prosperity. Although violence in the private domain is now widely recognized as a human rights violation, violence against women and girls, especially sexual harassment in public spaces, remains a largely neglected issue, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it.

Women Safety Audit (WSA)

WSA is a participatory research tool to analyse the safety state of women and explores their perceptions of safety, the practices and safety measures women adopt for their protection. Moreover, this research looks into lapses in government policies and plans relating to the protection of the rights of women. WSA, rather than strict adherence to top-down or bottom-up approaches to research, takes a collective and inclusive approach as opposed to an extractive one, whereby all stakeholders are involved and special attention is paid to the inputs of women in the community.

WSA in the Nepali context

The women-rights movement started in Nepal from the 17th century and remained visibly active after the 1990's democratic movement of 1990s. However, safety audit for women had been a long overdue, considering the prevalence of GBV and VAW. In Nepal, the issue of safety of women in public places has never gained enough ground. Moreover, WSA, in other parts of the world, has been conducted in cities and more urban spaces, making it important to explore the issues of women's safety in rural and semi-urban settings. In a rapidly urbanizing country, it is sensible to explore the safety of women in public spaces, which seems to be an easily ignored while considering that only the incidences of harassment leading to rape or death are reported owing to the survivor's apprehensions of being stigmatized. The Government of Nepal has shown positive gesture in enacting laws and policies on women's rights after ratifying the CEDAW Convention in 1991. Domestic Violence Act, Anti-Trafficking Act, and Workplace Harassment Act are some of the examples. Considering the minimal number of reported cases in the absence of adequate policies, arrangements should be made to guarantee safety for women in the public places. A WSA would then allow for a realistic and a deeper look into safety issues for women.

Women and the public space

Traditionally, women were kept away from the public places considering them the territory of men. Over the decades, with feminist movements propagating strong demands for women's free mobility, restrictions on women's mobility has decreased. Moreover, the issue of mobility gained a momentum in Nepal through the decade long internal conflict, which propagated gender equality as a major agenda. The Maoists, comprising with more than 33 per cent of their women combatants were able to mobilize them at the grassroots. This may have contributed in changing the often-patronizing images of women

from mere care-givers inside the private space who are dependent and require protection to resourceful human capital in the public space on par with men.

Women tend to avoid the places which are known to be unsafe or which they perceive to be unsafe. Freedom of movement is one of the biggest casualties of violence against women in public spaces.
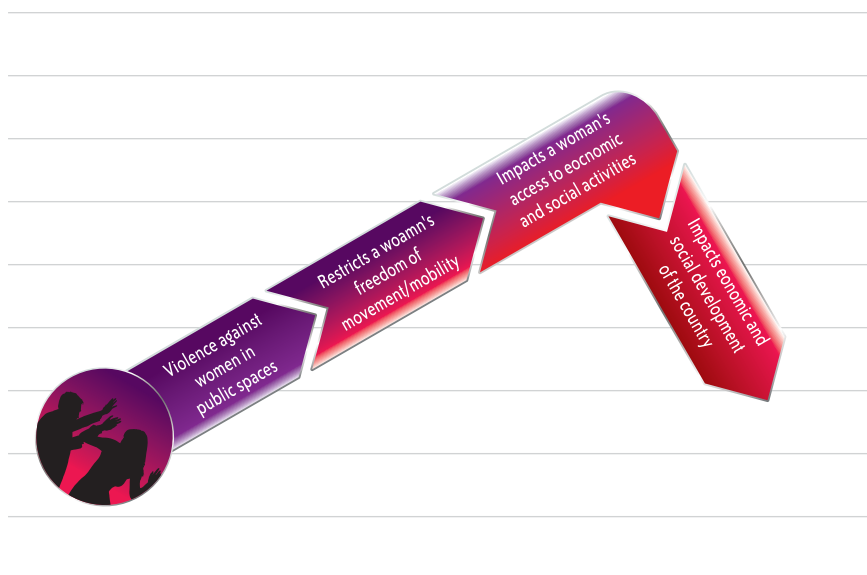

Figure 1: Impact of violence against women in public transport

 The cumulative effect of revolutions, globalization, conflict and the efforts of different development and government agencies has empowered women to be visible in the public arena, making use of their rights to education, and employment. However, for women these liberties come with a price. The more accessible public places become for women, the more they are prone to being harassed or violated by men. Even the increase in women's freedom of mobility has not resulted in proportionate changes in attitudes and behaviour towards women. Women are still viewed as weak, and vulnerable, and often prohibited from engaging in public life. When they are allowed that 'privilege' from male members in the family, they may not always escape the ridicule and harassment.

WSAs conducted in the past have deconstructed certain notions about safety in the city lives. We would generally think of public places in cities as safe owing to the density of people and hence perceived availability of help in case of an emergency. However, WSA results have shown that public places in cities are unsafe for women, especially in the rush hours. WSA conducted in the selected districts of all the development regions of Nepal by Didi Bahini in 2013/14 revealed the extent to which women and girls are being denied from the access to and use of public places and services. Moreover, it also became an eye opener to both women and girls as well as the men and boys, including the public service providers in the communities, who have taken it for granted that women's space is at the locus of their home.

Over a year after the devastating earthquakes of 2015, 40,706 individuals (53% women) continue to live in temporary displacement sites that offer limited protection from the elements and threats to personal health and safety. The aftermath of natural disasters infringes the rights and freedoms of women and girls as equal citizens. The vulnerabilities and the prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls (SVAWG) in public spaces, and the trafficking in persons, especially of women and children increased after the earthquake. The UNICEF semi-annual report of post-earthquake 2015 states that there have been reports of sexual violence against women and girls (SVAWG) and other forms of violence against women (VAW) in the temporary shelters and camps. A post-earthquake WSA carried out by DidiBahini in three municipalities in the Kathmandu valley in 2015 not only confirmed the aforementioned facts, but also revealed that the new and temporary living conditions in the tents and squatters of the city has increased the vulnerability of girls and women (Didi Bahini WSA Report 2015). Therefore, it is very crucial to help Nepal build back better and safer in the post-disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts. It gives an opportunity for a gender equal society free of gender-based violence and discrimination and address pre-existing gender inequalities.

In this context, ActionAid Nepal, Didi Bahini, Nepal Evaluation and Assessment Team (NEAT), and Safe City Group, in collaboration with the UN Women are conducting a research in the area of violence against women and girls to conduct women's safety audits (WSA) and scoping study on sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces. As part of this research, a comprehensive WSA was carried out in selected municipalities of Bhaktapur, Dhading, Nuwakot and Sindhupalchowk districts of Nepal.

- To analyse the location of four districts in the light of the main principles of safe layout,

- To conduct a critical assessment of the risks of assault and violence that may be present in the selected locations,

- To identify and discern positive factors (related to assault and violence prevention) and negative factors (related to assault and risk of violence),

- To share observations and suggestions collected from WSA and translate findings into practice,

- To explore the current trends in women's access to the police and other service providers responsible for safeguarding their rights,

- To determine how women respond to harassment and lack of safety,

- To gain insight into and analyse the perception of men on women's safety,

- To enhance the capacity of government local bodies and line agencies in the areas of gender sensitization, gender responsive planning, implementation and monitoring, as well as WSA,

- To suggest measures to enhance safety and ensure an inclusive environment for women.

METHODOLOGY

This study is guided by principles of feminist research and the tools are developed in accordance with those principles, with an aim to bring the ideas, concerns and voices of the most excluded and vulnerable women and girls to the centre. The process of the study is a means for women and girls to express their opinions, thoughts and ideas and become participants in a process of learning and change. This focuses on validating the experiences of women documenting them and bringing the concerns. The safety audit study is planned as a qualitative study, to give us a better understanding of the links between lack of access to basic services and violence against women.

A common set of tools and questions was used for this study, which was conducted in Bhaktapur, Sindhupalchowk, Dhading and Nuwakot districts. The intention was to collect responses from each location to the same set of questions and concerns. The tools chosen were Focused Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII), Safety Mapping, Stakeholder analysis and Case Studies. More than one kind of tool was used to give depth of the methodology and enable investigators to get the viewpoint of different cross sections of society, as well as to highlight different aspects of the problem. This enabled the investigators to engage with multiple stakeholders on issues relating to violence that urban women face in public spaces and to strengthen ongoing programs and campaigns around women's safety in urban spaces.

Rapid Situational Analysis

The purpose of the RSA is to map the key safety issues in their focus areas, including who is affected and why, and where and when any sexual violence and harassment might happen. It provides a baseline highlighting what is already known, what evidence is currently available on these issues and where there are any gaps in knowledge that should be explored further in the safety audit.

Key Informant Interview

It provides an opportunity to gain more in-depth information about key safety concerns of individual women and girls who have positions of responsibility in specific urban spaces. It serves as an indicator of the extent to which local women approach the duty bearers, when they are concerned about particular safety issues and whether these problems are addressed or even an effort is made to address them. The KII was focused on duty bearers, police, driver and conductors of the public transport, NGOs and INGOs, and academics.

Focused Group Discussion

It helps a group of individuals (between 8-12) with similar interest to explore women's safety issues in more depth along with their roles and responsibilities. It helps to uncover deeper insights into the safety concerns faced by women and girls whilst working, studying or moving around in public spaces.

Safety Walk

A group of women and girls, who are regular users of an urban space together with field volunteers and possibly duty bearers and decision makers, conduct a walk through that space to identify the factors that make them feel safe or unsafe.

RAPID SITUTATIONAL ANALYSIS

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

SAFETY WALK

Dhading

Dhading covers an area of 1926 sq. km of Central Region in Bagmati zone. This district comprises of 46 Village Development Committees with Nilkantha Municipality; its district headquarters is Dhading Bensi. Dhading district borders Gorkha district in the West, Nuwakot in the East, Makwanpur in the south and Rasuwa in the north. The women safety audit was conducted in Nilkantha Municipality ward no. 3. The increasing settlement of individuals led to conduct WSA in Nilkantha Municipality.

The following tools were used:

Key Informant Interview

- Increased people's settlement is an emerging problem causing a violence against women,
- Teenagers are mentally affected due to harassment and violence,
- Girls are victim of violence in public vehicles, while travelling to and fro school and college, during religious processions and festivals,
- Violence against women has increased after the earthquake,
- Misuse of smart phones and cc cameras,
- Boys have been harassing girls,
- Eve teasing and stalking have been everyday problems faced by girls,
- Even public duty bearers and service providers ignore women and girls.

FGD

- Women and girls aged between 18 to 35 are victims of violence and harassment,
- Violence seen in crowds, vehicles, schools, hospitals and junctions, bus stations, temples etc.
- Public toilets are not in the condition to use and they are also not violence free,
- Open space, bridge, subways are more vulnerable to violence,
- After the earthquake, the rate of violence has increased because people are living in a different setting from where they used to live,
- There is no freedom for girls as compared to boys,
- Short dresses worn by girls are the main problem of violence against women (male perspectives).

Stakeholder Analysis

- According to Sahayatri Samaj Nepal, even political parties are involved in violence and harassment. The victims are threatened by political parties to kill them if they open their mouth.
- Economic problem and lack of awareness are leading to violence against women.
- Incidents of violence in public places are not revealed.
- Influence of the western culture has affected the society.

Safety Walk

- Although the roads were comparatively safer to travel, the streetlights were not functioning properly.
- Police were patrolling day and night, but their body language and signals do not show that they are sensitive enough to the issue.
- The roads were not crowded and potential to VAW.
- The footpaths are narrow and rough which require reconstruction and maintenance.

Safety Journey

- No fixed bus stands in the area,
- Driver and co-driver behaviour indifferent. They are neither friendly nor cooperative.
- The bus was not crowded.

Safety Map

The safety map of Nilkantha Municipality ward no. 3 shows that the red lines along the roads indicate the vulnerable areas where women and girls fear to walk alone and in a group. The areas near hospitals, chautara (resting place), cinema hall, hotel and restaurants, near the monastery and temple, are more vulnerable to VAW. The red mark area in the below map indicates the unsafe places in the Nilkhantha Municipality after conducting the safety walk. This gives a brief overview how unsafe our public spaces are for women and girls to walk through.

Figure 2: Safety Map of Nilkantha Municipality Dhadhing District

Recommendations

With the technological advancement, CCTV camera installation inside buses and crowded public places will help to the great extent to ensure safety and security of women and girls. Awareness and training programs should be conducted for the entire community and special focus should be given to men and boys. Such sensitization training should be planned for the police, driver and co-diver to make them realize the intensity of the issues and take action to ensure safety and security of women and girls in public spaces. Gender friendly infrastructure should be ensured through the installation of streetlights in dark and lonely spots to avoid accidents and make easy and safe for people to walk even at night. The footpaths and sub-streets should be considered a priority to maintain to avoid the potential incidents.

CASE STUDY

Mr. Silwal from Dhadingbesi, "one of the reasons behind sexual harassment is the attire of women. Now-a-days, girls wear short clothes and they are subjected to different types of harassment."

A young school girl dropped out the school just to avoid the group of boys who used to tease her. She was mentally tortured by the boys.

Sita travelling from India to visit Nepal was raped by a gang of boys. The police informed the Indian Emabssy and helped her to go back to her hometown.

A girl went to the police station to file a case of violence against a co-driver. He admitted that he had raped the girl inside the vehicle.

Bhaktapur

Bhaktapur district lies in Bagmati zone and the district covers an area of 119 km 2. The women safety audit was conducted in ward no. 13, Bhaktapur Durbar Square. The following tools were used:

Key Informant Interview

◆ Short dresses worn by girls lead to more violence and harassment (male and boys).

◆ Unsafe areas are bus stand, market, Durbar Squares, narrow roads, cafes and liquor shops, temples, and crowded settlements.

◆ Unsafe to walk during the evening and night.

FGD

◆ Violence can be seen at market, college, office, bus stand and vehicles,

◆ Difficulty walking at night due to lack of streetlights, many drunk people,

◆ Boys use vulgar words to girls passing by in narrow roads,

◆ Cases of violence by driver and co-driver can be seen on buses,

◆ Unsafe to walk around during the days and nights,

◆ Number of restaurants, cafes and local liquor shops make the areas most vulnerable to violence.

Stakeholder Analysis

◆ More reserved seats for women and girls should be allocated and maintained in vehicles,

◆ Public awareness and trainings should be provided,

◆ Police complaints should be done in case of any sort of violence,

◆ Couples sitting in the Durbar Square area polluting the area hugging and kissing in open space publicly,

◆ More interaction and training programs with duty bearers and service providers are needed.

Safety Walk

◆ Girls are unsafe in Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Kamalbinayak Bus Park, Dudhpati Bus Park, and District Development Committee areas.

◆ Narrow roads without street lamps are indicating unsafe areas.

◆ Public toilet areas are unsafe.

Safety Journey

◆ Most men consume alcohol and travel on the route of Kathmandu to Bhaktapur.

◆ Difficulty travelling in buses due to over crowdedness.

Safety Map

The safety map of Bhaktapur Durbar Square ward no 13 shows that the red dots on the map indicate the vulnerable areas of Durbar Square. The narrow roads, police units' surroundings, street with no lights, bus stand, hotels and restaurants, public toilet area, temple areas are more vulnerable to VAW.

Figure 3: Safety Map of Bhaktapur Durbar Square ward no 13

Recommendations

People or groups with the immoral intention use dark and empty places. Therefore, VDCs must identify such spaces and install streetlights to keep such people at bay. To neutralize open defecation and to ensure safety, clean and hygienic public toilets need to be constructed. Similarly, wall paintings and posters related to violence against women and girls need to be placed in public vehicles, public places and discussions on awareness of violence and abuse need to be held on a regular basis. The community must be vigilant against abuse and violence. Training and sensitization programme should be conducted regularly in the coordination with the government and the other stakeholder.

CASE STUDY

Ritu from Bhaktapur Durbar Square shares that during summer it is difficult to walk or move out of the home as boys stare at us, pass comments and make vulgar gestures.

Anjana, while travelling by a bus from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu came across a guy who tried to touch her private parts. She took out a safety pin and pierced him.

Sushma from Sallaghari shares that while returning back from evening tutions it's very difficult to walk by the road as a gang of boys pass comments sitting at cafes and liquor shops.

Sindhupalchok

Sindhupalchok covers an area of 2542 sq.km of Nepal's Central Region in Bagmati zone. Sindhupalchok district comprises of 67 Village Development Committee with two sub-metropolitan cities: its headquarters is Chautara Sindhupalchok district borders Nuwakot district in the West, Kavrepalanchowk district in the South, Dolakha in the East. The WSA was conducted in its headquarters Chautara, ward no. 3 and 7. Chautara was highly affected by the devastating earthquake. The tools used are:

Key Informant Interview

- Unmarried girls are more prone to violence and harassment,
- Short dresses worn by girls are leading to increase number of violence (male voice),
- Unable to walk alone by the road,
- Co-driver touches women's body while collecting money,
- Consumption of alcohol during festivals and religious processions are leading to violence against women.

FGD

- Fear to walk alone during daytime as well as night time due to people's consumption of alcohol
- Passing vulgar comments, winking, whistling are some of the common harassments
- While travelling by bus drivers play vulgar songs and pass comments on women and girls
- Violence and harassment cases are seen when the buses are crowded
- Group of boys tease while going to school and colleges, market,

Stakeholder Analysis

- Rate of violence and harassment is high during morning and evening
- Girls are pinched, whistled, winked while travelling to crowded places
- Young girls are mostly affected mentally due to these sorts of incidents
- During the time of earthquake boys/men not so entered the tents of girls and slept with them
- Girls are blackmailed to expose their videos in public

Safety Walk

- Cc cameras installation has decreased the rate of violence
- Difficulty walking during the evening and morning
- Streetlights should be added in unsafe areas

Safety Journey

- People were not so comfortable while travelling
- People paid their ticket after getting off only
- The reserved seats for women and special groups were not maintained as per rule

Safety Map

The map of Sindhupalchowk, Chautara ward no. 3 and 7 shows that red triangles on the map show the unsecure places of Chautara area. The unsecure places are narrow roads, near temples, street with no lamps, areas near government offices, bus stand area and near hospitals.

Figure 4: Safety Map of Chautara Municipality, Sindhupalchok District

Recommendations

The accident-prone areas need to have installed solar lights. Increasing police patrolling will keep the drunkard, hooligans, gambler and groups in the bay from harming women/ girls. The community as a whole need to provide awareness regarding women/ girls safety and education them. Make easy access to water and sanitation, electricity, transportation and other public services to avoid violence against women and girls.

CASE STUDY

Ms. Tamang from Chautara-7 was brilliant at her studies. one day, a man attempted to rape her. From that day, she got traumatized and was not able to perform well in her exams

According to Ganga, "The recent earthquake destroyed our house and forced us to live in a tiny tin hut on the road side. We always live in a constant condition of fear."

According to Shanta, "I travel on the crowded buses every day, and I am aware of the curious eyes and hands of the males and co-driver. I even know how far the inquisitive hands can go. I always feel fear and insecured."

Nuwakot

Nuwakot district covers the area of 2162 sq. km of Nepal's Central Region in Bagmati zone. This district comprises 61 Village Development Committees and 1 Municipality. Its district headquarters is Bidur. Nuwakot borders Sindhupalchowk district in the East, Kathmandu in the South and Rasuwa and Dhading in the North. The Women Safety Audit was conducted at the headquarters of Nuwakot district Bidur in ward number 3 and 4. Bidur was selected for the study because it is the only a municipality in Nuwakot district and it is more crowded than the other wards. Moreover, it was affected by the devastating earthquake of 25th April, 2015. Following tools were used for WSA:

Key Informant Interview

◆ Decrease in number of violence and drug addiction due to installation of 35 CC cameras around the area,

◆ Less vulnerable to violence than other wards; the other wards are worse.

◆ Difficult for women to travel morning and evening; it is also not easy during the day.

◆ Boys tease girls looking at their short dresses; they even touch them and stalk some times.

Focused Group Discussion

◆ Polygamy prevails in the society that leads to violence and harassment.

◆ Girls' perception towards winking, teasing, whistling, staring is normal. They take these acts normal.

◆ The cases of harassment cases can be observed while travelling on a bus.

◆ Police are also involved in teasing women and girls.

Stakeholder Analysis

◆ Number of cases of violence are prevalent in the school and college girls.

◆ Modernization leading to increase in number of violence,

◆ Possibility of occurrence of violence in school, park, office, jungle, bus parks,

◆ Mobile and internet leading to violence in the community,

◆ Strict rules should be made against the culprit,

◆ Girls didn't face any sort of violence after the devastating earthquake.

Safety walk

◆ Installation of CC camera around the Bidur area has reduced the rate of crime and violence.

◆ Streetlights on the wider roads are reducing the violence. The streetlights should also be installed in the small and narrow roads prone to violence.

◆ The travel from Loktantrik Chowk to Baghar Dhunge seems safer than the other areas.

◆ It is required to manage the growing number of hotels and lodges in the vicinity to reduce the violence rate in future.

Safety Journey

- ◆ Misuse of women reservation seats of the vehicles,
- ◆ Lights on the vehicle made women and girls feel safer.
- ◆ Limited number transportation services with overcrowded vehicles has caused difficulty for travelling to various destinations.

Safety Map

The red dots on the map indicate the unsecured public spaces in Bidur, Nuwakot, which include resting place like Chautara, public parks and jungles, surroundings of a prison, around the residential areas and public water taps.

Figure 5: Safety Map of Bidhur Municipality, Nuwakot District

Recommendations

Women Safety audit needs to be conducted on a regular basis for gender sensitization. The Government needs to plan for a safe community program. Trainings on the self-defence strategies should be conducted for women and girls. The bus drivers and conductors should also be given gender sensitization training. Initiatives should be taken to promote women and girls' education for making them self-reliable and confident. The schools and colleges need to be gender friendly places.

CASE STUDY

A dead body of a girl aged 21 was found at the bank of trishuli river. The death of a girl was followed after a boy whom she was in love with posted vulgar photos in facebook and blackmailed her after he found that the girl was going to marry another boy.

Geeta from Bidur, We get teased by a group of boys on our way to school in the morning; sometimes they block the way and pass vulgar comments to us.
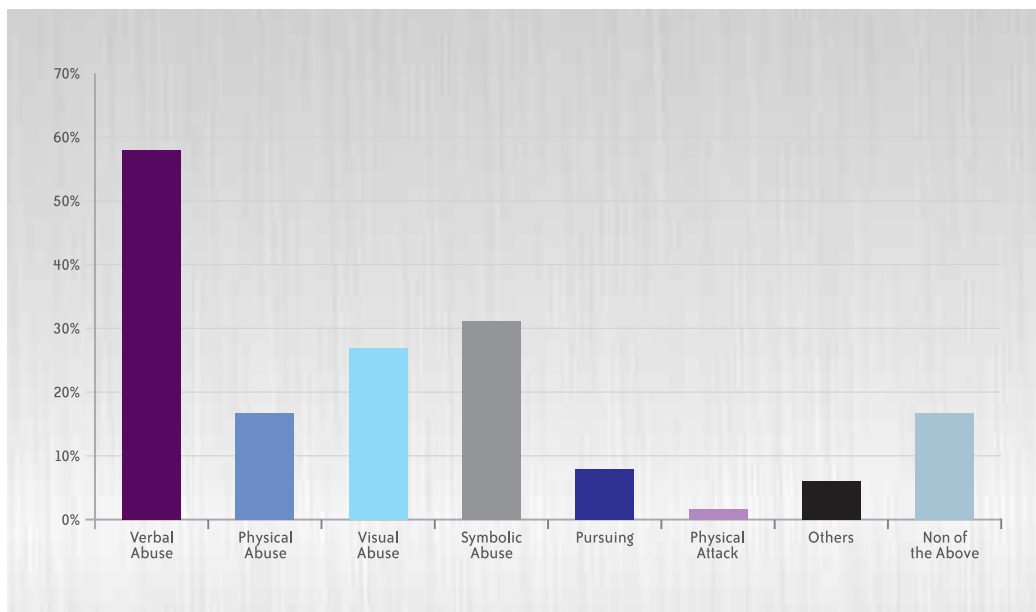
According to Shopkeeper, a girl was raped 2-3 months back. The culprit is still unknown. The police has arrested group of boys as suspect of the case

Mira, aged 13 complained her parents and teacher about her boy classmate harrassing her and other girl classmate. After that the boy stopped harrasing them.

Age group of respondents

- 🟡 15-19 years
- 🔵 20-24 years
- 🔵 25-29 years
- 🟣 30-39 years
- ⚪ 40-49 years
- 🟣 50+ years
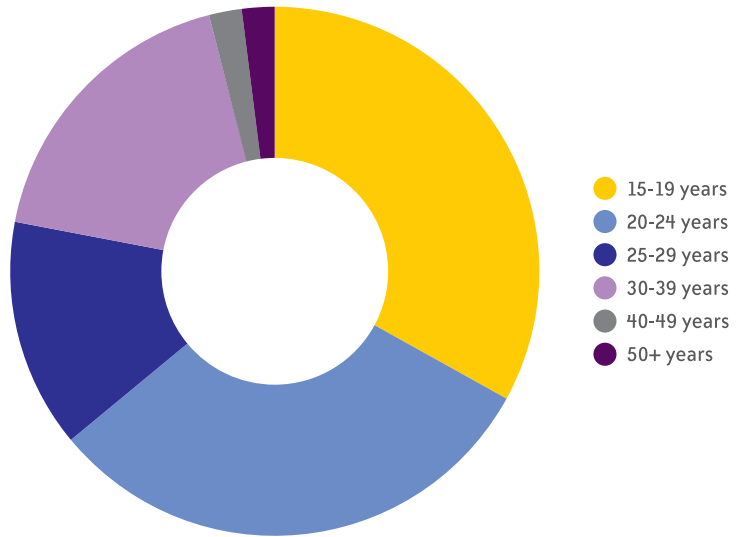
The kinds of abuses and violence the respondents are facing

Travelling in the city

The common experience among all women in the city is related to the public transport that causes them fraught with discomfort and danger. The bus is the most commonly used public transport in the city. 71.4% of the survey respondents in four districts felt unsafe while travelling on a bus. The risk is associated with the threat of harassment or rape in the isolated areas. Public transports, particularly the buses are considered the most vulnerable places of sexual harassment for women. All the bus staff, i.e. the driver and the conductor were male. There were instances that women were followed or attacked while travelling on a bus.

Infrastructure

In many areas, the pedestrians cannot use the pavements because there are potholes. Besides, men often use the pavements as their urinal making these sidewalks extremely uncomfortable for women. The lack of safe and clean public toilets poses a serious safety and public health hazard. In addition, the toilet entrance is common to men and women, causing difficulty for women. The very poor state of public toilets leaves women in the vulnerability of sexual assault. Moreover, 82.1% of the respondents expressed that the lack of streetlights poses insecurity. 64.3% respondents demanded to set up a police station for maintaining safety and security of women and girls in the locality.
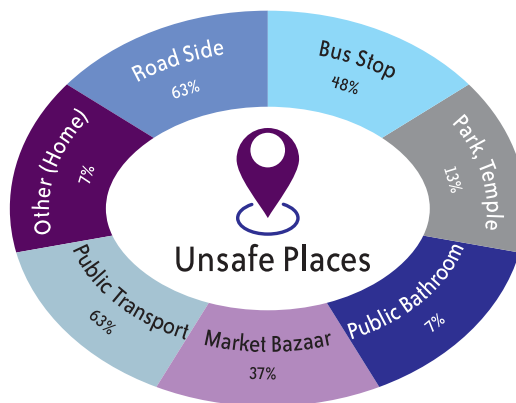
Social attitude

Many women believe the problem is largely inherent in the society, which should be addressed at the community level. They would like to challenge the impression that women are responsible for sexual harassment or assault. The myths that women are safer at home and with their relatives requires to be
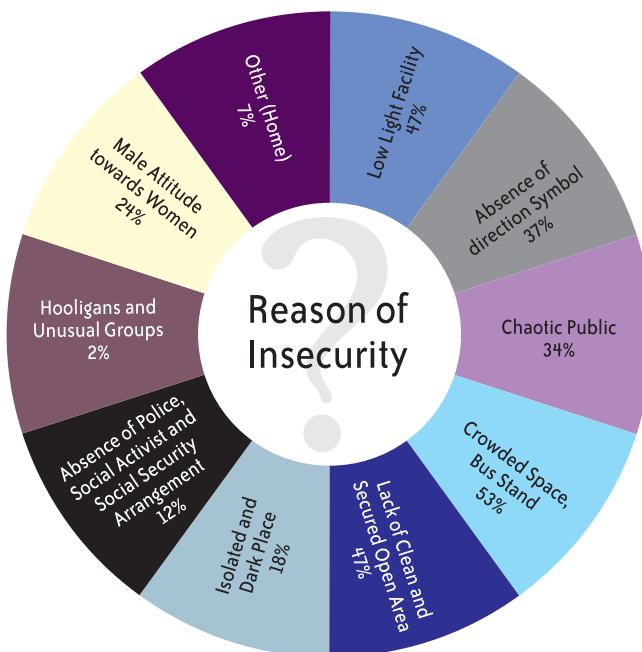
deconstructed. Women and girls are equally exposed to vulnerability in the public places, bus stops, markets or the work places. The survey reveals that 74.05% of respondents mentioned that the victims of sexual violence would not register their complaints with a belief that it disgraces their honour and family. The public silences to the acts of harassment as of the present scenario, the perpetrators move around freely, smug in the knowledge that they could get away.
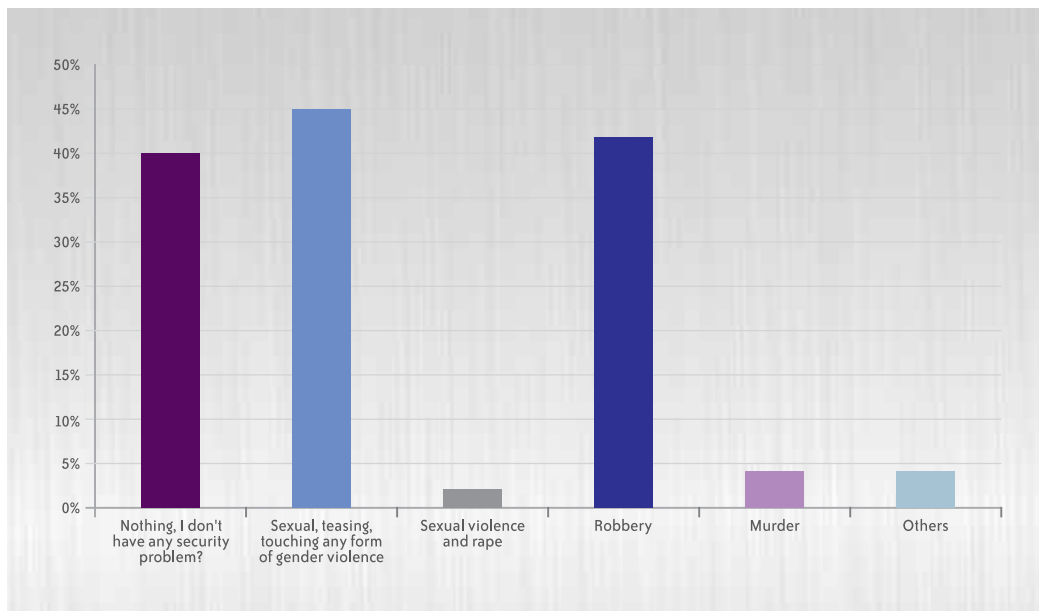
Unsafe Places

Women felt unsafe in quiet and very busy and noisy places. The lonely and busy areas were considered more unsecured causing fear of being harassed easily. Based on multiple-choice questionnaires, many respondents felt unsafe while waiting for the bus at the bus stop and commuting on a bus.

Road Side 63%
Bus Stop 48%
Park, Temple 13%
Other (Home) 7%
Unsafe Places
Public Transport 63%
Market Bazaar 37%
Public Bathroom 7%

Following are the reasons behind women's insecurity in the above mentioned places:

Other (Home) 7%
Low Light Facility 47%
Male Attitude towards Women 24%
Absence of direction Symbol 37%
Hooligans and Unusual Groups 2%
Reason of Insecurity
Chaotic Public 34%
Absence of Police, Social Activist and Social Security Arrangement 12%
Crowded Space, Bus Stand 53%
Isolated and Dark Place 18%
Lack of Clean and Secured Open Area 47%

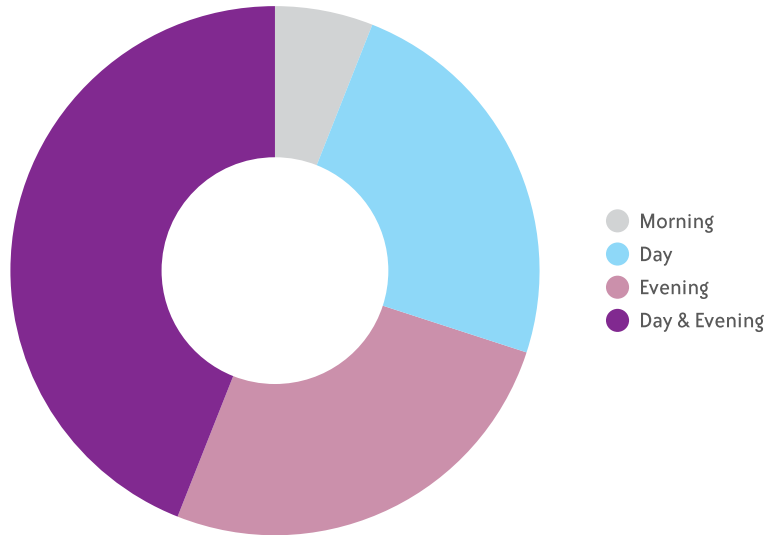Threat faced by the respondents in the place they stay

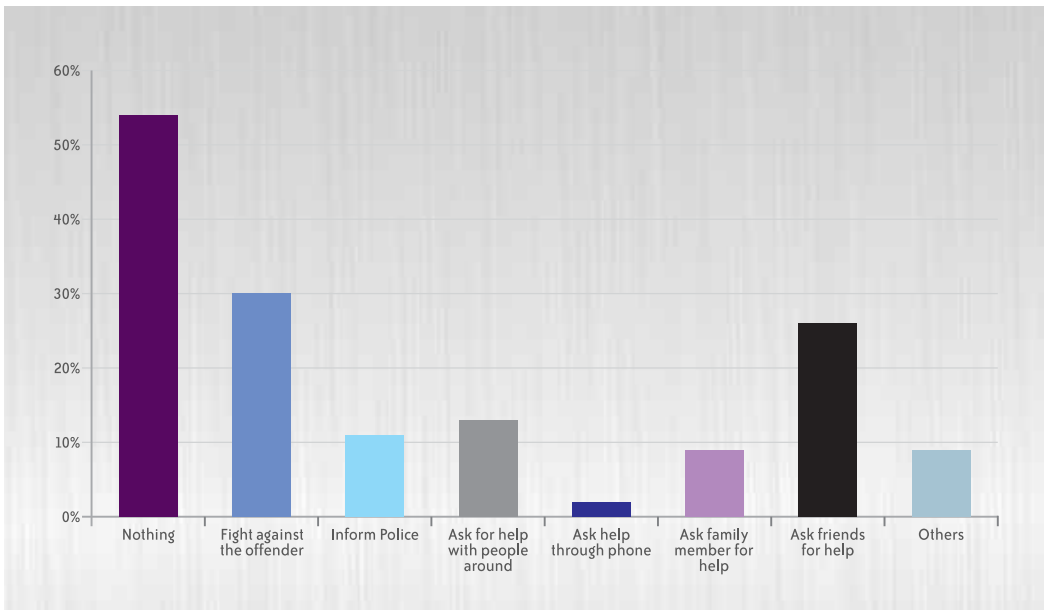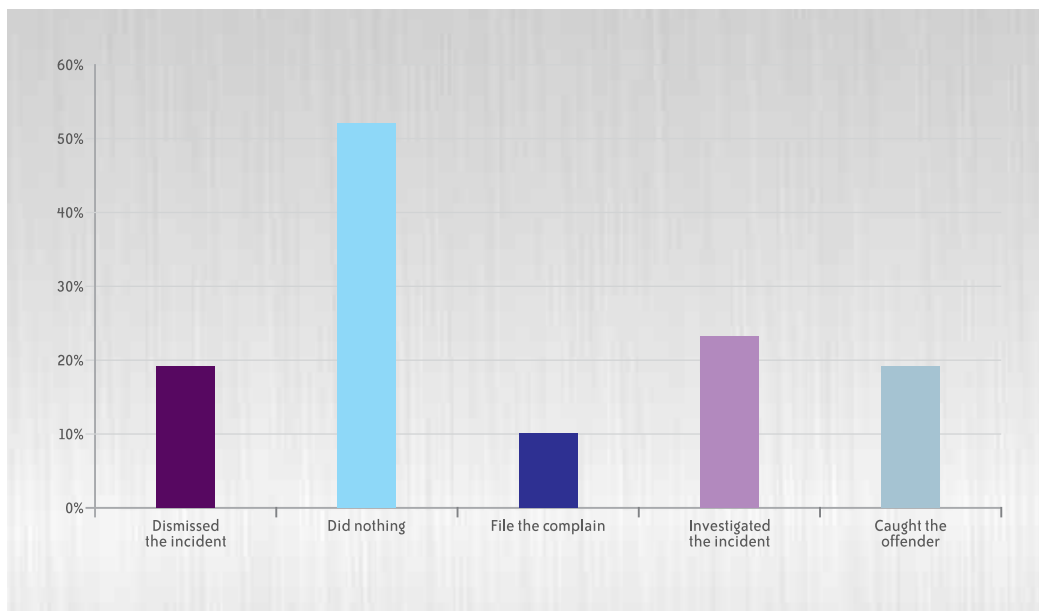Things that affect women's personal security
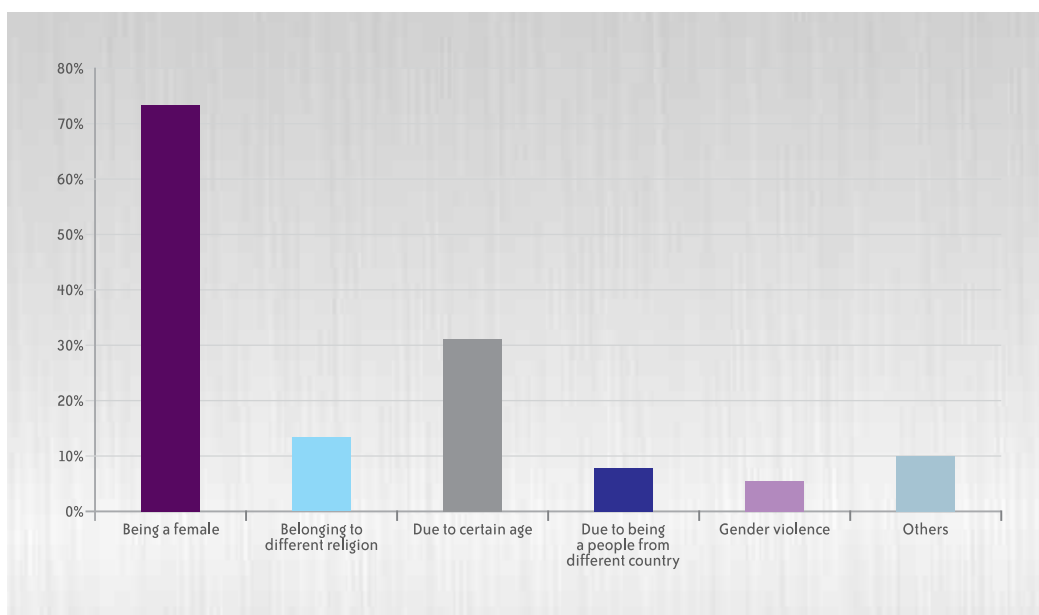
Unsafe Timing

The findings show that women and girls face sexual harassment at any time of the day. 26% of women and girls face sexual harassment at any time of the day.
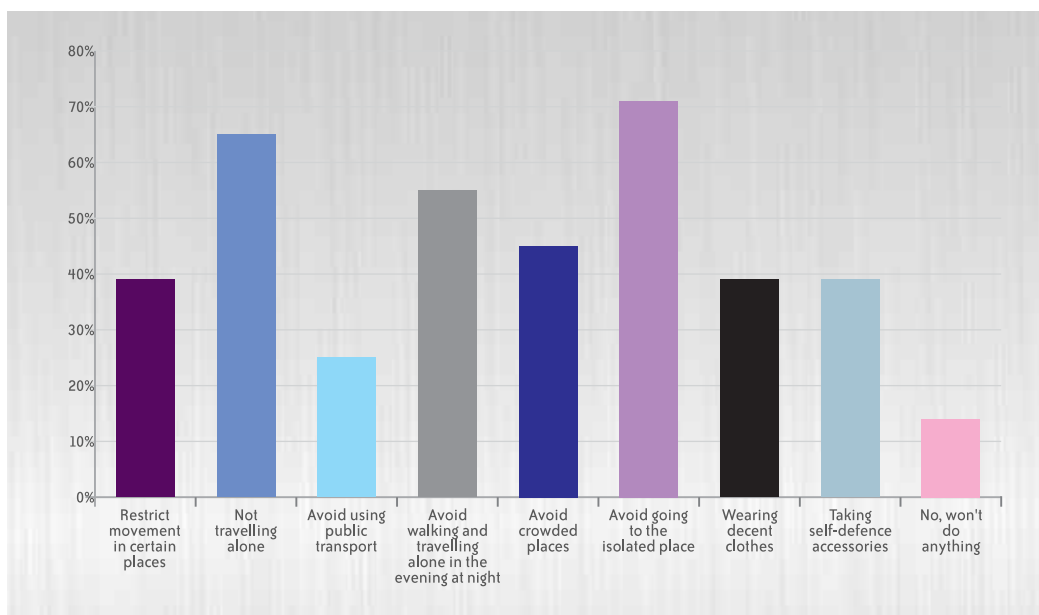

- Morning
- Day
- Evening
- Day & Evening

Steps taken by the victim against sexual violence

Police's response to the complaint about the violence

Measures taken to avoid sexual abuse and violence

(This is just a glimpse of the extracted data. There are additional data to support the arguments.)

Most types of violence inflicted on women are not clearly identified, because neither women report the incidents nor the society advocates in favour of women and girls. Even the government does not respond appropriately. The broken or non-existent streetlights, unhygienic toilets and overcrowded buses cause safety and health menaces of women.

The safe city environment asserts the rights of women and girls in public places, including streets, markets, parks, playgrounds, bus stops, etc. The movement in safe cities for women emphasizes that women have right to work and play outside their homes, during the day and night, individually or in groups so that the city has to offer them an atmosphere to enjoy their rights.

The WSA has provided insightful findings that reflect the real conditions of women, girls, boys, and men, including their perceptions and attitudes towards girls and women and VAW/G. The findings establish how the cultural dimensions affect the attitudes towards women and girls. This has the effect of denying women's fundamental rights to live in a safe environment that is free from violence.

Harassment against women in public places usually has a sexual undertone. Unhealthy images of women and girls are exploited with easy access to mobile phones. The public spaces, such as the markets, public transports, hospitals, temples, restaurants, parks and even government offices become unsafe and harmful for them as they are frequently subjected to a life of physical assaults and mental suffering. Therefore, the attitude and behaviour of men and the culture of impunity must be changed.

Several recommendations emerge from this report. Awareness raising is one of the key recommendations for making all levels of governments accountable. Such work should be coupled with changing social norms that perpetuate dress codes or that suggest that violence against women in public spaces is acceptable.

Recommendations

Enactment of gender friendly laws and policies:

- ◆ Separate legislations related to safe public spaces for women and girls to be in place and implemented effectively.
- ◆ A strategic plan and programme to address the issues of safe public spaces for ending VAW in public spaces to be developed.
- ◆ Enforce existing laws (Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act) to ensure safety of women and girls in public spaces. Establish effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms for the laws, policies and strategies.
- ◆ A target orientation and sensitization programme to develop a common understanding about women, girls, men and boys and other related actor and stakeholder on the existing laws and policies.

Improving knowledge and information sharing mechanisms on women's safety issues:

- ◆ Promote gender friendly environment in schools and colleges for women and girls. Education for women and girls should be promoted with a view to make them self-reliant and confident.
- ◆ Training and discussion sessions on sensitive issues should be conducted for security personnel, men/boys, women/girls, civil servants, teachers, parents and transport associations. The program should focus on the general awareness of:
  - ◆ VAW and women's safety
  - ◆ Right to safety in public spaces
  - ◆ Knowledge of the legal provisions
  - ◆ Attitude and behaviour of individuals.
- ◆ The office bearers of the municipality and local government institution must be aware of and sensitively responsive to the status of women and girls in their working periphery.
- ◆ Government should mainstream the safe public space plan in their regular programme, and strengthen the mechanism for proper implementation of existing laws and policies.

Improving police patrolling and security vigilance for women's safety:

- ◆ Number of police patrols should be increased in both busy and lonesome areas to stop violence and crime in public spaces.
- ◆ Public services, such as hotline services, women police cell for the survivors of violence against women and girls should be in place.
- ◆ Strengthen capacity of the service providers, including police officers to understand and respond properly to the cases of violence against women and girls in public spaces and take actions against the perpetrators of sexual harassment without blaming, and intimidating women and girls as victims.

Improving attitudes and behaviour related to rights to safety and security of women and girls in public spaces:

◆ Men and boys, girls and other stakeholders to be mobilized for promoting transformative social norms, attitudes and behaviour and enhance their capacity to prevent sexual violence in public spaces.

◆ Focus on sensitizing public transport employees, such as driver, conductor and related institutions to make them aware and responsible for the security of women and girls during commuting. As per the findings of the survey, public transports and their stations are the most unsafe places for women and girls.

◆ Self-defence classes to be conducted for women and girls for promoting their safety.

◆ Wall paintings, posters/pamphlets, announcements in public spaces to reduce violence in the vulnerable areas.

◆ Strengthen the capacity and engagement of women and community group organizations, such as Mahila Adhikar Manch (MAM) to fight against VAW in public spaces.

◆ Promoting transformative popular education programmes, such as street dramas, songs, animated comic books, advertisements, mobile applications, etc.

Strengthening gender sensitive support mechanisms of the public services:

◆ As per the findings of the survey, only 11% of the victims seek help from the police for legal support because victims do not feel secured and confident in the formal structure of legal and security system. They even do not feel safe and secure to seek help/ support from family and community. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop following gender sensitive support mechanisms at all levels:

   ◆ Special police beats in public road to register complaint about violence in public vehicles,

   ◆ Special cell on sexual harassments in public space in the cities,

   ◆ Strengthening women cells in all police offices,

   ◆ Informal support networks (available to support women to walk during the evening on lonely street).

◆ Strengthen focused program interventions as per the needs of the specific target groups, time and locations based on the evidences generated by the study. The study suggests following groups to target:

   ◆ Age group: Female and Male (15-25)

   ◆ Students or job holders who need to frequently travel using public vehicle,

   ◆ Informal sector women.

   ◆ Location: public vehicle, streets, and social networks.

◆ Conduct dialogue among government, public service providers, communities and their agencies to identify existing unsafe public spaces/cities and generate appropriate responses.

◆ Organize campaign and intensify communications to stop gender based violence and harassment on the public spaces.

- Hold regular meetings between the police and community groups to encourage participation of women and girls. This method can help reduce mistrust between the two. The increased confidence can help women to report their situation with police and prevent future incidents.

- Promote psycho-social counselling mechanisms for the survivors of violence against women and girls. Parents and family members should be aware of and be educated about the needs of their children. Frequent communication and counselling support helps to share and open up the problems they are facing.

Improving women friendly infrastructure for safer public space:

- Develop women and girls friendly infrastructure and services targeting roads, public vehicles, and social networking. For example, advocacy could target having bigger bus, which only take passengers based on its seating capacity. Some suggested advocacy objectives could be:

    - Large bus or public vehicle that strictly follows a passenger per seat rule,

    - Adequate number of public vehicles,

    - Wider foot path and streetlights,

    - Develop a building code for market, college and school and other public spaces, ensuring gender friendly public spaces,

    - Women friendly toilets in public spaces,

    - Designated parking and waiting spaces with seats for women and girls.

- One of the priorities of the State should be promoting better infrastructure and management of security system at all levels of public places. Narrow, dark and lonesome streets have been reported as one of the most unsafe and vulnerable spaces for women and girls. Therefore, improved infrastructure, safety measures and installation and maintenance of public lighting in all streets, parks, communities, public transport stops as well as in other relevant public institutions, such as schools and universities can be an immediate response. Some long term solutions include:

    - Incorporate contents related to gender based violence and sexual harassments and their preventive measures in the school curriculum, and in the induction courses of police, military, government and private offices.

    - Collaborate with schools and colleges to make boys as well as girls adequately aware and informed about it.

    - Targeted awareness and advocacy that relate to the socialization process (starting with the family),

    - Advocacy to encourage people (observer or individuals other than the victim) to raise a voice and support victim in case of violence.

    - Publish and disseminate widely the IEC materials related to safe public spaces for women and girls.

Regular gender and safety responsive monitoring of public spaces:

◆ Establish gender responsive public services to ensure women safety and security in public spaces. Safe space needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis to track, identify gaps and ensure quality activities and referrals and safety of the spaces.

◆ Establish and strengthen the referral mechanism to report the cases of violence against women and girls to ensure prompt justice.

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NEPAL

GPO Box 6257, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977 1 4002177
Email: mail.nepal@actionaid.org

www.actionaid.org/nepal