

Working Together to Keep Girls and Women Safe in Public Spaces: Report Launch Proceedings



ILS Law College, Pune
Friday, June 28, 2019

Co-hosted by

3D Program for Girls and Women and the
Women's Studies Center, ILS College, Pune



Women's Studies Center
ILS Law College



I. Introduction

On Friday, June 28, 2019, the 3D Program for Girls and Women and the Women's Studies Center of ILS Law College co-hosted the report launch of the 3D Program publication [*Working Together for Girls' and Women's Safety in Public Spaces: Lessons from India*](#). The event was attended by 36 participants from Pune and Mumbai, representing government, civil society and the private sector (see Appendix 1 for participant list). The agenda was designed to reflect the 3D Program's convergent framework to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) in public spaces presented in the report, and to encourage inputs and discussion by experts, partners and participants (see Appendix 2 for agenda). This document includes a summary of the meeting sessions and discussions.



Geeta Rao Gupta, Executive Director, 3D Program for Girls and Women

II. Welcome and Keynote Remarks

The meeting was opened by Smt. Vaijayanti Joshi, Principal, ILS Law College, Pune, who graciously welcomed participants and the 3D Program team, saying that there was no better place to hold a meeting on this important topic. She described the ILS Law College's legal literacy programs and invited participants to collaborate with the Law College to improve legal services for girls and women. Geeta Rao Gupta, Executive Director, 3D Program for Girls and Women thanked Smt. Joshi and Jaya Sagade, Director, Women's Studies Center, ILS Law College and 3D Program Advisory Committee member for co-hosting the meeting and supporting the work of the 3D Program. Smt. Joshi officially launched the report and Geeta presented her with five copies for the ILS Law College library.



Geeta Rao Gupta and Vaijayanti Joshi, Principal, ILS Law College, Pune

III. A Framework for Girls' and Women's Safety in Public Spaces

Sia Nowrojee, 3D Program Director presented an overview of the problem, the methodology of the review, the 3D framework to address VAWG in public spaces, and key findings, gaps and recommendations, on behalf of herself and Kalkidan Shebi, 3D Program Senior Associate.



Sia Nowrojee, Program Director, 3D Program for Girls and Women

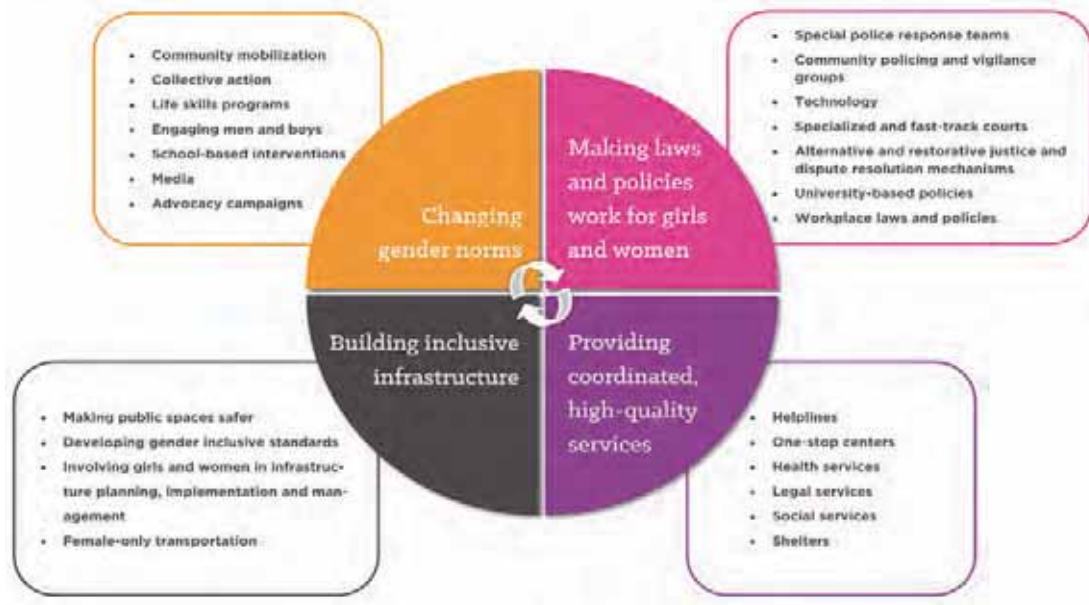
The problem:

- The headlines are horrific: For example, a physiotherapy intern, aged 23, was beaten, gang raped and tortured in a private bus by six men also on the bus, including the driver. An 8-year old Muslim girl was kidnapped, drugged, gang raped and murdered by eight Hindu men in a village temple. 34 girls aged 7 to 17, many of whom have speech impediments, were drugged, beaten and raped, at an NGO-run shelter home that received government funds.
- Nonetheless, so many stories do not make the headlines: The countless girls who are harassed and attacked on their way to school; the university students who do not report the harassment they face because they are afraid their families will pull them out of school; the working women who face harassment on the way to work and in the workplace, whether it is a marketplace, a corporate office or someone else's home.
- This report was written for them – the girls and women who did not survive the violence and those who do, who get up the next day and bravely step out into the world.

The methodology behind the report included:

- A review of the literature and evidence on violence against women and girls, with a focus on public safety (over 425 documents)
- Consultations with 25 experts, advocates and implementers in Pune, India and globally
- Ongoing learning, including attending consultations on various aspects of VAWG, such as what works to address violence against women and girls, innovative responses to prevent violence, safe urban spaces, violence against women in politics, and mapping risk and accountability

The 3D convergent framework to address VAWG in public spaces includes action within and across four domains:



Key findings and gaps revealed in the review process:

- There are many responses, innovations and investments across sectors, led by government, civil society and the corporate sector.
- However, there is insufficient linking of programs, interventions and approaches;
- Accountability in and across public spaces is unclear;
- Significant data gaps persist; and
- There is a lack of interventions in rural areas, where girls and women face particular challenges

Key recommendations include:

- Involving girls and women more in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs;
- Undertaking rigorous mapping for accountability to identify who is accountable for girls' and women's safety in and across different public spaces;
- Filling the data gaps;
- Linking and coordinating services; and
- Building the capacity of service providers across sectors

Conclusion: Until government officials, service providers and citizens come together across sectors to ensure that these steps are taken across these four domains, we will all remain bystanders to VAWG and girls and women will continue to face unimaginable risks, their access to economic and social opportunities will be limited and their full participation in society will be undermined.

IV. Moderated Discussion

During the next session, experts presented the key conclusions from the report in each of the four domains, provided key insights and moderated a discussion by participants.

A. **Changing Gender Norms**, moderated by Ravi Verma, Regional Director, ICRW Asia

Ravi began the session by reminding participants that gender norms are complex and are not just about attitudes and behaviors but are about structural inequalities and systems. They are not fixed, but are shaped by the social, political and economic structures within each context. It is important that programs that aim to improve women's status do not marginalize women and reinforce gender norms. For example, having a victim/survivor model can deny girls and women their agency. While it is important to address masculinities, as the report does, much of the work so far has been instrumental rather than transformative. Ravi highlighted the importance of hearing and including girls' and women's voices to truly understand their perspectives on violence. He also stressed the need for nuanced discussions and deeper research and the need to refine both qualitative and quantitative measurements of gender norms.



Ravi Verma, Regional Director, ICRW Asia

Participants raised the following points:

- The media can play an important role in changing gender norms.
- It is important to capture the voices of women.
- Agency is not innate. Women need to be empowered to question gender norms.
- There is a need to start changing gender norms in schools. It is the new generation that will change the norms. Gender equality curricula should be a part of school curricula, the same way environmental education and other subjects are. Textbooks should be analysed for messages (or missed messages) on gender norms.
- Schools can be challenging to work in as they can be patriarchal and hierarchical institutions. It is also important to work with communities and families.

Key Conclusions from the Report on Changing Gender Norms

- Gender norms normalize VAWG and validate traditional constructions of masculinity that perpetuate male aggression.
- Engaging men and boys to change norms related to masculinities that underpin VAWG is an integral part of preventing VAWG in both private and public spaces.
- Community mobilization efforts and advocacy campaigns that engage multiple stakeholders from government, the private sector, university and civil society as well as individual allies in challenging attitudes and beliefs rooted in gender norms have had positive impact in addressing VAWG.
- Girls and women who are on the front lines of challenging gender norms need support, resources, and opportunities to come together through collective action and safe spaces to build skills, foster agency and resilience against the backlash.
- Without norm change, critical investments in legal policy, service and infrastructure interventions will be undermined.

B. **Making Laws and Policies Work for Girls and Women**, moderated by Jaya Sagade, Director, Women's Studies Center, ILS Law College

Jaya highlighted that the law is a central and essential component in promoting gender equality and preventing violence. Acceptance of prevalent gender norms by both perpetrators and survivors of VAWG is a major hurdle in securing justice. Involving women is important, as is holding bystanders accountable. It is important to understand that applications of the law are impacted by gender and other stratifiers (intersectionality). There are effective uses of technology to make laws and policies work for girls and women, including online legal education programs and platforms for survivors to provide online testimonies. However, the courts are overwhelmed. Additionally, there is little understanding of gender and little accountability in the making and implementation of the law, including within legal and justice systems. Even women holding positions within these systems require training to improve their perspective and gender analysis. Legal - and all - professional training should include gender and a feminist understanding of issues.



Jaya Sagade, Director, Women's Studies Center, ILS Law College

Participants raised the following points:

- Patriarchy is currently under unprecedented pressure. Girls are increasingly challenging norms, being educated, mixing outside their designated caste, and breaking other taboos. Hence, there is backlash.
- Feminist movements need to speak out on backlash and on sexual harassment.
- There are some contradictions that play out under existing laws. For example, the law still does not prohibit marital rape, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 creates problems for youth aged 16-18 in consensual relationships and can lead to the death penalty.
- We need to think about justice at the individual and the structural levels.
- We should explore the role of female corporators in upholding the law.
- How should we deal with perceptions by men of their relative deprivation or victimization under the law? The IMAGES survey found that these perceptions are rooted in resistance to changing gender norms, not to a real sense of victimization - there is a correlation between those who believe that laws are unfair to men and those who are vocal about and display aggressive masculinities. Conversely, male allies are important.
- Are there lessons to be learned from good Samaritan acts in things like road safety? Could we protect or support bystanders who do take action against VAWG in public spaces, e.g. by keeping their name out of a FIR.
- There are environmental and children's tribunals. Would a national women's tribunal be helpful?
- In holding bystanders accountable, it is important not to feed into the current climate in which mobs are administering what they claim is justice.
- Many corporates have taken the Sexual Harassment of Women (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act) seriously and are even going further to increase representation of women in leadership.
- In addition to challenges, we should showcase successes and good stories.

**Key Conclusions from the Report on Making Laws and Policies
Work for Girls and Women**

- Although there are progressive and comprehensive laws and key institutional responses in place in India, most law and policy interventions are hampered by gender norms and structural weaknesses in law enforcement and judicial systems.
- Evidence suggests that involving girls and women as well as communities in the planning, implementing and monitoring security solutions tend to lead to improved laws and policies and engagement with police and communities.
- Technological innovations provide a valuable option for women and girls, vulnerable communities, advocates, police and officials, to document and respond to incidents of VAWG as well as generate much-needed data on VAWG. However, this only benefit those who have access to technology.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms tend to be successful when there are clear rules and regulations and work well with other stakeholders in the community including women's collectives.
- Workplace laws and policies can serve as catalyst in both the implementation of formal laws and in shaping the normative environment related to VAWG, particularly sexual harassment.
- Legal and policy interventions could benefit from more explicit and accountable linkages to services to ensure continuity in services for survivors.

C. Providing Coordinated, High-Quality Services, moderated by Sangeeta Rege, Coordinator, CEHAT

Sangeeta discussed how the Nirbhaya case and the advocacy that followed it pushed the Government of India (GOI) to create clusters of care and protocols to address VAWG – the first since Independence. Services do exist. However, there are gaps. Services tend to lack a rights-based perspective and survivor-centric approaches. Lack of training means that the beliefs and norms of service providers can get in the way of high-quality services. Protecting the family is a bigger priority than protecting the rights of survivors of violence. Doctors continue to look for certain types of injuries to ‘prove’ rape, rather than screening for VAWG part of their regular clinical protocol. POCSO is jeopardizing access to safe abortion and reproductive health services and contradicts the adolescent health policy which guarantees access to services! Furthermore, there is a disconnect between key departments addressing VAWG. For example, the Ministry of Home Affairs has guidelines to address VAWG that focus on forensics, not health. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare’s medico-legal protocol reflect WHO 2002 guidelines and focus on health and rights. Neither coordinate with each other or the ministries of Women and Child Development, Education, and Law and Justice on approaches and services to address VAWG. Hence, there is both duplication and undoing of good work. The GOI One Stop Centre Scheme also has not followed the evidence of successful approaches such as Dilaasa, which is a redesigned, hospital-based, client-centered response center that was replicated by the National Health Mission. Instead, they set up centers that are not hospital-based which are designed to fail. Implementation has broken down and service providers are unable to act under the law.

How can we play a role in facilitating convergence and show how to effectively coordinate multiple services? We need to influence policy to define and develop minimal standards and to fill gaps in services. We need to find champions within the system to bring about a transformation. We also need to generate and share data. It is not enough to just have stories to challenge the impact of POSCO and other laws. We need local- and state-level advocacy to impact GOI policies. We should also highlight what has been done well and ask girls and women what they want which should inform the content of guidelines (e.g. ‘5 things the GOI should do’).



Sangeeta Rege, Coordinator, CEHAT

Participants raised the following points:

- After 2012, the Nirbhaya Fund resulted in a glut of government services that are reactive and staffed by service providers who are not adequately trained and do not challenge gender norms.
- Technology, such as apps or hotlines, have a role, but women need both agency and trained personnel to ensure they get what they need from services.
- Accountability can impact both the quality of the service experience and the outcome. Quality of service needs to be rooted in women's experiences and feedback. The WHO framework has 9 indicators of quality.
- The quality of service discourse has distorted service provision, with a focus on the technical and interpersonal aspects of service provision, as opposed to examining systemic issues and rights.

Key Conclusions from the Report on Providing Coordinated, High-Quality Services

- Girls and women who survive violence require a range of health, social and legal services and high-quality services.
- Trained service providers are a key component of quality of care, with clear benefits for survivors of VAWG. This includes addressing the beliefs and norms of service providers.
- It is important to build capacity and convergence among key stakeholders, including government service providers and NGOs, to effectively respond to VAWG and to fill gaps and leverage resources for infrastructure, technology and training to strengthen response mechanisms for survivors of VAWG.
- To strengthen accountability, there is also a need to monitor, evaluate and report on the progress of protocols designed to improve both the range and quality of services.
- NGOs can play an important role in holding government accountable and advocating for the rights of women and girls in accessing justice.

D. Building Inclusive Infrastructure, moderated by Sanskriti Menon, Senior Program Director, Centre for Environment Education

Sanskriti affirmed that public space design can provide a good locus for public safety issues. However, public participation in the design of public spaces is critical and there are few platforms for voice in public planning. There are some opportunities for public inputs, e.g. annual budget and planning processes which include a 'window for comments' and the Smart City mission offers some opportunities for citizen inputs. There are even 'inclusive designers'. However, more typically, there are constraints on tenders and planning, fear of participatory processes by officials, and power imbalances inherent in official planning process. Pune's master plan is designed every 20 years! For public spaces to be inclusive and safe, we need to expand participation and engage constituents. The structures we build must include structures for participation and we need to embed values of participation in the very design of those structures. Finally, Sanskriti noted that SDG targets 11.2 and 16.7 focus on participation.



Sanskriti Menon, Senior Program Director, Centre for Environment Education

Participants raised the following points:

- Informal workers use public spaces as work spaces and need these to be safe. Normatively, both women and informal workers are not considered to be workers requiring protection.
- Who defines public space is important.
- Participatory budget processes are not truly participatory. They are defined by elected officials.
- We need to start with basic planning and a key first step is identifying the key stakeholders.
- The 'safety for women' discourse focuses on the safety of particular (not all) women and can be used to restrict girls' and women's mobility. We need to move beyond the current discourse and make public spaces not just safe, but inclusive and accessible.
- In creating public spaces, we are negotiating competing claims to spaces.
- How can we engage women who are in positions of leadership to shape inclusive infrastructure?

Key Conclusions from the Report on Building Inclusive Infrastructure

- Public spaces must be accessible, safe, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all citizens, including girls and women.
- Public spaces and infrastructure are designed primary with men in mind, excluding women from decision-making related to planning, building and accessing public infrastructure.
- Surveys, mapping exercises, and safety apps and audits indicate that hotspots for violence are often concentrated in the public spaces that girls and women need to occupy for their social and economic empowerment.
- Gender analysis and including girls and women in the planning and management of public facilities are essential to making infrastructure safe and inclusive in the long run.
- Devising a holistic and inclusive approach to developing, maintaining and managing public spaces will require engagement of all authorities including district, municipal and local government bodies, public-private partnerships such as Smart City, private companies and communities themselves.

V. Small Group Session on Increasing Stakeholder Accountability for Girls' and Women's Safety in Public Spaces

In this session, participants were divided into two groups – those working in rural areas and those working in urban areas. Expert facilitators shared the key conclusions on accountability from the report and moderated a discussion and brainstorming session on increasing stakeholder accountability for girls' and women's safety in public spaces. Each group briefly reported back.

A. Rural Group, moderated by Manisha Gupte, Founder and Co-Convener, MASUM



Rural group discussion

General points on accountability:

- Accountability must be applied to those who commit VAWG and those who enable it.
- We need continuity of accountability between Taluka/block level, the District/Zilla Parishad level and the State level.
- Girls must be empowered to speak for themselves and to seek aid.
- Awareness programs are important.

Who is accountable for the safety of women and girls in rural spaces? What platforms already exist that can be leveraged to hold stakeholders accountable for girls' and women's safety in public spaces?

- School Management Committees
- *Mahila Dakshata Samiti* – should be more inclusive
- *Janta Mukti Gram Samiti* – need to sensitize it more through training on laws and gender. The structure itself is inclusive but it does not function inclusively because of the patriarchal role of the *Gram Panchayat*. It should be linked to the police station.
- There are no structures in rural towns. Recommend creating a committee with representation from the *Gram Sabha*, education and health sectors, as well as other stakeholders.
- *Anganwadi sevika* and ASHA workers
- SHGs can play a critical role because they are located in different parts of villages

- Legal *jaankars*
- Village development planning process
- Bus conductors/drivers as particular group to be sensitized on how to go beyond preventing harm to make sure that women and girls do not feel scared

What steps do we need to take for stakeholders to take accountability regardless of where harm occurs and so that harm is not repeated?

- 1-2-day training program with stakeholders on first response to harm so they are equipped to respond effectively should harm occur: modules on role of each entity in responding to violence
- Empowerment of women is crucial to ensure reporting of harm
- Publicize helpline numbers in public spaces, particularly around public transportation
- Institutionalize structures, systems and project implementation plans that take into account the needs of women and hold stakeholders accountable.

B. Urban Group, moderated by Avinash Madhale, Program Officer, Centre for Environment Education



Urban group discussion

Who is accountable for the safety of women and girls in urban spaces?

- Start at local level -- can schools be the locus of where this assessment of safety of neighborhoods occurs?
 - *Basti sabhas*
 - Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs)
- Ward-level ranking of how safe your neighborhood feels to make elected officials accountable
- Workplace safety: accountability belongs to owner/management
- Transportation of employees - responsibility of management and transportation provider; primary responsibility is with the state (regional transport authority)
- Closure Report (CR) which you fill in for government officials: Key result areas (KRAs) linked with women's safety should include measures for women's safety and should be made public information to incentivize government officials to work towards achieving those targets

- Work with women and girls to access Local Complaints Committee, Police systems, etc.
- Third party required to do safety audits
 - Review by citizens' group or safety committees on what kinds of measures you took

Which platforms and responses could be used to increase accountability to stop VAWG in public spaces?

At the neighbourhood level:

- Housing societies, RWAs to conduct safety audits
- Set forums to engage key stakeholders at slums and near market places
- Engage street vendors in the locality
- Initiate creation of Citizen forum for safe public spaces
- Create special cells at Schools and institute of higher learning at Law colleges
- Put together learning from Mohalla Committee in Delhi, Pune and other cities

While travelling:

- Presence of police force in late night buses
- Registration of women working in night shifts in nearby police stations to ease tracking while travelling (although there were different views in the group, as some participants felt that women are tracked right from pregnancy)

At the ward level:

- Common forum – Municipal corporation, private corporations, making decision-making processes survivor-centric
- Setting safety and accountability standards for public spaces
- Monitoring safety and allocating accountability across different departments of municipal corporations
- Corporators – convergence platform of women's movement and governance
- Ward offices for corporators, *mohallas* for civil society and police
- Useful formats for incidence reporting that would help develop solutions
- Awareness drives about areas of concern

At the city level:

- District Collector/District Magistrate reporting, state expenditure on what woman want
- Grievance redressal mechanisms like Police Complaints Authority (PCA)/*Lok Shikayat*/District Legal Service Authority (DLSA)
- City Social audits and accountability report as annual feature before Municipal Budget session
- Contractor/Employer accountable for women safety in informal sector
- Cyber security provision action plan with cyber cell of Police in consultation with the subject experts.

Key Conclusions from the Report on Increasing Stakeholder Accountability

- Lines of accountability in public spaces are fluid and remain unclear.
- Policy makers, government services, civil society groups and private sector should all work together to develop implementation guidelines and accountability mechanisms to translate progressive laws, policies and protocols into effective programs.
- Accountability mechanisms to prevent and respond to VAWG in public spaces should be informed by data that reflects the realities of girls and women.
- Sustainable change comes when efforts are advocated by civil society, mandated by government, and supported by the innovations, data and resources of the private sector and academia.
- To effectively prevent and respond to VAWG within the dynamic landscape of public spaces, there is a need for coordinated response that leverage the strengths and resources of these multiple stakeholders.

VI. Wrap Up and Thanks

Geeta Rao Gupta, Executive Director, 3D Program for Girls and Women closed the meeting with a vote of thanks.

Appendix 1

Participant List



3D Program

FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

Working Together for Girls' and Women's Safety in Public Spaces
28th June 2019

Participant list

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Appendix 2

Agenda



3D Program for Girls and Women and Women's Studies Center, ILS Law College, Pune
Working Together to Keep Girls and Women Safe in Public Spaces
ILS Law College, Pune, Friday, 28th June, 2019
10:00 am – 1:15 pm



Women's Studies Center
ILS Law College

Agenda

- 9:30 am** **Registration and Tea**
- 10:30 am** **Welcome and Keynote Remarks**
- Vaijayanti Joshi, Principal, ILS Law College, Pune
 - Geeta Rao Gupta, Executive Director, 3D Program for Girls and Women
- 10:45 am** **A Framework for Girls' and Women's Safety in Public Spaces (Report Launch)**
Sia Nowrojee, Program Director and Kalkidan Shebi, Senior Associate
3D Program for Girls and Women
- Moderated Discussions:***
- 11:00 am** **Changing Gender Norms**
Ravi Verma, Regional Director, ICRW Asia
- 11:30 am** **Making Laws and Policies Work for Girls and Women**
Jaya Sagade, Director, Women's Studies Center, ILS Law College
- 12:00 pm** **Providing Coordinated and High-Quality Services**
Sangeeta Rege, Coordinator, CEHAT
- 12:30 pm** **Building Inclusive Infrastructure**
Sanskriti Menon, Senior Program Director, Centre for Environment Education
- 1:00 pm** **Working Session and Report-Back:**
Increasing Stakeholder Accountability for Girls' and Women's Safety in Public Spaces
Rural Group Facilitator: Manisha Gupte, Founder and Co-Convener, MASUM
Urban Group Facilitator: Avinash Madhale, Program Officer, Centre for Environment Education
- 1:30 pm** **Wrap Up and Thanks**
Geeta Rao Gupta, Executive Director, 3D Program for Girls and Women
- 1:45 pm** **Lunch**