

Safe Travels: Increasing Girls' and Women's Safety on Public Transport



3D Program
FOR GIRLS & WOMEN

Case Studies in Convergence Series, No. 3

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Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM) works with rural women in perennially drought-prone areas of Pune and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra state, and activities include women's right to health, confronting gender-based violence, building a progressive perspective among young people and enhancing women's rights in all areas of life.

Website: www.MASUM-India.org.in



Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), Pune Division was established by the Government of Maharashtra to create a network of efficient, cost-effective, fast and efficient road passenger transport services for the citizens of the state.

Website: <https://MSRTC.Maharashtra.gov.in/>



International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Asia's mission is to empower women, advance gender equality and fight poverty in the developing world. ICRW's Asia Regional Office in New Delhi collaborates closely with local, regional and international partners to undertake field research and program work and communicates findings and experience to policymakers through advocacy efforts that are grounded in sound evidence and data.

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The **3D Program for Girls and Women** advances gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment by helping local governments work more efficiently across departments, and with civil society and the private sector, to increase economic opportunities for girls and women and address their health, education and safety needs.

Website: <https://the3DProgram.org/>

This report is part of the 3D Program's *Case Studies in Convergence Series* which documents insights and lessons learned from pilot initiatives implemented by the program and our partners to demonstrate convergent solutions to advance gender equality and generate recommendations for stakeholders in government, civil society and the private sector. Pilot initiatives are being implemented in response to priority issues raised by girls' and women's collective platforms in Pune City and Pune rural District, Maharashtra, India.

Suggested citation:

"Safe Travels: Increasing Girls' and Women's Safety on Public Transport." *Case Studies in Convergence Series*, no. 3, Washington, DC: 3D Program for Girls and Women, 2021.

Foreword and Acknowledgments

This case study documents findings from a training program designed to increase the safety of girls and women in public spaces in India. It focuses on the pilot training program that was delivered to 208 public transportation workers, including bus drivers, conductors and depot staff, in Purandar block in Pune District. The training is designed to be delivered to additional cohorts of transportation staff, and adapted for other sectors, such as the police and the education sector, with the goal of creating a continuum of accountability for public safety as girls and women navigate their way through public spaces to access educational and economic opportunities and participate fully in their communities.

The 3D Program for Girls and Women facilitates the convergence of services and partners to strengthen programs for girls and women. We are proud to have partnered with the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), Mahila Sarvageen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), Pune and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Asia in this endeavor.

Special thanks go to our partners at MASUM, particularly Dr. Manisha Gupte for overall coordination, shaping the sessions and contributing to the report along with Poorvi Kulkarni, to Dr. Ramesh Awasthi for the analysis of pre- and post-training findings, to Kajal Jain for liaising with the MSRTC Saswad Depot and coordinating field level activities, and the team at MASUM for hosting and documenting the training throughout the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes Leela Faske and Shweta Patil, who recorded and collated the video presentations of resource persons and collecting other audio-visual material; Sachin Gondhali, who provided technical expertise and the production of a seamless audio-visual format of sessions; Poorvi Kulkarni, Shweta Patil and Yogesh Dhende who documented the sessions; Sonali Sutar, Jaya Nalage, Sunanda Khedkar and Malan Zagade who coordinated the small group discussions; and Vilas Indalkar, Rekha Giri and Mangal Ulhare who maintained COVID-19 precautions and provided healthy and safe catering. All of them brought decades of experience delivering training to address gender inequality across sectors and an unwavering commitment to gender equality and social justice. Thank you to 3D Program consultant Shailaja Aralkar, whose tenacity and skill helped in securing the necessary permissions from MSRTC, and for her active participation throughout the training program, and many thanks to our partner Sapna Kedia of ICRW Asia, who contributed her valuable expertise and perspectives to the design of the training.

We also deeply appreciate the inputs provided by our external resource persons, including Digambar Birajdar, Counselor, Foundation For Child Protection – Muskaan; Sadhana Khati, President, Local Complaints Committee, Pune District; Sunita Pawar, Program Officer with the Violence Against Women cell in the Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of Maharashtra; and Priya Rupali, Campaign Manager at Parisar. We also thank all the artists whose poems, songs and video clips we used in the training sessions.

Finally, we extend our admiration and gratitude to the MSRTC staff who participated in the training, for their willingness to learn and their commitment to the safety of the girls and women using their services.

Sia Nowrojee

Executive Director, 3D Program for Girls and Women

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the 3D Program for Girls and Women conducted a review on violence against women and girls (VAWG) in public spaces, resulting in a framework made up of four dimensions - changing gender norms, making laws and policies work for girls and women, providing coordinated, high-quality services, and building inclusive infrastructure. A key recommendation from the review was the need to strengthen the capacity of public servants to prevent VAWG, mitigate its impact, and increase accountability within and across public spaces.¹

To address this need, the 3D Program partnered with Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), Pune and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Asia to design a training program to enhance the ability of public servants to address VAWG. Specifically, the training program objectives were to:

- Empower public officials to understand their responsibilities to prevent and respond to VAWG.
- Increase understanding of how gender norms can hamper or facilitate official responses to VAWG.
- Facilitate partnerships to reduce and improve responses to VAWG in public spaces and increase girls' and women's participation in public spaces.

- Provide a resource to support government officials as they and the communities they serve adjust to life after the COVID-19 lockdown.
- Demonstrate the program in two blocks to generate buy-in and recommendations for district-wide implementation, and ultimately integration into official training programs.

After mapping risky public spaces for girls and women, as well as who was accountable for safety in those spaces, three priority sectors were identified for the first round of training – the police, education officials and public transportation staff. However, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the availability of participants from these sectors. The police were busy with managing lockdowns and emergency responses, and colleges and high schools were closed. Public transportation was also curtailed, but Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) staff in Purandar block, Pune District were available and were identified as the first cohort for training.

Public transport is a critical element of public spaces, linking citizens to resources, new experiences, and life changing opportunities. For rural girls and women, public buses are the most vital mode of public transport for routine travel. These buses connect the remotest of villages with

¹ For more information on the 3D Program framework, see Sia Nowrojee and Kalkidan Shebi, Working Together for Girls' and Women's Safety in Public Spaces: Lessons from India. Washington DC: 3D Program for Girls and Women, 2019.

educational institutions, government offices, courts, police, health care, commercial centers, marketplaces and recreational centers. MSRTC officials plan the everyday functioning of public buses and regulate passenger movement and safety. Their capacities, approaches and responses determine the kinds of experiences girls and women encounter while using public bus transport and the redressal mechanism when physical and sexual violence occurs.

Evidence from around the world confirms that safety on public transportation is a significant concern for girls and women, with high rates of sexual harassment and assault reported and little accountability exercised by officials. In surveys conducted across India, a high percentage of girls and women reported experiencing sexual harassment or assault on public transport or while waiting for it, on railway platforms or at bus stops. One Delhi-based study found that women make significant compromises to use safer transport routes, including attending lower quality or more expensive educational institutions or extending travel time. Another study in South India found that girls preferred walking long distances to school in groups rather than taking the bus, and some considered dropping out of school due to sexual harassment on buses.

Based on the growing body of evidence on the risks that girls and women face on public transportation, many municipalities, organizations and transportation services have taken concrete steps. Female-only transportation has been a long-standing

feature of the Indian railways, with women-only cars on rail lines across the country, and on metro lines in major cities, including Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai. Female-only seating areas or entire buses have been introduced in cities around the country, including Pune. Women-owned, women-operated taxi services have also been put in place. Many private sector companies, particularly IT companies and those running call centers, provide transport for their employees, which is seen as a safety benefit for young female employees. Safety applications on smart phones are increasingly used as a way to map safe routes, let friends and family know where women travelers are at any given time, and provide alarms when they face danger. Government and private bicycle distribution programs have enabled girls to get to school without having to contend with the risks at bus stops and on buses.

These are all important responses, providing girls and women welcome relief from pervasive sexual harassment and abuse. However, they do not get at the underlying issues and gender norms that perpetuate VAWG. In fact, they could do more harm by perpetuating an acceptance of girls and women being unsafe in public spaces and public transport services. Additionally, these responses do not address the lack of capacity of public service providers to effectively prevent or mitigate the impact of VAWG, even when they recognize or want to address it, such as knowledge about relevant laws and policies they can rely on, how to intervene to prevent or stop an

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incident, how to work with officials in other sectors, or how to refer girls and women to other services.

To address these issues, MASUM, Pune adapted and tailored the original program for MSRTC staff and to allow for the challenges posed by COVID-19. The MASUM team brought significant expertise in training on issues related to gender inequality, as well as knowledge about the issues that girls and women face in Purandar block. Through a partnership with MSRTC, the day-long training program was delivered over two weeks to 208 MSRTC bus drivers, conductors and depot workers in Purandar block, Pune District.

The training built on other concrete steps the MSRTC has taken to address gender inequalities in Pune District. This includes the 2019 decision to hire over 160 women bus drivers. MSRTC guidelines required a minimum of three years of experience driving heavy motor vehicles and a minimum height requirement of five feet two inches. After making a commitment to increase the number of women drivers, these guidelines were changed to make it easier for women to qualify. Women with one year of experience driving a light motor vehicle were selected for training, and the height requirement was dropped to five feet. These changes made all the difference, creating new economic and professional opportunities for women drivers and potentially improving safety for girls and women passengers. Additionally, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, MSRTC had agreed to review its bus schedules to synchronize them with the school and

college schedules of girls and young women, to enable them to attend more classes and waste less time waiting at bus stops, with an increased risk of sexual harassment.

This case study describes the training curriculum and process for the initial MSRTC cohort, including adjustments and safety guidelines put in place due to COVID-19. It also captures insights and lessons learned from this first cohort, including participants' experiences and perspectives, which will be incorporated into future trainings. Finally, it offers recommendations on building the capacity of transportation officials, public servants and service providers more broadly to improve the public safety of girls and women and create a continuum of accountability within and across public spaces.

PROGRAM MODEL

Training curriculum and methodology

A master training plan was jointly developed by MASUM, ICRW Asia and the 3D Program. It was designed to give participants the chance to understand the relevance and importance of addressing VAWG to improve their services. Additionally, it covered the law and policy framework on VAWG in India; focused on the role that gender norms play in responses to VAWG; provided opportunities to explore difficult situations and identify solutions; and allowed participants to understand their role in preventing VAWG across public spaces. The first five sessions were designed to be conducted separately

with each sector. The last session, which focused on working together across sectors to address VAWG, brought together a cohort of officials from across sectors (police, transport and education, for example) who are empowered and connected to work together more effectively to prevent and respond to VAWG in public spaces. The master plan was then adapted to focus on the particular issues related to public transportation for MSRTC participants (see Appendices 1 and 3 for detailed training and session plans).

The training methodology was as participatory as possible, allowing participants to actively engage with the content and have the opportunity to share their own experiences and learning. Recorded presentations by resource

persons were coupled with live sessions and smaller group discussions of case studies (see Appendix 2 for list of resource persons). Film and song visual clips, poetry reading, pre-recorded conversations and short writing exercises were also used. Additionally, remarks by MSRTC and 3D Program leadership were recorded and played at the opening of each training session.

Participant profile

Over 200 MSRTC staff from Purandar block attended the training in 11 groups of about 20 each. Participants included 189 men and 19 women, including bus drivers, conductors and other Purandar MSRTC Depot staff (see Table 1). They included seasoned MSRTC staff as well as relatively new recruits (see

Table 1. Participant Profile: Jobs at MSRTC²

	Conductors	Drivers	Other traffic staff³	Workshop staff⁴	Administrative staff⁵	Depot Manager
Men	67	82	4	32	4	0
Women	13	0	0	2	3	1
Total	80	82	4	34	7	1

² Every MSRTC depot is staffed by three wings – traffic, workshop and administration – and all three are headed by the Depot Manager.

³ The traffic wing includes posts such as Traffic Inspector, Traffic Controller, Driver and Conductor.

⁴ The workshop wing includes the Assistant Workshop Superintendent, Chief Artisan, Assistant Artisan and Assistant.

⁵ The administrative wing has posts such as Accountant and Clerk.

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Table 2. Participant Profile: Tenure at MSRTC

	0 to 9 years	10 to 19 years	20 to 29 years	30 to 33 years
Men	67	82	4	32
Women	13	0	0	2
Total	80	82	4	34

Table 2). The majority of participants were conductors and drivers who are the first point of contact or response when girls and women encounter violence on public transport.

COVID-19 precautions and impact

The training was conducted in person during a time period in which in-person gatherings were permitted, with permission from MSRTC authorities and continued monitoring of conditions in Purandar. A safety plan was developed and followed (see Box 1).

Additionally, some compromises were made due to the challenges posed by COVID-19. On the advice of senior MSRTC officials, the training was shortened from 12 hours to 8 hours to limit the amount of time the participants were together. This meant making some difficult decisions and omitting some content. However, participants participated fully in the one-day training, requested additional training

in the future, and those who attended the training encouraged their colleagues to attend subsequent sessions.

Evaluation

A pre- and post-training survey (see Appendix 4) was conducted with participants to assess the efficacy of the capacity building, and to understand the learning that had taken place over the course of the training.

FINDINGS

Knowledge and awareness increased

The participants had not received training on VAWG before. Overall, the training resulted in an increase in their knowledge and awareness of VAWG and related issues. Participants unanimously agreed that there should be a strong response to VAWG and acknowledged the roles, responsibility and accountability they had as MSRTC officials

Box 1: COVID-19 Safety Plan

1. All necessary permissions had been secured from officials to conduct the in-person training.
2. All precautions were followed as per government guidelines.
3. No more than 30 people were in the training room, as per government guidelines for gatherings.
4. Physical distance of two meters (as specified by official public health guidelines) was maintained between everyone in the room: participants, MASUM staff volunteers and resource persons.
5. Since MSRTC had started bus services, the Saswad bus depot training hall (which also functions as a locker room) could get crowded, with drivers and conductors coming in to change into or out of their uniforms. The joint decision of MSRTC and MASUM had been to shift the training to MASUM's office in Saswad, where all safety measures could be ensured.
6. The training room, exposed surfaces and rest rooms were mopped with phenyl and sprayed with 2% sodium hypochlorite solution twice every day by MASUM volunteers.
7. All individual participants and volunteers were checked for temperature and blood oxygen levels before entering the training hall every day. Anyone who failed the health test was requested to leave.
8. Records of temperature and blood oxygen levels were maintained by the MASUM staff volunteers. Those who showed any risky symptoms as specified by public health guidelines, (and who were not therefore able to participate in the training) were encouraged to get a COVID-19 test. Upon testing negative, they would be allowed to participate in a following batch, but after examining their medical certificate.
9. Sanitizer dispensing and usage was compulsory every time a participant, volunteer or resource person entered the training hall.
10. Soaps and paper napkins were provided in restrooms, and participants were encouraged to wash their hands and faces thoroughly during the day.
11. Personal belongings of participants were placed such that they didn't pose surface exposure risks to others in the room.
12. Masks were provided to all participants, who were required to wear them throughout the training sessions.
13. Food and snacks were provided in packed form.
14. Tea was personally prepared and dispensed by MASUM staff volunteers.
15. MASUM staff volunteers were provided fresh masks and gloves whenever they distributed food and tea to participants.
16. Most resource persons' presentations were in pre-recorded video format; thus, reducing the need to require additional people in the room or expose resource persons to multiple batches of participants and vice versa.
17. Whether to continue or discontinue the in-person training was to be taken upon observing any perceived risk to participants, MASUM or depot staff volunteers, or resource persons.
18. Due to the diligent safety planning, none of the 208 participants, nor anyone from the MASUM team (of 15 people) contracted COVID.

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The training provided all of us with a chance to reflect on and speak about our experiences. It will help us immensely to address the problems we face on a routine basis.

**Manisha Inamke, Manager
Saswad Bus Depot, MSRTC Purandar**

We understand now that violence is not just physical but also emotional and can be inflicted even by the way one looks at women or girls.

Training Participant

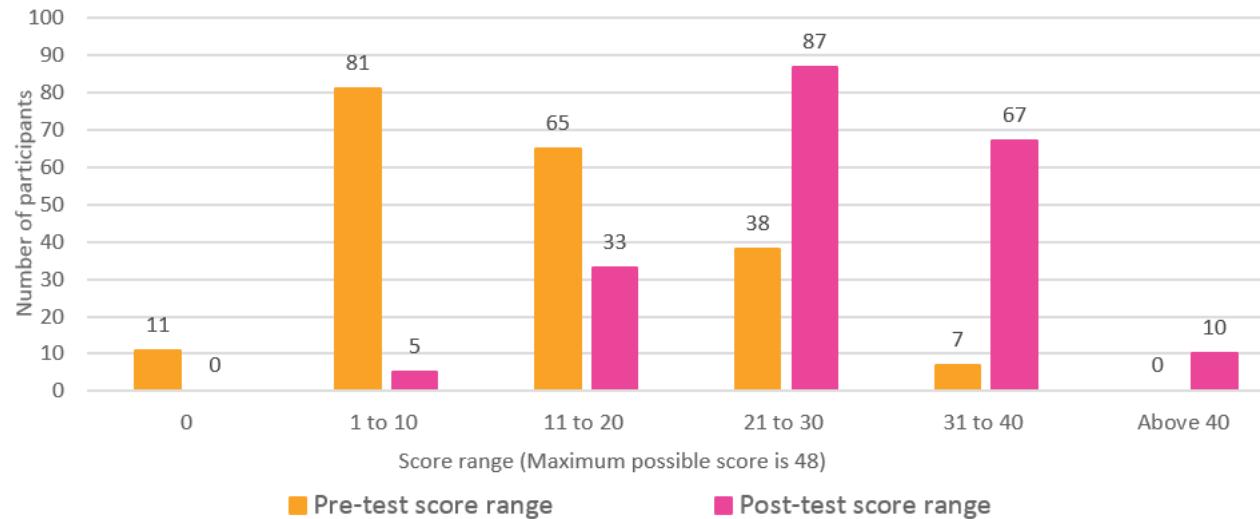
to prevent and act against incidents of VAWG on public transport buses, at bus stops and the bus stand or depot. They felt that training provided them with a platform to discuss these kinds of experiences, understand deeper reasons for VAWG, and to think about their role and accountability mechanisms.

A significant increase was observed in the post-training survey scores of all participants, indicating a uniformly positive impact of the training (see Figures 1 and 2). While 11 participants scored zero in the pre-training survey component, none scored zero in the post-training survey. The mean score in the pre-test was 13, which rose to 27 after the training, with a median score of 28. Additionally, participants were open to learning and doing more to prevent VAWG, despite facing their own challenges.

Mixed understanding of VAWG

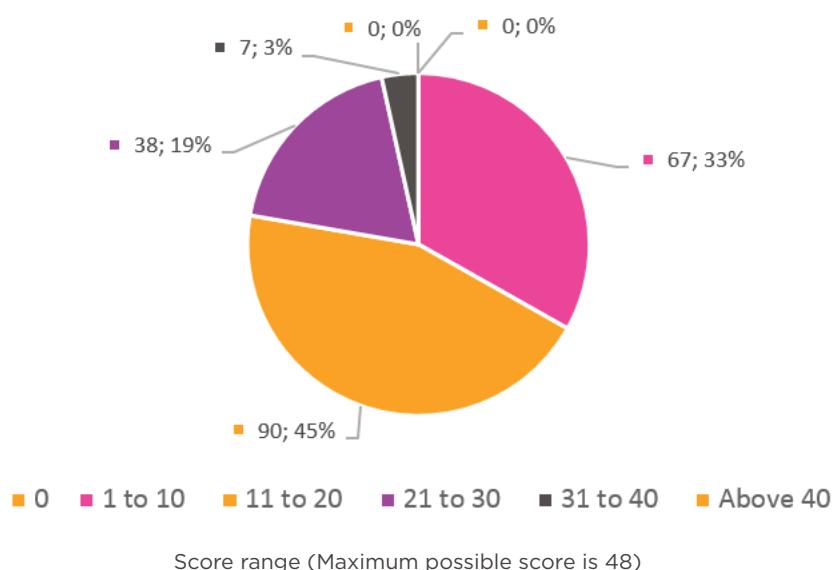
Many participants described incidents in which they witnessed VAWG and intervened by directly taking action or encouraging girls and women to stand up to harassers. However, their understanding of what causes VAWG varied. Some placed an undue burden on girls and women to challenge their harassers and did not understand the fear of further violence that this elicited or restrictions on the mobility of girls and women that would invariably result from such confrontations. A couple of participants suggested that girls and women should not board crowded buses since there was unavoidable pushing and men were not wholly to blame. Some

Figure 1: Pre- and Post-training Survey Scores



202 of 208 participants submitted both pre- and post-training surveys. Six participants did not complete the two surveys as they either arrived late for the training or left early due to personal reasons. Their scores have not been considered in the survey analysis.

Figure 2: Percentage of Participants with Increased Scores Post-training



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We had not looked at the issue of sexual harassment and violence with much seriousness until now. We will definitely apply the perspective we attained today in our work.

Training Participant

We do notice and intervene when girls and women face harassment and violence. But we had never comprehended the magnitude of adversities and hardships that befall them due to such incidents.

Training Participant

participants suggested that VAWG was knowingly or unknowingly provoked by girls who were socializing with boys or that it was an expected fallout of past, consensual relationships with a perpetrator. A few participants did not understand the difference between consensual physical contact and abuse. These attitudes and beliefs were challenged during the training.

The training also highlighted the impact of VAWG beyond particular incidents of harassment and assault. One case study described a girl who was no longer permitted to attend college by her parents after experiencing repeated sexual harassment at the bus stop. Participants were asked whether they agreed with the parents and why. Following the training, participants expressed more support for the girl, using arguments based on the right to education.

The need for concrete actions

In the pre-training survey, participants skipped questions related to what they could do about VAWG or gave generic responses such as “We will help” and “We will inform the police”. In the post-training survey, however, the answers to the same questions included specific steps and accountability, such as “We will inform our superiors”, “We will ask the perpetrator to change his seat or correct his posture” or “We will take the bus to the police station”. Through the training activities, they were able to identify concrete steps they could take to prevent and respond to VAWG and

improve the safety of girls and women using their services (see Box 2).

Systemic and infrastructure problems

When drivers and conductors try to respond to VAWG, they are often hindered by the lack of systemic coordination and infrastructure, which lie beyond their individual capacities. They felt strongly that the responsibility to address VAWG on public transport must be shared by the range of stakeholders

charged with protecting public safety. Most participants identified sustained support from the police as being critical for effective responses. In some instances, they were afraid to intervene in cases of sexual harassment or violence due to fear of backlash from perpetrators.

They suggested that police patils (local civilian police representatives) and sarpanches (elected village heads) should take local action against perpetrators from

Box 2: Participants' Resolutions to Prevent and Respond to VAWG

Responding to VAWG

- Confront and question the harasser
- Call the police/depot manager
- Take the bus to the nearest police station
- Support and stand by girls/women in distress
- Ask the harasser to change his seat or spot
- Take serious note of girls'/women's complaints
- Stop the bus

Preventing VAWG

- Give preference to girls and women while boarding and alighting buses
- Operate buses on time
- Give preference to women in seating inside buses
- Respect and behave well with girl and women passengers
- Stay alert in the bus
- Create a safe, conducive environment for girls/women in the bus
- Motivate girls/women in the family to continue with education

Resolutions are arranged in descending order, beginning with the most-stated and moving to the least-stated ones.

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If we confront any rogue harassers on remote routes, we are easily outnumbered once they mobilize a mob from their villages, using their cell phones.

Training Participant

A direct channel of communication should be established with the local police and timely assistance should be provided to us when we need it.

Training Participant

Taking a cue from the Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited, which runs public buses in Pune city, MSRTC must also launch special buses for women during peak hours.

Training Participant

their villages. They also advocated for coordinated action between MSRTC, police patils, Tanta Mukti Samitis (village dispute resolution committees) and block-level police vigilance committees, which would lead to swift redressal of VAWG.

Participants also described longstanding infrastructure issues for all modes of public transport. They repeatedly emphasized the need to increase the number of buses and start women-only buses on busy routes and during peak hours.

Additionally, participants suggested the need for guidelines on the step-by-step action they need to take in cases of VAWG. They identified some steps to improve public transportation and related infrastructure to further improve the safety of girls and women (see Box 3).

Lack of authority to act

While drivers and conductors are tasked with direct intervention in cases of VAWG, their relatively low status within the MSRTC hierarchy means they do not have a lot of authority or support to act. In fact, drivers and conductors have no official mandate and power in cases of VAWG. This weakens their position when they do act, especially when they are not backed by senior officials. One participant said that they are not even given a hearing if a passenger they confront makes a complaint to their superiors. There have even been cases where a perpetrator with political connections threatens them. Finally, on a practical level, if a perpetrator

or survivor has to be taken to the police station, other passengers understandably resent the delay. They suggested the need for training for senior staff.

Participants said they have always taken action within their capacities to ensure that women and girl passengers travel safely but expressed concern about selecting the

relatively lower-ranked block level staff for the training.

Alluding to the unfair allocation of responsibilities to guarantee safety of girls and women on public transport, some participants said that most of the aspects of accountability applied, in reality, to higher-ranked MSRTC officials.

Box 3: Infrastructure Issues Identified by Participants

Safety and Security Infrastructure

- Deploy women police personnel at bus stands and in buses
- Install closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in buses, bus stops and bus stands
- Provide adequate lighting at bus stands and bus stops
- Establish sustained coordination with police for immediate help
- Display numbers for emergency helplines more visibly in buses
- Suspend harassers from bus travel

Transportation Infrastructure

- Schedule more buses during rush hours and on busy routes
- Dispatch buses on time
- Start special buses for women
- Install complaint boxes at bus stands
- Provide basic facilities of water supply, lighting and cleanliness in toilets at bus stands
- Increase reserved seats for women inside buses to 50 per cent
- Give drivers and conductors more authority to take action against perpetrators on the spot
- Clean and service buses regularly
- Extend bus services to interior villages
- Prevent last-minute cancellation of buses
- Introduce free-of-charge bus travel for girls and women

Infrastructure issues are arranged in descending order, beginning with the most-stated and moving to the least-stated.

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If we intervene in a case of VAWG in which the harasser is powerful, and then complains about us at the depot, passenger complaints are invariably given more weight than our say in the matter.

Training Participant

In cases of VAWG, the woman or girl often fears social disgrace and backtracks, and we get embroiled in a trial that doesn't add up to anything in the end.

Training Participant

Why are trainings only planned for us and attitude changes also expected only of us? Senior officials are the real decision-makers.

Training Participant

Impact of gender norms and stereotypes

Perceptions around gender norms and stereotypes were challenged through training activities, and their understanding of concepts such as gender and patriarchy increased. For example, when asked in the pre-training survey whether women were inherently more forbearing or restrained than men, almost all respondents replied in the affirmative. By the end of the training, their belief in this stereotype was shaken. In the post-training survey, many acknowledged the different and unequal ways in which boys and girls are brought up as a result of gender norms and conditioning. Additionally, some participants also acknowledged the need to change their own behaviors and personally respect girls and women, indicating that the training had facilitated introspection and resolve for change at the personal level. During training activities, participants recognized the right of girls and women to use public transport and occupy public spaces for education and jobs. They firmly rejected restricting women's mobility as a solution to prevent violence. They also believed in helping survivors of harassment and violence by showing support and building their confidence.

However, although participants affirmed girls' and women's right to mobility, this conviction was conditional and many approved of monitoring and regulating their access to public spaces. Participants disapproved of girls and women using public spaces and transport for leisure and to socialize with friends. Some participants indicated they approved curbing the

freedom of sexual expression of girls and women but not of their mobility, education and economic opportunities. In short, participants believed the right to mobility of girls and women needs be protected largely for activities such as education and work, but not for leisure or recreation activities. These attitudes impacted participants' responses to VAWG in public spaces.

Disapproval of relationships among youth

It was observed that participants were uncomfortable with friendships between boys and girls, which they saw as unconventional and nonconformist behavior by youth. This impacted their responses to VAWG. The participants expressed hostility about strong and confident youthful expression, despite knowing that VAWG is also committed by middle-aged and older men. Many participants spoke disparagingly of college-going boys and girls meeting and gathering at bus stops. They considered this kind of behavior by girls and women to be risky and reckless, and suggested it could provoke sexual harassment and violence. They also disapproved of girls and women having romantic relationships outside of marriage and in some cases, intervened against young people in consensual interactions. To address this issue, the training team incorporated a short, interactive session on friendship, romantic love and coming of age. The session covered biological changes during adolescence, romantic and sexual attractions as natural, and avoiding moral panic or judgment. Participants were urged to speak to their own children with an

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Instead of valuing our work, our senior officials don't give us a fair hearing when there are complaints against us as a result of our interventions. They need this training the most, so that more concrete measures can be implemented for the safety of women and girls.

Training Participant

What can we do if enough buses are not made available or buses are not dispatched on time causing overcrowding and risks of sexual harassment to women and girl passengers?

Training Participant

“

There is no openness to discuss issues of gender-based violence in rural areas and if cases occur, blame is still pointed towards girls and women first. This can lead to the discontinuation of education and early marriage.

**Rupali Sarnobat, Revenue Officer
Purandar block**

I previously thought there were only biological, and no other, differences between men and women. Had it not been for this training, I would not have gained this crucial perspective.

Training Participant

open mind instead of reprimanding them. They were advised not to forbid friendships and relationships of love but instead gently counsel youth if these were causing them to lose any focus on other equally important aspects of their lives. Rather than trying to prevent youth from developing friendships and relationships, participants were encouraged to support young people about the responsibilities and consequences of their behavior and action.

INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The training program and findings highlight several insights that can be applied to MSRTC, as well as other public institutions and sectors to improve the capacity of staff within those sectors to prevent and respond to VAWG. They can also be applied across sectors to facilitate a continuum of accountability and action.

Build the capacity of officials

There is a need to develop and expand training programs such as this one, to build the capacity of public servants and officials working in public spaces. However, one isolated, stand-alone training is not enough to challenge the deep-rooted gender norms that often dictate official responses to VAWG. It is important for officials to understand feminist perspectives in relation to VAWG that emphasize girls' and women's right to safety in public spaces and freedom of movement. This pilot training program could serve as a springboard for further trainings to engage transport

and other officials in more depth on these topics. Gender trainings could be officially mandated for all levels of staff, from frontline workers to leadership.

Empower frontline service providers

In addition to building skills and knowledge in how to prevent and respond to VAWG, there is a need to put in place official mandates to empower frontline service providers and officials to act with authority. Highlighting the hierarchy of responsibilities and capacities within the MSRTC and other institutions holding jurisdictions over public spaces is critical to increase accountability and for frontline workers to better understand and use the chain of command within their sector to respond when an incident occurs.

Strengthen accountability across sectors

A framework with well-outlined protocols that stipulate responsibilities and accountability of the police and MSRTC officials could be drafted and established for safe public transport. This could set the pace for setting up a well-coordinated, sensitive and foolproof system of processes and officials who promptly respond to VAWG.

Participants suggested bringing together different stakeholders, such as MSRTC staff, the police, police patils, sarpanches and village-level dispute resolution committees, to prevent and address VAWG. Such convergent action resonates with the 3D Program recommendation to bring together

different stakeholders from government departments and local civil society groups to more effectively address the concerns of girls and women.

Implement systemic changes

There is also a need for systemic change. Policies governing public bus infrastructure need to be reviewed to identify gaps and areas of systematic improvement to root out VAWG. Frequent bus service, coordinated with school and college timings, special buses for women on crowded routes and a gender sensitive approach that includes interventions by MSRTC staff and bystanders when incidents of VAWG occur would fulfill and promote rights of girls and women to mobility. Budget allocations and action to build, upgrade and maintain physical infrastructure, such as adequate lighting at bus stands and secure and functional toilets at bus stations, is also necessary to ensure safe transit for girls and women using public transportation.

Engage girls and women

The 3D Program model also emphasizes a feedback loop from girls and women to the village, block and district-level functionaries to increase accountability and ensure action is taken. Active participation of girls and women in dialogue with MSRTC, the police, management of educational institutions and village governance structures would strengthen girls' and women's right to public safety without being patronized, segregated or relegated to the home in the name of protection.

CONCLUSIONS

While one training session is not enough, the MSRTC training program demonstrated how a group that typically does not receive training on issues such as gender norms and women's rights can benefit from such an intervention, and even request additional training. The opportunities to build on these results and the demand that was generated are encouraging, both within the transportation sector and across other sectors.

However, even through this one-day training, we saw some important results. Participants began the process of critically examining attitudes that impede their ability to provide the highest quality service to girls and women. Participants learned how their own attitudes and actions are shaped by the same gender norms that perpetuate VAWG. They also learned about the importance of understanding the perspectives and experiences of girls and women to improve the quality of their transportation services. This progress was revealed in the post-training survey results.

The training also provided an opportunity for participants to identify concrete actions they can take as frontline workers to respond to VAWG, as well as actions they can take to create an environment to proactively prevent VAWG in and around their services. It also highlighted the importance of clarifying lines of accountability and addressing systemic issues, revealing the shared responsibility of frontline workers, their supervisors and sector leaders for

ensuring that their services are safe for all girls and women.

A fundamental shift that began during the training was changing participants' views of girls and women as vulnerable victims needing protection to recognizing girls and women as individuals with the right to bodily integrity and the right to mobility. The role and importance of safe transport for girls and women to advance those rights was underscored, highlighting the importance of a rights-based approach to transportation. Participants were encouraged to change their focus from protecting girls and women, which can actually result in curtailing their rights, to proactively protecting their rights. This is an important shift, regardless of sector. However, it has particular relevance for the transportation sector. Without safe mobility, girls and women are denied their right to education and economic opportunity, social interactions and civic engagement. Participants understood that the stakes are high and so is the possibility for action.

APPENDIX 1: Generic Training Master Plan and Adaptations for Transportation Officials

Session 1: Inauguration and Introductions	
<i>Introductory session to establish the relevance and importance of the training for the participants' work</i>	
GENERIC	Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring together the decision-makers and participants of each batch before the course starts• Reinforce the legitimacy and need for the training, reiterated by the decision-makers• Enable participants to get to know each other better• To get the participants interested in the course and secure their commitment for full attendance Key messages <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addressing public safety of girls and women is a priority• Increased understanding of the process and content of the training program• It is important to commit to the training
ADAPTED	Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Underline MSRTC's crucial importance in the lives of women and girls• Emphasize the importance of MSRTC's role in ensuring public safety of women and girls Key messages <p>Since all of us are duty-bound to make girls and women feel safe in public spaces, this training has been organized for the state transport department in keeping with the important roles this department plays in ensuring public safety of women and girls.</p>
Session 2: Violence against women and girls in public spaces	
<i>Introductory substantive session to highlight the pandemic of violence that girls and women face in public spaces, their right to be in and use public spaces, and the responsibility of public officials to prevent and respond to VAWG in public spaces.</i>	
GENERIC	Objectives <p>Increase understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The overall objectives of the training program• The extent and types of violence girls and women face in public spaces• Girls' and women's right to public spaces• Their role in addressing VAWG in public spaces Key messages <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased understanding of VAWG can make you more effective in your work• VAWG is a serious pandemic• Girls and women have the right to access and use public spaces• You have a responsibility to prevent/respond to VAWG in public spaces

3D Program for Girls and Women

ADAPTED

Objective

Introduce concepts of biological ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ as a social construct to explain how gender norms curtail girls’ and women’s mobility, education, work and other basic rights and freedoms

Key messages

- Children could also be born male, female or intersex. Biological sex does not discriminate on its own. The discriminatory practice of imposing binary roles, expectations and behavior from someone because of their biological sex is called ‘gender’
- Gendered roles create an artificial divide between the ‘public’ and ‘private’ domains in women’s lives. This results in, for example, domestic violence being considered a private affair, and in human / constitutional rights not reaching women inside the home
- Gender is affected by caste, class, religion, culture, ethnicity and so on; it also changes for better or worse over time depending on the political milieu, and during disasters, conflict situations and economic stability / instability. We need to constantly strive for gender equality and justice
- Because women are supposed to remain in the private domain, they are questioned (and often blamed) when they encounter lack of safety in public places. Their education is summarily stopped and early marriage takes place
- Those who are on intersections of vulnerability (women, children, subordinated men) based on power, status and privilege are more likely to encounter violence and discrimination.
- Transgender individuals and those who do not / don’t wish to fit into strict gender binaries or roles suffer extensive discrimination, humiliation and violence
- Providing public safety for women and girls is not about regulating how they speak, dress or move around in public. It is about playing our part in creating an environment that can be freely and safely accessed by everybody, including girls and women
- It is important that you pay serious attention to and plan prompt action on a complaint that a girl/ woman makes in public buses, bus stands or stops.
- Two buses should be plied simultaneously on heavy rush routes
- Bus schedules should be diligently followed
- Lights and toilets should be functional at bus depots and bus stops

Session 3: What's gender got to do with it? From protecting women to protecting women's rights

Session to explain gender and gender norms and how they impact VAWG, access to public spaces and related benefits, and the attitudes/responses of public officials. The session will also explore officials' attitudes and focus on shifting from a protection/moralizing approach to a rights-based approach.

GENERIC

Objectives

Increase understanding of:

- How gender inequality and gender norms impact participants' attitudes and work
- How girls and women experience violence
- Girls' and women's right to be in public spaces
- How lack of access to public spaces impacts girls' and women's opportunity and participation

ADAPTED

Key messages

- Gender inequality is unfair and gender discrimination is illegal
- Gender norms impact your perceptions, reactions and your work
- Girls and women experience violence and its consequences and aftermath differently from boys and men
- Girls and women need their rights protected, they do not need to be sheltered
- Access to public spaces is critical for girls and women to access opportunities and fully participate in their communities

Objectives

- Deconstruct violence against women and girls by explaining systems of patriarchy and patriliney and their extending subsystems of gender norms, gender-based discrimination and violence
- Present the correlation between gender, patriarchy, safety, access to public spaces and deprivations of participation and opportunities
- Elucidate laws, policies and their mechanisms for public safety of women and girls

Key messages

- Patriarchy is the consolidated regime of economic, social, cultural, caste and political male heads of society, both inside and outside the home
- It enforces discrimination between boys and girls in their upbringing, education, jobs, mobility, decision-making and ownership of property in order to create power and privilege for men over women (and over some men too)
- Patriarchy is characterized by the head of a family most often being a male; and the family name and wealth being passed on from a male to his male offspring
- Hardly any space is provided for a girl to develop her decision-making abilities in order to maintain patriarchy
- A woman is kept dependent on her father, brother, husband and in-law through denial of inheritance and property rights
- People who challenge patriarchy are subjected to violence
- Power and control lie at the root of gender based violence
- Depriving the girls/ women of the freedom of mobility is a violation of their human rights, and their rights enshrined in the Indian constitution
- Respect for, and friendship between people of all genders is a pre-requisite for a life free of violence
- Equality in relationships within and outside the home is essential for a gender just society
- Participants must develop sensitivity towards experiences of people using MSRTC buses and premises
- Information about different stakeholders working on the ground on girls'/ women's public safety should be acquired
- Laws for public safety and protection of women's rights and government services for safe transport are for everyone's benefit
- Preventive and intervention steps should be taken up in a timely manner to prevent small incidents snowballing into bigger ones or having serious repercussions

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Session 4: Accountability and responsibilities: Mapping official responsibilities

Session to identify and emphasize the official responsibilities of officials in preventing and responding to VAWG in public spaces and identify and respond to their beliefs, attitudes and needs so they can be more responsive and effective. The session will also begin to map a continuum of accountability within and across public spaces.

GENERIC

Objectives

Increase participants' ability to:

- Understand their responsibilities to prevent and respond to VAWG in public spaces
- Identify and respond to key challenges in doing so
- Map the continuum of accountability for VAWG in public spaces and see where they fit
- Make 3 commitments to addressing VAWG in public spaces

Key messages

- You are responsible for preventing and responding to VAWG in specific public spaces
- You fit into a continuum of accountability and should know where you fit and who else you should work with
- Commit to 3 actions you can take to address VAWG in public spaces

ADAPTED

Objectives

- Encourage participants to shed gender biases, and move towards a gender just perspective in responding to VAWG
- Urge participants to identify the need to work on more sensitive and impactful mechanisms of responding to VAWG
- Summarize accountability mechanisms for public safety of women and girls by MSRTC

Key messages

- Public safety of women and girls must be viewed from a rights-based perspective
- Due diligence of the State in terms of prevention, investigation, prosecution and compensation need to be put in place government for it to be put in place
- Accountability and answerability from all stakeholders towards prevention and elimination of VAWG is essential
- State obligation towards the elimination of VAWG and to ensure public safety of women and girls includes respecting, protecting, fulfilling and promoting women's rights in all spheres of life
- Along with the government, it is equally the responsibility of all members of the family, community, and bystanders to prevent VAWG
- Right to live with dignity is a fundamental right enshrined in the Indian Constitution; from this point of view, all of us are responsible for safety of women and girls in public spaces
- A policy must be formulated to make bus premises and journeys safer

- The Depot Manager is primarily responsible for safety on bus journeys and in bus depot premises
- Conductors and drivers are also responsible because they are present when harassment happens
- Likewise, it is also the responsibility of the police, Block Development Officer, members of legislative assembly, elected representatives of the block level panchayat samiti and village based vigilance committees to provide a safe environment in all public spaces, including roads, bus stands and market places

Session 5: Challenges and the way forward: Decisions and dilemmas we face

Session to highlight and address the challenges that public officials face and the attitudes that get in the way of effectively preventing and responding to VAWG in public spaces.

GENERIC

Objectives

Increase participants' ability to:

- Be better prepared to prevent/ respond to VAWG in public spaces
- Assess and understand their own attitudes in preventing/ responding to VAWG in public spaces
- Respond with a rights-based approach in challenging situations

Key messages

- Like all the work you do, effectively preventing and responding to VAWG in public spaces requires preparation
- Understanding your own conscious and unconscious biases can help you be a more effective responder
- There are resources and people you can utilize to support you in this work

ADAPTED

Objectives

- Collectively recognize the need for coordination between different government departments to address VAWG
- Ask participants to jot down measures of implementation for public safety of women and girls

Key messages

- It is men who harass girls on buses. Therefore, as men, it is our responsibility to intervene
- Staying mute spectators encourages perpetrators and makes girls feel nobody would stand up for them
- Experiences of harassment affects the self-worth of individuals, especially girls negatively, resulting in dropping out of school and college
- If you intervene in VAWG as a government official, passengers and onlookers will also find the courage to take a stand, and to make the perpetrator answerable

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Additional session: Working together across sectors.

A session to bring together a core group of officials across sectors to explore how to work together more effectively to prevent/respond to VAWG in public spaces.

GENERIC

Objective

To create a cohort of officials who are empowered and connected to work together more effectively to prevent/respond to VAWG in public spaces.

Key messages

- Preventing and responding to VAWG requires convergence across sectors. Girls and women who are at risk of violence or have survived violence require a range of preventative (primary and secondary), police, medical, counseling, etc. services/responses.
- Everyone does not have to do everything - Your own work will be strengthened by coordinating with officials from other sectors.
- Creating networks and cooperation plans in advance will create better responses in a crisis situation.

ADAPTED

Objectives

- Closing session, and introduction to the forthcoming session with multiple stakeholders.
- The detailed session will be conducted once the gender training has been held with multiple stakeholders.

Key messages

- The 'Suraksha Maitra' training brings new responsibilities for all of us to intervene in VAWG in the MSRTC buses, bus stops and depots.
- Safety of women and girls inside and outside the home is equally essential.
- We need to work with multiple stakeholders to ensure women's right to safety, including in public spaces.
- Another training will be held once more stakeholders have gone through the gender training on public safety for women and girls.

APPENDIX 2: Training Resource Persons

The following resource persons conducted the MSRTC training:

- **Ms. Shailaja Aralkar**, Consultant, 3D Program for Girls and Women
- **Dr. Ramesh Awasthi**, Co-Convenor and Trustee, MASUM
- **Digambar Birajdar**, Counselor, Foundation For Child Protection – Muskaan
- **Dr. Manisha Gupte**, Co-Convenor and Trustee, MASUM and 3D Program for Girls and Women
- **Ms. Kajal Jain**, Program Coordinator, MASUM and 3D Program for Girls and Women
- **Sadhana Khati**, President, Local Complaints Committee, Pune District
- **Ms. Sunita Pawar**, Program Officer, Violence Against Women cell, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra and Tata Institute of Social Sciences
- **Ms. Priya Rupalee**, Campaign Manager, Parisar, a Pune-based non-government organization that works on sustainable urban transport among other urban issues

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APPENDIX 3: Detailed Training Session Guide

Before the training: (a) Checking for COVID-19 symptoms (body temperature, fingertip pulse oxygen levels, overt respiratory discomfort); sanitizing hands, wearing masks; (b) registration and picking up folder with training material and stationery, (c) breakfast, (d) fill out the pre-test survey form.

Session 1: Introducing the theme of the training (Duration: 30 minutes)

	Description of session	Method	Duration
1	Logistics and safety precautions	Video message screening	1 min.
2	Individual introductions by participants and training staff, and exposition of the training format	Round of introductions	2 mins.
3	Inaugural song – ‘Mann Shuddha Tuzha’ (Your unblemished heart) by Shantaram Athavale, with display of names and logos of the organisers	Song (visual screening)	5 mins.
4	Information on MASUM’s work and partnership with 3D, MSRTC and ICRW for the training (Ms. Kajal Jain)	Video message screening	5 mins.
5	Opening remarks By Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta, Executive Director, 3D Program and Ms. Yamini Joshi, Pune Divisional Controller, MSRTC	Inauguration (video messages)	12 mins.
6	Introduction to the training (Dr. Manisha Gupte)	Recorded video presentation	7 mins.
7	‘Shikshanachi Gadi Chalali’ (The Education Bus Goes Past) by Jyoti Mhapsekar	Song (visual screening)	2 mins.

Session 2: Gender roles, public spaces, and safety concerns of girls and women (Duration: 2 hours)

	Description of session	Method	Duration
1	‘Maye Ga Maye’ (Oh, Mother!) by Sanjivani Bokil	Audio recorded poem	2 mins.
2	Animated film on challenging gendered division of labour (made by 12-year-old Shiv and his mother, Darshana Pawar)	Film screening	1 min.
3	Gender roles, restriction of mobility and the impact of artificial divide between public-private spaces/domains in women’s lives (Dr. Manisha Gupte)	Video recorded presentation	35 mins.
4	Case study of harassment of girls in a public place (Small group discussion and presentation)	Live session	50 mins.
5	Public Safety of Women and Girls (PWSG) with emphasis on public transport (Ms. Priya Rupalee)	Video recorded presentation	15 mins.
6	Individual and institutional resolutions towards ensuring PWSG	Writing exercise	15 mins.

Case Studies in Convergence Series, No. 3

Session 3: VAWG and laws related to women (Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes)

	Description of session	Method	Duration
1	'Dola Tumcha Dola' (Your Fearsome Gaze) by Jyoti Mhapsekar	Song (visual screening)	3 mins.
2	Animated short - Bano Nayi Soch (Become A New Thought), by Oxfam India	Film screening	1 mins.
3	Violence Against Women and Girls, locating the same within patriarchy (Dr. Manisha Gupte)	Video recorded presentation	30 mins.
4	Laws related to Violence Against Women and Girls (Ms. Sunita Pawar)	Video recorded presentation	10 mins.
5	Case study of harassment of girl in a public bus	Video recorded presentation	15 mins.

Session 4: Accountability mechanisms and the rights-based approach (Duration: 45 minutes)

	Description of session	Method	Duration
1	Samatechya Vaatena (On The Path Of Equality) by Shantanu Kamble	Song visual screening	3 mins.
2	Animated short by Shiv and Darshana Pawar	Film screening	2 mins.
3	Accountability, due diligence and the rights-based approach (Dr. Manisha Gupte)	Video recorded presentation	15 mins.
4	Rights-based approach to PWSG in public transport: Manisha Gupte/Ramesh Awasthi/Kajal Jain/Shailaja Aralkar (one of the above people)	Interactive talk (live)	15 mins.
5	Summarizing accountability mechanisms for PWSG by MSRTC (Ms. Kajal Jain and Ms. Shailaja Aralkar)	Video recorded conversation	15 mins.

Session 5: Future action, and valedictory address (Duration: 1 hour)

	Description of session	Method	Duration
1	Why is it our responsibility to ensure PWSG? – Men's involvement, bystander intervention and changing norms and mindsets inside and outside the home (Dr. Ramesh Awasthi)	Video recorded presentation	10 mins.
2	Affirmations and concrete suggestions on ensuring PWSG in the MSRTC premises (buses, bus stops and the depot)	Writing exercise	15 mins.
3	Presentations by participants	Feedback of training	10 mins.
4	Post-test survey	Filling out individual post-test forms	15 mins.
5	Address by Ms. Yamini Joshi	Valediction (Video)	10 mins.

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APPENDIX 4: Pre- and Post-training Survey Form

Date:

Batch number:

Name:

Village:

Gender (Male/ Female/ Other):

Mobile number:

Since when have you been working with the MSRTC?

Designation:

Note: Each of the above 16 questions above had a minimum possible score of zero and a maximum possible score of three. The scoring was done on the basis of lack of information or irrelevant /wrong information (score=0); basic understanding (score=1); adequate understanding (score=2); and analytical / sophisticated understanding (score=3). The maximum cumulative score possible was 48.

**Partnerships lie at the heart of the 3D Program.
We are grateful for the support we receive from
our partners to help us advance our work.**

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

Pune Zilla Parishad • Pune Municipal Corporation

Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC)

Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM) • Sangini

Chaitanya • Maharashtra Village Social Transformation Foundation (VSTF)

Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) • SWaCH

Centre for Environment Education (CEE)

Pune Smart City Development Corporation, Limited

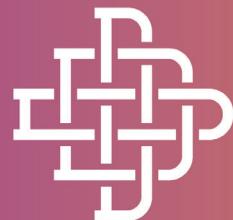
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