



kNOw Fear : understanding sexual violence faced by women and girls in rural public spaces

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Is it safe to go out?

- ◆ Sexual Violence against women and girls (SVAWG) in public spaces can be a major barrier to equitable development
- ◆ Restricts mobility and prevent access to opportunities offered by development programs
- ◆ Largely seen as a issue of concern of **urban cities**
- ◆ In rural areas, the governance structures at the local level are the Gram Panchayats (GPs), though constitutionally mandated to undertake equitable development, address issues of social justice have reneged on this responsibility.

In rural settings, where 68 percent of India's population resides, there is little systematic evidence of the nature or extent of SVAWG in public spaces or efforts to address it

The overall project : **kNOw Fear**

Aims to develop and evaluate a model of rural public space safety, kNOw Fear, in selected Gram Panchayats of Gujarat, one of the more developed states in India , offering opportunities for employability, and perceived as safe for women and girls

Understanding the issue : formative research



Objectives of Formative Research

1. Generate evidence

to understand the nature of sexual violence (forms, responses, consequences) experienced by women and girls in rural public spaces areas and the impact of sexual violence on their lives;

to understand the perceptions of young men and elected local leaders

2. To inform the design of the intervention and the research tools

Data collection included :

1. Participatory Workshops with young men aged 18-22 years (4)
2. Workshop with young girls aged 15-19years (4)
3. FGDs with women (4)
4. KII with elected members and Sarpach (8)

Key Findings

SPACES & ACCESS: what do maps

Several places are considered 'male only' spaces, and are not perceived as accessible to women and girls

village chowk, play ground, hotel/tea stall, pan shops, hostels

Desert, jungle, lake

"Actually most places are unsafe if the women needs to go alone"

EARLY MORNING :

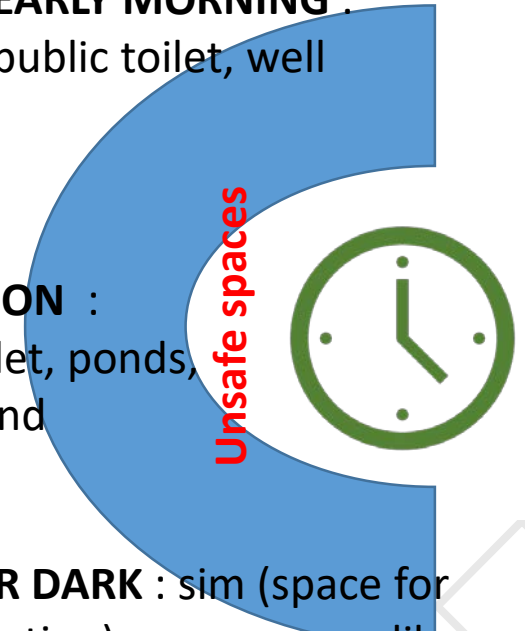
public toilet, well

AFTERNOON :

public toilet, ponds,
grazing land

AFTER DARK : sim (space for defecation), open spaces like farm and grazing land, panchayat office, anganwadi, post office

ALL DAY: places like jungle, desert, ponds .



Gender norms mediate access

Women

Women and girls are not allowed to go out of the house after dark- those who are going out at night are considered as “ bad”

“It is difficult to control boys/men as they will always roam around, that is why one need to control the girls and women”

“people say - those women who are going out at night want to be harassed”

women and girls are responsible for keeping the honor of the family intact

Gender norms mediate access

Girls : “We are afraid of being labelled ‘rakhdeli’ (one who roams around)”

- If an unmarried girl looks a boy it means she loves him and that compromises the honour of the girl’s parent.
- Boys can go and roam all around and go for movies and restaurants, but girls are not allowed to go to even garden
- It is only after marriage girls are allowed to move around the village.
- After marriage , the girls are given mobile phone to speak to their fiancé

Boys : *Well... there are good girls and those who roam around*

If a girl roams around, then she should know that she will get raped or molested. It is her fault

What is the need for girls to roam around in the village till late in the evening?

Girls should be engaged in household work- anyway they will get married

Commonly reported forms of SV

“*Line marna*” whistling, winking, passing comments, call the women /girls as “mal”, grabbing hand, obscene gesture, trying to touch(molest)

throwing mobile numbers, clicking photos, playing songs on mobile

pushing girls in the bus, sitting beside the girls , lying down to occupy the seat, writing girl’s name on the wall, following (toilet, market and school)

48.5% adolescent girls and 40% of women reported experiencing sexual violence in public spaces in their life time.

37 % adolescent girls and 26% women report one form of sexual violence in the last one year.

The local representatives

“Panchayats meetings are places for men- women don't go there ”

Things like this don't happen here

.....parents do not send girls to school because it is not safe

“If she has to go alone, no place in my GP is safe”



Consequences
and barriers

Confining girls
within the
home is the
way to ensure
their safety

High rate of drop out among girls :
few girls is the GPs were attending school after
completion of grade 7 (20% baseline figures for
secondary education)

Transport is a big hindrance
buses empty , not conducive to school
timings, boys take advantage
competition is with shared tempos-
jhakra – not perceived as safe transport

Alcoholism is rampant and contributes to fear of
being in public spaces

Skilling institutes and employment opportunities
remain in accessible to girls

Response and help seeking

Girls prefer reaching out to friends, and teacher – fear that parents would limit their mobility further and blame them

If there are safe buses, our girls will go to school- they want to progress in life

The girl's family is responsible . But if they want they want , they can approach the Sarpanch for help

Necessary action should be taken to speak to the boys –

Our village should not get a bad name

Women have to get together and demand that things change !

Possible solutions – who ?what?

“women have to solve their own problems. Men do what they want to do -Because they are men.”

- GP – not seen as a body to lodge individual complaints but has power to provide amenities and services, including safe transport
- Elected members see their role as shaping public opinion/social thought processes, but lament the lack of decision making and untied funds to undertake ‘unscheduled’ tasks

Key strategies :

mobilizing women's
citizenship

Youth
participation

Sensitizing and
catalyzing the Gram
Panchayat