

# **A Handbook on Women's Safety Audits in Low-income Urban Neighbourhoods: A Focus on Essential Services**

**JAGORI**  
in collaboration with  
**Women in Cities International**



A Handbook on Women's Safety Audits in Low-income Urban  
Neighbourhoods: A Focus on Essential Services, November 2010

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their time

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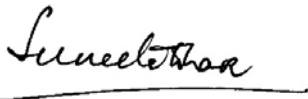


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Suneeta Dhar  
Director, Jagori  
New Delhi, November 2010



Caroline Andrew  
President, WICI  
Montreal, November 2010

# I. Background to the Handbook



Jagori has been working to address different forms of violence against women (VAW) for over twenty-five years. Gender-based violence is present at various levels beginning with discrimination at birth and is further perpetuated through discrimination in education, nutrition, employment, wages and direct/indirect acts of sexual aggression<sup>1</sup>. In the 1970s and 80s, Jagori, along with others in the women's movement, led protests against issues such as dowry-related violence and death, rape and sexual assault<sup>2</sup>. This phase was significant as it signalled the breaking of silence around VAW and led to several legal reforms<sup>3</sup>. Along with working on VAW in private spaces, Jagori expanded the scope of its work to address the issue of the gendered use of public spaces and the violence faced by women in these spaces in Delhi.

It is well accepted that in cities, women's sense of safety and security in public places varies depending on their own personal experience of the place, or based on the experiences of other women. These experiences structure the daily lives of women and girls to the extent that their freedom of movement becomes restricted and their behaviour is influenced by their increasing sense of vulnerability with regard to their physical safety. At times, they are unable to carry out their daily activities, to participate in the life in the city, move around freely, study, work, or even enjoy leisurely activities. Safety thus includes not only freedom from violence but also freedom from the anticipation or fear of such violence (See Box 1).

In an effort to address these issues, Jagori launched the Safe Delhi Campaign in 2005 to bring into public focus the issue of women's safety. The Campaign

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP 2010, *Power, voices and rights: a turning point for gender equality in Asia and the Pacific*.

<sup>2</sup> JAGORI 2009, *Marching together, revisiting dowry in India*.

<sup>3</sup> JAGORI 2010, *Understanding women's safety. Towards a gender inclusive city. Research findings, Delhi, 2009-10*.



aims to highlight public safety for women as a serious urban issue and to link the increasing 'unsafety' to the dominant models of urbanisation and the culture of the city. The campaign has a multi-pronged approach to address the issue, including research, public outreach, strategic partnerships and communication initiatives among others.

**Public spaces include streets, parks, community areas, dump grounds and open spaces.**

As a first step to understanding the extent and contours of the issue, 25 Women's Safety Audits<sup>4</sup> were conducted in different parts of the city. These safety audits identified the factors that make spaces unsafe for women and girls and also those that create a feeling of safety among them.

**A safety audit consists of a group of women walking in public spaces in their neighbourhood to identify the physical or social characteristics that make these spaces feel safe or unsafe.**

### **Box 1: Defining women's safety**<sup>5</sup>

*Women's safety involves strategies, practices and policies which aim to reduce gender-based violence (or violence against women), including women's fear of crime.*

**Women's safety involves safe spaces.** Space is not neutral. Space which causes fear restricts movement and thus the community's use of the space. Lack of movement and comfort is a form of social exclusion. Conversely, space can also create a sensation of safety and comfort and

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<sup>4</sup> For details on how to conduct Women's Safety Audit, see page 37

<sup>5</sup> UN-HABITAT 2008, The global assessment report: 10

can serve to discourage violence. Therefore planning and policy around safety should always involve and consider women<sup>1</sup>.

**Women's safety involves freedom from poverty.** This includes safe access to water, the existence and security of communal toilet facilities in informal settlements, slum upgrades, gender-sensitive street and city design, safe car parks, shopping centers and public transportation<sup>2</sup>.

**Women's safety involves financial security and autonomy.** Family income plays a powerful role in the cessation of battering. Resource accumulation and mobilisation is a core strategy for coping with abusive relationships. Similarly, women's economic empowerment reduces their vulnerability to situations of violence as they become less dependent on men and better able to make their own decisions.

**Women's safety involves self-worth.** In safe homes and communities, women have the right to value themselves, to be empowered, to be respected, to be independent, to have their rights valued, to be loved, to have solidarity with other family and community members and to be recognised as equal members in society<sup>3</sup>.

Women's safety involves strategies and policies that take place before violence has occurred to prevent perpetration or victimisation. This can happen by improving knowledge and attitudes that correspond to the origins of domestic or sexual violence, such as adherence to societal norms supportive of violence, male superiority and male sexual entitlement. Furthermore, women's and girls' full participation in community life must be promoted, partnerships between local community organisations and local governments must be pursued and including a full diversity of women and girls in local decision-making processes must be promoted. Prevention efforts involve strategic, long-term, comprehensive initiatives that address the risk and protective factors related to perpetration, victimisation and bystander behaviour<sup>4</sup>.

**Women's safety means a safer, healthier community for everyone.** This is a participatory process focused on changing community norms, patterns of social interaction, values, customs and institutions in ways that will significantly improve the quality of life in a community for all of its members<sup>5</sup>. This is a natural by-product of efforts that attempt to address issues such as family dynamics, relationships, poverty, racism and/or ending sexual violence. Building a healthy, safe community is everyone's job<sup>6</sup>.

### Notes:

1 Anna Bofill Levi, Rosa Maria Dumenjo Marti & Isabel Segura Soriano, "Women and the City," Manual of Recommendations for a Conception of Inhabited Environment from the Point of View of Gender. Fundacion Mari Aurelia Company.

2 Alicia Yon "Safer Cities for Women are Safer for Everyone," Habitat Debate, UN-Habitat (Sept. 2007, Vol. 13, #3), 9.

3 Mary Ellsberg & Lori Heise. "Researching Violence against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists," World Health Organisation & Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, 2005.

4 Morgan J. Curtis. "Engaging Communities in Sexual Violence Prevention; A Guidebook for Individuals and Organisations Engaging in Collaborative Prevention Work," Texas Association Against Sexual Assault.

5 David S. Lee, Lydia Guy, Brad Perry, Chad Keoni Sniffen & Stacy Alamo Mixson. "Sexual Violence Prevention," The Prevention Researcher, Vol 14 (2), April 2007.

6 Morgan J. Curtis. "Engaging Communities in Sexual Violence Prevention; A Guidebook for Individuals and Organisations Engaging in Collaborative Prevention Work," Texas Association Against Sexual Assault.

The findings from the audits have been used to design initiatives for public safety and for advocacy with the state to include women's inputs in urban planning, design and interventions. They also led to specific interventions to improve gender friendliness in public transport. The report of the safety audits *Is this our city?, Mapping safety for women in Delhi*<sup>6</sup> and the accompanying film *Is this our city?*, documenting women's experiences of sexual harassment in public places, were released in

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<sup>6</sup> JAGORI 2007, *Is this our city? Mapping safety for women in Delhi*

March 2007. There were accompanied by a media campaign and public awareness and outreach activities.

The next phase of the Campaign began in 2009, when Jagori undertook large-scale surveys and safety audits to understand the dimensions of gender inequality and exclusion in the city of Delhi. The surveys explored the different aspects of the forms of violence faced by women in public spaces, including factors that contribute to creating greater safety and inclusion for women. They also helped to assess the responses – both by the women themselves and the police – to harassment and lack of safety and finally, to determine what kind of spaces are perceived as unsafe or inaccessible to women. Jagori, in partnership with the Delhi Government, is currently planning strategies to address these issues.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Women's Safety Audit with reference to essential services**

### **Jagori's work in 'resettlement areas'**

Jagori currently works with women in two resettlement areas in Delhi – Bawana and Madanpur Khadar - on different forms of violence against women and girls and on women's rights. Residents of these two localities were displaced from slums in the central parts of the city to peripheral areas of the city. A study undertaken by Jagori in one of these resettlement areas noted that human rights violations resulting from urban evictions particularly affected marginalised women.<sup>8</sup> It also found that women and young girls reported harassment by attendants in community public toilets and by landlords of nearby fields who viewed the resettled families as encroachers and outsiders.

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<sup>7</sup> JAGORI 2010, *Understanding women's safety. Towards a gender inclusive city. Research findings, Delhi, 2009-10.*

<sup>8</sup> Menon-Sen, Kalyani and Gautam Bhan 2008, *Swept off the map. Surviving eviction and resettlement in Delhi.* Yoda Press, Jagori

This Handbook evolved out of particular experiences of two such resettlement areas. It is based on an action research process that was undertaken by two Delhi-based women's groups – Jagori and Action India – in collaboration with Women in Cities International. The objective of the Action Research Project on Women's Rights and Access to Water and Sanitation in Asian Cities (2009 – 2011) was to test and modify the Women's Safety Audit in its use in water and sanitation as well as drainage, solid waste and electricity. The Action Research Project was implemented in two resettlement colonies of New Delhi. It examined the gender gaps in the provision of water, sanitation, drainage, solid waste and electricity and their impacts on women's safety and security. The teams of the two women's groups worked closely with the women in communities in developing the tools and methodology for the research. The research was undertaken during the period June 2009 to April 2010.

The Action Research Project focused on slum residents who were evicted from east Delhi to Bawana, on the outskirts of the city. Bawana is as a resettlement site in north-west Delhi, over 35 km from the original homes of the slum residents. At the second site, residents were evicted from central and south Delhi to Bhalswa in north-east Delhi at a distance of over 20 km from their original locations where a large landfill is located. At the time of the research (2009-10), Bawana had an estimated



population of 130,000 whereas Bhalswa had approximately 22,000 residents. The women and their families had been living in Bawana for five years and in Bhalswa for nine.

The action research raised significant questions about gender and rights issues in relation to the design of the infrastructure and service provision in the resettlement colonies and the implications of a gender gap in services. For example, what are the specific components of resettlement design and community living that increase the insecurities of women and girls? How can a deeper understanding in this respect influence the shaping or negotiations for future resettlements and ensure that women's voices, needs and interests are part of the planning, infrastructure design and governance process?

### **Women's safety, low-income neighbourhoods and essential services**

As discussed above, safety includes not only freedom from violence but also from the anticipation or fear of such violence. The concept of security of women and girls goes beyond any form of violence or the fear of such violence. Safety and security of women must be located within a broader framework of rights. Security here implies not only security of tenure but also freedom from poverty and violence, which in turn influence their access to education and healthcare, as well as their ability to earn a livelihood and exercise their full rights as citizens.

Low-income neighbourhoods such as slums, squatter settlements and resettlement areas face problems of sustained access to livelihood, education, essential services and healthcare. Water and sanitation services, in particular, are insufficient – both inadequately maintained and poorly located. Other services that also influence women's and girls' feelings of insecurity are related to the inadequate drainage systems and garbage disposal. Further, power supply has to be included in the list of essential services as it affects the functioning of and access to the other services.



In the areas of our project, as in most societies, women and girls are primarily responsible for managing the household. Inadequate services affect them the most as they spend a considerable amount of time and energy accessing essential services such as water and sanitation. The infrastructure and design of such services in Delhi often do not respond to the needs of the women and girls. For example, some community toilet complexes have partially open roofs that make it possible for men and boys to peep into the women's section. In another example, women are forced to use open spaces for defecation due to lack of any other option. Specifically, lack of proper maintenance of the community toilet complexes, limited access at certain times of the day, inadequate supply of water and lack of facilities for disposal of menstrual waste illustrate a gender gap in services.

Social conditions can also negatively impact women's access to services. In some cases, friends of the male caretakers gather in the toilet complex, leading to women users feeling uncomfortable and unsafe. At other times, the toilet complexes are located near crowded areas, or male-dominated spaces that women have to cross to access the toilets. These aspects of design and social use of space are other examples of gender service gaps both in terms of design and provision of services.

In addition to the compromises to their privacy and dignity, our experience also highlights the links between safety and inadequate

services. Women and girls face acts of physical violence, sexual aggression and intimidation while accessing these services. These acts include staring, deliberately brushing past women or making aggressive verbal comments while they access these services. A brief mention here of some other forms of harassment faced by women in the two areas of Delhi will illustrate this point. We believe that these experiences of women in Delhi can be extended to women in poor neighbourhoods in other cities and countries.

- i. Instances of sexual harassment in toilet blocks. Women reported that boys and men often entered the women's wing of the toilet complex.
- ii. Women shared their experiences of being followed by men on their way to the open toilets, or even being touched by men.
- iii. Women and especially girls, are pushed by men and boys while filling water from tankers, or followed when they have to walk to the neighbouring areas to collect water.
- iv. Poor drainage can affect their well-being and safety as waste water on the streets and lanes makes it difficult for them to walk on the streets.
- v. Power supply is central to the functioning of the services. Women reported that men enter women's toilet blocks during power failures. Also, as toilet complexes often shut down when there is a power failure, women are forced to use open areas for defecation which leaves them vulnerable to further harassment.

***“Girls feel uncomfortable going to toilet complexes when instead of one caretaker a whole bunch of his friends are sitting there and staring at them”.***

**Woman in her 40s on the sexual harassment faced by girls in toilet complexes.**





## II. Introduction to the Handbook



In this Handbook we demonstrate how the issue of women's safety and security while accessing essential services in low-income neighbourhoods can be addressed by using Women's Safety Audits (WSA). This participatory tool enables women to analyse the safety of a place from their own perspective. It primarily focuses on identifying the infrastructure issues that make a place feel unsafe for women and explores how men and women use space differently (gendered use of space), both of which affect the safety of women and girls. The Metropolitan Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children (METRAC), based in Toronto, Canada, developed the Women's Safety Audit (WSA) in 1989. They define the WSA as “a method to evaluate the environment from the standpoint of those who feel vulnerable and to make changes that reduce opportunities for assault...”<sup>9</sup> The tool has been subsequently used extensively in Canada and in other countries such as Argentina, Australia, India, the Netherlands, Russia, United Kingdom, the United States of America and Tanzania.

The WSA brings together local women and girls who are regular users of a space — for example a street or a park — to walk through that space to identify the factors built into the environment that render the place unsafe for them. The process also calls upon the participation of local government representatives to get involved and bring about the required changes to improve safety. After the walk, the community members note down the factors that make the space unsafe and list the issues that can be resolved with government agencies. Women play a crucial role in the subsequent negotiations with the government for the implementation of these changes. The WSA tool can be adapted to suit the local conditions and the problems specific to a particular place.

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<sup>9</sup> METRAC: Community Safety Program, accessed at: <http://www.metrac.org/about/downloads/about.metrac.brochure.pdf>

For the organisation facilitating the WSA, the process of engaging community women and girls is central to the process. In this action research project, both women's groups were already working with women in the two resettlement colonies on issues of violence against women, women's health and women's rights. The existing relationship with the local women in both the field sites facilitated the process of working on the issues of women's safety and security and essential services. In the case of Bawana, a group of women who work with the Jagori team had already approached them to work on sanitation services. This project allowed the team to respond to their interest to work on essential services.

## **Objective of the Handbook**

The objective of this Handbook is to share the adaptation of the WSA methodology with other organisations for its use in their work related to essential services in low-income communities. Here, we have adapted the WSA model to cover essential services such as water, toilets, drains, garbage disposal and electricity. Though this model is based on the experiences in Delhi, many of these issues are common to other people who live in slums, informal settlements and peri-urban areas of cities. As this action research project has shown, the methodology can easily be adapted and used in other communities and cities the world over. Community-based organisations, NGOs (especially those working on water and sanitation), women's groups and local women can use the Handbook to identify and address the gender-based service gaps, with a special focus on women's safety. They can then discuss the possible solutions for changes in services with the appropriate local service providers.

Drawing from the lessons learned in the action research project, we recommend following a sequence of preparatory steps prior to engaging in the WSA. These steps would build the team's capacity and enhance their understanding of the local community and local services and also

ensure that a wide range of issues are covered in the final safety walk as well as in the subsequent negotiations with the service providers. Our focus is on the design and location of the service infrastructure, the gendered use of spaces linked with these services and the problem of inadequate services that contribute to women having to face different forms of violence. Details of the steps of our WSA adaptation are provided herein and we encourage groups wanting to use the WSA to further adapt it to suit their own local circumstances.



## **A note on the structure of the Handbook**

The following pages provide a step-by-step guide to conducting a WSA in low-income areas of cities with a focus on essential services. Detailed guidelines for undertaking each of the steps of the WSA process have been provided. Each step informs and shapes the next. The process described below includes the steps listed here.

## **STEPS for the Women's Safety Audit Process**

### **STEP ONE**

**Rapid situational analysis** of the essential services in the community



### **STEP TWO**

**Interviews with key service providers**

to understand the perspective of the service providers



### **STEP THREE**

**Focus group discussions** with diverse groups of women, men, girls and boys to understand how the specific gender service gaps affect different people



### **STEP FOUR**

**In-depth interviews with community women and girls**

to gain insights into the different aspects of marginalisation and accessibility issues



### **STEP FIVE**

**The safety audit walk** to observe the dimensions of safety and the different forms of harassment faced by women and girls while accessing the essential services



### **STEP SIX**

**Community members work with the local government**

to address issues related to essential services so as to make communities safer for women and girls and in doing so, increase safety for all residents of the community

### III. Preparing for the Women's Safety Audit

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## **Step One: Rapid Situational Analysis (RSA) – mapping existing services**



Establish a team to coordinate and implement the Women's Safety Audit (WSA). Along with local residents, include some members from the facilitating organisations. Since the focus is on issues affecting the women and girls, the team should have a larger number of women, both young and old, to observe and document the different perspectives on essential services. If residents include minority communities, ensure they are represented in the team.

### **1) Objective of the RSA**

The objective of the RSA is to familiarise the WSA team with the existing infrastructure and services and to understand its gender, age and locational impacts on community members.

***“I have been living here for the past five years but did not realise that the structure of the drains in the new blocks was so different from the older blocks”. Local resident, part of the Rapid Situational Analysis team in Bawana.***

### **2) Steps for undertaking the RSA**

The team begins by mapping the infrastructure of the different services in the local community. This can be done through observation and by speaking with the community members. An easy way to identify the service delivery locations is to give them a reference number such as Phase I, toilet complex number 2, water point in street with house numbers 35 – 50. If the streets are numbered, then street numbers can be used. Similarly, the location of the garbage disposal points and drains can



be identified on the basis of streets, roads, etc. It is important to note the agency responsible for each service you observe. The team can also check with the residents if they have some information/knowledge about the services (Who are the service providers? Who is responsible for maintenance? How often are the facilities cleaned, maintained?).

Services that can be included in the RSA are highlighted below:<sup>10</sup>

***The team can develop their own formats for documenting the services. The formats can vary for each service.***

**i) Water points:**

- Note the state of the services, especially water points. Are they functional? If non-functional, then why so? Are they broken? Do they need repairs? Are they missing parts? Any there other reasons?
- Note who collects water at different times of the day from the different sources.

**ii) Toilet complexes:**

- Note the number of bathing, washing and toilet units for men, women and children.
- Also note other details like how many are functional or non-functional? Why are they non-functional? Are they broken? Do they need repairs? Any other reasons?
- Are user charges levied? If yes, what are the charges for the use of the toilet facilities? Are they different for men, women and children?
- How many hours a day is each complex open?

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<sup>10</sup> Keeping detailed notes of these services would be beneficial. One of the formats used by our teams on page 40

- Note whether the attendant and the cleaning person are one and the same, or are they different? Man or woman?

### **iii) Garbage disposal points:**

- Note both the designated and the informal garbage disposal sites.
- Who disposes of the garbage at the different sites? Note whether it is disposed by women/girls or men/boys?
- Ask residents about the garbage removal patterns at the different garbage disposal points. How frequently do the service providers remove garbage?

### **iv) Drains:**

- Note the design and maintenance of the drains. Are the slopes of the drain appropriately structured to allow waste water to flow smoothly?
- Are the drains covered?
- Is there solid waste in the drains? What is done with the solid waste?
- Ask the residents about the regularity with which the service providers clean the drains.
- Do residents also clean the drains? If yes, who cleans them – women/girls or men/boys?



### **v) Power supply:**

- Note the state of the power supply. Is there a continuous, 24-hours/day supply of electricity? If irregular, is an alternate source available?
- Are the water points, toilet blocks and garbage disposal areas well lit?
- What is the impact of the disruption of power supply on the other services? Do the toilet complexes shut down? Is the water supply disrupted? If yes, what do the residents do? Note what women/girls do at such times.
- What are the alternate sources for water if power is disrupted? Who collects water from alternate sources – women/girls or men/boys?

### **3) Time estimated for completing the RSA**

The time taken to complete the steps in the RSA is dependent on the size of the community and the number of team members. It is not possible for us to suggest the time that would be required to complete the RSA as each community is unique and the level of detail, the scope of the study and the size of the area to be analysed will be determined by each location.

### **4) The Rapid Situational Analysis (RSA) in the Women's Safety Audit (WSA)**

The following points will explain the significance of the RSA in conducting the WSA:

- Becoming familiar with the services in the community is an important first step towards conducting the WSA. Working on essential services may be a new experience for team members and the RSA provides them with an understanding of the issues around the gender gap in services.

**Gender gaps can be identified by asking questions such as: Are there more toilets for men than for women? Have specific needs of women been taken into account? For example, is there a provision for bins for menstrual waste in the women's toilet blocks? Do the toilet complexes ensure privacy for women?**

- The RSA is the first step in identifying gender gaps in the provision of essential services by asking questions such as: Have women's needs been taken into account in the design and provision of these services? If so, how? If not, how could they be taken into account?

In addition to mapping the gender gaps, the team should recognise the importance of informing themselves about urban planning processes, policies and legal frameworks in the context of their city and specifically in terms of low-income communities.



## **Step Two: Interviews with the Key Informants: the perspective of the service providers**



Key informants can be a number of different people involved in the provision and maintenance of essential services. They can include local service providers, doctors, NGOs, CBOs, locally elected leaders and other informal leaders. In the initial stages, it can be difficult to get in touch with the local service providers and community leaders. In our project, however, regular attempts to contact them have proved helpful and they indicated their willingness to engage in a discussion with the community members.

### **1) Objectives of conducting the interviews**

The interviews provide an opportunity to the team to establish contact with the service providers and leaders as well as introduce the concept of the WSA to them. They will also give insights into the service providers' and leaders' perceptions of safety of women and girls. The team will also get to know of the measures taken up to date to address services-related problems in the community. Discussions with local doctors provide an insight into the health-related problems that arise as a result of inadequate services, including the diseases caused by impurities in water, or urinary infections caused by unhygienic toilets.

### **2) Steps for conducting the interviews**

- i) Identify the main service providers in the community including those responsible for the local water and power supply, maintenance of toilet complexes, garbage disposal and drains.
- ii) Identify the local leaders. These could include the elected, informal or political leaders who are influential and have a following in the community.

***“We were surprised to find that in some areas each street has a leader... there are so many layers of leaders to deal with”. Team member, Bawana.***

- iii) Interviews could include questions about the state of the services, about the complaints brought forth by the community – including the problems faced by women and girls, specifically from the perspective of their safety – and the measures taken to address these complaints.
- iv) You could inform the leaders about the exercise being undertaken by the group and about the need to conduct the WSA. They should also be informed that the community members will be approaching them to address the issues identified by them as being problematic during the safety audit walk.
- v) Identify and interview local doctors, including doctors who follow indigenous systems of medicine. Ask the doctors about the health problems faced by women due to inadequate water and sanitation services.

### **3) Time estimated for completing the interviews**

To a large extent, the time required for completing the interviews will depend on the relationship that your group or organisation has with the local service providers and on the number of service providers or local leaders that you intend to, or can finally, interview. It is important to speak with the providers of all the services. Interviews generally last between thirty minutes to one hour each. Interviews should then be written up for documentation and to share with others.

#### **4) Key informant interviews in the Women's Safety Audit (WSA)**

Conducting interviews with key informants will enable the team to gain an understanding of the main responsibilities of key service providers. They will also be able and to view the situation from their perspective in terms of the limitations or constraints that they are required to work with. The interviews will serve as indicators of the extent to which the community members approach the service providers with their problems and whether these problems are addressed, or even if an effort is made to address them. Issues brought forth by the service providers and leaders, such as complaints made by community members, particularly women and girls, can be explored further in the Focus Group Discussions. Finally, the interaction between the participants will help the team to identify leaders who can be part of the safety audit walk and later be associated with the process of finding solutions to the problems observed during the WSA.





### **Step Three: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): getting the specifics about the services, service gaps and their implications**



Once familiar with the services, the existing gender gaps and aware of the issues that need to be discussed further, the team facilitating the WSA can move onto the next step – the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). With the groundwork already done, the team can now build upon the experience to gain insight into the various aspects of essential services. In particular, the ways in which the gender gaps in services impact the lives of women and girls, especially in terms of their safety and security, can now be explored further. The added advantage of having learned about the service providers' perspectives through the interviews will be beneficial for the Focus Group Discussions.

***A focus group is a moderated conversation/discussion held to get a better understanding of a particular issue and explore ideas as to how a problem might be addressed. It involves sharing specific experiences, presenting opinions and exploring possible solutions.<sup>11</sup>***

Run one FGD to test and refine the questions. FGDs can be useful for pointing to new issues that may have been overlooked. On the basis of the RSA, the team can identify if there is any other vulnerable groups whose perspective has not yet been included and hold a FGD with them. This will ensure that any proposed solutions are inclusive of the community in all its diversity.

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<sup>11</sup> JAGORI 2010, *Understanding women's safety. Towards a gender inclusive city. Research findings, Delhi, 2009-10:16*

If you plan to audio or video record the discussion, it is critical to seek permission from the group.

## **1) Objectives of conducting the FGDs**

The objective of conducting the focus group discussions is to gain deeper insights into the problems faced by women and girls while accessing the services in their community. You may consider holding separate discussions with girls (without adults) so that they feel more comfortable sharing their experiences and in speaking their mind. FGDs with men and boys are also important to explore their understanding of the problems faced by women and girls, especially with reference to their safety.

In addition to the issue of safety and security, these discussions provide the team with an opportunity to learn about the community members' understanding of local governance and of the agencies responsible for different services. Insight into the knowledge of local governance will be critical for the team to later decide the areas for capacity development of community residents.

## **2) Steps for conducting FGDs**

- i) It is important to include diverse people in focus group discussions so as to ensure that the different areas and members of the community are represented. It is recommended that each group have no more than 10-12 participants so that every one of them is able to participate meaningfully in the discussion.
- ii) The facilitators and participants can briefly introduce themselves. The facilitators can start by giving a background to the exercise. Explain that the purpose of the focus group is to collect experiences, hear views and understand and identify the problems faced by women, including factors that make them feel unsafe. The aim is to hear everyone's opinion and not to arrive at a consensus or conclusion.

iii) It is important to encourage each participant to join in the discussion. The facilitators have to be careful not to impose their views, nor ask any leading questions, or express positive or negative reactions to any comments or views expressed.



iv) The discussion can be recorded and one person can write notes on the discussion.

v) We recommend that the facilitator steer the discussion to include services such as toilets, water, sanitation, drains, garbage disposal and power supply and explore the problems faced by the participants, including safety issues while accessing the services. Explore the instances of violence faced by women and girls and the implications of this violence. What are the strategies adopted by them to cope with this violence?

vi) In the discussion with men and boys, explore their understanding of the problems faced by women and girls, especially with reference to safety. Ask them if they have any safety concerns for themselves.

vii) With each group, explore their understanding of local governance and the agency responsible for each service. Also explore if they have tried to complain about their problems. If so, what was the outcome of their complaint?

### **3) Time estimated for completing the FGDs:**

As in the case of RSA, the time it could take to complete this exercise would depend on the size of the community and the number of team members. The duration of the FGD would depend on the time that the community members can give. Sixty to ninety minutes are typically adequate to cover the diverse issues in one FGD.

#### **4) The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in the Women's Safety Audit (WSA)**

- An analysis of the FGDs will highlight the gender gaps in the services, the safety and security problems faced by women and girls in the community and strategies adopted by women to deal with these problems. For example, in our experience, the FGDs helped us understand the problems related to gender gaps in services. These included the time spent in queues waiting for water, girls being late for school because of the long waiting time and sexual harassment while waiting to use the toilets.
- FGDs will also draw attention to men's and boys' understanding of the problems faced by women and girls and the strategies they suggest to overcome the same. They will also highlight any safety concerns of men and boys.
- FGDs will help identify the issues that need to be followed up in detail. For example, if any woman or girl shares her personal experience of violence, it can be followed up with an in-depth interview in a more secure and private environment where she will feel safe to speak freely.
- FGDs will also help identify the areas where women and girls face different forms of violence and these can be included in the route of the safety audit walk. On the basis of the observations of the walk, these areas can then be taken up for discussion with the local government agencies to bring about the necessary changes in order to enhance women's safety.





## **Step Four: In-depth interviews : scoping marginalisation and accessibility**

These semi-structured in-depth interviews will provide a greater understanding of the dynamics of 'access'. The sample should be representative of the diversity in the community. The number of interviews to be undertaken can be decided upon on the basis of the size of the community and the diversity therein. For example, we did 15 interviews in Bawana as the community there is large and 10 in Bhalswa as it is a smaller community. Attempts were made to include diverse groups of women and girls. The team should take permission from the interviewee before conducting the interview and explain to her how the information will be used.

### **1) Objectives of conducting in-depth interviews**

The objective of this step is to understand the dynamics of access: how negotiations are carried out with regard to access to water and sanitation facilities by different women/ girls in the community and the challenges and the alternatives being explored/used.

### **2) Steps for conducting the interviews**

- i) First, identify the number of women to be interviewed. Ensure that the women identified reflect the diversity in the community. This would include age, marital status, geographical location, religion, race, caste, any kind of disability, pregnant/lactating women, single women, etc. As a follow up from the FGDs, interviews with one or two women/girls who have faced violence while accessing the services should also be undertaken.
- ii) We recommend that the team follow the same steps of introduction and permission as in the case of the FGDs. While making notes, please note down all the anecdotal references.

- iii) It would be important to steer the discussion to include issues of safety while accessing the essential services, especially during power failures. Or, ask them if there are other specific times when they feel particularly unsafe? What are the issues of safety with respect to using open areas for defecation? Do they have regular companions? Do they wait for others despite the need to relieve themselves urgently?
- iv) Ask whether they see race, religion, caste, age, location, regional variations and other factors affect their access to or safety in any way while using the essential services.
- v) Behaviour/attitude of service providers towards any special group (favouritism or bad behaviour) in the community. How do they feel about issues of power and domination and how do they respond? Would they prefer a woman attendant/ maintenance person and would that make any difference to their access to the services? Do women and girls feel they are treated worse because of their gender identity than the boys and men? Is age a factor, i.e. are the younger women/girls worse off than the older women or vice-versa?
- vi) Issues about which residents argue while accessing the different services – how do these get resolved if at all? How do the women respond to the arguments? What are their ongoing grievances and concerns?
- vii) What are the different problems faced by the women at different times of the day (early morning, day, evening and night) in accessing the essential services.
- viii) What are the different problems they face in different seasons (summer, winter, rainy season) in accessing these facilities?

- ix) Ask about access to home-based or private toilets to explore the pattern of usage. Do the families take loans to construct the toilets? Are rents for such houses higher? What kind of water connections do these toilets have? How do they clean the septic tanks? What is the expense? The socio-economic status of people who have indoor private toilets? Do they need permission to build these?
- x) Women/girls who faced violence/fear of abuse when accessing different services. Find out if they reported the incident to the police or to any other authority? And if so, was any action taken?
- xi) Discuss the health problems caused by inadequate or inappropriate services – do the women specifically articulate any water-related infections, skin and urinary tract infections? Others?
- xii) What are the problems faced by women and girls in bringing water from areas outside of their neighbourhood? How far do they travel to get the water? Is there any objection by other passengers in public transport? It would be interesting to understand the scope of this issue – i.e. what is the amount of water being brought from outside – even if the information is obtained anecdotally.
- xiii) It is important to explore the issues faced by single women/ pregnant women/ elderly women and girls with special needs in using sanitation facilities and in filling water from various water sources in the community. Do the community members/caretakers provide any special facility/service/monetary discounts to them?
- xiv) Follow-up with those women who have mentioned any form of complaint that they have made in the past about the services and if so, to whom? How did they complain? Explore any community actions around the complaints.



### **3) Time estimated for completing each interview**

Each interview can vary between 60 – 90 minutes. Interviews should be written up for documentation.

### **4) The interviews in the Women's Safety Audit (WSA)**

These interviews will highlight the diversity of the experiences and help the team to identify more issues during the safety walk. In particular, they will provide insights into the specific problems of marginalised women and girls. Some of these women and girls, including old women, pregnant women, women with disabilities and girls can be part of the safety walk to pinpoint the gaps in services from their perspective, especially with regard to safety and security.



## IV. The Women's Safety Audit (WSA)



The preparatory steps that follow will lead to the Women's Safety Audit. The walk is the central part of the WSA. All the previous steps were to enable the team to gain insights into the gender gaps in essential services, the issues of safety and security faced by women and girls and the implications of the insecurity that they experience. As stated earlier, in a WSA, a group of women walk together in a demarcated area to identify the factors that make them feel unsafe.

***A Women's Safety Audit (WSA) is a participatory tool that is used for collecting and assessing information about perceptions of safety in public spaces. It is a process that brings people together to walk through a physical environment, evaluate how safe it feels and identify ways to make it safer.<sup>12</sup>***

If the community is very large, then two to three audits can be undertaken, covering different areas. For example, in Delhi, we undertook three walks in Bawana and two in Bhalswa. Ideally, the walk should be in the evening after dark, but in case more walks are decided upon, they can be planned for different times of the day to observe the issues of safety at these times.

### **1) Objectives of the Women's Safety Audit (WSA)**

Besides focusing on the issues of infrastructure and design, the safety audit walks uncover subtle forms of harassment faced by women/girls

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<sup>12</sup> JAGORI 2010, *Understanding women's safety. Towards a gender inclusive city. Research findings, Delhi, 2009-10: 29*

when they access the essential services. As the safety audit encourages men and boys to join in the walk, it can also help in breaking the silence around violence against women and include men and those women who have not been part of any programmes of local women's groups in addressing the issue of safety of women/girls. Further, the safety audit will facilitate the process of negotiation with the local government to address those issues that are linked to essential services and that affect the safety of women and girls.

## **2) Steps to conduct the safety audit walk**

### **a. Preliminary steps**

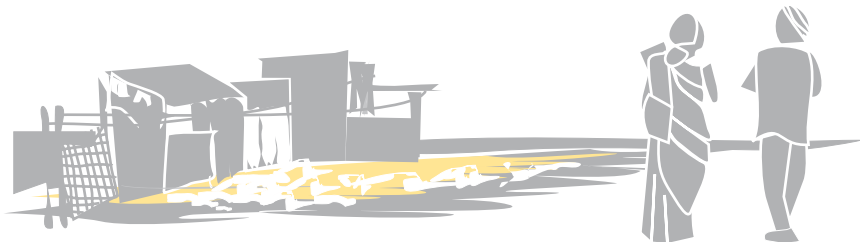
- i) A WSA group should ideally have seven or eight participants. Select a group of women, girls, men and boys, including residents/users of the area.
- ii) Give them a brief training on the WSA. They will be expected to walk through the selected area to identify issues that could make a place unsafe for women and girls in terms of access to essential services.
- iii) On average, they will be expected to devote about 2 hours for the walk.
- iv) Identify two members who will take notes of the observations. Also, identify the person who will take photographs and lead the group. Carry paper and pen for writing notes. A checklist can also be prepared and carried along.<sup>13</sup>
- v) The route should be decided with the community women to include areas that they have identified as unsafe for women and girls. Include those areas where incidents of sexual harassment took place, areas that women avoid and other areas that are considered

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<sup>13</sup> See page 40 for a sample checklist

risky or dangerous. Make a rough map of the route to be covered and explain the issues and the route to the group. For those who are not literate, symbols can be assigned for the different issues and these can be marked directly on the map.

- vi) If the geographic area is a large area, the group can be divided into two or three smaller groups.
- vii) Though the safety audits are generally conducted after dark, they should also be undertaken in the daytime as safety related to essential services can vary during the day. To map the differences, one daytime audit can be undertaken early in the morning or later in the day depending on the local situation. Another audit can be undertaken late in the evening.
- viii) For the evening audit, it would be ideal to start just before it gets dark, as the team can make observations while walking along the audit route before dark and then trace back the route after dark to map the functioning of the streetlights and the differences in the usage of space by women and men before and after dark.



- ix) Getting a government representative and/or official working in the area to join the walk would be of great benefit to the safety audit. They could be from different departments related to the essential services. Preferably, they should hold a position of influence so that they can address the identified problems. Getting officials from the electricity department could be of great value to the walk and the larger safety issues.

# Sample Checklist for Women Safety Audit

<p><b>Name of Area:</b></p> <p><b>Date:</b></p> <p><b>Route audited:</b></p> <p><b>Time and day of audit:</b></p> <p><b>Weather:</b></p> <p><b>Duration:</b></p> <p><b>Names of people who participated:</b></p>	
Streets	Comments & Findings
<p><b>Lighting</b> – Are the street lights working? Are they distributed evenly? Do they light the streets? Mark on maps lights that are not working? How long does it take to repair the lights?</p>	
<p><b>Condition of the streets</b> – Are the streets well paved? Or are they broken? Is it possible to walk fast and easily on them? Are streets accessible for people with disabilities? Is it possible for a woman with crutches or on a wheel chair to move easily on the street?</p>	
<p><b>Entrapment areas and unused land</b> – Are there any recessed doorways, alleys, demolished or unfinished buildings which could be unsafe? What is the condition of vacant/unused land? Are there any overgrown bushes and grass?</p>	
<p><b>Social usage of space</b> – Are there people on the streets? Note if men are more than women? What are they doing? Are there markets/shops on the main streets? Observe the location of cigarette and liquor shops.</p>	
<p><b>Formal surveillance</b> – Is there any visible policing?</p>	
<p><b>Informal surveillance</b> – Do surrounding buildings provide informal surveillance (shops or roadside eateries with large windows, housing with balconies)?</p>	

## **Sample Checklist for Women Safety Audit**

The template below has been prepared for “Streets”. The templates for other areas such as toilets, water points, drains and garbage disposal can be prepared on the similar lines.

Note these specifically for streets that are used by women and girls when accessing toilets, water points and garbage disposal areas.

### **b. Observe the infrastructure and the area**

When walking in group/s, it is important to focus on the infrastructure – condition of streets, streetlights, walkways, congested spaces, etc. – on route to the toilets, water points and garbage disposal points.

#### **i) Begin by observing the condition of the roads and streets**

– Are they well paved? Can you walk on them easily? Are they dug up? Ask yourself questions such as; is it possible for me to walk fast on this road? What would happen if someone chases me? Will I be able to run from here if need be? Where would I go?

#### **ii) Another important aspect of infrastructure is streetlights**

– Note the lighting on the streets? Is the area brightly and uniformly lit? Are there any obstacles – for example, bushes, trees, laundry, etc. – blocking the light? Are all the lights working in the area? If they are not, ask the participants or bystanders how long they have not been working and whether it is just at the time of the audit

***“There were so many things about our locality that I had never noticed. This walk showed me the problems of being on the streets at the time of a power failure. We should identify that as a major problem”.***  
**Boy, 17 years old after the WSA at night.**

that they are not functioning. Or have they not been functioning for some time? Has anything been done about it? If so, what has been the response of the local authorities? How long does it take for the lights to be fixed once they are broken or burnt out?

**iii) What is the condition of the vacant / unused land?** Do these areas have overgrown bushes and grass? Are there any green patches/areas/ agricultural land? Is it possible for you to see clearly when you look ahead while you are walking on the roads or on the inner streets? Is your vision obstructed by structures, bushes or other vegetation?

**iv) Is there any police station/ outpost/ or constable in the area?** How far are they? How often does the police visit or undertake their regular beat in this area? Are they easily accessible?

**v) Observe the location of the cigarette shops, liquor shops, roadside eateries and other vending shops** – Are these located close to any essential services sites? Do women and girls have to pass this area when accessing the essential services? How is this area different in the day as compared to night? Do men and women use the space differently? For example, are some people just passing through, others hanging out, others playing, people shopping, etc.? Would you feel safe being alone in this area?

**vi) Observe the location of religious places or any community centers related to essential services such as water collecting areas** – Do they have any special provision for essential services? For example, do they have water points from which residents may collect water under circumstances of water shortage?

**c. Observe the toilets and bathing spaces**

**i) Note down the observations separately** for different toilet complexes.

**ii) Observe whether or not attendants are present** – Is there an attendant? Woman/man? Young/older? Is there more than one attendant? Is s/he present all the time? What are her/his timings? How does s/he relate to the users, men/ women? Does the attendant's presence make you feel more or less safe? Why?

**iii) Is there any evidence of harassment?** Give details (staring, comments, actual physical contact/touch, stalking, etc.).

**iv) Observe the lighting of the toilet complex** – Does the complex have power supply? How is the lighting? Well-lit, dim, no light? If not lit well, what is the reason?

**v) Observe the area outside the toilet** – Are the steps/area at the entrance to the complex in good condition? Or are they broken or damaged? Will older/ pregnant/ women with disabilities find it difficult to use this area? Is there adequate space for standing in queues?

**vi) Observe the toilet and the bathing spaces** – Are the latches on the doors working or are they broken? What is the condition of the doors? Can they be locked? Or are they broken? Are parts of the door damaged, affecting the privacy of the users?

**vii) Do women have privacy while using the toilets?** If not, how is it being violated?

**viii) Do men/boys manage to gain access to women's toilets?** How? Can they enter the women's section? Do they peep through open spaces? Specify which spaces. Are there spaces where someone could hide? Make similar observations for the bathing and washing areas.

#### **d. Observe the open spaces used for defecation**

i) Observe the routes to open areas used for defecation. Is access



to the open spaces well lit? Paved? Do women have to cross male dominated spaces such as cigarette shops, etc., on the way to the open spaces? Note the vegetation in the area.

- ii) When do women/girls use these spaces? Do older women use such spaces, or do women across all age groups use them?
- iii) Are there men in the area? Do they use the same space for defecation as well?

#### **e. Observe the water supply areas**

- i) It would help to demarcate the water sources by giving them descriptive names/ numbers. Make separate notes for each water source. Observations about individual water connections operated by electric pumps can be very different compared to the public water points.
- ii) For a larger picture, ensure that the audits are done during the day as well as in the evening/late evening. For each time of the day observe who all are present at the water source? Note down men/women, approximate age groups, older women/ middle-aged women/ young girls, etc.
- iii) Are there queues? Were they formed before the water supply was turned on? Note specifically for night-time whether water comes only at night, or early in the morning when it is still dark. Is there adequate space for queues or is there shortage of space, especially if people are using the area/space as common spaces/ streets? If so, do the women/girls face harassment of any sort?
- iv) Is water collection a peaceful and organised process? Or are there fights and arguments? If so, between whom?

- v) Is the area well lit? What is the source of the light? Street lights/ light specifically planned for the area/ light from the nearby houses, etc.
- vi) Are there any attendants/ service providers at the public water supply points?
- vii) Also take note if you come across people getting water from a common place such as a religious building, community center, etc. and follow their route for similar observations as in the case of access to toilets.

#### **f. Observe the garbage disposal areas**

- i) Demarcate the different disposal areas by giving them descriptive names/ numbers. Note down your observations separately for each area. Observations about disposal areas such as vacant plots can be very different from the public disposal areas.
- ii) In order to avoid a garbage disposal area where garbage is strewn all around it, do women/ girls have to walk through isolated areas?
- iii) Do people throw their garbage around their homes?
- iv) Is there any mechanism devised by individual streets for disposal?
- v) Does any service provider ever walk by and provide information about timely disposal, etc?

#### **g. Observe the drainage system**

- i) Make a demarcation between the larger and the smaller drains in the street(s). For the larger drains, observe whether there are any issues specifically affecting women – such as any harassment when they are present in the area with their children. Children often defecate near the large drains.

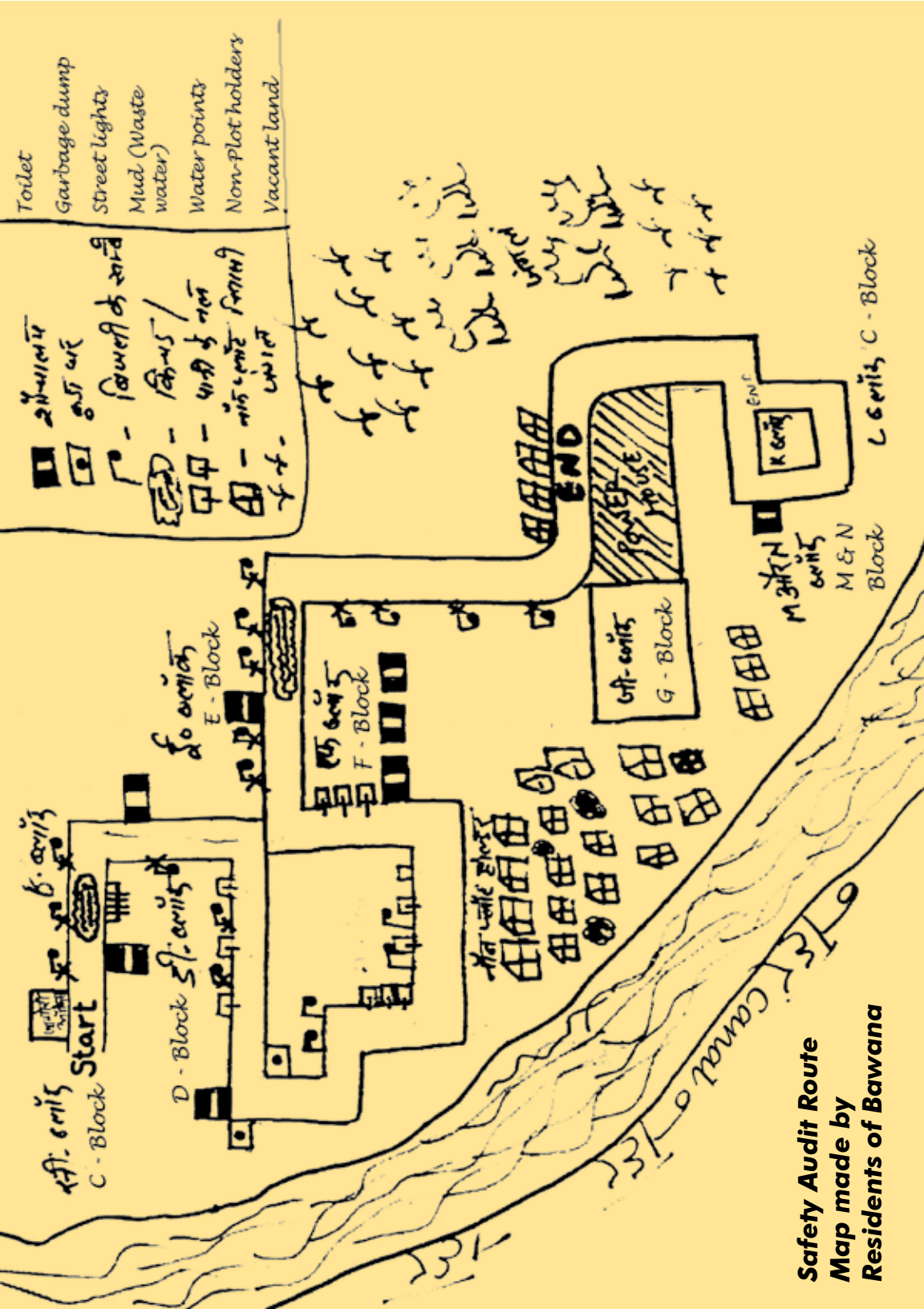
- ii) Speak to the users of the area about their interaction with the service providers who come to clean the drains. Do they provide any information about when they will come to clean the drains next? Do they have the equipment to clean the drain? Do they speak with those at home (especially women and girls) about the maintenance of the drains, etc.?

***“As a woman, I would identify the drains as the biggest problem faced by women here. It affects all aspects of our lives... outside our homes, walking on the streets and even while going to the toilet”. Woman in her late 30s during the night audit.***

- iii) Observe whether there are any women/ girls cleaning the drains outside their homes. Speak to them and ask about any problems they might be facing, especially on account of feeling unsafe given their present circumstances.
- iv) Observe whether there are any overflowing drains. If so, what do women/girls do in order to avoid them? Are they compelled to walk through an isolated area that exposes them to danger?

#### **h. Observe the gendered usage of space**

- i) In all the areas mentioned above, observe the number of men and women, including young boys and girls, using the area. Make a note of whether or not women are present in the inner and outer streets, markets, places of worship and till what time.
- ii) Observe whether there is a pattern in the usage of a space according to time.



**Safety Audit Route**  
**Map made by**  
**Residents of Bawana**

- iii) Note the areas where men are present in large numbers – cigarette and liquor shops, street corners, eateries or any other areas.
- iv) Note the areas where women are present in large numbers. They could be present in markets, near general stores, in areas with vendors, near places of worship and also parks.

### **i. Speak with the users of the space**

- i) While doing the audits speak with the women you come across in the area. Ask them about their perceptions of women's safety in the area. Do they feel safe and comfortable here? Have they heard of any incidents of sexual harassment in the area? Have they been harassed in the area? If so, at what time of day? Are there any places that they deliberately avoid? Do they opt for different routes depending on the time of the day? Do they avoid using certain spaces when they are alone?
- ii) Do they recommend any changes that will make them feel safer? What changes do they make in their day-to-day lives as a consequence of not feeling safe? For example, they go out accompanied by someone or do they not go out at all at night.
- iii) Ask yourself the same questions as you are using the same space.

### **j. Debriefing**

Hold a debriefing session immediately after the audit or the next day to discuss the observations of the group. Identify the priority issues that need to be addressed.

***The WSA does not end with the delivery of the recommendations to the relevant authorities. It will also entail regular community involvement and keeping track of where recommendations have been addressed and acted upon. It is also advisable to hold meetings with residents community and community-based groups to keep the process active and ensure their continued interest and involvement.<sup>14</sup>***

#### **k. Writing the audit notes and identifying the issues for action**

- i) Write the notes on the basis of the areas observed. This could be done street-wise or block-wise. Write down the details of all the infrastructure issues such as lights, condition of roads, etc., for all the areas. Checklists can also be used.
- ii) Identify the issues for action together with the participants in order of priority and discuss the ways in which they plan taking these up with the local authorities.

***In Bhalswa, the team is mobilising the youth to monitor the quality of services, health and hygiene and campaign on the issue through street theatre. They have engaged with the local authorities to ensure that the commitments are honoured.***

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<sup>14</sup> JAGORI 2010, Understanding women's safety. Towards a gender inclusive city. Research findings, Delhi, 2009-10:37

## **I. Discussions and working with the local authorities**

- i) Once the notes have been finalised, the main problem areas can be identified and discussed with the local authorities and service providers.
- ii) Keep detailed documentation of the discussions with the local authorities and service providers.
- iii) Keep detailed notes of the process – what changes were identified; how they were made; what was the effect of the changes; what has been learnt from the changes?



## V. Conclusion and the way forward



Identifying the factors that contribute to making a place unsafe for women and then negotiating with the local government to make it safe are critical parts of the Women's Safety Audit. The WSA assists in identifying the problems and taking the recommendations to improve services to the local authorities and service providers. This step is then followed up by working closely with them to implement the recommendations. The involvement of local women is central to this process.

Our action research process noted that there are serious concerns about the failure of the state and other stakeholders, including service providers, to develop a cohesive gender-sensitive framework on infrastructure and services. This denial and discrimination must be challenged.

Women require an enabling environment to access their full rights as citizens. Based on the findings of the action research, we engaged in a process of building the capacities of a select group of community women on the issues of rights and community-based governance. The WSA is a tool that they can use to begin to do this.

***UN-HABITAT defines urban governance as “the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action can be taken. It includes formal institutions as well as informal arrangements and the social capital of citizens”.<sup>15</sup>***

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/2232\\_80907\\_UGIndex.doc](http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/2232_80907_UGIndex.doc)



The idea of a group of women (and young women and men) coming together to develop an understanding and build their skills to explore gender-sensitive services and governance was discussed with the community. A group of about 60 women and youth in the resettlement area of Bawana came forth to be part of the group to undergo this training. The training module was developed bearing in mind the time that the community women could give for these sessions.

The capacity building sessions focused a number of important topics that were needed to engage with local service providers on the WSA recommendations. Topics included: the structures of urban local governance, public resources and distribution of essential services, the urban planning process of Delhi and the planning of resettlement colonies therein. It also included developing an understanding of discrimination against women, the realisation of their rights and issues of health and hygiene.

The methodology used for the capacity building strategy was based on the principles of adult learning. The basic foundation of this training was the recognition of the fact that the group of women learners and the youth have come with their own life experiences and struggles. This understanding helped strengthen the group and ways were found to work effectively together and to connect with each other in solidarity and through common interests. Hence, the training was built upon cohesive team building processes in which there was space for collective learning and reflection.

While the training sessions had distinctive content areas and used participatory methods and tools, they were also combined with follow up sessions by the field team. The aim was to reinforce the learning and to accompany the group of community women as they share the knowledge with others in their immediate neighbourhood. Field visits and exchange trips were also undertaken during this period. At the end of the capacity building period, a group of about 15 to 20 women

emerged as leaders. Up to the time that this handbook went to print, nearly all the training sessions had been completed.

***“Partnership with the government agency is like an aircraft... I have never seen it but would like to see one and even sit inside one of them”* Woman in her 40s about partnerships with the local government agencies.**

Based on the main findings of the action research and especially the Women' Safety Audit, the women decided to begin discussions with the local service agencies on the issue of drainage. The Jagori team contacted the local officers and requested for a meeting with the local women to hear their problems so that possible solutions could be discussed. The women, even as this manual goes to print, are in the process of negotiating the maintenance of the drains with the local officers and the community women have noted immediate positive results. As a pilot initiative, the service providers have cleared the drains of solid waste from certain sections of the resettlement colony and came to an understanding with the community members that henceforth, they will be careful not to dispose of waste in the drains. We hope that this negotiation will extend to other services and that the service providers will fulfill their obligations to the women residents.

On the basis of this experience, we recommend that the groups facilitating the Women's Safety Audits identify the needs of the women and build their capacity to enable them to negotiate with local service providers themselves to get the services they need the way they want them. Changing the relations of governance and facilitating gender-sensitive governance in low-income communities is and will continue to be an on-going process both in Bawana and Bhalswa.

It is our hope that the Handbook will prove to be a useful guide for groups working on issues of women's safety as it relates to essential services in low-income neighbourhoods around the globe. We encourage all groups to make further adaptations to this Handbook to ensure that it is inclusive and relevant for the local context. Including diverse women and girls in your work will certainly bring depth to your work and will help to shape recommendations that will make your community safer and more inclusive of women and girls in all their diversity.



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## **Preface**

This handbook is a wonderful example of partnering with people across continents to co-produce a work of knowledge and learning on globally shared concerns. It is a comprehensive guide prepared by Jagori – an organisation working for gender equality and against all forms of violence against women – on conducting Women's Safety Audit (WSAs) in low-income urban neighbourhoods, with a special focus on essential services. The Action Research Project on Women's Rights and Access to Water and Sanitation in Asian Cities (2009 – 2011) implemented in two resettlement colonies of New Delhi is also the result of a partnership between Jagori and Women in Cities International (WICI), a Canadian based organisation working both in Canada and internationally. In Delhi the project is being undertaken in partnership with Action India.

The partnership between Jagori and WICI has grown over the life of the project, expanding into the joint organising of the Third International Conference on Women's Safety. Safety audits and access to basic services has allowed for rich learning experiences over the course of the project. Our thanks to the International Development Research Centre, Canada that saw great potential for learning in linking women's safety concerns with access to essential services and their rights.

This Handbook is a learning tool and our hope is that it will inspire other groups and communities across the world to explore the links between women's safety and security and access to essential services in order to create more gender inclusive communities free from violence against women and girls. The two organisations – Jagori and Women in Cities International – jointly thank all those who have worked on this Handbook and invite the readers to make use of this valuable tool.





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