Safety Audits at Higher Education Institutions Across India

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace

an initiative of the

Foundation for Universal Responsibility
Safety Audits at Higher Education Institutions Across India

Shilpi Shabdita

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of His Holiness the Dalai Lama
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Acknowledgements

This publication compiles WISCOMP’s (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) journey of collaborating with Safetipin under the HAMSA: Campus Equity Initiative to conduct experiential trainings on Safety Audits with faculty, senior management team and students at five higher education institutions across India. It also includes a report on an online dialogue held on the Log-in Gender Portal of WISCOMP, developed as part of the HAMSA initiative. The sessions on Safety Audits were designed as a core component of the larger workshops on Gender Equity and Inclusion: Transformative Pathways in Higher Education. The HAMSA initiative is supported generously by the Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, New Delhi.

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Shilpi Shabdita
WISCOMP
Introduction

All of us interact with public spaces differently. We perceive them and access them in diverse ways – whether for work, for transit, or for leisure. Urban infrastructure is designed in a way that it neglects the mobility, accessibility and safety needs of vast sections of our population, particularly women, sexual minorities and the differently abled. Women’s lives in cities are not homogenous and experiences of safety are intersectional. Women’s identities are shaped not just by gender, but also by their caste, class, religion, sexuality, profession, disability, ethnicity, etc.

Women face violence not just as women, but additionally for being poor, Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, lesbian, transwoman, for belonging to particular geographical region, being in a wheelchair, as sex workers, domestic workers, daily wage labourers, and so on. According to Safetipin’s research, young women between 12-18 years of age are the most vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment. In addition, the Disabled, Homeless, Migrants, Children, Elderly, Sexual Minorities, and Youth in low income areas are also highly vulnerable to violence. How does the infrastructure cater to the needs of these groups?

High levels of sexual harassment against women in public spaces is framed as a ‘law and order’ problem. On the outside, it appears to only be an issue of violence against women, but if we dig deeper, it is also a problem of women’s exclusion from public spaces, their right to access the opportunities that urban spaces offer – freedom to move, study, work, leisure – and a denial of their right to the city as citizens.

It is not just violence but also the fear of violence that controls and inhibits women’s choices. For example, young girls quit education due to fear of using the public transport; women take admission in colleges that are in the vicinity of their residence, irrespective of the academic quality of the institution, due to fear of traveling to a better

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1 The Introduction draws on the valuable insights and research shared by Kalpana Viswanath, CEO, Safetipin, at the WISCOMP Workshop Gender Equity and Inclusion: Transformative Pathways in Higher Education at Cotton University, Guwahati in March 2019.
college which may be far away; women give up job opportunities due to fear of violence during commute from home to work. The ramifications of the lack of safety and fear of violence, are much broader than actual violence and vulnerability to violence. It shapes how women and sexual minorities access the city.

In this context of public spaces, when the gaze is turned to Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), we need to critically reflect upon whether our educational spaces indeed succeed in creating enabling, accessible, and equitable spaces for people with a diversity of identities and needs.

One of the important parameters to identify gendered policies, practices and procedures at HEIs is to examine the usage and design of the campus infrastructure and surrounding public space: Who is welcome and visible in the campus? Who is using the libraries, elevators, canteen and hallways and how are public spaces being inhabited? Is the lighting around the campus adequate? Does the campus provide creche facilities for faculty, non-teaching staff, and students who may be parents? What are the policies of the hostel facilities on campus in terms of curfew timings, dress code, etc.? Are there gender-neutral toilet facilities for transgender faculty, staff and students? Is the campus designed and equipped to cater to the needs of differently abled students in terms of availability of ramps, reading material, medical facilities, teaching methodology and pedagogy, and career opportunities?

To assess the gendered nature of campus spaces and infrastructure and to re-imagine ways to make HEIs more accessible, inclusive and gender-just, WISCOMP partnered with Safetipin to conduct sessions on Safety Audit as part of the HAMSA: Campus Equity Initiative. Safety Audits using the Safetipin App and the offline pen-and-paper method have been an integral part of the WISCOMP initiative at universities and colleges.

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2 WISCOMP acknowledges the research and conceptual framework on the components of Gender Audits shared by Dr. Kristy E. Kelly at the WISCOMP workshop Gender Equity and Inclusion: Transformative Pathways in Higher Education at St. Teresa’s College, Kochi in January 2019. Infrastructure design is one aspect of this framework.
The Safetipin App is global in its reach and maps safety in cities across five countries – India, Colombia, Kenya, Indonesia and the Philippines. It is designed to help citizens to reclaim public spaces and for public officials to respond to the needs of all dwellers of cities.

The quality of social and physical infrastructure can enhance women’s participation in city life. WISCOMP workshop sessions on Safety Audits with Safetipin expose economists and town planners through the university, to the political economy of ‘inclusive public spaces’ and ensure that these ideas inform curricula. The sessions involved training of the campus community in the use of the App and offline method of data collection, and discussions on the idea of ‘safe cities’ through a Gender Lens.

Methodology

Safetipin is a map-based online and mobile phone application that works to make our communities and cities safer by collecting and disseminating safety-related information on a large scale through crowd sourcing and other methods. It is a free app available in multiple languages across the world.

![Safetipin app displays the Safety Score of an area in Delhi](image)

The Safetipin App crowd-sources and collects data on safety using a color-coded system to indicate levels of safety. It gathers data along nine parameters (a combination of empirical data on lighting, usage and quality of public infrastructure as well as subjective perceptions of safety) covering all major roads and areas of the city. The objective parameters of safety include light, openness, visibility, people, security, walk path, public transport and gender
usage. These objective parameters are based on global research on incidence of violence and infrastructural and social features of the site of violence. The ninth parameter—Feeling, is a subjective measure of perception of safety.

This data is uploaded live on the online platform and can be accessed by the public to hold city officials accountable for safe public spaces, to make informed decisions about travel and to use the emergency call facility to alert family and friends in a crisis.

Users of the app can carry out Safety Audits by gathering data from a particular point in their city. Each such audit then appears as a pin on the app. Each audit-point gets uploaded immediately and is available for anyone to see on the Web or the Mobile App.

The App includes 5 sections:

- **Safety Score** that helps identify safe and unsafe neighborhoods;
- **Feeling** pin that helps users share how they feel in an area;
- **Safety Audit** that allows users to upload data in different cities;
- **Tracking** that lets users share their location with friends/family; and
- **Safest Route** that allows individuals to select the safest route from one location to another in a city that is part of the Safetipin network.

Safetipin also gathers data using cameras mounted on the windshields of vehicles to capture night-time images. These are assessed by a
certified team of coders using the safety audit parameters. Using this technology, the organization has helped several city governments and communities to improve infrastructure, especially to address ‘dark spots’ of the city.

Safetipin also offers a pen-and-paper method of data collection, where it encourages users to assess the safety of an area during a safety walk, using the following form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety Audit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a document to guide you on what you should be looking for and examining during a safety walk. We request you to note these details carefully and fill in this form. Do remember to take photographs and speak to people along the way to get their views. Also, speak to shopkeepers and street vendors, or guards as they usually know the area very well. Safety Audits can be done in all kinds of public places – streets, parks, markets, community shared areas, transport hubs, outside educational institutions among others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Name of the area: |
| Date: |
| Route audited: |
| Time and day of the audit: |
| Weather: |
| Duration: |
| Names of the people who participated: |

**Physical Infrastructure**
- Lighting – are the lights working? Do they light pedestrian ways? Are there dark areas?
- Sightliness (how far ahead can you see and be seen from)? Are there foliage/bushes/trees which hinder the view ahead?
- Are there boundary walls? If so, are they high? Can you see into the buildings?
- Are there entrapment areas – recessed doorways, alleys?
- Are there any demolished or unfinished buildings?
- Is there good signage (maps, directions, etc.)?
- Are there sidewalks? If so, are they wide enough? Are there obstructions or large cracks?
- Are sidewalks accessible for people with disabilities or with prams (dropped curbs, paved)?
- Are the public spaces surrounding you clean and well maintained?
- Are there any public toilets and dustbins? If yes, who far are they from where you are? What is their condition?
- Are there open spaces or parks? Do women and children use them? Till what time is it safe to use?

**Social Usage**
- Do the buildings in the area provide informal surveillance (shops or restaurants with large windows, housing or offices with balconies)?
- Are there street vendors?
- Are there people on the street, men/women/trans persons/children?
- Are there groups who use the street that make women feel unsafe?
- Is there any visible drug or alcohol dealing/usage?
- How many women are there? Are they rushing through or lingering?
- Are there places to spend time/hangout (benches, shade, interesting things to see such as public art)?
- Are there public community spaces?
- Are there safe pedestrian crossings?
- Are there children or youth playing? What age group?
- Are there public transport hubs close by – metro station, bus stop etc.?

**Security and Policing**
- Is there any visible policing? Police station, police booth, police patrolling.
- Are there any private security guards?
- Are there any other emergency services available?
- Are there CCTV cameras?

**Public Transport**
- Does the bus stop/metro station have enough lighting?
- Are there shops and vendors around?
- Are there people around? Are there women and children?
- Is there good signage?
- Are there emergency numbers and helpline numbers on display?
- Are there any police or police booth in the vicinity?
- Is there separate space for women inside the transport?
- Do the driver and conductor respond of women report any problem? If so, what is their response?
Glimpses of Safetipin’s work on conducting Safety Audits across Delhi-NCR, identifying ‘Dark Spots’, and advocating for better lighting facilities on streets
Pan-India Safety Audits at Higher Education Institutions

As part of its HAMSA: Campus Equity Initiative, WISCOMP partnered with Safetipin to conduct experiential trainings on Safety Audits with over 300 faculty, senior management team and students at five campuses across India. The sessions on Safety Audits were designed as a core component of the larger workshops on Gender Equity and Inclusion: Transformative Pathways in Higher Education that were organized at the following locations:

- St. Teresa’s College, Kochi on 5-8 January 2019
- Cotton University, Guwahati on 11-14 March 2019
- Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, Pune on 22-24 August 2019
- Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, Jalandhar on 17-19 September 2019
- Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar on 26-28 November 2019

St. Teresa’s College, Kochi

The session on Safety Audit was facilitated by Sonali Vyas, Program Manager, Safetipin. Setting the context of the session, Vyas shared some of the key findings of a research conducted by Safetipin on gender-based violence in public spaces. The research revealed the following:

- Women of all classes have to contend with harassment as part of their daily lives
- School and college students in the 15-19 age-group and women workers in the unorganized sectors are particularly vulnerable to violence
- Harassment occurs during day and night and in all kinds of public spaces, both secluded and crowded
• Public transport, buses and roadsides are reported as spaces where women and girls face high levels of sexual harassment
• Poor infrastructure including poor or absent streetlights, unusable pavements, and lack of public toilets compound vulnerability to violence
• The burden of ensuring safety falls on women

After sharing these context-setting facts, Vyas introduced Safety Audit as a participatory tool to evaluate the environment from the standpoint of those who feel vulnerable, and to assess infrastructure and usage of space to create inclusive spaces for all. Eventually, the goal of a safety audit is to make sustainable changes that reduce opportunities for violence. This stems from the fact that the quality of social and physical infrastructure can enhance women’s participation in city life.

Proceeding further, Vyas introduced the Safetipin app to the participants and engaged them in a collective exercise to break some myths about the usage of public spaces through a gender lens. Eliciting responses from the participants, she created a list of public spaces that individuals access and inhabit in their everyday lives. The list included the following: Shopping Malls, Parks, Hospitals, Theatres, Roads, Religious Places, Colleges, Beaches, Restaurants, Offices, Trains, Ferry, Bus Stops, Buses, Courts, Airports, Police Stations and Government Offices.

Drawing on their personal experiences, Vyas asked the participants to share the number of men and women that they may typically find in each of the public spaces in the morning and evening hours of a typical work day. Based on the visibility of men and women in the different public spaces, she asked them to give a score on a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 denoted the absence of any visibility
and 5 denoted high visibility. A rich discussion followed with several insights and questions being raised. Some participants objected to the exclusion of transgender people in the exercise, and discussed the complexities of identifying physical markers of people with different gender identities in public spaces. Vyas acknowledged that the Safetipin app currently does not include transgender people as a category of assessment and welcomed the feedback. It was interesting to note that the participants unanimously decided to include transgender people as a category in the exercise that they collectively engaged in on the usage of public space by different gender identities.

The participants then stepped outdoors in small groups to conduct a safety audit of the college campus and the surrounding areas, using the Safetipin app and the pen-and-paper method. The pen-and-paper method captures the subjective experiences of women and members of other groups in greater detail. It includes a nuanced analysis of the quality of physical infrastructure (including working lights, potholes), social infrastructure (including the presence of street vendors), security and public transport.

After conducting the safety audits, the various groups of faculty and students re-convened to share their reflections and findings. Several points emerged:

- The participants noted that the process of auditing had heightened their sensitivity to the vulnerability of different groups, particularly sexual minorities, in public spaces.
- They discussed and debated the usefulness of CCTV cameras. Since they are not an effective preventive tool and have a limited deterrent effect, institutions cannot rely solely on them to ensure safety on campuses.
- Parks were seen as safe spaces by most of the women, at different times of the day, but not so much by people with different sexual orientations and gender identities, who feared being labeled, bullied and harassed by the public.
- Some of the female students who conducted the safety audit on a street near the campus where another co-educational college was
located, shared that they felt fearful of displaying their college id cards on the streets since it carried personal details including their names. They felt afraid of being harassed and stalked by young men from the neighbouring college, and noted how they often walked in groups to avoid harassment on that street.

• Some of the female faculty shared experiences of harassment in buses. They also noted that faculty meetings outside working hours are often scheduled without prior notice and without consideration of the family and childcare commitments of the faculty. It often puts the safety of the female faculty at risk, since those who are dependent on public transport for their commute may face more incidents of harassment during the evening hours when the buses are more crowded.

• Reflecting on the gendered nature of infrastructure on campus, several students noted the absence of a pharmacy and sick room for students, lack of a common room, and inadequate toilet facilities. They also questioned the hierarchical architecture of open spaces for the management and a spacious auditorium for events, but crammed classrooms for students.

*Workshop participants conduct a Safety Audit of the College campus and the surrounding areas*
In conclusion, Vyas foregrounded that creating safety is not just responding to violence, but also creating enabling conditions for women and other minorities to move about safely without fear of violence or assault, and to correct existing inequalities. In their feedback, the participants appreciated the hands-on methodology of Safety Audit and highlighted the importance of women, men and trans persons collectively arriving at an expansive understanding of safety.

**Participant Feedback:**

“Safety in a public space is a Right and not a Privilege. Even though we know it, we still fear the community surrounding us. There is no other solution to it, other than taking concrete steps and measures and not just shouting ‘empowerment’.” – A transgender student

“I realized today that I may not be as proactive in applying my feminist ideals to daily practice. I never knew how gendered and exclusionary public spaces and infrastructure could be, until today.” – A male faculty

**Cotton University, Guwahati**

Dr. Kalpana Viswanath, CEO, Safetipin made a presentation on social audits of cities using a gender lens. Safetipin is a social enterprise that uses technology to address the issue of gender exclusion, lack of safety and its ramifications on the lives of women in cities. Dr. Viswanath shared insights on how women’s usage of public space differs from men and the myriad ways in which urban infrastructure design neglects the mobility, accessibility and safety needs of vast sections of the population that includes women and sexual minorities. She also shared details of how her organization works with cities to ensure that all sections of the population have an equal right to the city.
Several research studies by NGOs and UN agencies have reported on the high levels of sexual harassment in public spaces against women in Indian cities. One such study of Guwahati in 2012 by North East Network revealed that 70% of the respondents had faced sexual harassment in the past year. Of the women who reported facing harassment, 28% said its frequency was more than five times. Similar data has come out of Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore. This is often framed as a law and order problem. Dr. Viswanath argued that if a gender lens is used to analyze the problem, it reveals multiple layers. On the outside, it appears to be only an issue of violence against women but once we dig deeper, it is also a problem of women’s exclusion from public spaces, their right to the opportunities that urban spaces offer and denial of the right to the city.

Viswanath asked the participants to think of the numerous ways in which not just violence but the fear of violence circumscribes women’s choices. Young girls quit education due to fear of using the public transport, and women give up job opportunities based on apprehension of violence during commute from home to work. The ramifications of the lack of safety are much broader than actual vulnerability to violence. Families and women themselves internalize fears and control behavior based on fear. Fear is sometimes and, in some senses, greater than the violence itself. It determines how women access the city.

Another aspect of this reality that needs recognizing is that women’s lives in the cities are not homogenous. Women engage in a diverse set
of activities and these vary across different classes and age groups. In order to capture the ramifications of violence and the fear of violence on the lives of women, their relationship with the city needs to be understood more holistically.

Research conducted by Safetipin demonstrates that young women between the ages of 12 - 18 years are the most vulnerable to sexual violence and sexual harassment. In addition, the Disabled, Homeless, Migrants, Children, Elderly, and Youth in low-income areas are also highly vulnerable to violence. How does the city infrastructure cater to the needs of these groups? City designers have to plan for development based on the needs of these vulnerable groups.

Safety Audits by Safetipin and its partner NGOs are designed to identify barriers to women’s access to cities and to articulate solutions that create an enabling environment and correct existing inequalities. In this context, Dr. Viswanath drew attention to the fact that in India there are very few women bus drivers. On the surface, this appears to be a problem of gender stereotypes but when we look deeper, we find that Indian cities are not designed for women to take up careers as bus drivers. She observed that Safetipin audits found that in Delhi, bus depots do not have women’s toilets. Measures for gender equality have to move beyond only putting out an advertisement that states that the city authorities encourage women to apply. There is a need to think through equality measures so that they remove existing barriers. Safetipin has found through its work that the quality of social and physical infrastructure in cities can enable women’s participation in city life.

Assuming that as of 2019, more than 30% of India’s population lives in urban areas and in all likelihood by 2030 it will become more that 50% urban, it is important to gauge whether women have an equal right to the city.
Safetipin’s approach to Safer Cities:
- Conduct safety audits, research studies, organize FGD discussions with diverse stakeholders, and monitor and evaluate change.
- Provide audit reports to city authorities to improve amenities and policies.
- Support community-based initiatives through campaigns, women and youth collectives, schools and universities.
- Provide information on gender responsive urban design, infrastructure planning and delivery of services to policy makers.

Dr. Viswanath clarified that the right to the city is not the same as using a human rights framework for women’s rights. It is an idea propounded by Henri Lefebvre. It encompasses the ability to ‘define the city’, not just a right to the services. Women have a right to articulate and contribute to the kind of city they want.

Elaborating on a gender friendly city, Viswanath noted that besides providing basic services like sanitation and water, it provides spaces for play and leisure. Usually, women access public spaces for purposeful activities and not leisure.

In India today, perhaps the first thing that women would demand of a city is freedom from fear. Safetipin and Jagori have been pioneers in the area of building safer cities. Governments often look at the problem in a piece-meal manner, and that is why the solutions include adding CCTV cameras, increasing police patrols, improving lights on the streets, etc. But these solutions do not eliminate the problem of fear. Safetipin draws attention to the lack of women’s safety as a holistic problem. Since not all aspects of the problem can be addressed together, there is a need to prioritize.

Spatial factors have an impact on perception about safety and both social and physical features of space play a part in this perception.

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3 Right to the city has been reclaimed more recently by social movements, thinkers and several progressive local authorities alike as a call to action to reclaim the city as a co-created space—a place for life detached from the growing effects that commodification and capitalism have had over social interaction and the rise of spatial inequalities in worldwide cities throughout the last two centuries.
Some of the spatial factors that influence safety perceptions for women are: visibility, clear and alternative routes, and the presence of diverse groups of people.

The availability of public transportation and the types of spaces that support mobility are critical factors that determine the quality of life for women and the marginalized. The city should offer a wide variety of options, with priority given to pedestrian options within a mixed-use urban fabric. Public transportation should also respond to diverse schedules and needs, and not only to the able-bodied, heterosexual male who goes to work in the morning and comes back in the evening. Safety Audits help to unpack the norms and ask questions about the right to the city for a range of people, not just women, but diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. The idea of the male as model needs to be challenged. If we don’t look at gender as a binary concept but instead take into consideration the needs of all groups and become sensitive to the discrimination, hostility, violence and exclusion they face in the cities, we will be able to build more inclusive cities.

Lessons from the work of Safetipin:

- Work collaboratively with the community to identify issues, audit & prepare a Community Action Plan
- Data helps to build credibility with policy level stakeholders
- Asking questions generates change in behavior and attitudes and builds a sense of ownership.
- Safety Audits are not pure research exercises; they are designed for application and action.

In addition to Viswanath’s presentation, a parallel workshop was conducted with the students of Guwahati University on conducting Safety Audits in and around their campus. Led by Sonali Vyas as an interactive session, the students explored several questions together—What are the various perceptions of safety on campuses? Do men and women perceive safety in public spaces differently? What are the factors that limit, and what are the factors that enable a sense of safety? How does one ‘audit’ safety on the campus?
Vyas initiated a discussion on safety audits by inviting the participants to reflect on the visibility of men, women and other gender minorities in various public spaces in their city during the morning and evening hours of a typical work day. Vyas noted that the access to public spaces is directly proportional to the fear of violence, both perceived and actual, thus making it ‘unsafe’ or ‘secure’ for different sections of the society. An important element of city-planning is re-assessment of issues of mobility, accessibility and security needs, especially that of women and gender minorities. Her organization, Safetipin, works in this direction through advocacy, policy interventions and consultations with diverse stakeholders.

Sharing findings from various research projects undertaken by Safetipin, Vyas highlighted that it is important to acknowledge that women hold various intersectional identities across the faultlines of class, caste, religion, age, profession and ethnicity. All of these collectively shape their experiences of violence and safety in public spaces. Safety Audits, she noted, seek to bring women’s experiences of exclusion into public focus and consciousness, with a view to bring about changes in their experiences of security and enhance freedom of movement. Therefore, safety in public spaces entails infrastructural changes, alterations in the usage of space with a view to create safe surroundings, along with deeper attitudinal and behavioral shifts towards safety of all individuals.

Post her presentation, Vyas encouraged the participants to walk around the campus and conduct a Safety Audit of different locations using the Safetipin app on their mobile phones and the pen-and-paper method.
Participants reconvened after conducting the audits and shared their experiences. They all shared that it was their first experience of conducting a safety audit and they found it to be deeply enriching and enabling. By the end of the session, majority of the participants expressed keenness to conduct such safety audits frequently so as to positively contribute towards the policy making.

**Participant Feedback:**

“The process of conducting a Safety Audit made me re-look and pay attention to minute details of the streets and campus spaces which I would have normally overlooked. I now see them from the lens of a woman, a transgender person, a student in a wheelchair, a pregnant faculty member, a cleaning staff who works late in the evenings and goes home in a bus.” – A Male Student

“Safety Audit is the practical analogue of ‘think globally, act locally’, as the audits of every spot will help build safe and inclusive localities, and contribute to a global database which will inform global ideas of gender equality, peace and security.” – A Female Student

**Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, Pune**

A workshop on Safety Audits for students ran concurrent to the faculty workshop with a view to seed dialogue in the broader college community on the themes of gender equity and inclusion. The workshop participants included 30 undergraduate students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds.

The session on Safety Audit was facilitated by Sonali Vyas who built a theoretical understanding of the gendered nature of public space and infrastructure, and encouraged the participants to conduct a Safety Audit of their campus. Upon reconvening after conducting the audit, the participants shared that while their campus was largely gender-just in its ethos, they had some observations around the need for gender-neutral toilet facilities, infrastructural support for sanitation staff, need for awareness building on the spatial and infrastructural needs of people with different sexual orientations and gender identities, among others.
Rwitee Mandal, Senior Program Manager, Safetipin made a presentation on safety audits of cities using a gender lens and led an interactive session with the faculty, senior management and students. Highlighting case studies from various contexts including Colombia, Vietnam, and New Delhi in India, she shared details of how her organization works with cities to ensure that all sections of the population have an equal right to the city. She also noted that several research studies by NGOs and UN agencies have reported on the high levels of sexual harassment in public spaces against women in Indian cities.

Proceeding further, Mandal encouraged the participants to walk around the campus and conduct a Safety Audit of different locations using the Safetipin App on their mobile phones, which was followed by a rich de-brief:

- The participants were unanimous in sharing that this was the first time they had conducted a safety audit and felt that the experience was deeply enabling and revealing.
- The process of conducting the audit nudged them to question what ‘safety concerns’ look like in an all-women’s college and broaden their own understanding of safe spaces.
- The students lauded the initiative taken by the college to hire female security guards on the campus and female bus conductors who accompany them during their commute from the campus to their homes and back.
- Participants emphasized the need for the Safetipin app to provide desegregated data on safety shared by users, moving away from
simplistic binaries of male-female, to also reveal their intersecting identities of class, caste, profession, age and ethnicity.

- Some female faculty noted that although deployment of police personnel is seen as a measure to ensure the safety of women, the experience of visiting a police station for a woman to register a complaint is one that is fraught with insecurities.

In conclusion, Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Director, WISCOMP, made an observation about how the perception of the same place can be very different for different people. While talking about safety, several questions emerge around what safety constitutes, what we mean by safe zones, what we believe is always lurking in the shadows. This could be based on some previous experience, it could be based on memory, it could be based on the specific location, it could be based on transmission of a particular kind of history that is associated with that place. She also shared examples of creative initiatives such as night walks led by women to claim the night and public spaces, among other such initiatives.

Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar

Seema Kakran, Deputy Director, WISCOMP and Diksha Poddar, Consultant WISCOMP, facilitated an interactive session to involve the participants in an exercise where they worked in groups to virtually carry out a Safety Audit. The facilitators introduced two tools for conducting the audit, one developed by Safetipin and another by Jagori, a New Delhi based feminist organization.

Seema Kakran engages with participants at the session on Safety Audit

Safetipin has developed a mobile app that can be used to carry out an audit in any public space. Each group selected an area (either inside or
outside the campus) that all members in the group were familiar with and assessed perception of safety based on a set of physical and social characteristics. Before proceeding with discussion in their groups, the facilitators provided a brief overview of why safety audits of public spaces are considered important. The links of Safety Audit to Urban Design and Time Use were elaborated upon.

The groups discussed perceptions of safety guided by questions that focused on physical infrastructure, social usage, security and policing, and public transport.

After the deliberations, the participants observed that while the K.I.S.S. (Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences) and K.I.I.T. (Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology) campuses were in general safe for women and men, the areas surrounding the campuses had several issues. The following issues were raised about safety near the campus and during movement from one part of the campus to another part:

- Issue of lighting in the evening and at night
- The existence of a resettlement area near the campus that is unsafe due to criminal activities including sexual harassment and snatchings
- Lack of functioning public toilets
- Lack of a sense of safety despite police presence in the vicinity of the campus
- Research scholars and younger faculty who stay on campus for late evening classes noted that they feel unsafe and have difficulty in accessing public transport (both cabs and buses)
- Lack of display of emergency numbers
- Park close to campus with lot of men was pointed out as a cause for feeling unsafe
- Normalization of activities like drinking in public areas
- Presence of street animals, particularly dogs, increases sense of fear. If one is bitten by a dog, women felt rather unsafe rushing to a hospital for treatment by themselves
• Lack of boundary wall makes women feel unsafe
• Accessibility issues for wheelchairs

Participants also noted some of the factors that made them feel safer in public places:

• Presence of security guards
• Women auto drivers in the city
• Transwoman cab drivers and women cab drivers

It was also noted that CCTV cameras have added to everyone’s sense of safety on campus as it has led to better monitoring of entry and exit of persons. However, CCTVs are only helpful after an incident of violence occurs. It does not prevent violence. Some of the participants noted that the availability of safe drinking water should also be included in safety audit.

Kakran and Poddar concluded the session by sharing some of the findings from Safety Audits conducted in bigger cities that have revealed who the most vulnerable groups are and how policy change has been brought about especially in Delhi. They asked the participants to collect data with safety audit tool and use it to advocate for provision of facilities within the institution and in the larger city of Bhubaneswar.
Creative Dialogues on Engendering Educational Spaces

“Walking is the ultimate philosophical statement on freedom. To walk free and without threat is to be a citizen. Walking freely is one of the greatest entitlements of freedom and citizenship. To walk without being questioned, to walk free, is virtually to dream free. When you suppress a walk, cage a body, you cage a mind. Violence begins when you destroy the innocence of walking.”

– Shiv Vishvanathan

Log-in Gender’s Inaugural Genderlogue was hosted as a vibrant online discussion on the theme of ‘Creative Dialogues on Engendering Educational Spaces’ on June 4, 2019. It aimed to initiate public conversations on themes of safety, inclusion, gendered infrastructure, enabling spaces, mobility and agency through an intersectional lens to uncover the many facets of Safety Audits within higher educational spaces. 25 participants from across the country connected virtually to engage in a rich discussion on the varied themes and share their imaginations of inclusive and gender-just higher education spaces. The participants included educators, media professionals, architects, development practitioners, NGO workers and students from across disciplines such as Design, Engineering, History, and Law, among others. The online discussion witnessed the representation of diverse intersecting identities including gender, sexual orientation, caste, class, language, among others.

The online discussion prompted deeply insightful responses from the participants, who contributed over 70 responses to five elicitive questions posted on the forum. The following pages carry the questions and some of the reflections and insights shared by the participants, to share a glimpse of the rich conversations and incisive questions that emerged at the discussion forum.
When I take the metro, I have to think of what I’m wearing, and use the women’s compartment, unless I’m travelling with a male friend, because I feel safer there. When I travel alone in an auto, I sit on the side closer to the road. I imagine myself jumping off in case the driver turns predatory, and I have my Maps on because auto drivers sometimes take by-lanes. It sounds absurd and irrational, but the fear is real. Auto drivers also charge us extra at late in the night and this is not even for their sacrifice of sleep, but for “letting us reach safely” which is quite enraging. My identity as a woman from the North-East requires me to take extra measures, because I have personally experienced disturbing remarks, especially at night.”

- Teresa Vanmalsawmi

“It is definitely restrictive, even with my own advancing age. I need to be extra cautious about the time of the day, about how desolate my surroundings are, and who are around me – men or women – whether it’s a group of men or a suspicious looking single man (of any age). Late night is avoided at all costs unless I am with a ‘safe’ group of friends. I have traveled solo in various parts of my country and the world.
Somehow a tent in Rajasthan – in the middle of a desert felt safer than a crowded metro in Delhi. And I cannot explain why.”
– Kamalika Bose

“My identity as a female in Kashmir definitely shapes my experiences of public spaces, especially in public transport and with regard to sharing personal information and pictures on social media. In a public transport, as a female if I ever face undesirable gestures by any guy, unfortunately, if I try to argue with him, everyone sitting in the bus or sumo will start gazing at me as if it was my fault, instead of supporting me. Regarding social media, particularly Facebook, I feel very unsafe about uploading my pictures as well as certain posts because of many reasons.”
– Bhat Aafiya

“My identity as an upper caste, privileged, brown cis-man in India has a noticeable bearing on my experiences of public spaces. Apart from my sex, my caste/surname has played a very invisible yet impactful role in giving me an undue advantage when it comes to access and preference in institutional setups, without me even wanting it. Having been living in Delhi for over 9 years, I have extensively used different forms of public transport (day & night) and not even once during those years did I experience any violation (apart from the general over-crowdedness in the city transport) of my space or dignity. On the other hand, there would hardly be any female friends/colleagues who have not had one or more harrowing experiences in the same spaces.”
– Ranjan
“This is a terrifying situation to be in. As a woman, I would ideally look for a few other people who are willing to accompany me. If that doesn’t work out, I’d probably get someone to stay on call with me. However, that would not be enough to ease the fear. Going to the resource center would depend upon a number of factors such as is the road well-lit and safe, do I know a trusted public transport person (for example a frequent rickshaw guy who has proven to be safe in the past), how ‘shady’ the area is, which is to say what are the chances of someone walking out of the shadows and mugging/assaulting me etc. However, these are just hypotheticals. In reality I would probably look for an alternate resource online, in the comfort and safety of my room, and if I am not able to find it then I will just leave it till the next day morning, even if, unfortunately, my grades suffer.”
– Lalantika Arvind

“I have studied in CEPT University. The hostel was around a mile away from our campus. If I ever needed to visit the campus late at night, I would surely first find a friend to accompany me. Also, CEPT had assigned a few rikshawalas who would wait at the campus gate for students throughout the day. Their vehicle number, id and phone number were registered with gate-keepers hence they were a reliable and safe mode to travel even during night time. I suppose not all campus have such facilities, but yes, if brought into action we can achieve a safe model for every campus.”
– Sonali Vyas
“CCTV cameras in schools haven’t necessarily ensured that students don’t get sexually abused. That said, CCTV cameras might serve as deterrence because visual footage could be used to implicate an offender. The downside of CCTV cameras is surveillance over student activism, and moral policing that could be used to target inter-caste and queer relationships.”
– Chintan Girish Modi

“Presence of CCTV cameras in a completely dark street can be helpful in making someone feel safe to some extent. However, it is not a complete solution. Cities are dynamic spaces which are changing constantly. I feel creating “eyes on streets” is a more realistic solution for enhancing one’s safety perceptions, especially women. I am pretty sure many more people would be willing to walk outside the college campus if there are more people or activities likes hawkers and vendors selling street food, shopping goods, etc. happening around.”
– Sonali Vyas
“I believe that CCTV cameras would make my parents feel safer about the accommodation. But I am not certain about how comfortable I will be. While it is intended to ensure safety of the tenants, I am skeptical about who will monitor these cameras and what they can do with the footage. I am sure my thoughts on CCTV will evolve over time, depending upon what I experience in life. I do think it is necessary to monitor poorly lit areas near the campus. Several girls from my college have been stalked and harassed in such locations but arresting those culprits was difficult because there was no way of confirming their identity. Good quality CCTV cameras should go a long way in checking this problem. However, placing cameras in common rooms can have a detrimental impact on the privacy of students and their freedom of speech.”
– Tarini Sudhakar
“I think it is pertinent that language is tuned to ensure that it isn’t merely tokenistic. Which is to say that it isn’t about putting ‘she’ before ‘he’, but more specifically acknowledging and being cognizant of gendered pronouns and terms. Specifically, we notice that at seminars and lectures, it is common to refer to women as ‘chairman’, ‘spokesman’ etc. It is important to start acknowledging women as women.”
– Sitara

“The language of safety can be made more inclusive and enabling by inviting the participation of a diverse student body to define what safety means to them instead of having a top-down approach wherein policymakers determine what safety means. The construct of safety is influenced by how people experience their gender identity, sexual orientation, caste, class, ethnicity, body image, religious identity, linguistic identity, (dis)ability, and more.”
– Chintan Girish Modi

“We need to look at the language of safety from an intersectional lens. My colleagues and I are working to create a safe space at school for young people from different parts of the world. For many of our students, English
is their second language. A few students have asked me – “what can I do to change my accent?” I think it is important for us to be more culturally responsive in an international school setting. So, when I teach a lesson on media and advertisement, I normalise identities through a selection of resources. I introduced Malala’s speech to teach persuasive techniques so that students understand that the accent should not define our ability to speak a language. It is so important to create visibility of queer identities in our everyday teaching. When I taught a unit on advertisement and media, I showed a commercial of two African American fathers getting their daughters ready for school. Unfortunately, in a school that is dominantly white, black kids and Asian kids don’t see themselves in the books and resources that they use. The plays we perform, the songs we sing at school, our everyday language of boys/girls stems from a cis-heteropatriarchal culture. While the school is open to making a cultural shift, it is important for teachers to identify social justice standards and embed these into their curriculum framework to plan lessons that are age and context-appropriate. For example, in Indian schools, we do not talk about caste and caste privilege. These concepts need to be unpacked in the classrooms for us to see a visible change.”

-Tulika Bathija
“Very often, the language and idea of inclusion are limited to supporting students that need support to develop their English language abilities and students with learning needs. Unfortunately, we don’t see our students as whole people with overlapping and intersecting identities. Some suggestions include:

1. Celebrating diversity through Black history, Women’s history, and Dalit history month for example. Moving away from saviourhood and facilitating lessons to amplify the voices of community leaders from historically disadvantaged groups to help young people reflect on questions of caste/class/race/gender/able-body privilege
2. Celebrating Pride Month
3. Reading LGBTQIA+ literature in the classroom
4. Bilingual storytelling performance — an opportunity for second language learners
of English to embrace and take pride in their bilingual identities, recognizing that their first language and/or mother tongue is an asset.

Our policies and structures should also be inclusive. For example, having a gender-neutral bathroom, a wheelchair accessible campus, and opportunities for young people to participate in mixed gender sports.”
- Tulika Bathija

“Some suggestions based on my study on Harassment of Female Students in Educational Institutions are:

1. Educate students about harassment and its various aspects. Students must be taught the difference between friendly teasing and bullying, and between flirting and harassment.
2. Make zero-tolerance for harassment a top institutional priority. Train and empower teachers to take a stand against sexual language and harassment.
3. Students often feel fear or shame while sharing incidents of harassment with their family and teachers. They need encouragement to discuss experiences of harassment like molestation, bullying etc., and an understanding of their right to safety and right against abuse and exploitation.
4. Self-defence classes for female students should be part of curriculum.”
- Bhat Aafiya

“For educational spaces to be inclusive, and gender-just, it’s important to think of: 1). intersectionality and 2). the formal-informal spaces in educational institutions.

Intersectionality in practice means to ensure that all kinds of identities and experiences are represented adequately in the student body and teaching departments. Educational institutions need to think about their hiring practices and admissions policies to make sure that the people who work, learn, and live in their institutions do not form an elitist, homogeneous cohort.

The second thing is to focus on formal and informal spaces. As a university student, it took me a long time to realise that classrooms are incredibly alienating and exclusive spaces where only certain kinds of
people (mostly from urban, savarna, upper/middle class backgrounds with an expensive, private English-medium school education) are prominently visible in classroom discussions, tutorials etc. and receive formal recognition for their work in the form of better grades, awards, scholarships, internship opportunities, job offers etc. This certainly has to change, and the institution and the faculty have to proactively make the classrooms more inclusive because it is unfair to burden students from marginalised backgrounds with this responsibility. One can implement inclusivity training programs for teachers. So, for example, if a Dalit student from a vernacular-medium background is finding it difficult to do an assigned reading for a course and is therefore unable to write an essay based on that reading, the student should be able to approach the teacher and ask for help without the fear of being dismissed or ridiculed and also receive practical support – like an extension in the submission deadline or different readings, perhaps – to finish the task effectively. Another way to do this would be to create a rigorous, anonymous feedback-mechanism for the teaching process so that students can express their concerns and problems in a safe way and hopefully, these can be implemented thereafter in the teaching process.”

- Shrinidhi Narasimhan
Profiles of Resource Persons from Safetipin

**Kalpana Viswanath** is the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Safetipin, a social enterprise that uses data and technology to support cities in their endeavour to become safer, more inclusive and smarter. Since its inception in 2013, Safetipin has worked with more than 30 cities in India and other developing countries. Safetipin collects public space data through multiple sources including the MySafetipin app, and works with governments, to use this data for better planning and maintenance of cities. Earlier, Ms. Viswanath headed Jagori, a leading NGO working on women’s rights. She has led large projects globally, and has been a consultant for many agencies including Women in Cities International, Action Aid, Plan International, UN Women, and UN Habitat. She has published widely in journals, magazines and newspapers and is on the board of several organizations including International Center for the Prevention of Crime in Canada and Advisory Board of Women in Cities International.

**Rwitee Mandal** is Senior Program Manager at Safetipin. Ms. Mandal works as a data analyst to look at how gender and the built environment intersect in creating inequalities in public spaces. She guides the team at Safetipin with content development, data representation and intervention recommendations. An Architect and Urban Designer from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, her primary expertise lies in ‘Gender and Space’. She has worked in varied capacities with women centric organisations and urban design practices in India. Currently, she is also a visiting faculty at her alma mater at the Post Graduate Urban Design Programme.

**Sonali Vyas** is Program Manager at Safetipin. As an Architect-Urban Planner, she works on data analysis, representation and is involved in developing design and policy level recommendations to make public spaces safer for everyone. Ms. Vyas works with Safetipin partners – governments, NGOs, city planners, international agencies and corporates, to provide and use safety data for change. She also manages project campaign and documentation. She has completed B Arch. at Aayojan School of Architecture, Jaipur and post-graduate studies from CEPT University, Ahmedabad.
Profiles of WISCOMP Team

Meenakshi Gopinath is an Educationist, Political Scientist and the Founder and Director of Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP). Formerly, she served for over 26 years as Principal of Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. Dr. Gopinath was the first woman to serve as Member of the National Security Advisory Board of India. She has been a member of the Advisory Board on the Planning Commission of India and the University Grants Commission (UGC). At the UGC, she was Co-Chair of the Committee on Measures for Safety of Women and Programs for Gender Sensitization on Campuses. Dr. Gopinath has lectured across the world on issues of Conflict Transformation, Peacebuilding, Women's Leadership, Education for Peace, and Diplomacy. She serves on the governing boards of prominent research institutes and educational institutions and has developed curricula on educating for peace in many universities and schools. In recognition of her contribution to the field of women’s education and empowerment, she has received several awards including the Padma Shri Award; Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi Award; Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Education; among others. She was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree for significant contribution to the education of women and commitment to fostering global peace through Conflict Resolution by La Trobe University, Australia.

Seema Kakran is Deputy Director at WISCOMP with over a decade of experience of designing gender trainings and conducting research on issues of inclusion and diversity. Ms. Kakran holds experience in Monitoring and Evaluation of peacebuilding and educational initiatives and mentoring of young scholars in the areas of conflict resolution, international law, peace education and non-traditional security concerns. Ms. Kakran has previously taught Political Science at the University of Delhi and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, USA. A specialist in public policy analysis, political theory and evaluation methodologies, Ms. Kakran holds a Graduate Certificate in Public Policy Analysis from University of Nebraska–Lincoln. She has also attended courses in Evaluation Methodology at INCORE, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, and Gender Evaluation
Methodology and Participatory Evaluation Training of Community of Evaluators (A South Asia Network). She has completed pre-doctoral work at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and holds M.Phil and Masters’ degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University and University of Delhi. Her research focuses on gender equality and sociopolitical conflicts in India.

**Diksha Poddar** is a Consultant at WISCOMP. She conducts research on youth, peace and security. She holds an M.Phil from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and her dissertation was titled ‘Interlinkages between Development and Conflict: A Case Study of South Asia, 1991-2015’. Ms. Poddar holds a Masters’ degree in Development Studies from Ambedkar University Delhi and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Conflict Transformation and Peace Building from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. A graduate in Political Science and Economics from Lady Shri Ram College, she is actively engaged in several youth leadership initiatives, including the ‘The Multi-Stakeholder Engagement Initiative’ (TMSEI) between youth from Kashmir and other parts of India. Her research interests include youth and peacebuilding, gender, conflict and development.

**Shilpi Shabdita** is a Consultant at WISCOMP. She holds a Masters’ degree in International Peace Studies from University of Notre Dame, U.S.A., along with a Post-Graduate Diploma in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding and a Bachelors’ degree in Mathematics and Economics from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. Previously, she worked at Heartland Alliance, U.S.A., providing case management services to unaccompanied minors from South Asia, West Africa, and South America apprehended by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. She has worked in Uganda on a USAID-SAFE project at Justice and Reconciliation Project, a grassroots organization engaged in transitional justice efforts. She co-authored a USAID Policy Report ‘Mapping Regional Reconciliation in Northern Uganda’. She also collated and edited a ‘Memory Book’ documenting war memories and justice needs of 283 LRA-war victims and former combatants in Uganda. She has also served as a Grant Writer at Afghan’s for Progressive Thinking.
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