

Gender Inclusive Urban Planning in Pune City

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Abstract: *According to reports published by United Nations, migration from smaller cities and towns is one of the main reasons for the urbanization phenomenon and this will further increase in coming years. When cities expand it results in urban sprawls and development of outer areas of the cities that result in long travel time and related distances to jobs, leisure and other activities from the core areas where maximum job opportunities exist. The issue of women's safety at public spaces (areas located in the outskirts of Pune core city) in Pune has come up in sharp focus over the past five years; with increasing media coverage and public outrage at violence faced by women of all social classes and age groups. This paper presents better understanding of gender sensitive issues in the identified areas located in Pune, the concerns of women and safety measures in the urban planning and design that results in encouraging policy makers, planners and urban designers to integrate gender perspective planning strategies in decision making process so as to create a safer, sustainable and inclusive urban development.*

Keywords: Gender Sensitive, Urban Design, Migration, Women Safety

I. INTRODUCTION

As per 2011 census of India the urbanization in Pune district is among the highest in the Maharashtra state with over 57.39 lakh people living in cities. When matched with the total population of 94.26 lakh, Census data showed that 60.88% people are concentrated in urban areas of Pune district, up from 58.08% in 2001[i]. On the other hand, population in rural areas was 36.87 lakh, falling from 41.92% in 2001 to 39.11% in 2011¹. Migration is one of the major factors in urbanization of Pune city due to the expansion of the information technology (IT) sector that has given rise to several job opportunities. People migrate and prefer to stay in urban areas because of these opportunities. Migration has also put pressure on the city's limits which have expanded to include surrounding villages. Rapid urbanization leading to urban sprawl in Pune results in development in the peripheral areas resulting in long travelling distance to work places, recreational and other facilities. The pace at which urbanization is taking place is overtaking the ability of city authorities to keep up with the demand for public services. This outward development is devoid of densification,

¹ <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/in-50-per-cent-rape-cases-in-pune-last-year-crime-committed-after-false-promise-of-marriage-4460959/>

proper planning of mixed use development and provision of public services, safe streets or pedestrian walkways especially to Women. In the current scenario urban planning and design largely ignores gender-specific experiences and in turn exposing Women to the risk of sexual harassment and assault. This issue should to be addressed by integrating gender sensitive planning at the policy and ground level.

II. AIM OF STUDY

The main aim of this study is to understand the gender sensitive issues and concerns and the need of safety measures for women in the urban planning. Also this paper will encourage policy makers, planners and urban designers to integrate gender perspective planning strategies as a pre-requisite factor in the policies, programs and decision making process so as to create a safer, sustainable and inclusive urban development.

III. SAFE AND INCLUSIVE CITIES

With the advent of industrial age and technological age women have been equally contributing in the family income. They have been going out, working in offices which are far or near to their homes. Safe city promotes the elimination of gender-based violence and at the same time advocates equal opportunities for men and women in all the spheres of social, economic, cultural and political life (access to employment, education, political participation, resources and leisure, etc.).[ii] Safe cities eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by simultaneously targeting the systemic societal factors that create gender inequality and empowering women and girls to make changes within their communities. At the core of the safe cities for women movement is the belief that violence and fear of violence restricts women's and girls' access to their cities, including to employment, health, education, political and recreation facilities. Thus, as a result of violence and fear of violence, women and girls are excluded from various aspects of city life and do not have the same rights to cities as men [iii]. Inclusive cities on the other hand offer safety and security for all occupants, irrespective of age and gender. Urban planning is part of the larger context of urban growth, management and governance. The examining of urban governance with gender and socio-economic dynamics of the city is a critical starting point in assurance of equalities, inclusion, and urban sustainability. Gender mainstreaming across local governments offers an opportunity to create inclusive cities respecting the rights of both women and men. Only when the diverse experiences and needs of women and men are integrated into urban planning and design, it will be possible to form an inclusive, sustainable and intact urban environment [iv].

IV. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PLANNING

Men and Women experience cities in different ways. A gender perspective in urban planning requires integration of all the concerns and solutions that all genders face while experiencing the city on day to day basis. The implementation of gender mainstreaming implies equality and equal opportunities for women and men in all activities and areas of life.

In this, “gender” refers to a person’s social gender rather than just the biological differences between women and men and also includes the respective person’s upbringing according to gender roles, social expectations and (behavioural) norms for women/girls and men/boys. These norms are mutable and vary both within and between cultures. Mainstreaming means that the strategy wants to be an integral part of all political and planning decisions. Respect for the everyday life of women and men, of younger and older persons is the foundation of a gender-sensitive planning culture. Groups that tend to be underrepresented in urban planning processes are to be increasingly supported in their everyday lives.

Women not only perceive and experience cities in a way different than men, but also use public spaces in different ways. [v] The physical and spatial order of cities is particularly linked to women’s and men’s work patterns. Poor women living in insecure neighborhoods are more likely to commute in the late or early hours to and from work or to and from educational opportunities, and they are more likely to work in informal sectors. Their housing is also located outside the city and these hectic routines may result in their being exposed to the risks of sexual assault. [v]

V. ISSUES OF WOMEN SAFETY -PUNE

The safety of women at public spaces in Pune has come in sharp focus over the past five years, with increasing media coverage and public outrage at violence faced by women of all social classes and age groups. Women live a life of vulnerability and fall victim to atrocities and the criminal instincts of people of their own community. Gender-based violence is present at various levels, beginning with discrimination at birth, further perpetuated through discrimination in education, nutrition, employment, wages and direct/indirect acts of sexual aggression. Women always experience fear of harassment and stress while accessing to inadequate potable water and outdoor toilets in their day to day lives. The number of rape cases registered in Pune has increased by 26 per cent in 2016, according to figures obtained during the annual crime conference of the Pune city police on Thursday. In 2015, 280 rape cases were registered with Pune city police, of which all were detected. In 2016, the number of rape cases has gone up to 354, of which 351 have been detected so far.

The statistics is not only shocking but is also loud to explain how women and girl children have become vulnerable to the unmanly instincts of men in the society. Despite the scale and intensity of the problem, violence against women in public spaces remains under-recognized and underreported most of the time, making it difficult to map out the real extent of the problem. Few states in India have tried to estimate or survey unreported cases of sexual assault. The estimates for unreported

rapes in India vary widely. A UN study of 57 countries estimates just 11% of rape and sexual assault cases worldwide are ever reported [vi]. In last 5 years, lot of rural migrants migrated to the Pune city for seeking employment. The increase of migration from rural to urban areas and failure of local government to provide basic amenities forces a large segment of population to live in inadequate housing and sanitation facilities. “It is widely acknowledged that women and girls living in low-income urban contexts are disproportionately affected by safety hazards, inadequate housing and sanitation facilities which make them outreach from privacy because of using open toilets and bathing facility.” Inadequate and inaccessible toilets and bathrooms, as well as the general lack of effective policies and actions, make women more vulnerable to violence. [vii] For example, in cities that that don’t have indoor toilets, women face danger every time they go to use an informal outdoor “bathroom” where they have little privacy and are vulnerable to sexual harassment or violence.

In a 2010 survey conducted by UN Women, Jagori and the Delhi Department of Women and Child Development, almost two out of three women reported experiencing sexual harassment two to five times over the previous year. [viii] Not only in developing countries, the Women in developed countries also dealt with threats to their safety as well. A 2012 poll conducted in London found that 43 percent of young women had experienced street harassment in the past year. In France, a 2013 study revealed that 1 in 4 women experienced fear when in public spaces and that 1 in 5 was verbally harassed while walking on the street. [ix]

VI. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. Article 14, 15 not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women and protects the rights of women. Articles 16, 39, 42 and 51 favors gender mainstreaming .There are also several sections of the Indian Penal Code that deal with sexual harassment, but hardly any punishment is imposed to the culprit because of unregistered case.

VII. PUBLIC SPACE AND GENDER

Public spaces are the social spaces such as parks, playgrounds, pavements, plazas, streets etc, which plays a crucial role in cities. Design of public spaces conferred with proper urban planning and design standards along with safety checklist plays a major role in the prevention of sexual harassment and violence against women outside their homes and workplaces. These spaces can offer lesser opportunities for violence against women and girl children as per appropriate design. Due to lack of sound policies and poor management, these spaces are neglected and lack gender sensitive planning. For instance, women have higher levels of fear of crime and are more at risk and insecure in public spaces that are rendered unsafe by virtue of their bad design, isolation or inadequate and poor maintenance. [viii]

VIII. IDENTIFICATION OF GENDER SENSITIVE PLANNING AT PUBLIC SPACES

According to UN-HABITAT, women and girls still experience a higher degree of insecurity and vulnerability to violence (both in public and private realms), which limits their socioeconomic opportunities and access to city services, in comparison to their male counterparts. [viii] In general, those cities where public spaces are more intensely used by diverse citizens conducting different activities at different hours of the day are safer for all, and particularly for women and girls. This is because variety and diverse activities in public spaces tend to promote inclusiveness and make a space more active & populous; make areas less vulnerable for misdeed. In addition, if there are more people present on the street during the day and night time, then there are more “eyes on the street”, which can make it more difficult for an assault to occur.

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By promoting mixed land use; elimination of dark alleys, narrow pathways, dead ends and entrapment areas, removal or lowering the height of boundary walls and ensuring eyes on the street, and putting in place hawker friendly policies, can help in making cities safer for women. The percentage of participation of women in the public realm during night time indicates the health or livability of the society. The following recommendations to be worked out in a holistic manner for a gender sensitive city planning:

1. Involving women and girls in the making of decisions that affect their safety: Safer cities work should include women and girls as agents in decision-making processes.
2. Residential developments to be lined up with the commercial / institutional spaces and the premises to be ensured with low height boundary walls to have clear sight vision to adjoining streets.
3. Planning and designing spaces like streetscape, nodes or squares for genders of different age groups as per their needs so as to make optimum utilization of space and encourage social interactions to achieve an objective of gender equality.
4. Encouraging transit oriented development (TOD) in urban planning to promote walkability / bikeable safe neighborhoods while minimizing travel distance to work place and improve accessibility to jobs, schools and other destinations.
5. Designing safe public transportation services with installation of CCTV cameras at railway platforms, bus stops

6. Designing safe streets with proper lighting, signage and maintaining clear sight lines.
7. Giving more priority to cyclists and pedestrian and proper signage to be placed at every nodes or squares, showing clear spatial layout of the area with proper road networks.
8. Encouraging some late night road side activities like exhibitions, cultural programs etc.
9. Imposing equal ratio of lady security staff for night patrolling, night cabs etc.
10. Local authorities should focus on arranging some sort of campaigns, road side plays against gender-based violence on women and girl children to change attitudes of the society with help of NGO groups.
11. Local authorities should arrange institutional stakeholders involving groups of women in safety audits of cities.

It is recommended that all the above strategies should be developed and implemented to ensure safe and inclusive cities for women and provide sense of belongingness for a city to women.

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