

# Guidelines for conducting safety audits

## Safe Cities Initiative

Adapted from 'A Handbook on Women's Safety Audits in Low Income Urban Neighborhoods: A focus on essential services

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## Background

Intervention II of the Safe Cities Initiative of the MPUIIP seeks to build and strengthen capacity of SHG members to understand and take initiatives to prevent and respond to VAW through trainings, community mobilization and community safety audits. Community safety audits will be conducted in 21 selected slums in which Intervention II is being delivered. As a first thematic level engagement at the community level, the primary objective of this activity is to get SHG women to start thinking on issues of violence against women and plan preventive action.

## What is a ' Women's Safety Audit'?<sup>1</sup>

A women's safety audit is defined as- "a *method* to evaluate the environment from the standpoint of those [women] who feel vulnerable and to make changes that reduce opportunities for violence...".

Safety audits are conducted using the principles that

- All users of a space are experts and thus should be involved in auditing
- When a space is made safe for the most vulnerable users (women, elderly, disabled, children), it becomes safe for all people.

In India women's safety audits have been conducted in, among other places, in Delhi by Jagori in collaboration with Women in Cities International. The method to be used for conducting women's safety audit is adapted from Jagori's '*A handbook on women's safety audits in low income urban neighborhoods: a focus on essential services*'. The method includes the following steps:

1. Orientation of field staff on safety audits
2. FGD with women's groups (SHGs) and services providers at the community level, such as anganwadi workers/ teachers, etc.
3. Micro-planning – slum mapping and exploratory walk by women's groups to observe dimensions of safety and map unsafe spaces including spaces where safety is perceived as being threatened
4. Preparing a community level action plan
5. Sharing the action plan with Parshad/MIC members
6. Using the action plan as a basis for interactions with service providers in interface meetings to be held.

However, it must be noted that that this process does not end with the completion of the steps mentioned below. Subsequent follow-ups are essential to ensure that plans developed are followed through and women are actually benefitted from this process.

## 1. Orientation of Field Staff

Field staff from CSD Agencies will be oriented on 'Safety Audits' using these guidelines and with reference to the aforementioned Jagori publication.

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<sup>1</sup>KalpanaVishwanath, Presentation on 'Safety Audits' (Unpublished)

## 2. FGD with women's groups (SHGs) and services providers

- a. Focused group discussions will be conducted with members of selected SHGs and community level service providers(e.g. anganwadi workers, teachers)in each slum (21 slums in all).
- b. The objective of these focused group discussions is to understand issues of
  - i. Safety and security,
  - ii. Perceived threats of violence
  - iii. Availability of essential services and related safety/security issues and
  - iv. Community members' understanding of local governance and of agencies responsible for different services.

These FGDs will provide a context for the micro-planning, which will be done in the next step. To illustrate-the FGD will help identify areas where women face different forms of violence and these can be included in the route of the safety audit walk.

- c. SHG members may invite male members of the community or members of youth groups in slums where Intervention I is also being implemented to be part of this process.
- d. FGDs must begin with
  - An introduction of the project
  - An introduction of the participants.
  - An explanation of what constitutes women's safety (see Jagori Handbook Box on 'Defining Women's Safety' on Page 4 of the publication) and
  - An explanation of the purpose of the exercise, which is to collect experience, hear views, and understand and identify problems faced by women, particularly regarding factors that make them feel unsafe.
  - A clarification that, while this exercise is focused primarily on violence faced by women *outside* the home. Issues relating to domestic violence shall be taken up in subsequent sessions.
- e. This will be followed by a discussion of the issues provided in the box below.

### Checklist of issues to be discussed during the FGD

1. Discuss the state of essential services available in the community, including
  - Roads,
  - Power supply,
  - Sanitation, garbage disposal
  - Toilet facilities,
  - Water supply,
  - Public transport
2. Discuss whether women/girls face or fear any violence in accessing any of the services discussed. Explore instances of violence faced by women/girls and implications of this violence. What are the strategies adopted by them to

cope with this violence?

3. Discuss whether there are any other issues that compromise women/girls' safety (e.g. the presence of an alcohol shop within the slum, congregation of men or men gambling in the area, if people from outside the slum pose a threat to girls, etc.). Here also explore instances of violence and its implications as well as the strategies adopted to cope with this violence.
4. Discuss if there are any particular problems faced by more vulnerable members of the community, e.g. problems faced by single women, pregnant women, women belonging to disadvantaged communities.
5. Discuss if the participants have complained to any authority regarding the problems they have faced, with particular reference to addressing issues relating to women/girls' safety /security. If so, to whom? How did they complain?
6. Discuss the attitude of the authorities before whom complaints have been brought and the extent to which the issue was resolved.
7. Explore if there have been any community action around improving women/girls' safety.

- f. FGDs should take about 90-120 minutes.
- g. The discussions can be recorded or one person can take down notes.
- h. A brief report (2-4 pages) must be prepared of each FGD, which provides information on each of the questions provided in the checklist. If no responses have been received then reasons for non-response should also be included.

### **3. Micro-planning – slum mapping and exploratory walk**

- a. After FGDs have been conducted, a meeting will be organized with members of the SHG to
  - i. Prepare a slum map and
  - ii. Walk through selected areas to identify issues that could make a place unsafe for women/girls
- b. The objective of this step is to uncover subtle forms of harassment faced by women/girls. It is also to facilitate negotiations with local governments to address issues that affect women's safety on one hand, and help women plan action to improve women's safety on the other.
- c. Prior to the meeting the facilitators must ensure that they carry the following with them:

- a. A draft map of the slum
  - b. Chart paper/markers/pens/pencils/erasure
  - c. Copies of the (Hindi) checklist
  - d. Two different kinds of bindis
- d. The meeting should be started in the evening just before dark, as the participants can make observations while walking along the audit route before dark and then trace the route back after dark to map the functioning of the streetlights and differences in the usage of space by women and men before and after dark.
- e. The meeting must be started with an explanation of the objective of this step (as mentioned above). The participants must also be informed that there will be a follow up meeting to draw up an action plan to address the issues that arise from this exercise (as per Step 4 explained later).
- f. The participants must then be provided a chart paper and asked to prepare a community map indicating –
- a. Roads
  - b. Habitation and areas not inhabited
  - c. Essential service delivery points (e.g. toilets, water outlets)
  - d. Routes leading outside the community (e.g. approach roads or routes taken by community members to get to work or to school/college)
  - e. Other community landmarks (e.g. temples, meeting grounds, etc.)
  - f. Areas where women feel unsafe. (e.g. in front of alcohol shops or pan shops where men congregate)

A sample of a map is provided in Annexure 1.

- g. Assist the participants to identify the audit route.
- h. The participants may be divided into groups to cover the route, if needed.
- i. Designate 1-2 persons to fill in the checklist and another to take photographs.
- j. Explain to the participants that the walk will be to look for:
- a. What is the space used for?
  - b. Who uses the space?
  - c. Is the space used differently at different times
  - d. Amenities available
  - e. Nearest police van or check post
  - f. Security guards
- k. The questions that the participants must consider while assessing whether a space is safe are:
- a. When do you feel uncomfortable in a space?
  - b. Have you experienced anything negative in this space?
  - c. Would anyone be able to hear if you called for help?
  - d. Would people help you if you were in need?
- l. Explain the checklist below and how it should be

**Checklist for Women's Safety Audit**

- a. Name of Area:
- b. Date:
- c. Route audited:
- d. Time and day of audit:
- e. Weather:
- f. Duration:
- g. Names of people who participated:

Area		√	X	Remarks
<b>Streets accessed by women</b>				
<b>Lighting</b>	Are there streetlights?			
	Are the street lights working?			
	Are they distributed evenly?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Condition of the streets</b>	Are the streets in good condition?			
	Is it possible to walk fast and easily on them?			
	Is it possible for a woman with crutches or on a wheel chair or with any disabilities to move easily on the street?			
	Any other observation?			
Area		√	X	Remarks
<b>Entrapment areas and unused land</b>	Are there any vacant lands?			
	Are there any vacant and broken down/unused buildings?			
	Do these lead to any threats to women's safety?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Social usage of space</b>	Are there people on the streets?			
	Are there more men on the streets than women?			
	What are they doing?	N	A	

	Are there markets/shops on the street?			
	Are there any liquor shops?			
	Are there any cigarette or paan shops?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Formal surveillance</b>	Is there any visible policing?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Informal surveillance</b>	Can people in the buildings/areas around see if a woman is being harassed?			
	Do you think that people in the area (residents/neighbors/commuters) in the area will be able to respond to/help a harassed woman?			
	Any other observation?			

<b>Approach Roads</b>				
<b>Approach roads</b>	Are the approach roads in good condition?			
	Is the approach road well lit?			
	Is it crowded?			
	Is there a bus stop nearby?			
	Is there an auto stop nearby?			
	Are there any shops/vendors nearby?			
<b>Amenities</b>				
<b>Public Toilets</b>	Are the toilets in good condition? (e.g. are there any broken windows, broken steps at the entrance, etc.)			
	Are there separate services for men and women?			
	Is there a female attendant?			
	Do women have privacy while using the toilet?			

  	Can men gain access to women's toilets?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Water supply areas</b>	Is water collection a peaceful and organized process?			
	Are there fights and arguments at the collection point?			
	Is it adequately lit?			
	Is there a congregation of men around the water point, which makes women feel unsafe?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Sanitation</b>	Is garbage disposal being done regularly?			
	Does garbage lying on the roads impede women's mobility?			
	Are the drains well maintained allowing for easy movement?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Other community spaces</b>				
<b>Open defecation</b>	Can women reach open spaces (fields, nullas) for defecation easily? (E.g. open defecation spaces may be too far or routes to such spaces may pass through areas commonly dominated by men, etc.)			

	Are these spaces safe to use?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Common spaces (e.g. temple, chabutre/chou pal, junctions/chauraha, common meeting points)</b>	Do you think these spaces are safe to access?	N	A	
	Any other observation?			
	Are there any men drinking or gambling the space?			
	Are there any women in the space?			
	Any other observation?			
<b>Any other space observed (e.g. schools within the slum)*</b>				

\*In case of schools see if the areas around are safe, if there are separate toilets for girls and boys, if the toilet structures are safe for girls (latches/locks are present, doors and windows provide adequate privacy, etc.)

- h. The participants may interact with people present in the spaces mentioned in the checklist to ask questions on whether women feel safe in that space or if they have heard of any incidents of harassment in the space.
- i. After returning to the meeting venue use the checklist to mark the areas where the participants felt unsafe in red on the map prepared.
- j. Reflect on the observations recorded in the checklist and ensure that it is complete.
- k. Identify priority issues for further discussion in the planning meeting.
- l. Print the maps prepared on flex sheets bearing the following parameters:
  - (i) The flex sheets should not be less than 5 by 3 feet in size
  - (ii) The flex sheets must be colored and not in monochrome
  - (iii) An extra copy of the sheet may be printed, if required, to be kept in the CS Agency's office
  - (iv) Each flex sheet must mention 'MPUIIP Project Uthan' and carry the Nagar Nigam and MPUIIP logos

#### 4. Preparing a community level action plan

- a. Organize a follow up meeting to further discuss priority issues and prepare action plans. This meeting should be held shortly after, preferably on the next day, the previous meeting to build on the momentum created.

- b. For the meeting please ensure that chart papers, pens/papers/ sheets of paper, as well as the map prepared in the previous session are taken to the meeting.
- c. Recap what had happened in the previous meeting, with particular reference to the priority issues unearthed during the exploratory walk.
- d. Discuss each of the issues with the participants and the action that can be taken to improve women's safety by addressing each of these issues.
- e. Note down the recommendations for action to be taken to address each of the issues in a chart paper by using the following format.

<b>Problem</b>	<b>What can be done?</b>	<b>Person /Agency responsible</b>

- f. Prepare a petition for Parshad members/ Parshad candidates and MIC members for specific action to be taken to improve women's safety in the community. A sample petition is provided in Annexure II
- g. Inform the participants that there will also be interface meetings during the course of the project at which different service providers will be invited to discuss issues relating to violence against women. These plans can, therefore, be used at these meetings to facilitate interactions with such service providers.
- h. Finalize and display the chart and the map (created earlier) at a prominent place where the SHG members meet.

## **5. Sharing the action plan with Parshad/MIC members**

- a. Get an appointment with the Parshad member.
- b. Identify women to be part of the delegation to meet the Parshad member.
- c. Take copies of the petition to be submitted to the Parshad member
- d. At the meeting – discuss the issues and hand over the petition to the parshad member.
- e. Note down his/her response
- f. After the meeting send a letter to the Parshad member thanking him/her for their time and mention the commitments they have made (if any).

## **6. Discussing action plans at interface meetings**

- a. Prior to an interface meeting, examine the action plan to see if there are any relevant follow up action the visiting representative can take.
- b. Prepare and keep ready a petition for the visiting representative as needed.
- c. Ensure that the map and the plan of action are prominently displayed at the meeting venue.

## **7. List of deliverables for each safety audit**

1. Report of focused group discussion
2. Community map
3. Completed checklist of safety walk
4. Photographs taken during the safety walk
5. Action plan
6. Petitions prepared during the planning meeting

## Annexure 1 Sample Map





