



Safecity Patna Chapter

Jan– June 2018

Patna, Bihar

About Safecity

Safecity is a platform that crowdsources personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces. This data which maybe anonymous, gets aggregated as hot spots on a map indicating trends at a local level. The idea is to make this data useful for individuals, local communities and local administration to identify factors that causes behavior that leads to violence and work on strategies for solutions

Abstract

Safecity's Bihar chapter is about empowering the community with right tools to report and curb sexual harassment. It brings together all the stakeholders to fight the issue of sexual harassment and eradicate it from the area via increased governance and sustained development.

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1. Campaign Description

1. Background

Safecity's Bihar Chapter came into existence to address sexual harassment in public spaces of Patna city in Bihar. This campaign was in collaboration with Nirman NGO.

Safecity conducted a campaign in Patna, Bihar to create awareness on sexual harassment and abuse to get women and other disadvantaged communities to break their silence and report their personal experiences

2. Existing Issues

Women and girls staying in Patna city become victims of sexual assaults on a regular basis. It restricted their mobility and access to certain routes, places etc. These incidences primarily (~50%) occurred on their way to and from Market / Home / Workplace / School or at these places. Around 25% of these were repeated occurrences as there was limited / zero bystander intervention. The main cause of these was absence of proper public infrastructure, presence of alcoholic men loitering around these routes, public spaces etc. Here is a detailed account of the issues faced:

1. Lack of Public Infrastructure:

- a. Lack of Streetlights : Women had to travel through poorly lit streets to get home. These streets made them more vulnerable to harassment.
- b. Abandoned Streets Women and young girls had to travel through lonely and abandoned streets to get to their school, college or place of work.

2. Groups of men stalking and commenting:

- a. High incidents of staring and commenting in the area around the market place, schools and homes: This area had high incidents of sexual violence.
- b. Lack of support from the Police

3. Silence around sexual harassment

- a. As stated earlier, women and girls do not talk about sexual abuse for multiple reasons –fear of society, culture, victim blaming, fear of police, tedious formal procedures. As a result women keep silent and data is not captured anywhere but the perpetrator gets bolder over time and sexual harassment is normalized. This leads to under communication and under reporting of the issue. If there are poor official statistics, the problem is not visible and is not a true representation of the actual problem. Therefore there is a need to break this silence and document every instance of harassment and abuse in public spaces so that an effective solution can be found for the problem.
- b. Lack of awareness about sexual harassment and their rights: Not many were aware of the different types of harassment, what constituted as sexual harassment. They were also unaware of the law and their rights with regard to reporting harassment and filing an FIR.
- c. Patriarchal culture: Growing up in a patriarchal society many of the women had normalized gender roles and did not question stereotypes.

3. Current Impact

These incidences of sexual violence have had far reaching impact on the women living in the area. It has affected their daily choices and restricted them from continuing their education and living an independent fear-free life. Here are few examples of the same:

1. Mobility and accessibility
 - a. Limited/restricted access to public spaces especially higher education
 - b. Strong sense of fear and apprehension among women in accessing public spaces
 - c. Lack of trust and awareness in the system to safeguard their rights
2. Physical, emotional and psychological
 - a. Society-based pressure and shame inflicted on women who have faced/reported sexual violence
 - b. Restricted/discouraged participation of girls and women in university and community-based-matters
3. Sexual harassment, a taboo: Sexual harassment is not discussed freely in rural areas even within the families. As a result, there are no reports of the incidents as no one wants to speak about the topic

2. Campaign Objectives

1. Goals

The campaign aimed to reduce / remove sexual violence in Patna by increasing awareness on sexual harassment and associated rights and laws. Here are the detailed objectives:

1. Increase awareness on sexual harassment, individual and collective legal rights and laws against sexual harassment
 - a. Encourage people to report sexual harassment in public spaces through training and development
 - b. Only few women knew what constitutes sexual harassment (most women considered only rape to be sexual harassment) amongst the participants who submitted reports of incidents of sexual abuse and attended the sessions.
3. Address sexual harassment in public spaces using data and technology
 - a. Train volunteers on engaging community members to take ownership of the campaign for systemic and social change
 - b. Address the absence/lack of bystander intervention
 - c. Collate the information to showcase location-based trends
4. Increase community participation
 - a. Engage community members in brainstorming sessions
 - b. Improve community member's involvement in devising and effective solution to curb sexual harassment cases

2. Target Audience

1. Women, Girls and Community members
2. Girl students in Patna
3. Children and teachers of local schools and colleges
4. Local Municipal Corporation, Local police and district officer
5. Anganwadi and Asha workers
6. Grassroots NGOs like Nirman

3. Campaign Methodology and Challenges

1. Methodology

The campaign was conducted in multiple phases to ensure accurate diagnostic and develop a comprehensive solution for the above-mentioned problems.

1. Diagnostic: Documenting sexual harassment in public spaces in Patna city in collaboration with Nirman NGO by:
 - a. Collecting reports and uploading them on Safecity's reporting platform
 - b. Focused group discussions and Community meetings (including one-to-one discussions with survivors of sexual violence)
 - c. Strategic meetings with grassroots organizations in Patna
 - d. Community mobilization and field visits
 - e. Engaging community leaders and stakeholders

2. Developmental Trainings, Awareness workshops and focused discussions (including one-to-one discussions):
 - a. Training and development of community collectives: The training was centered on identifying hotspots using Safecity's reporting form, interviews etc. This session was followed by an intervention designing session, which helped them to design its activities in these areas
 - b. Awareness workshops: All the women in the area participated in Safecity's sexual harassment awareness workshop.
 - c. Capacity building of Community based NGO partners: After a series of discussions with Safecity, a joint plan of necessary training and development was created. This included-
 - Campaign Design and implementation focusing on improved engagement
 - Coordination with local systemic bodies like Police, Village Sarpanch etc.
 - Skill enhancement such as Train the trainer on conducting awareness workshops
 - Data and Technology to influence social and systemic change

3. Stakeholder meetings:

- a) Stakeholder meeting with Local Police, and Village Sarpanch: During the 6-month campaign with Nirman NGO on increasing awareness and reporting of sexual harassment in public spaces, 2 successful stakeholder meetings were conducted which included local police, politicians and the Mayor. These were designed by Safecity with the aim of seeking support and accountable governance from local systemic bodies to eliminate sexual violence through human rights based approach.



January 21st and 28th

An introductory session about Safecity and its work. A session on Child Sexual Abuse, effects of CSA.



February and March

A movie on Child Sexual Abuse was shown. The elders were also told about signs of CSA and how to deal with kids. POCSO Act was discussed.

Awareness sessions on sexual harassment and its types.



April and May

Session with Govt. school girls on
POCSO and sexual harassment.

Laws and legislations related to
Sexual Harassment were discussed.
They were taught about FIR and how
to file it



27th May

A Gram Sabha was organised by Safecity and its partner organisation Nirman in Mehandiganj.

The Chief Guest at the Gram Sabha was Sita Sahu, the Mayor of Patna. The other dignitaries were Mr. Sunil Yadav, the Chairman of the Rotary Club and a few ward members

2. Challenges

1. Limited / Zero Community development:

2. Community behaviour and taboos:

- a) Cultural barriers: The strong shackles of patriarchy not only governed the oppressing attitudes and behaviour of men but also women. Women rarely stepped outside the house for workshops or trainings. Women were very reluctant to attend our workshops. So it was difficult to ensure their attendance.
- b) Lack of support from the men in the community: There was resistance from the men in the community as they believed we had come to provoke the women against their husbands or family. They thought that women might rebel against them if they say something. Hence, they didn't allow the women of their households to attend our workshops.
- c) Hesitance and lack of awareness: The women were not aware of sexual harassment and its various forms and only thought of rape as sexual harassment. Hence they were hesitant to share stories of harassment they had faced or seen. As soon as the speaker mentioned sexual harassment, they would feel ashamed and begin to chat among themselves in hushed tones, because they believed women from respectable families did not discuss sexual harassment in public. This tabooed behaviour towards sexual harassment also affected campaign sustainability.
- d) Lack of support from the administration: Safecity wanted to conduct some awareness sessions with local police but they never showed up for workshops. If women went to the police station to register complaints, either they were denied or asked to pay small amounts of money.

3. Other Challenges:

- a) Weather uncertainties: Hot summers or heavy monsoons make it difficult to organize campaign activities.
- b) Lack of local media coverage at desired level: Media is not interested in hyper-local news and do not want to engage in inconvenient community issues centred around sexual abuse
- c) Lack of concrete/reliable data (available with local stakeholders) on the issue of sexual harassment in public spaces due to limited / no use of technology lead to limited / lack of comprehensive information

4. Campaign Outcome and Impact

The campaign educated / enabled community members with the right knowledge and tools to curb sexual harassment cases. It engaged the people including men through encouraged reporting, direct engagement etc. The campaign also engaged local village authorities in addressing sexual harassment faced in public spaces. Few instances are as follows:

Sharing Experiences of harassment: Initially the women and girls refused to share any experiences and said harassment only happens in other places. This data was captured in a pre-survey. Post the project, the women and girls are now more open to talk about it and share their experiences because they are more knowledgeable about the laws and legislation. They are now more comfortable sharing an incident, reporting it and finding solutions to address them. The women also reported a few cases of domestic violence.

Involvement of local stakeholders: The Mayor of Patna and Chairman of the Rotary Club in Patna City attended the Gram Sabha organised at the end of the campaign. With them involved, the use of the technology, the ideas and processes introduced through the project will be sustainable in this community.

Infrastructural change: One street light was installed in an area which wasn't lit well previously becoming a spot of sexual harassment.

Art as a means of expression: The women in the community made posters about sexual harassment, the law and their rights and pasted them on various walls in and around the community.

5. Conclusion

The women in Patna City in Patna, Bihar experienced sexual harassment in public spaces and even domestic violence but refused to talk about it in the initial stages of the campaign. The men prevented the women from attending workshops for fear that they would speak up against them.

Safecity and Nirman NGO collaborated for a period of 6 months from Jan to June 2018 and worked with the community to address their issues. They organized multiple trainings, awareness workshops, stakeholder meetings to increase community action and involvement. The community as a whole, especially women, became aware of sexual rights and laws and started to report these issues via Safecity's missed dial facility.

Some of our observations were:

1. It takes time to build a rapport with the women in the community and gain their trust. 6 months is not enough for some women to feel comfortable enough to share their experiences and express themselves.
2. People, especially women, are not very technology-friendly. They preferred using Safecity's missed dial facility to the web app and mobile app.
3. Patna has a strong patriarchal culture where the men prevented the women from attending the awareness workshops and refused to accept the prevalence of sexual harassment like ogling, staring, commenting in their locality. There is a need to organize activities that involve more men and boys in order to stop the normalization of sexual harassment and make them stakeholders as well.
4. Such campaigns are more successful when done in collaboration with NGOs that provide the community with skills and training. Community members are more willing to attend workshops when they believe they will gain monetarily from it, either through upskilling or other ways.
5. There needs to be more involvement of the local stakeholders to address the issue of sexual harassment. This can be done through awareness workshops with the police, administration and ward members. Increase in police patrols near the schools and colleges would prevent girls from being harassed.
6. Infrastructural changes need to be made. More street lights need to be installed to ensure areas are well-lit.