



Safecity Satara Chapter

Feb– June, 2018
Satara, Maharashtra

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 Satara chapter is bridging the digital divide, incubating technology innovations and content development of livelihood options. It also focused on building capacities of community based organization.

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1. Campaign Description

1. Background

Safecity's Satara Chapter came into existence to address sexual harassment in public spaces of Satara. This campaign was in collaboration with the Suzlon Foundation and Adar NGO.

Safecity conducted a campaign in Satara, Pune 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 Satara 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 and an influx of tourism which was worsened by the 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. High incidents of staring and commenting on an arterial main road connecting colleges and schools from the villages:
As the villages are far away from the school and colleges, the girls have to walk close to 10 kms to reach the nearest school and college, restricting the mobility of women and putting them at risk of sexual abuse. Majority of the reported issues were staring, commenting, stalking and groping.

2. Groups of men stalking and commenting:

- a. High incidents of staring and commenting on an arterial main road connecting the market place, schools and homes: This street had increasingly high incidents of sexual violence. The presence of tourists gave men and boys an excuse to loiter for extended hours commenting / stalking women, making it uncomfortable for women to access this road and forcing them to use alternative longer routes

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.

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 to continue their education and live 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 publicspaces
 - 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 the sexual violence in Satara 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 2% of 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. Students in Colleges in rural Satara
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 Suzlon and Adar

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 at Satara in collaboration with Suzlon Foundation and Adar 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 Satara
 - 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 Police Patil and Vice Sarpanch along with the Forest officers were trained by Safecity on specific actions against sexual harassment. 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 workshop with the entire village and neighbouring villages: All villagers from Mahableshwar and surrounding villages 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

- e. Awareness workshop with NGO workers and Asha workers in Satara: 15 women NGO workers and Asha workers members participated in Safecity's sexual violence awareness workshop. The objective was to empower women to keep neighborhoods safe.
3. Art to create awareness and facilitate social change by encouraging community participation and action:
 - a. Poster making: The girls and women designed posters on sexual harassment in public spaces. The objective was to increase awareness and community action in sexual harassment hotspots (locations)
5. Stakeholder meetings:
 - a) Stakeholder meeting with Local Police, and Village Sarpanch: During the 5-month campaign with Suzlon Foundation and Adar NGO on increasing awareness and reporting of sexual harassment in public spaces, 2 successful stakeholder meetings were conducted which included local police and village Sarpanch etc. 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.
 - b) Village Police Patil equipped with a smart phone: The village Police Patil was given a Smart phone with the Safecity Mobile app to record cases of sexual harassment and share these with the local police station. The Police Patil meets the women once a month and captures data of sexual harassment cases. These are then recorded and shared with the local police.



Koyna

**Safecity
Safe Village**

February 20th

Workshop for 105
girls from 11th
standard who
travel 2-8 kms on
a daily basis for
education





Patan

Understanding sexual harassment and reporting on Safecity through role play

February 21st





Chalkewadi

March 12th

Safecity conducted awareness workshops in Chalkewadi Village for 105 youth, women and men from the village and nearby villages and Angawadi worker and NGOs who worked in this village.





May 21st-
Sabha with
stakeholders
and local
administration

Bhekhavli

May 24th-
Workshop for NGO
partners and their
staff





2018-5-29 12:44



2018-5-29 14:01

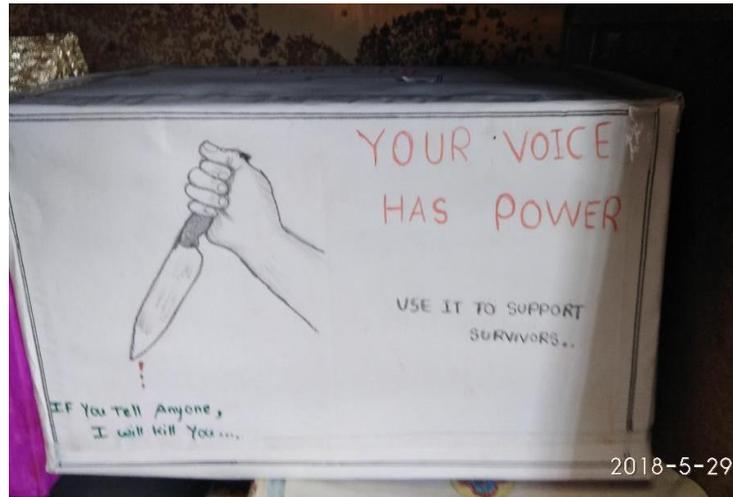
Bhekhavali

May 29th

Solutions by the community :
Box making to collect complaints and poster-making competition



2018-5-29 14:01



2018-5-29

2. Challenges

1. Limited / Zero Community development:

- a. Poor Literacy rate: Low literacy rates made it difficult to design trainings as it restricted the use of most content. Since very few women (less than 20%) are literate in this area, awareness on sexual harassment and their rights was poor / absent
- b. Lack of Infrastructure :Some of the schools and colleges have no electricity or lack of infrastructure to use technology. This affected the quality of workshops as no videos or slides could be shown. In some areas due to lack of space, boys couldn't be accommodated in the workshops along with the girls.
- c. Language barriers: Translation of trainings from English to Marathi while retaining the original content was a challenge resulting in few videos. These barriers also made it difficult for people (majorly college students) to contribute.
- d. Limited use of technology: The use of technology to report sexual abuse was highly limited (Less than 2% had a cell phone)

2. Community behavior and taboos:

- a. Cultural barriers: The strong shackles of patriarchy not only governed the oppressing attitudes and behaviors of men but also women. Women were also engaged in perpetuating the hold of patriarchy as they believed that women are meant to be inferior to men, and hence should accept everything, including violence. This ideology prevented many interested women from engaging on the campaign and made it difficult for Safecity to engage men
- b. High dropout rates from campaign/absenteeism: Since most girls and women associated/reached out to through the campaign do meager jobs to sustain their families, they fail to regularly show up for campaign activities, or were denied participation by their families due to tabooed behavior towards sexual harassment, affecting campaign sustainability.

3. Other Challenges:

- a. Distance of villages from city center: The accessibility to some of the schools and villages was difficult and time consuming as the villages are close to 3 hours away from the nearest bus station and lack transportation.
- b. Weather uncertainties: Hot summers or heavy monsoons make it difficult to organize campaign activities.
- c. 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 centered around sexual abuse
- d. 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 1000+ people including 40% men through encouraged reporting, direct engagement etc. The campaign also engaged local village authorities and Police 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 villages. 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 have shared their experiences via the technology, using the drop box, through discussions and through drawings. They are now more comfortable sharing an incident, reporting it, and finding solutions to address them. They have also gained the necessary technical skills to use the technology. This is clearly shown as the number of sexual harassment reports that have been reported prior to the project and post the project.

[Girls explain sexual harassment and the process of reporting on the Safecity app through role play](#)

[Women of Bhekhavli share their learning from the workshops- sexual harassment, the law, their rights and reporting on the app.](#)

[Women share their feelings with Safecity](#)

[This woman is the Police Patil in a village in Maharashtra and talks about the need for safety](#)

[Girls have found the confidence to speak up against harassment](#)

[Finding courage in solidarity to share stories of sexual harassment](#)

Using the Safecity App and Reporting: Since majority of the villagers do not have smart phones, Safecity has given a smart phone to the Police Patil of the village who will meet the women once a month to collect reports and then share the reports with the local police station in her weekly meeting. They are comfortable speaking and sharing their experiences with the Police Patil of the village. We now have the technology in Marathi which is the local language and is easier for them to use.

The villagers suggested we place, not one but two drop boxes, one near the temple and one at the Panchayat office. They also ensured that they would use the Safecity missed dial facility from their regular mobile phones.

The village Sarpanch has agreed to sponsor a drop box to be put outside the panchayat office / community centre.

The CBO partners have downloaded the Safecity reporting app, which they will use in other rural areas to collect reports on sexual harassment.



Involvement of local stakeholders: Since we have the local governing bodies - The Police Patil, the Upp Sarpanch and the Sarpanch involved, the use of the technology, the ideas and processes introduced through the project will be sustainable in this community. However we will continue to visit and create more awareness.

Empowered to continue education : The project also had impact on the young girls in the village who had dropped out of school or college. Post the project, some of them are keen to continue with their education. 3 girls from one village re-enrolled into college to continue their education. The technology and awareness sessions has made them realise that they can report incidents of sexual harassment and collectively find solutions to resolve it.

Accessing Public Spaces: The girls were never allowed to go out on their own, even to the market. Now the women are more confident to stand up to any perpetrator. They would never report the incident to their families, amongst each other or to the local authorities due to fear, shame etc. Post the project they are confident that the police will take cognizance of the issue and they have various ways to report it.

Awareness among men and boys: The men and boys are also aware of the legislation and ways people can report. The awareness workshops, building trust, helping women break their silence, doing an awareness campaign at a local event for both men and women and giving them the technology (a smart phone) has helped them to be more open and report incidents.

5. Conclusion

Satara a district in Maharashtra, has many small villages. Most of the villages are far from each other with very little connectivity. The girls and women have to travel on foot to reach the nearest school or college or bus stop. The community women become victims of sexual harassment on a regular basis due to tourism and lonely commutes to and from colleges and market places with limited or no intervention from the community. Absence / Non-functional public infrastructure worsen this causing them to make changes in their life choices eg. Stop going to school and collage, girls not allowed to go out of their homes without being accompanied by their family members.

A collaboration of Safecity and Suzlon Foundation and Adar NGO worked with the community during a 5-month campaign to address these issues. They organized multiple trainings, awareness workshops, stakeholder meetings to increase community action and involvement. Several local systemic bodies and institutions were pushed to act to improve the living conditions of the community and reduce the cases of sexual harassment. The community as a whole, especially women, became aware of sexual rights and laws and started to report these issues via Safecity's reporting platform and local authorities.

Overall, during these 5 months, Safecity and Suzlon Foundation and Adar NGO brought all the stakeholders such as local police, Local Authorities like the Village Sarpanch, Up Sarpanch, Police Patil, school authorities, grassroot NGOs, Forest officers etc. together to act against the issue of sexual harassment.