Gender Sensitive Planning Proposal in Public Spaces: A Case Study of South East Zone, Surat City

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Abstract - *Urbanization and Migration processes are basically configured by gender roles and relations. Rapid urbanization leading to urban sprawl results in developments in the Surat City. These sprawl developments in turn lack densification, mixed use developments, public services and safe streets or pedestrian walkways which fuels to the rising levels of insecurity and sexual violence to women in cities. Urban planning is concerned with the relationship between people and the built environment and ensuring the protection of people's general health, safety, and welfare. Public spaces must be accessible, safe, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all citizens, including girls and women. The study examines the issues of women and girls safety at public spaces in South East Zone of Surat City. It will then examine the factors of design consideration in creating safe built environment in public spaces. Gender sensitive planning in public spaces which aims to understand gender sensitive issues, concerns and the safety measures. Finally, prepare planning proposal for the improving safety of women and girls as per guidelines and analysis of the public spaces in South East Zone of Surat City.*

Key Words: Urbanization, Gender sensitive, Women and Girls safety, Public spaces, Urban Planning

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, the majority of the world's people live in urban centers. The global trend towards increasing urbanization promises to continue. Towns and cities in many countries of the global south, such as China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Turkey, are expected to grow even faster. India is one of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world. Yet, when it comes to gender equality, India ranks poorly on global indicators. In spite of powerful Indian women voices across the world in diverse fields of work, women and girls in India do not enjoy many of their rights due to deeply-held notions of (lesser) female value and power.

Rapid urbanization is one of the defining challenges of contemporary societies. For cities to realize the potentials and avoid the pitfalls of population and economic growth, good urban planning is critical. There are numerous factors that contribute to increasing urbanization: rural-to urban migration, land grabs and dispossession in rural areas, higher urban birth rates, opportunities presented by urban-centred economic growth, conflicts, and natural disasters. Migration and urbanization processes are strongly shaped by gender roles and relations.

Public spaces, including parks, plazas, squares, and gardens, but also temporary or informal spaces such as streets and sidewalks, are essential ingredients for a successful urban environment and healthy, connected, prosperous city. Providing opportunities for play, recreation, exercise, social and cultural exchange, and civic participation, public spaces aim to promote equity and coexistence for women and girls. When essential services are badly designed or missing, women and girls bear the burden of the inaccessibility and insecurity that follows. Public space is not neutral, and hence their design can either facilitate or impede usage, appropriation, and safety for women and girls. In today's scenario, urban planning and design largely ignores gender-specific experiences, needs and concerns particularly for women and girls, exposing them to the risk of sexual harassment and assault. This has to be addressed by integrating implementable gender sensitive planning at the public space.

In India, the data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that cities with a population of more than one million tend to have a higher rate of crime in general. There were 33,789 cases of crimes against women reported from 53 mega cities out of the total 2,28,650 cases reported in the country during 2011. Among them, Delhi accounted for 13.3% (4,489), followed by Bengaluru 5.6% (1,890), and Hyderabad 5.5% (1,860). The proportion of IPC crimes committed against women as increased during the last five years from 8.8 % in the year 2007 to 9.4% during the year 2011. Clearly official data is showing an increase in the reporting of crimes against women. Nevertheless, we recognize that reported crime is probably only the tip of the iceberg and violence against women and girls is a much more pervasive phenomenon than reflected by crime statistics. The work by women's groups on domestic violence certainly indicates this.

The process of conducting over a hundred safety audits over the past eight years in Delhi, and then through partners in Kerala, Kolkata and Mumbai, some of the key elements to building cities that are inclusive, safer and accessible have been delineated. Almost all the safety audits reveal that

public spaces are poorly planned and designed for usage by the most vulnerable.

1.1 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 per appropriate design. 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.

1.2 The Issues: Women and Public Space

Women and girls experience situations of violence that are different from those experienced by men. Violence that is inflicted against women and girls because of their gender is one of the worst discriminations that they suffer. Women and girls are sexually harassed, in streets, in parks and plazas, in schools, in work places, and while using public transportation. This reality, studies show that women change their routines more often than men. For example, women tend to stop going out alone after dark while men do not. Thus, women and girls feel and perceive safety and insecurity differently than men and boys.

1.3 Safe and Inclusive Cities

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.).

Safe cities eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) 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. 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

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

- Women and girls feel insecure in public spaces due to a wide range of factors including poor design and infrastructural facilities, behavioural pattern of society, shortcomings of education system with respect to gender relations and economic disparity.

- Due to lack of sound policies and poor management, these spaces are neglected and lack gender sensitive planning. So, the safety of women and girls equal participation in public space is a major concern of the Surat city.

- Women's against crime increases in city day by day. The total crime rate against women of Surat city is 51.5% by the year of 2019.
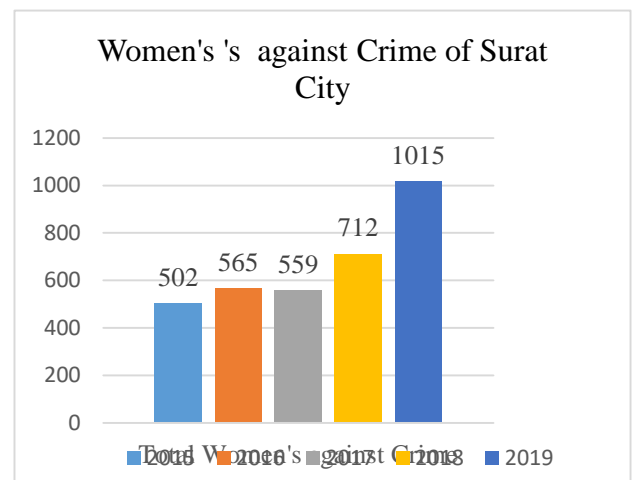

Chart -1: Women against Crime of Surat City

2.1 Aim

To prepare planning proposal for the improving safety of women and girls in public spaces in South East Zone, Surat city.
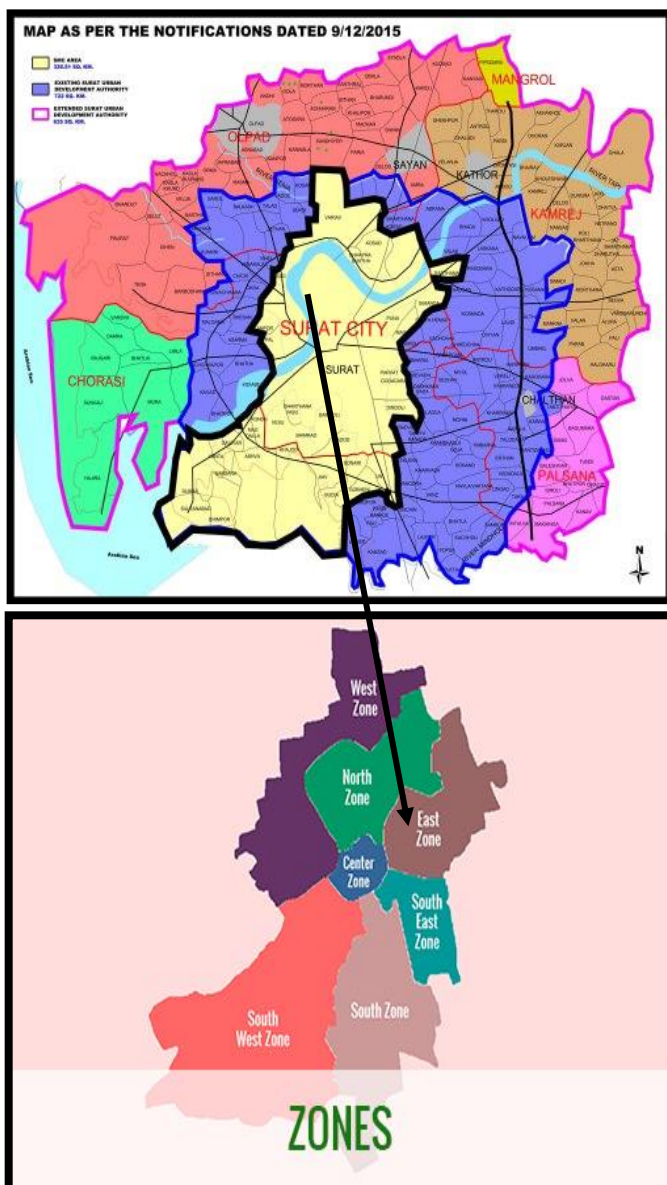
2.2 Objectives

- To study existing scenario identify current issues related women and girls safety in public spaces in South East Zone of Surat city.

- To prepare a long term strategy plan.

- To give planning proposal of safety measures in terms of women and girls security in public spaces.

3. STUDY AREA PROFILE

Surat city is situated in the southern part of Gujarat state of India. It lies between 21.112° North latitude & 72.814° East longitudes. The metropolis is positioned 284 kilometers (176 mi) south of the nation capital, Gandhinagar; 265 kilometers (165 mi) south of Ahmedabad. The town centre is positioned on the Tapti River, shut to Arabian Sea. The city has flat coastal land. It is divided in to eight zones (Central zone, West zone, South zone, South-East zone, South-West zone, North zone, East zone A, East zone B).

Fig -1 Location of Study Area

3.1 Demographics Profile of South East Zone

South-East Zone is the second most populous zone in the Surat city after East zone with a population of 7.48 lakhs according to Census of India, 2011. The study area is having largest decadal growth rate of population 88.37% among eight zones. The study area is divided in to 12 wards namely, 14-B Umarwada A, 14-B Umarwada B, 27 Anjana, 27-C Magob, 28-A Mithikhadi, 28-B Limbayat, 29 Udhna Yard, 30 Navagam/Dindoli, Magob-Parvat, Godadara, Dindoli Ward Office-2, Parvat-Magob.

Table -1: Demographic profile of South East Zone

Zone	Area (in Sq. km)	Population	Density per Sq. Km	Decade Growth 2001-2011 (% age)	Total no. of households
South East	19.492	74834	38390	88.37	1,55,732

4. DATA COLLECTION

The study includes two types of data. So, data was collected in terms of population, sex ratio, crime rates against women, government reports and media articles which are used for to identify the women sensitive issues and intensity in different parts of the study area. The type of data collected are as follows:

1. Primary data

Street survey questionnaire, informal questioning to police and the head of authorities.

2. Secondary data

This includes data collected in the form of existing reports, census data, newspaper articles, case study and National Crime Records Bureau Reports.

Total population of **Surat city as per census 2011** was 6,081,322 and total sex ratio of Surat city was **787 females to 1000 males**. The growth rate was 42.24 % and literacy rate was 85.53.
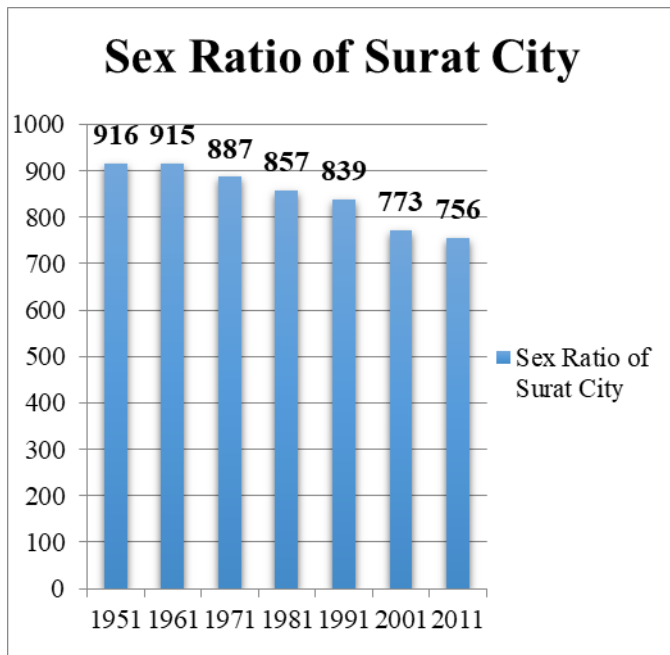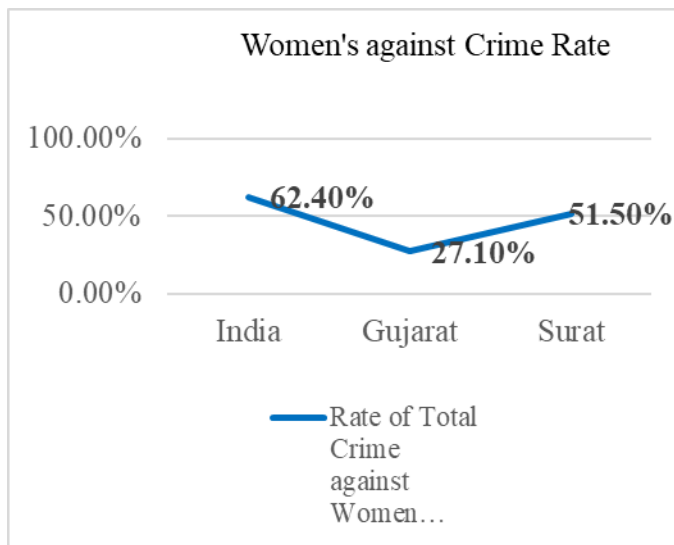
Chart -2: Sex Ratio of Surat City

Chart -3: Women's against Crime Rate

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of the data collected is an important stage to find the existing scenario of the study area.

- The analysis of the study revealed that 35.6% of poor lighting, 32.8% of lack of poor signage or information, 28% of poor maintenance of open public spaces, 7.2% of lack of clean and safe public toilets, 20.4% of lack of vendors or stalls/people in the area, and 22% of lack of effective/visible police or civil guards contribute to women feel unsafe in this area.

- According to the survey sexual harassment/assault of 40.8% verbal (comments, whistling, etc.), 13.8% physical (touching up, feeling up, etc.) and 32.5% visual (staring, leering) women faced in public spaces.

- Women experienced sexual harassment/assault of 46.1% in a daytime, 25.7% after dark and 28.3% both.

- Public spaces such as 46.3% roadside, 24.8% market place, 37.6% of park/square/open space and 31.5% of waiting for public transport women faced harassment/assault in the past year.

6. RECOMMENDATION

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: Analysis of the data collected is an important stage to find the existing scenario of the study area.

- 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.

- Security and use of public places are closely connected and the security in public places is ensured by providing open structures, mix land uses, visual connectivity, appropriate signage and monitoring by security cameras.

- Encouraging transit oriented development (TOD) in urban planning to promote walkability / bike able safe neighborhoods while minimizing travel distance to work place and improve accessibility to jobs, schools and other destinations.

- Designing safe streets with proper lighting, signage and maintaining clear sight lines.

- 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.

- Provision of clean, safe and easily accessible females' toilets in public places.

- Public facilities should be easily accessible and legible for all segments of the population.

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