

POLICY BRIEF

PUBLIC SAFETY IN DELHI*

In the context of rapid urban growth, planning and distribution of resources for expanding urban populations has emerged as a major point of concern and risks deepening existing inequalities and may give rise to conflicts. This becomes apparent in the Indian context with differential use of the city by low and high income groups. The socially and economically weaker sections, for instance, use public transport and spaces more extensively than the upper classes to commute and carry out livelihood activities. Women and children in particular are constantly exposed to health and safety hazards, with sexual and physical violence being most commonly experienced. This policy brief discusses factors such as inclusive planning and equitable governance in making the city and its people feel like safe and equal citizens with an equal right to the city.

Delhi has been gaining notoriety in terms of crimes, with women and children emerging as the most vulnerable groups to violence. According to media reports as well as the Public Perception Survey conducted by the Institute for Human Development during December 2012 and January 2013, it is also clear that trust in state institutions like the police and judiciary is wavering which has become an urgent concern. At the same time, Delhi has also gained a reputation of being a dynamic city where masses have come together to express their concerns about the safety of women and children, especially in the context of a series of brutal events that have occurred in the recent past, including the horrific gang rape of a 23-year old girl in December 2012, and that of a 5-year old girl in April 2013, to count a few. The incident of 16 December is being increasingly seen as a 'tipping point' in the social, legal as well as policy landscape, as it invited massive social protests, thus making crimes against women *'everybody's business'*. The demands and grievances put

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forward by these protests crystallized in the form of the recommendations made by the Justice Verma Committee (constituted in December 2012), many of which have been incorporated in the new the Criminal Law [Amendment] Act (2013). Civil society organisations along with the media were also instrumental in facilitating massive protests and meetings, spreading awareness in the process, and demanding fundamental changes within institutions such as the police and the judiciary. The policy requirement is thus to make these institutions more responsive, approachable and reliable and to make the process of policy formation more participatory than ever before.

Crime against women is a structural problem, and in need of strong long-term solutions at the levels of the law, policy and society. Recent incidents of collective participation have highlighted the role of the social media in not just raising awareness, but also mobilising people for collective action, thereby bringing forth its potential as a tool that could be constructively utilised for crime prevention and reduction.

Moreover, it has increasingly become clear that the provision of safety is not merely a technocratic concern; rather, it needs to be placed within a wider socio-economic and political framework of planning and provisioning of basic services. Thus, besides the need for systemic changes within policing and planning processes, what is also required is a change in societal attitudes and a positive consciousness amongst citizens. The policy suggestions that have been discussed in detail in the concluding section, are structured along the above themes.

1.OVERALL INCIDENCE OF CRIME

- The crime rate in Delhi (based on a three-year average crime rate for 2004-06 and 2010-12) calculated using the official source of statistics, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)¹data declined over the period 2004-06 to 2010-12²from 397.9 to 314.3 per 100,000.
- The NCRB ranking, which is based on the total cognisable crime rate in the country, shows that Delhi ranks 31st among 53 cities in 2012.
- Delhi displays higher rates of violent crimes such as murder and kidnapping, as compared to other cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Chennai.

- Between 2004-06 and 2010-12, the share of crimes against property were the highest during both time points, and have increased over time, while body crimes and crimes against women also recorded an increase from 6.8 to 9.9 per cent, and 6.7 to 9.5 per cent, respectively, over the same points.

2. CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

- The crime rate against women increased from 26.8 to 29.7 per 100,000 between the two time periods under study.
- Delhi ranks 16 among the 53 cities in terms of crimes against women recorded by the NCRB in 2012. In 2011, it ranked 21.
- Delhi reported the highest rate of rapes among the other major cities. It was 4.0 per 100,000 and 3.2 per 100,000, respectively in 2004-06 and 2010-12.
- The rate of kidnappings and abductions was also the highest in Delhi and increased from 5.2 to 10.8 per 100,000 between the two time periods.
- If the rates of crimes against women are calculated as a proportion of the urban female population rather than of the total population, between 2011 and 2012, the crime rate witnessed an increase to 63.6 per 100,000 from 49.8 per 100,000 in 2008-09.
- In terms of percentage share, kidnappings and abductions, and cruelty perpetrated by husbands and relatives together constituted more than 60 per cent of the crimes in 2004-06, and over 70 per cent of those in 2010-12. Rapes constituted 15.1 per cent of reported crimes against women in Delhi in 2004-06, and 10.8 per cent of those in 2010-12.

3. CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

- The rates of kidnapping and abduction of children in Delhi increased substantially from 4.5 per 100,000 in 2004-06 to 18.3 per 100,000 in 2010-12, and remained the predominant crime perpetrated against children.
- Delhi ranked number 2 among the 53 cities in terms of crimes against children recorded by the NCRB in 2012.

- Rape constituted a significant share of the total crimes reported against children, though its incidence declined from 22.2 per cent to 8.4 per cent over the period considered.
- Kidnapping emerged as the most prominent crime constituting over 80 per cent of reported crimes against children in 2012. The sex composition of the kidnapped children varies substantially with age. The proportion of male children is higher than that of female children in the below 15-years age group, while the older age groups (15-18 years) comprised a larger proportion of females. In Delhi, on an average, 14 children are reported missing daily, according to the Crime in Delhi Report (Delhi Police, 2012).

4. CHARGE-SHEET AND CONVICTIONS

- In terms of police investigations, in 2011, the pendency rate was reported to be 45 per cent and the charge-sheet rate was 55 per cent. In 2012, the charge-sheet rate increased significantly to 70.4 per cent, which was a positive development, while the pendency rate decreased slightly to 42.1 per cent.
- At the level of the courts, between 2011 and 2012, the conviction rate increased from 5.3 per cent to 7.1 per cent, the rate of acquittal increased slightly from 5.7 to 6.2 per cent, while the pendency rates declined from 88.9 per cent to 86.7 per cent.
- Looking specifically at cases of rape, in 2012, the rate of charge-sheeting by the police fell to 69.8 per cent, while the pendency rate increased to 30.2 per cent from the previous year when it was 22.8 per cent.
- At the level of the court, the conviction rate has increased significantly from 9.9 to 14.8 per cent from 2011 to 2012, while the acquittal rate has increased to 15.2 per cent from 14 per cent in the previous year. The pendency rate has fallen from 76.3 to 70 per cent between 2011 and 2012.

5. FINDINGS FROM THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION SURVEY 2013

The Perceptions Survey, 2013, collected information relating to various aspects of crime and safety of the population, in general, and women, in particular. Some of the key findings that emerged were:

- While a majority of Delhi's population felt safe in the areas wherein they resided—their localities and their neighbourhoods, they felt that crime had increased over time and rated Delhi poorly in terms of personal safety. Women rated personal safety more poorly than men, and the STs rated it more poorly than the others. At the same time, migrants across all caste groups found Delhi to be safer than their non-migrant counterparts.
- Children and senior citizens emerged as vulnerable groups. Senior citizens felt far more unsafe in their own localities, and also had less positive perceptions about women's safety, in general. In the FGDs, almost all the female respondents expressed fear for their children's safety and cited fearsome events that had occurred within their localities.
- People's perceptions about the lack of women's safety in the city were significant. The survey revealed that most women did not feel safe in public spaces, with the workplaces and public transport emerging as spaces perceived to be the least safe for women.
- People's perceptions about the police were not very positive. There was a general sense of fear as well as dissatisfaction in dealing with the police, which points towards the need for more police, including policewomen, and a more responsive police force.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In this context and keeping the key findings of the study in mind, policy suggestions have been made around five main areas:

1. Reforms in the criminal justice system like the police and judiciary, and rehabilitation and intervention mechanisms, which include capacity building and better coordination among various departments to ensure efficiency and accountability and facilitate the building of trust among citizens.
2. Urban planning and services to ensure safety and equitable access for all citizens.
3. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in crime reduction and prevention.
4. The innovative and constructive use of media, including new media, as a tool to bring about social and attitudinal changes, building on citizens' spirits,

dealing with civic apathy as well as sensitisation and spreading of awareness about important issues.

5. Encouraging more research in the sensitive areas of crime, safety and social protection, so as to better inform the formulation and implementation of social policy.

To elaborate the above:

6.1 Strengthening the Law Enforcement Machinery

- Law enforcement services should be brought under the Delhi Government in order to make police functions efficient and accountable.
- The police force should be freed of duties that do not require law enforcement such as security provision, orderly and summon duties, and should be allowed to focus on law enforcement and the protection of citizens.
- There is a need to strengthen the transport, excise and other enforcement departments of the Delhi Government in order to lessen the burden on the police. Similarly, municipal bodies like the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council, and Delhi Cantonment Board should have their own enforcement force to lessen the burden on the police.
- The number of female police staff should be increased and their needs and concerns including with regard to safety should be met.
- Financial and other incentives like better ranks should be offered to the police to instil pride in them and to boost their morale.
- There is also a need for proper reporting of all crimes, even those considered to be 'small crimes', especially against women and children.
- A board elaborating cases concerned with crimes against women and children should be displayed at all police stations.
- Police personnel should be sensitised, particularly in dealing with crimes against women, children, and the socio-economically weaker sections.
- Resources should be dedicated to the implementation of social programmes such as *Yuvaand Parivartan*, organised by the police, and regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted on the basis of detailed feedback from the residents in order to measure progress of these programmes on the ground.
- The possibility of extension of the *Bhagidari* system to policing could be explored, and the institutionalisation of community policing and

neighbourhood watch schemes (on the lines of Police *Mitras*) should be encouraged, thus giving citizens a stake in their safety and well-being, as well as building trust between the people and the police.

- The need for change within the police force as per public demands also needs to be analysed and understood. The police should not be viewed as merely a coercive instrument of the executive, but also as a facilitator, a provider of services to the public. In this context, the setting up of a Public Relations Committee for the police that would comprise people from all fields and facilitate public interaction may be considered, thus creating a positive image of the police vis-à-vis the public.

6.2 Reforms within the Judiciary

- Special fast-track courts should be institutionalised to address the perpetration of violent crimes against women and children in order to expedite these cases and ensure conviction.
- Proper implementation of Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) and reviewing of the Indian Penal Code Acts regarding rape and sexual abuse should be ensured.
- The State should assure monetary compensation, counselling and all possible medical treatment to rape survivors including going to visit the rape survivor in the hospital.
- Stronger punishments are needed for crimes considered to be 'minor', such as sexual harassment, stalking, etc. in order to prevent more serious crimes in the long run.
- Special protection and encouragement should be given to witnesses of violent crimes.

6.3 Rehabilitation and Intervention Mechanisms

- Reforms must be initiated in the juvenile justice laws to bring them in line with Convention of the Rights of the Child recommendations, that is, moving away from judicial proceedings and custodial sentencing to social and community solutions.
- Continuity of child care interventions must be ensured from rehabilitation to re-integration (including the provision of education, vocational training, skill development, recreation and employment) for children in need of care and

protection as well as children in conflict with the law, by involving experts as well as relevant stakeholders.

- Ensure proper and sensitised training of Personnel dealing with children (especially those in care of need and protection as well as in conflict with the law), whether at shelter homes, or during the investigation processes.
- There is need for linkages between various legislations and departments dealing with children to ensure that the main principles of international law focusing on the protection of child rights are upheld.

6.4 Urban Planning and Services

6.4.1 Participatory and Inclusive Urban Planning

- Involvement of women and children, elderly as well as minority groups, in planning processes through scientific safety audits and regular feedback.
- Inclusive city-wide planning by building community centres.
- Installing of sufficient street lighting within and outside localities.
- Widening of pavements and pedestrian amenities, and reduction of setbacks in order to create visibility of the streets and mixed space use in these areas.
- Creation of more stops and slowdowns in highways.
- Reviewing of the Master Plan, 2021, to ensure that children's needs and concerns such as safety and well being are met.

6.4.2 Transport

- Installation of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in public transport as in well as autos and taxis.
- Prominent display of helpline numbers and driver and cab/bus/auto information inside these modes of transport.
- Regulation of all forms of transport and conduction of regular checks.
- Avoiding overloading of buses and provisioning of more frequent buses.
- Checking of all forms of transport, especially during the night.
- Implementation of prohibition of tinted windows in all forms of transport with resultant penalties for violations.
- Presence of police in buses and metros, especially at night.

6.4.3 Municipal Services

- Building more community toilets in slums and resettlement colonies as well as free public toilets in public spaces for women, while maintaining enough distance between the men's and women's toilets; ensuring regular monitoring and upkeep of these facilities (including security provisioning) to prevent misuse and to ensure the safety of users.
- Building of well-maintained roads for access to schools, clean and usable toilets (separate for girls and boys), and better security around schools to be provided by school authorities.
- Ensuring that social welfare schemes cater to all and are available in all areas without discrimination.

6.4.4 Security Provision by Service Providers

- The onus of providing security should be with the concerned service providers. Thus, apart from providing services like public toilets, monuments, parks, buses, schools, etc., the owners of these services should also be responsible for providing safety to the users of these services. A successful example of this is the Delhi Metro, which provides security at all the stations and is perceived to be relatively safe as per the findings of the Perceptions Survey, 2013, and this could be extended to the above-mentioned public services.
- This would make the service providers accountable for the safety of their users as well as ensure that no anti-social or criminal activities take place in these public spaces.

6.5 Use of Technology to Track and Curb Criminal Activity and Map Unsafe Locations

The Delhi Police has been working towards the installation of technical systems to enhance the reporting and tracking of criminals and victims via web-based integration of information systems, information exchange programmes, ZIPNET, enhanced databases, and digital crime mapping in collaboration with other departments and NGOs. However, there is still a level of mistrust where the police are concerned, which could be tackled through the implementation of a range of positive measures and more interactions with the public such as the *Jan Sampark* initiative.

The following are some suggestions whereby technology could be used to address crimes as well as spread awareness:

- Electronic registration of FIRs and other complaints across local police stations, which could then automatically enter the central database. A web portal should be maintained for the city wherein the citizens' experiences regarding crime and safety could be shared. This portal could also be used to share new policies, laws and events on the issues of crime and safety. A provision to receive important alerts on the phone or sending SOS messages could be explored (for example, 'VithU', an emergency application available for smart phones).
- Mapping of these different kinds of crimes could be done on the basis of the above information.

6.6 Innovative and Constructive Role of the Social Media and Other Media Like TV, Films, Plays

- Building and promoting norms, which inculcate a respect for the law, starting at the school level, by integrating them into the curricula.
- Building and promoting norms of mutual respect and responsibility amongst the citizens (particularly towards women and girls), which could also be integrated into the school curricula.
- Tackling public apathy through awareness and sensitisation regarding the safety and well-being of women, children, youth and the elderly within localities and public spaces; affording encouragement to citizens to help victims of accidents as well as assaults, and assuring them protection from police harassment.
- Spreading awareness about the rights of the people, laws and government schemes, amongst the vulnerable sections, particularly children and youth.
- Facilitating the formation of neighbourhood and community watch groups, both in posh colonies and slum settlements.
- Spreading awareness about crimes against children and laws therein, in schools as well as residential areas for creating awareness not only amongst parents, guardians and teachers, but also amongst the children themselves.

- Need for social media to screen their own content and ensure that images and messages which condone violence against anyone in any way are immediately reported and removed.

6.7 Promotion of Research in the Area of Crime, Violence and Safety

- Conduct in-depth longitudinal research studies to understand how urbanisation in the country is panning out and how it impacts planning, governance and safety and security.
- Collection of disaggregated data on how different groups use and experience public spaces (over a period of time).
- Carrying out in-depth research to understand how men, women, girls and boys, the differently-abled, the elderly, transgendered persons, and the poor, experience violence and crimes in order to inform more specific policies for their empowerment and protection; and conduct more evaluation studies on the existing programmes to understand how they are operating on the ground.
- Review state budgets to understand the extent to which the needs and concerns of women and children are being captured.
- Improve understanding of the NCRB data, how data on crime are collected, how IPC crimes are categorised, and what challenges come in the way of the recording of crimes.
- Undertaking of detailed research to understand how different socio-economic groups view crime and what they expect from the police; tools such as safety audits and accessibility audits can be used to include vulnerable sections in the planning processes.

Endnotes

- ¹ The NCRB is responsible for collecting data on cognisable crimes from police stations in the states and Union Territories (UTs) and compiles them into detailed reports.
- ² In 2004, the NCRB recorded crimes in 35 cities, while in 2011, crimes in 53 cities were recorded.

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