

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Sexual Violence against Women and Girls (SVAWG) constrains women and girls' access to opportunities and negatively impacts their ability to participate in personal and overall development. Public space sexual violence has gained some attention, but mainly in cities. In rural areas where a large majority of India's population resides, violence of this kind is unacknowledged yet prevalent. Safety for rural women and girls is typically achieved by confining them closer to the home, which restricts mobility, leads to school-drop out and justifies early marriage. Governance structures at the local level, the Gram Panchayats (GPs), though constitutionally mandated to address issues of social justice and violence against women and children, have reneged on this responsibility.

Since 2016, Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives (SWATI) and International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), Asia have been implementing a project that responds to the issue of public space safety of rural girls and women. The evaluated intervention research model, *kNOW Fear* was tested with 16 GPs of Patdi / Dasada block in Surendranagar



district of Gujarat. The twenty four-month intervention phase of the project ended on June 2019 and was supported by International Development Research Center (IDRC).

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

kNOW Fear is a gender-integrated, women's empowerment project that fosters freedom from violence in public spaces in Gujarat, India. It empowers women and girls to demand and lead change towards transforming gender norms, increasing support for girls' education and delaying age at marriage, while bringing men and boys along as partners in these processes. *kNOW Fear* aligns women's citizenship and political agency within the structures of democratic planning. The project positions public safety as a critical component of local governance and creates an evidence-based model of public safety for women and girls in rural areas. The effort to evoke the constitutional mandate of GPs, as elected bodies responsible for social justice and equitable development, and make them responsive to women's safety, adopts a structural or systemic approach that is replicable and scalable.



LIVING IN FEAR AND DISCRIMINATION

A baseline research was conducted in 16 villages with young men (age 18-22 years); adolescent girls (age 15-19 years) and women (age 20-45 years) in 2016. Key findings and insights can be summarised as:

Extent and form of sexual violence

- 37% girls reported experiencing some form of sexual violence (visual, verbal, unwanted sexual contact such as touching and groping) in the last one year, of this 25% mentioned that they faced any form of sexual violence on their way to school.
- 26% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual violence (visual, verbal, unwanted sexual contact such as touching and groping) in the last one year prior to the survey. Among them, 61% women reported that they faced sexual violence of some kind on their way to work

Early and childhood marriage

- 42% girls think girls should be married early to protect them from sexual harassment compared to 57% women and 38% men who think so.

Leisure

- 30% of young men reported they go out for leisure activities while only 6% adolescent girls and women reported so.

Access to technology

- 17% girls reported that they owned a mobile as opposed to 96% men; ownership among women is 30%
- 4.3% girls have access to internet compared to 26% young men

Impact on Education

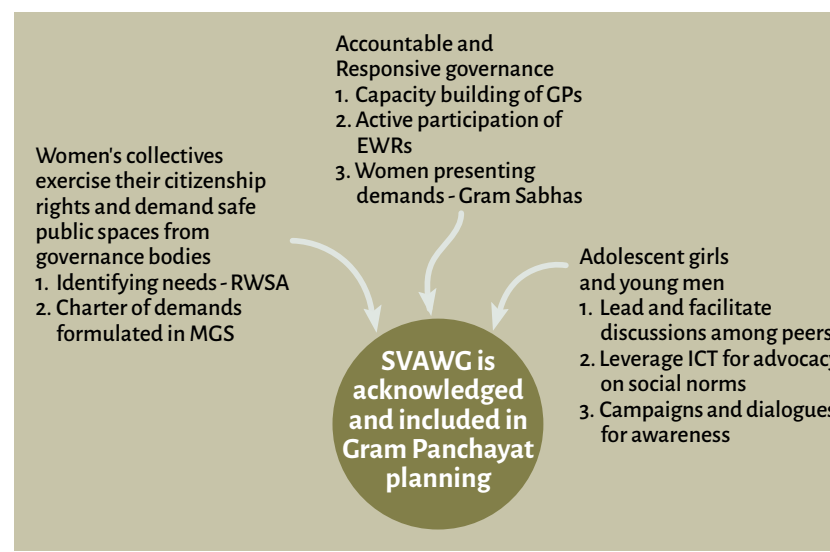
- reasons for discontinuing education –
 - need to support family (40%)
 - fear of experiencing sexual violence either in transport or on the way (12%)
 - school / college is far away (14%)
 - no facility for transport (9%)
- Among the adolescent girls who are currently not studying, 61% wished to continue study when they dropped out from school/college compared to 43% young men
- To avoid public space sexual violence, 42% girls changed their route, 25% changed their timing and 30% missed school



PROJECT GOAL AND STRATEGIES

kNOW Fear worked to directly impact social norms around public space violence, mobility for women and girls, early and forced marriages. It mobilised women's collectives, elicited youth participation and promoted women's participation in the gram sabha. The goal being to catalyse local governance bodies - the Gram Panchayats (GPs) to prioritise and respond to violence faced by women and girls in rural public spaces.

Women's Citizenship	Making Governance Accountable	Young Women and Men as Partners for Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the politically symbolic platform of Mahila Gram Sabhas for women to voice their demands in preparation for the formal Gram Sabha Conduct Rural Women's Safety Audits to bring out girls' and women's safety concern and needs and placing them on the agenda of the GPs. Strengthen women's demands with the GPs through public discussions on the issue of safety for women and girls and its impact on their lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orient and build capacities of Gram Panchayats on making public space safety of women and girls, a concern to be addressed by the GPs Activate informed participation of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in the Panchayat functioning Mobilise women collectives to voice their demands in Gram Sabhas Include women's safety and essential demands in village development planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead and facilitate discussions with groups of young men and girls around sexual harassment in monthly sessions Campaigns on promoting gender equitable attitudes Leverage Information Communication and Technology (ICT) to generate evidence on impact of violence and advocacy for safer public spaces for women and girls



WOMEN'S CITIZENSHIP AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

PROJECT PROCESSES

- Formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was drawn with GPs assuring their commitment to supporting the project goals.
- Trainings workshops and exposure visits were conducted to build GPs' capacities to acknowledge and respond to women's demands on concepts of good governance, 73rd Amendment Act, women's concerns in local governance, budgeting and Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). From each GP, an average of three members participated in these trainings.
- Comprising of an average of 20 members, women's groups were formed around the idea of women's citizenship. Around 750 women were directly engaged through intervention activities in the eleven villages.
- The project envisaged a convergence between the women's collectives and the Elected Women's Representatives (EWRs). The women's collectives supported the EWRs in playing an active role in GP, while the EWRs gave voice to women's demands.
- Citizenship Rights Dialogue were used as a platform to initiate discussions about equity and equality, political participation of women, their constitutional rights and their public and private citizenship – more than 250 women participated in two such block level dialogues.
- Women's Safety Audits were carried out in six villages and was utilized to bring out women's safety needs at the Gram Sabha and inclusion in the GPDP.

OUTCOMES

- Assertion of women for their citizenship rights – solidarity with EWRs and increased EWR participation in GP meetings; strengthen GP functioning through citizen engagement
- Women's collective started using the Panchayat office for their monthly meetings in six GPs – Sedla, Nana Goriya, Bamanva, Savlas, Jaravla and Bajana.
 - Mahila Gram Sabhas were held ahead the statutory Gram Sabha and were an important platform for women to discuss, prioritise and plan for their issues before presenting them at the Gram Sabha – 474 women participated in 26 Mahila Gram Sabhas during the intervention period.
- GP meetings which were earlier done once in three or four months were now being done at least once every two months - Vadgam, Gavana, Mithaghoda, Bamanva, Nana Goriya, Jaravla and Sedla.
- Increased women participation in Gram Sabha – 222 women participated in 28 Gram Sabhas. They demanded information on budgetary allocations and expenditure from GPs. Women also demanded accountability from the Talathi¹ to seek progress on the status of the resolutions passed during Gram Sabha.
- The issue of girls and women's safety was discussed during the Gram Sabhas for the first time.



Inclusion of women's demands in GPDP

Some of the specific demands by women that were accepted during the Gram Sabha and included in GPDP are –

- Provisions of street lights - Savlas, Sedla, Nana Goriya, Bamanva, Panva
- Regular garbage collection from streets and removal of heaps of hay and straw from the roads – Bajana, Nana Goriya, Savlas and Bamanva
- Cutter line for disposal of waste water – Bamanva, Gavana, Mithaghoda, Bubwana
- Removal of thick bushes of Gando Bawal (Prosopis Juliflora) on roads and around ponds
- Borewell and pipeline for water supply – Nana Goriya
- Construction and / or repair of washing and bathing Chats – Bamanva, Panva, Savlas, Sedla, Bajana, Nana Goriya, Jaravla and Mithaghoda

Details of work done by each GP on women's demands, along with the resources mobilised for the same –

Gram Panchayat	Details of the work done	Resources mobilised
Mithaghoda	Sewage line connection in Rabarivaas and pruning bushes near the lake - Dalitvaas near the school	1,620,000
Savlas	Deepening the lake and covered bathing ghat, facilitation for drainage of rainwater in Harijanvaas, RCC roads and pruning bushes on the road connecting the bus stand to the village etc.	892,000
Bamanva	Pruning bushes near the village pond and sewage line connection in Thakorvaas and Dalitvaas	484,000
Bajana	Garbage disposal near the school, pruning bushes and RCC road near the village pond	307,000
Jarvla	Street lights repaired in all areas of the village, RCC road connecting the village and the bus stand and pruning on Gadiyasar Mahadev road	515,000
Nana Goriya	New bore-well, pumping machinery, pipe line (water supply)	1,000,000
Sedla	Street light repaired in every area of the village, RCC road in Dalit vaas, covered bathing ghat near village pond with taps	715,000
Bubwana	Borewell, Pump room and motor machine	125,0000
Vadgam	RCC road in Vankarvaas, RCC road near school, Bore-well and pump room machinery and street lights	2,545,000
Gavana	RCC road from Bharwadvaas to school and sewage line connection in Vankarvaas and Rabarivaas	855,000

WORK WITH YOUTH

PROJECT PROCESSES

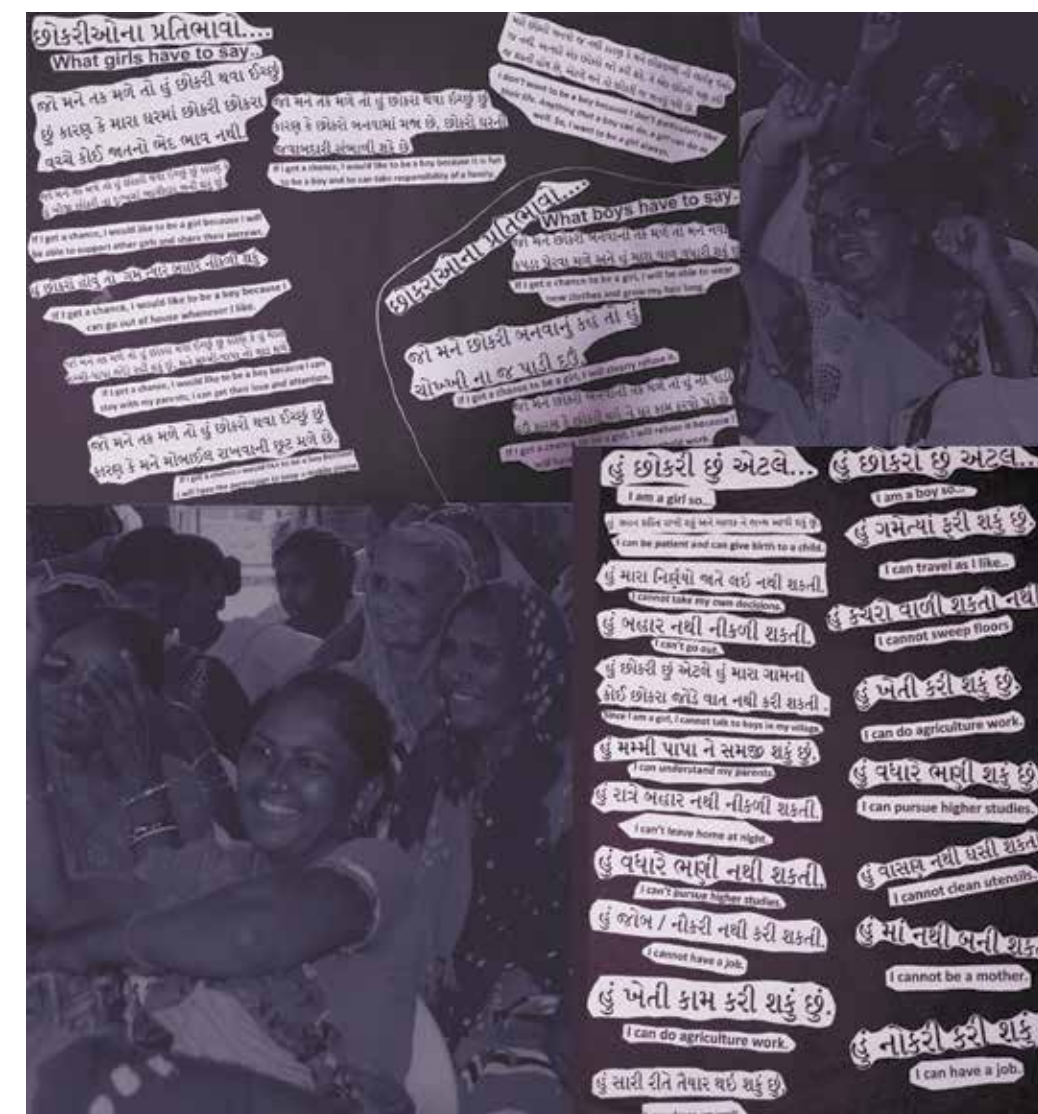
- kNOW Fear* elicited involvement of young men and adolescent girls through capacity building workshops on gender justice and workshops on photography and video making. About 675 adolescent girls and 530 young men from 11 villages were associated with this project through participation in campaigns, protests, petitioning, exhibitions and safety audits.
- Gyan Sahayaks or infomediaries were youth leaders in each GP - one male and one female. Workshops were designed and conducted in a ToT format whereby the sessions which were discussed with the Gyan Sahayaks, were then subsequently delivered by them in their villages with their peer groups.

OUTCOMES

- The Gyan Sahayaks were given mobile tablets for creating awareness and undertook advocacy for safer public spaces for women and girls. Video and photo stories were made on education, focusing on the impact of early drop out on girls, lack of safe transport to schools, early and child marriage. Photo stories around gender equality and a film explaining the process of conducting safety audit were also made by the Gyan Sahayaks. These videos and films were used for advocacy with the Panchayats and communities in the villages.
 - Girls and young men led a protest at Patdi where over a 100 people joined in solidarity against Surat and Kathua rape cases on minor girls.
 - Campaigns against sexual harassment were organized in villages and at block level as a part of the 16 days of activism

against gender-based violence.

- Over 350 people participated and performed in an Equal Rights festival organised at Patdi. Young girls performed popular Hindi film songs with rewritten lyrics to highlight the casual sexism and objectification of girls in mainstream cinema. Girls and women also performed plays highlighting social norms around land inheritance and women's active involvement in Panchayat.
- In the parliamentary elections of 2019, over 50 girls from nine villages, many of whom were first time voters, approached candidates from all major political parties and presented their demands regarding lack of transport, quality of education
- A community dialogue was held with mothers focusing on issues of Education - to understand the reasons for dropout of girls at the secondary and higher secondary level. More than 80 girls and women participated. As a result of the career counseling session by the teachers during the dialogue, 4 girls joined skill courses in government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 3 girls were enrolled for higher education by their mothers.
- A dialogue with young men was held where more than 70 boys participated in discussions on gender equity and how it impacts their lives; girls' education and their mobility and ways in which boys can contribute to these issues. Post this dialogue, young men from Mithaghoda initiated a special bus service from their village to a local factory so that the girls who want to work can commute safely.



PROJECT PARTNERS



PROJECT SUPPORT



International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



kNOW fear

MAKING RURAL PUBLIC SPACES SAFER FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

An evidence informed model which fosters freedom from violence and safety for women and girls in public spaces in rural Gujarat, India