Need for a Gender Inclusive Planning - Bhubaneswar City, Odisha (India)

Swapna Sarita Swain[1], Omkar Mohanty[2]

[1]*Asst. Prof.- KIIT School of Architecture and Planning, KIIT University, India*
[2]*Architect - Urban Planner, REPL, Noida, India*

Abstract:- *The rapid growth of urbanization is a relatively recent phenomenon. Urbanization and Migration processes are basically configured by gender roles and relations. Rapid urbanisation leading to urban sprawl results in developments in the peripheral areas, which further results in long travelling distance to work places, recreational and other facilities. 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. The issue of women's safety at public spaces in Bhubaneswar has come in sharp focus over the past five years, with increasing media coverage and public outrage at violence faced by women of all social classes and age groups. This paper highlights two main objectives. Firstly, better understanding of gender sensitive issues, their concerns and safety measures in the urban planning and design. Secondly, encouraging policy makers, planners and urban designers to integrate gender perspective planning strategies as a pre-requisite factor in the policies, programmes and decision making process so as to create a safer, sustainable and inclusive urban development.*

Keywords:- *Gender sensitive, Public spaces, Urbanization, Urban Planning, Women safety*

I. INTRODUCTION

Bhubaneswar, the Capital City of Odisha has derived its name from Tribhubaneswar, which means the Lord of the Three World i.e., Lord Shiva. It is also known as the "Temple city" of India and together with Puri and Konark, it forms the "Golden Triangle". The City was designed by the German Architect Otto Koenigsberger in 1946.It was one of the post independence planned cities. Today the city faces urbanisation with an increased rate of population growth. Though part of the city has stayed faithful to the plan, it has grown rapidly over the last few decades and made the planning process unwieldy. Rapid urbanisation leading to urban sprawl results in developments in the peripheral areas, which further results in long travelling distance to work places, recreational and other facilities. The pace and scale of rural to urban migration is overtaking the ability of city authorities to keep up with the demand for public services.These sprawl developments in turn lack densification, proper planning of mixed use developments and public services, safe streets or pedestrian walkways. In today's scenario, urban planning and design largely ignores gender-specific experiences, needs and concerns particularly for women, exposing them to the risk of sexual harassment and assault. This has to be addressed by integrating implementable gender sensitive planning at the policy and ground level.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper highlights two main objectives. Firstly, better understanding of gender sensitive issues, concerns and the need of safety measures for women in the urban planning. Secondly, encouraging policy makers, planners and urban designers to integrate gender perspective planning strategies as a pre-requisite factor in the policies, programmes and decision making process so as to create a safer, sustainable and inclusive urban development.

III. NEED FOR SAFE AND INCLUSIVE CITIES

A safe city is one that promotes the elimination of gender-based violence, while at the same time promoting 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.).[1] Socially inclusive cities 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. [2] Gender mainstreaming across local governments offers an opportunity to create inclusive cities respecting the human rights of both women and men of all ages and diverse backgrounds. 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]

IV. GENDER AS A NEW PLANNING APPROACH

An input of "gendered perspective" in planning occurs when planners, designers, decision-makers and community actors look at problems with the needs of both women and men in mind. Men and women experience city life in different ways. Women not only perceive and experience cities in a way different than men, but also use public spaces in different ways. [3]

The physical and spatial order of cities is particularly linked to women's and men's work patterns. Poor women living in insecure neighbourhoods are more likely to need to commute in the late or early hours to and from work or to and from educational opportunities, and they are more likely to work in informal sectors. These routines may result in their being exposed to the risks of sexual assault, particularly if water collection is involved. [3]

V. ISSUES OF WOMEN SAFETY ON BHUBANESWAR CONTEXT

The issue of women's safety at public spaces in Bhubaneswar has come in sharp focus over the past five years, with increasing media coverage and public outrage at violence faced by women of all social classes and age groups. Even though women are considered to be the descent half of the society, they live a life of vulnerability and fall victim to atrocities and the criminal instincts of people of their own community.[4] Gender-based violence is present at various levels, beginning with discrimination at birth, further perpetuated through discrimination in education, nutrition, employment, wages and direct/indirect acts of sexual aggression.[5] They always experience fear of harassment and stress while accessing to inadequate potable water and outdoor toilets in their day to day lives.

"Atrociousness against women, particularly the cases of sexual assault and rape, are on the rise across the country. And Odisha is no exception."

As per claims made by the President of Odisha Congress women wing on the basis of a white paper tabled in State Assembly, about 5,572 cases under section 376 (rape) were registered in different police stations of Odisha during last four years. As many as 2,011 rape cases were registered by the State police in 2014, against 1,832 rape cases in 2013 and 1,458 rape cases in 2012.

The statistics is not only shocking but is also loud to explain how women and girl children have become vulnerable to the unmanly instincts of men in the society. However, what has made many people in the eastern state really worried and disturbed is the alarming rate at which child rape cases are going up in the state. As per released official report, during the three year period between 2010 and 2012, the state had recorded as many as 2,071 child rape cases, which was one of the highest in the entire country.

In Bhubaneswar, number of rape cases reported was 56 in the year 2012, 81 in 2013 and it went up to 138 in 2014 which is about 70 percent rise against 2013.A total of 72 rape cases have been registered this year so far, according to the white paper tabled in the State Assembly. Despite the scale and intensity of the problem, violence against women in public spaces remains under-recognized and underreported most of the time, making it difficult to map out the real extent of the problem.

Few states in India have tried to estimate or survey unreported cases of sexual assault. The estimates for unreported rapes in India vary widely. The Government of Odisha estimates 60% of sexual assaults go unreported in its state. [6] Because if the case is reported then, it has a very serious detrimental impact on girl's live as they are restricted in their movements outside homes, getting killed or being driven to commit suicide. A UN study of 57 countries estimates just 11% of rape and sexual assault cases worldwide are ever reported. [7]

In last 5 years, lot of rural migrants migrated to the capital city, Bhubaneswar for seeking employment. The increase of migration from rural to urban areas and failure of local government to provide basic amenities forces a large segment of population to live in inadequate housing and sanitation facilities. "It is widely acknowledged that women and girls living in low-income urban contexts are disproportionately affected by safety hazards, inadequate housing and sanitation facilities which make them outreached from privacy because of using open toilets and bathing facility." Inadequate and inaccessible toilets and bathrooms, as well as the general lack of effective policies and actions, make women more vulnerable to violence. [8] For example, in cities that that don't have indoor toilets, women face danger every time they go to use an informal outdoor "bathroom" where they have little privacy and are vulnerable to sexual harassment or violence.

In a 2010 survey conducted by UN Women, Jagori and the Delhi Department of Women and Child Development, almost two out of three women reported experiencing sexual harassment two to five times over the previous year. [9] Not only in developing countries, the Women in developed countries also dealt with threats to their safety as well. A 2012 poll conducted in London found that 43 percent of young women had experienced street harassment in the past year. In France, a 2013 study revealed that 1 in 4 women experienced fear when in public spaces and that 1 in 5 was verbally harassed while walking on the street. [10]

VI.   CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles**.** Article 14, 15 not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women and protects the rights of women. Articles 16, 39, 42 and 51 favours gender mainstreaming .There are also several sections of the Indian Penal Code that deal with sexual harassment, but hardly any punishment is imposed to the culprit because of unregistered case.

The law commission had examined the entire law relating to rape and sexual assault in IPC and suggested a complete overhauling of the law. Bill, drafted by Ms Kirti Singh advocate and legal convener of AIDWA (All India Democratic Women's Association), is based on 172nd report of the Law Commission to amend the laws relating to sexual assault in Section 375, 376, 354 and 509 IPC and the relevant sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act 1872. The recommendations are based on the national consultation on the issue organized by the national commission for women.

VII.   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 as per appropriate design.

Due to lack of sound policies and poor management, these spaces are neglected and lack gender sensitive planning. For instance, 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. [9]

VIII.   IDENTIFICATION OF GENDER SENSITIVE PLANNING AT PUBLIC SPACES

According to UN-HABITAT, women and girls still experience a higher degree of insecurity and vulnerability to violence (both in public and private realms), which limits their socioeconomic opportunities and access to city services, in comparison to their male counterparts. [11]

In general, those cities where public spaces are more intensely used by diverse citizens conducting different activities at different hours of the day are safer for all, and particularly for women and girls. This is because variety and diverse activities in public spaces tend to promote inclusiveness and make a space more active & populous; make areas less vulnerable for misdeed. In addition, if there are more people present on the street during the day and night time, then there are more "eyes on the street", which can make it more difficult for an assault to occur.

IX.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue of women safety needs to be seen from social perspective. Improved planning, for example 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. [12]

The following recommendations to be worked out in a holistic manner for a gender sensitive city planning:
*   Women's safety, needs and requirements are rarely reflected in urban planning policies.More emphasis should be given on -"Planning city with women" rather than "planning city for women" i.e, encouraging more women participation in policy making and city planning process at the grass root level so as to integrate their state of perception.

- Planning Mixed use developments. Residential developments to be lined up with the commercial / institutional spaces and the premises to be ensured with low height boundary walls to have clear sight vision to adjoining streets.
- Planning and designing spaces like streetscape, nodes or squares for genders of different age groups as per their needs so as to make optimum utilisation of space and encourage social interactions to achieve an objective of gender equality.
- Encouraging transit oriented development (TOD) in urban planning to promote walkability / bikeable safe neighbourhoods while minimising travel distance to work place and improve accessibility to jobs, schools and other destinations.
- State authority to ensure that women are provided with gender-sensitive public services that respond to their needs and provision of safe public toilets.
- Designing safe public transportation services with installation of CCTV cameras at railway platforms, bus stops etc.
- Designing safe streets with proper lighting, signages and maintaining clear sight lines.
- Giving more priority to cyclists and pedestrian and proper signage to be placed at every nodes or squares, showing clear spatial layout of the area with proper road networks.
- Encouraging some late night road side activities like exhibitions, cultural programs etc.
- Imposing equal ratio of lady security staff for night patrolling, night cabs etc.
- 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.
- Local authorities should arrange institutional stakeholders involving groups of women in safety audits of cities.

It is recommended that all the above strategies should be developed and implemented to ensure that a diversity of girls and women are represented within the envelopes of safe cities, both on ground and policy level and creating framework for timely monitoring and review of outcomes for the above mentioned strategies in order to have a gender inclusive city.

REFERENCES

[1]. http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/237-what-are-safe-cities-and-communities-for-women-and-girls-.html?next=238
[2]. UN Habitat (2012), Gender issue guide – urban planning and design,.
[3]. UN Women (2009), Safe Cities Global Programme.
[4]. Basudev Mahapatra,(2012),Growing women atrocities in Odisha.
[5]. UNDP, March 2010, 'Voices and Rights'.
[6]. (June 2013) Page 59, Odisha Review Govt. of Odisha,
[7]. UN Women (2013), Factsheet – Global Progress of the World's Women 2011-12.
[8]. Amnesty International. (2010). Insecurity and Indignity: Women's Experiences in the Slums of Nairobi, Kenya. London: Amnesty International.
[9]. Jagori, UN Women, Delhi Government Department of Women and Child Development (2010). Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls Initiative: Report on Baseline Survey, Delhi, 2010. United Nations Development Fund for Women
[10]. Blumenthal Susan (2014), Creating Safe Spaces in Cities for Women: A Resolution for International Women's Day; The Huffington Post.
[11]. Action Aid (2014), Safe Cities for Women: from reality to rights
[12]. http://bloomingrock.com/2015/03/09/safety-comfort-and-delight-for-women-in-the-built-environment/ Taz Loomans