Towards an Inclusive and Safe Delhi*

In the context of rapid urban growth, planning and distribution of resources for increasing urban populations has emerged as a major concern in India in the recent decades. Rapid urban expansion without governance sufficiently oriented towards inclusiveness and safety is known to deepen existing inequalities and endanger public safety curtailing the rights of vulnerable sections to urban space. This becomes apparent in the Indian context with differential access to the city by low and high income groups and by different genders. 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 equal right to the city.

Delhi has acquired the disrepute in terms of crimes in general and with women and children emerging as the most vulnerable groups to violence. The horrific gang rape of a 23-year old girl in December 2012 was a 'tipping point' of violence against women in the city that erupted in the form of unprecedented protests and campaigns by the citizens, civil society organisations and media for the cause of women's rights and safety. These demands and efforts that culminated in a series of measures by the State and the law enforcing agencies, the foremost being amendments to Criminal Law (2013), resulted in an urban social milieu qualitatively better than the past. Yet, according to a recent study conducted by the Institute for Human Development in early 2015 and analysis of official crime data and media reports suggest that women's

right to access urban spaces and to pursue their aspirations is still severely curtailed by the concerns of safety and security. The campaigns, post-December 2012 incident, have instilled a sense of confidence among young women to assert, raise their voices and report instances of sexual violence, along with an increased awareness of their entitlements; but they still navigate urban spaces with caution and fear of the imagery of assault, facing everyday forms of sexual violence, and limit their movement and time outside home. There is also an increased sense of fear among the families and parents that curb physical mobility of women to varying extents. While the better off sections can afford to be more mobile in 'safer' zones, women and girls from poor sections and localities limit their mobility, but are also forced to venture through 'unsafe' zones – poorly lit lanes along railway lines and sewage canals leading to their settlements, public spaces of defecation etc.

The sudden spurt in the rate of crime against women after 2012 in Delhi can be attributed to both responsive policing in recording of crime, owing also partly to the new provisions in Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, and assertion of women in reporting crime. While this is a positive development, the trust deficit on law enforcing agencies still remains large and the numbers of crime prove to be too large that the efforts, both of State's and societal, should continue to strive for women's right to city and safety.

Further, Delhi's infamous image as 'crime capital' has become part of the overseas cautionary security communication to the foreign businesses and visitors to India citing high rate of crime against women and also against foreign nationals (see for ex. US' OSAC's security communication on Delhi). Delhi registered alarming levels of street crime including robbery, snatching and all thefts in the recent years which constitutes two-thirds of the total crime. This raises serious questions on increasing crime levels and its links with unemployment, deprivation and exclusionary tendencies in the city, resulting in drawing a new generation into crime. For example, of the 2556 persons arrested in 2014 with charges of snatching, according to Crime

in Delhi report (Delhi Police, 2014), more than 90% of them were first time offenders and more than 60% were either 'illiterates or school drop-outs'. Therefore, reduction of crime in general and safety of women and children in particular should remain a priority in policy and governance for reinventing Delhi and its image as safe and inclusive.

1. **Overall Incidence of Crime**

- Delhi city registered a steep increase in crime in the recent years: registered IPC cases increased by 47 % between 2012 (54287) and 2013 (80184) and it further increased by 84% with 147230 cases in 2014. The street crime, which includes robbery, snatching, burglary and all thefts, increased by 185% between 2013 and 2014, and constitutes 66% of the total 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) data) declined over the period 2004-06 to 2010-12 from 397.9 to 314.3 per 100,000; but it substantially increased to an average rate of 530 during 2012-14; the crime rate recorded for Delhi was unprecedented in 2014 at 856.
- The NCRB ranking, which is based on the total cognisable crime rate in the country, shows that Delhi ranked 2nd among 53 Indian cities in 2014.
- Delhi displays higher rates of violent crimes such as murder and kidnapping, as compared to other five major cities, namely Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad 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, and starkly increased from 2013.

- 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 from 63.6 per 100,000 females in 2011 and 2012 to 151 in 2013.

- Delhi ranks 4 among the 53 cities in terms of crimes against women recorded by the NCRB in 2013. In 2012, it ranked 16.

- Delhi reported the highest rate of rapes among the other major cities. It was 4.0 and 3.2 per 100,000 total population, respectively in 2004-06 and 2010-12. In 2013 and 2014 it recorded highest rate among all the 53 Indian cities at 19 and 23.9 per lakh female population respectively.

- 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 percent to 8.4 percent over the period.

- 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. Findings from IHD's study 2015

In the first half of the year 2015, IHD conducted qualitative group interviews and a survey among more than 2000 households across various localities in Delhi city. Two years after the December 2012 Delhi rape case, and the measures initiated by the police like women's help line (1091) including prompt registration of cases, this study sought to probe how safe women felt in their localities and the city at large, perceptions on crime and policing among others.

- Higher percentage of respondents feel that their immediate locality is safer than outside locality/city for women in their households (see chart 1 and 2). There is drastic difference how they perceive both locality and city in general when compared them during the nights. Further, there is difference between the types of localities with lower percent of respondents in slums feeling safer in their locality compared to authorised colonies.

- Immediate locality: While 80% of the total respondents feel their locality is safe in general, only 54% feel safe during nights. The corresponding figures in slums are 60% and 38%.

IHD 2015 - Survey highlights of perceptions on women's safety in Delhi
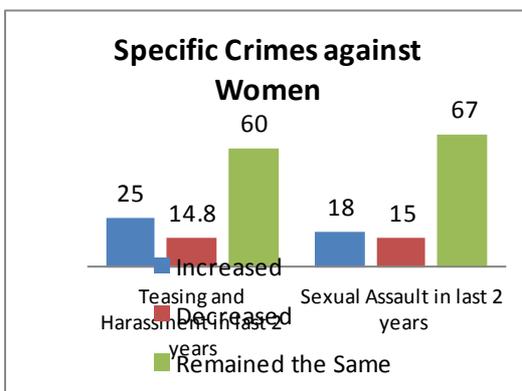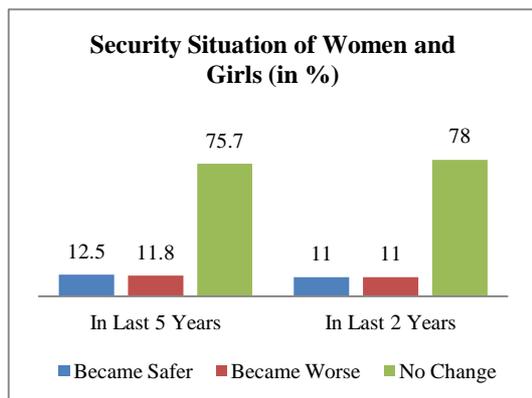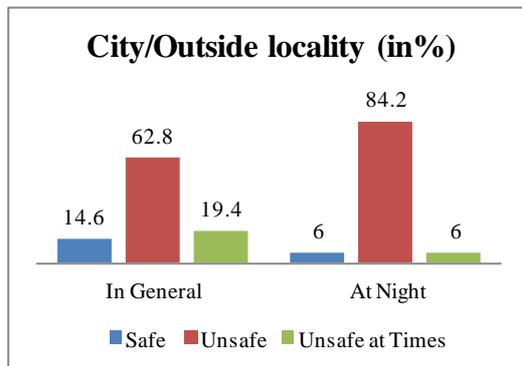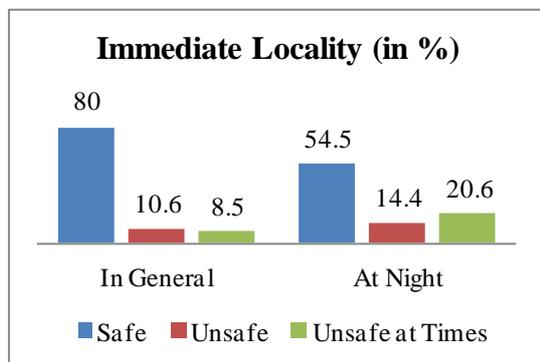
- Outside locality/city at large: Only 14.6% feel safe outside their localities in general and as low as 6% feel safe during nights. There is no significant difference between localities in the responses.
- No change in women's safety: About three-fourths of the respondents feel that there was 'no change' in women's security situation in the last five years

in the city. Further, the same percent feel that there was 'no change' in last two years (2013 and 2014) compared to previous years (see chart 3).

- Crime against women: Majority (more than 60%) feel there was no change in crime against women, but 24% feel it has increased. Specifically, 25% believe that harassment of girls has increased and 18% believe that incident of sexual assault has increased (see chart 4).

- Everyday harassment and fear of major assault: In group interviews, many felt that they are more confident to talk about sexual violence more openly since the campaigns after 2012 incident. Not infrequently, they face everyday forms of sexual violence like comments, cat calls, staring and groping especially in public transport and crowded market places. The fear of sexual assault still looms large and, thus, women avoid deserted places and movement during nights.

- Heightened insecurity: More than half of the respondents felt that crime related to theft has increased in the last three years. Such response is consistent with official crime figures that registered a steep increase in street crime in the recent years. Heightened sense of insecurity pervades Delhi residents, especially in better off localities where there is increase in measures like private security, high fencing and surveillance cameras.

- Youth in crime: In some poor localities, it was openly revealed that some of the youth indulge in crime like snatching purses, mobile phones and chains. Youth at large in such localities are under surveillance of police; policing in these localities is largely characterised by suspicion and persecution than protection unlike in better off localities.

- Policing in general: 45% of households feel policing, in general (not particularly regarding women's security), has improved in the last two years. Also 54% agree that police regularly patrol in their localities; such response is high (62%) in authorised colonies and low (40%) in slums. However, 10% in

slums and 5% in resettlement colonies agree that police harass people, mostly youth, in their localities, which is very low in authorised colonies.

- Extortion by the police: Rendering illegitimate the livelihood activities of the poor, particularly the street vendors and auto drivers, police in Delhi resort to extortion of money through intimidation. In absence of official licenses for vending, both police and municipal officials informally control vending markets and continue to exact money on a monthly basis. Absence of parking spaces near metro stations and bus stops makes auto drivers the target of police extortion.

5. **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS** In this context and keeping the key findings of the study in mind, policy suggestions have been made around the main areas

- Inclusive urban planning and services to ensure safety and equitable access for all citizens. Most importantly, especially to reduce the troubles of women in poor localities, sufficient access to water and increase in number of public toilets and ensuring their access round the clock to reduce risks from sexual violence.

- The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in crime reduction and prevention. Recent measures by the Delhi police like women's help line (1091), WatsApp helpline, *Himmat* App need more publicity and should reach poorer sections of the city. There is an urgent need to study their reach and impact to fill the gaps in safety concerns of women and children.

- 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.

- 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. Official surveys to be instituted to study crime under selected police station jurisdictions, on the lines of Victimization surveys in UK and other countries, in order to assess the actual incidence of crime, reporting and the registration of cases by the police to strengthen law enforcement.

- The records of Delhi police in recent years suggest that there is significant improvement in registration of cases. Yet the gap between the number of complaints officially reported and actual registered cases is very wide. Mechanism should be evolved to make random checks at police station level for non-registration of cases of the reported crimes in order to improve accountability of policing and proper registration of cases.

- Special focus on children and youth in poor localities to ensure them better access to education and counseling in case of school drop-outs, substance abuse and juvenile crime. Emphasis on creating infrastructure for sports and other creative pursuits in these localities to channel the creative energies of the children and youth.

- For speedy redressal of cases and raise confidence in the criminal justice system, continue reforms in 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. Most important for Delhi is that the law enforcement services should be brought under the Delhi Government in order to make police functions efficient and accountable.

- Further, police personnel should be sensitised, particularly in dealing with crimes against women, children, and the socio-economically weaker sections

and measures to ensure accessibility of the police. The number of female police staff should be increased and their needs and concerns including with regard to safety should be met. Measures to change the attitude of surveillance and suspicion on poor localities and minority communities to instill confidence in police.

- A legitimate and accessible body has to be instituted where poor can directly voice their concern in the contexts of harassment by lower functionaries of state, which ensures no further victimization of the aggrieved.

- Institutionalizing fear reduction: Not only controlling crime but fear reduction has to be at the centre of contemporary urban policing. The state and police must seek to reduce the larger fear around crimes which severely curtails women's rights to and access over public spaces.

- Allowing vending and shopping activities in deserted places as well as near other places like metro stations and bus stops till a certain time at night to enhance a sense of security among night travelers, particularly women, and reduce the possibility of crime.

- Immediate implementation of Street Vendors Act to protect the rights of vendors and measures to curb extortion and harassment by the police on vendors and other vulnerable occupational groups.

- Campaigns and awareness programmes that made a qualitative difference in building confidence among girls and women should relentlessly continue using all media and platforms to reach all sections of the city focusing on the rights of women, children and vulnerable sections and on the available redressal mechanisms. Participative mechanisms creating more platforms at local and community level to redress locality specific issues.