



**THE EPIDEMIC
OF SEXUAL
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN IN NEW
DELHI**

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Motivation

We have all been victims of sexual assault or know someone close to us who has. Growing up in India, most of us in New Delhi, we have come to normalize sexual assault. In 2012, the brutal gang rape and death of 23-year-old student Jyoti Singh acted as a catalyst to bring the issue of sexual violence in New Delhi to the forefront. International outrage over the horrific incident led to the promise of new laws and fast-track courts. Seven years later, Jyoti's parents feel that change has not occurred and that justice in India has failed Jyoti and women like her.

Map the System offers a meaningful way to explore an issue that is deeply personal to all of us. We hope that we can contribute to a larger conversation on bringing about widespread change in New Delhi.

Methodology

We conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with a broad range of stakeholders and detailed secondary research of 80 reports and articles to gain a comprehensive understanding of the system surrounding sexual violence. For the purposes of this report, we define sexual assault as acts ranging from micro-aggressions, such as catcalling, to molestation and rape. We interviewed politicians, film producers, police officers, lawyers, activists, teachers, counsellors, government officials, members of the private sector, parents, and academics. Some of our notable interviewees included Swati Maliwal, a politician and chairwoman of the Delhi Commission for Women; Leslee Udwin, the producer of the BBC documentary *India's Daughter*, which focuses on Jyoti Singh's gang rape; and Vijaya Rao, an activist who has been fighting for women's rights in India for over three decades.

We also interviewed those who are at the heart of the issue—men and women living in New Delhi. We interviewed three broad categories of stakeholders: those who have influence, those who impact growth and development, and those who provide support and protection.



Our secondary research which also looked at interview accounts of 100 perpetrators and studies conducted with more than 9000 men in North India helped us understand factors that drive masculinity in Delhi men, making it an almost toxic element of society.

Some of the limitations in our research include:

- (i) a limited sample that could reduce the generalizability of our findings;
- (ii) a lack of interviews with victims of sexual assault (this went against the guidelines for Map the System). However, we spoke to those who worked directly with victims of sexual assault.

Introduction

In New Delhi, a woman is reportedly raped every five hours (Hindustan Times, 2018). One in three reported crimes against women in India occur in New Delhi (Alavi, 2017). Reported cases of rape, molestation, and sexual harassment have increased more than 300% between 2012 to 2017, from 1,647 cases in 2012 to 7,238 cases in 2016 (Delhi Police, 2016).

Despite these statistics, the full extent of sexual assault is still unknown. A significant proportion of attacks go unreported because of the cultural and social stigma associated with sexual assault.

This complex and hostile environment against women is a product of deeply entrenched patriarchy; an outdated and rigid educational system; caste system; longstanding religious and cultural tradition; weak institutional support; and social stigma against, and collective denial of the issue of sexual assault.

Strongly Entrenched Patriarchy

India, particularly northern India where New Delhi is located, operates within a male-dominated patriarchal system in which men are encouraged to be hyper-masculine and women are taught to be submissive (Doshi, 2017). More than 90% of our stakeholders attribute patriarchy as the main contributing factor towards sexual assault.

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When women do not conform to the standards set by patriarchal society, it fuels sexual violence.
Sutapa Sanyal, Indian Police Service

Gender discrimination also contributes to India's skewed sex ratio. By 2020, India could have 28 million more men than women (Halarnkhar, 2013). In New Delhi, there are less than 9 women for every 10 men (Government of India, 2013). Women are underrepresented in all areas of society, including politics and workforce. Fewer women in the workforce contributes to their increased financial dependence on men and compounds inequality between the sexes.

Rigid Caste System

Individuals are born into a hierarchical caste system and have very little social fluidity or opportunity for upward mobility. This system has contributed to a culture of rampant caste discrimination—and in particular, women become easy targets of caste-based violence. Over 23% of lower-caste women have reported being raped (Krishnan, 2018), and rape is often “used as a weapon” in caste conflicts, or as an “exercise of power” by upper-class men (Krishnan, 2018).

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The disease is not the violence or rape, the disease is gender discrimination—that discrimination leads to rape and violence. Rape and violence are the symptoms, and not the cause.
Leslee Udwin, Activist & Producer of BBC documentary “India's Daughter”

Lack of Education and an Outdated Educational System

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Parents get upset that you are introducing kids to words like ‘sex’. Because sex is taboo, no one talks about it.

Rhea Dubey, School Counsellor

Our interviews highlighted a lack of education as a deterrent to creating a safe environment for women in North India. The current education system almost exclusively focuses on equipping people with skills for the labour market (Udwin, 2019). Sex education is not given the same status or importance as other academic subjects by students, parents, or teachers. This is in part because it does not contribute to tangible academic gains, and also the conservatism associated with Indian society.

Religion

The perception that women are the weaker sex is passed down intergenerationally under the guise of religion. This is a large factor in perpetuating the image that ‘weaker’ means “prey,” which helps empower sexual predators (Bisaria, 2019).

Weak Institutions

Until the Jyoti Singh case in 2012, outdated and parochial laws and policies were intrinsic to the legal system and police force, particularly in the area of sexual crimes. Laws against sexual assault were made harsher after 2012, but lax implementation continues to instil little fear in perpetrators.

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Rape is about power. We need to completely disempower these criminals. Presently, our system is empowering them.

Swati Maliwal, Chairperson, Delhi Commission for Women

There are not enough police personnel in this city.

Viniti Sareen, Human Resources, New Delhi

Social Stigma and Victim Blaming

A deeply rooted cultural taboo around sex contributes to the consistent underreporting of sexual assault and propagates a culture of denial and downplay of sexual violence against women, resulting in victim blaming and bystander apathy. The New Delhi Government faced global criticism for banning the documentary *India’s Daughter*, about Jyoti Singh’s rape; for attempting to silence the issue rather than actively combatting the violence (Udwin, 2019).

Other factors

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Don't trust National crime bureau data because there is huge underreporting and states use different definitions of sexual assault.

Vishnu, P., Editor - HT Mint

Drug and alcohol abuse are situational factors, increasing the likelihood of violence by reducing inhibitions, clouding judgment and impairing the ability of both men and women to interpret cues. **Migration from rural to urban India, poor infrastructure, poverty and unemployment** are additional factors that contribute to the intensity of the problem. The **entertainment and pornography industries** are exacerbating factors, if not the root cause, that encourage the viewing of women as objects of desire.

Solutions Landscape

Large and sustained change cannot be achieved with short-sighted, one-off, or reactionary changes. Widespread behavioural change can only be achieved if New Delhi designs and implements a concerted city-level strategy that targets education, policy, law, technology, and infrastructure.

Education

All our interviewees advocated for education as key to fostering long-term change in mindset. Solutions targeting education take the longest to make an impact; the effect is not immediately visible. However, they yield the highest probability of enacting a paradigm shift in deeply entrenched attitudes. A variety of preventative educational programs differing in intensity and objective can be utilized, such as:

- Gender sensitization and sexual harassment trainings at the workplace for all professions such as lawyers and police officers;
- Bystander training for those who witness sexual assault crimes;
- Self-defence and positive sexuality programs for women;
- Early childhood development programs and equality training for parents; and
- programs targeting men to reflect upon rigid gender norms.

Media is a crucial platform through which education can reach a larger population, whether by the Indian film industry featuring more empowered women on screen or through socially-focused shows hosted by famous actors.

ThinkEqual

A set of programmatic tools targeting children between the ages of 3-6 years teaching respect, value, and empathy regardless of gender.

Parwarish

Organization training parents to introduce the topic of sex education and positive sexuality at home.

Policy

Policies range from mandating a quota of women in the police force and Delhi legislature, to setting a target for the number of women in the Delhi workforce. For schools and the workplace, a zero-tolerance policy should be enforced against sexual harassment and crimes with harsh penalties such as suspension, expulsion and police involvement, if necessary (Rao, 2019). While policies can be designed in the short-run, implementing and enforcing policy takes time and diligence. Effective policy, along with strict laws, can help regulate behaviour and act as a stop gap before the longer-term impact of education helps bring about attitudinal change. These policies' impact should be rigorously evaluated by inviting external academics and critics to implement, test and replicate solutions (Garg, 2019).

Legal

As a comprehensive legal structure already exists in India to deal with crimes of sexual assault, particularly in the aftermath of the Jyoti Singh case, solutions in the legal arena should focus on expediting the justice process through fast-track courts; reducing or eliminating error; and placing the victim at the centre of the case (Verma et al, 2012). For instance, legal reforms require mandatory completion of investigations under two months. Swift implementation of the law is key to enforcing curative behaviour.



We should ensure a judicial system which is fool proof, swift, and with a certainty of justice.

Swati Maliwal - Delhi Commission for Women

Nirbhaya Fund

\$143 million allocated to support initiatives by the government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity of and building safe infrastructure for women.

Delhi Commission of Women

An institution created by the government with the aim to investigate and examine matters relating to the safety of women. The Commission offers services such as a complaints registry, counselling, and women-led self-help groups at the communal level.

Nirbhaya Act

An amendment made to the Criminal Law Act in 2013 after the 2012 rape of Jyoti Singh, it modified and broadened the definition of rape beyond penetration and increased the age of consent from 16 to 18 years (Verma et al., 2012).

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act

Legislative act that came into effect in 2013 seeking to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work.

Technology

The use of mobile phone apps in providing professional networks, SOS emergency lines, and an avenue for women to report workplace harassment has amplified since 2012. Successful social media campaigns have also gained traction nationally. The use of technology allows for positive messaging to be dispersed in a short period of time to a large sample, inexpensively.

Mumbai police

The number of followers of the Mumbai police Twitter account increased from 32,000 to 4.6 million when they started posting witty tweets on topics such as consent (De, 2018).

Vaahini app

Provides a networking forum for professional women through discussion and connections with senior thought leaders.

Himmat app

Developed by the Delhi Police, the app sends SOS messages to the police and scans QR codes of taxi drivers.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure—physical or social—offers a relatively short-term and tangible preventative solution to helping reduce the incidence of sexual assault. Safe and supportive infrastructure can be of two types:

- physical, in the form of better lighting and improved public transportation facilities, and
- social, through the building of safe spaces for survivors of attacks and women’s self-help groups to help with financial empowerment (Rao, 2019).

Last-mile connectivity

Providing public transport facilities across the city with detailed maps indicating connectivity (Safetipin, 2019).

Dark spots

Servicing 9000 dark spots in Delhi with street lights (Safetipin, 2018).

Sexual Assault Abroad: What works

For Women: Enhanced, Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) Quebec, Canada

The Enhanced, Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) educational program consists of 12 hours of small-group work targeted at empowering women with strategies that they need to defend their own sexual rights. This is the only educational program of its kind that has been evaluated in a clinical trial and shown to significantly reduce the incidence of rape for a year after the program (Senn, 2017).

For Men: Program H Brazil

Program H targets young men between the ages of 15 and 24, encouraging reflection about rigid gender norms. Originally started in Brazil, the program has now been scaled up to 34 countries. The program also offers a Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale that can be used to assess the effectiveness of the program. The results of eight, quasi-experimental studies on Program H have found evidence of positive change in participants such as more gender equitable attitudes and behaviour (Promundo, 2019).

Gaps and Levers of Change

The solutions identified above face limitations imposed by internal and external factors such as a lack of prioritization, sensitivity, representation, and awareness. We have identified levers that can make these existing solutions more effective.

Gap: Lack of Prioritization & Implementation	
Levers of Change: Prioritize gender equality as a national agenda through different media	
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce investigation time (which can take 90 days or longer despite the Nirbhaya Act) and impose stricter penalties for those guilty of sexual assault (Roshan Shankar, 2019) ● Implement a cohesive and concerted national strategy to guide the effort of ministries trying to prevent and respond to sexual violence (Solotaroff & Pande, 2014) ● Effectively utilize the remaining two-thirds of the Nirbhaya funds by operationalizing more one-stop rape crisis centres and women's emergency helplines (Business Insider, 2018)
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that investigators, prosecutors, and judges have the capacity to collect and appreciate evidence (Mohta, 2019)
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Portray women in empowered and liberated roles in mainstream media, such as newspapers and Bollywood movies (Maheshwari, 2017) ● Engage parents during sex education classes at school (Dubey, 2019)
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop products and technologies focused on women as the primary user. The app-based taxi service, Ola, ended a Pink Ola Cabs service for women as they did not consider that most taxis are booked by men for women (Saurav, 2019)
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Service remaining 71% of dark spots in Delhi with adequate light (Safetipin, 2018)

Gap: Lack of Sensitivity & Support	
Lever of Change: Create a safe and reliable space for women to fight against assault	
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strict remedial action against police officers who do not adhere to the law and refuse to register sexual assault complaints, if the accused is from a wealthy family or dominant caste (Bajoria, 2017)
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designing and teaching curriculums that condition minds to be more

	<p>sensitive towards sexual assault survivors and more accepting of the high incidence of the issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeated gender sensitization training for judges and defence lawyers to reduce use of biased and derogatory language for women in courtrooms
Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement checks in court proceedings for sexual crime cases. Only one in four cases of rape currently end in conviction (Biswas, 2018) ● Create a shift in the environment where external political pressure does not lead to the accused going free
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build strong social networks and cohesion among female professionals that would help with female empowerment (Rukmini Rao, 2019; Anonymous, 2019)
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a digitized central sex offender registry that tracks a person's past misdemeanours beyond state borders (Sourav, 2019)

Gap: Shortfalls in Staffing and Representation

Levers of Change: Increase the agency and representation of women across sectors

Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage more women to study and improve female literacy rate, currently at 65% compared to male literacy rate at 81% (Katiyar, 2016)
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deploy 66,000 more police personnel including policewomen and enable Delhi police force to work at its full capacity (Swati Maliwal, 2019) ● Increase participation of women in the New Delhi workforce to match the national average of 26% (from its current rate of less than 13%) (Government of Delhi, 2013) ● Improve women's representation in Delhi legislature, from 10% to the mandated 30% (Bellinger, 2018)

Gap: Lack of Knowledge, Awareness, & Accessibility

Lever of Change: Develop effective campaigns for information dissemination

Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase educators' awareness of the importance of developing emotional intelligence in students that transgresses traditional core curriculum (Leslee Udwin, 2019)
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote existing safety apps. Currently, the Himmat safety app has 30,821 users in a city of 19 million (NDTV, 2018) ● Use internal MIS systems for the Delhi police to track the performance of every police officer (Maliwal, 2019)

Lessons Learned

Change is happening—many of our interviewees expressed having witnessed positive intergenerational change in the treatment of women in India. However, change is not happening rapidly enough. The impetus from large-scale responses to brutal cases of rape and sexual violence have not sufficiently translated into targeted, effective and widespread solutions. As mentioned before, the government focuses on reactionary measures to a publicized incident, rather than a structured and pre-emptive national-level strategy.

Through this process we have developed a deeper understanding of the existing complexity and scale for reducing instances of sexual assault against women.

Complexity

Initially, we began with a narrower and more biased understanding of the issue. Preconceived misconceptions included thinking that lower socioeconomic backgrounds or lack of formal schooling contributed to sexual violence; and that the best solutions were curative, in the form of harsher punishment, instead of preventative, such as gender sensitization and sexual education.

As we spoke to a diverse group of stakeholders and conducted extensive secondary research, we realized how deeply entrenched and non-linear the issue is. The problem is multi-faceted and complex, and the only tangible way to address the problem is through a portfolio of solutions implemented through a concerted effort by various sections of society.

A supportive and connected network of stakeholders can help create a fostering environment, in which women feel empowered to share their stories publicly, continue to raise awareness, break taboos, and expose violence.

Scale

“New Delhi may be called the rape capital of the world, but there is no such thing as a rape capital. Rape is in every city, country, town, or rural area in the world,” said Leslee Udwin, producer of the documentary *India’s Daughter*. While we chose New Delhi as the focus of our study, the extent of the problem is global and widespread. The WHO estimates that about 1 in 3 women have experienced either physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. (WHO, 2017). We know that while our report has been written with the Indian context in mind, the problem is a universal one, and our insights can be applied globally.