

***“Hum itni dangerous jagah pe rehte hai yeh aaj map banane ke baad samajh aya”***  
**(We were able to reflect on just how unsafe our community spaces are after making our participatory safety map)**

**Women domestic workers of Devli and Faridabad conduct Participatory Safety Audit of their world of work**

**Date: 19th September, 2022**

**Location: Devli, South Delhi**

**Number of participants: 15 women domestic workers,**

**Resource Persons: Programme Staff, Martha Farrell Foundation**

**Field Facilitators: Helen Raj and Anima**

### **Introduction**

Under [#संजी](#), a project led by women domestic workers of Delhi-NCR and Martha Farrell Foundation, funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, women domestic workers have been working towards building resilient and accountable mechanisms to prevent, prohibit and redress cases of sexual harassment in their world of work. In Devli, South Delhi, and Faridabad, Haryana, women domestic workers facilitated Participatory Safety Audits in and around their communities, spaces that constitute their world of work, to map levels of safety and unsafety in these spaces. Results and findings will be used for advocacy with relevant stakeholders, to enhance safety from sexual harassment and inform the initiative to strengthen processes and mechanisms under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, for the safety of women domestic workers.

A Participatory Safety Audit (PSA) is a participatory research tool whereby participants are invited to visualise their communities in terms of the levels of safety in their surroundings. A ‘Transect Walk’ is usually conducted prior to a PSA, wherein participants walk through their communities and observe areas that they believe to be ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’— a facilitator also provides other guiding questions during this activity. Participants are then invited to create a safety map that details their observations during the entire process.

In Devli, South Delhi, a group of 15 women domestic workers gathered in the house of one domestic worker to plan and initiate the PSA. Before the map making process, the women reflected that it is impossible to draw every lane of the community as it is spread over a large area of land. There is also no clear demarcation of where the community ends as it is tightly surrounded by other localities around the area. Within the community itself, women domestic workers’ houses were far away from each other. Given this, they focused on drawing the maps and lanes that they most frequently used, particularly in the context of their work. They then undertook a rapid analysis, women domestic workers shared where they feel the most unsafe in their communities and on their way to work. Leading questions around where exactly they have experienced sexual harassment and gender-based violence were asked for this purpose by the facilitator.

In Faridabad’s Gadakhor Basti, women domestic workers used the community Church as a base location to facilitate the PSA. This is the same space that they usually use for their awareness sessions and focussed group discussions. The session began with a map making activity, women domestic workers discussed community areas that form the community spaces, with particular focus on the roads and streets that they take for their commute to their workplace and their children’s school. The map highlighted the community entrance,

which lies on the main road, from which a *kachha* road, which is generally lonely, dark and unmonitored, leads into the community. Other community spaces including the local temple, school and lake, which is used by women and children of the community to fetch water, were marked on the map.

In both locations, the sessions began with a discussion on gender-based violence and what participants understand by the term. This was followed by a discussion on their everyday experiences of using community spaces, and subsequently mapping on the map how safe or unsafe spaces are, and then collaboratively building and noting recommendations on how these spaces can be made safer for them.

The process in itself was empowering for participants, as for the first time, most were able to visualise their community spaces and articulate the challenges in a safe, learning space. Moreover, recommendations to address the safety challenges came from the participants themselves, as owners of their own community-based research, empowering them with confidence to advocate for the implementation of their recommendations with relevant stakeholders and authorities.

### Highlights from the session in Devli

Reflection from a domestic worker on safety:

*“Mai yaha 20 saal se upar se reh rahi hun. Devli ka mahaul bahut kharab hai. Pehle behtar tha lekin waqt ke saath sab bigadta jaa raha hai. Humko apne liye bhi darr lagta hai aur apne bacho ke liye bhi”*

(I have been living in this community for over 20 years. The general atmosphere of the community is really bad. It used to be okay before, but with time, things are just getting worse. We are constantly scared for ourselves as well as our children)

During the map making process, landmarks such as the *Khanpur Chowk*, “*chaupal*” (a space occupied by men), Dr. Ambedkar’s Statue, temples and the community school were marked and participants observed that these landmarks are mostly surrounded by men and boys of the community. All participants unanimously agreed upon the fact that Khanpur Chowk, a space all of them use while travelling to work, is among the most unsafe for women and girls.

A Woman domestic worker shared -

*“Khanpur Chowk sabse zyada khatarnaak jagah hai. Pure time bheed rehti hai. Ladke aur aadmi sharab pike khade ho jate hai. Agar koi chede, seeti bajaye toh pta bhi nhi lagega ki kaun hai. Mai bhi apni kaam ki jagah jaane ke liye yaha se guzarti hun aur hamesha darr laga rehta hai. Bohot se logo ki betiya bhi yahin se school jati hai. Unke liye bhi bohot unsafe hai”*

(Khanpur Chowk is the most dangerous place of the community. It is almost always crowded. Boys and men roam around drunk and occupy the place. If someone makes a comment or whistles at us, one would also now know who it was. I cross this place to reach my workplace and I’m always scared and anxious. Many people’s daughters also take the same route to go to school or bus stands. It is also highly unsafe for them”

Some of the key challenges to safety and wellbeing in the world of work as highlighted by participants are captured below:

1. **There are no parks in the community which is an inconvenience for its residents**  
*“Pure devli mei ek bhi dhang ka park nhi hai jaha hum jaake baith sake ya apni marzi ka kuch kar sake”* (Entire Devli community does not have a single proper park where we can sit and do something for ourselves)
2. **Participants shared that they have faced sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the community**  
*“Kaam pe jaate time bohot baar aisa hota hai ki koi ladka chede, kapdo pe comment kare, gana bajaye. Har baar toh sabak sikhane ka time nhi hota hai. Par pichli baar mere saath jab hua tha, ek ladka zabardasti mera peeche karne laga. Maine sake saamne usko apni chappal utaarke mara”* (A lot of times, while going to work, men comment on our clothes, or sing an inappropriate song. It is impossible to care and give them a lesson after each such incident as we are in a hurry to reach our workplaces. But last time, when a boy started following me while I was walking outside, I lost my temper and hit him with my slipper in front of everyone)
3. **Participants shared that the alcohol store inside the community space draws large crowds of men and boys, who use it as an excuse to get into fights. They also crowd in these spaces and make it hostile and threatening for women and girls, who are then unable to use these roads**  
*“Saare ladke aur aadmi sharab lene ussi theke pe aate hai. Kayi baar wahin khade rehke peete hai, badtameezi karte hai aur aapas mei maar peet bhi karte hai. Iss wajah se bohot saari mahilaye woh raaste lena chor chuki hai”* (Men and boys come to the same alcohol store to buy liquor. Many times, they stand there and drink, behave inappropriately and get into physical fights amongst themselves. Many women of the community have been forced to stop taking that road completely)



**Participatory Map made by women domestic workers of Devli Community**

The recommendations shared by participants on increasing safety included:

1. More police patrolling in the community spaces
2. Closure of the alcohol shop and its relocation to a space away from the community
3. More training and solidarity building among women and girls, in particular so that they are aware of their rights and have the ability to speak up for their safety.
4. Further, **improving systemic responses** so participants are able to effectively seek support and improve prevention of such violence
5. Participants also expressed a need for women and girls to **stand in solidarity** with one another and collectively speak up against sexual and gender based violence in the community spaces

### Highlights from the session in Faridabad

#### Women domestic workers' reflections on the issue of safety:

*“Yaha ki mahilao ke liye na basti mei ghusna safe hai na hi yaha se bahar nikalte time safe hai”*  
(Women of the community are neither safe in the community, nor while leaving the community)

*“Yaha pe aisi haalat hai ki agar koi kisika muh band karke jungle le jaye toh kisiko pta bhi nhi chalega. Aisa ho bhi chuka hai. Ek ladki ka muh dabakar usko ladke ne jungle mei ghaseeta aur uska baladkaar kiya”*

(The condition is so bad here that if a woman gets kidnapped, no one would even come to know where she went. This has happened before, a girl was forcefully taken in the jungle by a man. No one heard her, it's only later that we got to know that he raped her)



#### Women domestic workers of Faridabad doing transect walk of their community



**Women domestic workers of Faridabad participating in the Participatory Safety Audit of their world of work**

Women domestic workers also marked their direct workplaces, nearby residential complexes including Omaxe Tower and Greenfield, and reflected that the lonely route from inside the community to these residential complexes is preferred to the main road, despite the safety risk. It was observed that no community spaces were marked as fully safe by participants, highlighting the extent of the safety issue in the community.

**Women domestic workers shared while marking unsafe spaces in the map-**

*“Talaab ka jo raasta hai woh bohot sunsaan hai. Waha pe raaste mei darr laga rehta hai ki koi kheechke le na jaye”* (The way to the lake is very unsafe. We’re scared that someone might pull us away)

*“Basti ke peeche, jaha pe mahilaye nahane ya kapde dhone jaati hai woh bohot unsafe hai. Ladke aur aadmi chup chup ke dekhte hai aur comment paas karte hai”* (The place behind the main community space where women go to take showers or wash their clothes is very unsafe. Men and boys hide nearby and pass inappropriate comments)

*“Na hum kaam jaane ke raaste pe safe hai aur na hi karyasthal par safe hai. Kaam ki jagah pe bhi niyokte badtameezi karte hai. Yaun utpeerad hota hai, chutti nhi milti aur na hi paisa milta hai. Khaas kar ke 24 ghante kam karne wali mahilao ke saath yeh saari dikkate bohot zyada hai”* (We are not safe on our way to work, we are also not safe at our workplaces. Employers treat domestic workers badly. We go through sexual harassment, we don’t get proper leaves and not even proper wages. Domestic workers engaged in full time (24 hour) duty are particularly vulnerable)

The recommendations shared by participants on increasing safety included:

1. There is an urgent need to install **CCTV cameras** in the community spaces
2. There is also a need to improve infrastructure within the community, including installation of **street lights** and building **pukka (cemented) roads**

## Key Learnings

- There was a lot of hesitation among women domestic workers to undertake the transect walk. Fear of being seen by family and community members loomed large. However, participants encouraged each other to undertake the walk to facilitate the audit
- Although it is very common, women domestic workers tend to ignore cases of verbal or non-verbal forms of sexual harassment to avoid backlash from community and their employers; indicating the urgent need to address these issues and also sensitise community members to be survivor centered in their approaches
- Participatory methodologies helped bring experiences and local knowledge to the front which also helps participants realise the gravity of the issue of sexual harassment at workplace in their own individual contexts. This also drew a buy in and enhanced confidence of participants to actively use their individual and collective voice to call for change through the implementation of their own recommendations