A SAFETIPIN FOR OUR CITIES

Research Findings of the study conducted in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala 2014

Anna M

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Thiruvananthapuram

In Partnership with

SAFETIPIN
Supporting Safer Communities

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Coordinator

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Introduction

A public space is a social space that is generally open and accessible to people regardless of ownership of the place. Typical public spaces are public roads and streets, pavements, market squares, parks, beaches, sport fields, cinema theatres, cemeteries, public buildings, means of public transport, government offices, other office premises and restaurants. Public spaces are still the spaces of men where women's access is restricted by time, place and purpose. These spaces are rarely designed and planned to facilitate and enhance women's access to such spaces. Gender issues in public spaces have not changed much on the grounds and the liability of negotiating danger continues to rest on women.

Today cities provide major public places around us. Women and men experience cities in different ways. The Right to the city space is an idea and a slogan that was first proposed by Henri Lefebvre[1] in 1968. According to David Harvey, a proponent scholar of the idea of the right to the city, "The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights"[2]. The Right to a city space could be materialised for all citizens irrespective of gender, class, caste and community affiliations. A rights-based approach can help to generate the political will and create a culture of resource allocation that places the needs of vulnerable groups such as women on an equal footing with the interests of those who are better off. However, a right-based approach in the context of Indian cities has not yet been extensively documented and researched.

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[1] Henri Lefebvre was a French Marxist philosopher and sociologist, best known for pioneering the critique of everyday life, for introducing the concepts of the right to the city and the production of social space, and for his work on dialectics, alienation, and criticism of Stalinism, existentialism, and structuralism

[2] 'Right to the city', accessed September 01, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_to_the_city

There are already regional, national and municipal instruments on The Right to the City, such as The Charter of Educating Cities, the European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City, the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, the Aberdeen Agenda of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Brazil City Statute of 2001 and the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. An early initiative was the 1994 European Charter for Women in the City, a European Commission action-research project, which promoted emancipated philosophies in town planning, housing and services, arguing that 'the city is an organized memory' and that 'women are the forgotten ones in history', the Charter has helped to raise gender awareness in EU structural policy (City and Shelter 2004)[3].

City is a space for different user groups. Large number of floating population from adjacent towns and villages visit the city every day for employment, education, health facilities etc. Safety is one of the primary concerns for all these different user groups, especially the disadvantaged groups like women and aged population.

Kalpana Viswanath identifies enhancing women's right to the city is a process of, changing the nature of cities, the ways they are conceived, designed, planned; recognising the intersecting vulnerabilities faced by women - class, ethnicity, age, migrant status etc; understanding and addressing the violence and discrimination faced by women in public spaces with an idea of safety which is beyond that of security which focuses on addressing crime and violence.

In India a total of 2, 44,270 incidents of crime against women were reported during the year 2012 as compared to 2, 28,650 in the year 2011, recording an increase of 6.4%. The rate of crime committed against women was 41.7 in 2012. The 2012 Delhi gang rape case was one of such terrific incidents which reinforced the perception that Delhi is the crime capital of India. It involved a rape and fatal assault that occurred on 16 December 2012 in Munirka, a neighbourhood in South Delhi, when a 23-year-old female was beaten and gang raped in a private bus in which she was travelling with a male friend. The incident generated

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[3] Alison Brown and Annali Kristiansen, Urban Policies and the Right to the City Rights, responsibilities and citizenship, (Management of Social Transformations and UNESCO: 2009)

widespread national and international attention and was widely condemned, both in India and abroad. Public protests against the state and central governments for failing to provide adequate security for women took place in major cities throughout the country. Following this incident, the Criminal Law was amended with new provisions for punishment for rape and other forms of sexual harassments and came into force from 3rd February 2013.

The proportion of IPC crimes committed against women under total IPC crimes has increased during last 5 years from 9.2% in the year 2009 to 11.2% during the year 2013. A total of 53,464 cases of crime against women were reported from 53 mega cities out of 3, 09,546 cases reported in the country during 2013. The rate of crime in these cities at 69.7 was comparatively higher as compared to national rate at 52.2[4].

Kerala has drawn considerable attention for its paradoxical pattern of growth with high social development indicators, often referred to as the 'Kerala model of development'. In terms of sex ratio, literacy, life expectancy and mean age at marriage women in Kerala score higher than any other state in the country. But there is a growing uneasiness with Kerala's social development outcomes linked to non conventional indicators as in the rising visibility of gender based violence and related crimes.

Kerala reported the highest crime rate (502.2) for IPC crimes in 2013[5]. Kerala has reported the highest crime rate (20.9) in assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty as compared to the National average of 7.7 in 2012. Of the 2,44,270 incidents of violent crime in the country, Kerala accounted for 10,930 which is more than the much larger neighbour Tamil Nadu (7192) in 2012. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) figures compiled on a yearly basis till 2010 show that Kerala has a crime rate of 424.1, more than double the national average of 187.6. According to records of Kerala Police, a total of 13,738 cases were registered as crime against women in the year 2013, in which the highest were from Malappuram District (1380), followed by Thiruvananthapuram Rural (1258)[6]. Crimes against women are increasing alarmingly at local, regional, national and global levels. Despite

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[4] *'Crime in India 2013'*, accessed September 01, 2014, http://ncrb.nic.in/
[5] *'Crime in India 2013'*, accessed September 01, 2014, http://ncrb.nic.in/
[6] *'Crime against women'*, accessed September 01,2014,
http://www.keralapolice.gov.in/newsite/crime_against_women.html

modern crime surveillance technologies and access to information and networking, guaranteeing the safety and security of women has become a serious challenge for all.

At this point, *'Safetipin'* initiative in Kerala examines how safe our city areas are for women, by analysing various aspects such as infrastructure, transportation, role of police force and feeling of safety. It has conducted safety analysis of Thiruvananthapuram city, using '*Safetipin',* a map based mobile application as a tool.

Major issues pointed out in the study were lack of public infrastructure in the city such as walk paths, street lights and public transport, unavailability of security force and lack of gender friendly public spaces. Sensitive and far sighted planning of public transportation, better lighting and walk paths in public spaces, availability of more open areas, parks with heterogeneous mix of people, and lesser compartmentalisation of residential and commercial set ups and presence of visible security personnel are identified by the project as the solutions to accelerate women's public access. The study is very relevant for urban policy planners to address the problem of gender discriminations in public spaces. It aims at making urban planning inclusive and heterogeneous which will justify the rights to public spaces for all.

Background

The *'Safetipin'* initiative is a follow up of the project, Safe City Free of Violence against Women and Girls, conducted by Sakhi Women's Resource Centre in four cities of Kerala, during 2009-13.

Safe City Free of Violence against Women and Girls Initiative was conducted by Sakhi, with the support of UN Women and Jagori, Delhi, in two phases from November 2009 to October 2013, spanning the cities of Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Thrissur and Kochi. The partner organisations like Anweshi, Kozhikode, Centre for Gender Development and Ecology (CGDE), Ernakulam and MAYA in Thrissur lend a hand in accomplishing the project.

The primary focus of this study was on violence in the public domain and how they demand different responses and strategies precisely because of their location in the public. The factors examined in this study were, how safe are cities for women and girls, what is the relationship between women's fear of violence, their avoidance of specific public spaces or times and the dress code they follow to avoid harassment. Other factors examined were societal response, role of police, gender friendly infrastructural facilities and awareness of existing violence redress mechanisms. The methodologies used in the study were surveys/ interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), capacity gap analysis and safety audit.

The survey revealed an element of "fear of violence" created consciously or unconsciously in women and girls by the society. The elevated degree of fear of violence, crime and insecurity made women more vulnerable and restrained her freedom of mobility, choice of clothing and ability to live her life in the way she desires. This leads to the question of social construction of female sexuality and patriarchal upbringing.

The study points out specific issues on women's safety in public places. The major recommendations based on the findings were for infrastructure development, strengthening security and institutional mechanisms and creation of awareness. A call for

conscious inclusion to address the women's needs and facilities in the city planning is a telling pointer.

The findings from this study have been passed on to policy makers and policy implementers and to an extent there have been visible influences on policies intended at making public spaces woman friendly. Examples are the inclusion of Section 119 in the Police Act, the scheme for the implementation of woman-friendly auto-rickshaws at prominent public places by the City Police Commissioner Office. The Kerala Protection of Women's Privacy and Dignity Bill which was drafted as a result of this initiative has been under the consideration of the subject committee of the Legislative Assembly of Kerala. State Railway Police have asked SAKHI to collaborate with the campaign on woman's safety in the railways.

About 'Safetipin'

'Safetipin' is **a map-based mobile phone application** which works to make our communities and cities safer by providing safety-related information collected by users. *'Safetipin'* builds on the premise that community participation and engagement will make our cities safer.

'Safetipin' was developed by Active Learning Solution Private Limited, based in Gurgaon. Dr. Kalpana Viswanath, a researcher who has been working on issues of violence against women and safer cities for women for over 20 years, from Jagori, women's resource centre, New Delhi and Ashish Basu are the founders of this application.

'Safetipin' can be freely downloaded from the web. Users can view posts through the wall feature or the map view, where selecting an option shows the contents of a post. A post can be a safety audit, a place, harassment or a hazard or even a feeling. Users can agree or disagree on posts, put up their own comments, and even post it on Facebook. In the map view of the application, three pins with different colours are used to indicate the level of safety (Green for Safe, Amber for Less Safe, and Red for Unsafe). A locate feature that shows places (both recorded by users and those available in the public domain) based on nearness to present location and the safety groups namely medical, transport, police and shops. Selecting an option displays the exact route to the option. A directory with important emergency numbers in the city, based on the city selected is also provided. In this era of Internet activism and Social networking it is hoped that *'Safetipin'* will be used for connecting individuals with the community.

'Safetipin' provides information about infrastructure and other factors to promote safety of women and other groups, to citizens' at large and important stakeholders including the government, NGO's, companies and Resident's Welfare Associations[7].

In the case of citizens, one can set up 'Circles of Interest', which could be their own neighbourhood or a place of work. In each of their identified 'Circles of Interest', citizens can

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[7] For details about '*Safetipin*', accessed September 01, 2014, https://safetipin.com/

observe and contribute information, add their own comments on audits, harassments, hazards and places. Through an audit users can view and contribute information on lighting, openness of the area, visibility, presence of people, availability of visible security personnel, condition of pedestrian walk path, availability of public transport, gender diversity and general feeling about the place in each area of a city. The harassment feature enables users to view and report harassments in the city like catcalls, sexual invites, stalking, rape etc. Since recording of harassment on the spot may not always be feasible, it can also be done later through an online interface. Users can view and comment on problems with infrastructure by recording hazards. One can view and report problems such as broken lights, bad roads, exposed wiring, sewage waste, poor public toilets, collapsing structures and obstructions on the road. There are four categories of places being recorded: transport, medical, police and shops, since all of these contribute to the aspects of safety. They can hit upon information such as nearby 24 hours pharmacies, auto stands, ATMs, and directions to them. While travelling, they can view audits to know safe and unsafe locations, and plan their routes accordingly.

In the case of Government, *'Safetipin'* will provide information to public service providers (such as the Public works department) with access to information from the application – such as malfunctioning streetlights, collapsed roads etc to help them improve their level of service. Information provided on incidents of harassment can be used by the police to ensure better patrolling.

In the case of NGO's, *'Safetipin'* can be used as a tool by NGOs and others working at the grassroots level in lower income areas for advocacy.

In the case of Resident's Welfare Associations, *'Safetipin'* will allow RWAs to directly connect member complaints with the appropriate service provider within the RWA. This will help track level of service and hence improvement of amenities.

In the case of Companies and firms, Companies can use *'Safetipin'* to extend safety outside the workplace, by providing information and recommendations to employees on transport, places to stay, and even planning routes based on employee locations.

All together, the application can be used to view and contribute specific issues like harassments, hazards, infrastructural lapses and unsafe feeling in different parts of a city. With the help of *'Safetipin'* one can identify safe and unsafe areas of a city.

Safety Audit
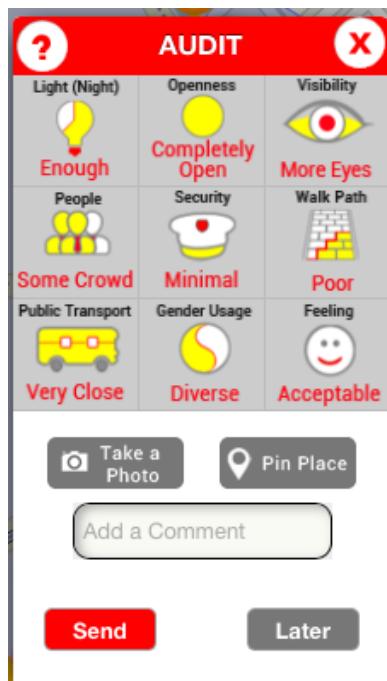
Screenshot of recording an audit in 'Safetipin'

The core of the application is Safety Audit. It consists of a set of 9 parameters such as level of lighting, openness of the area, visibility, presence of people, availability of visible security personnel, condition of pedestrian walk path, availability of public transport, gender diversity and general feeling about the place, that together contribute to the perception of safety. Each audit results in a pin on the specific location where the audit was performed and also records the time and date. Safety audit is a valuable tool in supporting individuals and groups to collect strategic data to understand the environment better and advocate for change.

Terms such as lights, openness, visibility, people, security (visible security personnel), walk path, public transport, gender usage / gender diversity and feeling are used in the safety audit feature of *'Safetipin'*. These terms will be used here after to refer the following throughout the report.

- Light; to indicate the availability of street and other lights in the area
- Openness, to indicate blind corners and dead ends in the area
- Visibility; to specify the number of windows and entrances overlook to the point
- People; to point out whether the place is crowded, less crowded or deserted
- Security; (visible security personnel) to indicate the availability of private or public security personnel in the area
- Walk path; to point out the condition of foot path in the area
- Public transport; to specify the availability of buses or autorikshaws in the area
- Gender usage/diversity; to indicate the number of men and women in the area
- Feeling; to show what one feels about the place - comfortable, acceptable, uncomfortable or frightening

As a newly developed mobile application on safety, it has various limitations such as it focuses more on infrastructure and does not consider many other perceptions of safety. A good infrastructure need not guarantee safety of a woman in the city. It is only one of the factors that contribute to safety. We hope *'Safetipin'* will be updated to become more effective and useful in the future.

'Safetipin' Initiative in Kerala

In cities around the world, public space is an essential platform for voicing calls for change. But is this platform safe and accessible for women? Most women are taught to have a fear-based relationship with her city. Public Places are mostly occupied by men and women's access to it is restricted by several factors like time, place and purpose. Many places that women are able to access during the day become inaccessible at night. Our cities will be safer when we acknowledge women as citizens. We need to start looking at and designing the city as a place for women instead of focusing on protecting women — without perpetuating victimhood.

'Safetipin' initiative in Kerala was launched as a follow up of the Safe City Free of Violence against Women and Girls Initiative with a hope to accelerate the process of transforming our cities into safer places. The study was conducted by Sakhi Women's Resource Centre, Thiruvananthapuram with the support of *'Safetipin'.*

The study examines how safe the city areas are for women, by analysing various aspects such as infrastructure, transportation, role of police force, feeling of safety etc. Sakhi team has carried out safety analysis of Thiruvananthapuram city, using *'Safetipin'.*

Methodology

The methodology adopted for the study in Thiruvananthapuram was based on *'Safetipin'* mobile application. One of the major features of the application called, 'safety audit' was used to identify issues in the selected city. An audit consists of a set of 9 parameters mentioned earlier (Light, openness, visibility, people, security, walk path, public transport, gender diversity and feeling) that together contribute to the perception of safety. Auditors were asked to upload photographs of the auditing areas and add their own comments. Each audit results in a pin on the specific location where the audit was performed and also records the time and date. This audit data along with user comments are analysed for the preparation of reports.

Training

One day training was given on 3rd of July in Thiruvananthapuram. The trainings were for familiarising the *'Safetipin'* application, especially safety audits and for selecting auditors for the same.

'Safetipin' training conducted in Thiruvananthapuram

Training was organised using different methods like screening short videos and photographs addressing safety issues and other interactive methods. Mock audits were conducted to make acquainted with the application and to assess the skills of the auditors. Final audit team were selected on the basis of it. Trainings were given by Sanya Seth, Project Associate of *'Safetipin'* in collaboration with Sakhi team.

Research Team

The research team comprised of auditors, programme coordinator, programme associates and advisory committee. The audit team consisted of 8 men and 9 women in Thiruvananthapuram between the ages of 19 to 30. The selection was limited to this age group as they are the ones who are more exposed to the problems in the city. The audits in Thiruvananthapuram were mainly done by selected students from Department of Social work, Loyola College of Social Sciences.

Project Period and Target Areas

The project period in Thiruvananthapuram was four months, from July to October, 2014. Thirty areas in the city were identified for safety auditing and to gather information on safety. In each selected area 25 audits were conducted. By the end of August 800 audits were completed in Thiruvananthapuram.

Areas included in the safety auditing in Thiruvananthapuram city are the following;

Sreekaryam	Statue
Ulloor	Pattoor
Kesavadasapuram	Vanchiyoor
Pattom	Kannamoola
PMG	Medical College
Palayam	Pettah
Museum	Chakka
Vellayambalam	Shanghumugham
Vazhuthacaud	Poojappura
Bakery Junction	Karamana
Thycaud	Manacaud
Thampanoor	Kowdiar
Overbridge	Devaswom board Junction
East fort	Nanthancode
Chalai market	Plamoodu

Analysis and Findings

The survey helped in understanding the level of public infrastructure in Thiruvananthapuram city. It also resulted in finding out the correlation between visibility of women in the cities after dark and the level of public infrastructure. The audit team faced several issues of moral policing, catcalling and stalking during the audits.

Thiruvananthapuram

City Profile

As per the records, the capital city of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram is the 5th largest Urban Agglomeration (UA) in the state behind Kochi, Kozhikode, Thrissur and Malappuram. This UA consists of Thiruvananthapuram city, the municipalities of Attingal, Nedumangad and Neyyattinkara, three outgrowths and 24 census towns. In 2011, Thiruvananthapuram district has population of 33, 07,284 of which male and female were 15, 84,200 and 17, 23,084 respectively. Out of the total Thiruvananthapuram district population for 2011 census, 53.66 percent lives in urban regions of district. As per provisional reports of Census India, population of Thiruvananthapuram city in 2011 is 752,490; of which male and female are 364,657 and 387,833 respectively. Although Thiruvananthapuram city has population of 752,490; its urban / metropolitan population is 1,687,406 of which 815,200 are males and 872,206 are females. The density of population is about 1509 people per square kilometre. Total literates in Thiruvananthapuram city are 647,479 of which 316,614 are males while 330,865 are females. Average literacy rate of the city is 93.72 percent of which male and female literacy was 94.94 and 92.58 percent respectively. The sex ratio of Thiruvananthapuram city is 1064 per 1000 males[8].

The city is home to central and state government offices and organisations. Apart from being the political nerve centre of Kerala, it is also an academic hub and is home to several educational institutions. Thiruvananthapuram contributes 80% of the state's software exports and is a major IT hub of the state.

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[8] For details about *'Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram'*, accessed September 05, 2014http://www.corporationoftrivandrum.in/general-information-0

In October 2010, the area of the city/corporation was enlarged from 86 wards to 100 wards by the amalgamation of Sreekariyam, Vattiyoorkavu, Kudappanakunnu, Vizhinjam and Kazhakuttam panchayats. The city has now an area of 214.86 km².

Thiruvananthapuram was ranked as the best city in Kerala to live in by a survey conducted by Times of India survey (2012). A survey conducted by India Today ranked the city is ranked as the best city in India for Housing and Transport by (2013).

Unemployment is a serious issue in Thiruvananthapuram. The increase in the unemployment rate was from 8.8% in 1998 to 34.3% in 2003, thus registering a 25.5% absolute and a 289.7% relative increase in five years. Thiruvananthapuram taluk ranks third in Kerala with 36.3% of its population unemployed. The immigration of the unemployed from other districts boosts this high unemployment rate.

Thiruvananthapuram has a high suicide rate, which went up from 17.2 per lakhs in 1995 to 38.5 per lakhs in 2002. In 2004, the rate came down slightly to 36.6 per lakhs. As per 2001 census, the populace below the poverty line in the city was 11,667. A BPL survey indicated the urban poor population as 120,367. Majority of these populace lives in slums and coastal fishing areas[9].

A total of 603 cases on crime against women were reported in Thiruvananthapuram city in 2013. Out of the total 6,798 cases registered in the state for offences against women in 2012, 844 are from Thiruvananthapuram rural limits and the city. Exactly 61 rape cases were registered during this period in the district which is way ahead of 44 cases in Ernakulam[10].

[9] For details about *'Thiruvananthapuram city'*, accessed September 05, 2014,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thiruvananthapuram
[10] *'Crime against women'*, accessed September 05,2014,
http://www.keralapolice.gov.in/newsite/crime_against_women.html

Analysis

In Thiruvananthapuram, the safety auditors were selected students from Loyola College of Social Sciences, Sreekariyam and other interested students who approached Sakhi, of which 8 were men and 9 were women. A total of 800 audits were completed in 30 different areas in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation between July and August, 2014.
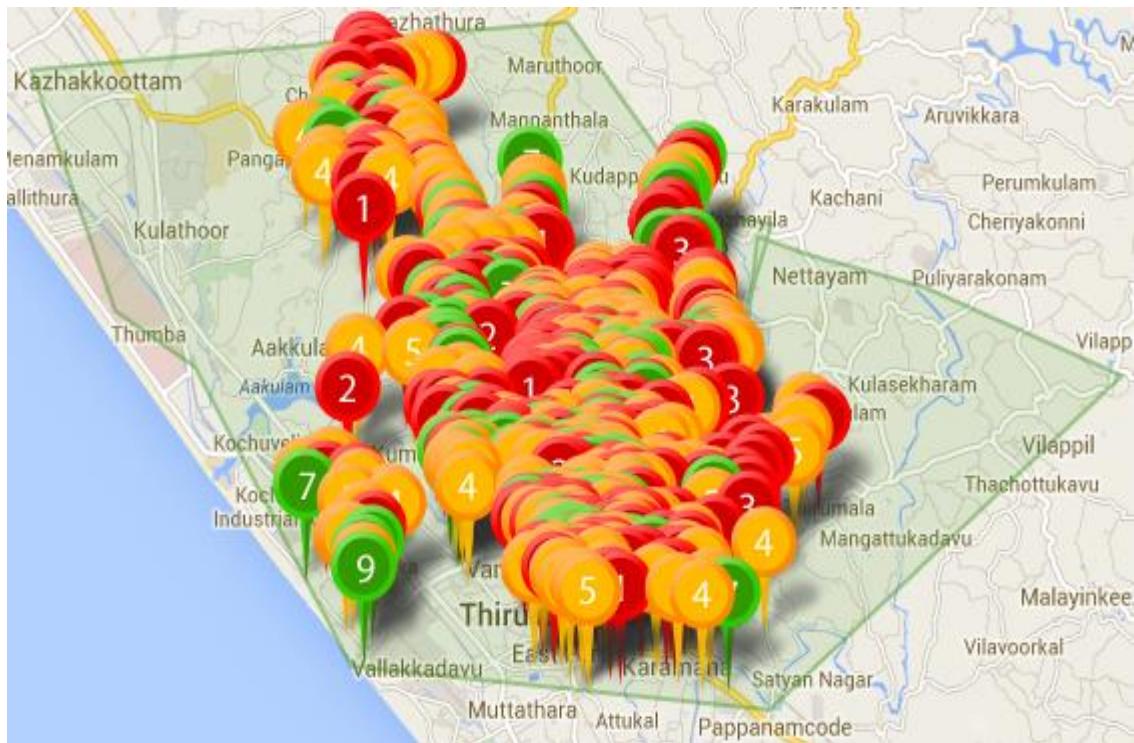
Map 1 : Thiruvananthapuram city with safety audit pins

In Map 1, Green pins indicate areas which are safe, amber pins for less safe places and red pins for unsafe places. Some of the unsafe areas in Thiruvananthapuram city according to *'Safetipin'* audits are;

- Kunnukuzhy
- Thakaraparambu road
- Chalai - Valiyasalai road
- Plamoodu
- Women's College - Panavila Road
- Kannamoola

- Murinjapaalam

- Poojappura

- Sreekariyam - Akkulam road

- Thampanoor

The audits were conducted during different periods of the day. Many places which are accessible and safe during the day become inaccessible and unsafe at night. As graph 1 show, the majority of audits (34%) were conducted between 7pm to 8pm. The time factor for conducting audits was determined as when the city turns dark and when street lights come up. This is also the prime time when many people avail the streets for various purposes. At this period of time, it is also important to measure parameters and feelings of safety.

Auditors faced many difficulties in conducting audits after dark. Many participant students were not allowed by their family members to travel alone after dark because of fear of insecurity and danger lurking in the streets
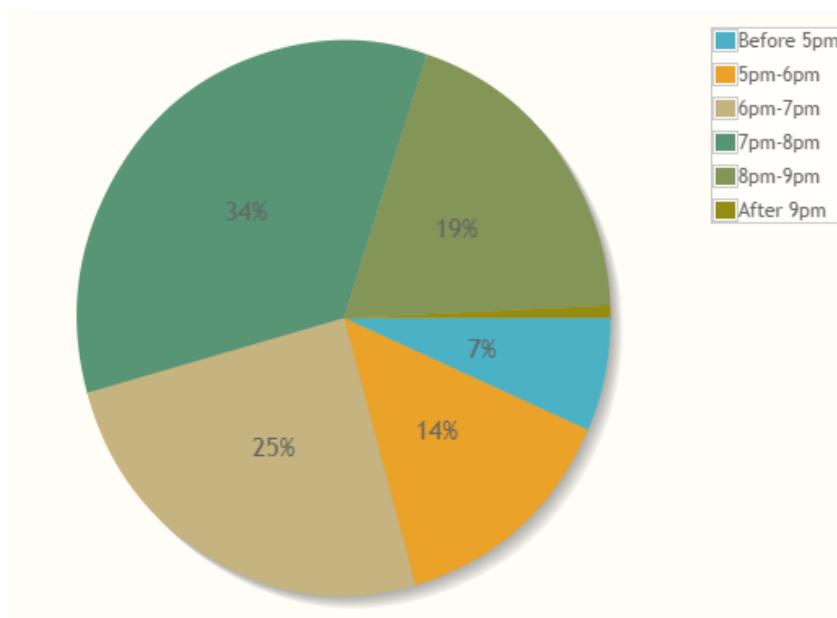
Graph 1: Auditing time of the Day

Key Findings

The study shows that, despite being the capital city of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram is far behind in ensuring the feeling of safety. Graph 2 indicates the score of each safety audit parameter on a scale (0-3).
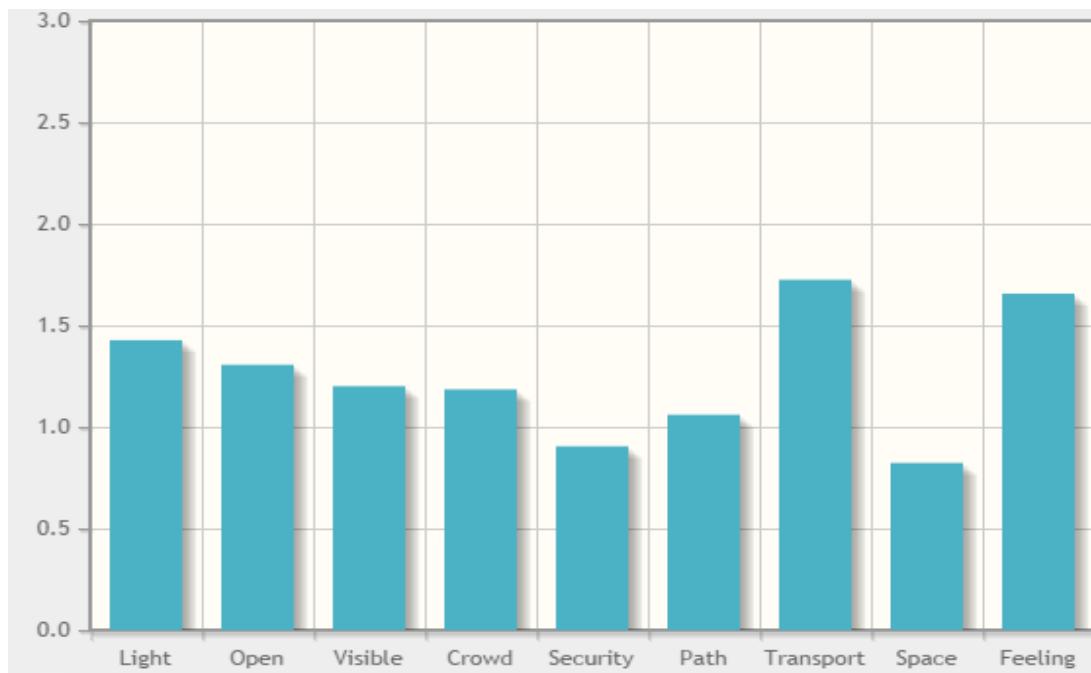
Graph 2 : Average audit parameters in Thiruvananthapuram City

Findings from the audits show that four parameters have lowest rating. These are gender diverse spaces, presence of visible security personnel and walk path. This means that the city does not have the presence of enough women in public places, very few visible security personnel (private and public) in the city, and no proper walk paths in most of the areas. All other parameters such as availability of public transport, lighting, openness, visibility (which is how well you can be seen by others in a public space) and crowd, the score are higher.

The presence of women in the city (gender diversity) has reported the lowest among other audit parameters. This means very low or negligible number of women is seen in the public areas of the city. This is mainly because majority of the audits are done after dark and women are not seen outside after a certain time in the evening except for emergencies. Very few women are seen even on the main roads, major junctions, markets and public transport. Women avoid many areas because of safety issues. Those who go out are mostly accompanied by men. Lack of safety in these areas and element of fear created by the society prevents women from accessing the city, especially after dark.

Following areas in Thiruvananthapuram city were very low in gender diversity, i.e., very few women were found in these areas during the audit;

- Thakaraparambu road
- Kunnukuzhy
- Sreekariyam – Akkulam road
- Chirakkulam road, Palayam
- Ulloor - Akkulam road
- Kuravankonam – Nanthancode road
- Ambalamukku - Oolampara road
- Nandavanam
- Sasthamangalam - Pipinmoodu road
- Pettah

Map 2 shows the level of gender diversity in different parts of Thiruvananthapuram city.

Fully grey = No
women
Partially grey = Few
women
White = Both men
and women

Map 2 : Level of Gender diversity in Thiruvananthapuram City
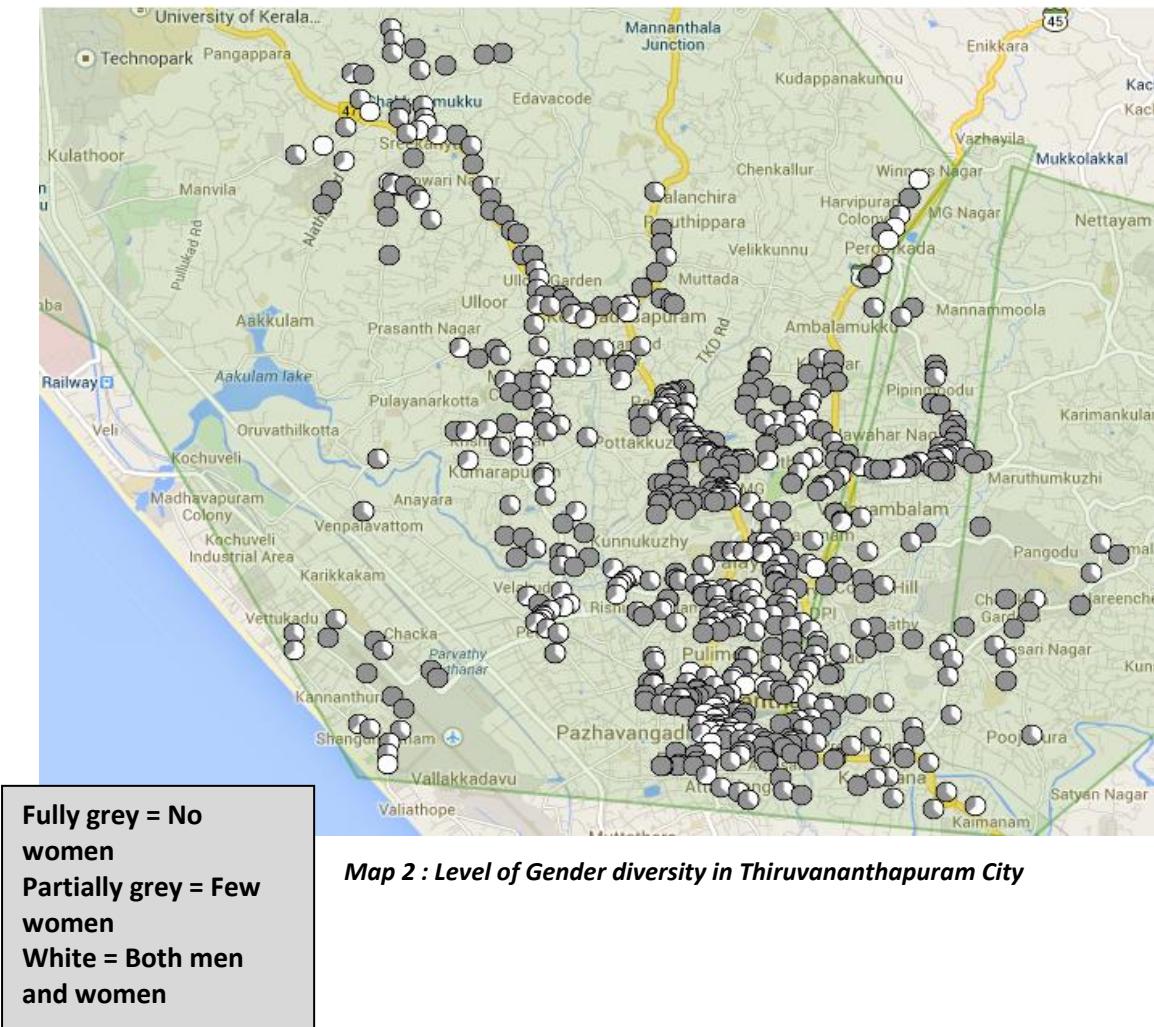
In Map 2, fully grey spots are areas where there is no presence of women. Partially grey spots are areas which are somewhat gender diverse and fully white spots are areas which are completely diverse, with the presence of both men and women. It is obvious from map 2 that our public places lack women's presence, particularly after dark.

# Feeling of safety at different times of the day

Safety of an area differs with various factors like time, number of people and familiarity with the area.   In Thiruvananthapuram city, 169 safety audits were done before 6pm, i.e., before dark and 631 audits were done after 6pm, i.e., after dark. It is significant to note the large variation in the level of safety before and after dark. Graph 3 shows the scores of safety audits conducted before 6pm and after 6pm in Thiruvananthapuram city.
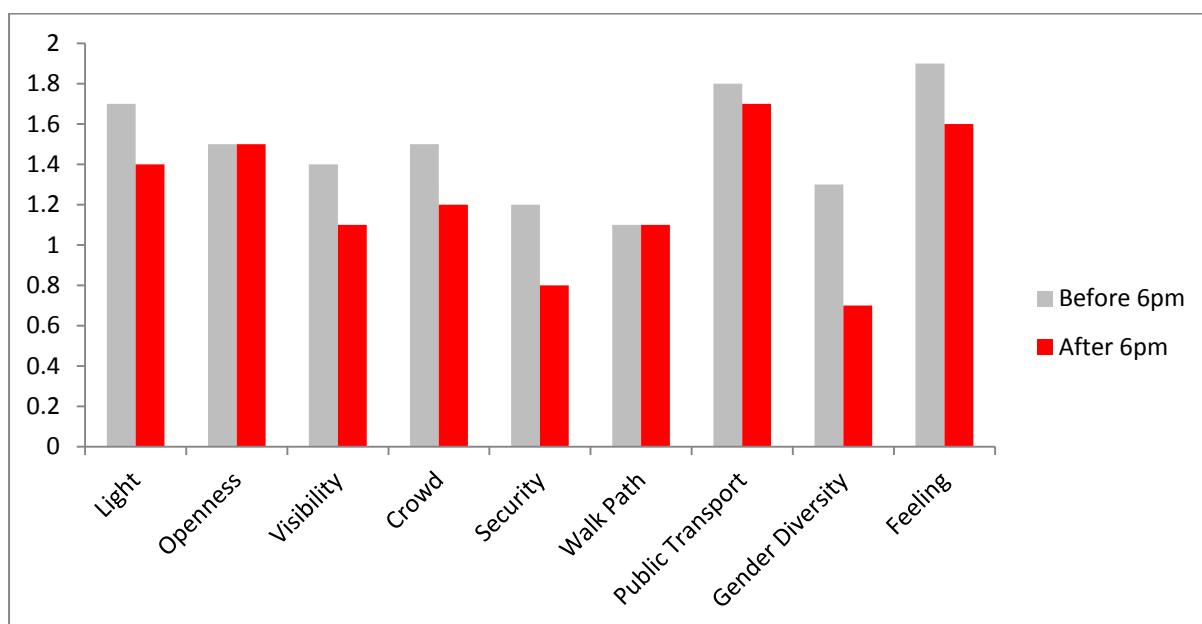
Graph 3 : Average audits parameters before 6pm and after 6pm

Most of the audit parameters were satisfactory before dark, whereas after dark most of them becomes low, except for walk path and openness. Among the parameters, gender diverse spaces have a direct relationship with time of the day. Graph 3 shows that number of women in the public areas of Thiruvananthapuram city is higher before dark and there is a very large decrease in this number after 6pm in the evening. Why women choose to be inside houses after dark? What makes the same places inaccessible and unsafe for women after dark? How can we ensure safety of women in the public places at night?   Graph 3 indicates that number of visible security personnel is also coming down notably after dark.

Number of women in the city and presence of visible security personnel is even lower after 8pm. Graph 5 shows the scores of safety audits conducted after 8pm in Thiruvananthapuram city.
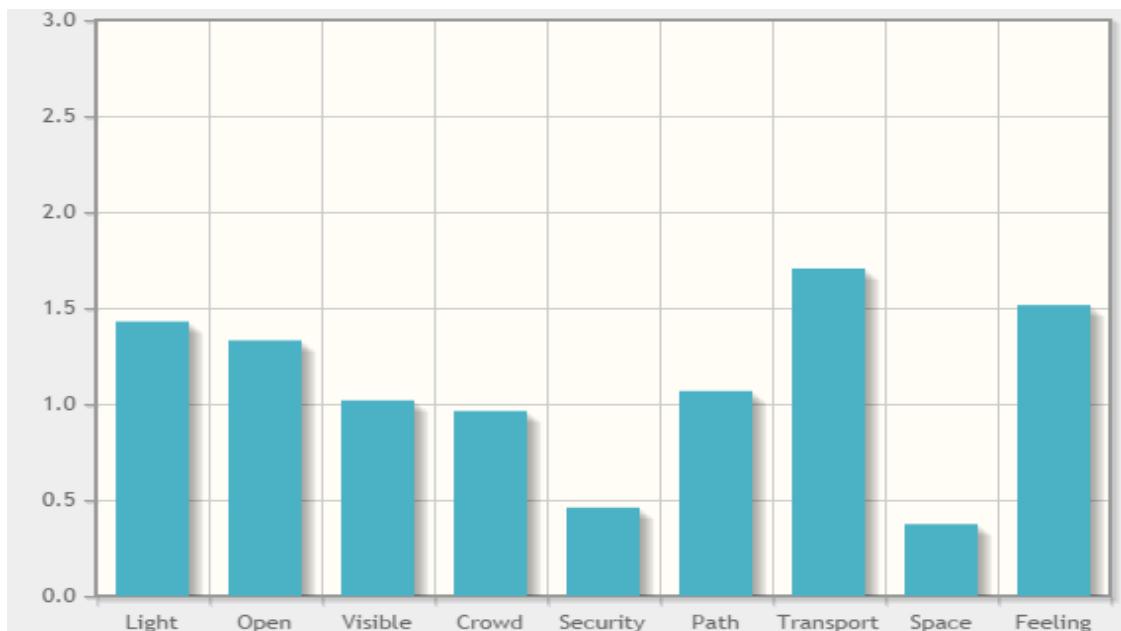

Graph 4: Average audit parameters after 8pm

Some of the areas with lack of security personnel in Thiruvananthapuram city are;

- Kunnukuzhy
- Pettah
- Pottakuzhy
- Killipalam
- Vanchiyoor
- Nandavanam – Bakery Junction road

Map 3, shows the level of security in different parts of Thiruvananthapuram city. The fully grey spots are areas where there are no visible security personnel. This condition persists even on the main roads, major junctions, bus stands etc. Partially grey spots are areas with minimal security, private or public security personnel available in reachable distance and fully white spots are areas with high security, where there is enough police.

Fully grey = No security
Partially grey = Minimal security
White = High security

Map 3 : Level of security in Thiruvananthapuram City
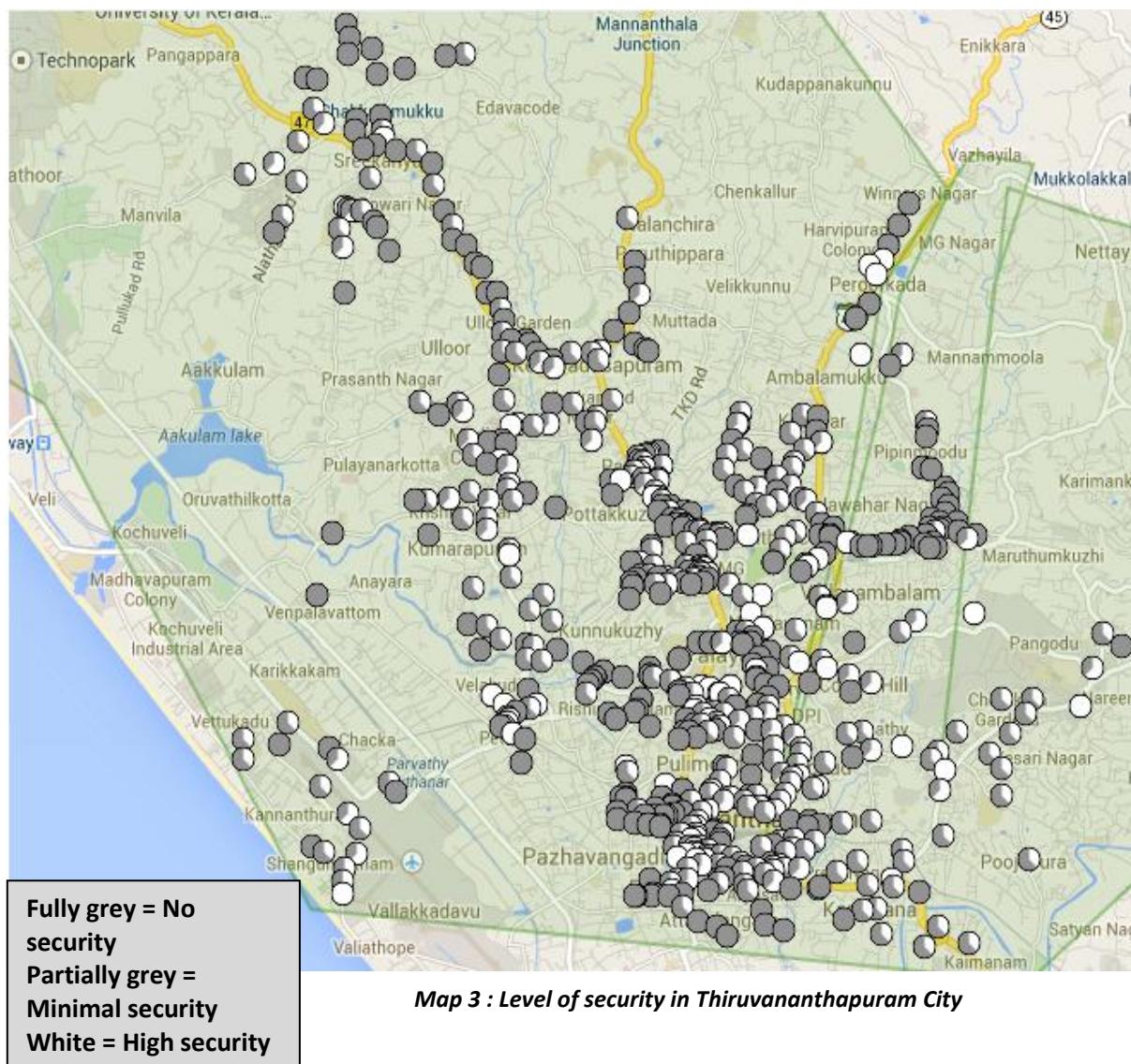
Thiruvananthapuram city is much better in the case of walk paths compared to Kochi and other cities of Kerala. But there is a considerable lack of proper walk paths in the city except for major residential and business areas. Walk paths in the main areas like, East fort, Chala market, Thampanoor and Thycaud are non functional. These photographs were taken during the audits to give an idea about the bad condition of walk paths in major areas of the city.

Condition of walk paths in Thiruvananthapuram City

Major Railway Stations and Public Bus stands

The major railway station in Thiruvananthapuram city is Trivandrum Central Railway Station, and major bus stands are Thampanoor and East Fort. For the purpose of analysis these three public transport stations are grouped together. Graph 6 indicates the score of each safety audit parameter in these public transport stations.
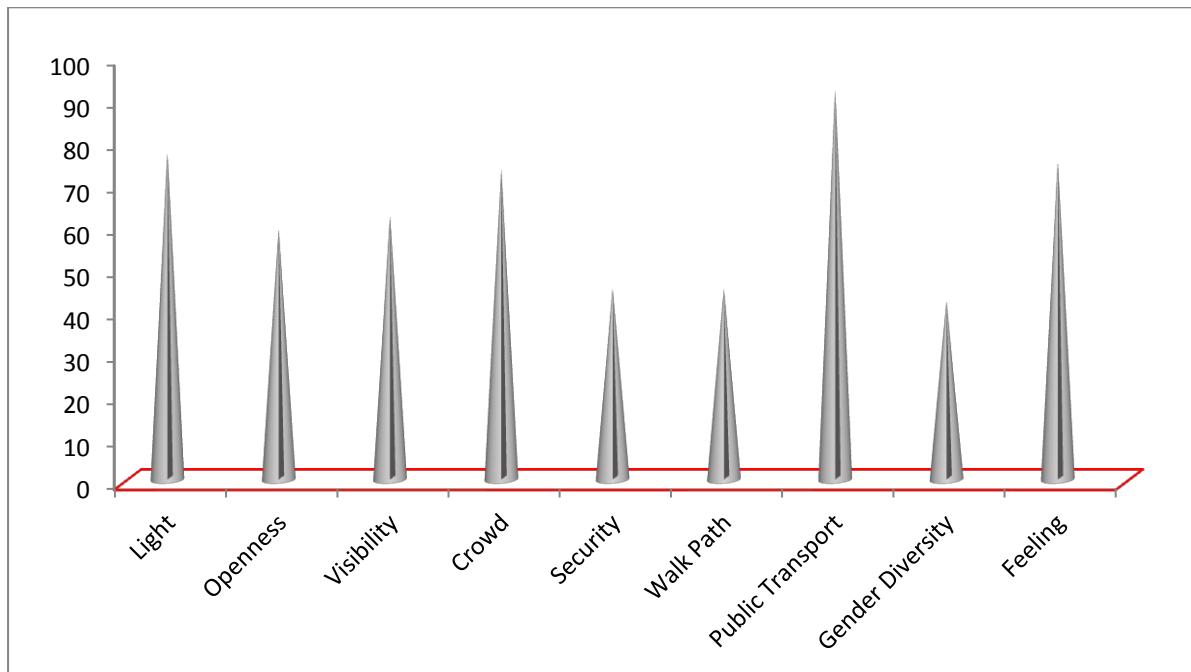

Graph 5 : Average audit parameters in major railway stations and bus stands in Thiruvananthapuram City

A total of 50 audits were conducted in Trivandrum Central Railway Station, Thampanoor and East Fort bus stands. The findings from the audits shows that visible security personnel, number of women in the area and walk path have the lowest rating. These areas are reported to be unsafe for women by several studies including Safe City Free of Violence against Women and Girls Initiative which was conducted by Sakhi in 2009-11. Even after presenting many such reports to the authorities, there are no adequate security personnel in this area. The drainage slabs turned over walk paths are often cracked and broken. As majority of the audits were conducted after dark, numbers of women in Trivandrum Central Railway Station, Thampanoor and East Fort bus stands were low.

Prime Markets

Prime markets in Thiruvananthapuram city are Chalai Market and Palayam Market. These are the major hub of everyday shopping, ranging from electronics to fruits and vegetables. For the purpose of analysis these two markets are grouped together.

A total of 58 audits were conducted in the above said two areas. The finding from the audits shows that visible security personnel, walk path and number of women in the area have the lowest rating. Though Palayam and Chalai markets are the busiest markets in the city, there is no adequate police force in both the areas, especially inside Chalai market which is bigger than Palayam market. Chalai market is a connected network of small roads and by-road. This overcrowded area has very narrow walk paths, where people are likely to tap each other. As majority of the audits are conducted after dark, number of women in both areas were low, whereas during day these areas have a considerable number of women such as street vendors, sales girls and consumers. Graph 7 indicates the score of each safety audit parameter in these market areas.
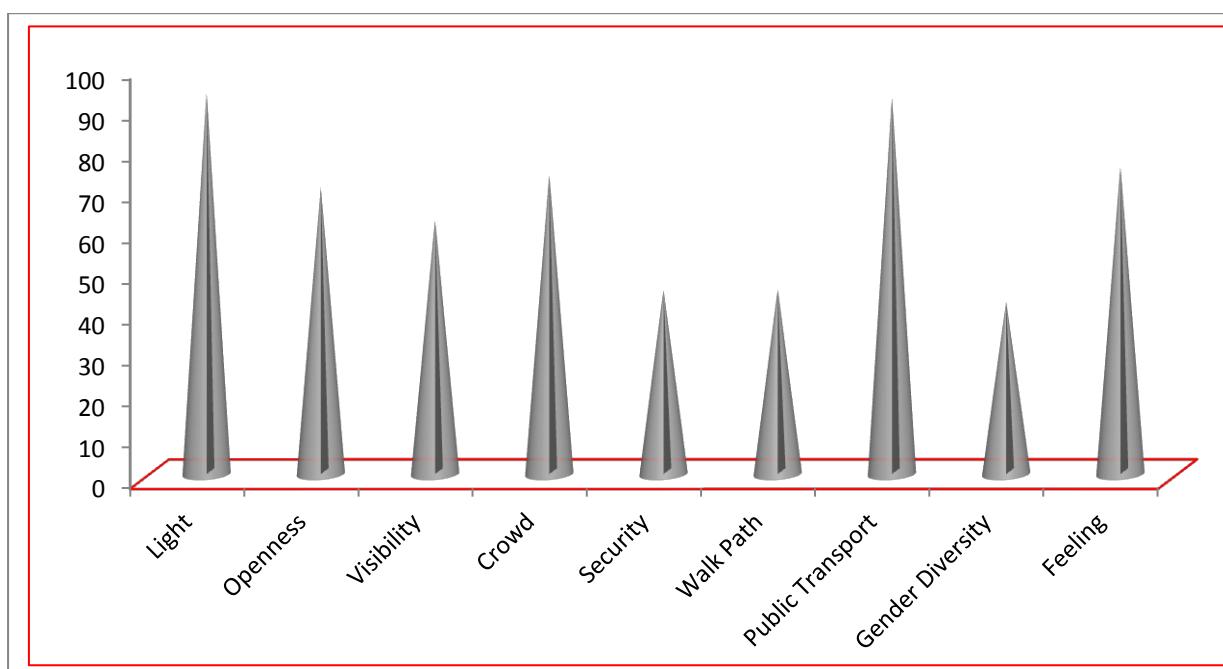
Graph 6: Average audit parameters in the prime markets of Thiruvananthapuram city

Overall findings from the audits show that the presence of women (gender diversity) in the city has reported the lowest among other audit parameters. Very few women are seen even on the main roads, major junctions, markets and public transports after 7pm. Women avoid many areas because of safety issues. Those who are outside are mostly accompanied by men. Number of security personnel in the public places are very few or negligible in the city, even though Thiruvananthapuram is the capital of Kerala. Though main hubs of city have good walk paths, outer ring paths are in pathetic condition and visibility in many areas are also reported low after dark. In the case of lighting, many street lights are either not functioning properly or broken. On other parameters such as availability of public transport, openness and crowd, the scores are high.

Several attempts of moral policing were experienced by the audit team in different parts of the city. Moral policing was mainly experienced by audit teams which consisted of a man and a woman. A female auditor experienced incidents of catcalling and comments while riding her scooter from one place to another as part of conducting audits. She reported that this is a common problem faced by most of the women who ride two wheelers in the city. It was generally observed that public transport facilities are comparatively low after 8pm and those available are unsafe. Study also pointed out that number of women pedestrians in the city is very few after 8pm.

Issues

Women's access to and visibility in public is compounded by several factors like time, place and purpose. There is a direct relationship between women's fear of violence and their avoidance of specific public spaces. Women's safety in a city is affected by a variety of interrelated factors.

Following are the major issues reported from the safety audits conducted in Thiruvananthapuram City;

- **Lack of proper walk paths makes the mobility of women inconvenient**. Walk paths in East fort, West fort, Thampanoor are either broken or waste is dumped. In many places walk paths are occupied by street vendors and vehicles are parked on it.

- Lack of street lights in public areas makes it difficult for women to access these areas. **Though there are street lights all around the city, many of them are not functional.**

- Thiruvananthapuram is well connected with public transport, especially KSRTC buses and autorikshaws, even though very **few buses are available after 8pm and those are reported unsafe**.

- **The presence of women (gender diversity) in Thiruvananthapuram city reported the lowest among other audit parameters.** This means very low or negligible number women are seen in the public areas of the city, especially after dark.

- The **visible security presence, both private and public security, is negligible** in the city. There are no visible security personnel even in the main roads and major junctions in case of emergency. There are a number of surveillance cameras installed in different parts of the city, but no one to approach in case of an issue, especially at

night. Also, the insensitivity of police to women's experiences of gender-based issues and violence discourage women from approaching them.

➢ It was also reported that lorry **parking in Attakulangara area is causing a feeling of insecurity and fear** as the area is totally deserted and without proper lighting and security.

➢ **Back side of Women's college (Women's college lane) is reported to be very unsafe for women**. This is where the women's college hostel is situated. Anonymous vehicle parking, lack of visible security personnel, less number of people and buildings around the area make it very difficult for the hostel students.

➢ **The Military camp area in Pangode was reported to be with collapsed roads and without proper lighting**.

➢ **Men urinating in public spaces** often bring difficulties for women.

➢ **Very less number of pedestrians after 8pm**, only moving vehicles, which lead to low visibility.

➢ Inside **Sabhalyam shopping complex, Palayam upstairs are deserted and without proper lights and security**. Many shopping complexes in the city are in the same condition.

➢ **Exhibitionism in public places and moral policing** makes women avoid many parts and they desist from exploring the city.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Insecurity and threat of violence prevent women from participating as full and equal citizens in the community life. Women too have a right to the city and right to safety which is often violated. In a study conducted in four cities across the globe, results showed that almost 60% women reported feeling unsafe on urban spaces. Women often take precautions in their daily lives such as restricted dressing and avoiding certain areas of the city at certain times, to protect themselves from violence.

Citizens can use *'Safetipin'*, as an effective tool to view and report relevant information on the safety of a particular space, whereas governing and public works authorities can use it as a tool to evaluate a particular space. By contributing information about one's city through a safety audit, hazard or harassment, *'Safetipin'* help in gathering data for the process of building safe and inclusive cities for women.

A safe city for women is;

- A city where women can enjoy public spaces and public life without fear of being assaulted.
- A city where violence is not exercised against women either in the home or the street.
- A city where women are not discriminated against and where their economic, social, political and cultural rights are guaranteed
- A city where women participate in making decisions that affects the community in which they live.
- A city where the state guarantees the human rights of all people without excluding women.
- A city where the state and local government take actions to provide attention, prevention and punishment for violence against women and girls.
- A city where the state and local government guarantee women's access to justice[11].

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[11] *'UN Women, Safe Cities Module'*, accessed September 15, 2014,
http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/modules/pdf/1304107021.pdf

Towards Possible Interventions

A number of suggestions and recommendations have come up as a result of the study conducted in Thiruvananthapuram.

➢ Infrastructural Development

1. Proper and wide walk paths to be built in the city and broken ones are to be reconstructed. Walk paths to be built in a way to make it accessible for aged people, people with disabilities and with prams, without obstructions and cracks. An effective maintenance mechanism to look after the level of walk paths in the city.

2. Dumping waste on the walk path and occupying it with vehicles or for street vending makes it difficult for pedestrians to walk safely. Such acts must be made punishable.

3. Cities to be planned and constructed with more open areas with proper visibility in the upcoming city development plans, by minimising the blind corners and areas without clear sightline. Eliminating dark alleys and dead ends.

4. Install more street lights and non functional street lights are to be replaced and an effective mechanism for the proper and timely maintenance of street lights. Ensure street lights in all by-roads.

5. Women use public transport more than men. More number of public transport to reduce the rush in buses and a mechanism to ensure safety inside the bus. More number of buses at night and more number of KSRTC buses to be allocated.

6. Proper and regular maintenance of public roads and waste disposal.

7. More gender friendly parks, hangout places, city squares to be built. Women's only spaces will not be a solution to the violence experienced by women in the public space. There is a need for more gender friendly and open spaces in the city.

8. Separate bays to be built for lorry parking outside the city limits with proper lighting and security.

9. Deserted and unoccupied parts of shopping complexes and other deserted areas to be renovated to make it functional.

10. Urinating in public spaces to be punishable under law. More number of public toilets for men and women should be built in public places.

11. Helpline numbers are to be displayed in different parts of the city.

12. Setting up of free public telephone services.

13. Provide short stay homes for women in the bus stands and railway stations.

14. Women's needs and facilities should be included in urban planning. Gender sensitive urban planning which understands that women and men experience and use urban spaces differently, are to be developed.

15. Corporation and Town planning authorities should develop a gender friendly city development plan for our cities.

➢ Strengthening the Security Force

1. Police need to be more active. At least one police aid post in between two major junctions. More police forces on the street after dark.

2. All the important offices and commercial spaces should have a provision for security personnel.

3. Police should be gender sensitive and approachable for women.

4. Patriarchal attitude of not taking sexual harassment seriously should be changed.

5. More number of women constables should be assigned in public places.

➢ **Awareness Creation**

1. Awareness creation among women about her right to the city and public space. Awareness among women on the significance of accessing the public space.
2. Create and enhance gender awareness among men, women and children of all sections.
3. Gender awareness programmes for private security force and police force.
4. Awareness programmes to sensitize private bus staff.
5. Sex education classes in the schools should be more effective.
6. Civil society initiatives on women's issues are to be encouraged.

➢ Promote and Publicise *'Safetipin'* mobile application. Encourage people to upload information about their feelings of safety in different areas. Encourage governing and public works authorities to use *'Safetipin'* for evaluating various issues in the city.

➢ Build a road map and timeline for Corporation of Thiruvanananthapuram indicating unsafe places and times

➢ Fast settlement of sexual harassment cases and strict implementation of law is to be ensured.

➢ Government should take an active role in ensuring women's safety.

Appendix

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