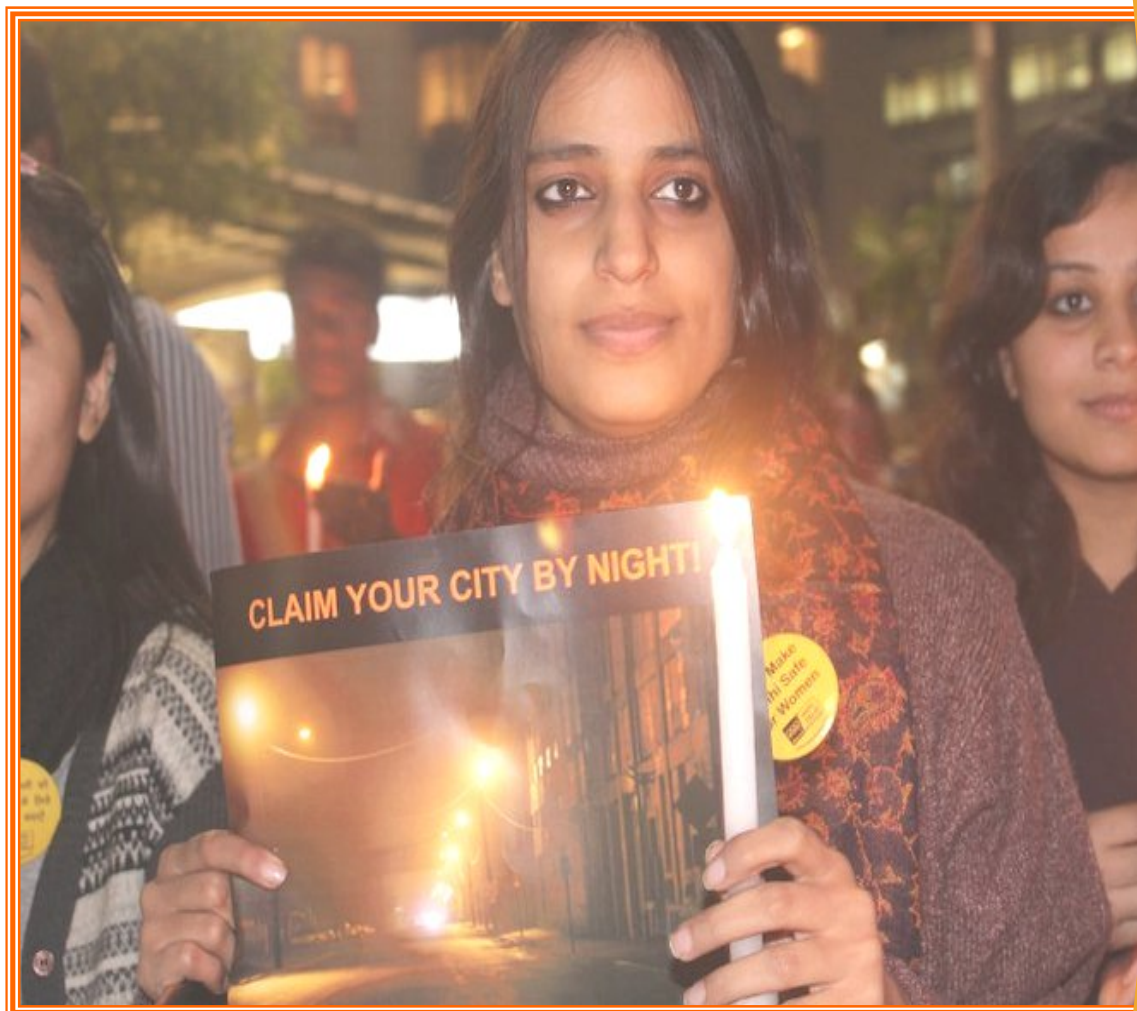


# YOUTH FOR WOMEN AND HABITAT POST LAUNCH REPORT

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**SAFP** |

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**Sathi All for Partnerships (SAFP)** has been involving youth in its advocacy work for some time. By hosting students and young professionals from India as interns and volunteers, it has introduced many people to the women land and resource rights context in Asia and Europe. As the acting secretariat and member of the Consult for Women and Land Rights Network (CWLR) and Habitat International Network Woman and Habitat Network (HIC-WAHN), SAFP also participated in international youth employment programs. In the summer of 2010, architecture students from Barcelona joined forces with architecture and ekistics students from Delhi and SAFP to work on a pilot project for a Woman Resource Zone (WRZ). Following the success of this initiative, SAFP launched a Youth for Women and Habitat Campaign, to formally engage young people's networks (Manzil, Pravah, Community Youth Collective) to intern and volunteer to work on a women resource increase plan in different parts of India. Through this campaign SAFP and its partners reached out to groups in universities and schools in Delhi to organize discussions and workshops with the goal of sensitizing future leaders and professionals to women and habitat issues.

### **The constituents of the Youth Campaign :**

Different groups were invited to participate in an event on December 10, 2010 to mark the celebration towards International Human Rights day. Each constituent invited to be part of a youth campaign for women and habitat has had a long standing work on mobilizing young people on issues that concern them. To illustrate a few, Ankur Society for Education has done work on girls and spaces such that they feel secure within their neighborhood. Plan India's partners in Delhi have worked on ITC options for girls near their homes to prepare themselves better in changing urban frontiers. The Community Youth Collective is motivating students to work on Gender Based Violence as a network of youth groups of which Pravah a part. Pravah for the past decade has orientated youth to work on development issues. The safe cities process coordinated by Jagori looks at spatial planning and safety issues at the city level. SAFP works on solutions that will have a lasting impact to reduce violence in communities. AISEC students in Delhi have worked on a campaign on women empowerment. Several groups in Okhla area including Muslim Women's Organisation, Zakir Hussain Centre, Muslim Women's Forum, work directly with women groups. Others like Aman Trust, PWSCER, Mahila Daxita Samiti joined up as they were part of discourse on women and land rights networks.

SAFP initiated the Youth Campaign for as the work on women and habitat needs young people. The youth think out of the box and come up with simple solutions to complex problems. With help of AISEC student volunteers and architecture students' SAFP detailed the solution of a Women Resource Zone (WRZ) that asks stakeholders to plan homes and the neighborhood in a way it can be productive and safe for women. WRZ needs more young people to work towards its realization just like all efforts by different constituents of youth campaign need. Thus youth groups like Manzil and NGOs that work with working class women were contacted to work together towards a common goal. To learn from young people's support that was already developed within civil society groups like Nirmana were invited to share their work with young tribal women who work in the capital as domestic workers and they support work of Nirmana with migrant construction workers. NACDOR has its youth groups in different parts of India that has resolved to support its National Dalit Women's Movement. The readily agreed to participate with an activity of the campaign as they too feel that issues of women's productive capacities can be made highlighted by providing space for work near homes.

### *The Launch of the Youth for Women and Habitat Campaign*

The youth for women and habitat campaign has been a citizen's initiative and this began with an event to launch itself with the goal to create a momentum in the city of Delhi around women's productivity and safety issues. To achieve this while raising awareness in the general public, SAFP went about organizing a re-claim the night walk, for which it partnered with several other NGOs working at the local, regional, national and international levels. The reclaim the night walks have been organized by feminist groups across the world successfully. However while planning such an event the initiator of this walk Ms Emmanuel Paris Cohen an SAFP intern from Rooftops Canada was un aware of the history of the strategy. She was responding to the restriction she faced while travelling in Delhi as a foreigner, especially at night. Her feelings intensified when she worked on gender resource gaps in Delhi and she decided that she needs to do something to change the way mobility restricts equal contribution and participation of women in the city. While planning the event she realized she was not alone in her goal too see the transformation she believes in and there were many who wanted to walk along with others. A small group agreed to call themselves the organizers of the walk who invited support from others. A surprising supporter was the American Ambassador himself, who agreed to provide space at the American centre and address the group, only as he had participated in such walks back home! This offer was not taken up to remain focused on the civil society informal nature of the campaign. This walk aimed to add value to the historical process by linking the aspects of gender equal sustainable planning as a solution to lasting safety.

The goal of the walk to begin with was to hold a general, galvanizing event which would unite different feminist and youth movements and workers organizations around one issue: **Women's right to the city**, whether it is the right to move with no restrictions, whether these are psychological, safety related, or imposed; Women's right to access public space and services on an equal footing as men; Women's right to participate in the city's market economy as productive, independent citizens; Women's right to be active stakeholders in urban planning; and finally, Women's right to live a life free of gender based violence.

SAFP reached out for involvement of civil society groups and NGOs in the capital. This was a challenge, as each group is deep into a specific focus area of action which is an exclusive domain created after years of follow up on a particular issue. Within the theme of women's rights, this is especially true. The feminist movements focusing on gender-based violence, those focusing on the right to the city, and the organizations working on the right to livelihood don't traditionally associate or work together. Even as all understand that all issues are interrelated and indivisible working together has its difficulty. Through discussions some groups understood that, if women could manage their own resources and be linked to groups in neighborhood, they would be less likely to stay in situations in which they are victims of violence. This can happen when women get greater control in the governance and planning of the areas they live and work in. The right to the city calls for sustainable area plans that can provide greater and equal access to resources for both women and men. When this kind of inclusive planning takes place people in an area can closely work with administration to ensure safety within the area they live, work and study in.

Eventually, through discussions some partnerships were created, as many people saw the advantages of uniting forces to experience working together for an event and making it a success. Organizing a re-claim the night walk would allow for all different streams of work to unite while raising awareness around the one issue which they have in common: the right to the city. That is, the right to participate in the city's governance and activities, the right to access all services and opportunities the city has to offer, and the right to security and safely anytime, anywhere. Although there were logistical issues such as who's logo to include on the poster (participants as opposed to organizers, supporting organizations, etc.). There was also debate around what activities would be appropriate during the walk, on top of only

taking part of the procession while holding banners and shouting slogans. For instance, there was the question of whether to hold discussions and poster making contest before starting the walk, but the idea was dropped as it seemed irrelevant for this sort of mass gathering, and would be more appropriate if organized as the central activities within a smaller workshop, which could be more easily managed.

SAFP campaigned in universities, schools and colleges in Delhi. Discussions were organized in classrooms, with youth and student groups across the city. This was perhaps the most important bit of work done in the recruiting process. It gave an opportunity for young people to voice their concerns and reflect on what their city really means to them. They saw in this walk a platform to express their discontent, an opportunity to discredit the status quo situation which confines women to the private arena. Posters and brochures were printed by Plan India, and distributed in schools. The making of these promotional tools was also a concerted effort between youth groups and NGOs, who each contributed to make posters and brochures which would pique people's attention and start raising awareness. Finally, it was decided that logos of organizers, participants and supporting NGOs would be included on the poster, although the logos which were actually printed were not exhaustive of the organizations represented at the event.

Youth groups and NGOs, such as Youth Collective and Manzil, prepared songs, slogans, video projections, and other activities to make the event a success, and to impact the thought process of the walk's participants. These creative activities were instrumental, not only to draw attention during the event, but their preparation itself was inspirational to many young people, and allowed them to sublimate their concerns, hopes and wishes into something they could be proud of. SAFP is hoping to continue tapping in this creative streak of today's youth in Delhi, to come up with innovative ways to plan the city, to suggest new sustainable means to manage resources and to use available government development schemes.

Press releases were submitted to major newspapers, both in English and Hindi, circulating in Delhi, and radio and TV coverage were obtained for the event. The amount of publicity we received for the event went far beyond the organizers' expectations and hopes. This was a very welcome turn of events, which meant that we captured the general population's attention, and hopefully, planted the first seeds of reflection on these issues.

### ***"Claim your city by night" walk***

Finally, the "Claim your city by night" walk took place on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010, coinciding with International Human Rights Day, and the last of 16 day of activism against gender based violence. Several NGOs participated in this effort majority of them were student groups. Hundreds of people joined us, most of which young people concerned about women's situation in the National Capital. The event also touched upon a recent wave of violent crimes against women, and drew attention to these issues across the board. The turnout was a great success, and although the organization ran into some difficulties in trying to obtain police permission, everything ran smoothly on the day itself. Indeed, after several visits to the Parliament Street Police Commissioner and the Traffic Police, permission was implicitly given, yet on the eve of the event, a rogue officer called to demand a change in the schedule. With the support of the Police Commissioner's office, the event ended up unfolding as planned.

Hopefully, this event will be a first step towards getting people to question the current accepted situation and established gender expectations, when it comes to women's place in the city, their role in the public vs. private sphere, and their right to move safely and freely, as a basic human right.

**Impact :** The Chief Minister Of Delhi released a statement that "Delhi was a safe city and statistics show that crimes against women happen more within the neighborhood and at home."The Chairperson of

National Commission for Women spoke a parallel event organized by another NGO that picked on the call SAFP has given since 2004 asking for women's space in City Master Plan. Production and retail areas that only women can own, rent and sell were asked for as part of a planned process from the government. The police authorities through an official communication warned the employers to organize for safe transport of female staff if they need to stay back for work at late hours of the night.

The media coverage gave the Youth Campaign for Women and Habitat a profile enough for the organizers to agree to make this and walk and annual event. With this great beginning year long collaboration between organizers need to be invoked to sustain interest of the young to remain focused on gender equality issues.

### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE AND WITH WHOM**

Each invited Youth Campaign constituent should share how it would want to stay linked with each other. For example SAFP and its collaborators are now focusing on approaching local and regional community and political leaders, ministers, municipal corporations and other relevant authorities and get them to agree to earmark available land for a Sustainable development zone, which will include a WRZ. To do so, the momentum gained from the "Claim your city by night" walk will be used to make our demands heard to local leaders.

Some NGOs in Okhla in Delhi, Barabanki in UP, Bilaspur in Chattisgarh and Bhopal and Ratlam in MP have agreed to work on a WRZ in their areas. They will need student volunteers to document local women's concern to propose their case to local and district authorities. Through the Pravah exposure program if students can travel to the NGOs and develop the concept of WRZ they can apply what they have learnt when they are back in Delhi. The CYC work on gender based violence could also carry on contextual work in different area development plans.

Once a provision for a WRZ is officially sanctioned in an area development plan or district gender sub-plan, as provided for by the Indian Constitution, we will approach corporations and builders who would fund and implement such a project. With sustainable development fast becoming the only way to go, the long-term benefits, including job creation, new productions and technological innovation far outweigh those of investing in traditional development projects. Private actors can be convinced both on the basis of future profit and by enhancing their corporate social responsibility profile, to invest in the building of WRZs. Partnerships with local community leaders will also keep being strengthened, not only to ensure the success of the project, but to have the political clout necessary to convince local and regional governments to take on the WRZ.

We wish to continue working with youth, students and faculty members, and try to approach others, in order to continue our architectural plans, to keep building awareness through our Youth Campaign on Women and Habitat. Students in universities across India today will soon enter the workforce and begin their careers as architects, town planners, urban and rural developers, or policy makers. Considering the country's current fast-paced development, it is essential that the next generation take this development in the right direction, and giving women an equal share in this planning will ensure India's future success.

What we are now looking forward to is the organization of thematic workshops in target areas where SAFP wants to implement a WRZ. These workshops would unite local women, NGOs, elected representatives and volunteer students and youngsters. During this time, participants would have the opportunity to voice their ideas on how to improve the neighborhood layout, infrastructure, activity, market connections and resource management process. With the support of government schemes, these workshops would be followed by implementation of the changes sought.

