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Addressing VAWG through co-ordinated urban planning

Tags: VAWG, WEE, Cities, Planning, Case Study

Creating safe and inclusive urban environments is a top priority for UK government, who have signed up to several international commitments in this area, including Sustainable Development Goal 11 to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable', with a target that directly contributes to addressing women and girls' safety in public spaces.

Better planning of urbanisation and infrastructure has the potential to create safer environments. However, effective operations and maintenance is essential to ensure the reliable provision of services. Street lights with no power, bus services that don't run, no water at the standpipe all serve to increase risks. Creating an urban environment that is safe and inclusive for everyone means recognising different concerns and vulnerabilities around VAWG, for example younger women and adolescent girls, elderly women, IDPs and refugees, and people who transgress gendered norms.

Effective governance and joined-up planning between government agencies is a key precondition to ensure that infrastructure achieves its potential to expand economic opportunities for women.[1] The same can be said of addressing VAWG within urban and infrastructure programming, particularly given that the prevention and response to violence relies on coordinated action across multiple sectors, including health, education and social services, legal and security actors, and the community.[2] Evidence has in particular highlighted this in the context of emergencies and humanitarian assistance, where public service delivery is disrupted or lacking, and where a multi-sectoral approach helps to ensure more responsive action to address VAWG.[3] A joined-up approach also ensures that actors in different sectors are aware of and understand the risks and opportunities related to urban and infrastructure programming, and have the political will to address these issues, and that adequate resources are allocated to VAWG in budgets and funding allocations.

Improving urban infrastructure and integrating gender-responsive public services into municipal planning also necessitates women's participation at all stages. ActionAid's research into women's experience of violence in seven cities highlighted the need to apply gender analysis and for women to be involved in the planning and budgeting of public service design and implementation from the outset.[4] Governance-based movements to promote women's safety in urban public spaces, such as Toronto's Safe City Committee (1989-1999) and the Safe Delhi Initiative (2009-present), link up with infrastructure projects and involve the development of 'partnerships' between elected officials, public servants, community based groups and researchers.[5] The joined-up model, drawing on urban planning and design, aims to mobilise power, information and resources to push for urban social change to promote women's security.

> **Joined-up urban planning model for improving women's safety, India**
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> The safety audits undertaken by Jagori, a women's resource centre in India, which mapped a range of public spaces and safety issues in Delhi, resulted in a partnership with a local transport corporation, run by a supportive bureaucrat. The partnership led to training on gender and violence for almost 3,800 bus drivers and conductors employed by the public service. Under the UN-Trust Fund supported Gender Inclusive Cities Programme, new partnerships were later developed with local government and private sector urban planners. For example, an organisation contracted to redesign a major road in Delhi used Jagori's data in their road redesign, and included new bus stop designs, space for slower moving traffic, and improved public toilets and public spaces. Eventually, local urban planning design guidelines incorporated women's safety concerns.
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> (Source: Whitzman et al, 2014)

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[1] Jacobson et al (2016)
[2] World Bank, Global Women's Institute and IDB (2014) VAWG Resource Guide
[3] Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015)
[4] ActionAid (2015)
[5] Whitzman et al (2014)

Safety audits are an important participatory tools that can inform joined-up urban planning. Safety audits have been used by diverse groups of women and girls to evaluate their city's safety, generate rich local-level data about the relative safety of a place or area at different times in the day and at night, and to leverage women and girls' knowledge to become voices of authority in their communities.[6] Safety audits have been adapted in various settings and programmes. For example, Plan International developed a Girls' Safety Walk tool as part of their 'Because I am a Girl Urban Programme'. Adolescent girls used the tool in a familiar area of their city to help identify factors that make them feel safe and unsafe. In Kampala, 80% of girls reported feeling 'very unsafe' or 'unsafe' in public spaces, particularly when they were moving through the city – when walking and when using passenger taxis and motorcycles (boda-boda).[7] As well as providing data on safe and unsafe areas, the researchers also observed that as girls and boys used the tool, they were increasingly empowered to speak out and raise issues of safety and inclusion in their cities.

New technologies and 'digital infrastructure' are increasingly being used in urban planning and can be used to monitor, respond to, and prevent violence against women and girls. Digital tools such as HarassMap and SafetiPin (see box) have been used to collect data to inform inclusive planning and to share experiences, raise awareness, seek support and prevent sexual harassment in cities. These new technologies are also able to gather user-generated data to help local authorities and the police to address concerns around safety and inclusion in cities and on transport.

There is also potential for digital innovation to provide **real-time information on transport services**, which can help provide a sense of security for women and girls to know how long they have to wait before their transport arrives, and if necessary reduce their waiting time in public.[8]

SafetiPin

SafetiPin is an organisation that seeks to use technology and data to make cities more inclusive, safe and free from violence for women and others. We build apps to collect information and engage with individuals and city stakeholders. At the core of the app is the Safety Audit. It consists of a set of 9 parameters that together contribute to the perception of safety. The parameters are lighting, openness, visibility, crowd, gender diversity, security, walk path and public transport. Each safety audit results in a pin on the specific location where the audit was performed and also records the time and date. All the pins are visible on the app. The pins are also aggregated to produce a Safety Score for a neighbourhood. Data is collected either through users or through photographs. Safetipin has collected data in over 20 cities in India and around the world. The data collected in some of these cities has been used in innovative ways.

In **Bogota**, the app has been used to map safety issues along the city's bike paths and 2262 points have been mapped. This is being used by the Secretary of Women and Secretary of Transport departments to make informed decisions about where to put resources to make these spaces safer focusing on sidewalks and non-motorised transport. For example, this data has been used to decide locations of CCTV's.

In **Delhi**, the data has been used to identify dark spots and has been shared with key stakeholders who are working on fixing these after which Safetipin will conduct another round of audits to ascertain whether the safety score in these areas have improved and women feel safer. In one low income neighbourhood, the data from audits was shared in a public space so that the community could interact with it and give their recommendations. Further the Delhi Police have incorporated the findings and have improved police patrolling in areas that were identified as unsafe.

In **Nairobi**, the data was used to redesign a public space in a neighbourhood Eastleigh with participation from the community who deliberated on the data. The main street of a neighbourhood was made more accessible through providing space for different activities like leisure or shopping as well as making the area brightly lit. This ensured that people were out and using

Key reading: USAID (2015) Building a Safer World: Toolkit for Integrating GBV Prevention and Response into USAID Energy and Infrastructure Projects

The **World Bank's Global GBV Task Force** is currently developing a set of recommendations and strategies to identify threats and prevent and respond to violence in World Bank projects, including construction of large infrastructure projects (report due out mid-2017)

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[6] Travers et al (2013); Fulu (2016); METRAC (2002). See Lambrick and Travers (2008) for good practice on safety audits, based on a comparative evaluation study of women's safety audits by Women in Cities International in partnership with UN-HABITAT

[7] Travers et al (2013). Boda Boda (motorcycle taxis) are a very important form of transport in Kampala but are particularly dangerous for women at night – particularly when used for journeys to slum areas. They formed a vote block for President Museveni in the recent presidential elections which gives them additional protection from the authorities. (Pers communication, Ian Curtis, from a recent meeting with the Ministry of Labour, Gender and Social Development in Kampala, Nov. 2016).

[8] Gekoski et al (2015)