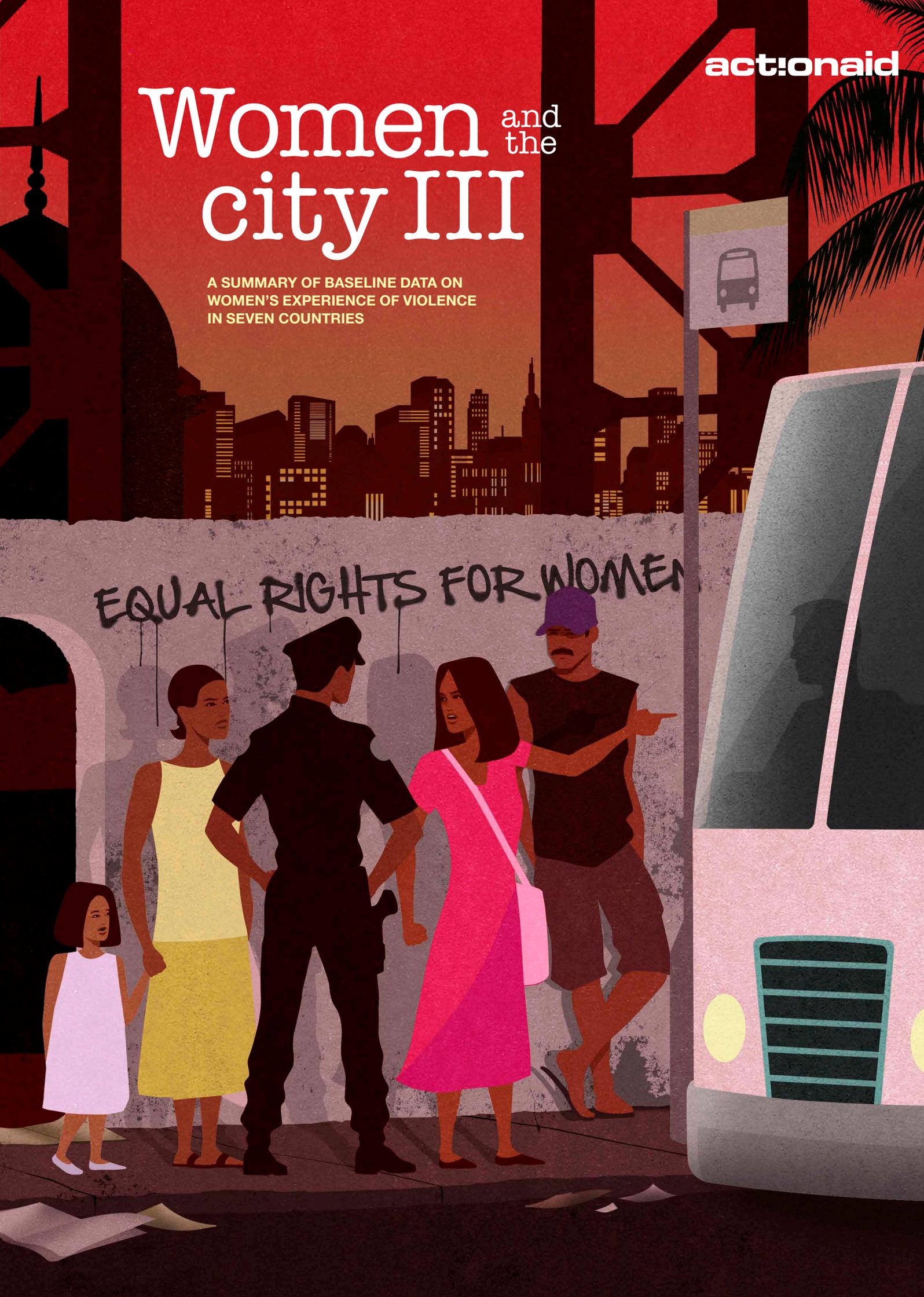


Women and the city III

A SUMMARY OF BASELINE DATA ON
WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE
IN SEVEN COUNTRIES

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN





A garment worker on her way home from work in Phnom Penh, Cambodia
PHOTO: ACTIONAID CAMBODIA

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List of acronyms

CSOs	civil society organisations
FGD	focus group discussion
GBV	gender-based violence
GRPS	gender-responsive public services
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
KII	key informant interview
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
WMG	Women's Major Group
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
VAWG	violence against women and girls

Foreword

As a human rights based anti-poverty organisation, ActionAid puts women's rights at the heart of its work. We believe that gender inequality is an injustice we must fight. While our world view recognises that poverty has different faces, we know that the majority of people living in poverty worldwide are women.

Through our Safe Cities for Women Programme, we tackle the injustice, exclusion and violence suffered by poor urban women – from slum dwellers to sex workers and from informal vendors to students – as a result of a rapidly urbanising world in which cities and their services are not designed with women in mind.

In order to better understand the context in which these women live, ActionAid undertook baseline research in seven countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Liberia, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe. This research has affirmed many of the issues we knew to undermine women's freedoms and mobility in cities. The normalisation of daily violence and the extent to which women are blamed was overwhelmingly evident in the accounts shared with us by women from all seven countries. At the same time this research reveals the extent to which women living in urban spaces are hindered by fear of violence on a daily basis. It undermines access to work, education and leisure, and participation in local decision-making.

ActionAid's Safe Cities for Women Programme has become a flagship initiative of the organisation. This research will not only help us determine the impact of our programme on women's lives but will also play a pivotal role in shaping the demands of ActionAid and our partners as we prepare for our global launch in May 2015. Momentum is gathering worldwide around the issue of urban poverty. As we approach the Habitat III conference that will take place in Quito, Ecuador in 2016, I strongly believe this report will be of great interest to the many activists, UN agencies and governments from across the globe who are demanding that women have a greater say in urban design, for their voices to be heard, and for the ideal of gender-responsive cities to become a reality.

Dr Ramona Vijeyarasa
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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
Themes of the current report	8
Conclusion	9
INTRODUCTION: Women and the city III	10
A changing global context	11
Overview of the current report	12
A note on methodology	13
CHAPTER 1: Women's experiences globally: an analysis of findings from six baseline report	15
Introduction	16
Women and girls' experiences and perceptions of GBV in public spaces	16
Women's access and perceptions of state services that deal with VAWG	19
Community attitudes towards VAWG	22
Conclusion to the global analysis	24
CHAPTER 2: Country findings	26
Bangladesh	26
Brazil	28
Cambodia	30
Liberia	32
Nepal	34
South Africa	36
Zimbabwe	39
CONCLUSION: Moving forward on women and girls' demands	41
ANNEX	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	46
ENDNOTES	47

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“It would be wonderful if I could feel safe on the bus and could go to school or any other place without a single hint of fear of anything in my eyes. But that’s not what life here is like.”

15-year-old girl, Brazil¹

“The bus is always crowded and most often I have to sit with male passengers. One day I sat beside a man aged about 45 years. Within minutes, the man put his hand on my leg.”

Latifa, small trader, Bangladesh²



Fewer buses where only 6-9 seats on each bus are reserved for women, makes travelling a nightmare for women and girls in Dhaka
PHOTO: STEPHANIE SIMCOX/ACTIONAID

This report reflects the experiences of over 3,000 women and girls living in urban communities in Brazil, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Liberia, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe. While the women and girls interviewed in this baseline study shared their views that cities can be places of choice and empowerment for them, they also spoke of the multiple challenges they face in enjoying their rights and freely making choices about their daily lives. Freedom of movement and expression within these urban spaces is severely limited by harassment, violence, fear of violence, lack of adequate and gender-responsive public services and stereotypical, negative perceptions about women and their place in society. ActionAid works with some of the poorest women in city communities worldwide, including migrant workers and those living in slums. These

women struggle to make a living in the informal labour market, fighting against forces that subjugate them socially and economically. Mobility means survival for many of these women and girls – many of whom walk miles in the morning and evening or use public transport to travel to and from work or school. Yet in going about their daily lives they are confronted by situations of sexual harassment, assault and violence that trigger feelings of shame, fear and distress.

In South Africa, only 12% of women and girls interviewed felt safe from verbal and physical abuse in their neighbourhoods. In Nepal, 90% of women and girls interviewed had experienced sexual harassment in a public space at some point in their lives, yet only 11% had ever reported it to the police. In Brazil, women and girls reported changing the way they dressed, their behaviour and their daily routes in order to feel safer, yet they felt unable to speak out about sexual harassment and assault. This was because of a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system to hold perpetrators to account, and the fear that they themselves would be blamed for the abuse. In the absence of state services and solidarity from community stakeholders, women and girls identify their own coping mechanisms. Unfortunately, this sometimes means sacrificing educational and job opportunities and not engaging in leisure activities.

Gender-based violence (GBV) presents a constant and multiple threat to women's freedom and dignity in cities, including individual and institutional forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls purely because they are women. At its root are norms and power imbalances that uphold men's superiority over women. GBV in cities frequently occurs through daily acts of **sexual harassment** (unwanted sexual gestures, looks, comments or requests for sexual relations) and **sexual assault** (coerced and unwanted contact of a sexual nature, including touching, fondling, contact with someone's genitals, and rape). These become pervasive in women's lives, but are often dismissed and normalised by a large majority of women themselves, community members, local leaders and governments. The perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault are rarely held accountable for their actions. These forms of urban violence particularly affect women and girls living in poverty, and who face other forms of discrimination based on class, race, sexual orientation, age, geographic location and occupation.

GBV in cities is a systemic issue. Most urban planners and decision-makers are men and their perspective means that cities are not designed with women's needs in mind, leaving women and girls impacted by poorly planned urban spaces, infrastructures and services. In addition, institutional sexism excludes or limits women's participation in local decision-making processes. Asserting everyone's right to "public space and to decision-making around public space"³ is a requirement for creating gender-inclusive cities.

ActionAid's contribution to the safe cities for women and girls movement

The global safe cities for women and girls movement emerged in the 1970s with groups of women worldwide organising protest marches to 'take back the night'. Over time, several international organisations and NGOs began conducting work on women's urban safety. They

included UN-HABITAT, UNIFEM (a predecessor of UN Women), Women in Cities International (WICI), Red Mujery Habitat, the Huairou Commission, and Jagori.

ActionAid is building on the achievements of this evolving work through its Safe Cities Programme, with particular emphasis on the concept of the 'right to the city'. ActionAid is implementing the programme in 13 countries in the context of rapid urbanisation, migration and the widespread sexual violence and harassment experienced by women in cities and urban spaces. We work with migrant, urban and poor women living in slums and squatter settlements, women involved in informal labour, sex workers, poor young students and women with diverse sexual orientations who all experience marginalisation and a denial of their human rights in their everyday lives. ActionAid's experience from this urban programme confirms that 20 years after the Beijing Platform for Action, gender inequalities not only persist, but that gains made since 1995 are increasingly under threat. ActionAid endorses and supports the demands from women living in poverty, and feminist movements, for developmental justice that respects, protects and fulfils women's rights. *"Eliminating violence against women and girls must be a priority for governments and civil society going into the post-2015 agenda and should reflect a genuine commitment to transformative change through the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action."*⁴

As part of the Safe Cities Programme, ActionAid has conducted studies of the safety of women and girls in cities and urban spaces through its local offices in a number of countries, and published two summary reports in 2011 and 2013.⁵ The first report comprised findings of safety audits in five countries, and the second report included the results of a participatory study in six countries on the links between gender, the quality and gender-responsiveness of public services, violence and urbanisation. It also included demands on the kinds of policies, programmes, tools and approaches

that could help foster public awareness and develop practical strategies to enhance women's safety in urban spaces, their mobility and their full enjoyment of a range of human rights. This third report builds on the findings and demands from the above studies and presents the findings from a more recent baseline research study in seven countries. The objectives of the report are to:

- highlight women's and girls' experience of cities and potential solutions to violence against

women and girls (VAWG) in cities as perceived and presented by women;

- illustrate the need for further disaggregated data for policy and programme development;
- highlight the relevance of the international processes around UN Habitat, UN Women, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Right to the City towards increasing women's freedom and security in urban spaces.

Farida's story, Bangladesh

Farida takes her daughter to school by bus. *"One day when I was returning home by bus, a man... was trying to push me from the back. The bus was overcrowded and there was no seat available – the ladies' seats were occupied by male passengers. I was standing with other male passengers and the notorious man tried to push me hard, I had nothing to do but to endure it. Because there were so many standing passengers, nobody would listen to my complaint. After a short while I got down from the bus. But to my horror I found that the man also got off from the bus. Initially I thought that it might be his destination also but then I noticed that the man was in fact following me.*

It was 8am and there were many people on the road. So I stopped, looked at the man and asked him "Why are you following me?" The man said, "Nothing to be worried about" – he just wanted to have my phone number so that he could talk to me anytime he wanted. I was shocked and surprised at his audacity and told him to leave the place immediately, otherwise I would call the police and complain. But the man did not seem to be concerned at all; he said that he had not done anything bad, the police won't take it seriously and he could not be implicated.

Sometimes I have to wake up as early as 5am to prepare breakfast, wake up my daughter and get her ready, and leave home by 6.30am so that we can reach my daughter's school on time. I am always afraid of risks of rape and sexual harassment when I leave home for my daughter's school."



Themes of the current report

This report compares and analyses key findings from baseline research undertaken in 2014 in Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Liberia, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe, involving over 3,000 women and girls, according to the following four themes.

1. Women's experiences and perceptions of violence

The experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence documented in this report shed light on the global phenomenon of systematic violence against women and girls in cities. The rates of reported sexual harassment and assault were high in all cities. In **Brazil**, between 46% and 71% of women interviewed reported being cat-called on the streets, and 41% suggested that this occurred at least once a month. In **South Africa**, 80% of respondents had experienced some form of abuse in the past year. These experiences of sexual harassment, and in some cases abuse, contribute to a general sense of fear, and prevent women and girls from participating fully in city life. Across countries, women and girls cited the streets and public transport as places where they experienced sexual harassment and assault most frequently and severely.

2. Women's access to and perceptions of state services that deal with VAWG

Across all cities, women reported mistrust and fear regarding police services. In fact, a number of women reported experiencing sexual harassment by the police. In Brazil, 84% of women reported having been sexually harassed by the police. Rates of reporting of sexual abuse and harassment to the police were very low across cities. Of the women who had experienced abuse in the past year, **none** of the **South African** women in the study and only 2% in **Cambodia** had reported their case to the police. Women gave various reasons for not reporting, including fear of the police, not feeling their case was important, difficulties in the reporting process, and fear of being stigmatised by their family.

3. Community attitudes towards VAWG and its 'normalisation'

Across cities, the phenomenon of the **silent public** was identified as contributing to the **normalisation** of VAWG. In **Nepal**, 48% of women reported that those who witnessed an instance of abuse did not comment or intervene. Women and girls also reported that public transport operators failed to act on sexual harassment and assault in their vehicles. Women and girls also experienced **blaming**. For instance, community members, public transport operators, the police, spiritual leaders, elders and family members often blamed women and girls' dress styles as the cause of sexual harassment and assault.

When men, boys, women and girls silently witness or downplay an act of violence, or blame the women, they contribute to a sense of shame felt by survivors. This shame encourages women and girls to take the weight of VAWG upon themselves, and develop strategies in their daily lives to avoid it. For instance, 97% of women in **Brazil** reported always or sometimes changing their route to avoid harassment and violence.

4. Women's demands to create safe cities for women and girls

Demands made by the women involved in the study can be grouped under three main themes:

1. Improve urban infrastructure and integrate gender-responsive public services⁶ into municipal city planning;
2. Address institutional sexism⁷ in police, and other services and provide adequate gender-responsive community safety and justice services;
3. Raise awareness in the community and with service providers on sexual harassment and assault, and build women's capacity to advocate for their rights.

Demands to improve infrastructure and access to gender-responsive public services:

- Provide adequate, pedestrian-focused street lighting at all hours of the night and in every neighbourhood.
- Apply a gender analysis and involve local women in the planning and budgeting of public service design and delivery.
- Conduct women's safety audits with diverse groups of women and girls and local authorities to assess the safety of city spaces, and access to essential services. Implement resulting demands.
- From the outset, anticipate and address the needs of marginalised groups of women and girls in the planning and delivery of public services.
- Address institutional sexism, particularly with regard to public transport services.

Demands to address institutional sexism and improve state responses to VAWG:

- Recognise sexual harassment and sexual assault in public spaces as an infringement of human rights.
- Conduct policy reviews to assess and improve existing laws, policies and programmes.
- Conduct local-to-local dialogues with government representatives, civil society organisations and local women.
- Ensure governments fund the collection of disaggregated data on gender-based violence in public spaces in order to monitor change over time.
- Support the transformation of the safety and justice services from a relationship of power over citizens, to a relationship of power with all citizens.
- Ensure police services are held accountable for acts of VAWG committed by service providers, and that external investigations are launched when such acts are reported.

Demands for raising awareness and building women's capacities:

- Support and lead awareness-raising campaigns to involve women, girls, men and boys in

preventing and ending sexual harassment and assault in public spaces.

- Disseminate awareness-raising campaigns through diverse media platforms, such as the internet, television, radio and posters.
- Address community attitudes that normalise violence and blame women.
- Provide women and girls with resources and capacity-building training.
- Provide women and girls with resources to form advocacy groups.

Conclusion

This baseline study clearly indicates that women want immediate action to address the violence perpetrated against them. Women urge duty bearers to respond to demands for gender-responsive public services and a shift in attitudes and behaviours so that sexism, sexual harassment, assault and violence against women and girls in cities are no longer tolerated.

The study will help ActionAid strengthen its programmes and measure change and progress over the years as we strive to ensure that women and girls are empowered to enjoy their rights to social, political, economic, recreational and cultural participation in the city. ActionAid hopes that this report will inform and guide international agencies, governments and policy makers as they negotiate, agree and implement the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Women's Beijing +20 Platform, and UN Habitat's 2016 New Urban Agenda.

ActionAid will join hands with the safe cities movement and like-minded networks, coalitions and organisations to ensure that violence against women and girls in public spaces is recognised as a political priority by expanding and strengthening programmes locally, building national partnerships with state and civil society coalitions, and advocating on safe cities for women in relation to both the SDGs and Habitat III.

INTRODUCTION **Women and the city III**

Although violence in the private domain is now widely recognised as a human rights violation, violence against women and girls, especially sexual harassment in public spaces, remains a largely neglected issue, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it.

UN Women⁸



A focus group discussion with a women and girls' safety team in Nepal
PHOTO: MAKWANPUR MAHILA SAMUHA (MMS) SAKCHAM, NEPAL

Violence and fear of violence limit women's freedom of movement in cities worldwide. ActionAid works with some of the poorest and most excluded women in cities, such as communities of migrant workers and slum dwellers who are involved in the informal labour market, sex workers, students, and women with diverse sexual orientation. The ability of women and girls to move around their cities safely is essential for their survival, yet often they encounter situations that create feelings of fear, discomfort and shame. This includes in their neighbourhoods, on public transport, and when travelling to work or school. A woman out on the street is seen as common property or available

for men as an object of ridicule or entertainment. Women and girls often modify their clothing, behaviour or daily routes in order to feel safer. Fear of harassment and violence prevents women from accessing educational, work and leisure activities.

Gender-based violence (GBV) presents a constant and multiple threat to women's freedom and dignity in cities, encompassing individual and institutional forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls purely because of their gender and institutional sexism. At its root are norms, customs and power imbalances that uphold men's superiority over women. GBV in cities frequently

occurs through daily acts of **sexual harassment** (unwanted sexual gestures, looks, comments, or requests for sexual relations), and **sexual assault** (coerced and unwanted contact of a sexual nature, including touching, fondling, contact with someone's genitals or rape). These often become pervasive in women's lives, yet are dismissed and normalised by community members, local institutions and governments. These forms of urban violence particularly affect women who live in poverty, and who face other forms of discrimination based on race, class, sexual orientation, age, occupation and geographic location.

GBV in cities is a systemic issue that limits women's participation in local decision-making processes. Cities are not designed with women's needs in mind, with poorly planned urban spaces, infrastructures and inadequate services impacting their daily lives. Asserting everyone's right to "public space and to decision-making around public space"⁹ is a requirement for creating gender-inclusive cities.

ActionAid's contribution to the safe cities for women and girls movement

The global **safe cities for women and girls movement** works to create safer and more inclusive cities for women, girls and for everyone. It emerged in the 1970s with groups of women worldwide organising protest marches to 'take back the night'. Over time, several international and non-governmental organisations began conducting work on women's safety in urban settings. These organisations included Women in Cities International (WICI), Red Mujer y Habitat, the Huairou Commission, Jagori, UN Habitat and UNIFEM, a predecessor of UN Women. More recently, UN Women initiated its own Safe Cities for Women and Girls Global Programme.

ActionAid is building on these efforts and accomplishments through its Safe Cities Programme in 13 countries. In 2011 and 2013,

ActionAid published reports on its programme activities: *Women and the city I* (2011)¹⁰ looks at the gender impact of violence and urbanisation in cities in five countries, and *Women in the city II* (2013)¹¹ examines ways of improving public service prevention and responses to violence against women in urban spaces. These reports highlighted the need to develop new policies, programmes, tools and approaches, foster public awareness and develop practical strategies to enhance women's safety in urban spaces (including their mobility to and from their homes), and, as a result, their full enjoyment of a range of human rights.

A changing global context

For the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be transformative they must aim, among other things, to "reduce inequalities of wealth, power and resources... between men and women", (excerpt from the Women's Major Group Statement, July 21, 2014).

A number of significant developments at the international level offer an important and crucial opportunity to enhance the safety of women and girls. As the 2015 target date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is reached, the world has a major opportunity to set the development agenda for the next 15–20 years. This report aims to inform and guide international agencies, governments and policy makers as they negotiate, agree and implement the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Women's Beijing +20 Platform, and UN Habitat's 2016 New Urban Agenda.

Although the SDG drafting process included the participation and input of civil society groups, internal differences between country leaders may have limited their impact. In a statement released two days after the presentation of the draft SDGs (July 2014), the Women's Major Group (WMG) said there had been disagreements between countries on the extent to which language promoting gender

equality would be included in SDG drafts.¹² The statement further criticised the SDGs for not addressing the root cause of poverty, including the concentration of wealth and power in a small fraction of the world's population. WMG states the goals fall short of women's aspirations for a strong set of transformative targets needed to achieve gender equality, women's human rights, sustainable development in harmony with nature, and an end to inequalities. ActionAid supports the WMG's call for "stronger rights-based targets and a deeper transformation of our economic and financial system", which would redistribute wealth, power and resources equally to all, including women.¹³

The relevance of this report in the current global context

This report relates directly to two of the 17 proposed SDGs:

- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls¹⁴
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable¹⁵

ActionAid supports the standalone target on violence against women and demands measures to tackle VAWG also be integrated into Goal 11, in order to address GBV in urban spaces. The Habitat III conference, which will set the New Urban Agenda, and UN Women's review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration Platform for Action will further mobilise governments, civil society groups and international agencies around these two intersecting goals. But ActionAid's experiences worldwide show that 20 years after the first Beijing Platform for Action, gender inequalities not only persist, but gains related to their eradication are increasingly under threat.

This report culminates in a series of urgent demands by women we work with in urban communities, geared towards the UN, UN Women and UN Habitat, as well as national and local governments and policy makers, as they establish and implement

development plans. These demands include measures to end the impunity of police and security services, holding state services and state authorities accountable when they commit acts of GBV, and ensuring the provision of gender-responsive public services such as a gender-responsive police force and transportation system.

Overview of the current report

Women in the city III presents baseline research undertaken in Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Liberia, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and involved over 3,000 women and girls. It includes a global analysis of the baseline research conducted in each country, as well as short summaries of the country-specific findings. The report concludes with a discussion on areas for future research, and puts forward a set of demands from women for making cities safer and more inclusive for women and girls. The report is structured around four main themes:

- **Experiences and the perceptions of women and girls on sexual harassment and sexual assault in public spaces:** It shows that women and girls worldwide experience sexual harassment and assault at high rates, and in various forms, in public spaces, limiting their full participation in city life.
- **Women's access to and perceptions of state services that deal with violence against women and girls (VAWG):** State responses to VAWG are shown to be largely inadequate, in turn limiting the capacity of lower tiers of government and CSOs to effectively support survivors of VAWG.
- **Community responses to VAWG and its 'normalisation':** Community members often perpetuate patriarchal norms around GBV and do not intervene when they witness cases of sexual harassment and assault.
- **The demands of women and girls to address sexual harassment and assault in public spaces:** Among other things, women and girls demanded the improvement of

public infrastructure and state services, raising awareness of GBV in public spaces, and building their own capacity to respond to the GBV they experience.

A note on methodology

The study was organised in a participatory manner to place centre stage the voices of marginalised women.¹⁶ It was a means for women and girls to participate in a learning process, to validate their experiences as women, and to become involved in the sphere of public policy.¹⁷ It also served to deepen ActionAid's understanding of local dynamics, and thus strengthen its global discourse in order to influence urban governance at all levels towards adopting a gender sensitive and gender inclusive approach.¹⁸ Using a variety of baseline data collection methodologies¹⁹ such as focus group

discussions, key informant interviews and case study collection, local ActionAid offices adapted a number of participatory and other data collection tools, focusing their research on the four themes listed above.

Each country was encouraged to adapt the research tools provided to suit and reflect their local context. While this flexibility represents a point of strength in the research process, it also poses limitations in conducting a comparative statistical analysis of findings across the seven countries. Therefore, the report presents an analysis and discussion of the trends and findings on women and girls' (and in some countries boys' and men's) experiences across cities in six countries, as well as short summaries of the key findings from seven countries. Liberia was not included in the global analysis as its research focused mainly on access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Table 1: Methodological tools employed in each city, the number of respondents and their socio-economic profiles

Country	Methodological tools	Number and profile of respondents
Bangladesh Study conducted in seven cities: Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Narayangonj	Literature review	Documents and reports from ActionAid donors, NGOs, research organisations and academic institutions
	Surveys conducted in busy locations (i.e. bus stops, train stations, markets, parks, educational institutions, etc.)	1,200 800 women and girls, and 400 men and boys Schoolgirls and mothers, garment workers, domestic workers, women migrants Income groups: 40% poor, 40% middle class, 20% upper class
	Focus group discussions (FGDs)	21 three FGDs in each of the seven cities, one with each of the following groups: poor women (garment and domestic workers) non-poor women (teachers, housewives) community leaders (youth, religious leaders)
	Key informant interviews (KIs)	56 eight KIs were conducted in each city, with police, transport authorities, transport operators and urban planners
	Case studies	15 At least one case study was conducted per city
	Brazil Study conducted in six localities in four states: Charnequinha, Passarinho, Ibura, Upanema, Heliópolis and Favela de Maré	Literature review
Survey		306 50-56 women from each of the six communities Age: 80% between 22-55 years old Ethnicity: > 60% black women

<p>Cambodia Study conducted in the capital city, Phnom Penh</p> <p>Limitations: -No men included -No media or community people included -Only one interview with a government official</p>	Literature review	
	Survey	<p>380</p> <p>241 garment workers, 91 university students, 24 sex workers and 24 beer promoters 93% migrant women Age: Between 18-35 years old Income: equivalent of US\$105 monthly, maximum being US\$365</p>
	FDGs	NGO representatives
	KIIs	<p>4</p> <p>Senior government officials from the following ministries: Interior; Urban Planning: Urbanisation and Construction; Women's Affairs, and one Sangkat (Commune at city level) chief</p>
<p>Liberia Study conducted in four major cities: Monrovia, Gbarnga, Zwedru and Bopolu</p>	Survey conducted in educational institutions, markets and entertainment areas.	<p>218</p> <p>170 women and girls, 48 men and boys</p>
	FDGs	Conducted with women and girls, sex workers, drug users, people living with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities and sexual minorities
	Six case studies	Sex workers, women and girls
<p>Nepal Study conducted in five cities: Kathmandu, Nepalgunj, Biratnagar, Chitwan and Hetauda</p>	Literature review	
	Surveys	<p>341 women Age: 14-30 years old Income: 31% agriculture, 60% unemployed Education: 47% students, >95% literate</p>
	FDGs	<p>15</p> <p>3 FDGs in each city with the following groups: Girls (14-22 years old), Women (22-30 years old), Boys/men (14-30 years old)</p>
	KIIs	Stakeholders from Department of Urban Development, Traffic Police, Women Development Office, women's rights advocates
<p>South Africa Study conducted with members of LGBTI communities in nine townships (Soweto, Vosloorus, Katlehong, Tembisa, Daveyton, Etwatwa, Tsakane, Kwathema and Vaal)</p>	Survey	<p>90</p> <p>85 identified as women, one as a trans-woman and five as men. Age: 79% between 19-30 years old Sexual orientation: 92% identified as lesbian, 7% as bi-sexual Income: 73% are unemployed Education: >53% have higher secondary</p>
<p>Zimbabwe Study conducted in two cities, Dzivarasekwa and Chitungwiza</p> <p>Limitations: Women interviewed in company of men were reluctant to answer questions</p>	Survey	426 women and girls, 228 men and boys
	FDGs	Three focus group discussions with women and girls in each city One focus group discussion with men and boys in Chitungwiza
	KIIs	<p>Two police officers within the Victims Friendly Unit Department from both profile areas</p> <p>One representative from the Department of Social Services. Nine ward councillors</p> <p>Two representatives from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development</p>

CHAPTER 1 **Women's experiences globally: an analysis of findings from six baseline reports**

Case study one: Jaqueline Teixeira

Jaqueline Teixeira dos Santos, 35, is a cleaner in the shanty town of Heliópolis, Brazil. She works at a children's day care centre during the day and at night studies to be a teacher. The trip she makes to and from college every evening should be part of her journey towards a dream of a college degree, but instead, the darkness of the streets of her São Paulo suburb transforms this daily commute into one of her biggest challenges. She says:

"When I started working as a cleaner in the day care centre, I saw an opportunity to change my life and give a better future for my children. But as a cleaner I will have to wait 10 years of my yearly trade union bargaining agreement to earn what a teacher gets nowadays. If I attend college, in two years I can get there and do what I like, which is working with children. I'm only afraid of the way have to walk to college because it is very dark. Even where it has lighting, lights are really weak. Fear has never stopped me going to class because I have a major goal. But I go all my way praying, asking God to protect me. I am afraid of being robbed and raped."



Jaqueline Teixeira

PHOTO: NINA BORGES/ACTIONAID

Asked how she protects herself, she lists:

"I've been paying attention, looking back. If I see someone suspicious, I cross the street. If the person crosses in the same direction, I come back. Once my sister had to make her way to college alone, but she had no guts to get up there. When she started climbing up the slope next to college and saw the darkness around and nobody in the street, she came back home."

To protect herself, Jaqueline avoids taking her laptop to college. But the equipment makes a difference in the classroom:

"I leave my computer at home and this is really bad for me because we have to do group work. We could use the break between classes to do it in college. But it can't do that. I work all day long. It is not easy to have some free time. These days, I had to make a lesson plan for college. I needed to use the lunch hour in my job to do it. The only thing I do not leave at home is my cell phone because I need to have contact with my children. But I hide it."

About the lack of policing, she says:

"We don't have policing all the time. From time to time we see a patrol passing. College is located in a kind of desert place. Some drug users use the surroundings to consume their drugs. They do not mess with us because they are focused on their thing... But we are afraid of what might happen. The police pass by, see these people and do nothing. I think that in order to make me feel safe a policeman should be here all the time and the police should to get those people out of there."

Asked if she has experienced violence, she says no, but a close relative has.

"It's happened to my cousin. She was on her way to a training course and a guy stopped her and took her by force to an alley... Luckily a person was passing by. The guy got scared and let her go. It was near the Ipiranga Museum. And also some college students complained of being robbed."

Introduction

The findings presented in this chapter build on previous research conducted by ActionAid and by other NGOs around the world. For instance, Women in Cities International's Gender Inclusive Cities Programme²⁰ conducted participatory research in four cities internationally.

These research initiatives take place in the context of unprecedented urbanisation rates around the world. In the next few decades urban dwellers will double in number, accounting for three-quarters of the world's population.²¹ Compared to rural areas, cities generally offer women more work opportunities, easier access to education and healthcare, and chances to socialise outside the home and participate in community or political leadership.²² However, rapid urbanisation when poorly planned leads to the formation of densely populated areas with poor infrastructure, social segregation and environmental degradation.²³ Residential areas often lack quality public services that are accessible, affordable and directly responsive to the needs of women and girls, contributing to their social and economic marginalisation.²⁴

Limited opportunities to work outside the home or move about the city contribute to the feminisation of urban poverty. Testimonies presented in this report reflect that when women and girls' mobility in the city is hindered by their fear of harassment or violence, their economic, social and political participation is directly reduced. Some girls stop going to school, which further reduces their livelihood chances. The economic insecurity of women and girls working in the informal sector is compounded by their greater exposure to GBV, and their lack of access to justice or effective security services. Thus, a direct link can be seen between rapid urbanisation processes and women and girls' quality of life.

Women and girls' experiences and perceptions of GBV in public spaces

The experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault documented in this report shed light on the global phenomenon of systematic violence against women and girls in cities.

Rates and frequency of violence in public spaces

According to ActionAid baselines, feelings of fear, just like actual experiences of harassment, contribute to the exclusion of women and girls from public space. Experiences of sexual harassment and assault were reported in all cities, and the table below shows where rates of violence as reported by women in our study were particularly high.

Table 2: Women's reported rates of sexual harassment

Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment at some point in their lives 72% had experienced harassment 1 to 3 times in the past month
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of respondents experienced some form of abuse in the past year
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 46% and 71% of women experienced cat-calling on the streets Between 22% and 50% experienced cat-calling every month

Most common type of abuse witnessed, experienced or feared

Across cities, when women were asked directly if they had experienced 'sexual harassment and assault', the positive response rate was on average 20%. For instance, when women in **Cambodia** were asked whether they had experienced "sexual or physical harassment in a public place in 2013", the response rate was 22%. This percentage appears relatively low given the extent of violence outlined above. This may be connected to varying

definitions of the term 'sexual harassment',²⁵ and lack of comfort in reporting it, even in an anonymous survey. The following table shows the types of violence women reported experiencing in the past year, and demonstrates varying rates of responses for different forms of harassments.

and considered their own homes to be safest. When women in **Cambodia** were asked where incidents of sexual harassment had occurred, 55% reported the street, 11% reported factories, and 2% reported brothels. In **South Africa** 59% of women rated their homes as always safe. This

Table 3: Types of violence reported as experienced by women and girls in the past months or year²⁶

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Nepal	South Africa	Zimbabwe
Verbal abuse or sexual remarks	84%	77%	44%	74%	42%
Physical abuse	NA	25%	22%	25%	43%
Sexual harassment/eve teasing	56%	NA	NA	20%	22%
Sexual assault, rape or fear of rape	22%	10%	NA	NA	NA

In many cities women reported verbal abuse such as derogatory or sexual remarks as the most common form of abuse. However, in **Bangladesh**, **Brazil** and **Zimbabwe**, and particularly in **Cambodia**, fear of robbery, theft and crime was also reported. Types of harassment also varied depending on the place where it occurred, and depending on the profile of the respondent. For example, in **Cambodia**, **Zimbabwe**, **Bangladesh**, **Nepal** and **South Africa**, women cited the street as the place where violence occurs most frequently, or as the place where they feel the least secure of all public places. In **Nepal**, women experienced non-verbal forms of harassment on the street such as whistling and stalking. In **Bangladesh**, sexual remarks or gestures, teasing through abusive language, and jokes with sexual implications were the most common and frequent feature of eve-teasing/sexual harassment suffered by women.

Sexual harassment happened in particular on the road, in market places and at educational institutions. Women often cited home as safer than public spaces. In **Zimbabwe**, 13% of participating women cited the home as the place where VAWG occurred most often, whereas 53% cited the street and other locations in the city. Women in **Brazil** considered public space in general to be unsafe,

is interesting in the light of international surveys of GBV, which suggest that GBV occurs most frequently, and in its more severe forms, in domestic rather than public settings.²⁷

Table 4: Public places where women reported experiencing harassment

- Streets
- Public transport
- Shopping malls
- Markets
- Cinemas
- Community water holes
- Drinking/entertainment places
- Parks
- Brothels (Cambodia)
- Guesthouses (Cambodia)

"The bus is always crowded and most often I have to sit with male passengers. One day I sat beside a man aged about 45 years. Within minutes, the man put his hand on my leg and gave me a piece of paper containing his cell number." Latifa, small trader, Bangladesh²⁸

Women reported experiences of sexual harassment and assault when they were waiting for, getting onto or riding in public transport. Public transport was often cited as the place where women experienced harassment and feared violence the most. As in Latifa's story, when buses are crowded, perpetrators experience greater impunity due to a sense of anonymity. While this story does not suggest that providing less crowded or empty buses would end all aggression on public transport, as can be seen in the table below, women feared being in crowded vehicles across cities. Women also reported a range abuse and harassment from transport operators.

changing their route for safety reasons. In **Zimbabwe**, a FGD participant explained: "It is scary to walk around at night because boys who smoke weed will be standing in the streets and can do whatever they want with you." The **Brazil** baseline report argued that poor lighting triggers feelings of insecurity and makes it harder for women to defend themselves, and for that reason public lighting in cities must always be focused on pedestrians.²⁹ The study also found that there is a higher tendency for poor women to use the street, as they lack other transport options. Since most women walk for all kinds of daily routines, maintaining the quality of streets is therefore particularly important for low-income communities.

Table 5: Types of harassment reported, as experienced on public transport

	Bangladesh	Nepal	Zimbabwe
Sexual harassment	X	X	X
Physical abuse	X	X	X
Abuse from conductor	X	X	X
Mugging, snatching of bags, theft	X		X
Being charged extra fares	X		X
Crowded and unhygienic vehicles	X	X	X
Changing route or unwilling to go to certain places	X		X
Experience or fear of rape	X		X
Fear of kidnapping			X
Being pulled onto the vehicle by driver		X	X

In Brazil, public transport received the worst rating compared to other public services – street lighting, state schools and the police. In Nepal, public transport got the worst rating in terms of prevalence of harassment.

Factors contributing to lack of safety

In **Brazil, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe** and **Cambodia**, women made clear links between poor lighting, working or travelling at night, and an increased sense of fear or exposure to actual violence. In **Brazil**, researchers found a positive correlation with poor neighbourhood lighting and women

The consequences of unsafe cities

There are multiple consequences of the lack of safety in cities, including barriers in accessing educational opportunities. The **Nepal** study found that when women and girls are more mobile and pursue educational opportunities, the chances of facing violence outside the home increases. This view was echoed during FGDs, when one girl explained, "Before there was violence done at home but now women are literate and go out. So now, they are harassed in public places." Across cities, it was commonly reported that the route to school was unsafe and school in itself was seen as an unsafe place by more than a quarter of

respondents in South Africa. Access to work opportunities could also be limited. The following table shows the percentage of women in Cambodia who avoided going to work for fear of safety.

sidewalks to make public space more user-friendly and reduce accidents. Women in Zimbabwe demanded safe access to communal water access points.

Table 6: Percentage of women reporting the need to avoid going to work due to fear of safety, Cambodia

Sex workers	Garment workers	Students	Beer promoters
71%	38%	38%	33%

Note: A range of experiences was offered. Some women reported needing to avoid work "once in a while" but others reported having to do this "many times".

In addition to facing barriers in going to school and work, women and girls continuously limited their participation in leisure activities due to violence. In all countries, women also felt that violence occurred more early in the morning and after sunset. In Nepal women and girls reported being harassed in movie theatres, and in Bangladesh one garment worker reported that a rickshaw driver raped her co-worker on the way to the movie theatre. In the film "if indecent things come, then men in the cinema hall come closer to touch. While entering the hall they push the girls". (FGD with girls in Nepal)

Fear of violence, sexual harassment and assault therefore prevents women participating fully in city life, and improving their economic situation and completing their education.

Women's demands to improve safety in cities

- **Improve public lighting:** Public lighting was an issue in many cities, and women recommended adequate street lighting at all hours of the night (not least because most informal workers have to start work early in the mornings and late in the evenings).
- **Improving public infrastructure and access to essential services:** Women in Bangladesh suggested the need to construct even, wide

- **Improving public transport services:** Women requested safe, clean and spacious vehicles. They also suggested codes of conduct for passengers and conductors.

Women's access to and perceptions of state services that deal with VAWG

Women's access to and perception of police services

Women across all cities reported mistrust and fear of police services, and some reported sexual harassment and assault at their hands. Sabiha, a young garment worker in **Bangladesh**, told the story of a garment worker who refused to sleep with a policeman and for that reason was charged with engaging in prostitution. She concluded, "This is how the police, with the help of their uniform, exploit and abuse poor girls like us."

ActionAid Brazil found that GBV perpetrated by police occurred at alarming rates – on the streets, in police stations and in women's homes. In fact, in Maré and Upanema, 100% of women reported experiencing police abuse on the street, and in Heliópolis, 100% had heard a pass being made at them by a police officer.

Table 7: Percentage of women reporting police abuse per locality in Brazil (multiple choice answers)³⁰

Police abuse	Heliópolis	Maré	Recife	Upanema	Cabo	Olinda	Total
Have been harassed	54	43.	78	6	84	62	54.2
Heard a pass being made at you	100	42	82	4	16	18	22
Humiliation	0	11	18	0	0.	4	3
Cursing	0	22	18	0	0.	0	3
Disrespect	0	31	27	4	0.	2	6
Brutality	0	56	18	0	0.	0	1
Location							
Street	85	100	21	100	0.	32	41
Police station	0	4	3	33	19	0	7
Home	0	25	3	0	0	3	5
Pub	0	13	0	0	0	3	2
Others	0	13	0	0	0	0	2

Women’s reasons for not reporting abuse to the police

Women reported a range of reasons for their mistrust of the police and for choosing not to report cases of sexual violence.

Of the women who had experienced abuse in the past year, none of those interviewed in South Africa, and 2% in Cambodia, had reported their case to the police. In Nepal only 11% of the women had ever reported a case.

Women gave various reasons for not reporting, including feeling their case was not important, and fear of being stigmatised by their family. In **Nepal**, a FGD participant mentioned women-blaming mentalities, arguing, “If we report to anyone, then the perception of society towards us changes. The accused is not punished but the survivor has to tolerate all the things.” In some cases, women feared that reporting to the police could actually instigate heightened abuse from the perpetrator. A mother in **Bangladesh**, whose daughter had faced abuse from a boy at school, feared violence

from the boy’s family if she reported to police, and said, “We have abandoned the idea of going to the police. Because, in Bangladesh justice is negotiable, if you can’t give bribe, you won’t get justice.” In **South Africa**, the majority of those who did not report abuse and violence did so because they did not feel safe. It is however noteworthy that 22% stated that they did not consider it worth mentioning to anyone as it was a common occurrence.



Oung Ravy, a garment worker, in her rented room in Chak Angre Krom
PHOTO: ACTIONAID CAMBODIA

Table 8: Reasons given for not reporting a case of sexual harassment or sexual assault³¹

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Nepal	South Africa	Zimbabwe
Not necessary/common occurrence		X	X	X	
No benefit	X	X		X	X
Process is too complex or tedious	X	X	X		
Not knowing where or how to file a case		X	X		
Social stigma	X	X	X		
Fear of harassment	X	X			
Police station too far			X		X
Not being taken seriously			X	X	

Dissatisfaction with the reporting process

Overall, among women who had reported cases of harassment or violence to the police, their experience was not very satisfactory. Women might go through a complaints process and interrogation, receive follow up on their case or a report number, but sometimes they received no follow up at all. Some women also said that the police dismissed their case as a “normal incident” and were just told to “stay safe”.

Women in **Nepal** reported that even state services designed for women and girls were ineffective, as they lacked the authority to carry out investigations and act on charges. Even where they have the authority, state services are institutionally sexist, their policies and cultures imbued in a way which means the system and individuals within the system discriminate against women. One of the results is that women sometimes chose to report cases of violence to CSOs, in particular in **South Africa** and **Nepal**. However, as the system for responding to violence is generally inadequate, CSOs had limited capacity to support or protect survivors, and to get justice. Lastly, many countries lack appropriate or adequate laws and policies on VAWG and sexual harassment and assault in public spaces (see Annex Table 14 for more on national laws).

Women's demands on security services

Women made several demands to improve services, implement existing laws, and integrate preventative work into police services.

- **The recognition and enforcement of existing laws:** Women demanded recognition of sexual harassment and assault as an infringement of human rights, and for security services to enforce existing laws on sexual violence where they existed.
- **The creation of new laws addressing sexual harassment and assault in public spaces:** Many women requested the criminalisation of sexual harassment and assault. However, further reflection and research would be needed on criminalisation in the context of each city, as criminalisation can harm already marginalised communities, especially if it is enforced by an already corrupt justice system. For instance, a 2008 anti-sex trafficking law in Cambodia was used as a legal instrument by some police officers to persecute or harass sex workers, and those involved in the sex industry.³² It is crucial to bring justice to survivors of GBV in ways that do not re-victimise women and girls and their communities.

- **Adequate support for survivors of violence:** Women suggested 24-hour hotlines at police stations, stopping the abusive behaviour of police, and having close and accessible police stations.
- **Police working with women to prevent violence:** Women in **Zimbabwe** and **Brazil** expressed the need for the police to collaborate with them, rather than perpetuate more violence by harassing them. In Zimbabwe they recommended that police act as educators, moving from community to community, talking to women about sexual harassment and abuse.
- **Involving women in decision-making processes:** It was recommended that women take part in local governance – consultation with women not only ensures services meet their needs, but also that women feel included in local and state processes.

Community attitudes towards VAWG

Normalising violence: the silent public, and mob psychology

In many countries VAWG is perceived as a normal and natural part of life, which cannot or should not be changed. Across cities, the phenomenon of the **silent public** was identified as a factor contributing to the **normalisation** of VAWG. In **Nepal**, 48% of women reported that the men who witnessed an instance of abuse did not comment or act. An FGD participant said witnesses, “just stand and watch. They don’t say anything to the perpetrator because it doesn’t make a difference”.

When men and boys act as passive witnesses, they are condoning violence. Moreover, passive complicity can turn into active participation. In **Zimbabwe**, researchers argued that when men and boys congregate in groups they adopt a **mob psychology** – 54% of all respondents in **Zimbabwe** pointed out how VAWG starts as verbal taunts about the way women and girls are dressed, and then becomes physical.

Saleha’s story – an example of mob psychology

A teenage girl from **Bangladesh** described walking by a group of boys who started joking among themselves and then taunting her. When a boy confronted her directly, she shouted at him.

“The other boys were enjoying my harassment and they started laughing at me. Finally, the boy let me go and I left the place being embarrassed and humiliated. I did not tell anybody about this except my mother. My mother became really concerned and told me not to share this with anybody else.”

Many women and parents did not defend survivors of harassment. In **Nepal**, an FDG participant explained, “Some parents say, why you have to make an issue... stay quietly at home.” In **South Africa**, many women did not intervene when they witnessed situations of harassment, as 70% did not want to interfere in the household issues of others or believed a woman should not raise such matters in public. Dismissing violence as a private issue is another form of normalising harassment. Public service operators also failed to act on harassment taking place in their vehicles. The representatives of transport associations in **Nepal** did not acknowledge harassment as a systematic problem, and said they were unaware of any abuse perpetrated by transport workers, despite evidence to the contrary.

Blaming the women for violence

The normalisation of GBV is compounded by blaming of women which involves accusing women of provoking harassment or of not taking the necessary steps to prevent it. This common attitude is rooted in patriarchal norms suggesting that survivors, rather than perpetrators, are responsible for GBV.

In several countries, how women and girls dress was considered to be a cause of harassment. The Brazilian Institute of Applied Economic Research conducted a survey³³ in which 26% of respondents stated, “women who expose their bodies in public deserve to be attacked”. This sentiment was echoed in **Zimbabwe**, as public transport operators and male FGD participants said that to prevent sexual harassment and assault, women should not wear revealing clothes in public. Similarly, a male FGD participant in **Nepal** said, “If the girl is the wrong type she will allow the guy to follow her but if she is a good girl she will feel that the guy is harassing her.” This perception of the “good girl” and the “bad girl” attributes harassment to women’s behaviour rather than to the actions of perpetrators.

The sense of shame carried by survivors of sexual harassment and violence

When men, boys, women and girls silently witness or downplay an act of violence, or blame the woman or girl, they contribute to survivors’ sense of shame. This shame encourages women and girls who have experienced sexual violence to take the weight of the blame on themselves, and to develop strategies in their daily lives to avoid future harassment and violence. Some women reported they could not avoid harassment, and simply had to tolerate it. These strategies, and the burden of simply tolerating harassment, are symptomatic of a culture of impunity around sexual violence.

Table 9: The strategies women used to avoid sexual harassment and assault

Changing dress styles
Changing their route
Avoiding going out alone
Avoiding going out at night
Travelling with a male companion
Travelling with groups of women

Women’s demands for changing community attitudes

Women proposed many initiatives to change societal attitudes around sexual harassment and gender-based violence in public spaces.

- **Forming advocacy groups:** Women suggested forming advocacy groups to act as watchdogs and educators in the community, ensuring that cases of abuse and harassment are addressed, and that perpetrators are confronted.
- **Organising public events:** Women proposed holding events to educate their communities on VAWG, such as public speaking contests and drama presentations in schools.
- **Communication for development (C4D):** Women suggested using television, Facebook and posters as platforms for awareness-raising campaigns on VAWG. NGOs in Cambodia recommended engaging media celebrities in national efforts to end VAWG.
- **Capacity building for women and girls:** In **South Africa** it was suggested that women participating in the study lacked the confidence to engage fully in community organisations. It was recommended that they conduct confidence building and awareness-raising workshops for the local lesbian women’s groups with whom they work. Remarkably, in **Nepal**, young women felt they had sufficient awareness about VAWG in the city. Ninety-one per cent of respondents said they would like to lead awareness-raising campaigns, yet only 14% felt they had the skills and ability to do so. This suggests that it is important to build women and girls’ skills to advocate for themselves, in order to help bring about change.

Conclusion to the global analysis

Global findings demonstrate that women and girls experience sexual assault and abuse in ongoing and systematic ways. As GBV in public spaces

occurs with such frequency, and is normalised by community members, women and girls often learn to tolerate it as part of their daily lives and to accept changes in their daily routes, their dress style, and their education, work and leisure activities. However, women and girls made innovative demands for changes in city infrastructure, improving access to gender-sensitive services,

GBV prevention efforts, and educational initiatives to change patriarchal attitudes on VAWG in cities.

The following section provides short summaries from each city baseline report. It highlights findings and research areas that were particular to each city, and sheds light on some differences across cities.



Young girls have to face a lot of harassment at public boreholes
PHOTO: ACTIONAID ZIMBABWE

Case study two: Scarlet Rayssa Barbosa Costa

Over the last four years the parents of Scarlet Rayssa Barbosa Costa, an 18 year-old living in the city of Cabo de Santo Agostinho in Pernambuco state, have grown increasingly concerned for her safety. Her mother Madalena explains:

"There was a sudden change in the city of Cabo. Large infrastructure construction sites sprang up and construction workers arrived from all over the country. Local people were offered training to apply for those posts too, but despite that, our girls and boys were not equipped to deal with the changes."

"We have seen a big increase in crime and drug use. Some girls think that getting romantically involved with outside men is an opportunity to get out of Cabo. These men come, mess up our city and leave. But the damage stays with us: on the beaches, in the streets, in our homes, our schools and our lives."



Scarlett Rayssa

PHOTO: DANIELLE PECK/ACTIONAID

The large number of male workers coming Cabo for work and leaving their families behind changed the dynamics of the city and brought harassment. Scarlet explains how she was twice followed by men in cars on her way home from school.

"The first time it happened I got so afraid that I spent a week at home without going to school... It was already dark. A car stopped ahead of us when a friend and I got off the bus. As we got closer to the car, the driver started to reverse in our direction. We turned back and he stopped. We were scared to continue. We called my friend's brother and he came to pick us up."

"The next time it happened, I was so disturbed I stayed 10 days at home... It was during the day, around 1pm, and I was alone. The car passed by slowly. The driver started saying a lot of things, hooting and following me in the car. I started to walk faster and faster. Then another man in the street came and asked if I was having any problem. The car sped up and drove away."

That was back in 2012. Now Scarlet has graduated from school and is studying Work Safety in a neighboring city. But she still has to make the same journey from the bus stop to home. The route she takes remains the same – with few people in the street and weak lighting.

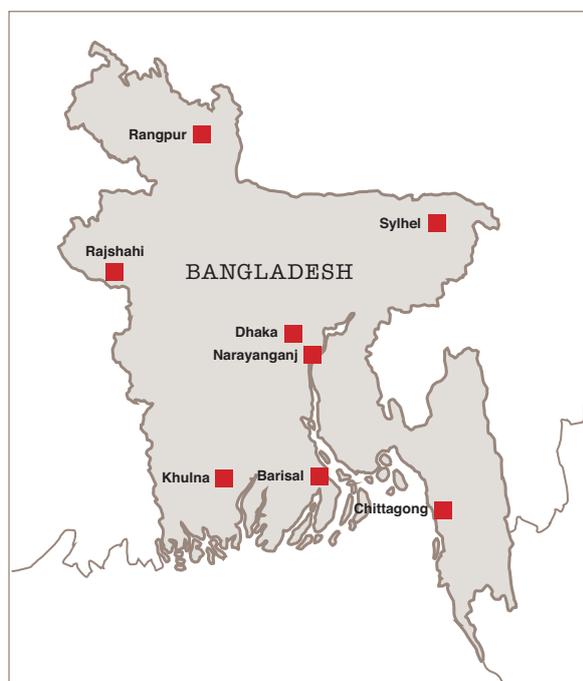
Scarlet studies in the afternoon and usually arrives home from class at 6pm. If for some reason she is delayed, her male cousin waits for her at the bus stop so that they can walk home together.

Fear and caution recently led her to decline an internship. The daytime working hours would have meant adjusting her study schedule to evening classes. Faced with the prospect of travelling home from class after dark she turned down the opportunity to put into practice what she is learning.

"This is not good for me. The course I'm doing requires me to have 600 hours of internship experience to graduate. And I cannot do that while I am studying. I'll have to wait to finish the course to start an internship, which will delay my professional qualification," says Scarlet.

CHAPTER 2 Country findings

Bangladesh⁵⁴



Bangladesh's urban population has grown exponentially, from five million in 1970 to approximately 52 million in 2010.³⁵ The proportion of the population living in slums has doubled. This rapid urbanisation stems from rural migration rather than economic expansion or job growth in cities.³⁶

Sanitation, water and electricity services in settlements are scarce, and roads are informal or

poorly maintained.³⁷ Alongside high levels of urban poverty are rising levels of sexual harassment, drug trafficking, violence and theft. Rape is the worst form of intimidation – according to the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association there were 6,597 rape cases during 2003-2008 – shockingly, about 15% of them were minors. The ActionAid Bangladesh Safe Cities programme operates in seven cities: Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisa, Sylhet and Narayanganj. The communities we work with include women living with disabilities, Dalit³⁸ women, indigenous women, female migrants, garment workers and domestic workers.

Women's experiences and perceptions of violence

When women and girls from the seven cities were asked about the types of harassment they faced in the last three months, the majority – 84% – chose 'derogatory comments and sexually coloured abusive language'. In one of the cities surveyed, Barisa, 100% of women had faced this type of harassment. Findings from the FGDs suggest that many of the perpetrators are *mastans*,³⁹ drug addicts, students and policemen. Overall, more than half of women respondents (57%) reported that they suffered 'physical contact / sexual advances / a deliberate push' during the past three months. Table 10 shows other forms of sexual harassment reported by the women.

Table 10: Types of harassment experienced by women and girls in Bangladesh in the past three months

Types of harassment	Percent (average from seven cities)
Derogatory comments or sexual advances	84
Sexual harassment	57
Harassment by public transport operators	53
Indecent proposals	48
Harassment by a male passenger on bus	42
Fear of rape	22

State responses to VAWG and women's access to state services

The survey demonstrates women respondents' acute mistrust of police, with 95% reporting feeling that problems would arise from seeking police help. During FGDs and case study interviews, women revealed that mastans and police mistreat garment workers and poor women, with one garment worker explaining that they, "want the working girls to be obedient so that they, can use their bodies any time they want for sexual purposes".

The fear of seeking assistance from police is attributed to the perceived image of police – reasons given included: the police tend to blame women rather than taking action against the perpetrator (65%); police take the complaint lightly and would not prosecute (57%); police merely offer a token service by recording the incident with no further action (37%); there would be no action on the complaint (53%); fear of going to the *Thana* (police station) (28%); and risk of further harassment by police (12%).

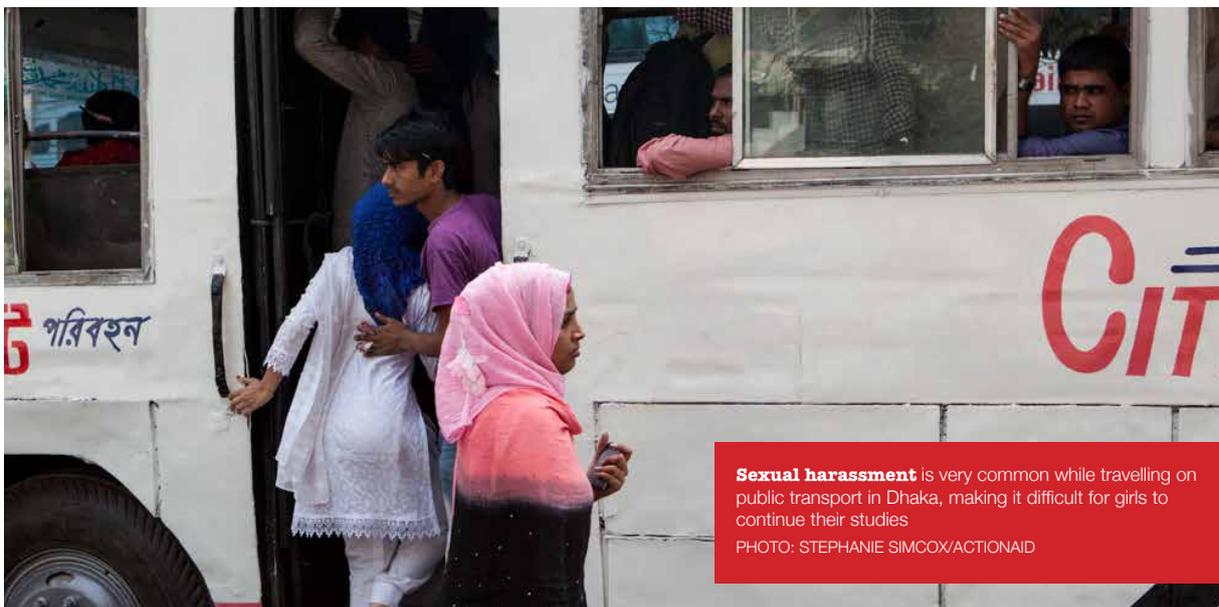
Community attitudes towards VAWG

Some community leaders who participated in FGDs did not acknowledge the problem of sexual

harassment and assault, and blamed women for provoking it. An Imam said his wife and daughters do not face sexual harassment and assault because they cover their faces and bodies under a burqha when they go out. He maintained that young and modern women "suffer sexual harassment and abuse" because of their dress style. Most of the women and girls who participated in the FGDs resisted these community attitudes, stating that nobody has a right to harass or abuse them regardless of what they wear.

Women's demands

This study poses questions to government, policy makers, planners, civil society organisations, service providers, different social institutions and individuals about why women are excluded, and ways in which such exclusions are perpetuated. Is it lack of laws or poor implementation of legislation that makes the scenario worse? This study also makes the point that providing gender-responsive public amenities such as adequate street lighting, wide public sidewalks, appropriate services for survivors of violence (including counselling, police support, healthcare, legal aid etc.) are significant and practical ways of challenging sexism, promoting women's right to mobility and moving towards equality and justice.



Brazil⁴⁰



Brazil's Safe Cities Programme involves women and girls in six different communities: Charnequinha, Passarinho, Ibura, Upanema, Heliópolis and Favela da Maré. These cities have distinct socio-historical contexts, including varying levels of poverty, organised crime, lack of access to essential services (housing, water and sanitation, etc.) and lack of access to public services (schools, post offices, banks, nurseries, public transport, etc.). The context of social inequalities is aggravated in this and other communities when poverty and social injustice are related to age, gender, race and class. Women, most of whom are household heads; low-income groups; and black people represent the highest exclusion indicators.⁴¹ A history of rapid urbanisation – which does not meet the needs of all inhabitants and deepens social inequalities – characterises all cities. Women play an important role in the history of popular struggles in most of these places, as currently most grassroots community organisations are led by women. However, the conditions of participation are still differentiated – women participate in activities involving training and politics often after a long day doing household chores.⁴²

Women's experiences and perceptions of violence

A high percentage of women across cities said they changed their behaviour because of fear of violence – for example, 97% changed their route to avoid poorly lit streets. Women and girls reported sexual harassment and assault in their homes, at police stations, on the way to school, on the street and on public transport. Across the six cities, 93% of women reported not feeling safe in their communities. In Heliópolis, 100% of women reported having been harassed on public transport. Bus stops, alleys, streets and squares are considered unsafe by women from all localities. As a consequence of the long waiting time for public transport, problems relating to public lighting and police patrolling, around 80% of women said they felt unsafe waiting alone at a bus stop. For almost half of the women interviewed, feelings of insecurity are also related to the use of public transport, where they report having been harassed.

A 15-year old girl from the municipality of Santo Agostinho in northeast Brazil expressed the sense of fear that is pervasive in her life:

“I wish I could be free and live without fear; I wish we had well lit streets in my neighbourhood; I wish I could walk to the bus stop on my own at any time; I wish the neighbourhood was well patrolled, and I didn't need to be afraid of the police. It would be wonderful if I could feel safe on the bus and could go to school or any other place without a single hint of fear of anything in my eyes. But that's not what life here is like.”

Accordingly, 70% of women reported giving up leaving home at certain hours for fear of sexual harassment or violence. When asked about what environment they consider to be the safest, the majority of women, in all localities, said it was their own homes. There is a strikingly low proportion of women who feel safe at work and, particularly, at school.

Table 11: Measures adopted by women to avoid GBV or fear of violence in Brazil

Changing dress style	Not wearing short skirts, short pants or low-cut shirts
Giving up leisure activities	Not going to pubs, shows, public squares or friends' houses
Adapting their daily route to avoid poorly lit streets	97% of women reported always (36%) or sometimes (61%) changing their route
Taking precautions on public transport	Not sitting next to men Avoiding sitting at the back of the vehicle Not boarding a crowded vehicle

State responses to VAWG and women's access to state services

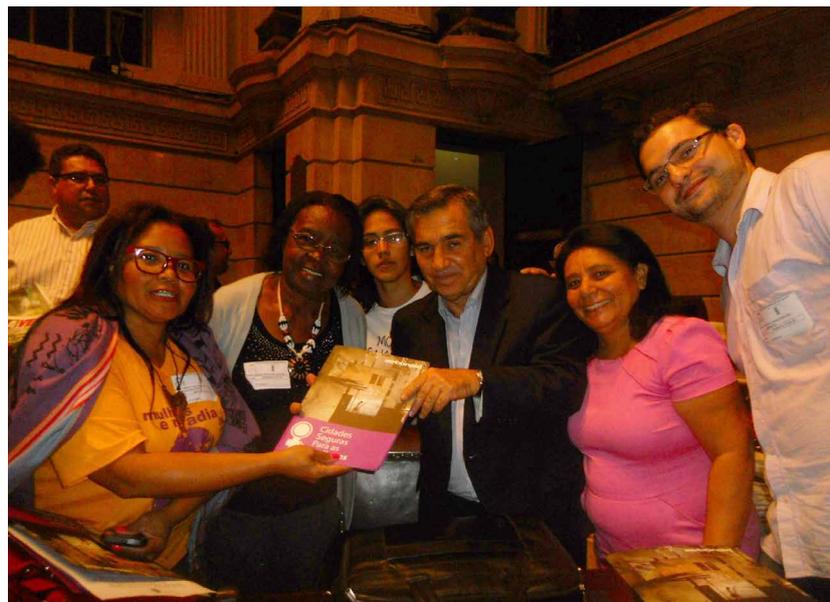
Despite the high frequency of harassment in all localities surveyed, less than 5% of women reported incidents of GBV to authorities. Overall, 48% of women were afraid of the police (the figure varies from 84% in Cabo to 6% in Upanema – a place where there are hardly any services and hence the low figures). Women in Favela da Maré in Rio de Janeiro gave the worst evaluation of police services, with 76% of women rating the police as very bad. This high degree of mistrust is consistent with widely documented human rights abuses committed by police in the State of Rio de Janeiro, including 10,000 deaths between 2001 and 2011.⁴³

Women's demands

To develop holistic, preventative approaches, governments, police services, community organisations and women must be involved in analysing and problem-solving. There is an urgent need to frame sexual harassment and assault as a structural rather than a 'natural' phenomenon. The study reveals that good-quality, gender-responsive public services⁴⁴ – especially public transport, street lighting and police patrols – will help reduce violence. Above all, it involves effective citizens' participation on decisions involving urban issues and addressing institutional sexism across and within agencies.

Community attitudes towards VAWG

Women's efforts to avoid sexual harassment and assault by changing their daily routine and dress style places the responsibility of GBV on women. The ActionAid Brazil study therefore argued that community members, including women themselves, *normalised* harassment – treating it as an inevitable part of daily life. The normalisation of harassment and sexual violence in public spaces leads to the perception that women must adapt themselves to cities and not that cities should adapt to be equally open to all.



The Minister Chief of the Presidency Secretariat of the Republic of Brazil, Gilberto Carvalho, receiving the Political charter of Demands developed by ActionAid Brazil and women in the community.
PHOTO: ACTIONAID / BRAZIL

Cambodia⁴⁵



Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, is the second most populated city in the country. Between 1998 and 2008 its population doubled. Approximately 55% of migrants in the 2008 census were aged 15-30, with about 20% aged under 15 years; the remaining 25% were aged 31 or older.⁴⁶ Rural poverty pushes women to migrate to Phnom Penh and other urban areas to earn money to support themselves and their families. Evictions and displacements plague city dwellers and many urban poor settlements continue to be considered illegal. Inadequate or non-existent infrastructure is the most pervasive problem, including poor sanitation and waste management, lack of social services and financial limitations. Public electricity and water services are rarely available. Private suppliers are the only option, charging prices inflated by over 400% and 1,600% respectively for electricity and water.⁴⁷ One in every five women workers in ActionAid's study felt that they had been sexually harassed or been the subject of humiliating behaviour with sexual undertones. Female workers experienced sexual harassment and assaults when leaving work late at night or after working overtime. Many areas near factories are dark and almost empty of residents, and workers must walk along deserted roads, storehouses or empty areas. Over the years, sexual aggression, rape and murder

have occurred, and many workers are afraid.⁴⁸ ActionAid Cambodia's Safe Cities Programme works with garment workers, young women, university students, sex workers and beer promoters. While public transport is not yet widely available, the government is currently piloting its first public buses. For this reason, public transportation issues were not taken into account in the study.

Women's experiences and perceptions of violence

Women's living and working conditions impacted their exposure to sexual harassment and assault. For instance, sex workers reported experiencing physical harassment and violence, as well as rape, at much higher rates than women in other occupations. Sex workers and beer promoters were also the only groups who reported being abused by both customers and by law enforcement officers. The following table shows the type of sexual and physical harassment experienced by occupation.

Three key factors contributed to women feeling unsafe in public areas: presence of gangsters/intimidating groups (68%); presence of men dealing with or taking alcohol/drugs (33%); and poor lighting (28%). Over half (59%) mentioned robbery, stealing and snatching of valuable items as the key personal risk women faced the most while in public areas, and 19% others cited sexual assault or rape.

To prevent sexual/physical harassment, 90% of the women do not go out after dark, alone, and/or to secluded places.

State responses to VAWG and women's access to state services

Occupational status impacted women's help-seeking behaviour. Fifty-eight per cent of the sex workers who experienced sexual harassment and assault chose to confront the offenders themselves. Most

garment workers, students and beer promoters chose to do nothing. Only 6% of beer promoters reported the incident to the police. None of the other women in the study chose to do so. It is interesting to note that a majority of sex workers (59%) were either “not at all satisfied” or “not very satisfied” with law enforcement officers. Sex workers

A lack of gender-sensitive services and outreach could explain women’s reluctance to report cases of sexual harassment and assault. Though the police operate three hotlines, none specialised in VAWG and only 13% of women were aware they existed. Moreover, there are no free counselling services for survivors. Though numerous laws exist

Table 12: Type of sexual and physical harassment experienced by occupation in 2013 (n=83⁴⁹)

Type of sexual/physical harassment	Garment worker (n37)	Student (n9)	Sex worker (n19)	Beer promoter (n18)
	% Responses compared to n			
Verbal (comments, whistling etc.)	84	89	47	89
Physical (inappropriate touching etc.)	14	11	37	44
Violent physical attack	5	0	78	6
Visual (staring, leering)	32	11	0	11
Sexual assault or rape	3	0	42	0
Stalking	16	0	0	6
Attempted murder	0	0	5	0
Acid attack	3	0	0	0

and beer promoters were more critical of them than the other two groups. In general, women had little involvement in public affairs and little trust in local authorities/police.

that could be used to address sexual harassment and assault, these laws are poorly enforced and do not translate into gender-sensitive and accessible services.



Kon Chamrouen and Nou Chanthou, two garment workers in Cambodia take their lunch break
PHOTO: ACTIONAID CAMBODIA

Senior officials interviewed⁵⁰ admitted that while the government did take into consideration public safety in urban planning and in provision of public services, little consideration was paid to women's safety. FGD participants also suggested the government had little consideration for women's safety and that public services were typically not gender-sensitive.

Community attitudes towards VAWG

A survey conducted in 2013 found as many as 28% of Cambodian men and 33% of women felt that "there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten."⁵¹ This women-blaming mentality, and the shame it can project onto women, has consequences such as the fact that 76% of women did not report their experience of sexual harassment and assault because the incidents were "not serious enough". Moreover, FGD participants believed that less than 50% of Cambodian men, especially those with little education, had respect for women's rights.

Women's demands

The study highlights an immediate need to improve gender-responsive public services such as public transport and public toilets, assistance to women survivors of sexual harassment and assault, such as telephone hotlines, counselling, legal aid and women's participation in public affairs. Many women were highly critical of the police, and some were allegedly victims of police misconduct. While there were no shortage of laws and policies to protect and/or assist girls and women, lack of financial and human resources and the low status of women, constrained effective enforcement and/or implementation of existing laws and policies.

Liberia⁵²



Liberia has been peaceful and stable since 2003 and is moving towards sustainable development, but the country remains fragile and the provision of adequate basic social services is a critical challenge. Ebola, which has affected every part of Liberia's population since March 2014, has further weakened the social fabric and exhausted state services. During the past three years, ActionAid Liberia has piloted the Safe Cities Programme with emphasis on female university students from urban, poor and rural communities. The Safe Cities baseline assessment was conducted in four major cities (Monrovia, Gbarnga, Zwedru, and Bopolu).

Women's experiences and perceptions of violence

Sex workers expressed being particularly at risk of sexual violence in public spaces. In October 2013, a female sex worker was killed by a man she met in a nightclub in Zwedru. Despite investigations by security forces and government authorities, the perpetrator was not found. As a result of this case, female sex workers participating in a focus group discussion felt fearful in nightclubs and expressed they do not have access to security services and resources that deal with GBV.

On university, college and school campuses, male and female students claimed a lack of knowledge about their rights, and not having access to justice. One female student in Bong County stated that, "The majority of the people do not know women's

A female student speaks during a mixed focus group discussion at the University of Liberia campus.
PHOTO: ACTIONAID LIBERIA



legal rights and the majority of women do not know their rights.”

Community members also reported local mining activities as posing a sense of risk and fear. Annie Tarpeh, a resident in Gbarpolu County said, “Our town is on the hill, but people are digging under the town – so we cannot tell what will happen in the future.” In addition, road conditions are poor and limit inhabitants’ mobility, especially during the rainy season.

State responses to VAWG and women’s access to state services

In a human rights based approach activity to analyse community leadership structures, participants defined power as having influence and control over a group of people, and lack of power as lack of money and information. It was agreed that women generally lack power. Participants found that there is only one woman occupying a leadership position in the community, and that decisions over economic resources are made by men. Annie Jaye from Grand Gedeh County said, “The men can already decide what to do before calling the women.”

It was reported by a community member that traditional and religious leaders normally settle incidents of domestic violence and provide advice or warning to perpetrators. Community leaders invite the police to intervene when they cannot settle matters themselves. Moreover, some

communities have only one or no police stations for their entire population and most communities lack health centres – so inhabitants who are sick have to walk one to two hours, and use motorcycles to access healthcare facilities.

Community attitudes towards VAWG

In Gbarpolu, women expressed dissatisfaction with leadership structures that prohibit women and girls from attending and making decisions in community meetings. Women also reported that elders and men in the community frown on girls for accessing sexual and reproductive health services, and that no clinic is located in the community.

Women’s demands

The myths, beliefs and prejudices that different people have about ‘human rights’ and development, especially in relation to protecting the rights of women and children, need to be challenged. CSOs must help create political will among leaders and government representatives to change the systems and structures that permit sexual and GBV, deny women and girls general opportunities in public places, endanger their health and inhibit their potential. Imperative to this are information and services addressing VAWG, efficient police services and improved responses to cases of VAWG, and the equal participation of women in decision-making processes.

Nepal⁵³



Following years of turmoil Nepal is now moving towards democracy and making significant progress in areas of health and education – progress that has been recognised internationally. However, around 65% of the population lives below the poverty line and high unemployment rates have led to high levels of emigration.⁵⁴ Women’s participation and leadership was excluded from peace agreement processes and the negotiations that followed, and GBV is a rapidly surfacing issue. ActionAid Nepal’s Safe Cities Programme aims to reach women, girls and youth, mainly through capacity building training.

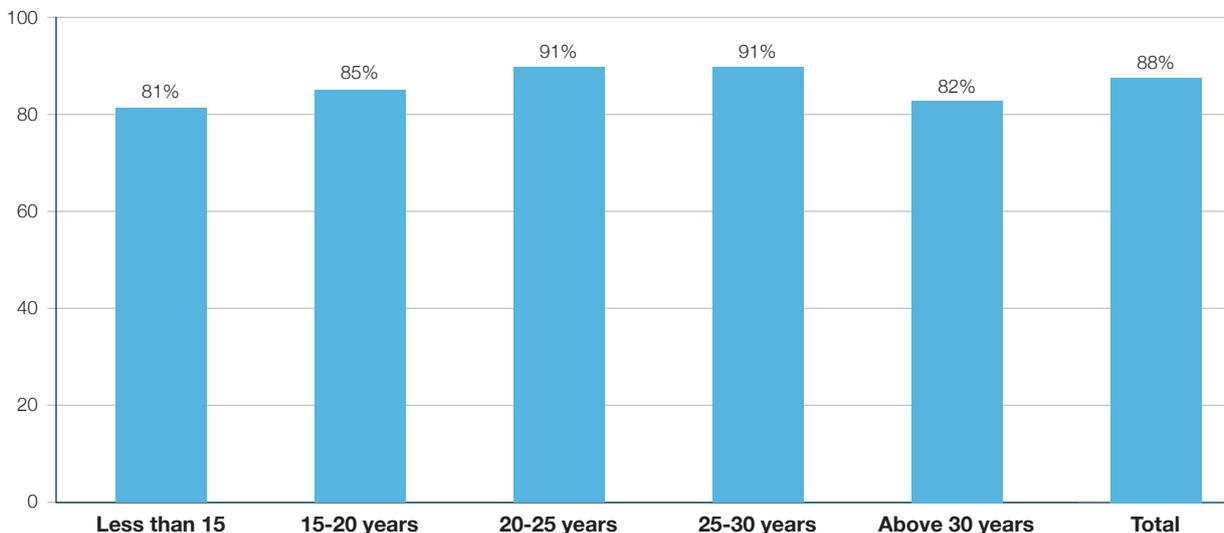
Its focus is on women who have to travel to cities for work, to study, or for other daily purposes such

as healthcare. The initiative also hopes to influence local authorities on women’s safety issues. Almost half of the survey respondents were students in cities where the Safe Cities Programme is taking place, including Kathmandu, Nepalgunj, Biratnagar, Chitwan and Hetauda.

Women’s experiences and perceptions of violence

Participants reported that as girls venture into public space for work or school, they face increasing levels of harassment – nine in every 10 women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in public spaces. One woman explained, “We stay inside homes so we don’t go through harassment.” Most women reported facing their first experience of harassment between 10 and 19 years of age. During FGDs, women and girls discussed how they were only able to identify these early experiences as harassment once they had gained a deeper understanding of GBV. One participant said, “When I was very young, maybe around six, there was a shop we used to go to. There was a man who would pull at our breasts and say they will grow big. Now, I understand it was harassment.”

Chart 1: Prevalence of harassment by age group



Such harassment occurs quite frequently: around 50% of respondents reported experiencing it at least once a week. The risk of sexual harassment was higher early in the morning and in the evening when most of the women and girls needed to travel to schools, colleges or offices, and return. The risk was considered to be high during the travelling period and riskier during darkness or semi-darkness. Some locations had a higher prevalence of harassment, such as public transport (especially buses), streets, roads and tea shops, public toilets, schools and classrooms, crowded places including local markets, *Mela* (fairs), cinemas, etc. Interestingly, schools and classrooms were considered unsafe because girls were at risk of sexual harassment by teachers.

State responses to VAWG and women's access to state services

Only 11% of women surveyed had reported a case of sexual harassment and assault to the police. There was a slight negative correlation with levels of education and rates of reporting. Nearly 18% of illiterate women had reported cases of sexual harassment and assault, while only 9% of women

with at least secondary education had done so – 52% of women cited complications in the reporting process as their reason for not reporting.

For instance, women were required to provide exact information on the identity of the perpetrator – a clear barrier to reporting cases of sexual harassment and assault in public spaces, which typically occur between strangers. Women were also dissatisfied with the outcomes of reporting. One girl said, “Even though the police say they will take action in a few days, the case is dissolved.” Gender-sensitive services, such as an office for women and children at the police station, lacked the authority to investigate cases of abuse or provide meaningful support.

Girls and women do not trust the police, nor do they trust the justice system. According to the girls and women in the survey, perpetrators receive little or no punishment and remain free to seek revenge and harm the women at a later date should they report them. There is also poor understanding about harassment among government and reporting agencies. Around 87% of respondents said they had heard about violence in public spaces, but that the information given was not adequate to effectively communicate women's key rights.



Individual interview with a street vendor in Makwanpur Nepal
PHOTO: MAKWANPUR MAHILA SAMUHA (MMS) SAKCHAM, NEPAL

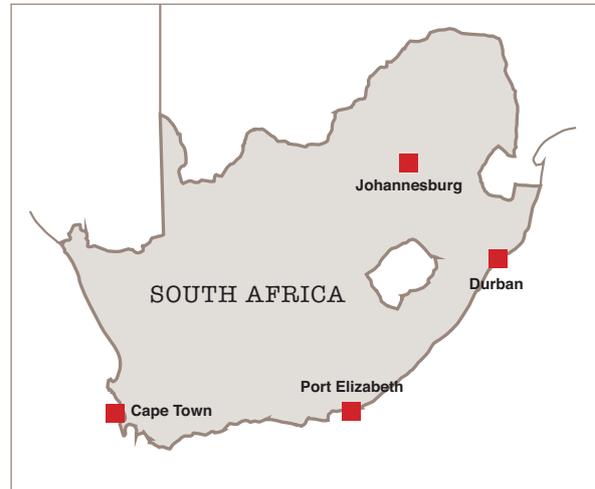
Community attitudes towards VAWG

Seventeen per cent of women cited social pressure as the reason for not reporting sexual harassment and assault. As one girl explained, “If the word spreads that the particular girl had gone through such a thing then it will be difficult for her to get married.” Some girls and women also reported that their families prohibited them from going out or dismissed their concerns when they shared experiences of sexual harassment and assault. The public tends to remain silent in many cases of sexual harassment in public places. Even when the woman makes efforts to retaliate against the perpetrator, the public around often consider it to be a problem between the two people. Despite community attitudes that blame survivors and normalise sexual harassment and assault, study participants displayed awareness of GBV, with 90% of respondents identifying all unsolicited behaviour, including touching, winking and whistling as sexual harassment. A woman asserted, “All harassments are violence as it happens without the woman’s consent.” The women and girls requested capacity-training so that they could run campaigns on sexual harassment and assault, and assert their rights.

Women’s demands

There is a need for long-term solutions, such as including social values and mutual respect in college curricula and reducing the prevalent institutional sexism, and for short-term solutions, such as the need to establish gender-responsive support mechanisms. There is a need to create awareness among local authorities that gender-sensitive infrastructure is people’s right, while practical demonstrations of this, such as safer and less crowded public transport vehicles, should also be made. CSO capacity should be improved to make the state accountable and respond to VAWG, establish strong monitoring mechanisms (e.g. setting up databases) and data collection mechanisms, and track changes in violence, violence perceptions and gender-responsive public services in communities.

South Africa⁵⁵



South Africa is highly urbanised country with the most developed infrastructure on the continent. Two-thirds of South Africa’s population now lives in urban areas, according to the most recent survey released by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR).⁵⁶ The reasons for this rate of urbanisation are varied. Historically it predominantly relates to the displacement of large numbers of the black population from their rural lands and into urban townships from which they could be drawn as a ready unskilled labour force. The apartheid urban planning system was such that designated black areas were characterised by inadequate housing, transport and service infrastructure. The inadequate spatial planning of these townships soon led to the formation of informal settlements around major cities. Despite a progressive constitution that specifically protects and enshrines the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, violence and discrimination against them persists. The Empowering Lesbian Activists to Create Safer Communities project – part of ActionAid South Africa’s Safe Cities Programme – aims to empower all members of LGBTI communities, specifically targeting lesbian women and girls. The survey for the baseline study was conducted in nine townships with members of the LGBTI community – most identifying as lesbian and bisexual women⁵⁷ and 80% between the ages

of 19 and 30. A high percentage (58%) of women had reported cases of VAWG for themselves or another woman to the police at one point in their lifetime. However, no respondents had reported their most recent cases to the police.

Women's experiences and perceptions of violence

Only 12% of respondents said they felt safe from verbal and physical abuse in their neighbourhoods, while 27% stated that they never feel safe. Respondents cited their homes and workplaces as the most secure environments, although around 20% never felt safe in these places.

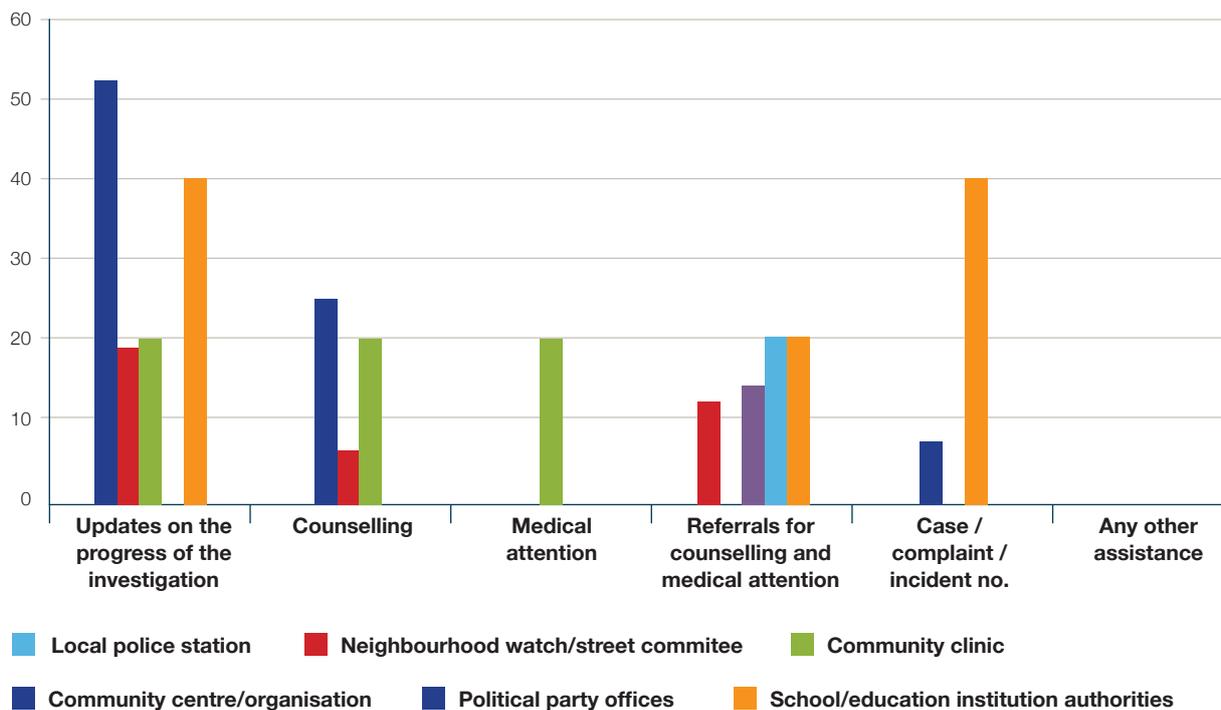
The study also found that lesbian and bisexual women faced barriers to participation in local political processes. Ninety per cent belonged to and participated actively in LGBTI organisations

and 64% had also engaged in community forums. However, they identified many barriers to participation in these public forums, including lack of communication skills, feeling intimidated by others and lack of confidence. Moreover, respondents considered the right to vote as the least important right, and 56% of women who chose not to vote said it was because "no party represents my interests".

State responses to VAWG and women's access to state services

Fifty-eight per cent of respondents had already sought justice for themselves or someone else with regards to physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Most women who had reported cases had gone to the local police and community-based organisations. The following graph shows the support services they received.

Chart 2: Percentage of women in South Africa who received services or help after reporting a case of physical or sexual violence for themselves or others



Women mostly received updates and case numbers, but rarely received counselling or medical attention, even from community organisations. Women also reported that though their basic needs in terms of food and shelter were fulfilled, they had great difficulty finding employment. Ninety per cent reported having access to work opportunities “never” or only “sometimes”.

Community attitudes towards VAWG

Just under half of participants had raised the personal problems of other women in public, including issues related to domestic violence, youth pregnancy and sexual harassment in the neighbourhood. Only 43% of respondents gave a reason for not doing so, and 25% of these believed that a woman should not raise these matters in public.

Women's demands

The study in South Africa shows that lesbian women's lack of confidence is reinforced by a number of factors related to their position in society with regard to race, economic status, gender, sexual orientation and gender presentation, sexual identity and age. Large numbers are unemployed and are not linked up with community organisations or local service providers. Political engagement is centred on issues involving sexuality and discrimination within the communities in which they live, with little engagement with other human rights issues. The disconnect between voting in a democratic state and claiming full citizenship (rights and entitlements) also needs to be addressed. Black lesbians will struggle to attain full citizenship if they are not seen as a political force.

Anita Matt a young woman from an informal settlement in Alexandra, Johannesburg, gives expression to her demand for gender-responsive public services

PHOTO: ACTIONAID / SOUTH AFRICA



Zimbabwe⁵⁸



ActionAid Zimbabwe conducted research in the communities of Dzivarasekwa and Chitungwiza. Dzivarasekwa was established in the late 1950s as a residential area for domestic workers employed in nearby and formerly white-only areas. It lacks basic amenities such as proper roads, drainage, electricity and sewerage. Residents live in semi-permanent structures and use communal boreholes and toilets for their water and sanitation needs. Chitungwiza is the largest high-density suburb in Zimbabwe. Many of the female respondents worked as informal traders in shopping centres in Chitungwiza, and frequently experienced sexual harassment in and around these centres. The Zimbabwe Safe Cities Programme works with women and girls in both areas.

Women's experiences and perceptions of violence

Women and girls from both Dzivarasekwa and Chitungwiza reported facing physical, sexual, psychological and verbal abuse in public spaces. Women's comments include: "We are booed and jeered at, at bus termini", "public transport operators

do a tug of war for female customers" and "my friend's child was raped in public". Streets, bus terminals, water boreholes and shopping centres were cited as the main areas where women experienced sexual harassment and assault. Women raised specific concerns about areas such as fields around their neighbourhoods where perpetrators can hide, and cited cases of rape, robbery and murder in these areas. Women also feared particular types of violence in public transport and informal public vans (kombis), such as theft, accidents, rape, and drivers "running away" with them: *"We fear for our goods being stolen and there are instances where commuter Omni-bus operators divert their intended routes and run away with female passengers."*

Sixty-four per cent of female respondents from the profile areas highlighted that they did not feel safe to move around at night because of drunkards, violent people and thieves. They said that potential aggressors can say whatever they want at night along the roads as there are no street lights and they cannot be recognised in the dark. Table 13 illustrates some of the types of harassment experienced in these areas.

State responses to VAWG and women's access to state services

"Every person has the right to bodily and psychological integrity which includes the right to freedom from all forms of violence from public or private sources..." S52 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

There have been positive outcomes of provisions to end gender-based violence in the 2013 constitution, such as increased media coverage on VAWG and stiffer penalties for perpetrators. These developments are reflected in the fact that 77% of respondents were aware of laws and policies protecting them from violence in public spaces, and almost half had learned about these laws from radio, television

programmes such as the Mai Chisamba Show, newspapers, magazines and police officers. However, only 40% of women said they would report cases of sexual harassment and assault to the police, and 56% said they would not know what to do if they experienced harassment. When asked who the main perpetrators of violence against women and girls in public spaces were, the majority of the respondents said men and boys, and especially police officers.

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, to which the country is a signatory), Zimbabwe stepped up actions against domestic violence, abuse and rape through a series of legislative and policy reforms and programmes. However, the intended result of eliminating all forms of GBV has not been achieved as GBV cases continue to increase. More concerted efforts by officials from local government, district administrators, councilors, representatives

Table 13: Types of sexual harassment and violence by location

The street	Verbal harassment Theft and mugging (especially at night) Rape, robbery and murder close to cultivated fields
Public transport and kombis	Being pulled onto buses Verbal and physical harassment from touts ⁵⁹ and passengers Fear of accidents, robbery, rape and being kidnapped by drivers
Community boreholes	Pushing women aside Charging women for water
Shopping centres	Verbal harassment Mugging

Community attitudes towards VAWG

Male and female focus group participants maintained the common belief that GBV in public spaces occurs because “women and girls dress in a way in which most of their skin is out”. Due to fear of violence, women took measures such as restricting their mobility at night, avoiding certain clothing and hiding their money in under-garments. Women also expressed feelings of powerlessness. When they were asked what they could do to prevent VAWG, FGD participants said, “There is nothing we can do except to wait for the police to arrest the perpetrators of violence.” However, participants also recommended women form groups to advocate for their rights in the community.

Women’s demands

According to the National Gender Policy (2013–2017), in line with global commitments such as the

from relevant line ministries such as the Ministry of Women Affairs and the police are required to end VAWG in Zimbabwe. Public lighting, access to water and sanitation, codes of conduct for transport operators and passengers, public events to educate community members on GBV, enforcement of constitutional rights, and implementation of laws and regulations are some of the ways forward suggested by women.



Mrs Makaza on her stall at the Dzivarasekwa market, Zimbabwe
PHOTO: ?/ACTIONAID

CONCLUSION **Moving forward on women and girls' demands**

Demands made by the women involved in ActionAid's Safe Cities Programme to ensure safer cities for women can be grouped under three main themes:

1. improve urban infrastructure and integrate gender-responsive public services into municipal city planning;
2. address institutional sexism in police, and other services and provide adequate gender-responsive community safety and justice services,
3. raise awareness in the community and with service providers of sexual harassment and assault, and build women's capacity to advocate for their rights.

1. Improving urban infrastructure and integrating gender-responsive public services into municipal city planning

The findings of this report clearly point to city infrastructure and its maintenance as central to improving women and girls' urban safety. Implementing women and girls' demands to provide access to water and sanitation, adequate street lighting, well-maintained roads, even and ample sidewalks, clean air and green spaces can make the city more inclusive to women, and all users. Furthermore, the study confirms the need for gender-responsive public services (GRPS). GRPS are public services that take into account and address the practical needs and priorities of women and girls. States are obliged to provide public services as part of their duty to implement progressive realisation of human rights. A GRPS is one that takes account of the practical and strategic needs of women. That means that as well as providing the service itself (the practical need) – for example clean water or basic health care, a GRPS will also address long-term, strategic goals such as legal rights and equal wages. For a GRPS to have positive impact on violence against women in public spaces, it must also be addressing the structural

causes of violence against women.

Public services include “those conventionally regarded as basic services that support human rights, such as health and education services; those not conventionally regarded as basic services but that also support women's human rights, such as employment and economic services; those that are fundamental components of governance itself, such as electoral and related political services, civil registration, and legal justice”.⁶⁰

Participatory tools such as the **Women's Safety Audit**⁶¹ (WSA) can be used to further these goals. The WSA “consists of a group of women walking [since it is less-advantaged women and girls who walk, due to the absence of safe, affordable public transport] in public spaces in their neighbourhood to identify the physical or social characteristics that make these spaces feel safe or unsafe”.⁶² In many countries and regions, women have used WSAs to diagnose the safety of their neighbourhood, and to work collaboratively with stakeholders to recommend and implement changes to the physical environment and to the social use of space. WSAs have also been adapted in countries such as India to assess access to water and sanitation services, an issue also addressed in this report. Most importantly, the WSA is a participatory process that empowers women to become more involved in local decision-making processes, and allows local leaders to learn from women's and girls' expertise on urban safety.

The women taking part in this study signalled an urgent need to improve public transport services. One practice that can be used in this area is **Gender sensitivity training for bus drivers**. The Delhi-based NGO Jagori developed training programmes in 2007 and 2010, conducted on buses with drivers. Training public transport operators about the myths surrounding GBV, and on ways to

deal with incidents of violence, can help them be more responsive and prevent sexual harassment and assault.⁶³ The other demands under this section are:

- Provide adequate, pedestrian-focused **street lighting** at all hours of the night and in every neighbourhood.
- Apply a **gender analysis** and involve local women in the planning and budgeting of public service design and delivery.
- Conduct **Women's Safety Audits** with diverse groups of women and girls and local authorities to assess the safety of city spaces, and access to essential services. Implement women and girls' demands.
- From the outset, anticipate and address the needs of **marginalised groups** of women and girls in the planning and delivery of GRPS. For example, work with poor women, young women and students, who travel at less busy hours of the day and night, to assess their needs for safe, accessible and affordable public transport.
- Provide **water, sanitation and latrines** close to, or inside, women's homes, and ensure safety at community water access points.
- Address institutional sexism in **public transport services**. Bus drivers should be properly trained to address sexual harassment and assault in their vehicles, and held accountable if they condone or themselves commit acts of GBV.

2. Address institutional sexism in police and other services and provide adequate gender-responsive community safety and justice services

This study points to the lack of existing laws and policies in many countries surrounding sexual harassment and sexual assault in public, and to institutional sexism in the implementation of existing laws and the provision of security services. Institutional sexism refers to an acceptance of the way that policies and cultures in organisations, systems or

structures such as the police force, the government, the media or business discriminate against women based on notion that women are somehow inferior to men. To analyse laws and policies, governments, policy makers, NGOs and academics can conduct **policy reviews**.⁶⁴ Policy reviews allow for a substantiated analysis of the gap between policies and their implementation. They involve in-depth research about pertinent policies or programmes, assessing their success in addressing VAWG, and making demands for strengthening policies. Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that **structural changes in safety and justice services** be introduced.

Initiatives such as gender-sensitive training and trust-building activities can be conducted together *with* women and the police. However, long-term goals should aim for systemic changes in the ways governments and communities respond to and mitigate violence. Systemic changes involve shifting the current framework away from repression and punishment, to the use of preventative rather than reactive approaches, conflict-resolution, and transformative justice models. Importantly, governments must hold the police accountable and launch external investigations to address past and ongoing police impunity and abuse.

To address these multiple, intersecting and complex issues, governments and civil society, including NGOs, can engage in **local-to-local dialogues**.⁶⁵ This practice has been used by grassroots women's organisations to foster conversations and collaboration between women, girls and local stakeholders and officials. They serve to build mutually beneficial relationships on issues of gender equality. The demands from women are:

- Recognise **sexual harassment and sexual assault in public spaces** as an infringement of human rights.
- Conduct **policy reviews** to assess and improve existing laws, policies and programmes.
- Conduct **local-to-local dialogues** with

government representatives, civil society organisations and local women.

- Governments must fund the **collection of disaggregated data on GBV** in public spaces to establish indicators and enable changes in rates of VAWG over time to be measured.
- The role of the **safety and justice services** must be re-envisioned from a relationship of power over citizens to one of power with all citizens. Governments must provide community safety and justice services that work hand in hand with women and men, both to prevent GBV and act effectively in cases of violence.
- Safety services should be present **24-hours on the street** and in nearby, accessible offices, in order to promptly respond to and prevent cases of sexual harassment and assault in public spaces.
- Police services must be held **accountable for acts of VAWG committed by service providers**, and external investigations must be launched when such acts are reported.

3. Raise awareness in the community and with service providers on sexual harassment and assault, and build women's capacity to advocate for their rights

It is crucial that women and girls be recognised as agents of change. They can actively and effectively participate in awareness-raising initiatives and must be supported in developing the skills and confidence to be leaders in their communities and advocates for positive change. The participatory tools listed above, such as the WSA, can empower women to participate in local governance. It is also recommended that **capacity assessments**⁶⁶ be conducted with groups of women and girls. These can be used at the beginning of a project or programme to help girls and women identify what kind of capacity development is needed.

It is also recommended that innovative campaigns to educate the public about VAWG in public space be conducted, using a variety of media. Women

artists, advertisers, communications experts and internet service providers can be invaluable partners on these kinds of initiatives. Women's demands are:

- Support and lead **awareness-raising campaigns** to involve women, girls, men and boys in preventing and ending sexual harassment and assault in public spaces, and for all to be aware of the rights of women and girls to cities free of violence.
- Disseminate awareness-raising campaigns through **diverse media platforms**, such as the internet, television, radio and posters.
- Address **community attitudes** that normalise violence and blame the women.
- Provide women and girls with **resources and capacity-building training** so that they can advocate on their own behalf.
- Provide women and girls with resources to **form advocacy groups** that can educate communities on sexual harassment and abuse, denounce cases of GBV and help prevent it.

Conclusion

This report underlines that public services and infrastructure such as adequate housing, street lighting, access to water and sanitation, and safe public transport are basic necessities demanded by women to help reduce the risk of physical and sexual harassment and violence in public (and private) spaces. Women also call for more public services for survivors of abuse, including 24-hour hotlines and well-trained and sensitised public service and transport staff. The women and girls consulted also argue that the normalisation of gender-based harassment and violence in their communities, and by governments at all levels, manifested in institutional sexism, is a major threat to their peace, safety and ability to live with dignity. Above all, this report demonstrates that women and girls need to be involved in decision-making processes. When the drafting and implementation of policies and laws do not meaningfully involve

women and girls, they fail to effectively address their needs, or to prevent violence and harassment.

We hope this report will inform and guide international agencies, governments and policy makers as they negotiate, agree and implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Women's Beijing +20 Platform, and UN Habitat's 2016 New Urban Agenda. ActionAid urges states to act on an ambitious agenda set through the SDGs and the Commission on the Status of Women,

and to ensure that greater progress is made on women's rights and on gender inequality, building on the Beijing Platform for Action established in 1995. ActionAid supports the standalone Sustainable Development Goal 5 to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. Further, it strongly supports the inclusion of measures to tackle violence against women in Goal 11 to 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.



A safety audit team in Nepal stands in solidarity with local district stakeholders to demand an end to violence against women
PHOTO: MAKWANPUR MAHILA SAMUHA (MMS) SAKCHAM, NEPAL.

ANNEX

Table 14: Laws protecting respondents from violence

Country	Laws on VAWG in public places	Other laws and policies protecting respondents from violence in public or domestic spaces
Bangladesh	N/A	1860 Bangladesh Penal Code, 1980 Dowry Prohibition Act, 2000 Suppression of VAWG, 2009 Draft Policy on Sexual Harassment In the constitution: -Article 27 states that all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law
Brazil	None	Legal mechanisms concerning acts against the life, freedom and equality of any citizen
Cambodia <i>*Proper law enforcement is an issue</i>	2008 Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation	2005 Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims 2008 Criminal Code: -Article 239 protects against rape -Article 250 protects against sexual harassment -Article 246 protects against sexual/indecent assault
Liberia <i>*Customary laws and practices are an issue</i>	N/A	Rape and Inheritance Law, Children Act, 2009 National Gender Policy, National SGBV Action Plan, Draft of Domestic Violence Act
Nepal	None	Social Crime and Punishment Act, 2006 Gender Equality Act, 2009 Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act
South Africa	N/A	The constitution protects rights of LGBTI
Zimbabwe	None	2001 Sexual Offences Act, 2006 Criminal Law, 2007 Domestic Violence Act, 2013-2017 National Gender Policy In the constitution: -Article 52 protects rights to bodily and psychological integrity, which include the right to freedom from all forms of violence from public or private source -Article 66 states that everyone who is legally in Zimbabwe has the right to move freely

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7. Institutional Sexism Q&A, ActionAid 2014.
8. UN Women (2014) 'Creating Safe Public Spaces' [web page], <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces> (accessed 7 December 2014).
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13. Ibid.

14. The Goal 5 sub-targets are:
 - 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
 - 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
 - 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
 - 5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
 - 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.
 - 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
 - 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources in accordance with national laws.
 - 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technologies, in particular ICT, to promote women's empowerment.
 - 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

15. The Goal 11 sub-targets are:
 - 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrade slums.
 - 11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
 - 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacities for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.
 - 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.
 - 11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of affected people and decrease by y% the economic losses relative to GDP caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with the focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.
 - 11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality, municipal and other waste management.
 - 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.
 - 11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.
 - 11.b By 2020, increase by x% the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, develop and implement in line with the forthcoming Hyogo Framework holistic disaster risk management at all levels.
 - 11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, for sustainable and resilient buildings utilising local materials.

16. Hooks, B. (1984) *Feminist theory: from margin to centre*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
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18. Ibid, p19.
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20. See www.womenincities.org for more information.
21. UN Habitat (2014) 'World Cities Day' [web page], <http://unhabitat.org/wcd/world-cities-day-2014-leading-urban-transformations/> (accessed 17 December 2014).
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25. In Bangladesh, 'eve teasing' is the common term for sexual harassment. It includes all forms of unwanted, sexual remarks, gestures and actions.
26. This table does not represent an exact comparative analysis as not all survey questions were formatted the same way. Women and girls were asked to report the following: in Bangladesh, the type of harassment they had faced in the last three months (multiple answer response); in Nepal, the nature of the last assault they had experienced (single choice response); in Cambodia, the women who had reported experiencing

some form of harassment in 2013 (n=83/ 21.6%) were asked the type of abuse they had experienced; in South Africa, women were asked what form of abuse they experienced in the past year (multiple answer response); and in Zimbabwe, the forms of violence against women witnessed or experienced in public space (multiple answer response).

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32. Keo 2014 and Keo et al. 2014.
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38. Dalits are an often discriminated against and marginalised caste.
39. Mastans are members of organised crime with connections to local leaders or the police. They force citizens to pay them in exchange for 'protection'.
40. Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this section is drawn from ActionAid Brasil (2014).
41. See <http://www2.recife.pe.gov.br/a-cidade/perfil-dos-bairros/rpa-6/ibura/>.
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49. n=83 refers to the women how reported having experienced sexual harassment or abuse in the last year.
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52. Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this section is drawn from ActionAid Liberia (2014).
53. Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this section is drawn from ActionAid Nepal (2014).
54. United Nations Development Programme (2010) 'Human Development Report', UNDP.
55. Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this section is drawn from ActionAid South Africa (2014).
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57. In terms of gender profile, 93% identified as women, 1% identified as transwomen and 2% identified as men. In terms of sexual orientation, 92% identified as lesbians and 7% identified as bisexual. For the purpose of this summary, we will refer to the respondents as 'lesbian and bisexual women'.
58. All information in this section is drawn from ActionAid Zimbabwe (2014).
59. Touts are crew members of kombis (informal transport vehicles).
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ActionAid is a partnership between people in rich and poor countries, dedicated to ending poverty and injustice. We work with people all over the world to fight hunger and disease, seek justice and education for women, hold companies and governments accountable, and cope with emergencies in over 40 countries.

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Women and the city III: A summary of baseline data on violence against women and girls in seven countries

ActionAid February 2015