# The Women's Perspective: the Case of Manzese

## Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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### **Summary**

An initial Safety Audit was conducted with a group of women in Manzese, a densely populated ward that is a business centre in Dar es Salaam. Findings and recommendations were presented to the municipal director, environmental and economic planners, and engineers who then suggested that another Audit be conducted with key municipality staff and Manzese women. This was the first time the municipality had worked so closely with women in a community to discuss matters affecting their livelihood and development of the area.

Women need to demonstrate, especially to men, their ability to initiate necessary changes that will benefit everyone's safety. By bringing women's safety concerns to the municipality's attention, it was subsequently possible to involve municipal staff in the second safety audit which resulted in better understanding and consideration of women's needs and the allocation of funds to implement some of the women's suggestions for improvement.

Women's participation in safety audits should be encouraged as a way for them to unite and to promote their involvement in urban decision-making and safety planning and design. In Tanzania, local leadership provides for women's participation in decision-making at the grassroots level which should in turn be built into national policies of good governance.

## Introduction

Planning and design for safety in a city or a neighbourhood may become a very complex exercise from the physical point of view. Largely because safety depends primarily on:

- 1) people in authorities' awareness of the issues and their commitment to playing a positive role in mitigating crime in the area;
- 2) a responsive mechanism towards environmental improvement with safety in mind:
- 3) willingness to improve upon the situation which corresponds to the people's concern for their safety.

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It is therefore on this basis that any community can play a role in enhancing

safety either through planning and design or through socio-economic and cultural

changes based on the main factors involved, i.e. awareness of the environment,

visibility and opportunity to find help, etc. In this regard it does not matter whether the

area is well planned, a slum or unplanned/spontaneous settlement.

According to a rigorous study based on police records conducted in Dar es

Salaam in 1997 for the previous 5 years, about 25% of all recorded crimes occurred in

Dar es Salaam. Moreover, in a victimization survey conducted in Dar es Salaam

between April and May 2000, it was observed that violence against women is a

multifarious experience ranging from social, economical, to sexual and physical abuse.

The report showed that among the women interviewed, 79% have been economically

abused, 76% emotionally abused, 71% physically abused while 45% of the women have

been sexually abused. The need to provide women with opportunity to participate in

developing strategies that will address the situation is necessary. Safety audits for

women are one of the most practical opportunities.

This brief intervention looks at how women perceive safety in their community,

the causes of their unsafety/insecurity and how to address the problem.

The role of local authorities in planning and design for safety

In Tanzania, local authorities are obliged to maintain peace and order as per

Local Government Act 1982<sup>1</sup> sect. 54(1)(a) and 54(2)(a) and the United Republic

Constitution 1977 article 146(2)(b). On the other hand, the country and planning

ordinance strongly calls for public participation in planning schemes to allow

stakeholders, including women, to raise their concerns especially regarding their safety

before the plan is endorsed for implementation. All instruments are meant to empower

local authorities to address urban safety from different dimensions. The issue is to

determine who is involved in the planning and design for urban safety and for whose

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2

concern. The constitution allows for free democratic participation of both women and men in political elections culminating into decision-making bodies. The constitution also insists that at least one woman representative is included in the sub-committee including the safety and security committee at the sub-ward level. However, the impact is nearly negligible unless women unite as one voice to raise their concern. The safety audit is an example of how women could be united to give their vision of safety in the neighbourhood. I will elaborate on the safety audit for women that took place in Manzese as an example.

Involvement of women in safety planning and design include not only the enhancement of the physical environment of an area and enforcement of municipal rules but also takes into account the socio-economic structure, political and cultural behaviour of the society which gives a holistic approach in crime prevention. Therefore, planning for safety becomes a multi-sectorial process from women's point of view that needs involvement of all stakeholders including the local community and the local authority to effect implementation.

In the new millennium, cities are increasingly becoming homes for a larger part of the world's population. Coupled with the effects of globalization, planning and design are also changing to address the root causes of crime such as marginalization and isolation to a more distributive role that will create minimum standards of urban livability. Unfortunately this process takes place with limited involvement of the majority of the population, "the women", who are not taking part in decision-making on planning and development instruments of key city functions such as safety. The world assembly of cities and local authorities declared "promoting and ensuring the full participation of women in the decision-making process at a municipal level by taking necessary measures for them to share power and authority"<sup>2</sup>. To a considerable extent, women in Tanzania have the opportunity to share, given more education and awareness regarding their constitutional rights.

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Dar Es Salaam in brief

**BASIC DATA** 

The city (region) is located on the east coast of Tanzania, along the Indian Ocean

with an area of 1,800 km<sup>2</sup> and population of approx. 3,5 million; a growth rate of 8 to

10% and 51% being women. Dar es Salaam is the largest city and commercial centre in

the country.

Administratively, the city is divided into four authorities – the Dar es Salaam

City Council and the three municipal councils of Temeke, Ilala and Kinondoni. Of the

three, Kinondoni has the largest population of approx. 1,2 million. The three

municipalities are divided into a total of 73 wards, whereby 27 of them belong to

Kinondoni. Manzese ward is one of the most densely populated wards in Kinondoni and

a business focal point for many people countrywide.

THE WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE: MANZESE EXPERIENCE

To be able to generate solutions to personal safety, one needs the opportunity to

be involved and heard by responsible authorities. By involving a group of women from

one part of Manzese in a safety audit for women, it was easy for the local authority

(municipality) to understand what women think concerning crime and what are the

immediate solutions to bring about the necessary changes in partnership with the

authority. From the safety audit it became clear that the women perceived the safety

problems in their area as diverse, due to both the physical design and socio-economic

planning. In fact, each problem has a solution – be it long or short term, somehow

partnership and awareness between those with authority and the affected is necessary,

for example as a result of the audit, the women in Manzese made the following

observations

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#### OBSERVATIONS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- 1) All streets that were once wide enough for vehicular circulation have been invaded/encroached by structures/buildings and are now very narrow.
- 2) There are many unfinished and abandoned buildings in the area which are hideouts for potential criminals.
- 3) The narrow streets are completely dark, not named and there is no light around the buildings although some houses have electricity! The women felt it was very unsafe to walk around the area during the night and even in the early evening or morning. Sometimes they felt it was also risky during the day when they were alone.
- 4) Visibility is very limited due to housing congestion and darkness.
- 5) Sanitation situation is very poor; no proper drainage channels and no sewer system. Ground water level in the area is very high causing floods during the rainy seasons. Again most houses use pit latrines for disposal, which overflows during rainy seasons thus causing outbreak of diseases like diarrhoea, cholera, malaria, etc. The concern for the women here is their health and the health of the children whom they have to attend in terms of medication during epidemic break up and safe walking to hospitals especially during the night.
- 6) Houses are built very close to each other (congested) leaving no open space for children playgrounds neither for community activities and air circulation.
- 7) The area is dirty due to the absence of waste management system (collection); damping and littering are rampant.

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

- 1) There is high unemployment in the area. As we walked around we could see groups of young men sitting around at jobless corners doing nothing. The women said, "our children have no job, it is very bad for the boys".
- 2) We have seen mixed business activities such as local brews, video rooms and bars, restaurants, guesthouses and market stalls, etc.

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3) Most women and young girls are involved in selling local brew in local bars

and this affects social life at households and the society as an attraction to

prostitution, drugs, loitering, etc.

4) The sungusungu performance has helped to improve the situation a lot but

should be monitored and strengthened for more patrols.

5) There is loud music/noise from bars, restaurants and guesthouses during the

night so they cannot sleep/rest.

6) Domestic violence is rampant due to excessive alcoholism among the men not

to mention drug abuse.

After this walking and discussion exercise, the team went back to the sub-ward

office as a group to discuss the observations and give recommendations / solutions on

what should be done. The women reiterated that all what was observed has a lot to do

with their safety despite the *sungusungu* efforts as long as their fear for crime persists.

From the audit the women were now able to sit as a group and discuss the results and

gave the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Accessibility and visibility. The women in Manzese are very much aware of their

environment and what they wish was minimum vehicular circulation for

emergency services and visibility. The women recognized the legitimacy and

aesthetic value of public and semi-public space in their area, which they have

been denied due to haphazard construction of housing without proper planning.

Yet they believe the small space available can be usefully converted to cater for

accessibility and visibility. They observed the unnamed narrow streets, most of

which were blocked by some structure, as a weakness in enforcement of

municipal rules contrary to town and country ordinance.

2) Elimination or destroying hideouts of potential criminals: a number of old

unfinished buildings or dilapidated structures which are used by criminals as

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6

hideouts. Local authorities could send notices to demolish /complete or auction the buildings to competent builders.

- 3) Lack of lighting. Due to lack of street lighting, the area is completely dark at night; this creates fear of crime and a potential environment for criminals. Women believe they can carry out local campaigns to illuminate the area on self-help basis. The plan should be for each household to set up a bulb in front and behind their houses, and possibly on both sides. Lighting around the houses can scare petty offenders. But for the streets, the municipality and other partners should provide lighting.
- 4) Safe places. Women have the least choice of safe places to live facing all sorts of abuses such as sexual, economical, physical and emotional. Whether married or single headed household, they are faced with these circumstances thus making them vulnerable and hostile to the physical environment, always forced to change their living pattern on the basis of their safety. Their fear of crime ranges from the transportation network, public spaces and homes.
- 5) *Health*. Furthermore women in Manzese believe health should be an important issue, especially for their children. Therefore, planning for improved sanitation system, drainage and solid waste management is a crucial issue for the women of Manzese. This will eliminate frequent outbreak of infectious diseases such as malaria, cholera, diarrhoea, etc. which might necessitate their walking during the night to catch a taxi or other transport to hospital in a crime prone community.
- 6) Socio-economic problems. Manzese women link the crime levels in their area with the socio-economic problems in their community. They highlight the problems of youth unemployment as a root cause of the problem. They observe the need for the municipality to work with the women to develop income /job generating activities to engage the jobless youths and women in the area. They pointed out examples of waste collection as subcontractors to the municipality to develop an alternative activity to women who are currently involved in local brew selling at night, prostitution, etc. Women or youth groups could be incorporated in the ongoing community contracts for garbage collection and disposal currently organized by the municipality. In this way a more reliable

employment and income is insured. Manzese also has the largest outdoor market along the main road leading to Morogoro, Mbeya and Zambia. The congestion of different merchandise vendors within the area, and the multitude of people that pass through for their shopping, has created a potential harbouring of criminals such as in video show rooms, bars, guest houses, local brew pubs, etc. This problem is manifested by lack of open spaces inhibiting movement, public land thus further threatening children growing up in the area.

7) Security groups. They underscore the fact that community policing being carried out by community security groups (sungusungu) in collaboration with the police is crucial but not the only way to bring safety into the neighbourhood.

# Institutionalization of the safety audit

In order to facilitate the recognition and therefore implementation of the audit a brief presentation was done to the municipal director including the municipal town/environmental planner, engineer and economic planners in a short meeting. The meeting resolved that there should be a repeated audit in which the municipality key staff and the women in Manzese will be involved in order to share the discussion and suggestions given by the women for a better planning and commitment.

After agreeing on the date and time, the two groups were organized for a day walk into Mnazi Mmoja and Midizini with the municipal staff. The women, guiding the walking, had the opportunity to show and explain the experiences of crime in the area to the municipal staff as associated to both the environmental and social economic problems of the area. After the walking, the team sat as a group to discuss the observations and the women gave their suggestions to what they think should be done while they exchange views with the municipality staff. They also said what would be their role in order to make sure the exercise is successful. In fact, this was the first time the municipality had come so close with this community to discuss matters affecting their livelihood and the development of the area. The municipal staff reported back the discussion to the municipal authority for action.

# Strategies to mobilize women for safety audit

The results presented above call for more efforts to encourage more women to participate in safety audits. Women are very easy to work with, especially in matters related to their livelihood and their families within the communities. They need to show the society that they can initiate and bring about necessary changes that will benefit everyone especially the men. They believe these will stop/reduce levels of discrimination. What they need is result-oriented support and recognition by the authorities to unveil their ability. This must be built in the national policies of good governance. In Tanzania, local leadership provides for women participation in decision making at grass-root level. The lowest development committee of six members at subward level (Mtaa) must include at least one woman. In Mnazi Mmoja, the women present in the committee were able to take up the safety audit exercise, which was done by the women for decision-making. Fortunately cultural differences have no effect in most of Tanzanian urban settlements due to long historical development of our nation, which has eradicated tribal and cultural differences. However if the case at stake is stronger than cultural differences, such as "crime", it will be an opportunity to bring the community together to fight it rather than dividing them. This is happening in some areas due to political differences after the multi-partism, but through meetings organized by the district commissioners, communities have been able to separate the two.

## Conclusion

By bringing to the attention of the municipality the concerns of the women regarding safety in their area, it was possible to involve the municipal staff through the repeated safety audit and make them to share the concern by allocating some funds to initiate the implementation of some of the issues raised by the women. If improved, it will impact to other areas with similar problems. Women will learn that living with the fear of crime without reporting the fear, safety will never come about. Laws and

regulations alone cannot address the problem. Therefore, a new approach – customer designed to local problem is essential. The safer cities' approach tailored to partnerships at the community level concerning their perceptions of safety, especially the most vulnerable – the poor, women, aged and children is very appropriate.

Local Government Act, 1982 section 54(1)(a): It shall be the responsibility of each urban authority as a local government .... to maintain and facilitate maintenance of peace, order and good governance within its area of jurisdiction. Section 54(2)(a): For the purpose of better execution of its functions, a local authority shall take all such measures as in its opinion are necessary, desirable, conducive and expedient .... For the suppression of crime, maintenance of peace and good order and the protection of public and private property lawfully acquired. Act No. 15 of 1984 section 30 ... to ensure the enforcement of law and public safety of the people.

Violence against women in urban areas: an analysis of the problem from gender perspective – UMP working paper series 17.