

Safety Audits and Beyond

Round Table

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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 (Tanzania). Findings and recommendations were presented to the municipal director, environmental and economic planners, and engineers who then suggested that another Audit be conducted with other key municipality staff and Manzese women. This was the first time the municipality had worked so closely with community residents 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 women's suggestions.

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 allows for women's participation in grassroots-level decision-making. Such encouragement of women's participation should be integrated into national policies of good governance.

Discussion

A safety audit is an adaptable tool that identifies local concerns and helps develop context-specific solutions that are tailored to a particular community's priorities. The vision of women involved in Dar es Salaam's safety audit included concerns such as inadequate transportation, poor lighting, little open space, high unemployment, and domestic violence.

However safety audits must realistically consider the root causes of inequality and violence and the challenge of getting a patriarchal system to implement women's recommendations for improvement. For change to be enduring, change must be made within entire patriarchal institutions and systems rather than only developing "band-aid" solutions that do not comprehensively consider the roles that all actors can play.

Conclusions

- Safety audits are an excellent tool for uniting women and allowing them to share their experiences of abuse with each other and to identify common safety issues. These functions are themselves important and productive as they empower women.
- Women need to demonstrate, especially to men, their ability to initiate necessary changes that benefit everyone's safety.
- Awareness-building must be done with local government to help them better understand violence against women issues.
- Actions must consider all forms of abuse and violence against women: physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic.
- It is important to follow up on and evaluate the impact of safety audits in order to convince governments to provide financial support. At the same time, such monitoring and follow up

themselves demand financial, human, and material resources that many communities simply do not have.

- It is not enough to demand that international organizations and networks and the United Nations consider the violation of women's human rights. Groups of women around the world need to unite in their efforts to defend women's rights, promote gender equality, and pressure government and legal institutions to be more sensitive to gender considerations.

Recommendations

- Women's participation in safety audits should be encouraged as a way to empower them and promote their involvement in urban decision-making and safety planning and design. Such encouragement of women's participation should be integrated into national policies of good governance.
- Cities and municipalities must work closely with citizens and use their power to incorporate women's concerns in basic daily planning. Local government budgets must allocate resources for implementing women's recommendations for action.
- Local administrations should work to engage other levels of government in ongoing dialogue on how to coordinate women's safety efforts and avoid offloading of responsibility.
- Women should shout out their fear and must discuss with men their reasons for violent behaviour. Awareness-building work must be done with men to sensitize them to how their violent actions create fear.
- Schools should incorporate human rights and equality education into course syllabi.

- Schools should conduct safety audits and develop anti-violence programs with young children.