Safety Audits: The Kenyan Experience

Hannah Kamau

Fundraising Advisor, Intermediate Technology Development Group

Eastern Africa (ITDG-EA), Nairobi, Kenya

Summary

The Safer Nairobi Project in initiative spearheaded by the Safer Cities Programme of UN-Habitat in partnership with the Nairobi City Council, ITDG-EA and a range of other partners interested in crime prevention in Nairobi. It aims at developing a medium and long-term crime prevention strategy involving partners from central and local government, the private sector, the citizens and civil society. Nairobi's Pilot Urban Safety Assessment Walk was a first step in building awareness of what residents could do to improve safety and to sensitize the Nairobi City Council, the Kenyan Government, and the police on the importance of including women in planning and decision making processes regarding safety and security. This is based on the premise that if an area is made safe for women, it will be safe for the entire community.

The Nairobi Victimization survey and Violence against Women Surveys also played a crucial role in revealing the overall incidence, types, and perceptions of crime which then better guided the safety audit, planning, and proposed solutions. These surveys and the Safety Walk found that fear of crime was different for men and women and that there was a difference between fear of crime and the actual risk of victimization. This was often influenced by an area's crime history and the fact that media representation of crime can invoke unnecessarily high fear.

In countries where women are still marginalized and not accepted as equal partners in the development process, gender/cultural biases may greatly hinder a truly inclusive urban development process. Women's participation in development issues may be overshadowed by high poverty, especially in countries where their participation in urban design and planning may not be a priority when compared to meeting other basic needs. Safety audits should be advocated in all city-planning strategies to enhance the concept of "inclusive cities" and serve as a tool to ensure women's active participation in urban development.

Brief summary on Kenya

Kenya is located in the eastern part of Africa and comprises one of the three East African countries. Kenya has a projected urban population growth rate of almost six- percent and is one of the most rapidly urbanizing countries on the continent. The 1999 national population census indicated that the total population of Kenya is 28.7 million people. Nairobi, the capital city on the other hand has a total population of approximately 3 million people.

Nairobi is not only the capital city of Kenya but also serves as the administrative center and economic hub of the nation. Administratively, the city is divided into 8 constituencies with a total of 110 sub-locations.

Nairobi is also home to one of the biggest slums in the world, Kibera slums. Like may other informal settlements in the world, regulations and licensing rules often restrict their activities and urban planning takes little account of their needs. Often the relationship between local government and the urban poor in these neighbourhoods is antagonistic. Social exclusion and a relative lack of support systems further characterise informal settlements. Crime in the city is high and perceived to be increasing annually and the issues of both private and public security have become the most identifiable criteria negatively impacting on the quality of life of the urban poor. Crime however, although almost endemic to these areas is not restricted to them, but flows to and from formal middle and upper class suburbs, as well as in the commercial areas. Nevertheless, it is the residents of the low-income peri-urban and informal settlements who are the main victims of all crimes, regardless of whether they are of a personal or proprietary nature. Likewise, although violent crime is not exclusively endemic to these areas, it is more prevalent further eroding the various assets of the urban poor.

Brief summary on ITDG-EA

The Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) was established in 1966 based on the then radical ideas of Fritz Schumacher, an economist and the author of the best selling title, *Small is Beautiful.* The organization has since grown into an international NGO with offices in the United Kingdom, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Nepal, Peru and Sudan. As an international development agency, ITDG prides itself in being an organization with a difference, firmly believing as our founder noted: "the best aid to give is.....the gift of knowledge". ITDG works with poor women and men to develop technology which puts people first. It is technology, which draws on their experience and feeds it, recognizes their potential and releases it, respects their environment and nurtures it, and builds on their past, to sustain the future. ITDG-EA specializes in helping people use

technology for practical answers to poverty. We respond to real needs, put people first, promote appropriate technologies that are suitable to local circumstances, widen technology choices and encourage development that can be sustained.

ITDG's vision is "a more equitable and just world in which technology enriches and benefits the lives of poor people". Our mission is "to build the technical skills of poor people in developing countries enabling them to improve the quality of their lives and that of future generations".

The organization is currently working in eight main technical areas: shelter, energy, mining, transport, food production, agro-processing, small-scale manufacturing, and disasters and development. ITDG- Eastern Africa is one of the regional offices of ITDG whose head office is in the UK and the presence of ITDG-EA in the region dates back to the mid 1980s. An office was opened in Nairobi in 1992 and it is registered as an NGO. It works under five technology programmes - agriculture and pastoralism, small-scale manufacturing, transport, urban livelihoods and shelter, and energy.

Introduction on the safer Nairobi project

In the year 2001 the Safer Cities Programme of UN-HABITAT in conjunction with the Intermediate Technology Development Group - Eastern Africa (a regional NGO), conducted a citywide crime victimization survey. The survey was carried out in two parts. The first was a scan survey in which 7, 954 people were interviewed while under the main victimization survey, 2,000 people were interviewed. The results of the victimization survey indicated that the incidence of violence against women in Nairobi was high and the residents of Nairobi perceived the violations as a serious problem. Out of the 7 800 people interviewed during the scan survey, 1,210 women gave their experiences and views on gender based violence. As a result of the findings of the scan survey, a qualitative survey on violence against women was carried out where 200 women victims were interviewed. In addition, to this, a qualitative survey on youth offenders was also conducted to supplement the findings of the main victimization survey.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

1)   To find out the various forms of abuse suffered by women;

2)   The socio-economic characteristics of the abuser;

3)   Impacts of the abuse on the victims;

4)   The types of services and assistance offered to victims;

5)   Suggestions on the way forward.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

Economic abuse. One in every four women suffers from economic, physical or emotional abuse. Half of all economically abused women are victims of non-payment of family maintenance, while one in every four of those interviewed, were forced to hand over their earnings to partners or family members and this happened on a frequent basis.

Physical abuse. Six out of every 10 women victims who were interviewed suffered from serious physical abuse by being hit with objects, having objects thrown at them or being choked and strangled. Three quarters of the victims also said that the abuse was perpetrated in the presence of other people with 73.3 % saying that this was perpetrated in the presence of children.

Emotional abuse. More than half of the respondents (110 out of 195) said that they suffer from serious emotional abuse. The perpetrators are either their husbands or family members with 66% of the victims saying that the abuse occurred in the presence of other people and 72% stating that the abuse takes place in front of children. Further more, the physical and social movements of 1 in every 7 emotionally abused women are being limited by their husbands.

Sexual abuse. More than one-third of women suffered from sexual abuse during the previous year with three out of every five incidences being gang rapes. One out of

every four cases of rape were gang rapes, which is a worrying phenomenon. Of those interviewed, one in 12 survivors of rape contracted HIV/AIDS.

OTHER KEY FINDINGS

1) Violence against women occurs in all constituencies of Nairobi and among all socio-economic groups in the city.

2) Only a few of the abuses are reported to the police, while only 12% of the reported cases result in actual arrest.

3) There is a cycle of violence; all respondents who suffered sexual abuse during childhood experience multiple forms of abuse later in life.

4) Three quarters of the abused women turn to informal support services provided by various social networks such as family and friends.

5) The vast majority of abusers are males and are known to the victims.

6) Two out of every five abusers were under the influence of alcohol while perpetrating the crimes.

7) Most women who have suffered abuse are too intimidated by cultural attitudes and state inaction to seek redress.

The findings of this survey have been documented in the publication titled "*Survivor's Speak"* which was launched on the 2nd of May 2002, at the recently concluded First World Urban Forum held at the UN headquarters in Nairobi from the 29th of April to the 3rd of May 2002.

The Safer Nairobi Project approach

Since then, the Government of Kenya, the Safer Cities Programme, the Nairobi City Council, the provincial administration, ITDG-EA and various stakeholders have been in the process of formulating and implementing a crime prevention strategy for the City of Nairobi. The Nairobi Project has adopted an integrated and multi-sectorial approach with a multiplicity of actors. The strategy adopts a two-pronged approach with the development of a medium term 6-months and a long-term 3-year city wide crime prevention strategy. This

will involve among other things the implementation of a 3-year plan of action and institutionalization of the project. The objective of the Safer Nairobi Project is "to reduce the level of crime and causes of crime in the city of Nairobi through a multi-sectorial and partnership crime prevention strategy".

The partnership approach developed includes the participation of various stakeholders both in the central and local government and civil society. The stakeholders include the Nairobi City Council, the Kenya police, Safer Cities Programme of UN-Habitat and ITDG-EA among others. Efforts have been made to create focal points in the central government and local authorities. In the field of violence against women, there are numerous organizations in Kenya that are working on reducing gender-based violence. Some of the key ones which were involved in the process and are playing various roles in the Nairobi project include FIDA-Kenya Chapter, Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), Population Communication Africa, and the Women's Rights Awareness Programme (WRAP).

This is the background against which the Safety Assessment Walk was held in an effort to kick-start a series of activities that will lead to a reduction in violence against women in Nairobi. This also served as a first step towards the implementation of the short–term strategy of the Safer Nairobi Initiative and as part of the year 2002 International Women's Day activities. This began with a sensitization campaign on the role of women in community and urban safety and was carried out by way of a safety assessment walk.

Safety audits

Definition - Audits are generally understood to mean the process of inspection, correction and verification. Women's safety audits on the other hand are used as tools for collecting information on public perceptions of urban safety in relation to the urban design.

The information generated in safety audits is used to create positive changes for a safer social and physical environment for women. This tool was developed in Canada to assess the safety of an area according to the opinions, experiences and perceptions of women.

The main goal of the safety audit is to reduce the opportunity for sexual assault or harassment and also lower the chance of other crimes.

NAIROBI'S SAFETY ASSESSMENT WALK

The Nairobi safety assessment walk, which served as the exploratory walk in Kenya, was carried out in early March 2002. The walk was planned to help design a more elaborate questionnaire for the development of future safety audits. It was also envisaged to kick-start the development of a women's safety audit tool kit, which will be implemented citywide and whose results will be presented to a city-wide public convention later in the year 2002. This safety walk was aimed at building awareness amongst the residents of Nairobi on what they can do in their neighbourhoods to improve their safety. It also seeks to sensitize the Nairobi City council, the Government of Kenya and the Kenya police on the importance and usefulness of involving women, and take into consideration their experiences and perceptions in policy making.

THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFETY ASSESSMENT WALK

The first stage in the design of the safety assessment walk involved the mapping out of the area to be covered in Nairobi's central business district. The areas mapped out included some main roads, back alleys, and small narrow pathways in the city center. A map covering those areas was then prepared and the routes to be used clearly marked out in order to guide the participants on the route to follow. A group of women, including representatives of women's organizations conducted the safety assessment walk, accompanied by some policy makers, representatives of the Nairobi City Council and the Kenya Police, some members of the business community and the Nairobi City Council, and under the technical guidance of UN-HABITAT.

The safety assessment walk took place during the evening of the 4th of March starting from a central point in Nairobi's City center. Each group was guided by a map and a number of guiding questions, which they kept in mind as they carried out the exercise. During the walk, the women discussed all aspects relating to the safety and insecurity of the area. Some

of the issues that the participants bore in mind related to lighting, visibility, the environmental surroundings, maintenance etc. Afterwards, the group met and held discussions on their experiences and made recommendations for changes in the urban design that will enhance the safety and reduce feelings of insecurity and opportunities for crime. The findings and recommendations made are in the section below.

FINDINGS OF THE NAIROBI PILOT URBAN SAFETY ASSESSMENT WALK

1) General perception of safety

a) Lighting and visibility

- Poor lighting created a sense of insecurity due to the fact that the women could not see if there was anyone lurking in the dark waiting to attack.

- The kind of lighting also varied in certain places. Some buildings had spotlights which were bright and lit up an entire area. Hence even though such a place had fewer people and a lot of traffic, the lighting itself made all the difference and enhanced feelings of safety.

- In other instances, where streets had poor lighting which was inadequate to illuminate all areas clearly, this also created feelings of insecurity.

- It was noted that though some streets had lampposts, many on various streets were not functional and were not serving the purpose for which they were installed.

- It was noted that every street that is poorly lit creates ideal grounds where criminals thrive. These streets were also ideal for invasion by street families and contributed to feelings of insecurity.

b) Physical design and maintenance

- There was general consensus from the women that they felt safer in areas where the buildings were widely spaced, and well maintained. This was attributed to the fact that dilapidated buildings and a dirty

environment with rubbish strewn all over created conducive environmental conditions for street families to live in.

- The back streets and certain secluded areas such as gardens and walkways which were occupied by street families and street boys (a common phenomenon in Nairobi) were found to be extremely insecure.

- The areas with demolished buildings were not safe to walk in as they create good hiding places for would-be offenders. This was made worse due to the fact that the areas were poorly lit and there were few security guards in the vicinity.

- Poorly maintained flower bushes which were overgrown created a sense of fear among the women as they felt that they created ideal hiding places for would be offenders.

- The presence of trees and other plants was acceptable so long as they were not too long or poorly kept blocking visibility and creating hiding places.

- The women also felt much safer in places with wider pavements compared to those that had narrow ones.

c) Population concentration

- The areas that were densely populated but in poorly maintained and cared for surroundings created a sense of insecurity. This was made worse if the lighting in the area was inadequate or non-existent.

- Bus stations with a high concentration of people coupled with a lot of unruly traffic were also considered as insecure areas.

- Some of the areas where the women felt safe and would walk without fear were areas where the population concentration was lower with adequate lighting and security personnel from different private companies. The presence of security guards made the women feel safer as there was someone who could help them in the event of any attacks taking place.

- The presence of people in various areas increased the feelings of safety. However, in areas where there were people such as busy bus stations which had a lot of commotion and hawking activities, many women felt insecure as they did not know who among the people in the vicinity were actually passengers waiting for vehicles or would be offenders.

d) Social and economic activities

- The different socio-economic activities in different areas also had a bearing on feelings of security. The areas occupied by hawkers often had high concentrations of people and though there was presence of a lot of people, there were still feelings of insecurity. This was attributed to the fact that not all who were posing, as hawkers were actually genuine as some are criminals.

- Prior knowledge of the areas which are considered as crime spots also created a sense of fear among the women therefore making them feel naturally insecure due to the dangerous history of the place.

- The areas that have social outdoor entertainment spots were also deemed to be safer than others due to the lighting and the presence of security personnel.

- Women felt safe in streets where certain economic activities such as banks were due to the lighting provided on the buildings and the presence of private security personnel.

- It was noted that there is a general breakdown in the social structure of society which has led to an increase in the level of crime and that people do not help others once attacked. This feeling was more on certain streets creating a sense of fear.

- It was also noted that though there were several police booths in different sections of the city center, these were not manned.

2) Conclusions

- The fear of crime is different for men and women.

- There is a difference between fear of crime and the reality of the risk of victimization: for instance the presence of street families and children created a high feeling of insecurity although not all street children are criminals. Mouth-to-mouth information on crime or media reports on crime can create feelings of insecurity that are not necessarily based on reality.

- "Broken Window Theory" - an area that feels taken care of and is well-maintained, increases feelings of safety because the people who use the area also feel taken care of. Furthermore, it will motivate its users to take care of and maintain the area as well.

3) Suggestions for improvement and ways forward

- The presence of the Nairobi City Council and the police need to be felt and seen.

- Building codes and council by-laws and regulations should be adhered to.

- A participatory and inclusive approach is required to address the issues of safety related to design. In particular, all users of an area, including hawkers and street families, need to be included.

- Commercial activities need to be promoted and revitalized throughout the city center to enhance social control.

- Hawking needs to become legitimized, organized and coordinated with police and the Nairobi City Council to use the presence of commercial activities in a positive way that enhances (feelings of) security.

- The capacity of the City Inspectorate Department of the Nairobi City Council needs to be strengthened and co-coordinated to enable them take on safety and security issues more effectively and also establish

ways in which they can play complimentary roles with the police to maintain safety in the city center.

- The concept of community policing needs to be strengthened, co-coordinated and given legal basis so as to adopt a collective responsibility to crime reduction and prevention in the City of Nairobi.

Why focus on Women's Safety Audits

1) Lack of safety affects women most and they are more at risk of being sexually molested.

2) The violation against women is a denial of fundamental human rights and treaties which are recognized under international treaties and various constitutional rights in any country, hence activities aimed at reducing gender violence should be supported.

3) Recommendations for the enhancement of human rights is central to development.

4) The violation of women also greatly undermines human and economic development and undermines peace, which is a basic prerequisite for any development activity.

5) The social and economic costs of violence against women are a cost that should be avoided at all costs not only due to the monetary implications especially in the poor countries of the developing world but more so due to the negative impact that the violations have both on the victim and the children who often watch their mothers abused by violent spouses or partners.

6) International research has indicated that women's perceptions and experiences of crime, violence and insecurity are crucial in designing effective urban planning, urban management and crime prevention policies and strategies. Because women are more vulnerable to violence and suffer more from feelings of insecurity, they are more sensitive towards those aspects of the built environment and of urban design that contribute to opportunities for crime and criminals and to fear of crime and violence. As

such, women's views, experiences and perceptions have to be taken into account in city policies, (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women - [METRAC], 1998).

7) Safety walks fill in gaps in existing data that are often not differentiated by gender or type of area (METRAC), 1998).

8) The links between urban design and planning though salient can clearly be marked out during safety audits. Though urban design and planning does not result in violence against women or assault of any kind, they create an environment that either enhances or reduces opportunities for these crimes to occur. The creation and construction of public spaces that are designed to enhance safety and feelings of safety reduce the opportunities for assault and violations of every kind to occur.

9) The participation of women in all aspect of urban development and the adoption of inclusiveness will ensure that the concept of "inclusive cities" is enhanced.

10) Lack of safety affects women most. Therefore, their inclusion in the decision making process to improve security will benefit not only the women but the entire community and city residents; "women's safety is community safety".

Challenges in safety audits

The envisaged challenges include the following: -

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

1. Prior knowledge of an area's history regarding crime may invoke unnecessarily high fear, which may lead to subjective decisions about a particular area and hence give biased recommendations.

2. The role of the media in highlighting crime may also lead to a high perception of crime which may not necessarily be the case in real life leading to subjective decisions being made towards the recommendations for improvement.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

3. The process of reviewing laws and regulations is often long and slow in many countries. In view of the long bureaucratic process, women who are often the victims of gender-based violence will be discouraged by the slow process of making improvements to enhance safety.

4. In some cases, the length of time taken to adopt and implement recommendations made after safety audits are carried out may also delay the progress of making cities safer places for all to live in.

5. Land use conflicts in areas where there have been persistent land use conflicts may create problems in the implementation of any recommendations made to make certain areas safer for women.

GENDER BIASES

6. Cultural bias and inhibitions in countries where women are still marginalized and not accepted as equal partners in the development process may act as a great hindrance in any urban development process that seeks to be inclusive.

7. Women, all over the world and especially in poor countries of the developing world comprise the largest majority of the poor. Their participation in urban development issues may therefore be overshadowed by high poverty levels especially in poor countries of the developing world where their participation in urban design and planning may not be a priority when they are more concerned about meeting their basic needs.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

8. Another great challenge in safety audits is the translation of the safety audit walks to make real change on the ground. The implementation of safety assessment walks results in setting high expectations in the community. In cases where changes are not forthcoming, this results in both disappointment and lack of trust by the community towards planners and all policy makers.

9. The design of safety audit tools also poses various challenges in its implementation due to the variances in different neighborhoods in terms of design and planning standards. This is especially the case while carrying out safety audits in informal settlements, which have different planning standards and designs as compared to formal neighborhoods.

10. Follow-up to ensure the implementation of recommendations may also be hampered by lack of resources and commitment to enable the implementation of any safety planning and management measures that are suggested.

GROUPS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

11. In order to have an objective safety audit it is crucial to include the participation and involvement of representatives of women from various sections in society. This includes those with disabilities such as the visually impaired, those on wheel chairs, women from marginalised areas such as informal settlements etc. to take into consideration the views and different needs of different groups. In instances where not all the groups are adequately represented, this means that their points of view may not be adequately reflected hence reducing the impact of the envisaged results.

TIMING

12. Crime rates in different cities differ depending on the time of day or time of the year, which presents a great challenge in terms of reaching a decisive conclusion in terms of making concrete recommendations. This is especially the case in instances where there are inadequate resources to carry out the safety audits at different occasions.

Recommendations and the way forward

1. There is need to lobby for the inclusion of safety audits as a key tool in participatory urban planning. This is in view of the fact that no city in the world can boast of being free from acts of violence against women. This would serve as a gateway to lobby for

improved and safer cities where women can walk, relax and work freely at all times without fear of crime.

2. The crucial role that victimization surveys and violence against women surveys play in informing safety audits and planning cannot be overruled. The surveys add value to the process by informing both the city residents, policy makers and planners on the overall levels and types of crime, their incidence, the perceptions of crime and the suggestions to make cities safer places to live and work in. The role of research is therefore central in safety planning. This also underlines the importance of creating links between research and practice in the development process.

3. It is also crucial to popularize the concept of *safety audits* to all for wider acceptance not only by the policy makers for use as a planning and management tool but also to citizens.

4. Efforts to institutionalize the process in the local authorities should be made in all countries as violence against women transcends, race, color and economic status.

5. There is also need to increase city-to-city networking within countries and regions for purposes of lesson learning and creating strategic alliances in the development of a holistic approach to crime prevention and gender-based violence.

Conclusions

Women's safety audits serve as a useful tool not only in highlighting the links between safety, design and planning but also increase awareness on violence against women and other vulnerable groups. It is also a useful tool to raise awareness among policy makers and an action-oriented way of involving them in the needs identification of vulnerable groups.

The adoption of safety audits as a tool in participatory urban planning should therefore be advocated and endorsed in all city-planning strategies. This will not only enhance the concept of "inclusive cities" but also serve as a tool to ensure women's active participation in urban development.

In Nairobi, the Safer Nairobi Project is committed to start the implementation of safety audits at the city-wide level starting in June 2002. The findings of these will be shared to the residents at the constituency level workshops and eventually at the Safer Nairobi Convention to be held later in the year to all residents of Nairobi. It is envisaged that this initiative aimed at reducing gender-based violence among other activities will contribute towards achieving the aim of making *Nairobi the safest and greatest place to live in.*