

Safe Cities for Women in South Africa



A shocking one in three women will face gender based violence in her lifetime. This number is especially high in cities in South Africa, holding women back in their opportunities. The aim of this project is to make cities in South Africa safer, by focusing on improvements in public transport.

Location: South Africa

Project duration: Nov 2017 – Dec 2019

Total project cost: €205.684

Funding gap: investments can range from €50.000 to full project costs

Context & background

Currently around 54% of the world's population is living in urban settings and this number is projected to grow to 66% by 2050. Rapid urbanization leads to an increase of women and girls' visibility and mobility, but also increases their vulnerability. Violence against women in cities around the world has become increasingly common and is one of the highest risks women face in public spaces.

Sexual harassment including catcalling, unwanted sexual gestures, comments or requests for sexual relations and assault including rape occur on a daily basis, and are often dismissed and normalized by police, communities, local leaders and by women themselves. This is hindering women's ability of living their lives fully as many feel forced to change their behaviour or avoid school or work due to fear of violence.

The good news is women around the world are already coming together, calling on governments, businesses, leaders and individuals to act now for safe cities for women. In ActionAid's country programs, women are demanding that their governments start making women's safety a priority.

Currently our Safe Cities Programme is running in Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Liberia, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

In South Africa, one of the main issues holding women back is sexual harassment in public transport. In the next two years, ActionAid plans to partner with women and other key stakeholders in South Africa to push for more investment in safe public transport and a central role for women in the design and decision making processes of urban planning.

Public transport in Johannesburg

When ActionAid asked young urban women to take a return train ride around Johannesburg, results were very disturbing.

They talked to 87 passengers and gathered information about women's access to public trains. Of the 51 women surveyed during the activity, 61% said they had witnessed violence or harassment against women. Two thirds of them said services had worsened and that more security is required on trains and at train stations.

These findings are in line with ActionAid's baseline research 'Women and the City III' involving over 3,000 women and girls from seven countries.

Download the full publication at www.actionaid.nl/safecities



What we could achieve together

ActionAid will work together with partners in South Africa to support women and girls living in poverty and exclusion in urban slums to have increased safety, public transport and access to justice and Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS). The programme will span a period of two years (November 2017 - December 2018). Our partners will be building on their current work on Safe Cities and already established multi-sector partnerships. Together with your support, we will ensure that:

Outcome 1: Communities, government and authorities – including City of Johannesburg officials, South African police staff, taxi drivers and rank marshals – partner to provide women with the safe, accessible and quality public transportation they need.

- We will host a number of national seminars and conventions on urban mobility, public hearings on public transportation and lobby and negotiation meetings with decision makers.
- Together with the communities and authorities we will develop a best practice model for public transport. It will contain, among others, an analysis of the state of public transport and a review of law enforcement regarding incidents on buses, vans, subway and trains.
- ActionAid Brazil's mobile app on urban mobility, that allows women to mark unsafe places, will be tested and implemented in South Africa. Police are encouraged to create female friendly and safe reporting mechanisms.

Outcome 2: The capacity of women, girls and social movements to demand Gender Responsive Public Services and safe cities has increased

- Women and girls will receive training in negotiation skills, leadership, mobilisation, networking and campaigning.
- We will develop innovative ways for women to inform and activate other community members through the production of videos, cultural events, music and theatre. Local partners and activists will be supported to travel to other communities to learn from one another. A total of 40.000 community members will be reached.

Outcome 3: Media attention and public pressure on authorities to put in place Gender Responsive Public Transport have increased

- We will build awareness of 380 government officials and service providers on the issue of safe public transport for women. By doing this, we will not only provide information and data on the issue, but also make government officials and service providers accountable to their citizens.
- We will develop a video to create awareness about how precarious transport services in cities can be. Media actions will be developed to engage the general public and messaging campaign materials will be developed, including articles, pamphlets, meetings with journalists, debates at education institutions (such as universities and colleges) to discuss experiences and generate ideas on public transport safety.
- A Scorecard will be developed on the status of Gender Responsive Public Services in large cities. This Scorecard will provide a safety ranking and can act as both a monitoring and evaluation tool as well as a media exposure tool.

How this project will lead to lasting impact

The sustainability of our Safe Cities for Women project can only be ensured if we collaborate closely with key stakeholders. All project ideas have been developed together with local activists, students and women's groups. They have oftentimes experienced or witnessed violence first hand, they can identify the dangers in their neighbourhood and they know best how these issues should be addressed.

The women's groups will be working closely with municipalities who are responsible for urban safety and are the main providers of gender responsive public services. However, government officials often disregard solutions due to lack of funding. We therefore make sure that we not only campaign against the lack of GRPS in cities, but also provide alternatives and how best to implement and fund the required public services. By involving the media, women's groups will increase public pressure on governments to address the issues raised in the reports and scorecard.



Project cost

Our Safe Cities for Women programme is running in multiple countries. Similar activities in Brazil and Liberia have already shown promising results. The costs of the full project in South Africa are €205,684 but can be downscaled or co-funded. With your investment we can implement the project in South Africa and carry out this indispensable work.

Contact

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Together we have the power to change the future.

Join us!