**BECAUSE I AM A GIRL: GLOBAL ANALYSIS**

Findings from the Because I am a Girl:

Urban Programme Study in Delhi,

Hanoi, and Kampala

Introduction

For the first time in history, there are more people living in cities than in rural areas. Each month, 5 million people move to cities in developing countries. By 2030, it is estimated that 1.5 billion adolescent girls will be living in urban areas.[[1]](#footnote-1) *Girls in cities contend with the duality of increased risks and increased opportunities.* On the one hand, girls face sexual harassment, exploitation, and insecurity as they navigate the urban environment through the streets and public spaces, while on the other hand they are more likely to be educated and politically active and less likely to be married at an early age.

While global debate surrounding gender equality is on the rise and statistical information collected on women and children is increasing, there remains little available information about girls and young women. Academic and development institutions alike have in the past overlooked the interaction between sex, age, safety, and urbanization. Specifically, urban safety and crime prevention initiatives tend to overlook adolescent girls and restrict women’s safety issues to adult women in the domestic sphere.

The Because I am a Girl Urban Programme was developed by Plan International, together with UN-Habitat and Women in Cities International, as part of the Global Girls Innovation Programme. The Urban Programme is a ground-breaking initiative that seeks to close existing gaps between urban programming targeting either ‘youth’ or ‘women’ by focusing on adolescent girls who are often the most vulnerable and excluded population in a city. The programme seeks to build safe, accountable, and inclusive cities with and for adolescent girls in all their diversity. One of the premises of BIAAG-UP is that gender inequalities and violence in the domestic sphere are intimately linked with the public sphere. Therefore, creating safer cities for girls will positively affect the ability of girls to access the services they require to protect themselves at home. The intended outcomes of the Because I am a Girl Urban Programme are:

1. Increased girls’ safety and access to public spaces.
2. Increased active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance.
3. Increased girls’ autonomous mobility in the city.

The baseline research was conducted by Plan International country offices to compliment the rapid situational assessment that was carried out in 2012 and 2013 to better be able to understand issues related to the safety and inclusions of adolescent girls. If the safety of adolescent girls is to be improved, we must become aware and responsive at national, community and individual levels to the current issues faced by girls in urban environments. Those concerns must be confronted in a collaborative manner. The safety of adolescent girls is a shared responsibility and thus communities must work together at all levels of change in order to challenge sexual harassment and abuse of adolescent girls in public spaces.

The objectives of the study were to understand the issues related to adolescent girls safety in streets and public spaces and to generate information and data that can serve as a benchmark and a tool for monitoring and evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

In order to generate relevant and meaningful information, several data collection tools were used. These tools were consistent across all cities to ensure that similar data was collected in each location. Although uniformity of data collection was a priority throughout the study, emphasis was also placed on local adaptations and appropriation to be sure that they are culturally sensitive and meaningful. The data collection tools include a policy review, key informant surveys, the girls’ empowerment star for safe and inclusive cities, and street surveys.

The policy review tool is a qualitative method of analysis that reviewed existing national and local policies and programmes that are currently in place and relevant to the safety of adolescent girls in streets and public spaces and in the country in general. Key informant surveys is a quantitative tool that provides information on how a broad range of key public officials and community leaders view adolescent girls’ safety. The girls’ empowerment star is both a qualitative and quantitative tool that allows adolescent girls and boys to communicate their perceptions, opinions and safety concerns surrounding five dimensions of safety and inclusion. Finally, street surveys covered a wide-range of participants by use of a questionnaire to gather the perceptions of adult men and women about the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on public transit. Below is a table demonstrating the tools, indicators, and some of the programme’s key findings.

Programme Indicators and Baseline Findings

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Programme Goal | | | | | |
| Programme Goal | Indicators | Tools / Source | Key findings (% according to indicators) | | Use of information |
| To build safe, accountable, and inclu­sive cities (streets and public spaces) with and for girls in all their diversity. | Proportion of girls who report that they always feel safe in public spaces in their city. | - Girls’ Empowerment Star (GES) | Kampala | 14 | To track girls’ perception of safety and inclusion. |
| Hanoi | 13 |
| Delhi | 4 |
| Proportion of adolescent girls who start to actively participate in governance issues related to girls’ safety during the programme period. (baseline numbers) | - Girls’ Empowerment Star (GES)  - Policy Review Tool  - Key Informant Interviews (KII) | Kampala | 7 | To track girls’ participation in governance. To inform and shape policies that promote girls’ participation. |
| Hanoi | 23 |
| Delhi | 18 |
| New laws / strategies / policies on urban develop­ment taking into account adolescent girls’ right to participate and/or their safety. | -Policy Review Tool, including statistics and progress reports that mention the development in laws / strategies / policies | Kampala | N/A | To influence laws / policies / strategies to increase girls’ access to safe and inclusive public spaces. |
| Hanoi | N/A |
| Delhi | N/A |
| Programme Outcomes | Indicators | Tools and/or Source | Key Findings | | Use of information |
| 1. 1. Increased girls’ safety and access to public spaces. | % of girls who report always feeling safe when in public spaces. | - Girls’ Empowerment Star (GES)  -Street Surveys | Kampala | 14 | To track girls’ perception of safety and inclusion. |
| Hanoi | 13 |
| Delhi | 4 |
| 1. 2. Increased girls’ active and meaningful partnership in urban development and governance. | Perceptions of adolescent girls changes in their ability to participate in urban development and governance. (What percentages of girls ‘always’ participate?) | - Girls’ Empowerment Star (GES) | Kampala | 7 | To track girls’ participation in governance. |
| Hanoi | 23 |
| Delhi | 18 |
| Perceptions of public officials of the value of girls’ participation. (those who place high value on girls’ participation) | - Key Informant Interviews (KII) | Kampala | 100 | To inform and shape policies that promote girls’ participation. |
| Hanoi | 65 |
| Delhi | 75 |
| 1. 3. Increased girls’ autonomous mobility. | % of girls who report experiences of sexual harassment when using transportation services. (girls who report experiences of sexual harassment ‘always’, ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’) | - Girls’ Empowerment Star (GES)  - Street Surveys | Kampala | 45 | To track girls’ experiences of sexual harassment. To track by-standers awareness to intervene in incidents of sexual harassment on transportation. |
| Hanoi | 73 |
| Delhi | 54 |

These data collection tools led to several key findings. In accordance with the indicator, what percentage of girls ‘always’ feel safe in public spaces, findings reveal that adolescent girls across all of the cities do not feel safe in public places. For instance, in Kampala, only 14 percent of girls said they ‘always’ feel safe, while 13 percent of girls in Hanoi and 4 percent in Delhi ‘always’ felt safe.

In addition, information pertaining to the proportion of girls who actively participate in governance issues that relate to their safety as well as the perceptions of public officials of the value of girls’ participation was gathered. Information gathered using the girls’ empowerment star tool reveals that only 7 percent of girls in Kampala said that they are ‘always’ involved in issues related to their safety, while 23 percent in Hanoi and 18 percent of girls in Delhi agree. In Delhi, 75 percent of government officials think that girls’ participation is valued, while 65 percent of stakeholders in Hanoi agree. In Kampala, 80 percent of stakeholders said that girls’ participation in city development is completely important and 20 percent agreed that it is mostly important.

With regard to girls’ safety when using public transportation services, research shows that merely 6 percent of girls in Hanoi said that they ‘always’ feel safe on public transportation, while 12 percent in Kampala and 14 percent in Delhi said that they ‘always’ feel safe when using transportation services. These findings are an indicator of the outcome, increased girls’ autonomous mobility, and signify that girls in all of the cities do not feel confident in the safety of public transport services.

An indicator of the programme goal is the creation and implementation of new laws and policies and/or the reevaluation of existing laws and policies on urban development that take into account adolescent girls’ right to participate and their safety. The policy review tool is the beginning of a reevaluation of existing policies in order to ensure they better accommodate the safety and inclusion of girls. The information gathered, together with adolescent girls, was to validate the need for new laws and policies that affect girls’ safety and inclusion and revision of existing laws and policies.

While the Because I am a Girl Urban Programme defines adolescence as being between the ages of 13 and 18, local age definitions do not always agree. In practice, therefore, the age range for participants in the programme is from 11-23 years old. In each city, girls who attended schools were included in the baseline process. However, each research team made a particular effort to reach adolescent girls who were excluded from mainstream urban groups. For instance, efforts were made to reach marginalized girls, such as out-of-school girls, working girls, and differently-abled girls. From young migrant workers in Hanoi to sex workers in Kampala, the diversity of participation was vast[[2]](#footnote-2).

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF DATA COLLECTION

Although the street survey was a cost effective method to reach a large number of respondents in a small window of time, there were a number of limitations. The nature of a crowded bus terminal posed a threat to the data collectors of losing their electronic devices and to their personal security. In addition, although the questions were designed specifically to be quick and straightforward, many respondents had to skip some answers in order to catch a bus.

In Hanoi and Kampala, there was hesitation on behalf of some government officials to reveal their opinion, in fact a repressive climate and issues with political instability deemed it impossible in some cases. In Hanoi, of 83 invitations sent, only 65 responded and many skipped open-ended questions[[3]](#footnote-3). In Kampala, after making several attempts to fix appointments with directors within the Kampala Capital City Authority, data was collected from political leaders who were more cooperative than the technical team[[4]](#footnote-4).

Another limitation was the fact that sexual harassment on public transport cannot be easily measured. Proxy indicators were used to overcome this issue. More specifically, estimates of the prevalence of sexual harassment for girls on buses is derived from the percentage of street survey respondents who think sexual harassment is a risk for girls on buses, and the frequency of examples of sexual harassment on buses reported during the GES focus group discussions[[5]](#footnote-5).

A further limitation to be addressed is the issue of underreporting occasions of sexual harassment and abuse, which may often be the result of social conventions that blame the victim. Victim blaming not only deters girls from coming forward about their experiences and concerns, it also embeds a sense of shame in victims that encourages repressive solutions on girls rather than addressing male cultural attitudes and behaviours. Victim blaming is a consequence of gender inequality where females are less valued than males and are held responsible for being sexually harassed.

MAIN FINDINGS AND EMERGING THEMES

**Part 1. Increased girls’ safety and access to public spaces**

Information that was gathered from the girls’ empowerment star and the street survey was evaluated to find the percentage of girls who report feeling (un)safe in public spaces. Findings indicate that girls in each city cope with severe feelings of insecurity and fear while in public spaces. Girls’ perceptions of their own safety vary according to elements such as location, time of day, whether or not they are alone, etc. However, across all groups, adolescent girls felt that they are living with severe risks of being sexually harassed and/or abused when occupying public spaces. In Kampala, 33 percent of adolescent girls said that girls *never* felt safe in public spaces, whilst 32.5 percent respectively stated girls *always* feel safe in public places.  In Hanoi, only 13 percent of girls reported that they *always* felt safe in public places. Findings from Delhi further demonstrate the lack of perceived safety where only 3.4 percent of girls stated that girls or girls like them *always* feel safe in public spaces. Figure 1 below summarizes the views of adolescent girls on their own safety in all three cities, while figure 2 demonstrates this information for each city separately.

*Overall, 27 percent of all girls across all three countries, according to information gathered from the girls’ empowerment star, said that they never feel safe in public places. Conversely, less than 10 percent of all girls said that they always feel safe in public places, as shown in figure 1.*

**Figure 2. Do adolescent girls feel safe when walking in streets? (By %)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never | | | Seldom | | | Sometimes | | | Often | | | Always | | |
| **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | |
| **Hanoi** | 13 | | 4 | 15 | | 13 | 35 | | 34 | 35 | | 36 | 8 | | 13 |
| **Kampala** | 40.2 | | 32.5 | 15.9 | | 12.9 | 27.1 | | 30.7 | 12.2 | | 9.8 | 4.7 | | 14.1 |
| **Delhi** | 32.9 | | 37.8 | 25.7 | | 24.4 | 24.3 | | 26.7 | 10 | | 6.7 | 7.1 | | 4.4 |

The majority say that avoiding these situations is all they can do. These findings uncover a crucial need for improvements in public awareness of adolescents’ safety issues, community attitudes towards adolescent girls in public spaces and urban planning that better accommodates adolescent girls’ needs and political will at the municipal and national level to address these issues.

In terms of government responsibilities to address issues of widespread safety concerns for adolescents, information analyzed in the policy review shows that policies to protect adolescents, and adolescent girls in particular, exist at the national and local level. For example, the Ugandan Gender Policy emphasizes equal rights and protection between men and women, boys and girls. Specific mention is made to the rights of more vulnerable groups such as children and women. In addition, the Kampala Capital City Authority underlines the functions of the city that are relevant to what was identified as areas of concern for adolescent girls. Services such as installment and maintenance of proper street lights, organized traffic, assist in the maintenance of law, order and security, as well as planning of parks and other public spaces.

Similarly, in Delhi the National Policy for Children specifically discusses adolescent girls as a special focus and refers to the role of the state to protect and provide “safe environments for all children, to reduce their vulnerability in all situations and to keep them safe at all places, especially public spaces”[[6]](#footnote-6).

In order to facilitate change, it was important for researchers to identify the details of incidents of sexual harassment to adolescent girls. The intention is to identify trends in order to reduce incidents of sexual harassment effectively. Several similarities have been noted across all three cities with respect to common forms of harassment to adolescent girls in public spaces and in transit. The most commonly mentioned forms of harassment include: sexual harassment, stalking, staring, inappropriate touching, flashing and teasing. More severe forms of sexual assault, including rape and kidnapping/trafficking, were also identified as risks. Murder was mentioned as a risk across all three cities, albeit by a small amount in Hanoi, and it was indicated as usually following incidents of rape. In Delhi, 24 percent of officials reported that murder has become an issue for adolescent girls, while 3 and 27 percent of officials in Hanoi and Kampala respectively agreed. Robbery was also seen as a frequent danger for young girls. In Hanoi, next to sexual harassment, being robbed was the biggest risk in public places. Robbery accounted for 44 percent of perceived risk as indicated by stakeholders. Figure 3. summarizes these findings.

**Figure 3. Most frequent forms of harassment against adolescent girls (by %)**

Perceptions of the various stakeholders (findings from key informant surveys)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Hanoi | Kampala | Delhi |
| **Forms of Harassment** | N=65 | N=65 | N=75 |
| Sexual harassment | *67* | *96* | *89* |
| Stalking/ touching/ flashing/ teasing | *65* |
| Robbery | *44* | *27* | *37* |
| Sexual Assault or rape | *22* | *70* | *57* |
| Murder | *3* | *27* | *24* |
| Other | *13* | *17* | *0* |
| No risk | *8* | *5* | *3* |

Note: Total exceeds 100 due to multiple responses

Where and when harassment occurs

Participants of street surveys, girls’ empowerment star sessions, and key informant surveys were asked to identify the most common places adolescent girls face sexual harassment and abuse. Across all three cities, the results show that girls face a high risk of harassment or assault when travelling on roadsides, in market places, on buses and at bus stations, in parks, beaches and public squares, and when using public toilets. In Kampala and Delhi, roadsides were singled out as the most dangerous place for adolescent girls by 91 percent and 71 percent of respondents respectively. In Hanoi, train/bus stations, parks, and public toilettes were rated more dangerous for adolescent girls than streets and roadsides. Females feel more vulnerable using public toilets at train stations and bus stops.

Adolescent girls and boys said they felt the highest level of vulnerability occurs in overcrowded and in deserted places. For example, in Kampala, the centenary park is subject to severe overcrowding and minimal security, which causes adolescents to gather in less open and less safe places where they are more vulnerable to abuse[[7]](#footnote-7). On the contrary, girls in Hanoi feel safer going out during the day because public places are filled with people, compared to the empty streets at night. However, it is without exception that participants feel unsafe when they encounter situations where drugs or alcohol are being consumed. In Kampala, for instance, drug abusers, followed by bodaboda drivers, and taxi drivers were named the most common perpetrators of sexual harassment and abuse.

Nighttime was universally identified as the most dangerous time of day for adolescent girls’ safety. For example, 42 percent of respondents in Hanoi linked the risk of harassment to darkness, but not daytime. This suggests that they may be unaware when it comes to risks of sexual harassment and the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces, because in fact a high volume of incidents of harassment occur during the day.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Frequency of Harassment and the Reaction of the Public

Harassment of adolescent girls is real and it is being witnessed at all hours of the day. In Hanoi, almost 37 percent of street survey respondents have witnessed different types of harassment happening to girls over the past year. In addition, 18 percent had witnessed it 2-5 times or more. Key informant surveys reinforce the finding that girls are unsafe in public places with more than half (61 percent) of respondents reporting that urban spaces are not safe for adolescent girls. In Hanoi, only 13 percent of girls always feel safe in public spaces. Figure 4 below shows the frequency of by-stander witnesses of sexual harassment in each city.

**Figure 4. Frequency of personally witnessing sexual harassment -findings from the street survey (by %)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| City | Never | Once | 2-5 times | More than 5 times |
| Hanoi | 63 | 19 | 13 | 5 |
| Kampala | 0 | 34.9 | 28.5 | 36.6 |
| Delhi | 0 | 30.4 | 23.6 | 46 |

In Kampala, only 3 percent of key informants reported that public spaces are safe for girls, and the highest percentage of respondents, nearly 60 percent, said that they are unsafe. These findings correspond with the street survey results and the girls’ empowerment star findings in Kampala.

In Delhi, perceptions of the public show a relatively high number of female and male respondents who believe that adolescent girls never face sexual harassment, 45 percent and 53 percent respectively. Conversely, some 25 percent of females and 19 percent of males felt that girls face sexual harassment 2 to 5 times a day.

**Part II. Increased autonomous mobility in the city for girls**

As with public spaces, the overwhelming majority of respondents in all three cities expressed concerns about the risks adolescent girls face while travelling on public transportation. Common means of transportation vary from one city to another, so specific modes of transport were taken into consideration to accommodate the reality of each city. Information was gathered in regards to the percentage of girls who report experiences of sexual harassment, types of harassment and the reactions of those who witnessed incidents in order to support the intended outcome of increasing girls’ autonomous mobility.

Community perceptions of safety on public transport

The baseline study revealed that risks associated with public transport include: theft, sexual harassment, inappropriate touching, staring, verbal abuse, and rape. It was stated that in Hanoi, risk of harassment on buses increases if a girl is young, or has little experience with the transportation system. This is because older girls, and those who have experience taking buses, tended to prepare themselves for incidents of theft or harassment. Namely, adolescent girls often carry with them items to protect themselves such as hairpins or other possessions that may be used as a weapon of self-defense. As a means of safety and self-protection, carrying weapons and taking self-defense courses was also common in Delhi and Kampala. Again this is symptomatic of the “blame it on the victim” culture and a consequence of putting the responsibility of safety on girls’ shoulders rather than acknowledging that safety issues are a shared responsibility among different stakeholders (at the institutional, community and individual levels).

As indicated above, in the girls’ empowerment star sessions, girls were asked to rate how safe they feel on public transportation. In Hanoi, 35 percent of girls stated that they *sometimes* feel safe travelling by bus. Conversely, 23 percent of adolescent girls believed that girls are *rarely* safe, and only 6 percent of girls perceived girls’ safety on buses as *always safe*.

Bus drivers and conductors are not only reported for sexually harassing girl passengers, they are also accused of being rude or verbally abusing girls. Poor transit conditions, such as overcrowding, were unanimously mentioned as a reason harassment occurs. For example, buses are often overcrowded and allow perpetrators the opportunity to inappropriately touch or fondle female passengers. As with public spaces, general public respondents and government staff who were interviewed in Hanoi rated theft on buses as the highest risk overall, 62 percent and 65 percent respectively. In Kampala, sexual harassment, such as stalking, touching, and flashing, were given the highest rating by both men and women, 87 percent and 89 percent respectively. Sexual harassment was also the highest rated risk for girls travelling by bus in Delhi, comprising 90 percent of the risk as perceived by females.

In Kampala, public taxis, bodabodas, and bicycles are the most common means of transportation and also represent the highest risk for adolescent girls’ safety. Bodabodas are particularly dangerous since they take only two people at once, including the driver and the passenger. This puts adolescent girls at a dangerous disadvantage. Bodaboda and taxi drivers were singled out as the most common perpetrators of sexual harassment, often using sexist or obscene language towards girls in Kampala.

According to the girls’ empowerment star session in Delhi, the majority of girls do not feel safe when using public transportation. When asked how frequently they experience sexual harassment when using public transport, nearly 54 percent of all female participants reported that they *always, often*, or *sometimes* face such situations. As a main indicator of girls’ autonomous mobility, it was significant to find that more than half of 225 adolescent girls were experiencing sexual harassment, which undoubtedly impacts their ability to move freely within Delhi and underlines the question of access to services and opportunities that a city can offer. Taxis are also perceived to be extremely dangerous for girls living in Delhi. Through focus group discussions with girls, it was suggested that the safest mode of transportation was the metro. Buses and taxis were deemed less safe, especially at night. The study further revealed that the only time adolescent girls feel safe on buses is when they are travelling with a parent or someone older

According to findings from the girls’ empowerment star in all three cities, 21 percent of adolescent girls stated that they *never* feel safe when using public transportation. This is compared with 11 percent of girls who say that they *always* feel safe when using transportation services (see Figures 5 and 6.)

**Figure 6. Findings from the GES on girls’ safety on public transportation**

Do adolescent girls experience sexual harassment when using transit? %

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never | | | Seldom | | | Sometimes | | | Often | | | Always | | |
| **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | |
| **Hanoi** | 8 | | 7 | 25 | | 16 | 38 | | 35 | 35 | | 36 | 0 | | 6 |
| **Kampala** | 31.8 | | 30.1 | 11.2 | | 11.7 | 30.8 | | 34 | 13.1 | | 11.7 | 13.1 | | 11.7 |
| **Delhi** | 1.4 | | 22.7 | 35.7 | | 23.6 | 30 | | 30.2 | 17.1 | | 9.8 | 15.7 | | 13.8 |

**Part III. Increasing girls’ active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance**

Evaluation of girls’ participation in development and governance issues that relate to their safety is used as an indicator of the outcome, increased girls’ active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance. The tools used to measure this outcome were Key Informant Survey and the Girls Empowerment Star. This information provides a basis to track girls’ participation as the programme moves forward in its aims as well as to inform and shape policies that promote girls’ participation. Three dimensions were evaluated in the baseline survey to measure the level of active and meaningful participation of adolescent girls in development and governance:

1. Girl’s ability to voice their opinions,
2. Opportunities to participate, and
3. Feeling valued.

Girls’ ability to voice their opinions

Both girls and boys in the three cities were asked if girls were able to speak out and express their views in ‘public’ discussions. Information about how often and to what extent adolescents felt they could express themselves on issues that relate to their safety was used as an indicator for the outcome to increase girls’ active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance. During the Girls Empowerment Star focus group discussions in Hanoi, many girls and boys indicated that they are unable to express their opinions to teachers and parents; only 2 percent felt that they could always do so. Girls and boys rated their ability to “voice out opinions” 2.9 and 2.8 out of 5 points respectively.

Adolescents felt unable to speak out because parents and teachers regularly give the impression that they have no time or patience to hear them out when they attempt to express what they think. Rather, parents decide important issues that relate to adolescents for them. Instead of engaging in an open dialogue with adults, adolescents often find an outlet through peers or over social media. In Kampala, findings from the Girls Empowerment Star also suggest an inability amongst adolescent girls to voice their opinions. Some 35 percent stated they that were *sometimes* able to speak up, while 20 percent of participants reported they *never* or *seldom* voiced their opinions to adults. In Delhi, half of the girls reported that they *seldom* or *sometimes* speak up about matters in front of adults. Girls from Delhi explained in a GES FGD session that a common belief is that “*Girls are supposed to go to their in-laws one day so it is better not to speak too much*”[[9]](#footnote-9).

**Figure 7. Ratings from the GES on girls’ ability to voice out their opinions.**

Do adolescent girls say what matters to them in front of an adult? %

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never | | | Seldom | | | Sometimes | | | Often | | | Always | | |
| **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | |
| **Hanoi** | 6 | | 0 | 33 | | 29 | 46 | | 53 | 19 | | 16 | 2 | | 2 |
| **Kampala** | 17.8 | | 8 | 16.8 | | 12.9 | 57.9 | | 35 | 4.7 | | 22.1 | 2.8 | | 22.1 |
| **Delhi** | 7.1 | | 7.6 | 37.1 | | 18.7 | 24.3 | | 35.1 | 14.3 | | 13.8 | 17.1 | | 24.9 |

Notably, girls in Delhi who felt they had the ability to speak up were from families with financial security and had good educations. This suggests a correlation between freedom of expression, education, and financial security. Similar findings emerged in Kampala. It was observed that adolescent girls that are out of school had limited chances of being heard compared with their counterparts in school.

The view of girls and boys on girls’ participation

As a main indicator, it was essential to assess the current levels of participation among adolescent girls and the barriers that may stand in the way of greater involvement. Using the *Girls’ Opportunity Star* tool, GES participants in Hanoi rated the participation point highest among the five, with girls rating participation 3.51 out of 5 and boys gave girls’ participation 3.85 out of 5. Moreover, 55 percent of girls said that they *always* or *often* participate in decisions that affect them. Overviews of the findings from each country office are displayed in the figure below.

**Figure 8. Findings from the GES on girls’ level of participation in governance and urban development issues that relate to their safety**

Are adolescent girls able to participate in decisions that affect their community? %

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never | | | Seldom | | | Sometimes | | | Often | | | Always | | |
| **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | |
| **Hanoi** | 6 | | 4 | 4 | | 18 | 25 | | 23 | 37 | | 32 | 35 | | 23 |
| **Kampala** | 25.2 | | 41.7 | 20.6 | | 20.3 | 31.8 | | 22.1 | 13.1 | | 8.6 | 9.4 | | 7.4 |
| **Delhi** | 0 | | 12.9 | 27.1 | | 24.9 | 31.4 | | 32 | 18.6 | | 12.4 | 22.9 | | 17.8 |

School activities and leadership programmes are among the types of activities girls are engaged with. According to FGDs, most monitors and leaders at schools are females. However, it was noted that there was a lack of activities for adolescents outside of school or in relation to city planning and development.

In contrast, Key Informant Interviews with government officials said that numerous forums and activities for adolescents to participate do exist, pointing to a possible lack of awareness among adolescents. Yet, as noted by respondents who were aware of these forums or activities, they are often targeted at the ‘best’ and ‘brightest’ students, excluding the majority of adolescents. The chart below shows adolescent girls’ views from all cities on their own participation in urban development and governance in their communities.

Looking at each location separately, most adolescent girls in Kampala rated their involvement within the school community as being 2.5 out of 5, but this did not reflect their participation within the general community and outside of school. Working adolescents felt that apart from working to meet their needs, they were seldom involved in community development issues nor did they attend meetings. Overall, in Kampala, participation was given the lowest rating.

Girls in Delhi noted that discrimination between girls and boys prevented them from participating in development and governance issues. It was argued that boys are given permission to participate in many of the activities organized in the community and that society accepts their involvement with greater ease compared to girls. As noted in Hanoi, girls are given permission to become involved with school led activities, but their families prohibit them from participating in those organized at the community level. In addition, many older girls, most of whom are married, stated that they are too occupied with household chores to get involved with community activities. Isolating adolescent girls’ role to the domestic sphere diminishes concerns for her in the public sphere, which reaffirms the gender stereotype whereby girls are expected to contribute to the family exclusively by fulfilling domestic tasks.

Thus it can be inferred that many adolescent girls are willing and eager to participate in issues related to urban development and governance, but barriers such as lack of awareness and gender discrimination often prevent them from doing so.

Information gathered in the policy review phase of the baseline research put forth that both Uganda and India have national policies in place to ensure that women and girls have opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. The National Youth Policy of Uganda for instance, provides a framework for youth to participate in governance and development. It also reaffirms the right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse as well as the right to participate. These directly relate to the programme’s focus on safety and inclusiveness of adolescent girls. Similarly, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in India refers to requirement of local governing bodies to reserve seats for women and to lay a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local levels. However, there exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in these policies and programmes alike and the situational reality for adolescent girls.

The extent to which adolescent girls feel valued

With regard to the value placed on girls’ views and participation, findings are evaluated in accordance with the outcome: increase girls’ active and meaningful participation in governance. Therefore, perceptions of public officials on the value of girls’ participation were collected in addition to how girls themselves perceive their valuation by parents, community members, and public officials. The table below demonstrates the extent to which girls interpret how they are valued by society.

**Figure 10. Do girls feel valued by society? Findings from the GES (by %)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never | | | Seldom | | | Sometimes | | | Often | | | Always | | |
| **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | | **Male** | **Female** | |
| **Hanoi** | 2 | | 2 | 6 | | 20 | 17 | | 49 | 18 | | 51 | 12 | | 13 |
| **Kampala** | 9.4 | | 7.4 | 12.2 | | 11 | 27.1 | | 19 | 24.3 | | 22.1 | 27.1 | | 40.5 |
| **Delhi** | 12.9 | | 9.8 | 14.3 | | 14.2 | 11.4 | | 16.9 | 17.1 | | 19.1 | 44.3 | | 40 |

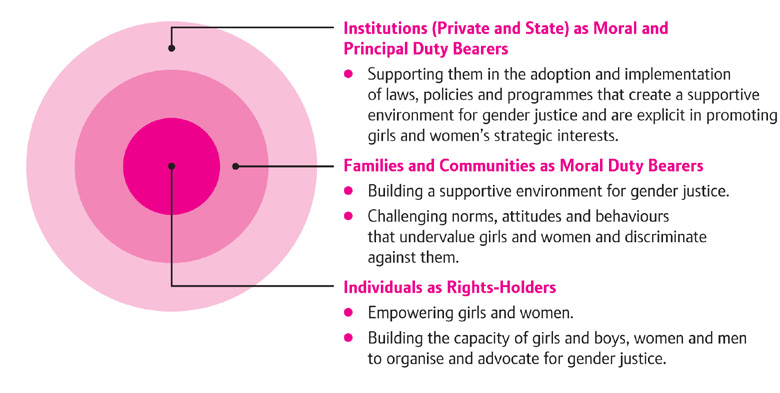
Girls from each city often spoke about feeling undervalued, or that their opinions were frequently overlooked and disregarded. Being listened to is crucial for adolescent girls to build self-esteem and feel valued. In general, girls felt that they are perceived as too young to contribute to urban development and governance. According to the majority of participants, parents and the community do care for them, however, that does not mean they value their views and opinions. Gender stereotyping came across as a prevalent factor in undervaluing adolescent girls. Notably, girls are valued for their contributions to the household, such as childrearing, cooking, but not perceived as able to contribute to issues relating to policy-making or urban development. Girls reported that they are valued as members of their household in terms of daily tasks and chores, but not as members of their community with the ability to activity contribute to issues relating to their safety. In Hanoi, many boys in GES FGDs articulated the view that girls are given less opportunity simply because they are the “weaker kind”[[10]](#footnote-10).

A positive finding in Kampala was that girls give themselves a relatively high sense of self-worth, acceptance, and value. The majority of girls participating in the study feel that their parents and teachers value them, and that this is important to their safety and inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

To make cities safer, more accountable and more inclusive for adolescent girls in all their diversity, every member of society has a role to play. This requires concerted efforts at all levels (institutional, family and community, and individual) to change attitudes and behaviours. This section, therefore, pulls together a series of recommendations based on the information gathered throughout the study, and the ideas proposed by participants. It is possible that each of the cities included in the study can become safer and more inclusive for adolescent girls if there are well-rounded efforts on behalf of the city and its institutions, by family members and communities, and by individuals – including both men and boys and women and girls themselves. In order to create sustainable and gender transformative change, we must work across these three aforementioned levels of change as shown below in Figure 7.

**Figure 11. Three levels of change for creating safe and inclusive cities that are sustainable and gender transformative**



The following overall recommendations are based on the perceptions and opinions of each community. Implementation requires local solutions to be crafted, in order to be locally relevant.

**Institutional level**

**Reviewing and improving existing laws and policies that directly affect the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on public transport** must be prioritized. To effectively change existing laws and policies, government (national and local) and local communities must work to further identify poor design and management of public spaces and transportation, but most importantly, ensure that laws, regulations and policies are changed to be gender sensitive, inclusive and child friendly.

To support the implementation of existing laws**, police and other government stakeholders must be able to better respond to adolescent girls’ issues of safety in public space and public transit and more effectively enforce laws.**

**Improvements in participatory urban planning processes are needed in order to increase adolescent girls’ involvement.** This would help to achieve better planning and design of public spaces, such as roads, buses, bus stops, parks, and public toilets.

**Building partnerships** is vital to improve the safety of girls by ensuring their fears and concerns are considered, and effective regulation and laws are implemented.

For adolescent girls’ safety, **training programmes should be arranged to sensitize** local authorities, city councils, and transport authorities and staff, among others, on the issues, fears, and concerns of adolescent girls in public spaces and on transportation.

**Family and Community**

**Effective strategies must be developed and carefully implemented to target cultural conceptions, social norms, and peer pressures that negatively affect the perception and treatment of adolescent girls.** Strategies might include carefully packaged messages and awareness campaigns in public spaces and on public transportation that address the issues of sexual harassment and bystander intervention.

**Sensitization campaigns should also specifically target public and private transport personnel, such as taxi drivers, conductors, and bodaboda drivers, to positively influence their behaviours and increase sensitivity about girls’ safety**.

**Individual level**

**Workshops and community activities should be initiated to involve adolescent girls and boys in community and urban development**.

To reach the programme goals and create safer more inclusive cities, **it is vital to build the capacity of adolescent girls to report harassment** **and support them in speaking up about these sensitive issues.**

Finally, **incorporating awareness and sensitization campaigns directed at men and boys in order to engage them in the development process is vital**.

CONCLUSION

Currently, adolescent girls in all three cities are regularly facing various forms of harassment and abuse in public spaces and on public transportation that negatively impact their use of the city, self-esteem and opportunities to learn and be involved in the socioeconomic development of their city. Not only are girls being harassed and abused in public, but adolescent girls are too often ignored or underrepresented in current policies and programming and are most excluded from urban development and governance processes, specifically those that relate directly to their safety. The findings from the study clearly show that there is a need for initiatives such as the Because I am a Girl Urban Programme in cities around the world today. The current report found that issues relating to the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces are regularly overlooked and/or disregarded by governments and communities. Building safe, accountable, and inclusive cities with and for girls takes great persistent, commitment, and coordination among all levels of change. By bringing city officials, communities, and adolescent girls together there is a real opportunity to create sustainable economic and social change within these societies that will benefit all citizens.

1. UN-HABITAT (2008), State of the World Cities Report 2008-2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Plan International, WICI, UN-HABITAT (2015). *Because I am a Girl Urban Programme: Global Analysis. Findings from the Baseline Study in Delhi, Kampala, and Hanoi,* P 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Plan Vietnam. *Because I am a Girl Urban Programme: Baseline Report.* P 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Plan India. *Because I am a Girl Urban Programme: Baseline Report.* P. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Plan Vietnam. *Because I am a Girl Urban Programme: Baseline Report*. P. 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Plan India, *Because I am a Girl Urban Programme Baseline Report.* P. 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Plan Uganda. *Because I am a Girl Urban Programme Baseline Report*. P. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Plan Vietnam. *Because I am a Girl Urban Programme Baseline Report.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Plan India. Baseline Report. P. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., P 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)