

Investigating Gender Based Insecurity & Mobility

Formative Qualitative Research in
Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Haiti



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Country Report

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Table of Contents

Research Team.....	3
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.....	5
Methodology	6
Preliminary Results	7
Areas of Intervention	11

Research Team

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Key Findings

This study of gender based insecurity in Addis Ababa found that women and girls are vulnerable in public and private spaces at any time to assault and harassment, though they are at greater risk for physical violence, including rape, at night. They sacrifice time, money, education, socializing, and their mental health to mitigate the risks they face moving around their community and the city.

Overall, men commit almost all of the violence described by participants. Much of the insecurity is blamed on unemployed young men that abuse drugs and alcohol. Some also linked unemployment with massive migration from other areas of the country to Addis Ababa. Two cultural factors seem to inform violence against women. First, society normalizes men and boys touching and saying inappropriate things to women and girls, which then leads to increasingly violent forms of abuse. Additionally, limited police response to gender-based violence creates a culture of impunity, which furthers a cultural acceptance of violence against women. Several strategies that draw from participant coping strategies and an analysis of the sources of insecurity can be explored and are detailed at the end of this report.

Introduction

Rapid urbanization is the most significant demographic shift taking place globally. By the year 2050, it is predicted that 70% of the world's population will be urban. The urban poor live in a state of chronic crisis and reside in extremely dense informal settlements without basic infrastructure or services. High levels of insecurity are of particular concern. Due to their unofficial status, density, high concentrations of poverty and, often, high turnover, urban informal settlements are either extremely difficult to police or effectively remain un-policed and ungoverned. While all residents of urban slums face significant insecurity and susceptibility to violent crimes, women are especially vulnerable.

The Gaps in Knowledge

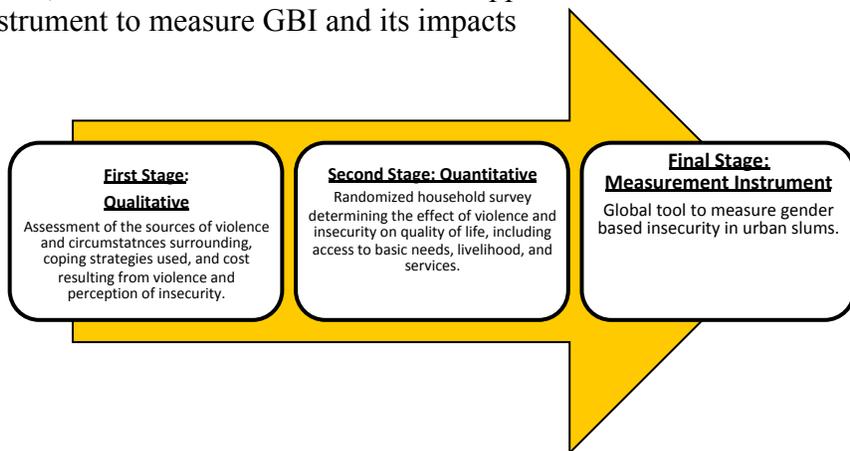
Women bear the brunt of this insecurity and find their mobility limited. Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to events of violence under various definitions. These range from verbal and emotional abuse to physical violence and sexual assault. But only looking at each event of violence leads to an incomplete understanding of how gender-based insecurity (GBI) impacts urban women. Even without an actual violent event, they face environments marked by enough insecurity that the sense of fear may have significant impacts. This insecurity may impact them in a myriad of different ways. Anecdotally, many women identify insecurity as the reason they are unable to seek care for illness, access social networks such as church groups, visit specific markets, take employment in certain areas or even use the toilet at night. Given their role as mothers and caretakers, this limitation can have further effects on child health and development. The general level of insecurity, the sources and types of insecurity and their effects are not well measured among women living in insecure urban slums and likely represents a large undocumented burden.

Primary Goal

This formative research seeks to determine the experiences, sources and effects of GBV and GBI among the urban extreme poor of Dhaka, Bangladesh; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the goal of informing the development of a pilot survey instrument to measure the prevalence and impact of GBI in selected urban slums of the same three cities.

Major Objectives

1. Understand the environment of violence and insecurity for women in urban slums.
2. Explore the effect of this insecurity on women in terms of their access to basic needs such as markets, water and sanitation, means of livelihood and social support.
3. Develop a pilot survey instrument to measure GBI and its impacts



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia¹

Ethiopia's diverse population diverse ethnic make-up, consisting of approximately 35% Oromo, 27% Amhara, 6% Tigray, and 6% Somali, with the remaining population partly composed of indigenous tribal groups. Ethiopia's current population is estimated to be approximately 102,400,000.² Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, is one of the fastest-growing cities in East Africa. According to Ethiopia's most recent census in 2007, Addis had a population of 3,384,569. Data are not yet available from a census planned to be undertaken beginning in 2017, but Addis's population is now estimated to be closer to 4 million.³ Administratively, Addis is organized into sub-cities, districts (*woredas*), and sub-districts (*kebeles*).⁴ While Ethiopia has a large agricultural sector with only 17% of the national population living in urban areas, Addis is home to approximately 25% of this urban population.⁴ As of 2015 Addis's economy was growing at 14% annually, contributing 50% to the country's GDP. Despite this growth, Addis remains home to some extremely poor and marginalized communities of informal

¹ Concern Worldwide Bangladesh Standardized Security Brief Pack

² Ethiopia Country Profile 2016. World Bank.

http://databank.worldbank.org/data/Views/Reports/ReportWidgetCustom.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ETH

³ Addis Ababa Population 2017. World Population Review. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/addis-ababa-population/>

⁴ "Women and the City: Examining the Gender Impact of Violence and Urbanisation." (2011). ActionAid.

http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/actionaid_2011_women_and_the_city.pdf

settlement residents and street-dwellers, with a poverty level estimated at 22%.⁵ Precise data on the numbers of Addis's population living in informal settlements is limited. Based on infrastructural indicators including living space characteristics and access to sanitation, nation-wide the proportion of the urban population living in informal settlements has been estimated as high as 80%, and Addis itself has been estimated to have among the highest proportion of informal settlement-dwelling residents world-wide.⁶ The majority of crime in Addis Ababa has been described as opportunistic petty crime such as pick-pocketing and robbery, however, these reports are predominantly focused on foreign travelers. More serious threats to personal security including as homicide and sexual assault have been reported in grey literature and NGO assessments focusing on the experiences of the urban poor in Addis.

Methodology

**Table 1:
Focus Group Participants**

Total Participants	40
Age	
Average Age	35.75
Age Range	18-73
Gender	
Male	20
Married	8
Single	10
Cohabiting with partner	2
Female	20
Married	7
Single	9
Widowed	2
Engaged	1
Other(?)	1
Education	
None	6
Primary	8
Secondary	26
Religion	
Orthodox	32
Protestant	5
Muslim	2
N/A	1

Participant Selection

To better understand the gender-based violence (GBV) and insecurity (GBI) experienced by informal settlement residents in Addis Ababa, qualitative data was collected with those living in sub-districts of an urban informal settlement area in the capital from October 25-November 3, 2017. A two-stage purposive sampling method was used to select focus group participants. Concern Worldwide recruited community members through a local partner organization serving the target population, poor and vulnerable persons in an Addis Ababa township, Addis Ketema. Five focus group discussions (FGDs) and four key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted. *Table 1* describes the demographics of the focus group participants. Key informants were recruited and chosen from among a selection of pre-identified categories of people, such as journalists, community leaders, and community health care workers. Ultimately, four key informants were recruited: a health officer, a church leader and two civil society organization leaders. A KII scheduled with a community police officer was canceled due to sensitivity concerns and study participant perceptions of the research team's neutrality. KIIs were conducted to gain an overview of the community's perspective on the prevalence and effects of gender based insecurity. Following one FGD, the two researchers identified a participant who had a unique perspective that seemed to be valuable for the study, and one in-depth follow-up interview was completed. All participants were at least 18 years old.

⁵Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Enhancing Urban Resilience. (2015). World Bank, Resilient Cities Program. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/559781468196153638/pdf/100980-REVISED-WP-PUBLIC-Box394816B-Addis-Ababa-CityStrength-ESpread-S.pdf>

⁶Situation Analysis of Slum Settlements in Addis Ababa. 2007. UN-HABITAT. <https://unhabitat.org/books/situation-analysis-of-slum-settlements-in-addis-ababa/situation-analysis-of-slum-settlements-in-addis-ababa/>

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

A variety of approaches were used to elicit information about community members' perceptions of their own neighborhoods and the ways in which they assess and mitigate risk as they move around the city. In addition to the question-guided discussions, these included listing, map analysis, and two types of conceptual mapping. All of these methods allowed participants to identify important locations within their spheres of mobility, the risks they face while traveling between these locations, and the ways in which they attempt to mitigate those risks. FGDs were conducted with groups of young, single women; older, married women; young, single men; older, married men; and a mixed gender group of young people. For each focus group, only one method was employed. Rather than ask explicitly about personal experiences, questions were posed indirectly, eliciting participants to volunteer personal experiences only when they felt comfortable. The semi-structured template guiding the discussions consisted of open-ended questions followed by prompts from moderators to explore important issues more deeply.

Data collection and translation was done in real time. Two members of the research team oversaw all data collection, with one serving as the moderator and the other as a note taker for each session. All interviews were conducted in Amharic. Two Ethiopian translators – one man and one woman – facilitated all focus group discussions and assisted with key informant interviews as necessary, with one individual appointed as primary translator for each session. With the permission of participants, sessions were audio recorded. All audio files are saved to a password-protected online database to which only the research team has access. Preliminary results presented in this report were acquired by analyzing interviews through content analysis strategies.

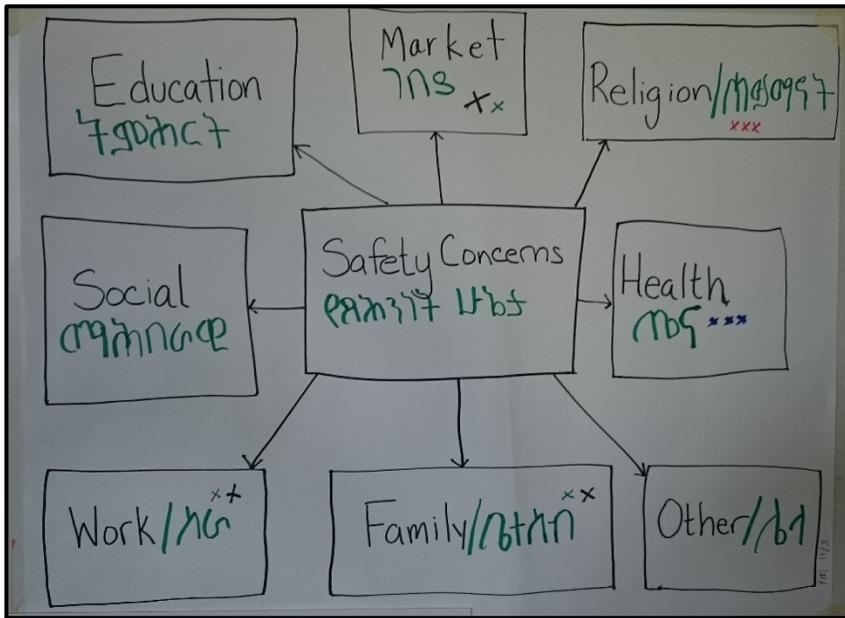
Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from Solutions IRB. Local approval was obtained through a community advisory board organized by Concern Worldwide Ethiopia. All participants were provided a copy of a translated oral consent script in Amharic. The translators also read the script aloud in Amharic to ensure participants with limited literacy understood the project and their decision to participate. Before beginning the interview, participants were given time to ask any questions regarding the study and the opportunity to excuse themselves from the study. No monetary compensation or other incentives were provided for participation. Sessions were conducted in a private space to ensure confidentiality.

Preliminary Results

Participants outlined a variety of forms and sources of violence in and around Addis Ketema where they live and the ways in which they cope with them. These themes are described in more detail below. It is worth noting that many people seemed hesitant or unwilling to discuss issues of safety in their community providing an incomplete reflection of the concerns, coping strategies, or impacts of insecurity in Addis Ketema.

Figure 1: Conceptual Impact Map by Young Men and Women



Safety Concerns

Men and women identified an array of concerns they have when moving around their community. There is a stark difference between what each gender is afraid of and the number of things that make them feel unsafe. The only common concern was pickpockets and thieves in markets, though this still affected women far more than men because women travel to the markets more often. Another similarity between the men and women discussants is that they agreed that nighttime was

more dangerous than the daytime because the likelihood of physical violence is higher. **Figure 1** is a conceptual impact map from a focus group discussion with young, single men and women.

Participants also described things that make them fearful but are not direct experiences of violence. Men said that they fear unknown areas because they are more vulnerable without any social network nearby. Some single men said that the presence of police, outside of a mosque for instance, checking people who go in, makes them feel unsafe because the police would only be present if a security issue existed. Women said that they worry about the safety of family members when they are outside of the home and feel distressed when hearing domestic abuse in neighbors’ homes.

When considering the differences, men said they fear armed robberies; getting into fights with other men, particularly other young men; and violent interactions with police. Women fear harassment and teasing; unwanted touching and grabbing; revenge violence if they respond negatively to men’s advances; teachers who pressure them to have sexual relationships; men groping and ejaculating on them on the bus; kidnapping; and rape.

Lastly, there was a distinct difference between what the older, married participants feared compared to the younger, single ones. It seems that issues of insecurity are largely experienced by younger community members, which may be because older community members are less likely to go out at night. The married women who participated said that they largely stay at home and do not travel far if they do go out.

Sources of Insecurity

Community members described the following causes of conflict in their neighborhood and city: men using alcohol and drugs, such as qat; cultural values that normalize and accept men harassing and touching women; unemployed men with nothing to do; migrants from rural areas coming to Addis Ababa looking for a better life; poorly lit and congested areas. In all cases, men are described as the aggressors. Older, married men spoke at length about the role of unemployment and migration in

driving challenges within the community, like the cost of basic necessities and insecurity. A single man supported this when he said,

“Those who are jobless are very likely prone to conflict. For instance, I may go to work, I may have a job. Let’s say, if somebody else has no job and is sitting around, he’s very likely to cause problems, violence, conflicts with me more than people who have time working.”

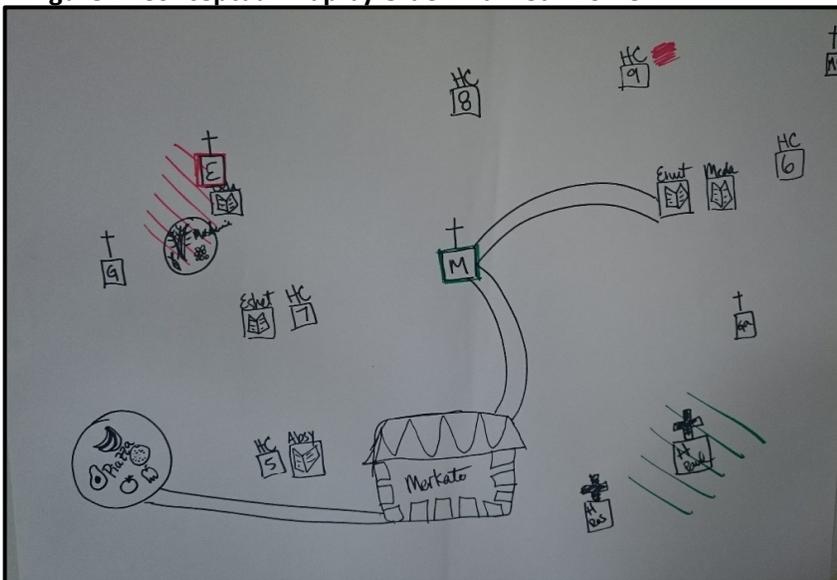
Young women are often harassed or assaulted in public spaces, like the market or walking past the bus station to school. This is in part informed by cultural acceptance of men touching women and girls without their consent:

“It is normal, it is a usual activity – touching the women here... It’s not because you are laughing or serious, or dressing well or not. It’s just because you are a woman. They are assaulting you and teasing you and harassing you. Because you are a woman, they think you are weak.”

Very tellingly, older, married men described a difference between proper assault and improper assault; the former is harassment, while the latter is a physical attack.

Another factor that informs the gender differences in safety concerns is where men and women travel. Men and women visit different places, which reflects the roles of men and women within the home and family. For example, men are not expected to purchase food, so they don’t go to the market often; women, on the other hand, are responsible for this task, which exposes them to threats within the marketplace. Men also have greater freedom and ability to socialize at night – to travel to bars or pool halls – which exposes them to fights with other young men. Single men also fear unknown areas and people. In particular, going to new places may feel unsafe for two reasons, people from that new area may try to show the newcomer who is in charge through violence, and when they don’t know anyone, there is no one there to assist if a conflict arises. Women did not mention this as a concern.

Figure 2: Conceptual Map by Older Married Women



The police are viewed by some as direct and indirect sources of insecurity. Three single men said that the police are a source of insecurity because they are armed and not motivated by serving the community but rather directed by higher level authorities and politicians. Some single women said that police do not do anything if they report assault or harassment because verbal harassment leaves no evidence for the police to use. Further, they said there are so many cases that the police cannot handle

the load. Thus, men and boys are able to do these things to women and girls without any formal or legal repercussions.

A noted age difference emerged with older participants, either because they were unwilling to discuss or unaware of safety issues within the community. Older married women said they stay at home more often so they didn't report experiences of the problems others reported. They were only able to say they have heard rumors of other people experiencing things like rape or robbery, but never themselves and never in their locality. They said that congested, poorly lit areas are less safe, while areas with wide, clear roads, lights, and nearby residences are safer. **Figure 2** is a conceptual map developed with older, married women during a focus group session; they identified two areas as being unsafe (marked in red) specifically because they are places where bad people can hide to attack passersby. Older, married men said that some issues exist, which are caused by youth unemployment and migration to Addis Ababa, but that these issues are quickly and effectively addressed by community policing committees. These committees include community leaders, like themselves, police officers, and other community members.

Coping Strategies

Given the distinctions between threats during the day and at night, participants described different types of strategies to mitigate their risk. Differences also exist between what men and women do to try and stay safe. When examining strategies used during the day, there are few commonalities across genders because of the vast differences in what men and women face. During the day, men said that it is best to remain peaceful if conflict arises between you and another man and to not intervene if other people are arguing or fighting, especially if the conflict involves the police.

When women are harassed by a man, some respond by being rude and aggressive back, while others are polite and ask the man what he wants from her. The latter group's concern is that the man who bothers you during the day could come back to physically harm you at night. One young woman said, "During the daytime, it's normal for grabbing, touching, but during the nighttime, when we are going to church, they are raping, forcibly raped by men." Another way for women to avoid violence from men is to travel with a man, particularly a male family member but even a stranger. One woman said that if she feels unsafe and sees a kind looking man, she will take his arm and ask him to walk with her to make the other men leave her alone. Within schools, girls have three potential paths to respond to a male teacher pressuring her to have a relationship with him: agree and have sex with him; reject his advances and potentially face additional harassment in school; or leave school.

To stay safe at night, men and women described limiting the times one travels and traveling with other people. The first common strategy is observing a curfew (9 p.m.) imposed on young people by their parents. Yet even if parents want all of their children to return home by 9 p.m., some of the men said that they just stay out later anyway or will sleep at the pool hall, either because they are too drunk or it is not safe to travel home. One participant said he would sleep at the bar or pool hall to avoid any trouble after a night of drinking:

"There are individuals in our area who work during the daytime but during the night, they often engage in violent kind of robbery. So when I visit a bar, for example, I cannot

go back to home because I am afraid of them. I often spend the night there because of that insecurity to travel back home.”

Others said that they ignore their parents’ curfew because they are able to handle any conflicts themselves. Sometimes handling conflict meant getting into a fight or going to the police for mediation.

Traveling in groups is the second universal strategy employed to stay safe at night. This was mentioned when traveling to a church or mosque, going to or from a bar, and going to a health post for care. Some single men, however, said that even women who travel in groups are not safe; they are still exposed and vulnerable to assault and rape at night. But if a woman travels with a man, like her brother, this will help keep herself safe.

Modes of Mobility

Single, young women described transportation as being particularly dangerous. Participants detailed a ranked list of factors in making a decision about the mode of transportation to use that takes into account time of day, price, availability, and safety. Money is a major factor that determines how women travel and where they can go. Often, they do not have enough money and therefore have to walk. For some young women who are in school, having a school bus take them to school meant they felt safer than the women who walk to school; the latter are exposed to men saying or doing things to them while the former is sheltered from that. At night, it is difficult or impossible to get a yellow taxi, which is described as the safest option. Yellow taxis are registered with the government, which makes them safer, but they are still new to Ethiopia so their numbers do not meet the demand; they are also expensive. Blue cabs are private and cheaper, but dangerous because the driver is not registered and participants express a fear of kidnap, rape, and/or murder and felt there is no guarantee of where you’ll be taken. A minibus is safest during the day because many people are in the vehicle but they can only ride a minibus if multiple passengers are on board. At night, they prefer to take the yellow taxi, but they take a minibus if they can’t afford the taxi. There are also larger buses, which are also dangerous during very busy times; it is crowded and men touch women and sometimes ejaculate on them. Young men also see public transportation as insecure, particularly during rush hour, as many people are trying to get into a limited number of minibuses and conflicts can arise.

Community and Institutional Structures

Addis Ketema has community structures and institutional systems that respond or have the potential to respond to the community’s security needs. Police, for example, are seen as having the potential to address the harassment women and girls face, but currently do not have the capacity or laws to respond as forcefully as participants would like. Some also see the police’s role within the community policing structures as a positive support. Conversely, as mentioned earlier, not all view the police as a positive presence in the community, with some placing blame for conflict on officers.

Two focus groups discussed the role of community policing committees, which both serve as a liaison between the police and community as well as a mediating body when smaller conflicts arise between individuals. These committees do not handle serious incidents, like sexual assault, but rather refer those directly to the police. Older men, some of whom are part of a committee, said that these are organized

and driven by the community; the only role of the government is assigning a police officer to the group. Three of the five focus groups did not mention these committees, so it is unclear how present, visible, or effective they are in addressing individuals' safety concerns.

Some participants mentioned a local non-governmental organization working to address the extreme of vulnerability of people living with disabilities, particularly women, throughout Addis Ababa. This organization does community outreach through the radio and other media to educate people on the rights of people with disabilities and works with the government to affirm protections and access to services for this population.

Impacts of Safety Strategies

Participants struggled to conceptualize the impact of insecurity on their lives, but did identify certain outcomes from their coping strategies. Almost all of the impacts are felt specifically by women and girls.

- Women and girls spend more time and/or money to travel safely. This included taking a longer walking route to school to avoid a dangerous bus station and paying more to travel by either a yellow taxi or minibus as these are safer than the cheaper blue cabs.
- Girls lose their education if they drop out of school to avoid the advances of male teachers or must deal with a hostile school environment.
- Women also spend more on food to avoid more dangerous areas. This meant buying goods from a smaller vendor nearby to one's home rather than traveling to a larger market with lower prices but where one is more vulnerable to robbery, harassment, and assault.
- Both men and women lose time to socialize and draw on social support as traveling at night is a challenge. This is particularly true for women who are only able to travel with a group, ideally with men in it.

Areas of Intervention to Explore

- **Safe transportation options are critical** for residents of slums to have access to a variety of basic services and social activities around the city. This is particularly true for girls and young women as they are targeted by drivers and passengers alike for harassment and assault. Advocate for the registration of blue cabs within the same system as yellow taxis and minibuses to reduce the risk associated with them and possibly integrate them within a livelihood program. Further, push for the expansion of school buses or development of safe alternatives so that students can travel to and from school without worrying about their personal safety.
- Campaign for increased police efforts to **respond to allegations of assault and harassment**. In particular, urge the police to take issues of harassment seriously so that they don't escalate to assault or other physical violence. This may be ripe for the community policing structures to combine the authority of the police with the social capital of the community to induce behavior change and identify perpetrators.
- GBV is normalized to the point where some women accept the abusive behaviors of men and boys as normal and to be expected. Train men, both young and old, on women's rights, human

rights, and GBV to **target concepts of masculinity and root causes of violence against women**, including harassment and rape.

- **Mobilize change agents within the community**, utilizing both government and community structures, to address currently unmet needs, such as using the community policing committees for escorting people to/from church, students to school, and other regular and predictable activities.
- Initiate or support local agencies and community based efforts at **addressing alcohol and drug addiction**. Revitalize or prioritize rehabilitation of areas within these communities that are known locations for drug use and trade to push them out of the communities and daily routes that women use.