

Investigating Gender Based Insecurity & Mobility

Formative Qualitative Research in
Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Haiti



Multi-City Report

Dhaka, Bangladesh • Addis Ababa, Ethiopia • Port-au-Prince, Haiti

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CONCERN
worldwide

December 2017

Table of Contents

Research Team.....	3
Introduction	3
Gaps in Knowledge	3
Primary Goal.....	3
Major Objectives	3
Metrics and Outcomes.....	4
Methodology	4
Participant Selection	4
Data Collection and Analysis Methods	5
Ethical Approval	5
Findings.....	6
Safety Concerns	6
Sources of Insecurity	7
Coping Strategies.....	9
Discussion and Recommendations	14
Social-Cultural Forces.....	15
Structural and Political Forces	17
Direct Programming Targets.....	18

Research Team

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Preface

This report summarizes the findings and initial programmatic recommendations for Concern Worldwide from the first phase of a multipart study of gender based insecurity and mobility among the urban poor. This first phase consisted of formative qualitative research from three cities, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The research informs these recommendations as well as the development of a pilot instrument to measure gender based insecurity and its impacts among the urban poor. A formal analysis for peer-review publication will follow this working paper.

Introduction

Rapid urbanization is the most significant demographic shift taking place. By the year 2050, it is predicted that 70% of the world 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 informal settlements face significant insecurity and susceptibility to violent crimes, women are especially vulnerable.

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 informal settlements and likely represents a large undocumented burden.**

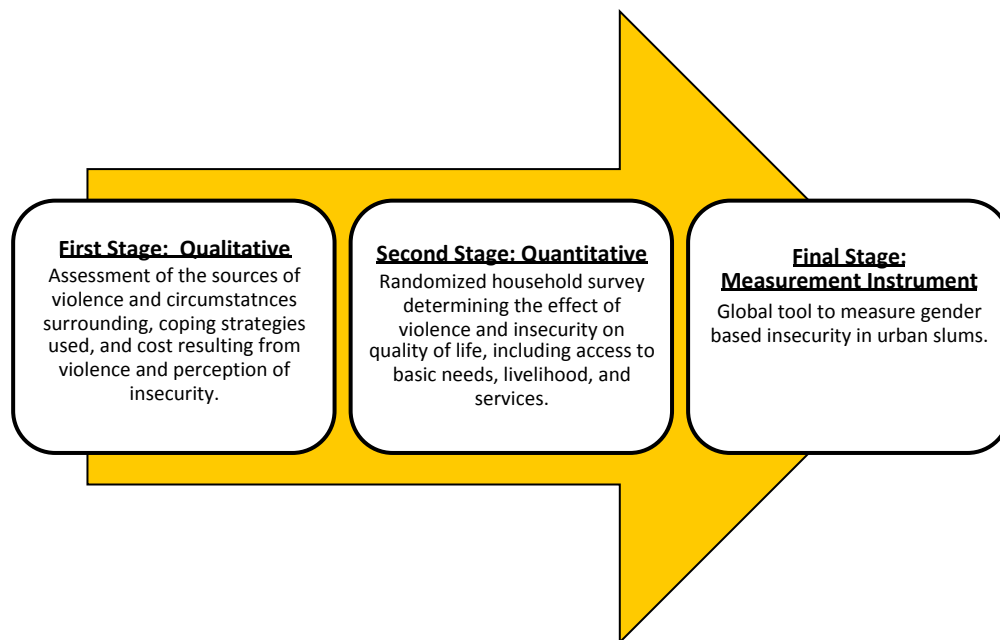
Primary Goal

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 informal settlements of the same three cities.

Major Objectives

1. Understand the environment of violence and insecurity for women in urban informal settlements.
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

Metrics and Outcomes



Methodology

Participant Selection

To better understand GBV and insecurity of the extreme urban poor, specifically pavement dwellers, squatters, and those living in the most vulnerable informal settlements, qualitative data was collected in selected urban informal settlements of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Port-au-Prince, Haiti from mid-October into mid-December, 2017. A two-stage purposive sampling method was used to select focus groups.

Concern Worldwide and its local partners recruited community members through their program locations in the most vulnerable settlements, as these were already identified poor and vulnerable persons in each city. Key informants were recruited and chosen from among a selection of pre-identified categories of people such as journalists, community leaders, community healthcare workers, etc. **Table 1** describes the key informants interviewed. Subsequently, researchers identified a participant that had a unique perspective that seemed to be valuable for the study from each focus group, one in-depth interview was completed from each focus group. Key informant interviews were conducted to gain an overview of the community's perspective on the prevalence and effects of gender based insecurity. All participants were at least 18 years old.

Table 1. Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Religious Leader	•	•	
Health Care Provider	•	•	•
Civil Society Leader	•	•	•
Educational Authority			•
Journalist	•		
Researcher			•

Table 2. Demographics of Focus Groups

	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Addis Adaba, Ethiopia	Port-au- Prince, Haiti
Total Participants	32	40	33
Age			
Average Age	26	36	30
Age Range	18-42	18-73	21-60
Gender			
Male	8	20	14
Married	8	8	6
Single	•	10	8
Living with Partner	•	2	•
Female	24	20	19
Married	10	7	8
Single	12	9	10
Living with Partner	•	•	1
Separated/ Widowed/Other	2	4	•
Education			
None	15	6	1
Primary	11	8	4
Secondary	16	25	21
University	•	1	7
Religion	•	•	•
Baptist	•	•	3
Catholic	•	•	6
Christian	•	•	2
Muslim	32	2	1
None	•	1	1
Orthodox	•	32	
Pentecostal	•	•	4
Protestant	•	5	16
Income			
None	6	17	24
Some	26	23	9
	(Average:: \$58/month)	(Average: N/A)	(Average: \$115/month)

All audio files were saved to password protected online database to which only the research team has access. Preliminary results for this report were acquired by analyzing interview through content analysis strategies.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained by Solutions IRB, protocol #2017/10/9. Local approval was obtained through each community board. All participants were provided a copy of a translated oral consent script in the local language. The translators also read the script aloud to ensure participants understood the project and their decision to participate. Before beginning the interview, participants

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 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 they ways in which they attempt to mitigate those risks. For each of the focus groups with women, only one method was employed, as there were multiple sessions with women. For the one session with men, both the listing and map analysis methods were used. Rather than ask explicitly about personal experiences, questions asked indirectly and participants shared personal experiences when they felt comfortable. The questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions followed by prompts from moderators to explore important issues more deeply. *Table 2* displays the demographics of the focus group participants.

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 done in the local language. Two local translators facilitated all focus group discussions and assisted with key informant interviews as necessary. Sessions were also audio recorded when participants gave permission to do so.

were given time to ask any questions regarding the study and the opportunity to excuse themselves from the study. Sessions were conducted in private spaces to ensure confidentiality.

Findings

Table 3: Forms of Violence Experienced by Gender

Forms of Violence	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Port-au- Prince, Haiti
Robbery/Theft	M, W	M, W	M, W
Armed robbery	M	M	M, W
Physical Assault: (including, beating, stabbing)	M, W	M, W	M, W
Getting into a fight		M	
Verbal harassment	W	W	W
Taking photos without permission (including for blackmail)	W		
Kidnapping	W	W	W
Human Trafficking	W		
Sexual Assault (including unwanted touching, grabbing)	W, B	W	W
Sexual Assault: Rape	W, B	W	W
Murder	W		M, W
Pressure to join armed group			M
Pressure to have relationship with armed group member			W
Pressure to have relationship with teacher or other authority figure		W	
Police harassment/abuse		M	M, W
Public masturbation on public transportation		W	
Targeted gun violence			M, W
Random gun violence			M, W
Violence/abuse related to employment (usually as domestic laborer, maid, etc.)	W		

sexual abuse, this was almost universally discussed as a problem unique to women and girls. Further, women and girls

are vulnerable to these forms of violence in both public and private settings, leaving many female participants with few if any places they feel safe. Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual drawing exercise completed by older women in Dhaka. Men mostly said they faced more random acts of violence, including armed violence. Further, in Ethiopia and Haiti, participants were asked about safety concerns during the daytime and nighttime separately; in both places, people had concerns that differed depending on the time of day but clearly felt safer during the day than they did at night.

M= Men; W= Women and girls; B= Boys

*The letters (M, W, B) symbolize the gender that experiences these types of violence, not which gender spoke about these types of violence.

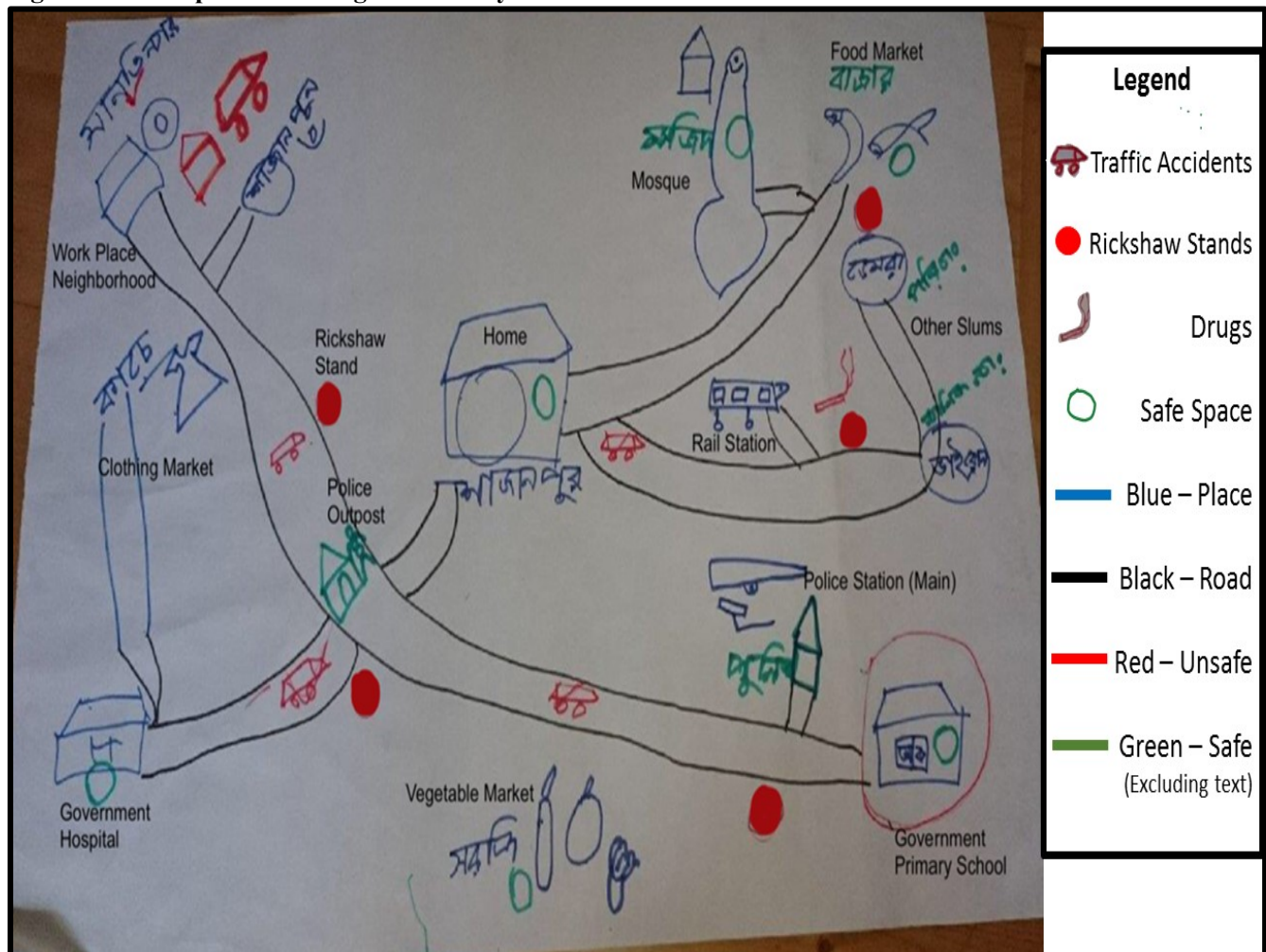
Safety Concerns

Participants in all three cities described a multitude of forms of violence they experience or see in their communities, with many repeated across sites. **Table 3** presents the complete list of acts that make men and women feel unsafe in each city. In all three places, participants identified more types of threats faced by women than by men. In particular, women endure a range of sexual and gender based violence, from verbal harassment while walking to work or the market to rape by both strangers and family members. While one civil society leader in Bangladesh mentioned that boys also experience

While there were many similarities, some things in each city did stand apart from the other locations. Dhaka was unique because it was the only place where participants spoke about violence committed by employers. Some women who work as maids in private homes said they encounter verbal and physical abuse by both men and women; participants in one focus group described horrific examples of employers abusing women who work as maids for various reasons, including one story of a woman being murdered to cover up a pregnancy that resulted from rape by the family's son. In addition to directly experiencing violence, Bangladeshi women also carry deep feelings of shame in response to what men and boys do to them, which is sometimes as distressing as the actual experienced violence. Women said that men will take pictures of them on the street with their phones and post or threaten to post them online, which is incredibly distressing. This is then used to try and blackmail the women into having sex with them to avoid having the pictures posted.

The tense/fragile security situation in Port-au-Prince also makes it an environment distinct from the other two cities. Due to the presence of armed groups in the informal settlement communities included in this study, participants spoke about guns and gun related violence at length. Much of the discussion around gun related injuries and deaths focused on how anybody could be hurt by a stray bullet at any time, especially during flare-ups of violence between the different armed groups. Despite this randomness,

Figure 1: Conceptual Drawing Exercise by Older Women in Dhaka



participants said that men are more often killed than women. The presence of armed groups introduces other unique threats to communities, including people using weapons to pressure individuals to do certain things: for men, this meant taking a gun and joining the group to fight and for women, this meant having a sexual relationship with a member of the group.

In Addis Ababa, transportation was a common topic among youth as it had the possibility of both improving and decreasing one's feeling of safety while moving around the neighborhood and city. Men said fights often break out at minibus pickup points during the morning rush hour because more people need a seat than there are minibuses available. Young women, in contrast, described a long list of the threats they face and ranked the transportation options available to them. Participants said that women fear groping and public masturbation on large crowded buses while they fear kidnappings, rape, and murder in yellow taxis (which are registered with the government),, unregulated blue cab and minibuses. The blue cabs were viewed as the most unsafe, especially at night.

Sources of Insecurity

The sources of insecurity described by participants largely fit into two categories: social and cultural norms and economic status. Further, hierarchies of power place women and informal settlement residents at greater risk of violence in part because they are less able to respond and get justice.

Social and Cultural Norms

In all three cities, community members and key informants identified men, and to some extent boys, as the source of insecurity in the neighborhood and perpetrators of violence. The only exception was in Dhaka where women described also being abused by female employers inside of the private residences where they work. Male entitlement and aggression is viewed as normal and sits deeply ingrained in social norms. In Ethiopia, one old man explained how there are two types of assault – verbal and light physical harassment on one hand and violent attacks on the other – asserting that the former is somehow acceptable and the latter is not. In Haiti, a community leader who attended Concern trainings on women's rights and gender-based violence said that young men do not know how to court women respectfully and said that he was teaching them what he himself learned; yet in the same interview this leader also suggested that some women deserve the violence they experience because they do not correctly respond to men's romantic advances. Other participants – men and women – similarly felt that some young women and girls are at fault for men's actions based on what they are wearing or if they go out at night.

The natural counterpart to male entitlement is the degradation of women and girls within society. In all three countries, people spoke about women and girls being vulnerable to assault in public and private spaces, during the day and at night. A young women in Ethiopia explained the dynamic in her community:

“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.”

Women in Haiti and Bangladesh echoed these sentiments. It does not matter what a woman wears, what she says or does, or where she is: she is at risk for violence if there are men and boys are present. Women in Bangladesh spoke at length about how unsafe they feel simply walking on the street because of all the ways men and boys threaten them.

Gender roles further exacerbate this vulnerability because women and girls have more responsibilities within families than men and sometimes have to travel farther and/or more often. This was clear in the discussions in Ethiopia as the young men and women had very different relationships with places like the marketplace since the men are not expected to purchase food for home as opposed to women. In Haiti, respondents said thieves target women at the market because they are the ones who go to buy more things for their families and thus have more money in their possession. Further, young women are expected to help care for other family members, including children and ill or elderly family members, which can involve escorting children to and from school¹ and traveling back and forth between relative's homes.



Dhaka, Bangladesh

Economic Status

Economic dynamics in each city also inform drivers of violence in the field sites as well as informal settlement dwellers' vulnerability to violence. Community members in Ethiopia and Haiti specifically identified unemployed young men as a source of insecurity in their neighborhoods and cities more broadly. In both countries, participants suggested that creating job opportunities would improve safety because the men would no longer be unoccupied and using drugs and/or involved in organized crime.

In Bangladesh, community members specifically cited their poverty as a factor in why they experience the violence. Because of their low economic status in society, participants said that outsiders come into the informal settlements with the explicit intention of abusing and exploiting residents, knowing that they would be able to pay off the police if a case is filed against them. Additionally, women's concerns about their children's safety is, in part, because they have to leave home to work and do not always have the resources – financial and/or social – to provide supervision. Children can thus be left at home or with inadequate and incomplete supervision leaving them at risk for getting lost, being kidnapped or exploited when a caretaker is not around. Finally, their socioeconomic status relegates them to specific livelihoods that continually place them at risk of violence or harassment either in private homes as in the

¹ Men in Haiti also spoke about bringing their children to and from school.

case of maids or on the street selling goods or restricted to neighborhoods that are marked by a lack of police as well.

Limited financial resources also influence how people travel and the types of threats to which they are exposed. Most of the women in Bangladesh said that they walk to the places they need to visit because public transportation is too expensive, which then increases the total time of their travel and exposure to risk in public. In Ethiopia, young women said that the safest mode of transportation – the new, government regulated yellow taxis – are the most expensive option, which means they are often left choosing between more affordable and more dangerous choices.

In many cases, the impact of economic status on vulnerability speaks to the broader issue of people in power being able to abuse those without power. In Bangladesh, this meant that people without money were unable to counter abuse by wealthy people because the latter could simply pay off the police if a case was filed against them. In Ethiopia, a few participants said that the police are able to abuse civilians with impunity and are sometimes directed to do so by powerful individuals.

A final, but significant, source of insecurity, far more prevalent in Haiti, was the presence of guns and armed groups within informal settlement communities. These groups are able to wreak havoc on their communities through intentional and random gun violence. Members of these groups are able to amplify the other mentioned sources of insecurity – gender norms, economic status, and power dynamics – through the addition of guns.

Coping Strategies

The coping strategies employed by community members largely fall into four categories: passivity, mobility, cultural norms, and community groups. In all cases they are attempts to mitigate risk rather than remove it.

Passivity

Due to the disadvantaged position many informal settlement dwellers hold in society, many felt they had few options to respond to active threats. In both Bangladesh and Haiti, men and women said that it is sometimes best to just give in to the demands of an aggressor to diffuse the situation and avoid an escalation of violence. In Dhaka, men said that they will give up their money if approached by an armed robber and women noted that some will have sex with men to avoid worse violence. The latter shared examples of how women and girls who reject men's advances will sometimes be kidnapped from their homes at night and gang raped or murdered in retaliation. In Port-au-Prince, participants described how members of armed groups will use their weapons to pressure men to join the group and women to have sex; the risk of either gender saying no is violence, including murder.

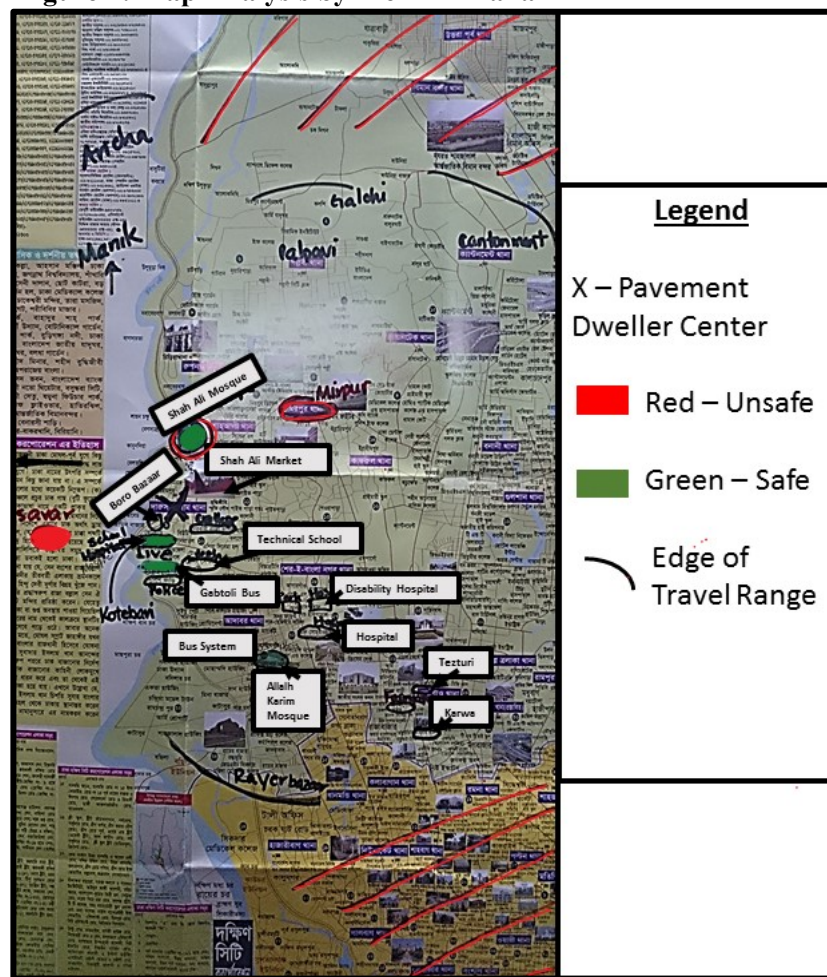
Another form of passivity used by participants is avoidance. For women in Bangladesh and Ethiopia, some said that it is better to either not respond to men who harass them or be polite, even if a man grabs them, because responding aggressively could just create more conflict. Not all women thought this was the right approach, with some young women in Addis Ababa saying that it is better to be loud and assert oneself to get the man to back off. Some men in Addis Ababa also subscribed to the non-engagement approach if they see a fight happen; even if they see a friend is being beaten, it is better to just avoid the

whole situation so that they are not also beaten. Finally, in an extreme and finite form of avoidance, some women who work as maids in Bangladesh said that they will leave their jobs if they are abused by their employers because there are no options for recourse otherwise. Similarly, in Ethiopia, one young woman said that she moved from one neighborhood to another to avoid the threats posed by the armed group in her original community.

Mobility

Another way community members compensate for the threats they face on a regular, if not daily, basis is they alter where, how, and when they travel within their neighborhoods and cities. In all three cities, people reduced how far they travel from home and women restricted their movement or had their movement restricted to a greater degree. In Bangladesh, men explained that there are large parts of Dhaka that they avoid because they are unknown and therefore viewed as unsafe (*See Figure 2*). Men in Ethiopia expressed similar sentiments: unknown areas are best avoided because people there may want to do you harm and you would be away from your own protective social network, making you more vulnerable. Women in Dhaka also have a limited range of travel because they are unable to afford means of transport and walking, even short distances, is fraught with danger (*See Figure 2*). When comparing Figures 2 and 3, we see that women stay closer to home than men, which is the result of this gender-specific vulnerability.

Figure 2: Map Analysis by Men in Dhaka

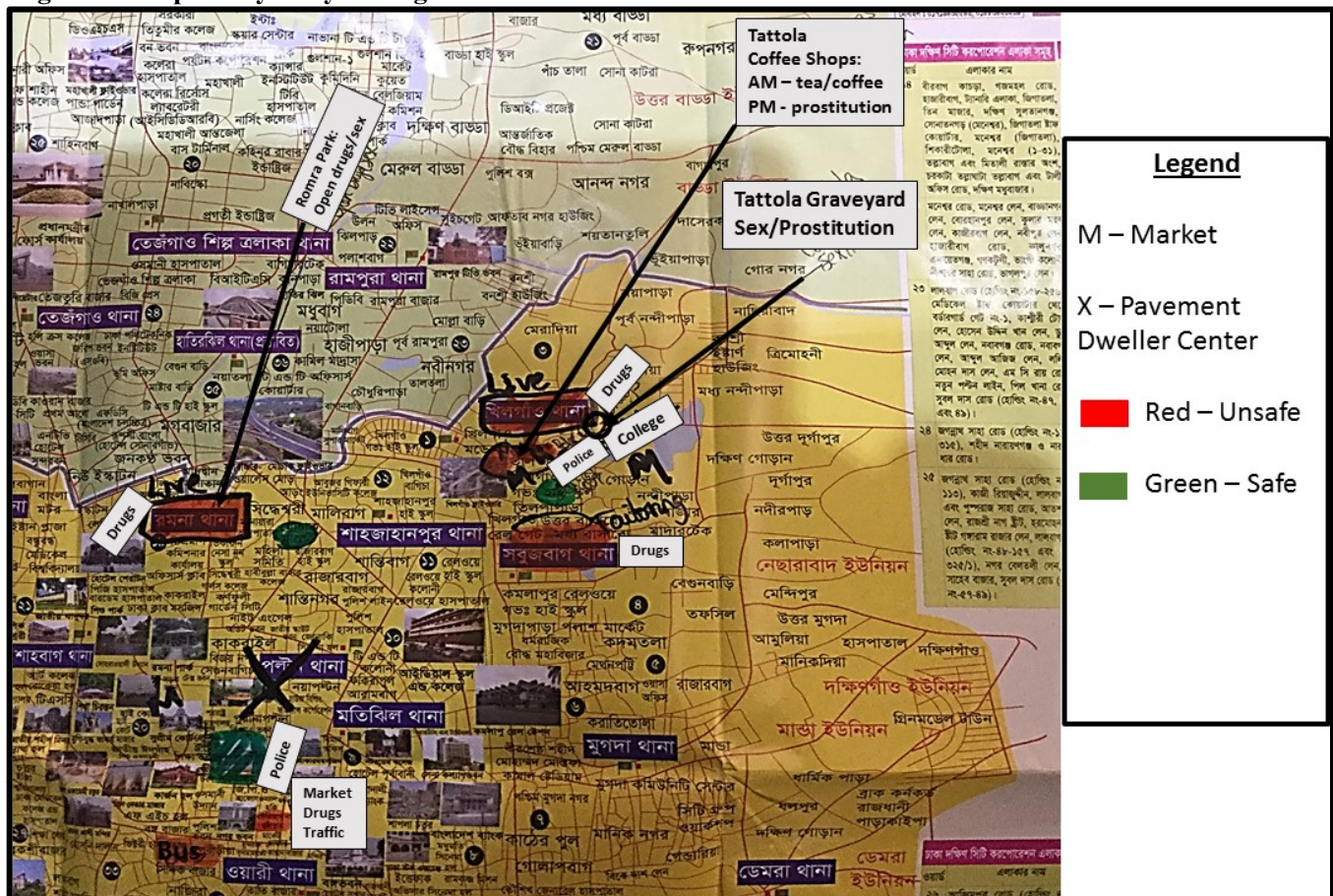


One way women in Dhaka and Addis Ababa deal with the threats associated with walking is to travel in groups. In Addis, this was a method used when traveling to places at night, such as church services. In Dhaka, this was used when traveling during the day. In both places, traveling with other women offered minimal protection, while traveling with a man – or even a boy in Bangladesh – reduced one’s vulnerability because men respect other men in a way they do not respect women and girls. In Ethiopia, some young women said that if they were walking and felt unsafe, they would grab the nearest kind looking man to walk with them until they reached their destination or were far enough away from the perceived threat. Young men also spoke about traveling in groups at night for protection, but this was not a requirement for them as it was for women.

Reducing travel times is another way participants cope with insecurity. In Ethiopia, older and younger participants spoke about a general curfew of 9 p.m. for young people. It was expected that young people will be home by then, both for their safety and because of family expectations. In some cases, community members felt this curfew applied more strongly to young women than men. In Haiti, the curfew was less flexible; men and women said that traveling at night was not possible during times of active conflict between armed groups. This becomes even more restrictive during periods of open fighting with some saying that you cannot leave your home at any time of day during active conflict.

Finally, people alter their travel routes and methods. In Bangladesh and Ethiopia, community members described how there were certain roads or areas that were unsafe because of poor lighting, congestion, or people using drugs. They, mostly women, would then make their travel plans so as to avoid those areas, which sometimes meant taking longer routes or traveling to alternative places, such as a closer market or farther health clinic. In Ethiopia, as noted earlier, young women select their mode of transportation based in part of the risk of each option, which can impact how far or where they can travel.

Figure 3: Map Analysis by Young Women in Dhaka



Cultural Norms

Just as cultural norms inform women's vulnerability, some use those same norms inform their own and others' attempts to protect them. Religion was raised as an important part of each community's life in all three cities. Some women attempted to use this to their advantage. In Dhaka, young women said that they would wear the hijab as a signal to men on the street that they are good, pious Muslim girls, which might induce men leave them alone. In Port-au-Prince, young women who are approached by armed men propositioning them for sex highlight their faith and, again, the identity of a good Christian girl as a way to get the man to leave them alone.

As noted earlier, women in Bangladesh and Ethiopia travel with men as a means of protection as men are less likely to bother another man. Women, thus, attempt to manipulate the social hierarchy that disadvantages them in order to stay safe. Similarly, some women in Dhaka said that parents will marry off their young daughters (i.e. child marriage) because married women and girls are viewed as safer from harassment and violence than single ones. It is worth noting, however, that participants said that all women – married or single – were vulnerable and exposed to violence.

Community Protection Groups

In both Addis Ababa and Port-au-Prince, community members spoke about protective community groups that respond to the insecurity that threatens their neighborhoods. In Ethiopia, this meant the establishment of community policing committees,² which help to mediate and diffuse smaller interpersonal conflicts, largely between young men, and can connect victims of crime with the police. There is a police officer assigned as a liaison to each committee. In Port-au-Prince, the same armed men who bring chaos to the capital's informal settlements can also bring some semblance of stability to communities largely abandoned by government, including the police. Some married men spoke about community watchmen who keep an eye on the neighborhood overnight. One community leader spoke openly and proudly about how he and other men in his zone took up weapons as a means of protecting their neighborhood from the aggression of the armed group in an adjacent zone.

Impacts of Safety Strategies

These coping strategies have implications for the lives of the urban poor. Participants in Bangladesh and Ethiopia struggled to explicitly identify key impacts as it represented an exercise in conceptualizing a different life - an insecure one is the only one they've known. In stark contrast, men and women in Haiti had no trouble listing the ways in which their lives are hurt by the strategies they employ to address the insecurity in their communities. It is possible this difference arose because of the types and frequency of violence present in each city. Because residents in Dhaka and Addis Ababa largely deal with a constant level of insecurity, they've never experienced a life without having to adapt to the risks around them. In Port-au-Prince, the fighting between armed groups happens in waves, which mean that community members know what life with and without those threats looks like. This section presents both what participants explicitly said about how their lives are impacted and what the researchers elucidated from the interviews.

² These groups were only raised in two focus groups discussions, one of which was with older men who were part of one of these committees, thus it is not possible to assess how effective they are or how the community overall views these groups.

Education is the only sphere that was impacted by insecurity in all three sites. In both Bangladesh and Ethiopia, the impact was gendered, with only girls being affected. Girls are harassed both on their ways to school and within the classroom. In Ethiopia, young women spoke about how some male teachers proposition female students for sex and if they are refused, they make school a very difficult place for the girls. This harms girls' ability to learn and sometimes leads them to drop out of school in order to avoid the harassment. In Haiti, access to education is denied to many children regardless of gender, sometimes for months, when intra-zone conflict forces severely restricted movement; parents spoke about having to keep their children at home because it was not safe to travel to school or having to go and bring their children home early if fighting flares. Similarly, some parents keep their daughters at home, not allowing them to attend school, because they deem the outside too dangerous for them; out of desperation, they deny their daughters an education in order to protect them.

Individual health and access to health care are also damaged by insecurity. Participants in all three countries described a variety of health issues arising directly from violence, including physical injuries and mental trauma. But some in Haiti and Ethiopia also identified health issues arising from their restricted mobility and inability to access appropriate care. In Haiti, community members explained that people often cannot travel at night, including travel to a hospital or clinic until morning; some stated they knew of people who died overnight because they could not reach medical care. In Ethiopia, one young woman spoke about her mental health struggles and how she is unable to seek desperately needed solitude to feel relief because women cannot safely travel alone. While not talked about during the discussions in Bangladesh, past research shows a variety of negative health outcomes strongly associated with child marriage, including early pregnancy and domestic abuse.

While not mentioned in Bangladesh, community members in the other two countries reflected on the impact of insecurity on their **ability to socialize and enjoy public spaces**. In Ethiopia, due to the 9 p.m. curfew and limited safe transportation options, many young women described having to cut short their time socializing with friends or missing out entirely because there was no one to walk with to the gathering. Young men, in contrast, did not see their ability to have fun, even at night, reduced due to insecurity. In Haiti, men described how they can largely only socialize within their neighborhood, going to their friends' homes or local block parties. Some young women said that they have limited options of where and when they can travel for social activities because of insecurity. Mobility restrictions can also create deep divides between neighborhoods, sometimes severing family members from each other. One married woman said that she has family members she has not seen in a long while because the relative lives in a zone that is deemed too dangerous to visit.

Lastly, participants in Addis Ababa and Port-au-Prince detailed the **economic impact** of their safety strategies. Men and women both spend more and earn less in order to avoid insecure spaces. In both cities, women said they sometimes opt to buy from smaller local markets or vendors, despite them being more expensive and having a smaller selection of items, because it means avoiding the larger, more dangerous markets. Men in Haiti also said that they feel they miss out on income earning opportunities because they are unable to travel far beyond their homes at night. While not explicitly discussed in Dhaka, women risk losing their income if they decide to leave an employer in order to avoid abuse.

Discussion and Recommendations

Given Concern Worldwide's stated goal of tackling poverty and suffering in the world's poorest countries, the subject of this research, gender based insecurity among the urban poor, should become a major focal point for future programs. The world's poor now find themselves concentrated into rapidly



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

growing cities and this urban demographic shift will now dominate efforts to tackle poverty and improve lives. The urban poor, living in informal settlements, now number well over one billion and rural poverty is being concentrated into dense urban communities where indicators on standards of living, food security, livelihoods, education, health and well being have been often found to be worse than rural areas in the same country. Due to this shift, it has been argued that the battle for the newly established sustainable development goals will be won or lost in our cities.

Concern Worldwide has already demonstrated leadership in identifying urban areas as a focus of future development and humanitarian programming by recognizing the nexus between chronic and acute crisis within cities in its successful project, Indicators for Development of Slow Onset Urban Emergencies. Concern Worldwide should continue this innovative work in cities to further explore the poverty traps within cities and vehicles for alleviation. This project along with Concern Worldwide's broader urban portfolio is an advantageous niche that should be fully developed.

This research explores how women and girls experience violence and fear in cities as a limitation on their access to goods and services including jobs, markets, healthcare, schooling and social support. This project attempted to first understand the experiences and perception of insecurity faced by women among the urban poor to guide the development of a pilot instrument to measure gender based insecurity and its impacts and inform a follow-on study to measure this within various cities.

Gender based insecurity in cities is often discussed but incompletely understood, not well explored in a detailed and contextual manner and wholly unmeasured. Yet *any efforts to tackle poverty must address the limitations that violence and insecurity have on women and their access to livelihood opportunities, healthcare, their choice of markets and education opportunities as well as social support that underlie the very means by which the poor move out of poverty and remain there. These define a decent standard of living and the choices essential to a long and healthy life* as described in Concern Worldwide's vision statement. Without this security women, are often trapped and pushed into poverty. Insecurity remains a root cause of urban poverty globally. By basic demography, women and girls not only account

for half Concern Worldwide's target population but women are often the caretakers of children and targeting them would have exponential impacts toward achieving the stated mission. Additionally, addressing gender based insecurity would directly align with Concern Worldwide's vision of a world in which ***no one lives in fear or oppression and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.***

The findings of this research can be divided into three categories as targets for intervention. The first comprises **socio-cultural** forces that may be difficult to address but remain a strong factor in driving the insecurity that women face. Concern Worldwide's advocacy efforts and direct work with communities can be used to address these forces. The second category includes the **structural and political** forces that may be difficult to alter in the short term but remain priorities for influencing decision makers are the local, national and international level. Finally, the third highlights **direct programming** targets within urban poor communities that can be addressed with new and existing programming.

Socio-Cultural Forces

Evident throughout the research findings are direct quotes, perceptions, experiences and countermeasures adopted by women and girls that exemplify the socio-cultural forces that drive insecurity for women.

Among the most consistent themes throughout study locations was the frequency and commonality of unwanted touching in public spaces such as buses and busy streets. In Dhaka, women identified any space with a man present as potentially unsafe due to the prevalence of this for of sexual harassment. More than verbal forms of harassment such as name-calling or whistling, this is an actual physical assault and thus, a crime.

The impunity with which men behave towards women in public spaces seems derived from two main sources, the place of women in the societies studied and the repercussions for these violations. The latter will be discussed in structural-political forces. The broader perception of women and behavior displayed toward them by men is one of overwhelming undervalue. That implicit assumptions in these insecurity are the women are weak, do not have right to refuse unwanted advances and should be made available for men in such a manner as this is not generally seen as sexual assault or even unacceptable.

The violence against women has been normalized and even internalized to some extent.

More telling, the response by women to often allow the assault or accede to the unwanted advance by not resisting due to fear of further physical violence was prevalent in all three study sites. Their response of accepting the unwanted touching shows the relative power women wield even in the face of an egregious violation.

Responses to this threat include families of young girls directing them to avoid certain public spaces and buses or use a male escort or stay at home. These actions display the actual limitations on their mobility but also reinforce this weaker position of women in society that allows and perpetuates greater control.

Societal and cultural forces that govern behavior toward women played a strong role on all three study sites in a strikingly similar manner and must be a target of intervention.

Suggestions to Address Socio-Cultural Forces

- 1) Awareness and behavior change campaigns structured along the same lines as public health campaigns to raise awareness about the vulnerability that women face should be initiated if not already present. A variety of techniques including posters, radio, social media, and community theatre among others have proven successful for many awareness and behavior change campaigns. The same selection of techniques should be employed on the subject of daily gender based insecurity. A local NGO that works on the same or similar issue would make for a good partnership.
- 2) Community driven awareness and behavior change campaigns should ideally be organized and led by interested community members for a higher chance of success and sustainability. Concern staff can provide resources and facilitate such groups as necessary but given the overwhelming concern among women and some men in these study sites, there should be enough interest for a community driven process.
- 3) Community leaders, if they have social capital in the target communities and especially if they are male can play a pivotal role in any campaign. They must vocally support efforts by Concern staff or the community driven campaign.
- 4) Men's groups, if they occur in any fashion, whether sporting clubs or trade groups or regular gathering places (pool halls for example) should be targeted directly by any behavior change efforts. Identify any of these existing groups within the community whether formal or informal and introduce the campaign directly to them. Ideally men recruited and identified as change agents from within the community would address these groups in a brief but engaging manner.
- 5) Parents were identified as a strong force governing women's freedom, especially young girls or unmarried women. From restricting movement to child marriage, parents must be a high priority or intervention given their powerful role in reinforcing stereotypes, limiting mobility and in the worst cases, using child marriage as a coping strategy with it well documented and devastating impacts on girls.
- 6) Stigma was identified as a major challenge in Dhaka and led to further behavior that was harmful for girls and women, as they felt blamed for their experiences. Both the stigma and blame associated with daily gender based violence must be eliminated in some of these communities for any significant progress to be made. Community conversations that are public gatherings for individuals of mixed genders to discuss this issue would not only highlight its importance but share knowledge that men or others may not know and build support as well as momentum for reducing the stigma as well as blame. These community conversations may also help build social cohesion which some identified as a way to improve a sense of security and reduce fear within their own communities.
- 7) Shaming can be a powerful tool when used accurately and appropriately. This can flip the blame and stigma onto the perpetrators where it belongs and using public sentiment and the community to reinforce this can lead to change.
- 8) Positive role models can be complementary to shaming by publicly recognizing those men and boys that behave appropriately and endangering a sense of pride in positive behavior.

Structural and Political Forces

There are multiple drivers of insecurity for the urban poor and women specifically that are larger structural and political forces that Concern Worldwide can begin to address at the level of policy and decision-makers for longer-term targets. These suggestions require a longer time frame, concerted effort and resources and possibly coordination across cities and regions with other external initiatives to be effective but must be noted.

The rapid growth of cities fuels the growth of informal settlements that lack official registry, maps, proper roads, lighting or public spaces that allow for safety. These urban planning and development issues are not unique to the issue of gender based insecurity but multiple efforts at reducing the vulnerability that the urban poor face and improve their human security are underway. Working on urban informal settlement redevelopment, investment and gender-sensitive urban planning is critical to addressing the insecurity and violence faced by women.

The impunity with which men behave towards women is also indicative of the wider police and justice deficits that many rapidly growing cities encounter. Port-au-Prince in particular shows how criminal and violent elements exert authority in urban poor communities. This violence and the power they exert to deny official police any authority allows violence against women and their fear of violence to thrive. Even in less violent cities, women often described the futility to going to police with complaints of harassment or even assault. The further corruption among police and the fear of reporting abuse specifically to police presents a large target for intervention. Without accountability, sexual harassment and violence against women will remain unfettered despite the best socio-cultural interventions. Keeping men who harass and indeed assault accountable represents the best preventative strategy.



Cité Soleil: Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Suggestions to Address Structural-Political Forces:

- 1) Gender inclusive cities are a concept that has been promoted by UN-Women and UN-Habitat at an international level along with a wide range of independent advocacy organizations. These campaigns highlight the issues above as critical to ensuring women and girls have a right to the city equal to their male counterparts and safety is central to this effort. Concern Worldwide should be actively engaged in these efforts as well. These include a wide variety of efforts from appropriate urban planning to adequate public transportation and specifically designing residential blocks and neighborhoods with safety in mind. This can be daunting in rapidly growing cities with significant portions of informality but efforts to work in these spaces also exist and should be explored.
- 2) Police and justice deficits have been empirically associated with urban violence and fragility when these cities are stressed by an acute crisis or more insidious stresses. Police were also highlighted in the research as an important element in driving the safety or insecurity of the study sites. Women and girls suffer disproportionately relative to their involvement in violence. The state apparatus from the quantity and quality of policing through to the prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of violence is lacking in all these environments. In some cases such as Port-au-Prince, the levels of criminal violence are so excessive in some urban poor communities that gangs may represent the only established authority. This is another larger issue with multiple dimensions but a critical one that cannot be ignored to make any progress. Concern Worldwide should recognize these as a factor in the health and poverty alleviation mission for cities and launch or join other efforts that are aimed at addressing the issue of police deficits. The community policing groups identified in Port-au-Prince and similar structures elsewhere as well as women police officers may be a feasible area to start.
- 3) Youth unemployment is a another factor identified in the research as a causal factor in the insecurity women and girls face in the city and in the literature the association has been well documented if not causally. Concern's focus on Livelihood programs are important to target specifically at youth that a prone to association with violence and present alternatives for the criminal activity described in the studied cities, especially Port-au-Prince.
- 4) Opportunities for education were not just limited by the problems of transport to and from school but also abuses at school from male teachers and their advances. This power differential creates an environment ripe for abuse and there seems to be no recourse that young girls have as they either agreed to advances, stayed home from school or suffered consequences by not agreeing to these advances. As education is an essential service and plays a major role in poverty alleviation and empowerment not only of women but improves national GDP, the gender-based insecurity of school environments must be addressed. Campaigns against these abuses and avenues for safe avenues for reporting claims with appropriate verification processes should be developed. Safe schools initiatives should also incorporate this threat in addition to the typical violence and hazards that are addressed.

Direct Programming Targets

In addition to broader socio-cultural and structural-political forces, a collection of factors within these communities directly contributes to the limitations on women's mobility presenting some opportunities for Concern Worldwide to engage in areas where it may already have some current or easily deployable programs. Often many of the programs already in place play some role in the suggestions that drew from this research such as child-care services or livelihood opportunities as described above. The interventions below may require expanding programs or addressing existing public services while others require partnering with local groups and other NGOs already working on the issue while others still will require new innovations in programs.

Suggestions to Address Direct Programming Targets:

- 1) Transportation was a major topic in this research both as a mode of mobility and as a source of insecurity for women and girls. In each city they made a calculation between cost, time and safety when choosing their mode of transport and insecurity placed a significant limiting factor on their ability to move about the city. Unwanted touching was the most prevalent abuse reported. Women and girls often sacrificed time and money or forwent needs to remain safe. In each context various strategies may be useful. Specifically, organized walking groups on specific high-demand routes or times such as to school or the market or church, expanding public transport with women-only sections on buses located in the front, and registering private blue cabs in Addis Ababa are a few examples.
- 2) Childcare services would also allow greater mobility for women. Many women described not having and child-care assistance that would allow them to travel much or fear for their children when left at home. As women in poor urban neighborhoods often find themselves alone without kinship relations or extended family, the options for child-care are limited. Concern has some child-care programs that should be expanded to allow more mobility for urban poor mothers in these cities.
- 3) Social support among women and girls is both important to mental health as well as reducing stigma and represented an area limited by insecurity due to their inability to travel, especially at night. Organized events and groups by Concern among women and girls specifically for social purposes could help with all three of these issues affected by insecurity and have further benefits by catalyzing interactions within neighborhoods.
- 4) Substance abuse and locations where illicit substances are used or sold including excessive alcohol came up in the research on multiple occasions and is reinforced in the literature as a contributor to violence against women and girls. Programs aimed at alcohol and drug addiction and revitalizing areas where drugs are sold may be a start to reducing this factor of insecurity.
- 5) Platforms to share information on abuse and harassment have been developed in many contexts to help women and girls report locations and forms of attacks and highlight safe routes on the web and on smartphones. Simple community mapping exercises can do the same. Efforts to support these platforms and exercises by Concern Worldwide could help identify areas for local community led neighborhood improvement but also allow women to navigate the larger urban

space with safety especially in unknown areas that were highlighted as an especially risky area by both men and women.