



WOMEN'S SAFETY AUDIT of 24 public spaces in Timor-Leste

Background

A safe space for women is crucial, ensuring their secure access to fundamental rights, information, and services. In alignment with Timor-Leste's National Action Plan for Gender-Based Violence 2022-2032, the Joint Programme **"Together for Equality" (T4E)**, implemented by UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, and IOM, aims to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence by creating safe public spaces for women.

The Women's Safety Audit (WSA), a tool developed in Canada and refined by UN-HABITAT, is instrumental in identifying factors that may lead to increased violence against women and girls (VAWG) and providing recommendations to enhance public space safety.

As part of the T4E Programme implemented by **Rede Feto Timor-Leste** and its affiliated members (**UFD Baucau, Esperança, FKSH** and **MANEO**), 16 public spaces and 8 public institutions in four municipalities were audited using the WSA tool. This initiative, facilitated by Rede Feto with technical support from UN Women and financial support from KOICA, aims to assess and propose recommendations to improve the safety, inclusivity, and accessibility of public spaces for women.

Scope

The WSA conducted an evaluation on women's safety in specific areas: 16 public spaces and 8 public institutions in 4 municipalities between October 2022 - October 2023.

A total of 1,570 individuals (598 women and 972 men) including students, teachers, patients, hospital personnel, marketgoers, public transportation users, community members, government representatives and CSOs took part in the Women's Safety Audit Walks, representing the municipalities of Baucau, Dili, Covalima, and RAEOA.

All these 24 locations covering:

- Education Institutions (4)
- Public Parks (8)
- Markets (5)
- Public Transportation (2)
- Government Offices (3)
- Hospitals (2)

Methodology

1

Consulting with the relevant stakeholders

2

Identifying the location for conducting WSA

3

Organizing a workshop for orienting participants

4

Conducting the WSA Walk

5

Participants recording data in assessment sheets

6

Validating the findings and recommendations

7

Preparing the WSA Report

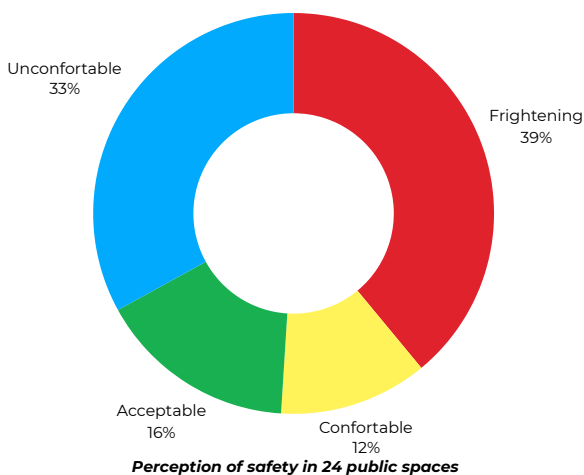
Assessment Criteria

- Overall perception of safety (color-coding):** Assess the overall perception of the participants classified into four levels using the color coding to describe the participant's feelings about the safety of the audited areas.
Red means scare, insecurity, or very unsafe
Blue means uncomfortable or unacceptable
Green means some level of safety
Yellow means safe and feeling comfortable to be in the area
- Safety issues:** The 7 Safety issues (Lighting, Openness, Visibility, People Density, Security, Walk Path, and Gender Diversity) are criteria for determining which safety issues are observed as a factor in making public spaces more insecure.
- Inclusiveness and accessibility:** Assessing how public spaces are designed and managed in a way that is welcoming and accessible, safe, and welcoming to all members of the community. This includes people of different ages, genders, races, and religions including people with disabilities.
- Other threats:** Assessing other factors contributing to making areas unsafe.

Findings

Perception of Safety

Across 24 public areas audited reveals perception of safety, concerns, and varying levels of discomfort among respondents.



Hospitals (2): Perception: **Red** (scare, insecurity, or very unsafe) Significant fear and discomfort were perceived among respondents, particularly in areas such as hospital toilets and maternity rooms. These findings emphasize the urgent need for improved safety measures in healthcare facilities.

Public Parks (5): Perception: **Red** (scare, insecurity, or very unsafe) Safety concerns within public parks encompassed various areas, including toilets, gardens, vendor stalls, and security measures, with significant fear and discomfort prevailing despite some areas being viewed more favorably, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive safety improvements in public parks.

Public Transportation (2): Perception: **Blue** (uncomfortable or unacceptable) Sites in the bus terminal like footpaths and canteens raise significant safety concerns, while others such as toilets and microlet routes present a more mixed perception of safety, highlighting the need for improved safety measures and inclusivity in the transportation system.

Markets (8): Perception: **Blue** (uncomfortable or unacceptable) Safety perceptions in markets were varied, with significant concerns about toilets, market houses, and rubbish disposal areas, indicating a pressing need for targeted interventions to improve safety and cleanliness standards in the markets.

Educational Institutions (4): Perception: **Blue** (uncomfortable or unacceptable) Safety concerns within educational institutions extend beyond classrooms to include toilets and footpaths, highlighting the need for enhanced safety measures to create secure and inclusive learning environments in education institutions.

Government Offices (3): Perception: **Blue** (uncomfortable or unacceptable) Various levels of concern exist across different areas, with toilets and footpaths generating significant worries, indicating safety and cleanliness concerns. Safety perceptions are more positive in areas like the canteen, despite serious safety concerns in areas such as the registration desk, driving license room, and staircases, highlighting the need for safety improvements and infrastructure upgrades.

“ More than 70% of the respondents feel **unsafe** in public spaces 39% found public spaces **Frightening**, whereas 33% felt **Uncomfortable** ”

Safety issues identified

Physical Environment



Inadequate lighting

Lighting deficiencies were prevalent in crucial areas like schools, hospitals, markets, and parks, posing safety risks, particularly for women and girls.



Lack of openness

Concerns about poor layout and lack of demarcations compromised privacy and security in various areas in the public institutions and spaces.



Poor visibility

Obstructed views and insufficient lighting in critical areas like toilets and entrances raised concerns about patient privacy and safety.



Safety walk path condition

Safety risks associated with obstructed walk paths and congestion were identified in schools, markets, and parks.



Poor security or protection

Significant concerns were raised about security and protection in hospitals, markets, parks, and government offices.

Social Environment:



High people density

Overcrowding concerns and issues were identified across various areas in the hospitals, Markets, schools, Parks, and Terminals.



Gender diversity

Women and girls felt unsafe around areas that are mostly male-dominated including toilet areas in hospitals, Markets, canteen, schools, Parks, Offices, and Terminals resulting in women feeling insecure.

Overall, the data underscores the diverse range of safety concerns within public spaces and emphasizes the need for comprehensive safety measures to create secure and inclusive environments for all members of society.

Short-term Recommendations

The following are recommendations is for the **Governments** for immediate actions.



Improve lighting infrastructure

Allocate funds for installing brighter lights and motion-sensor lighting and include the phasing improvement plans in the Annual Action Plan (AAP) 2025 and beyond.



Enhance physical security measures

Increase security personnel. Install surveillance cameras implement physical barriers and include the phasing improvement plans in the Annual Action Plan (AAP) 2025 and beyond.



Create designated safe spaces

Identify and designate safe spaces within public institutions and include the phasing improvement plans in the Annual Action Plan (AAP) 2025 and beyond.

Where as civil **society organizations** have the crucial role to monitor the progress and advocating with the relevant government institutions. Moreover, the role of **development partners** for the actions is to provide technical support and support advocacy efforts.

Long-term Recommendations



Optimize walk paths for safety and accessibility

Government: Conduct assessments to identify safety hazards. Ensure well-maintained, accessible, and adequately illuminated walk paths.

CSOs: Participate in assessments and provide input on safety hazards. Monitor the maintenance of walk paths.

Development partners: Provide technical support and support advocacy efforts.



Promote gender diversity and inclusivity

Government: Implement policies and initiatives to promote gender diversity and inclusivity.

CSOs: Monitor the implementation of gender diversity policies and advocate for inclusivity in public institutions.

Development partners: Provide resources and support for gender diversity programs.



Foster community engagement and awareness programs

Government: Organize safety workshops, community patrols, and outreach programs.

CSOs: Participate in and support community engagement activities

Development partners: Provide funding and resources for community engagement programs.

Costing

An estimated costs for implementing the safety improvements in public spaces are currently not available due to various needs of scope for improvements. However, it is essential to allocate adequate funds to address these safety concerns.

For high-budget improvements, it is advisable to plan these interventions in phases to ensure efficient use of resources and effective implementation. This phased approach allows for prioritization of critical safety needs while also considering budget constraints and resource availability over time.

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