WOMEN'S SAFETY AUDIT REPORT

Education Institutions

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 Baucau, Covalima, Dili and RAEOA 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 everyone including women and girls.

Scope

The WSA conducted an evaluation on women's safety in specific areas of four educational institutions between October 2022 and October 2023.

A total of 340 individuals took part in the WSA, with 201 women and 139 men, representing the municipalities of Baucau, Dili, Covalima, and RAEOA. These four education institutions include:

- **Dili** - Universidade Nacional Timor Loro sa'e
- **Baucau** - Escola Sek. Jeral Publiku
- **Covalima** - Escola Sek. Jeral Publiku
- **RAEOA** - Eskola Tekvoc Etaro

Methodology

This assessment engaged teachers, students and local stakeholders in data collection using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including Focus Group Discussions, Women's Safety Audit Walks, and validation meetings. The selection of public space venues for audit was based on recommendations from community members, empowering them and fostering ownership of safety issues to make education institutions safer for everyone.

Findings
## Overall perception level of safety

From the WSA conducted across four education institutions, it is evident that safety concerns vary across different areas.

A significant majority of respondents (55%) expressed fear, while 36% felt uncomfortable with the conditions of toilets in their schools, while only 6% found the toilets acceptable and 3% comfortable.

Similarly, classrooms were viewed with notable concern based on data from 2 municipalities, with 60% finding them frightening and 27% feeling uncomfortable with classrooms. Acceptance levels are low. Only 5% considering classrooms acceptable and 8% finding them comfortable.

In comparison, schools footpaths received a relatively less alarming response compared to toilets and classrooms, with 30% finding them frightening and 51% feeling uncomfortable. However, a higher percentage perceived footpaths as acceptable (12%) or comfortable(7%), indicating relatively better safety perceptions.

Additionally, safety audit also assessed additional areas like teachers' room and administration room, with 78% and73% of responses respectively indicating discomfort.

"

_____
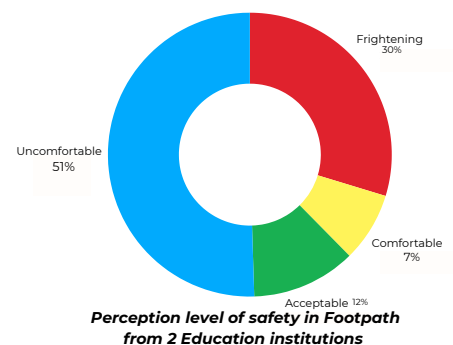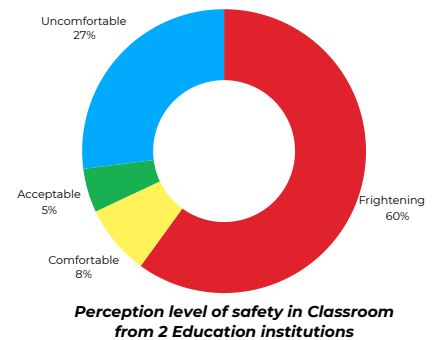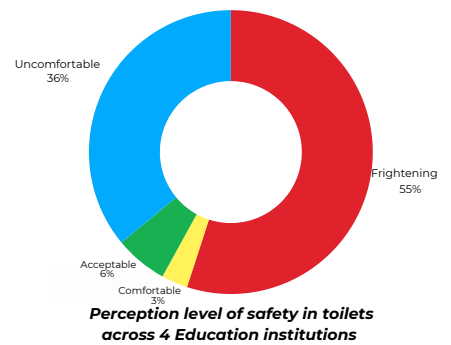
55% of respondents expressed *fear*, while 36% felt *uncomfortable* with the toilets at their schools

"

_____

Perception level of safety in toilets across 4 Education institutions

Uncomfortable 36%
Frightening 55%
Acceptable 6%
Comfortable 3%

Perception level of safety in Classroom from 2 Education institutions

Uncomfortable 27%
Frightening 60%
Acceptable 5%
Comfortable 8%

Perception level of safety in Footpath from 2 Education institutions

Frightening 30%
Uncomfortable 51%
Comfortable 7%
Acceptable 12%

Safety issues identified

Physical Environment

Inadequate or poor lighting
A substantial portion of respondents (71%) across all institutions indicated inadequate lighting in and around toilet areas from all schools assessed, correlating with feelings of insecurity or discomfort. Furthermore, All respondents (100%) from one municipality reported poor lighting in the school office, with 97% reporting similar issues in the Teacher's room, Additionally, 68% expressed concerns about lighting in classrooms from two schools visited, which could increase vulnerability for women and elevate the risk of harassment incidents.

Openness
All respondents (100%) stated concerns about the poor layout of areas around the school office, while 51% identified deficiencies in classroom layouts from two schools visited, particularly insufficient exits for emergency situations. Additionally, 48% reported poor layout in the toilet area from all all schools assessed, lacking clear demarcations and blind corners, which are associated with feelings of insecurity due to insufficient privacy control.

Poor visibility
According to the audit conducted across four schools, 45% of respondents noted obstructed views in toilet areas and 51% reported similar issues with classrooms from two schools visited, Notably, 100% of respondents expressed the same concern regarding the school office from one institution. These conditions could potentially create hiding spots for perpetrators, and increase the risk of harassment incidents targeting women and girls.

Poor condition of walk path
All respondents (100%) indicated an obstructed walk path or sidewalk (highlighting rubbish and rough roads) leading to the office, 50% reported similar obstacles on routes to the classrooms from two schools visited, and 38% encountered such hindrances around toilets within the school premises. These issues present safety concerns, particularly for women and girls, especially those with Disability.

Poor security or protection
A notable issue highlighted by all respondents (100%) from one municipality was the feeling of insecurity in the teacher's room, with 97% expressing similar concerns in the Administration room. These feelings were linked to poor lighting and overcrowding within and around rooms.

Social Environment:

High people density
Substantial concerns were expressed by all respondents (100%) regarding overcrowding in and around the school office, with 51% noting similar issues about the hall, 49% about classrooms from two schools visited, and 40% with the toilet area from all schools audited. These conditions pose risks for women, who may face incidents like harassment, bullying, and misconduct, as they may feel pressured to defend their personal space amidst the overcrowding.

Gender diversity
According to the audit findings, 36% of respondents indicate concerns about the safety of women and girls in predominantly male-dominated toilet facilities from all schools visited, leading to feelings of insecurity when accessing these areas. Likewise, a notable 100% expressed similar feelings of insecurity in the school office from one school, while 49% reported experiencing such concerns in classrooms.

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*.

Where as civil **society organizations** have the crucial role to monitor the progress and advocate with relevant government institutions. Moreover, the role of **development partners** for the actions is to provide technical support and assist in 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 the four education institutions are currently not available due to various needs of scope for improvements. However, it is essential that the Government takes necessary actions by allocating 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.

Contact Detail:
Domingas dos Santos Saldanha Alberto
Advocacy Officer, **Rede Feto Timor-Leste**
+670 77356663/amyng.saldanha@gmail.com