

# Tackling Sexual Harassment in sub-Saharan African Transport

Changing Attitudes  
Meeting Needs



September 2022

# EMPOWER

Building the capacity of transport professionals to deliver gender-equitable and inclusive transport to improve the personal security of female passengers.

## Changing Attitudes Meeting Needs

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## Foreword

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Sexual harassment is known to be a major challenge in public transport around the world. However, there is often too little data at the national or local levels to better understand and identify the problem or take action.

Recently, the topic of women's empowerment and consent has rightly gained greater global attention. Voices and advocates in the media and at institutional levels have successfully raised awareness by lobbying for stricter laws and policies to keep women safe and hold perpetrators accountable.

The #MeToo movement proved that international campaigns can have a significant impact thanks to a central message, understood by millions. Technological and generational shifts are also driving this progress, with mobile phone applications now being used to flag and report locations where harassment has taken place.

Over the last two years, the EMPOWER project has responded to this challenge specifically in sub-Saharan Africa by designing and delivering new qualitative and quantitative research. With new data, we have been able to form an evidence base on the prevalence of sexual harassment and hence a stronger justification for stakeholders to take action. We have designed a unique online Tool to help decision-makers address this issue. It is called the SHE CAN Tool because it offers concrete measures to empower women to more confidently use public transport, improving accessibility and mobility, without fear of sexual harassment.

This publication presents the process followed in our research so that it can be replicated elsewhere to develop an evidence base and rationale to take action. It introduces you to the SHE CAN Tool, the resources it offers and its supporting methodology. We want to see the Tool being used by local authorities, policymakers, enforcement agencies, transport providers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to make a real difference.

This really feels like the moment to bring together stakeholders from all sectors in a coordinated shift to secure the safety and well-being of female transport users.

**I can, you can, he can and SHE CAN.**

*Paul Curtis, EMPOWER Team Leader*

*EMPOWER is funded by UKAid through the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office under the High Volume Transport Applied Research Programme, managed by DT Global UK.*



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# Introduction

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The EMPOWER project builds the capacity of transport professionals to deliver gender-equitable and inclusive transport to improve the personal security of female passengers. It specifically addresses the causes of sexual harassment towards women when they travel. EMPOWER has delivered an integrated programme of research in sub-Saharan Africa proving the prevalence of the problem and highlighting that the definition of harassment is not always understood. The project collected data on women's mobility and levels of sexual harassment in two sub-Saharan African cities: Lagos, Nigeria and Blantyre, Malawi. This underlined the need for coordinated action by many stakeholders including transport operators, local and regional authorities, ministries, non-government organisations, community groups, police and citizens themselves. Such stakeholders were brought together in workshops in Abuja, Nigeria and Kigali, Rwanda to discuss common challenges and opportunities to tackle harassment across different sectors.

Based on the knowledge gained through research, the project has developed the SHE CAN Tool:

Sexual  
Harassment  
Engagement

Changing  
Attitudes meeting  
Needs

It is designed to help decision-makers address sexual harassment in public transport. The SHE CAN Tool makes suggestions to improve the safety and security of urban transport for the benefit of women, but ultimately for all citizens. The Tool is full of good practices from around the world to inspire users on how women's safety can be improved through different types of interventions, including: legal frameworks, surveillance and policing, infrastructure, campaigns, vehicle design and management. Recommended interventions are tailored to the type of organisation using the Tool, namely: Local authorities, policymakers, enforcement agencies, transport providers and NGOs.

Resources are available for all stakeholders to deliver their own research to produce data to enable them to better justify taking action locally and nationally by engaging with multi-sector stakeholders.

This publication starts with an overview of the current prevalence of sexual harassment in public transport in our research countries and beyond. It illustrates the impact that this has on mobility behaviour. Then we introduce the SHE CAN Model which responds to this challenge through stakeholder mapping and behaviour change at individual and organisational levels. The EMPOWER approach to data collection is illustrated offering a step-by-step approach that can be easily replicated. We show how we have built and tested the SHE CAN Tool and offer a taster of the resources contained within, before offering conclusions on how users can best exploit it across their organisations.



**1.**

**What Is the extent of sexual harassment in public transport?**



Women and girls are subjected to varying degrees of gender-based violence, assault and harassment (GBVAH) when accessing public spaces across the globe. Studies have repeatedly shown that sexual harassment on public transport is widespread in both the developed and developing parts of the world. Although we have seen an advance in equality and empowerment for women in the last decades, there remain numerous challenges to be addressed in terms of women's mobility.

The failure in achieving a substantial shift in how women face and perceive their personal safety intersects with how prevalent culture makes women feel safe or unsafe. Actions like teasing and groping have sadly become an integral part of the way many men behave in public spaces in a wide range of countries including both high-income and low-income countries. The simple act of stepping outside the home is often linked to fear. From a young age, girls are taught to avoid walking on certain streets after certain hours; being alone in certain areas or wearing certain types of clothing. Women and girls live in constant fear that foregoing these rules might lead to incidences of GBVAH, and it effectively becomes the victim's fault. These instructions have been repeatedly reinforced in the media and from family and friends for years, ultimately becoming embedded into the belief system of a society.



**There is an existing continuum of harassment (visual, verbal and physical) that may be almost invisible to men. This includes leering, sexual comments, harassment, photography, intimidation, groping, threats, and other nuisances or crimes with sexual undertones. These acts of harassment against women in urban transport vary in their degree, spatiality and temporality, ranging from sexual harassment, assault or violence on city streets, and at public transport stations to inside vehicles. These perceived and actual threats of violence have constrained female mobility to a great extent which not only has social ramifications but also serious economic repercussions [1].**



## 1.1 The extent of the issue - sexual harassment statistics in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond

A large-scale survey of street harassment in 42 cities around the world revealed in 2015 that approximately 84% (from a sample of 16,600 female respondents spread across the world) had experienced street harassment for the first time before they were 17 years old [3]. A study conducted in 2012 in Quito, Ecuador as part of their UN Women Safe City program revealed that over 65% of women have experienced it [4].



Image: statistics of sexual harassment around the world based on the EMPOWER literature review [2].

The Flone Initiative, a Nairobi-based NGO, investigated incidents of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Nairobi's public transport system and found it to be widespread across all the routes studied. The results are staggering: 73% of the managers, 44% of operators and 88% of commuters had heard of or witnessed cases of VAWG on their respective routes, with most incidents occurring at bus stations and in vehicles. This is confirmed by Mwangi [5], who further elaborates that the most common form of violence against women in Nairobi on the popular form of informal public transport, matatus, was abusive language (26%), indecent touch (23.3%) and physical harassment (20%). Importantly, the main category of aggressors was reported to be matatu crews (87%). Victims of gender-based violence in matatus were also often found to be silent spectators, reflecting a lack of protocols for raising complaints, and limited faith in the law enforcement agencies to tackle issues of gender-based violence (ibid).



A series of surveys conducted by the EMPOWER consortium as part of the research on the incidence of sexual harassment in public transport in Lagos (Nigeria) and Blantyre (Malawi), revealed that the understanding of sexual harassment was quite different between men and women. There was also some confusion between sexually motivated harassment, and harassment by hawkers or those selling goods or services, potentially leading to misjudged analysis.

The surveyors prompted the respondents about the types of sexual harassment they had witnessed and/or experienced. The findings in both cities combined showed that sexual harassment of women is common, with 38% of all female respondents reporting it as 'common', while 15% stated that it is 'very common'. Inappropriate touching, verbal harassment, and intimidation with pushing and shoving were the three most frequent types of sexual harassment personally experienced or witnessed.





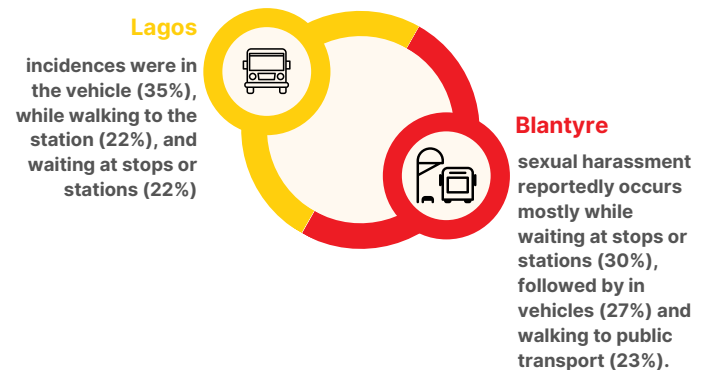
In Blantyre, verbal abuse is clearly a major issue – it was cited as the most frequent type of sexual harassment. This appears to be a much greater problem than in Lagos. Intimidation by a group and pushing and shoving was also worse in Blantyre than in Lagos. Groping or stroking (43% in Blantyre and 54% in Lagos) was also widespread. It is interesting to note that inappropriate touch seems to occur frequently in both case cities, for both genders. The findings show that there is a revealing difference between the two case cities regarding the personal experiences and witnessing of sexual harassment while travelling on public transport, or in associated public spaces. A very important observation from the surveys is that more people admit to having witnessed sexual harassment in both cities than having experienced it personally. This illustrates that there is no form of complaining and reporting sexual abuse nor that local authorities are prepared to deal with these cases.

- **In Blantyre, almost 80% of respondents reported that they had witnessed sexual harassment, while 68% of respondents in Lagos reported the same.**
- **When asked about their own experience, in Blantyre, 66% of respondents indicated that they sometimes (from time to time or weekly) experience sexual harassment, while in Lagos 16% indicated that they have personally experienced sexual harassment.**

The survey results show that having to make a transfer between modes or vehicles during a trip increases the potential for exposure to sexual harassment, for females in both Blantyre and Lagos.

This is also in line with expectations, as more frequent use of public spaces (for waiting and transferring) increases the risk of sexual harassment. In Blantyre, between 67% and 83% of all female respondents (depending on their occupation, self-employed and students being at most risk) indicated that they experience sexual harassment regularly. The literature indicates that income levels (and age) do influence the level of perceived personal safety [6].

While the survey intentionally avoided asking questions relating to more violent forms of sexual harassment, to avoid re-traumatisation of victims, cases of observed rape and molestation were mentioned by some respondents. The respondents were asked where the sexual harassment crimes typically occur:



## 1.2 Influences of sexual harassment on women's mobility behaviour

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Women develop individual strategies to avoid the risk of harassment. These include changing journey times and routes, only travelling in daylight, travelling in groups or requesting someone to meet them at the bus/rail stop. In one of the most extensive international surveys on the topic, over 82% of the respondents reported taking a different route home/to their destination to avoid GBVAH [7]. It is important to note that though women have developed coping mechanisms or personal strategies to address existing risks, in some cases they might even choose not to travel at all.

The close connection between fear of sexual harassment, crime and public spaces as experienced by women is a well-established theme across the world. Fear has been shown to have a negative impact on livelihoods and physical and emotional well-being by limiting access to education, work, and leisure, and restricting the use of public space. In developing countries, the fear of sexual harassment is connected with slum dwelling, with female informal workers often citing fear of crime while going from bus stops to their homes through poorly lit pathways. This represents one of the greatest deterrents to coming home after dark and accessing evening markets.



For example, in Mexico City, World Bank funded research [8] found that women living on the periphery of the city make difficult decisions over the trade-off between economic opportunity and personal security. Women's earnings are three times higher in the city centre, but over half of them experience sexual harassment on public transport.

Similarly, the issue of urban policies and connectivity of cities with suburban areas remains highly problematic in sub-Saharan Africa. As an example, EMPOWER project partners highlighted that public transport access to Abuja's suburbs is solely by tricycle and motorcycle, but in late 2020, Abuja's urban authority banned the usage of tricycles and motorcycles, which is having the most serious repercussions for women and school children.

Studies suggest that women generally use public transport, walk or cycle more than men to perform their daily activities and have more limited access than men to private modes of transport, such as cars that can provide them with the personal space and security they desire [9,10]. Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between the high share of female employment in the informal sector and their dependence on informal transport.

For example, it is noted that more than 70% of the households in Dar-es-Salaam who depend on informal livelihoods use informal modes of transport such as minibuses, motorcycles and tricycles as their primary transport mode. Additionally, women in sub-Saharan Africa frequently travel with bulky loads from the market, smallholder farms etc. or frequently need to travel accompanied by children and elderly relatives which compound their need for safe and secure access to activity centres (i.e markets, business centres, etc). It is noted that cases of harassment, violent attacks or sexual abuse especially when transporting heavy goods and accompanying children seem to have become an integrated part of the mobility landscape.

It is hypothesised that harassment may be less apparent in Lagos because respondents were mostly Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) users.

The Lagos BRT system is heavily policed, with security guards at the stations, as well as high volumes of passengers, which travellers perceive to make the system safer, by deterring potential offenders who are less inclined to act when witnesses (and help) are nearby.

However, EMPOWER survey findings show that generally, women feel more unsafe than men while in public spaces and on public transport.

**Women's perceptions of safety while travelling on buses influence their modal preference. Fear of crime and sexual harassment and safety concerns cause women to shift from public transport to less sustainable, private modes of travel. Often, women make decisions on where they go or which jobs they accept based on feelings of safety. Thus, the lack of safety has repercussions that extend beyond acts of violence and affect the socio-economic growth of a considerable demographic in society. Given this backdrop, working on this topic and finding sustainable solutions to tackling sexual harassment in sub-Saharan Africa becomes essential to achieving gender equality, ensuring women can make their choices uninfluenced by fear and overall creating a safer environment where women can further thrive.**



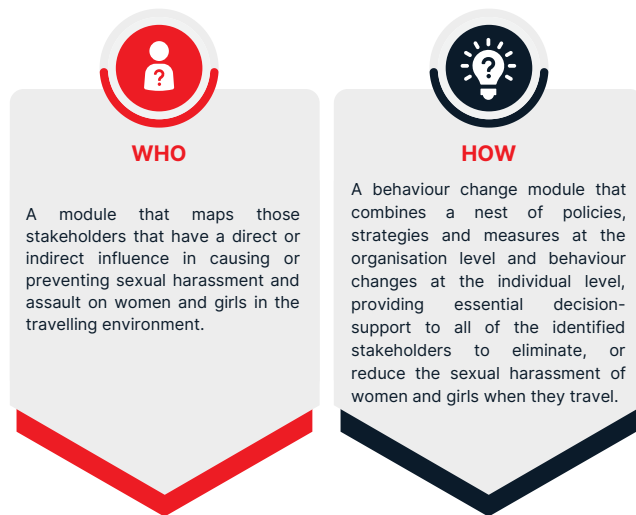
2.

## The SHE CAN Model



The preliminary research conducted by the EMPOWER consortium on the subject uncovered a clear need for developing an integrated approach since numerous stakeholders were identified from different sectors with levels of responsibility in tackling sexual harassment in public transport. The SHE CAN Model was developed at the beginning of the EMPOWER project, as a way to lay a clearer course of action and the basis for the project's methodological approach for tackling sexual harassment in sub-Saharan public transport. The implementation of the SHE CAN Model provided the grounds to build the SHE CAN decision-making Tool.

The SHE CAN Model is composed of **two modules**:



SHE CAN solutions to eliminate Sexual Harassment will depend on:

- **A holistic approach** – that encompasses all of the dimensions of the problem, with 'quick-win' measures, medium-term strategies and longer-term resilience measures.
- **A collaborative approach** – building frameworks for stakeholders to engage in joint actions and take common ownership of the problem and the solution.



## 2.1 The stakeholder mapping module

It is preferable for one stakeholder to take the primary management, ownership and responsibility for developing and managing a programme of interventions in each country, region or city. This role ensures that the necessary holistic, collaborative approach can deliver the greatest efficiency between the stakeholders that are engaged, to achieve the maximum reduction in sexual harassment and assault.

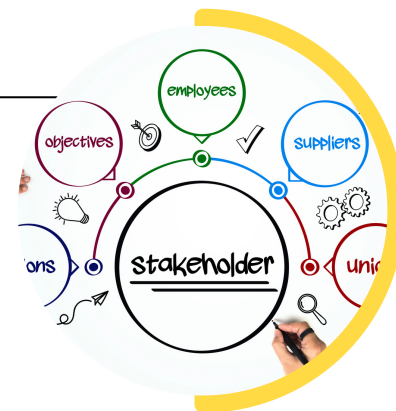
Deconstructing the sexual harassment and assault problem is an important first step in the process of constructing the SHE CAN Model. This involves:

**a. Creating a mind-map of the sexual harassment problem:** the process and the interrelationships of the different elements identified – what are the processes and timescales involved? Define what constitutes sexual harassment. Where does it occur? Why do people behave this way? How is their behaviour influenced in the first place?

**b. Identifying the stakeholders that have some role in each element:** both individuals and organisations and the interrelationships between these stakeholders, as it relates to the problem mapped out in (a). These can be both transport-related and other organisations.

**c. Defining the tools for change:** Specifying the powers and responsibilities of each stakeholder and identifying where responsibilities are strong, weak or lacking entirely. This will include the different levels of rules, regulations and operating protocols and their enforcement mechanisms.

**d. Actions:** Specifying how the responsibilities of each stakeholder have, and are, being used to address sexual harassment. Providing examples of both actions and lack of action.



**e. Attachment:** Aligning the perceptions of each stakeholder organisation to their responsibilities and roles in eliminating sexual harassment – how much do they feel ownership of the problem?

**f. Experiences:** At the individual level, understanding, through data collection, the roles of the different actors in sexual harassment events – before the event, the event itself and after the event. In this, we define four categories: the perpetrators of harassment, the victims, the witnesses and the responders.

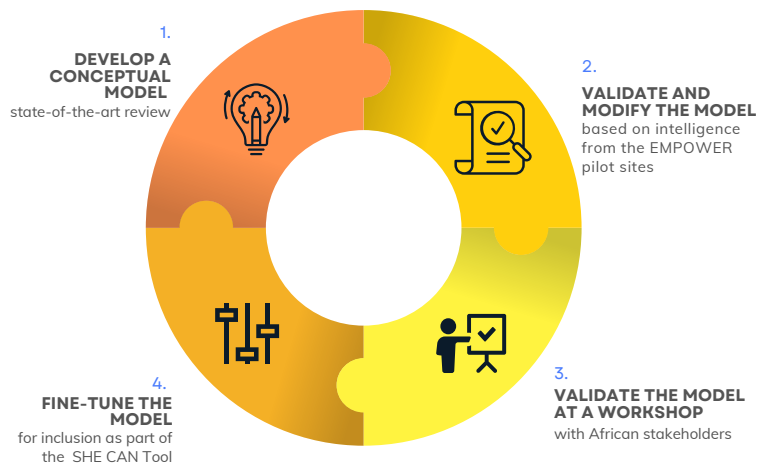
This intelligence provided the groundwork to construct the SHE CAN Model. The different levels and roles provided a complex nest of interrelationships, which in itself can prevent progress toward developing policies, strategies and measures to eliminate harassment in the travelling environment. The aim was to get underneath this complexity and identify the key powers, relationships and linkages from which innovative solutions could emerge.

## 2.2 The behaviour change module

SHE CAN is a holistic behaviour change model in the sense that it integrates behaviour change at the individual level with the organisational level. It differs from both conventional and state-of-the-art behaviour change approaches in transport. In those approaches, the aim is to move behaviour to more sustainable transport modes, to access local facilities or avoid trips altogether. While research shows that the sexual harassment problem has a clear impact on the (sustainable) travel behaviour of women and girls, the prime objective of EMPOWER was to support decisions that eliminate or reduce it – many of which will be actions initiated by transport-related agencies. The clear benefits to transport operators and sustainability planners of eliminating this issue are of a direct consequence.

The four stages in the development of the SHE CAN Model are:

### THE FOUR STAGES DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHE CAN MODEL



### 3.

**Delivering solutions  
for tackling sexual  
harassment in sub-  
Saharan Africa:  
The EMPOWER  
approach**



The EMPOWER project consortium developed an approach that looked into the root of the problem to better understand the current situation regarding sexual harassment in public transport (in sub-Saharan Africa), what influences it, and what decision-makers need in order to tackle the issue. The key element of the EMPOWER approach was to develop a new data collection process to understand the extent of harassment in public transport to provide the evidence base and justification for the action. This process is composed of five main activities, as explained below, and can be easily replicated using the guidance and templates in the SHE CAN Tool.



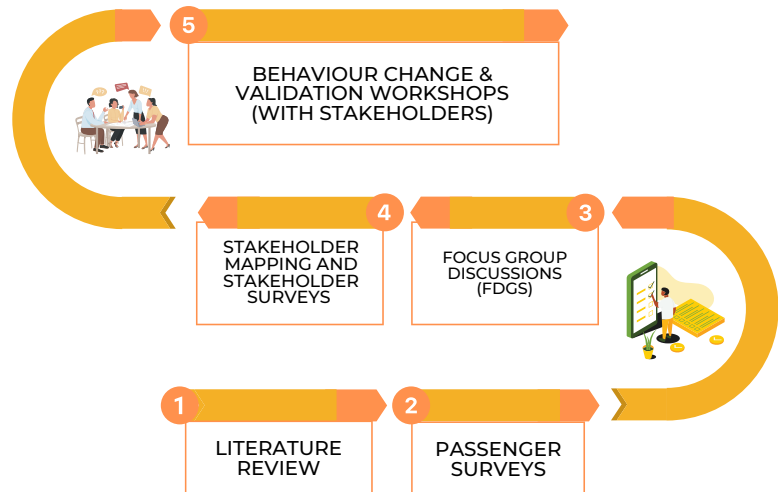
## 3.1 The EMPOWER data collection process

The project tested the data collection framework with urban public transport users and key stakeholders in two African cities having distinctly different transport profiles – Lagos (Nigeria) and Blantyre (Malawi). Lagos is a large mega city (over 10 million inhabitants) with a wide variety of public transport modes, including formal (BRT and ferries) and informal (minibus taxis, motorcycle and cycle taxis) modes. Blantyre has just over 1 million inhabitants and the modes available are predominantly minibus taxis and sedan taxis (no formal public transport services are available).

The main objectives of the EMPOWER data collection process were to test the process of collecting data and to document the main challenges. This would provide valuable information to those interested to replicate the data collection in a different place. In addition, a key aspect of this activity was to:

- **Establish the level of sexual harassment in the case of cities**
- **Who suffered from this**
- **Where it happened most**
- **What type of harassment was the most prevalent.**

**The EMPOWER data collection process comprised five main activities (phases):**





## 1. Literature review



The EMPOWER Literature review was based on extensive research into a compilation of published journal articles, books, book chapters, conference papers and reports on the issue of sexual harassment in public transport. Aiming to map the state of the art of the various sexual harassment aspects highlighted in recent literature, a data search and review protocol was developed to assure the scientific rigour comprising three main steps: search criteria; assessment of topics; and data structure (qualitative vs. quantitative data). As a result, an interpretative synthesis was carried out which consisted of an inductive derivation of the findings, discussions and constructs. This was based mainly on the authors' understanding of the focus, core ideas and arguments presented in the various articles, reports and documents. This review provided the building blocks for developing the passenger survey, the focus groups discussions guide and stakeholders' workshops.

## 2. Passenger survey data collection phase



The dual goal of developing a data collection framework was to test different methods and ascertain which were the most effective and efficient. The passenger survey has been developed based on the results of the literature review undertaken, the discussions with the main stakeholders and the experience of the members of the consortium. The objective of the passenger surveys was to gather quantitative data regarding transport user experiences travelling around Lagos and Blantyre. Data was collected in both cities using the same questionnaires, slightly adapted for the local context.

Both technology- (offline tablets) and paper-based survey collection methods were used to randomly intercept people at main transport hubs, while the survey findings were validated in focus groups in each city. Interestingly, the response rates were influenced by the data collection method, where digital collection rendered better response rates.

The focus of the survey was on the extent to which female users encountered sexual harassment and the types of interventions that could be introduced to tackle the problem.

The survey was conducted in a few phases during February and March 2021:

- Pre-Pilot Focus Groups to gain local insights into the questionnaire development and discuss the fieldwork locations;
- Pilot Field Survey to further refine the questions, test the data collection methods (paper and tablet), the pictograms and test the length/average time taken for conducting the survey; and
- Main Field Survey held in both case cities during the same time period;

**The EMPOWER data collection process took place in early 2021 when COVID-19 was still a major risk and uncertainty factor. This issue was integrated into all aspects of the data collection process. Despite this, the validation of the questionnaire, the way that it was implemented, and the training given to the local surveyors have been of major value. It allowed the project to collect valuable knowledge of the main methods to be used in data collection, in different types of conditions.**

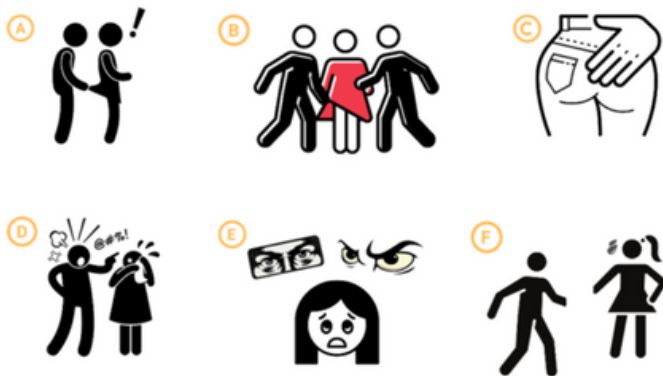


## 2a. Questionnaire development

The biggest interest from the EMPOWER research perspective has been to find out as much as possible on the issue of sexual harassment in public transport, including the types of sexual harassment that occur most frequently; where it happens within the public transport environment; who is affected most; what actions people take when it happens; why they think it happens; and their understanding of who should take responsibility. Both closed and open questions were used, with single and multiple-choice answers. The area of interest was narrowed down to the public transport travelling environment only, recognising that this includes a wide number of modes in the African context (formal and informal/ publicly and privately operated).

Internal discussions also showed that there was a need to develop a clear indication of what was meant by sexual harassment. Based on the experience of some members a series of images (pictograms) were developed that were tested internally and refined. The pictograms were used to indicate the main types of sexual harassment as identified in the literature review: sexual harassment is unwanted advances given by someone to another. It can either be verbal or non-verbal, physical.

### Types of sexual harassment and pictograms



The figure shows the final versions of the pictograms that were used in the main survey collection and the focus groups:

- A - unwanted touching;
- B - pushing and intimidation;
- C - groping;
- D - verbal abuse (including catcalling);
- E - leering, intimidation and staring; and
- F - stalking and following.

## 2b. Enumerator selection and training

Guidance was provided to the team leaders on the recruitment of the teams and on the balance of male and female enumerators for both cities. Recruitment was carried out using different methods in the two cities:

- **In Lagos, a pre-pilot survey workshop was organised, with both members of the public (Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority - LAMATA passengers) and potential candidate enumerators invited to sample and conduct trials of the survey to test the information and length and give other feedback on the pilot questionnaire.**
- **In Blantyre, this was done with a smaller group of potential enumerators and a local NGO working on this issue.**

The final enumerator teams in both cities were composed of men and women (six female, four male).

In both cities, the enumerators were given clear information about COVID-19 restrictions. They worked in teams so they were never alone in the field, for their own security, and they were provided with a number to call should they get into any difficulties or had any queries. They were also trained to look out for any body language showing that an interviewee was becoming uncomfortable discussing sexual harassment and could offer the cards provided with the contact details of a local NGO that could provide support for sexual harassment.



## 2c. Sampling

It was considered important to ensure that there was as much similarity as possible between the surveys used in the two cities to ensure that the results are comparable. The target audience, sampling profiles, numbers of interviews and typical locations were the same in both places. A random sampling of both men and women from 18 - 60 years old was used in both cities, with every 10th commuter passing the enumerator being invited to be interviewed. As the questionnaires were inputted each day the enumerators and the fieldwork manager could advise if one or other segment needed greater attention the following day.

Key transport hubs were selected as locations for the surveys (conducted between 8.00 and 17.00) on selected weekdays. Places where people could answer in comfort (i.e. shade or sitting) resulted in the highest response rates.

### 3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)



The data collection framework recommends a series of focus groups to validate the data collected. For these focus groups, a discussion guide was developed and a series of recommendations for the facilitators were provided. This approach allows the local interested parties to tailor the method to the local conditions.

Discussion guides were drafted including questions on the following topics:

- **The extent that men consider the behaviour indicated in the pictograms as being acceptable/unacceptable.**
- **Differences in perceptions of what is acceptable and unacceptable between men and women, and if this changes with other variants (age, income, occupation, ability etc).**
- **Indications of who is perceived as being 'responsible' for ensuring that this space is safe to travel in; and**
- **The types of solutions that can be envisaged in the African context.**

The post-survey focus group discussions were conducted to validate the findings from the passenger surveys. A key objective of the FGDs was to gather qualitative data and insights into women's experiences travelling on public transport and the surrounding spaces. Within them, the EMPOWER consortium also explored what types of interventions and measures could be included in the SHE CAN Tool as possible solutions.

The method used was participatory and the discussions were guided by facilitators (female) and the participants were encouraged to respond to the open questions directly and to the narratives given by other participants. This method enabled participants to further reflect on their personal experiences and those of others.

### 4. Stakeholder Mapping and Stakeholder Surveys



Ahead of the behaviour change workshops, a stakeholder mapping process was completed followed by a stakeholder survey. This process needed to be tested, so that it could be recommended as a fundamental step that needs to be taken in order to effectively tackle the issue of sexual harassment. The survey was developed drawing on some of the insights gained from the passenger surveys and focus group discussions. To collate standardised information, each question included a series of options as answers, which also helped to prompt the respondents.

The objective was to map out the key organisations (in Nigeria and Rwanda) with whom EMPOWER wished to engage at the local level and then invite them to complete the stakeholder surveys and participate in the Behaviour Change Workshops. Their input was necessary to understand the local governance structures and inter-relationships which determine how decisions are made, and by whom. This engagement sought to shape the contents of the SHE CAN Tool, ensuring it best meets the needs of those organisations we expect to use it, responding to local needs.

The result was that more than 30 organisations were identified who were then duly contacted to complete the surveys and attend the Behaviour Change Workshops. All respondents were welcomed and data was recorded.

The surveys collected detailed information on the different roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in various sectors concerning the prevention and response to sexual harassment in the transport arena. In many cases, such roles were not commonly known by fellow stakeholders, and this was discussed further in the behaviour change workshops. This exercise underlined that there is scope for stronger cross-sector collaboration, for example, data sharing, in order to pursue a common objective.

## 5. Behaviour Change & Validation Workshops



The objectives of the workshops were to:

- ▶ Bring together (for the first time) a selection of cross-sector stakeholders with power and interested in the domains of transport and security;
- ▶ Understand and discuss stakeholder roles and responsibilities;
- ▶ Introduce the EMPOWER project and SHE CAN Tool;
- ▶ Present findings from the passenger surveys and focus groups to stakeholders;
- ▶ Understand barriers to tackling sexual harassment and identify areas of potential collaboration (policies, strategies, measures on the ground, cross-sector working);

- ▶ Discuss potential solutions to feed into the project research and support other countries; and
- ▶ Test the overall process of such workshops, as a useful way of mobilising support for change, such that recommendations can be made to other countries to follow this approach.

A discussion guide was prepared for both workshops drawing on the results of the passenger surveys, focus groups and stakeholder surveys. This allowed the moderators to mine down into the reasons for the responses received. It also encouraged participants to suggest solutions to tackling sexual harassment and bring about changes in behaviour in the public transport system for women in sub-Saharan Africa.

Two workshops were organised in Abuja, Nigeria and Kigali, Rwanda. Stakeholders who had previously been sent the surveys were invited to participate in the workshops. This was a successful approach as they already had the background of the research objectives and saw the value in continuing to collaborate. Attendees were selected on the basis of providing a balanced composition of public, private and non-governmental sectors.



**All of these activities are considered necessary in order to obtain comprehensive and well-rounded data. This approach to data collection lays the foundation for any undertaking of a project or a process where solutions need to be identified and implemented.**



## 3.2 Knowledge gaps surrounding sexual harassment - EMPOWER key findings

The literature review identified key areas which could help address concerns about harassment. This included response strategies (including grievance and reporting mechanisms), public awareness campaigns and communication aspects, the impact of a more diverse workforce and more women working in the transport sector, as well as monitoring and evaluation. As such, this directed our subsequent research into which interventions to include in the SHE CAN Tool.

Several primary research areas that are under-examined in the literature were identified:

- ▶ **How fear constraints women's movement when using public transport;**
- ▶ **Methodologies to better understand the scope and depth of fear;**
- ▶ **Victimisation concerns faced by different groups of women;**
- ▶ **Research and methodologies to better understand and document the reasons behind low levels of incident reporting; and**
- ▶ **Evaluation of successful policies, measures and interventions that respond to women's needs.**

Additionally, the surveys and the series of workshops conducted within the EMPOWER project identified the following issues that need to be taken into consideration by decision-makers when discussing possible solutions to tackle the issue of sexual harassment in public transport in sub-Saharan Africa.



### **a. Sexual Harassment is not well understood**

A key finding was that this issue is not universally understood and this is further complicated by the fact that men and women have different interpretations of sexual harassment. Based on the literature review and personal opinions, for the purpose of the project the EMPOWER consortium defined sexual harassment as unwanted advances given by someone to another. These can either be verbal, visual, physical and/or psychological (such as intimidation or stalking). The widespread lack of understanding of sexual harassment was notable in both cities, however, it was more pronounced in Blantyre than Lagos. Many respondents did not initially seem to fully understand what sexual harassment is and it needed to be explained and defined by the enumerators using pictograms, even to women.

### **b. The root of the issue is often ignored and also not well understood**

EMPOWER findings indicate that adolescent or young adult men were perceived as the main perpetrators of sexual harassment. Left unaddressed, this poses a severe risk of continued behaviour into middle age thereby perpetuating the problem. This could be the reason why there were also several reports of 'older men' being perceived as perpetrators of sexual harassment and specifically abuse, particularly in relation to harassment of schoolgirls. Generally, the reasons cited by survey participants as to why sexual harassment occurs point toward societal ignorance on the topic, and cultural norms that desensitise people to the problem. Most likely at the root is a mix of a lack of education (especially around consent), a lack of sensitivity or a lack of care for societal norms and boundaries. Drunkenness/drugs were also often cited as a reason during the EMPOWER surveys and that some perpetrators also do it for 'fun', are not aware that sexual harassment is a criminal offence or feel that they can behave in this manner because the police are not interested when it is reported.

### **c. Victims or witnesses do not know where to report incidents or feel that it wouldn't matter if they did**

Many respondents to the EMPOWER surveys stated that they did not know where to report incidents and even if they did, there seems to be a lack of trust in the security agencies (police) in doing anything about any complaint. In Lagos, 89% of those who have experienced sexual harassment did not report it, because they did not know where to report it, or felt that it would be useless to report the incident. The surveys and focus groups also showed that victims do not want to call an emergency number or speak to the police. This is partly because harassment is a very sensitive topic, which needs trained advisors/officers to take the reports. However, culture and norms in society still play a critical role in under-reporting. This was mostly identified as verbal harassment and staring, which in Rwandan culture is considered by some as being normal/acceptable. Some actions classified as sexual harassment have been normalised by society, to the extent that many do not perceive all the described actions to be sexual harassment. As a result, some victims may believe that if they were to report incidents of sexual harassment, they would be perceived to be overreacting. In addition, it was believed that sometimes a lack of proof or witnesses makes it difficult to charge the perpetrators, further discouraging victims from reporting such incidents.

#### **d. Certain infrastructure issues can intensify the feeling of insecurity for women**

Ensuring sufficient street lighting and toilets is the bare minimum that urban planners and engineers can do to facilitate women's safety and mobility, and yet, these needs remain largely unmet. For example, an issue that often gets overlooked is the topic of underpasses, pedestrian subways, and the fact that many mass transit systems run underground, with some stations therefore also being underground. Dark, desolate underpasses carve out conditions for targeting women. Further, weak or absent mobile phone signals in underground stations and when in transit can make one feel disconnected, invisible (to people above ground), vulnerable and unsafe, especially during off-peak hours or at night. It usually takes considerable time to get out of underground stations to a place where a proper signal can be received. This compounds the feeling of insecurity and discomfort. Such situations are similar to pedestrian subways, which women often avoid due to improper lighting, and feelings of isolation and invisibility.

#### **e. There is a lack of policy frameworks around the issue of sexual harassment**

The SUM4ALL report (2019) [12] states that only 32 countries have legislation on sexual harassment in public spaces. In a recent (currently unpublished) study by the Centre for Transport Studies at the University of Cape Town, only five out of 29 countries in Africa have policies around gender equity. There is, therefore, a clear lack of adequate policy and legal frameworks that address the issue at present. Moreover, conducting the surveys highlighted the different views and widespread misunderstandings about what sexual harassment is.

Updating policy frameworks to provide clear definitions of sexual harassment, and to set legal boundaries, would support improved recognition and policing of these offences. Also, policies should foresee concrete pathways that each public sector will implement actions that will tackle the sexual harassment issues, and they need to work with public transport providers to prevent sexual harassment taking place. The integration of the policies on sexual harassment could be a very innovative approach, not researched at this moment, but could be a game-changer in how sexual harassment in an area is tackled.

#### **f. There is a lack of targeted data to help decision-makers better understand the issue and take action**

Although this study has shed light on the prevalence of sexual harassment in public transport in two African cities, a large data void exists. This inhibits the ability of governmental stakeholders to make decisions with this issue in mind. The improvement of disaggregated data collection exercises and the inclusion of sexual harassment-related information in such endeavours presents another opportunity to help combat sexual harassment and could lead to better management practices. The capacity of the public sector to design and implement data collection actions. Collaboration, and partnership with academia or lobby groups should be encouraged to determine a good baseline for understanding the sexual harassment situation.



#### **g. There is a lack of community engagement and awareness-raising activities**

For real progress, the actions of individual citizens must also be changed, from the bottom up. Sexual harassment needs to be correctly understood first and foremost, on a large scale. Awareness campaigns on sexual harassment also need to be tailored to the cultural differences of different communities. For example, during the focus groups, many male respondents made comments that seemed to normalise sexual harassment. Some male participants (especially in the Lagos mixed focus group) noted that certain female dress styles are a form of sexual harassment for men, and a number of male participants did not feel it is their responsibility to behave differently, nor do they understand the severity of sexual harassment or the emotional distress that it can cause. Raising awareness of the consequences and reinforcing criminal laws was seen as being helpful as many men are unaware of the emotional distress it can cause nor of the legal consequences should they be reported for causing it.

**These aspects have been taken into consideration in the data collection, and behaviour change workshops and are ongoing as considerations and justifications for the development of the Tool. Despite several examples of guidance and Toolkits, there is still little practical advice targeted at sub-Saharan cities. This highlights the need for a decision support Tool to tackle sexual harassment in transport. It highlights the need for the EMPOWER's SHE CAN Tool.**

### 3.3 The SHE CAN Tool - building blocks

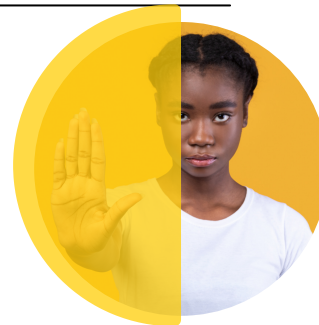
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The SHE CAN Tool has been developed to address and integrate all complex components that decision-makers need to consider when formulating policy on the management of sexual harassment in public transport. Using the Tool focuses on the amount of information to be considered when deciding how to tackle sexual harassment. The knowledge is presented in four dimensions so that a holistic representation of proposed elements involved in addressing sexual harassment can be provided. This is done by suggesting combined packages of interventions to be converted into sexual harassment management strategies.

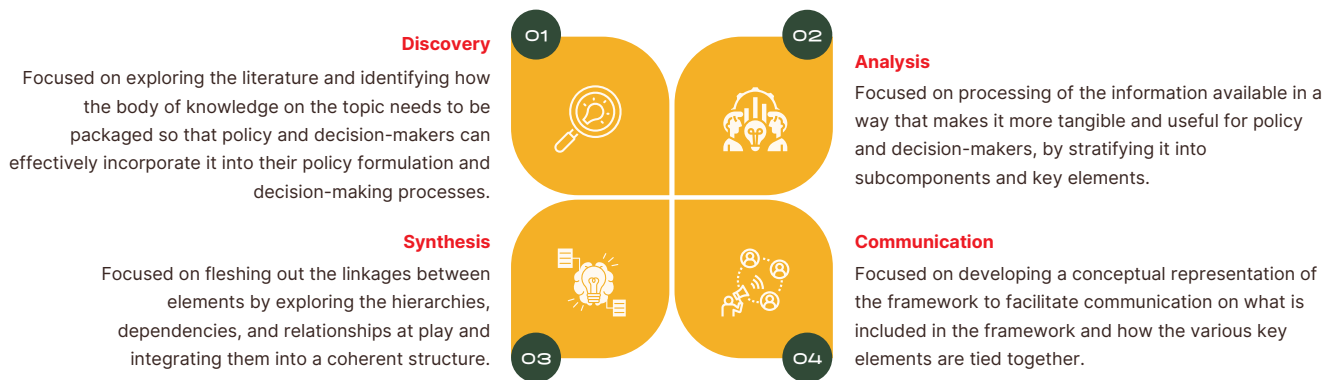
The literature review, surveys, focus groups and workshops conducted within the project validated the need for this kind of Tool. The work done with local stakeholders involved throughout the project allowed the consortium to provide a compendium of possible interventions that can be implemented to tackle sexual harassment - in short, the SHE CAN Tool. The purpose of the Tool is to guide and support decision-makers through structured information sharing and guidance on practical steps that they could take to address the issue of sexual harassment on public transport within their own context and institutional settings.

Deliberations on the development of the SHE CAN Tool started early on in the project. A key output of these deliberations was the identification of two potential decisions, from the perspective of a stakeholder, that could be addressed by the Tool:

- ▶ Decision 1 – Should I be doing something about sexual harassment in public transport?
- ▶ Decision 2 – What should I do to reduce sexual harassment in public transport? Where do I start?



## The methodology for the development of the EMPOWER framework for decision-making comprised four stages:



The key benefit of approaching the topic with this framework is that it allows decision-makers to navigate through the complexity, without isolating the various key elements involved, while dramatically reducing the amount of information to consider. By breaking down the topic into subcomponents, and structuring them in a coherent, logical manner, policy and decision-makers can find the information they need quickly and explore the ties to other aspects of the problem in a focused and explicit manner. The additional processing of the information available on the topic turns it into intelligence that is tangible and useful for policy and decision-making.

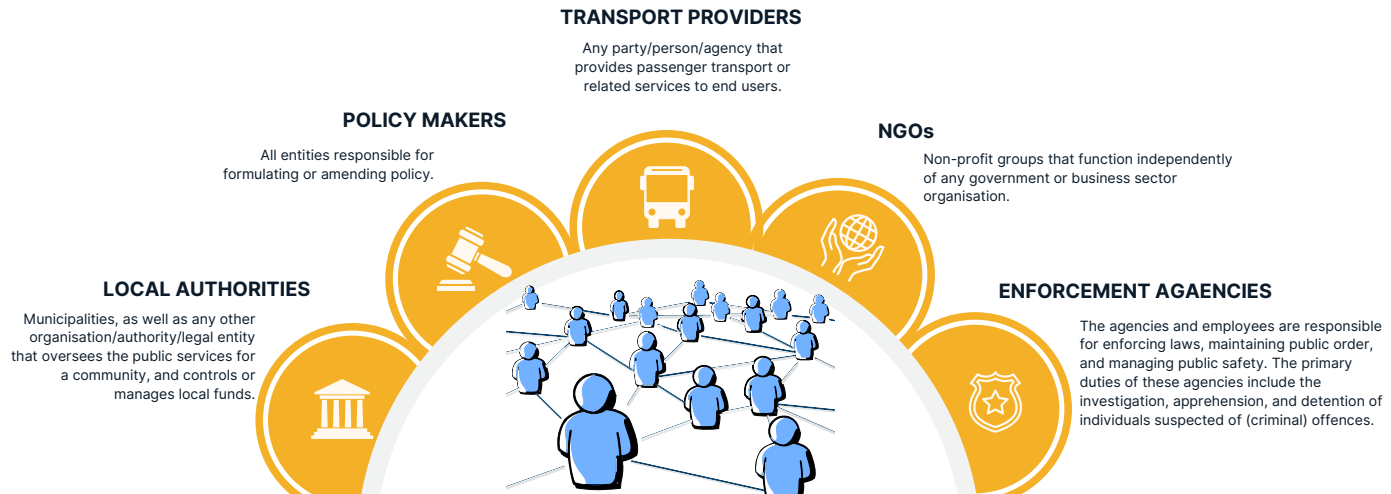
The first three phases of the methodology led to the identification of six types of interventions on sexual harassment in public transport. As a result, these are the categories used in the SHE CAN Tool:

- ▶ **Legal framework** – laws, acts, policies and guidelines;
- ▶ **Surveillance and policing** – enforcement of the legal framework through human intervention and/or technology devices;
- ▶ **Campaigns and educational behaviour change** interventions – written or digital information provision;
- ▶ **Infrastructural improvements** – amendments to the built environment to improve personal safety;
- ▶ **Management-based improvements** – changes in institutions to reduce sexual harassment;
- ▶ **Vehicle design** – physical changes to the public transport vehicles to reduce sexual harassment; and



Many of these categories can be divided into subcategories, with numerous interventions that fall into each (sub)category. In total, 49 distinct interventions were found to provide a comprehensive (yet not exhaustive) representation of the interventions proposed in the literature. There is no general sequence in which the various intervention categories need to be implemented. Many of these categories can be addressed in parallel and any relevant sequence will be specific to a certain application. Conversely, a hierarchy does exist between the intervention categories. From the bottom up, physical infrastructure (such as roads and vehicles) is needed. Regulatory guidance (rules and ideologies) is required to frame transport operations from the top down (through legal and policy stipulations, as well as campaigns and education initiatives). Policing and management form the interface between the top-down and bottom-up influences to ensure that the intended benefits are realised.

Consequently, **five key types stakeholders** have been defined that can influence policy or decisions on the implementation of interventions to combat these crimes from the top down. These are:



The SHE CAN Tool describes an extensive range of interventions; however, these interventions do not impact sexual harassment in public transport in a similar manner or scale. The EMPOWER consortium, therefore, developed the EMPOWER Intervention Classification System (EICS), that is used in the SHE CAN Tool to structure the packages of information included in the Tool. The EICS uses three tiers to classify interventions: Foundation, Elevation and Empowerment.



- **Foundation** refers to basic changes to the public transport environment that ideally should be in place. Examples of foundational interventions include providing adequate street lighting or installing panic buttons in public transport vehicles.

- **Elevation** refers to changes that do not necessarily form part of the fundamental public transport system provisions but are add-ons that, when implemented, can improve women's free and fearless use of public transport, and empower women by providing access to opportunities previously denied. Examples of such interventions are the provision and use of safety auditing apps or appointing female employees within the transport system.

- **Empowerment** refers to changes that are aimed at transforming society and governance from the top down, typically through policy changes, law reform, campaigns, and education. Their impacts will be felt throughout the entire network but will be less impactful without a proper foundational base.

The strengths of the framework are that it is universally applicable and can be adapted for use in any country, by different levels of policy and stakeholders. Use of the framework will, however, be application specific and the actual list of interventions, stakeholders and impacts will have to be adapted for each application. The upshot of this is that abstract concepts can become more tangible when the actual entities involved, in a particular location, are substituted for the generic terminology used in the framework. This can improve understanding of the problem, by making it more relatable to the stakeholders involved.

Ultimately, **the development of the EMPOWER framework for decision-making resulted in the creation of an online Tool** that disseminates information on addressing sexual harassment in public transport through the framework described. During the online Tool development process, both the structure and contents of the EMPOWER framework were tested and approved by potential end-users.

## 3.4 Testing and validating the SHE CAN Tool

Both the methodology behind the SHE CAN Tool and its online representation has been tested and validated throughout various stages of its development. The initial validation of the Tool tried to get insights from African stakeholders on the comprehensiveness of the content offered and the first draft of the design.

The conceptual design of the Tool was finalised and presented on 13th July 2021. During the first validation workshops, all aspects of the Tool were explained and discussed. This includes:

- ▶ The aim and structure of the SHE CAN Tool;
- ▶ The different entry points (Take Decision and Get Knowledge)
- ▶ The draft designs of elements; and
- ▶ Video to illustrate the functionality.

The insights collected have helped further shape the Tool to meet the specific needs of potential users as well as to better fit within the African context in terms of design. Further, the Tool has undergone an extensive process of validation through a series of workshops and surveys with a wider pool of stakeholders in preparation for its official launch.

Four online piloting workshops were held between 12th – 18th May 2022, which were designed to present, provide training and validate the SHE CAN Tool with stakeholders and determine if it was fit to be used by different professionals associated with the transport sector. The workshops also aimed to collect feedback on the various elements of the Tool.



Approximately 30 participants joined in, including participants from Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Rwanda. Apart from transport professionals, the UN agency (UNEP), international and national NGOs (Transaid) as well as urban transport operators and unions and the core consortium team attended. The workshop was by invitation only and participants were also given a brief overview of the EMPOWER project and the progress up to date.

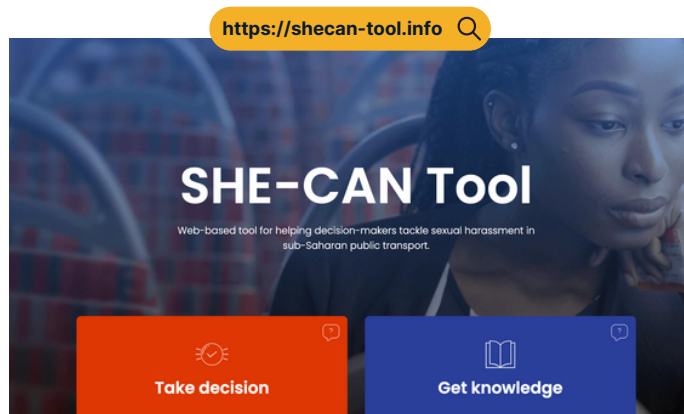
The feedback obtained from the four online workshops was used to design and conduct a physical workshop in the city of Bengaluru in India, which was held on 27th May 2022. A total of 40 participants joined the workshop ranging from government organisations, NGOs, Lions Club, WRI India and the university staff and students of The Ramaiah Institute of Management.

This process has led to finalising the online representation of the Tool, pushing for the final goal of the EMPOWER project - effectively getting stakeholders to start using it and taking the knowledge presented forward.

4.

## The SHE CAN Tool online experience: navigating the Tool





The SHE CAN online Tool has been developed to be user-friendly, and intuitive and to offer the interested stakeholders the information they are searching for in an uncomplicated manner. Its design is the result of extensive research into the African context as well as numerous consultation and validation processes to ensure that every element is fully comprehensive and that it offers to the user an easy and well-structured experience.

The SHE CAN online Tool practically consists of two main sections which offer users diverse pieces of structured information, each with its own distinct user experience.

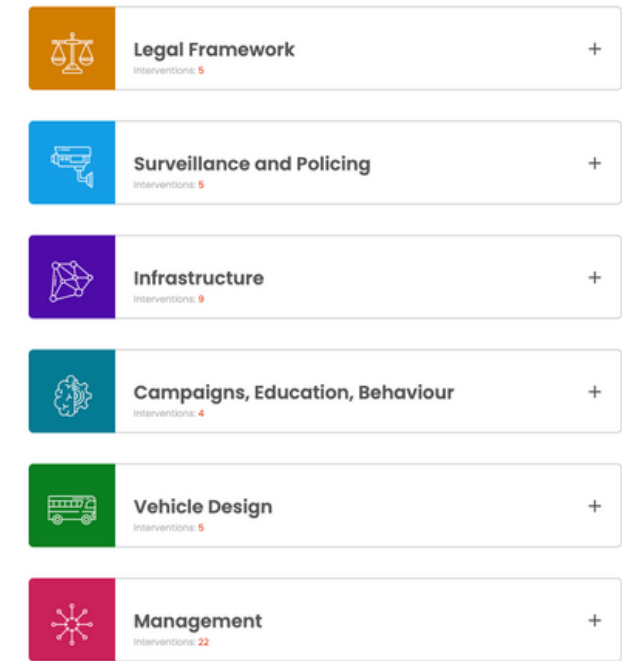
### ► Take Decision

This section offers tailored information on the interventions that stakeholders can implement for tackling sexual harassment in public transport. Users can navigate the Tool based on the self-identified **stakeholder type**, guiding them towards specific interventions within their area of influence. They can further select which intervention they want to see in full detail, from the several **categories available** (e.g. surveillance, legal aspects, campaigns, etc). Once on the **intervention page**, users can read more about case studies, resource needs, stakeholders involved, risks of implementation, and effectiveness among other key details.

### ► Get Knowledge

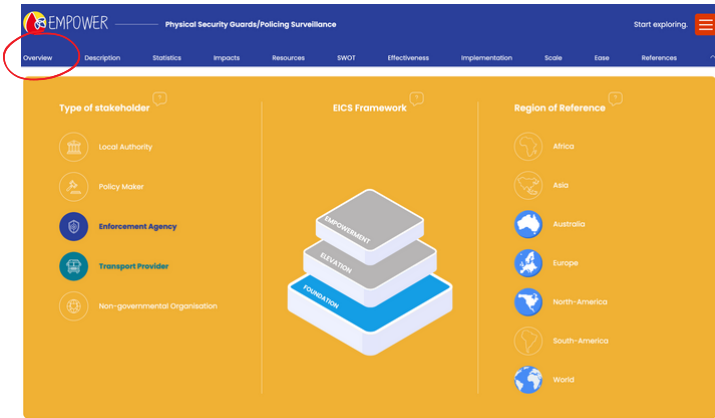
The “Get Knowledge” section offers the possibility to explore all the resources available in the Tool. Within this section, users can find additional filters that can be applied to further tailor information to their specific needs. Interventions can be filtered here by their position within the EMPOWER Intervention Classification System (EICS), ease of impact, area of impact, the timeframe of implementation, and their impact on women. Additionally, this section also provides an advanced filtering system that allows users to “mix & match” impacts to obtain the best interventions based on their interests. This section also provides valuable information regarding the data collection process for sexual harassment in public transport, alongside downloadable templates and examples. Those interested in reading more about the findings of the EMPOWER project and the current situation regarding sexual harassment in public transport as well as global attempts to tackle it can also access a repository through this section.

The main focus of the SHE CAN Tool is, however, the 49 selected interventions which stakeholders could apply when attempting to tackle the issue of sexual harassment in public transport.



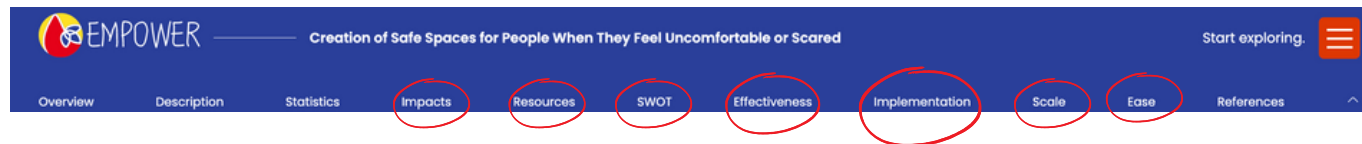
Intervention pages have been developed with the specific goal to offer users complex information in the most structured and comprehensive way possible. To this end, the intervention pages incorporate a series of sections through which the user can navigate either by scrolling down to the end of the page or by selecting them from the menu that appears on the top of the page, as soon as the user scrolls down from the overview.

The overview displays what types of stakeholders the intervention applies to, where it sits on the EMPOWER Intervention Classification System (EICS) and the regions of reference for the literature behind.





Each section displays a series of impacts that have been carefully evaluated as part of the methodological process of creating the Tool. The visual representation of these impacts has been curated to be as intuitive as possible for the user. Tooltips placed above each section explain the meaning of each impact and how it should be interpreted.



- ▶ **Impacts** - displays which area, time of travel, mode and demographic would be impacted
- ▶ **Resources** - displays monetary and non-monetary resource demands required to implement the intervention.
- ▶ **SWOT** - displays identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- ▶ **Effectiveness** - displays the potential effectiveness as perceived by females using the transport system, or as perceived by the governing bodies implementing the measure.
- ▶ **Implementation** - displays interventions targeted at local, citywide, regional, or national implementation scales.
- ▶ **Scale** - displays the timeframes associated with implementing an intervention (inception, as well as the duration that continued effort and support is required for an intervention to become and remain impactful) and the timeframes for realising the benefits of an intervention.
- ▶ **Ease** - displays the expected ease of implementation of an intervention.

Overall, the EMPOWER SHE CAN Tool is meant to be an effective resource aiding stakeholders in achieving a decrease (or, eventually eliminate) in instances of sexual harassment in public transport in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. The Tool is addressed to stakeholders either within the transport realm or with a specific interest in the topic (i.e - NGOs). Although an integral part of the online representation of the SHE CAN Model has been to guide a stakeholder toward the information most relevant to their interest, it is important to reiterate that the interventions highlighted within the Tool and taking the goal of tackling sexual harassment forward rely on stakeholder engagement and cooperation.

5.

## Conclusions

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Taking forward the  
SHE CAN Tool



The extensive amount of existing literature on the subject of sexual harassment in public transport proves that not only is the incidence extremely high in sub-Saharan Africa as well as on a global scale, but also that there is a dire need for immediate action. Women's perception of safety when they travel was proven to influence their choice of work, study, and daily activities. Conversely, studies have indicated that men do not factor travel safety in when making similar choices. Considering this, women's safety when travelling becomes an issue of gender equality at its core. In today's society, women's traditional roles within the household have changed and with that, so have their travel needs. Offering women equal opportunities means ensuring that the environment within which they exist and move needs to become safer.

With this in mind, the EMPOWER consortium started the project by trying to understand what decision-makers are missing and what they would need in order to start taking action. Two major pieces of research were delivered in the project:

- how to design and implement qualitative and quantitative research to provide an evidence base to justify taking action; and
- what type of supporting information do decision-makers need in order to tackle sexual harassment in sub-Saharan public transport?

Once the research phase was completed, an integral aspect became clear - the sheer amount of literature on the subject can be overwhelming for decision-makers to go through and, because of this, key information might get overlooked. But what would be the optimal solution?

In a nutshell, the SHE CAN Tool was born out of the necessity to offer decision-makers easily accessible, key information that can prompt actions to tackle sexual harassment in public transport.

With the help of the Tool, decision-makers can now explore all the practical elements required to implement certain measures - cost, effectiveness, skill and time required, and ease of implementation among many others. They can also explore examples, targeted literature, and 'how-to' guidance on certain aspects related to tackling sexual harassment in public transport.

The SHE CAN Tool offers knowledge about actions that could be taken in the field of management, vehicle design, infrastructure, campaigns and education, surveillance and policing and the legal framework. However, creating a safer environment for women when they travel goes beyond these. Successful implementation of actions to tackle sexual harassment requires cooperation among stakeholders - a joint vision. Laws are ineffective if not rigorously applied. Campaigns lose value if they are not supported by institutional efforts to educate citizens not only on the topic of consent and consequences but also to take action when they witness instances of sexual harassment.

Collaboration among different actors is not only essential, but it is also the best way to successfully address the issue of sexual harassment in public transport. Developing a long-lasting strategy and concrete change requires a joint approach among all major types of stakeholders identified within the SHE CAN Tool - local authorities, policymakers, enforcement agencies, transport providers and NGOs.



Effectively taking forward the SHE CAN Tool and implementing the identified interventions requires collaboration between two or more of these stakeholders, working towards the common goal of tackling the issue of sexual harassment in public transport, by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for accomplishing results.

To reach this goal, collaboration should rely on the following principles:

- **Inclusion:** involving everyone who could be impacted by the outcome of a decision or a process;
- **Equal partnership:** recognising that all stakeholders involved have equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status;
- **Transparency:** creating a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue with each other;
- **Information access:** providing everyone involved access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process;
- **Sharing responsibility:** equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process for everyone involved;
- **Empowerment:** offering everyone involved a sense of ownership over the outcome of the process.

During the project, we hosted a number of physical cross-sector stakeholder workshops to discuss the challenges of sexual harassment and the opportunities to tackle it by working together. This brought together public, private, national and local decision-makers together in one room for the first time. This not only gave clarity of responsibilities but also generated a desire for future collaboration. Budgets need to be identified to initiate and continue such workshops. This might be possible by multiple organisations allocating a small amount each, or through external funding.

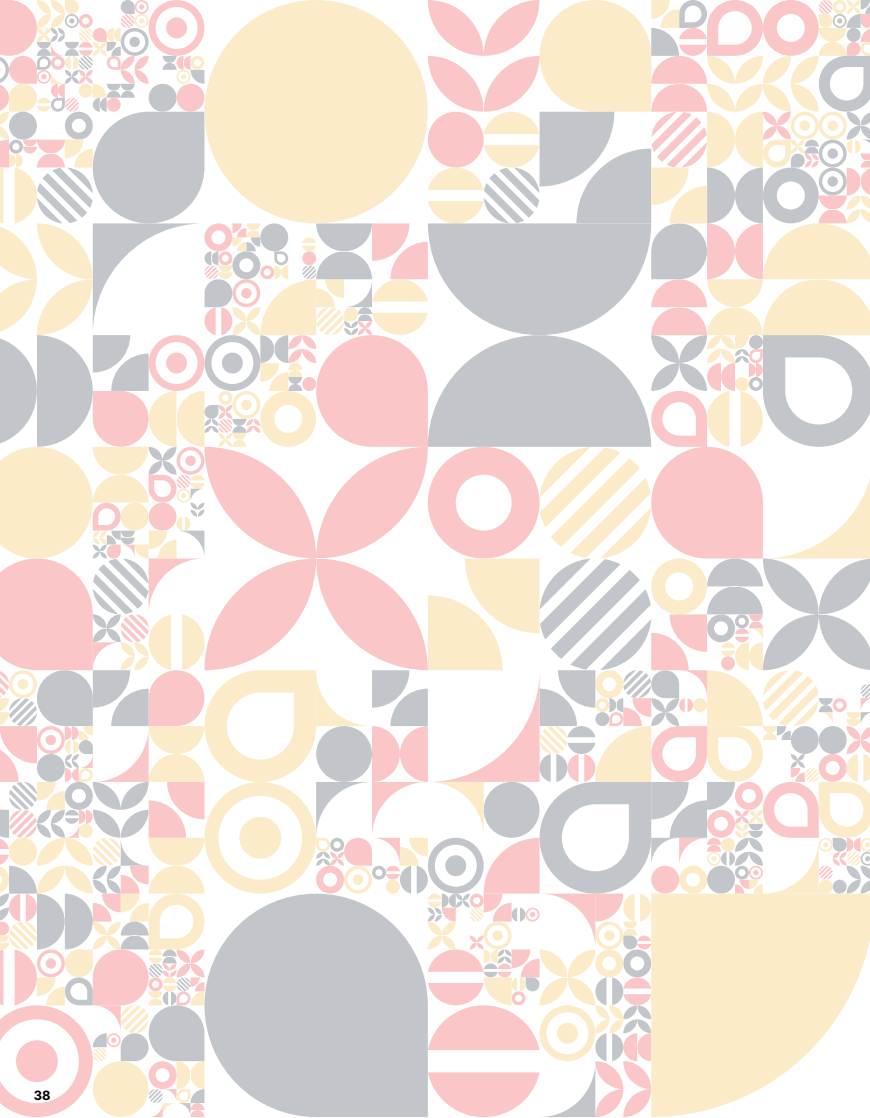


## Recommendations:

- ▶ The Tool is designed to be applied by local authorities, policymakers, enforcement agencies, transport providers and NGOs. Whilst they can use the resources as single organisations, the greatest impact would result from the cross-sector collaboration.
- ▶ In order to gain the support of senior decision-makers in an organisation, it may first be necessary to present research examples from the Tool on the definition and prevalence of sexual harassment in public transport in general.
- ▶ Select relevant tool interventions to your organisation's role to show how other city stakeholders have tackled the issue, such as through legal frameworks, surveillance and policing, infrastructure, campaigns, vehicle design or management. This might include quick wins or longer-term strategies.
- ▶ Awareness can be raised more widely by using the SHE CAN Tool in an organisation's professional development programme, such as through gender and equality training.
- ▶ For decision-makers to justify taking action, it is important to develop and provide them with an evidence base of the prevalence of sexual harassment across public transport services in your city or region. To do this, follow the 5 step data collection process employed by the EMPOWER project.
- ▶ As part of the data collection process, deliver a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify the actors who have relevant responsibilities and engage them in workshops, presenting the SHE CAN Tool and the rationale for cross-sector collaboration.
- ▶ Following the data collection process, the evidence base should be communicated internally to gain support and unlock the budget to take action.
- ▶ For the greatest impact, the lead stakeholder should set up a cross-sector steering group (referring to the Tool's guidance and templates) to pursue a joined-up approach of prioritising and delivering interventions which are mutually supportive.
- ▶ If this is not possible at first, the lead stakeholder should set out their strategy for delivering interventions within their organisation first, then communicate this to gain buy-in from others.







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