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USAID's Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV)

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# Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development

SECTION 3.5. SECTOR-SPECIFIC PROGRAM ELEMENTS

## Addressing GBV through Energy and Infrastructure Programs

Analytical Services IV Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ)  
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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**B3W**

Build Back Better World (Partnership)

**CARE-GBV**

Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence

**GBV**

Gender-based violence

**SEAH**

Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment

**USAID**

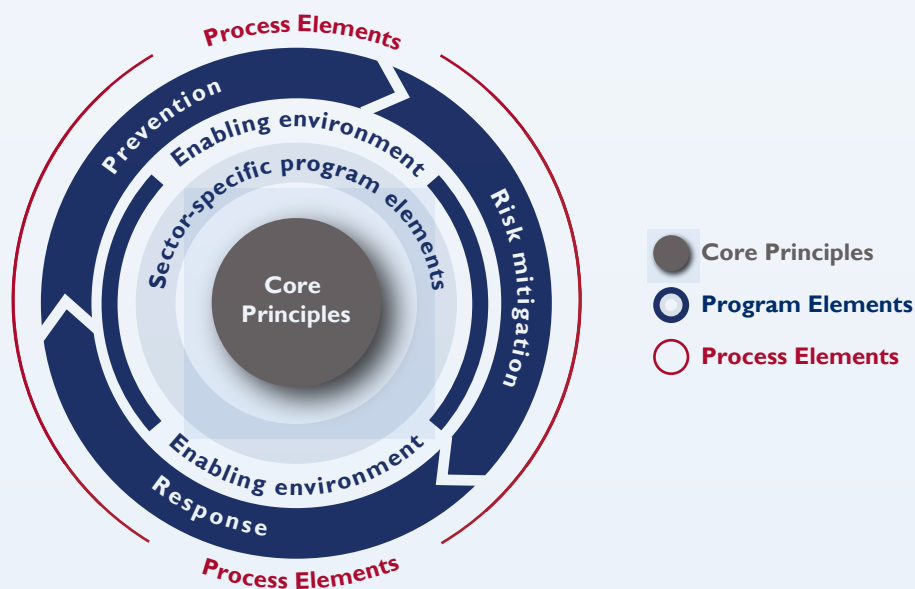
United States Agency for International Development

# Introduction

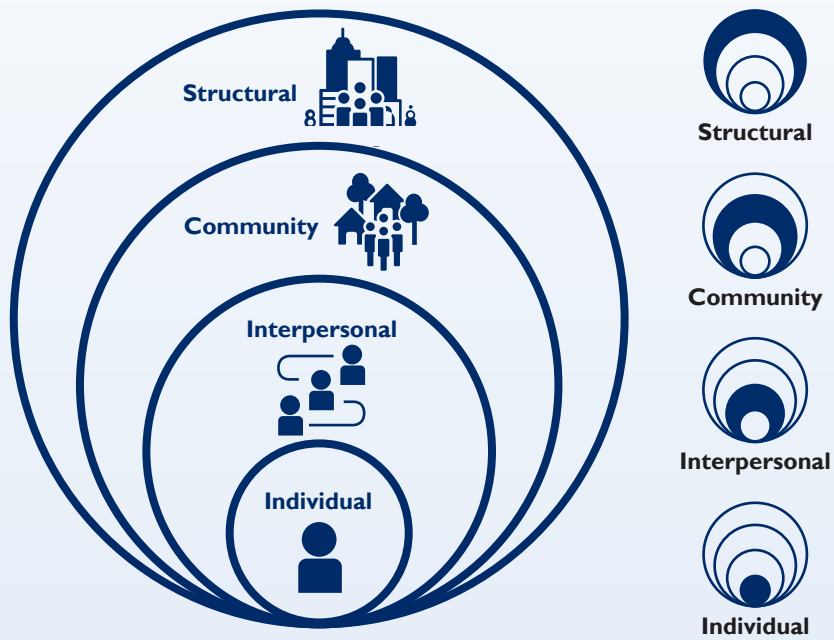
This document describes why USAID's energy and infrastructure programs should address gender-based violence (GBV) and details specific strategies for doing so. Program examples are provided to illustrate how the strategies can be incorporated into energy and infrastructure programs, and links to tools and resources are provided for additional information.

This document is part of the Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development, which include core principles, program elements (prevention, risk mitigation, response, enabling environment), and process elements. Ideally, readers will familiarize themselves with these sections of the Foundational Elements before reading this brief. At a minimum, readers should be familiar with the following sections before reviewing this brief:

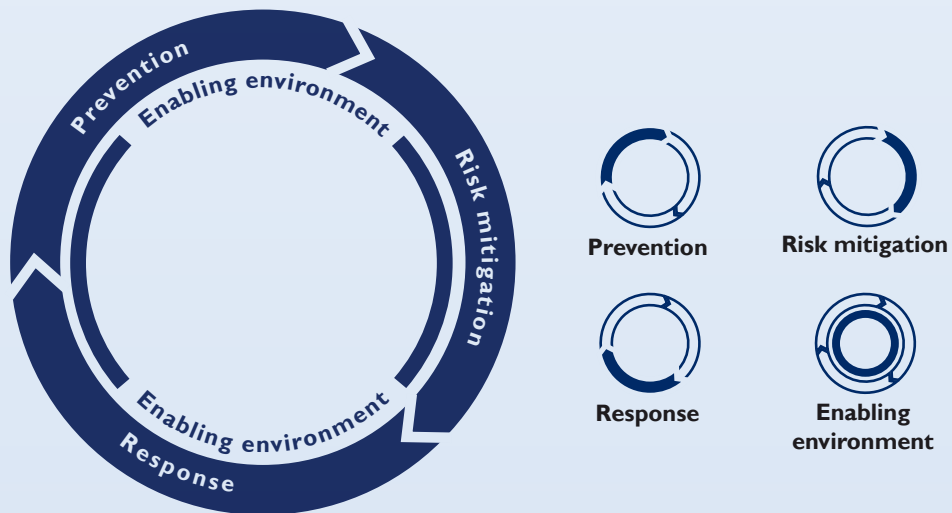
- Section 1.0. Introduction
- Section 3.2. Program Elements: Risk Mitigation
- Section 4.0. Process Elements:
  - Values, Organizational Culture, and Leadership (Program Example: A Framework for Safeguarding Program Participants)
  - Strategic Planning and Design (Gender Analysis and Referral Network Mapping)



The strategies described in this brief are organized by levels of the socio-ecological model: individual, interpersonal, community, and structural. Effective GBV interventions typically include strategies that address multiple levels of the socio-ecological model.



Each strategy is also labeled as prevention, risk mitigation, response, or enabling environment.



# Why Energy and Infrastructure Programming Should Address GBV

Well-functioning societies rely on energy, transportation, and waste-management infrastructure to deliver basic services and improve well-being. However, aging, inadequate, and poorly planned infrastructure contributes to tense, unsafe, overcrowded, and resource-stressed conditions, with limited economic opportunities and increased risk of GBV, where women must compromise personal safety to meet their needs (see Table 1) (Terraza et al. 2020, McIlwane 2013). GBV is rooted in unequal and discriminatory gender norms, but is also “enabled by a number of physical factors in the built environment,” as well as men’s dominance in the sector workforce (Terraza et al. 2020). Thus, threats and experiences of GBV in infrastructure development and use are prevalent and cannot be ignored.

Rapid infrastructure development is critical to meet the needs of an increasingly urbanized world, and the opportunities and risks associated with infrastructure development, including GBV, must be contextualized within the climate crisis. This necessitates a revolutionary and just transformation, with investments that address GBV and climate resilience across areas of infrastructure, including energy, transportation, and waste-management systems, all of which are part of the Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership (The White House 2021).

Safe, inclusive, and well-planned infrastructure investments, projects, and operations contribute to substantially reducing GBV while delivering critical energy, transportation, and waste-management services.

(Fraser et al. 2017)

**Table 1: GBV threats and factors in infrastructure and energy sectors**

Infrastructure planning and construction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-planned energy, transportation, and waste-management infrastructure projects can result in safer communities by reducing hidden areas or blocked alleys, creating adequately lit spaces and pathways, and managing the flow of users to prevent crowded areas. These conditions reduce risks and incidence of physical, verbal, and sexual harassment, which limit the mobility of women and sexual and gender minorities (Land Portal 2019, Terraza et al. 2020). A study in Mexico City found that 70 percent of surveyed women modified daily routines to avoid physical, verbal, and sexual harassment, with some women switching schools, changing jobs, and moving neighborhoods (Campos et al. 2016).</li> <li>• Infrastructure and energy development can create economic opportunities through provision of jobs for women and men, but can also cause displacement and loss of local and diversified livelihoods, resulting in stress and harmful coping mechanisms. Awareness of drug and alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism, as well as interventions to mitigate this behavior, can reduce the risk of domestic and intimate partner violence (O’Neil et al. 2015, Levien 2017).</li> <li>• The infrastructure workforce tends to be male dominated and often involves large numbers of male workers coming into communities with disposable income. This can lead to increased risks of sexual harassment, violence, and coerced sex for women living or working near project sites (Social Development Direct et al. 2020). In addition, some reports show that women in male-dominated workplaces experience higher levels of gender-based discrimination and harassment (Menon 2019). A study in India found that 74 percent of women working in construction regularly experienced sexual harassment and exploitation from supervisors, contractors, and site owners (Parry 2014).</li> </ul>
Energy infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting homes and neighborhoods to reliable electricity can result in healthier, safer, more resilient communities. Electrification of public spaces can also contribute to increased safety for vulnerable populations. Replacing traditional fuels with cleaner alternatives reduces risks to women and girls by decreasing or removing the need to collect biofuels in remote areas. Improving access to clean, affordable, and reliable electricity in households improves access to education, information, and economic opportunities, and evidence suggests that these households report lower acceptance of domestic violence (Power Africa 2020).</li> <li>• High energy costs in confined, crowded, unsafe situations exacerbate household economic and social tensions, leading to intimate partner violence and other forms of GBV, and increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse of women by energy suppliers (Mercy Corps 2019).</li> <li>• Electrified GBV response centers and health care facilities can remain open to provide uninterrupted service to GBV victims (Power Africa 2020). This is also critical for communication channels and connectivity (cellular or Internet) to remain accessible for those experiencing abuse or helping survivors to report abuse and access life-saving resources (Roodbol 2020).</li> </ul>

### Transportation infrastructure

- In advanced and emerging market contexts, public transportation is estimated to be the second most common location for sexual harassment to occur, after public streets (USAID 2020). Designing adequate and inclusive transportation systems can reduce sexual harassment on public access lines and in public streets.
- Rates of GBV occurring on public transportation are often underreported due to social stigma and taboos around discussing GBV. This makes it difficult to formulate and measure the effectiveness of mitigation and response strategies (Patterson 2021, USAID 2020). Research from Nepal shows that women who experienced violence and harassment on public transportation were pressured by cultural norms to remain silent, and if they did express fear, they were told to wait until elders, husbands, or companions were available to travel with them (ActionAid 2013).
- Women with disabilities are also more vulnerable to GBV on public transportation, but have limited alternatives to these transportation systems (USAID 2020).

### Waste-management infrastructure

- Many urban areas struggle to provide formal waste-management infrastructure, especially in informal settlements, and rely on the labor of informal networks of waste collectors, many of whom are women (Aidis and Khaled 2019). Women engaged in the informal waste-management sector experience many forms of violence and violations of rights due to their low societal status; black, low-income, and illiterate women particularly experience these violations more often and more severely (WIEGO n.d.).
- Violence against waste pickers can come from many sources, including the state, communities, other workers, household members, criminal networks, and intermediaries. For example, women may be pressured into transactional sex by fellow waste pickers and landfill owners to access waste and recycling processes (WIEGO 2020). Women waste collectors also report sexual and physical abuse from private security forces and law enforcement officials (WIEGO 2020). The presence of male-led gangs and criminal activity controlling operations and processes around landfills and dump sites contributes to GBV experienced by women waste collectors (Aidis and Khaled 2019).

# How Energy and Infrastructure Programming Can Address GBV

Evidence on interventions to address the risk of GBV in infrastructure development and use is increasing, but still limited. The following are evidence-informed and promising practices for integrating GBV into infrastructure programming, including in the planning, construction and energy, transport, and waste-management sectors.

## Strategy #1: Promote women's representation and economic empowerment in infrastructure projects and businesses



**Program elements:**  
prevention



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
individual, structural

Women and other marginalized groups continue to be underrepresented in the energy and infrastructure workforce. Identifying constraints to women's recruitment, retention, and economic empowerment can provide information to advocate for policy change and training for skills development specifically targeting women in infrastructure sector projects and companies. This can include addressing gender and social norms that affect women's participation and decision-making by putting in place human resource policies to encourage gender-sensitive recruitment and access to professional development opportunities for women throughout the energy and infrastructure workforce. Policies addressing wage equity, workplace harassment, zero tolerance of sexual misconduct, and family leave (with enforcement and redress mechanisms) can empower women, as can training for women on infrastructure construction, installation, and repair to give increased confidence, skills, and economic potential (O'Neil 2015). Promoting economic opportunities for women decreases their risk of GBV, and promoting women's representation in the sector can also contribute to safer, more gender-equitable workplaces.



## Strategy #2: Ensure infrastructure project sites are safe and accessible for infrastructure professionals and for service delivery to people of all genders



**Program elements:**  
risk mitigation, enabling environment



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
community, structural

Project sites must be free of all types of harassment, discrimination, exploitation, and other abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse of personnel, subcontractors, and community members, and workplace harassment. Infrastructure professionals all deserve dignity, respect, and safety while designing, constructing, and repairing infrastructure systems. Written workplace sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment prevention (SEAH) policies (See Section 4.0. Process Element: Values, Organizational Culture, and Leadership) with clear, safe, accessible, and confidential referral pathways and reporting mechanisms, along with actionable consequences for perpetrators, can foster a safe, respectful workplace for all infrastructure professionals, as well as community partners and stakeholders. This can be facilitated by developing code of conduct for contractors and ensuring they have zero tolerance of sexual misconduct and GBV in their employment policies.

Protecting against workplace GBV through evidence-informed interventions can increase women's participation in the infrastructure sector and build community resilience (Aidis and Khaled 2019). For example, requiring adequate and available sanitation facilities at infrastructure project sites for all genders is imperative where the male-dominated industry may preclude facilities altogether for women and gender and sexual minority workers, or facilities may be insufficiently safe for them. This includes providing safe and accessible routes, internal site-transportation options, and sanitation facilities with privacy, lighting, and supplies for women and gender minorities (WaterAid et al. 2018, UN Habitat 2012). Another intervention to improve safety is sourcing local labor for construction operations to keep families together and provide economic opportunity to local communities, including women and eligible youth. This can reduce GBV risks that are posed by an influx of often-male laborers or migrant workers without families into a community development site.

### Strategy #3: Ensure infrastructure project design and implementation is informed by gender analysis and safety audits to prevent and mitigate GBV in public spaces



**Program elements:**  
risk mitigation



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
community

USAID seeks to identify and prioritize public safety issues during project design and implementation, with the aim of ensuring that initiatives are inclusive and reduce GBV in public spaces (i.e., environmental design as prevention) (USAID 2020). Therefore, every infrastructure project should be intentionally designed using evidence from a gender analysis to identify where and why people experience GBV in public spaces. The gender analysis—especially when conducted by local women’s rights groups and other organizations working on GBV—can explore social norms, power dynamics, and patterns of GBV to anticipate and respond to the differentiated needs of individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities.

A safety audit can be conducted to glean context-specific information about GBV patterns and concerns of safety and security for all genders, and can be conducted by local GBV prevention organizations and advocates. For example, public transportation and infrastructure projects should assess and design measures that account for GBV safety concerns, including: ensuring waiting, riding, and walking areas are well-lit and comfortable and safe for women and girls; installing closed-circuit television surveillance systems, emergency phones, and additional exits; creating and disseminating digital mobility safety apps; increasing security presence or police kiosks in bus terminals; patrolling—by trained security forces or by women and girls in groups; and training professionals on gender-responsive approaches (Morgan et al. 2020, USAID 2020, O’Neil et al. 2015, Terraza et al. 2020, Begzsuren and Mendizabal 2018).

Initiating female-only trains and buses has had success in some contexts in preventing harassment on public transport (Shah et al. 2017). A study in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has shown that gender-segregated transportation can reduce women’s experience of physical harassment by 40 percent compared to study participants in unsegregated transportation (USAID 2020). The effectiveness of gender-segregated transportation depends on whether resources are dedicated to ensuring that men are not allowed on these cars, with consequences in place for breaking these rules (USAID 2020).

## Strategy #4: Address social norms to prevent GBV



**Program elements:**  
prevention



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
community, structural

Behavior change communication campaigns can be built into infrastructure projects as a specific component to confront and address GBV by raising awareness with the public on gender inequality and power dynamics perpetuating GBV. This can be achieved through processes and implementation measures directed at infrastructure users, construction workers, and systems' operators (Morgan et al. 2020) (See Section 3.1. Sector-Specific Program Elements: Prevention: Transformed Attitudes, Beliefs, and Norms).

## Strategy #5: Strengthen institutional response to respond effectively to GBV



**Program elements:**  
response



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
structural

Institute mechanisms to allow survivors to come forward and report harassment and abuse in energy and infrastructure projects. Because underreporting is a challenge to effective response, reporting systems should be made easier, more accessible, and more comfortable, with increased trust in confidentiality and non-retaliation (USAID 2020). Where possible, multiple channels of reporting should be established to make it easier for survivors to come forward. Those reporting GBV should be able to trust that reporting will be effective, leading to prosecution or penalty for perpetrators, positive changes to operations/infrastructure (e.g., increased security patrolling public transit), and mitigate risk for violence (USAID 2020). Coordinate cross-sectoral programming (i.e., activities working across multiple thematic areas, such as health, education, economic growth, justice, and gender) to enhance support for women who are survivors of GBV on public transportation (USAID 2020).

Other strategies to improve response to GBV include laws and policies with strict criminal penalties for offenders, awareness-raising campaigns to teach about the negative effects of GBV on individuals and communities, and campaigns to increase bystander intervention when witnessing GBV (USAID 2020).

## Strategy #6: Leverage partnerships with private-sector entities to promote gender-equitable and GBV-free workplaces in energy and infrastructure programming



**Program elements:**  
prevention, risk mitigation,  
response



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
structural

Safer spaces and workplaces can be created by advocating for and engaging with private-sector entities and partnerships that are using or seeking certifications of recognized standards to respond to gender equality and GBV, such as gender-equality seals, environmental and social responsibility, or voluntary corporate social responsibility programs. They also promote participation, advancement, and benefits for women and women-led enterprises across value chains and in infrastructure development levels (Aidis and Khaled 2019). Following analysis, specific infrastructure plans and projects can apply innovative frameworks or opportunities for women, such as through the W+ Standard, to promote and train private-sector entities on workplace equality including GBV policies, equal employment, pay, benefits, and hiring practices (W+ Standard n.d., Aidis and Khaled 2019).

## Strategy #7: Improve capacity in gender-responsive planning and budgeting of investments and infrastructure projects



**Program elements:**  
enabling environment



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
structural

Government officials, private-sector entities, service providers, city planners, community members, and stakeholders can benefit from upstream investment in infrastructure that integrates gender and GBV considerations into investment planning and budgeting. This can be done in national or municipal plans and strategies—such as municipal master plans. Also, to holistically address GBV in communities, ensure that energy and infrastructure investments include funding and measures across sectors and from the planning and design stage. Stakeholders' capacity to budget and plan for integrating GBV can be built via dialogues, coordination, professional development programs, and knowledge sharing between communities and among GBV organizations. Reinforcing intentional and equitable allocation of budget for GBV initiatives with specific gender markers, and including government investment planning, infrastructure development, and improvement projects can help set and achieve concrete targets to reduce and prevent GBV. This should be part of effective and safe infrastructure service delivery (Terraza et al. 2020).

# Program Examples

## Example #1: Power Utility Edesur Dominicana, S.A. (EDESUR)

USAID, through its Engendering Industries program, is partnering with EDESUR to improve gender equality and enhance the utility's operations by reducing barriers to women's participation and economic opportunities, including sexual harassment and GBV in the workplace. EDESUR is a large power utility that provides electricity to more than 800,000 customers in the southern part of the Dominican Republic. Its workforce is male dominated—only 37 percent of its employees are women. Many women do not pursue technical roles in the energy sector and are confined to managerial or administrative roles due to a fear of being exposed to sexual violence in the field and harassment in the office.

EDESUR began addressing sexual harassment in its code of ethics, as well as promoting women staff as leaders in media outreach and coverage. USAID's support in recent years further enabled EDESUR's development and responses to prevent risk and exposure to GBV across the utility's operations by providing tailored coaching to EDESUR staff

on gender equality and best business practices, along with development of an action plan contextualized to the company's identified needs. Specific interventions have included:

- Internal training and communication to increase the company's awareness of the issues of sexual harassment and GBV, with a focus on male employees becoming allies for women at the company and in their communities
- Internal male outreach, running workshops and focus groups, and screening and discussion of films about gender issues, including workplace harassment and GBV
- On-site facilities to accommodate women returning from childbirth
- Formation of a women's association at the utility, with discussions on gender-related topics and planned establishment of a women's mentorship program
- Utility personnel's participation in a gender equity executive leadership program (USAID 2019)

## Example #2: World Bank: Safe Commutes for Working Women in Kathmandu, Nepal

With high rates of women participating in the workforce (83 percent of women) and more women working in sectors outside agriculture, women need safe forms of transportation to meet their needs for mobility and independence. World Bank partnered with the National Transport Management Strategy of Nepal to meet this goal. First, they conducted a survey to learn more about the context-specific transportation needs of women. This survey found that 26 percent of women and 10 percent of men ages 19 to 35 had experienced sexual assault on public transportation. Specific findings showed patterns of violence—against both women and men—while walking to and waiting for rapid transit buses, especially early in the morning and after dark. Findings showed that overcrowding was perceived as contributing to incidents of violence. An initial solution proposed was to reserve seats for women on buses. However, this turned out to be unsuccessful, because it was not widely implemented and it left vacant seats on an

Recommendations from the World Bank study now include avoiding the reserved seating method and instead, addressing key issues such as alleviating overcrowding; developing a campaign promoting safe travel for all; taking a whole-journey approach that accounts for walking to and waiting at bus stops; supporting improved legislation and protection of victims; ensuring women’s participation in planning, design, and implementation; and commissioning another study to better understand the needs of users with disabilities (World Bank Group and Australian Aid 2013). As a result of these findings and recommendations, women-only minibuses have been adopted, providing safe spaces for women during morning and evening rush hour. This contributes to their safe, independent mobility to support their needs as working women.

(World Bank et al. 2015, World Bank Group and Australian Aid 2013)

### Example #3: SafetiPin App in Delhi, India, and Bogotá, Colombia

Technology can be leveraged to increase safety across infrastructure sectors, such as the SafetiPin app, which connects technology, safety, and public transportation. Developed in India, SafetiPin (SafetiPin n.d.) is a map-based mobile and desktop application that enables women to document and report where they feel safe or unsafe within a city, including public transportation (Shah et al. 2017, Cites Territoires Gouvernance n.d.). A main feature of this app is the women's safety audit, which includes nine parameters: (1) lighting, (2) openness, (3) visibility, (4) crowd, (5) security, (6) walk path, (7) availability of public transport, (8) gender diversity, and (9) feeling (Cites Territoires Gouvernance n.d.). SafetiPin was launched in Delhi in 2013; one major outcome was that data shared with the government in 2015 identified more than 7,000 dark spots in the city, leading the government to fix broken lights and install

new lights. A 2018–2019 SafetiPin study has provided further evidence for how and where safety can be improved (SafetiPin n.d.).

Following the methodology originally used in Delhi, the City of Bogotá decided to work with the SafetiPin app to address issues of sexual harassment on public transportation (Cites Territoires Gouvernance n.d.). A 2017 survey showed that more than 85 percent of women felt unsafe and 64 percent had experienced sexual assault on public transport in Bogotá. As of reporting in 2018, nearly 18,000 entries had been made in SafetiPin, showing patterns to inform awareness campaigns and transit staff training. Additionally, the City of Bogotá has increased the presence of officers, including female officers, to arrest offenders on public transit (Terraaza et al. 2020).

# Tools and Resources

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The goal of the Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV) activity is to strengthen USAID's collective prevention and response, or "collective action" in gender-based violence (GBV) development programming across USAID. For more information about CARE-GBV, click [here](#).

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