Original Article

The effectiveness of women's safety audits

Carolyn Whitzman[a,*], Margaret Shaw[b], Caroline Andrew[c] and Kathryn Travers[d]
[a]Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia.
E-mail: whitzman@unimelb.edu.au
[b]International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, Montreal, Canada.
[c]Faculty of Social Science, University of Ottawa, Canada.
[d]Women in Cities International, Montreal, Canada.

*Corresponding author.

Abstract   This paper discusses a methodological tool – the women's safety audit – initially developed in Canada, but which has been adapted and used in many regions of the world. The women's safety audit allows participants to identify safe and unsafe spaces and recommend how the unsafe spaces can be improved. In doing so, the women's safety audit privileges the experience of women living in a neighbourhood as 'experts' in their own field. Based on interviews with six organizations in Europe, Africa and Asia and on an analysis of written sources, the paper examines some of the applications, outcomes and challenges of this methodology. The findings suggest that the audit is adaptable to local contexts, can be effective for bringing about environment changes, empowering women and alerting the public and authorities to the shared responsibility for ensuring the safety of women.
Security Journal (2009) **22,** 205–218. doi:10.1057/sj.2009.1;
published online 18 May 2009

Introduction

Women's safety audits have been defined as 'a process which brings individuals together to walk through a physical environment, evaluate how safe it feels to them, identify ways to make the space safer and organize to bring about these changes' (WACAV (Women's Action Centre Against Violence Ottawa-Carleton), 1995, p. 1). Since it was developed by Toronto's Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC, 1989), the women's safety audit tool has been disseminated to different regions of the world. Women's safety audits raise fascinating conceptual questions and introduce very practical tools for interventions in communities. In this paper we evaluate the use that has been made of women's safety audits across the world. At the same time, we raise some conceptual issues – Whose knowledge is used in building communities? Whose knowledge is seen as legitimate? What kinds of knowledge can be understood and by whom? – as well as describing the practical nature of women's safety audits as a tool for improving urban planning and management.[1]

In their 2005 paper, 'Engendering Crime Prevention: International Developments and the Canadian Experience', Shaw and Andrew describe work undertaken to improve women's safety:

> Much of the work has centered on the use of tools such as safety audits and exploratory walks to develop recommendations for situational crime prevention initiatives. These include urban planning, housing design, and transport design and scheduling. They are also used to lobby for increased local authority support for front-line services for women. There has been an emphasis on developing prevention strategies through partnerships between local grassroots organizations, communities, and municipal governments and services thereby increasing the role of women in local decision-making. (Shaw and Andrew, 2005, pp. 296–297)

This description underlines the basic strategy of women's safety audits as a way of establishing partnerships with municipal governments and of giving voice to users of urban space as 'experts of experience', with equal standing to 'professional experts' such as urban planners and police officers (Whitzman, 2008a, p. 250). It is this combination of the analysis of the safety audit as a local governance tool, as an urban planning tool and as an expression of knowledge based in practice that is the central focus of this paper.

The idea of a women's safety audit is simple: using a checklist, a group of women users of a particular urban or community space walk around that space, noting factors that make those users feel unsafe or safe in that space. The original Women's Safety Audit checklist included 15 categories, including lighting, sightlines (seeing what is ahead and around), entrapment spots, signage and maintenance. Examples of questions on the checklist included (for lighting): 'Can you see a face 25 metres away? How even is the lighting? How many (what proportion) of the lights are out?'. They then formulate and prioritize recommendations and organize to bring about the recommended changes, notably by entering into a dialogue process with the local government and other key actors (for example, private land owners, police) to work towards implementation of the recommendations (METRAC, 1989).

Before discussing how women's safety audits have been adapted and used in different cities of the world, we want to establish how we intend to evaluate their effectiveness. Our research has uncovered only two meta-evaluations of safety audits, one undertaken in 1995 for the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) by WACAV (now called WISE – Women's Initiatives for a Safer Environment) and the other a result of a 1995 forum on safety audits organized by the Victorian Community Council Against Violence (VCCAV) in Australia.

The Canadian evaluation was based on a survey of 250 individuals and organizations that were likely to have used safety audits, plus 16 in-depth interviews with participants in audits. The overall evaluation was highly positive. People involved in safety audits felt that they offered a wide range of benefits to participants, the community at large, decision-makers, planners and the organizations that sponsored the audits. Safety audits were seen to be a valuable tool for the following reasons:

- they are flexible;
- they can be used by a wide variety of groups and in different circumstances;
- they are a useful community development tool;

- they address violence against women and against other vulnerable groups;
- they can help to bring about tangible changes.

However, the evaluation also highlighted limitations to the effectiveness of women's safety audits. These included:

- difficulties in the implementation of recommendations;
- difficulties in involving the most vulnerable groups of women;
- lack of criteria for evaluation and/or evaluation frameworks.

This study recommended to CMHC that they play a more active role in the promotion of safety audits as one effective way of doing community development, and of doing it in a way that integrated women and all groups vulnerable to violence. These recommendations were not, unfortunately, followed up by CMHC. This could be due to the fact that institutional crime prevention efforts at the CMHC in particular, and within Canada in general, have tended to ignore gender and feminist tools, including women's safety audits (Klodawsky *et al*, 1994; Shaw and Andrew, 2005).

Similarly, the Australian evaluation, based on a public forum with over 100 users of safety audits (in Australia, the audits were far less likely to be gender-specific) found that safety audits were effective when:

- they involved a wide variety of people;
- they looked at both long-term and short-term solutions;
- they developed partnerships between community organizations/agencies and local government.

But concerns expressed at the forum included:

- audits do not always promote a broadly supported problem-solving process, and may be organized solely by particular agencies and groups, and not involve residents and communities;
- audits may create unreal expectations in the community that safety is ensured by fixing up built-environment problems, and may divert resources from other, perhaps more substantive and complex, causes of crime and violence;
- difficulties in the implementation of recommendations.

The forum's conclusions were that much more rigorous training was needed from the State Department of Justice, but as in the case of Canada, these recommendations were not followed up (Sutton and Cherney, 2002). In fact, state government in Victoria, Australia has backed away from funding or supporting local government work in preventing crime and promoting community safety, and the VCCAV, which sponsored this forum, was disbanded by the Victorian state government in 2005 (Whitzman, 2008b).

Both evaluations completed half a world away from one another, but in similar English-speaking high-income nations, reiterated similar themes. Safety audits can be effective community development and problem-solving tools, but need to involve those who are most vulnerable – not only using the gender construct of 'women', but also including a more

intersectional analysis of vulnerability, including such factors as disabilities, being elderly, being a young person, living in low-income and/or high-violence communities, and racialization. They also need to be based in an understanding of local decision-making structures, have realistic short-term and long-term recommendations, and be grounded in a 'bigger picture' of how safety audits might fit into a long-term violence prevention plan.

No one knows how many women's safety audits or more generalized local safety assessments of this type have taken place around the world. The European Forum on Urban Safety (EFUS) has supported local safety audits as a tool since the early 1990s (EFUS, 2007), UN-Habitat's Safer Cities Programme has supported 'safety audits for, and by, women' since its establishment in 1995 (Vanderschueren, 2006, p. 29). Women's safety audits have been modified for use on university campuses and in rural/remote areas (WACAV, 1995; Whitzman, 2002), and children's participatory safety audits have been developed in a number of cities as part of the Child Friendly Cities project (Bartlett, 2006). The increasing complexity of the issues facing cities and regions has also been recognized by planning and built-environment professionals as requiring the development of new approaches, which are more pro-active and innovative. The need to ensure that all sectors in society, especially the poorest and most disenfranchised, can participate in decision-making processes affecting their lives, requires more inclusive and participatory approaches (Higgins and Reeves, 2004). The work of Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine (1999) and Jenny Pearce (2007) also point to the value of the use of participatory approaches such as rural appraisals, and the involvement of women's organizations, to reduce violence and increase the safety and security of women and girls in high violence neighbourhoods in Latin America and the Caribbean.

One of the most interesting phenomena for us has been the modification of the original women's safety audit tool for use in low-income countries, as well as low-income communities in high-income countries. We are particularly interested in the ways in which the safety audit has moved around the world and how the original movement of borrowing from developed countries to developing countries has been complemented by safety audit ideas now moving in the other direction, as well.

Methodology

We interviewed the director or other person responsible for their safety audit programme in six organizations – two in Europe, two in Asia and two in Africa. These organizations were: the Information Centre of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF), in Petrozavodsk, Russia; the Women's Design Service (WDS) in the United Kingdom, which has worked in London, Bristol and Manchester; the City of Dar es Salaam Safer Cities Programme, Tanzania; the Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN) Network on Violence Against Women, eThekwini (Durban), South Africa; Jagori, a feminist non-governmental organization (NGO) in Delhi, India; and PUKAR (Partnerships for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research), Mumbai, India.

These organizations were selected for a range of reasons, including as women's organizations with considerable experience and long-term or on-going use of the safety audit methodology, and whose work on safety audits has been published (Cavanaugh, 1998; Ranade, 2005; Viswanath, 2006), and/or been judged international good practice by a panel

of experts (Whitzman *et al*, 2004). In addition, they were selected to provide some regional representation and a sense of the application of this tool in very diverse socioeconomic and urban contexts, as well as for their willingness and ability to provide fairly rapid feedback. They are in no way, therefore, seen as representative of all those who have used the safety audit tool, but as illustrative of some of the breadth of experiences and the outcomes and challenges entailed in different settings.

A survey questionnaire using a series of open-ended questions was developed on the basis of existing literature and audit methodology, and emailed to all respondents. Telephone interviews, backed up by email responses to the survey, were solicited from each organization. The six respondents were asked a series of background questions about the origins and purposes of their use of the women's safety audit; who has been involved; when and where the audit(s) took place, the scale of the audit(s); and to whom the results were presented. We also asked them to assess the outcomes of the audits, in terms of the kinds of changes their audit(s) accomplished; and what they judged were the successes and failures of the process, as well as the results of any formal evaluations of the process undertaken.

In terms of assessing the outputs and outcomes of the use of the audit methodology, a range of factors from physical and environmental changes, greater awareness of violence against women and the gendering of local-government decision-making were brought up by the six respondents. In some cases reductions in fear of crime have been noted, but in general, organizations have been limited in their capacity to undertake rigorous evaluation of the impacts on levels of crime and fear of crime.

The sections present case studies of the experiences and outcomes of the use of the women's safety audit for each of the three regional groupings: Europe, Africa and Asia. The experiences have been separated into three themes by continent: urban regeneration, poverty alleviation and consciousness-raising about violence against women.

London, Bristol, Manchester, Petrozavodsk: Safety Audits as Inclusionary Practices in Urban Regeneration Projects

The WDS is a consultancy based in London, England that has been in operation since 1985 (Whitzman, 2007). WDS became aware of the METRAC safety audit guide early on, and felt that its methods and philosophy fitted well with the aims of WDS. Thus women's safety audits were used as a participatory planning tool from the mid-1990s onwards, and a modified *Making Places Safer* guide was published in 1998 (Cavanaugh, 1998). The *Making Places Safer* guide included a number of preparatory exercises ('What Really Makes My Blood Boil'), simple suggestions on mapping and taking photographs during audits and an activity observation sheet that allowed the numbers and characteristics of people observed (including gender and age, cars and other vehicles along with pedestrians) to be counted and recorded. A 3-year UK government grant in the early 2000s helped WDS work with low-income communities in three cities – London, Bristol and Manchester – incorporating its modified women's safety audits in urban regeneration schemes.

WDS reports many specific results from its women's safety audits (personal communication, Wendy Davis, 19 March 2008). A path has been re-routed through a problem park, for example, a pedestrian tunnel was radically re-designed, and signage and lighting have been improved. Perhaps more important is a consistent rate of success in terms of the acceptance

of recommended changes, possibly because decision-makers are always informed before-hand of the audits. Their audit recommendations are also well presented in a consistent format, with many photographs and activity observations, and the results are immediately provided to the organization involved in the regeneration/community improvement project. This, in turn, both legitimates the women's concerns, and provides useful information to local authorities. WDS has also used before-and-after surveys of participants to gauge the success of projects in terms of sense of accomplishment and empowerment. In their experience, their key lessons are for organizations to give themselves time to build capacity with the group undertaking the audit, and to get the decision-makers on board before the audits begin.

In Moscow, Russia, the ICIWF is a non-profit organization founded in 1994. It is a networking women's organization active throughout Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union. As part of housing reforms of modern Russia, much state-owned housing was at that time being privatized. However, the 'culture of dialogue' within and between local groups has been lacking (personal communication, Elizaveta Bozhkova, 19 March 2008). Elizaveta Bozhkova, Director of ICIWF, was impressed by the concept of women's safety audits, introduced to her at the First International Seminar on Women's Safety, organized by Women In Cities International (WICI), in Montreal in 2002. In the City of Petrozavodsk from late 2003 onwards, ICIWF organized a series of seminars and training projects for women's NGOs, neighbourhood groups and organizations, local government, the police and the architecture department at the local authority, on how to create a local environment that is more friendly for women and children. Part of this participatory process included the use of safety audits in several public housing projects where ownership was reverting from the state to local non-profit cooperatives.

In Petrozavodsk, the local authorities followed up on safety audit recommendations by improving both housing and neighbourhood design. The police department has reported decreases in local crimes where safety audits have taken place, and there also appears to have been a spillover positive impact on family violence, as partnerships between local women's groups and police increased. Local media coverage of the audits also raised public awareness on gender and safety issues (Hague *et al*, 2006, pp. 38–41).

Dar es Salaam and Durban: Safety Audits and Poverty Alleviation

As was the case in Petrozavodsk, the safety audits in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania resulted from training offered by the coordinator of the *Programme Femmes et ville-Ville de Montréal* (City of Montreal's Women in Cities programme) (see Whitzman, 2007 for more on the Montreal initiative). The City of Montreal began using safety audits in the early 1990s, and the coordinator of Femmes et Ville, Anne Michaud, provided training to several African Safer Cities coordinators as part of the UN-Habitat Safer Cities Programme in 2000 (personal communication, Anna Mtani, 17 March 2008).

The Dar es Salaam safety audit programme was piloted in Manzese, a densely congested informal settlement where violent crime was particularly high. The local government (Kindondoni Municipality) had already approved the audit, after discussion with local planners, engineers, economic and community development staff. The local political leadership was also engaged, and two smaller-scale neighbourhoods – Midizini and Mnazi

Mmoja – were selected for audits. Notices were placed inviting women in the area to attend a public meeting explaining safety audits, and 100 turned out. This was the first time that local women were involved in discussions on safety, according to the Dar es Salaam Safer City Coordinator, Anna Mtani. Some male leaders were also present.

The safety audits themselves involved teams of 10 people, comprising five women, a local politician and three local government staff, along with the Safer City coordinator. The audits brought out a range of issues often found in women's safety audits: lack of accessibility of streets to emergency vehicles, absence of street lights and signs, lack of cleanliness. The audits also brought out some concerns less typically noted in safety audits in wealthier cities in countries such as Canada and Australia, such as endemic unemployment, and related selling of home-made alcohol and prostitution.

Although the audits took place in 2000, there was no money to implement recommendations, and it was only in 2002 that funding from an international organization enabled the safety audit process to be repeated at the request of the funder and UN-Habitat. Some of the recommendations did not require external funding, such as the suggestion that households buy a light bulb for their front and back doors to create street lighting. Some did require local government assistance, such as unblocking roads and footpaths, and job creation programmes. The safety audit findings were used to justify funding received from the World Bank in 2006 for upgrading, which has resulted in tarmac streets, municipal street lighting and an enhanced job-creation programme. The coordinator of Dar es Salaam Safer Cities is especially delighted that seed capital was provided to the women who were brewing grog and acting as prostitutes, to enable them to establish less risky income-generating activities such as food kiosks, second-hand cloth stalls and charcoal stalls instead.

A safety audit was also undertaken in the Kurasini (Temeke municipality) and Mchikichini (Ilala municipality) areas, where the results generated environmental changes such as maintenance of open spaces used as hideouts, bridges and the introduction of street names.

The project coordinator Anna Mtani reports that on a recent visit to Manzese with a group of planning and architecture students, the women who undertook the safety audit report lower crime rates and improved physical development in their area. The only downside is that gentrification is now taking place due to the neighbourhood improvements, with locals selling their properties to outside developers, impacting poorer families, although it is not necessarily a direct consequence of the safety audits.

The Durban, South Africa safety audit project also arose from training provided by Anne Michaud of the City of Montreal. The KZN Network on Violence Against Women, along with the eThekwini Municipality (Durban) Safer Cities Programme, decided to audit KwaMakhutha, a community that, like Manzese, was an informal settlement with a reputation for high levels of violence. There is a 'one-stop community centre', known as Ensimbini, which became a local focal point for activity. The safety audits involved women's organizations, local organizations, city planners and local politicians, local Ward Councillors and other local government departments and the community. This was followed by a needs assessment and strategic planning session with these local service providers, as well as other stakeholders who might be able to fund/sponsor the safety audit process, to increase the coverage of the audit process by having good community input.

The coordinator of the project, Cookie Edwards, reports that safety audits are useful in raising awareness about violence, and are an effective tool for building communities and networking (personal communication, Cookie Edwards, 17 March 2008). However, after

the safety audits were completed in 2003, implementation was the most difficult stage owing to lack of funding and buy-in from the local authority or international agencies. Although service providers got to know the community better, she was unable to point to any specific physical improvements owing to this lack of funding and buy-in by the local municipality.

Delhi and Mumbai: Safety Audits Raising Consciousness About Violence Against Women

Unlike the European and African examples described above, safety audits performed recently in India's two largest cities – Delhi and Mumbai – did not involve prior discussion with local government officials. In 1997, Shilpa Phadke, an urban sociologist, was travelling through North India with a friend and became conscious of their own constant strategizing about safe travel. Back in Mumbai, she began talking to other women about their fears within public space, and realized the extent to which they all continually negotiated concerns about safe and unsafe places, even in their own community settings that they knew well (personal communication with Shilpa Phadke, 20 March 2008).

At some point these ideas were discussed with two other colleagues Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade, and they developed a project, the Gender and Space Project, linked to PUKAR, a research centre in Mumbai. This was eventually funded by an international aid organization. At some point in the 6-year gestation period of the project, the group became aware of the METRAC Women's Safety Audit tool, the first concrete work they had come across, and this was then used as the basis for developing their own local safety audits. There were approximately a dozen audit walkabouts accomplished in various parts of the City of Mumbai – some undertaken by the core group, and others with one or two of the core members and six or eight 'locals'. These were followed up with training sessions at local colleges, using the safety audit mapping techniques that they had developed.

One theme that emerged was similar to the WDS findings in the United Kingdom: through observation and mapping of the use of space, they discovered that women rarely loiter in public space in the same way that men do. There was only one site where women stayed for an extended period of time: a wall next to a school, just before and after the school day ended. The legitimacy of waiting for one's children allowed the women the pleasure of 'hanging out' together. This need for women to justify their presence in public spaces has led the group to articulate concepts of women's right to risk, and of the ambiguities of better lighting at night: implying both a greater sense of safety but also greater possibilities of surveillance (Phadke, 2005). The right to risk is the idea that worry about security can lead to, or be associated with, efforts to protect women to such an extent that they are being isolated from, or forbidden to participate in, the normal patterns of urban life which contain elements of risk. Through a series of papers published in Indian architecture and planning magazines (for example, Phadke, 2005; Ranade, 2005) as well as workshops in Mumbai-area universities, the women's safety audits have contributed to urban theory building.

The women in Mumbai also met with Central Railway officials at an open meeting they had organized to discuss safety on trains. They followed up with an audit of several railway stations (the genesis of the METRAC safety audit was also an assessment of

Toronto's 60 train stations). This led to concrete improvements in lighting in and around stations.

In Delhi, India, Jagori (a Hindi term meaning 'awaken, women') is a women's centre that has worked on violence against women and women's rights for over 20 years. They became interested in a project on public space, partly through concern with the particularly high rates of violence against women in public spaces in Delhi, brought to a head by several rape cases that received wide media coverage. These ranged across all social classes, from a young medical student to poorer women when going to the toilet outside their homes.

The Safe Delhi Campaign involved two pilot audits. Then, in perhaps the most ambitious audit programme yet described, 25 audits took place in a wide range of places, from infor-mal settlements to middle-class suburbs, as well as commercial and office districts. The audits were funded as part of a larger project, so no specific funding was required. A group of eight women from Jagori were involved, together with three or four local women per audit. All the audits took place in the evening between 1700 hours and 2100 hours. Jagori wrote up the results, and then organized a public function to release the report. Representa-tives of the Planning Commission, the Delhi Transport Commission and the local universi-ty's School of Planning and Architecture attended, as did members of the media. In terms of the successful outcomes of the safety audit process, Jagori sees it as having made women's safety a public issue, and putting it firmly on the agenda, rather than as a passing news item (personal communication, Kalpana Viswanath, 20 March 2008). The intense media interest in the audits also underlined that it is not just a women's problem, and that more people and organizations need to take responsibility for safety. Inspired by the meeting and the report, one individual within the Delhi Transport Commission became a champion for the issue, and a further safety survey was organized, involving 500 women. From this work, the initiative evolved into a gender sensitization campaign created with the Commission. This campaign provided training for over 1000 drivers and conductors within the city. In addition, transit security issues were further addressed by another partnership with the South Delhi Auto Union. In this case, over 5000 stickers were printed and carried by union members advertising women's safety.

In terms of the weaknesses of the process, there has since been a lack of follow-up, in part because of changes in key personnel within Jagori. This is not to suggest that only one person can bring about change, but that organizational priorities have to jostle for attention, and it can be difficult to sustain initiatives, even if they are successful, when the institutional memory represented by one key staff person is lost.

In addition, it is worth noting that both Indian projects have been very conscious of the importance of the quality of the visual images they use, and have capitalized on the recent development of the internet. Both have used their publications and web sites to great advantage to further public education on women's safety (Jagori, 2008; PUKAR, 2008).

Implications for Security

There is some irony in the fact that some 25 years of activism on violence against women, in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, has focused primarily on the use of the criminal law to reduce such violence, yet rates of convictions for rape have declined, and the attrition of cases continues (Regan and Kelly, 2003; Walklate, 2008).

Much less attention has generally been given to the role of prevention of such violence in the first place (Shaw, 2006).

The default mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of crime prevention programmes and tools is whether crimes reported to the police decreased as a result of the intervention. This concept has been critiqued by feminist researchers, who point to the chronic underreporting to the police of violence against women in both the public and private spheres (Walklate, 1995). Several of the safety audit leaders interviewed, in fact, pointed to an increase in reporting to the police – the obverse effect. Safety audits in Petrozavodsk and Durban resulted in increasing local consciousness about gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS, and improved relationships between service providers and the community. This, in turn, may have led to increased reporting of gender-based violence as well as other crimes, which could, therefore, be considered a success.

Measures of reduction in fear might also be used, but these would require pre- and post-project surveys of insecurity to assess. This has not often formed a major aspect of audit projects, and would require considerable funding and resources. There are many other potential measures of effectiveness, such as improved access to services, or more women using public spaces.

How then, might we evaluate the effectiveness of women's safety audits? One obvious mechanism is whether changes in the design and management of the built environment occurred as a result of the audit process. The answer in almost every case (the possible exception being Durban) is 'yes'. Both short-term changes (increased lighting, improved signage, maintenance), and longer-term changes (to train scheduling or the design of public spaces such as parks, housing projects and train stations) occurred.

However, the previous meta-evaluations pointed to other possible measures of effectiveness, such as partnership development, citizen empowerment and leadership training. Crime prevention evaluation can look at changes to places, people and processes (White and Coventry, 2000, p. 22). Changes to places include not only specific adjustments to the built environment, but also additional services in places and transformations in the way that people feel about and use places. Changes to people include changes in the number of victims and offenders, as well as modifications to the way in which people perceive, and behave towards, one another and particular institutions. Changes to processes include organizational capacity building and training, and increased inter-organizational linkage.

By these measures, women's safety audits produced other positive changes. In all sites, women's safety audits have legitimated women as experts of experience in their local environments. Women's safety audits helped train women, not only in the environment cognition skills of identifying safe and unsafe places and how they could be improved, but also in the political process of successfully advocating for change. Particularly in Petrozavodsk and Dar es Salaam, the safety audit process would appear to have developed lasting partnerships between grassroots organizations and local authorities. In Dar es Salaam and the UK cities, the safety audit process attracted additional international or national funding to priority projects. In Dar es Salaam, a job creation project for women resulted, and in that city as well as Mumbai and Delhi, a new way of training urban professionals was developed, one with an explicit focus on gender.

In all cases, women's safety audit tool was modified to fit local circumstances and also to gain from learnings in audits from other places. For instance, the Delhi audits modified tools used by METRAC, WDS and PUKAR to come up with their checklist. Unlike the

original METRAC checklist, the Jagori list had specific questions for streets, bus stops, residential areas, parks, subways (that is, pedestrian underpasses) and market areas; it also paid much more attention to 'people factors' as well as physical design. For example, the 'physical characteristics' for markets include: lighting; presence of entrapment areas such as recessed doorways, alleys, vacant shops or shops under repair; access to phones; condition of the pavement or streets; any public toilets; security and lighting in car parking areas and taxi stands; and whether shops shut at a scheduled time. 'People factors' for markets include: how many people, men and women, at various times; whether there were places where large numbers of men congregated, like 'paan' (Indian sweet, often sold with chewing tobacco) or alcohol vendors; whether there was harassment from men witnessed; and number of police or private security guards patrolling.

Thus, the diffusion of women's safety audits highlights the effectiveness of international networking. In every case, knowledge about women's safety audits, emanated from Toronto or Montreal, were modified to suit local circumstances, and then the lessons from this exercise were communicated back through the internet. This occurred partially through the existence of WICI. WICI is a non-government organization, which the authors helped develop in 2000, along with Anne Michaud from Montreal, and many others, and which organized the First International Seminar on Women's Safety in 2002 (Shaw and Andrew, 2005), with UN-Habitat Safer Cities Programme and other partners.

Recent work by Whitzman (2007) on evaluating feminist organizational success within planning and urban management suggests that 'achieving policy objectives' is only one of four facets of success. Getting money and new people involved is another facet of success, as is building a resource base for future organizing.

A fourth measure of organizational success is challenging patriarchal ideas and norms. The questions we asked at the beginning of the paper – Whose knowledge is used in building communities? Whose knowledge is seen as legitimate? What kinds of knowledge can be understood and by whom? – are key questions in understanding the effectiveness of women's safety audits. Seen at their most basic level, women's safety audits are a diagnostic tool to identify safe and unsafe spaces, and how unsafe spaces can be improved. But the underlying concept of women's safety audits is radical: that residents without any particular urban planning or crime prevention expertise can quickly and easily be 'trained' to turn their everyday consciousness of 'how they are going to negotiate insecurity in public space' (in the words of Shilpa Phadke) into recommendations for concrete action. The increased capacity for concrete action can empower the participants, both to see themselves as 'experts of experience' and as legitimate political actors. Through this kind of piecemeal transformation of both urban space and public participatory practices, women's safety audits help build a more equitable, as well as less violent, world (Table 1).

As Elizabeth Stanko has written, 'the meanings of violence are gendered … and … people's accounts of violence matter' (Stanko, 2006, p. 543). Through this study of six women's safety audit initiatives in three continents, we have shown that this tool can be effective in validating local women's experiences, developing partnerships with local governments and other key urban decision-makers, creating the impetus for spill-over effects such as women's employment programmes, or training for architects and planners, and making small but concrete improvements to places. The question of whether these improved built, social and policy environments have, in turn, led to behavioural changes among women and other vulnerable groups, still remains under researched. Women's

Table 1: A framework for evaluating the success of women's safety audits (modified from Whitzman, 2007 which in turn is based on Disney and Gelb, 2000)

Goals	Mechanisms for Success	Measurements of Success
Achievement of policy objectives (goods, services, policies, programmes)	Cooperation and negotiation between organizations, governments, and possibly, the private sector	Measurable outcomes (Did the change lead to improved built environments, new policies or new participatory processes? Did it reduce insecurity and/or crime?) Are results written up? Is success replicable to other places and at other scales? Do these improvements or policies endure over time?
Organizational adaptation and survival (sustainable planning mechanisms and organizations)	Developing and maintaining economic and human resources: getting money, new members and new partnerships	Has the organization survived? Has it made new partnerships? Has it received funding to implement recommendations?
Building a resource base for future organizing (better informed and more representative planners and institutions)	Renegotiating internal organizational structures, including the recognition of diversity	Were diverse women involved? Has it led to changes in the way the organizations works or its priorities?
Challenging patriarchal ideas and norms (policies, analysis, governance, theory)	Expansion of a feminist agenda within the planning and governance environment	Have the lessons from audits informed training of planners, architects or local government officials? Has the organization been successful in embedding an understanding or gender or other grounds of difference within planning and governance? Are there equity improvements traceable to women's safety audits?

safety audits can thus be conceptualized not only as a promising tool in reducing violence and insecurity in public space, but also as a mechanism for increased gender equality in urban planning, design and governance.

Acknowledgements

Note

1 This article forms part of a larger project to assess the effectiveness of the women's safety audit methodology internationally, undertaken by Women in Cities International for the UN-HABITAT Safer Cities Programme (WICI, 2008).

References

Bartlett, S. (2006) *Review of Child Friendly Cities Database: Integrating Children's Rights into Environmental Action*. Stockholm, Sweden: Save the Children Sweden.

Cavanaugh, S. (1998) *Making Safer Places: A Resource Book for Neighbourhood Safety Audits*. London: Women's Design Service.

Disney, J. and Gelb, J. (2000) Feminist organizational 'success': The state of U.S. women's movement organizations in the 1990s. *Women and Politics* 21(4): 39–76.

EFUS (European Forum for Urban Safety). (2007) *Guidance on Local Safety Audits: A Compendium of International Practice*. Paris: EFUS.

Hague, C., Wakeley, P., Crespin, J. and Jasko, C. (2006) *Making Planning Work: A Guide to Approaches and Skills*. Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing, http://www.communityplanning.net/special/makingplanningwork/index.htm, accessed 25 March 2008.

Higgins, M. and Reeves, D. (2004) Creative Thinking Tools for Planners and Related Built Environment Professionals. Cardiff, UK: CEBE. Working Paper 4 Centre for Education in the Built Environment.

Jagori. (2008) Safe Delhi: Make your city safe for women, http://safedelhi.JAGORI.org/, accessed 26 March 2008.

Klodawsky, F., Lundy, C. and Andrew, C. (1994) Challenging 'business as usual' in housing and community planning: The issue of violence against women. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 3(1): 40–58.

METRAC (Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children). (1989) *Women's Safety Audit Guide*. Toronto: METRAC.

Moser, C. and McIlwaine, C. (1999) Participatory urban appraisal and its application for research on violence. *Environment and Urbanization* 11(2): 203–226.

Pearce, J. (2007) Violence, Power & Participation: Building Citizenship in Contexts of Chronic Violence. Brighton, Sussex: Institute for Development Studies. IDS Working Paper 274.

Phadke, S. (2005) (En)Lighten the night. *Architecture: Time, Space and People*, March: 10–12.

PUKAR (Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research). (2008) Gender and space project, http://www.pukar.org.in/genderandspace/index.html, accessed 26 March 2008.

Ranade, S. (2005) Gender mapping: Accessing place. *Architecture: Time, Space and People*, April: 18–21.

Regan, L. and Kelly, L. (2003) *Rape: Still a Forgotten Issue*. London: Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University.

Shaw, M. (2006) Gender and crime prevention: Where are we now? Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology Meetings; 16–19 November, Toronto.

Shaw, M. and Andrew, C. (2005) Engendering crime prevention: International developments and the Canadian experience. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 47(2): 293–316.

Stanko, E. (2006) Theorizing about violence: Observations from the Economic and Social Research Council's Violence Research Program. *Violence Against Women* 12(6): 543–555.

Sutton, A. and Cherney, A. (2002) Prevention without politics? The cyclical progress of crime prevention in an Australian state. *Criminal Justice* 2(3): 325–344.

Vanderschueren, F. (2006) *Prevention of Urban Crime: Safer Cities Concept Note*. Nairobi, Kenya: UN-Habitat.

VCCAV (Victorian Community Council Against Violence). (1995) Safety audits: Past experience and future strategies. Unpublished notes from a March 1995 Forum, Melbourne: VCCAV.

Viswanath, K. (2006) Gender issues: What about safety in public spaces? *The Hindu*, 3 February.

WACAV (Women's Action Centre Against Violence Ottawa-Carleton). (1995) *Safety Audit Tools and Housing: The State of the Art and Implications for CMHC*. Ottawa, Canada: Canada Mortgage and Housing Association.

Walklate, S. (1995) *Gender and Crime: An Introduction*. London: Prentice Hall.

Walklate, S. (2008) What is to be done about violence against women? Gender, violence, cosmopolitanism and the law. *British Journal of Criminology* 48: 39–54.

White, R. and Coventry, G. (2000) *Evaluating Community Safety: A Guide*. Melbourne: Department of Justice Victoria.

Whitzman, C. (2002) The voice of women in Canadian local government. In: C. Andrew, K. Graham and S. Rankin (eds.) *Urban Affairs: Back on the Policy Agenda*. Montreal, Canada: Queens University Press, pp. 93–118.

Whitzman, C. (2007) The loneliness of the long-distance runner: Long-term feminist planning initiatives in London, Toronto, Montreal, and Melbourne. *Planning Theory and Practice* 8(2): 203–225.

Whitzman, C. (2008a) *The Handbook of Community Safety, Gender, and Violence Prevention: Practical Planning Tools*. London: Earthscan.

Whitzman, C. (2008b) Community safety indicators: Are we measuring what counts? *Urban Policy and Research* 26(2): 197–211.

Whitzman, C., Canuto, M. and Binder, S. (2004) *Women's Safety Awards 2004: A Compendium of Good Practices*. Montreal, Canada: Women In Cities International, www.womenincities.org, accessed 30 March 2008.

WICI (Women in Cities International). (2008) *Women's Safety Audits. What Works and Where?* Nairobi, Kenya: UN-HABITAT.