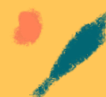




# Urban transformation and community safety

Gender perspectives in the use of public spaces in Cabo Delgado

November 2024



# Executive Summary

The study carried out by Ayuda en Acción in Saul, Metuge, is an innovative example of how gendered action research methodologies can transform community interaction with public spaces and services. This initiative not only identified significant differences in the use of spaces between men, women, and vulnerable groups, but also provided concrete solutions to address accessibility and safety, which are fundamental to gender equity in urban design. Through an action research methodology, this study has demonstrated how active community participation can transform the urban environment, making it more inclusive and safe, and serve as a replicable reference for other regions with similar challenges.

“Before, we felt that our spaces did not reflect our needs. Now, with the improvements implemented, there is a real sense of ownership and security in our common areas. This project has not only improved our physical environment, but also strengthened our community”

Local Resident



At the water fountains, women also find security in the freedom to talk to other women and have some leisure time to themselves.

# Introduction

Ayuda en Acción is conducting a pioneering study in Saul, Metuge, Cabo Delgado, to explore how gender differences influence communities' interaction with public spaces and services. This pilot project is taking place in three different locations: a community center, a resettlement center and a local community, with the aim of fostering more equitable access to urban services.

The main objective of the study is to deepen the understanding of the dynamics of the population's use of and access to public spaces and community services. Adopting a gender perspective with a human rights approach, we aim to improve the capacity to respond to the barriers and constraints that especially limit the rights of women and other vulnerable groups in their community environments. The results obtained are intended to lay the groundwork for future participatory design and implementation projects, adapting and replicating the model in other areas where Ayuda en Acción operates.

This approach not only focuses on the analysis of spaces, but also seeks to activate community participation and foster governance in the planning process. Using the gender perspective with a human rights approach as a key tool for designing inclusive urban policies, the project is positioned as a benchmark for addressing both local and global challenges, offering lessons learned from the experience of the project.



## Methodological design

In the study, Ayuda en Acción implemented a research methodology incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, specifically designed to suit the rural and emergency conditions of Cabo Delgado. Data were collected from over 500 participants, using tools such as the *World Bank Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design* and *UN-Habitat's HerCity toolkit* for inclusive urban design. The combination of structured surveys, focus groups and semi-structured interviews allowed for capturing a wide range of perspectives and experiences, focusing on how men and women interact with public spaces and community services, and highlighting the importance of considering gender differences in urban planning.



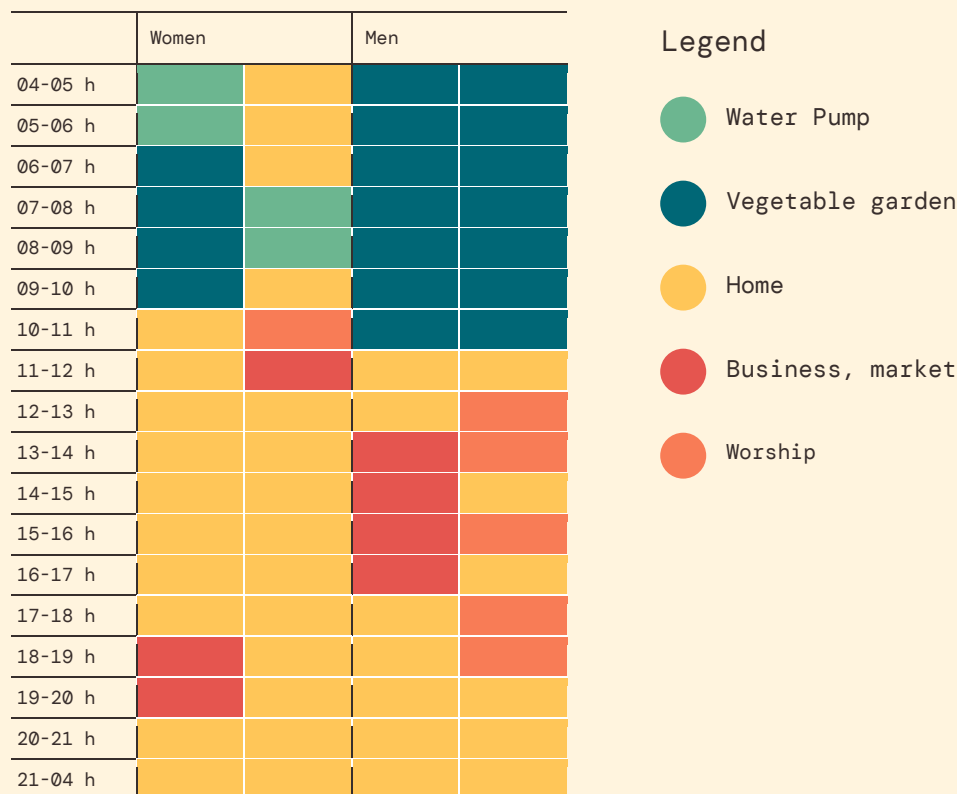
In the communities, the men's main occupation and source of livelihood for their families is the fields.

# Analysis and results

Saul, Metuge, a rural locality with unique challenges due to its emergency situation, offers a representative setting to examine gender interactions in the use of public space. Everyday activities, such as water collection, cultivation in community gardens, and participation in markets and places of worship, delineate the social and cultural structure of the place.

## Patterns of space use by gender

The research identified clear patterns in the distribution of activities between men and women throughout the day, illustrated in the accompanying graph. Women, for example, concentrate on water collection in the early hours and spend most of the day in domestic settings or market activities, while men devote the morning to agricultural work and the rest of the day to recreational activities or places of worship.



## Positive and negative places identified

During the focus groups, men and women delineated areas with both positive and negative connotations. Spaces such as schools, homes, and markets were categorized as safe and crucial for social cohesion and leisure. However, certain places such as the main road and unlit areas were noted as points of insecurity, exacerbated by local rumors of criminal activity.

This approach allows us not only to understand gender-specific needs in relation to the use of public spaces, but also to effectively address barriers that limit equal participation in community life.



Women from the Quissanga district gathered together to discuss the main challenges they face after returning to their communities of origin.

# Key findings and correlation analysis



## Security and night use

Improved lighting has increased the use of parks by women at night by 40%, demonstrating a statistically significant correlation ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) that underscores the importance of a well-lit environment for safety.

“Since they installed more lights, the park has become a safe gathering place for us after dark”

Local Resident



## Differences of use by gender

Analysis of usage patterns shows that women prefer public spaces during daytime hours, primarily for safety reasons, in contrast to men who use these spaces at night.

“We observed that daytime activities, especially in well-lit and crowded areas, are more frequented by women”

Project Coordinator



## Impact of infrastructural improvements

The installation of benches, paved paths and safe play areas has increased the use of public spaces by 25% among all demographics.

“With the improvements made, it is now much more attractive and accessible to come to the park, something my family and I enjoy on a regular basis”

Local Resident



## Perceptions and barriers

The perception of safety continues to be a critical barrier to the effective use of public spaces, negatively impacting the participation of women and people with functional diversity.

# Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis conducted has provided valuable findings on how public spaces affect social interaction and perception of safety, especially from a gender perspective. Targeted interventions have shown a positive impact on the use and perception of these spaces, highlighting the importance of considering gender differences in urban design and planning. This research has established a solid foundation for future actions, showing that, with participatory and considered approaches, we can significantly transform common spaces for the benefit of the entire community.

## Recommendations

- 1 Development of safe spaces:** continue and expand lighting improvements in public spaces in parks, squares and roads, focusing on areas frequented mainly by women and children to increase their safety and use during nighttime hours.
- 2 Surveillance programs and inclusive activities:** organize community patrols and cultural events at different times, especially during the afternoon and evening, to ensure that public spaces are safe and accessible for women and other vulnerable groups.
- 3 Inclusive and accessible infrastructure:** extend infrastructure improvements to all areas in need, with special attention to less developed areas to ensure accessibility and equity.
- 4 Community education and awareness:** develop and implement awareness campaigns to educate the community on the importance of safety and the proper use of public spaces.
- 5 Constant evaluation and adaptation:** maintain a dynamic approach of continuous evaluation to adjust interventions based on community feedback and changes in the use of space.

