Engaging primary school children through participatory community mapping to examine safe and unsafe routes between home and school in a rural South African community

Walking School Bus Project

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HSRC
Human Sciences
Research Council

Background

- SA has one of the highest rates of GBV in the world[1]
- Children are especially vulnerable to various forms of GBV
- In KZN, >3 million learners walk more than 1 hour to and from school[2]
  - Rural /township learners more likely to walk than urban learners[2]
- School journey potentially dangerous[3]:
  - Treacherous terrain and inclement weather
  - Kidnapped, physically attacked, mugged, bullying, &/or sexually abused

>70%

Learners who walk to/from school[2]

[1](Stats SA, 2018) [2](Porter et al., 2010) [3](Equal Education, 2017)

The risky school journey...

#ChildNotBride

Four arrested over kidnapping teen in KZN

DAILY NEWS / 4 JANUARY 2018, 3:00PM / THOBEKA NGEMA

Girl (13) raped en route from school, man gets life sentence

South African Police Service

April 7, 2018

Vanderbijlpark school to take action after bloody fist fight video

© 12:26 02/02/2018 & Charlea Sieberhagen-Gray

YOU

A video of two high school boys' bloody fistfight has led to their school's intervention.

crime 16.10.2019 09:27 am

Pietermaritzburg high school pupil dies in mother's arms after fatal stabbing

Shorne Bennie and Mfundo Mkhize

The scene of Tuesday's fatal stabbing in Pietermaritzburg. Image: Public Eye

SOUTH AFRICA

Two men take turns 'raping' girls on their way home from school

25 July 2019 - 06:44
BY IAVAN PIJOOS

Adolescent girl's perception of risk

- Photovoice study in peri-urban community in KZN

- Adolescent girls described omnipresent harassment

- Creates fear of GBV (Ngidi et al., 2018)

They sit like this; morning, during the day, [and in the] afternoon. When girls pass by, [boys] whistle and stop you… and what they are doing makes you angry! (Nelly, 17-18 group)

Research with early adolescents

- Traditional methods (surveys, interview, focus groups) are useful
  - But adolescents may consider repetitive and boring (Wilson et al., 2007)
- Shifts in modes of communication, esp. among adolescents:
  - from face-to-face to technology-based – instant messaging, texting, social network sites (Baker & White, 2010; Woolford, Clark, Strecher, & Resnicow, 2010)
- Research approaches to study adolescent development and behaviours have changed over the last few decades
- Increasing recognition of the value of alternative qualitative methodologies that explore and describe sensitive, complex phenomena

- A picture is worth 1000 words

Alternate research approaches

- Arts-based methodologies/ participatory approaches
  - Photovoice (Wang, 1997)
  - Drawing (Mitchell, 2006)
  - Diaries (Alaszewski, 2006)
  - Poems/poetic inquiry (Predergast, 2004)
  - Music/ Hip Hop (Blunt, 2003)
  - (Ethno)Drama (Saldana, 2003)
  - Documentaries
- Commonality: Approaches are participant-centred (expert) – guided by researcher
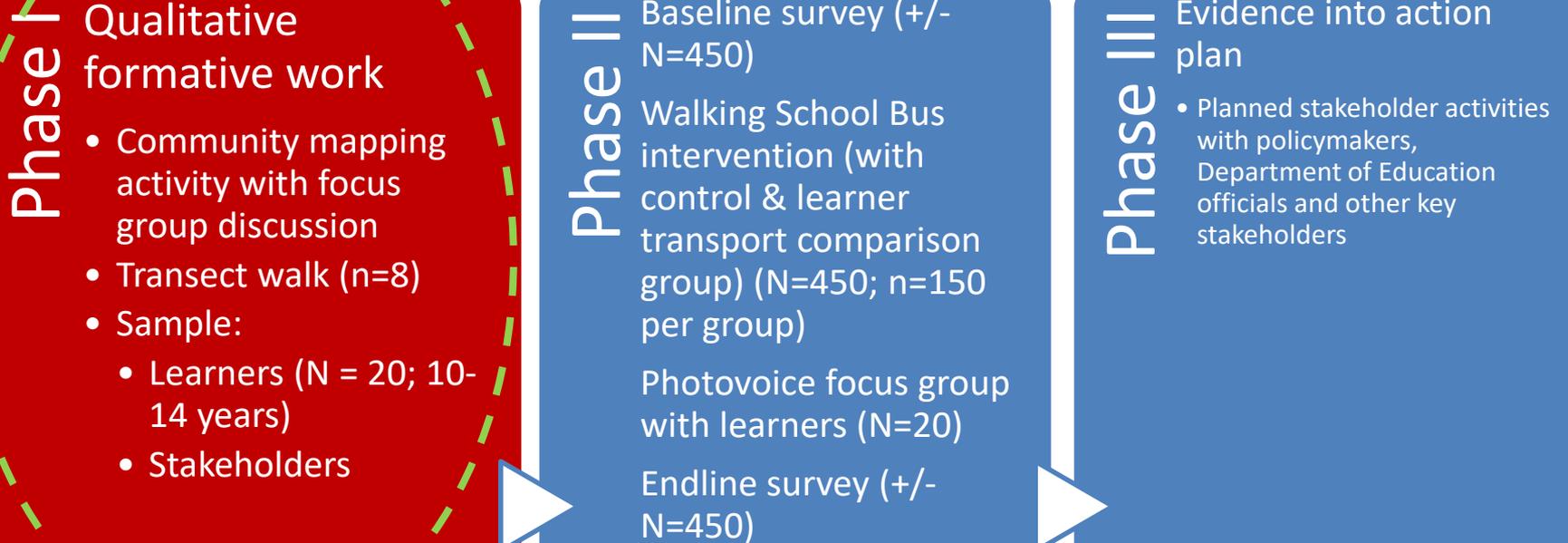
Formative research aim & objective

Aim

- To understand learners' experiences of the school journey

Objectives

- Use participatory community mapping to explore perceptions of:
  - Learner safety,
  - Experiences of GBV, and
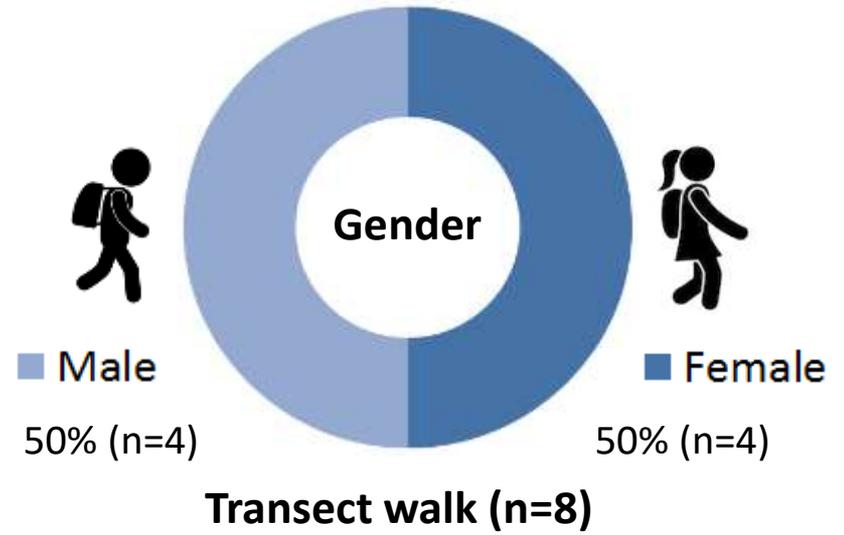 - Risks associated with learners walking particular routes to and from school
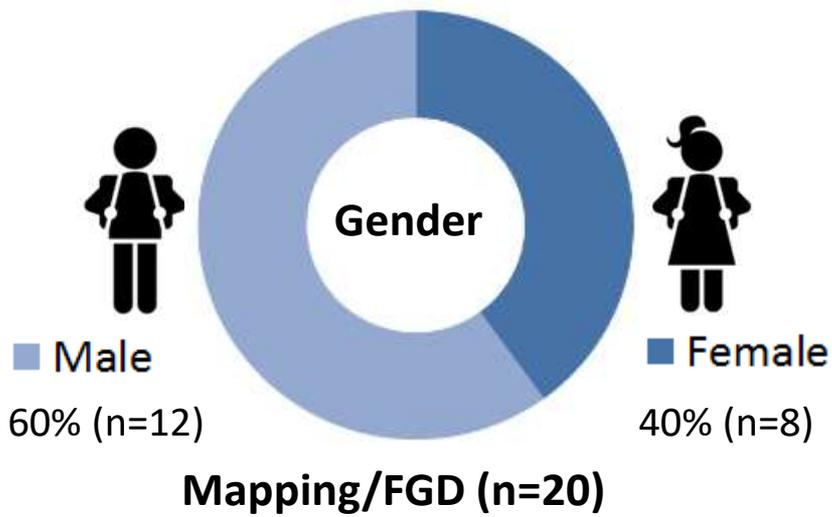
Research design:
Piloting a WSB to prevent SRGBV

Phase I

Qualitative formative work

- Community mapping activity with focus group discussion
- Transect walk (n=8)
- Sample:
  - Learners (N = 20; 10-14 years)
  - Stakeholders

Phase II

Baseline survey (+/- N=450)

Walking School Bus intervention (with control & learner transport comparison group) (N=450; n=150 per group)

Photovoice focus group with learners (N=20)

Endline survey (+/- N=450)

Phase III

Evidence into action plan

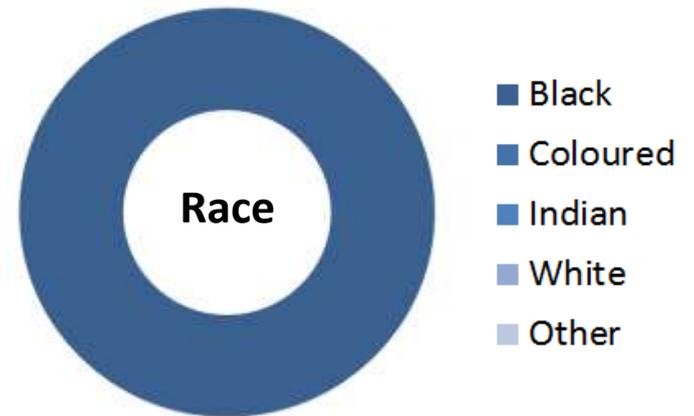- Planned stakeholder activities with policymakers, Department of Education officials and other key stakeholders
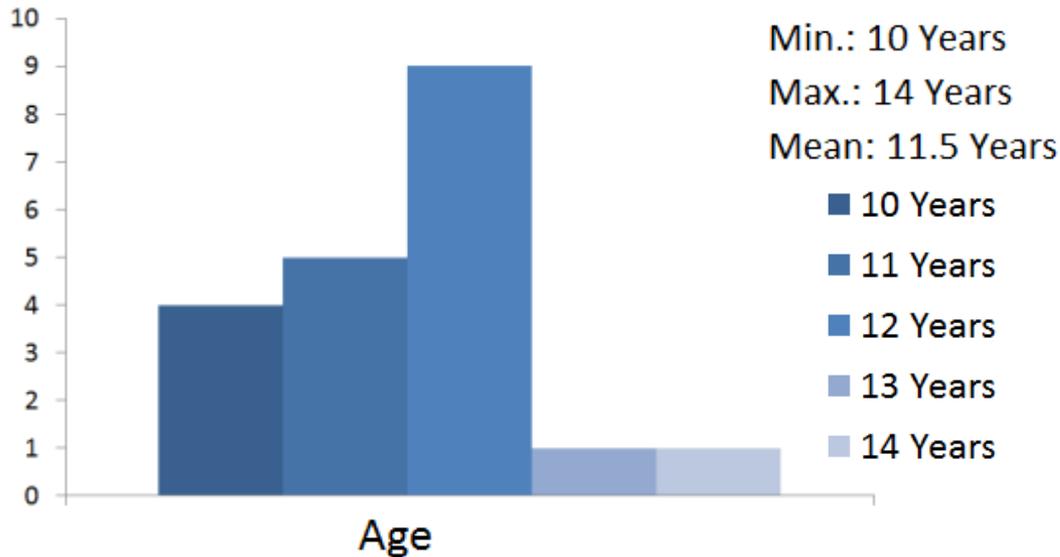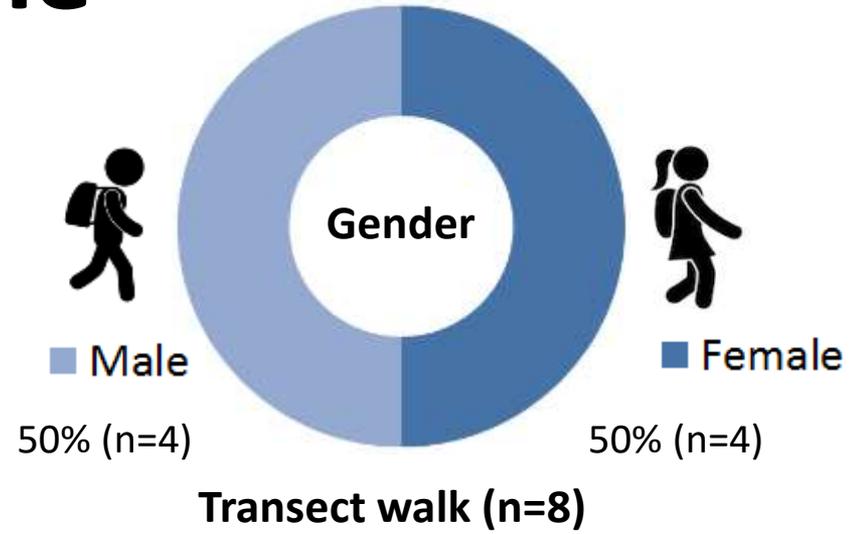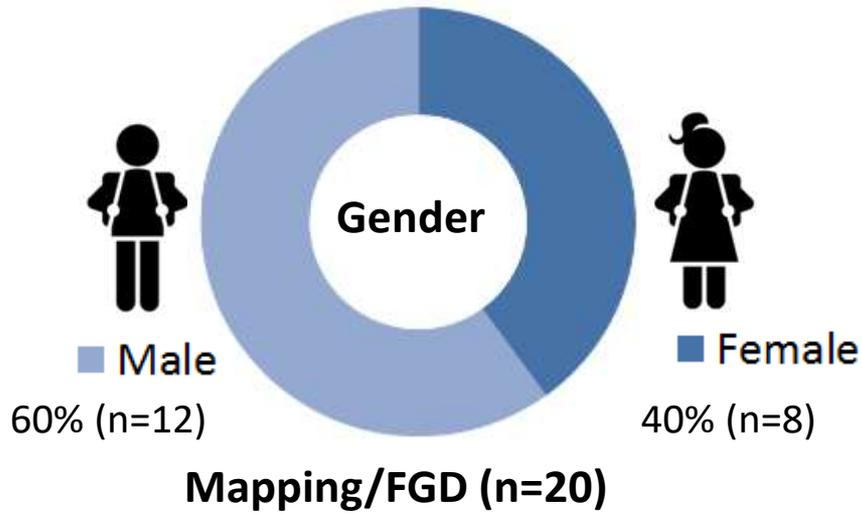
Formative research activities

- **Participatory community mapping (*n*=19 adolescents; 3 FGDs)**
  - an emerging approach, within the broader participatory visual methodologies (PVMs), that engages child-participants in map creation using drawings.
  - Young adolescents (10-14 years old) in primary school participated in a participatory mapping exercise where they drew their communities, with a focus on school routes, and identified safe and unsafe spaces on route.
  - They also participated in discussions about their drawings, which also unpacked local definitions of bullying, harassment, and physical and sexual violence, including current practices for addressing and/or reporting these activities.
- **Transect walks (*n*=1 with learners; *n*=2 with community stakeholders)**
  - A transect walk is a systematic walk along a defined route (3km radius around the intervention school)
  - During the walk learners identified areas from their community maps and facilitators took photographs

Sample

Mapping/FGD (n=20)

Gender

Male
60% (n=12)

Female
40% (n=8)

Transect walk (n=8)

Gender

Male
50% (n=4)

Female
50% (n=4)

Sample

Gender

Male 60% (n=12)   Female 40% (n=8)

Mapping/FGD (n=20)

Gender

Male 50% (n=4)   Female 50% (n=4)

Transect walk (n=8)

Min.: 10 Years
Max.: 14 Years
Mean: 11.5 Years

- 10 Years
- 11 Years
- 12 Years
- 13 Years
- 14 Years

Age

Race

- Black
- Coloured
- Indian
- White
- Other

Method for mapping

30%

32%

38%

■ Sometimes safe/sometimes unsafe
■ Unsafe
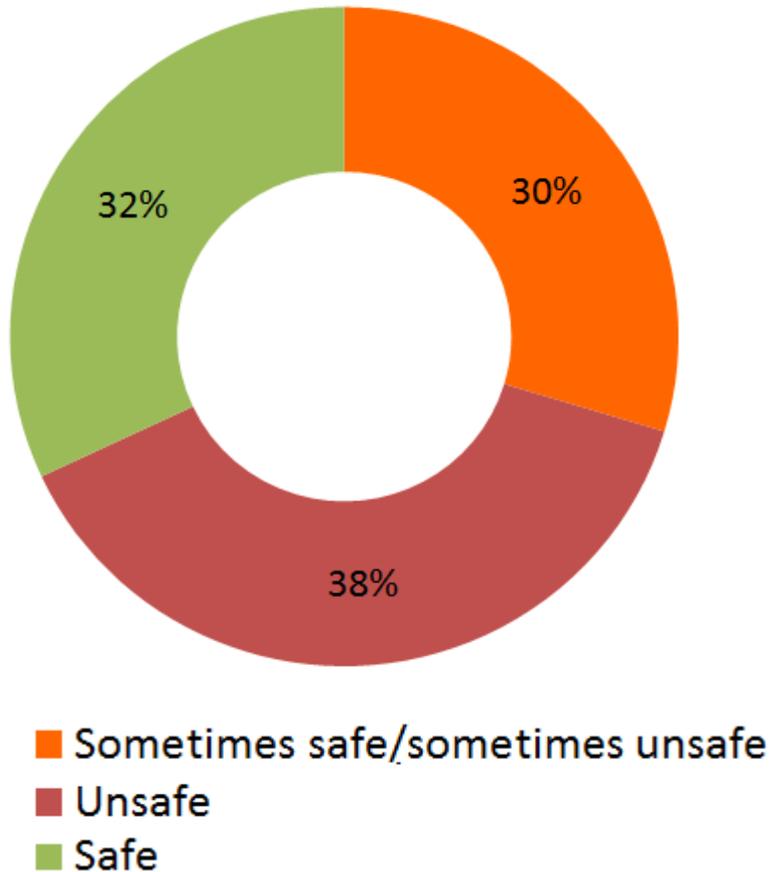■ Safe

- Drawing of journey to school
- Learners used green, orange and red stickers to identify areas along the route to/from school
- No limit on the number of stickers was specified, however learners distributed stickers evenly
 - Slightly more spaces marked as unsafe (38%)

Data analysis

- Community maps/transect walk photographs
  - Content analysis[1]
    - Uploaded to Atlas ti.
    - Coding framework developed
    - Coded
- Focus group discussion transcripts
  - Thematic analysis[2]
    - Uploaded to Atlas ti.
    - Coding framework developed
    - Coded

[1](Amsden & Van Wynberghe, 2005) [2](Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Perceptions of safety

- Learners used green stickers to mark spaces they identified as safe

Legend:
- Home — 32%
- School — 30%
- Neighbour's house — 12%
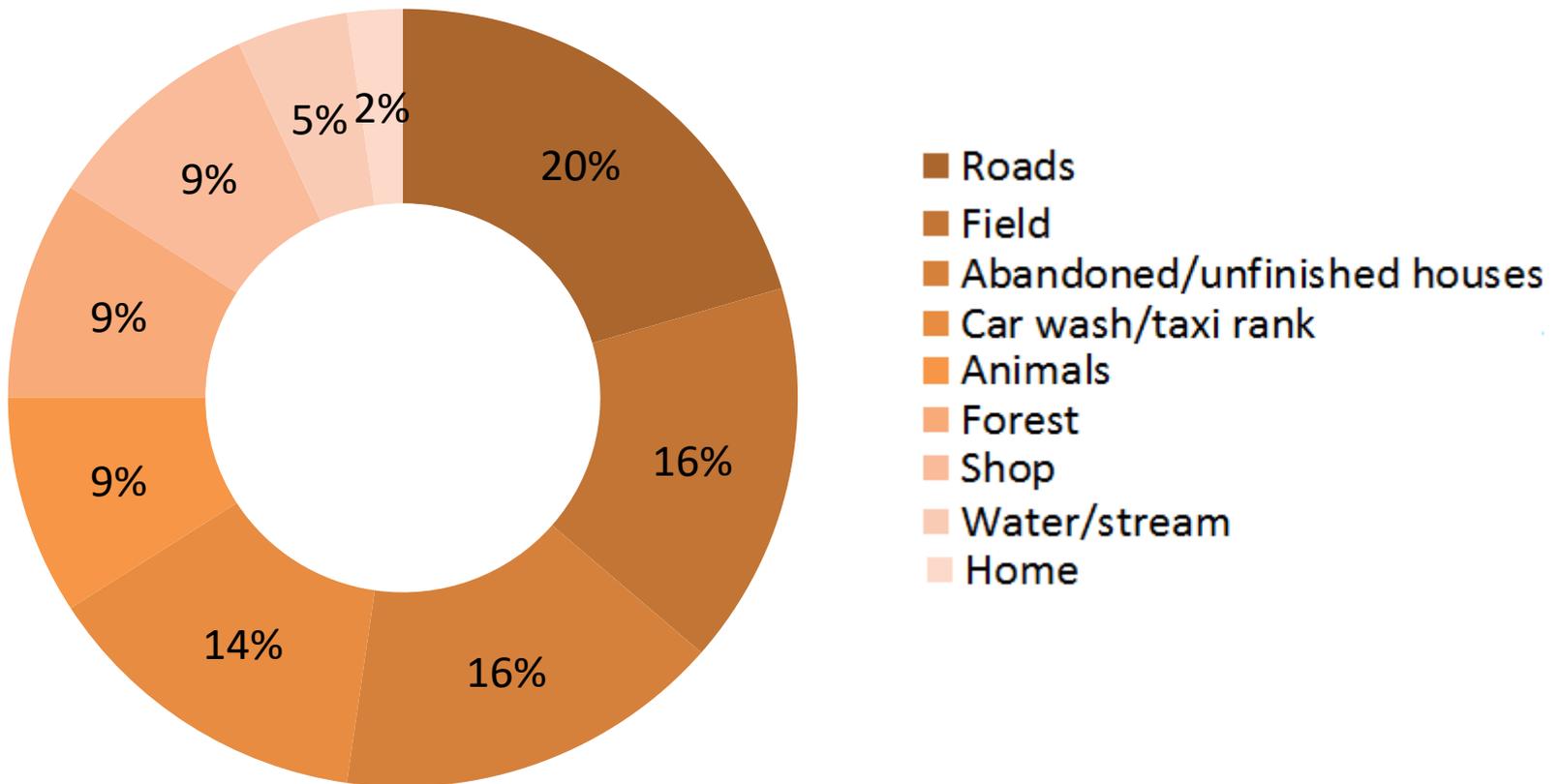- Shop — 10%
- Field — 8%
- Other — 8%
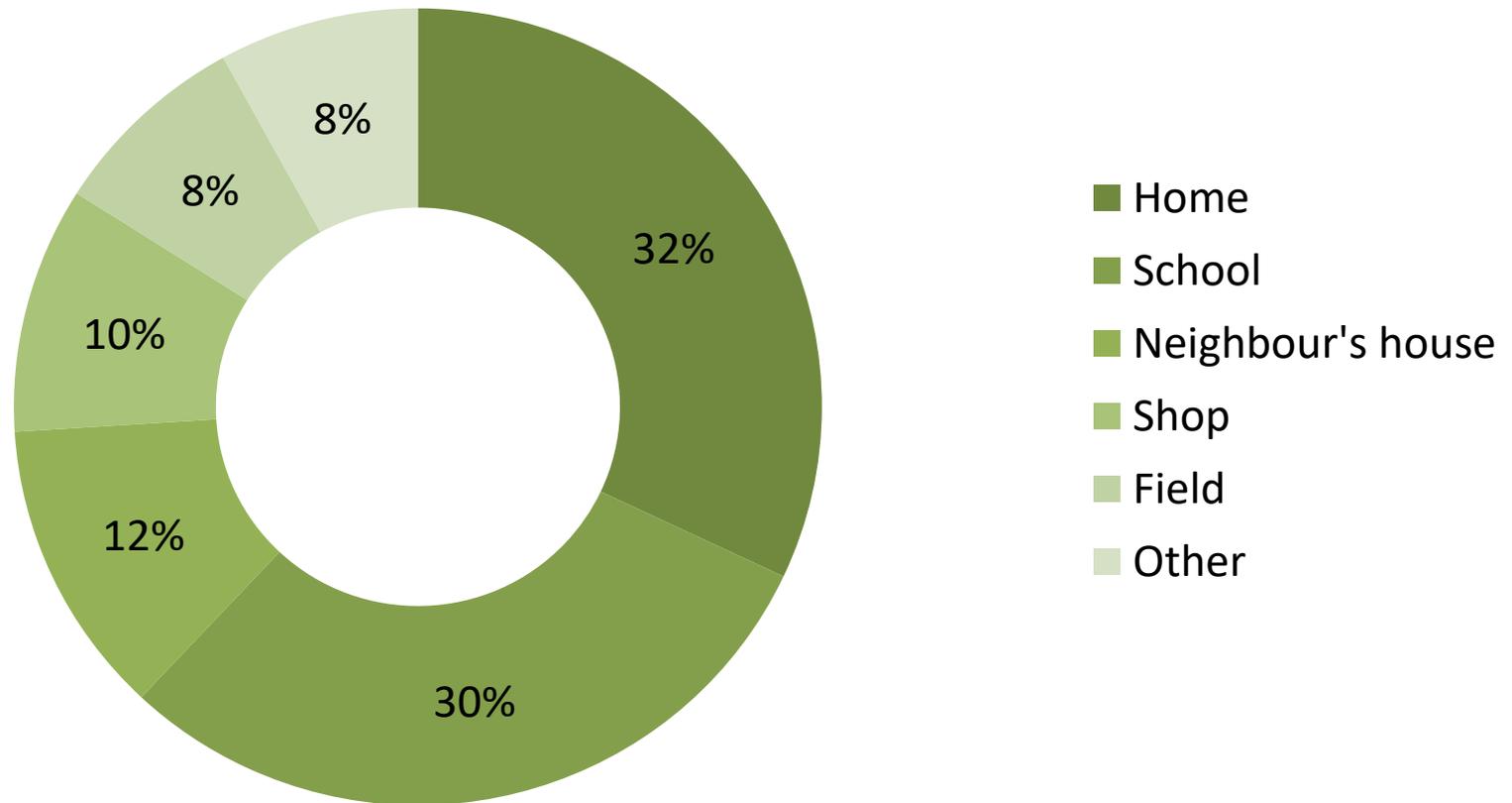
Perceptions of safety

- In group discussions, learners described home, school and community as safe

- Community maps completed individually:
  - only a third of learners marked their home (32%) and school (30%) as safe
  - Only 12% identified a neighbour's house as a safe space

Perceptions of risk

- People
  - *"A man helps children cross the road [to school] safely, so there's nothing that could ever happen to us"* (Female, FGD 1)
  - *"The shop is safe because there are people there"* (Female, FGD 2)

- Routes
  - *"We reported [the boys that mugged us] to our parents and teachers, they told us to change the route that we used but because the route is a short cut, we continue to take it"* (Male, FGD 2)

- Spaces
  - *"Home is safe because it's fenced"* (Male, FGD 2)

(Female, 11 years, FGD 3)
Home and school marked as safe

(Male, 10 years, FGD 2)
Neighbours' homes marked as safe

Perceptions of risk

- Learners used orange stickers to mark spaces they identified as sometimes safe and some times unsafe

Legend:
- Roads — 20%
- Field — 16%
- Abandoned/unfinished houses — 16%
- Car wash/taxi rank — 14%
- Animals — 9%
- Forest — 9%
- Shop — 9%
- Water/stream — 5%
- Home — 2%

Perceptions of risk

- Across the sample the following were marked as sometimes safe and sometimes unsafe:
    - Spaces with animals and livestock
    - Car washes and taxi ranks

- Many spaces and routes were marked as both safe and unsafe
    - Safe
        - Home (only 1 learner identified their home as sometimes safe and sometimes unsafe
        - Shop (shops that sell alcohol were considered sometimes safe and sometimes unsafe due to patrons who consume alcohol outside the shop)
        - Field (some fields were considered safe while others were considered unsafe. Fields designated for playing soccer were considered safe)
    - Unsafe
        - Field (Fields that were secluded or empty were considered unsafe)
        - Abandoned/unfinished buildings (considered unsafe due to loitering people who consume alcohol/substances in buildings)
        - Forest (Only male learners marked the forest as sometimes safe and sometimes unsafe; all of the female learners marked the forest as unsafe)
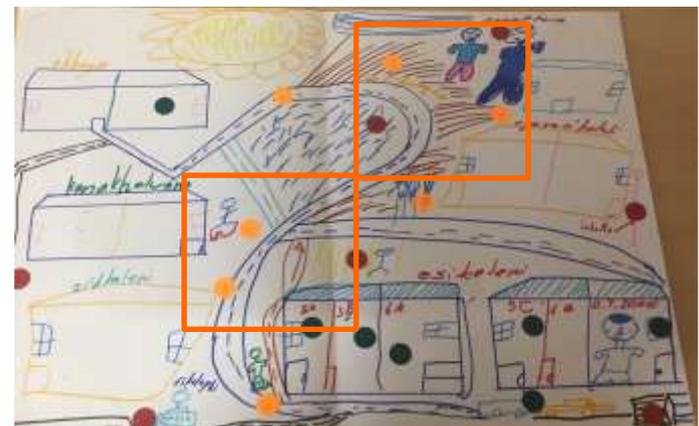
Perceptions of safety

- Spaces
  - *"the field where we play soccer is safe...people aren't used to hanging out there"*(Male, FGD 2)
  - Getting to the field was perceived as dangerous due to people considered dangerous along the route.
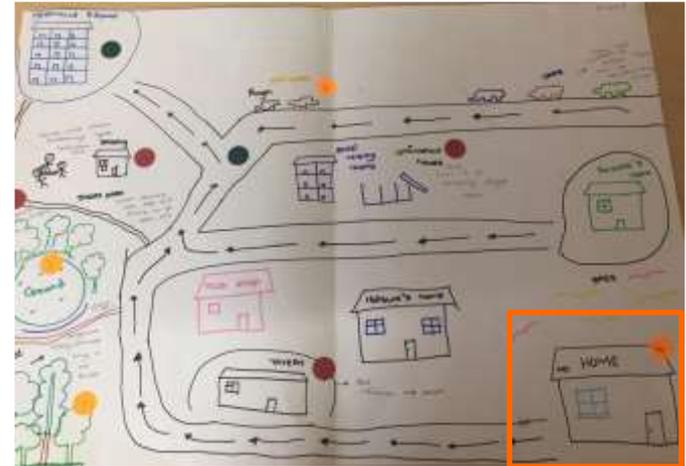
(Female, 12 years, FGD 1)
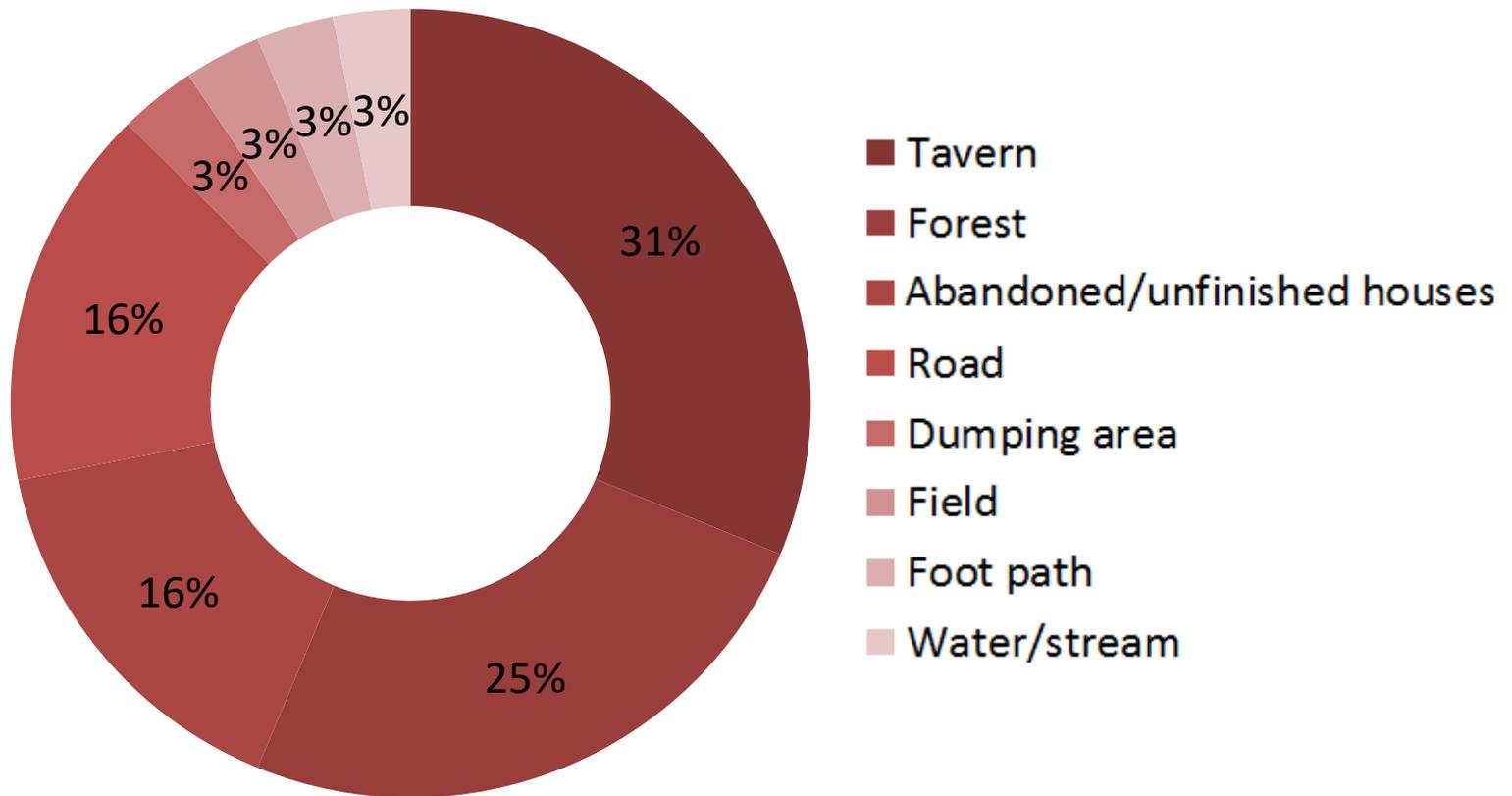Home marked as (un)safe

(Male, 11 years, FGD 3)
Multiple areas marked as (un)safe

Perceptions of risk

- Learners used red stickers to mark spaces they identified as unsafe

Legend:
- Tavern — 31%
- Forest — 25%
- Abandoned/unfinished houses — 16%
- Road — 16%
- Dumping area — 3%
- Field — 3%
- Foot path — 3%
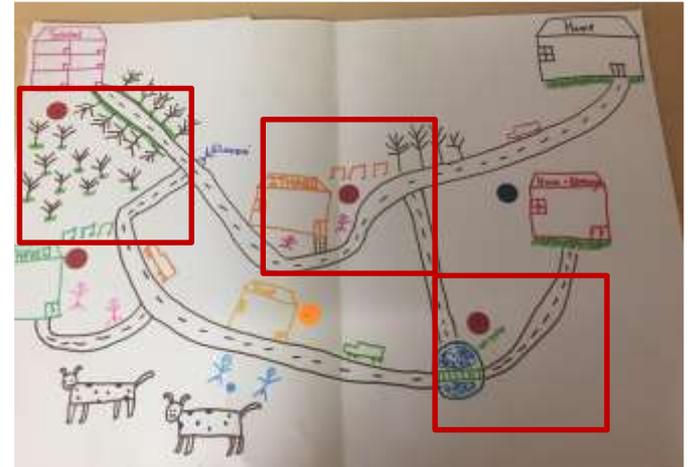- Water/stream — 3%

Perceptions of risk

- Greater consensus among learners regarding unsafe spaces
  - Spaces considered unsafe
    - Taverns and spaces where people use alcohol and substances along the route
    - Animals (Stray dogs and livestock)
  - Infrastructural dangers
    - Busy roads without pavements
    - Foot paths through forests/across streams
- Types of violence differ across gender
  - Male: Harassment, mugging, physical violence
  - Female: Harassment, sexual violence
- No learners marked home or school as unsafe

Perceptions of risk

- Alcohol and substance related dangers
  - *"When they're drunk they want to hit you…I've been stopped before by someone who wanted to hit me"* (Male, FGD 1)
  - *"People get drunk and want to hurt you by hitting you"* (Male, FGD 2)
- Sexual harassment related dangers
  - *"He used to follow me…back from school"* (Female, FGD 1)
  - *"It's scary to walk past [taverns/taxi ranks] because they might rape you* (Female, FGD 1)
  - *"There's a girl in grade 11…there were males sitting around [the tavern] they caught her and raped her"* (Female, FGD 1)

(Female, 12 years, FGD 2)

Forest, tavern, water/stream marked as unsafe
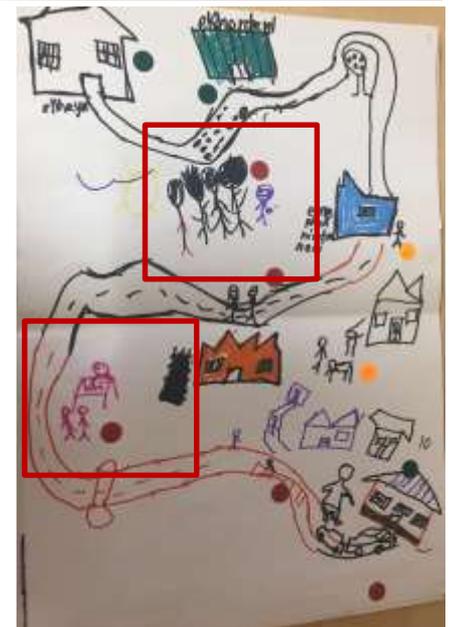
(Male, 11 years, FGD 3)

Multiple areas with people marked as unsafe

Transect walk photographs

- Learners' preferred routes perceived as shorter/quicker
- But these were often more dangerous:
  - Secluded
  - Infrastructure

Transect walk: unsafe spaces

Main road without pavements (left) - Unsafe

"Forest" (right) - Unsafe

Construction site (above) - Unsafe

Blood and stick from physical assault on a learner the day before the transect walk (above) - Unsafe

Participatory methods

- Important to triangulate data using mapping, focus group discussions and transect walks to gain a holistic narrative
  - Community maps provided:
    - A visualisation of learner perceptions; individualised
    - Enabled children to express their views, without solely relying on verbal communication
  - Focus group discussion provided:
    - Prompt discussion
    - Provides further qualitative data not presented on map
      - Eg. Time of day (Afternoon/early evening); weather (mist; rain)
  - Transect walk provided:
    - Details related to community map
    - Scale versus perception
      - Eg. Forrest versus clearing with +/- 40 tree

Conclusion

- Children actively engaged in their own risk landscapes which were related to several contextual factors - space, time, people, actions (see Harden et al., 2000).
- On the school journey, children often make decisions about risks and potential harms, and how to navigate these
- Critical to understand risk and safety from children's perspectives.
- Using participatory/emancipatory approaches gives children opportunities to voice their concerns in their own right, rather than researchers 'coming in' and making assumptions on what is important or not
- Visual methodologies give voice to children; allow alternative ways of capturing and disseminating their concerns, as they see and experience them
- Primary benefits stemming from participatory tools:
  - Individual perspectives of safe and unsafe spaces per learner that may go unnoticed in a standard FGD (particularly related to variation within the sample)
  - Provides opportunities to prompt, deepen and enrich discussion
- There is clear value in involving children in empirical research concerning their lives using methods that are both comfortable, engaging and interactive.
- Such involvement is a crucial precursor to developing contextually-relevant interventions.

Acknowledgements

- World Bank and Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), Development Marketplace: Innovations to Address Gender-Based Violence

- University of KwaZulu-Natal

- KZN DoE

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