

# SAFE RIDES FOR EVERYONE!

WHY SAFE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS ESSENTIAL FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA<sup>1</sup>



Everyone needs safe, reliable, affordable public transport - but trains that are not safe to travel on often impact more on women and children as they are physically more vulnerable.



➔ As primary caregivers and workers, women need to arrive safely and on time

- at their places of work,
- at clinics and hospitals,
- to see their family and friends,
- at other important services, like SASSA paydays.

➔ And girls need safe public transport to get to school and to be able to do after-school activities like sport.

➔ Public transport that is safe, affordable and reliable helps women feel confident and do things that help them reach their goals and dreams.<sup>2</sup> It also contributes to families' financial security and to healthy communities – and helps girls stay in school.<sup>3</sup>

## WHAT THE LAW SAYS ABOUT SAFETY ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT



Two laws talk about the safety of commuters – i.e. passengers on public transport:

- The **National Land Transport Act** of 2009 says that passengers should be safe when using public transport.<sup>4</sup>
- The **Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act**<sup>5</sup> says that women should be able to get to work without fear of discrimination. Safe, reliable transport is an important part of women being able to do this.

In addition, the main law of the country – the **South African Constitution** – says that all people have the right to dignity and equality, and the right to be free from violence. The Constitution also says that nobody should be treated in a 'cruel, inhuman and degrading' way.<sup>6</sup>

People's right to freedom of movement is also in the Constitution.<sup>7</sup> Although the Constitution does not talk about the right to transport or about access to safe public transport explicitly, these rights are linked to the right to freedom of movement as well as the rights to dignity and equality and to be free from violence.

1 The information in this pamphlet developed by Sonke Gender Justice, is a summary of 'Public Transport and the Safety of Women in South Africa – Lessons from Around the World', a research report commissioned by Sonke Gender Justice and written by Mamello Matthews, April 2017. In addition, information is derived from interviews conducted by Zukie Vuka and produced by Gavin Silber (Unite Behind) with commuters broadcasted on Unite Behind Radio, affidavits from Sharone Daniels in the High Court of South Africa and video interviews from Monique Craig by Unite Behind.

2 Amy Dunckel Graglia. 2016. "Finding mobility: Women negotiating fear and violence in Mexico City's public transit system", *Gender, Place & Culture - A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 23:5.

3 UN Women. 2014. *Ensuring Safe Transport with and for Women and Girls in Port Moresby*. Papua New Guinea: UN Women 7.

4 Parliament of South Africa. 2009. *National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009*.

5 Parliament of South Africa. 2002. *Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2002*.

6 *Constitution of South Africa, 1996. Bill of Rights, Chapter.*

7 *Constitution of South Africa, 1996. Section 21.*

8 Mashongwa v PRASA(2016) BCLR 204 (CC) : <http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2015/36.html>

9 <http://www.urban.org/urban-wire/why-womens-access-safe-public-transportation-key-sustainable-development>

# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH OUR PUBLIC TRANSPORT?

When some people are rude, threatening or violent to other people using the trains, they make public transport unsafe for everyone – but particularly for women and children. They are also violating the other passengers' constitutional rights.

The current train system does not provide protection for commuters and does not seem to care for their safety. PRASA – the company that manages the train services - is meant to take 'reasonable measures' to ensure the safety of passengers. As they are not doing this, they are failing in their constitutional and legal duties to ensure the safety of passengers.

## HOW THE LACK OF SAFETY ON TRAINS AFFECTS WOMEN & GIRLS

### *The impact of delays*

Everyone relies on the official train schedule to plan when they will travel. When changes in the schedule are not announced, and when the trains are delayed or even cancelled altogether, commuters are late for work, for school or for wherever they need to be. Some women lose their jobs, while others are not able to run their businesses efficiently. Some girls don't get to school on time – and some do not get to school at all.

When trains stop for long periods between stations, some passengers jump off the train onto the tracks to find other ways of getting to their destinations on time. This is dangerous – and it also costs them more money.

When train schedules are unreliable, women and children sometimes have to travel in the dark in early mornings or late evenings. Bad lighting in the streets and at many train stations makes them even more vulnerable to violence and harassment.

### *Overcrowding*

As train carriages are often very crowded and there are not enough seats, commuters have to stand close together, squashed together in small spaces often for a long time. This makes women and girls more vulnerable to **sexual harassment**. Overcrowding on the train and on the station can also lead to **conflict, violence and crime**. There can also be **pushing and stampedes**.

All of these put women and children – and elderly people - at risk of being hurt in some way.

### *Lack of safety - Know what to do!*

Doors are often left open while a train is moving. This can be dangerous, and can result in injury or death.<sup>8</sup> In addition, some train carriages have no windows and lack appropriate doorways.

Many carriages do not have fire extinguishers. As there are often no **safety procedure notices and information** on what to do, commuters do not know how to use emergency kits if there is a fire or collision.





## Time and money

Women who live far away from the train station must catch taxis and buses and sometimes walk long distances to get to the station. This can be expensive, making it difficult for people who do not have much money. They must also spend a lot of time each day travelling.<sup>9</sup>

## No reporting system

There are no effective systems for reporting violence, harassment or theft on trains and it is not clear who will take responsibility. This allows crime and violence to continue putting women and children at constant risk. The lack of a system also makes it difficult to speak out.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE HURT OR SEE SOMEONE ELSE BEING HURT

**If someone hurts you, harrasses you or steals your belongings** try to make sure that other people near you know that something has happened. If you can, shout at the person who has done this – it might stop them hurting other people.

**If you see someone else being hurt, harassed or having their things stolen,** draw attention to their situation and offer them help. This can be difficult if you are in a hurry but it is important than no-one manages these situations alone.

But it is important not to put yourself at more risk – so if you do not feel safe shouting, ask someone close by for help. This can either be:

- to report theft or violence to the station police;
- to help you or someone else get medical care;
- to help you or someone else get home.

### CONTACT:

**CITY OF CAPE TOWN'S TRANSPORT INFORMATION CENTRE (TIC)** on **0800 65 64 63**, a 24 hour seven-days-a-week call centre providing residents and visitors on information on public transport in Cape Town.

**If an incident happened to you and felt like gender-based violence and/or sexual harassment, while commuting in the trains, contact:**

**METRORAIL PROTECTION SERVICES** on **021 449 4336** to report it and get immediate assistance, alternatively you can call the **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE COMMAND HELPLINE** on **0800 428 428** or **0800 GBV GBV**.



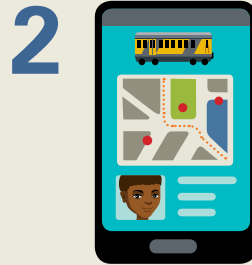


# WHAT THE TRAIN SERVICE SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE SAFETY

The train service should improve the safety of passengers in a number of ways.



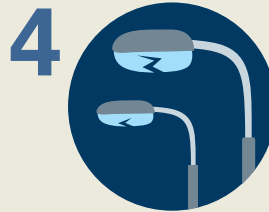
**1 Announcements** about train delays, cancellations or dangers should be made at all stations. They could also be communicated through social media platforms and on local radio.



**2** There could be a **smartphone app and online platforms** for women to share their experiences, report incidents and see where trains are at any moment in time. These could also have maps which show where crime hotspots are.



**3** There could be **carriages only for women and girls**. To make sure they are safe, these carriages would be monitored by additional physical security.



**4** The **lighting at stations** should be improved so that people can see who is on the platforms.



**5** There should be **increased surveillance**. This could include visible patrols by transport staff and police, as well as non-uniformed police inside trains and at stations. There could be CCTV cameras inside trains, in train stations and surrounding areas.



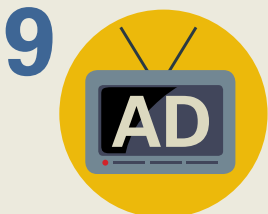
**6** All stations, carriages and platforms should have **panic buttons** installed that are linked to rapid response teams.



**7** All major train stations should have **complaints offices** where passengers can report sexual harassment, injury and violence on trains. The staff in these offices should have received gender sensitivity and sexual harassment training.



**8** A **24-hour toll-free helpline** should be advertised in all carriages, stations and platforms. Women could report sexual harassment, injury and violence on trains and get advice on what to do.



**9** **Advertising campaigns** could remind everyone that sexual harassment, theft and violence are completely unacceptable and often illegal. They could raise awareness of what to do, including reporting what has happened.



**10** Through **grassroots action**, communities could help to protect and inform one another. They can form 'buses' of commuters who walk and travel closely together in groups, so that they are safe. They could also share information and raise issues about transport - through awareness campaigns and demonstrations.