

## The Flone Initiative: tackling sexual harassment and violence against women on public transport in Nairobi

### Introduction



The Flone Initiative is a Kenyan association that aims to tackle sexual harassment in order to make Nairobi's collective transport network of *matatus*<sup>1</sup> safer and more welcoming for women, whether they are passengers or workers. To this end, it strives to raise awareness and disseminate information about gender-based and sexual violence and discrimination, supports women who wish to work in the *matatus*, and trains *matatus* operators on how to prevent and tackle such aggressions.

The association was created in 2011 by five university friends, but it has been developed and given a more formal structure following the #MyDressMyChoice<sup>2</sup> movement in 2015. This social media movement was launched in response to the assault of a young woman in public transport, and gave rise to widespread protests against sexual harassment and violence directed at women in Kenya, garnering media attention and putting this issue on the political agenda. The association is now composed of six employees and two volunteers, with an annual budget of \$500,000 thanks to the patronage of public and private organizations, as well as individual donations. To conduct its activities, the Flone Initiative partners with many local actors (associations, *matatus* cooperatives, etc.) to communicate and organize workshops, as well as with international actors to hold conferences and set up research projects. One of its flagship initiatives, a training and awareness program for male *matatus* operators, has trained over 700 people over five years. Another program called "Women in Transportation" - that aims to support women wishing to work in the transport sector - has seen its number of yearly participants increase from 12 in 2017 to 150 today.

Methodology: The description and analysis of this initiative is based on data and documents in English made available on the Flone Initiative website and on interviews with the organization's director, Naomi Mwaura.

<sup>1</sup> The *matatus* are privately owned minibuses with 13 to 19 seats, providing public transport. Routes and stops are not formalized and vehicles are very often overcrowded (Mobile Lives Forum, [Matatus... is small-scale transportation becoming trendy?](#), March 2017)

<sup>2</sup> [«#MyDressMyChoice: Tackling gender discrimination and violence in Kenya one tweet at a time»](#), March 2015

## Nairobi, a city with informal mobility

### Geography and demography

- **Area:** 704 km<sup>2</sup> (*7 times the size of Paris*)
- **Number of inhabitants (2019):** 4.4 million (*twice as many as in Paris*), a growth of 1 million inhabitants in ten years
- **Population density:** 6,893 inhabitants/m<sup>2</sup> (*equivalent to New York*)

### Economy

- Capital and largest city in the country, commercial and cultural center
- The metropolitan area generates nearly 60% of the country's GDP
- More than 2/3 of the working population works in the informal economy (transport, shops, etc.)
- The transport sector is one of the main drivers of the country's economic development, defined in the National Development Plan "Kenya 2030" as one of the pillars of economic growth, including through infrastructure development.

### Governance

- **Governor:** Anne Kananu since January 2021 (supported by the Jubilee Party, a right-wing liberal conservative party)
- **Nairobi City County:** the city is administratively merged with the county and is composed of 17 constituencies whose representatives sit in the Nairobi City County Assembly
- **Nairobi Metropolitan Region:** created in 2008, composed of 5 counties

### Policies and social mobilizations against gender-based violence and discrimination in transport

- **National Transport Policy (2009):** recognizes the inequalities affecting women in terms of mobility and accessing resources and services
- **National Constitution (2010):** includes the idea of gender in the definition of equality and makes it a national objective
- **#MyDressMyChoice movement (2015):** online movement and in-person protests mobilizing tens of thousands of people to denounce sexual assault in transport and sexism in Kenyan society. It also led to a polarization of the debate with the emergence of the masculinist countermovement #YourNudityIsNotMyChoice
- **Law against forced stripping (2015),** punishable by 10 years in prison
- **Life sentence given in 2017 to the three men responsible** for the attack that triggered the #MyDressMyChoice movement

### Transport services and mobility practices

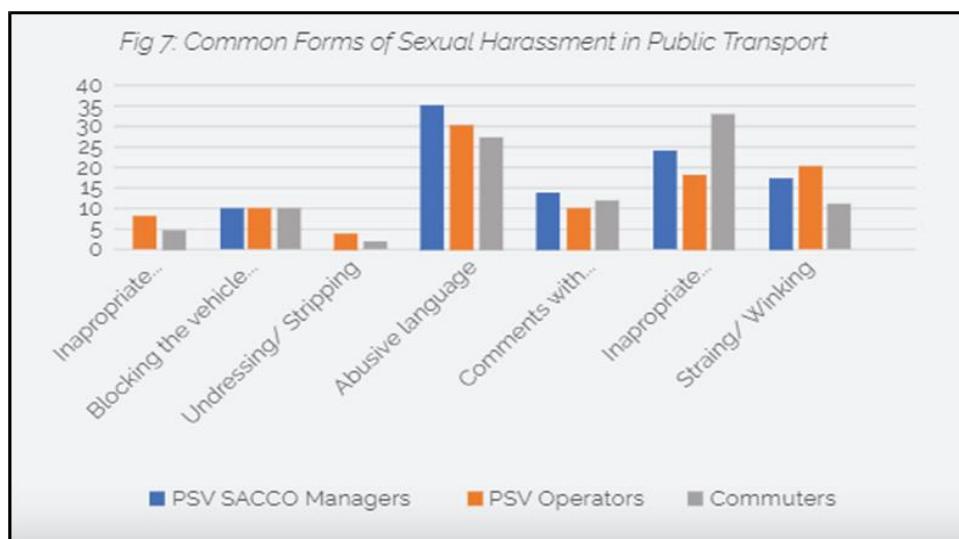
- **Walking:** the most common travel mode with a modal share of **37.9%**, higher among women (45% modal share) than among men (31%)
- **Matatus:**
  - **28.4%** of trips in Nairobi are made by *matatus*.
  - Between 8,000 and 10,000 private minibuses, belonging to the semi-informal sector: the *matatus* were originally "pirate taxis" that emerged as a way of compensating for gaps in the public bus service. They were then gradually regulated by public authorities and by the first *matatus* operators themselves in order to manage the arrival of competition on the market.
  - The *matatus* operate 135 underserved lines of the public transport system. Operators can, however, create new routes as soon as a need is identified or to avoid traffic jams or police. *Matatus* are characterized by their flexibility and responsiveness to demand, with the ability to adjust schedules and stops. Vehicles are often overcrowded, beyond their official capacity.
  - They are grouped into operator cooperatives (called Savings and Credit Cooperatives, or "SACCOs") that adhere to a code of conduct approved by the National Transport and Safety Authority and that may impose penalties. However, these codes of conduct do not include specific guidelines on gender-based and sexual violence.
  - The *matatus* sector employs nearly 160,000 people nationwide, mainly drivers and conductors, whose role is to assist drivers by selling tickets and letting them know when passengers want to alight.
- **Bus:** The network includes 300 buses and 1200 employees, and has been operated by Kenya Bus Service Management since 2006. It accounts for **12.2%** of trips in Nairobi.
- **Motorcycle taxis (bodas bodas):** officially banned in Nairobi but they continue to operate, with a modal share of **4%**
- **Taxis and private cars:** modal share of **12.6%**, used mainly by the wealthiest individuals
- **Train:** network operated by Kenya Railways Corporation, the only formal and regulated mode that offers 4 lines in Nairobi, used by only 13,000 daily passengers, with a modal share of **0.2%**
- **BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) project in progress,** led by the public authorities

## An initiative by feminist students

- Raising awareness about violence against women in transport

The organization was created in 2011 by Naomi Mwaura – today its director - and her friends, who were then studying at the United States International University in Nairobi. Naomi Mwaura's life is intimately linked to the *matatus* industry: her uncles operated a minibus and supported her family this way. Yet she had never used this mode of transportation before going to university. It was only then that she discovered the true extent of the violence directed at women and that she herself became a victim of it.<sup>3</sup> The initial reasons that moved these women to create a student association were as follows:

- The professional transport sector is **predominantly male**, depriving women of economic<sup>4</sup> opportunities and reinforcing an environment that is conducive to violence against women.
- The extent of sexual harassment and violence against women in transport is **not sufficiently documented or publicized**.
- There is **no political response** to violence against women in transport.



Different forms of sexual harassment observed on public transport in Nairobi depending on the respondent's status

Source: "Violence against Women and Girls in Public Road Transport and Connected Spaces in Nairobi

- The great "#MyDressMyChoice" movement: an impetus for the organizations' first actions

After several years operating as a simple student association, its first major action was to organize a protest in 2014, around the slogan #MyDressmyChoice, in response to a video showing a woman being forcibly stripped in the city of Nyeri, north of Nairobi. With the movement gaining widespread support and media attention, the founders proposed a **training program** for male public transport operators in order to educate and inform them about sexist and sexual violence in transport. Putting this issue in the media and on the political agenda, helped them to be awarded funding from the pan-African feminist organization FEMNET<sup>5</sup>, thus enabling them to develop the association more formally.



<sup>3</sup> Interview with Naomi Mwaura, June 22, 2021

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> FEMNET, The African Women's Development and Communications Network: <https://femnet.org/>

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## One goal, several action programs

The association highlights specific structural problems within the *matatus* industry that create a favorable context for violence against women (heavily male-dominated sector, driven by power struggles and competition, lack of regulation by public authorities...). However, they do not call for *matatus* to be banned or integrated into the public transport system:<sup>6</sup> "Instead of getting rid of *matatus*, we have to understand travel habits, train workers on how to improve the commuter experience, change behaviors, build and adopt policies to combat sexual harassment, and hire a more diverse workforce to make public transport the preferred mode of transport."<sup>7</sup>

The organization thus promotes the method-concept of "gender mainstreaming,"<sup>8</sup> an integrated approach to equality between women and men. This method, first proposed at the Third United Nations World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985, implies that actions in favor of gender equality must cut across all public policies. Each public policy must therefore take into account the specific situations of women and men before implementing an action aimed at everyone. This criterion must also be considered when assessing public policies. However, the organization's founder and director, Naomi Mwaura, points out that while the government has a growing interest in the transport sector, it only focuses on investing in road infrastructure, neglecting the socio-economic factors that determine transport demand, in particular gender.<sup>9</sup>

The two main elements that influence mobility in a gendered way are:

- **Social norms and gender roles:** these norms and their roles imply specific trips undertaken by women, who are more often involved in "care" activities (caring for the family, the elderly, etc.). They also have less time to travel for other purposes (leisure, work, etc.).
- **Gender-based and sexual violence:** as women are more often victims of assault and harassment than men, their experience of transport is often more difficult and negative, and can thus restrict their mobility.<sup>10</sup>

This position has led the team to develop a series of programs to transform the *matatus* system from within, with two main objectives: (1) Develop and share knowledge on gender-based and sexual violence, (2) Support changes in behavior and representations.

### 1) Develop and share knowledge on gender-based and sexual violence

- Quantitative and qualitative research reports to better understand the phenomenon of sexual violence

A first overview of violence against women in public transport and connected spaces was carried out in 2017 and is considered a reference document by public authorities. In this report, the Flone Initiative provides an account of the frequency and nature of sexist attacks in transport, as well as the type of responses provided by witnesses to these attacks (reactions, defense, ignorance, etc.) and by public authorities (investigations, sanctions, etc.). This study was based on surveys carried out among managers of *matatus* cooperatives, drivers and passengers (both men and women).

In particular, the study found that:

- 88% of users have already witnessed an act of assault or harassment
- 70% of users say that violence takes place most often at bus stops
- 36% of users say they do not react when they witness this type of violence

(Report on Violence Against Women and Girls in Public Road Transport and Connected Spaces in Nairobi County, 2017)

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Naomi Mwaura, June 22, 2021

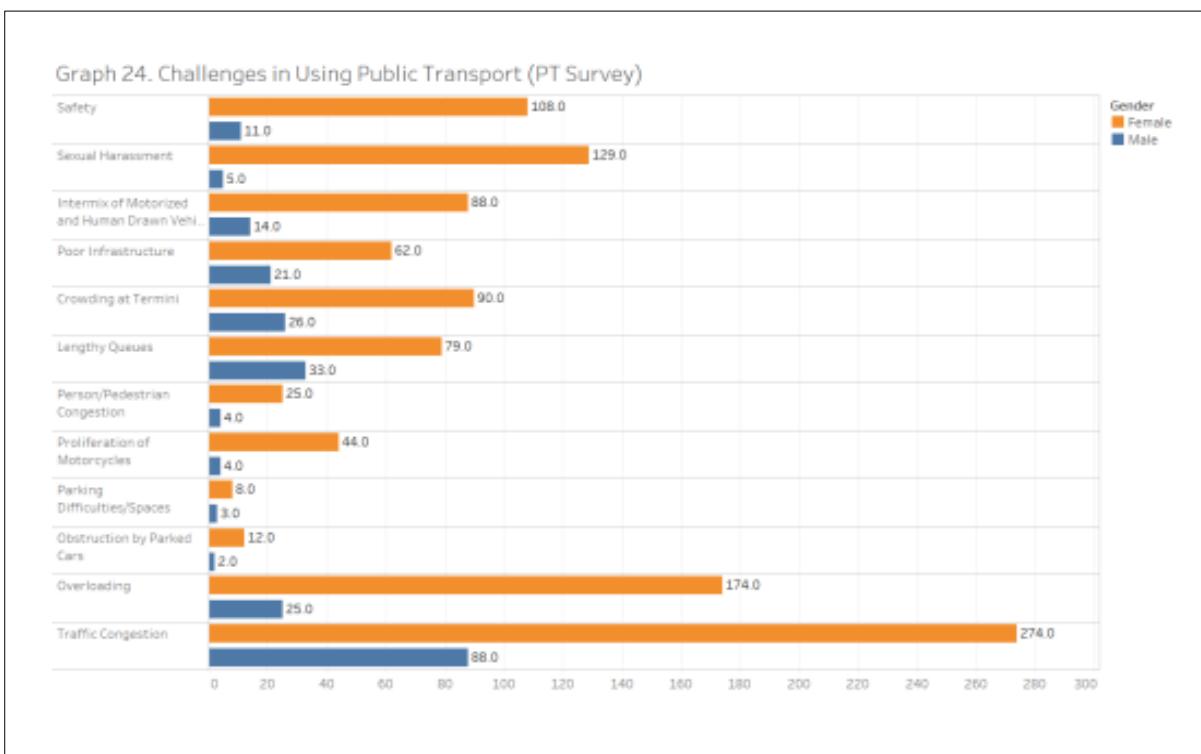
<sup>7</sup> Mwaura, N., "A feminist re-imagining of Kenya's public transport," Ted Talk, June 9, 2021  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUYmYE7ZJ\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUYmYE7ZJ_E)

<sup>8</sup> Dauphin, S. and Senac, R., "Gender mainstreaming : analyse des enjeux d'un 'concept-méthode'" [Gender mainstreaming: analysis of the stakes of a 'concept-method'] , Cahiers du Genre, n°44, p.5-16, 2008

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Naomi Mwaura, June 22, 2021

<sup>10</sup> "Gender in Urban Transport in Nairobi, Kenya: Volume 1 – Mobility", World Bank, 2020

Difficulties faced by public transport users in Nairobi, by gender. Source: "Violence against Women and Girls in Public Road Transport and Connected Spaces in Nairobi County, Kenya", Flone Initiative, 2018



A second study was carried out in 2018 with funding from UN Habitat, this time focusing on gender discrimination within the *matatus* professional sector. This study, based on more than a hundred interviews with managers of *matatus* cooperatives, aimed to establish an overview of the various difficulties currently faced by women working in this sector, and the barriers facing women who want to join it. In particular, it reveals that the managers of cooperatives are exclusively men, and that although they recognize that women can be "good employees," they systematically favor hiring men due to a

number of gender stereotypes. The study also shows that there are no internal policies in place to tackle sexual violence against female *matatus* employees. (Report on Gender Equity Assessment of Nairobi's Public Minibus Transport Services, 2018)

A report was produced on the **specificities of "care mobility"** - i.e. mobility related to the care of household members, children or the elderly - based on interviews with 450 women accustomed to riding on *matatus*. These interviews revealed the travel habits of these women and the difficulties they encounter during these specific trips: carrying various loads, travelling with children, etc.

**A report on travel safety from the point of view of women** was carried out in 2019, based on data provided by the "My Safetipin" app, which is used by women in Mombasa (the country's second largest city) to rate the safety level of their journeys with a dozen parameters (illumination, human presence, visibility...). This user-generated diagnosis then allowed the association to draft recommendations to make improvements to the most unsafe locations: for example, adding streetlights where needed, widening sidewalks, or encouraging the development of mobile street vendors whose presence creates natural surveillance, etc. ("Mombasa Safety Report", 2019)

**A study on the impact of Covid 19 on women working in the *matatus* sector** in Nairobi was published in 2020 and showed that 52% lost their job because of the crisis ("Implications of Covid 19 on Women Professionals in the Public Transport Industry").<sup>11</sup>

- **The crowdmapping platform "Report It, Stop It"**

- Crowdmapping is the user-generated collection of online location information.
- The "Report It, Stop It" platform allows people to geolocate and provide information on incidences of assault or harassment (facts, number of people involved, etc.) in transport and public spaces. The goal of this tool is to collect data on violence in transport and connected spaces (bus stops...) in Kenya, in order to objectify and document the extent of gender-based and sexual assaults, and then raise awareness among the public and public authorities. The tool also serves to identify high-risk locations where the most incidents are reported, and therefore guide the actions of the police and security services. However, it is not intended to provide emergency medical assistance or live police contact.
- The intended users of the app are firstly victims and witnesses of assault or harassment, but also public authorities and transport operators who can report on violence and meet the safety needs of transport users.
- This platform was set up in partnership with the non-profit company Ushahidi, which made its crowdmapping software freely available. Several local and student associations helped the Flone Initiative raise awareness among university students about using the platform, to encourage them to report incidents.

#### International exchanges to share knowledge and experience

- The Flone Initiative took a leading role in organizing the **4<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Women and Transport Africa" conference** in December 2021. This international conference aims to federate workers, decision-makers, researchers and other key actors in the field, who want to tackle discrimination and violence against women in transport. The event is supported by a dozen international organizations, including the World Bank and UN Habitat<sup>12</sup>.
- On June 9, 2021, Naomi Mwaura was invited to present the Flone Initiative at the international American Ted Talk conference. The video of her talk, called "A feminist reimagining of Kenya's public transport," has been viewed almost 108,000 times on YouTube.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Supporting changes in behavior and representations

<sup>11</sup> Official website of the Flone Initiative: <http://floneinitiative.org/index.php/home/>

<sup>12</sup> Official website of the Flone Initiative: <http://floneinitiative.org/index.php/home/>

<sup>13</sup> Mwaura, N., "A feminist re-imagining of Kenya's public transport," Ted Talk, June 9, 2021  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUYmYE7ZJ\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUYmYE7ZJ_E)



A woman working in a *matatu*. Source: Annual Report 2019

#### A training program for women who want to work in transport, called "Women in Transport (WIT)":

- This is the Flone Initiative's flagship program. Its goal is to promote and protect the presence of women in the professional transport sector, by providing them with know-how and collective support.
- The training consists of regular support for members, monthly professional workshops, meetings to share experience...
- Two local groups currently exist: in Nairobi and in Mombasa<sup>14</sup>



Workshop organized by the Flone Initiative with operators. Source: Official website of the Flone Initiative.

#### An awareness and prevention program for men working in matatus, called "Usalama Wa Uma":

- This program trains public transport providers (mainly *matatus* managers, drivers and conductors) in **preventing gender-based assault and sexual harassment**.
- This program consists of workshops to train men in gender issues, raise awareness of service quality issues, and suggest ideas for personal and professional development. The Flone Initiative aims to make such training mandatory in Kenya in order to obtain the professional driving license.
- It operates in collaboration with some *matatus* cooperatives and concentrates its efforts primarily on neighborhoods with recurring incidences of sexual harassment and violence against women.

#### The "Gender Sensitive Minibus Services and Transport Infrastructure for African Cities: A Practical Toolkit"<sup>15</sup>, in collaboration with UN Habitat, 2018

- This document identifies practical guidelines and tools that can be used to create safer and more accessible transport systems.
- It is aimed at decision-makers and civil society actors, as well as transport operators
- The Flone Initiative has set up participatory workshops with *matatus* managers to draft these recommendations together and reflect on how to implement them. A workshop on the concept of "gender-mainstreaming" (integrated approach to equality between men and women) brought together 100 professionals from the *matatus* sector (managers, drivers, union representatives, etc.) in June 2021.

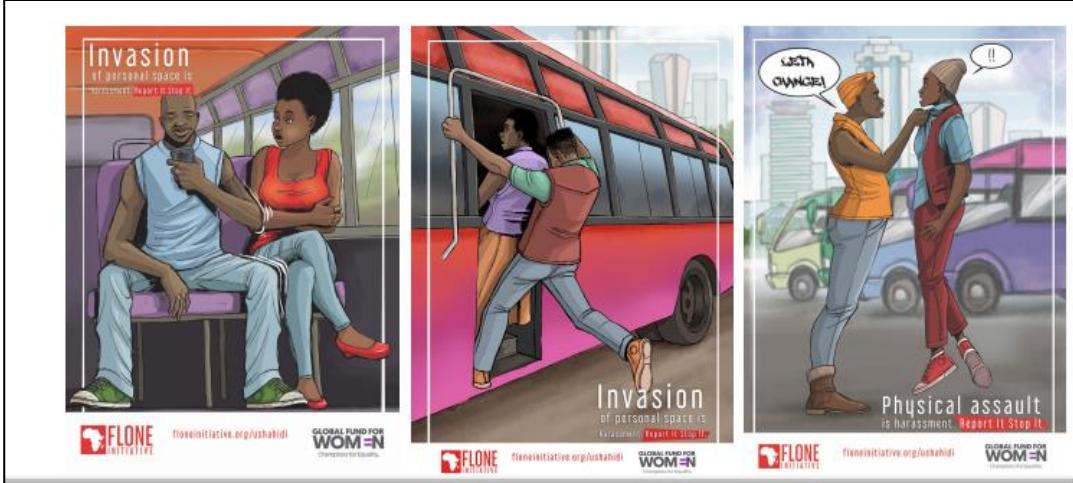
#### Digital and artistic campaigns to communicate and raise awareness on social networks and in public space

- Creating animated videos to encourage the use of the "Report It, Stop It" app, designed by a Nairobi production company (Mau Mau Arts).
- Producing a feature film to present stories of women working in transport and raise awareness about gender-based violence and discrimination ("Muspa Nganya", in collaboration with Hivos Global, Mau Mau Arts and Turning Tables Kenya).

<sup>14</sup> Official website of the Flone Initiative: <http://floneinitiative.org/index.php/home/>

<sup>15</sup> "Gender Sensitive Mini Bus Services and Transport Infrastructure for African Cities: A Practical Toolkit", Flone Initiative, 2019

- Displaying posters and other visual elements (brochures, etc.) in vehicles and *matatus* cooperative offices to raise awareness.
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cultural interventions, through theatre and graffiti for example<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

## Financial and human resources

The Flone Initiative's annual budget is 500,000 euros.

This budget comes almost entirely from institutional patronage<sup>17</sup>:

- International organizations, such as UN Habitat (which also occasionally funds complementary studies)
- NGOs and foundations: The Global Fund for Women, Ashoka, Voice, Hivos, The Harnisch Foundation ...
- Google

These donations are supplemented by the membership fee to the association, which is 2 dollars/month.

To implement its programs, the Flone Initiative has six full-time employees:

- Founder and CEO Naomi Mwaura
- A communications manager
- A programs manager
- A head of research and public policy
- A financial manager
- An intern

The team also has two volunteers: a publications editor and a financial controller<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Official website of the Flone Initiative: <http://floneinitiative.org/index.php/home/>

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Naomi Mwaura, June 22, 2021

## **The initiative's impact: a growing number of participants, innovative programs supported by various actors**

The Flone Initiative celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2021. However, its first quantitative and qualitative studies on discrimination and violence against women in transport date back only to 2018. While the recent nature of the data makes it hard to statistically assess the organization's impact, several observations can be made from an external point of view:

### **1. The number of projects developed locally is significant and the number of participants is growing**

The training programs set up by the Flone Initiative are attracting more and more women and professionals from the sector. The Women in Transport program counted only 12 women when it was created in 2017; now it has nearly 150. According to Naomi Mwaura, this is the most successful project and the only one implemented in a city other than Nairobi, Mombasa. While it is difficult to assert a causal link between this program's development and the number of women working in transport, the founder claims there is an evolution in how women's work is represented.<sup>19</sup> With nearly **700 male workers trained in 2019**, the **Usalama Wa Uma** program launched in 2017 is also proving effective: Naomi Mwaura points to the workers' education and positive reactions when the association offers operators the opportunity to receive the training. Finally, the practical toolkit's recommendations were implemented via experiments within two *matatus* cooperatives: they each designed an internal anti-harassment policy and set up their own training program for operators, training nearly 60 workers (drivers and conductors) and 6 managers.<sup>20</sup>

### **2. The Flone Initiative is a recognized source of expertise on gender-based and sexual violence in Kenya**

With its quantitative and qualitative reports and its crowdmapping platform, the association is documenting the extent of gender-based and sexual violence in transport in an unprecedented way. It has thereby established itself as a leading authority on this issue, called upon by public actors and professionals in the sector.

### **3. The Flone Initiative's communication has a national and international scope**

While the association's concrete actions are mainly concentrated in Nairobi at this stage, they are disseminating information, raising awareness and sharing experience on a national and international level. This is evidenced by the four editions of the international conference "Women and Transport Africa" - each bringing together about 950 participants - and the significant support of international organizations (World Bank, UN Habitat, The Global Fund for Women...).

#### **Key figures**

- **Association members:** 6 employees and 2 volunteers
- **Rate of women employed** in the transport sector at the national level: 10%
- **Number of women participating in the Women In Transport program:** from 12 women in 2017 to more than 150 women today
- **Number of Women in Transport workshops per year** (2018): 6
- **Number of workers in the sector who have received the Usalama Wa Uma training:** 700
- **Number of matatus cooperatives that have implemented the recommendations of the Gender Sensitive Toolkit:** 2, resulting in the training of 60 workers and 6 managers
- **Number of transport workers taking part in workshops to implement the Toolkit:** 86
- **Number of participants at the 2020 Women and Transport Africa conference:** over 950

## **Conditions for success, according to the founder and director**

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Naomi Mwaura, June 22, 2021

<sup>20</sup> Annual Report 2019, Flone Initiative, 2019

According to founder and director Naomi Mwaura, there are three main reasons why the Flone Initiative's actions are growing in number and are well received by those concerned:

### **1. A bottom-up initiative that works closely with communities and professional actors**

First, the association is led by people who are directly affected by the issue at stake. This allows them to adapt the actions to better respond to the reality on the ground. Furthermore, the members of the association have forged close ties with the communities in which they operate (professional sector, neighborhoods, women's groups...). Director Naomi Mwaura explains, for example, that to prepare the training sessions, her team learns about the specific characteristics and needs of the targeted community through informal exchanges with its members. This allows them to identify specific issues on certain *matatus* lines, which can for example be particularly subject to police violence, cartel fights or tensions between employees and their hierarchy. Also, making some training courses women-only allows the organization to offer participants a safe environment and a sense of belonging to the group, which encourages them to speak out and share experiences on women's daily living conditions<sup>21</sup>. The Flone Initiative also collects data on the incidences of harassment and assault on *matatus* lines directly from citizens, via the crowdmapping platform and by monitoring Facebook groups specific to some neighborhoods or communities. This feedback from the ground allows the organization to adapt its actions to the actual needs and priorities of those concerned. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the association was able to set up specific actions for women who worked in transport or who lost their jobs because of the crisis, and thus served as an intermediary with the state services to provide them with support (financial and material aid, childcare, etc.).

### **2. Numerous partnerships with local actors, adapted to each project**

While the Flone Initiative is a citizen-led initiative directly in contact with local communities and actors, it ensures its proper functioning by setting up partnerships for all its projects. For example, research reports and conferences are actively supported by large international organizations, while awareness-raising projects (notably through artistic projects) also involve smaller local businesses<sup>22</sup> (for online services, video production...).

### **3. An educational and constructive approach, both for women and *matatus* operators**

The Flone Initiative has chosen to educate people in order to raise awareness and change representations, based on a pragmatic and non-confrontational approach. This strategy aims to defuse conflicts, in a context that is still hostile to women's rights, as evidenced in particular by the masculinist countermovement "#YourNudityIsNotMyChoice" in 2015. In the training program for *matatus* workers, some workshops, for example, consist of describing a woman's daily experience of public transport, in order to show the reality of her negative experience and garner the operators' empathy. Additionally, women are presented above all as *matatus* customers, whose experience must be improved in order to retain their custom and encourage them to use *matatus* even more.

## **The levers of development, according to the founder and director**

### **1. Increasing the organization's budget so it can be developed on a national scale**

Naomi Mwaura would like the Flone Initiative to receive more donations and subsidies, arguing that its current yearly budget of 500,000 euros is insufficient to tackle the problem of sexual violence in Kenya. Women make up 51.9% of the population, and in 2014, 49% of women aged 15-49 reported having been victims of violence<sup>23</sup>. In addition, the Flone Initiative is the first and only association to date in Kenya working to tackle this kind of violence in transport. With the Covid-19 pandemic, donors are focusing more on public health issues than on women's safety in transport. One of Naomi Mwaura's main activities as director is to raise funds and respond to calls for projects, which is time consuming; similarly, the organization currently only has one person in charge of all the programs. Increasing the budget would allow the Flone Initiative to hire more people in order to develop the training programs and create different local branches throughout the country.

### **2. Developing educational programs for male *matatus* operators**

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Official website of the Flone Initiative: <http://floneinitiative.org/index.php/home/>

<sup>23</sup> Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS 2008-2009)

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As the *matatus* sector keeps growing, the organization is struggling to find the resources to train enough operators on how to prevent violence against women. The need is all the more pressing as male cultural resistance is strong: there is a significant gap between what men consider harassment or aggression and what the law says. Despite all these efforts to educate and raise awareness, the women working in the transport sector continue to face the sexist and violent reality of this professional environment. As a result, despite training from the Women in Transport program, many have had to stop working in this field earlier than they would have liked, due to regular harassment.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, educational interventions with schoolchildren could prove useful in preventing violence and deconstructing gender stereotypes from an early age.

### **3. Communicating more widely on the crowdmapping platform and partnering with local governments to generate greater participation**

Despite presentations at the university to raise awareness about using the platform, coupled with important advertising on social networks, the platform has only recorded just over 300 incidences of harassment or assault by victims or witnesses<sup>25</sup> since its creation. This number seems very low considering that, according to the Flone Initiative's study in 2018, 88% of *matatus* users (hundreds of thousands per day) have witnessed or been victims of violence on their line<sup>26</sup>. Consequently, while the crowdmapping platform works, the volume of users is insufficient. There is therefore a need to advertise its existence more widely on social networks, carry out information campaigns among young people and test its functions to ensure accessibility. To encourage women to use it, campaigns will also have to reassure them on the protection of personal data. A financial partnership with local public authorities could be a win-win: indeed public policies on prevention and safety could be better calibrated with the insights provided by the app's data. However, a note of caution should be raised on the possible negative effects of this tool, insofar as it could lead to the creation of "No Go Zones" where women are deterred from going, and where they could therefore be held responsible for any attacks they were subject to because they did not heed this warning.

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<sup>25</sup> "Inspirational interview: Naomi Mwaura, founder of Flone initiative - part 1", The Pixel Project, 29 July 2018"

<https://www.thepixelproject.net/2018/07/29/inspirational-interview-naomi-mwaura-founder-of-flone-initiative-part-i/>

<sup>26</sup> "Gender Sensitive Mini Bus Services and Transport Infrastructure for African Cities: A Practical Toolkit", Flone Initiative, 2019

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