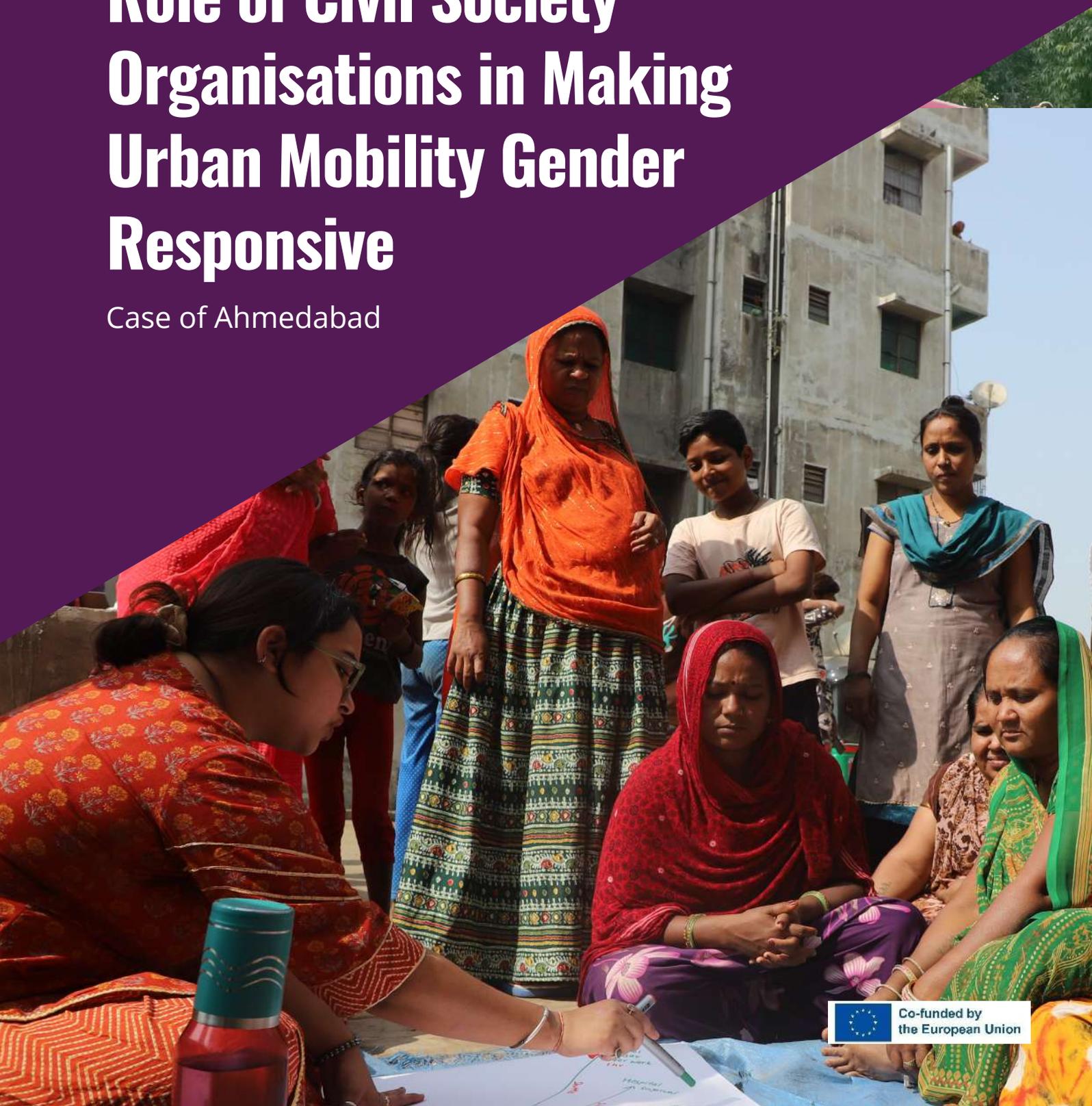# Role of Civil Society Organisations in Making Urban Mobility Gender Responsive

Case of Ahmedabad

About MobiliseHER

MobiliseHER is a project co-funded by EuropeAid under the Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA). The project's main goal is to create safer cities for women and gender and sexual minorities in India. This is done by increasing the involvement of civil society organisations in transport planning and governance and promoting gender-responsive planning. The project also aims to raise awareness and jointly implement gender-sensitive, low-carbon urban transport systems.

MobiliseHER is active in three major Indian cities: Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, and Cochin. The goal is to expand the project's results to 10 other cities nationwide.

This three-year project began in April 2024 and is being implemented in partnership with the Urban Electric Mobility Initiative (UEMI), WRI India, the CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), and Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA).

Authors

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)

Meghna Sandhir
Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay

CEPT Research and Development Foundation

Dr. Nitika Bhakuni
Dr. Smruti Jukur

Context

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a significant role in shaping civic life in Ahmedabad. Their work is rooted in a deep history of mobilising citizen participation and enabling systemic change through state and community collaboration. They have led reform movements, and rights-based advocacy to amplify the voices of the most marginalised communities. Historically, CSOs in the city have focused on welfare for women cooperatives, education, public health the environment, and social justice, among other areas. Over time, their roles have gradually evolved to involve closer engagement with governance processes making urban development inclusive and participatory.

Urban mobility is emerging as a critical issue, especially when viewed through the lens of gender and equity. As cities grow and formal planning struggles to keep pace with the needs for all residents, CSO's have taken on a vital role. They are stepping in to innovate solutions and represent the needs of vulnerable groups who are frequently overlooked: women, people with disabilities, informal workers, and marginalised communities- pushing for a more inclusive planning.

This technical note presents insights from a mapping exercise conducted under the MobiliseHER project to understand the engagement of CSOs in the city and more specifically on gender-responsive mobility in Ahmedabad. Some organisations have a stronger focus on initiatives at the intersection of gender and mobility, while others, though not directly addressing mobility issues, work closely with communities and provide valuable grassroots perspectives on related concerns. A city-wide mapping of CSOs was conducted using secondary sources, identifying 44 organisations. Detailed profiles of 14 organisations were created representing different groups of marginalised communities and those who work at the intersection of gender and or mobility. For this study, CSOs are defined as non-profit, voluntary citizen groups and organisations that operate independently from the State and market to support such initiatives. These may include community-based organisations, membership associations, social and youth groups, and research institutions focused on urban transport, gender issues, and inclusive governance. Historically, Ahmedabad has vibrant CSOs working on women's empowerment, livelihood, poverty alleviation, and access to housing and basic services. These organisations mobilise communities to facilitate access to rights and entitlements, access subsidies and schemes by governments, address gender-based violence, and implement urban interventions and governance. To identify potential CSOs for engagement in the MobiliseHER project, four criteria were established:

1. **Engagement on mobility issues**: Organisations with past or current experience in mobility issues.

2. **Civic, governance, and citizen rights**: Organisations addressing civic issues, governance, and citizen rights.

3. **Intersectional factors**: Organisations working on issues related to transgender individuals, people with disabilities, and economically marginalised communities that intersect with mobility issues.

4. **Gender and women's rights**: Organisations advocating for women's rights, including safety and accessibility to public spaces.

The process underscores how CSOs in Ahmedabad are responding to gender-mobility gaps, identifies areas of shared efforts and potential collaboration, and suggests key capacity challenges that can be collectively addressed. The mapping presents a landscape of Ahmedabad's context rich with valuable experience and grassroot efforts, while also constrained by systemic barriers and challenges to achieving inclusive and sustainable mobility. The technical note is organised around three major areas of CSO engagement: **Inclusive and Sustainable Mobility, Urban Infrastructure and Gender Planning,** and **Citizen Participation**. It also explores the intersections of issues related to mobility.

1. Inclusive Sustainable Mobility

Mobility, in the Indian context, is more than just movement- It is closely tied to opportunity. It determines enhanced opportunity for wellbeing, a person's access to education, healthcare, employment, livelihoods, social networks, leisure, and justice systems. In cities like Ahmedabad, where infrastructure growth is pacing to be translated into inclusive accessibility, mobility offers a critical lens to understand how inequality plays out in the everyday life. For women, people with disabilities, elderly citizens, and those from low-income communities, good mobility influences how people access opportunities with pathway to autonomy, full participation in city life, and dignity. However, current transport systems public infrastructure, and urban planning practices could be improved to meet these diverse and specific needs giving impetus to ongoing efforts.

One of the most compelling examples of a community-rooted response to this gap comes from the Driverben initiative by Janvikas. Conceived as a non-traditional livelihood pathway, the programme trains women, often widowed, divorced, or from economically vulnerable families, to become professional drivers. It goes beyond skills training; it is designed as a holistic empowerment model. Participants are not only trained in driving skills but also in communication, self-defence, legal rights, map reading, GPS navigation, and first aid. This integrated approach addresses the layered challenges women face when stepping into public-facing spaces, especially in transport, which is traditionally perceived to be a male-dominated space. As reported in 2025 by The Indian Express[1], the initiative is particularly notable for bringing women into jobs that were previously inaccessible or considered unsafe, such as logistics, delivery services, and public transport driving.

Through its sustained engagement in neighbourhoods with high rates of female dropout from the labour force, Janvikas has been able to identify and address systemic obstacles. These include infrastructural gaps, such as the lack of safe restrooms at fuelling stations (only 17 out of 137 in the city are women-friendly, as noted by the interviewee), and social barriers, including family opposition and deeply internalised norms about what is considered 'appropriate' for women. What distinguishes Driverben is its emphasis on door-to-door counselling, community conversations, and peer solidarity, which creates a support system that extends beyond the training classroom and into the everyday lives of its participants.

The Urban Management Centre (UMC) has played a specific support role in certain aspects of mobility by providing technical assistance, training and capacity building for city managers related to green transportation and integrated city planning in Ahmedabad, by providing technical assistance to AMC and by conducting gap analysis under smart city mission. Through research, they make policy suggestions on gender-responsive mobility systems for the city. UMC's studies consistently point to opportunities for improving the integration of Ahmedabad's various transport modes, such as the Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS), Ahmadabad Municipal Transport System (AMTS), and Metro. This is combined with need to improve frequency, improve lighting at stops for improved safety, and incorporating minimal safety features, that can support and encourage the use of public transport by women who often are more affected by these gaps in public transport. UMC advocates that mobility challenges cannot be addressed without understanding the everyday burdens of care work, time poverty, and spatial restrictions that women experience. Importantly, UMC has also experimented with implementing pilot projects and has drawn on comparative insights from other states, such as Odisha, to demonstrate that placing women in mobility-related roles is both viable and have impact.

These interventions are particularly significant when viewed against the backdrop of India's National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) 2006[2] that marked a paradigm shift by emphasising the need for people-centric rather than vehicle-centric transportation planning. It underlined the importance of equity and access for all user groups, especially those using non-motorised transport or public transport. While NUTP presents a strong policy framework, it's on ground implementation varies, and requires efforts to fully integrate and prioritise its gender-responsive components.

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[1] The Indian Express. (n.d.). Overcoming social obstacles: 25 driver Bens take new road to become trailblazers. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved April 11, 2025, from https://indianexpress.com/article/india/overcoming-social-obstacles-25-driver-bens-take-new-road-to-become-trailblazers-4432401/

[2] Sanghi, Sunita, Manshi Singh, and Charlotte Adelina. "Sustainable Urban Transport Is the Way Forward." *NITI Aayog*, 13 Apr. 2023, https://niti.gov.in/sustainable-urban-transport-way-forward. Accessed 15 Apr. 2025.

Similarly, the Smart Cities Mission[3], launched in 2015, aspires to create citizen-friendly and sustainable urban centres. While it is a long-term aim, immediate implementation has seen focus on improvement in safety and efficiency of public transport system through Intelligent Transport Management system (ITMS), to help passengers with real time passenger information, cashless systems and integrated systems have been developed. Electrification strategies alongside infrastructure upgrades for safety through digital improvement such as CCTV coverage in bus stops and on public transport, well-lit sidewalks, safe pedestrian crossings, and accessible public toilets with bio-toilets and mobile toilets around public transport stops have been the focus of such interventions by the city. Even where smart or "aspirational" toilets and mobile toilets have been introduced, coverage remains sparse. This is especially true in peripheral areas and near transit stops used by women and informal workers. Maintenance is often irregular. Basic safety features such as lighting and staffing are not always available. Inclusive design for differently abled and the third-gender users is also not assured at all locations. Similarly, Smart City investments in smart roads and junctions have not yet translated into a systematic programme of shaded, continuous footpaths, safe crossing points, and street lighting in low-income and industrial areas, where women's everyday walk trips and last-mile connections are concentrated. There is a gap between policy ambition and lived realities and therefore local CSOs like Saath, Awaz, Janvikas, and UMC support initiatives and suggest improvements through their work, as enablers and facilitators of communities and knowledge partners and accountability actors with the city.

The above examples show that gender-responsive mobility is not only about adding safety features or creating women-only services, but also about expanding women's presence in mobility-related occupations, addressing care burdens, and negotiating social norms in households and neighbourhoods. For MobiliseHER, these examples highlight key areas that Gender Responsive Mobility Plan (GRMP) frameworks must address: the quality of everyday journeys, the conditions under which women enter mobility related jobs, and the partnerships between civil society organisations and city institutions that enable such changes.

2. Urban Infrastructure and Gender Planning

While Indian cities have made rapid strides in expanding roads, metros, and civic amenities, the underlying frameworks need to work on gender-sensitive design and planning taking cues from ongoing efforts from CSO's and initiatives that are making this effort The design of public infrastructure continues to be dominated by assumptions of a neutral user, making it outright inaccessible for women and gender minorities[4]. In cities like Ahmedabad, where large portions of the population, primarily women from vulnerable groups, often rely on public mobility infrastructure for daily movement and livelihood, improvement of existing support infrastructure, amenities and spaces is a major concern. One of the most pressing challenges in urban mobility is the limited availability of safe and accessible sanitation facilities. Women commuters, particularly those engaged in informal or outdoor jobs, routinely report to face difficulties due to lack of clean, functional public toilets. This not only constrains their mobility choices but can also impact their health and sense of dignity. Similarly, public spaces, such as bus stops, subways, and market lanes may lack from adequate lighting, maintenance, or sensitive designs which may contribute to feelings of insecurity from blind spots, all of which risks safety. For working mothers, the absence of childcare facilities within or near transport nodes further adds a layer of difficulty, making it harder to navigate the city and participate fully in paid work.

Against this backdrop, organisations like the UMC and Habitat Forum INHAF have adopted a systemic approach to rethinking urban infrastructures from an inclusive perspective. UMC, through its Gender Audit Lens has developed tools to evaluate public infrastructure projects, such as transport hubs, street designs, and public facilities, against criteria rooted in women's safety, accessibility, and usability. "This lens enables planners to move beyond technical efficiency and begin addressing questions like: Is this space well-lit and safe for women after dark? Are there seating

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[3] *About the Mission*. Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, https://smartcities.gov.in/about-the-mission. Accessed 16 Apr. 2025.

[4] NITI Aayog. (2023). *Toolkit for Enabling Gender Responsive Urban Mobility and Public Spaces, Vol 2*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://www.nitiforstates.gov.in/public-assets/Best_Practices/compendiums_all/Toolkit%20for%20Enabling%20Gender%20Responsive%20Urban%20Mobility%20and%20Public%20Spaces%20Vol%202.pdf

and shelter for elderly passengers? Are there clean, secure restrooms available for women and children?" Based on its findings, UMC has issued detailed recommendations to civic authorities and contributed to shaping inclusive transport guidelines. They have also been instrumental in advocating for female conductors and transit staff, whose presence has a direct impact on women's comfort and confidence while using public transport. While INHAF's work on mobility and urban planning sits within its broader focus on making Indian cities more people-centred, equitable and environmentally sensitive, with a particular concern for the urban poor. Through its "Rethinking Cities" [5]online dialogue series and thematic webinars on sustainable mobility, BRT systems and "Women on the Move: Rethinking Urban Mobility," INHAF brings together practitioners, academics, CSOs, government officials and international experts to discuss lived mobility challenges, gendered travel patterns and the future of public transport in Indian cities. These conversations create a shared space where perspectives from policy, grassroots practice, design, research and advocacy meet, helping to build a common language around inclusive, gender-responsive mobility and strengthening networks that can feed into on-ground reforms and collaborative initiatives like MobiliseHER. However, many promising initiatives such as DrivenBen, suggestions on the street design or a recommendation of building vending spaces or disability friendly walkable footpaths face challenges in moving beyond pilot stage, often due to interdepartmental coordination issues and unclear accountability, which can limit their long-term impact.

Complementing this audit-based approach is the participatory planning methodology championed by the Urban Lab Foundation which emphasises inclusive engagement and locally informed solutions. Urban Lab has engaged communities, particularly women, elderly residents, and people with disabilities, in the co-design of public spaces, re designing junctions in Ahmedabad, on street parking strategies in Surat. Their belief is rooted in the principle that those who use a space should also have a voice in shaping it. This bottom-up planning approach challenges the dominance of traditional design practices and brings lived experiences to the forefront. In one such engagement in Bhuj, which serves as a comparative case for Ahmedabad, women identified key locations where they felt unsafe, inaccessible, or excluded. These insights directly informed the redesign of footpaths, signage, and waiting zones, demonstrating how even small, low-cost interventions can lead to significant improvements in gender-responsive infrastructure[6].

Several initiatives collectively aim to improve safety, accidents and mishaps have also informed policy standpoints from time to time. At the policy level, India has, in recent years, taken steps to enhance women's safety in public spaces. The Nirbhaya Fund[7], established in 2013 following the horrific Delhi gang rape case, was created specifically to finance schemes aimed at increasing women's safety across sectors such as transport, policing, and public space management. Several cities have used this fund to install CCTV cameras, improve street lighting, and develop women's helpline systems. However, implementation can be more holistic in approach. In many urban centres, including Ahmedabad, the introduction of such technologies has not always been matched with parallel investments in physical infrastructure or community outreach, which can limit their overall effectiveness a Additionally, organizations such as Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG), - A local NGO committed to working on women's empowerment and creating a gender-just society, have raised thoughtful concerns about the reliance on surveillance as a standing for safety, noting that it may not fully address the deeper systemic causes of gender based violence.

Another important, yet often overlooked, policy intervention is the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019[8], which mandates equal access to public services and prohibits discrimination in public spaces. While its scope extends beyond mobility, its implications for urban infrastructure are profound. Gender minorities face specific vulnerabilities in public transport, ranging from verbal abuse to denial of service. Despite the legal framework, very few Indian cities, including Ahmedabad, have initiated infrastructural or sensitisation measures to ensure that transgender individuals can navigate the city without fear or exclusion. Organisations working on gender and urban planning, including UMC and Urban Lab, have begun to acknowledge this gap and advocate for design standards that are inclusive not just of women, but of all gender identities.

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[5] https://www.inhaf.org/webinars/

[6] Lokre, Abhijit. "Bhuj Shows the Way!" *The Urban Lab*, 4 Dec. 2022, https://theurbanlab.org/reflections. Accessed 15 Apr. 2025.

[7] Islam, Tajamul. "Working of the Nirbhaya Fund in India." *Nyaaya*, 13 Mar. 2023, https://nyaaya.org/guest-blog/working-of-the-nirbhaya-fund-in-india/. Accessed 16 Apr. 2025.

[8] Nyaaya. *Guide on the Rights of Transgender Persons in India*. Retrieved April 16, 2025, from https://nyaaya.org/resource/guide-on-the-rights-of-transgender-persons-in-india/

These experiences underscore the need for planning frameworks that embed gender and intersectionality as core design parameters. Integrating such approaches into Ahmedabad's GRMP would move planners beyond national compliance toward iterative collaboration with CSOs and communities. Here, organisations like UMC and Urban Lab act as change agents influencing planners' mindsets, policy execution, and community integration, yet systemic challenges persist, with infrastructure defaulting to gender-neutral assumptions and policies faltering in implementation.

3. Citizen Participation

In cities like Ahmedabad, where diversity in class, caste, religion, gender, and ability shapes how residents engage with infrastructure and services, participatory planning becomes even more critical. The limitations of top-down planning, where decisions are made without adequate consultation with affected communities, are increasingly being acknowledged.

CSOs have emerged as vital intermediaries in operationalising this participatory vision. Janvikas, for instance, has developed a strong methodology around community mobilisation that prioritises people's voices at every stage of the development process. They begin with the principle that communities must be engaged not as beneficiaries, but as co-designers. Their approach includes door-to-door outreach, group counselling, local leadership identification, and trust-building mechanisms. In programmes like Driverben, such a strategy was key to challenging deep-seated patriarchal norms and convincing families to allow their daughters or wives to participate in driving jobs, as they kept the doors open even for women who dropped out mid-programme to return at their convenience.

The Urban Lab Foundation's creative project, the Challan Initiative, inspired by the concept of behavioural accountability, provides a more policy-oriented illustration of this strategy. Implemented as a trial in one school, the project aimed to educate young people about traffic safety and regulations. Participants are given a mock challan book to help them hold their parents accountable when driving and to issue a challan when mistakes are made. According to the founder of The Urban Lab Foundation, urban planning is not merely a matter of poor execution but also involves deeply ingrained behaviours that can be changed when individuals are held accountable and encouraged to change after witnessing their friends' willingness to set an example for their children and make things right going forward. Similarly, Saath and St. Xavier's Social Service Society (XSSS), work closely in vulnerable urban poor areas, empowering women and girls through capacity building, and training. While Saath focuses on exchanges to foster neighbourhood ownership via its Integrated Area Development (IAD) model, collaborating with AMC, communities, and corporates, Saath's Urban Resource Centres (URCs) serve as hubs for co-produced planning and infrastructure, bridging state initiatives with grassroots needs across sectors. While St. XSSS works at the grassroots level and helps community understand their rights and works to ensure proper governance.

The government has been trying to engage communities through initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission, introduced in 2015. The programme emphasises citizen involvement and embraces digital innovations to improve safety in case of mobility needs. Government departments have promoted engaging tools such as city challenges and created online platforms for feedback and public consultations also through the networks of CSO's. However, various studies suggest that many of these plans need to work more closely with resident groups especially those from marginalised communities to ensures community engagement is meaningful and goes beyond procedural requirements for effective implementation. This is where CSOs like Saath, St. Xavier's Social Service Society (XSSS), Janvikas and Urban Lab among others step in, not merely as critics but as facilitators of meaningful, grounded participation. Their work challenges the notion that citizen voice can be captured through a one-off consultation or online form. Instead, they demonstrate that participation is a process involving listening, iteration, capacity-building, and power-sharing.

4. Intersectionality in Practice, Not Just Policy

While policy frameworks in India increasingly recognise the need for inclusivity, implementation often treats marginalised groups, such as women, religious and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities, as homogeneous entities with predictable needs. Individuals experience layered exclusions shaped by the intersection of gender, caste, class, religion, disability, geography, and social roles. In Ahmedabad, these intersectional challenges are particularly evident in the city's infrastructure, access to services, and urban livelihoods, especially for women in informal work and people with disabilities navigating the public realm.

The Blind People's Association (BPA) in Ahmedabad has long highlighted how infrastructural designs that claim to be universal often systematically exclude those with disabilities. A representative from the BPA team shared observations about how tactile paving was sometimes removed or disrupted from use by commercial encroachments, and how the "buzzing cuckoo" a device that was designed to give auditory signals at crossings, once introduced for visually impaired pedestrians, were eventually discontinued following concerns raised by traffic authorities. These changes highlight the need for more consistent efforts to ensure that the city's infrastructure remains accessible and inclusive for all uses, including those with disabilities/differently abled. They also note that high-floor buses, uneven footpaths, lack of low-platform access, and the shortcomings of trained personnel severely restrict the movement of persons with disabilities across Ahmedabad. "A general example is that bus ramps can be further lowered to assist wheelchairs in entering. Though BRTS, with its levelled platforms, has improved accessibility in some respects, closer observation shows that certain features still pose challenges. For instance, although ramps are available at entry points to make it universally accessible, users often need to navigate busy traffic crossings and may encounter obstacles such as poles that can make movement difficult for people with disabilities.

Lessons

The mapping of CSOs in Ahmedabad revealed a critical two-fold challenge that continues to impact the implementation and scalability of gender and livelihood-focused initiatives, such as the availability of affordable and safe transport in informal settlements and skilling programmes to include more women in non-traditional livelihoods. Firsty CSO initiatives are identifying gaps and researching to come up with alternate actions to govern a gender lens in urban planning by voicing concerns or suggesting street/ footpath plans for the city basis where they have presence, through direct involvement of communities or indirectly through raising awareness. The scale and complexity in urban areas challenges replication of well-meaning pilot initiatives and sometimes are linked to capacity constraints such as limited staffing. While this poses a bottleneck, it also presents an opportunity, as both CSOs and government actors are increasingly recognising these challenges and beginning to co-create pathways for reform. Second, and perhaps more significantly, there exists a gap in collaboration between CSOs with technical expertise in urban design and infrastructure and those with deep-rooted community experience working on intersecting issues like gender, mobility, and livelihoods.

For example, Saath's work with communities involves making suggestion and demanding safety for municipalities, essentially women and youth to improve safety in remote locations. UMC's advocacy includes initiatives such as developing alternative plans to enhance walkability in Ahmedabad, innovating street vending frameworks, training drivers and conductors, and ensuring rest areas and sanitation facilities for women in public transport professions. Their work also highlights successful pilot projects in Odisha, where women were trained to operate battery-run waste collection vehicles, demonstrating the promise of integrating women into non-traditional mobility roles. However, in cities like Ahmedabad, sustaining such innovations can be challenging due to overlapping responsibilities and administrative complexities, along with the lack of gender-disaggregated data, which limits both the design and implementation of the initiatives. In parallel, AWAAG, which works closely with women on gender-based violence, spoke about how deeply gender-based domestic violence is linked with mobility and the importance of reliable and safe public transport for women. "It is noted that cases of domestic violence often stem from households where the female is homebound and her access to mobility is restricted. Safe and affordable transport opens opportunities for

women to take up paid work. Saath Charitable Trust also echoes such realities, particularly in neighbourhoods like Vasna and Narol, which are the fringe areas and industrial corridors making them crime hotspots and the need for better safety initiatives in these areas. Their deep engagement with commodities on ground shows how women delay or miss health appointments due to irregular, unsafe, or unaffordable transit. The availability of public transport may improve access to caregiving roles, and social constraints often prevent women from using it. This organisation uses the integrated slum development approach detailed above that combines skill training, social protection, and infrastructural improvements. Through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), women are trained in trades such as tailoring, beauty, food processing, and even digital work. However, the organisation recognises that training alone is insufficient. To sustain employment, women need support systems like crèches, health services, and secure housing, along with access to affordable transport that reduces the burden of unpaid care work and creates a stable environment for income generation. Saath's model also includes community engagement and policy dialogue, enabling women to voice their concerns and advocate for structural change.

More robust, scalable, context sensitive models could be co-created if synergies of CSO networks could be leveraged for gender responsive plans. Organisations like UMC, INHAF, and Urban Lab work are brought together with organised networks of community working with CSOs like AWAAG, Saath, and others. The former set of organisations brings technically appropriate design and implementation expertise, while the latter offers a grounded understanding of social realities, gendered experiences, cross sector work with intersection of mobility concerns and assessing needs of communities to overcome community-level barriers. The CSO mapping exercise ultimately highlights the depth of this potential. The interviews reinforced the strong interconnection between that mobility, gender, and livelihoods highlighting the potential for greater impact when these elements are addressed together through shared knowledge, coordinated action, and inclusive planning can result in a more holistic and sustainable impact.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The mapping exercise suggests that while there is growing momentum around gender-responsive planning, and efforts in taking cross sector approach with policy support. Significant gaps remain as the policy ambition is huge and ground realities require working at the micro level, many of which were echoed in conversations with CSOs. A recurring theme was the fragmentation of efforts: while several organisations are working on issues of gender justice, livelihoods, or community mobilisation, not all of them are familiar with the frameworks or language of urban mobility and planning. This disconnect limits the potential for a unified, systematised response. Some conversations also pointed to the lack of structured platforms where organisations working on different aspects of mobility can converge. At the same time, there is growing recognition of the need to better understand the impacts of mobility on livelihoods, access to services, safety, and everyday well-being. While CSOs often focus on their specific areas of work, they are seeking opportunities to strengthen their technical knowledge and resources. However, the CSO engagements revealed synergies and complementary capacities among organizations, setting examples through their ongoing work on possibility of innovation, collaboration, and adaptation practices can come together to respond creatively to the mobility needs of people across all genders.

As the call for gender-responsive urban planning gains traction, government agencies are beginning to open participatory spaces where citizens and communities can share their views and CSO's can enable community partnerships what is needed now is a means to connect these dots. This is where initiatives like MobiliseHER can act as a catalyst in bridging the gap between the knowledge and skills of urban planning and the lived experiences of gender and mobility. Deepening collaboration, convergence of resources-technical and social knowledge and building interdisciplinary platforms for knowledge exchange, where urban designers, planners, and technical experts can engage meaningfully with grassroots organisations, is key to unlocking scalable, inclusive solutions. Thus, making planning knowledge and tools more accessible to CSOs working on various sectors particularly those on gender and livelihoods.

Annexures

CSO interview and profiling for the project

CEPT and PRIA conducted semi-structured, in-person interviews with 14 shortlisted CSOs over the course of two week. In the following section gives a detail of the interview of fourteen CSOs.

1. Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG) (Pronounced as *Awaj,* meaning 'voice' in Hindi*)*

Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG) founded in 1981 by Illa Pathak, now led by her family Jharna Pathak, is an NGO dedicated to protest violence against women, protecting societal image, and supporting their rights for dignity and *economic* welfare. AWAG operates vocational training centres in Ahmedabad and employs a Research and Action approach to its work. The organization is predominantly run by women who have personally experienced domestic violence, who now serve as mentors and leaders within their community. AWAG's works both in the urban and rural- they have strong connections with various communities in Ahmedabad, including Bapu Nagar and Ramol, and they reflect on linking restricted mobility to increased domestic violence make them a partner who may reflect and advise on the framework for the Mobilise HER project. Although AWAG represents work on gender, it does not specifically focus on mobility issues, their keen interest in the project and their extensive engagement with local authorities, such as the Police and Municipal Corporation, position them to contribute meaningful insights and perspectives on gender and its linkage with mobility in relation to safety and empowerment.

2. Habitat Forum INHAF

Habitat Forum INHAF started in 1999 is a not-for-profit, registered as a trust focused on policy advocacy and civil society strengthening for both rural and urban issues, with a particular emphasis on urban transport. The organization engages with women, men and youth working to improve living conditions for poor and lower-income groups through inclusive, sustainable, and equitable development. Their strength has been in active advocacy. With a strong background in urbanization, housing, poverty alleviation, mobility, and the role of education in planning, INHAF has accumulated years of experience in the transport sector, particularly in the BRTS systems in Pune and Ahmedabad. Currently, the organization is engaged in identifying gaps in the Ahmedabad BRTS system and has contributed to initiatives like the Chennai Heat Plan and a policy proposal for Urban MNREGA. Although INHAF is well-connected within urban settlement networks, it has been noted that they lack a strong community connection.

Kirtee Shah, a veteran architect and the director from INHAF, brings a holistic approach to urbanization with a focus on the urban poor. His extensive experience and understanding of Ahmedabad's urban history, combined with INHAF's well-established networks, make the organization a strategically important partner for the MobiliseHER project. He has expressed a strong passion for the project and aligns with its bottom-up approach to mobility, which matches INHAF's values. INHAF actively engages with government authorities, other CSOs, and academic institutions, indicating its significant influence and collaboration potential in the urban development space. The organization is involved in mobility, particularly within urban transport systems like BRTS. For the MobiliseHER project, INHAF would serve as a consultant, offering broad expertise despite their lack of strong ground-level team. Kirtee Shah's guidance and extensive network can help connect the project with relevant members or organizations working in similar areas, providing valuable support and direction.

3. Urban Management Centre (UMC)

Urban Management Centre (UMC) is a Section 8 Company and an affiliate partner to International City/County Management Association (ICMA), UMC group of organizations founded in 1997 focused on addressing urban issues related to sustainability, local administration, and poverty. Their primary target communities include women, girls, men, and boys. They offer professional assistance to local governments in developing sustainable solutions that improve quality of life. They have significant experience in urban transport, notably through projects like the Training Needs Assessment of City Managers in Gujarat for Sustainable Urban Transportation. While gender is not a primary focus, their research outcomes do consider gender differences and intersectionality. UMC is also involved in mobility projects, including work with the transgender community in Odisha. Reflecting on the MobiliseHER project, UMC has

a strong community presence and an understanding of urban mobility, making them highly relevant to the initiative. They have expressed a willingness to assist with research and provide access to existing literature from their past and ongoing projects. However, they might not be open to internal capacity building within their organization, as they are focused on strengthening others. They engage with local government, community groups, and private organizations, and they are well-versed in mobility and urban transport. As a CSO collaborator, UMC can leverage its community connections and comprehensive knowledge of mobility to support the MobiliseHER project effectively.

4. The Urban Lab Foundation

The Urban Lab Foundation is an NGO established in 2022 with the goal of creating liveable cities. Their work focuses on advocacy, awareness, and citizen engagement, specifically targeting urban poor communities. The organization's efforts are concentrated on safe cities (safety and mobility), resilient cities (climate), and inclusive cities. They are exploring the needs of the urban poor and how government policies address these needs, including redefining the concept of 'Urban Poor.' One of their notable studies involved reimagining safer junctions in Ahmedabad through a walking audit. Additionally, they are expanding their outreach in schools, educating students on road safety and encouraging them to influence their parents' decisions.

In terms of relevance to the MobiliseHER project, the Urban Lab Foundation has a strong focus on mobility and urban transport, particularly in areas like Narol Chowk, Jamalpur, and Akhbar Nagar. The organization engages with local government, community members, and private institutions, making them well-versed in the subject matter of the project. Their work in Ahmedabad, aimed at making the city more walkable and liveable, aligns with the goals of MobiliseHER. The Urban Lab Foundation plays an engaging role in the project, with active teams working directly in various neighbourhoods of Ahmedabad and they have expressed a willingness to collaborate closely with the MobiliseHER teams.

5. Saath Charitable Trust

Saath Charitable Trust, founded by Rajendra Joshi in 1989, is a well-established organization in Ahmedabad focused on slum development, rehabilitation, livelihood services, and empowering marginalized communities, including women, men and youth. The organization provides skills training, access to health and education, and focuses on child and human rights, young girls' education, and overall community development. A unique aspect of Saath is that most of its staff comes from the communities they serve, and they follow an integrated approach that interlinks various aspects of community life. They work primarily in the South-East part of Ahmedabad by creating community-driven collectives or committees.

In relation to the MobiliseHER project, Saath has strong community engagement and understands how mobility impacts different aspects of life, especially for displaced settlements on the city's periphery. They are willing to collaborate closely with the project teams to better understand the mobility needs and patterns within the community. While Saath does not currently work directly on mobility issues, their deep community rapport and integrated approach will facilitate productive conversations and collaboration. This partnership will also introduce Saath to the concept of urban mobility, which aligns closely with their work with women and children in the community. Their primary areas of engagement include Vatva, Ramol, Fateh wadi, Vasna, and Sarkhej.

6. Sanchetana CHRC

Sanchetana CHRC, established in 1982 by Dr. Hanif Lakdawala and Ushma Khare, is an NGO focused on the health and education of underprivileged women and girls in Ahmedabad. The organization works on community health, sexual and emotional health, and operates two vocational training centres that offer training in traditional jobs like stitching, tailoring, and computer skills. Their exclusive focus on women helps build trust within families, encouraging them to allow their girls to attend training classes. Sanchetana CHRC operates in 80-100 pockets across Ahmedabad, from the Jamalpur flower market to Narol, where they form clubs and groups of 10-15 women or girls and train community leaders to continue their work.

The organization has a strong community presence but is not interested in being directly associated with the MobiliseHER project. However, they are willing to support community interactions and connect the project with the community. Sanchetana CHRC mainly engages with doctors and community health centres, and while they do not work on mobility issues, their extensive community reach could be valuable for community engagement.

7. SEWA Cooperative Federation

The SEWA Cooperative Federation, represented by Palak Gadhiya (Sonakshi and Neha), is a women's collective under the Gujarat State Women's SEWA Co-Operative Federation Ltd. and Trade Union collective, focused on empowering women informal workers and advocating for their rights. The organization is deeply involved in need-based research to support the revival and upgrading of cooperatives, helping women with market research and product development. SEWA Federation has a strong community presence and a dedicated research wing that could be valuable for MobiliseHER, particularly in research and community engagement. They are based in Ahmedabad and in rural areas in Gujarat. Since the model is based on co-operatives the team was not sure of the geography or location of the collectives.

While they are willing to assist with research and community outreach, there is some uncertainty about their comfort level with participating in capacity-building exercises specific to mobility. SEWA Federation engages with local government, community, and private organizations but does not work specifically on mobility issues. Their operations include four cooperatives in Ahmedabad, and their research capabilities and community outreach can serve as a consultant role for the project.

8. St. Xavier's Social Service Society

St. Xavier's Social Service Society, represented by Father Isaac and Mr. Anil Mecwan, is a society dedicated to education, health, housing, and climate change, targeting primarily women and children. Established in 1976 to expose students from elite backgrounds to the realities of vulnerable communities, the organization has grown to address various community needs, including rehabilitation, redevelopment, and climate change awareness through youth campaigns and street plays. The organization, which employs 32 staff members, mostly women, serves as a facilitator to support community development and address pressing issues. St. Xavier's Social Service Society has been active in mobility and gender issues and demonstrates a strong community presence and access, making it relevant to the MobiliseHER project. They have expressed willingness to engage actively in community interactions and project activities. The organization collaborates with both community and private organizations and operates in 156 slums in Ahmedabad, including areas such as Odhav, Sabarmati, Juhapura, Narangpura, Gomtipur, and Saraspur.

9. The Blind People's Association (BPA)

Is an NGO focused on disability issues, particularly serving men and women with multiple disabilities, including blindness and deafness. The Ahmedabad BPA centre provides primary and higher education, as well as skill and professional training for people with disabilities. The organization's advocacy work and focus on improving design standards for universal mobility make it a key stakeholder in projects aiming to enhance accessibility. In the past they have engaged with city authorities and the State Public Transport Service, by demonstrating training bus operators to be more sensitive toward people with blindness and disabilities. BPA has shown a keen interest in participating in the MobiliseHER project, particularly in the role of advisory in universal mobility.

10. Paryavaran Mitra

Paryavaran Mitra, represented by Puneet Agarwal, is an NGO focused on supporting women waste pickers and adolescent girls in Ahmedabad. Established in 2014 by Viren Joshi, who has over 30 years of experience working in Ahmedabad's slums, the organization provides loans and entrepreneurial support to women waste pickers, along with ensuring proper health and nutrition. They operate seven centres with over 650 women involved in waste sorting and selling, emphasizing upcycling and waste segregation. With a staff of 45, primarily managed by Aruna Ben, who oversees field interactions and runs a wick-making centre, Paryavaran Mitra has a significant community presence. Their experience with the waste-picking community offers valuable insights for the MobiliseHER project, and they are open to participating, though they seek more clarity on the level of involvement required. The organization collaborates with the Ahmedabad Cantonment Board and various community and private organizations but does not currently work on mobility. They are active in areas like Ranip Centre, Sabarmati (Gandhi Nivas area), Bakra Mandi, and Suraksha Swachh Kendra.

11. The Centre for Development,

The Centre for Development, represented by Rafi Malek, is an NGO established in 1996 that focuses on child rights protection, livelihood, education, and inclusive urban local governance, primarily targeting vulnerable communities, including women and informal workers. The organization works extensively with marginalized groups to enhance their livelihoods, access to education, civic participation, and basic entitlements. It collaborates with the Ahmedabad Waste Pickers Association to improve livelihoods and provides financial support to informal workers through interest-free loans. The Centre for Development is actively engaged in research, which has influenced urban planning policies, and addresses environmental issues. They work closely with local councils and transport unions and have trained over 150 young change agents to assist community representatives. Although they do not currently focus on mobility, they are willing to explore further collaboration with the MobiliseHER project. They are involved in various national and state-level alliances and operate in eight municipal wards in East Ahmedabad, including Vatva and Odhav.

12. Utthan

Utthan, represented by Pallavi, is a Gujarat-based NGO focused on gender equity, women's rights, livelihood, conflict transformation, governance, and capacity building. The organization primarily works with women from tribal and vulnerable communities, promoting gender-just and inclusive community empowerment through capacity building, local leadership development, and institutional development for sustained impact. While their main operations are in rural Gujarat, they are familiar with topics related to women's safety in public spaces, based on their studies and experience in rural areas. Although Utthan does not have a significant presence in Ahmedabad for community outreach, they are willing to participate in dialogues and exchange resources for the MobiliseHER project. Their work engages with Panchayats and government authorities, and they do work on mobility-related issues, but mainly in rural settings.

13. Gandhinagar Queer Pride Foundation (GQPF)

The Gandhinagar Queer Pride Foundation (GQPF), led by Rahul Upadhyay, is a youth-led CSO established in 2019 that provides a safe and inclusive space for the LGBTQIA+ community in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The foundation focuses on gender sensitization, training in gender issues, hosting pride events, and providing sexual health and crisis intervention services. Their relevance to the MobiliseHER project lies in their active work with the LGBTQ community in Ahmedabad, offering potential connections and a fresh perspective on gender inclusion. GQPF is eager to participate in project dialogues and collaborates with institutions, universities, and police authorities. Although they do not specifically work on mobility, they are valuable for both community engagement and as an expert voice on gender inclusion. They also have connections with IIM Ahmedabad's Queer Collective and IIT Gandhinagar.

14. Unnati

Unnati is a trust focused on social inclusion and democratic governance, primarily serving urban and rural low-income communities. Established in 1990 as a voluntary non-profit organization, Unnati aims to empower vulnerable groups to participate effectively in mainstream development and decision-making processes. Although the organization is not relevant to the MobiliseHER project and lacks a presence in Ahmedabad, its director has established long-term relationships with city authorities can plays an advisory role.

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