



About Global Safe Cities Programme Free of Violence against Women and Girls

Overview

Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic of alarming proportions: according to available country surveys, 15 to 76 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.

Though a universal phenomenon, especially relevant in a globalized and urbanizing world, particular forms of violence are largely ignored by policies, programmes and budgets. Millions of women and girls face sexual harassment and assault in public spaces every day, on city streets, parks, public transportation and their routes to and from work and school. The dearth of data also makes it invisible.

A cornerstone of UNIFEM's (part of UN Women) efforts to advance gender equality, end violence against women and bring women's rights to bear on local governance and decision-making is its work on the neglected issue of sexual harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces. To this end, and in order to catalyze policy attention, public awareness and innovative responses, UNIFEM is launching a new flagship initiative, the Global Programme on Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls.

The initiative is inspired by the ongoing experiences and partners of a similar multi-city initiative in Latin America, which originated in an effort initially supported in the region by the UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women. It builds on the years of accumulated expertise of pioneering women's networks, specialists and local authorities. The programme aims to develop the first proven model on how to prevent and reduce sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in public spaces for eventual adaptation by local authorities and other decision-makers worldwide, in partnership with grassroots women's organizations and community groups. This model can be scaled up in many contexts—furthering women's empowerment and gender equality, while enhancing the quality of city life for all.

Focusing on slum areas, impoverished neighborhoods and excluded groups, these efforts will work to empower women and their communities in diverse settings in five cities: Cairo (Egypt), Kigali (Rwanda), New Delhi (India), Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) and Quito (Ecuador).

The initiative responds to international and inter-governmental agreements, and calls for intensified action to address the global pandemic of gender-based violence. This includes General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions; the UN Secretary-General's Campaign UNite to End violence against Women, launched in 2008; and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including MDG 3 on empowering women and advancing gender equality, and MDG 7 focusing on the rights of the more than 900 million slum dwellers in the world.

Key partners

At global level: UNIFEM, UN-Habitat, Women in Cities International, Red Mujer y Habitat of Latin America and Caribbean, Huairou Commission, and the International Center for Research on Women.

At national and local levels: At national and local levels: governmental authorities of various sectors, mayor's offices, women's, grassroots, youth and community-based organizations, private sector institutions, the media, as well as other UN agencies, including UNIFEM, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.

The *Safe Cities for Women and Girls* key strategies and components include:

- furthering enhanced laws, policies and protocols to address these forms of violence explicitly, end impunity for abusers, and strengthen governmental accountability;
- carrying out surveys and data collection, to capture the magnitude and nature of sexual harassment and violence in public spaces, gauge the attitudes of men, women and young people; as well as to inform public policies and assess progress;
- undertaking 'safety audits', considered internationally a best practice, which involve women and other community members in identifying unsafe areas and needed interventions, mapping 'hotspots' of risks of assault and harassment, and formulating solutions in dialogue and partnership with local authorities;
- improving municipal planning in various sectors, including urban design through the introduction of practical safety measures by local authorities, in collaboration with women and their communities—such as changes in street lighting, signage, location of bus stops, and access to emergency hotlines in metros and train stations;
- advancing prevention efforts, including through mass media campaigns and community mobilization on 'zero tolerance' for sexual harassment and lewd behaviour towards women—with a special focus on engaging young people and men of all ages;
- training and improving the capacities of local authorities and other key actors to respond to violence against women and girls in public spaces, including the police, judiciary, social services and the media;
- applying gender-responsive budgeting, a methodology utilized to analyze resource flows and their responsiveness to women's needs and rights, in order to identify the level of existing allocations to address violence against women issues, inform budgetary appropriations, and track relevant public sector investments;
- crafting and pursuing a first-of-a-kind rigorous impact evaluation, in order to demonstrate the model's value and relevance for policy-makers and others in cities and countries around the world concerned with making cities safer for women and girls.