



FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME



# SAFE CITIES AND SAFE PUBLIC SPACES



Photo: UN Women / Dzilam Mendez

## The Issue

Across the world, women and girls fear and experience various types of sexual violence in public spaces, from unwelcome sexual remarks and touching to rape and femicide. It happens on streets, in and around schools, public transportation, workplaces, parks, public toilets and other spaces in urban, rural, online, and conflict/post conflict settings. Sexual harassment continues to occur in public spaces during the pandemic.

This reality reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to participate in school, work and public life. It limits their access to essential services and their enjoyment of cultural and recreational activities, and negatively impacts their health and well-being.

In 2013, the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women (CSW57) identified various forms of sexual violence against women and girls (SVAWG) in public spaces as a distinct area of concern and called on governments to prevent it. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set "the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres" as one of its specific goals (Target 5.2).

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Cover Photo: Across cities, a focus on inclusive transport requires a strong recognition of the impact of fear and experience of sexual harassment on women's mobility patterns. While, cycling can provide women with more personal control over the routes they take when traveling, measures are also needed to address the causes of sexual violence in cities, including the harassment that women cyclists may often face.

In 2016, the New Urban Agenda committed to promote a safe, healthy, inclusive, and secure environment in cities and human settlements for all to live, work, and participate in urban life without fear of violence and intimidation.

Although domestic violence and workplace violence is now widely recognized as a human rights violation, sexual harassment in public spaces is often neglected, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it.

## Our Strategy for Change

UN Women's Global Flagship Initiative "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls" builds on its "Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls" Global Programme that began implementation in January 2011 to prevent and respond to SVAWG in public spaces. It supports local and national governments to address multiple sustainable development goal targets across multiple goals.

City partners commit to:

- 1. Identify gender-responsive locally relevant and owned interventions.** Conducting a scoping study is essential as it provides specific data to ensure a deep understanding of local forms of SVAWG in public spaces. Multiple stakeholders reflect on the findings to develop programmes with a specific set of results based on the local context and ensuring joint accountability.

#### PARTICIPATING CITIES IN THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE:

**New Delhi**, India  
**Kigali**, Rwanda  
**Port Moresby**, Papua New Guinea  
**Quito, Cuenca** and **Guayaquil**, Ecuador  
**Cairo** and **Alexandria**, Egypt  
**Cape Town**, South Africa  
**Marrakesh, Rabat** and **Fez**, Morocco  
**Maputo**, Mozambique  
**Kericho**, Kenya  
**Quezon City**, The Philippines  
**Ho Chi Minh**, Vietnam  
**Hawassa** and **Addis Ababa**, Ethiopia  
**Banja Luka**, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
**Rubizhne**, Ukraine  
**Guatemala City**, Guatemala  
**El Alto**, Bolivia  
**Montevideo** and **Canelones**, Uruguay  
**Mexico City, Puebla, Torreon, Monterrey** and **Guadalajara**, Mexico  
**Dakar**, Senegal  
**Dodoma** and **Shinyanga**, Tanzania  
**Kampala**, Uganda  
**Medellin, Bogota, Villavicencio, Cali, Popayan,** and **Pasto**, Colombia  
**Tunis**, Tunisia

#### CITIES PARTICIPATING FROM THE GLOBAL NORTH:

**Dublin**, Ireland  
**New York** and **Chicago**, USA  
**Sakai**, Japan  
**Brussels**, Belgium  
**Winnipeg**, (jointly with) the Province of **Manitoba**, Canada  
**Edmonton**, (jointly with) the Province of **Alberta**, Canada  
**London, Vancouver, Montreal, Halifax and Ottawa**, Canada  
**Madrid**, Spain  
**London**, United Kingdom

**More cities to be announced in 2023.**

## 2. Develop and effectively implement comprehensive laws and policies to prevent and respond to sexual violence in public spaces.

Through capacity building, awareness raising, community mobilization and other strategies, authorities, women's grassroots and community partners are equipped to advocate, develop, and monitor the effective implementation of laws and policies, and to make sure that accompanying resources are in place to support this action.

## 3. Investments in the safety and economic viability of public spaces.

A gender approach to urban planning ensures that the needs of women and men are taken into account across all municipal departments' planning. This includes public infrastructure (investments in safe potable water, improved sanitation, lighting, creation of market stalls, provision of training on financial literacy) and economic development, focusing on opportunities for women's empowerment.

## 4. Change attitudes and behaviors to promote women's and girls' rights to enjoy public spaces free from violence.

Girls, boys and other influential champions are engaged in transformative activities in schools and other settings to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality, and safety in public spaces.

UN Women is a strong technical partner in city led programmes. At global level, a package of guidance notes and other tools are available which can be adapted to context. In collaboration with partners across cities, UN Women facilitates a Global Community of Practice for the FPI. It also convenes a biennial Global Leaders' Forum to promote exchanges and advance knowledge on trends, and practices in safe city and safe public space initiatives with women and girls.

#### FACTS AND FIGURES - ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- In the US, a national study on sexual harassment reveals that 66 per cent of women said they experienced some form of sexual harassment in public spaces (Stop Street Harassment, 2018).

- In Cuenca, Ecuador, a 2018 survey found that 90 per cent of women living in urban areas said they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the last 12 months (UN Women 2018).
- In Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, a baseline survey found that 41 per cent of women and 39 per cent of men said that they had witnessed sexual harassment in public spaces (UN Women 2018).

#### RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- In **Morocco**, the Ministry of Housing developed National Guidelines on Gender-Responsive Planning to ensure that all women and girls living in cities can safely access and use urban public spaces.
- In Guadalajara, **Mexico**, the Municipal Police Regulation was reformed to penalize sexual harassment in public spaces, including economic sanctions for the first time in the city.
- Evaluations of comprehensive safe city programmes reveal an improved sense of safety, hygiene and comfort among women and girls in markets and public transport in Port Moresby, **Papua New Guinea**, and a reduction in the prevalence of sexual harassment in public transport and a significant increase of bystander willingness to support women during sexual harassment incidents occurring in public transport in Quito, **Ecuador**.

## Partnerships for change

#### AT LOCAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS:

Government partners across different sectors (economic development, urban and transport planning, women's machinery, justice, police, sanitation, environment, education, housing, health, etc.); grassroots women's, youth, and men's groups, research organizations, UN agencies, the private sector, media, etc.

#### AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL:

Women in Cities International, Women and Habitat Network of Latin America, the Huairou Commission, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, UN-Habitat, UNICEF and other agencies.