

SAFE CITIES AND SAFE PUBLIC SPACES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS GLOBAL INITIATIVE

GLOBAL RESULTS REPORT 2017-2020



SAFE CITIES
AND SAFE
PUBLIC SPACES

UN WOMEN GLOBAL FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME

 **UN
WOMEN** 



FOREWORD BY UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The year 2021 marks the 10th anniversary of the implementation of UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global initiative. Much has happened over the decade, most recently with the COVID-19 pandemic changing the ways our cities function – closing businesses, moving schools online and limiting access to healthcare, social services recreation and transport. In that crisis we saw a 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women and girls, with both domestic violence indoors, and empty streets and fewer witnesses leading to women in public spaces experiencing heightened risks of sexual and other forms of violence with additional need for shelters and gender-sensitive response by police and others.

Despite these challenges, we have come a long way together in our efforts to end sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces and to create safe, smart and sustainable cities for all. Together with local and national governments, grassroots women and women's organizations, researchers and young feminists, we have responded to the strong call from women around the world to work with cities on this neglected issue. We have seen the Initiative grow from five founding cities – Cairo (Egypt), Delhi (India), Kigali (Rwanda), Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) and Quito (Ecuador) – to 50 cities in the Global South and North, with expansion continuing within and across countries. And we are not done yet. This year we launched six Generation Equality Action Coalitions – including one on gender-based violence that will help to drive the initiative even further by adding an additional 50 cities by 2025.

This second global report presents results across the initiative's "champion" cities – from Quito, Ecuador, La Paz, Bolivia and Montreal, Canada to Kericho, Kenya and Manila, Philippines. It stresses the need for investing in local data and evidence to inform participatory safe city approaches engaging women and girls, including those groups of women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence (e.g., women from minority populations living in under-served communities). It calls for the further development and implementation of comprehensive laws and policies that prevent and respond to sexual violence in public spaces – one of the main gaps identified in the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The report highlights many encouraging partnership initiatives from 2017- 2020 that are yielding results at both outcome and impact levels through interventions that enhance the political participation and economic empowerment of women in all their diversity, and that increase women's sense of safety, improve their autonomous mobility and reduce sexual violence against women in public spaces.

By sharing locally tailored solutions from cities around the world, including those adapted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and which foster an integrated approach, I hope that this report will continue to advance the international knowledge base on the prevention of sexual harassment of women and girls, and inspire action from many more cities and communities to focus on localization and the full achievement of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda to ensure safe, healthy, green and sustainable cities for all.

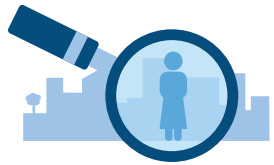
Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women



UN WOMEN GLOBAL INITIATIVE: SAFE CITIES AND SAFE
PUBLIC SPACES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

MAKING CITIES AND PUBLIC SPACES SAFE FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS



KEY OUTCOME 1:

GENERATE EVIDENCE AND BUILD PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE

Initial scoping studies provide specific and often unique data to ensure a deep understanding of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces. Key stakeholders from different sectors reflect on the findings that help to inform the design of their safe city programme and helps to foster local ownership.



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women Bolivia



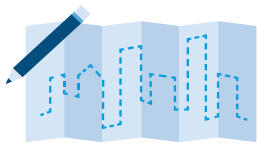
Photo: UN Women Mexico



KEY OUTCOME 2:

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT COMPREHENSIVE LAWS AND POLICIES

Laws and policies are specifically focused on preventing and responding to sexual violence in public spaces. Capacity-building measures in place help local governments, women's rights groups and other partners to advocate for legislation and policies, allocate adequate resources, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of these measures.



KEY OUTCOME 3:

INVEST IN THE SAFETY AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF PUBLIC SPACES

Greater safety for women and girls may come through specific investments in public infrastructure (e.g. better lighting, improved visible sight lines, and safe and accessible public toilets, etc.). Economic development interventions help to expand opportunities for knowledge transfer and skills training for women, and increase opportunities for economic empowerment at the local level.



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



Photo: UN Women



KEY OUTCOME 4:

TRANSFORM SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS

Transformative activities in schools, communities and other settings raise awareness on gender equality, and promote women and girls' rights to safety in public spaces, and respectful relationships.



GENERATE EVIDENCE AND BUILD PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE

MONTREAL, CANADA

The city of Montreal, Canada, began a pilot approach in 2018 to apply an intersectional gender analysis (ADS) within its policies, services and programmes. Lessons from ADS will inform the implementation of the Montreal Safe City and Safe Public Spaces with Women and Girls Initiative.

Following the principle of *leaving no one behind*, this new intersectional gender analysis tool was implemented in the city and used as the preferred framework to build an inclusive city. The city began to lead a review of its programmes, paying particular attention to the experiences of women facing multiple forms of oppression (indigenous women, women living with disabilities, racialized women, women of sexual diversity, and homeless women).

This approach has since been translated into other pilot projects in two districts and five administrative services, including the Property Management and Planning Department; the Planning and Mobility Department; the Great Parks Service, Mount Royal and Sports; the Housing Department; and the Diversity and Social Inclusion Service.

In 2019, specific awareness raising tools were developed, a ‘train the trainers’ approach was rolled out including for civil servants, and assistance was provided on how to use an intersectional gender-differentiated analysis.

Collaboration with the Department of Urban Planning and Mobility has been key in helping the city to develop more inclusive public spaces and reflect on issues related to women’s experiences and fear of sexual violence.

QUITO, ECUADOR

Similar to other cities, violence against women and girls (VAWG) in public spaces is widespread in Quito, Ecuador. The baseline study for the Quito Safe City Programme found high rates of VAWG in public transport and on streets. 91% of women and girls had experienced some form of violence (e.g. physical assault, robbery, and sexual harassment, including verbal abuse, threats and intimidation) on public transport. Also, 84% of women participants said that they felt public transport is unsafe, and 79% said they had experienced sexual violence at least once

in the past 12 months, taking place on streets. It also noted that incidents were more prevalent during peak hours when transportation is overcrowded, with high congestion on buses mentioned by participants as a contributing factor to sexual harassment, particularly unwelcome physical contact. Risk factors for sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG in public spaces included: a lack of enforcement of laws on VAWG, high levels of alcohol consumption that can exacerbate sexual harassment, and attitudes on sexual harassment in public spaces as “normal” held by men and some women. Bus stops, taxis and streets were identified as places where sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG often occurs.

A mixed methods participatory impact evaluation of the Quito Safe City programme was conducted in 2019. It measured changes in the prevalence of VAWG in public spaces and related programme outcomes.

The evaluation engaged 737 participants (90% women), and 50% of women participants were users of public transportation.

“You see the changes among women survivors of sexual harassment who have gone through the process. They start gaining trust and self-confidence. They start making decisions and ask questions about their rights, and they feel supported. They know the problems in the community and are the best advocates. They share their stories with other people.”

— MUNICIPAL LEGAL OFFICER



Photo: UN Women

The field inquiries were complemented and supported by secondary research that drew on an extensive desk review of more than 279 programme specific or related documents.

Main evaluation findings:

- The prevalence of sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces was reduced
- Improved legislation on the prevention and response to sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG in public spaces.
- Knowledge about available mechanisms to report sexual harassment in public transport among women increased.
- Increased awareness of multi-stakeholders on initiatives that include women's participation in urban planning.
- A significant increase in bystander willingness to support women during sexual harassment incidents occurring in public transport in Quito.

DAKAR, SENEGAL

Senegal is the first country in West and Central Africa to participate in the Global FPI. The city of Dakar has adapted the Global Framework on Safe Cities and accompanying tools, with the support of UN Women and women's organizations.

As a first step, the city conducted a scoping study to identify and better understand the nature and forms of sexual violence in public spaces in three suburbs (Guediawaye, Pikine and Rufisque) to inform the design of the safe city programme with community partners. The study included a desk review, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The main spaces identified by study participants where women and girls often face high risks to sexual harassment included: marketplaces, public transportation, bus stations, on roads leading to schools and universities, garages, in open public spaces (e.g. beaches and fishing wharves), and learning and work spaces.

The study also revealed that there is a heightened risk of sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG in public spaces around public holidays and festivals, including incidents that may be often facilitated by substance abuse. Some of the recommended actions for the design of the Senegal safe city initiative include: ensure community mobilization interventions with women and men and boys and girls to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, strengthen the capacity of local government and women's rights groups on gender responsive urban and transport planning and how to mainstream gender and women's safety in a range of policies related to ending VAWG. Also, work with the police, justice and other governments at national and local level to improve reporting, employ a victim/survivor centered approach in the response to sexual harassment, and ensure the accountability of perpetrators.

UKRAINE

Rubzhne is the first city in the Ukraine to participate in the Global FPI, and this has drawn interest of other cities in the country to consider their participation in 2021, including Novoaidar and Hirske (including Zolote), Luhansk region and Toretsk, Donetsk region. In 2020, safe cities for women and girls' actions were institutionalized through the establishment of ten local Gender Coordination Councils, with the support of UN Women. This includes an expanded mandate to include safe cities and safe public spaces for women and girl approaches in target communities in the conflict-affected East of Ukraine. These councils are mandated to coordinate and monitor the implementation of gender commitments at the local level and serve as a dialogue platform between the local government and community members. As a result of the convening of partners and joint policy advocacy on safe cities by UN Women, the Regional Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Luhansk oblast has now included specific measures on Safe Cities. It is the first time that these measures have been included in a regional socio-economic policy in the country.

CORPORATE EVALUATION

A [Corporate Evaluation](#) of UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening role in Ending Violence Against Women (2021) reveals that UN Women is working with UN agencies and other partners to mainstream gender and reduce the risks associated with VAWG including by working with non-traditional and male dominated sectors such as urban and transportation infrastructure and planning, agricultural commodity sectors (working with women smallholder farmers), and making links with broader security initiatives focused on transnational criminality. These are sectors where UN Women has had very limited reach in the past, and the Global FPI has helped to position and support the uptake of women's safety action in these sectors. For example:

- In Egypt, Cairo's transport authority, in partnership with UN Women and UN-HABITAT designed and implemented the first gender-responsive the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in the region with an aim to make public transport more responsive to the needs of women and girls and curb congestion and CO₂ emissions.
- In Colombia, linking UNODC's programme on citizenship security, UN Women worked with local government and the UN entity to address women's safety issues in the public spaces, and maximize potential synergies.

The Evaluation also notes that Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative, maintains a high focus on intersectionality and disability inclusion in programming, ensuring inclusive representation from stakeholders (LNOB).



EXAMPLES OF ACTION ADAPTED TO COVID-19 BY PARTICIPATING SAFE CITIES

In **Colombia**, safe cities free of violence against women has been embedded in the local development plans of five cities (Bogota, Cali, Medellin, Popayan and Villavicencio) that participate in the Global FPI, with initial allocations of US \$1.3 million. All five mayors signed a political declaration of commitment recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on violence against women in private, public and virtual spaces. They reaffirmed that in partnership they will work to "reduce, prevent and comprehensively address sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in all spaces". They also committed to implement a gender approach in urban planning and transportation; prevention- through social norms change; and strengthen women's rights organizations, including a focus on minoritized women and girls.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the City of Banja Luka was undertaking a scoping study on sexual harassment when lockdowns were implemented as part of COVID-19 measures. Rather than stopping the research, methods were adapted with careful attention in continuing to uphold the ethical and safety principles for violence against women data collection. Drawing on and validating the findings of the study, a participatory programme design workshop was held that integrated recommendations made by diverse grassroots women, local government departments, women's organizations and other civil society groups.

In **Chile**, a scoping study was undertaken to better understand the nature and extent of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces. Adapted online methods to capture the views and expertise of women's organizations and civil society groups and other stakeholders were used. A desk review of available research and quantitative data on sexual harassment was also conducted. Given the increased use of technology for educational purposes during the pandemic, city partners are conducting a large-scale study to assess online violence against women and girls.





DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT COMPREHENSIVE LAWS AND POLICIES

MANILA CITY, THE PHILIPPINES

As part of efforts to scale up a safe city for women and girls intervention in the Philippines, a local city ordinance on the prevention and response to sexual harassment in public spaces was developed and endorsed in the city in 2018 by the Office of the Mayor of Manila City, in collaboration with the Institute of Politics and Governance (IPG) and UN Women. Informed by the results of the scoping study conducted in Manila which identified a gap in legislation on sexual harassment (SH), city partners agreed to review legislation and policies including the Quezon City ordinance on sexual harassment in order to inform the development of the Manila City Ordinance. The Quezon City Ordinance was the first one of its kind to be endorsed in the Philippines in 2015 as part of the Quezon Safe City for Women and Girls Programme which participates in UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative. While the Quezon city ordinance was achieved through an amendment of the Gender and Development (GAD) Code to include provisions on SH in public spaces, Manila city's local ordinance is a stand-alone ordinance - with specific provisions on SH.

The ordinance was drafted in one year in collaboration with legal and gender experts, advocates and government partners. It recognizes SH as a matter of gender inequality and a violation of human rights, and advocates for equality of treatment for those who report and offenders. In a practical way, the ordinance identifies clear, simple and accessible procedure pathways and has mandatory training.

“The women from the villages in different districts showed up to their city official's office to help place this issue on the agenda. The training taught us to take a positive approach. We explained our concerns and the importance of this ordinance for us and for the community. We brought flowers as a symbol of dialogue on safety and they actively listened to us and they took action.”

— WOMAN PROGRAMME PARTICIPANT, MANILA



Photo: UN Women

Using a multi-pronged advocacy strategy was key in passing the ordinance to address sexual harassment in Manila city. Key champions were identified across sectors to participate in this process such as city government, including women city council members, women's rights organizations, the City Committee on Women, and legal experts. Strategic partnerships at the national level were also developed and strengthened with the criminal justice system, including with the judiciary and law enforcement.

Advocacy efforts led by civil society, specifically grassroots women organizations, helped to increase the understanding of the issue, and strengthened advocacy efforts of village legislators. ILAW ng Manila, a women's rights organization with support of UN Women, strengthened the leadership skills of women's advocates through training sessions, and mentorship programmes.

Women leaders conducted community consultations in neighbourhoods to inform women residents of their rights to live a life free of violence. Community engagement was further reinforced through ongoing in-person discussions and online. In total, the community awareness and advocacy efforts reached over 22 barangays (administrative divisions), and 226 barangay officials.

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

In Guatemala City, a 2017 study revealed that nearly all women respondents said they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in public space during their lifetime. As part of the commitment to build solutions and create a safe and inclusive city for women and girls, with support of UN Women, the city has developed and approved the Women's Development Policy (2019-2027).

This policy extends to different local development plans, it takes advantage of existing resources and enhances political commitment towards ensuring transformative change in the lives of women and girls. It focuses on equal participation, liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods, women's economic empowerment, and institutional strengthening.

To ensure that a comprehensive approach to prevent sexual violence against women and girls can be sustained, the city has prioritized women's safety in public spaces in their agenda. They have launched a plan that includes specific indicators to monitor the reduction of harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.

Strong leadership, a participatory consultation process with women and other partners, and gender-responsive budgeting helped to ensure the success of the programme. Given these elements, the Women's Municipal Directorate obtained authorization to develop and implement municipal policies that would serve as the basis for any municipal policy, plan, programme or project relevant to the status of women.

For the first time, the city developed a long-term plan to ensure that the benefits of municipal services and infrastructure are distributed among the population, helping to achieve gender equality and address multiple and intersecting forms of oppression of women.

COLOMBIA

UN Women organized the Safe Cities and Universities against Violence and Sexual Harassment Colloquium (Bogota, 19 and 20 September 2019) with over 140 participants in attendance. This included stakeholders from the five participating safe city programmes in the country (Popayan, Bogota, Medellin, Cali and Villavicencio), and 12 guest universities (including from Chile and Mexico), who presented their good practices to prevent and address sexual harassment in university settings.

At the end of the event, 20 universities in Colombia agreed to implement institutional policies to address the issue. In partnership with the Ministry of National Education, 107 protocols to prevent and respond to cases of sexual violence in higher education institutions were analyzed, resulting in recommendations to create and implement institutional policies to prevent harassment at universities, guided by [UN Women's Guidance Note on Campus Violence Prevention and Response](#).

MONTERREY, MEXICO

In the Monterrey Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Programme, women's organizations and other civil society organizations (CSOs) have been supported to participate in the initiative in diverse ways. Thirty organizations have received training on policy advocacy and monitoring

of violence prevention initiatives. Participants were trained on legal frameworks, monitoring, advocacy skills, and evaluation tools.

Following the training, participants applied their knowledge and skills acquired in assessing the implementation of existing policies aimed at addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) at the local level. Participants from different CSOs developed a joint advocacy plan and developed a strategic coalition that addresses the multiple interrelated forms of discrimination in private and public spaces.

In February 2020, a Mexico Safe Cities for Women and Girls Citizen Monitoring Guide was developed to assist local government in strengthening partnerships to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in public spaces, and ensure that the integrated plan on safe cities and safe public spaces can be sustained over time.

TORREON, MEXICO

As part of the Torreon Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Programme with Women and Girls, a group of lawyers with experience in human rights and the prevention of violence against women (VAW) analyzed municipal ordinances related to safe public transport. From this analysis a series of recommendations were made in relation to the prevention, response and sanctions against sexual violence.

Local councilors, different municipal departments, including transport authorities further worked with women's rights and other civil society organizations to identify necessary changes in mobility regulations to address sexual harassment. This regulation became mandatory, and public messages were issued by local government. The regulation for transport authorities and passengers include:

- Prevention messages on VAW
- Information on places to report sexual harassment
- A telephone service number on how to access essential services
- Mandatory training for all public transport personnel on VAW



Photo: UN Women



EXAMPLES OF ACTION ADAPTED TO COVID-19 BY PARTICIPATING SAFE CITIES

In **Belgium**, the City of Brussels, in partnership with the organization Garance, is conducting training with women and men police officers so they can better understand the nature and extent of sexual harassment in public spaces and have the knowledge and skills to respond effectively.

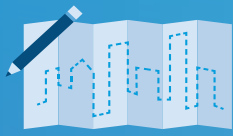
In the **United Kingdom**, the Mayor of London led a partnership of front-line voluntary sector agencies to support those that were fleeing violence during the first 'lockdown'. A network of accommodation spaces were implemented across the city with wrap around support which included counseling and help to move survivors/victims and their children on to more permanent housing. The city also distributed much needed funding to organizations to enable them to adjust their services to provide support to women remotely.

In **Egypt**, a surge in reports to the helpline run by the Women's Complaints' Office prompted the establishment of a dedicated WhatsApp modality together with training of an "emergency intervention team" to facilitate timely and effective referrals for support, including brokering of arrangements with employers. In the underserved areas of Alexandria and Damietta, economically hard-hit women were provided with skill-building and training, paired with information on COVID-19 preventative measures. Similar information was provided to women's shelters through various Government platforms and broadcast through national television. Together with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, four shelters were re-designed ensuring a survivor-centred approach adapted to COVID-19.

In **Ethiopia**, in the City of Addis Ababa, in partnership with the Association of Women's Sanctuary and Development and the Ethiopian Network of Women's shelters, adjustments were made to ensure that safe accommodations remained available. During this period, the first transitional shelter with comprehensive support services also opened its doors.

As part of their COVID-19 response, some cities are offering free and safe transport services to health workers, the majority of whom are women, such as New York, USA and La Paz, Bolivia.





INVEST IN THE SAFETY AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF PUBLIC SPACE

RABAT, MOROCCO

Morocco continues to experience high urbanization which has been accompanied by high levels of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces. In 2011 a national study revealed that about 63% of Moroccan women had experienced some form of violence – of which 33% took place in public spaces.

The city of Rabat started to participate in the Global FPI in 2015 and develop a comprehensive approach to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in public spaces. One of the key areas for action identified in the participatory programme development process was to strengthen the capacities of local government departments and women's rights organizations to implement gender responsive urban planning.

In 2016, the first women's safety audits (WSA) were implemented in the country and were carried out by the Moroccan Institute for Local Development (IMADEL), supported by UN Women. These audits were conducted once again in 2017, this time by four additional civil society organizations (CSOs). Each CSO presented the methodology and recommendations made by grassroots women during the audit process to local and national government representatives.

Informed by the implementation of WSAs at the local level, the Moroccan Ministry of Housing committed to mainstreaming the gender perspective across urban development initiatives in the country. In 2020, the Ministry developed and launched National Guidelines on Gender-Responsive planning with an intersectional approach to guarantee safe access to urban public spaces for all Moroccan women.

EL ALTO, BOLIVIA

El Alto is the second largest city in Bolivia, one of the fastest growing urban centers, where 78% of the population identifies itself as Aymara. The city has a high rate of migration and carries out its activities through networks between rural and urban environments.

The El Alto Safe City and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls initiative was launched in 2018 with support of the Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (AECID) and UN Women. In 2019, a scoping study was conducted to better understand the nature of sexual harassment in public spaces. It identified streets, bars and public transport as spaces where sexual harassment is more likely to occur.

Over a period of two months, Aymara women reflected on their daily experiences using public space in their neighborhoods. Using a map, they located frequently used transit areas and identified the elements of the physical and social environment that made them feel unsafe. During the design of the programme, an intersectional approach was prioritized, in order to guarantee that the lived experiences of migrant women would be at the center of planning.

From these reflection sessions, two initial priorities were highlighted: to include better signage and ensure women as active users of public spaces. Aymara women recommended the need to create more intuitive, visual and multilingual signs. UN Women is working with them and other partners to respond to this recommendation. Also in 2019, a women's soccer programme for girls, adolescents and adult women was developed at the request of local women and this has helped to



Photo: UN Women

PORT MORESBY, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Port Moresby Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Initiative was launched in 2011 as one of the founding programmes of the Global Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative. A scoping study conducted by UN Women in 2014 found that more than 90 per cent of women and girls experienced some form of violence when accessing public transport, including on buses, waiting at bus stops, walking to and from bus stops, or in taxis. To address sexual harassment in public transport, the Port Moresby local authority National Capital District Commission (NCDC) has been working in collaboration with the Secretary of Transport, UN Women, and other partners since 2015 to support the provision of a safe, reliable and affordable public transportation for women and girls.

In order to ensure women and girls' safety, a temporary special measure – women-only buses were launched in Port Moresby, known as the

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