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Proceedings Report Safe Cities Global Leaders' Forum

Safe Cities for Women & Girls in Action: Implementation Essentials & Key Takeaways

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We hope that the proceedings will initiate further discussion and exchange of knowledge and practice on evidence based holistic approaches to prevent and address sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces.

Proceedings Report:

Safe Cities Global Leaders' Forum

New Delhi, India

June 10-12th, 2015

Safe Cities for Women and Girls in Action: Implementation Essentials and Key Takeaways



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INTRODUCTION AND MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

The Issue: Creating Safe Public Spaces

Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces are an everyday occurrence for women and girls around the world—in urban and rural areas, in developed and developing countries. Women and girls experience and fear various types of sexual violence in public spaces, from sexual harassment to rape and femicide. It happens on streets, public transport and parks, in and around schools and workplaces, in public sanitation facilities and water and food distribution sites, or in their own neighbourhoods.

This reality reduces women’s and girls’ freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to participate in school, work and in public life. It limits their access to essential services, and enjoyment of cultural and recreational opportunities. It also negatively impacts their health and well-being. Although violence in the private domain is now widely recognised as a human rights violation, violence against women and girls, especially sexual harassment in public spaces, remains a largely neglected issue, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it.



Safe City Leaders participating in UN Women’s Safe Cities Global Leaders’ Forum, June 10th-12th, New Delhi, India
Photo: Sarabjeet Dhillon for UN Women

About the Safe Cities Global Initiative

UN Women's [Safe Cities Global Initiative](#) (SC GI) includes two main programmes. In November 2010 UN Women, in collaboration with Women in Cities International, the Huairou Commission, Women and Habitat Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, UN-Habitat, and other partners, with support of the Spanish International launched the "Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls" Global Programme in [Quito](#) (Ecuador), [Cairo](#) (Egypt), New Delhi (India), [Port Moresby](#) (Papua New Guinea) and [Kigali](#) (Rwanda).

It is the first-ever global comparative programme that develops, implements, and evaluates comprehensive approaches to prevent and respond to sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces. The cities of [Cape Town](#) (South Africa), [Mexico City](#), (Mexico), Rabat (Morocco), Dublin (Ireland), [Winnipeg](#), jointly with the Province of Manitoba (Canada), Reykjavik (Iceland), Sakai (Japan), New York (United States), also form part of this programme.

In June 2011, UN Women, UNICEF and UN-Habitat launched the "Safe and Sustainable Cities for All" joint programme in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), San José (Costa Rica), Tegucigalpa (Honduras), Nairobi (Kenya), Beirut (Lebanon), [Marrakech](#) (Morocco), [Manila](#) (Philippines) and [Dushanbe](#) (Tajikistan).

Obtaining strong evidence in support of the safe cities approach will make a significant contribution to one of the most neglected areas within the field of programming on ending violence against women and girls – prevention.

The SC GI is poised to make a valuable contribution to the wider field of ending violence against women and girls, urban safety, and sustainable development. It also addresses the gap in rigorous, impact level evaluation of existing models on violence against women and girls as well as the gap in capacity at the local level to evaluate and scale up interventions.

The Initiative has already achieved many results through partnerships with mayors' offices, national governments, women's groups, and other partners. As part of their holistic programming, Quito amended a local ordinance to strengthen action against sexual harassment in public spaces. In Port Moresby, the Gerehu market's infrastructure improved with insights on gender and prevention from the newly created vendors association that includes 50 per cent representation of women in executive positions.

About the Safe Cities Leaders' Forum

The following report includes the main proceedings of UN Women's Biennial Safe Cities Global Leaders' Forum "Safe Cities for Women and Girls in Action: Implementation Essentials and Key Takeaways", which was held at the Lalit Hotel, in New Delhi, from June 10th to 12th, 2015, in commemoration of Beijing Plus 20.

It includes insights from a wide array of speakers, key takeaways from programme sessions and participant discussions. It also includes good practices and tools, and reference material, and provides a links to available powerpoint presentations and videos.

The Forum brought together a core group of 140 participants from 24 countries, including: representatives from national and local government, grassroots women's organisations, and community groups, leading international organisations, nongovernmental, and intergovernmental agencies, researchers, the private sector and media.

Main Goal of the Forum

To share and discuss evidence-based approaches, practices, tools, and learnings to advance the international knowledge base on safe cities for women and girls. Programme Sessions were designed to:

- Provide up-to-date knowledge and good practices from the field focused on the implementation of safe city programmes that aim to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.
- Share programme updates and results from recent research commissioned at local and global level under UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative, and support a cross-regional learning platform for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Discuss priority areas for safe city policy and programme action including: coordination, sustainability, building to scale, evaluability for impact and accountability.

There is a growing global recognition of the importance of public space in sustainable urbanisation¹, achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment² and overall for post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda³. Public space is a social good, which should be safe, accessible, inclusive and available for all. It should generate enabling environment for equality, rights and economic, social and political opportunities. However a quality public space, especially in the cities, which accommodate more than half of the world population⁴, has become a rare commodity and is marked by social exclusion, neglect, and violence⁵. These issues underpinned discussions at the Global Safe Cities Leaders' Forum.

Expected Take-aways from the Forum

- ✓ **Heightened engagement** among stakeholders towards policy and programme action to create safe, smart and sustainable cities with women and girls.
- ✓ **Increased access to tools** to strengthen multi-sectoral and evidence based approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.

¹ In 2011, the 23rd Session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat mandated UN-Habitat to consolidate agency-wide work on public space, to develop and promote public space policy, coordination, disseminate knowledge and directly assist cities in public space initiatives.

² CSW57 (2013) for the first time identified various forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence against women and girls, inter alia, in public spaces as a distinct area of concern ((Introduction, articles xx, zz)

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/57/csw57-agreedconclusions-a4-en.pdf>

³ Among proposed 2016-2030 Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 11: 'Build cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' includes a target "by 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities".

- ✓ **Access to good practices** to inspire reflection on safe city model design and implementation.

Main Highlights

The insights of leaders from diverse sectors and cities, and the discussions throughout the Safe Cities Global Leaders' Forum underline a number of important lessons in building safe and inclusive cities for women and girls.

- While cities offer important opportunities to build gender equality, safety, and inclusion, these may often be hindered given many of the challenges related to rapid and unplanned urbanisation (overcrowding, underinvestment in infrastructure, growing inequalities) with widespread sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls in public spaces.

- Urban safety is intrinsically linked to the concept of the Right to the City, and encompasses every person's rights to mobility and access to social, economic, political, and the cultural opportunities that cities offer. Adequate gender-sensitive and gender inclusive planning in the provision of services and infrastructure can become an empowering force that enables women and girls to fully enjoy their right to public space, promotes gender equality, including equal access to income, education, health care, justice, and political participation and influence.

- The challenges of sexual violence in urban public spaces at the local level must also be seen in relation to larger global trends (urbanisation, humanitarian crises, technocratisation, etc.)

- Successful Safe Cities for Women and Girls Initiatives require strong leadership from national and local government, and strategic planning based on a sound analysis of problems and causes of sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in public spaces.

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