



IN BRIEF



SAFE CITIES GLOBAL INITIATIVE

Photo © UN Women Papua New Guinea / Alethia Jimenez

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 recognized 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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Safe Cities Global Team, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, UN Women: safe.cities@unwomen.org

UN Women Website: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

Our Solutions

UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative includes two main flagship programmes. In November 2010 UN Women, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, Women in Cities International, the Huairou Commission, Women and Habitat Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, and other partners, 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 harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.

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), Marrakesh (Morocco), Manila (Philippines) and Dushanbe (Tajikistan).

The Global Initiative has achieved many results through partnerships with mayors' offices, national governments, women's groups and other stakeholders. As part of their holistic programming, Quito has amended a local ordinance to strengthen action against sexual harassment in public spaces. Egypt's Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development has adopted women's safety audits to guide urban planning. Port Moresby established vendors associations in their safe market programme, with 50 per cent representation of women in executive positions.



Facts and Figures:

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC SPACES AN UNDER-RECOGNIZED GLOBAL PANDEMIC:

- In London, in a poll conducted in 2012 by the Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) Coalition, 43 per cent of young women said that they had experienced street harassment just during the past year alone.
- In France, a study conducted in 2013 by the National Institute of Statistics and Economics Studies found that every fourth woman experienced fear when walking on the street, and that 1 in 5 women have suffered from verbal harassment while walking on the street in the past year.

FINDINGS FROM SAFE CITIES GLOBAL INITIATIVE:

- In New Delhi, a baseline study conducted in 2012 reveals that 92 per cent of women experienced some form of sexual violence in public spaces in their lifetime, and 88 per cent of women experienced some form of visual and verbal sexual harassment (unwelcome comments of a sexual nature, whistling, leering or making obscene gestures) in their lifetime.
- In Quito, a scoping study conducted in 2011 reveals that 68 per cent of women experienced some form of sexual violence, at least once in the previous year.
- In Port Moresby, a scoping study conducted in 2011 in 6 markets (Gerehu, Gordons, Tokarara, Malauro, Waigani and Hohola) reveals that 55 per cent of women experienced some form of sexual violence in market spaces in the previous year.



Photo © UN Women/Gisele Netto.

- In Kigali, a baseline study conducted in 2012 reveals that women's fear of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence limited their participation in activities outside the home during the day and at night. 42 per cent of women said they were concerned about going to educational institutions during the day, and 55 per cent after dark. Over half of women said they were concerned about participating in leisure activities during the day and after dark.

“Development, democracy and urbanization do not automatically ensure safety for all citizens. Women and girls face risks of harassment and sexual assault at home, at work, at schools, on public transport and on streets.”

- PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA, UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NEW DEVELOPMENTS:

- In December 2013, Cape Town (South Africa) joined the Safe Cities Global Initiative.
- Most recently, cities from developed countries continue to join the Safe Cities Global Initiative, led by the city of Dublin (Ireland), including Winnipeg/province of Manitoba (Canada), Sakai (Japan) and Reykjavik (Iceland) to share their knowledge, and strengthen and expand their initiatives to prevent sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.
- In May 2014, UN Women Safe Cities became a Member of the Gender Science, Technology Environment Network (GenderSTE), EU COST Initiative.
- In November 2014, UN Women and Microsoft will release findings from a Global Mapping Project within the Safe Cities Global Initiative involving the safe city teams in Rio de Janeiro, Marrakech and New Delhi. Major UN partners include UN-Habitat and UNICEF. It explores women's and girls' perspectives from disadvantaged communities on access to mobile phones and their use in the prevention, documentation, and response to sexual violence in public spaces.