



IN BRIEF



# SAFE CITIES GLOBAL INITIATIVE

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## 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 sexual assault including 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](mailto: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 2010, with UN-Habitat, Women in Cities International, the Huairou Commission, Women and Habitat Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, and 80 other global and local 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 areas. In 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 Safe Cities Global Initiative has generated a number of results through partnerships with mayors' offices, national governments, women's groups and other partners. As part of their comprehensive approaches, the municipality of Quito has amended a local ordinance to strengthen action against sexual harassment in public spaces, New Delhi has integrated Safe Cities' approaches in social protection schemes, and Egypt's Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development has adopted women's safety audits to guide urban planning.



## 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 percent 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 harassment and sexual violence, at least once in the previous year.



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- 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.
- In Kigali, a baseline study conducted in 2012 reveals that women's fear of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence limits their participation in activities outside the home during the day and at night. 42 per cent of women said they are 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.

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**“We have to work with communities to change harmful social norms and attitudes, and social institutions that discriminate and tolerate violence against women.”**

- Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka, UN Women Executive Director

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### **NEW DEVELOPMENTS:**

- In January 2013, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) became a Global Partner in the Safe Cities Initiative to promote and scale up effective human rights based approaches with UN Women.
- In February 2013, cities from developed countries are also joining the Safe Cities Global Initiative, led by the city of Dublin, 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 April 2013, UN Women and Microsoft launched 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 harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces. Findings will be made available shortly and shared with governments, technology providers, women's groups and other organizations to help inform evidence based policy and programming in this area.