UN-HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Safer Cities Programme, UN-HABITAT
P.O. Box 30030-00100
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254-20-7623706
Fax: +254-20-7624263
E-mail: safer.cities@unhabitat.org
www.unhabitat.org

FEMMES ET VILLES MUJERES Y CIUDADES WOMEN IN CITIES international

Women in Cities International
6465 Avenue Durocher, suite 309
Montréal (Québec)
Canada, H2V 3Z1
Tel : 514.861.6123
Email : info@femmesetvilles.org

Sida

Sida's main office
Valhallavägen 199
105 25 Stockholm
Switchboard: + 46 8 698 50 00
Fax: +46 8 20 88 64
E-mail: sida@sida.se

HUAIROU COMMISSION
Women, Homes & Community

Huairou Commission
249 Manhattan Avenue,
Brooklyn, New York USA 11211
Tel: 1-718-388-8915
Fax: 1-718-388-0285
Email: info@huairou.org

Red Mujer y Hábitat de América Latina

CISCSA
9 de Julio 2482 - X5003CQR - Córdoba - Argentina
Teléfono y Fax: +54 (351) 489 1313
Correo electrónico: ciscsa@ciscsa.org.ar /
difusion@ciscsa.org.ar

The Global Assessment on Women's Safety

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Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254-20-7623706
Fax: +254-20-7624263
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www.unhabitat.org

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FOREWORD

Women are at risk of violence both in public and private spheres, in and around the home, in neighbourhoods and at city level. Risk is influenced by urban design choices and the organisation of public services including transport and energy, amongst other things. Women experience a higher degree of insecurity which can restrict their "access" and "use of the city".

UN-HABITAT supports sustainability and inclusiveness in our cities. But women and girls still experience a higher degree of insecurity as compared to men and boys, which limits their access to city services. To create inclusive cities that respect the rights of everyone, we need to create conditions and physical environments where women, men, girls and boys can live, work, go to school, move around, and socialise without fear of harm. We also need to change attitudes and policies that perpetuate violence against women. This is essential for economic and social development and for meeting the Millennium Development Goal commitments entered into by the international community in 2000.

Many women and girls face domestic violence not only in their homes and in relationships, but also in public spaces due to poor choices in urban design and poor management of those spaces. In practical terms this can relate to factors such as inadequate street lighting, unsafe underpasses, ineffective community policing and lack of rehabilitation programmes for those involved in antisocial use of public spaces. During times of conflict or social unrest, those factors can further exacerbate the risk of gender-based violence.

UN-HABITAT takes an active role in the documentation and exchange of best practices and lessons learned to improve safety and security in cities. To this end, UN-HABITAT has collaborated with the Huairou Commission, Women in Cities International and Red Mujer y Habitat to conduct this Global Assessment on Women's Safety, which is an extensive review of tools and strategies promoting women's safety on the global, regional, national and local levels. This has resulted in the creation of a database of over 200 institutions, local authorities and grassroots initiatives working on women's safety. This helps with information sharing and building of global and regional networks.

We need full and meaningful participation of women and girls to make cities safer for them. Governments at all levels have a vital role and responsibility in engaging women and girls and men and boys as equals in decision-making, policy and strategy development addressing violence against women and girls. Ending violence against women requires collective action and we need to recognise that safer cities for women and girls are better cities for everyone.

Anna Tibaijuka,
Under-Secretary General of the United Nations
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT

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We would also like to recognize the countless hours of work and dedication that the survey respondents themselves have put into ensuring women have safe and secure communities for themselves and their families.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

The Safer Cities Programme of UN-HABITAT embarked on a strategic planning process which resulted in the development of a Strategic Plan for 2008-2013. The **overall objective** of this strategy is to guide UN-HABITAT work on urban safety building on external needs/demands and on added value, and to provide directions for partnership building and advocacy activities, as well as for capacity building.

At the global level, the Safer Cities Programme undertakes advocacy on local crime and violence prevention, policy development on human settlements and on the governance dimensions of crime and violence prevention, documents and analyses experiences, and develops and disseminates tools for local governments and other actors. Among key outputs are an integrated set of tools and resources on crime prevention, policy documents on key issues such as women's safety, youth at risk and the role of the police in urban governance, regional strategies on youth at risk, and an overall increased recognition of the key role of crime prevention in sustainable human settlements. for human settlements, it is a central concern vis-à-vis women participation in urban development, and needs to be addressed in the context of governance (political violence, and violence prevention policies), security of tenure (economic violence, and violence in connection with evictions), as well as in post-disaster/conflict situations (in the escalation of violence against women). Key element of a gender approach is the planning dimension, whereby safety of women in the public space can be addressed as a component of urban planning and management of public space.

UN-HABITAT and Safer Cities purport an approach to urban safety that links women initiatives and local government initiatives, as a way of influencing public policy and addressing the causes of violence against women in a systemic way. As part of the strategic planning process the Safer Cities Programme engaged and consulted with organisations active in the field of women's empowerment, women in human settlements development and violence prevention.

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