



FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME



SAFE CITIES AND SAFE PUBLIC SPACES



Photo: UN Women Rwanda

The Issue

Across the world, women and girls fear and experience various types of sexual violence in public spaces, from unwelcome sexual remarks and touching to rape and femicide. It happens on streets, in and around schools, public transportation, workplaces, parks, public toilets and other spaces in urban, rural, online, and conflict/post conflict settings. Women's and girls' experience of sexual harassment was further exacerbated during the [global pandemic](#).

This reality reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to participate in school, work and public life. It limits their access to essential services and their enjoyment of cultural and recreational activities, and negatively impacts their health and well-being.

In 2013, the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women (CSW57) identified various forms of sexual violence against women and girls (SVAWG) in public spaces as a distinct area of concern and called on governments to prevent it. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set "the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres" as one of its specific goals (Target 5.2).

Cover Photo: *The Nyaruguru District in Rwanda participates in a safe rural spaces programme with women and girls. As part of the comprehensive approach to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, women, boys and girls participate in community mobilization activities using drama and music with messages to transform social norms in order to promote women's and girl's rights to enjoy spaces free from violence against women and girls.*

In 2016, the New Urban Agenda committed to promote a safe, healthy, inclusive, and secure environment in cities and human settlements for all to live, work, and participate in urban life without fear of violence and intimidation.

Although domestic violence and workplace violence is now widely recognized as a human rights violation, sexual harassment in public spaces is often neglected, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it.

Our Strategy for Change

UN Women's Global Flagship Initiative "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls" builds on its "Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls" Global Programme that began implementation in January 2011 to prevent and respond to SVAWG in public spaces. It supports local and national governments to address [multiple sustainable development goal targets across multiple goals](#).

City partners commit to:

- 1. Identify gender-responsive locally relevant and owned interventions.** Conducting a scoping study is essential as it provides specific data to ensure a deep understanding of local forms of SVAWG in public spaces. Multiple stakeholders reflect on the findings to develop programmes with a specific set of results based on the local context and ensuring joint accountability.