

IN BRIEF

Sharpening the lens: Mayors' commitments on gender equality translated into action

Introduction

At the current rate of progress, it will take another 171 years to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. More women than men live in extreme poverty, nearly two thirds of countries provide no or little legal protection for women's land rights, the gender pay gap persists, and nearly 1 in 3 women globally has experienced partner or sexual violence.¹

The current period is marked by unprecedented backlash against longstanding gender equality and women's rights commitments and is further exacerbated alongside other cascading crises (conflict, climate, economic, housing, etc.), many of which are situated in cities across around the world where they are felt in the daily lives of women and girls, and where local governments are called upon to respond.

Local governments, working with local women and women's rights partners, and with support from national government, United Nations, and donor partners are heeding the call, demonstrating innovation and perseverance to continue to make progress in closing gender gaps, empower women, and end violence against women and girls (EVAWG).

In November 2023, UN Women and the City of Quito, Ecuador launched the Quito Declaration: Global Commitment of Mayors to Accelerate Action: Gender Equality and Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces with and for Women and Girls (Global Commitment). Since that time, 84 mayors from around the world have endorsed the Global Commitment, including some mayors who lead comprehensive programmes as part of UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls Global Initiative (SC SPS Global Initiative).

The Global Commitment highlights practical action cities can take in support of gender equality, women's empowerment, and EVAW.

For example:

- It calls for increasing women's and girls' meaningful participation, leadership, and decision-making power in cities and communities.
- It recognizes the importance of multistakeholder partnerships in designing new, evidence informed and human rights-based approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in public spaces.
- It stresses the need to accelerate the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies, and other initiatives across areas such as climate change, water and sanitation, urban and transport planning, housing, economic development, and food systems to advance gender equality, and address structural inequalities in cities.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS: REPORTED PROGRESS BY CITIES IN TRANSLATING COMMITMENTS ON GENDER EQUALITY INTO ACTION



46 CITIES

across 23 countries have reported progress under the Global Commitment of Mayors to Accelerate Action on Gender Equality between 2023-2026



19 MILLION WOMEN

in 23 cities have benefitted from stronger legal protections, policies, strategies and institutional frameworks that uphold their rights, including safety between 2023-2026

THE TOP THREE THEMATIC AREAS

for the 46 subnational governments reporting action under the Global Commitment of Mayors to Accelerate Action on Gender Equality include:



GENDER RESPONSIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES



FINANCIAL RESOURCING



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

MAYORS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND SAFETY CAN



Institutionalize gender equality and women's safety across local government.

Strengthen women's leadership and meaningful participation in local decision-making.

Invest in regular collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to inform local policies and plans.

Adopt policies and plans that include prevention and survivor-centred services as part of an integrated approach to end violence against women, with coordination mechanisms in place.

This brief presents emerging trends and developments in areas where mayors and local governments are working to translate their commitments to action on gender equality, women's empowerment and EVAWG, highlighting the important roles that local governments play. During the reporting period **46 cities across 23 countries** have shared progress made in actioning the Global Commitment between November 2023 and August 2026.

The brief illustrates a range of action in partnership with governments, grassroots women and women's rights organizations, the private sector, and other partners, including from cities participating in UN Women's SC SPS Global Initiative. It also includes recommendations to be considered by local governments, international organizations, women's rights and other civil society organizations.

Number of subnational governments that have reported action under thematic areas of the Global Commitment



139 thematic entries across 11 thematic areas

TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Summary

Local governments are central to achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and in the prevention and response to sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in different settings (urban, rural, humanitarian, online, etc.).

Mayors and local governments are at the frontline of advancing and sustaining women's rights to the city. They have a responsibility for public safety, are positioned closest to the community, oversee services and the budget, and can lead multi-sectoral partners (police, urban planners, engineers, social services, transport, city management, economic development, housing, etc.) towards the shared goal of creating cities that are safe, healthy, caring, and sustainable for all women and girls.

For the 46 cities which responded to the survey on commitments actioned under the Global Commitment, all local governments are working to **coordinate multi-stakeholder partnerships** to advance gender equality and end VAWG. For example, through data-driven programming, design and maintenance of environments and infrastructure, overseeing municipal police and other city services, implementing bylaws, procuring services, piloting innovations in technology, speaking out on injustices, supporting and/or partnering with other actors to support programmes that address the risk and protective factors associated with crime and VAWG, managing public spaces, and contributing to stronger legal protections, and

the development and implementation of policies, strategies and institutional frameworks, adapted to local needs.

Women are increasingly being supported to meaningfully participate in city developments including for example in the collection of data and evidence to inform the implementation of laws and policies, engaging men and boys in prevention of crime and violence, and leading and/or participating in the redesign and launch of new public spaces, including through institutionalized mechanisms that bring local women and local government decision-makers together.

Public transportation and other public spaces are being re-thought and re-designed with a gender responsive approach in cities, with the technical accompaniment of women's rights partner organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), youth groups, UN Women, and other UN agencies. This action is often guided by gender responsive tools adapted to local contexts to support regional and local governments to take account of women's needs and concerns in the city.

Efforts to prevent and respond to VAWG are expanding, with women's safety increasingly being addressed by cities alongside issues such as care, economic development, environment, housing, recreation, and other initiatives to transform discriminatory social norms and support lasting progress on gender equality and women's safety.

In many cities, comprehensive initiatives that address the causes of VAWG are increasingly being supported and sustained through dedicated financial investment by governments at the subnational level, and programmes and interventions are being embedded in local and national policies, strategies and budgets.

The action taken up by mayors and local governments under the Global Commitment further calls attention to the importance of **strong leadership, political will, targeted investments, advancing women's political participation, community engagement and international cooperation** that are needed to advance gender equality, women's empowerment, and safety.

19 million women in 23 cities

have benefitted from stronger legal protections, policies, strategies and institutional frameworks that uphold their rights including safety between 2023-2026.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS: TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS ON THE REPORTED PROGRESS BY CITIES IN TRANSLATING THE GLOBAL COMMITMENT ON GENDER EQUALITY INTO ACTION

Local governments are coordinating and supporting strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships to advance gender equality

In **Pasto**, Colombia, a technical advisory safe city committee was formally established to support the implementation of the Pasto Safe City Programme, helping to embed women's safety in public spaces within the municipal plan and women's policy framework.

In **Guediawaye**, Dakar, Senegal, with the support of UN Women, multi-level collaboration was strengthened between the municipality, the five communes of Guediawaye, the national police, the Ministry of Family Affairs, and women's organizations and other civil society groups in support of women's safety and gender responsive policing.

Local governments are leading and supporting partners to end violence against women and girls, with many working to integrate women's safety across municipal departments

The city of **London**, Ontario, Canada used its Parks Master Plan review as an opportunity to integrate women's safety and considerations for women, girls, gender diverse and transgender people into park planning and design guidance.

In **Niamey**, Niger, 2026, two gender responsive sanitation blocks were constructed at the Grand Market, informed by women's recommendations on health, safety, and dignity in the provision of safe and accessible sanitation.

In **Geneva**, Switzerland, a municipal reporting tool provides a direct route from reporting sexual harassment to personalized follow up and help in filing complaints. Between 2022-2025, the city has received 722 reports, of which 166 survivors have requested personalized follow-up.

Some subnational governments are shifting investments in gender equality and women's safety from standalone projects to institutionalizing within municipal spending

The city of **Fez**, Morocco has dedicated a budget for data and evidence generation, advocacy, municipal engagement, and gender responsive urban planning.

The Prefecture of **Pinchincha**, Ecuador has allocated within its annual budget support for the operations of the Warmi Pichincha network which provides comprehensive care

centres provides free psychological, social, and legal services to survivors of gender-based violence.

In **Ho Chi Minh**, Vietnam the city has incorporated the operating costs for its One Stop Service Centre into annual city health and social sector budgets.

Women's voices are shaping city action, including through women's political participation and decision-making in cities, and the engagement of men champions for gender equality

In **Jabalpur**, India the city has institutionalized women's safety dialogues through local Ward Committees that offer a channel for women and girls to raise concerns and propose solutions, and directly engage local government and police. Information shared in the dialogues has resulted in several public space improvements, including the establishment of 40 new change rooms in the city, and the installation of 10 women friendly public toilets.

In **Calgary**, Canada, the Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Subcommittee (GED) provides a mechanism through which gender informed lived experience, professional expertise, and community knowledge contribute to city policies and initiatives. Between 2023 and 2026, GEDI informed the development of several municipal strategies and plans, including the Transit Public Safety Strategy, Downtown Safety Leadership Table, public washroom guidance, and Safer Together: A Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan for Calgary.

Local governments are advancing gender responsive policies, programmes and budgets to advance gender equality, women's empowerment, and safety

In **Port Moresby**, Papua New Guinea, with the support of UN Women, the city has developed an integrated policy architecture to promote gender equality, including complementary strategies such as the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2023 to 2027), a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and Anti-Harassment and Non-Violence Policy (2026), and a Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plan launched in 2026.

In **Valparaiso**, Chile, the city has introduced budget tagging and gender responsive procurement as part of its efforts to incorporate gender considerations into public management.



Multi-sectoral and multi-level strategic partnerships for gender equality and women's empowerment and safety

Cities around the world are engaging in strategic partnerships to position gender equality, women's empowerment and safety as a **shared responsibility** across local government departments including for example public transportation, parks and recreation, police, economic development, urban planning and infrastructure) and across jurisdictions with women's organizations, grassroots leaders, youth groups, UN agencies, the private sector, academia and other partners. These multi-sectoral and multi-level partnerships facilitate, and support **coordinated action** to achieve results.

- In **Pasto**, Colombia, a technical advisory safe city committee was formally established to support the development and implementation of the Pasto Safe City Programme and helped embed women's safety in public spaces as a priority area within the municipal plan and women's policy framework. An action plan was developed to implement the policy framework, with allocated resources across municipal departments.
- In **Damietta**, Egypt, a public space developed with a gender responsive approach has been sustained through well-established partnerships between the Governorate of Damietta, the National Council for Women, Misr Public Library, and UN Women. The Women Friendly Space is used as a site for enhancing women's skills and economic empowerment, and sharing information on ending VAWG, reaching an estimated 2,000 women and girls and men and boys each month.
- In **Guediawaye**, Dakar, Senegal, multi-level collaboration was strengthened between the municipality, the five communes of Guediawaye, the national police and the Ministry of Family Affairs, and women's organizations and other civil society supported by UN Women. An intentional focus on facilitating vertical and horizontal partnerships in the Guediawaye Safe City Programme has led a more coordinated, coherent and comprehensive approach to prevent and respond to VAWG.



Data collection, analysis, and evidence generation to inform priority action

Many cities in this review are working to **address data gaps on sexual harassment** and other forms of VAWG at the local level through investments in data, evidence generation and monitoring to inform and advance the implementation of local policies and practices to promote women's empowerment and safety.

Data collection methodologies often include participatory tools that capture women's voices, including surveys, capacity assessments, women's exploratory walks and safety audits. Local scoping studies review available quantitative data, and include focus group discussions and key informant interviews to inform priority actions on gender equality, and other issues. These data serve to complement administrative data and institutional assessments and enhance understanding of the lived experiences of women to inform local policies and make changes within the built environment which take account of the needs of women and girls. Finally, local data and evidence are increasingly being used not only to describe problems but to shape strategies, protocols and planning.

- In **Tunis**, Tunisia, a scoping study was conducted in 2024 which examined the forms, locations and drivers of VAWG in public spaces alongside women's safety exploratory walks that were conducted along seven strategic routes that provided complementary insights into women's safety perceptions and experiences in public spaces. As part of this process, diverse groups of women, including young women and women with disabilities identified issues related to inadequate lighting, risks to sexual harassment, accessibility issues, and gaps in service provision which have informed measures to address women's and girls' fear and experience of sexual violence in public spaces, including the development of the Tunis Safe City Strategy, adopted by the local government in June 2025.

- The State of **Jalisco**, Mexico combines institutional data systems with participatory evidence generation. A VAWG reporting communication platform - Código Violeta consolidates information from different institutions on VAWG, protection orders, and femicide into an accessible open data system. The State government also has a permanent statistical advisory mechanism that provides technical guidance to municipalities in its territory to further support the use of evidence in policy and planning.
- In Ecuador, the generation of data and evidence has informed the development of integrated safe city approaches with women and girls in the country. For example, in the Province of **Imbabura**, the first territorial and intercultural survey with Indigenous women on gender-based violence was conducted in 2025, combined with qualitative data from community research and dialogues held in **Gualaquiza**, Otavalo.
- The city of **Harare**, Zimbabwe has partnered with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission to conduct a gender mainstreaming assessment covering seven areas of municipal functions: policies, complaints handling, VAWG, women's leadership, work life balance, organizational culture, and service delivery. The findings from the assessment will be used to inform future gender and safeguarding policies within the public service and strengthen action for gender mainstreaming across municipal service delivery.
- **Montevideo**, Uruguay, has used digital tools to map the locations of 611 sexual harassment reports received between 2023 and August 2026. The data is being used to prioritize territorial planning action as part of a comprehensive safe city and safe public spaces' approach.



Young women and men participating in the Youth Summer Camp organised under the Tunis Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Programme in Tabarka, 2024. The camp strengthened young people's leadership and engagement in promoting safer and more inclusive public spaces for women and girls. UN Women Tunisia.



Women's and girls' participation, leadership, and decision-making power

Women's meaningful participation and leadership in public and political life strengthens democracy, improves outcomes for communities, and advances gender-responsive policies. However, gender gaps remain, and women, particularly those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are still denied equal participation in political and public life and remain excluded from decisions affecting their lives, families, and communities. **When women lead, they are more likely to protect hard-won rights and hold institutions accountable.** At the local level, local government leaders who are connected to women-led organizations and movements are shown to be particularly responsive to women's priorities and more likely to deliver meaningful change in their communities.²

Women and girls are being supported to shape multi-sectoral approaches on gender equality, women's empowerment and safety. Opportunities for women's participation are moving beyond consultation towards more active roles in identifying priorities, informing local government decisions, and participating in implementation in several areas related to gender equality, including the management of safe public spaces.

While traditional forms of public consultation remain important and common, some local governments are demonstrating a shift from viewing women and girls as beneficiaries to active participants and leaders in designing solutions.

This shift in perspective requires an accompanying shift in systems and structures to provide opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in urban governance and be supported in those positions of leadership, for women to meaningfully engage in decision-making processes and be actively involved in participatory planning that takes place in person and online.

- In **Calgary**, Canada, the Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Subcommittee (GED) provides a mechanism through which gender informed lived experience, professional expertise, and community knowledge contribute to city policies and initiatives. Its advice has helped identify and elevate gender related barriers, opportunities and community priorities in relation to safety, wellbeing, quality of public spaces, and access to services. Between 2023 and 2026, GEDI informed the development of a number of municipal strategies and plans, including the Transit Public Safety Strategy, Downtown Safety Leadership Table, public washroom guidance, and Safer Together: A Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan for Calgary.
- Building on one of the founding programmes in the SC SPS Global Initiative supported by UN Women, in **Port Moresby**, Papua New Guinea, Market Vendors Associations continue to give women traders a route into market management and decision-making alongside financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and livelihood support. This has been further complemented by the revival of the National Capital District Commission (NCDC) Council of Women in 2025, the establishment of a Women and Girls' Desk, and changes within NCDC that aim to strengthen women's representation.
- In **Heredia**, Costa Rica, a scoping study supported by UN Women was conducted to inform the development of a SC SPS programme in 2026, and reactivated the Cantonal Women's Network, bringing together 15 women's rights organizations to engage with the municipal government. Through a women-centred

co-creation process, members identified priorities for addressing sexual harassment in public spaces, strengthened their collective leadership, and developed proposals for safe routes, preventive signage, and safe and inclusive infrastructure. An implementation roadmap was presented by the Network to the municipal team responsible for planning, roads, parks, infrastructure, public space management, and social inclusion.

- In **Jabalpur**, India the city has institutionalized women's safety dialogues through local Ward Committees that offer a formal channel for women and girls to raise concerns and propose solutions and directly engage local government and police. Information shared in women's safety dialogues has resulted in several public space improvements, including the establishment of 40 new changing rooms in the city, 10 women friendly public toilets, and 120 safety signs across traffic intersections, railway stations, and bus stops. In addition, an Inter-Departmental Committee on Women's Safety in the local government coordinates and monitors follow up action.



Local governments are leading efforts to end violence against women and girls

Women's fear and experiences of sexual violence and other forms of violence in public spaces shape their use of city spaces, in terms of mobility and access to opportunities.

Mayors and local governments are addressing women's safety concerns in public spaces such as streets, transportation, festivals and sports and other events, in markets, blue economy spaces, urban forests and other green spaces, and online spaces, etc.

Local governments are also broadening responsibility beyond traditional violence prevention and survivor support services by integrating women's safety across municipal departments and in partnership with women's rights organizations, NGOs, youth and community groups, UN agencies, and the private sector. This coordinated approach connects sectors, systems and services.

With growing evidence that prevention of VAWG is possible and effective,³ several local governments are working with community partners to address the structural drivers of VAWG and strengthen protective factors to prevent violence before it occurs, including supporting and/or partnering with community initiatives on social norms change and through gender responsive urban and transportation planning. These prevention efforts complement VAWG response efforts which ensure that women victims/survivors have access to quality essential services that are culturally aware, including police and justice services, health services, social services, and shelters.

- In **Quito**, Ecuador, the city has been working for over a decade to enhance women's safety in transportation through a comprehensive evidence-based approach. The Quito metro system was developed through gender responsive transportation planning and continues to monitor progress on the prevention and response to sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG. Between 2024 and 2025, reported incidents of VAW declined in surface transport in the Metro, and women's perceptions of safety in transportation improved.
- In **Medellin**, Colombia, the local government strengthened the prevention of sexual harassment in public transport through the development and implementation of a response protocol for the Medellin Metro. The local government also promoted safer tourism, and women's safety in the nighttime economy through the Ask for Angela (*Pregunta por Ángela*⁴) campaign, strategies on safe festivals and events for women developed in coordination with businesses, tourism authorities and nightlife associations.
- In **Niamey**, Niger, a street was redeveloped using a participatory and gender responsive design process. The street was dedicated to the women and girls of Niamey and renamed 'Women's Street' during its inauguration in May 2026. In addition, two gender responsive sanitation blocks were constructed at the Grand Market, informed by women's recommendations on health, safety, and dignity in the provision of safe and accessible sanitation.

- The city of **London**, Ontario, Canada used its Parks Master Plan review as an opportunity to integrate women's safety and considerations for women, girls, gender diverse and transgender people into park planning and design guidance.
- The city of **Fez**, Morocco organized a multi-stakeholder seminar in 2024, bringing together over 50 participants from more than 20 institutions, including the women's groups and other civil society groups, the municipality, architecture and training institutions, and the private sector to translate women's safety evidence into urban planning priorities. The priorities identified (e.g. increased lighting, pedestrian pathways, improved access to city services and green spaces) have been incorporated in a development plan for a local ward with allocated resources to support its implementation.



A woman reads safety information displayed on a changing room at Gauri Ghat, Jabalpur, India. The municipality established 40 changing rooms along the Narmada River as part of its efforts to improve women's safety, dignity and access to public spaces. UN Women India / Jabalpur Municipal Corporation.



Accountability and access to justice for victims/survivors of violence against women

Local governments are essential to ensuring that women survivors can access justice and that perpetrators are held accountable. This requires not only strong laws, but also accessible, adequately resourced and gender-responsive institutions that provide timely protection, support and remedies while minimizing the risk of revictimization.

Local governments can strengthen accountability by coordinating across sectors, training police and service providers, improving data and monitoring, and working with women's organizations to address barriers to services. These measures translate local and national commitments into survivor-centred responses that are delivered at the local level. Local governments can work to build trust, encourage reporting, including by establishing and/or raising awareness on multiple channels for reporting VAWG, and support efforts to end impunity for VAWG.

- **Ho Chi Minh City**, Vietnam piloted a hospital-based One Stop Service Centre providing coordinated and free medical, psychosocial, legal and referral support to victims/survivors through a single-entry point. By May 2026, 560 women and adolescents had received support. The model has been institutionalized and embedded within the public health system, and adapted in three other hospitals.
- In **Geneva**, Switzerland, a municipal reporting tool provides a direct route from reporting sexual harassment to personalized follow up and help in filing complaints. Between 2022-2025, the city has received 722 reports, of which 166 survivors have requested personalized follow up.
- **Guatemala City**, Guatemala embeds women's safety within its Municipal Policy and Plan for the Comprehensive Development of Women throughout the Life Cycle 2019 to 2027. The Municipal Policy emphasizes the importance of addressing VAWG across a continuum of settings and continuum of violence, including sexual harassment in urban transportation

and other public spaces. The Plan includes support for four 'Municipal Women's Houses' where local women can access medical, legal and psycho-social support services, meet and exchange with other women, and participate in activities related to health and economic empowerment.

- The city of **Bogota**, Colombia in 2024 developed a comprehensive public policy for women that includes the development of a district care system, safe spots for women during major events, and an education and intervention campaign in public transportation. Around 9,635 women survivors of violence have received support, including by paired emergency teams offering legal and psychological support. As part of this policy, a violence response mechanism (the TM26 code) was introduced which alerts authorities on cases of violence in public transportation with over 20,900 public transport drivers trained on how to activate the new response mechanism.
- In **Morona Santiago**, Ecuador, the provincial government has worked to strengthen the prevention of VAWG through coordinated technical working groups that bring together justice institutions, rights protection agencies, and local governments to coordinate prevention, reporting, and response pathways. The Government of Morona Santiago partnered with the Network of Amazonian Women and secured resources to build a local shelter to ensure that women can access quality essential services. Psychosocial and social work outreach was also deployed to rural areas to ensure case follow-up and support.



Gender-responsive policies, programmes, and budgets

Local governments are advancing gender responsive policies, programmes and budgets to advance gender equality, women's empowerment and safety. Some cities are supporting these issues in stand-alone policies, whereas other cities are implementing integrated approaches, bringing together different issues related to gender equality or women's safety together in a single integrated framework.

A gender responsive approach can support cities to identify how municipal policies, plans, and budgets may differently impact and/or benefit women and men. A gender-based and intersectional approach is being used by some cities in a transversal way to inform the development of all municipal plans, policies, and budgets, considering additional factors such as age, disability, and sexual identity, helping to ensure all community members benefit equitably from city policies, plans, programmes, and services.

Gender-responsive budgeting is a tool that local governments can use to support them in directing public resources towards addressing gender-based inequalities in the community, identifying where additional resources may be needed to close gaps. Embedding this approach in local plans and enabling women to shape budget decisions can strengthen accountability and align investments in services and infrastructure to better respond to women's needs.

- In **Canelones**, Uruguay, the municipality operationalized its departmental policy on sexual harassment in public spaces through a dedicated interdepartmental Monitoring Commission, established by departmental decree. By August 2026, the Commission had approved its operating regulations and agreed on initial actions covering parks, beaches, public squares, sports centres and public transport, alongside coordinated training and awareness-raising activities with local governments.
- The city of **Port Moresby**, Papua New Guinea has developed an integrated policy architecture that encompasses a range of policies and strategies to promote gender equality. These complementary strategies include: the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2023 to 2027), a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and Anti-Harassment and Non-Violence Policy (2026), and a Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plan launched in 2026.
- In **Cuenca**, Ecuador the city's Third Equal Opportunities and Care Plan (2025 to 2035) integrates gender equality, human rights, women's economic autonomy, care, and freedom from violence within its territorial planning. A Safe Tourism Guide further extends the gender responsive approach to the tourism sector.

- The city of **Popayan**, Colombia has integrated women's safety in public spaces into its 2024 to 2027 Development Plan and its 2020 to 2040 Public Policy on Women and Gender Equality. The city also has a stand-alone Safety for Women Strategy, complemented by the Move Safely Strategy and an internal safer transport protocol providing additional operational mechanisms in support of women's safe mobility.
- The city of **Valparaiso**, Chile has introduced budget tagging and gender responsive procurement as part of its efforts to incorporate gender considerations into public management.
- The city of **Villavicencio**, Colombia embedded a gender responsive budget tracker in its municipal Investment Platform. Covering 132 projects across 11 municipal departments and approximately 6 per cent of total direct municipal investment, the tracker increases transparency and identifies gender-responsive projects and resources across municipal spending.



Targeted resources and investments for gender equality and women's safety

Financial resourcing varies considerably across cities, ranging from time-bound donor and programme funding to dedicated municipal or /state government allocation of funds, and recurrent public financing. Predictable and reliable financial resources allow local and regional governments and their community partners to strategically plan and accelerate action to achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To sustain support for longer term objectives, **some subnational governments are shifting investments in gender equality and women's safety from individual activities or projects, to making them part of routine municipal spending.** Strengthening budget reporting and increasing recurring municipal financing could provide a stronger basis for long-term institutional responsibility for gender equality and women's safety.



Inauguration of Women's Street in Niamey, Niger, May 2026. The street was redeveloped through a participatory, gender-responsive design process and dedicated to the women and girls of Niamey. UN Women Niger.

- **Ho Chi Minh City**, Vietnam has incorporated the operating costs for its One Stop Service Centre into annual city health and social sector budgets.
- **Fez**, Morocco has dedicated a budget for data and evidence generation, advocacy, municipal engagement, and gender responsive urban planning.
- **Jalisco**, Mexico has used multi-year state financing to support women's economic empowerment. Between 2024 and 2026, it allocated MXN 130 million (over USD 7 million) to support women's productive activities.
- **Montreal**, Canada, applied an intersectional and gender-based analysis to its Montréal Prevention Programme, which funds community organizations promoting social inclusion and safety for people aged 0–30. The analysis showed that funding had previously focused largely on youth street gangs while insufficiently addressing young women's safety in public spaces. In response, the programme added an explicit objective to support community initiatives preventing sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG in public spaces. The city

is investing CAD 2 million (USD 1.4 million) over three years to support community-led efforts to prevent sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls in public spaces.

- The Prefecture of **Pinchincha**, Ecuador has allocated an annual budget of about USD 640,000 for the operations of its Warmi Pichincha network.

The provincial network of comprehensive care centres provides free psychological, social, and legal services to survivors of gender-based violence.



Capacity development

Many cities are intentionally investing in building and strengthening capacities across different sectors to increase knowledge and skills of personnel required for prevention, response, service delivery, and gender responsive municipal action, including as part of comprehensive safe cities and safe public space programmes. Capacity development is often linked to specific institutional responsibilities, professional roles and functions, protocols and service standards rather than one-off sessions aimed at sensitization.

As part of efforts to mainstream gender equality and women's safety across municipal departments and sectors, non-traditional partners are also receiving targeted support to strengthen their capacities in this area.

- In **Canada**, the city of **London's** bystander intervention training began as a pilot initiative for municipal staff who work in public spaces to learn how to intervene in cases of sexual harassment. Following the success of the pilot, the training was scaled up and made mandatory for Environment and Infrastructure employees, then extended to other municipal departments, library supervisors and temporary workers, and incorporated into staff orientation. The city of **Halifax** partnered with Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS) to train 90 municipal and public library staff working directly with young people on identifying and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. In a post-training survey, 40 of 45 respondents reported improved knowledge or ability across all eight skills assessed.

- In **Colombia**, the city of **Barranquilla** has embedded prevention of violence against women and girls into Carnival security management, with more than 800 uniformed personnel trained to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG. In the city of **Cali** eight municipal secretariats and 704 staff and contractors received technical assistance to integrate gender equality and intersectionality into their work.
- In **Hawassa**, Ethiopia, a series of sensitization and capacity-building activities resulted in the Hawassa Transport Bureau, in consultation with 14 public transport associations, to develop a joint bylaw to address violence and sexual harassment in public transportation. Since its adoption, 12 driver training institutions have integrated violence prevention and gender-responsive approaches into their curricula to support and sustain implementation.



Women's economic empowerment

Mayors and local governments are central to women's economic empowerment because they shape the services, infrastructure, and policies that determine access to economic opportunities. Mayors can oversee budgets which help strengthen protective factors that relate to ending VAWG, including support for action that ensures women's economic autonomy and their access to skills training, credit and employment.

Through gender-responsive planning and budgeting, municipalities can expand women's access to safe, decent work, entrepreneurship, markets, and economic resources while addressing local inequalities. Investments in accessible care services and care responsive urban infrastructure can also reduce women's disproportionate unpaid care burden and enable fuller participation in employment, public life, and local economies.

- In **Chişinău**, Moldova, the municipality combines Safe Spaces with vocational guidance, digital literacy and economic empowerment opportunities. Its Safe Space for Women and Girls Initiative has supported 81 women, while annual Local Producers' Fairs provide

over 80 women entrepreneurs, including women with disabilities, survivors of violence, rural and refugee women, with opportunities to access markets, promote their businesses, and strengthen professional networks.

- The City of **San Miguelito**, Panama established a Local Care Roundtable and supported a participatory process to develop a Local Care Plan. The resulting plan recognizes the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women, which acts in turn as a structural constraint to women's economic participation and access to opportunities. With an initial financial investment of USD 35,000 to support implementation of the plan, San Miguelito is signalling that care is a city issue.
- The city of **Villavicencio**, Colombia is supporting women to become taxi drivers. The Taxis Fem initiative has supported 60 women to enter the job market as taxi drivers.



Students participate in a physics laboratory lesson at the STEAM Educational Complex. UN Women Moldova



Public awareness raising

Public awareness remains an important part of municipal action on gender equality and women's safety, with approaches ranging from large campaigns accompanied by community mobilization action to interventions focused on bystander behaviour, positive masculinities, and institutional communication.

Many cities included multi-stakeholder awareness raising interventions as part of their efforts to prevent VAWG. As part of a comprehensive approach, local governments awareness raising interventions are increasingly combined with other city actions which include accessible response systems, access to survivor services, and clear institutional responsibilities.

Some cities are also working to go beyond awareness raising efforts to support programming aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours, and institutional norms change.

This means challenging harmful social and cultural norms that act as drivers of sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls and addressing the normalization of sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG that occurs in many cities across the world.

- In **Geneva**, Switzerland, the Objective Zero Sexism in My City initiative uses a multipronged approach, combining public awareness raising campaigns, professional training, and support for community projects since 2019. In total, 55 awareness activities reached approximately 2,600 people, with a further 600 people reached through 81 training and workshop sessions, and 38 community projects have received support. To visibly address the symbolic exclusion of women from public spaces, the municipality has renamed more than 20 streets after women.
- **San Miguel**, Peru has used digital campaigns, school caravans and community action to shift public perceptions to recognize sexual harassment in public spaces as a form of sexual violence. The *San Miguel Takes Action* campaign has reached 111,870 people through

digital communications. In addition, six school caravans engaged 500 adolescents, and more than 50 men have participated in work on masculinities.

- In **Barranquilla**, Colombia, the No Means No Campaign was implemented during the Carnival, reaching over 50,000 people. More than 1,000 women received information on violence prevention and on what local services are available for victim/survivors of violence. The approach has since expanded to transport and sport, extending prevention efforts beyond Carnival to other city settings and major events.



Geneva's Objective Zero Sexism in My City campaign challenges sexual harassment in public spaces and promotes everyone's right to move freely and safely. City of Geneva.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

In many cities that have reported progress under the Global Commitment, action on gender equality, women's empowerment and safety is shifting from stand-alone projects or initiatives towards integrated approaches that embed gender equality and women's safety in subnational policies, planning, services, and budgets. Multisectoral partnerships, stronger coordination, investments in data and evidence generation and targeted capacity development are extending responsibility beyond specialized gender mechanisms to transportation, policing, health, environment, urban planning, parks, markets and other areas of urban governance.

Subnational governments are also working to create spaces for meaningful participation of women and girls, drawing on their leadership and knowledge, and use of local evidence to shape practical solutions from mainstreaming gender equality and creating safer public spaces and transportation, to improving access to quality services and justice. Sustaining this progress requires predictable financing, efforts to diversify the funding base where feasible, shared accountability, trust building, transparent monitoring, and continued targeted investment in comprehensive approaches that combine prevention, survivor-centred responses, economic empowerment, and women's leadership and participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT FURTHER ACTION ON GENDER EQUALITY BY LOCAL, STATE, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS, WITH SUPPORT FROM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATIONS, AND DONOR PARTNERS

Strengthen women's leadership and meaningful participation in local decision-making

- Create permanent mechanisms for local women, girls, and women's rights organizations and community groups to meaningfully participate in shaping local priorities, planning, budgeting, and monitoring.
- Proactively address barriers to women's public and political participation (e.g., location, scheduling, care responsibilities, addressing sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence online and offline) to enable their meaningful participation.
- Ensure diverse women have meaningful roles in shaping, implementing, and monitoring urban policies and investments, while recognizing and making visible their contributions.



Women and families enjoy a public space in Guatemala City, Guatemala. UN Women Guatemala

Generate and use sex-disaggregated data and evidence to guide policies and investments

- Invest in regular collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to inform local priorities, policies, plans and targeted investments. Where possible use an intersectional approach to further understand the needs and priorities of differently positioned women and girls who face heightened risks of discrimination and violence.
- Make use of participatory methodologies to engage local women and girls in generating local data and evidence, including through women's safety audits, participatory mapping, focus group discussions, local to local dialogues, etc.
- Use evidence to identify priority issues, measure outcomes, allocate resources, and disseminate results on gender equality and ending violence against women and girls, with more targeted investment in monitoring and evaluation.

Adopt integrated approaches to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls

- Adopt policies and plans that include both prevention efforts and survivor-centred services as part of an integrated approach.
- Establish formal coordination mechanisms and referral systems that include essential service providers such as social services, police, health services, justice institutions, transport actors, and women's organizations.
- Explicitly address violence against women across multiple settings, including in public spaces, transport, markets, workplaces, and online while ensuring access to protection, justice, and support services across each of these settings.
- Disseminate knowledge and results from local action to support the uptake of interventions in national policies and plans that prevent and address violence against women and girls.

Institutionalize gender equality and women's safety across local government

- Continue to build to scale action on gender equality and women's safety and ensure the sustainability of local efforts to advance women's rights by embedding gender equality and women's safety into city policies, planning processes, service delivery, infrastructure, and municipal budgets.
- Create permanent cross-sector coordination mechanisms, consider assigning responsibilities across relevant departments, including transport, urban planning, public works, health, policing, and social services, with dedicated resources to sustain implementation.

Ensure sustainable financing for gender equality and women's safety, including support for women's rights organizations

- Shift from short-term project funding to dedicated and recurrent municipal financing, including through a diversified funding base to support action, including support of women's organizations, international organizations, and other local stakeholders to promote gender equality and ensure women's safety.
- Draw on global evidence⁵ that demonstrates that sustained investment in women's rights organizations shifts harmful social norms, expands access to survivor services, enables more responsive justice systems, and builds stronger and more resilient women's organizations.
- Make use of available tools, including gender-responsive budgeting to track investments, and establish long-term funding streams for crime and violence prevention programmes, essential services for victims/survivors of violence, increasing women's public and political participation, and implement gender-responsive urban and transportation planning.

ENDNOTES

- 1 UN Women (2026) Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/the-gender-snapshot-2026-en.pdf>
- 2 UN Women (2026) Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/the-gender-snapshot-2026-en.pdf>
- 3 UN Women (2025) Delivering Impact for Zero Violence UN Women's Key Results in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, 2022–2025; Alice Kerr-Wilson, Andrew Gibbs, Erika McAslan Fraser, Leane Ramsoomar, Anna Parke, Hussain M A Khuwaja and Rachel Jewkes. What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls: UNU Global Health, 2026.; Maressa Noemia Rodrigues Queiroz et al (October 2026) School-based sexual violence prevention: A systematic review. Child Abuse & Neglect.; Basile, K.C., DeGue, S., Jones, K., Freire, K., Dills, J., Smith, S.G., Raiford, J.L. (2016). Sexual Violence Prevention Resource for Action: A Compilation of the Best Available Evidence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 4 Ask for Angela is an international community-based campaign that allows women and others who feel unsafe or who are experiencing sexual harassment to use a code phrase to 'Ask for Angela' (e.g., Is Angela here? Is Angela working today?), to signal to staff at participating locations that they need assistance or support. Ask for Angela began in the United Kingdom in 2016 and has since expanded internationally, including to French and Spanish speaking countries. For more information: <https://askforangela.org.uk/faq/>
- 5 UN Trust Fund meta-analysis report 2025: Insights from civil society organizations funded by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls (2026). Available at: <https://untf.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/05/un-trust-fund-meta-analysis-report-2025-understanding-impact-and-reflecting-on-success-not-all-that-counts-can-be-counted>; Kerr-Wilson, Alice, Andrew Gibbs, Erika McAslan Fraser, Leane Ramsoomar, Anna Parke, Hussain M. A. Khuwaja, and Rachel Jewkes. 2020. *What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls? A Rigorous Global Evidence Review of Interventions to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls*. What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Global Programme. <https://unu.edu/global-health/report/what-works-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls-rigorous-global-evidence-review>; Ellsberg, Mary, Diana J. Arango, Matthew Morton, Floriza Gennari, Sveinung Kiplesund, Manuel Contreras, and Charlotte Watts. 2015. "Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls: What Does the Evidence Say?" The Lancet 385 (9977): 1555–66. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61703-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61703-7).

UN Women exists to advance women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. As the lead United Nations entity on gender equality, we shift laws, institutions, social norms and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. We keep the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.