

# Because I am a Girl Urban Programme: Creating Safe, Accountable and Inclusive Cities for Adolescent Girls



## Adolescent Girls in Cities: Increased Risks and Opportunities

For the first time in history, there are more people living in cities than in rural areas. Each month, five million people are added to cities, and it is estimated that by 2030, approximately **1.5 billion girls** will live in urban areas<sup>1</sup>.

Girls in cities contend with the duality of increased risks and increased opportunities. On the one hand they face sexual harassment, exploitation, and insecurity as they navigate the urban environment, while on the other hand, they are more likely to be educated, less likely to be married at an early age, and more likely to participate in politics.

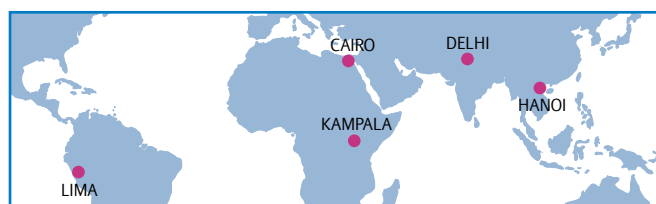
While there has been much global debate on gender and equality over the last decades, and statistics are increasingly collected about women and children, there is very little information available about girls and young women. In particular, the intersection between girls' safety and urban spaces has been largely ignored by academics and development institutions alike. Girls are often ignored in programming aimed at engaging 'youth' or 'women'. For example, many urban safety and crime prevention initiatives target young men and many women's safety initiatives focus only on adult women.

The case of the recent gang-rape and murder of the 23-year-old young woman on a bus in Delhi in December 2012 highlights the urgency of the safety situation for girls and young women in public urban spaces. This incident brought the plight of women's safety to both national and global attention. We are now at a crucial juncture where the passions of people are ignited like never before to end violence against women and girls and make cities safer and more inclusive for themselves and for everyone.

## Our Solution: The Because I am a Girl Urban Programme

The Because I am a Girl Urban Programme is a joint programme developed in partnership between Plan International, Women in Cities International (WICI), and UN-HABITAT to address the increased risks and opportunities for adolescent girls in cities. The overarching goal of the programme **is to build safe, accountable, and inclusive cities with and for adolescent girls in all their diversity.**

The Because I am a Girl Urban Programme will be carried out in **five cities** around the world: Cairo, Egypt; Delhi, India; Hanoi, Vietnam; Kampala, Uganda; Lima, Peru.



### The outcomes of the programme include:

1. Increased girls' safety and access to public spaces.
2. Increased girls' active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance.
3. Increased girls' autonomous mobility in the city.

This programme is part of Plan International's Because I am a Girl campaign to empower girls, promote gender equality, and remove barriers that girls face in achieving their rights. The programme is one of the flagship initiatives of Plan's Global Girls Innovation Programme, a coherent framework that is designed through high equality technical approaches that drive learning and results.

<sup>1</sup> Plan (2010). *Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls 2010. Digital and Urban Frontiers: Girls in a Changing Landscape*. Woking, Plan International.



In Delhi, only 3.3% of girls said that they always feel safe when using public transportation.

## Adolescent Girls' Views on Safety in Cities

In 2012, Plan, WICI, and UN-HABITAT carried out a [study](http://goo.gl/sStEy6) (goo.gl/sStEy6) to understand how safe and inclusive cities are for adolescent girls in Cairo, Delhi, Hanoi, Kampala, and Lima. The research is among the first of its kind. Examining the unique position of adolescent girls in urban environments in an active and participatory way from a broad range of stakeholders is an innovative approach to delving into a new area of research. In each of the cities, girls shared similar experiences of insecurity, of sexual harassment and of feelings of exclusion. They also shared visions of future cities that are well-lit, well-planned, and well-maintained and where they are given space to participate.

- In **Kampala**, 80% of girls claimed that they do not feel safe when in public spaces.
- In **Delhi**, only 3.3% of girls reported always feeling safe when using public transportation. [Watch this video](http://goo.gl/VcVvJq) (goo.gl/VcVvJq) and hear what girls in Delhi had to say.
- In **Cairo**, 32% of girls felt that they never could talk to anyone about their safety concerns.
- In **Lima**, only 2.2% of girls reported always feeling safe when walking in public spaces.
- In **Hanoi**, girls reported that they seldom (36%) or rarely (23%) had access to emergency services – notably the police. [Watch this video](http://goo.gl/KfBkMd) (goo.gl/KfBkMd) to hear more.

## An Innovative and Unique Programme

The Because I am a Girl Urban Programme will focus on innovative and unique strategies and activities to build safer and more inclusive cities for adolescent girls.

**In order to increase adolescent girls' safety and access to public spaces, the programme will:**

- Ensure policies and laws are more receptive and inclusive to adolescent girls' safety.
- Increase the capacity and willingness of institutions and government stakeholders to promote girls' safety in cities through training.
- Mobilise support and action amongst families and communities about girls' safety and inclusion in cities.
- Increase girls' understanding of their rights to safety in the city by building girls' capacity through training workshops, producing resource guides and materials, and establishing girls' clubs and safe spaces.

**In order to increase adolescent girls' active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance, the programme will:**

- Increase the participation of families and communities in girl-led and/or girl-inclusive initiatives.
- Enhance the participation of girls in local governance and increase capacity of girls to take a leadership role in their communities around safety issues. This includes supporting the skills training of girls on communication, participation and leadership to communicate results of safety walks and community score cards.
- Ensure that forums are in place to facilitate girls' participation in urban development and government at community and district levels.

**In order to increase girls' autonomous mobility in the city, the programme will:**

- Ensure that transportation authorities, managers and staff promote and support the safety of adolescent girls by providing sensitivity training and by establishing guidelines and regulations that reflect the priority of girls' safety.
- Increase the willingness of staff and by-standers to protect and support girls when faced with insecurity in transportation systems, including implementing awareness raising campaigns.

## Invest in Girls' Safety

- Adolescent girls are too often ignored or underrepresented in current safety policies and programming and are most excluded from urban development and governance processes. Their voices, so often side-lined and silenced, must be brought forth and listened to in order to build cities that are inclusive of girls, that respond to their needs and priorities and where they feel safe to move freely.
- This programme is being developed at a key strategic moment. At the global level, there is increasing awareness about the particular safety issues women and girls in urban environments face every day, and increasing community and political support in favour of efforts to address these issues.
- The total estimated programme budget is \$12.6 million USD over five years (2013-2017).
- This innovative initiative is a globally united, locally implemented programme that brings together several partners to achieve a common goal – putting adolescent girls at the centre of transforming cities to become places of inclusion, tolerance, and opportunity for everyone. By bringing city officials and adolescent girls together there is a real opportunity to create sustainable economic and social change within these societies that will benefit all citizens.



"I want to give my opinion to make changes in the future."  
Girl, Cairo