

International Service Program 2008-2010

Safe Cities for Women in Guatemala City, Guatemala and San Salvador, El Salvador

UNIFEM (now UN Women)
US\$600,000

Project Update: August - December 2010

Project Summary

Urban violence in Latin America is an increasingly serious phenomenon with a murder rate 114 percent higher than the world average. El Salvador and Guatemala have rates of urban violence and violent homicides even above the regional average. As these nations urbanize, there is a growing sense of insecurity among the population, especially among women who are particularly vulnerable to violence in public and private spaces due to their traditionally subordinate position in society. Measures can be taken to adapt urban planning and policies to meet the particular needs of women in an urban environment and help ensure that women are not at a greater risk of violence simply due to their environment. The Safe Cities project in El Salvador and Guatemala, developed as part of the UNIFEM regional Safe Cities program, builds the capacity of local women's organizations to form coalitions, identify risks in their communities, advocate for their right to lives and neighborhoods free from violence and fear, and participate in the planning of safe neighborhoods with local authorities.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The goal of the regional Safe Cities program is to strengthen women's rights to active citizenship in order to reduce public and private violence against them. With Zonta International's support, the specific objectives of the Safe Cities Project in El Salvador and Guatemala are to:

- Document the connections between reduced gender-based violence (GBV) and improved urban planning.
- Launch campaigns to sensitize the public to the issues surrounding violence against women (VAW) in urban areas.
- Empower local women, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders to promote and develop public policies – with a gender perspective - that help ensure women's safety.
- Create specific opportunities for



collaboration between decision-makers, municipal planners and local women's NGOs to adapt policies and urban planning.

- Disseminate information on lessons learned and successful practices to the public, media and relevant stakeholders.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

There were more than 2,900 direct beneficiaries of this project, including 286 women in Guatemala and 2,624 women in El Salvador. Indirect beneficiaries included 1,430 people in Guatemala; data on indirect beneficiaries in El Salvador is not available.

Increased knowledge on the link between urban violence and violence against women (VAW) to inform ongoing debates on violence and urban security.

➤ El Salvador

- The Salvadoran Women's Organization for Peace implemented a Social Watch on Violence against Women to produce and incorporate gender-sensitive indicators in municipal urban safety policies. The annual report produced by the Social Watch led to the establishment of agreements and commitments in three municipalities in El Salvador – El Puerto, Zaragoza and Olocuilta.
- Workshops on women's active citizenship trained 131 women on urban safety. Proposals from women participating in the workshops, based on an assessment of safety in local public spaces, were presented to municipal authorities to assist in developing a guide to improve public spaces. In response to the women's recommendations, municipal authorities took action, cleaning up streets, improving street lighting and increasing protection by police officers.

➤ Guatemala

- The presentation of the Safe Cities project to the Women's Commission of Guatemala resulted in the signing of an Agreement of Collaboration to implement the Safe Cities' project initiatives within the Congressional Commission of Women in Guatemala.
- Female parliamentarians continued to advocate for the creation of safe public spaces for women through laws and legislation on VAW.

Gender-based violence perspective included in the agendas of stakeholders from social organizations and governments in Guatemala City and San Salvador.

➤ El Salvador

- The Parliament of El Salvador approved the Special Integral Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women in El Salvador on 25 November 2010. The law, formulated by women parliamentarians in consultation with women's organizations, contains 61 articles to uphold the rights of women through policies on detection and prevention of violence, victim assistance and protection, and other measures. The law will come into force in 2012. Passage of this legislation has resulted in enhance recognition of the role of women's organizations in advocacy to eliminate gender-based violence. Going forward, emphasis will be placed on wide dissemination of the law and capacity development of local authorities to guarantee application of the law.
- Women's organizations in Suchitoto conducted an evaluation of the community, creating a map highlighting potential unsafe places. The results were presented

to the Minister of Justice and Public Security, the Director of the National Civil Police and local authorities, all of whom have committed to implementing the recommendations of the women's organizations based on the mapping exercise.

- Reporting units to receive complaints of VAW will be implemented in the National Police Citizen Attention Center in Suchitoto as a result of advocacy by women's organizations. The project plans to replicate this initiative in Puerto La Libertad, another municipality in El Salvador.

➤ Guatemala

- The Women's Agreed Agenda for Safer Cities and Action Plan, developed in collaboration between local government agencies, women's organizations and Fundación Guatemala, a UN Women partner, was presented to the President of Guatemala, the Presidential Secretary for Women, and the Ministry of Government of Guatemala to urge local



- governments in Guatemala to take steps to eradicate urban VAW.
- A collaboration agreement was signed with the Department of Izabal to implement the Women's Agreed Agenda for Safer Cities and establish a Women's Office in 2011.

Urban development plans that include a gender perspective developed with the active participation of women's organizations, civil society and local authorities.

➤ El Salvador

- Women's organizations and the municipal government of Suchitoto have reached agreement on the development of a Safety and Security Plan. The process included several meetings within the Citizen's Violence Prevention Committee Dialogue, in which women's organizations actively advocated for the promotion of concrete measures to increase women's safety in urban spaces in partnership with the local government.
- Lessons learned on VAW from the Safe Cities International Seminar held in El Salvador in 2009 resulted in the incorporation of a gender perspective in urban safety policies of three municipalities – El Puerto, Olocuilta and Zaragoza.
- Fifty-nine (59) public buses in Suchitoto now have external or internal branding to raise awareness of women's safety and public transportation and to alert women to the most dangerous areas of the city, initiatives promoted by women's organizations in alliance with the mayor's office, transporters and business leaders. Safety maps developed by women's organizations were used by local authorities to identify the dangerous areas.

Increased capacities of women's networks and organizations to influence local governments to include gender issues and women's safety in public policies.

In both El Salvador and Guatemala, women's networks and organizations continued to advocate for local governments to prioritize women's safety in public policies. Beginning in

2011, initiatives in both countries will focus on the generation of knowledge of urban violence and gender using baseline data. In El Salvador, work will focus on the dissemination and institutionalization of the Special Integral Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women.

➤ **El Salvador**

- The women's organizations of District 5 in San Salvador, now recognized by the municipal government as key actors on GBV, are able to raise awareness and influence public administrators, officials and other organizations on women's public safety policies as a result of training on gender and masculinity, which was provided to representatives of 17 public institutions and five NGOs from District 5 in San Salvador. As a result, police officers now accompany the women's organizations on exploratory walks through the neighborhoods.

➤ **Guatemala**

- A local study of urban safety, conducted by women's organizations, led to increased street cleaning, improved lighting and protection by police officers for women's organizations during exploratory walks.



Information and lessons learned on violence against women in urban areas disseminate.

In both El Salvador and Guatemala, fundraising by women's organizations has facilitated the dissemination of lessons learned and participation in national and international workshops and meetings.

➤ **El Salvador**

- Through capacity development, training of local actors, and systemization of good practices, the Safe Cities' methodology, as a strategy to prevent VAW, is disseminated to women's organizations and municipal governments in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and parliamentarians in Central America.
- The Safe Cities experience in Suchitoto was selected as a "best practice" at the United Nations Development Program Knowledge Fair held in Panama.
- Information and lessons learned on VAW from the 2009 International Safe Cities Seminar resulted in the incorporation of a gender perspective in urban safety policies in three municipalities – El Puerto, Olocuilta and Zaragoza.

➤ **Guatemala**

- Journalists and representatives of the local police, urban authorities, security ministries and United Nations agencies participated in a Safe Cities International Seminar aimed at identifying key issues related to VAW in urban areas of Guatemala. The Seminar is expected to result in increased publication of articles by opinion leaders and columnists on VAW in urban areas of Guatemala,

highlighting violations of women's rights, in order to promote the development of public policies with a gender perspective to help ensure women's safety.

CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

Delays in collecting the anticipated baseline data were experienced, but this activity should be on track in 2011.

NEXT STEPS

➤ **El Salvador and Guatemala**

- Analysis of criminal trends with a view to incorporating a gender perspective into urban safety policies.
- Development of gender-disaggregated data and statistics on GBV to provide inputs for criminal trends.
- Production of a methodological guide with local analysis of urban safety tools in El Salvador and Guatemala.

➤ **El Salvador**

- Continued systemization and dissemination of experiences and knowledge from the Safe Cities International Seminar held in San Salvador in 2009.
- Monthly publication on the current situation of women's human rights.

➤ **Guatemala**

- Analysis of the application of the Law against Femicide and other Forms of Violence against Women in Guatemala (adopted 9 April 2008).
- Follow-up to the Collaboration Agreement signed to implement the Women's Agreed Agenda for Safer Cities in the Department of Izabal to establish a Women's Department in 2011.
- Roll-out of Safe Cities Women's Coalitions in Guatemala City to promote VAW initiatives.
- Development of methodological guides on active citizenship training workshops on neighborhoods in Guatemala for women leaders and the development of Safe Cities Social Watches.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM

The International Service Program is a Zonta International program, funded by contributions to the Zonta International Foundation's **International Service Fund**. During the 2008-2010 Biennium, three projects were funded by the International Service Fund:

- Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV in Rwanda
- Safe Cities for Women in Guatemala City, Guatemala and San Salvador, El Salvador
- Reduction of Obstetric Fistula in Liberia