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**SAFETY OF WOMEN: CHALLENGES AND
MEASURES IMPLEMENTED**
With Particular Focus on Public Transport

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SAFETY OF WOMEN: CHALLENGES AND MEASURES IMPLEMENTED

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes increasingly urban, gender-based violence in urban public spaces has become a growing phenomenon. With increasing population density, a diverse mix of people in cities, growing inequalities and lack of opportunities for a large proportion of disaffected youth, urban crime in general is on the rise. Violent Crimes against women are also increasing as part of this process. The fact is that women are at risk of Violent Crime just because of their gender. Women are particularly affected by urban design choices, the organisation of public services, the mix of urban functions. They experience a particular feeling of insecurity which can restrict their “access” and “use” of the city, and eventually, undermine their “Right to the City”. At the same time, the fear of Crime and Violence is just as important to take into consideration as actual violence. Furthermore, Women’s Safety is not an issue of violent crime alone. Women’s safety is an all-encompassing concept which includes all strategies and tools which can reduce Violence against women, and must be a central feature in the work of local/ municipal Governments.¹.

2. DEFINITION OF WOMEN’S SAFETY

Women’s safety has been defined in various ways, but the essence of these definitions is a reduction in gender based violence including women’s fear of crime. This includes, first of all, creating safe public spaces, where women can move freely. Women’s safety also includes freedom from poverty, and ensuring that women have safe access to water and sanitation services, as well as other public infrastructure and amenities. Freedom from abuse, domestic violence and sexual harassment at the workplace are also essential ingredients of women’s safety. Finally, a sense of selfworth, along with financial security and independence, are also seen as integral to women’s safety. Strategies, policies and practices to ensure and enhance women’s safety must aim, first of all, to prevent perpetration or victimisation. This can be done, *inter alia*, by improving knowledge and changing attitudes that correspond to the origins of domestic or sexual violence; and

¹ Safe Cities Free of Violence Against Women and Girls Initiative - A Draft Strategic Framework for Women’s Safety in Delhi 2010, p. 1

by ensuring that women and girls participate fully in community life and in local decision-making processes. A safe city for women is a safe city for all².

3. CREATING SAFE PUBLIC PLACES

Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces are an everyday occurrence for women and girls around the world—in urban and rural areas, in developed and developing countries. It happens on streets, public transport and parks, in and around schools and workplaces, in public sanitation facilities and water and food distribution sites, or in their own neighbourhoods³.

Roads (50%) and Public Transport (39%) are listed as most Unsafe Public Spaces, which are followed by markets (22%) and spaces where women wait for public transport (12%). Factors contributing to the lack of safety include lighting on the streets, poorly maintained, non-existent pavements, and poorly designed men's urinals. Women also highlighted the societal attitude towards them which is discriminatory and deepens their sense of exclusion⁴.

This reality reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to participate in school, work and in public life. It limits their access to essential services, and enjoyment of cultural and recreational opportunities. It also negatively impacts their health and well-being. Although violence in the private domain is now widely recognized as a human rights violation, violence against women and girls, especially sexual harassment in public spaces, remains a largely neglected issue, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it⁵.

4. ANALYSIS OF TOTAL CRIME IN DIFFERENT CITIES

The crime profile in major cities, namely, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata has been examined basing on National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics⁶.

² *Ibid*, p. 2

³ <http://www.unwomen.org>

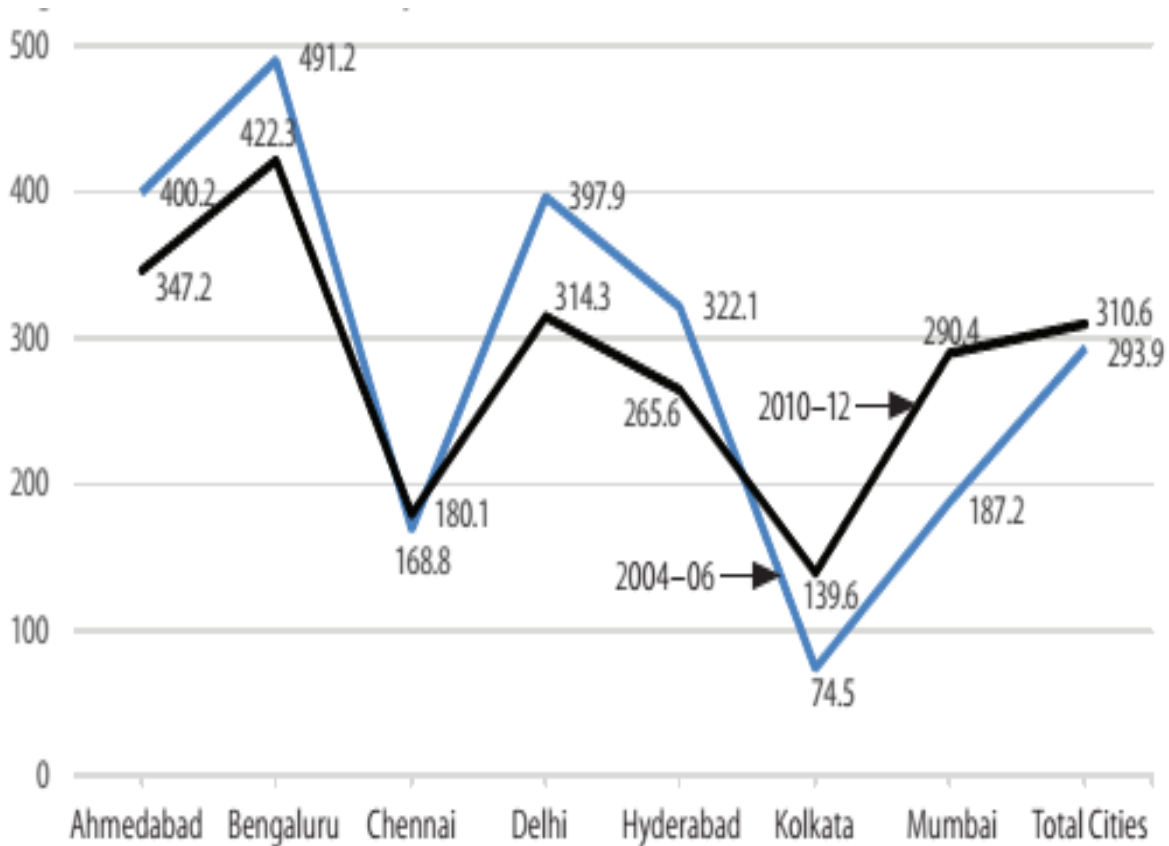
⁴ *Op.cit.*, A Draft Strategic Framework for Women's Safety in Delhi 2010, p. 5

⁵ www.unwomen.org

⁶ Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), 28.12. 2015, Vol. 9 p.88

The crime rates have been calculated based on a three-year average crime rate for 2004–06 and 2010–12. In both the time points, the highest rate of total crime was in Bengaluru, followed by Ahmedabad and Delhi. At the same time, all three cities display a decrease in total crime rates between the two time points, while Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai experienced an increase in total crime rate. The total crime rates for all major cities experienced a marginal increase from 293.9 to 310.6 per 1,00,000 population (as shown in following figure).

Crime Rate in Major Cities (2004–06 and 2010–12)



An analysis of the types of crime reveals that Delhi is reported to have the highest rate of violent crimes, particularly murder, rape and kidnapping. The rate of rape and kidnapping is alarmingly high in Delhi as compared to the other cities, while rates of murder and rape have declined from 2004–06 to 2010–12⁷ as shown in following Table.

⁷ Ibid

Rate of Murder, Rape and Kidnapping in Major Cities during 2004–06 and 2010–12

Crime	Year	Delhi	Chennai	Kolkata	Mumbai	Bengaluru	Hyderabad	Ahmedabad	Total Cities
Murder	2004–06	3.0	1.6	0.3	1.4	4.0	2.2	2.0	2.7
	2010–12	2.9	1.9	0.5	1.2	3.5	1.7	1.6	2.4
Rape	2004–06	4.1	0.6	0.2	1.1	0.6	1.3	0.9	1.5
	2010–12	3.2	0.9	0.3	1.2	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.7
Kidnapping	2004–06	9.5	0.8	0.7	1.2	2.4	2.5	4.5	3.4
	2010–12	19.7	0.8	1.3	1.2	7.3	1.5	3.9	5.2

As per the National Crime Records Bureau data, a total number of 228650, 244270 and 309546 cases of atrocities against women have been registered in the year 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively which shows increasing trend⁸.

5. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES ON WOMEN SAFETY

(a) Policies and Legislations

➤ **International Conventions:** India has ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the **Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** in 1993. In addition, the **Mexico Plan of Action (1975)**, the **Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985)**, the **Beijing Declaration** as well as the **Platform for Action (1995)** and the **Outcome Document** adopted by the **UN General Assembly Session on Gender Equality and Development and Peace for the 21st century**, have also been endorsed by India.

There have been a number of initiatives by the national Government or the judiciary over the past decade or so, which have touched upon issues of gender equality, women's empowerment, violence and crimes against women which are given below:

- **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women:** It was adopted in 2001 with the explicit aim of “advancement, development and empowerment of women.” Its objectives were wide-ranging, and included adoption of positive economic and social

⁸ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2243 dated 5.12.2014

policies that would enable women to realize their full potential; ensuring that women enjoyed all human rights and fundamental freedom as much as men.

The policy also made a specific mention of violence against women, asserting that, *“All forms of violence against women, physical and mental, whether at domestic or societal levels, including those arising from customs, traditions or accepted practices shall be dealt with effectively with a view to eliminate its incidence. Institutions and mechanisms/schemes for assistance will be created and strengthened for prevention of such violence, including sexual harassment at work place and customs like dowry; for the rehabilitation of the victims of violence and for taking effective action against the perpetrators of such violence”*⁹.

- **The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012)** has included a reference to preventing Violence Against Women in its chapter titled “Towards Women’s Agency and Child Rights”, acknowledging that VAW is a major issue in both rural and urban areas. The focus, however, continues to be on domestic violence and rape.
- **Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2013 (Sections related to Sexual Assault):** The Bill is also known as the Anti Rape Bill which was passed on 19 March 2013. It provides for natural life term or even death for repeat offenders of rape. It is also to provide stringent punishment for offenses like stalking, voyeurism, acid attacks and human trafficking¹⁰.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Act, 2013:** The Supreme Court judgment in the case of *Vishakha versus the State of Rajasthan* in 1997 laid down detailed guidelines and norms on sexual harassment at the workplace. The landmark judgement asserted that actual molestation or even physical contact was not required for it to be construed as sexual harassment¹¹. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 came into force on 9 December 2013¹². It seeks to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the

⁹ *Op.cit.*, A Draft Strategic Framework for Women’s Safety in Delhi 2010, p. 16

¹⁰ Business Standard, dated 15.12.2016

¹¹ *Op.cit.*, A Draft Strategic Framework for Women’s Safety in Delhi 2010, pp. 16-19

¹² India, Ministry of Child and Women Development, Annual Report 2014-15, p. 8

prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith.

- ***The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005***: On 26 October 2006, the path-breaking Domestic Violence Act was passed by the Indian Parliament to provide immediate support to women victims of domestic violence in the form of shelter, medical facilities, etc. Under this legislation, all States were to appoint Protection Officers to support and guide those affected by domestic violence¹³.
- ***The Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986***: The Act was enacted with the specific objective of prohibiting indecent representation of women in advertisement, publications, writings and paintings or in any other manner and references that are derogatory to the dignity of women¹⁴.
- ***Advisory of the Ministry of Home Affairs***: The Ministry has also issued directives to state governments from time to time on women's safety. The most recent one was an "**Advisory regarding Measures needed to curb Crime against Women**", issued on September 4, 2009. It pointed specifically to the need for "improving safety conditions on the road", and suggested that the concerned departments of the State Governments should: increase the number of beat constables especially on the sensitive roads; number of police help booth/kiosks, especially in remote and lonely stretches; police patrolling, especially during the night; the number of women police officers in the mobile police vans; set up telephone booths for easy access to police; install people friendly street lights on all roads, lonely stretches and alleys; initiate special steps for security of women working in night shifts of call centers; and ensure safety and security of female students in educational institutions¹⁵.
- ***Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)***: Another initiative that merits a mention here is a paper commissioned by the **UNDP** on incorporating gender considerations in the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. The paper makes several useful recommendations on ensuring that urban development and

¹³ *Op.cit.*, Annual Report, p. 9

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Op.cit.*, A Draft Strategic Framework for Women's Safety in Delhi 2010, pp. 17-18

the provision of urban infrastructure and services is sensitive and responsive to women's needs, including the need for safety in public spaces. Poor women are particularly vulnerable in this respect, as they tend to work in the informal sector, are paid less than men, and are more open to exploitation. Resettlement of slum-dwellers in far-away, less-populated areas also increases risks to women both at home and in travelling for work.

The above-mentioned initiatives, enactments, judgements and policy directives have made significant strides in the mainstreaming of gender considerations in policy setting and implementation, as well as in the prevention of domestic violence, sexual harassment at the workplace, rape and sexual assault, and trafficking. Yet, there is neither a widespread recognition of the issue of sexual harassment of women in public spaces, nor an institutional mechanism or significant financial allocations, to address this growing problem¹⁶.

(b) Strategies and Measures: Studies all over the world have demonstrated that men and women use public transport differently. In India, even in car-owning households, it is usually the men who drive, while women take public transport to travel to the workplace, drop and pick-up children, and carry out a whole range of household chores. Thus improvement in the public transport system has shown immediate positive results on the lives of women and the way in which they access the city¹⁷. Some of measure in public transport are given as follows:

- **Women Safety in Trains:** For strengthening of security of women passengers, measures like operationalisation of 182 Security helpline and installation of CCTV cameras in ladies compartments of suburban coaches have been pronounced in Rail Budget 2015-16¹⁸.

A mobile-based application by the name of 'R-Mitra' has been launched recently by the Railway Minister, Shri Suresh Prabhu which will ensure the safety of women. It is an extremely useful App that could be used by regional railways nation- wide. "The basic functionality of R-Mitra (Railway Mobile Instant Tracking Response and Assistance) is

¹⁶ *Op.cit.*, A Draft Strategic Framework for Women's Safety in Delhi 2010, pp. 18-19

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 29

¹⁸ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3353 dated 10.8.2015

to alert the nearest RPF inspector and divisional security control room in case of any emergency with the press of a button only"¹⁹.

- **Safety and Security for Women Tourists:** The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Home Affairs has started collecting data on crime against foreign tourists since 2014. A number of steps have been taken by the Ministry of Tourism to ensure the Safety and Security of tourists including foreign tourists. Some such measures include:
 - i). The Ministry of Tourism, on a pilot basis, has set up the 'Incredible India Help Line' to guide the tourists.
 - ii). Adoption of Code of Conduct for Safe and Hon'ble Tourism, which contains a set of Guidelines to encourage tourism activities to be undertaken with respect to basic rights like dignity, safety and freedom from exploitation of both tourists and local residents, and women and children in particular.
 - iii). All the Chief Ministers of the State Governments and Administrators of Union Territory Administrations have been asked to take immediate effective steps for ensuring a conducive and friendly environment for all tourists²⁰
- **Response Centre for Women Safety:** The Government of India is deeply concerned with the welfare of women, through various Schemes and Advisories to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations²¹.

All the State Governments have been advised by the Ministry of Home Affairs to put in place regulatory frame work where by the provision of basic security features pertaining to access control and surveillance (through CCTV cameras, etc) systems, are made mandatory in respect of certain types of private establishments, such as Malls, Multiplexes, hotels, restaurants and other entertainment places²².

- **Safety of Women in Metro:** Various measures for safety of women in Metro Rail have been taken by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC). Some of them are: One dedicated coach as 'Women Only' has been provided in each train for women commuters, in addition to one reserved coach for women commuters; 4 additional

¹⁹ samacharplus.com dated 15.2.2016

²⁰ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 86 dated 27.7.2015

²¹ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 4378 dated 21.4.2015

²² *ibid*

seats per coach have also been earmarked for ladies; and dedicated ladies CISF staff has been deployed at stations for separate frisking of lady passengers in specially made frisking booths, etc²³.

- **Ministry of Women and Child Development** initiated the measures as: Swadhar and Short Stay Home Schemes are being administered by the Ministry for relief and rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances. Under these schemes funds are allocated to the Non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The Ministry is endeavouring to put in place effective mechanism to provide safe environment for women to work and live and fulfil their potential. Continuous awareness creation among men and women in the society through workshops, seminars, street plays, Nari ki Chaupals, Beti Janmotsav at the district level. In collaboration with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Special (Mahila) Gram Sabhas have also been conducted. Further, advertisements in the press and electronic media have been educating people about issues of women²⁴.

The Scheme for Universalisation of Women Helpline has been approved for implementation through States/UTs from 1 April 2015 to provide 24 hour emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence both in public and private sphere, including in the family, community, workplace etc. Under the Scheme, it has been envisaged to publicize the Women Helpline through awareness-generation strategies including mass publicity campaign by State/UT Government²⁵.

- **Mobile Apps** : India is developing mobile safety device for women in collaboration with Premier Electronic Research Institutes in India²⁶.

Suraksha Women Safety Device: The atrocities against the women can now be brought to an end with the help of a device called Suraksha. The basic idea underlying suraksha which is to flash a warning giving an instant location of the distressed victim to the police so that the incident could be prevented and the culprit

²³ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1759 dated 3.12.2014

²⁴ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2243 dated 5.12.2014

²⁵ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3279 dated 18.12.2015

²⁶ www.mea.gov.in

apprehended. This would help reduce crime against women. It is a simple and easy to carry device with magnanimous functionality. The basic approach is to intimidate instant location and a distress message to the cops. Currently the work is under process to miniaturize it so that it could be embedded in jewelleries, mobile phones etc. in order to make it versatile instrument for masses. It can play a major role in the upcoming projects such as Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS) in which all the police records all over India are digitized and all the police station throughout the country will be integrated.

Amrita Personal Safety System (APSS), a new technology to protect women from potential rapists and sexual offenders. APSS is an inconspicuous, wearable and easy-to-operate electronic device that will help women in establishing communication with family and police at the first sign of trouble. The device will remain invisible to the criminals and yet can easily triggered by the user with multiple options, to ensure steady and secure communication.

"VithU" is an emergency App that, at the click of the power button of your Smartphone 2 times consecutively begins sending out alert messages every 2 minutes to your contacts that you feed into the app as the designated receivers or guardians.

JIVI 2010 is a feature of Jivi mobile with a fully dedicated SOS button aimed at women. In case of any emergency or unfortunate times, user needs to long press the SOS button and the phone starts calling 5 pre-stored numbers one after the other²⁷.

6. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S SAFETY IN CITIES

Urban Safety and Crime prevention is increasingly a concern and priority area for Local Governments around the world. These issues are linked to problems of poverty and social fragmentation, exclusion from decision-making, inequitable distribution of resources among city-dwellers, and lack of essential services. In addition, safety is also dependent upon urban form and quality of infrastructure in different neighbourhoods. A number of

²⁷ International Journal of Information and Computation, Vol. 4 No. 8, 2014, p p. 787-788

cities in both developing and developed countries have developed Urban Safety Strategies whose implementation is led by the local Government and other local actors such as the police.

A number of international organizations, including UN-HABITAT's Safer Cities Programme, the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC), the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and UNIFEM, among others, have worked with other international, regional, national and local organisations to develop documents, projects, guidelines and various other interventions in the area of crime prevention at the local/urban level.

UN-HABITAT's Safer Cities programme has focused its attention on integrating gender perspectives into safety discussions; developing conceptual and practical tools and methodologies to combat violence against women; collecting, analyzing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data; and promoting the full and equal participation of women in human settlements planning and decision-making. The Safer Cities programme recommends a systematic approach to improving urban safety and countering gender-based violence which includes:- diagnosis of local insecurity; formation of a local coalition of stakeholders; strategy formulation and development of local action plans through city consultations; and its implementation through a broad-based participatory process; Monitoring and evaluation.

Like the Safer Cities programme, the International Centre for Prevention of Crime (ICPC) also prescribes a five-step approach to Community Safety at the local Government level, which involves:

1. Identification and mobilisation of key partners led by local city authorities;
2. A rigorous assessment or security diagnosis of local problems of urban safety;
3. Development of local action plans which address the root causes of crime;
4. Implementation and evaluation of long- and short-term projects which target social exclusion and urban poverty, specific crimes and specific geographical areas; and
5. Establishment of a central coordinating committee involving all relevant stakeholders.

Another recent initiative at the international level is the programme “**Gender Inclusive Cities**”, coordinated by Women in Cities International. It aims to increase women's safety by identifying and disseminating effective and promising approaches that promote women's equal access to public space. The project is being carried out in four cities around the world - Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Delhi in India, Rosario in Argentina, and Petrozavodsk in Russia.

At the national and local level, many countries have adopted comprehensive strategies for urban crime prevention. In the **United Kingdom**, a twin-pronged approach has been adopted over the past decade – tough-on-crime policies, accompanied by a multi-faceted strategy to reducing crime through addressing the root causes. In March 2010, the Greater London Authority unveiled a strategy titled “The Way Forward: Taking action to end Violence Against Women and Girls”. Steps already taken include significantly increasing Safer Transport Teams, running awareness campaigns on planning journeys home and advising against using illegal minicabs, and working with the police and Transport for London (TfL) to make the pan-London Cab Enforcement Unit (CEU) more effective.

In the United States, a web-based survey conducted in 2007 on the New York City subway system brought out many interesting findings. 63 per cent of the respondents reported having been sexually harassed in the subway, while 10 per cent reported being sexually assaulted. Over 50 per cent reported that the incident had taken place during morning or evening rush hour. 96 per cent of the victims did not report the incident to the New York City Police Department (NYPD) or the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Another initiative on improving safety and tackling sexual harassment and assault in New York City is RightRides. Launched in 2004 Volunteers operate a fleet of up to 6 cars to drive women. It is a free service, available on Friday and Saturday nights, and operates within select neighbourhoods of New York City²⁸.

A handful of initiatives also exist in developing countries which have a specific component on women's safety. For example, some Latin American cities have taken significant steps in recent years to address the specific types of violence and crime that women and girls face, including designating separate subway cars for women, establishing

²⁸ *Op.cit.*, A Draft Strategic Framework for Women's Safety in Delhi 2010, pp. 11-14

women-only police stations, etc. Since 2007, **UN-HABITAT** has supported the City of Bogota in preparing the White Paper on '**Safety and Coexistence for Bogota**'.

UNIFEM's programme "**Cities with no Violence towards Women**" is a regional initiative implemented by the Latin American Network Woman and Shelter in five cities across the region - Santiago, Chile; Rosario, Argentina; Bogota, Colombia; Guatemala city, Guatemala; and El Salvador city, El Salvador²⁹.

UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative includes two main flagship programmes. In 2010, with UN-Habitat and 50 other global and local partners, the "**Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls**" was launched in Quito, Ecuador; Cairo, Egypt; New Delhi, India; Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; and Kigali, Rwanda. It is the first-ever global comparative programme that develops, implements, and evaluates tools, policies and comprehensive approaches on the prevention of, and response to, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls across different settings.

In 2011, UN Women, UNICEF, and UN-Habitat launched the "**Safe and Sustainable Cities for All**" joint programme in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; San José, Costa Rica; Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Nairobi, Kenya; Beirut, Lebanon; Marrakesh, Morocco; Manila, Philippines; and Dushanbe, Tajikistan³⁰.

CONCLUSION

Women and Girls are vulnerable to violence both within and outside the home. Past efforts have focused mainly on domestic violence and sexual harassment at the workplace, sexual assault and rape. The present situation focuses primarily on violence in the public domain, including sexual harassment, staring, touching, sexual assault, attempted rape, stalking, lewd comments, etc. These forms of violence demand different responses and strategies precisely because of their location in the public space. In many ways, the present initiatives are pioneering one, which aspire to formulate a strategic framework to make the cities safe for women³¹.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 14

³⁰ www.unwomen.org

³¹ *Op.cit.*, A Draft Strategic Framework for Women's Safety in Delhi 2010, p. 2

Public transport (including the modes of transportation as well as waiting areas) can be improved through design, training of staff, and increased monitoring. Civic awareness campaigns can help in building an understanding of women's safety concerns. Increased police presence in public spaces, and induction of women police officers and constables can help, but it should also be accompanied by sensitisation and capacity building programmes for the police force³².

³² *Ibid*,p.10