THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

CITIES FOR GIRLS: GUIDELINES FOR FEMINIST URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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OVERVIEW

Most of the world's population live in cities, and poverty is increasingly becoming an urban phenomenon. One billion live in informal settlements, and inequalities are increasing the fastest in cities. Girls are often the most vulnerable and neglected, suffering from gender-based violence and lacking access to education and safe places. Investments in girls' access to decent work, physical and financial assets, mobility, security, and representation becomes key to sustainable development. #UrbanGirlsMovement was initiated to map local good examples and lessons learned while implementing SDG 3, 5, 10 and 11: 'Plan a city for girls – and it will work for everyone'.

KEY TAKEWAYS

Where are we? What is our reality? What challenges are we facing today?
What similarities and/or differences do we see across contexts?
Poverty and exclusion has traditionally been seen as a rural phenomenon. But with the current rapid urbanisation, it is becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon. Today, one out of seven, or more than 1 billion people, live in slums. Globally, inequalities are increasing the fastest in cities. Girls in cities are often the most vulnerable and neglected; they face gender-based violence, lack safe access to public spaces, education, and are more vulnerable to environmental risks. A particular focus on girls in cities, their needs and rights, will therefore be crucial to meet many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Investing in urban girls' access to decent work, physical and financial assets, mobility, security, and representation will be crucial for sustainable development globally. Global Utmaning initiated #UrbanGirlsMovement to map good examples, stories, and lessons learned from multi-stakeholders globally. It highlights ongoing projects implementing the SDGs at the local level. The purpose of the seminar was to provide a deeper understanding that city planning has a role within development cooperation and that focus on women and girls in urban areas must become a priority if we are to meet the SDGs.

Plan International is among other organisations raising awareness, acknowledging these norms, and empowering girls to be assertive, keep safe and learn how to access the public space. The perceptions girls have of safety differs. Girls feel weak because they are told men are stronger and that they have the right to treat them as other than equals. As a consequence, girls are often afraid of being harassed in the street or on public transport or of walking unaccompanied in the dark at night. Understanding the social norms behind these behavioural patterns that ultimately guide these stories, and the perceptions that these are built upon becomes key to change. Plan International raises these issues with local authorities to make their cities safer.

What are we doing?
As cities grow, particularly when urbanisation is very rapid, inequalities tend to increase too. In order to make cities inclusive for all, we need to plan ahead and adopt inclusive and long-term perspectives. Feminist urban planning can be a tool for that. A crucial element for policy capacity building are contributions from multi-stakeholders. The panellists shared good examples from their experiences.

From an international perspective Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive director of UN-Habitat, shared how she as a former local decision-maker is bringing her experience in gender budgeting to the UN level. As a Mayor, Ms. Sharif headed the first municipality in Malaysia to practice gender responsive, participatory budgeting, transparency, and accountability. As a result, she pushed for the allocation of more funding for public infrastructure benefitting women and those who are more vulnerable. In her position as executive director of UN-Habitat she plans to continue the discussion how to localise the global sustainability agenda and support cities at the municipality level in this transformation.

From the national perspective, as well as a representative for the private sector, Monica von Schmalensee, Chair of the Swedish council on sustainable cities, is bringing private sector experience into the implementation of the new national urban policy. The existence of SDG11 is proof that our society has evolved. Cities are becoming innovative platforms for sustainability but are also illustrating the societal divisions in terms of co-existing economic classes. For example, several suburbs of Gothenburg have engaged young girls, putting up signs in places where they did not feel secure. Studies carried out in these areas have shown that a much larger number of boys are playing in the playgrounds and public parks compared to girls. Walking tours with the girls were initiated and arranged in order to identify ideas in need of change to make them feel safer – and open up the playground and public parks for girls on equal terms. Bushes and vegetation has been removed and adequate lights have been installed for them to feel safer.

From the local decision-makers' perspective, Ebba Östlin, Mayor of Botkyrka, shared the municipality's work with vulnerable girls in urban planning. The municipality of Botkyrka has been pin-pointed as one of the socio-economically vulnerable areas in the Stockholm region. It has a large housing stock that is in need of special attention, and the area is characterised by a high level of segregation. For the past 15 years, the municipality has been strategically working on refurbishing and developing the neighbourhoods with an active involvement of the citizens. However, they have just recently realised that they have totally

missed out on one group – the young girls. Therefore, they are now initiating projects to see how to plan a specific area based on the girls' specific needs.

From the civil society perspective, Alex Munive, Head of Gender and Inclusion at Plan International Headquarters, described their effective tools for putting girls at the centre of urban planning. Plan International is developing training materials and tools for empowerment, putting girls at the centre of urban planning. The purpose of one of the exercises tested during the workshop is to explore participants' knowledge and experience of insecurity in the city from a gender perspective. This helps participants understand that perceptions and feelings of insecurity have an impact on girls' and women's access to public spaces. In the last five years, they have been testing different practices to sustainable urban development and to translate it into something that can be discussed with authorities. At the centre, social accountability mechanisms are putting girls at the centre to make them look at the public services from a different perspective, thus empowering them with information.

From the grass roots and social entrepreneur's perspective, Elsa DaSilva, Founder of SafeCity India, is raising awareness about sexual harassment by mapping data. SafeCity aims to make cities safer by encouraging equal access to public spaces for everyone, especially women, through the use of crowdsourced data and technology. It was founded in 2012 after a gang rape on a girl in Delhi and has almost 200,000 followers on Twitter. SafeCity aims at creating awareness on street harassment and abuse and at getting women and other disadvantaged people in the communities to break their silence and report their personal experiences. They are creating anonymous stories based on real experiences, highlighting hot spots and hit maps, and then clustering these stories to form location-based perspectives to make informed choices and to be ready to react.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Where do we go from here?
We understand that it takes a critical perspective on norms for city planning to become more inclusive, which is necessary to meet the SDGs on cities and equality and many of the other goals. We asked our panellists about their most important lessons learned and their recommendations for others:

- Involving the private sector, stakeholders and facilitating community engagement is crucial to get the correct feedback in order to make the right priorities and manage progress more effectively. Key has been to work hard to reduce cost for cities by improving partnerships between the private, public and people.
- Whatever we might intend by the New Urban Agenda, we have to translate it to a local level since that is where the actual implementation is taking place.
- It is important to institutionaliSe safe cities as a smart solution. Look for the local champions, make them believe in you, and build local relationships where the youth are participating and a part of the processes.
- If the city is safe for girls and women, it is safe for everybody. Every decision-maker should have this in mind as they put up any new development plans. Safety assessment tools such as conducting women safety audits can be one way to improve women safety in urban areas.
- Come up with global tools to look at success projects that have been implemented in other cities, based on public engagement and public participation in making cities safer.

- Sustainable urban planning must entail planning for all, both poor and rich, without prioritising one at the expense of the other. It is as important to have a bottom-up approach to planning, design and architecture as to policy-making.
- Know your facts and know your area; this cannot be stressed enough.
- Equality must be a cornerstone. Everyone should have the same possibility and access to public spaces. In some cities we have to reclaim the space and see who the different stakeholders are and also use social media as a tool to create solutions.
- There are official channels to hand in proposals and suggestions, but today mostly men are using this opportunity. We must reach and involve more women.
- Plan projects with sustainability and long-term perspectives – not just pilots or start-up projects.
- Plans have to be sustainable; we need to plan for the future and for future populations; and we have to be both visionary and innovative. Focus on integrated strategies that are sustainable, not just short-term projects with a political agenda of just showing quick results to voters.
- We need to make sure the architects and urban planners manage to translate the citizens' ideas into reality. There is an increasing need to use technology to contact and network with young girls. Researching out to likeminded is crucial to find tools to increase participation in urban planning as well as to capitalise on the latest inventions and other tools.
- Find ways of scale up good activities globally to other cities.
- Focus on social norms is focusing both on boys and girls in applying a gender perspective. Bringing in young men into the project to discuss norms and the importance of decent behaviours turns out to be very effective. ■

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