



CONCEPT NOTE

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S SAFETY: BUILDING INCLUSIVE CITIES

NEW DELHI, INDIA 22 - 24 NOVEMBER 2010

SUMMARY

Women's lack of safety is a serious obstacle to achieving gender equality as it curtails women's mobility and limits their right to participate fully and freely as citizens in their communities. It is an issue that affects millions of women and girls in cities all over the world. Both the causes and consequences of gender inequality and women's lack of safety are interrelated and multi-faceted, encompassing such diverse issues as violence against women (VAW), access to basic services and employment, good governance, urban planning, and political participation.

Women in Cities International and Jagori are co-organizing the Third International Conference on Women's Safety in collaboration with the Huairou Commission, UNIFEM, UN-Habitat, and various local and international partners in order to address the safety needs of today's female urban population. It is an occasion for bringing together a diverse international community working in the fields of safe cities for women, women's rights and violence against women (VAW) to build upon collective experience through capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and visioning activities. This event is part of a strategic process of assessing, consolidating and further advancing new EAW strategies, which are especially relevant to women living in urban communities in both the global South and North.

Given the existence of growing international pressure to achieve women's equality, it is an opportune time to launch the Third International Conference on Women's Safety, which will take place on November 22 – 24, 2010 in Delhi, India. Moreover, this event will occur two-thirds of the way to the 2015 deadline set for reaching the Millennium Development Goals. At this two-thirds marker, it is clear that no country is close to achieving gender equality. Thus, there is a need to mobilize international actors at every level to push forward a women's rights agenda.

BACKGROUND

Many international conventions and declarations have been adopted, and conferences and meetings organized to explore opportunities and challenges associated with the creation of a world that is safe for women. Some results from these events include the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW, 1979); the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993); the Convention of Belém do Pará (1994); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995); the United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women (2008); the ongoing campaign 16 days of Activism against Gender Violence which begins each year on November 25th; and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

In the past five years, there has been renewed commitment and determination at the international level to tackle the issues put forward in each of these initiatives and policies. For example, the 2009 United Nations General Assembly's vote in favour of the creation of a single UN entity for women demonstrates an active interest in enabling women's equality worldwide. There have also been developments aimed at addressing the underlying causes of gender-based violence and increasing women's safety in both family/private and public settings. It is now widely accepted that public and private expressions of VAW are not mutually exclusive, but rather are mutually reinforcing. Today, it is clear that it is the task of the entire international community to fight all manifestations of VAW, which result in gender inequality and have a direct impact on how safe women feel in their daily lives at home, in their workplace and in public spaces.

It is only by working comprehensively and in a multi-sectoral fashion that we can begin to address the root causes of VAW and gender inequality, both of which affect women's safety. Two international conferences have already been held to look in-depth at the issue in 2002 and 2004. Each conference resulted in the creation of a Declaration on Women's Safety (Montreal Declaration on Women's Safety 2002 and Declaration of Bogotá Safe Cities for Women and Girls 2004). These important milestones attest to the fact that the international community has acknowledged the necessity of 'Making the Links' (the theme of the first conference) in order to create safe cities that benefit from the knowledge and expertise of a multitude of stakeholders, including grassroots women. Evidence from the first two conferences indicates that events such as this are crucial for building and sustaining the momentum we see today in the safe cities for women movement. For example, the international success of the women's safety audit methodology implemented in many countries across the world can be attributed in part to its dissemination in the skills-building workshops offered in 2002 and 2004.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE CITIES

The theme of the Third International Conference on Women's Safety is 'Building Inclusive Cities'. This theme highlights how the concept of women's safety can be used as an entry point to action on VAW and women's rights through the strategic convening of key urban stakeholders and decision-makers, including those women whose voices and perspectives would not otherwise be heard.

This conference will build on the successes of its predecessors while striving to address current issues such as rapid urban population growth and its effect on socially excluded groups. The needs of women living in slums and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, of elderly women, of disabled women, of indigenous women, of lesbian and transsexual women, and of those from ethnic and cultural minorities all continue to present particular challenges for those working to include representative groups of women in safe cities, women's rights and VAW work. As a result, the international community must now focus on gender inclusion through a wider lens which accounts for the multiple exclusions women face while living in cities worldwide. Women from every level of urban life will be at the centre of this event, sharing their strength and experience in order to collectively develop strategies for confronting the issues that threaten women's safety and equality.

OBJECTIVES

The Third International Conference on Women's Safety provides the opportunity to ground and expand upon local and international approaches that build safer and more inclusive cities for women and girls. This event will enable participants to collectively explore how these methodologies have been or can be adapted, how they have succeeded, and how they can be improved and used elsewhere to confront new and emerging issues. In addition, the conference will be a space for peer-learning and for the capacity-building of local groups, so that new actors can take responsibility for implementing safe and inclusive cities approaches in their communities. Specifically, the objectives of the Third International Women's Safety Conference are:

- to review, analyze and consolidate different approaches/tools aimed at building safe and inclusive cities,
- to build strong capacity within local-level civil society in order to mobilize community-wide support for safe and inclusive cities action,
- to assess and disseminate lessons learned and good practices developed on enhancing women's inclusion and right to the city.

OUTCOMES

Over the past 20 years, international networks, governments, local women's organizations, and a host of non-governmental organizations have developed an important body of theoretical and practical work on safe and inclusive cities. This conference continues to build on this work, while emphasizing opportunities for synergies amongst different actors. The expected outcomes of this event are to increase awareness, engagement and advocacy on women's full rights to their cities. It is anticipated that conference participants will gain:

- a more profound understanding of the benefits of building safe and inclusive cities,
- an overview of key strategies to effectively address issues, challenges and opportunities for the diversity of women in accessing their rights to the city,
- a set of tools/approaches that can be used in their daily work when they return to their communities,
- a plan of action to facilitate advocating for women's right to the city and to mobilize community-wide support.

OUTPUTS

The Third International Conference on Women's Safety is expected to result in several concrete outputs which will benefit participants as well as the wider international community.

1. A webpage dedicated to the conference will be developed and made available via the conference organizers' websites. The webpage will encourage discussion and debate before and after the conference, contain up-to date information about the conference, and provide electronic registration.
2. A background paper will be developed in anticipation of the conference. The background paper will focus on the conference theme and provide pertinent information related to women's safety, women's rights, VAW and gender equality in cities.
3. A 'Delhi Declaration' will be presented and adopted at the end of the conference, following the tradition of its predecessors. Within the document, conclusions from each of the conference sessions will inform action-oriented goals directed towards all stakeholder levels.
4. Conference proceedings will be developed and distributed. Proceedings will include: an introduction summarizing the conference and its themes, the Delhi Declaration adopted at the close of the conference, short papers prepared by the keynote speakers, panellist presentations, and rapporteur conclusions from each of the sessions. This document will in turn inform future action plans for work on safe cities for women.

PARTICIPANTS

The Third International Conference on Women's Safety is an opportunity to bring together approximately 200 people from a wide variety of different fields and backgrounds (women's

groups, elected representatives and civil servants at the municipal level, associations of municipalities, researchers, crime prevention organizations, regional and national governments, community organizations, grassroots groups, and international agencies) who are actively working to enhance women's safety and equality in urban environments. Participants will be invited on the basis of their contribution to the issues of women's safety, elimination of VAW and women's equality. Organizers will strive to ensure equitable institutional and geographical distribution of participants.

CONFERENCE SUB-THEMES

Presentations will be conducted on the basis of key sub-themes related to women's safety and equality in cities. These presentations will help practitioners to review the progress of the safe cities movement and to identify obstacles, strengths and future prospects at local, national, regional and international scales. A number of possible sub-themes have been identified based on current practice and discussion in local and international networks.

The following sub-themes reflect diverse approaches and strategies that build women's and communities' capacities for action on safety. Consideration of the importance of citizen empowerment and participation will be at the heart of all conference events. The role of partnerships and local authorities, the primacy of local-level action and the sharing of local and international expertise and practice will be overarching concerns to be addressed throughout conference proceedings. Potential conference sub-themes include:

- Involving differently-abled women in the safe cities for women movement
- Strengthening our links and linking globally
- Creative expressions of (un)safe and in/exclusive urban spaces
- Women's access to basic services
- Good governance.

CONFERENCE FORMAT

A variety of sessions, including keynote presentations, skills-building workshops, interactive panel presentations, and collective visioning exercises will maximize opportunities for knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and networking among participants.

In addition to the daily conference programme, activities aimed at facilitating strategic convening and partnership-building will be arranged, including:

- A cocktail reception on the first evening of the conference,
- Select site visits to allow participants to see first-hand the work being done in and around Delhi, India on women's safety and gender equality,
- An exhibition space for displaying innovative and creative expressions of women's experiences and perceptions of urban life.

PARTNERS

The Third International Conference on Women's Safety is being organized in collaboration with a number of key international partners at the forefront of safe cities for women work. Red Mujer y Habitat de America Latina and the Huairou Commission, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) are collaborating partners.

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