

Two UN agencies partner to make world's cities safer for women – (4 June 2009)

Two United Nations agencies have teamed up to combat violence against women and girls in the world's cities, including by proposing measures such as improved street lighting and female-only modes of transportation.

[UN-HABITAT](#), the agency charged with ensuring adequate shelter for all, and the UN Development Fund for Women ([UNIFEM](#)) have signed a memorandum of understanding that brings the shelter agency into UNIFEM's existing Global Programme on Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls, the agencies announced today.

The Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, Anna Tibaijuka, and the Executive Director of UNIFEM, Ines Alberdi, signed the agreement in New York on 2 June.

“Local authorities and city management have a crucial role to play in the prevention of violence against women, both in public and private spaces, whether it be harassment or attacks outside the home, or domestic abuse behind closed doors,” [said](#) Ms. Tibaijuka.

According to the memorandum, the agencies will develop practical measures that local authorities can use to make cities safer.

A UNIFEM spokeswoman said today that such measures could include improved street lighting; regular, dependable and safe transportation; the revitalization of vacant lots that some women might find threatening; and women-only cars on trains or women-only buses.

The agencies also cited “a need for campaigns to help change attitudes or behaviour that condones or perpetuates violence against women.”

The memorandum also covers broader issues of good governance, urban planning, women's empowerment, political participation, gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting and access to basic services, the agencies said.

Violence makes up at least 25 to 30 per cent of urban crime and women, especially in developing countries, are twice as likely as men to be victims of violent aggression, including domestic violence, UN-HABITAT said.

“For the last 10 years, UN-HABITAT has been supporting local authorities in developing countries in preventing crime and violence through advocacy, training and city level activities. UN-HABITAT advocates special attention to women’s safety because the disproportionate amount of violence faced by women limits their rights and freedoms to mobility, education, work, recreation and participation in public and political life,” the agency said.

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