

Cities safe for women are safe cities for everyone



All net proceeds from Through Women's Eyes, the 9th Annual Women's International Film Festival, support the Safe Cities Program to end gender-based violence in Latin America.

VIOLENCE ESCALATING IN LATIN AMERICAN CITIES

Violence is now among the five main causes of death in Latin America and is the principal cause of death in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico and Venezuela. While young men remain the major victims of street violence, the rapid acceleration of criminality and violence in Latin American cities creates a high degree of insecurity for women and girls as well. Women in too many public spaces must fear rape, homicides, kidnapping or sexual harassment. Government protection and prevention policies have not always been adequate to meet these concerns. Many cities lag behind, even on basic safety measures, such as well-lit streets and sufficient policing.

Statistics on Violence in Latin America

- One out of 3 women is abused in the course of her life.
- Among women ages 15 to 44, gender-based violence causes more deaths and injuries than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war.
- In Sao Paulo, Brazil a woman is abused every 15 seconds.
- In Chile's metropolitan region, 50% of women age 15 to 49 have been subjected to violence by their partners.

WOMEN WORKING TO MAKE THEIR CITIES SAFER

In Rosario, Argentina, and Lima, Peru, two women's organizations – Flora Tristán and Centro de Intercambios y Servicios Cono Sur-Argentina (CISCSA) – used a UN Trust Fund grant to pilot ways of making cities safer for women. The original project has been expanded into a regional UNIFEM program, with activities in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador.

The initiatives undertaken by women's groups and cities in Latin America are addressing the specific types of violence and crime that impact women and girls.

In Rosario and Lima two women's groups convened focus groups of women to record their experiences, analyzed the prevalence of public violence and identified

policy gaps hindering urban safety. The two groups then supported local women's organizations to brief city planners and the media on the issues women face, and to discuss recommendations to improve safety.

In Rosario the city printed the message "violence against women is a grave violation of human rights" on pre-paid transportation cards for commuters. Municipal plans were revised to include ways to curtail violence, such as better signage and bus shelters that allow passengers clear visibility of the surrounding area.

In Lima city officials improved lighting on streets and parks and fenced off empty lots.

In Sao Paulo the city sponsors police stations with specially trained female staff.

In Bogotá, Colombia the city instituted specific guidelines on dealing with sex crimes.

In Mexico City separate subway cars are designated for women during rush hours.

In addition, CISCSA produced a guide to gender-sensitive municipal planning called *Tools for the Promotion of Safe Cities from a Gender Perspective*. The first regional compilation of information on urban violence against women in Latin America, the book showcases successful practices from the region and other parts of the world, and offers tools for formulating urban strategies that improve women's safety.

SUPPORTING UNIFEM'S FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENCE

UNIFEM's Safe Cities Program funds the continued expansion of efforts like these by:

- Disseminating knowledge and promoting public debate on the subject of women's safety in cities.
- Advancing the incorporation of violence against women in social agendas and public policies.
- Starting actions in Cochabamba, Bolivia; Recife, Brazil; and Lima.
- Implementing models for security intervention in Bogotá, Rosario and Santiago.

How You Can Help

All major fundraising efforts of the US Committee for UNIFEM and its chapters during fiscal year 2007-2008 support the Safe Cities Program. You can help by attending these events and by becoming a UNIFEM member. For more information, visit www.unifemusa.org and www.ThroughWomensEyes.com.