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METROPOLITAN SPACES for Women

REPORT AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Metropolises are unique territories where opportunities arise due to the presence of services and resources, and the meeting of ideas and cultures. Women and girls still struggle to access and benefit from these same opportunities due to challenges and barriers that contribute to their discrimination. From unsafe transport systems to lack of paid care services, from gender-based violence to lack of rights in the informal economy, women and girls are penalized when trying to achieve their full potential. A coordinated response is necessary in this sense for the planning, implementation and management of metropolitan cities, globally. This study highlights some of the experiences and solutions implemented in order to make metropolises more inclusive, safe and sustainable. It shows that metropolitan governments achieve results when they collaborate with citizens, women's groups, and even private enterprises through a strong participatory process. We hope it will inspire more women and men to act in the same direction.

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LIST OF TERMS

The following list provides definitions for the terms referred to in this publication.

CITY: Densely populated area with at least 50,000 people and 1,500 inhabitants per km² (Dijkstra & Poelman 2012).

GENDER: The social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relationships between women and those between men. These attributes are socially constructed and impact responsibility and activity assignment, access and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. (OSAGI 2001).

GENDER EQUALITY: The absence of discrimination, based on a person's sex, in opportunities, the allocation of resources and benefits, or access to services (WHO 2021).

GENDER EQUITY: Fairness and justice are distributed in the benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes (WHO 2021).

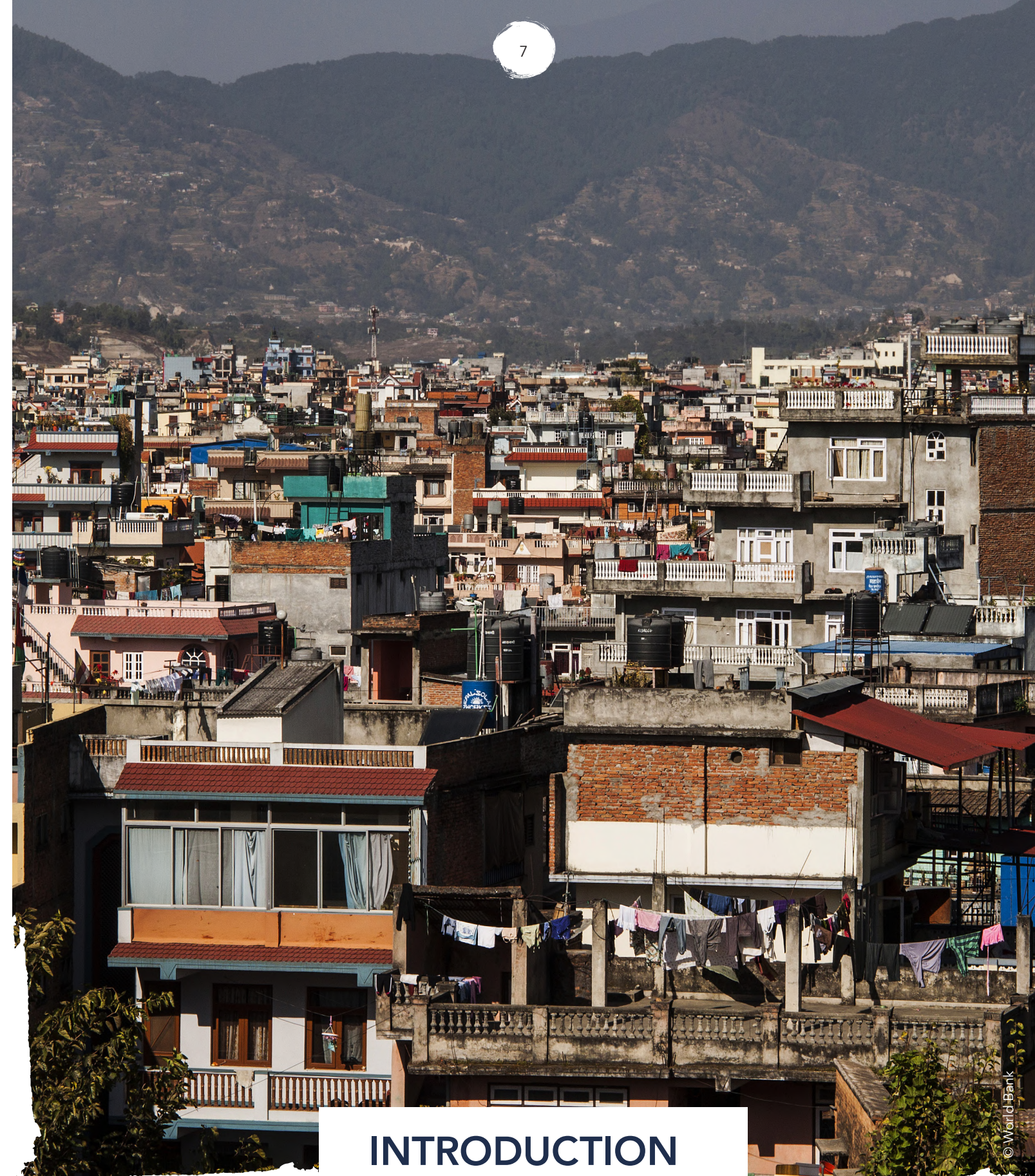
GENDER MAINSTREAMING: Gender perspectives and attention are implemented with the goal of gender equality in all activities—policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects (UN Women 2001).

GENDER-INCLUSIVE URBAN POLICIES: Overarching commitments given to guide gender-inclusive planning and design processes towards meaningful, effective outcomes and long-term improvements in the status of women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities (World Bank 2020a).

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: Any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males (UNICEF 2017).

GOVERNANCE: How interactions between urban actors across public, private, and civil society operate in different urban contexts with varying social, political, and economic circumstances. The governing of metropolitan regions can be accomplished by a variety of mechanisms, ranging from a comprehensive metropolitan "government" to a variety of forms of cooperation amongst the numerous jurisdictions in a metropolitan area, which will be termed "governance" here.

METROPOLIS: Metropolises, also called metropolitan areas, represent a wide urban area gathering a major city together with its suburbs and nearby cities, towns, and environs over which the major city exercises a commanding economic and social influence (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2021). For the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), defining metropolitan areas is inseparable from the concept of 'functional urban area', that is, a city and its surrounding areas approximating the extent of the city's labor market ('commuting zone'). These two components are central. Commuting zones are areas surrounding cities, which are socio-economically integrated into the city (OECD 2020b). In 2020 there are 1,934 metropolises with more than 300,000 inhabitants representing approximately 60% of the world's urban population (UN-Habitat 2020).



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A METROPOLIS FOR WOMEN?

The COVID-19 pandemic, while uncovering vulnerabilities in societies' social and economic systems, has also highlighted the essential role of cities, metropolitan governments and regions in delivering public services at the local level, as well as the shortcomings of current systems. To do so equitably for all citizens going forward, it is crucial to incorporate a gender perspective into metropolitan governance systems, within the drafting of every public policy, and while managing the services offered in the metropolises. Cities' spatial and organizational aspects affect men and women in different ways. A gender-sensitive approach to urban development seeks to ensure that both women and men have equal access to and control over the resources and opportunities offered by a city.

METROPOLITAN SPACES WITH A GENDER-FAIR APPROACH

At least 2.59 billion people lived in metropolises in 2020, which is equivalent to one third of the global population (UN-Habitat 2020). Metropolises are complex, fragmented urban territories with high levels of inequality. The levels of accessibility, quality of life and conditions that metropolises offer are different for different people, depending on their gender or other socially constructed identity categories. Women experience and use the urban environment in different ways from men; they have different priorities in terms of services and infrastructure such as transportation, housing and public spaces. These priorities rarely feature in urban policies or projects—leading to exclusion and lost opportunities for both women and society in general.

To understand and respond to these challenges, women and girls need to have the chance to meaningfully share how they experience their environment—in their own words and their own language (Maci 2021)—and participate in decision-making about that environment. Participatory decision-making processes are crucial for gathering citizen input regarding the creation and maintenance of urban spaces and the definition of public policies. However, women are not always present as part of these processes, nor are their views sufficiently considered when they do participate. The different ways in which women and men take part in participatory processes are significantly shaped by prevailing constructions of gender norms and expectations (Metropolis 2019).

Globally, gender equality in local development remains a challenge. However, many local governments have increased their gender mainstreaming efforts in municipal strategies or action plans (Carpio-Pinedo et al., 2019) following the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (United Nations 1996). This publication showcases some of these efforts in order to inspire metropolitan governments worldwide to replicate such approaches and proposals.

An important factor driving the promotion of equality in cities is that creating gender-sensitive urban policies does not only benefit women, but also helps create safe, inclusive and sustainable cities for everyone. Active policies that understand and address women's needs are a prerequisite to more democratic and inclusive metropolises.

These inequalities inhibit both the presence of women and their ability to influence decisions. This discrimination causes planners to forgo the experience and knowledge of women—who are amongst the most active users of the urban space, although they often use it differently than men do—thereby reinforcing gender stereotypes. Metropolitan governance needs to adopt new forms of engagement that can better understand, reflect upon, and implement better means of addressing the needs, expectations, capacities and will of women in all age groups.

Engaging a certain number of women does not in itself improve the diversity of a group, since those who participate do not necessarily represent the diversity of women or have the same capacity to influence. Therefore, urban participatory processes should also consider the overlapping of multiple social identities, types of discrimination and social structures that reinforce exclusion (Metropolis & Women City International 2018). For example, a woman living in an informal and marginalized neighborhood may face unusually high levels of prejudice and even threats of violence. Overcoming the lack of diversity calls for the integration of a diverse range of urban experiences in planning and policymaking and for considering such characteristics as gender, ethnicity, age, religion and disability.

The Women's Engagement in Cities Framework (WEC), developed by Cities Alliance (Cities Alliance 2020),

provides a guide for the collection and analysis of data on how women and girls interact with their cities. This gender-responsiveness analysis tool presents a set of indicators built on four dimensions: social inclusion, economic engagement, human and social capital, and institutional and political engagement. The WEC Framework encourages strong collaboration amongst local and regional governments and global actors.

This comparative study takes inspiration from the WEC framework, by investigating four metropolitan areas through a set of questions and focusing on a specific issue:

1. Mexico City: meeting women's mobility needs;
2. Kathmandu: fostering women's economic empowerment;
3. Tunis: creating inclusive public spaces with women; and
4. San Salvador: preventing gender-based violence.

The case studies first introduce the respective cities and provide context on gender-related issues. Then they will explore policies and programmes in place to tackle the specific gender issue. These interventions serve as inspiration for local and regional governments elsewhere facing similar challenges in delivering gender-inclusive policies. Finally, each chapter closes with a section that discusses the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender challenges in urban settings.





MEXICO CITY

MEETING WOMEN'S MOBILITY NEEDS

WOMEN'S KEY PRIORITIES IN MEXICO CITY

With nearly 20 million inhabitants spread over more than 2,000 km², Mexico City is amongst the most crowded and dispersed metropolises in the world. It is the twelfth most populated globally and the third most populated in the Americas, surpassed only by São Paulo and New York City (Population Stat, 2021). Mexico City's overcrowding and urban sprawl pose various challenges to the planning and governance of the city, including ensuring just and inclusive transportation systems.

Mexico City has one of the largest public transport systems globally, with 12 metro lines connecting more than 190 metro stations (CDMX 2018). Yet despite its size, the transport network does not have the capacity to meet the demands of

the daily commuters, tourists, and residents of the city, resulting in continuous overcrowding and congestion (Sistema de Transporte Colectivo 2018). This constant overload of the public transportation system also increases the risk of harassment, violence, and sexual violence, amongst users, especially against women (Gardner et al. 2017; Madan & Nalla 2016; Natarajan et al. 2017). According to the National Institute for Women, 9 out of 10 women are sexually assaulted at least once in their lifetime while using public transportation in Mexico City (UN Women 2016). Transport nodes such as subway stations represent a high-risk area. They are a place for informal trade and thus are the workplace of many women, but they largely lack adequate lighting or security personnel (Patlan 2021). In addition, female taxi drivers in Mexico City face,

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among other issues, sexual harassment and lacking political leverage in taxi driver unions (Hiramatsu 2021).

To improve service to its female users and reduce sexual harassment in public transport Mexico City introduced women-only carriages in 1977—the first gender-segregated public transportation network globally, and the oldest that is still in operation (Tillous 2015). While it was initially a symbolic gesture when the operator of Mexico City's transportation network (Sistema de Transporte Colectivo 2018) dedicated 5% of public transportation exclusively to women (Tillous 2015), this practice was strengthened and expanded in the 2000s. Moreover, Mexico City's pioneering approach of gender-separated public transportation was also followed by other metropolises, such as Cairo, Tokyo, New Delhi and Kuala Lumpur (Graham-Harrison 2015).

Beyond addressing the problem of violence and harassment of women using the Mexico City public transportation system, a further challenge for local governments to address is the problem of unequal access to mobility services, with women from lower socio-economic classes disproportionately disadvantaged (Rosales 2021). The sharp division of the metropolitan area between the center and the periphery exacerbates this unequal delivery of public services, including public transportation. Ironically, the existent transportation

system itself illustrates Mexico City's segregation. Metro line 12, for example, symbolizes the social frontier between the popular south-east neighborhoods and the rest of the metropolitan area. The long-term lack of public investments in these socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods has resulted in deteriorating mobility infrastructure (Rosales 2021). Moreover, for travelers from and within the periphery, using public transportation is particularly expensive: ticket prices can increase sharply due to the multiple modes of transportation necessary and the different transport companies that may have to be used to complete a single trip (Rosales 2021). Hence, inadequate transportation infrastructure and high costs present a high burden for many women living in Mexico City's periphery, and who are often dependent on public transportation to pursue their daily activities, including job opportunities.



LINKS BETWEEN GENDER AND TRANSPORT

Gender mainstreaming in mobility policies and practices is central to the creation of metropolitan places for women. However, mobility analysis has traditionally focused on male mobility patterns, without taking into account that women often have different transport needs than men (Hanson 2010; Metropolis 2019). Generally, women are responsible for household and care tasks, and thus their mobility patterns involve longer trips with multiple stops (Patlan 2021). Yet transport services are often solely conceived for journey-to-work commutes and are not suitable for many women. For instance, public transport is designed along inflexible trunk lines and schedules. Such a system cannot meet the complex mobility patterns of women, who must combine their caring role with their income activities. Women's mobility patterns may require multiple modes of transport, including walking and cycling, as the trips are generally shorter and more frequent.

Moreover, many residential areas where women form the primary workforce in occupations such as chores and care services are not identified as 'work zones' in public transport designs. This means that they are neglected in terms of

public transportation planning and therefore do not serve many women's requirements for commuting. Further, transportation infrastructures frequently are not suitable for women who travel with children and strollers, complicating women's journeys even more. Because of the focus on male mobility needs, existing transportation systems neglect women's safety, as well as their physical and economic accessibility to workplaces.

The restrictions on women's mobility also result in unequal access to other fundamental basic goods and services, such as access to health services, education, and cultural participation (Metropolis 2020). Thus, gender-unequal transportation systems promote women's dependency on male household and family members and foster the subjective perceptions of women being tied to the domestic sphere (Patlan 2021).

Because public transportation is less safe for women than it is for men, women face an additional barrier to service accessibility that also affects their personal and professional lives (Hsu 2011; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht 2009).

Safety concerns force many women to adapt their travel plans and schedules and discourage or prevent them from traveling alone. The results of a survey conducted by the French National Federation of Transport Users, for example, showed that 90% of all women interviewed experienced sexual harassment while using public transportation. As a consequence, 49% of the affected women changed the way they dressed, 34% used other types of transportation, and more than 80% changed their general patterns of mobility (UN Women 2020). Thus, gendered geographies of fear influence the choices women make during their daily routine (Valentine 1989; Gilow 2015). Having to adapt their schedules and avoid certain parts of urban spaces and certain transport

modes because of the risk of harassment is an everyday phenomenon in metropolises around the world that excludes women from actively participating in urban life and the public space (Metropolis & Women City International 2018).

The safety concerns and risks women face in using public transportation limit their mobility in the urban space and, consequently, their access to employment opportunities, healthcare, education, and opportunities to participate in political and cultural activities. Hence, affordable and safe transportation for all is key to empowering women to safely experience the city, carry out their daily activities, and achieve economic independence.

“TO IMPROVE WOMEN’S FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN THE CITY, THEIR IMPLICATION IN DECISION MAKING AND TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE ARE ESSENTIAL.”

Marianely Patlan ITDP

GENDER-RELATED URBAN POLICIES AND PRACTICES

In Mexico City, a long-term intersectoral approach to integrate a gender perspective in urban governance has been adopted in recent years, both on the national as well as local level, to make the public transportation system more gender-equal. As a result, general, cross-sectoral measures have been introduced at institutional and political levels to create a conducive climate for gender-inclusive urban policies. The introduction of parity mechanisms is intended to increase women’s participation in the decision-making process (Rosales 2021).

Moreover, various capacity-building methods for local governments and internal administrative regulations have been introduced to raise awareness about women’s perspectives in urban planning, as well as about harassment against women at different levels and sectors, including within local administrations (Rosales 2021). In 2016, the national government introduced the digital platform, *CECI: Ciudad Equitativa, Ciudad Inclusiva* (CECI: Equal City, Inclusive City) to foster the technical capacities of local public officers in the planning and management of urban sustainability projects (National Government of Mexico, n.d.). This platform offers information exchange, training, and practices on sustainable and inclusive mobility management. It was part of the National

Programme on Urban Development for the years 2014–2018, which aimed to ensure quality, availability, accessibility, and connectivity of urban mobility in the country.

In addition to the national effort, Mexico City’s transportation ministry (SEMOVI) has introduced cross-sectoral frameworks and programmes to promote dialogue and action on gender-equal urban mobility policies, as well as their evaluation. For example, the 2010 *Agenda de Género y Movilidad* (Gender and Mobility Agenda) is to be replaced by the new *Plan Estratégico de Género y Movilidad* (Strategic Plan for Gender and Mobility) for the years 2019–2024 (Secretaría de Movilidad 2019). This new strategic framework forms part of the city’s *Programa Integral de Movilidad* 2019–2024 (Integrated Mobility Programme). It is structured along three objectives: the reduction of gender-based violence (GBV) in public transport, the promotion of gender parity within the urban transportation authorities, and an improved understanding of women’s mobility patterns. The strategy is based on a participatory and cross-departmental approach that allows effective information exchange and monitoring to ensure that women have safe access to public transport and can enjoy their journeys with fewer delays (Secretaría de Movilidad 2019).

With these programmes, Mexico City also focuses on gender-based analysis and diagnosis of mobility needs, experimentation, and immediate action (Dirección General Adjunta De Estudios, Legislación y Políticas Públicas 2009). For example, as part of the *Programa CDMX Ciudad Segura y Amigable para las Mujeres y las Niñas* (Program Safe and Friendly City for Women and Girls)—which was launched in 2015 after the women of the city demanded more rights, security and freedom in public space and transportation—the *Estrategia 30-100* (Strategy 30-100) was implemented. Pledging to report to the public within 30 to 100 days, the local government took immediate action to prevent and punish the sexual harassment of women on public transportation and in urban areas (Secretaría de las Mujeres 2021a). Moreover, in 2015, Mexico City joined the UN Women programme, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls, to promote women’s safety in urban spaces and fight against sexual harassment in transportation (UN Women 2019).

By implementing separate metro cars and buses for women in 1977, the city became a pioneer in gender-separate public transport services. In July 2000, the *Sistema de Transporte Colectivo*, Mexico City’s subway system, expanded women-only subway service to cover rush hours as well. After the change, the first two carriages of 42% of the trains of various metro lines were dedicated to women, children under 12 years, disabled people, and men accompanying a child (Dunckel 2016; Patlan 2021). Even though the policy received a mixed reception, it offered an immediate response to empower women who depend on public transport. To provide legal support to victims of harassment

in public transport, lawyers of the Ministry for Women also began to offer legal assistance at information points in different metro stations (Modulos Viaja Segura), such as in filing police complaints (Secretaría de las Mujeres 2021b; Soto Villagrán 2017). These info points facilitate easy access to legal services for women.

In 2008, female-only pink buses, known as ‘Atenea-buses’, were introduced. They were part of the Atenea Programme, which introduced women-only bus lines in order “to address the in-vehicle security of women using mass transit busing by providing even more exclusive spaces for female users than the rest of the mass transit network, which only had individual cars/cabins designated as women-only metro or metrobus” (World Bank 2020b). The pink color of the buses, which are partly also equipped with security agents, permits a wide visibility and presents an educational campaign about the need for female rights in public transportation (Rosales 2021; World Bank 2020b). In 2013, the local government introduced its first fleet of women-only taxis, composed of 100 bubble-gum-pink cabs (Dunckel 2016). The women-operated taxis were equipped with GPS and with an alert button connected to a 24-hour police station by phone or the internet, and drivers also received a 160-hour self-defense training course (Rosales 2021).

Further, to decrease the unequal access to transportation, an urban cable car, ‘Mexicable’ was inaugurated in 2016. Mexicable reduced transport time and also was accompanied by urban renewals, such as street lighting improvements. It is associated with having decreased social and gender gaps between neighborhoods in Mexico City (Patlan 2021).

EFFECTS OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has widened social and gender inequalities in Mexico City, and it has also affected women’s safety and opportunities, with respect to their mobility. For instance, the decrease in transport activity during the pandemic affected the vulnerable population living in the east of the metropolitan territory, and violence against women in transport intensified (Patlan 2021). Moreover, movement-restriction measures reduced the number of transport users and, as a result, reduced the coverage of connectivity. While this presented a burden to a large part of the population, women working in the informal and essential sectors were particularly heavily affected because they depend on public transport services as a means to get to work and on transport users as a source

of income. In addition, since the pandemic began, doctors, nurses and vendors have been exposed to increased violence during their travels (Patlan 2021).

Yet the pandemic also allowed for new innovations. During the pandemic, the local government implemented a previously planned 12-km cycle lane on Avenida de Insurgentes in only a few months (El País 2021). This further revealed the importance of community groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in creating a more gender-equal transport system (Patlan 2021). For example, with the increased cycling network, a bike school where women teach other women how to cycle in the metropolitan area has emerged

(Patlan 2021). The increase in bicycle use has appeared as a positive outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic. Women commonly identify cycling as a symbol of freedom in mobility and a means to avoid street harassment and gender-based violence.

To further ensure a gender-sensitive public transport system, post-COVID-19 investments are crucial and will shape the future of urban development in Mexico City (Heeckt & Martínez 2021). Moreover, reviewing previous transportation programmes, as well as continuously evaluating and monitoring existing transportation programmes is needed.

MEXICO CITY: IMPROVING WOMEN'S TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Mexico City seeks to change travel culture for women, before, during and after the trip. This means combining the following:

- **Prevention measures**, such as communication campaigns and training.
- **Redesign** the areas around subway stations with renovated sidewalks, lights, places for caring activities, and clearer information (Patlan 2021; Rosales 2021).
- **Support and access** to justice for victims of sexual assault using a 24-hour hotline and five safe places in the main metro stations where women can confidently report sexual abuse to trained female workers and receive medical, psychological and legal help (Dunckel 2016; Rosales 2021).
- **Provide training to police officers in gender issues and justice processes** which is also part of the global strategy against GBV (Rosales 2021).



KATHMANDU

FOSTERING WOMEN'S INDEPENDENCE AS LEVERAGE FOR THEIR RIGHTS TO THE CITY

WOMEN'S KEY PRIORITIES IN KATHMANDU

Kathmandu, the capital and the largest and oldest city of Nepal, is the urban core of the Kathmandu Valley in the Himalayas. More than 1.5 million people live in the city, making it one of the most densely populated regions in the country, with 13,225 inhabitants per km² (World Population Review 2021). With the most advanced infrastructure of all urban areas in Nepal and being a popular starting point for Himalaya excursions, Kathmandu's economy is tourism-centric (Kathmandu Metropolitan City 2021).

The year 2015 marked an important step forward for women's representation and participation in national

and local administration and politics in Nepal. Since then, a new constitutional reform mandates that at least 40% of seats for representative candidates at all levels must be held by women (Cities Alliance & UNOPS Nepal 2020). In municipalities, either the mayor or deputy mayor must be a woman, and three of the nine members of the District Coordination Committees must be women. Despite these reforms, women representatives have been mainly taking on the deputy roles, which possess less political power, visibility and responsibility (Pradhan 2021). In addition, many gender-related policies remain declarative in nature and are not being implemented (Pradhan 2021).

Economic independence is a key challenge for women in Kathmandu and for Nepalese women in general. Nepal is deeply affected by poverty and was ranked 145 out of 187 countries in the 2014 Human Development Index. Only 26% of Nepali women have access to property, and the participation of women in the labor force is at a mere 26.3% (UNDP & NPC Nepal 2014). In Kathmandu, women's ability to be financially independent is limited because of insufficient access to education and a lack of vocational training opportunities, among other factors (Pradhan 2021). In addition, the gender wage gap remains high across all sectors, and social classes and institutional and legal barriers prevent women from borrowing and inheriting (Pradhan 2021).

The lack of care facilities poses a further obstacle to women's financial independence. In Kathmandu, women are largely over-represented in unpaid care work (ActionAid International 2014). Women spend 1.4 hours on care work for each hour worked by men (ActionAid International 2014). On average, they spend more than 200 minutes a day on housework and 71 minutes a day on childcare (ActionAid International 2014). Women's burdens and responsibilities in unpaid care work increased heavily after the 2015 earthquake that destroyed great parts of Kathmandu (Nesbitt-Ahmed 2017). This heavy unpaid workload is one of the impediments to women's participation in economic, political and public life.

In addition, women's independence is prevented by the lack of safe and accessible transportation and public spaces. Urban transport means are often overcrowded, and public spaces are still culturally considered male spaces, which discourages girls and women from participating in public life and ties them to the domestic sphere (Cities Alliance & UNOPS Nepal 2020). This increases the financial dependence of women and girls on their male family members, and prevents them from pursuing educational and economic opportunities, severely limiting the full realization of their potential. Again, the consequences of unsafe transportation and public spaces primarily affect women living in poverty and those who work in the informal sector (Pradhan 2021), which is nearly all women who work. In Nepal, 90.5% of employed women are in informal sectors, according to the National Labor Force Survey 2017/18.



LINKS BETWEEN GENDER-SENSITIVE PLANNING AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Urban public policies and urban design are crucial to making women feel at ease in the urban environment and for enabling them to gain easier access to economic and political opportunities. The introduction of gender-inclusive urban policies and increased gender-sensitive planning to improve the social status of women and girls takes time. It is a gradual process that needs to permeate all governance levels, institutions and infrastructure sectors. Nevertheless, globally some progress can be seen. For instance, by 2018, 36% of the communities that are members of Metropolis have taken initiatives to achieve greater freedom of movement and reappropriation of public spaces for women and girls (Metropolis & Women City International 2018). This reappropriation of public spaces and increased right to the

city together go along with more participation of women in economic life, the perception of women as being legitimate urban dwellers, and the ability to fully exercise their political rights (Metropolis & Women City International 2018).

In addition to public legal, institutional and planning improvements challenging traditional cultural norms that assign domestic responsibilities to women, many urban dwellers—men and women—also benefit from national and international civil society organizations and international development actors (OECD 2020a). These actors often provide, for instance, capacity building workshops or facilitate service delivery to promote women's access to economic independence and political representation.

GENDER-RELATED URBAN POLICIES AND PRACTICES

At the national level, the Fifteenth's Periodic Plan presents the vision of Nepal's government on how the country should develop in the period 2019–2024. Titled "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali", the plan revolves around the aspiration of national economic development and becoming a high-income country by 2030. It also highlights the need to promote policies and objectives of gender-equality and empowerment at all governance levels and metropolitan areas. For instance, the plan includes the objective of institutionalizing a system of gender-responsive budget and financing programmes targeted at economically poor and socially excluded women (Government of Nepal 2020).

Moreover, Nepal is increasingly applying Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) diagnosis in order to identify how approaches intended to empower women can be integrated and mainstreamed across different sectors, including in urban development (Asian Development Bank 2020; UN Nepal 2020). The Gender Equality Policy, launched in 2019, underpins the government's aim to promote a gender-equal country by 2030. The policy strongly emphasizes women's economic empowerment and the abolishment of discriminatory barriers to their socio-economic development by such means as promoting women's participation in income-generating activities through family support mechanisms, fostering female entrepreneurship, and reducing women's risks in the workplace (Himalayan News Services 2019).

Apart from governmental actions, NGOs and civil society actors have also set up women-inclusion programmes to empower women and foster their economic independence. After the 2015 earthquake, several gender-responsive cash-for-work programmes were launched in the Kathmandu Valley. For example, Oxfam Nepal introduced a cash-for-work programme that is adaptable to women-specific needs, such as their responsibilities in unpaid home care work, which has allowed women to participate in economic activities and gain a salary on an equal basis with men. Similarly, cash-for-work programmes implemented by CARE Nepal enabled women and men to participate in the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, promoting the economic empowerment of the groups most affected by the earthquake and improving their livelihoods (Nesbitt-Ahmed 2017). National NGOs and cooperative banks, such as Lumanti, designed projects to support women's recovery from the earthquake (Lumanti 2016). Through microfinance programmes, less educated and illiterate women now receive the opportunity to take out loans and microcredits. Such programmes, which often are developed on a cooperative basis, frequently include financial and entrepreneurial training offers and opportunities for women and marginalized groups (Cities Alliance & UNOPS Nepal 2020; Lumanti 2021; Nesbitt-Ahmed 2017; Volunteers Initiative Nepal 2020).



EFFECTS OF COVID-19

COVID-19 had a particularly negative impact on women in Kathmandu, as it deepened the gender division of labor and increased women's caregiving burden, especially on those with lower incomes (Cities Alliance & UNOPS Nepal 2020). During the pandemic, many men migrated back to Nepal from other countries, placing more household and care responsibilities on women and girls. Moreover, as the markets were temporarily closed, many women vendors lost their main source

of income and had to work as street vendors, constantly on the move, often with children (Pradhan 2021).

The increased burden of unpaid care work together with the global pandemic has also heavily affected the economic independence of women whose access to education, training and formal employment opportunities shrank sharply in the past year. In the current recovery phase post-pandemic governments should foster the

engagement with local organizations to leverage their knowledge of cultural norms, the metropolitan setting and the local governance context. Further cash-for-work programmes that include decent employment opportunities, equal pay policies and capacity building opportunities should be promoted. This approach appears to be the only way forward to empower women and other vulnerable groups and ensure their active role in the sustainable reconstruction of cities.



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KATHMANDU:

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND DISASTER RECOVERY

After the 2015 earthquake that severely hit the densely populated valley of Kathmandu, several NGOs engaged and invested in **capacity building and cash-for-work programmes** to enable affected vulnerable communities to stay financially and economically independent in the post-earthquake

An example of these actors is *Lumanti – Support Group for Shelter*, a national NGO operating in multiple districts of the country, including Kathmandu (Lumanti, 2021). Lumanti's work focuses on the improvement of shelter conditions, mostly in informal settlements. As services Lumanti provide **training and workshops** to foster economic development among the most vulnerable population, including women. The workshops include not only **lectures** but also **participatory methods** to involve all participants.

For instance, in 2016, Lumanti and the Community Women Forum developed workshops to promote entrepreneurship among the families affected by the earthquake in Kathmandu. In this five-day workshops, **18 women and 1 man** received training by business experts and engaged activities participatory gaming to learn about successful entrepreneurship, marketing strategies, and customer behavior. The participants developed their own business plans for starting business in diverse fields, ranging from tailoring clothes to building furniture. This workshop laid the base for long-term entrepreneurship and economic empowerment of women and families affected by the earthquake in Kathmandu.

TUNIS

CREATING INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES WITH WOMEN

WOMEN'S KEY PRIORITIES IN TUNIS

In the Middle East and North Africa region, Tunisia is one of the most progressive countries in relation to women's rights. The country has been working towards the goal of gender equality since its independence in 1956. In the 2021 annual *Freedom in the World* report, Freedom House ranks Tunisia first amongst the Arab countries in the major categories that concern women's rights, including "autonomy, security, and freedom of person" and "freedom of expression" (Freedom House 2021). During the revolution in 2011, women actively participated in the protests as professionals, students and citizens (Charrad & Zarugh 2013). This contributed to making the political discussion on gender equality a central one in post-revolution Tunisia.

However, more than 60 years after its independence, the country still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality. Patriarchal norms and constraints to broader political participation hinder the implementation of laws and regulations aimed at protecting women's rights and exacerbate inequality by introducing additional obstacles to women's effective participation in communal life (Maci & Cicognola 2021).

In Tunis, the country's largest metropolitan area, urbanization has been linked to progress in a number of areas that have contributed to the emergence of a new category of active, autonomous and educated women. Yet the benefits of urbanization are nuanced and unevenly



distributed. For women in particular, accessing the increased social, economic and political opportunities ostensibly available to them is, in reality, increasingly difficult to accomplish (Cities Alliance 2021).

Some neighborhoods that are shaped by high poverty rates are also densely populated and under-served, which increases the difficulty for women in terms of accessing economic opportunities and social services. In the Medina, the historical area of Tunis, women experience a level of employment of only 7.5% and are paid around 25% less than men for the same type of work. While entrepreneurship is the key for women to attain economic independence, they face a lack of job opportunities and the lack of training, along with gender-based discrimination in markets dominated by men. As a consequence of these obstacles, women represent only 11.7% of entrepreneurs in the Medina (Cities Alliance 2021).

Although Tunisian women have always been active in political life, their representation at the decision-making level and in leadership positions has yet to reflect such participation. Between 2011 and 2014, the Parliament of Tunisia adopted an array of women's rights laws, including an electoral parity clause stipulating that women should constitute at least 50% of all electoral party lists at all levels of elected councils. Thanks to this law, women ended up with 47% of the local council positions in the elections held during May 2018 and the city of Tunis got its first female mayor (Cities Alliance 2021; UN Women 2018).

Despite these achievements, women's voter turnout in political elections remains low. In the 2019 Tunisian parliamentary elections, only 36% of registered voters were women (Cities Alliance 2021). Men dominate the city's political, civic and cultural life, including urban planning and citizen participation during the planning process. Although women are not absent from public life, public spaces are not always secure or welcoming for women, and there is a lack of services that meet women's needs, such as public toilets, green spaces and cultural facilities (Chikhaoui 2018; Cities Alliance 2021).

According to a recent study, in Tunis the public spaces used by women the most are local markets, public parks and areas near their homes. Forty-one percent of Tunisian women said they go outside to run errands or accomplish tasks related to the family, such as picking up children from schools, household purchases or health care (CREDIF 2016).

Conversely, men were found to dominate bars and restaurants. Recently, the women's association, Chamfl, organized symbolic actions to reclaim public spaces in Tunisian cities, such as popular cafés that are always exclusively attended by men (Masciavè 2019). Similarly, a workshop called *Notre-Dame-de mots* has been launched to give women the opportunity to gather in cafés or public spaces and share their poems or personal writing (Masciavè 2019). While women's presence in public spaces is not negligible nor marginal, they still do not have access to all spaces at all hours, and they cannot move freely (Chikhaoui 2018).

LINKS BETWEEN GENDER INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC SPACE

In many societies, the traditional gendered division of roles between women and men assigns women to the home and domestic tasks, while men are assigned to professional activities and, thus, to the outside world. Consequently, these social constraints restrict women to more domestic functions and therefore to the occupation of indoor spaces. Some women may then feel the need to justify their presence in a public space by being part of an activity or a daily chore.

Access to public space can also be limited by the threat of gender-based violence and the fear it generates. Women are still largely the victims of street harassment, sexist violence and sexual violence. According to a report on gender-based violence by the Center of Research, Study, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF 2016), 62% of Tunisian women do not feel safe walking at night.



Often, women do not feel safe when on the move. The occupation of public space by men makes these areas intimidating and uninviting for women and girls. As a consequence, women may develop strategies, such as avoidance or changes in their appearance, or they may feel uncomfortable about taking up certain spaces, a perception that is reinforced at night. Thus, women lack spaces that they can appropriate for different uses and in which they can engage and socialize. This situation affects women's ability to pursue outdoor recreational activities. Women have limited spaces in which to meet or rest, and this particularly affects the lives of elderly women.

GENDER-RELATED URBAN POLICIES AND PRACTICES

After the revolution, Tunisia started its transformation from a highly centralized state towards more decentralization, participation, and representative democracy. Consequently, post revolution urban governance started shifting from a top-down approach towards more participation. These changes are evident in the new constitution of 2014 which clearly and explicitly emphasized decentralization as a direction expanding the mandate of local authorities (municipal councils) to plan and decide on development programs, projects, and budgets. More importantly, the local governance law issued in 2018 clearly articulated the participatory mechanisms in local governance, as it emphasized in its fifth section the importance of citizen participation at the local governance level and specified its key guiding principles. This law mainstreams participation through delineating the processes for transparency, collecting local communities' feedback, and deliberating citizens' input in local

governments' meetings. Women in Tunisia used the decentralization process "as a vehicle for mobilizing local efforts, connecting with gender rights advocates in other MENA countries, and participating in a transnational dialogue" (de Silva de Alwis, Mnasri, & Ward, 2017). One result of these efforts are gender quotas, important mechanisms for achieving gender parity.

Moreover, various development projects on the rehabilitation and inclusiveness of the public space are implemented in Tunis,

For instance, the two years EU funded project "A'SIMA Tunis: Strategic planning and multilevel governance for a resilient metropolitan city" aims to strengthen the territorial planning of the city of Tunis in its metropolitan context (MedCities 2021). The project supports the Municipality of Tunis in the development of a participatory City Strategy

with the aim of making the metropolitan area of the Greater Tunis more inclusive and resilient from an environmental, urban and economic and social perspective. The project is implemented over the period 2022-2024.

The project “Future Proche”, funded by the Italian Cooperation, promoted local development in the metropolitan area of Tunis (AICS n.d.). It consolidated the decentralization process by supporting the inclusive service programming and delivery. In particular, it focused on improving the accessibility of basic health services for women and children.

Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, the USAID funded programme “Tadaeem” contributed to municipal service delivery and promoted the Tunisian decentralization process in 33 partnering municipalities, including the metropolitan area of Tunis (USAID 2022b). Another USAID’s five-year, youth-focused project called “Ma3an” (“Together” in Arabic) aiming to withstand political, social and economic shocks via capacity building to vulnerable communities runs until 2023 and is, among others, being implemented in the governorate

of Tunis (USAID 2022a). In Tunis, the “Femmedina” pilot programme, funded by USAID and implemented by Cities Alliance in 2021-2022 focused on the rehabilitation of public spaces in historical center through the engagement of women living and working there (Cities Alliance 2021).

Moreover, The French Development Agency (AFD) supported four pilot projects for the rehabilitation of touristic routes in the medinas of Tunis, Sousse, Sfax and Kairouan, delivered in 2016–2017. Capitalizing on this past experience, the AFD in partnership with the EIB has recently launched a 12 million programme on the revitalization of historic centres (19th, 20th and earlier) and medinas by taking into account their economic, historical and social dimensions in an integrated manner. Renovation work will be undertaken, particularly at the level of roads, water and sanitation networks, public lighting, which will improve the environment and living conditions of the inhabitants (UPFI n.d.).

Connecting and capitalizing on the mentioned initiatives is key in order to further develop an inclusive city-wide strategy for gender equality for the city of Tunis.

TUNIS: FEMMEDINA - INCLUSIVE URBAN PROGRAMME

To empower women as participants in and architects of the Medina’s rehabilitated public spaces, Cities Alliance and the Municipality of Tunis are implementing Femmedina, an 18-month project funded by USAID.

The Femmedina project includes three reinforcing phases:

- **During the first phase**, local experts and citizens living in the vicinity of the Medina have been engaged to identify interventions necessary to improve public space for women’s participation. Key information and data have been collected through interviews, workshops, and surveys, which helped to identify potential locations suitable for interventions and transformation.
- **The second phase** involved the implementation of small-scale refurbishment of public spaces to make them more inclusive of women’s needs, in particular in Medina Centrale, Bab Bhar, Bab Souika and Sidi El Bechir, 4 of the 15 districts of the Municipality of Tunis. Physical interventions included, among others, women’s training centers, women-focused recreational gardens, an outdoor library and marketplaces for women artisans.
- **A city-to-city exchange to share and reflect on approaches**, results and lessons learned at the national scale.

EFFECTS OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a large economic impact on Tunis. The souks, craft workshops, and markets concentrated in the Medina closed, which affected women’s economic and financial situations as they were unable to sell their handicrafts. The

pandemic increased the poverty of the population, especially women (Ben Gacem 2021). Moreover, many of the cultural, social, and religious events and activities women could normally take part in were postponed or canceled (Cities Alliance 2021).

A silver lining of this situation, however, seems to be that the lack of tourist activity has made it possible for locals to experience and appreciate their public spaces in a new, less crowded way (Ben Gacem 2021).



“ IN THE MEDINA AS IN ALL DISTRICTS OF TUNIS, SPACES ARE ALWAYS SEEN THROUGH THE MALE GAZE, WHETHER IT BE SIDEWALKS, SOUKS, CAFES ... THE FEMALE GAZE IS LACKING.”

Leila Ben Gacem, Consultant and research manager,
Business manager in Medina Tunis



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SAN SALVADOR

PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

WOMEN'S KEY PRIORITIES IN SAN SALVADOR

The metropolitan area of San Salvador represents only 2.8% of Salvadoran territory, yet it is home to approximately 27% of the national population (DBPedia 2021). With around 3.3 million inhabitants, some 600,000 of whom commute to the city daily to pursue economic activities, the metropolis is very densely populated. This density poses major challenges to San Salvador's administration, including the fight against crime and violence (La Prensa Gráfica 2016). About 80% of all crime incidents in the country happen in the metropolitan area of San Salvador (La Prensa Gráfica 2016). Moreover, a large socio-economic segregation and urban fragmentation characterizes the city and results in unequal public good provision and services (La Prensa

Gráfica 2016), disproportionately affecting women and LGBTQI+ minority groups (Metropolitan Government San Salvador 2021). For instance, insufficient and unequally distributed family planning information and health care services, as well as the high criminalization of abortion, increases health risks for women and girls health risks (Metropolitan Government San Salvador 2021). Other social and economic factors directly or indirectly contribute to the reinforcement of structural barriers that increase gender inequality and gender-based violence. Women represent only 41% of the staff of the metropolitan government (Metropolitan Government San Salvador 2021). Women earn almost 20% less than men, and 5 out of 10 girls

quit school early to care for the home or children (UN Women n.d.; Wodon 2018). Women work mainly in microenterprises (CONAMYPE 2017) and represent 76.8% of the inactive economic population (UN Women 2011).

A large majority of women in El Salvador as well as in the capital city are exposed to gender-based violence regularly. Nationwide, 67.4% of women have been victims of gender-based violence at least once in their lives, and 79% of recorded sexual violence cases in 2019 involved girls under 19. Every day, one woman is murdered by a man, representing the highest rate of femicide in the world (Huttner 2020; Observatorio de Violencia Contra las Mujeres 2019). Many development programmes have been trying to improve this daunting situation through the reinforcement of public services (SDG Fund 2017) and the integration of this matter in the public debate (Oxfam 2005; SDG Fund 2017).

While the government of El Salvador has ratified various legislations and regulations to promote women's and children's rights, (e.g., *Ley Especial Integral para una Vida Libre de Violencia de las Mujeres* (CEPAL 2011), *La Política Nacional de la Mujer* (ISDEMU 2011)) their implementation remains a challenge (SITEAL 2018). Successive reports show that many femicides and sexual violence cases remain unpunished. For instance, according to the Salvadoran media outlet El Faro, out of 3,000 women killed between 2012 and 2019, only 8.6% of cases resulted in a prosecution (Zanzinger et al. 2021). The metropolitan area of San Salvador is the least effective in the country, with 61.7% of reports for sexual assault and 23.9% of femicides not being prosecuted (Observatorio Nacional de Estadísticas de Género 2021).

Government institutions in San Salvador, as well as each municipality of the city, are trying to improve the situation by focusing on facilitating the prosecution of sexual violence and femicides and improving their support to survivors of gender-based violence, through services such as improved access to health, counselling and shelter. These efforts are partly organized with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo*, AECID) (Patlan 2021). Similarly, in San Salvador, each district has created a meeting point called "Mesa de Género" (Gender Table) as a space where women can speak up about and report harassment and violence. Nevertheless, follow-up actions are difficult to organize (Bonilla & Quijiao 2021). Moreover, the lack of political stability affects the efficiency of measures taken against gender-based violence. Collaboration and integration across different public institutions is still difficult, and often initiatives are not sustained over time (Bonilla & Quijiao 2021).



LINKS BETWEEN VIOLENCE, GENDER AND URBANISM

Safe public places in metropolitan territories can contribute to an overall safer city for women. Such urban features as planning and design can enhance women's safety and feelings of safety (UN Women 2017). A safe city for women is also a safe city for other vulnerable groups and their caretakers: the physical and social characteristics of urban space should, therefore, also take into account the needs of young children and the elderly (UN Women 2017). To fight gender-based violence, public policy can be built with an understanding of the "continuum of violence." This concept, established by Professor Liz Kelly in 1988, translates the range and variety of sexual violence experienced by women and that affects and limits women's control over their

lives, bodies and sexuality (European Women's Lobby 2017). The continuum of violence frequency should also be considered (European Women's Lobby 2017). "Non-mixity"—meaning the establishment of non-gender-mixed spaces, events and initiatives—can also be a useful tool for women. It can be used temporarily to bring together people belonging to the same social group, and it creates safe spaces by temporarily excluding potentially dominant groups. This tool has its roots in activism and is often necessary when it comes to creating a reassuring space for women to share their experiences and evolve toward self-emancipation and self-assertion (Aromatario, 2017).

GENDER-RELATED URBAN POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The Mayor's Council (COAMSS) and the *Oficina de Planificación del Área Metropolitana de San Salvador* (Planning Office of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador OPAMSS) have set the transformation of San Salvador into a safe and caring city as one of their main goals. They identified key priorities to promote gender equality and reduce gender-based violence. These include: (i) the integration of a gender focus in all aspects of public management; (ii) capacity building for administrative employees and technical services; and (iii) the collection of data about gender-based violence and their analysis (Patlan 2021). To fulfill the latter, COAMSS and OPAMSS have created the *Observatorio Metropolitano del Área Metropolitana de San Salvador* (Metropolitan Observatory of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador) in 2009, to generate data on the population's living conditions in the San Salvador metropolitan area and develop proposals and policies against violence (AECID, 2009).

In 2010, COAMSS and OPAMSS implemented the *Política Municipal Para La Equidad de Género* (Municipal Policy for Gender Equality) which builds the framework for municipal action towards more gender equality. The policy touches upon urban development, the design of public space and the prevention of violence, among other aims. This trans-departmental focus towards a safer city for women, with better access to public services, emphasizes the first efforts of gender mainstreaming in El Salvador (Metropolitan Government San Salvador 2021).

In 2018, COAMSS/OPAMSS started revising metropolitan policies in the policy areas of (i) urban development, (ii) public space, (iii) urban mobility, (iv) environment, (v) childhood and youth, and (vi) violence prevention. These policies, which originally were adopted in 2010, already included measures aimed at gender equality and increasing women's participation. Yet, in 2018, a participatory process was launched to contextualize and reinforce their frameworks, including increased measures for gender-based violence prevention (Metropolitan Government San Salvador 2021).

Further, in 2011 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of Social Inclusion, and the Interamerican Bank of Development (BID) launched the *Ciudad Mujer* programme (Bustelo et al. 2016). The programme consists of five centers in different cities and is based on an open-door policy. In each center, the programme integrates the services of 18 institutions in a single space and offers more than 20 different services to victims of gender-based violence (Bustelo et al. 2016). In the first three years, one of the programme's goals consisted of transforming churches and confessional spaces into safe places for women through the project *Refugio Seguro*. Through this initiative, 360 church leaders and administrators were trained, including in counseling, health and legal support services (UN Sustainable Development Group 2021).

Women-led initiatives also have played an important role in tackling violence against women. The community organization *Red Defensora*, for instance, is present in all six districts of the metropolitan territory and has been working for 10 years to provide localized recommendations on urban design (such as lights or ramps). Similarly, the initiative *Ciudad Segura* engages women to directly propose and implement interventions in their own neighborhoods, such as the installment of streetlight arrangements (Bonilla & Quijiao 2021).

Furthermore, international actors are supporting San Salvador's transition to a violence-free city. In 2008, UNIFEM (predecessor of UN Women) launched the "Cities without Violence against Women, Safe Cities for All" programme to raise awareness, help local actors build networks and capacity through training, and establish a systematization of knowledge: the Sistema de Estadísticas y Monitoreo para la Igualdad-SEMI (UNIFEM n.d.). In 2015, UN Women launched the Safe Cities Program in San Salvador to promote women's safety in urban spaces through the re-appropriation of public space, starting with four strategic pilot public squares, a counseling hotline, and an online support platform for women and members of the LGBTQI+ community (UN Women 2014).

EFFECTS OF COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women rose significantly. At a national level, from March to May 2020, reports of gender-based violence incidents increased by 30% compared to 2019 (International Rescue Committee 2020). A main reason for this sharp increase was the confinement rules that forced many women to be "locked up" with their abusers (Bonilla & Quijiao 2021).

In reaction to the lockdown and the increased violence incidents, prevention campaigns were launched and the number of support hotlines increased. The Supreme Court of Justice introduced a free telephone line for victims of gender-based violence, which allows the operator to connect the victims with judicial services, thereby directly initiating women's access to legal support (UN Women 2022). In parallel, *Colectiva Feminista por el Desarrollo Local de San Salvador*, a collective of local women's organizations, launched a hotline to support women confined

indoors with their abusers. This hotline, which put women in contact with lawyers and psychologists, received 400 calls in its first four months (Bonilla & Quijiao 2021). The government authorities, together with the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women (Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer ISDEMU) also acted to improve online services against gender-based violence (ISDEMU 2020).

In general, but especially during the pandemic, improving financial independence and access to economic opportunities for women has been viewed as an important approach toward reducing gender-based violence. Different programmes were launched to foster women's economic empowerment and support the establishment of women's micro-businesses (Metropolitan Government San Salvador 2021). Several studies were first conducted by COAMSS and OPAMSS to better understand the actual experiences and needs of women in the economic sector (Metropolitan

Government San Salvador 2021). These included an analysis of gender disparities in the job market were analyzed (*Brechas de género en el mercado laboral del AMSS*) and an investigation of women's ability to adapt their microbusiness activities to the pandemic (*Exploración de la vulnerabilidad y adaptabilidad actual de microempresas y emprendimientos localizadas en el AMSS ante emergencia del COVID-19*). The results indicated women were able to commercialize their goods and skills as services and adapt to the digital context through social networks. These assessments led to the implementation of several programmes to promote economic opportunities for women and increase their livelihoods, such as the introduction of Fomentando la Resiliencia Empresarial, a programme that financially supports mainly women-led initiatives (Metropolitan Government San Salvador 2021). These programmes for women's economic empowerment ultimately hold the opportunity to decrease women's exposure to violence.

SAN SALVADOR: CREATING AN INTEGRATED, MULTI-SERVICE SAFE PLACE

Within the centres of Ciudad Mujer, the services of 18 governmental institutions are concentrated under the same roof providing support to victims of violence. These services address matters of health, justice and economic services.

- **Experienced staff from the health sector offer women-specific health care** (sexual health and prevention, mammography and gynecology, prenatal and postnatal services, and psychological counseling services for women survivors of abuse).
 - **Women are further supported to become economically and financially independent** the provision of professional and entrepreneurial training, empowerment workshops, and access to microcredits.
 - **Representatives of the justice and police departments** provide services for juridic consultation, record and prosecute harassment complaints and reports.
- To encourage women to reach out and seek the help of Ciudad Mujer, the centres are located close to public transport, provide childcare and are staffed exclusively by women to encourage a trusting environment.



LOOKING FORWARD

TRENDS & RECOMMENDATIONS IN MAKING CITIES MORE INCLUSIVE

The case studies illustrated some of the key issues in terms of gender inclusion in cities and proposed some possible measures to promote the advancement of women. The next paper's chapter compares these experiences and identifies: 1) some triggering factors for gender-sensitive

urban transformations 2) a reflection on the recurring impact of covid 19 on women 3) some recommendations for implementing urban actions and policies effective to improve gender equality.

RECOGNIZED PATTERNS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN CITIES

The case studies highlight some of the policies and practices that have contributed to ongoing efforts to make these cities more gender inclusive. The following factors have contributed to trigger greater attention to the issue of gender equality and catalyze a series of actions aimed at supporting women's empowerment.

- 1. Growing societal and media attention to gender-based violence:** This situation can be observed in both Mexico City and San Salvador, where the rise of gender-based violence and femicides was addressed with a rapid public response only when associated with the notion of a public emergency. This trend demonstrates how policy change occurs when the media and general public apply pressure over gender issues.
- 2. Political will from decision-makers on the local, national, or international level:** In Tunis, the election of the first female mayor caused a major shift. This political change, together with the will of international donors to work on existing challenges of gender equality, helped implement multiple development programmes, such as the Femmedina project developed by Cities Alliance, and demonstrates potential benefits of stronger formal and female political leadership.
- 3. Active civil society and community-based initiatives advocating for women's rights and providing capacity-building and economic support:** Non-state action can play a major role for promoting gender mainstreaming in metropolitan governance. In Kathmandu, the activities of international and national NGOs were identified as a main driver of change in supporting the disaster recovery after the 2015 earthquake. In San Salvador, women-led support networks took on the task of providing counseling

hotlines and managing shelters for women fleeing violence. These civil society actions inspired public authorities to develop their own programmes, such as the safe place and public service hub, Ciudad Mujer. While grassroots initiatives usually provide a more direct answer to women's needs, the combination of public and non-state action is advantageous and can complement the strengths and make up for the weaknesses of the other. By no means, however, must public actors shirk their responsibility to develop gender-equal cities.

- 4. Ensuring that all public authorities adopt a common gender-mainstreaming approach and framework:** Sensitization of public authorities, integration and collaboration across departments and governance levels, and overcoming path dependency take time and continuous effort. In Mexico City, the central administration and the different districts and levels of the transport administration (SEMOVI, ADTP) adopted the same framework of reference. The implementation of gender-mainstreaming policies remains a complex process, however. The uptake of gender mainstreaming policies within public authorities relies on establishing methods that also ensure effective implementation of the policies, as well as the evaluation of the policy impacts in reducing gender inequalities. Such methods include the collection of sex-disaggregated data (e.g., on the use of public spaces by women) as well as the implementation of gender-sensitive budgets, gender needs assessments, and gender action plans.

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN IN THE CITY

As with most socio-economic global issues, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous worsening effect on gender inequalities. In all four cities highlighted in this report, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in gender-based violence, for a variety of reasons, as described in the case studies. The increase in gender-based violence extended to public transportation, where harassment or sexual violence was more prone to happen because, with fewer users around, harassers and aggressors could act with a feeling of impunity. Fortunately, several public and private sector actors have taken action to address this issue. The lockdown measures and decrease

of commercial activities and lockdown measures have also affected women's mobility and usage of their workspaces, especially those who rely on informal street vending stalls. For them, the decrease of transport activity, in addition to the increased health risk, were major challenges.

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of public spaces as a necessity in women's everyday lives. Metropolises and their governing authorities should ensure women's and girls' accessibility and appropriation of spaces, ranging from functional and service areas to leisure areas and safe hubs.



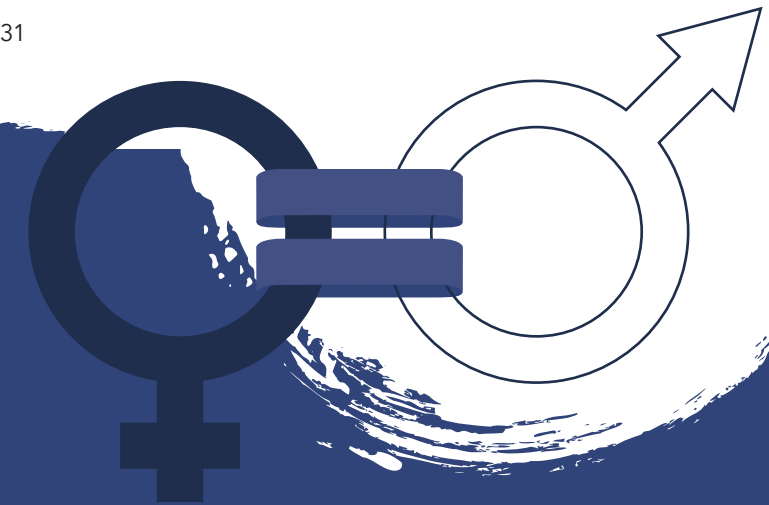
KEY PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The city case studies revealed key priorities for creating gender-sensitive metropolises on which the following five recommendations are based. These recommendations provide courses of action for tackling gender inequalities in urban settings and are largely intertwined, reinforcing each other.

- 1. Fight to prevent gender-based violence and ensure easier access to legal, medical and psychological help for victims of gender-based violence.** The fight against gender-based violence—through sanctioning, prevention, assistance to victims and provision of safe housing—is one of the main points of focus. Ensuring easy access to help for victims of gender-based violence is crucial in managing this problem at a societal level. San Salvador's Ciudad Mujer centers and Mexico City's help points in metro stations both directly address this issue. Support centers that provide a wide range of services, ranging from legal support, to psychological advice, to education opportunities, can facilitate the recovery from abusive actions and make women feel more comfortable in seeking help.
- 2. Improve women's economic independence.** Improving women's economic independence is an important way to reinforce women's ability to be part of a city's economic, political and governance activity. As part of this challenge, it is crucial to support women from the lowest income groups. The examples from San Salvador and Kathmandu show that women's economic empowerment can be fostered through entrepreneurial and professional training. In Tunis, the Femmedina project also addressed these challenges through interventions, such as training centers or marketplaces for women entrepreneurs and the development of workspaces.
- 3. Enhance city governance and institutional change.** Restructuring the governance of cities and promoting institutional changes are necessary at all governance levels to facilitate women's participation in local governance and urban projects. In Nepal, the 2015 Constitution states that 40% of nominee seats at all

levels must be occupied by women. In Mexico City, women have been specifically placed in charge of decision-making for women's mobility needs.

- 4. Enable informed, data-based policy development.** To ensure a holistic, gender-sensitive approach to urban governance, it is crucial to make use of gender-disaggregated data and good practices. This also includes the development of knowledge, the implementation of pilot initiatives and assessments, and the delivery of urban laboratories. In Mexico City, the role of diagnosis, experimentation, and evaluation has been key to creating public policies that are better suited to women's mobility needs. In San Salvador, the Cities without Violence against Women, Safe Cities for All UNIFEM Programme also adopted a systematic case approach through the collection of data and the establishment of a baseline for public policies with a gender mainstreaming approach.
- 5. Facilitate women's participation in urban planning.** Facilitating women's participation is a key element in providing paths for women's voices to be heard and acted upon in metropolitan development. To do so, it is necessary to consider possible gender biases and barriers that prevent women's participation. It is also important to adopt an intersectional approach toward understanding and addressing the variety of challenges women experience. Participatory workshops, such as those established in Kathmandu to collect women's opinions and experiences, are amongst the tools available for incorporating women's vision and needs. In Tunis, public green spaces and other interventions were designed and created through the Femmedina project in accordance with women's expressed needs and as a result of their direct participation in planning.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

The stories of these four metropolises around the world show how traditional urban planning and policies fails to recognize the unequal gender relations in our society: the rights and opportunities that cities offer to people are different according to their gender, or other socially constructed identity categories. At the same, time the paper highlights how local authorities are engaging women in local governance and decision-making processes and applying a gender lens in different areas of policy-making, in order to ensure a better inclusion of women and their needs when shaping policies.

The highlighted issues, trends, and related recommendations based on the experiences of the four case study cities could inspire other metropolitan governments everywhere to design and implement inclusive and gender-sensitive policies and practices. From political leadership and media coverage to street safety and access to services, women and girls need to be both central actors in and beneficiaries of metropolitan governance. Only in this way will metropolises transition into inclusive and sustainable spaces for everyone.



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