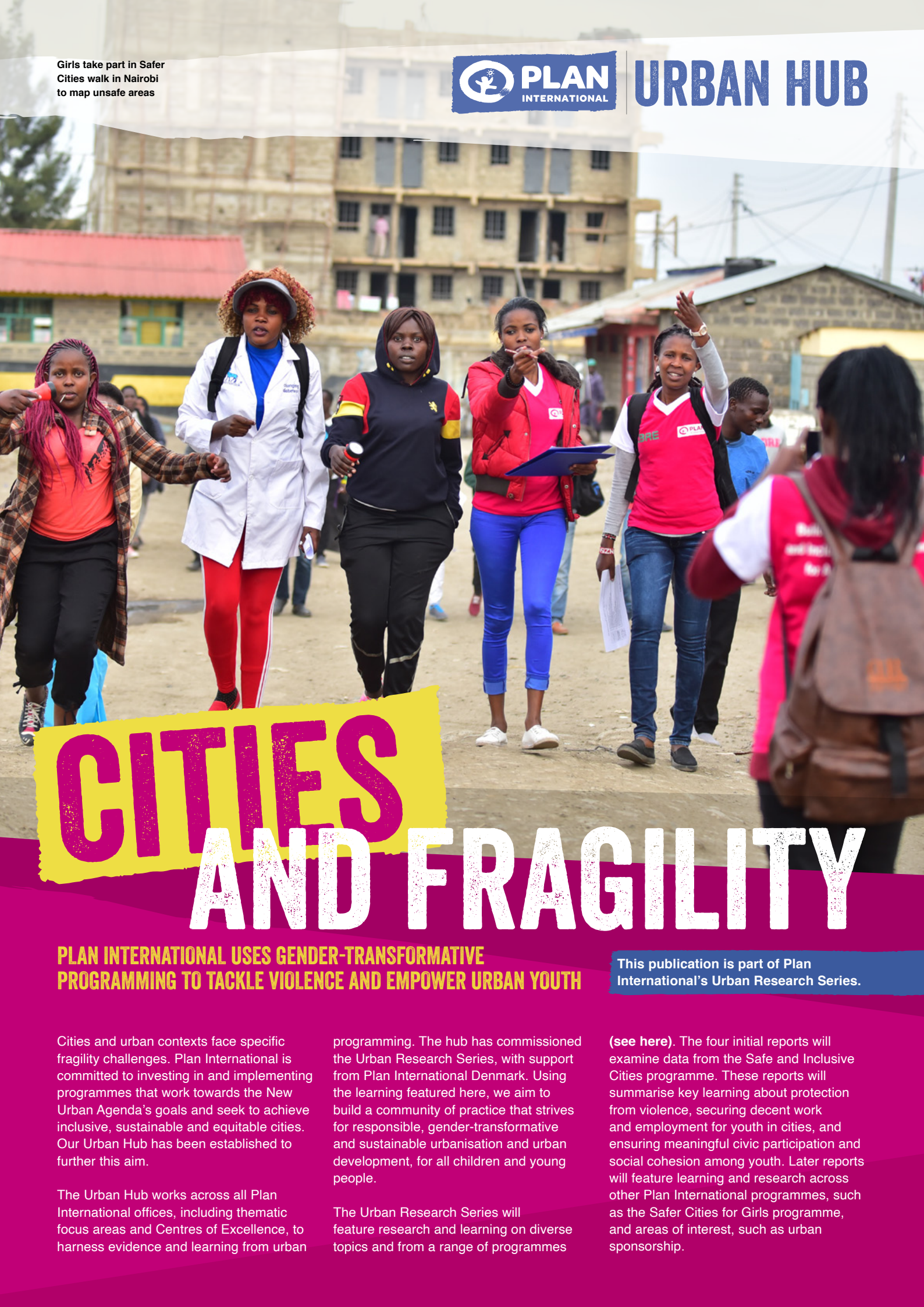


Girls take part in Safer Cities walk in Nairobi to map unsafe areas



URBAN HUB



CITIES

AND FRAGILITY

PLAN INTERNATIONAL USES GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMMING TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AND EMPOWER URBAN YOUTH

This publication is part of Plan International's Urban Research Series.

Cities and urban contexts face specific fragility challenges. Plan International is committed to investing in and implementing programmes that work towards the New Urban Agenda's goals and seek to achieve inclusive, sustainable and equitable cities. Our Urban Hub has been established to further this aim.

The Urban Hub works across all Plan International offices, including thematic focus areas and Centres of Excellence, to harness evidence and learning from urban

programming. The hub has commissioned the Urban Research Series, with support from Plan International Denmark. Using the learning featured here, we aim to build a community of practice that strives for responsible, gender-transformative and sustainable urbanisation and urban development, for all children and young people.

The Urban Research Series will feature research and learning on diverse topics and from a range of programmes

(see here). The four initial reports will examine data from the Safe and Inclusive Cities programme. These reports will summarise key learning about protection from violence, securing decent work and employment for youth in cities, and ensuring meaningful civic participation and social cohesion among youth. Later reports will feature learning and research across other Plan International programmes, such as the Safer Cities for Girls programme, and areas of interest, such as urban sponsorship.

URBAN FRAGILITY

Today, approximately 4.6 billion people live in cities and urban spaces. A high proportion of city-dwellers are children and young people. While the quality of life of millions of urban inhabitants has increased, we know that the benefits of urbanisation are not equally distributed. Disadvantaged and marginalised children and youth are particularly at risk of being left behind.

Cities today can be viewed as complex systems, growing organically and rapidly, often without coherent regulation and planning. This is particularly the case in many low- and middle-income countries where populations are migrating away from rural communities in search of better living standards and work. Simultaneously, in many countries, conflict is prompting the forced migration of people towards urban centres where services and goods are concentrated.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that a set of specific and interlinked challenges can be found in cities, otherwise known as urban fragility. Within its 2016 'States of Fragility' report, the OECD notes that cities are contexts deserving of particular attention. This is because many diverse economic, environmental, social, political and safety-related issues intersect in these urban spaces.

"Rapid and unregulated urbanisation, income and social inequality, concentrated poverty, youth unemployment, policing and justice deficits, and real and perceived insecurity can all contribute to urban violence. (...) Several contexts most affected by fragility and conflict will see rapid population growth in their cities before 2030".¹

The Sustainable Development Goals² also acknowledge the role of cities in global development. SDG 11 specifically calls for action to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".³ In support of this goal, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) adopted the New Urban Agenda⁴ in Quito, Ecuador, on 20th October 2016. The New Urban Agenda sets out a shared vision for tackling the diverse fragility related challenges in urban areas, emphasising that all urban residents should have a 'right to the city'.

Whole-of-society approaches are needed if we are to achieve



“We share a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.”

PLAN INTERNATIONAL AND OUR URBAN WORK

Two specific Plan International programmes stand out in relation to urban fragility, violence prevention and the goals of the New Urban Agenda:

- 1) the Safe and Inclusive Cities programme and
- 2) the Safer Cities for Girls programme.

Implemented across a diverse range of urban contexts for several years, evidence and learning from both these complementary programmes can be used to inform global policy and practice relating to gender-transformative urbanisation and youth programming.

SAFE AND INCLUSIVE CITIES

Implemented across four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Safe and Inclusive Cities (SAIC) programme aims to address issues of urban fragility and create a safe and inclusive environment for young people in urban areas.

CONTEXT

Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, SAIC was implemented between 2018 and 2021 by Plan International with sixteen civil society and community-based partner organisations from across Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia.

Each of the countries faced similar urbanisation-related challenges, including:

- increasing rates of urban community violence, including gender-based violence
- high levels of unemployment and limited work opportunities for youth
- gender inequality and the marginalisation of young women and girls
- limited capacity among local state actors to provide the social services needed to address the above challenges and
- a restricted civic participation space for youth.

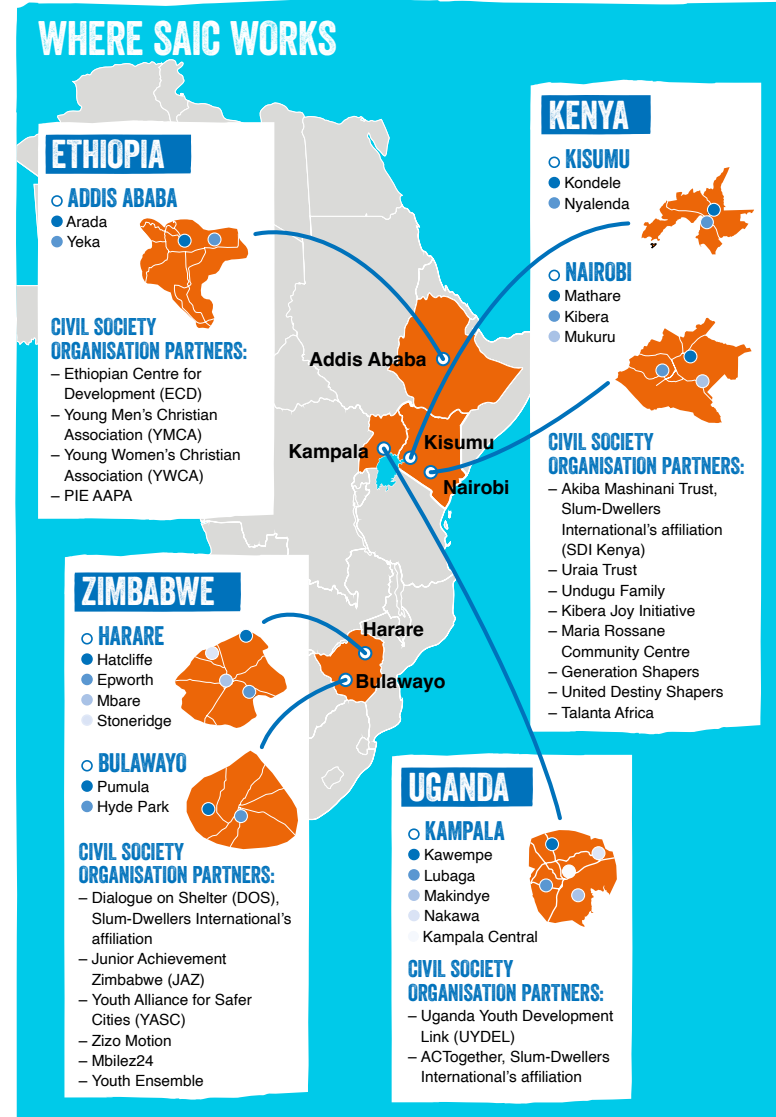
SAIC IMPLEMENTATION

The programme targeted young people aged 15-25 living in fragile urban areas, including those most marginalised and vulnerable. Specifically, this meant engaging with young adults who exchange or sell sex, young women and men who have substance use problems (including drugs and alcohol) and perpetrators of violence.

SAIC activities were organised around three main areas, with multiple individual interventions taking place for each:

Safety in communities and public transportation: this included training youth in safety skills (e.g. violence prevention, knowledge of legal rights and reporting mechanisms) and development of city area safety profiles – mapping areas of the city to identify where violence occurs and what actions may be taken to mitigate this.

Decent work and youth economic empowerment: this included training on vocational and business skills, and the conduct of youth-led market surveys to identify current market conditions, opportunities and challenges relating to work culture.



Youth governance and active participation: this included encouraging local duty bearers (persons with a responsibility to respect, realise and protect human rights) to engage with youth and marginalised groups, organising youth groups (including around participation and savings), enabling dialogue and alliance meetings with local duty bearers, and working with local stakeholders to address challenges relating to safety and decent work.

SAIC EVIDENCE TO DATE

The SAIC programme included a thorough research and documentation component, including surveys, focus groups and interviews at three timepoints to measure changes attributable to the programme. A baseline assessment took place in 2018, followed by a midline assessment in 2020 and an endline assessment in 2021. The initial reports of the Urban Research Series will examine the above data and identify key learning pertaining to protection from violence, securing decent work and employment for youth in cities, and ensuring meaningful civic participation and social cohesion among youth

SAFER CITIES FOR GIRLS

Safer Cities for Girls was developed by Plan International, together with UN-HABITAT and Women in Cities International. It is a groundbreaking initiative that seeks to close existing gaps between urban programming targeting either 'youth' or 'women' by focusing on adolescent girls, who are often the most vulnerable and excluded population in a city.

CONTEXT

Safer Cities for Girls is currently being implemented in seventeen cities around the world and there are plans to scale up the programme to over twenty cities in 2025.

Previous Plan International research has found that girls seldom feel safe in cities, they may experience physical and sexual violence, and they are often excluded from decision-making processes that impact their safety. Girls feel unsafe in public spaces, irrespective of the country, geography and culture. In fact, our previous work suggests that girls and women in large German cities do not feel safer than those in the capitals of Peru, Uganda or India.

SAFER CITIES FOR GIRLS IMPLEMENTATION

There is a significant breakdown in accountability towards girls, especially adolescent girls, in cities. Sustainable change is only possible by working across different levels of a city. Hence, the programme works to influence:

- governments, institutions and policy-makers to make inclusive and responsive laws
- families and communities to create an empowering and inclusive ecosystem, and
- adolescents to become champions of change.

The programme does this by learning about the diverse needs of young people through participatory youth-led research, connecting with young people through multiple pathways, and collaborating and co-creating with young boys and girls on localised, responsive and transformative solutions.

Through this approach, the programme strives to build safe, accountable and inclusive cities with and for adolescent girls, in all their diversity. It aims to increase girls':

- safety and access to public spaces
- active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance, and
- autonomous mobility in the city.

SAFER CITIES FOR GIRLS EVIDENCE TO DATE

To date, the programme has carried out seventeen evaluations and four research studies. A meta-evaluation will be commissioned, as part of the Urban Research Series, to more thoroughly document programme impacts.

COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF THE PROGRAMMES

Safe and Inclusive Cities and Safer Cities for Girls are both innovative programmes seeking to strengthen the capacities and wellbeing of young people in cities, especially young women and girls.

The programmes share some key attributes. They are both participatory, working with and empowering local youth to contribute to decision-making in cities.

By adopting a gender-transformative lens, the programmes specifically intend to strengthen girls' agency and voice. Both programmes also work together with diverse local stakeholders and duty-bearers, reflecting an understanding that this is how sustainable change can be achieved. They bring stakeholders into constructive dialogue with young people, in order to influence both city-wide and broader policy change. Both programmes additionally focus on protection from violence.

There are also notable differences between the programmes. For example, the Safe and Inclusive Cities programme focuses on decent work creation because poverty and wealth inequality are among the highest drivers of violence and crime in cities. In contrast, the Safer Cities for Girls programme has a substantive component dedicated to strengthening social accountability in cities. The latter programme additionally seeks to build a social movement specifically targeting gender-based violence in cities.

Together, the two programmes complement all Plan International's urban interventions with the combined aim of creating inclusive, sustainable and equitable cities, as part of the New Urban Agenda.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016), States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267213-en> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 2 United Nations, Overview of the Sustainable Development Goals: Overview (2022). Available from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/Overview/> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 3 United Nations, Overview of the Sustainable Development Goals (2022) Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities. Available from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/Overview/> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 4 Habitat 3: The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (2016) The New Urban Agenda. Available from <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 5 Habitat 3: The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (2016) The New Urban Agenda. Available from <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 6 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016), States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267213-en> Accessed 01 March 2022

ENGAGING WITH THE URBAN HUB

IF YOU ARE:

- a professional active in urban youth and violence programming
- a donor or policy maker interested in effective and impactful programming in urban areas, or
- a researcher working on urban issues

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