UN-HABITAT’s Safer Cities Programme

Cecilia Andersson

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UN-HABITAT’s Safer Cities Programme

UN-HABITAT’s Safer Cities Programme was launched in 1996 at the request of African Mayors seeking to tackle urban crime and violence in their cities. The Safer Cities approach embraces a holistic, integrated and multi-sectoral approach to improving the livability of cities and quality of life for all urban residents (especially the most marginalized), predicated on the confidence that good urban governance, planning and management can improve the safety of neighborhoods. The Safer Cities supports cities and other urban stakeholders to develop and implement city-wide crime and violence prevention strategies via two interlinked by distinctive service modes: a network hub (GNSC) and a design service. This bimodality enables work on both a global, normative level, and at the city, operational level, with actions at both levels providing mutual reinforcement, knowledge transfer, amplification of messaging, and added value. To date UN-Habitat has supported programmes in 72 cities in 23 countries worldwide.

The Global Network on Safer Cities (GNSC) was launched during the World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy in September 2012 with the goal of equipping local authorities and urban stakeholders to deliver urban safety, thus contributing towards securing the urban advantage for all. The GNSC represents an international forum for cities and urban stakeholders working to reduce insecurity by stimulating exchange between policymakers and practitioners, facilitating the standardization of principles on prevention at the local level, institutionalizing knowledge, supporting application of proven and promising approaches, spreading a culture of prevention, and increasing coordination and creating synergies among cities and donors. It also promotes the visibility of urban safety, through joint advocacy and communications activities, and leveraging collective policy and political weight to influence other orders of government, especially at the national level. Key activities include:

1. **The Definition of the UN Guidelines on Safer Cities.** A set of internationally accepted and validated standards providing comprehensive guidance to improve the quality and consistency of policymaking and programming by the UN system, Member States, and other partners.

2. **A Global Safer City Award** to celebrate the achievements of local authorities in improving safety and security for all. The Award will become the international benchmark by which local public sector innovation in the safety and security realm is judged.

3. **Urban Safety Monitor** to benchmark urban security. The Monitor is currently in development and will be a composite index, based on comparable indicators including the incidence of violence and crime and other factors. The Monitor will not be a global index, rather foster regional
peer-to-peer comparison

4. **Establishment of a trust fund/funding mechanism for safer cities.** A funding mechanism that will catalyze a wide range of financial resources for specific service lines through a call-for-proposals for format.

5. **Design service.** A locally responsive service for cities and national authorities to assist them in diagnosing and resolving the issues of affecting urban safety.

6. **City-to-city knowledge exchange and training.**

In a survey that was conducted in 2010 on the need and value of a network promoting urban safety, out of the 250 partners that were involved, 228 responses were received. The survey responses affirmed the need for the Network based on the growing number of cities that are adopting safer cities approaches by developing strategic and planned initiatives and the increasing demand for technical assistance to deliver urban safety. This is complemented by the fact that there are also many tools and approaches which have proven their effectiveness in the prevention of urban crime and enhancement of urban safety and social cohesion; and, a tremendous amount of lessons learned from practice. Hence, there is need to:

1) intensify the sharing of experiences, ideas and strategic information across sectors and linguistic barriers, with and among local authorities, of what is working and in what context and what challenges are encountered; and in this way enhance city to city learning and collaboration;

2) consolidate a knowledge repository bringing together experiences, approaches, debates on urban safety so that more cost-effective prevention and intervention policies can be implemented;

3) enhance dialogue among city administrators, other urban stakeholders and citizens in order to create safer and healthier environments for all.

As core resources committed to urban safety continue to dwindle, most city safety interventions are under-resourced. Therefore, there is a need to:

1) leverage additional resources through enhanced partnerships;

2) enhance advocacy and fundraising for safety interventions by seeking out expanded technical cooperation financing from bilateral and multilateral agencies and private sector.

At the global level, the GNSC is designed as a common collaborative platform, a network of networks, which will promote the standardization of principles, indicators and methodologies globally in order to scale up best practices while encouraging the creation of centres of excellence on action-oriented research with emerging issues on urban crime and violence.
At the national level, the Network provides a platform for structured dialogue between local authorities and national government on crime prevention and urban development. The network will also foster the dialogue between various government departments and ministries such as ministries of local government, ministries of housing and urban development and ministries of internal security and justice. At the city level, the network will further encourage community participation and interaction and enhance the link with other ongoing urban processes and developmental programmes.

The GNSC is comprised of 5 key organs:

- The Steering Committee
- The Advisory Panel
- The Partners Consultative Group
- Cities Exchange Assembly/Forum (including local government and grassroots platforms)
- The Secretariat (including the Trust Fund facility and Regional Centres of Excellence)

The **Steering Committee** of the GNSC was constituted to strengthen the international dialogue, advocate for safer more sustainable urban development and provide strategic guidance and advice, across policies, programme of work and budgeting at global, regional, national and local levels on urban safety. The Steering Committee is led by Mayors and other high-level personalities representing the regions:

- Chair of the GNSC: Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón, former Mayor of Mexico City
- North America: Antonio Villaraigosa, former Mayor of Los Angeles, USA
- North America: Annise Parker, Mayor of Houston, USA, representing the United States Conference of Mayors
- Central America: Norman Quijano González, Mayor of San Salvador, El Salvador.
- Andean Region: Gustavo Petro, Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia
- South America: Fernando Haddad, Mayor of Sao Paulo, Brazil (represented by Mr. Roberto Porto, Secretary of Urban Safety)
- Middle East: Bilal Hamad, Mayor of Beirut, Lebanon
- Africa: Parks Tau, Mayor of Johannesburg, South Africa, Chairman of the South African Cities Network
- Africa: François Amichia, Mayor of Treichville-Abidjan, Ivory Coast, President of the National Forum on Urban Safety
- Europe: Guillermo Pintos, Mayor of Matosinhos, Portugal, President of the European Forum on Urban Safety
Asia/Pacific: Won Soon Park, Mayor of Seoul Metropolitan Government, South Korea

Other Steering Committee members include:

- Germany: Ministry of Economic Cooperation
- Sweden: Swedish International Development Co-Operation Agency (Sida)
- Josep Roig, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
- John De Boer, Director, International Development Research Centre (IDRC) – Canada
- Marisol Dalmazzo, Huairou Commission – Gender representative
- Elizabeth Johnston, Director, European Forum on Urban Security
- Vijay Jagannathan, Secretary General, Citynet
- Private sector representatives

The Advisory Panel is made up of experienced personalities who have worked with UN-HABITAT and partners in the technical field and are experts in the area of urban safety.

The Partners Consultative Group is made up of organizations that have entered into a collaborative arrangement with the GNSC (UN-Habitat) supporting cities through tool development, training, knowledge management and capacity building. The Partners Consultative Group will also work towards joint programming and scaling up of normative and operational work of partners as well as monitor and evaluate the delivery of urban safety in cities.

The Cities Exchange Assembly/Forum is made up of local governments, thematic partner platforms and citizen/grassroots movements (e.g. Youth, Gender, Police, Armed Violence, CPTED, etc.). The Cities Exchange Forum is the World Urban Campaign’s Safer Cities Cluster Group and meet to exchange knowledge on policy and practice on urban safety and to enhance city to city cooperation and learning. It will particularly involve city-to-city exchanges and enhanced peer review mechanisms. This will involve cities that have already developed safer cities models (defined as ‘resource cities’) working with the network of cities. The resource cities will have championed or adopted safer cities approaches that may be replicable in other cities/communities and are willing to share their knowledge with other cities.

The Secretariat serves the GNSC and its members, initiates and facilitates a range of network activities, supports fundraising and collects good practices and tools. The secretariat will also monitor and evaluate implementation of urban safety projects and make available information and relevant tools/methodologies as required to facilitate the work of the cities and partners. UN-Habitat serves as the Secretariat for an incubation period until 2016.
Given that the Network is being established over a four-year horizon, the GNSC architecture, partner database and organization of work will incrementally be built over the period 2012-2016 and be subject to continuous review as it grows in a consultative process alongside the development of UN Guidelines on Safer Cities. The GNSC has adapted a strategy of “starting small” from its launch in September 2012. To facilitate its foundational development, UN-Habitat is entering into partnerships/MoUs with various partners on various themes to provide an impetus to the development of an all-inclusive network architecture and to the assembly of a broader alliance of cities.
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