For the first time in history, more people live in cities than in rural areas. In public and private spaces, women and girls experience and fear various types of violence, ranging from harassment, to rape and femicide. Momentum is growing around the issue of women and girls’ safety in urban, public spaces. However, given that this is a relatively new field of work, published evidence of the impacts of such interventions remain somewhat scattered and limited.

UN Women with KWDI conducted this study with Dr Fulu as the Lead Researcher to:

- Map the existing relevant interventions being implemented in the region;
- Assess available global evidence to determine the impact of existing measures on women and girls’ safety, mobility and agency;
- Document key lessons learned and emerging promising practice among innovative initiatives; and
- Provide recommendations for future work in the region on women and girls’ safety in public spaces and mobility.

The study included a review of 55 evaluated interventions, a survey of over 118 stakeholders working on the issue globally, over 50 in-depth interviews and field visits to Jakarta, Indonesia; Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam; and Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Recommendations point to the need to address VAWG at every sectoral level and in a coordinated way, involving different actors and stakeholders, and the use of a gender-transformative lens that sees women as agents of their own destiny. To maximize effectiveness, interventions must also take an inclusive approach, targeting marginalized and vulnerable groups. In addition, there is an urgent need to address the paucity and low quality of evaluations. Lastly, interventions should target women’s mobility and not just their safety. An excessive focus on safety is protectionist, narrow and moves away from the revolutionary conceptual framework set up by the safe cities movement. As one of the key informants stated, “a heightened sense of danger is not helping their independence so we really need to be addressing the underlying causes of violence against women.”

1. Build gender-transformative programs that challenge the status quo and critically engage men and women.
2. Address sexual harassment against women in public spaces as part of the continuum on VAWG, from private to public and across the life-cycle.
3. Use research to develop an evidence base that informs intervention design and implementation.
4. Have strong community engagement, including participatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
5. Invest time and financial resources in coordination and partnership building throughout the life of the program.