Securing the urban advantage for all
Half the world’s inhabitants live in urban areas. Cities hold out the promise of concentrated economic dynamism, predictable access to services, and opportunities for democratic citizenship—what we call the urban advantage. Yet for hundreds of millions of people on the wrong side of the breach of urban poverty and exclusion, violence and insecurity have become facts of everyday life, denying them the benefits of the right to the city.

UN-HABITAT established the Safer Cities Programme in response to this predicament, to empower local authorities and other stakeholders to strengthen urban safety and security, mainly in low- and middle-income countries. Safer Cities aims to strengthen the capacity of local authorities to use good governance, appropriate urban planning and management, and the reduction of acute vulnerabilities to diminish the incidence and impact of violence. Over the past 15 years, the programme has implemented effective urban safety and security programmes in 77 cities and towns in 23 countries.

In 2012-16, the programme will aim to deliver a measurable improvement in security for urban citizens globally. Safer Cities will build a global network of local authorities to advance its systematic approach to improving urban safety and security, and champion that approach in the development policy debate. It will work to achieve tangible results in 20-25 cities, scaling-up innovative initiatives to prevent and reduce violence and improving the conditions for vulnerable urban constituencies. And it will expand investment in demonstrating and documenting results and producing a compelling evidence base to inform policy. Safer Cities will boldly and ambitiously endeavour to enable everyone to enjoy the urban advantage.
The Safer Cities Programme launched in 1996, at the request of a number of African mayors. Over the past 15 years, we have rolled-out multiple local-level interventions in partnership with municipal authorities in low- and middle-income countries.

The Safer Cities approach embraces a holistic, integrated and multi-sectoral approach to improving the liveability of cities and quality of life for all urban residents, predicated on the confidence that good urban governance, planning and management can contribute to improving the safety of neighborhoods. A rigorous citywide diagnosis of insecurity is used as the basis for developing a local government-led, community-based, partnership-driven, integrated strategy and action plan to tackle violence and insecurity.

We are now undertaking a change process intended to consolidate and scale-up Safer Cities gains based on lessons learned from more than a decade of experience.

**Our value proposition:** We know cities. The Safer Cities Programme is uniquely positioned to deliver added value for cities in two areas: the development of a dynamic global normative framework for action on urban violence and insecurity, based on the convening power and mandate of UN-HABITAT; and deployment of state-of-the-art technical and operational support for city-level interventions, based on the programme’s 15 years of experience and established credibility.
More than three billion people live in cities, a figure expected to rise to five billion by 2050. The concentration of people, capital and resources in urban centres affords exceptional opportunities for human development. Yet many cities are sites of extreme and chronic forms of poverty and inequality, where violence and insecurity are facts of everyday life. Some 60 percent of all urban residents in developing countries have been victims of crime, with women, young people, and those living with insecure land tenure facing the most acute risks. The urban advantage is in jeopardy for hundreds of millions of people.

**Our goal:** Deliver a measurable improvement in security for urban citizens globally in four years.

We will do this by strengthening global learning, knowledge-exchange, cooperation and advocacy to support the achievement of safer cities for all, by achieving a verifiable improvement of the security environment for citizens of 25 beacon cities, and by producing a compelling evidence base to inform policy and practice.

Who are the beneficiaries of our work? The primary beneficiaries are the local authorities of 100+ cities involved in the global network, and 20-25 cities assisted by the design service. But the final beneficiaries are the urban populations of those cities, who stand to benefit from better governance and urban planning and management, as well as efforts to ameliorate acute urban vulnerabilities, resulting in improved safety and security and more resilient cities.
Safer Cities will deploy support to cities and other urban stakeholders via two interlinked by distinctive service modes: a network hub and a design service. This bimodality will enable us to work both at a global, normative level, and at the urban, operational level, with actions at both levels providing mutual reinforcement, knowledge transfer, amplification of messaging, and added value.

**The network hub:** The programme will serve as the network hub for the Global Network for Safer Cities. As a permanent secretariat tasked with facilitating decentralized cooperation for city-to-city exchanges and replication, the network hub will enhance the convening capacity of UN-HABITAT on urban safety, enabling the agency to act as an international catalyst and the primary resource for promoting safe and just cities for all. The network hub will position and profile UN-HABITAT to attain the policy heft necessary for the design service to credibly advise cities.

**The design service:** Safer Cities will provide a design service to support and collaborate with cities in the development of urban safety and security programmes. The design service will offer a nexus of technical and consulting expertise and a toolbox of tried-and-tested analytical and operational tools, with a sharp focus on improving the security environment for the most vulnerable. The design service will generate a compelling evidence base for the effectiveness of Safer Cities interventions, to be disseminated at the global level by the network hub.
Launching in September 2012, the Global Network for Safer Cities (GNSC) will represent the foremost international forum for cities and urban stakeholders working to reduce violence and insecurity. It will provide an inclusive common platform linking existing urban violence and crime prevention networks with a multitude of local authorities. During the period 2012-16, SCP will serve as a network hub for the GNSC.

GNSC will stimulate exchange between policymakers and practitioners, facilitate standardization of principles on prevention at the local level, institutionalize knowledge, support application of proven and promising approaches, spread a culture of prevention, and increase coordination on advocacy among cities and donors. It will also grow the visibility of the urban safety and security agenda, through joint advocacy and communications activities, and leverage collective policy and political weight to influence other orders of government, especially at the national level. Key activities will include:

- An Advisory Group on Safer Cities to advance policy leadership globally
- Definition of International Safer Cities Standards
- Establishment of a virtual e-learning environment and a City-to-City Networking and Training Platform
- A Global Safer City Award to celebrate the achievements of local authorities
- Development of a Urban Safety Index to benchmark urban security
- Launch of a global public awareness campaign on urban safety and security
Based at UN-HABITAT headquarters in Nairobi, the Safer Cities design service supports cities and other urban stakeholders to utilize an evolving, integrated process for assessment of safety and security needs and deliberative development of policy and programming instruments in response. It is a demand-driven deployable capability to assist cities in reducing urban vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience.

Powered by insights from the programme’s corpus of deep field experience, the design service offers municipal government partners a rigorous, systematic, and rapid means of generating understandings of local safety and an ensemble of field-tested tools to address the unique circumstances of a particular city. Programme personnel can be deployed to provide technical and operational support to cities, and link partners to supplemental knowledge, technical savoir-faire, and financial support. Key activities include:

- Production of a comprehensive toolbox for Safer Cities
- Deployment of direct technical and operational support to cities
- Participation in three global UN joint programmes to enhance the security of women and girls
- Innovative programming to enhance the security of tenure and reduce forced evictions and land conflict
- Launch and sustain a state-of-the-art Youth Safer Cities Ventures incubator
Safer Cities is the leading global champion of a comprehensive approach to urban violence and insecurity. Our credibility and leadership rests on the quality of our evidence base. So, data collection and analytics will be at the heart of our work in the next four years, woven into our programme’s DNA. We will make a heavy investment in measuring results and assessing impact, in order to inform priority setting, shape the design of interventions, and understand the effectiveness of programming. Our aim is to amass a credible, incontrovertible base of evidence for the effectiveness of Safer Cities initiatives.

Measuring results and assessing impact will enable Safer Cities to capitalize on its stock of knowledge and produce an empirical evidence base that will be appealing to donors and convincing to policy-level partners at the UN and elsewhere. Key activities will include:

- Development of **common indicators** to be tracked across programme sites
- Investment in **local and national data collection capacities**, and strengthening the ability of local authorities to manipulate and analyze data
- Expanding knowledge on **what works in reducing urban violence and insecurity**
- Conducting periodic **systematic reviews of policy and practice**
- Embracing an “open development” approach, making a rich cascade of data available on an **online programme dashboard**
UN-HABITAT is the United Nations body mandated to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.

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