

POLICYBRIEF 2018

#URBAN GIRLS MOVEMENT

GUIDELINES FOR
FEMINIST URBAN
DEVELOPMENT

#UrbanGirlsMovement is an initiative mapping good examples, stories, and lessons learned from multi-stakeholders globally. It highlights ongoing projects implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level. In collaboration with a range of multi-stakeholders, the purpose is to showcase global pro-poor urban development initiatives targeting girls and young women in low-income areas in rapidly urbanizing cities, as well as to develop methods for local and urban development that can be applicable globally. In the long run #UrbanGirlsMovement aims to contribute to improving the living conditions for girls and young women in vulnerable urban areas through highlighting participatory design and public space planning; promoting public health, sanitation, access to education, employment, and security.

Introduction

To reach the SDGs, the interlinkages of the goals are of crucial importance. We believe that the integration of SDG3 on health, SDG5 on gender equality and SDG11 on cities must be put at the top of the agenda. Making girls in low-income areas in rapidly urbanizing cities a priority, is a fruitful starting point for implementation of the other SDGs, globally. But reaching the goals will also depend on whether local and national policies will manage to build socially sustainable cities.

The purpose of #UrbanGirlsMovement is therefore to help improve the living conditions for girls and young women in low-income areas in rapidly urbanizing cities through participatory design and public space planning. The project highlights global initiatives that improve living conditions through public space planning; promoting public health, sanitation, access to education and employment, and security for girls and young women in vulnerable urban areas. The project develops new methods for urban development, with focus on a feminist urban planning, that can be applicable globally. It maps global initiatives and emphasise good practices that affect the daily lives of girls and young women, directly or indirectly contributing to a majority of the SDGs. The project results in policy recommendations for local and national authorities and concrete guidelines for feminist urban planning and development as a support for implementing actors.

Challenges

#UrbanGirlsMovement was initiated with the conviction that “if we plan a city for girls, it will work for everyone”. Three quarters of the world’s poorest people live in lower middle-income countries, often without social security or adequate living conditions. Poverty and vulnerability is increasing within many countries as a result of unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. Oppression and social exclusion, particularly affects girls and young women.

As the world is predominantly urban, poverty is also becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon. More than 1 billion people live in low-income informal settlements, and inequalities are increasing the fastest in cities. Girls in are often most vulnerable and neglected. Consistent challenges raised by young women in urban areas are lack of safe places, gender-based violence, access to education, sex education, adult interactions and role models, as well as environmental risks.

In order to fulfill the SDGs, the interlinkages and integrated nature of the goals and targets are crucial. In the first global mapping of good examples, the main challenges raised by young women globally were; the lack of safe places, gender-based violence, access to education, sex education, adult interactions and role models, and environmental risks.

Therefore, addressing specially SDG3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages,” SDG5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and SDG11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” in an integrated manner is an effective tool to tackle the challenges and reach the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

“Plan a city for girls, and it will work for everyone”

Celine, Mumbai



Photo by: Aziz Acharki / Unsplash

Good practices & solutions

All projects included in the global mapping of good examples and lessons learned focus on improving the living conditions for girls and young women in low-income areas in rapidly urbanizing cities, through participatory design and public space planning. Girls and young women are key stakeholders, hence we have gained unique insights into some of the specific challenges they face, and how inextricably linked girls' development are to a range of development issues.

Participatory design and public space planning highlight the target groups' needs and establishes priorities in the planning of physical spaces, social and economic programs. The activities empower girls and young women by improving their living conditions through targeted interventions related to public health, sanitation, education, employment and security. They demonstrate how participatory design and public space planning is crucial as steppingstones for youth to improve their chances of a fruitful life, and at the same time addressing several SDGs.

Outcomes & opportunities

Prioritising girls and young women in low-income areas in rapidly urbanizing cities is not only vital for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the majority of SDGs, but also for other global agendas. The project has successfully mapped global good examples that make a difference; empowering girls and young women and improving their lives, with the purpose for others to learn, be inspired, and to scale up the work in another context. In line with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, the project has directly or indirectly shown the local application of particularly SDG1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16 and 17.

The initiative also contributes to the development of new methods for local urban development and planning that promote safe and productive public spaces, and that can be applicable in Swedish low-income areas, as well as in informal urban settlements globally. The ultimate goal is to propose new urban development methods for a feminist urban planning to local municipal leaders and actors that serve the local implementation of the SDGs. This provides an opportunity for #UrbanGirlsMovement to provide policy recommendations to both Swedish municipalities and the Swedish Government on how to turn a 'Feminist Foreign Policy' into practice, as well as to identify new priorities for Swedish development cooperation, targeting girls and young women in vulnerable urban areas.

Lessons learned & recommendations

By mapping the local work of our partnering organisations, we have managed to strengthen our belief "plan a city for girls, it will work for everyone". A city for everyone is a sustainable city, where both girls and boys can thrive and develop. But to get there we need to include everyone in the process. Many initiatives do not particularly target girls and young women, but it has been noticed they tend to, in a greater extent than men, take advantage of the opportunities provided. Women also often tend to carefully safeguard the longevity of the project or infrastructure put in place.

So, how should a city be planned in order to benefit the most vulnerable populations? Finding solutions that have a positive impact on making cities more inclusive and equal should be a top priority. To summarise, a city is balanced when there is space for all people to live, work, and play in equal measure.

Guidelines for feminist urban development

1. Good footpaths and public mobility - the pure ability to push a baby stroller or a wheelchair, or walk without looking down to watch your steps. It also provide connectivity to important sites in a city. The mobility issue is a direct issue sprung from norms. A majority of the population does not own a car, but a majority of the public space is taken up by roads, where cars occupy the majority of the space. We need to widen sidewalks and make roads into walkable streets.

2. Places for women, children, and elderly to loiter - benches faced towards each other to make it possible to talk to one another. Experience from informal settlements is that if there are no benches women in skirts or dresses (which often corresponds to the majority) will not sit down, neither stay standing but just quickly pass through. But as squatting is common among men, automatically the city will become more accessible to them.

3. Good lightning - makes a place less threatening during the dark hours of the day, for everyone. A city where women cannot access the city at all hours of the day is not an equal city.

4. Visibility and presence of authorities - contribute to the conception of safety. The feeling that everyone can see all the activities carried out in a public place have the potential of leading to a feeling of safety. It encourages positive activity and behaviour. A lively place therefore often becomes a safer place.

5. Open access - semi-public or semi-private spaces such as parks with fees, museums or restaurant terraces. Places that are not open access for free, systematically exclude the poorer part of the population.

6. Design - human scale, well-adapted design and urban form. It will automatically become an attractive meeting place. A place that is beautiful and differ in design from the majority of the city is less likely to get vandalized and will help strengthening the conception of safety.

7. Flexibility - one element must meet several purposes and functions. It attracts different audiences, at different times of the day. A staircase is a good example. It can be a place to walk, to sit, a meeting place, a training venue, a playground, a stage for performances. The more flexible elements, the more sustainable place.

8. Well working water and sanitation - women are more vulnerable than men when there is insufficient or lack of toilets and sanitation facilities. In informal settlements the community often share toilets. These, as well as public toilets in high-income areas must be well lit, clean and secure.

Contact:

Elin Andersdotter Fabre, Sustainable Cities Manager
Independent think tank Global Utmaning
Mail: elin.fabre@globalutmaning.se
Twitter: @elinafabre_
Link to interactive map:
www.globalutmaning.se/interactive-map/

GLOBAL UTMANING

Global Utmaning (Global Challenge) is an independent think tank that promotes sustainable development within social, economic and environmental dimensions. We create platforms for collaboration between research, business, politics and civil society, where experience and knowledge exchange form the basis for policy proposals to accelerate the transformation towards sustainable communities. The think tank is a node in international networks that work with strategic analysis, policy solutions and opinion through dialogues, seminars and reports. We have a qualified network of senior advisors with cross-sectoral expertise. Global Utmaning is a non-profit association funded through project funds from institutions, foundations and by our partners from the business sector.

Birger Jarlgatan 57C, 113 56 Stockholm, Sweden
info@globalutmaning.se | (+46) 08-787 2150

www.globalutmaning.se | facebook.com/globalutmaning | twitter.com/globalut | instagram.com/globalutmaning