

# PLAN A CITY FOR GIRLS, AND IT WILL WORK FOR EVERYONE

Elin Andersdotter Fabre (Global Utmaning)

## **INTRODUCTION TO CASE AND USED CONCEPTS**

How would our public spaces look like, function, be used and managed, if they were planned and built from a girl's perspective? This chapter will focus on guidelines and policy recommendations for girl centred public space planning and design. It will also show how such focus will be crucial to reach the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) by 2036.

#UrbanGirlsMovement is global initiative mapping good examples and lessons learned from multi-stakeholders all over the world. The purpose is to showcase global pro-poor urban development initiatives targeting girls and young women in low-income areas in rapidly urbanising cities, as well as to develop methods for local and urban development that can be applied globally. In the long run we hope to contribute to improving the living conditions for girls and young women through participatory design and public space planning promoting public health, sanitation, access to education, employment, and security.

## **DESCRIPTION OF CASE AND ANALYSIS**

In order to develop adequate guidelines for practitioners and policy recommendations for decision-makers, it is essential to take into consideration both the use of public space, e.g. the software, the design of public space, e.g. the hardware and the organisation of the public realm,

**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



**5** GENDER EQUALITY



e.g. the orgware. What do girls need in terms of the physical environment, for example to play on equal terms? How should the space be designed in order to respond to girls' needs? What are the main challenges when traditional norms of gender and age but also class and ethnicity, create a multi-discriminatory environment where girls are destined for the very edge of society?

Three quarters of the world's poorest live in lower middle-income countries, often without adequate living conditions or access to social security. Oppression and social exclusion particularly affects girls and young women. In our first global mapping of good examples, the main challenges raised by girls and young women in urban areas were the lack of safe places, gender-based violence, access to education, sex education, adult interactions and role models, and environmental risks.

The examples highlighted implements various SDGs at the local level, such as goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16 and 17. In order to reach the SDGs, systematically searching for interlinkages will be crucial. We examine how integrating particularly SDG3 on health, SDG5 on gender and SDG11 on cities can provide an effective tool to tackle one of our major global challenges. Putting girls and public space at the centre of policy will definitely change the business as usual approach and guarantee meeting the needs of the larger population.

#UrbanGirlsMovement develops new methods for urban development, with focus on feminist urban planning, that can be applicable globally. In all projects 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.

Through participatory design and public space planning the target groups' needs are highlighted and priorities are established for the planning of physical spaces, social and economic programs. The activities empower girls and young women and demonstrate how participatory design and public space planning is crucial as stepping stones for youth to improve their chances of a fruitful life.

Many initiatives has noticed that girls and women in a greater extent than boys and men take advantage of the opportunities provided. They also tend to carefully safeguard the longevity of the project or infrastructure put in place.

## **CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

How should a city be planned in order to benefit the most vulnerable populations? A girl centred public space planning and design must take into account the three levels in the city scape: the level of the building, the street level and the wider city context:



1. Good footpaths and public mobility - the ability to push a baby stroller or run without watching your steps. It also provides connectivity to important sites in a city. The mobility issue is a direct issue sprung from norms. Girls do not own a car nor drive, but a majority of the public space is taken up by roads, where cars occupy the majority of the space. Instead sidewalks need to be widened and roads turned into walkable streets.
2. Places for girls to loiter - benches faced towards each other make it possible to socialise and talk to one another. Experience from informal settlements says that if there is a lack of seating, for example benches, girls in skirts or dresses will not sit down, neither stay standing but just quickly pass through. But as squatting is common among guys, automatically the city will become more accessible to them.
3. Good lighting makes a place less threatening during the dark hours of the day, particularly for girls. A city where girls cannot move freely at all hours of the day, is not an equal city.
4. Visibility and presence of authorities - this contributes to the conception of girls' safety. The feeling that everyone can see all the activities carried out in a public place creates a feeling of safety. It also encourages positive activity and behaviour. A lively place 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 poorest part of the population, e.g. girls.

6. Design - human scale, well-adapted design and good urban form. This will automatically become an attractive meeting place. A place that is beautiful and differs in design from the majority of the city is less likely to get vandalised or abandoned, and will help in strengthening the conception of safety for girls.
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 for girls also in adapting and using it for their purposes.
8. Accessible water and sanitation - girls are the most vulnerable when there is insufficient or lack of toilets and sanitation facilities. In informal settlements the community often share toilets which is a direct threat to their security. These, as well as public toilets in high-income areas, must be well lit, clean and secure.