

## MAKING PUBLIC SPACES ACCESSIBLE FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

All over the world, the failure to fully mainstream gender equality in urban planning, design and governance is making cities less inclusive and preventing the full integration of women and girls in economic, social, political and cultural life. Unsafe and unfriendly public spaces particularly affect the everyday lives of girls and women. To counter this, gender equality and empowerment has been a specific focus of the Public Space Programme in 2017. UN-Habitat developed a training module on the priorities for engaging women in urban planning and city development and inspiring women professionals to engage in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda with public space as an entry point. The training module was first tested in Bahrain in November and there are already requests to conduct similar trainings in Wuhan, China.

One of the major elements restricting women's and girls' access to public space globally is gender-based street harassment. To give girls and women more influence over the way that cities and public spaces are designed, UN-Habitat and Plan International in 2017 commissioned research considering the gender transformative potential of video games for community participation in urban design. In March 2017, UN-Habitat and Plan organised a participatory process in which a group of 50 adolescent girls in Hanoi, Vietnam used Minecraft to reimagine their neighbourhood from a safety perspective. The aim is to develop a strong methodology to increase girls' safety and access to public spaces and increase their meaningful participation in urban governance.

The research provides an overview of the theory on gender and ICT and computer games and their potential to challenge gender norms and power dynamics, as well as clear recommendations on how ICT and computer games can be used to strengthen girls' and young women's skills, confidence, and voice and provide them with meaningful opportunities to participate in urban governance processes. It is based on a participatory action research methodology and key informant interviews in Asia and Africa, and will be published in 2018.

**I've been able to contribute to building a community that is more beautiful, safer and friendlier for myself and for girls in general – and for the community as a whole.**

Anh, 15  
Participant, Hanoi