

## **Strategies for women's empowerment**

### **Plenary II**

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#### **Question/Comment No. 1**

[Tanzania]: I am familiar with the guide for evaluating safety through exploratory safety audits. I tried to use this guide in my city in Tanzania but it was not oriented enough toward the concerns in my specific context. 70% of residents in my city live in slums - this is therefore a very different city context than that of Montréal, for example. How can we take into account these differences in urban contexts? Have you thought of adapting your Northern safety audit tool to safety concerns more specific to the South?

#### **Reactions No. 1**

[C.G.]: It is a great challenge to document all that is happening and all that we undertake. **Safety audits must be adapted to the many realities and contexts that they can be undertaken in.** For example, in Bolivia safety audit tools were adapted so that the process and results would be more useful to the particular context. We have identified certain things but there is no recorded data on this. Have any of the participants here used safety audit models other than the one developed by METRAC (Toronto)?

[S.S.]: UN-Habitat's experience could be a bridge linking the safety audit models of METRAC and the *Safer Cities Programme* (UN-Habitat). This would be a promising pilot project.

[C.G.]: **We must collect and document the best practices that exist throughout the world related to safety audits and exploratory walks.**

### **Question/Comment No. 2**

[Leader of a private enterprise, Peru]: In terms of women's self-defense, I believe that we must first teach women how to become economically autonomous via programs teaching entrepreneurship that will allow women to produce and sell products that are entirely their own. This way, women would not have to remain dependent on their spouse.

### **Reaction No. 2**

[L.H.]: In the United States, we have identified three important factors in the cycle of dependence that present obstacles to women's autonomy: vulnerability, economic and psychological dependence, and lack of information. An ideal solution should address these three elements.

### **Question/Comment No. 3**

[?] : Self-defense is a practical response. Yet how can we go beyond this to reduce violence by responding to the *cultural patterns* and traditional relationships between men and women? Does self-defense have an impact at this level?

### **Reactions No. 3**

[C.G.]: Changing cultural schemas is a very long and difficult process. In Bolivia, architects have not understood feminist analyses on violence that discourages women's participation in urban safety planning. To help them understand, we proposed that they ask the woman in their family if she had ever decided not to do something because she was scared for her own safety. Many were surprised to discover that the women that they knew had in fact decided not to participate in a sports activity, for example, because they were afraid for their safety. When people are personally affected, awareness-building is more likely to be successful and thus they are also more likely to take action.

[L.H.]: The private is political. Violence is equally intercultural and it is difficult to make general hypotheses on which strategies will be the best in a given cultural context. It is preferable to give women many options and to let them choose from among these options the one that will be the most appropriate for their particular situation. In self-defense, surprising an aggressor can be effective however the way in which a woman will surprise her attacker should depend on how she herself assesses the situation. For example, we know that shouting is a good way to trigger surprise however such behaviour is not acceptable for women of certain cultures. These women would therefore choose other strategies, adapted to their context and abilities. Regardless, releasing emotion by shouting within self-defense courses can also be good for women.