SAFE CITIES

─────────○ **FEBRUARY 2021**

The safety of women and girls in public spaces in Korçë

KEY CONCEPTS

Safe City- is a city that enables its citizens to feel equally safe, to live and act free form sexual harassment or other forms of violence in public spaces. A safe city takes the necessary actions to eliminate gender-based violence, to ensure equal access and opportunities to both men and women in all the spheres of social, economic, cultural and political life.[1]

Public space- is defined as an area or a place that is open and accessible to all people, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, or socio-economic background. This space, suitable for public gatherings could be the town's squares/plazas, parks or other connecting infrastructure such as sidewalks or streets.[2]

Neighborhood- is a territorial subdivision of the municipality in urban areas. The neighborhoods are created by the Municipal Council decision and include areas with a population of over 15,000 residents.[3]

Violence against women and girls - is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results or could potentially result in physical, sexual or mental harm, damage or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, arbitrary restrain or deprivation of freedom, whether in public or private life.[4]

Physical Violence- is defined as the intentional use of physical force and/or power, including threats against oneself, other persons, or against a group or community which results or has the potential to result in injury, death, psychological harm, poor development or deprivation.[5]

Sexual Harassment- is defined as unwanted sexual behavior, which is humiliating, offensive or intimidating. Sexual harassment can be written, verbal or physical and can happen in person or online.[6]

Sexual Violence- is defined as any sexual act, attempt to commit a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advancements, or acts directed towards one person's sexuality, using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home or work place.[7]

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1 Adapted from: http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/237-what-are-safe-cities-and-communities-for-women-and-girls-.html
2 Adapted from: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/urban-development/migrants-inclusion-in-cities/good-practices/inclusion-through-access-to-public-space/
3 Law No.8652, date 31.7.2000 "On Organization and Functioning of Local Government, available at: http://observator.org.al/wp-content/up-loads/2015/11/Ligj_8652_31.07.2000_per_organizimin_e_qeverisjes_vendore.pdf
4 Adapted from: https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women#tab=tab_1
5 Adapted from: https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/
6 Adapted from: https://au.reachout.com/articles/what-is-sexual-harassment
7 Adapted from: https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap6.pdf

1. METHODOLOGY

During the design phase of the study, a particular importance was given to the process of collecting accurate and reliable data. Making informed decision-making, based on accurate and reliable data will produce effective results, which will make the target areas safe for every woman and girl.

This study aims to bring forth the needs of citizens and interest groups for public space safety and to advocate with the institutions that are responsible for funding and maintaining the public spaces in target areas.

THE GOAL

Obtaining sufficient data to identify the factors that determine the safety of women and girls in public spaces, also to determine the required interventions to make these spaces safe and user-friendly.

OBJECTIVE 1

To clearly explain women and girls sexual harassment issues in target areas.

OBJECTIVE 2

To provide relevant information on such issues to future programs and interventions that will be planned and implemented in these areas.

OBJECTIVE 3

To help improve the sustainable safety and security in the city and community.

DATA COLLECTION

QUESTIONNAIRES, ADMINISTERED WITH CITIZENS

300 questionnaires were distributed The sample was chosen by random selection of pedestrians (18 years old and over) in the street.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

5 interviews were conducted with representatives from the sectors of education, health, administrative units, nonprofit organizations and businesses.

FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSIONS

4 focus group meetings were organized in each area with women and girls from the target communities.

STRUCTURED OBSERVATION MISSIONS

4 structured observation missions were carried out in each municipality during day and evening hours in the target areas.

STREET SAFETY INSPECTION (AUDITS)

4 street safety audits were conducted in each municipality.

2. MEN AND GIRLS' SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACES IN KORÇË

In Korçë city, the target of the research is Neighborhood No. 10. There are around 800 families and 3200 residents that live in this neighborhood. There are several institutions located in this area such as: kindergarten, 9-years school, high school, vocational school and university, health center, daily community center for children in need and 2 NGOs.

The team administered 300 questionnaires in this area, out of which 68% with women/girls and 32% with men/boys.

32%
Male
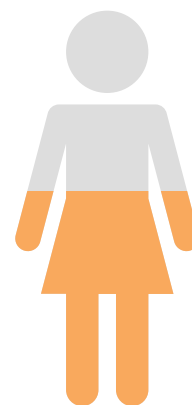
68%
Female

2.0.1. General Impression around safety in Neighborhood No. 10, Korçë

Maintenance in Neighborhood No. 10 in Korçë seem to be in satisfactory level.

56%
of respondents do think that infrastructure including streets, street lights and general public spaces in this area is adequate.

49%
of respondents do think that the maintenance of the area is good/very good

40%
of respondents do think that public transportation is good/very good
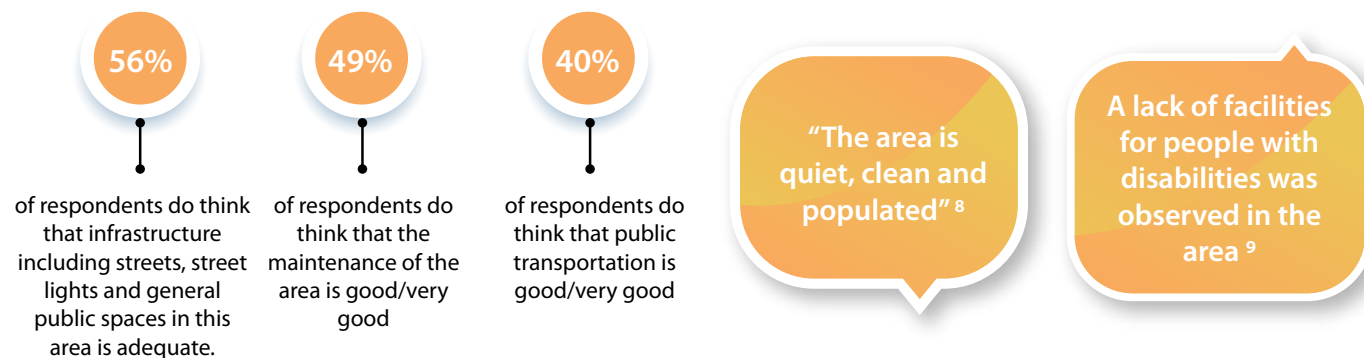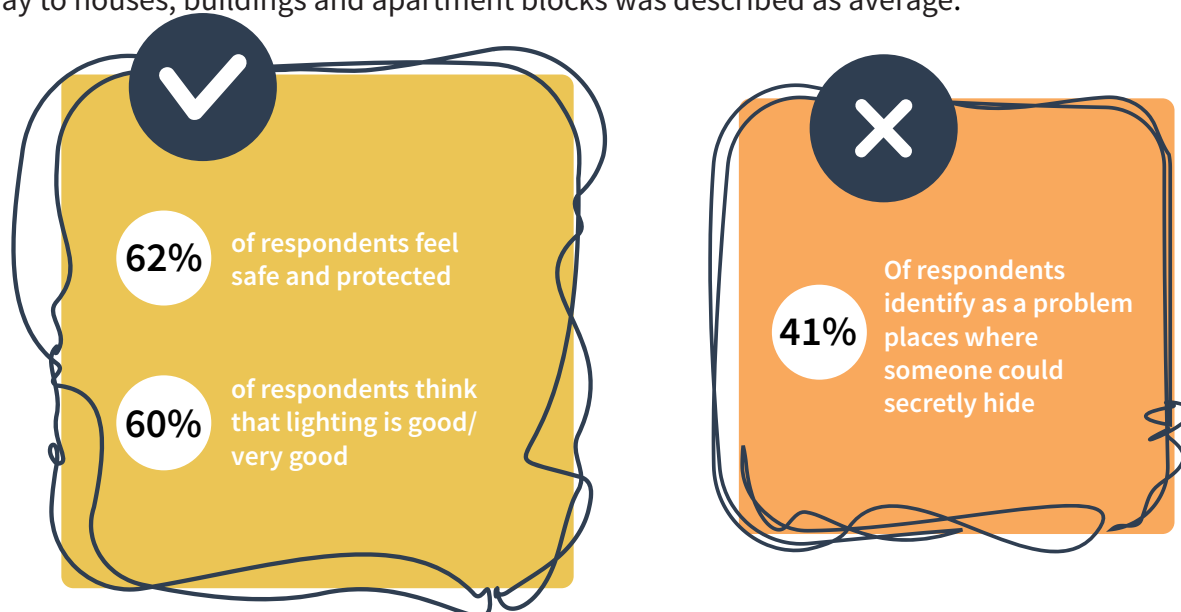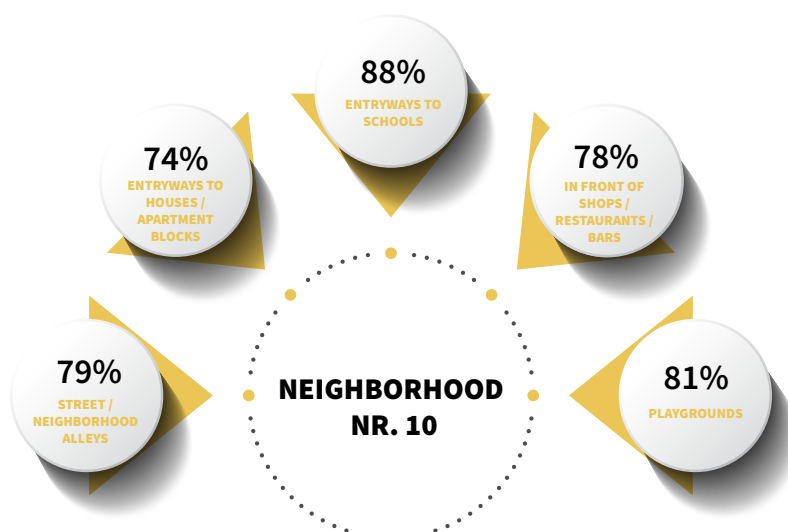
"The area is quiet, clean and populated" [8]

A lack of facilities for people with disabilities was observed in the area [9]

The area is described as safe and well-lit. These findings are supported by other sources of information also. During safety inspection, the lighting system was rated from 2 - 4 on a 1 to 5 scale. The lighting of entryway to houses, buildings and apartment blocks was described as average.[10]

62% of respondents feel safe and protected

60% of respondents think that lighting is good/very good

41% Of respondents identify as a problem places where someone could secretly hide

The respondents were asked about the level of safety in spaces that are used often by the majority of residents such as: streets/ neighborhood alleys, entryways to schools or apartment blocks, parks, etc. As can be seen in Graph 1, the majority of respondents consider these spaces safe or very safe.

88% ENTRYWAYS TO SCHOOLS

74% ENTRYWAYS TO HOUSES / APARTMENT BLOCKS

78% IN FRONT OF SHOPS / RESTAURANTS / BARS

79% STREET / NEIGHBORHOOD ALLEYS
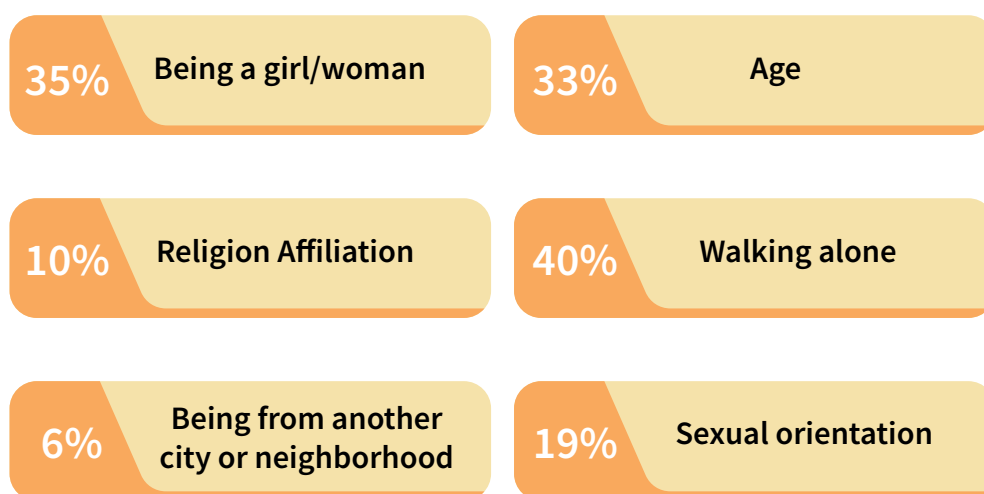
NEIGHBORHOOD NR. 10

81% PLAYGROUNDS

8 Safety Inspection/Audit, dt. 27.09.2020, at 11:00
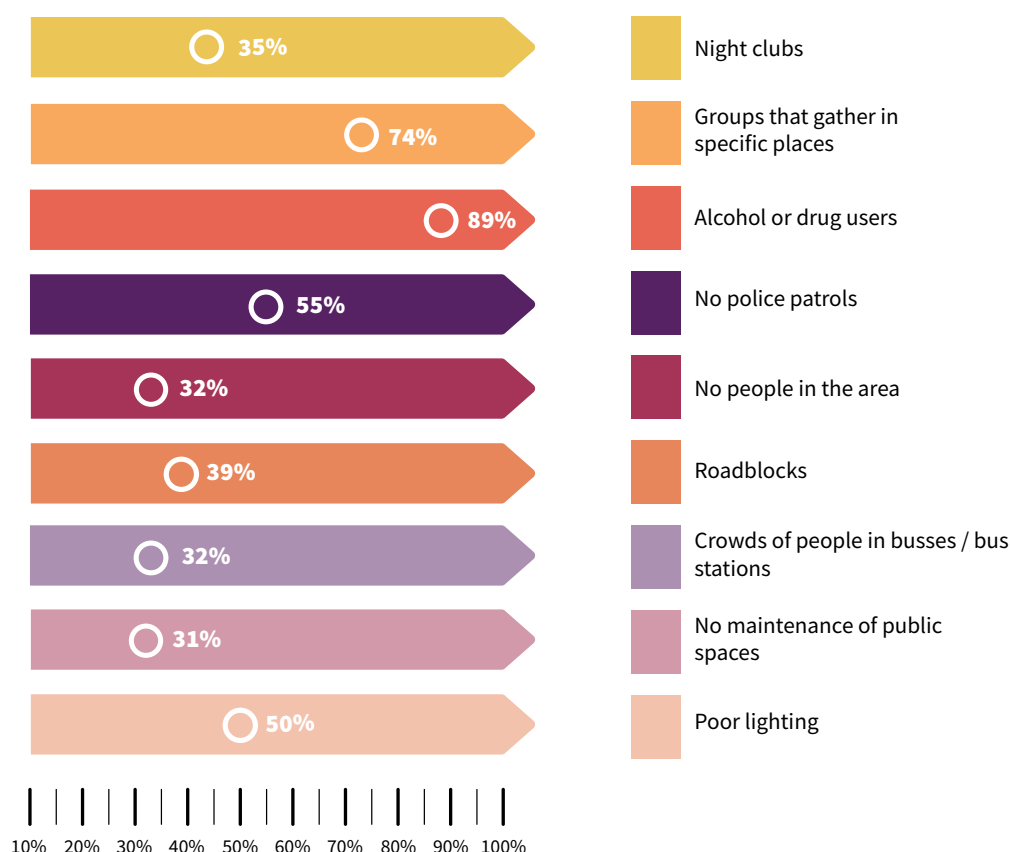9 Safety Inspection/Audit, dt. 23.09.2020, at 10:00
10 Observation, dt. 27.09.2020, at 19:00

Among others, the research focused on identifying the factors that affect the level of safety in target area. These factors were divided and analyzed into two categories: personal factors, including gender, age, religion affiliations, sexual orientation, origin and walking alone and other factors that deal with the area's condition.

35% Being a girl/woman		**33%** Age	
10% Religion Affiliation		**40%** Walking alone	
6% Being from another city or neighborhood		**19%** Sexual orientation	

Walking alone in the area is thought to make a person more susceptible to risk by 40% of respondents. Women and girls are perceived to be more susceptible to risk by 35% of respondents.
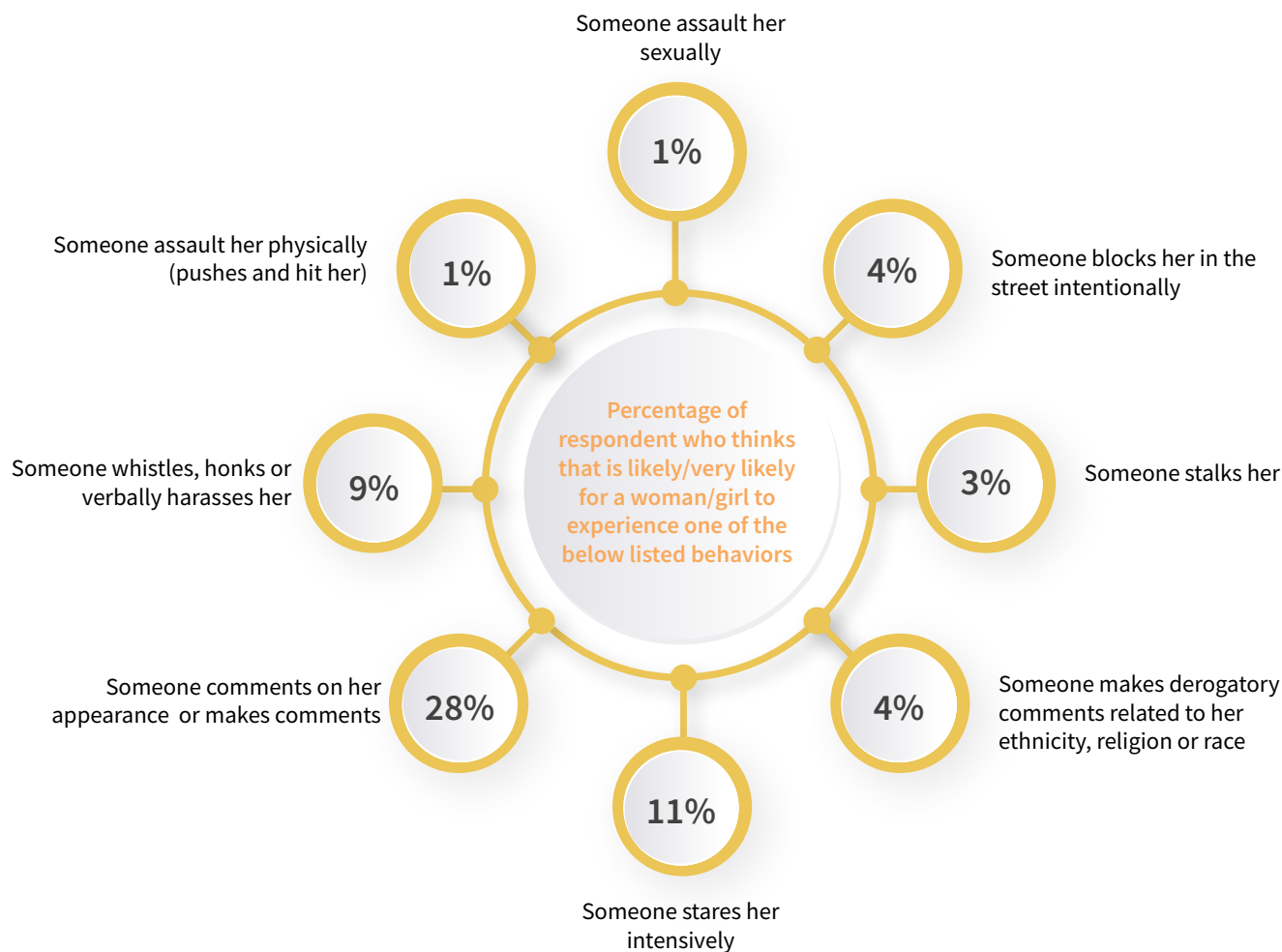
Percentage of respondents who think that the factors listed below affect the area's safety, Korçë

Percentage	Factor
35%	Night clubs
74%	Groups that gather in specific places
89%	Alcohol or drug users
55%	No police patrols
32%	No people in the area
39%	Roadblocks
32%	Crowds of people in busses / bus stations
31%	No maintenance of public spaces
50%	Poor lighting

10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

The presence of alcohol or drug users in the area is mentioned as a main factor that affects the safety of the area by 89% of respondents. This same issue was highlighted by other information sources. During focus group meetings, it was stressed out that some drug users gather behind the social center which is attended by children who are often unaccompanied.[11]

Lastly, the team collected information on the type of violence that women and girls were most likely to experience in this area.

11 Focus group with women/girls 26-35 years old, dt. 20.10.2020

Someone assault her sexually — 1%

Someone blocks her in the street intentionally — 4%

Someone stalks her — 3%

Someone makes derogatory comments related to her ethnicity, religion or race — 4%

Someone stares her intensively — 11%

Someone comments on her appearance or makes comments — 28%

Someone whistles, honks or verbally harasses her — 9%

Someone assault her physically (pushes and hit her) — 1%

Percentage of respondent who thinks that is likely/very likely for a woman/girl to experience one of the below listed behaviors

Also, of interest was the identification of perpetrators of harassment or sexual violence, i.e. if these episodes occurred from a relative, a distant acquaintance or a stranger, information summarized in the chart below.

Other — 4%

A relative — 4%

Someone at work — 1%

A neighbor — 2%

Someone unknown — 86%

Someone at school — 3%

Percentage of respondent who thinks that is likely/very likely for a woman/girl to experience one of the below listed behaviors

2.0.2. General impressions on improving the safety in neighborhood 10, Korçë

Furthermore, the team analyzed the factors that could contribute to improving the safety in the neighborhood or area. In this section, attention was paid to the public institutions which provide support or address issues related to women and girls safety. Half of respondents think that there are institutions that can help with such issues; 22% of them believe that these institutions do not exist, while 28% of respondents state that they have no information.

> "In one case, in our area, our children were physically violated by an older lady who resides in this same neighborhood. She hit the children while they were getting out of the center. We contacted the police authorities who advised us to drop the charges as children do usually create problems to each other and to other community members. They took no steps to prevent the perpetrator who still continues the same behavior with the children who attend the center."[12]

During focus group meetings with women and girls, the participants brought up specific cases where relevant institutions failed to provide the support expected from them.

Another thing noted was that responsible institutions did not provide regular information on sexual harassment and violence. During semi-structured interviews, it was admitted that this information was not disseminated regularly. The employees of Administrative unit, when asked during interviews, whether they provide information on sexual harassment and violence said: - "Yes, when it is requested and when it occurs".[13]

Lastly, the information generated from discussions on "what would help the citizens feel safer in the neighborhood".

26%	25%	5%	41%	3%
Improving lighting in streets/bus stations/rest areas/parks etc	Demolishing / removing objects that could be used as hiding places	Expanding streets / sidewalks	Frequent police inspection / patrols	Others (Security cameras)

The same findings were confirmed during focus group meetings also.

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12 Focus group with women / girls 36-45 years old, dt. 20.10.2020
13 Interview with Administrative Unit Staff

2.1. RECOMMENDATION TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY LEVEL IN NEIGHBORHOOD NO. 10 IN KORÇË

First of all, the municipality should take additional actions to improve the neighborhood's infrastructure, which would increase the women and girls' safety in public spaces. More specifically:

- Improving the lighting, especially in alleyways and entryways to buildings, houses and apartment blocks.
- Demolishing and removing all objects that could serve as hiding places, specifically: old, battered and abandoned cars and buildings.

- Removing roadblocks. Addressing the lack of sufficient space between buildings and streets should be part of the area's urban plans.

- Providing better maintenance of the area. The Municipality should take action to make the area accessible to people with disabilities, placing ramps, expanding the sidewalks etc.

- Improving the public transportation, by improving the bus station infrastructure and by increasing the frequency of transportation during rush hours to avoid crowding at bus stations.
- Placing maps or directive signs to orient and guide residents and visitors to institutions where they can find help and assistance when and if needed.

The municipality should collaborate with other institutions to provide an integrated approach to the cases of violence specifically to cases of sexual violence:

- The Coordinated Referral Mechanism should be active not only to manage specific cases but also to disseminate information on violence, on reporting mechanisms and the available services provided by different institutions.
- The municipality should collaborate with police authorities to increase the frequency of police patrols in the area, also to remove alcohol and drug users and groups of people who gather at particular places, making them unsafe.

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