




Canada 

SAFE CITIES

○ **FEBRUARY 2021**

The safety of women and girls in public
spaces in Shkodër





This report on safe cities, focused on women and girls' safety from sexual harassment and violence in public spaces was prepared by the "Observatory for Children and Youth Rights" with the support of Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives. The opinions and views expressed in this report are those of the authors' team and do not necessarily reflect those of the "Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives".

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KEY CONCEPTS

Safe City-

is a city that enables its citizens to feel equally safe, to live and act free from 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

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/uploads/2015/11/Ligi_8652_31.07.2000_per_organizimin_e_qeverisjies_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. THE SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PUBLIC SPACES IN SHKODËR

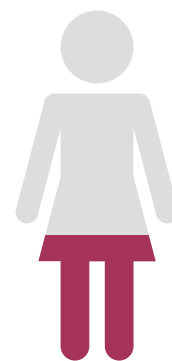
In Shkodër city, the target of the research is Neighborhood No. 1. There are around 7875 families and 31500 residents that live in this neighborhood. There are several institutions located in this area such as: The Prosecutor's Office, the Court of Appeal, two schools, one health center, one community center and one multi-functional center.

The team administered 300 questionnaires in this area, out of which 45% with women/girls and 55% with men/boys.



55%

Male

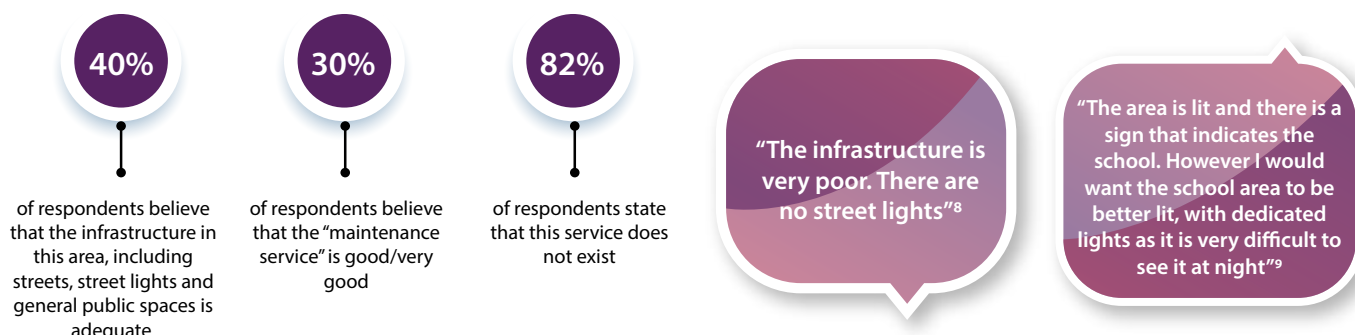


45%

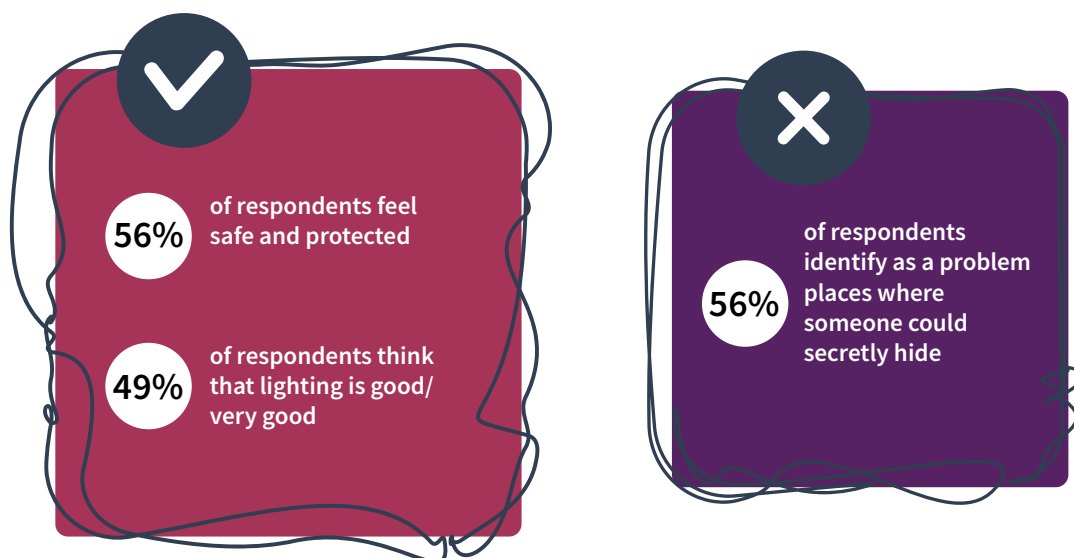
Female

2.0.1. General Impression on safety in Neighborhood No. 1, Shkodër

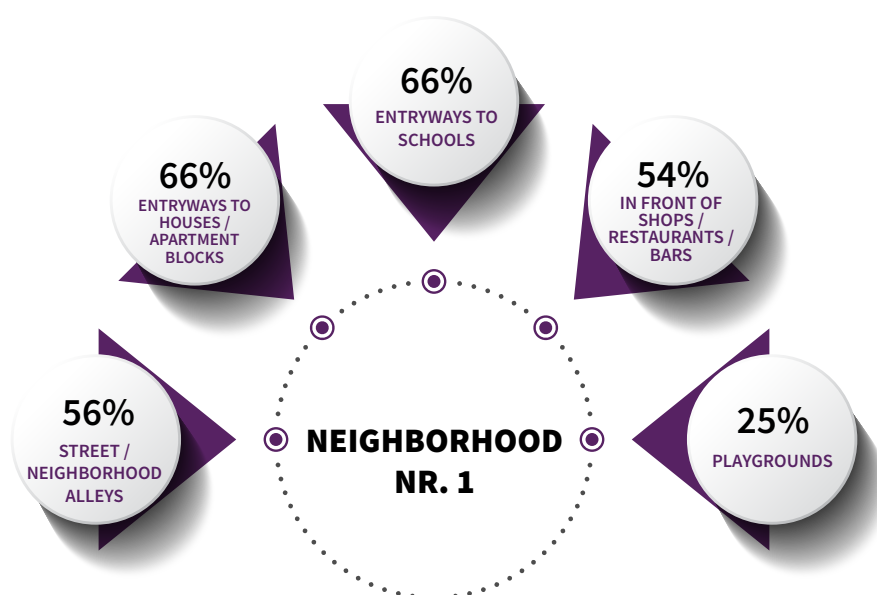
Maintenance in Neighborhood No. 1 in Shkodër is not described as satisfactory.



The area is described as a safe area by most respondents. However, some of the structured interviews strongly emphasize the lack of lighting and the need to improve it.



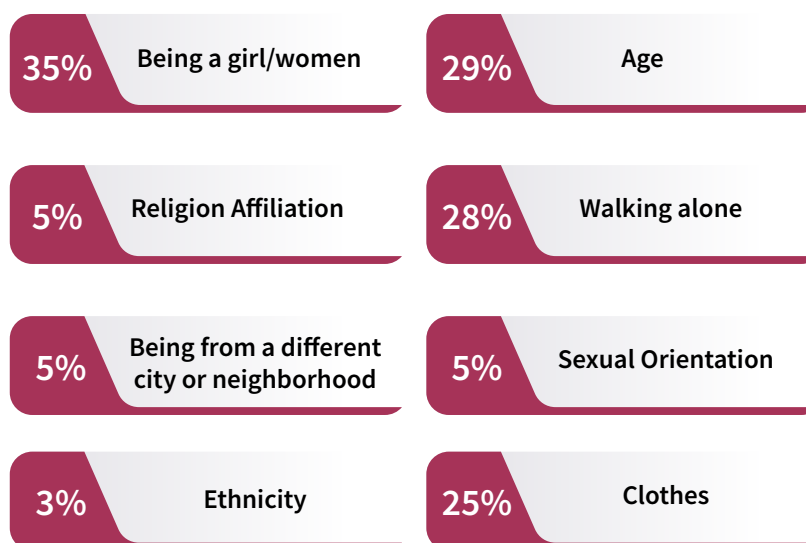
The respondents were asked about the level of safety in the spaces that are used often by the majority of residents such as: streets/ neighborhood alleys, entryways to schools or apartment blocks, parks, etc.



⁸ Focus group meeting with women/girls 56-45 years old dt. 28.10.2020

⁹ Observation, dt. 02.10.2020, at 20:30

This research was particularly interested to identify the factors that affect the level of safety in the 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.

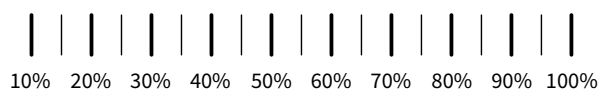
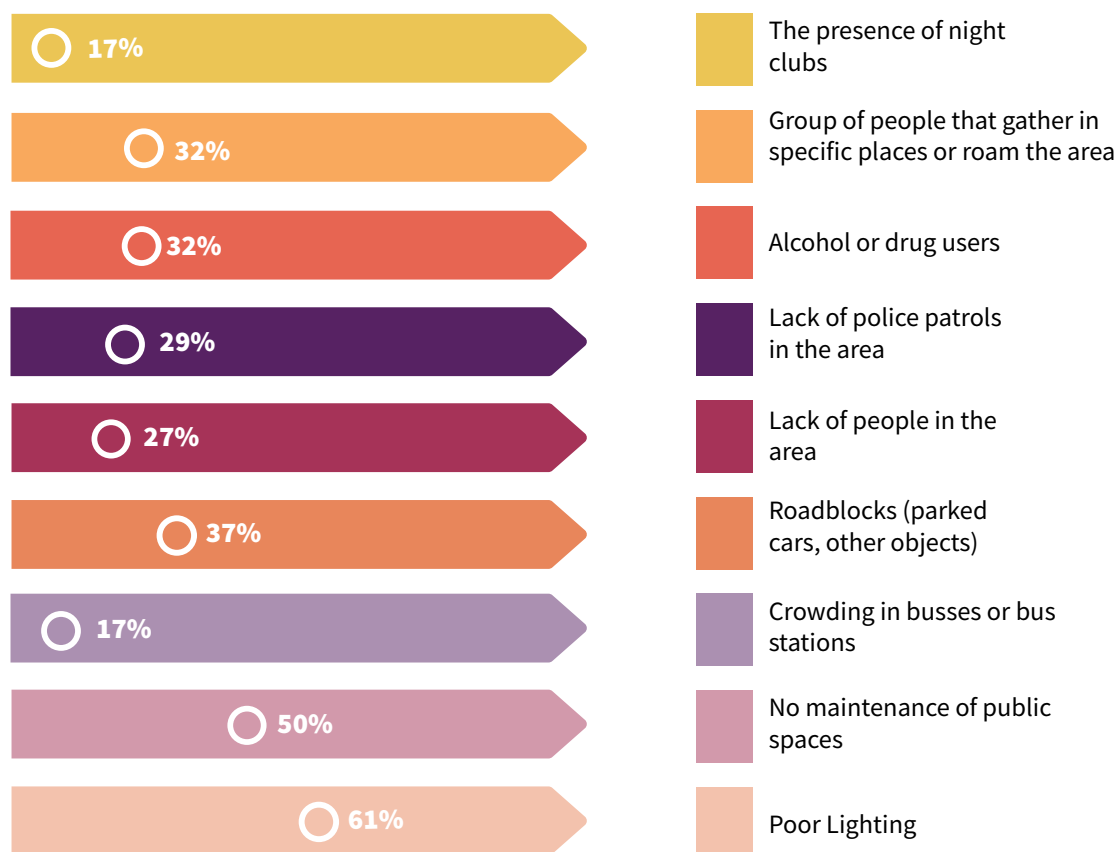


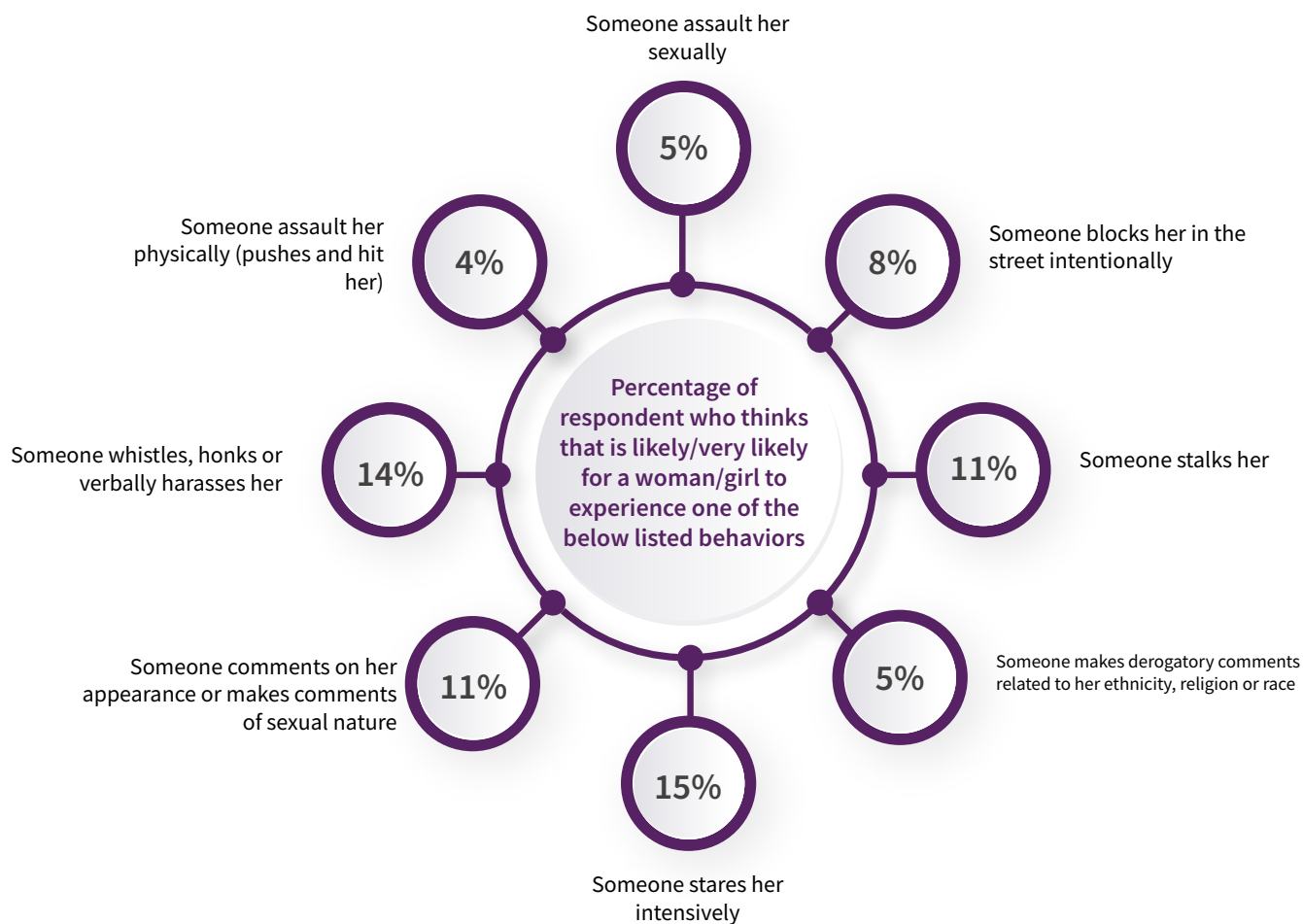
Women and girls are perceived to be more susceptible to risk by 35% of respondents. Walking alone, age and attire are also considered to increase the susceptibility to risk.

Graph 9: Percentage of respondents who think that the factors listed below affect the area's safety, Shkodër

Poor lighting is identified as a main factor that affects the safety in the area, by 61% of respondents.

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

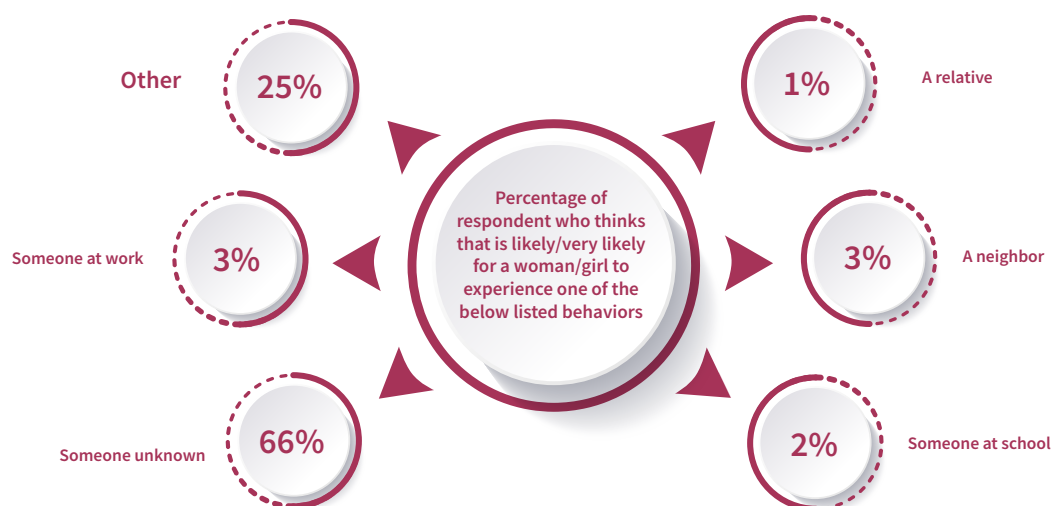




“There were no crowds of people. There were just 5-6 people in one bar. I felt unsafe just from the way they stared”¹⁰



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



2.0.2 General impressions on improving the safety in Neighborhood No. 1, Shkodër

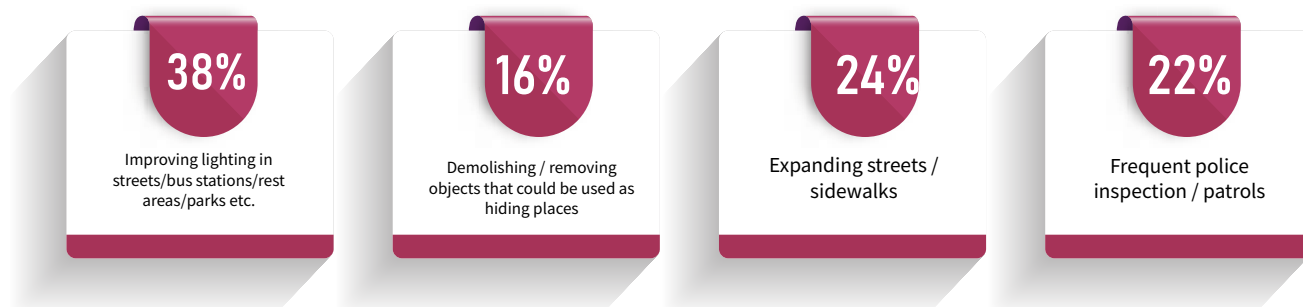
The respondents were also asked if they knew about any institution that worked with women and girls' safety issues. Only 13% of respondents confirmed that there are institutions that can provide assistance; 63% of respondents stated that there are no such institutions, while 25% of them responded that they have no information about it

During focus group meetings it was pointed out that women have always tried to address the problems on their own, without seeking institutional assistance.¹¹



What is noticed is the lack of frequent information on sexual harassment and violence by institutions. During structured interviews it is acknowledged that this information is not disseminated regularly. During the interview with employees of the Administrative Unit, when asked if they provide such information, the answer was: "When requested and when there are cases"

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



¹¹ Focus group with women/grils over 45 years old, dt 28.10.2020

¹² Structured interview with the representatives of Non-Governmental

2.1 RECOMMENDATION TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY LEVEL IN NEIGHBORHOOD NO. 1 IN SHKODËR

To improve the safety level in this area, the municipality should primarily invest in improving the infrastructure, specifically:

- Improving the lighting system to cover all the area should be a priority of the municipality. Apart main streets, lighting should be provided in alleyways, and entryway to institutions, buildings, houses and apartment blocks. Placing lights around the dumpsters' ground would make the residents feel safer.
- Placing a bigger focus on maintaining the area, specifically paving the streets, picking up and removing the trash and cleaning the dumpsters.
- Demolishing and removing all objects that can potentially serve as hiding places for perpetrators, such as old, abandoned buildings.
- Removing all roadblocks that limit mobility. The lack of sufficient space between buildings and streets should be included in the area's urban plans.
- Giving people with disabilities access to this area. As such the municipality should take action to place ramps, expand the sidewalks etc.
- Giving residents of this area access to the public transportation. The Municipality should make sure that the bus stations are located beside main institutions such as schools, health centers etc.
- Building and expanding green areas, but also playgrounds for children and other entertainment venues for other age groups.
- Placing maps or directing 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 raise the residents' awareness and access to information on violence and its forms, reporting mechanics as well as the services that are provided by different institutions.

The Municipality should coordinate with police authorities to find ways to remove alcohol or drug users from this area as their presence affects the level of residents' safety. The municipality should also focus its attentions to some specific areas that were identified as more problematic by this study; responsible institutions find it hard to intervene in these areas also.

