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# WOMEN'S DAY DESIGN CHALLENGE 2026

*Designing Safer Cities for Women*



APPLY NOW

## PARTNERING INSTITUTIONS



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# 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Theme: Designing Safer Cities for Women– Rights, Justice, Action  
Launch: 8 March 2026 (International Women’s Day)  
Awards Ceremony: 17 April 2026

Partners: Partner universities

Purpose: To reimagine urban systems that advance safety, dignity, visibility, and access for women and girls across streets, transit, workplaces, campuses, homes, and public life

# 2. WHO CAN PARTICIPATE

Eligible Participants: Any university student.

Team Size: Individual or maximum a team of 4 students per team.

Original Work: Submissions must be original and unpublished.

# 3. COMPETITION STRUCTURE & ORGANISATION

Stage 1 – Preliminary Screening: Administrative and content compliance review.

Stage 2 – Jury Review: Shortlisted entries evaluated by expert jury.

Post-Award: Prototype development (August 2026) and pilot implementation (November 2026) for the selected project.

Jury Members: Rayana Hossain, Architect Tanya Karim, Md.Ashraful Islam, Mehrin Chowdhury

# 4. REGISTRATION & DEADLINES

Registration: [www.isho.com/womens-day](http://www.isho.com/womens-day)

Submission Opens: 8 March 2026

Submission Deadline: 8th April 2026 [11:59 PM, BST]

Award Ceremony: 17 April 2026

## 5. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Each submission must include the following:

1. The Problem – Define the safety gap, who is affected, and under what conditions.
2. System Design – Spatial design, behavioural logic, technology (if relevant), and policy/community integration.
3. Cost Logic – Rough cost bands, scalability, and public-private feasibility.
4. Implementation Path – Pilot strategy, rollout plan, stakeholders responsible for build and maintenance.
5. Submission Format Options:  
Option A: 5–10 slides (PDF)  
Option B: 3-page concept document (PDF)

Portal: Maximum file size: 5Mb

**ONLINE SUBMISSION LINK: <https://www.isho.com/womens-day>**

## 6. AWARDS & BENEFITS

Three jury awards and one project selected for real-world implementation.

Awards include certificate of recognition.

Prize money of BDT 50,000 for one winner.

Media coverage and pilot development opportunity.

## 7. TIMELINE

8 March 2026 : Launch

10 April 2026 : Submission Deadline

17 April 2026 : Awards Ceremony

August 2026 : Prototype Development

November 2026 : Pilot Implementation

## 8. PRESENTATION RULES FOR FINALISTS

Winners will be selected and announced based on submission.

## 9. LEGAL TERMS, IP & IMAGE RIGHTS

Jury decisions are final and incontestable. Participants grant ISHO the right to reproduce submitted materials for promotional purposes. Plagiarism or misconduct will result in disqualification.

## 10. CONTACT & SUPPORT

General Enquiries: [ridwan.alam@isho.com](mailto:ridwan.alam@isho.com)

# CASE STUDY 01: Vienna – Designing a City for Women

## 1. Context

Vienna recognised that traditional urban planning was based on limited mobility assumptions, prioritising cars and linear commuting patterns. Women's daily movements often involve multi-stop, caregiving-related journeys, which were not adequately supported by existing infrastructure.

## 2. Core Challenge

Urban spaces had narrow sidewalks, poor lighting, limited seating, and car-focused traffic systems, making movement and public spaces less safe and accessible for women.

## 3. Strategic Approach

Vienna implemented Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning, integrating gender-sensitive criteria into city governance and development policies through pilot projects and long-term planning.

## 4. Key Interventions

- Lighting upgrades in unsafe areas
- Widened sidewalks
- Pedestrian-priority traffic systems
- Distributed seating infrastructure
- Inclusive park redesign
- Gender-sensitive housing such as Frauen-Werk-Stadt

## 5. Measurable Outputs

- 60+ gender-sensitive projects implemented
- Lighting and pedestrian improvements across districts
- Increased park participation by girls
- Gender planning criteria integrated into city governance

## 6. Systems Insight

Urban safety and accessibility are created through planning systems, not isolated design solutions.

## 7. Directional Takeaway

Designing cities for women creates more inclusive, safe, and functional environments for everyone.

## References:

<https://apolitical.co/en/articles/vienna-designed-city-women>  
<https://www.wien.gv.at/english/administration/gendermainstreaming/>



Photo:Shutterstock

## CASE STUDY 02: Delhi – The Pink Ticket Scheme

### 1. Context

In Delhi, many women faced limited mobility due to transport costs and safety concerns, restricting access to work and services.

### 2. Core Challenge

Economic barriers prevented women from regularly using safe public transport.

### 3. Strategic Approach

The Government of Delhi introduced free bus travel for women, funded through government subsidies to bus operators.

### 4. Key Interventions

- Free bus tickets for women
- Government reimbursement to operators
- Visible gender-focused transport policy

### 5. Measurable Outputs

- Increased female ridership
- Reduced travel costs for low-income women
- Improved access to jobs and services

### 6. Systems Insight

Urban safety depends not only on design but also on affordable mobility.

### 7. Directional Takeaway

Economic access to transport is a key factor in urban safety and inclusion.

Reference:

<https://changing-transport.org/pink-ticket-india/>

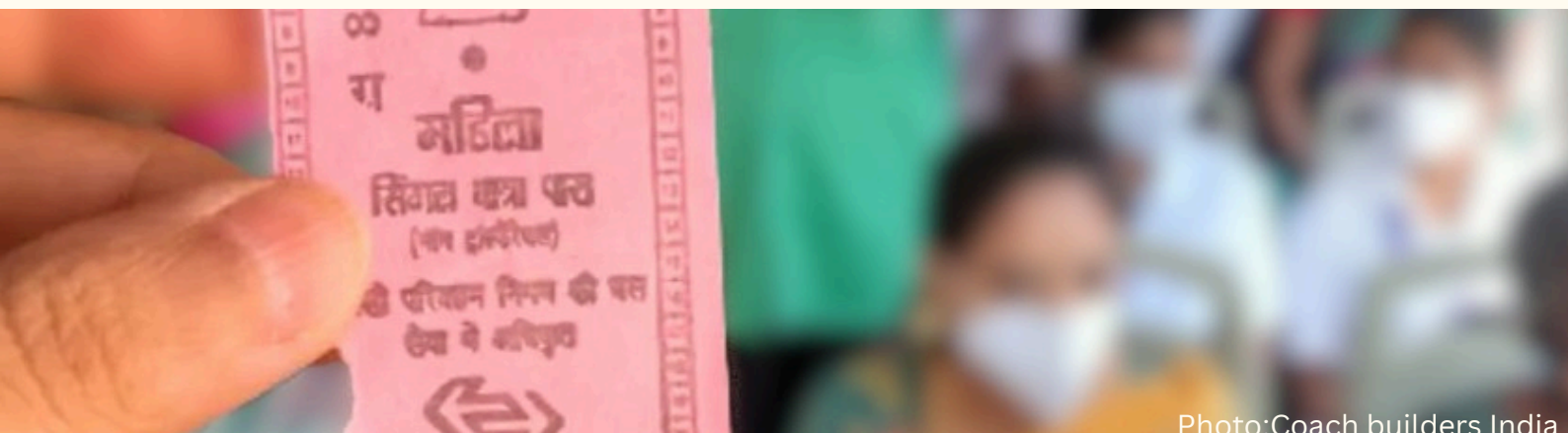


Photo:Coach builders India

# CASE STUDY 03: Barcelona – Superblocks

## 1. Context

In Barcelona, streets were heavily dominated by vehicles, reducing pedestrian safety, air quality, and public social space.

## 2. Core Challenge

Street design prioritised traffic flow over human activity, limiting safe and accessible public space.

## 3. Strategic Approach

The city introduced the Superblocks (Superilla) model, restricting through-traffic and reorganising street hierarchy to prioritise people.

## 4. Key Interventions

- Traffic diversion
- Pedestrian-priority zones
- Street activation with seating and play areas
- Tactical pilot urbanism
- 5. Measurable Outputs
- Reduced internal traffic
- Improved air quality
- Increased pedestrian activity
- More public space per resident

## 6. Systems Insight

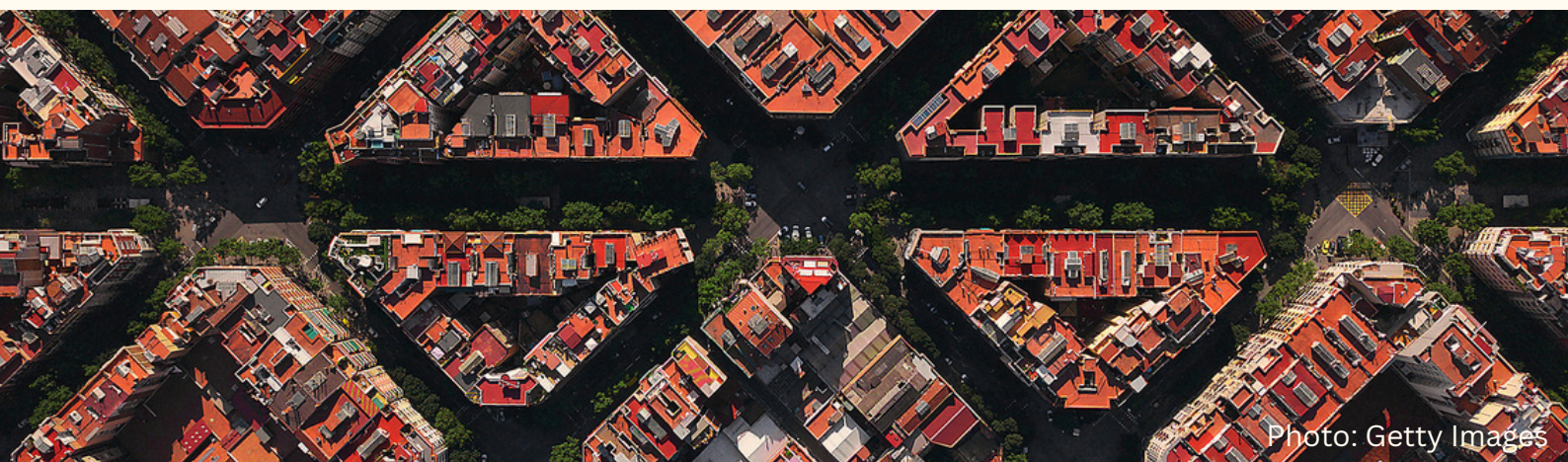
Reducing traffic speed and prioritising people embeds safety directly into street design.

## 7. Directional Takeaway

When streets are designed for people instead of cars, cities become safer, healthier, and more socially active.

Reference:

<https://reasonstobecheerful.world/superblocks-are-for-people/>



# CASE STUDY 04: Bogotá – Gender-Responsive Transit

## 1. Context

In Bogotá, many women experienced harassment in public transport, reducing trust and usage.

## 2. Core Challenge

Improving transit safety required institutional, behavioural, and environmental changes, not just infrastructure upgrades.

## 3. Strategic Approach

The city participated in the UN Women Safe Cities Programme, integrating policy, communication, and design reforms.

## 4. Key Interventions

- Anti-harassment campaigns
- Staff training
- Reporting mechanisms
- Improved lighting in transit areas

## 5. Measurable Outputs

- Increased awareness and reporting of harassment
- Stronger institutional response systems
- Greater public attention to transit safety

## 6. Systems Insight

Transit safety requires a combination of governance, operations, communication, and spatial design.

## 7. Directional Takeaway

Safe public transport requires layered solutions beyond physical infrastructure.

Reference:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces>



Photo: Transport Gender Lab