



# Commonwealth Secretariat Discussion Paper



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## Gender in Planning and Urban Development

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### Introduction

There is increasing evidence that women and men experience cities in different ways. Therefore gender-sensitive urban planning is needed. However, like other built environment occupations, the planning profession has traditionally been 'gender blind'. The Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP) has been a strong advocate for 'reinventing planning' (Farmer et al. 2006). CAP argues for 'planning as an inclusive process ... rooted in concerns for equity' (CAP 2008). Gender equality is one dimension of this kind of inclusive planning. This position, which was endorsed by the UN-Habitat World Urban Forum in 2006, also reflects the Commonwealth's strong commitment to gender equality.

So why does gender matter in urban planning? And, what might 'gendered planning practice' hope to achieve?

Urban planning covers a wide spectrum of concerns including employment, housing, open space, transport and environment to name just a few. Gender is relevant to all of these. For example, urban areas provide women with better employment opportunities than do rural areas. Pro-urban planning policies are thus more likely to

benefit women than those seeking to halt urban growth. However, urban labour markets often remain segmented along gender lines; many poor women find jobs as housemaids, cleaners or vendors. Can they get housing, or access public transport to reach these jobs? If health and sanitation services and infrastructure in slums can be upgraded, women are likely to be prime beneficiaries since they fetch water and spend most time in the slum.

These are just some illustrations of how gender and planning can come together. However, not all women or all men are the same and their activities overlap in many spheres. A gendered planning practice would be sensitive to gender differences in the way the city is used and therefore able to make more informed choices than by taking standardised approaches assumed to fit everyone.

This Discussion Paper presents an initial exploration of issues of gender and planning in urban development based on the work of the CAP Women in Planning Network. It looks at how awareness of the gender dimension of planning has developed and been reflected in guidelines for good practice, and how women's active participation in planning can provide

### **Case Study 1: Gender Audit, Plymouth, UK**

#### **Mainstreaming Principles in Statutory Local Planning**

##### *Step One*

A Gender Profile for Plymouth was developed using available statistics and findings from consultations in 2000. These highlighted the implications of the gender gap in labour market participation and pay and in family and caring responsibilities as well as gender differences in leisure and housing needs, transport and accessibility, shopping, and individual and community safety.

##### *Step Two*

A Gender Issues Matrix was prepared that related the topics of the Local Plan (environment, waste, housing and so on) to the gender findings. The Matrix listed issues under the headings of 'Home', 'Neighbourhood' and 'City', and related these to information on the day-to-day lives of women in Plymouth. The following example shows how one of the Housing sub-themes, 'Using the Home', was audited.

<b>Housing</b>	<b>Relevant gender issues</b>	<b>Source(s) of data</b>	<b>Planning implications</b>
Limitations on choice (type and location).	Many women may be forced to rent/live in sub-standard housing or housing remote from services and facilities because of low incomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation Exercise</li> <li>• Housing Statistics</li> <li>• Employment Statistics</li> </ul>	Encourage a wide range of low-cost housing for rent in the City Centre and other well-served districts.

##### *Step Three*

On the basis of this information, a Review of the objectives and policies of the Local Plan was conducted to identify sections where a gendered impact might be expected, and where a gendered perspective might raise opportunities for the refinement of policies or development of different ones.

important practical insights. The remainder of the paper looks at aspects of the planning of settlements. It concludes that while good examples and guidelines exist these are not applied consistently in practice, and suggests steps for making progress.

#### **From Awareness to Practice**

A generation ago, stereotypical assumptions of urban

policy-makers and planners about the ubiquity of male-headed households and nuclear families began to be challenged. These critiques led to the production of methodologies to make practice gender aware (Greed 1994; Kamau 2002; Reeves Associates and WDS 2007). However many planners still lack understanding about gender issues. For example, Reeves (2002) found that planners in the

development control sections of planning departments in England thought gender considerations had no bearing on their work as their decisions considered only technical matters.

Gender mainstreaming in planning means understanding the views of women and men equally when undertaking budgeting, consultation, design

- Who are the planners?
- Who forms the policy team?
- Which groups of people are perceived as recipients of planning?
- How are statistics gathered and whom do they include?
- What are the key values, priorities and objectives of the plan?
- Who is consulted and who participates?
- How are the planning proposals evaluated? By whom?
- How is the policy implemented, monitored and managed?
- Is gender fully integrated into all policy areas?

## Many planners still lack understanding about gender issues

and evaluation of physical and social infrastructure such as housing, employment generation schemes, community services, transport and so on.

The Royal Town Planning Institute Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (Reeves Associates and WDS 2007) shows how to incorporate gender into planning. It can be used at any stage of the plan-making process, and is based on a series of questions. In summary, these are:

The 2001 Plymouth Gender Audit (see Case Study 1) was a notable attempt to mainstream gender into the statutory local planning process in England, but unfortunately the council did not follow through on implementation.

### Participation of Women

Planners typically consult with communities likely to be affected and the views expressed can and do

### Case Study 2: People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning, Kerala, India Involving Women in Grassroots Participatory Processes

The Kerala State Planning Board created a series of nested participatory exercises in which citizens are given a direct role in shaping, rather than just choosing, policies and projects (Heller et al. 2007). As part of this planning process, the state, supported by civil society organisations, undertook an extensive training programme of key resource persons, which involved some 100,000 people.

As it evolved the programme—including policies and publicity—was specifically targeted at women and marginalised groups. The state also set parameters for local level expenditure, and stipulated compulsory minimum expenditures for women and marginalised groups.

The Campaign has had particularly noticeable impacts on women. Heller et al. (2007) demonstrated that the development planning process in Kerala has effectively empowered women through a deliberately participatory, inclusive and re-distributive process. It has also facilitated women's presence in local governance and increased the political space within which they can mobilise.

### **Case Study 3: Safety Assessment Walk, Nairobi, Kenya**

#### **Managing and Strategising the Processes of Physical Planning**

The Nairobi city council, along with UN-Habitat and the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) undertook the Nairobi Safety Assessment Walk in March 2002. It was aimed at kick-starting the development of a women's safety audit toolkit for citywide use (Kamau 2002).

The first stage in the design of the activity involved mapping out the area to be covered within Nairobi's city centre, including main roads, narrow pathways and alleys. Each of the participating groups—that is, representatives of the police, city council, business community and women's organisations—was guided by the map and a set of leading questions. UN-Habitat and the ITDG provided technical assistance.

The second stage involved a discussion of experiences of the city and meeting sessions designed to develop recommendations for resolving crime and insecurity. The findings related to four broad areas—lighting and visibility, physical design and maintenance, population concentration, and social and economic activities (Kamau 2002). Following the initial success of the project, the audits were implemented citywide.

influence outcomes. However, unless planners are gender aware such consultations can unintentionally exclude women in general, or particular groups of them. Where women have been consulted, one outcome has been improved street designs that are different to the standard grid layouts, which tend to isolate women in the home and make it difficult to engage in mutual help, such as supervising children (Hayden 1980; Beall 1996). Another example is where communal toilets alongside a public thoroughfare were re-sited in order to afford women more privacy.

Opportunities for women to participate fully in planning are important. The case of Kerala, India (see Case Study 2) shows how a participatory and inclusive planning process led to improved service delivery in ways that are beneficial to women.

#### **Planning Settlements**

Traditional planning based on land use separation has led to fragmented urban environments where residences, workplaces, shopping and leisure

districts are in separate spaces linked by extensive road and transportation systems. These practices have been criticised for isolating women at home, making access to services and facilities inconvenient, and discouraging home-based work (Little 1994; Moser 1987). For many women, especially poor women, the home is a productive space where they work to earn a living (Greed 1994). This has implications not only for zoning but also for plot size and the design of housing. Planners need to understand how and where to best provide services and infrastructure to enable women to live efficiently and effectively.

Settlement planning and design must promote safety, given problems of crime and sexual violence in many cities. 'Safe' design includes, for example, good street lighting and parks that are overlooked, but it avoids deserted spaces or areas that are not peopled for parts of the day and places where attackers can easily hide or where women are easily trapped, such as subways and alleyways (Trench and Tiesdell 1992; Little 1994). There is debate over

whether safety is best created through controllable and defensible spaces (such as the cul de sac) that enclose and segment, or through outward-facing layouts with continuity of access to create well-used public spaces. Trench and Tiesdell (1992) argue that different options may be appropriate depending on the context. Women are also often concerned about the safety of environments for children, such as busy roads, lack of safe places to play, polluted areas and so on.

### Infrastructure and Services

From a gender perspective, infrastructure and services are key areas for improvement because they

have a direct impact on domestic work. For example, having to walk long distances for water affects the time taken for housework and poor quality water has consequences for the health of households. In general terms, better services particularly benefit low-income women. However, services designed for men but mainly used by women and children, will not work—for example, hand pumps for men that women and children could not reach and thus could not use properly. Conversely, gender-aware integrated infrastructure development and planning result in a range of positive outcomes for the community in general and women in particular, as demonstrated in Case Study 4.

#### Case Study 4: Built Environment Improvement Programme, Thatta, Pakistan Improving Infrastructure and Women's Livelihoods

Thatta is a city in Sindh province that is home to about 1.1 million. Before the Built Environment Improvement Programme (BEIP) began, about 97 per cent of the population did not have access to potable water and there were no latrines in some areas. The untreated disposal of household wastewater had polluted the city water supply so badly that it caused a decline in fish hatcheries yields, a key source of local livelihoods.

The BEIP objectives included improving women's livelihoods and empowering households with knowledge on domestic hygiene, primary health care and environmental sustainability. The project specifically sought input from women during planning as well as the implementation phase of the BEIP and in promoting their full involvement in integrated built environment development (IBED). As the UN-Habitat (2006) project brief explains: 'Women were encouraged to assist and guide IBED by citing and selecting locations for installation of IBED living environment improvement products and technological interventions, and were also involved in the construction of these improved household products'. The project also provided women with informal education on domestic health and hygiene through workshops, meetings and field level briefings (UN-Habitat 2006).

There was a range of positive outcomes for Thatta in general and women in particular, with regard to women's livelihoods, skills capacity, political involvement, managerial responsibility within the planning process and their ability to care for their families. In addition, women gained the skills to improve and manage their environment, and to diversify the economic base of the city. Young women especially displayed enthusiasm for integrated built environment development because it offered them a way to meet their familial responsibilities while engaging in programmes to improve their social status and earning power.

### **Case Study 5: 'Between Two Stops', Montréal, Canada Gendered Perspectives in Public Transport Services**

Montréal is the second largest city in Canada. The Comité Action Femmes et Sécurité Urbaine/Women and Urban Safety Action Committee (CAFSU) was founded in 1992. It 'is a partnership between women's groups, municipal authorities, city planners, university research groups, public transit officials, health officials and the police' (Wakely and You 2002).

CAFSU approached La Société de Transport de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, which runs the public transit system on the island of Montréal, to put in place a bus service system to address issues of women's safety in public transit at night. The service would allow women to get off the bus between two regular stops in order to decrease the walking distance to their destination. In 1994, the 'Between Two Stops' pilot project was instituted to evaluate the viability of the service, which is strictly for girls and women only (Wakely and You 2002). The project was made permanent in December 1996, with the service extending its hours.

#### **Transport**

The design of transport systems is a fundamental aspect of urban and regional planning. Good public transport systems can widen women's employment opportunities. Women are more likely to be dependent on public transport, particularly in low-income communities (Little 1994). Where systems locate public transport on the edges of residential areas, rather than within them, women have to walk long distances, and may be vulnerable to crime (Trench and Tiesdell 1992). Case Study 5 provides an example of good practice in making public transport safer for women.

#### **Street Trading**

Street trading is a problem for many planners. It causes congestion and breaches planning regulations. However, street trading is vital to livelihoods of many poor people, especially women. Frequently, street traders are relocated to markets that may offer better facilities and conditions (water, sanitation, waste removal), but are often not well located and so undermine incomes.

There are some positive examples of planners

recognising the needs of street traders. For example, Singapore licenses all street traders and provides training, clear areas for trading and food markets where basic stall facilities and services such as water, electricity and garbage collection are available (Bhowmik 2005). In India, although street vendors are often harassed, some planners have shown that locating informal traders near housing complexes helps to reduce congestion, pollution and transport costs since shopping is literally on the doorstep (Bhowmik 2005). In Tanzania, under the Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project, traders were accepted, shelving was provided for goods, and health and cleaning issues were addressed, but implementation is inconsistent, and women are often excluded from more lucrative areas (Skinner 2008).

The Warwick Avenue Triangle project in Durban, South Africa, focused on a busy area where some 60 per cent of traders are women. The project worked closely with the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU), an international organisation of women street traders, with a branch in Durban. Infrastructure was developed for traders, and cleaning, ablution and child care facilities were provided (Skinner 2008).

Temporary housing was also developed to respond to safety problems for migrant women, who often sleep on the street. However, this has proved to be too expensive and the provision of much cheaper accommodation is being considered (Skinner 2008), which reflects a general problem of securing continuity in trader-friendly practices.

### Conclusion

The short piece of research on which this paper is based revealed a mixed picture. On the one hand there are some impressive initiatives where the adoption of a gendered perspective has made a real practical difference. In general these happen when there is direct engagement in the planning and development process by groups with a strong gender perspective, such as CAFSU in Montréal (Case Study 5), or SEWU in the Durban example (above). Also on the positive side, good practice guidelines on gender in planning are now available, such as the Royal Town Planning Institute Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit mentioned in the section, From Awareness to Practice. On the other hand, our research, though limited by its small budget and use of volunteers, did

the Urban Assessment Walk in Case Study 3) and a strong orientation to gender and to stakeholder engagement. Mainstream planning practice is more problematic. The innovative gender audit in Plymouth (Case Study 1) was not followed up and the research team did not find examples of municipalities or countries where the gender perspective (or a wider embrace of diversity and equality) is systemic in planning. Preparation of development plans, and regulation of the development and use of land, is typically undertaken within a statutory framework that prioritises functional and physical considerations and dates from a time before gender became a concern. This makes the example from Kerala (Case Study 2) particularly interesting—it was concerned with plan-making, it targeted women and it produced results. Other key aspects of the project are that it invested in training and worked as a partnership between government and NGOs. This is a model that deserves more attention.

These findings highlight the importance of the work being done to advocate for a gender perspective in planning by bodies such as the Commonwealth Association of Planners. The Commonwealth is well placed to take a lead on gender in planning because its commitment to gender equality is so strong, and because it has an array of active civil society organisations with gender as their mission and internationally recognised gender researchers in the planning and human settlements field. Crucially, the Commonwealth combines huge diversity with a common language and a shared legacy of legislative and institutional frameworks. There is real scope for knowledge sharing and learning from each other.

The following steps could be the basis for progress:

enough to suggest that good practices are the exception not the norm, and that a gap exists between what is recommended in guidelines and what happens in day-to-day practice.

Some of the success stories are from special projects with a well-defined problem to address (like

- Improve the evidence base. The research could only skim the surface. It would be useful to conduct a

## The Commonwealth, with its strong commitment to gender equality, is well placed to take the lead

country-by-country review across the Commonwealth, focusing on planning legislation and the extent of guidance from ministries and/or professional bodies. How far is gender built into statutory planning practice? What are the barriers?

- Focus on training. Build on CAP's growing links with UN-Habitat, and in particular its Gender Mainstreaming Unit, to produce training packs, for example on techniques like gender auditing. Train

trainers. Seek support from the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements to champion gender-sensitive planning and connect into national ministries and planning practice.

- Liaise with gender specialists in the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation to tap into experiences in other fields where awareness of gender has been translated into gender-sensitive practice.

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