



GENDER EQUALITY FOR SMARTER CITIES

CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS



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FOREWORD



We live in an increasingly urban world where providing healthy and safe living environments, productive economies and equitable social benefits are challenges facing towns and cities globally. Today, just over half the world's people live in urban areas, and we expect the percentage of urban dwellers to rise to 70 per cent by 2050. An important dimension of urban life is the condition of women in towns and cities; it is a condition marked by historical exclusion and multiple deprivations.

This publication serves two purposes. First, it highlights the major gender issues we face in the context of urbanisation. Second, it provides an overview of the various efforts deployed by UN-HABITAT to promote gender equality in all its endeavours and programmes. This is in fulfilment of international agreements, including the Habitat Agenda, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Millennium Development Goals, the third of which is to promote gender equality and empower women.

One in three people in cities of the developing world lives in a slum. Although conditions vary, research

shows that women and girls often suffer the worst effects of slum life, such as poor access to clean water, inadequate sanitation, unemployment, insecurity of tenure and gender-based violence (exacerbated at home by stressful and over-crowded living conditions, and in public areas by poor security and eviction threats).

On the whole, governments and policy makers are still responding inadequately to different gender needs in towns and cities. With time, this deepens the disadvantages for women and girls. It denies them an equal voice to bring about improvements in their communities, and holds back the full potential for social and economic development in their countries. With global threats such as climate change and global recession, never has there been a greater urgency to develop innovative interventions.

Still, and as outlined in this publication there is also substantial progress on improving gender equality in cities and local governance. This goes to show that strategic and targeted programmes and activities can, indeed, advance both gender equality and sustainable urbanisation in mutually reinforcing ways. In this respect, UN-HABITAT stands at the forefront of initiatives to sustain past gains and future momentum—with strong support from donors, the political will of governments and fruitful cooperation with other United Nations agencies, civil society, central and local governments and the private sector.

In 2010, as world representatives meet to review progress on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (“Beijing+15”), special attention should be paid to urbanisation and the impact of urban poverty on women.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Governments of Norway, Sweden, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada for funding gender mainstreaming activities at UN-HABITAT.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Anna K. Tibaijuka".

Dr. Anna K. Tibaijuka
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT



Photo © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN, Dhaka, 2007

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Women represent a large proportion of the poor who look to cities for a better life.
Photo © UN-HABITAT/Caylee Hong, Ngong Hills, 2009



Each week, 3 million people are added to cities of the developing world. Increasingly, the struggle for gender equality takes place in towns and cities the world over. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Caylee Hong, Ngong Hills, 2009

INTRODUCTION

Promoting gender equality and empowering women is the third of eight Millennium Development Goals agreed by the world community in 2000 to tackle the most daunting development challenges in this early 21st century. As populations become increasingly urban around the world, this third goal is also vital to the sustainable expansion of towns and cities.

We have, collectively, reached tipping point: 50.6 per cent of the world's people now live in towns and cities. Developing countries account for 95 per cent of current urban growth.¹ Over the next 40 years, urbanisation is expected to expand further in all major areas of the developing world. The number of urban dwellers is expected to triple in Africa and double in Asia.² In many cities of the developing world, though, advancement and affluence for some are offset by dehumanising poverty and exclusion for many others.

GENDER INEQUALITIES EXACERBATE DIVISIONS AND HINDER DEVELOPMENT

Today, close to 828 million human beings, or 33 per cent of the world's urban population, live in slums.³ They experience challenges and deprivations of various kinds and intensities, including high degrees of poverty, unemployment and crime, as well as lack of durable housing, poor sanitation and inadequate access to clean water. Overcrowding and threat of forced evictions pose further threats.

Women and girls are both direct and indirect victims of the lack of basic services in slums. The hours they spend fetching water can lock them out of opportunities for education, employment and training. They are also expected to stay home to care for relatives of all ages made sick by poor-quality water and inadequate sanitation. Early pregnancy and early marriages can also restrict girls' opportunities later in life. When coupled with the current food and economic crises, urban poverty can encourage women and girls to engage in risky sexual behaviour for

economic survival, putting them at heightened risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.⁴

UN-HABITAT helps governments and policy makers to build the skills and capacities required for better urban governance. This helps mitigate some of the risks of ongoing urbanisation, including the proliferation of slums, environmental damage as well as social and economic inequalities. Promoting gender equality is a crosscutting theme in all these efforts, as well as in the Habitat Agenda which sets out the agency's basic mandate.

The year 2009 marked the 30th anniversary of the adoption, by the United Nations General Assembly, of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Today, though, discrimination against women often takes more subtle forms than it did back in the late 1970s. "Gender blindness" – a failure to pay adequate attention to different gender needs and priorities – can result in inefficient services that act as barriers to women and girls' education, healthcare, employment, decent housing and safe access to streets, parks, cultural centres and other public spaces.

THE COST OF INEQUALITY

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) stated in its 2007 annual survey that the region was losing US \$40-42 billion a year due to restrictions on women's access to employment, and another US \$16-30 billion a year because of gender gaps in education.⁵ On the other hand, World Bank experts have found that poverty incidence tends to be lower in countries with more gender equality. Economic growth and gender equality also appear to be positively correlated.⁶

Research has shown that when mothers are granted greater control over resources, they allocate more to food, children's health (including nutrition) and education – as evidenced in a diverse set of countries, including Bangladesh, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Indonesia and South Africa.⁷

JOINT ADVOCACY ON TWO FRONTS

In advocacy on gender equality and sustainable urbanisation, UN-HABITAT routinely brings together groups that have more common interests than they may first realise. On the one hand, UN-HABITAT targets urban policy makers and governments in a bid to enhance their understanding of gender issues in development.

On the other hand, UN-HABITAT works directly with women's networks and agencies to enhance their awareness of the realities of urbanisation, slum growth and the need for interventions targeting slum-dwelling women. So far, the vast majority of women's advocates have focused on the plight of rural women and indeed, there has been a long-standing notion that the poor are better off in urban than rural areas.

Although slums and low-income neighbourhoods may be located close to schools, hospitals and other amenities, slum dwellers often have poor access to these services. UN-HABITAT's *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* report showed that in many cases, poverty, poor sanitation and indoor air pollution make slum-dwelling women and children more vulnerable to respiratory illnesses and other infectious diseases than their rural counterparts.⁸

As a matter of policy, UN-HABITAT draws attention to the many linkages between rural and urban populations, as gender inequalities affect both. When women in rural areas become widowed or disinherited, significant numbers migrate to slums; once there, however, many face further discrimination from slum landlords, who consider them to be unreliable renters.⁹ When they do struggle to pay rent, women become vulnerable to sexual exploitation and intimidation by landlords.¹⁰

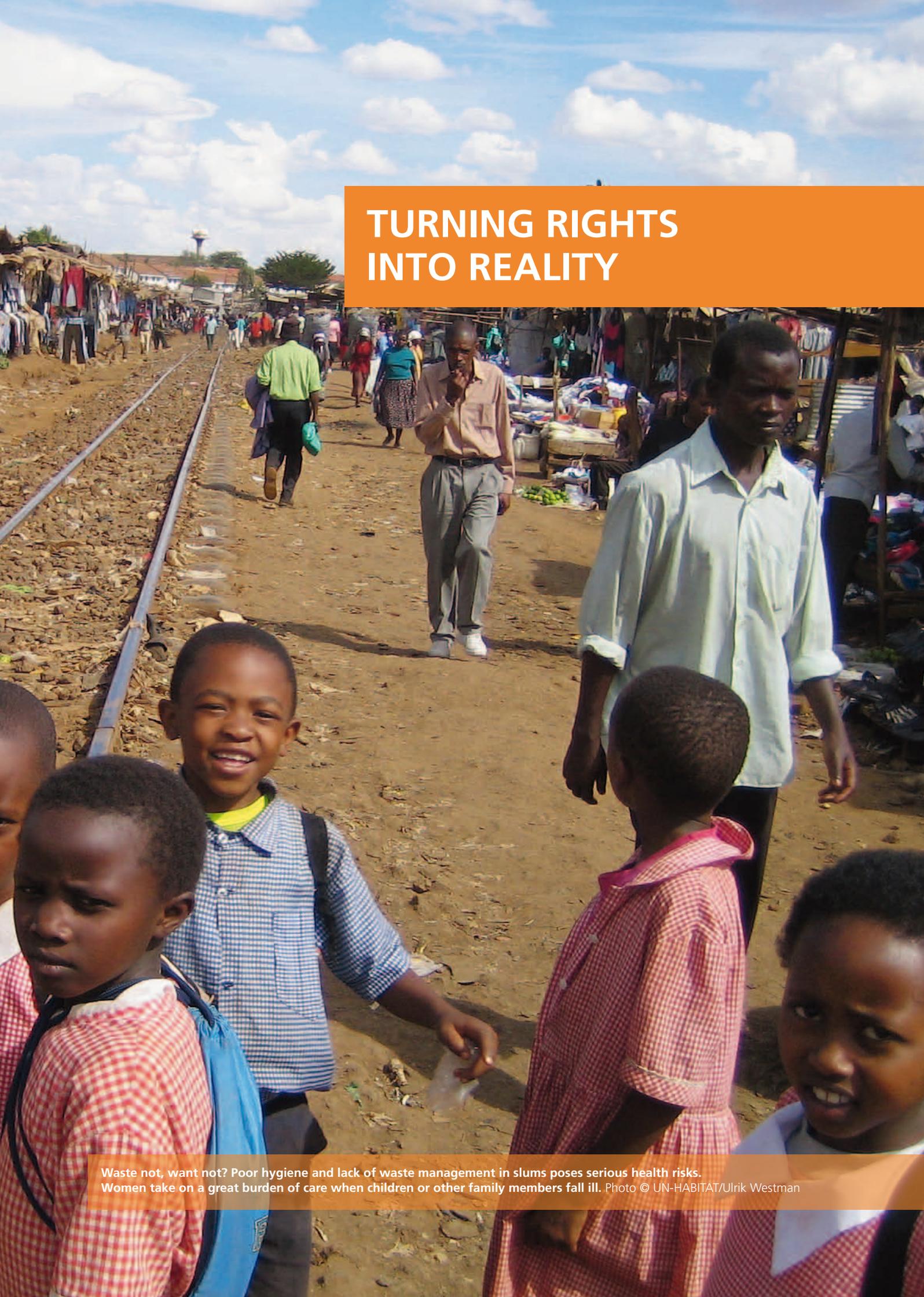
FACILITATING CHANGE

In order to build government capacities for better land administration and tenure security, UN-HABITAT works together with a wide range of global partners—from governments to academic institutions to women's organisations—exploring ways to improve conditions for both underprivileged women and men. UN-HABITAT is also working increasingly within a United Nations framework of strengthened interagency cooperation.

For example, UN-HABITAT works in close partnership with the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on the "Global Programme on Safe Cities Free of Violence Against Women and Girls." The two agencies are also collaborating on programmes for good urban governance and women's empowerment. In the same spirit of collaboration, UN-HABITAT is working jointly with a total of 13 other UN agencies in the "Kenya Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment."

UN-HABITAT is increasing the numbers of platforms and other opportunities for grassroots women to work with local, regional and national governments on improved housing and more sustainable urbanisation. In the years to come, and as part of its Gender Equality Action Plan (2008-2013), UN-HABITAT will build on these efforts.

This range of activities goes to show that if urbanisation is to bring about more equitable benefits and opportunities for everyone, enhanced awareness of gender issues is an important first step. Gender-responsive programming and budgeting, creativity, accountability, partnerships and perhaps, most importantly—political will—are also needed to turn women's rights and gender equality into reality.

A photograph of a busy, unpaved street in a slum. The street is dirt and littered with trash. On the left, there are makeshift stalls with clothes hanging. In the foreground, several children are visible, some wearing school uniforms. In the background, many people are walking along the street. The sky is blue with white clouds.

TURNING RIGHTS INTO REALITY

Waste not, want not? Poor hygiene and lack of waste management in slums poses serious health risks. Women take on a great burden of care when children or other family members fall ill. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Ulrik Westman

GENDER, LAND AND HOUSING

“After decades of struggle, most constitutions in the world now enshrine women’s equal rights. Although the fundamental human rights of women are recognised, many women still suffer from the continued consequences of traditional prejudices and practices. This is nowhere more evident than in the area of ownership and inheritance of land and other property.”¹¹

—Anna K. Tibaijuka, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

QUICK FACTS

- In many countries, the relationship women have to men—for example as wives or daughters—defines their access to land. This leaves women particularly disadvantaged in cases of relationship breakdown, widowhood or changing priorities of landowners.¹²
- It is estimated that only 2 per cent of women in developing countries own land.¹³ Such lack of access to land and housing can be a reflection of existing poverty, but it can also make women poorer.
- Exclusion of women from access to land pushes them from rural areas to cities, and especially slums, where they often join the ranks of female-headed households.¹⁴
- Female-headed households typically represent high proportions of the poorest living in informal settlements worldwide: for example, 26 per cent in Brazil and 20 per cent in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁵

All too often, women who have lost their husbands must face the added pain of being forced out of their homes and stripped of their land and inheritance, often by in-laws. The problem is particularly widespread in Africa and Southern Asia, where women are systematically denied their human rights to access, own, control or inherit land and property.¹⁶ The World Urban Campaign, as coordinated by UN-HABITAT, and earlier campaigns for secure tenure and urban governance, have placed women’s land and property rights at the centre of policy debate and advocacy.

In addition to campaigns, UN-HABITAT and partners look to develop strategies and identify tools

to ensure equitable enjoyment of land, housing and property rights. Women and vulnerable groups are a special area of focus. The severe impact of evictions on women has been highlighted by UN-HABITAT’S Advisory Group on Forced Evictions.

In many countries, the Constitution and specific laws or policies guarantee and promote women’s equal rights to land, property and housing, if only nominally. The challenge, however, is ensuring these safeguards are not undermined by poor governance and cultural or social practices that discriminate against women. For example, in Southern Africa, there are many cases of property grabbing from widows, especially those whose husbands died of AIDS-related illnesses.¹⁷

As part of its *Law, Land Tenure and Gender Review* series, UN-HABITAT has published studies on Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia, Nicaragua, Mexico, Brazil and Colombia. Gender has also featured prominently in the *Islamic Land and Property Research* series, with two papers focusing on Muslim women’s rights to property and Islamic inheritance and systems. This series was published by Zed Books, London in 2006 and another will soon be published in Arabic.

UN-HABITAT’S research is innovative in identifying entry points and strategies in the Islamic legal framework which can be used to protect women’s access to land and housing. The findings challenge a common assumption that Muslim women are inevitably frustrated in their pursuit of property rights under the Islamic legal system.¹⁸



Photo © UN-HABITAT/Caylee Hong

WOMEN'S LAND AND HOUSING RIGHTS

UN-HABITAT also acts as secretariat to the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), which brings together partners from various professional backgrounds. These share concerns for poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure. GLTN promotes realistic, practical approaches—particularly through recognition of a continuum of land rights, instead of focusing on individual land titling as the only option for greater tenure security.

For instance, GLTN research into land reform in Ethiopia showed that married women saw benefits in joint (husband and wife) land title certificates, as these could make it easier to keep their homes on their spouse's death. In 2009, GLTN began testing a gender evaluation framework to determine the extent to which land tools—such as those focusing on land rights, records and registration—addressed the specific needs of both women and men. In partnership

with the Huairou Commission (an international network of grassroots women's organisations), a pilot evaluation framework is now being tested by women's organisations in Brazil, Ghana and Nepal.

Together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-HABITAT also supports the United Nations Housing Rights Programme (UNHRP). Between 2003 and 2006, the programme issued three reports on women and housing. On those occasions, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Adequate Housing found that women's rights were often undermined by factors as diverse as gender-based violence, lack of affordable housing, and policies and programmes that respond inadequately to the disproportionate impact of natural disasters, forced evictions and HIV on women.

UN-HABITAT's shelter projects promote women's involvement in the design and construction of houses and community buildings, as well as in the development of services and infrastructure that make communities safer, healthier, more productive and more responsive to different gender needs.



Rapid population growth in cities like Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, has increased demand for housing. Many poor households headed by women are affected by inadequate housing, poor location, and scarce access to clean water, electricity, public transportation and other vital services. Photo © UNICEF/NYHQ2006-2438/Markisz

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In **Pakistan**, an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale caused wide-scale death and destruction in 2005. UN-HABITAT contributed to the reconstruction of 600,000 homes. Beneficiaries included large numbers of women, especially widows and those heading households while husbands had migrated to other areas for work. The project facilitated women's access to funding for reconstruction through their own bank accounts, or, when married, through joint bank accounts.
- In **Somalia**, after decades of conflict, UN-HABITAT's housing programmes for internally displaced people returning to Garowe are steered by committees with a 20 per cent quota for women's representation. This is how, for instance, women have participated in consultations on the design of housing and public spaces, and have contributed to the improvement of courtyards where they could socialise while their children play nearby.
- In **New York**, during the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN-HABITAT organised a side event to draw attention to the financial needs of land and housing schemes for women. Panellists included representatives from Women Land Access Trusts in **Africa** and the Self-Employed Women's Association in **India**. UN-HABITAT regularly uses high-profile platforms, including the biennial World Urban Forum, to enhance awareness of gender, land and property issues and to spur targeted action.

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND HOUSING FINANCE

“There is a strong positive association between women’s right to property and poverty reduction. As women generally have a broader household management role, their control of land assets has proven to enhance overall household welfare, including increased spending on food, children’s health and education. Secure land rights for female farmers and businesswomen can improve investment, access to sources of credit and better land use and productivity, with women frequently regarded as at lower risk of credit default than men.”

—Property Rights Alliance: International Property Rights Index 2009 Report ¹⁹



Photo © UN-HABITAT/Caylee Hong

Although the typical workforce is comprised of more men than women, in developing countries women make up 60 to 80 per cent of the informal workforce.²⁰ Compared to formal employment, informal work is generally characterized by lower pay, less job security and fewer social safety nets. Nevertheless, it is a means of survival for a large proportion of the urban poor and an important part of local economies in many developing countries.

UN-HABITAT supports and promotes Women Land Access Trusts as intermediary organisations that link together low-income women’s housing groups and cooperatives on the one hand, and financial institutions, governments and the private sector on the other hand. Low-income women often find it difficult to access loans to secure their own homes or, in slums, to upgrade their housing. The problem is the reluctance of mainstream banks and mortgage lenders

to make credit available in the absence of formal jobs, fixed addresses, collateral and other credit guarantees.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE

In Jinja, Uganda, UN-HABITAT has set up a revolving fund to finance affordable housing for female entrepreneurs and their families. As a pilot project, 20 new homes were completed in 2006 on government-donated land. The fund enabled the women to borrow money for the houses at low interest rates, repaying loans with business incomes. The small businesses involved making beaded jewellery, fruit and vegetable selling, tailoring and second-hand clothes—all low-to medium-income occupations unlikely to appeal to mainstream banks.

Jinja project beneficiaries were mostly widows, for whom securing decent, affordable housing can frequently be a serious challenge. In this particular instance, they had lost the ability to access land

through a husband and could not afford to buy any. Previously, the women in the Jinja project lived with their children in one-room shacks without piped water or adequate sanitation. Housing loans enabled them to move into more spacious dwellings, with their own kitchens and toilets, for the first time in their lives.

Jinja Municipal Council and construction company Akright Projects were active partners in the project, which goes to show that public-private partnerships, if well-devised, can make a significant difference. The Uganda Women Land Access Trust is now coordinating efforts to build more homes in a second phase of the project.

UN-HABITAT has worked with three other women land access trusts in Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania, while liaising with various organisations with to establish similar trusts in Burundi, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

On top of affordable loans for housing, the trusts also provide women with business advice and training,



UN-HABITAT is helping women to find affordable solutions to finance better housing. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Caylee Hong



UN-HABITAT's work in housing finance is helping women and their families in Kuruniyawatta, Sri Lanka to build better, flood resistant houses. The district is on the flood plain of Kelani River. Photo © UN-HABITAT/SUF Sri Lanka

enabling them to maximize incomes and make good use of small loans from revolving funds. The trusts also make it easier for women to liaise with local authorities on issues such as provision of land, water and sanitation.

UN-HABITAT strives to ensure that women enjoy equal access to affordable finance for housing and basic infrastructure, especially in slums and poor urban areas. The agency has involved women both as project planners and beneficiaries when establishing Local Finance Facilities in Ghana, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. *(See the case study on the Sri Lanka Women's Bank on the following page.)*

Local Finance Facilities build partnerships between banks, governments and slum communities. These partnerships improve banks' confidence in slum-upgrading projects, and help overcome the common

perception that slums are too risky for investment. Where necessary, UN-HABITAT makes grants to Local Finance Facilities, enabling these to provide the credit guarantees or bridging loans that will make slum projects more attractive for mainstream banking institutions.

In a separate development, both women and men stand to benefit from a new UN-HABITAT pilot programme that grants loans to community financial institutions. The monies are then lent out to the urban poor for housing, water facilities, sewerage and other infrastructure. In April 2009, UN-HABITAT signed six agreements with project partners in Argentina, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda to deploy this type of scheme, formally known as Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operations (ERSO).

CASE STUDY: WOMEN'S BANK OF SRI LANKA AND KURUNIYAWATTA HOUSE UPGRADING

One of UN-HABITAT's partners in Sri Lanka, Women's Bank, has pioneered community banking systems for low-income women, starting with women's self-help groups in the slums of Colombo in 1989. Today, the bank has over 70,000 depositors and a savings portfolio worth US \$12 million. In 2009, the Kuruniyawatta House Upgrading Project is one of several UN-HABITAT collaborations with the

Women's Bank. This project alone will benefit about 214 people. The settlers previously struggled to access water and electricity due to their illegal occupation of the public land, but now the government of Sri Lanka is transferring ownership of the land to Women's Bank. After the loan is repaid, Women's Bank will transfer the land title to the community for collective ownership. Hatton National Bank is providing a US \$96,000-equivalent loan.²¹ The Kuruniyawatta project is one of 10 in Sri Lanka where UN-HABITAT is promoting women's housing finance.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In the Kinondoni district of **Tanzania**, construction of a five-storey building with 32 residential apartments and five commercial units started through a successful partnership between Tanzania Women Land Access Trust, which is coordinating the project; the Government of Tanzania, which extended the lease on the land from 33 to 99 years; UN-HABITAT, which provided financial support and technical expertise; and the Chinese government through the province of Yangzhou, which supplied Chinese engineers to work alongside local contractors.
- UN-HABITAT is working with **Kenya** Women Land Access Trust in the development of affordable housing for women entrepreneurs. Land has been donated by the Government of Kenya as part of the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme.
- In Accra, UN-HABITAT is working with **Ghana** Women Land Access Trust to mobilise and register women's housing cooperatives. Members benefit from training on leadership, as well as housing and legal rights.

A high-angle, wide shot of a busy street in Dhaka, Bangladesh, completely filled with colorful rickshaws. The rickshaws, in various colors like blue, red, green, and yellow, are packed closely together, moving in both directions. Pedestrians are visible walking alongside the rickshaws. The street is lined with trees and utility poles with overhead wires. The overall scene depicts a vibrant and densely populated urban environment.

IMPROVING URBAN ENVIRONMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Photo © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN, Dhaka

SAFER CITIES FOR ALL



Concerns over safety and security affect the physical and emotional well being of citizens, especially vulnerable groups, which often include women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

Photo © UNICEF/NYHQ2003-0485/Nooran, Basra

QUICK FACTS

- UN-HABITAT's *Global Assessment of Women's Safety*, which surveyed 210 organisations, found that the most widespread forms of gender-based violence included partner violence (39 per cent), sexual violence (20 per cent) and violence in public spaces, including public transport (19 per cent).²²
- On average, violence makes up at least 25 to 30 per cent of urban crime, and women, especially in developing countries, are twice as likely to be victims of violent aggression (including domestic violence) as men.²³
- According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), women may be at greater risk of gender-based violence in urban areas "because of the breakdown in cultural mores that govern relations between the sexes and the lower likelihood that neighbours would intervene."²⁴
- In São Paulo, Brazil a World Health Organisation (WHO) survey of 1,172 women found that the 29 per cent who had ever had a partner had experienced physical or sexual violence at their hands.²⁵ WHO research found the figure to be 41 per cent for women in Bangkok.²⁶
- While men are the primary users of guns, women suffer disproportionately from gun violence as they are rarely purchasers, owners or users of firearms. The International Action Network on Small Arms estimates that, across the world, 30,000 women and girls are murdered by small arms every year, while millions of others are injured by guns or sexually abused at gun point.²⁷



Reclaiming public space: Local women in Rosario, Argentina painted a mural carrying the message, “More women in the street: Cities safe for everyone without fear and without violence.” Photo © Hilary Duffy/UNIFEM, Argentina

To make cities safer and public spaces better for all residents, UN-HABITAT promotes best practices and government accountability. The main focus is on improving urban safety for vulnerable and underprivileged groups, including women. In the past, most programmes tackling violence against women focused on intimate partner violence in the domestic, private sphere. While these efforts are still important, the policy makers of today need also to address gender-based violence in public spaces.

In 2009, UN-HABITAT joined forces with the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to launch the Global Programme on Safe Cities Free of Violence Against Women. The two agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the

partnership, and will work together to help local authorities improve urban safety policies and schemes.

In more and more instances, gender-responsive planning, budgeting and practical measures are expanding the rights of all citizens to access urban services safely and freely.

In Kenya, a public-private partnership known as “Adopt-a-Light” keeps Nairobi’s streets and slums lit up at night to enhance road safety and reduce the risk and fear of crime, including robbery and sexual assault.²⁸ This initiative sends out an important message, namely, that people who live in informal settlements and lack property rights still have a right to safety.



Women take an exploratory walk to identify safety risks as part of the Safer Cities Programme, a collaboration between UNIFEM and UN-HABITAT." Photo © Hilary Duffy/UNIFEM, Argentina

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND MAKING PUBLIC SPACES SAFER

In the city of Cebu in the Philippines, government funding of a multiagency effort to address domestic violence against women has strengthened cooperation between women's groups, the police, non-governmental organisations and health and social welfare departments. Enlisting male supporters to discourage other men from violence against partners²⁹ enables the scheme to take advantage of men's interests and skills to promote gender equality.

Fear of violence or harassment, in addition to actual violence, is a debilitating factor which restricts the ability of women, the elderly, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities to access services, move

about freely and enjoy urban life. UN-HABITAT contributes to a better understanding of gender-based violence in urban areas, and works with partners to develop preventive schemes. Women's active participation is critical to these efforts.

The focus is on creating safer environments in cities and changing attitudes that condone or perpetuate violence. This can include the following: (1) training of local authorities on gender-based policy-making and programming; (2) collection of gender-disaggregated data on safety and security; (3) conducting "violence against women" surveys, safety audits and exploratory walks; and (4) promoting the documentation and exchange of best practices, for example through the *Global Assessment of Women's Safety* published in 2009.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- UN-HABITAT has provided training on the methodology of women's urban safety audits to groups in **Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Abidjan, Warsaw, Durban** and **Kingston**. The audits enhance women's participation and give legitimacy to their concerns, while helping decision makers to understand how gender affects the way urban spaces are perceived and experienced. UN-HABITAT has also published *What Works and Where?*, a review of women's safety audit methodologies in various cities.
- In **Latin America** and the **Asia-Pacific** region, UN-HABITAT and Women in Cities International have run competitive award schemes to promote women-friendly cities and gender-responsive local governments. The focus was on safety and security in Latin America, and also on disaster management and resilience in the case of Asia.
- In **India**, and together with Jagori, a non-governmental organisation, UN-HABITAT is making bus drivers and conductors more aware of harassment of women and training them to take appropriate action.

MEETING GENDER NEEDS IN WATER AND SANITATION



Traditionally, women and girls play a strong role in attending to the water and sanitation needs of their families and communities. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Lao PDR

QUICK FACTS

- In 2006, 22 per cent of the world's urban dwellers lacked a piped drinking water connection on the premises where they lived. In developing regions, 29 per cent of urban dwellers lacked basic sanitation, with many having to defecate out in the open.³⁰
- In sub-Saharan Africa, treating diarrhoea absorbs 12 per cent of health budgets. On a typical day, more than half of all hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from faecal-related disease.³¹ At home, women and girls are often left to care for sick relatives.
- According to UNDP, inadequate access to safe, hygienic and private sanitation facilities is a source of shame, physical discomfort and insecurity for millions of women across the world. Cultural norms frequently make it unacceptable for women to be seen defecating—forcing many women to leave home before dawn or after nightfall to maintain privacy.³²
- Between 1990 and 2000, a UNICEF school sanitation programme in Bangladesh effectively increased girls' school enrolment by 11 per cent.³³
- In Tanzania, a survey found school attendance to be 12 per cent higher for girls in homes located 15 minutes or less from a water source than in homes one hour or more away. Attendance rates for boys appeared to be far less affected by distance from water sources.³⁴



UN-HABITAT is working with local authorities, women's networks, community groups, and water and sanitation experts to develop better facilities and services. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Nepal

SAFE WATER AND BETTER SANITATION

More than one in six people in the world lack sufficient access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion lack proper sanitation.³⁵ UN-HABITAT's water and sanitation programmes bring improvements to whole communities, with operations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, all with a priority focus on gender issues.

Research in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that women spend 40 billion hours a year collecting water—the equivalent of a year's worth of labour by the entire workforce in France.³⁶ This is why women and girls are likely to experience the more significant improvements in their daily lives when proper water schemes are put in place. Less time spent fetching water can also mean more time to study in school, with improved prospects for better employment and poverty reduction.

However, once at school, it will take better sanitation facilities to keep girls attending: they need facilities that are sensitive to their needs. In poor urban areas,

the lack of separate-sex toilets in schools is a factor behind poorer rates of girls' attendance in school, after the onset of puberty, with some girls dropping out altogether. Sanitation goes far beyond latrines. Women and girls require safe, private spaces with sufficient water for personal use and washing, and better drainage to make sure that waste water does not remain around their homes.

Unhygienic public toilets and latrines are threats to women's health, as poor sanitation makes them more susceptible to reproductive tract infections. When there are few or no toilets, many women have no choice but to relieve themselves out in the open, in secluded areas or under cover of darkness, which makes them more vulnerable to sexual or physical assault.

Addressing inequalities and deficiencies in water and sanitation is also important if Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved by the agreed deadlines. Regarding environmental sustainability, Goal 7, Target 7.A (formerly Target 10) is to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015,



For women, sanitation is a matter of health and human dignity. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Tanzania

while Target 7.D (formerly Target 11) is to achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN WATER AND SANITATION

UN-HABITAT has worked with the Gender and Water Alliance to mainstream gender issues in the “Water for African Cities” programme. These efforts involved gender assessments in 17 African cities to identify the particular problems faced by slum-dwelling women.

The assessment showed that it fell almost exclusively to women to collect water and remove solid waste, to dig pits for rubbish and toilets and, more generally, to keep the environment clean. For all these multiple tasks, though, very few women were invited to sit on local development committees.

UN-HABITAT raises awareness of these gender issues to help improve service planning and delivery. In Asia, UN-HABITAT has further extended its partnership with the Gender and Water Alliance to a series of training workshops; these strengthen the capacity of local governments to adopt gender analytical frameworks and to understand the broader political context of water distribution and reforms.

Gender assessments have been completed in three towns in Laos and four cities in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. These have helped local authorities to assess local needs and to prepare their own gender mainstreaming strategies and action plans.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- A UN-HABITAT programme targeting poor, female-led households has helped to establish microcredit and revolving fund schemes for water and sanitation projects in 11 African towns. By the end of 2010, more than 50,000 poor people will have access to better toilet facilities. Community toilet blocks offer a much-needed service while providing women with income-generating opportunities. UN-HABITAT has worked extensively in the **Lake Victoria** region and is developing similar schemes in towns in **Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana** and **Nigeria**. More projects are planned in **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Senegal**.
- In four cities in Madhya Pradesh, **India**, UN-HABITAT has supported the formation of slum-dwelling women’s self-help groups. The aim is for local governments to benefit from the active participation of women in the planning, management and implementation of water and sanitation projects.
- Under ongoing UN-HABITAT programmes in **Nepal**, women are involved in user committees dealing with the treatment and bottling of well water for the urban poor, together with rainwater harvesting and improved stoves for smoke-free kitchens, as well as installation of cost-effective, eco-friendly toilets.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN

“An important challenge of youth policies and programmes in the coming decades is to make up for the major shortfall in investment in young people, especially women, in past decades.”³⁷

—United Nations World Youth Report 2007



UN-HABITAT worked with the Kenyan government to establish the Moonbeam Youth Training Centre, which trains young people in construction and business skills. Photo © UN-HABITAT

QUICK FACTS:

- The majority of young women in slums tend to have children at an earlier age than their non-slum counterparts. Young women living in slums are more likely to stay at home to look after children and take care of household chores. This restricts their opportunities to look for employment, particularly in the formal sector.³⁸
- Youth make up 25 per cent of the global working-age population, but account for 43.7 per cent of the unemployed. Among young people, females face even higher rates of unemployment and underemployment. They are typically paid lower wages than their male peers.³⁹
- In slums, risky sexual behaviour among women and girls, or trading sex for food or cash, is a widespread strategy to make ends meet. This makes females vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. HIV prevalence among urban women in sub-Saharan Africa is already much higher than among rural women.⁴⁰
- Young men and women in the slums of New Delhi have helped to make local parks, streets and public spaces safer and more accessible through a programme supported by the non-governmental organisation Jagori and UN-HABITAT. The scheme has mobilised more than 2,300 households.



With the return of peace, school enrolment in Northern Uganda has risen dramatically. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Emily Wong

Today's young people are the “best educated generation in history,” according to the United Nations *World Youth Report 2007*. Greater equality in school enrolment between boys and girls in a growing number of countries, especially at primary school, is a contributing factor.

When promoting entrepreneurship, leadership, training, peace-building or arts and cultural activities, UN-HABITAT's approach to urban youth development builds on progress in closing gender gaps and in creating more equal opportunities between young women and men.

Young people between ages 15 and 24 represent 18 per cent of the world's population, or 1.2 billion people. According to the World Bank, 87 per cent of them live in developing countries.⁴¹ Youth are a great resource for building urban, and, indeed national economies.

This is why UN-HABITAT is working hard to improve employability and entrepreneurship among

young people, with special attention to young women. Better education does not, by itself, guarantee employment. UN-HABITAT's 2008/9 *State of the World's Cities* report found that only about 3.8 per cent of people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the world were employed. The report also showed that in Eastern and Southern African countries, more than 40 per cent of young women were neither employed nor in education.⁴²

In particular, young women in informal settlements often miss out on opportunities for formal paid employment because they have children at an earlier age, compared with their counterparts in planned settlements. They also take on more domestic tasks than men. This restricts their ability to participate more significantly in employment and training.

Against this background, UN-HABITAT has adapted the programmes of its One-Stop Youth Information and Resource Centre in central Nairobi, Kenya in order to make it easier and more welcoming for young



Photo © UN-HABITAT

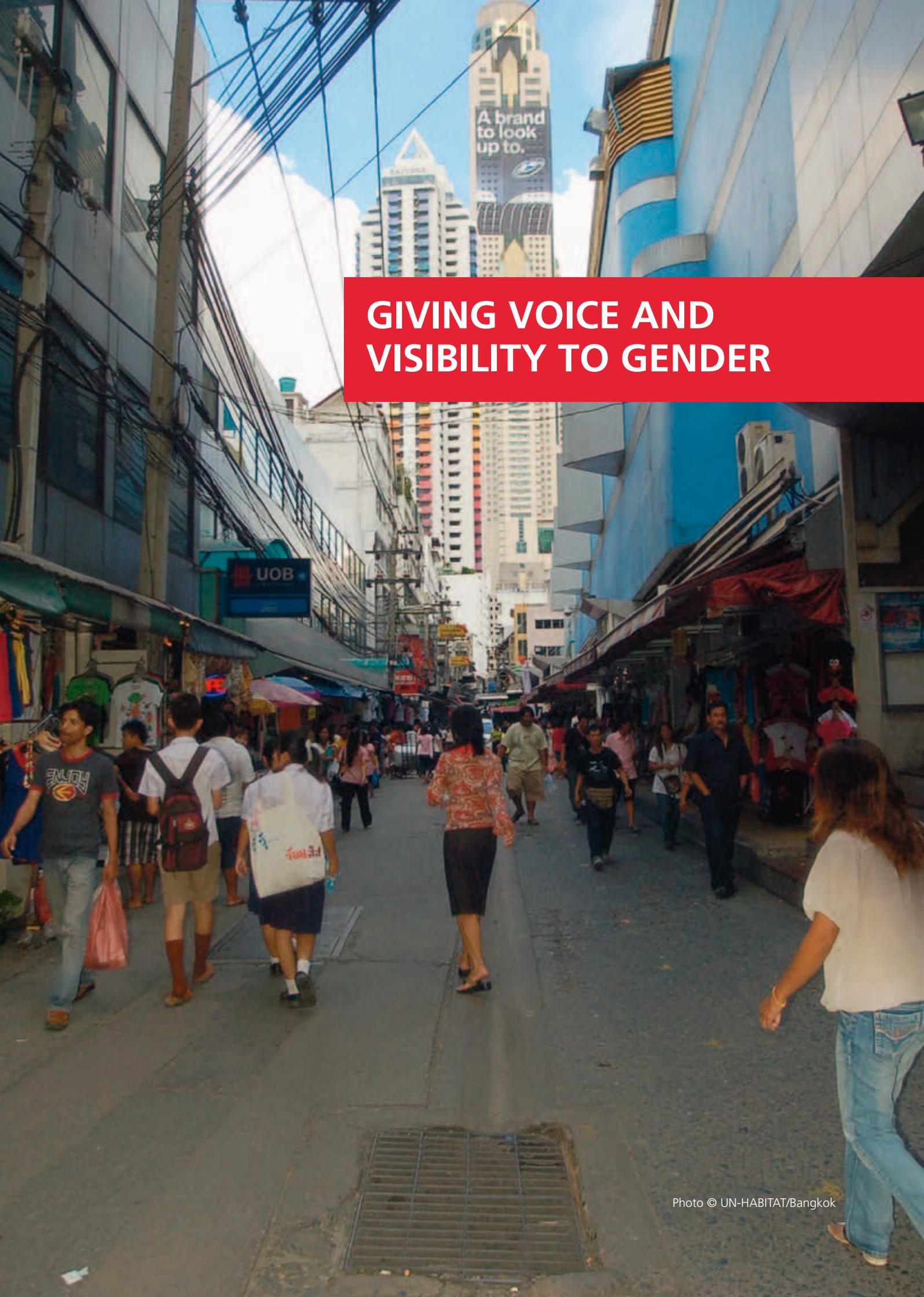
women to attend. As the agency found out, although many young women from informal settlements said they were interested in using the Resource Centre, their domestic duties and childcare responsibilities made it difficult for them to commute to the city centre.

As a result, UN-HABITAT has opened three satellite centres in informal settlements in Nairobi, enabling

young women in those areas to stay closer to home, while benefiting from services such as employment counselling, computer and internet resources, as well as HIV/AIDS education. Moreover, the programme has introduced monthly “Girl-to-Girl” talk sessions, which give young women a safe space to learn from each other and to talk in confidence about the issues affecting them, including female reproductive health.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In **Kenya**, UN-HABITAT’s Moonbeam Youth Training Centre has already provided vocational training to more than 300 young men and women from informal settlements in and around Nairobi. The project provides valuable experience for employment in the construction sector for both young men and women, despite the sector being traditionally dominated by men.
- Worldwide, UN-HABITAT’s Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-Led Employment is supporting youth projects which, among other objectives, promote gender equality.
- In Freetown and Kigali, the respective capitals of **Sierra Leone** and **Rwanda**, UN-HABITAT has provided project management training for more than 50 youth leaders and managers, about half of which were female. Most were working for “We are the Future One-Stop Youth Centres,” which provide youth-led activities in post-conflict cities. Gender balance among youth workers is important for the promotion of both male and female role models.



GIVING VOICE AND VISIBILITY TO GENDER

GENDER EQUALITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT



Power to the People: UN-HABITAT advocates for community-driven approaches in post-crisis reconstruction, with equal involvement of both men and women. Photo © UN-HABITAT /Pidie, Indonesia

QUICK FACTS

- Research based on a sample of 141 countries (1981–2002) found that, on average, natural disasters (and their subsequent impact) killed more women than men, or killed women at an earlier age. In some cases, more men die in natural disasters than women. This was the case in 2001, when Hurricane Mitch hit South America. Men were more likely to engage in risky activities, such as search and rescue.⁴⁴
- On average, women account for half the population in refugee camps, but their participation in camp decision-making remains low. Data from more than 80 camps show that equal participation has been achieved in only about two in every five camps. However, more recent data (2005, 2007) shows that women’s participation is increasing.⁴⁵
- Conflicts and disasters can accelerate urbanisation—with rural people displaced by war or natural disasters moving to urban centres in search of better resources and protection. This can cause fierce competition for resources, land and jobs in urban areas, adding to already difficult conditions in slums that are often highly disaster-prone in the first place.⁴⁶ Women and vulnerable groups often experience the most difficulties accessing limited resources.
- Violence against women during or after armed conflicts has been reported in every international or non-international war-zone. Between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, as were 20,000 to 50,000 women during the conflict in Bosnia in the early 1990s.⁴⁷ Over the last decade, up to 300,000 women in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been raped.⁴⁸

Approximately one million families and over five million people around the world were made homeless by conflict and natural disasters in 2007 alone,⁴⁹ and it is the world's poorest people, including slum dwellers, who suffer the most from these crises. Over 90 per cent of natural disaster-related deaths occur in developing countries.⁵⁰

UN-HABITAT works in partnership with other UN and humanitarian agencies to help communities in developing countries to mitigate the effect of disasters, and also to enable survivors to rebuild their lives, homes and livelihoods in a more sustainable way.

Gender equality in disaster management and mitigation enables communities to reduce underlying risks and vulnerabilities that have traditionally made women more disadvantaged in such situations. The approach recognises that women form a large part of the poor around the world, and that many may need additional economic resources if they are to develop more resilience to disasters—for example, by building stronger homes in regions susceptible to earthquakes.

Fair redistribution of land, property and resources is critical, as well as increased participation of women in decision making. To help equip policy makers with the knowledge and skills needed for more equitable land administration, UN-HABITAT has published a handbook, *Post-Conflict land Administration and Peacebuilding*, which includes a chapter on gender-responsive approaches.

Promoting gender equality in humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts remains a constant challenge,



Women possess much untapped potential to improve disaster responses and reconstruction efforts.

Photo © UN-HABITAT /Caylee Hong, Uganda

since many communities, and even governments, do not make this a priority and fail to associate the issue with longer-term urban development plans. However, training and advocacy efforts are gaining momentum, and attitudes and approaches are also gradually changing for the better.

In 2009, UN-HABITAT trained representatives from 14 different countries in the Asia and Pacific region on gender mainstreaming approaches in disaster management. In a bid to enhance awareness of best practices, UN-HABITAT has staged competitions and granted awards for gender-responsive projects that promote disaster resilience in cities.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In **Afghanistan**, UN-HABITAT has cooperated with three municipalities to ensure that under a post-conflict reconstruction and development scheme, half the community development councils were made up of local women's groups. In addition to improving roads and services such as electricity, the women's councils have also spearheaded income-generating projects, savings and credit schemes along with literacy programmes.
- In Aceh, **Indonesia**, one of the areas most severely devastated by the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, UN-HABITAT has worked with UNDP and the Government of Indonesia to mobilise and empower both women and men in their own community action planning groups. The groups decided on the design of their houses, building materials and labour arrangements. Within a year, 3,446 houses were built.
- In **Northern Uganda**, two decades of conflict have displaced two million people. As part of the process of healing and rebuilding, UN-HABITAT has encouraged involvement of a wide cross-section of the community. In Lira, young women have received training alongside young men to help rebuild homes for teachers. In order to help improve gender balance among teaching staff, female teachers have been given priority in the allocation of completed houses.

GENDER, NATURAL DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE



Women can be key players for promoting more environmentally sound practices around fuel use, home construction and waste disposal. Photo © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN

Since 1975, the number of recorded natural disasters (including floods, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, earthquakes and flooding) has increased fourfold.⁵¹ Seven out of 10 natural disasters are believed to be climate-related,⁵² particularly drought, desertification, severe storms, hurricanes and landslides. The urban poor are particularly vulnerable, as many live in flood-prone and environmentally hazardous areas. Poor quality housing further jeopardises their chances of survival.

As a matter of policy, UN-HABITAT emphasises the importance of gender-sensitive climate change interventions in cities. As women take care of their families during crisis situations, they face enormous challenges securing enough food and water, fuel for cooking and lighting, and wood or other building materials for rebuilding destroyed homes — especially if droughts occur, crops fail and natural resources are depleted.

Cities are highly vulnerable to the rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions associated with climate change. In developing countries, 14 per cent of the urban population live in low-elevation zones.⁵³

UN-HABITAT promotes the active involvement of both women and men to reduce the negative effects of global climate change.

According to the agency's *State of the World's Cities* 2008 report, urban areas are often blamed for increases in greenhouse gas emissions; however, cities' typical compact form, together with associated economies of scale, can also reduce energy demand and alleviate pressures on surrounding land and natural resources.⁵⁴ With disasters costing billions of dollars of damage every year, there is an urgent need for cities to engage both women and men fully in disaster planning, recovery, mitigation and innovative adaptation strategies.

ADVOCACY, MONITORING AND RESEARCH



Monitoring of gender and urbanisation is a dynamic and challenging area of research that warrants more attention and investment. UN-HABITAT is committed to producing fact-based reports and information about gender and cities to provide the basis of better informed urban development.. Photo © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN/Addis Ababa

QUICK FACTS:

- With the exception of Africa, the proportions of female-headed households is greater in urban than in rural areas of the developing world. This trend has socio-economic implications, which can result in more serious poverty among urban women in some countries.⁵⁵
- Approximately 20 per cent of households in the 160 sample cities included in UN-HABITAT's Urban Indicators database are headed by women. In the cities of Vietnam, Ethiopia, South Africa and Colombia, more than one in three households is headed by a woman.⁵⁶
- In Kenya and Nicaragua, one-third of female-headed households suffer from four shelter deprivations, which can include lack of durable housing, insecure tenure, insufficient living space, poor access to clean water or poor sanitation.⁵⁷
- In the developing world, almost two-thirds of working women are in vulnerable jobs as self-employed or unpaid family workers.⁵⁸
- Mothers are more likely to be attended by pre-natal healthcare personnel in urban areas, as opposed to rural ones, but there remain many women in slums who cannot afford maternal health services.⁵⁹



Bringing gender into focus: UN-HABITAT is striving to improve the compilation and analysis of data around gender and cities. Photo © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN, Dhaka

MONITORING PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY

As urbanisation prevails in most developing countries, towns and cities are becoming privileged places for the promotion of gender equality. While most aid agencies monitor development at country-wide level, UN-HABITAT has a unique focus on urban areas, identifying and monitoring inequalities, including those of a gender-related nature. The agency also compiles information on any action taken by cities, local governments and community organisations to improve gender equality, which makes it possible to share best practices.

UN-HABITAT encourages and assists partner organisations, especially governments and local authorities, to expand the collection of sex-disaggregated urban data. This enables better gender analysis of urban needs, enabling policy makers to tailor programmes and services that respond to gender differences while offering equal opportunities.

UN-HABITAT's Urban Inequities Survey monitors progress on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda—which was adopted by 171 countries in 1996

as a commitment to improve human settlements—and also progress on the Millennium Development Goals. One of the Habitat Agenda's seven commitments is to gender equality and, accordingly, gender analysis of urban development trends is an integral part of UN-HABITAT's work. When it comes to monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, the agency's focus is on improved conditions for slum dwellers (Goal 7, Target 7.D).

UN-HABITAT's specialised research area lies in comparing living conditions in slums, non-slum urban areas and rural areas. Sex-disaggregated data has shown that gender affects the type and severity of inequalities (for example, in education, health or types of employment). Since trends vary across cities and broad generalisations do not always apply, gender research in urban areas must be improved if policies are to be informed by specific evidence.

MONITORING URBAN INEQUALITIES

Slum-dwelling women and girls often face exceptional disadvantages. For instance, slum-dwelling girls typically have lower school enrolment rates than



Photo © UN-HABITAT

girls in formal settlements in the same cities. Meanwhile, women in slums have higher rates of HIV infection, compared with men and women in rural areas.⁶⁰ These are examples of the types of gender issues systematically analysed in UN-HABITAT publications, including the flagship reports, the *State of the World's Cities* and the *Global Report on Human Settlements*. They reach out to large audiences and help to inform policy.

In 2009, UN-HABITAT commissioned a worldwide assessment of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming in local governance. The survey reviews six regions and 25 countries, broaching a wide range of topics such as the effect of gender on decision-making, poverty, and access to services and resources.

PROMOTING BEST PRACTICES

UN-HABITAT also collects and disseminates information on urban development initiatives for its Best Practice database, which is available online. Gender equality and social inclusion stand among the 23 themes documented. Gender is one of the criteria for the Dubai International Awards for Best Practices, which is presented every other year. One of the 2008 awards went to a gardening project in Dakar, Senegal that helps the urban poor, including female-headed households, to diversify incomes with urban agriculture. Another award winner was a post-tsunami recovery programme in Aceh, Indonesia, which provided a revolving fund for women to start small businesses and earn their own incomes, instead of relying on emergency aid.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In 2008, UN-HABITAT published *Gender Mainstreaming in Local Authorities: Best Practices*, a resource book showing national and local governments, as well as civil society, how to benefit from the urban development and gender mainstreaming experiences in various regions of the world.
- UN-HABITAT is currently assessing the status of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming in local governance around the world. The research is conducted in partnership with the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and other independent researchers, and will show governments how to improve gender mainstreaming policies and practice.
- UN-HABITAT's Best Practice database and Dubai International Award for Best Practices publicise the schemes and projects that have proved the most effective for women's empowerment and gender equality.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE



Photo © UN-HABITAT

QUICK FACTS:

- Women make up only 9 per cent of mayors and 21 per cent of female councillors in the world.⁶¹ As of July 2009, they made up only 18 per cent of members of parliament.⁶²
- Some countries have set quotas for female representatives in lawmaking or political parties. Rwanda set a quota of 30 per cent for women in parliament. In 2008 elections, women won 56 per cent of seats. After Lesotho set a similar 30 per cent quota for local government, women won 58 per cent of the seats in 2005.
- The Philippines has introduced legislation endorsing the Gender and Development (GAD) budget format, which mandates all government agencies and instruments to allocate a minimum 5 per cent of their total budget to GAD programmes and projects.⁶³ Similar initiatives in local government can help ensure that gender-responsive programmes receive adequate attention and funding.
- In Santo André, Brazil, where 58 per cent of families are headed by women, a gender and citizenship programme has tackled high unemployment and poverty in four informal settlements, through a range of training and income-generating activities. Projects included a sewing cooperative for women and a microcredit scheme with *Banco de Povo* (People's Bank).⁶⁴



Small women's savings groups living in informal settlements in Sri Lanka were able to obtain affordable loans for upgrading their houses or community facilities, through collaboration with local authorities and UN-HABITAT.

Photo © Suzi Mutter/Colombo, Sri Lanka

GENDER IN GOVERNANCE

On top of good urban governance, UN-HABITAT promotes enabling conditions for women and men to access all the necessities of urban life and the benefits of urban citizenship. The aim is to create platforms for individuals to use their talents to the full and to improve their social and economic conditions. Mainstreaming gender issues in governance helps to achieve this. UN-HABITAT assists governments with training and capacity-building on gender mainstreaming, while also helping women's networks to strengthen their own roles in local governance.

Women are slowly gaining ground in political decision-making, but according to the 2008 United Nations *Millennium Development Goals Report*, progress is erratic and marked by regional differences. Women hold at least 40 per cent of the seats in five parliaments: Rwanda, Sweden, Cuba, Finland and Argentina, but worldwide the proportion is still only about 18 per cent.⁶⁵ At the local government level, only about one in five councillors is a woman on

average, and the ratio of male to female mayors is even lower.⁶⁶ Furthermore, women in many parts of the world are still under-represented in management positions in the public sector.⁶⁷

In order to improve gender balance in governance, some UN-HABITAT projects focus specifically on the advancement of women. Since 2002, the agency has been supporting the development of an advocacy, leadership and community engagement approach known as the Local-to-Local Dialogue. The method was pioneered by the Huairou Commission, one of UN-HABITAT's long-time development partners. The Commission campaigns in favour of grassroots women's involvement in governance and sustainable development.

UN-HABITAT has published two books to assist local authorities in gender mainstreaming: *Gender in Local Government—A Sourcebook for Trainers*, and *Gender Mainstreaming in Local Authorities: Best Practices*. The two publications are proving to be popular resources for local authorities in various regions of the world.



Face to face: UN-HABITAT uses high profile international events such as the World Urban Forum to bring together women representatives from government, academia and grassroots women's organisations to develop gender-responsive strategies for urban planning. Photo © Jiang Suping/Nanjing Women's Federation

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In a joint effort with the Huairou Commission, UN-HABITAT has piloted and tested Local-to-Local Dialogues at regional training sessions in **East Africa, West Africa** and **Latin America**. The approach enables grassroots women to conduct constructive debates with municipalities, local authorities, government departments, the private sector and development partners in order to address community problems and mobilise resources.
- In **Somalia**, UN-HABITAT has disseminated a Somali-speaking version of the training manual *Gender and the Role of Women in Local Governance*. The document has assisted in the training of district councillors and local leaders in 16 towns across the country. The manual will play a major role in the gender aspect of the UN Joint Programme for Local Governance and Decentralised Service Delivery.
- In 2009, UN-HABITAT training sessions on gender mainstreaming in local governance took place in **South Africa** and **Israel**, with participants in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Following the workshop in South Africa, local governments in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe have been developing gender action plans.

BRIDGING THE GENDER DIVIDE: THE UN-HABITAT GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN (2008-2013)



Photo © UN-HABITAT



Photo © UN-HABITAT/Caylee Hong

The rationale behind the UN-HABITAT Gender Equality Action Plan (2008-2013) is to ensure a focused and coordinated approach to mainstreaming gender perspectives into all UN-HABITAT programmes, policies and activities. The plan outlines six areas of action, which coincide with the focus areas of the agency's Medium-Term Strategic Institutional Plan (2008-2013):

1. **Advocacy and monitoring of gender equality in cities.** This involves promoting gender equality and sustainable urbanisation through evidence-based research and analysis, policy dialogue, strategic partnerships, global campaigns, education, communications and sharing of best practice.
2. **Urban planning, governance and management.** Good governance at the local level allows women and men to engage equally with the sphere of government closest to them on issues of accountability, transparency, participation and service delivery. UN-HABITAT strengthens the capacity of governments to develop more inclusive, productive and gender-responsive cities.
3. **Land and housing.** UN-HABITAT assists efforts by governments and Habitat Agenda partners to adopt pro-poor, age-sensitive and gender-responsive programmes for housing, land management and property administration. This involves improving policies and practices, as well as legal and regulatory frameworks.
4. **Access to environmentally-sound urban services.** Actions in this area help to ensure that women and men's different needs and priorities are adequately met in urban services, such as those covering water and sanitation, waste management and ecologically sound transport, fuel and power.
5. **Access to sustainable finance for housing and infrastructure.** UN-HABITAT helps to develop affordable finance options for the urban poor. There is special emphasis on slum-dwelling women, who often face even more difficulty accessing credit than low-income men.
6. **Strengthened gender mainstreaming in all UN-HABITAT programmes.** UN-HABITAT is strengthening its own procedures, performance and monitoring of gender mainstreaming across the agency. This includes training for staff on gender-responsive programming and developing tools and gender guidelines for programmes.

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Towns and cities are increasingly important places for tackling gender inequalities. Gender Equality for Smarter Cities highlights some of the key gender issues we face in the context of rapid urbanisation in the developing world. It also provides an overview of UN-HABITAT's work in promoting gender equality in all its activities and programmes.

Creating more equal opportunities and protecting rights for both women and men contributes to better living conditions for the urban poor and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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