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# Stronger women stronger cities

UN-Habitat's action for change 2020 - 2025





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**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

**Stronger women – stronger cities: UN-Habitat's action for change 2020 - 2025**

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**Gender equality in urban  
development is not just an  
aspiration - it is a right and a  
necessity**

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## 2 Foreword by the Executive Director

Over the past five years, the world has witnessed both remarkable progress and significant setbacks in the pursuit of gender equality. Against the backdrop of rapid urbanization, global crises, and shifting social dynamics, and despite our collective commitments for gender equality and women's empowerment through the Beijing Declaration, the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and other global declarations, it has been women and girls in their diversity that still run the greatest risk of being left behind.

One of the most defining crises of the last five years was the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacted every single one of us. Yet, it was women and girls, and especially those facing intersectional exclusions, including the women and girls living in slums and informal settlements, whose challenges were magnified indefinitely.

The pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities and created new vulnerabilities, significantly amplifying risks for marginalized groups. Many low-income urban residents, particularly the majority of women working in informal economies, lost their livelihoods due to lockdowns and mobility restrictions. As primary caregivers and often earning lower wages than men, women faced heightened financial precarity, making it even more difficult to afford rent or secure and stable housing. With few assets and limited social protections, many were plunged into severe poverty, leading to an increase in evictions and homelessness, which further exposed them to gender-based violence and exploitation.

At the same time, the pandemic intensified domestic and gender-based violence, with one in three women worldwide experiencing physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner. As housing precarity increased, many women found themselves trapped in unsafe environments with no viable escape, turning what were already dangerous situations into life-threatening ones. Without secure housing, women fleeing violence were left with even fewer options for safety and support, exposing the deep interconnection between the housing crisis and gender-based violence.



**Anacláudia Rossbach**  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

In many cities and countries, the pandemic not only heightened visibility around housing insecurity but also underscored its role in perpetuating cycles of violence and inequality. The sharp increase in evictions and homelessness—driven by job losses, social isolation, mental health challenges, and the escalation of domestic abuse—reinforced the urgent need for integrated solutions that address both housing security and protection from gender-based violence. Without such measures, those most at risk remain caught in cycles of poverty, instability and harm, further deepening the inequalities that the pandemic laid bare.

However, Covid-19 was not the only crisis impacting women and girls over these past years. Conflicts and disasters have also further intensified the intersectional exclusions and marginalizations faced by women and girls, ranging from gender-based violence to lacking access to the most basic services for survival such as drinking water, sanitation and access to health services.

Outside of crises settings, too, women and girls, continued to face exclusion and discrimination. For example, adequate housing is pivotal for achieving gender equality and fighting discrimination against women and girls as it not only provides physical shelter, it is also deeply interconnected with and enables access to other rights such as education, work and social support and thereby underpins economic independence and self-determination. Yet progress over the last five years has been limited and, looking forward, if no urgent action is taken, an estimated 1.05 billion women and girls will reside in slums or informal settlements or experience inadequate housing by 2050.

Similarly, economic independence is a cornerstone of gender equality. Yet, despite the emphasis of SDG 5, the Beijing Declaration and the New Urban Agenda, in many parts of the world, women remain locked out of land ownership and decision-making over resources, leadership positions, and stable, formal employment.

Despite these challenges, women persist and continue to stand up for their own rights and for those of their communities, even in the most difficult circumstances where this can put them at serious risk. At UN-Habitat, we have witnessed, again and again over the last five

years, that where women and girls can access decision-making at all levels, but especially at the community and local level, the results create better lives and spaces for everyone.

Therefore, one of our priorities over the past five years has been to ensure that all women and girls, especially those most at risk of being excluded, have the space and the means to engage, to participate, and to be heard. We have directly supported women community organizers, women small businesses and entrepreneurs, and women and girls impacted by crisis, promoting their solutions and needs. We have also worked with local and traditional authorities, as well as national governments, to support them in creating enabling environments for gender equality and women's empowerment, ranging from developing tools for participatory engagement to providing policy support for institutionalizing participatory and equitable urban development for equal outcomes for all.

As we look ahead, one thing is clear: gender equality in urban development is not just an aspiration - it is a right and a necessity. The intersection of poverty, gender, and urbanization must be tackled head-on, with targeted policies, strategic investments, and stronger partnerships that have access to an adequate standard of living, for all women and girls, especially those most at risk of exclusion, at their centre. Only when all women have access to adequate housing and essential services can we truly move towards gender equality.

Women must not only be included in conversations about the future of their cities, communities and homes; they must lead them.

## 2 Executive Summary

This publication presents a summary of UN-Habitat's gender equality impact over the past five years, in line with the Beijing reporting cycle. Using examples of UN-Habitat's work across the different regions, from Nepal to Brazil, this document aims to make a clear case of the interconnected and mutually re-enforcing relationship between gender equality, women's empowerment, and sustainable urban development.

It should be noted that the examples cited in this publication are indeed just emblematic case studies to illustrate the different areas of work towards gender equality that UN-Habitat engages in. Addressing gender-based discrimination and contributing to the realization of gender equality has been at the centre of all of UN-Habitat's work over the past five years as a cross-cutting priority,<sup>1</sup> from normative to operational work in line with United Nations Habitat Assembly resolution 1/4 on Achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements.<sup>2</sup>

While this document generally refers to "all women and girls" or "women and girls in their diversity", it should be understood that UN-Habitat recognizes the intersectional experiences of women and girls, implying that different women and girls face different, often compounding, exclusions and discrimination based on perceived characteristics. It should also be noted that when using the terms "women and girls", UN-Habitat intends to include anyone who identifies as such.

Following a short summary of the linkages between the New Urban Agenda and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the publication touches on the impact of crises on women and girls globally, starting with Covid-19 – a watershed moment drastically impacting progress on women's rights globally, from access to health care to formal employment and economic empowerment.

The publication then considers the impacts of other crises from armed conflict to natural disasters and climate

change. Building back better and promoting resilience and preparedness must not be limited to infrastructure but be based on the active participation and leadership of women and girls.

One of the key priorities of UN-Habitat is to ensure that all women and girls in their diversity have access to adequate housing and essential services, especially water, sanitation and hygiene. Equally, ensuring that women's rights to equal access to land are respected, protected and fulfilled is an essential component to addressing discrimination against women globally. The following section therefore considers how gender-responsive urban development plays a critical role in supporting these rights.

The next section addresses specifically the transformative impact of the economic empowerment of women and girls and showcases that beyond the strict economic impact, this provides women with a better platform to lead and participate in decision-making, in the family, in the community and in the city.

As is illustrated throughout this publication, women's access to decision-making and participation in public life is one of the foundations of gender equality as well as of sustainable cities. Cities developed with and for women are better cities for everyone. The next section therefore dives into some of the tools that UN-Habitat has developed to support cities, urban professionals and women and girls globally to make decisions together.

In the final section of the publication, the extraordinary efforts of women leaders are highlighted. This illustrates that dramatic change starts at the grassroots, even in the most difficult circumstances, but must be supported and enabled at every level, from the local to the international.

The document therefore concludes with some suggested recommendations looking towards the next five years for international organizations, national and local governments and funding bodies to promote gender responsive, participatory urban development for gender equality and better cities for all.



UN-Habitat aims to publish an update to this document every five years to match the Beijing reporting cycle, which may be supplemented with annual or bi-annual data updates. Internally, over the past five years, UN-Habitat has drastically improved its own data measurement and

impact tracking as part of its commitment to gender-responsive urban development. This means that from 2025, UN-Habitat will track exactly how much of its annual budget is being spent on gender equality activities and what impact this has had on women and girls.

One of the key priorities of UN-Habitat is to ensure that all women and girls in their diversity have access to adequate housing and essential services, especially water, sanitation and hygiene

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### 3 Gender equality and sustainable development: The Beijing Declaration, New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

This publication showcases projects that highlight key achievements in gender equality and women's empowerment, drawing on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA), while anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goals 5 and 11.



The BDPfA is a milestone in gender equality and women's empowerment, demanding equitable access to resources and decision-making power for women and girls to ensure equality in outcome. The BDPfA considers the impact of urbanization on women and girls and promotes the participation of women in local decision-making around infrastructure development, public service needs and spatial planning.<sup>3</sup> The BDPfA is also central to the SDGs, which recognize that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 goals. Only by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the goals can they actually be achieved. At the same time, urbanization and the situation of women and girls in cities is predominantly considered in the context of poverty. This misses some of the other transformative impact well-planned and managed cities can have that utilize gender-responsive approaches to sustainable urban development.



The NUA, adopted some 27 years after the BDPfA and clearly citing it as a document taken into account, sets out more clearly that **“by addressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed, the New Urban Agenda will help to [...] achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.”**<sup>4</sup> The NUA considers sustainable urban development as a critical step towards the implementation of the SDGs in an integrated manner.

Both the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA), therefore, offer tangible tools and opportunities to make a real difference in the global efforts towards gender equality, and when used together, create a powerful toolkit for women’s empowerment.

The power of participation and women’s leadership is central to both frameworks. The BDPfA emphasizes the importance of women being involved in and leading decision-making processes at every level, from local governance to national policy making. At the same time, meaningful participation and leadership is not just about having a seat at the table, it also requires having the resources, support and enabling environment to be heard. The NUA is critical in this regard, offering pathways for women to engage meaningfully in the development of their cities. The NUA emphasizes gender-responsive urban planning, to ensure cities are developed responding to the needs and perspectives of women and girls. This spans from creating accessible public spaces that feel safe for women, to gender-responsive housing and land policies that empower women instead of leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and poverty.

Another central theme in both the BDPfA and the NUA is economic independence. The BDPfA’s focus on eradicating poverty and increasing women’s access to economic opportunities is reflected in the NUA’s calls for cities to support decent work and entrepreneurship for women. Cities can be hubs of opportunity, but only if women have access to the resources they need to succeed instead of having to navigate additional

hurdles caused by unequal power dynamics, exclusion and discrimination. This includes ensuring that women can access formal employment and social protections, and that women’s needs and priorities are adequately reflected in public investment and spending.

Both documents emphasize the importance of women and girls to be able to access an adequate standard of living, including the different components this encompasses, such as adequate housing and clean water and sanitation. The NUA recognizes that without access to adequate housing for all women and girls, gender equality cannot be achieved, while the BDPfA also stresses that women’s poverty cannot be addressed without enabling women to access adequate housing and access to land.

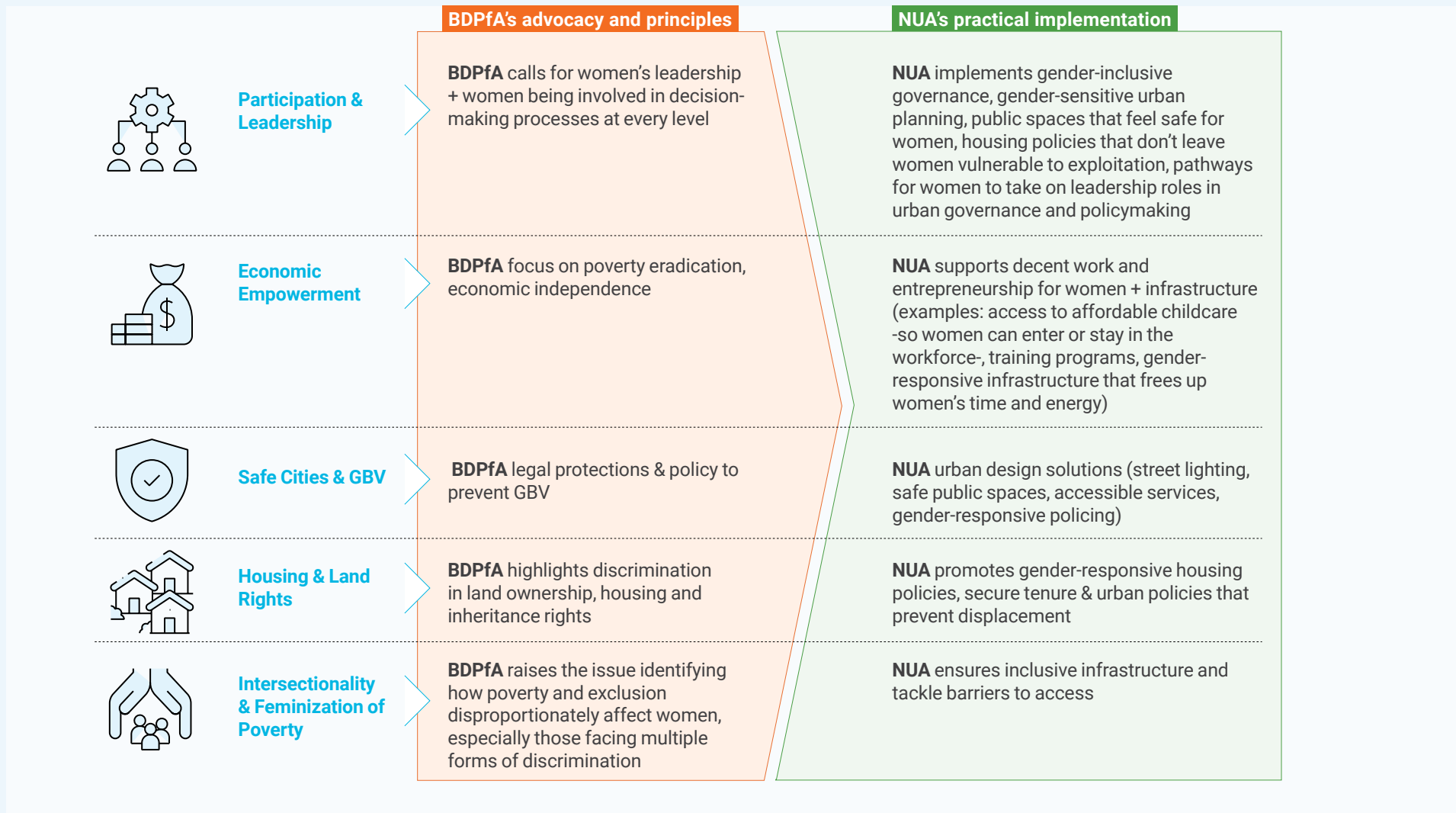
At the same time, addressing gender-based violence, this being a critical area of concern in the BDPfA, requires urgent action at the local level. The NUA’s emphasis on safe, accessible, green and high-quality streets and cities goes beyond just the idea of physical security and is based on, for example, public participation and inclusive policies and urban planning strategies.

Ultimately, the BDPfA and NUA, and as such, the fights for gender equality and women’s empowerment and sustainable cities do not just complement each other; they are mutually reinforcing and deeply interconnected, and we cannot achieve one without the other. A key prerequisite for both is women’s leadership and active participation in decision-making, the importance of which will also be covered in the following case studies.



Guyana, George town informal settlements, ©UN-Habitat-Kirsten Milhahn

**Bridging Vision and Action**



# 4 UN-Habitat's gender impact in facts and figures

## Women in urban areas, particularly those affected by conflict and displacement:

In 80% of analyzed countries by a UN Habitat report on harsh realities faced by marginalized women in cities of the developing world, data shows that **women aged 15 to 49 are overrepresented in urban slums**, where they endure inadequate living conditions such as overcrowding, lack of adequate housing, and insufficient access to clean water and sanitation<sup>5</sup>.



## Women in conflict-affected areas:

- According to UN Women, **over 614 million women** and girls lived in countries affected by war and instability in 2024: a 50% increase since 2017<sup>6</sup>.
- Women in these settings are also 7.7 times more likely to live in extreme poverty than those in peaceful regions<sup>7</sup>.

**Women in urban slums** often endure inadequate living conditions characterized by lack of adequate housing, overcrowding, insufficient access to clean water, and poor sanitation facilities.

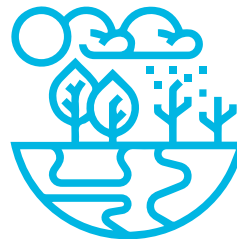
- Many women continue to be left behind. If current trends persist, an **estimated 341 million women and girls** will still be without electricity by 2030, with 85% of them living in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>8</sup>.



- If current trends continue, an **estimated 1.05 billion women and girls** will be living in slum-like conditions by 2050<sup>9</sup>.

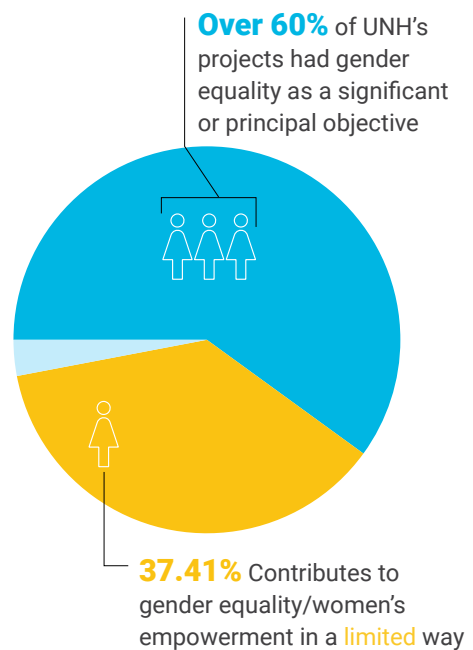
## Women affected by natural disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation:

A lack of access to affordable energy forces many women to rely on combustible fuels for cooking, which contributes to indoor air pollution, a factor responsible for **3.2 million deaths** in 2020, disproportionately affecting women and children<sup>10</sup>.



## UN-Habitat's gender impact in 2024

Out of UN-Habitat's over 290 projects in 2024:





**Meaningful participation and leadership is not just about having a seat at the table, it also requires having the resources, support and enabling environment to be heard**

# 5 Resilience in crises: Pandemic, conflict, disasters and climate change

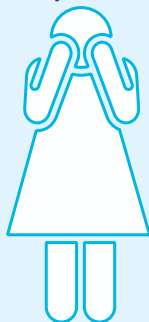


## The Covid-19 pandemic<sup>11</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic that started in 2020 and continued to define the rest of the reporting period disproportionately impacted women, girls and those already experiencing discrimination and exclusion. Increased unpaid domestic and care work, combined with greater impact from job losses with little to no access to social safety nets, especially for women who had been working in the informal and low-wage sector<sup>12</sup>, higher drop out rates from formal education and the existing wage gap experienced by women means that the economic impact of Covid-19 continues to be felt by women and girls around the globe even now. For example, the Covid-19 induced recession is likely still impacting women’s incomes and labour force participation, with a compounded impact on women already living in poverty.<sup>13</sup>



The “shadow pandemic” – the intensification of all forms of violence against women and girls and sexual exploitation in the context of Covid-19 and the lack of available support services enabling women and girls to flee violent homes, left women and girls around the globe stuck in potentially life-threatening situations.



Prior to Covid-19, **more than 1 in 3 women were impacted by gender-based violence** – which intensified during the pandemic. The repercussions of this continue to be felt until today.

According to UN Women data, in 2023, on average **140 women and girls** were killed by a family member every day.<sup>14</sup>

These concerns were intensified for women and girls living in slums and informal settlements without access to adequate housing where “**shelter in place**” orders, lockdowns and measures to reduce movement meant that access to social support and life-saving urban basic services was either not at all or only partially available.





© UN-Habitat Kirsten Milhahn

Women aged 15 to 49 are overrepresented in urban slums and slum-like settings in 80% of the 59 developing countries analyzed. In Kibera, Kenya, the world's fourth-most-populated slum – and where COVID-19 cases were highest in East Africa – there are 116 women for every 100 men. The figure is 120+ women per 100 men in Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti and Lesotho. In 61% of the 59 developing countries analyzed, more than half of women aged 15–49 live in slums.<sup>15</sup>

Ultimately, the worst-affected by the pandemic have been those facing multiple and intersecting deprivations. Women and girls in slums faced the dangers of greater exposure to the virus, given their limited access to hygiene and space, while each day of lost income and education multiplied their economic marginalization and pushed them further behind.

To mitigate these risks, UN-Habitat prioritized gender-responsive urban interventions to support marginalized

Women aged 15 to 49 are overrepresented in urban slums and slum-like settings in 80% of the 59 developing countries analyzed.

communities, particularly women and girls. Public health initiatives, community engagement programmes, and emergency response measures were implemented to mitigate the social and economic impact of the crisis. Special attention was given to addressing gender-based violence, strengthening women's leadership in crisis response, and ensuring equitable access to resources. By integrating gender-responsive planning into urban resilience efforts, UN-Habitat not only provided immediate relief but also contributed to long-term, sustainable solutions that empower women and build more inclusive cities.

### Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, UN-Habitat worked with communities and local and national authorities to improve the gender-responsive emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic in poor and marginalized estates and peripheral communities in the Nuwara Eliya District. These efforts were aimed at contributing towards reducing the health hazards and socioeconomic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on women, through improving awareness on hygiene practices; supporting measures on infection prevention and control; enhancing responses to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) / Intimate Partner Violence (IMV) and child abuse; and assisting in ensuring food security, nutrition and economic sustainability through promoting organic home gardening. Within three and a half months, UN-Habitat was able to benefit **approximately 125,000 people**, with a significant focus on women and children, ensuring equitable access to essential health messaging, emergency support, and livelihood opportunities.



UN-Habitat was able to benefit approximately **125,000** people



A group of local women beneficiaries of the project © UN-Habitat Sri Lanka

### Kenya

In Kenya, 54.7% of the population are living in informal settlements<sup>16</sup>, often as a result of lack of adequate housing, unmanaged rapid urban growth and inequality. These informal areas lack tenure security and their residents are often excluded from formal urban planning and development programmes, therefore lacking basic infrastructure such as sanitation and access to clean water. This impacts women and girls disproportionately, especially during times of crises such as the pandemic.



COVID19 prevention in slums in Mtwapa, Kilifi ©UN-Habitat Kirsten Milhahn

UN-Habitat’s Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) and its partners, including local authorities, worked with women in Kenya’s informal settlements from the early stages to support communities with crisis preparedness. In the informal settlements of Majengo and Mzambarauni in the Kenyan coastal region of Kilifi, UN-Habitat, through PSUP and the local government, worked with communities to set up hand washing stations, trained **over 200 health volunteers** and distributed essential items such as hand sanitizer and soap, but also clean drinking water, which became more needed as people lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic and were unable to buy these items or additional water. UN-Habitat’s partner, Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO), distributed up to 20,000 litres of drinking water per day on behalf of PSUP.

These measures reached over 70,000 community members and empowering women health volunteers was an integral part of their success to keep the communities safe and informed.



**54.7%** of the population are living in informal settlements



Hand washing stations were set up in informal settlements



**200** health volunteers trained



COVID19 prevention in slums in Mtwapa, Kilifi ©UN-Habitat Kirsten Milhahn

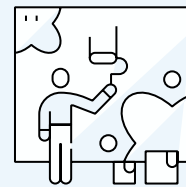


## Ecuador

In Quito, Ecuador, the project *Faces of COVID-19*, spearheaded by Diálogo Diverso with support from UN-Habitat and local institutions, turned public art into a bold statement of resilience and inclusion. At a time when the pandemic deepened inequalities, murals by renowned artist Juan Sebastián Aguirre (Apitatán) transformed city walls into a powerful platform for advocacy. The project brought together the LGBTIQ+ community, migrants, Afro-Ecuadorians, and Indigenous Peoples, ensuring their voices and experiences were not just acknowledged but celebrated.

More than just murals, “Faces of COVID-19” and “Trans Memories” – a mural specially designed to elevate the voices of Trans people and their historical struggles for rights in Ecuador - became symbols of solidarity, representing individuals like a Venezuelan mother and child, a Tsáchilas Indigenous leader, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Face masks -adorned with the colors of the LGBTIQ+ and Trans flags- became a recurring motif, symbolizing protection, identity, and resistance. The project also distributed these masks to community members, reinforcing public health efforts while promoting visibility and self-expression.

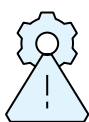
Beyond painting walls, the initiative sparked conversation. With support from the Contemporary Art Center of Quito, it engaged the public in discussions about discrimination, health, and human rights. It challenged conventional health messaging by making it personal, vibrant, and rooted in lived experiences. In a time of crisis, “Faces of COVID-19” did not just document struggles, it turned them into lasting symbols of empowerment and social change and ensured that those most at risk of exclusion are active agents for change.



Mural specially designed to elevate the voices of Trans people and their historical struggles for rights in Ecuador



The project distributed masks to community members, reinforcing public health efforts while promoting visibility and self-expression.



## Conflict and disaster<sup>17</sup>

The last five years also saw the unfortunate continuation, escalation and commencement of armed conflicts, predominantly carried out in cities and human settlements. In many contexts, killings of the civilian population disproportionately impacted women and children.<sup>18</sup>



At the same time, the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure in cities impacted by armed conflict also means that access for impacted populations to adequate housing and urban basic services is jeopardized for years to come<sup>19</sup> – once again leaving women, girls and marginalized groups to bear the brunt of the conflict and its aftermath.

Disasters have also been intensifying at an alarming rate, generally as a result of the impact of climate change, environmental degradation and extreme weather, as well as inadequate planning and adaptation measures. Here, too, it is women and girls that experience disproportional negative impacts caused by the destruction and damage to resources and infrastructure.<sup>20</sup>

This leaves compounding pressures on urban women and girls that exacerbate existing inequalities and

marginalization – increased responsibilities in the unpaid care burden, higher employment rates pushing women into the insecure informal sector, increased protection needs without adequate access to potentially life-saving services, less access to even basic education, all while being unable to fully access local and national decision-making bodies, both for local level-decisions and national peace and reconstruction initiatives.

UN-Habitat plays a crucial role in preventing and mitigating crises by focusing on sustainable development, resilience, and improving quality of life in cities facing conflict, displacement, or disasters. This spans from supporting access to adequate housing and essential services for women and girls to upgrading infrastructure and disaster risk reduction. A key part of this approach is empowering women and girls by ensuring their access to decision-making.



Women builders © UN-Habitat Mozambique

## Mozambique

In Mozambique, 2017 attacks by armed groups resulted in mass displacement. By 2021, **over 850.000 people, mostly women and children**, remained displaced, often living in inadequate emergency shelters not sufficient for the extreme weather conditions they were experiencing, lacking full access to basic services such as water and sanitation, and cut off from economic opportunities.

Therefore, between 2022 and 2023, UN-Habitat, in partnership with UN Women and relevant government counterparts, focused on both the creation of housing units, as well as the economic empowerment of women through skill development and creating an enabling environment in the community so that women artisans could work, even in jobs traditionally perceived to be reserved for men.

UN-Habitat created 50 sustainable and climate resilient houses for displaced women and their families. Throughout the project, women and girls participated in decision-making, including on how to adjust standard housing packages to meet the social and cultural expectations of the community.

As the women were also struggling to access economic opportunities, the project included women in the housing construction process, despite women not traditionally working in construction but rather carrying out unskilled, poorly paid work such as fetching water. As a result, 27% of the builders were women from the community, trained by UN-Habitat specialists. Women were also trained in carpentry and brick-laying – enabling them to not only build their own houses but also secure future work in climate-resilient construction activities in their area. By investing in both the housing and skills of women, the project was able to transform an informal settlement into a new home for the community and recover some of their livelihoods.



UN-Habitat **created 50 sustainable and climate resilient houses** for displaced women and their families



**27%** of the builders were women from the community, trained by UN-Habitat specialists.



Women were trained in several trades from carpentry to bricklaying, enabling them to build their own houses © UN-Habitat Mozambique

## Iraq

In the context of economically empowering women post-conflict and restoring accessible public space for all, in Iraq, between 2019 and 2023, the Municipality of Mosul partnered with UN-Habitat to return the 67,000 sqm that used to be Al Yarmouk Park into a vibrant and accessible public space for all in Mosul, thus restoring access to high quality public space for over half a million people living in west Mosul. This is especially key in cities like Mosul where public space has increasingly shrunk over the past years, both as a result of the conflict as well as of urban development efforts de-prioritizing public space for all, yet where spaces for social integration of the community in its diversity, especially for women and girls, are desperately needed.

To ensure a space for all, UN-Habitat and its partners applied inclusive and participatory public space principles, such as extensive consultations with the community in its diversity, including women, youth and children. This resulted in accessible sports facilities, playgrounds, a solar hall, irrigation, and sustainable lighting, all focusing on local materials and the generation of local economic opportunities.



Al Yarmouk Park is now under the responsibility of the Municipality of Mosul, and the majority of staff of the park, including the park administrator, are women. One of the women working as a gardener at the park is Nafla Mohammad Ali, who fled to Mosul with her family in 2014 as a result of the conflict.

When Nafla’s husband lost his job due to spinal issues, she became the sole provider for her family of seven – leaving the family struggling to make ends meet and in desperate search of decent employment.

Such an opportunity finally presented itself when Nafla applied to and was selected for UN-Habitat’s “Horticulture Training Programme for Women.” The initiative provided Nafla and her colleagues with an intensive 10-day vocational training comprising core lessons in horticulture, general maintenance and practical skills to work as gardeners.

Following the training, Nafla and her colleagues started to work on the park rehabilitation for two years (2021-2022). After the successful completion and handover to the Municipality, Nafla secured a position in the park administration, now serving as a gardener.



The initiative provided an intensive 10-day vocational training comprising core lessons in horticulture, general maintenance and practical skills to work as gardeners.

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**“It has been over a year since the park’s inauguration, and I still find myself actively involved in its upkeep alongside my female colleagues who shared the training lessons with me. It’s heartening to witness the park’s transformation and observe immense joy in the community as they relish their time in the now vibrant park.”**

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**Nafla Mohammad**



Nafla Mohammad Ali, one of the women working as a gardener at the park © UN-Habitat Iraq



District Lower Dir Girls School, one of the beneficiaries of the project © UN-Habitat Pakistan

## Pakistan

Pakistan has faced several natural disasters over the past decades, including two major earthquakes in 2005 and 2010, with the 2005 earthquake being described as one of the most destructive earthquakes in modern history. The district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, northwest of Islamabad, was hit especially hard and destroyed essential infrastructure, including 67% of the educational institutions in the province, and has slowed down reconstruction. As a result, children, and especially girls, lost access to even basic education.

UN-Habitat's Disaster Resilient School Infrastructure Project started in 2021 to, on one hand, retrofit schools impacted by reinforcing building structures to withstand future seismic activities and, on the other hand, build back better by ensuring that all selected schools have access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities for both girls and boys. In consultation with the community, UN-Habitat had learnt that one reason of children not going to school was the fear of the buildings being unsafe, but the other, which applied mostly to girls, was that there were no appropriate water and sanitation facilities for girls to use.

For this project, UN-Habitat selected 150 schools in eight districts, which includes 66 schools that are specifically girls' schools. UN-Habitat has already retrofitted 132 gender-responsive water and sanitation facilities, providing access to over 13,000 girls, enabling them to return to and remain in safe schools and continue their learning.



UN-Habitat selected **150 schools** in eight districts, which includes **66 schools** that are specifically girls' schools.



District Malakand Girls School © UN-Habitat Pakistan



## The climate crisis<sup>21</sup>

Women and girls have also been disproportionately impacted by climate-related hazards and disasters over the past five years. From increasingly intense wildfires, more frequent and intense cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons, intense rainfalls and rising sea levels and resulting floods, to droughts and heatwaves, it is generally women, girls and marginalized groups that experience the greatest impact.



© UN-Habitat Kirsten Milhahn

In many rural communities, women are responsible for managing small agricultural plots that provide income for their families, but land titles are typically held by men. As a result, when disasters strike, women often lack the legal rights needed to independently access state-provided reconstruction funds. Additionally, cultural norms can heighten risks for women during climate-related events, such as in regions where boys are taught to swim at an early age while girls are not, leaving them more vulnerable during floods.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond immediate disasters, women also bear the long-term burden of environmental degradation, facing displacement as land, forests, and water sources are depleted, privatized, or taken for commercial use, particularly affecting Indigenous women and those in marginalized communities. Women’s health and livelihoods are further compromised by energy poverty and exposure to pollution.

In households across the globe, it is women and girls that are responsible for, yet have little to no decision-

making power over, the resources required to maintain the household. It is women and girls generally that carry the burden of ensuring the availability of water, food and fuel, as well as of unpaid domestic and care work. This leaves them more economically vulnerable and less able to recover from climate-induced shocks, including to food systems.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, it is feared that by 2050, climate change may push up to 158 million more women and girls into extreme poverty – 16 million more women and girls than men and boys.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, UN-Habitat works to empower women in the face of climate change by contributing to addressing the intersectional exclusions and marginalizations they face in urban environments. UN-Habitat promotes gender-responsive climate policies, ensuring that women have access to resources, decision-making processes, and opportunities to lead climate resilience efforts.



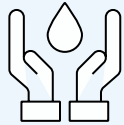
## Lebanon

Climate change is significantly impacting Lebanon, leading to increased temperatures, reduced rainfall, and more frequent extreme weather events. By 2040, temperatures are projected to rise by approximately 1°C along the coast and up to 2°C inland. This warming trend is anticipated to decrease snow cover by 40% to 70%, affecting water availability during summer and drought periods.<sup>25</sup>

UN-Habitat therefore initiated the Al-Marjeh project, developed in the urban peripheries of Tripoli, specifically targeting the community of Shalfeh that hosts refugees, where climate vulnerabilities and economic hardships intersect. This is a transformative initiative equipping women and youth with the skills to build sustainable livelihoods through urban farming, thereby tackling food insecurity, environmental sustainability, and gender inequality through providing practical training in urban agriculture, composting, and market-driven food production to over a hundred women.



Participating women gained expertise in planting, watering, harvesting, composting, packaging, and marketing, enabling them to establish small-scale, climate-resilient farms.



The project addressed water security and clean energy access, installing water filtration and solar energy systems in two public schools and one health dispensary



Al Marjeh is a transformative initiative equipping women and youth with the skills to build sustainable livelihoods through urban farming © UN-Habitat Lebanon



Through 180 hours of hands-on training, the participating women gained expertise in planting, watering, harvesting, composting, packaging, and marketing, enabling them to establish small-scale, climate-resilient farms. This initiative enhanced women's economic independence, especially for women facing the most intersectional exclusions such as widows, divorced women and female-headed households. At the same time, it provided young women with viable career opportunities in climate-smart agriculture.

This was made possible in coordination with FAO and Islamic Awkaf Endowment of Tripoli, who provided free-of-charge access to a nearby 10,000 sq meter plot of land owned and offered by Awkaf for participants to practice farming skills, relying on renewable energy and rainwater harvesting.

Beyond farming, the project addressed water security and clean energy access, installing water filtration and solar energy systems in two public schools and one health dispensary, directly impacting 1244 students, 96 staff and over 3000 patients monthly. These interventions improved hygiene standards for women and girls while reducing reliance on fossil fuels, reinforcing the link between climate adaptation and gender-responsive urban development.

## Guinea-Bissau

Climate change has also impacted Guinea-Bissau over the past decades and the country has seen a gradual increase in temperatures as well as diminished rainfall and decreased access to water. Additionally, droughts have a devastating impact on the population, causing food insecurity and inter and intra-communal conflict over access to scarce water sources. Women and girls, though they are generally the ones ensuring that the household has water, are mostly excluded from decision-making over how water resources are managed.

In the Koliba-Corubal river basin in the southwest of the country, high risks of inter-communal conflict over water management exist due to different interests in terms of natural and water resources use. Women here are under-represented in the decision-making processes over water resources but face disproportionate impacts, both due to lack of sufficient water and water-related conflicts.

UN-Habitat works towards peaceful, participatory and sustainable water resource management with a specific focus on gender-responsive approaches. Objectives of the project, which is expected to conclude in 2025, include creating concrete entry points for women’s access to decision-making processes around resource management and strengthening their role in conflict mediation and resolution.

The project is also built on the understanding that, by applying gender-responsive community water infrastructure installation/rehabilitation with the active and meaningful involvement of all women in the community in the planning and managerial processes, a tangible opportunity for broader gender equality and women’s empowerment in the community is created. Water use is an essential aspect of everyone’s daily life, and as such, empowering women to take a leadership role in water resources management provides an effective bridge between equality as a principle and its implementation at community level.

UN-Habitat, along UNCDF and FAO, is now working with 559 women in 30 communities, with a current focus on consensus-building and dialogue between the women and other partners, including local and national government. Listening clubs have been set up specifically in each community to create safe spaces for women to share their concerns and participate in community-level decision-making by ensuring that women have a formalized voice in community settings. At the same time, to ensure an enabling environment for women’s participation, UN-Habitat and its partners have also been working with over 500 men to raise awareness and understanding of gender equality.

Moving forward, the building of gender-responsive water facilities will be carried out, as is the inclusion of women leaders from the listening clubs in regional meetings on environment and water management and the promotion of women decision-makers in water resources management.



Mapping Mission 3rd Quebo meeting © UN-Habitat Guinea-Bissau/ Raquel Guidolin



Listening clubs have been set up specifically in each community to create safe spaces for women



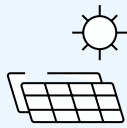
working with **over 500 men** to raise awareness and understanding of gender equality



Identifying water pumps mission in Sare Ali, Quebo © UN-Habitat Guinea-Bissau/ Raquel Guidolin



Confirmation of photovoltaic solar system functionality © UN-Habitat Cameroon



The project has equipped an **additional 40 women** with technical expertise in solar panel installation and maintenance,



**100 women** were trained in plastic waste collection and sorting

## Cameroon

In the communes of Mokolo and Fotokol affected by the climate crisis, UN Habitat links climate action with women's economic empowerment. The project aims to strengthen the adaptation and resilience of women, young people and marginalized communities through innovative solutions in the towns and villages of the Logone River watershed in Cameroon's Far North region.

Through a circular economy approach, 100 women were trained in plastic waste collection and sorting as well as the repurposing of materials, transforming environmental hazards into valuable resources, such as paving stones. This initiative addresses waste management challenges while at the same time providing women with a sustainable income, as a way to reinforce their resilience in the current situation of environmental instability.

Beyond waste management, the project has also equipped an additional 40 women with technical expertise in solar panel installation and maintenance, directly integrating them into the growing renewable energy sector. This is particularly significant as access to clean energy remains a gendered issue, seeing women and girls disproportionately affected by household air pollution from traditional fuels. These women, now positioned to contribute to local green energy solutions, are able to ensure that sustainable infrastructure is maintained and expanded in their communities. This initiative, increasing women's participation in renewable energy jobs, is fostering their financial independence as well as promoting long-term climate resilience by reducing reliance on non-renewable energy sources.

Finally, as part of its gender-responsive climate action approach, the initiative constructed market hangars in Mokolo and Fotokol, providing dedicated and secure spaces for women's economic activities. Responding to requests from local women's associations that represent around 1.000 women, these structures offer a safe environment for storing and selling agricultural products. Beyond facilitating economic stability, these spaces strengthen local food systems, which are increasingly vulnerable to climate change-induced disruptions. The hangars empower women as active agents of climate resilience and economic transformation by serving as hubs for women-led business initiatives.

Overall, the project has provided direct and indirect impact for over 2.500 women.



Handover of waste management equipment © UN-Habitat Cameroon



**Women face significant hurdles to accessing adequate housing due to cultural, economic, and systemic inequalities**



## 6 Women's empowerment in cities and human settlements

### Housing<sup>26</sup>



The right to adequate housing, beyond a roof and four walls, is the cornerstone of dignity, health, safety, and inclusion. Housing ensures security, provides access to services, and fosters cohesive and resilient community. However, systemic failures have left billions behind, making this right one of the most pressing yet neglected human rights challenges of our time.

At the international level, adequate housing and homelessness were addressed both at General Assembly<sup>27</sup> and at Habitat Assembly<sup>28</sup> level with resolutions aimed at prioritizing adequate housing for all. Yet, progress over the past five years remains limited.



Globally, between **1.6 and 3 billion people** lack adequate housing, with over 330 million experiencing absolute homelessness.<sup>29</sup>

Rapid urbanization, especially in developing regions, has overwhelmed infrastructure and housing systems, leaving **over a billion people living in informal settlements and slums.**



The barriers to adequate housing are even higher for women and marginalized groups. Women face significant hurdles to accessing adequate housing due to cultural, economic, and systemic inequalities. These include a lack of secure land and property rights, which are often tied to patriarchal cultural practices that require women to access housing through male relatives. Discriminatory



© UN-Habitat Kirsten Milhahn

legal and policy frameworks further exacerbate the issue, as women, particularly poor and marginalized women, are excluded from land ownership and tenure security.<sup>30</sup>

In the context of gender-based violence, the lack of adequate housing leaves women with the often impossible choice between abuse, violence and possibly death, and the risk of poverty and homelessness.

Additionally, female-headed households face economic exclusion, limited access to credit, and lack of participation in housing policy decision-making, worsening their ability to secure stable housing.

In light of this, UN-Habitat works to ensure that women have access to adequate housing by promoting gender-responsive housing policies and ensuring that women's specific needs are addressed in urban planning and housing development. This includes advocating for women's land rights, securing their access to affordable, safe, and resilient housing, and supporting their participation in housing decision-making processes.

## Brazil

In Brazil, access to adequate housing has been a challenge for decades. As a result of being unable to find housing that is affordable, safe and connected to other services, many individuals and families end up in informal settlements on the outskirts of urban centres. In the city of Belo Horizonte, the sixth largest city of Brazil, informal settlements developed from 2011 onwards and their population continues to increase.

Gradually, a small area of only 1.5 sqm was populated by approximately 5,000 families living in four different informal communities without access to basic services such as sanitation and electricity, and most living in tents. Despite having nowhere else to go, these communities faced ongoing threats of eviction and demolition.

In Brazil, the community’s focus was on achieving secure tenure for everyone, and to connect the informal settlements to the city’s service and infrastructure so that residents could access basic necessities for an adequate standard of living. This started with community organization. Charlene Cristiane Egídio, an indigenous woman who was in her early forties at the time, was one of the first people to arrive in the area with her three-year-old son. She quickly recognized the need for leadership and stepped up. “[By joining together,] we start to see ourselves as human beings. You start to feel the pain of others, and then you understand that being a leader is a calling. It’s insane, but it’s a necessary calling.”

Through organization, leadership and partnership with UN-Habitat, Charlene and the communities managed to be recognized by the Municipal Authorities of Belo Horizonte. Together and with the support of UN-Habitat and other partners, a Sustainable Urbanization Plan for the area was developed through participatory efforts, including in person and virtual community meetings. As a result of Charlene’s leadership, women were engaged in all of these and their perspectives and experiences are reflected throughout the Plan.

Subsequently, the community gained access to official water supply and sewage systems, as well as household electricity, although much remains to be done, as, for example, public lighting is still lacking in the streets.



Charlene Cristiane Egídio articulating the right to housing © Camila Bastos - Belo Horizonte City Hall

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**“This is a process of arduous, painful struggle, with blood – quite literally. But now we see the prospect of improvement, of respect, of citizenship, and that we are integral to Belo Horizonte”**

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**Charlene Cristiane Egídio**



Aerial view of Rio's Rocinha favela, © Shutterstock/ Mihai\_Andritoiu

## Iraq

In Iraq, it has been traditionally difficult for women to fully access their right to adequate housing, especially in the context of secure tenure, which protects women and girls from evictions, loss of their homes, poverty and homelessness. While the legal framework in Iraq protects women's rights in this regard, in practice, generally as a result unequal power relations that led to traditions and customs that favour men and discriminate against women, it can be very difficult for women to secure, prove and defend their right to live in their homes. For example, women may be pressured by the family to give up their inheritance of parts of the family house to male relatives, they may face challenges if their husband dies and they want to transfer or register their property or when claiming compensation for damaged property.

Women facing intersectional exclusions as a result of their ethnicity for example, such as of the Yazidi religious group, have to overcome even more barriers and exclusions.

These difficulties have been exacerbated heavily by the conflicts that took place in Iraq over the past years, especially when women and families are displaced, and deeds and documents relating to secure tenure are lost.

UN-Habitat therefore placed a strong focus on supporting adequate housing and especially secure tenure for all. From 2019 to 2024, UN-Habitat Iraq facilitated the issuance of 17,951 land occupancy certificates, serving more than 121,670 beneficiaries, of whom 55,384 (48.65%) are women, including 1062 (6%) for female-headed households in Ninewa Governorate, strengthening tenure security for marginalized women.



Yazidi women engage in a women-only awareness session on HLP rights in Sinjar, September 2024 © UN-Habitat Iraq



UN-Habitat Iraq facilitated the issuance of **17,951 land occupancy certificates**, serving **more than 121,670 beneficiaries**, of whom **55,384 (48.65%) are women**

Following the Decree on land framework reform approved in 2022 by the Council of Ministers, these documents serve as referral records for conversion into official title deeds. In 2024, for the first time in Iraq's modern history, a Yazidi household obtained an official title deed (registering both the male and the female heads of household), marking a milestone in formal land ownership.

With UN-Habitat's long-term support since the draft stages of the land framework, the Government of Iraq is expediting the transition from land occupancy certificates to full title deeds, enabling more than 1,000 women to gain secure tenure and official property documentation.

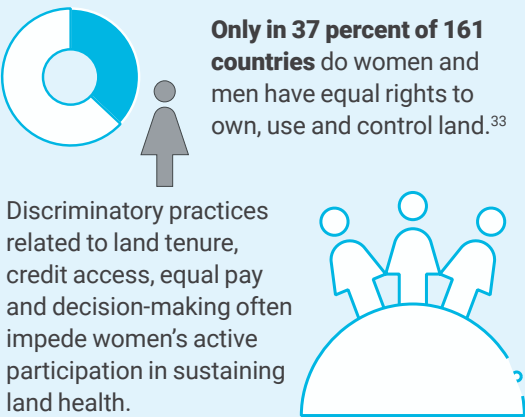
Compensation claims for war-damaged housing have been a key intervention, with 1,417 cases registered, including 261 applications from women (18%). In 2025, this number is expected to increase as the Government of Iraq, with UN-Habitat's support, works closely with compensation committees to remove bottlenecks in the claims process and explores financing solutions to resolve pending cases. These efforts aim to improve access to compensation, particularly for women, enabling them to rebuild, return, and fully exercise their HLP rights.

By 2024, awareness sessions on HLP rights have engaged 3,958 people, including 1,370 women (35%), equipping them with the knowledge to assert their housing, land, and property rights.

UN-Habitat Iraq contributes to ensuring that women have equitable access to their HLP rights for equality in outcome by providing reliable information, women-only and child-friendly safe spaces for technical assistance, and support in securing documentation and registering compensation claims. These efforts help ensure that women can claim and protect their housing and property rights, fostering gender equality, women's empowerment as well as greater security and stability.

## Land<sup>31</sup>

Access to land remains of such crucial importance that SDG target 5.a specifically focuses on equal access to economic resources and ownership and control over land for women. In many contexts women make up the majority of the, generally informal, labour-force working on land and in agriculture, yet women have significantly less access to, control over and ownership of land and other productive assets.<sup>32</sup>



**Only in 37 percent of 161 countries** do women and men have equal rights to own, use and control land.<sup>33</sup>

Discriminatory practices related to land tenure, credit access, equal pay and decision-making often impede women’s active participation in sustaining land health.

Today, less than one-in-five landholders worldwide are women.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, less than 20 percent of property lessors are women. The situation is particularly challenging in Western and Central Africa as well as the Near East and North Africa where generally less than 10 percent of are women.<sup>35</sup>

Progress over the past five years remains limited and some or all women remain excluded from accessing the same rights over land as men. Laws, social norms, traditional practices and economic disparities may prevent women and girls from inheriting family land, buying or leasing land on the market, enforcing their rights over land, and making decisions about how family land is used. Especially in contexts where land is an essential component of economic activity, food production and therefore, survival, this not only violates the rights of all women and girls to not be subjected to discrimination but also places them at high risk of abuse and poverty. If the male relative owning the land dies or the relationship breaks down, women often face economic destitution and homelessness. This not only has a grave impact on women, but it also undermines the economic progress of the entire community.

UN-Habitat, particularly through the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), plays a vital role in advancing women’s access to land rights by promoting gender equality in land governance. GLTN works to ensure that women have secure and equal access to land, addressing legal, social, and cultural barriers that often exclude them from land ownership and decision-making. UN-Habitat, through GLTN, develop tools and frameworks that help governments and communities implement gender-responsive land policies, ensuring that women’s land rights are recognized and protected. GLTN also provides capacity-building programmes to empower women, helping them understand their rights, engage in land governance processes, and secure tenure. Capacity-building is also carried out with local and national authorities to ensure that an enabling environment for women’s land rights is put in place.



© UN-Habitat Kirsten Milhahn



**Zambia**

In Zambia, land tenure security of women is often limited as compared to that of men. While data is sparse, on average, recent studies indicate that women are less likely to own assets such as land compared to men.<sup>36</sup> Without legal rights over their land, Zambian women are vulnerable to land grabbing and forceful disputes over land, which have impacted women, and especially widows, disproportionately.<sup>37</sup> While women bear the brunt of land conflicts, the entire community is impacted by conflicts and disputes over land rights.

Therefore, in Zambia, UN-Habitat took a comprehensive approach ranging from securing tenure for all, prioritizing women, youth and marginalized groups in informal settlements and customary land contexts, to creating low-cost housing through women cooperatives and slum upgrading with livelihood creation, as well as working with local and national government partners on capacity development. GLTN and UN-Habitat provided technical and financial assistance towards the development of the first ever National Land Policy in Zambia that is also gender-responsive, including the NLP implementation framework.

Through community participation and the implementation of innovative land tools, capacity building with a focus on women, girls and youth, and working directly with women land activists, a total of 4,752 certificates of customary occupancy (3,234 issued to men, 1,518 issued to women) have been issued by His Royal Highness Chief Chamuka VI to benefit 29,216 people (15,027 women and 14,189 men) in the target villages. Additionally, a total of 613 land disputes have been resolved, increasing both tenure security, safety and stability for women and their families.



A woman proudly receives her Certificate of Customary Occupancy during an issuance ceremony in Chamuka Chiefdom, securing her right to land © UN-Habitat Zambia



Community members show off their Certificates of Customary Occupancy during one of the issuance ceremonies in Chamuka chiefdom © UN-Habitat Zambia



Women sharecropper farmers participated in Climate Smart Agriculture Training at Gadhawa Rural Municipality in Nepal © UN-Habitat Nepal

## Nepal

Access to land for women can become even more challenging when intersectional exclusions are at play. For example, Indigenous Women face additional barriers, hurdles and exclusions when it comes to accessing their land rights.

With only 23% of Nepal’s land being arable<sup>38</sup> and the impacts of climate change further reducing available farmland, in communities that depend on agriculture as their most important form of both food production and economic activity, having secure access to land is an essential prerequisite to achieve, or move towards achieving, an adequate standard of living for individuals and their families. Access to economic resources and even basic services such as water supply, sanitation, electricity and other public services may depend on land ownership.

In Nepal, 60.4% of the population practices agriculture, yet 47.3% of the rural population is landless or near-landless operating in less than 0.5 hectare of land and many of them under informal tenure. UN-Habitat has been working in Nepal with the Global Land Tool Network since 2016 to support the Government of Nepal and local municipalities in the Identification, Verification and Recordation (IVR) of landless and informal tenure-holders. Indigenous Communities, including Indigenous Women, having been marginalized for decades due to the deep-rooted feudal system, with generations without formal land tenure documents, were key beneficiaries from the beginning of the project.

As a result of this partnership, by the end of 2023, in the 13 municipalities where UN-Habitat was affiliated, municipalities within the framework of National Land Commission have issued temporary cards to 80,033 households and land ownership certificates to 1,083 households, ensuring that joint land ownership between both spouses are provided so that women are reflected as co-owners. The support is being extended to an additional four municipalities through integrating land tenure security with sustainable land management to improve the livelihood of landless and those living in informal settlements. This is an important first step to ensure that Indigenous Women and communities in Nepal can finally access their land rights, which will impact their overall access to an adequate standard of living and other related rights.

To further promote lasting change, UN-Habitat, through GLTN and other partners, has been working with the government of Nepal to develop, adopt, and implement gender-responsive land governance provisions so that all women in Nepal can access equity on land rights.



Joint Land Ownership certificate between both spouses received through Identification Verification and Recordation process in Kankai Municipality © UN-Habitat Nepal

## Afghanistan

In post-conflict and post-disaster settings, women's abilities to access their housing, land and property rights may not only be a matter of enforcing non-discrimination but in fact a matter of survival.

As of 2020, around 1,000 informal settlements were identified across Afghanistan, accounting for at least 2.5 million people,<sup>39</sup> made up of predominantly internally displaced persons. Over 80 per cent of these were located in urban and peri-urban areas (typically in proximity to large cities).

Living in informal settlements means that these populations are cut off from municipal services and participation in urban development planning. Investment in the development of these areas also remains limited by the community and other stakeholders, due to the insecurity of their future. Infrastructure and service deficits have had severe impacts for women residing in informal settlements. Women have been particularly affected by unsafe public spaces, where they are subject to regular verbal harassment and the threat of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

At the same time, without access to secure tenure over the land that they live on, they also live at constant risk of forced evictions. Having already been displaced once or several times, the consequences of being forcibly evicted are devastating, especially for women-headed households. Women are generally in even more precarious economic situations due to the severe restrictions on their ability to work and mobility and access to public spaces and are reliant on community support.

UN-Habitat contributed to addressing these concerns by documenting and mapping the Housing, Land and Property (HLP) claims of those living in six of these informal settlements. Ensuring the availability of female staff meant that UN-Habitat was able to engage with women and women-headed households on their claims, who are otherwise most at risk of exclusion. This resulted in maps that ensured joint household registration and that were endorsed both by the community and by the de facto authorities, ensuring that women's land and property rights are recorded.

UN-Habitat also organized participatory planning sessions for all community members to understand all humanitarian needs and GBV risk prevention. Through women-only sessions, UN-Habitat ensured that women and girls in the community were able to actively participate and openly share their concerns and solutions.

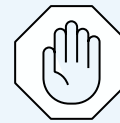
Based on the input of the community, UN-Habitat facilitated one priority investment in each informal settlement that reduces the risk of GBV in public spaces and improves the livability in the settlement – providing benefits to nearly 40,000 people. Identified priority investments included street lighting, the construction of boundary walls around community schools for girls to feel safe, and the creation of safe public spaces for women and girls to access, which was especially important as women are typically excluded from public life.



Mapping a Housing, Land and Property consultation in an all-women session © UN-Habitat Afghanistan



As of 2020, around **1,000 informal settlements** were identified across Afghanistan, accounting for **at least 2.5 million people**



UN-Habitat facilitated one priority investment in each informal settlement that reduces the risk of GBV in public spaces and improves the livability in the settlement

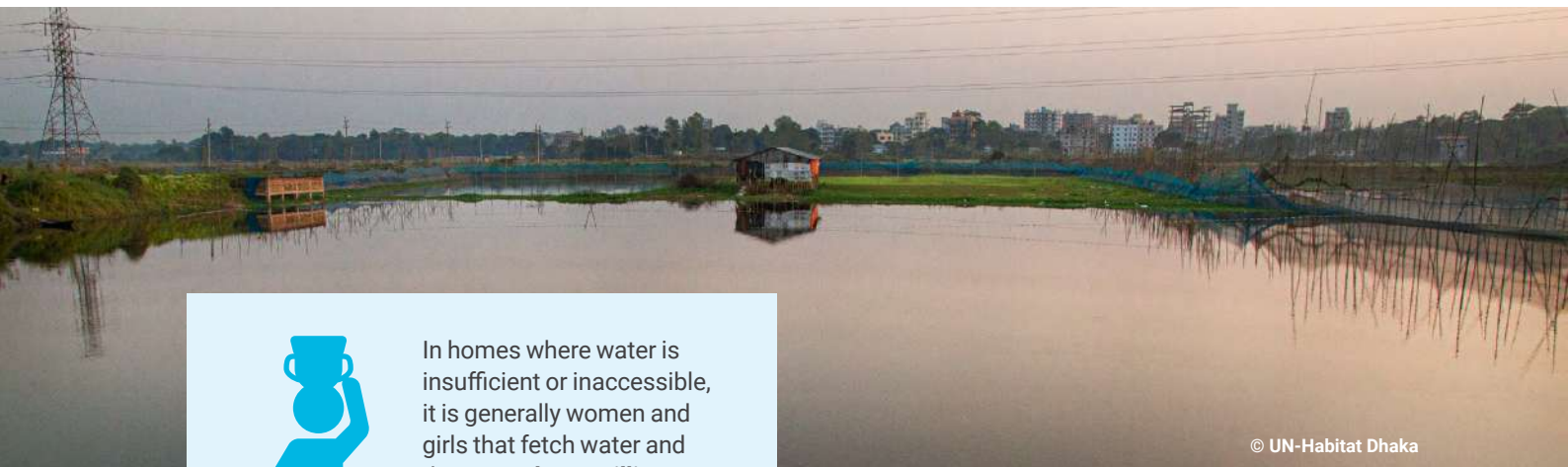


Engaging women and women-headed households in a land and housing consultation to prevent exclusion © UN-Habitat Afghanistan



## Water, sanitation and hygiene<sup>40</sup>

Being able to access drinking water, sanitation and hygiene is a human right that remains elusive for 2.2 billion, 3.5 billion and 2 billion people respectively.<sup>41</sup> This negatively impacts women and girls disproportionately in several ways. On one hand, women and girls have different water, sanitation and hygiene needs in the home due to, for example, reproductive and maternal health.



© UN-Habitat Dhaka



In homes where water is insufficient or inaccessible, it is generally women and girls that fetch water and thus **spend 250 million hours per day on water collection**, three times more than men and boys.<sup>42</sup>

This in turn not only means that women and girls have less time to spend on educational or income-generating activities, it also means that women unable to carry large loads of water, such as older women or women with disabilities, are unable to access water.



Further, having to walk long distances to fetch water exposes women and girls to the risk of gender-based violence en route. Similarly, when sanitation facilities are not available within the home, accessing these publicly, especially when also shared with men and boys, puts women and girls at increased risk of gender-based violence.

Women and especially girls are also differently impacted by access to sanitation and hygiene facilities in key public spaces such as schools. The inability to access safe and adequate facilities places women and girls at risk of violence and abuse, and may thus lead to families preventing girls from attending school, leaving them

to miss out on educational opportunities essential to access, for example, formal employment later in life.

It is therefore crucial that women and girls participate in decision-making about water, sanitation and hygiene, yet they are absent in the sector both informally and formally. For example, less than 50 countries have laws or policies in place to guarantee the participation of women in rural sanitation / water resources management.<sup>43</sup> In the formal sector, too, women remain systematically under-represented in water institutions, including as a result of gender stereotyping, unequal pay and cultural perceptions of gender and gender biases in hiring processes.<sup>44</sup>

UN-Habitat addresses the intersection of water access and gender equality through initiatives that ensure women have equal access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services. In collaboration with the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA), UN-Habitat promotes gender-responsive water management, supporting women’s involvement in water governance and the delivery of services. Through capacity-building and policy advocacy, UN-Habitat works to increase women’s participation in water and sanitation decision-making processes, ensuring their needs and priorities are reflected in planning and infrastructure. These efforts aim to improve water access in urban and rural areas, enhancing women’s health, safety, and economic opportunities, while also fostering leadership roles for women in water-related sectors.

**Ghana**

The old town of Accra, the capital of Ghana, includes two informal settlements, Jamestown and Ushhertown, expanded as a result of rapid urbanization and population growth coupled with a lack of infrastructure investments and sustainable urban development. In partnership with the community, including women and girls, UN-Habitat's Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP), identified the lack of sewerage networks and sanitation as a priority for improving the standard of living of the communities. Lacking these basic services meant that streets and public spaces were often inaccessible for street vendors and others carrying out economic activities, especially women.

Through the use of Community Managed Funds provided by PSUP but managed by the community, effective drainage was installed and repairs to the local sewage network were made, ensuring that public spaces, such as streets, are accessible to all at all times and do not pose risk to public health. Additionally, gender-responsive public toilets and shower houses (gender-segregated, lockable, etc.) were built that continue to be maintained by the community. Fifty toilets in private homes were also installed – ensuring that women and girls living in the informal settlements have safe access to sanitation and hygiene services.

More generally, this project also focused on economically empowering women and young persons through providing economic opportunities using the Community Manged Funds and ensured parity in community decision-making roles with 52% of community leaders being women.



Accesible streets and public spaces for street vendors and others carrying out economic activities © UN-Habitat Ghana



Accesible streets and public spaces for street vendors and others carrying out economic activities © UN-Habitat Ghana

## Lao PDR

In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic it is generally women and girls that carry the burden of water procurement for the household. This can involve having to carry heavy loads of extended distances on foot and exposes women and girls to security risks along the way as well as being so time consuming that they miss out education and economic opportunities.

Made possible by the Adaptation Fund and in partnership with the national authorities, and the impacted communities, especially women and girls but also children and young persons, persons with disabilities and groups at risk of exclusion who shaped the project from concept to evaluation, between 2017 and 2024, UN-Habitat focused on access to drinking water in 189 settlements across three provinces in Lao PDR.

**“Before, I used to go twice a day to the river which is 20 minutes away from my village to collect water. I had to walk even more during the dry season. Thanks to the project, now I have water in my own house. I am even able to grow vegetables in my garden,”**

**Sipaphai Kiuleshai,**  
a resident of Lahang village in Saravan province.



A woman washing her hands in one of the water supplies installed by the project in Dakvor Village, in the Sekong Province © UN-Habitat Lao

As a result, these efforts are now directly benefiting 125,295 individuals, including 67,659 women and girls (54% of the total number of beneficiaries). The Lao Women’s Union played a key role, in helping increase women’s participation in the design of water supply systems. This intervention has significantly impacted women and girls specifically as it reduced the time burden to fetch water, enabling them to pursue education and engage in economic activities.

An essential part of this project included the integration of women into local water management structures, ensuring their leadership in decision-making. Prior to this, women were not traditionally involved in community water management but this shift from being merely impacted to active decision-makers represented a milestone in gender-sensitive climate adaptation in Lao PDR. This is especially key as Lao PDR faces increasing climate risks so empowering women and communities is essential for climate resilience.



A newly built toilet with water connection to the toilet in Daksa Village in the Sekong Province © UN-Habitat Lao

**Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA)**

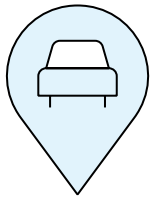
The Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) is an international network created by UN-Habitat to support water and sanitation operators through Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs), peer support exchanges between two or more water operators, on a not-for-profit basis, with the objective of strengthening their capacity, enhancing their performance and enabling them to provide a better service to everyone.

GWOPA has a strong focus on gender equality and women's empowerment, which it promotes including through, for example, amplifying the voices of women working in the water and sanitation sector to create inspiration and role models for more women and girls to consider a career in water and sanitation. Networking and mentorship between different operators for women is another key function of GWOPA, so as to connect aspiring women professionals with experienced mentors and peers who can provide guidance, advice, and encouragement in their career development journey.

For example, GWOPA supported the partnering of Water and Sanitation Providers in eThekweni in South Africa and Hamburg in Germany. The objective of this partnership was to support eThekweni in advancing its internal policies on gender equality and women's empowerment, including through attracting more women candidates in their efforts towards gender parity. To achieve this, the partners, supported by UN-Habitat, set up several exchange opportunities including online and in-person seminars for the staff of the two utilities. They were supported by a dedicated consultant. This has already resulted in strengthened capacity in organizational approaches towards women's empowerment and leadership skills development for the women utility staff in South Africa and Germany. Gender equality issues identified by staff have been raised and addressed at operational and management levels.



© UN Water



## Transport<sup>45</sup>

Public transport is essential for women and girls to access economic and educational opportunities such as work and school, markets and spaces to procure items for the household, and essential services such as health care. The absence of adequate transport options means that women and girls are effectively cut off from these services, or have to spend longer times walking – which also places them at risk of street harassment, which in turn, for example, contributes to girls dropping out of school. In many contexts, in households with cars, women and girls also have reduced, or no access to the car.<sup>46</sup>



Kenya, Nairobi, Mathare. COVID19 prevention in slums ©UN-Habitat-Kirsten Milhahn

Women and girls continue to face significant barriers in accessing public transport. During the Covid-19 outbreak, the restrictions and closure of public transport disproportionately impacted women and girls (as well as marginalized groups) who heavily rely on transport to for essential movement related to care-giving, household procurement and low-income and informal work. This amplified their economic vulnerabilities during the pandemic.

In many contexts globally, post-pandemic, public transport has not yet returned to its pre-pandemic levels. Existing barriers for women and girls remain in place and have been exacerbated by the economic impacts of Covid-19. For example, the spatial segregation of cities often means that public services, including transport, are far from, especially poor, women’s homes, reducing their mobility and economic opportunities. Personal safety and gender-based violence such as sexual harassment remain a pressing concern in the context of public transport usage, especially for women and girls, impacting their access at specific times and / or spaces. Globally, 3 out of 5 women experience sexual harassment

when using public transport.<sup>47</sup> Finally, the absence of women and girls in urban decision-making, including around public transport, means that the design, structure, and administration of transport systems are generally not responsive to gender. Women also make up less than 20% of the global workforce in public transport.<sup>48</sup>

As such, UN-Habitat works to ensure that women have safe, accessible, and affordable public transport by advocating for gender-responsive transportation policies and infrastructure. Recognizing women’s challenges in accessing public transport, UN-Habitat supports the design of inclusive transportation systems that address these issues. Through its work with local governments and partners, UN-Habitat promotes women’s participation in transportation planning and decision-making, empowering them to shape systems that better serve their communities. By enhancing women’s mobility, UN-Habitat contributes to their social and economic empowerment, enabling them to access education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, while fostering more equitable and sustainable urban development.



## Rwanda

In Rwanda, women heavily rely on motorcycle taxis, which are almost always operated by men. Gender-based violence is frequent for women using these services, both during their rides and while awaiting a driver. Women have little recourse to justice in such instances.

In an effort to increase the participation of women in the motorcycle taxi economy in Kigali, UN-Habitat partnered with the City of Kigali and SOLUTIONSplus and other key stakeholders such as Ampersand, an electric transport company, and Flone Initiative, to develop locally designed and assembled electric motorcycles to be provided to female taxi drivers. Thirty-six women were then recruited and trained by local driving instructors, out of whom 24 passed the driving exam. These 24 women then each received an electric motorcycle in November 2022 and were able to enter the moto-taxi industry in Kigali with a long-term view of transitioning the industry towards gender equality and the use of electric vehicles to substantially reduce air pollution.

Lessons from this pilot are also informing similar initiatives in other countries in the region, including through the development of five principles for gender-inclusive e-mobility projects. In the Kigali context, this pilot has also shaped the deployment of other transportation interventions (such as a bike share system with conventional bikes and the potential roll out of electric bicycles in the future; as well as the introduction of four electric busses). Additionally, the City of Kigali set up an E-mobility Technical Coordination Committee and the awareness-raising and capacity building activities of this project challenged the perceptions of women as public transport providers.



Initiative to develop locally designed and assembled electric motorcycles to be provided to female taxi drivers © UN-Habitat Rwanda



Initiative to develop locally designed and assembled electric motorcycles to be provided to female taxi drivers © UN-Habitat Rwanda

## Egypt

In 2023, UN-Habitat contributed to the development of Egypt’s first public bike sharing system, CairoBike, focusing on inclusive transportation for all. Public participation, especially with women and girls, was essential and UN-Habitat worked closely with national and local authorities, civil society and local academia. Stakeholder networks were created with civil society and community members to ensure an inclusive process, as well as ongoing feedback and improvement with a focus on women and girls.

Based on this continuous feedback loop, the system was upgraded, which in turn created a rapid increase in women participation, attracting more than double the number of women and girls to use the shared bikes compared to when the project was launched due to improved bike design, application user experience, and awareness raising.



Nouran Khaled riding her bike  
© UN-Habitat Egypt

In order to overcome barriers related to the cultural perception of women cycling, UN-Habitat and its partners organized awareness-raising events, rallies and promotions, also working with Egyptian celebrities. This not only fostered broad conversation around women’s access to public transport, it also raised awareness of the different experiences of women and girls in cities.

The percentage of women using the service remains low at 11.5% but has shown a steady increase over the past two years with more women pushing the boundaries to access this male-dominated activity in Cairo.

The impact of CairoBike can be seen through the personal experiences of its users. For example, Nouran, an architect living in Cairo, had to navigate long commutes and inefficient transportation when her job relocated her. But with strategically placed bike stations, CairoBike gave her back the ability to cycle, saving time and adopting a more active, eco-friendly lifestyle. “Riding a bike is a liberating experience; everyone feels it was made for them,” she says.

For Amany, a lawyer based in Downtown Cairo, cycling had always been a cherished dream - one she believed was unattainable due to storage limitations, high costs, and societal barriers. That changed with the launch of CairoBike, which provided her with a secure, accessible, and affordable way to navigate both her daily errands and professional commitments. “CairoBike was something I wished for, and it finally came true” she says. Now, she moves through the city with ease, rediscovering the joy and practicality of cycling in her everyday life.

The percentage of women using the shared bike service remains low at **11.5%** but has shown a steady increase over the past two years



Amany Mohamed riding her bike  
© UN-Habitat Egypt



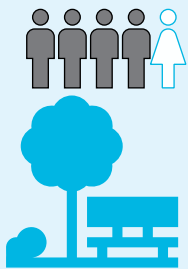
## Public space<sup>49</sup>

Access to public space, such as parks, playgrounds, streets and footpaths, waterfronts and gardens, should be essential for all women and girls as a space for recreational activities; to meet, connect and socialize; but also for economic purposes, such as selling goods, and to walk from, for example, their home, to their place of work or school. Yet, in many urban centres around the world, women and girls continue to experience inaccessibility, safety concerns, and various forms of sexual harassment and violence in public spaces – leaving them excluded from effectively participating in public life.



A public space in Mathare, Nairobi © UN-Habitat

Among those most at risk of exclusion are young women in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.



Research shows that girls and women do not use a city's public spaces to the same extent as boys or men. From the age of eight, **80 per cent of the public spaces** can be dominated by boys, and girls express that they feel significantly more insecure and excluded.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, creating public spaces that are accessible for women and girls means better public spaces for everyone.

UN-Habitat advocates for inclusive, safe, and accessible public spaces that meet the needs of all those living in the city, with a particular focus on empowering women and girls and those that are facing marginalization and exclusion. Recognizing that public spaces are often designed without considering women's safety, mobility, and social roles, UN-Habitat promotes gender-responsive urban planning, placing women and girls at the centre of the planning and decision-making processes, enabling them to shape the spaces they use, fostering greater community engagement and social cohesion. These efforts not only improve women's access to public life but also contribute to more vibrant, equitable, and sustainable cities.

## Palestine

Since 2018, UN-Habitat has been partnering with UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Palestinian local and national government representatives and civil society, on the implementation of HAYA Joint Programme: Eliminating Violence Against Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The overall objective of this programme is to build just and secure communities for women and girls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. UN-Habitat in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) has worked on building an enabling policy environment for local government units to combat violence against women through the comprehensive and sustainable prevention and response to gender-based violence in public spaces.

To achieve these goals, UN-Habitat and the MoLG executed a series of coordinated gender-transformative approaches at both national and local levels. These interventions included conducting assessments, designing and implementing physical interventions, rolling out capacity-building programmes, developing methodologies and toolkits, and institutionalizing principles of safe and inclusive public spaces within existing governance structures. Funded by the Government of Canada, UN-Habitat was able to benefit 283,545 women.

The team contributed to bridging the knowledge gap through mapping the use patterns of all users, especially women, youth, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, identifying both the physical and social difficulties on a city-wide scale. This was translated into the first ever city-wide public space assessments conducted in Palestinian cities. The public spaces with the highest needs for intervention were selected. Site-specific assessments were conducted with high levels of community participation, especially among women and girls. This was then translated with the local communities and municipalities into designed interventions reflecting women’s needs and aspirations.

Nine new public spaces were rehabilitated and created. They cover different typologies across the West Bank (community gardens, a sensory garden for children with visual-impairments, a pedestrian-friendly street, urban farm and the rehabilitation of a canal in Jericho, part of an archaeological site nominated to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site), providing examples to be replicated on a national scale.

HAYA Joint Programme actively engaged community members in a variety of locally-led activities to foster gender equality, advocate for disability rights, and



Girls using the marked pedestrian path while walking home from school in Al Doha 2020 © UN-Habitat

emphasize the significance of inclusive public spaces. By facilitating dialogue and collaboration between local governments and communities, it effectively addressed public space needs and aspirations.

In addition to the physical rehabilitation of public spaces, the HAYA Programme pioneered the institutionalization of the safe and inclusive public space principles with the Palestinian local and national planning structures. This was achieved through the development of a robust framework of policies, strategies, methodologies and guidelines.

UN-Habitat’s comprehensive and participatory approach in implementing the HAYA Programme has laid a strong foundation for fostering innovative partnerships across the private and public sectors, as well as bridging collaboration between civil society organizations and governmental entities. This creates new opportunities for diverse stakeholders to actively contribute to enhancing community safety in public spaces.

Finally, the HAYA Programme has highlighted the critical role of well-designed, safe, and inclusive public spaces during times of crisis and post-crisis recovery. The HAYA Promenade in Khan Younis (Gaza) served as more than just a public space mitigating trauma and psychosocial impact; it also provided a safe refuge for internally displaced persons (IDPs), offering shelter and access to solar panels and other essential facilities made available through its rehabilitation during times of crisis.

**Jordan**

In response to the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, UN-Habitat partnered with the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the international Labour Organization (ILO) from 2020 – 2022 to unlock the transformative power of public spaces in enhancing the socioeconomic empowerment of marginalized women in Ghor Al Safi, a “poverty pocket” in Southern Jordan.

Bringing together the expertise of different UN agencies, the project aimed to create a gender-responsive, inclusive, accessible, and safe public space and community center. Through a participatory process beginning with the UN-Habitat Public Space Site-Specific Assessment, the project engaged the local community, especially women and girls, to co-design a space that enhances economic opportunities and social cohesion in a safe and inclusive environment.

The result is a space that includes safe play areas for children of all ages, accessible for children with disabilities, shaded seating areas for members of the community to meet and connect, and a multi-use area designed for social and cultural activities, as well as a market where women can sell their goods and produce. The space hosts social, cultural, and capacity building activities, including tailored trainings on entrepreneurial skills and livelihood creation.

With the aim of providing women with the enabling environment and tools for socioeconomic empowerment, 138 women received training through the Women Do Business Programme, while 28 staff and community members received a Training of Trainers session on Business Development Services. Subsequently 32 business proposals have been funded and 132 job seekers (83% women) were linked to existing ILO employment platforms with specialized training sessions on grievance redress mechanism, labour rights, trade unions, and other decent work aspects, while 13 women were trained on professional caregiving. UN-Habitat also offered sustainable agriculture training to support women interested in working in this field.

Through a successful partnership with a local NGO, Zaha Cultural Centre, the public space and community centre is being maintained as an incubator for training and entrepreneurial activities for local women and youth, in collaboration with the Municipality of the Southern Jordan Valley and local community. The first of its kind in its area, the project benefits 37,040 Ghor Al Safi inhabitants, as well as those from neighboring communities.



Consultation Sessions © UN-Habitat Jordan



Khadijah (on the left), one of the Ghor Al Safi beneficiaries in the opening day at the park © UN-Habitat Jordan

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**Women and girls also carry out the majority of unpaid and unrecognized domestic and care work which in turn, means women lack access to social protections**

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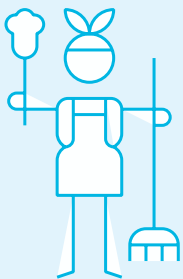
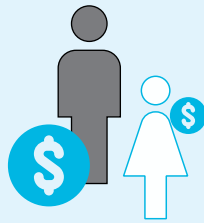


## 7 Women's economic empowerment<sup>51</sup>

Empowering women economically is essential for achieving gender equality. This is not only because women and girls are at higher risk of living in poverty than men and boys, when women are dependent on men for access to economic resources, they also have less access to decision-making in the family and are unable to escape abuse and gender-based violence. With no or only limited access over resources, women are effectively excluded from local and community-level decision-making, thus lack influence over the decisions that shape their daily lives.

UN-Habitat fosters women's economic empowerment by advocating for gender-responsive policies and creating opportunities for women to engage in the formal urban economy. A key part of this approach is promoting gender-responsive and participatory budgeting, ensuring that public investments reflect women's needs and priorities. By encouraging women's participation in decision-making processes, UN-Habitat helps ensure that resources are allocated to areas like public services, transport, and affordable housing, all of which impact women's daily lives and economic opportunities. Additionally, UN-Habitat provides skills training, empowering women to access jobs and start businesses.

Aside from being paid less than men in the formal economy, with an **estimated wage gap of 20%**, nearly **60% of women's employment globally is in the informal sector**, which in low-income countries goes up as high as **90%**.



Women and girls also carry out the majority of **unpaid and unrecognized domestic and care work**.<sup>52</sup> This, in turn, means women lack access to social protections – from basic labour protections such as maternity leave, to pensions and unemployment benefits.



Khadijah (on the left), one of the Ghor Al Safi beneficiaries in the opening day at the park © UN-Habitat Jordan

## Kenya

In Mtwapa, an informal settlement on the Kenyan coast, a women-led business now provides drinking water to the neighbourhood and beyond. “We came together as eight widows and formed a group called “Mungu Pamoja Nasi” – God with us - which operates two water supply points that sell safe and affordable drinking water to the neighbourhood” said Mishi Mboko, one of the founders. All eight founders are responsible for their respective children and grandchildren and setting up a business together seemed like a natural step for them.

Though the business was progressing, the women knew there was an opportunity to scale up, and to ensure that more people had access to clean water, including in the Majengo settlement, which is one of the neighbourhoods where UN-Habitat Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) operates. Following discussions with UN-Habitat’s PSUP team, the group requested Community Managed Funds to increase their storage capacity for drinking water and to purchase handcarts to distribute the water more effectively and comfortably. Now their reach has increased, as has their revenue and the positive impact on the women and girls in the community. The two settlements follow the global trend where women and girls are responsible for water procurement for the household, spending three times as much as men and boys on this task.

More than 15,000 households have benefited from the implementation of UN-Habitat’s Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme in Mtwapa. The PSUP has catalyzed the empowerment of women and girls as a foundation for building capacity at the local level.



Matilda Chonga, chairperson at Mungu Pamoja Nasi widows’ group © UN-Habitat Kenya

**“We were able to reduce the time spent by women and girls collecting water from central standpipes from an average of 30 minutes to 10 minutes. This has increased the safety of our young girls especially when it gets dark, as they don’t have to wait for long.”**

**Amina Omari,**  
a founder of Mungu Pamoja Nasi



The eight widows that came together and formed “Mungu Pamoja Nasi” group, which operates two water supply points that sell safe and affordable drinking water to the neighbourhood © UN-Habitat Kenya





Legazpi's first zero waste refilling shop in the city © UN-Habitat Philippines

**Philippines**

In Manila, the capital of the Philippines, the proliferation of marine plastic litter poses a significant environmental challenge, particularly impacting communities living near polluted waterways. Recognizing this issue and the potential to address waste while also empowering local women's collectives, UN-Habitat as part of the "Healthy Oceans Clean Cities" initiative forged a partnership with Women Waste Warriors, a women-led organization based in Barangay 412 (an area of Manila close to the sea), dedicated to reducing marine plastic waste and its adverse impacts.

This collaboration was joined by Tagumpay 83 Zero Waste Association (TEZWA), another women-led organization focusing on recycling waste materials into eco-friendly bags and pots. Welma Fernandez, a representative of TEZWA, highlighted its importance for women in the community: "We expect that our social enterprise will be fully operational this year and women who previously earned money only when selling ecobags will now receive a regular salary."

Being able to provide regular salaries goes beyond mere financial stability. It symbolizes a critical step toward enhancing economic resilience for these women, affording them greater agency and independence, both in the community and at home. It strengthens their capacity to assert their rights and participate in decision-making processes concerning the sustainability of their city and communities.

In Legazpi, a tourist hot spot south-east of Manila, the project supported the Legazpi City Recyclers Association to set up the first zero waste refilling shop in the city. This venture not only contributes to reducing waste, it also helps advocacy efforts in the community around plastic use reduction and provides economic empowerment to the women working in the shop.

UN-Habitat Philippines efforts on strengthening the capacity of women's organizations to combat marine plastic waste fosters safer, cleaner, and more equal communities for women to thrive.

**"We expect that our social enterprise will be fully operational this year and women who previously earned money only when selling ecobags will now receive a regular salary."**

**Welma Fernandez,**  
a representative of TEZWA,



Glass recycling process © UN-Habitat Philippines

## Afghanistan

The takeover of the Taliban, the current de facto authorities in Afghanistan since 2021, has had a dramatic impact on the economic situation in the country with the economy all but collapsed, wages being decreased, jobs lost, the cost of goods increasing and essential urban and social services being inaccessible.

While this impacts the entire population, women have been hit hardest, with increasing restrictions their daily lives, including in the context of pursuing employment and economic activities, accessing education and specifically working and being trained in the medical sector and health care, including in women’s health. Women-headed households and women living in informal settlements are particularly negatively impacted by this, often ending up in situations where they are unable to provide for themselves and their families.

This included Ms Zulekha Ahmadi, a teacher, who lives Mazar-i-Sharif city with her husband, three children, mother, and mother-in-law. Zulekha was a teacher in one of the local schools but due to the restrictions imposed on women by the Taliban, she was forced to leave her job. After being banned from working in the profession she was trained in, she lost her only source of income.

UN-Habitat with support from the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), has been supporting and empowering women to rebuild their livelihoods through women empowerment centres, vocational skills trainings, and supporting women-led SMSEs. Overall, 750 women participated in vocational training in IT, tailoring, carpet-weaving and beading.



Some of the women being trained by Zulekha © UN-Habitat Afghanistan

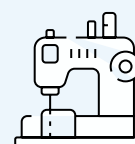
In this context, Zulekha participated in a three-month vocational re-training in tailoring.

Upon completion of the training, Zulekha managed to open a small tailoring shop within her home compound where she makes clothes for the women in her community. Since she opened her shop, she has seen an increase in orders and she is able to make an average net income of AFS 100,000 (USD 1,349) a month.

Looking at the challenges other women in her community are facing losing their jobs, she has now started offering free mentoring to women in the community so that they, too, may be able to re-train. Her background in teaching has made her especially sought-after as a mentor and trainer.



Zulekha Ahmadi in her shop in PD4, Mazar-i-Sharif in November 2023 © UN-Habitat Afghanistan



**750 women** participated in vocational training in IT, tailoring, carpet-weaving and beading



**As urban poverty is becoming increasingly feminized, more women and girls, compared to men and boys, are living in poverty, cut off from, or with only limited access to, municipal services and no avenues to influence the development of their neighbourhoods**

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## 8 Women's access to urban decision-making<sup>53</sup>

The decisions of local authorities shape the lived realities of all those living, working and spending time in the city, including women and girls – from urban planning to healthcare, housing, transportation and public safety.

As such, city-level decision-making that excludes the active participation of women and girls can lead to plans, budgets and policies that are biased against women and, unintentionally, negatively impact them. Yet, in many urban settings, some, or all, women lack the access to and / or influence over basic infrastructure, services, resources and decision-making mechanisms that impact their daily lives, preventing them from accessing equal opportunities. As urban poverty is becoming increasingly feminized, more women and girls, compared to men and boys, are living in poverty, cut off from, or with only limited access to, municipal services and no avenues to influence the development of their neighbourhoods.

At the same time, when women and girls have access to effectively participate in decision-making around urban development, local spending and distribution of essential services, this results in more inclusive cities for all, by ensuring that local city management reflects the needs and aspirations of all members of the community.

As is illustrated throughout this document, access to decision-making and leadership for women and girls is a central and crucial component throughout all of the areas of work of UN-Habitat and sustainable development more generally, and is, as pointed out above, a clear priority set out in both the BDPfA and the NUA.

In order to support local and national authorities, as well as urban professionals and women and girls to create enabling environments for women's access to decision-making and benefit from proven approaches, UN-Habitat continues to develop normative research and tools aimed for easy and straight forward local implementation.



Exploratory walks in public space in Sharjah, UAE © Sharjah Urban Planning Council

→ **Her City Toolbox**

In order to ensure that women and girls have equitable access to the city, UN-Habitat has developed a digital toolbox to ensure women and girl's involvement in urban planning, design and decision-making to achieve equal, and better, cities for everyone. Developed with the Shared City Foundation, Sida, Global Utmaning and the Swedish Innovation Agency (Vinnova) with contributions from our partners Block by Block Foundation, White Architects, Swedish Union of Tenants and MethodKit, this resulted in the Her City Toolbox, published in 2021.

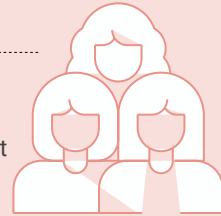
This digital toolbox supports cities and urban actors with sustainable and inclusive urban planning and design together with girls and guides users to implement projects through a step-by-step methodology, making use of innovative and digital tools, providing an open and digitally accessible platform for all. It helps to facilitate an ongoing dialogue between professionals and communities.



Since its launch, it has attracted **over 1400 digital toolbox users**, from 430 cities in 120 countries.

**Three hundred and fifty independent city initiatives** across all continents have contributed to the reach of over 700,000 people through outreach activities and social media. For example, 30 capacity building courses have trained over 1000 urban actors and professionals, and almost 1000 gender equality related events have raised awareness among 6,000 participants.

**Fifteen gender transformative public spaces** have been implemented, with 80,000 direct beneficiaries, and over 800,000 indirectly impacted.



HerCity empowers municipal professionals, urban actors, and local leaders with a toolbox to engage girls and young women in inclusive urban planning and design © UN-Habitat



HerCity empowers municipal professionals, urban actors, and local leaders with a toolbox to engage girls and young women in inclusive urban planning and design © UN-Habitat

## → Voluntary Local Reviews

Another important process for women and girls to engage with the management of and decision-making in their city are Voluntary Local Reviews.

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) are a process to monitor SDG achievement at the local level and powerful catalysts of the SDG localization process, including in the context of SDG 5. As their use is gradually adopted by more and more local and regional governments from around the globe, VLRs have become an instrument to orient strategic planning, financing, and initiatives through the SDG lens.

In this context, UN-Habitat has been promoting the integration of gender mainstreaming into the VLR process and found that this significantly enhances policy inclusivity, creating more equitable and responsive local governance. Beyond reviewing SDG 5 (Gender Equality), embedding a gender-responsive approach across all SDGs contributes to sustainable urbanization and the creation of inclusive, functional spaces that benefit everyone. Gender-responsive policies not only improve outcomes for women and girls but also yield broad societal benefits, reducing exclusion, enhancing infrastructure for marginalized communities, and driving progress on global goals such as health, education, and economic development.

UN-Habitat is therefore developing a gender-responsive version of its recently launched Action-Oriented VLR Methodology, which will be piloted in municipalities across Costa Rica. Additionally, UN-Habitat has supported VLRs that successfully integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment, such as the VLRs of Niš, Serbia, and Chandragiri, Nepal, setting strong examples of how inclusive governance can accelerate sustainable development at the local level.

In Niš, the VLR reviewed SDG 5, focusing on the proportion of seats held by women in local government. It highlighted existing gaps, challenges, and local initiatives to address gender inequality. Meanwhile, in Chandragiri, women and girls’ participation was prioritized throughout the process of VLR. Among the 184 participants of the consultation meeting, 81 (44.02%) were women and girls, shaping discussions on inclusion and social justice. The VLR process indicated that Chandragiri made good progress in implementing SDG5, despite the relatively low budget allocation. However, data obtained as part of the LVR process indicates a need to prioritize meaningful participation of women in decision-making process, and increasing their participation in the labor force and formal employment opportunities.

Through the VLR, these gaps have become visible so that the local government, in partnership with the community, can now take data-based and informed action to address them.



SDG localization, municipal consultation in Chandragiri, Nepal © UN-Habitat

## 9 Women community leaders<sup>54</sup>

Women community leaders worldwide are standing up against exclusion, using grassroots movements to make sure women's voices are heard and that their needs are addressed, often without or only very little funding and in the face of substantial obstacles. These leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that urban spaces are inclusive and equitable for all women and girls in their diversity. Their work is vital in bridging the gap between marginalized communities and local and national institutions.

Women human rights defenders are leading the change for equality, and empowerment. Despite systemic barriers and obstacles they face, they keep advocating

for, for example land rights and the protection of marginalized communities. Around the world, resistance to gender equality slows progress in creating fairer cities, leaving women in urban areas struggling in unequal environments.

UN-Habitat plays an important role in supporting these women by helping create urban spaces where their advocacy and leadership can grow. Through collaborations with UN-Habitat, these women are receiving support to drive change, but it is truly their courage and determination that creates impact for women and girls at all levels.

### Colombia

In Colombia, women in human mobility situations, especially those from Venezuela, report risks of sexual, physical, and psychological violence during their transit and stay in Colombia. Some also face discrimination due to their immigration status and often have to deal with obstacles to economic integration, including lack of access to financing and resources for entrepreneurship.

Mayerlín Gómez, 'Maye', arrived in Colombia seeking safety and access to an adequate standard of living from the situation in Venezuela. Over time, Maye became a community leader and joined UN Habitat's *Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity – ICCS* project, which addresses existing marginalization and exclusions within cities, and aims to implement action towards supporting and caring for refugees and migrants.

Through this involvement, she learned to work with children, single mothers, gained knowledge in leadership, and became more self-confident. She believes that, thanks to ICCS, the community now understands that change is possible, and inclusive and strong communities can be formed where everyone is welcome. Maye led community participation efforts to create more inclusive public spaces, supporting the transformation of three spaces in the Villa del Mar neighbourhood, where there were no community spaces for integration. Maye has earned the community's trust and is committed to helping her neighbourhood grow.



Maye has actively participated to empower children and single mothers, fostering confidence within the community and contributing to the strength of households. © UN-Habitat

### Dominican Republic

Sachi Durán is another of the dedicated champions who participated in the *Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity* project in the Dominican Republic, where she has played a key role in the successful integration of the Venezuelan and Dominican community in the region. Her commitment has allowed numerous Venezuelans to find positive inclusion in Dominican society and created better understanding and positive relationships between the communities.

In addition to leading projects to improve the situation of the migrant population, she contributed to improving public spaces and the general welfare of the community. Sachi stands out as a leader committed to building bridges between cultures, promoting inclusion and the benefits of diversity. Her tireless work is an inspiring example of how social action can transform lives and strengthen community coexistence.



In addition to leading projects to improve the situation of the migrant population, Sachi contributed to improving public spaces and the general welfare of the community © UN-Habitat

### Afghanistan

“Afghan women hold the potential to shape a brighter future in this country. My role is to make sure their voices are heard in community dialogues and help them unlock their potential in community development.”, says Fatima (her real name has been altered for safety).

Fatima is one of many Afghan women defying adversity to uplift her community. As a Community Mobiliser for UN-Habitat’s Emergency Support Programme for Conflict-Displaced Afghans, she helps ensure that women’s voices shape the development of their communities. Growing up in a farming family, Fatima fought to continue her education despite financial hardships and later became a teacher. Her pursuit of knowledge led her to Kabul, where she faced unemployment and homelessness but remained determined to support other women.

In Afghanistan, Community Mobilizers play a crucial role in defending human rights defense, often working under extreme risks. Since the Taliban’s return to power in August 2021, Afghan women have faced devastating setbacks, with 80% now living in poverty and 1.4 million girls denied access to education<sup>55</sup>. Women-led grassroots organizations continue to play a vital role in supporting their communities, driving initiatives in education, economic empowerment and sustaining hope and resilience across the country.

Now, through her work, Fatima engages with displaced communities in Kabul and Herat, advocating for women’s participation in decision-making, organizing workshops, and ensuring the most marginalized women benefit from Cash-for-Work initiatives. Fatima challenges societal

norms to make space for women in rebuilding their communities.

“Women’s participation matters when we vote for priorities in our communities.” “We have acquired new skills through capacity-building workshops. Now we know how to monitor project activities by ourselves.” Every time Fatima hears such words from female community members, she is deeply pleased and takes pride in being a Community Mobilizer for UN-Habitat. Fatima’s story is one of resilience, proving that when women lead, entire communities thrive. Her work ensures that Afghan women, often silenced, have a role in shaping their futures - one conversation, one project, and one empowered voice at a time.



Fatima discussing with female community members during a strategic mapping workshop held in Kabul © UN-Habitat Afghanistan



# 10 Recommendations for the next five years

Based on UN-Habitat's extensive experience in gender equality and women's empowerment over the past five years, the following recommendations could be considered to ensure that the intersection between gender equality and sustainable urban development is prioritized over the next five years:

## a) National governments



- Promote and adopt national and sub-national legislation and policies that ensure, respect and protect the rights of women and girls to housing, land and property, as well as to access public spaces and infrastructure
- Promote the adoption of zoning laws, building bye-laws, construction regulations and other regulations and standards that take into account the needs of women and girls
- Promote and adopt national legislation to protect the rights of women community leaders and human rights defenders
- Support women community leaders and organizers, including through appropriate funding, to ensure that the views of women and girls are considered in all decision-making processes

## b) Local governments



- Create and support an enabling environment for the effective participation of women and girls in all relevant decision-making processes
- Build institutional capacity and enhance the understanding of elected leaders and officials, including traditional leaders, on the importance of engaging women and girls in decision-making for development
- Consider implementing gender-responsive and participatory budgeting approaches to ensure that all services delivered respond to the needs of all of the community
- Adapt strategic tools and processes for both the active participation of women and girls and to assess what gender gaps are currently in place, using, for example, Voluntary Local Reviews

## c) Funding institutions



- Ensure that measures to ensure and promote gender equality and women's empowerment are included in all development funding extended to national and sub-national governments
- Consider the adoption of a gender-marker or similar instrument to assess the amount/proportion of every grant that helps to advance gender equality and women's rights
- Consider adopting specific modalities and instruments to financially support women-led cities, women community leaders, women in the informal sector, as well as NGOs and CBOs that advance the rights of women and girls



## 11 Conclusion

UN-Habitat's work over the past five years shows that cities only become stronger, more just, and more resilient, when gender equality is prioritized, implemented and mainstreamed. From Mozambique to the Philippines, from Brazil to Kenya, when women step up as decision-makers, claiming their positions in public space and as agents of change for their own rights and those of others that are part of marginalized communities, fundamental change happens.

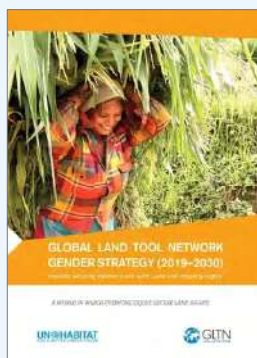
From handling the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, to supporting women in crisis and conflict zones, addressing the climate emergency, and ensuring access to safe housing, land, and public spaces, the stories shared in this publication are a testimony to the power of inclusive urban development. Yet, challenges persist. The struggle is far from over. Women still face barriers every day and everywhere: in being able

to participate in urban planning and governance, in accessing higher levels of leadership, in being invisible in moments of crisis.

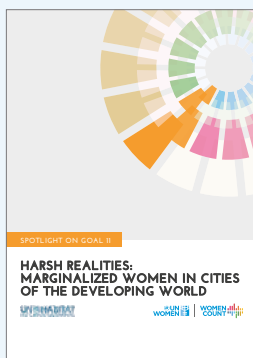
However, it is also clear that through women leadership initiatives in places like Colombia, Ghana, and Afghanistan, transformation happens. Gender-responsive and gender-transformative initiatives need to be a priority moving forward, as well as the push for inclusive policies and sustainable urban development that leaves no one behind.

The journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment is a collective effort that requires the commitment of governments and institutions, but also the sustained mobilization of communities themselves. Empowerment begins not in the promise of change, but in the courage to make it real for every woman, everywhere.

# 12 Annex: Relevant UN-Habitat reports / products:



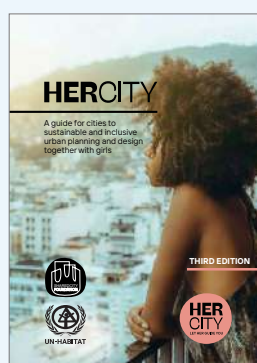
**GLTN Gender Strategy (2019–2030): Towards Securing Women’s and Girls’ Land and Property Rights.** This document provides a framework for designing land tenure and governance interventions around women’s and girls’ land and property rights. <https://unhabitat.org/gltn-gender-strategy-2019-2030-towards-securing-women-and-girls-land-and-property-rights>



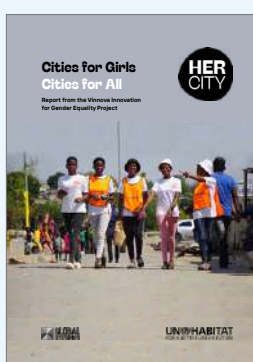
**Harsh Realities: Marginalized Women in Cities of the Developing World (2020).** This analysis is based on data from 59 low- and middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Southern Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, and finds that women and their families bear the brunt of growing income inequality and failures to adequately plan for and respond to rapid urbanization. <https://unhabitat.org/harsh-realities-marginalized-women-in-cities-of-the-developing-world>



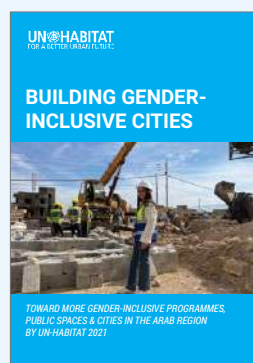
**GPP: UN-Habitat Policy and Plan for Gender Equality and the Rights of Women in Urban Development and Human Settlements (2020 – 2023):** This is UN-Habitat’s roadmap for promoting gender equality throughout its work. It is aligned with the organizational Strategic Plan and supports the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs through its contribution to their implementation. <https://unhabitat.org/gpp-un-habitat-policy-and-plan-for-gender-equality-and-the-rights-of-women-in-urban-development-and>



**Her City (2021): A Guide to sustainable and inclusive urban planning and design, together with girls.** The purpose of this guide is to map efficient methods and tools that contribute to increased equality and inclusion in urban development. <https://unhabitat.org/her-city-a-guide-for-cities-to-sustainable-and-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design-together-with>



**Cities for Girls, Cities For All (2022):** The report provides guidelines for gender and intersectional sensitive participatory planning, design and implementation to support a variety of urban actors in building cities for all, together with girls and young women: <https://unhabitat.org/cities-for-girls-cities-for-all>



**Building Gender Inclusive Cities. Toward more gender-inclusive programmes, public spaces & cities in the Arab region (2021):** The report highlights the mainstreaming and programmatic prioritization of gender in UN-Habitat’s work. <https://unhabitat.org/building-gender-inclusive-cities-toward-more-gender-inclusive-programmes-public-spaces-cities-in>

# Endnotes

- 1 See UN-Habitat, [The Strategic Plan, 2020 – 2025](#).
- 2 Resolution adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly on 31 May 2019 1/4. [Achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements](#).
- 3 See for example [Strategic objective K.1. Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels](#), para 253 (g).
- 4 [New Urban Agenda](#), para 5.
- 5 UN Habitat, [Harsh Realities faced by Marginalized Women in Cities of the Developing World \(2020\)](#). <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/harsh-realities-marginalized-women-in-cities-of-the-developing-world-en.pdf>
- 6 UN Women (2024) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/03/1-in-every-10-women-in-the-world-lives-in-extreme-poverty>
- 7 UN Women (2024) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/03/1-in-every-10-women-in-the-world-lives-in-extreme-poverty>
- 8 UN Women, [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023](#). <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023-en.pdf>
- 9 UN Women, [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023](#). <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023-en.pdf>
- 10 World Health Organization, [Household air pollution: Key facts. December 2023](#). <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health#:~:text=Each%20year%2C%203.2%20million%20people,air%20pollution%20data%20for%20details>
- 11 Links to the BDPfA: P. 58 (g): “Provide adequate safety nets and strengthen State-based and community-based support systems, as an integral part of social policy, in order to enable women living in poverty to withstand adverse economic environments and preserve their livelihood, assets and revenues in times of crisis;”; Links to the NUA: P. 29: “We further commit ourselves to promoting adequate services, accommodation and opportunities for decent and productive work for crisis-affected persons in urban settings and to working with local communities and local governments to identify opportunities for engaging and developing local, durable and dignified solutions while ensuring that aid also flows to affected persons and host communities to prevent regression of their development.”
- 12 Globally, women earn 24 per cent less than men and there are 700 million fewer women than men in paid formal employment. They frequently work in the informal economy where they are less likely to have employment contracts, legal rights and social protections. Women at the bottom of the economic ladder provide 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day, which is three times more than men do. Worldwide, men own 50 per cent more wealth than women. – UN-Habitat, [World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization](#).
- 13 United Nations, [Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women](#), 2020.
- 14 UN Women, [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#), 2024.
- 15 UN-Habitat, [Covid-19 exposes the harsh realities of gender inequality in slums](#), 2020.
- 16 Global Land Tool Network, [Strengthening the recognition of communal rights in Informal Settlements in Kenya](#), 2024
- 17 Links with the **BDPfA**: Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation: P. 142 (a): “Take action to promote equal participation of women and equal opportunities for women to participate in all forums and peace activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level, including in the United Nations Secretariat with due regard to equitable geographical distribution in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations”; Links with the **NUA**: p. 78 “We commit ourselves to supporting moving from reactive to more proactive risk-based, all hazards and all-of-society approaches, such as raising public awareness of risks and promoting ex-ante investments to prevent risks and build resilience, while also ensuring timely and effective local responses to address the immediate needs of inhabitants affected by natural and human-made disasters and conflicts.”; Link to **SDGs**: Target 11.5 “By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.”
- 18 See for example, OHCHR, [Update report: Six-month update report on the human rights situation in Gaza: 1 November 2023 – 30 April 2024](#), 2024
- 19 See for example, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, [Efforts to reconstruct human settlements in Ukraine affected by war, Report of the Executive Director](#), 2024, which found that in Ukraine, “over 10% of the housing stock is either damaged or destroyed and close to 2 million households are affected.”
- 20 UN Women, [Accelerating action for gender-responsive disaster risk reduction](#), 2023.
- 21 Links to the **BDPfA**: Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women, P. 258 (iii) “Analysis of the structural links between gender relations, environment and development, with special emphasis on particular sectors, such as agriculture, industry, fisheries, forestry, environmental health, biological diversity, climate, water resources and sanitation”; Links to the **NUA**: P. 13 “We envisage cities and human settlements that (g) Adopt and implement disaster risk reduction and management, reduce vulnerability, build resilience and responsiveness to natural and human-made hazards and foster mitigation of and adaptation to climate change”; SDG 11 Target 11.b “By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.”
- 22 UN Women, [Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected](#), 2022.
- 23 UN Women, [Facts and figures: Economic Empowerment](#), 2024

- 24 UN Women, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024](#).
- 25 <https://climatechange.moe.gov.lb/vulnerability-and-adaptation>
- 26 Links to the **BDPFA**: Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty, P. 58 (m) "Enable women to obtain affordable housing and access to land by, among other things, removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female heads of household"; Links to the **NUA**: several references, but for example, P. 32 "We commit ourselves to promoting the development of integrated and age- and gender-responsive housing policies and approaches across all sectors, in particular the employment, education, health-care and social integration sectors, and at all levels of government – policies and approaches that incorporate the provision of adequate, affordable, accessible, resource-efficient, safe, resilient, well-connected and well-located housing, with special attention to the proximity factor and the strengthening of the spatial relationship with the rest of the urban fabric and the surrounding functional areas."; Links to the **SDGs**: SDG 11 Target 11.1 "By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums."
- 27 See for example: [General Assembly Resolution A/Res/76/133](#) (2021), Inclusive policies and programmes to address homelessness, including in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and its follow up resolution [A/Res/78/172](#) (2023).
- 28 [Habitat Assembly Resolution Hsp/HA.2/Res.7](#), Adequate housing for all (2023).
- 29 UN-Habitat, State of efforts to progressively realize adequate housing for all: Report of the Executive Director, 2024
- 30 UN-Habitat, [Women and housing: Towards inclusive cities](#), 2014.
- 31 Links to the **BDPFA**: Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty, P. 58 (m) "Enable women to obtain affordable housing and access to land by, among other things, removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female heads of household"; Links to the **NUA**: See for example P. 35: "We commit ourselves to promoting, at the appropriate level of government, including subnational and local government, increased security of tenure for all, recognizing the plurality of tenure types, and to developing fit-for-purpose and age-, gender- and environment-responsive solutions within the continuum of land and property rights, with particular attention to security of land tenure for women as key to their empowerment, including through effective administrative systems."; Links to the **SDGs**: SDG 5 Target 5.a: "Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws."
- 32 UN Women, [Facts and figures: Economic empowerment, 2024](#)
- 33 Commission on the Status of Women 62nd edition, "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls," Report of the UN Secretary General, Section II entitled "Attaining the right to an adequate standard of living," Para III-22.
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- 35 The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Rural Women and Land and Property Rights".
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- 38 RTC. (2019). Forest Research and Training Centre. Ministry of Forests and Environment, Babarmal Kathmandu, Nepal. The report outlines 21.88% under cropland and an additional 1.15% under settlements.
- 39 REACH, [Afghanistan Informal Settlements Assessment](#), May – June 2020
- 40 Links to the **BDPFA**, see for example: Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services, P. 106 (x) "Ensure the availability of and universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation and put in place effective public distribution systems as soon as possible"; Links to **NUA**: see for example P. 34 "We commit ourselves to promoting equitable and affordable access to sustainable basic physical and social infrastructure for all, without discrimination, including affordable serviced land, housing, modern and renewable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation, safe, nutritious and adequate food, waste disposal, sustainable mobility, health care and family planning, education, culture, and information and communications technologies. We further commit ourselves to ensuring that these services are responsive to the rights and needs of women, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples and local communities, as appropriate, and to those of others in vulnerable situations. In this regard, we encourage the elimination of legal, institutional, socioeconomic and physical barriers."; Links to the **SDGs**: SDG 6, Target 6.2: "By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations."
- 41 WHO / UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for water supply, sanitation and hygiene, [Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000 – 20022](#)
- 42 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, [The Gender Snapshot 2024](#), 2024.
- 43 UN Water, [Summary Progress Update 2021: SDG 6 – water and sanitation for all](#), 2021.
- 44 Women in Water, [Closing Gender Gaps in Water Jobs](#)
- 45 Links with the **BDPFA**, see for example: Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade, P. 167 (d): "Ensure that women's priorities are included in public investment programmes for economic infrastructure, such as water and sanitation, electrification and energy conservation, transport and road construction; promote greater involvement of women beneficiaries at the project planning and implementation stages to ensure access to jobs and contracts."; Links with **NUA**, see for example: P. 54 "54. We commit ourselves to the generation and use of renewable and affordable energy and sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure and services, where possible, achieving the benefits of connectivity and reducing the financial, environmental and public health costs of inefficient mobility, congestion, air pollution, urban heat island effects and noise. We also commit ourselves to giving particular attention to the energy and transport needs of all people, particularly the poor and those living in informal settlements. We also note that reductions in renewable energy costs give cities and human settlements an effective tool to lower energy supply costs."; Links with **SDGs**, SDG 11, Target 11.2 "By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport,

- with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.”
- 46 Stockholm Environment Institute, The Republic of Kenya, KU-WEE and UN Women, [Women and public transport East Africa: Expanding available knowledge base about women and public transport in Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam](#), 2021.
  - 47 Solutions Plus, [Improving gender equality through electric mobility: Learnings from the SolutionsPlus pilot in Kigali, Rwanda](#).
  - 48 Solutions Plus, [Improving gender equality through electric mobility: Learnings from the SolutionsPlus pilot in Kigali, Rwanda](#).
  - 49 Links with the **BDPfA**, see for example: Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, P. 253 (g): “Promote the participation of local communities, particularly women, in identification of public service needs, spatial planning and the provision and design of urban infrastructure.”; Links to **NUA**: see for example P. 37: “We commit ourselves to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes, squares, waterfront areas, gardens and parks, that are multifunctional areas for social interaction and inclusion, human health and well-being, economic exchange and cultural expression and dialogue among a wide diversity of people and cultures, and that are designed and managed to ensure human development and build peaceful, inclusive and participatory societies, as well as to promote living together, connectivity and social inclusion.”; Links with **SDGs**: SDG 11, Target 11.7: “By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.”
  - 50 Her City, [Cities for Girls, Cities for All](#), 2022.
  - 51 Links to the **BDPfA**: see for example P. 26 “We are determined to promote women’s economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services.”; Links to the **NUA**, see for example P. 57: “We commit ourselves to promoting, as appropriate, full and productive employment, decent work for all and livelihood opportunities in cities and human settlements, with special attention to the needs and potential of women, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, refugees, and internally displaced persons and migrants, particularly the poorest and those in vulnerable situations, and to promote non-discriminatory access to legal income-earning opportunities.”; Links to the **SDGs**: SDG5, Target 5.a: “Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.”
  - 52 UN Women, [Facts and figures: Economic empowerment](#).
  - 53 Links to the **BDPfA**, see for example: P. 13 “We are convinced that women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”; Links to the **NUA**, see for example, P. 13 “We envisage cities and human settlements that (c) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal rights in all fields and in leadership at all levels of decision-making, by ensuring decent work and equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, for all women and by preventing and eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence and harassment against women and girls in private and public spaces.”; Links to the **SDGs**: SDG 5, Target 5.5: “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.”
  - 54 Links to the **BDPfA**, see for example Take measures to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making P. 192 (a) “Take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic decision-making positions.”; Links to the **NUA**, see for example, P. 13 “We envisage cities and human settlements that (c) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal rights in all fields and in leadership at all levels of decision-making, by ensuring decent work and equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, for all women and by preventing and eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence and harassment against women and girls in private and public spaces.”; Links to the **SDGs**: SDG 5, Target 5.5: “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.”
  - 55 <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/afghanistan-14-million-girls-still-banned-school-de-facto-authorities>





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