



# STATE OF WOMEN IN CITIES 2012-2013

## GENDER AND THE PROSPERITY OF CITIES



**STATE OF WOMEN  
IN CITIES 2012-2013**  
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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)  
P. O. Box 30030, 00100 Nairobi GPO KENYA  
Tel: 254-020-7623120 (Central Office)  
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# Acknowledgements

## **CORE TEAM:**

**Director:** Oyebanji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka

**Coordinator:** Lucia Kiwala

**Principal Authors:** Oyebanji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Lucia Kiwala

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## **LEAD CONSULTANTS:**

Sylvia Chant: Introductory Chapter and Composite Report  
Cathy McIlwaine: Summary and Composite Reports

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Government of Norway

## **STATISTICAL CONSULTANTS:**

Kaushalesh Lal and Boladale A. Adebowale

## **CITY REPORTS FOR POLICY ANALYSIS:**

Catherine Adeya: Cities Consolidated Report,  
Kaushalesh Lal and Boladale A. Adebowale:  
Statistical analytical reports.

## **CITY COORDINATORS:**

Aasha Ramesh (Bangalore), Maretha de Waal (Johannesburg),  
Carol D. Watson Williams (Kingston), Tabitha Ndegemo  
(Kampala), and Eliane Faerstein (Rio de Janeiro)

## **OTHER CONTRIBUTORS:**

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# Foreword



Equitable, inclusive and prosperous cities need to harness the full potential of all citizens – men, women, and the youth. This is important as the world grapples with the effects of the global economic and financial crisis that has resulted in food insecurity and widespread unemployment among women and youth. This report presents the

findings of a survey on perceptions of policy-makers, decision-makers, academics, and city dwellers on gender and the prosperity of cities. The report is UN-Habitat's contribution towards understanding the plight of women in cities. Following from the study, it suggests policy recommendations to enhance gender equality, equity and prosperity of women in cities.

Cities are recognised as engines of economic growth and centres of social, political, cultural and technological advancement. However, 21<sup>st</sup> Century cities and towns are divided cities and towns characterised by urban poverty amidst richness. This is exacerbated by poor practices in urban planning and design, inadequate land management and administration, poor physical and social infrastructure, and the lack of equitable distribution of resources and redistributive policies.

Women form the majority of the poor, and in some countries they form up to 70 per cent of the poor in both rural and urban areas. This is indeed a challenge, and the more reason why gender and the prosperity of cities need to be addressed by all concerned. For women, as well as men, the city's primary attraction is the possibility of economic opportunities which are unavailable to them in rural areas. Women migrate from rural to urban areas mainly in search of employment, and, in order to escape from poverty, gender-based violence, gender discrimination and disinheritance.

Moreover, there is evidence to show that future cities will be predominantly occupied by women, especially elderly women of 80 years and above, and female headed households. Yet cultures, value systems and beliefs, and to a large extent development policies and programmes are not changing at the same pace as the demographic shifts. Gender discrimination is still rife in social, economic, and political spheres.

The UN-Habitat gender study of 2012 shows that, first, urbanisation is largely associated with the prosperity of women in theory, but in practice few women actually benefit from economic growth and prosperity of cities. This is largely as a result of discriminatory practices and, the lack of formal recognition of women's reproductive work, and to some extent, undervaluation of

productive work, especially in the informal sector, where women are the majority. The world-over, women constitute the majority of care workers.

Second, women's economic empowerment is linked with economic productivity. However, lack of education and appropriate knowledge as well as skills are the main obstacles to women's prosperity, followed by lack of access to productive resources. Other factors include lack of access to land, property and security of tenure, lack of access to basic services, especially sanitation, as well as security and safety concerns in public spaces.

Third, the study highlights the promotion of entrepreneurship and the need to create productive employment opportunities as key policy actions required in order to enhance prosperity for women in cities. Fourth, the study affirms the need for increased investment in infrastructure development in order to lessen the reproductive work and time burdens on women, and to make urban planning and design more gender responsive, not only for the good of women, but to enhance prosperity for all.

The time is now ripe for cities and local governments to put in place gender equality policies, strategies and programmes which promote livelihoods and economic empowerment of women. In this regard, partnerships are fundamental to bringing about equitable and inclusive cities and ensure women's prosperity. NGOs, civil society, grassroots groups, academics, and all levels of government need to work together in promoting gender equality and equity in cities, while encouraging the effective participation of men and boys in both productive and reproductive work.

UN-Habitat's work on urban economy and employment creation aims to promote strategies and policies which are supportive of equitable economic development, creation of decent jobs, especially for youth and women, and improvement in municipal finance. We shall continue to provide evidence-based information on women in cities, and to ensure that our other programmes and flagship reports are gender responsive. I would like to encourage partnership and collaboration with other UN agencies, governments and other actors in our efforts to address women in cities, particularly urban poor women in slums and the informal economy by drawing on the evidence presented in this report.

**Joan Clos**

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
(UN-Habitat)

# Introduction

In focusing on gender in the prosperity of cities, the *State of Women in Cities 2012/13* reflects growing support for two main, and quite positive, ideas about urbanisation. First, cities are associated with the generation of wealth. Second, urban women enjoy greater social, economic and political opportunities and freedoms than their rural counterparts.

However, just as prosperity is not an inevitable outcome of urbanisation, nor is gender equality. There is considerable evidence to suggest that barriers to women's 'empowerment' remain widespread in urban environments. Nonetheless, broadening analysis away from the routine focus on women's poverty in cities, to their shares of prosperity offers an unexpected advantage insofar as it draws attention to a major hiatus between gendered inputs and gendered outcomes in urban contexts. While women in most developing countries contribute significantly to the 'prosperity of cities' through providing essential services, contributing substantially to urban housing stock, provisioning economically for households, and enhancing the 'quality of life' in their homes and communities, they are often the last to benefit. This is evidenced in notable gender gaps in labour and employment, 'decent work', pay, tenure rights, access to, and accumulation of assets, personal security and safety, and representation in formal structures of urban governance.

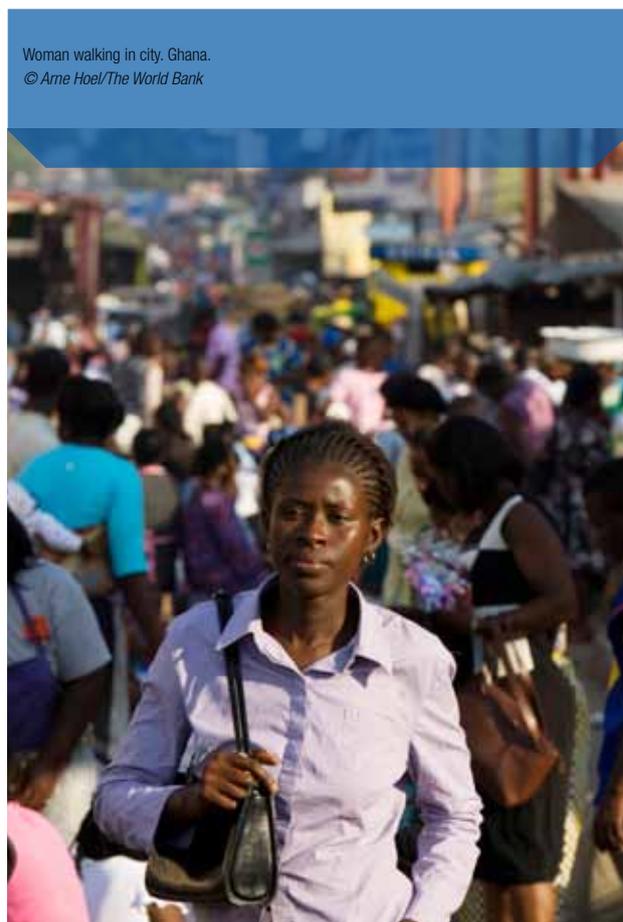
The persistent undervaluation of women's efforts, and their general lack of recompense or reward, constitute a compelling moral, economic, political and policy rationale to understand how prevailing inequalities between women and men play out in cities, and how these might be addressed effectively. Moreover, these inequalities have been worsened by the adverse impacts of the global financial and economic crises, the food and fuel crises, and climate change. Reaping the benefits of urban prosperity should be a right for all women and men, with the added spin-off that greater social, economic and political equality within cities is good for growth and sustainability.

Women experience different barriers and opportunities in cities. It is therefore essential to identify not only the experiences of poor women living in cities, but also the young, the elderly, the married, the single, the rich, the professional, those from different ethnic groups, sexual orientation and employment status not to mention spatial location in the city, particularly with reference to slum and non-slum areas.<sup>1</sup> Although the focus in this report is on women, reference is made to men where relevant reflecting a 'relational' approach that emphasises the dynamic interactions and negotiations around power that underpin women and men's identities and roles.<sup>2</sup>

Patterns of urbanisation and urban prosperity vary widely across developing regions. While the most urbanised region is Latin America with nearly four-fifths of the population residing in urban settlements, Asia, which is only 42 per cent urban, contains the largest number of mega-cities. India and China in particular, have also made the greatest strides in reducing the proportion of people living in slums. In Africa, by contrast, just under 40 per cent of the population is urban. Although cities produce the major share of regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP), rates of slum growth are virtually parallel with those for urban areas as a whole.

While levels of urbanisation and economic wealth broadly correspond positively, as well as display an inverse relationship with poverty, the correlation of these variables with quantitative indicators of gender equality is much less systematic. This undermines the common hypothesis that urbanisation and economic growth are good for women and suggests that in order for urban prosperity to reach women, more efforts to advance gender equality are required.

Woman walking in city, Ghana.  
© Arne Hoel/The World Bank





## SCOPE OF THE REPORT

The theme of *State of the World's Cities 2012/13* is urban prosperity, with the present report on *State of Women in Cities 2012/13* focusing on gender in the prosperity of cities. 'Prosperity' is invariably a positive term, implying "success, wealth, thriving conditions, wellbeing or good fortune".<sup>3</sup> However, it also needs to encompass equity, equality and participation and therefore the gendered dimensions of cities.

The *State of Women in Cities 2012/13* builds upon a growing body of gender-aware research and advocacy on the part of UN-Habitat,<sup>4</sup> including calls to make cities 'smarter' through promoting gender equality and its 2008-2013 Gender Equality Action Plan.<sup>5</sup> Such initiatives complement broader policy agendas for gender-equitable development which have been advanced by major organisations within the UN system, bilateral institutions, national governments, international and national NGOs, and grassroots women's movements since the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985),<sup>6</sup> as well as aiming to progress the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>7</sup>

The report not only draws on a wide range of academic research, official documentation and statistical data, but also on a UN-Habitat's survey of five cities namely Bangalore (India), Johannesburg (South Africa), Kampala (Uganda),

Kingston (Jamaica) and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) with a total of 691 policy-makers, non-government officials, business people and academics working in the field of urban and gender development, as well as informal city dwellers (the former constituted 55 per cent across all cities with a high of 83 per cent in Kampala and a low of 18 per cent in Kingston).<sup>8</sup> It dealt with perceptions of issues related to urban prosperity in relation to providing all its citizens with 'quality of life', 'productivity', 'infrastructure' and 'equity'.

The *State of Women in Cities 2012/13* comprises three parts. Part one – Gender and Urban Trends offers two chapters. Chapter 1.1 outlines the conceptual framework for understanding the relationships between gender and the prosperity of cities. This chapter explores ways of capturing women's energy, dynamism and innovation in cities to create multidimensional prosperity. Chapter 1.2 highlights gender and regional urban trends. Part two focuses on Gender and the Prosperity of Cities, and comprises four chapters. Chapter 2.1 considers gender and the quality of life in the prosperity of cities; Chapter 2.2 addresses the gendered nature of infrastructure; Chapter 2.3 deals with gender, productivity and employment; and Chapter 2.4 discusses prosperity and equity-based gender development. Part three reviews policies and institutions. The introduction, key actions, messages, and recommendations are presented at the beginning of the report.

# Key Messages

## 1. Cities of women, of older women, of female-headed households

With just over half of the world's current population living in cities, nearly all future demographic growth will be urban, will occur in developing regions, and will comprise a majority female component. Cities of the future will be marked by feminised urban sex ratios and pronounced in 'older' cohorts (>60 years) especially among the 'older old' (>80 years).<sup>9</sup> There will also be growing numbers of households headed by women based on patterns since the late 1980s to the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where the proportion of all urban households increased by 9.8 percentage points.

## 2. Urbanisation and prosperity of women interlinked in theory but not in practice

According to UN-Habitat's five city survey of 691 decision-makers, policy-makers and urban dwellers carried out in 2012, 69 per cent of respondents thought that urbanisation and the prosperity of women were related. However, only 7 per cent felt that women were actually 'prosperous across all types of dimensions' (in terms of quality of life, productivity, infrastructure, and equality), with only 4 per cent of people in Rio de Janeiro and Kingston stating this.

## 3. Spatial inequality: two-thirds think that 50 per cent of women have no access to secure housing

In the context of the fact that 40 per cent felt that their city was 'not fully committed' to promoting quality of life for women, 64 per cent of people across all cities, except Kampala, felt that 50 per cent or more women had no access to secure housing. Only 28 per cent in all cities thought that existing efforts to attain gender equity in access to housing tenure were 'advanced' or 'very advanced'. In turn, only 23 per cent noted that their city had policies to address the barriers facing women in securing land and property tenure. Gender discrimination in women's access to the rental sector must also be taken into account, especially as it has been more neglected policy-wise.

## 4. Safety and security are a major concern for women in cities

Security and safety were major concerns in all cities with one-third of urban dwellers not feeling safe at all in their city. This was especially marked in Johannesburg (42 per cent), Kingston (41 per cent) and Rio de Janeiro (41 per cent) all of which are cities that have notable problems with urban violence. Just over half of women stated that women increasingly had access to safe and secure public transport. This was most marked in the case

of Bangalore (60 per cent) with a low of 33 per cent in Rio de Janeiro.

## 5. Women need more equitable access to infrastructure, especially sanitation

Although over half (53 per cent) of the survey respondents thought that their cities were 'committed' in some form to promoting infrastructural development to fully engage women in urban development and productive work, only 22 per cent stated that they were 'fully committed' or 'committed', with a high of 39 per cent in Johannesburg. In turn, only 29.5 per cent of respondents felt that infrastructure was adequate, with lows of 15 per cent in Rio de Janeiro and 18.5 per cent in Kingston. The most problematic area was access to sanitation, especially in Bangalore and Rio de Janeiro. 50 per cent stated that sanitation and the burden of disease acted as barriers to the prosperity of women in cities.

## 6. Seventy per cent believe policies enhance women's productivity, especially by promoting entrepreneurship

More than two-thirds of survey respondents (68 per cent) thought that policies to promote productivity among women in cities were 'good', 'very good' or excellent'. Those in Rio de Janeiro were the least positive (51 per cent) while those in Johannesburg were the most (84 per cent). Related with this, 61 per cent thought that their city was committed to the promotion of women's productivity in some form. Entrepreneurship emerged as the most important factor in making the city more productive for women, followed by skills development.

## 7. Fifty per cent identify lack of gender equity in access to education and skills as barriers to women's economic empowerment

Women's empowerment is thought to be linked with economic productivity and lack of education and appropriate knowledge and skills were the main obstacles for women in attaining this (in 24 per cent of cases) followed by lack of access to productive resources. However, almost half of all respondents (49 per cent) felt that existing efforts to address gender equity in access to education were advanced or very advanced, especially in Kingston (82 per cent) and Johannesburg (62 per cent).

Girl working as gold-panner in Madagascar sifts heavy sand and rocks.  
© Guy Oliver/IRIN



### 8. More attention to women in the informal economy needed

Only a little over one-third (35 per cent) of city dwellers thought that their cities had programmes that addressed the needs of women working in the informal economy. In cases where programmes existed, almost half (48 per cent) thought that these sought to legalise informal activities, while 44 per cent aimed to move informal workers into the formal economy, with a further 42 per cent feeling that these programmes aimed to improve the quality of informal employment.

### 9. Sixty-five per cent of women related economic growth with gender equity, but still needs urgent attention

Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of city dwellers in the survey felt that economic growth was broadly related with gender equity. Almost half (47 per cent) thought that the relationship was 'somewhat positive' with a further 18 per cent suggesting it was 'highly positive'. Perceptions in Kingston and Johannesburg were the most affirmative.

### 10. Women residing in slums require special attention

Although women in slum and non-slum areas of cities experience a similar range of challenges in relation to gender inequalities, the greater concentration of poverty in slum settlements aggravated by overcrowding, insecurity, lack of access to security of tenure, water and sanitation, as well as lack of access to transport, and sexual and reproductive health services, often creates more difficult conditions for women in trying to achieve prosperity.

### 11. Gender equitable cities reward women and generate prosperity; but more dedicated gender policies needed in cities

While more than half of respondents (54 per cent) felt that there was some form of commitment to the equal participation of all women in social, economic, political and cultural spheres, only 23.5 per cent thought that their city was 'committed' or 'fully committed'. Indeed, 61 per cent thought that gender disparities in access to different social, economic and political opportunities were being reduced. More specifically, only 25 per cent felt that women had 'advanced' or 'very advanced' equal access to political representation. A history of class, ethnic and racial inequality was identified as the main factor limiting achieving greater levels of equity. Less than half of urban dwellers stated that their city had a dedicated gender policy (47 per cent). However, almost half (46 per cent) stated that their city had a policy that successfully contributed to gender equity. The actual policy or action thought to be most important in making the city more gender equitable was increased access to employment (19 per cent).

### 12. NGOs, civil society and governments need to collaborate in implementing gender equality policies

More than one-third of city dwellers identified NGOs and civil society as the most important set of institutions involved in the implementation of gender equality policies. In turn, government was also identified as important by just under one-third. However, almost half (47 per cent) thought that resources came from governments, followed some way behind by NGOs (20 per cent). Although the NGO and civil society sector is very diverse, this also suggests the importance of strengthening partnerships between all levels of government, especially cities and local authorities, and NGOs, civil society and grassroots women's organisations who are working on the ground and building multi-stakeholder alliances and partnerships.

### 13. Women experience time poverty due to inadequate urban services

Urban living exacerbates poverty with negative implications for women. The urban poor face specific circumstances which can exacerbate poverty such as spending more on food and services, especially water, sanitation, housing, energy and transport. This affects women disproportionately because they undertake unpaid caring and social reproductive activities such as childcare, domestic labour, community organising, as well as building and consolidating housing and providing basic services.

### 14. Urban prosperity is facilitated by women's unpaid reproductive work

Women provide the vast majority of unpaid domestic and caring labour, all of which is undervalued and unrecognised. However, this work allows the urban economy to function and without it prosperity would be difficult to achieve.

### 15. Women's growing economic contributions underpin urban prosperity

Women make crucially important economic contributions to the 'prosperity of cities' through their paid work. The 'feminisation' of the global labour force is associated with urbanisation, especially with the concentration of women in export-manufacturing, services, and niches in the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sector. This is often associated with declining fertility, increasing education levels and rising aspirations for women.

### 16. Women face more disadvantages in cities than men

Women are disadvantaged compared with men in cities in terms of equal access to employment and shelter, health and education, transport, asset ownership, experiences of urban violence, and ability to exercise their rights. These disadvantages are especially marked for poor urban women residing in informal settlements. Women's contributions are often ignored, especially by city officials, urban planners and development practitioners.

### 17. A holistic approach to understanding the gendered nature of urban prosperity is required to capture women's contributions

Conceptualising the gendered nature of urban prosperity involves interactions across a range of spheres and processes in the city. A holistic approach is needed in order to recognise the multidimensional inputs that women invest in generating urban prosperity and their juxtaposition with multidimensional privations. The gender and urban poverty nexus outlined in this report identifies the range of gender disparities that need to be reduced in order to generate prosperity and to facilitate the economic empowerment of women.

## Endnotes

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1 Khosla (2009)

2 Levy (2009); Jarvis et al (2009)

3 UN-Habitat (2010c, p. 7)

4 Kiwala (2005); UN-Habitat (2006a, 2007a)

5 UN-Habitat (2010b)

6 Chant and McIlwaine (2009, Chapter 8)

7 UN-Habitat (2008b)

8 This includes 167 interviewed in total in Bangalore, 100 in Johannesburg, 148 in Kampala, 136 in Kingston and 140 in Rio de Janeiro.

9 UNSD (2008:Table, 7, 155-253)

# Policy Recommendations and Actions

There are two key recommendations of this report followed by specific policy actions revolving around quality of life and infrastructure, productivity and equity in power and rights.

**Recommendation 1:** Strengthen livelihoods and women's economic empowerment strategies within the planning of cities and the delivery of basic services as key pre-requisites for equitable city prosperity

In doing so, it is important for policy and decision-makers, urban planners, and other practitioners within government, urban and local authorities and utility companies to ensure that elements of urban planning such as mixed land use, accessibility, mobility, safety and security, distribution of services, community buildings and recreation facilities, and social mix are more responsive to specific needs and priorities of women and girls, men and boys. This coupled with increased access to education, skills development, employment opportunities, physical and financial assets can contribute effectively to women's prosperity in cities.

**Recommendation 2:** Formulate gender policies and strengthen accountability for gender equality and equity at city level

Cities and local authorities are strategically placed to promote gender equality and equity by making the services they render and city bye-laws sensitive to the different realities of women and men in their localities. Cities and local authorities without dedicated gender policies are therefore encouraged to adopt gender policies, develop gender equality and women empowerment programmes with specific targets of achievement to facilitate monitoring progress. There is a need to strengthen partnerships between cities and local authorities on the one hand with gender experts, NGOs and civil society, grassroots organisations, academia and national machineries for women on the other, in order to facilitate capacity building in gender, local governance, gender budgeting and planning and economic development and to ensure accountability for gender equality and equity at city level.

## POLICY ACTIONS

### 1) Quality of life and infrastructure

(i) Women's disproportionate contributions to unpaid reproductive work to be valorised and supported

Unpaid reproductive work needs much greater valorisation and support to reflect its critical role in ensuring the daily regeneration of the labour force and the functioning of

urban life. This labour needs to be recognised in itself and on grounds that it constrains women's engagement in the labour market and most other urban 'opportunities'. It also inhibits the development of capabilities among younger generations of women who may have to pay for the expanded burdens of ageing mothers and other female kin. Direct attention to the burdens of childcare along with other types of unpaid care work typically performed by women can include community-based care options, work-based nurseries and care homes, state parental or carer support transfers, and dedicated private and/or public facilities.

(ii) Women's access to, and security in, housing

Pro-female housing rights initiatives should entail statutory joint or individual land and property titling, ideally accompanied by mechanisms to ensure that women are fully represented on committees which decide on land rights in communities which observe customary law. Support for paralegal services which assist women in their ability to realise their land and shelter entitlements is also crucial. These should extend to all women, including particularly marginalised constituencies of elderly women, widows, sick and disabled women, HIV-positive women, and individuals falling under the rubric of LBGT (Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender).

(iii) Greater public investment in basic services, especially in sanitation

The provision of better sanitation facilities together with better access to water will improve health and reduce women's reproductive labour and time burdens. At every stage in the planning, design, use and management of these services concerted efforts should be made to ensure the equal participation of women and men. The provision of more gender-sensitive or single sex public sanitary facilities will also assist in reducing violence against women and the school drop-out rate of girls in slums and informal settlements.

### 2) Productivity

(i) Improved access to gender-sensitive skills development

Long-term improvements in women's access to skills development to train them for a changing labour market are needed, especially in terms of skills that promote leadership and entrepreneurship and challenge gender-stereotypes as well as those that will allow women to capture the benefits of the new digital economy.

(ii) Promotion of 'decent work' and the rights of informal sector workers

Mechanisms for supporting small businesses and the self-employed are necessary. These include better provision for training with a view to enhancing the diversification of competitive informal activities, easier access to credit on favourable terms, assistance in promoting greater health and safety at work, and the reduction and/or phasing of costs of business formalisation.

(iii) Promotion of gender sensitive urban planning and design

Urban land use regulations restricting home-based enterprise establishment should be lifted, and regulations on upgrading rather than clearing slums, permitting greater access by informal entrepreneurs to public spaces as well as to middle-income and elite residential neighbourhoods, need to be encouraged in order to allow poor women have greater prospects of achieving 'prosperity'.

(iv) Women's unpaid and voluntary labour in slum communities and beyond should be paid or indirectly resourced

It is essential to create mechanisms to deal with women's unpaid care work and community voluntary work as part of any affirmative action to ensure non-discrimination against women. This might entail direct remuneration or payment in kind through preferential access to loans or use of other resources for free.

### 3) Equity in power and rights

(i) Multi-stakeholder planning mechanisms should include women's grassroots organisations as well as local and national governments, private sector, NGO and other civil society actors

Initiatives such as 'Local to Local Dialogue' and 'peer exchanges' involving shared learning, capacity building, and empowerment of women should be extended and scaled up. Developing grassroots women as leaders and as active participants in local decision-making processes and structures is also fundamental.

(ii) Affirmative action, gender quotas and leadership training in order to increase women's formal and informal political participation

Governments and political parties are encouraged to implement existing mandates of achieving 30 per cent or 50 per cent participation of women in politics and decision-making. Quotas are required to ensure women's access to formal political decision-making. Decentralisation efforts with its shift towards community participation can facilitate an increased role of women in local governance.

(iii) Gender-responsive pro-prosperity measures should not focus on anti-poverty programmes

It is important that gender-sensitive projects should not become poverty projects as these usually end up giving women more unpaid work. In order to counter the 'feminisation of responsibility' or adverse effects of the 'feminisation of policy', it is vital for poverty reduction programmes to promote the greater engagement of men.

(iv) Principles of gender rights and justice should be central to urban prosperity discourse and planning

This must involve attempts to ensure equality of opportunity and outcome through effective monitoring and enforcement, and to enjoin (and ensure) male participation at all scales, ranging from the household and community, to cities and nations as a whole. Mainstreaming gender effectively at all levels of policy dialogue and engagement is required.

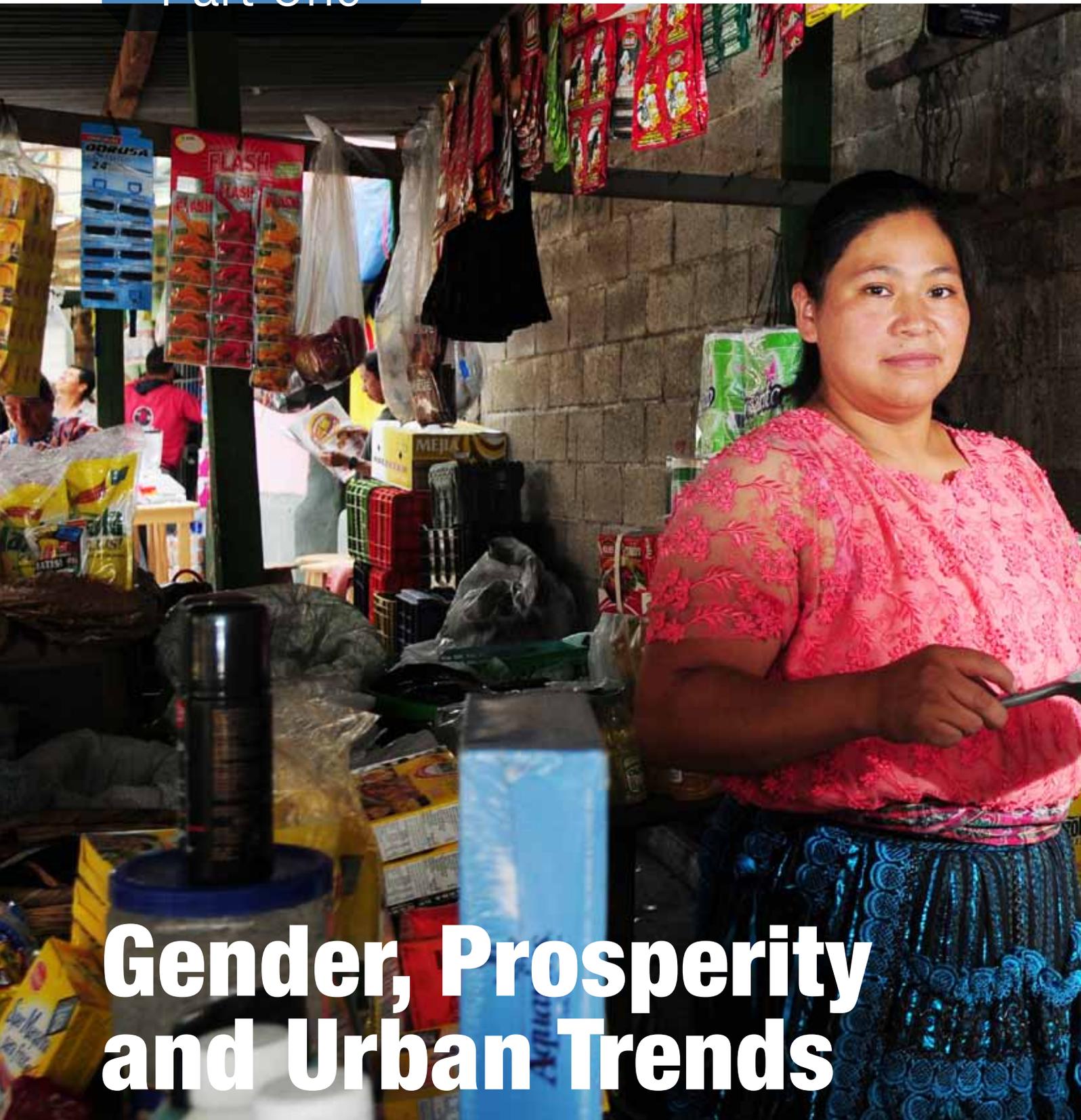
(v) More sex- and space-disaggregated baseline information

Data should be collected at national and city level clearly capturing the differences between rural and urban areas, and between slum and non-slum parts of the city within urban areas. This is essential for gender mainstreaming and for developing strategies to ensure that urban prosperity becomes more gender equitable.



Nearly 575 doctors have completed a three year specialization in Family Medicine that did not exist at the start of the reform. 2010. Bosnia and Herzegovina.  
© *Olja Latinovic / World Bank*

## Part One



# Gender, Prosperity and Urban Trends





# Chapter 1.1



## Conceptualising Gender and the Prosperity of Cities

### WHAT ARE PROSPEROUS CITIES?

Prosperous cities are predominantly associated with positive rates of economic growth and material wealth. This relates to the fact that almost three-quarters (70 per cent) of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across the world is generated in cities and that cities are often the economic powerhouses of nations.<sup>1</sup> Yet urbanisation and prosperity do not automatically go hand-in-hand as economic growth does not always trickle down to guarantee equity in terms of well-being, especially in relation to access to basic services, employment and housing.<sup>2</sup> There is extensive evidence that urbanisation has also created widespread poverty, inequality, poor living conditions, insecurity and violence for many people in cities.<sup>3</sup> This is especially the case in relation to those residing in slum communities in the Global South. Here, slum dwellers occupy homes and live in communities which suffer from one or more shelter deprivations. These include low quality of building materials, overcrowding, access to water and sanitation, or security of tenure. While it is not always appropriate to equate officially-

designated slums and poverty,<sup>4</sup> poverty tends to be more prevalent in slums than non-slum settlements. As of 2010, nearly 1 billion urban inhabitants worldwide resided in slum housing. Over 90 per cent were concentrated in developing regions, ranging from an estimated one-quarter (23.6 per cent) of the urban population in Latin America and the Caribbean, to around one-third in South eastern Asia (31 per cent) and Southern Asia (35 per cent), to nearly two-thirds in sub-Saharan Africa (61.7 per cent).<sup>5</sup>

However, it is now generally accepted that the spatial concentration and proximity characterising cities remain crucial in the generation of economic, social and cultural prosperity.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a prosperous city needs to foster economic growth and material wealth together with the well-being of the people who reside there, adopting a multidimensional perspective that extends beyond income.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that to be truly prosperous, cities require equitable access to the necessities for building human capabilities and well-being such as services, infrastructure, livelihoods, housing and healthcare, alongside proper vehicles for civic engagement and multi-stakeholder governance.

This access to assets, resources and rights needs to be shared among urban dwellers from all backgrounds in equitable ways in order to ensure prosperity (See Table 1.1.1). If these various elements are achieved, then cities will become 'engines of growth' as well as generate more gender equitable development outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

Table 1.1.1:

**Defining a Prosperous City****A prosperous city is one that fosters:**

<b>Productivity</b>	Contributes to economic growth and development, generates income, provides decent jobs and equal opportunities for all by implementing effective economic policies and reforms
<b>Infrastructure development</b>	Provides adequate infrastructure— water, sanitation, transport, information and communication technology in order to improve urban living and enhance productivity, mobility and connectivity
<b>Quality of life</b>	Enhances the use of public spaces in order to increase community cohesion, civic identity, and guarantees the safety and security of lives and property
<b>Equity and social inclusion</b>	Ensures the equitable distribution and redistribution of the benefits of a prosperous city, reduces poverty and the incidence of slums, protects the rights of minority and vulnerable groups, enhances gender equality, and ensures civic participation in the social, political and cultural spheres
<b>Environmental sustainability</b>	Values the protection of the urban environment and natural assets while ensuring growth, and seeking ways to use energy more efficiently, minimize pressure on surrounding land and natural resources, minimize environmental losses by generating creative solutions to enhance the quality of the environment

Source: UN-Habitat (2010c)

### Everyone should have rights to the city

Awareness of the negative dimensions of urban growth and recognition that prosperity does not automatically reduce poverty or inequality has generated new ideas about urban management. These acknowledge that prioritising social and environmental issues and employment generation is best for growth, as proposed in ‘smart growth’<sup>9</sup> or ‘smart cities’ approaches.<sup>10</sup> Fostering the links between infrastructure and human capital investment in ‘smarter’ more democratic and socially just ways is more likely to make cities prosperous, but also sustainable.<sup>11</sup>

As part of this, everyone should have ‘rights’ to the city.<sup>12</sup> This shift towards greater social inclusivity and equality also means that a ‘prosperous city’ is a space where women and men should enjoy equal rights and opportunities.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, as more inclusive cities are good for growth, gender equality can make cities ‘smarter’ still with gender-aware and fair ‘smart growth’ also demanding ‘smart management’.<sup>14</sup>

This also has wider implications for development processes as outlined in the World Bank’s *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* which notes: ‘Gender equality matters ... as an instrument for development’.<sup>15</sup> This ‘smart economics’ approach argues that economic growth can be positively linked with providing greater opportunities for levelling the playing field between women and men.<sup>16</sup> As such, it is suggested that: ‘The general view is that economic development and growth are good for gender equality, and conversely, that greater gender equality is good for

development’.<sup>17</sup> Although this perspective may ‘instrumentalise’ women rather than promote their human rights, the ends may arguably justify the means.<sup>18</sup>

UN-Habitat Pakistan team with gender audit consultant in Islamabad urban poor communities  
© UN-Habitat/Sylvia Chant



Therefore, while there are often deep pockets of disadvantage in urban areas and a widely-noted ‘urbanisation of poverty’, shifting attention to the prosperity of cities can highlight the considerable potential for poverty reduction.<sup>19</sup> Such a focus may also help to dispel some misleading stereotypes about ‘Third World’ cities and slums.<sup>20</sup> However, the multidimensional nature of urban prosperity must constantly be kept in mind.

## THE GENDERED NATURE OF URBAN POVERTY AND PROSPERITY

There are four main reasons why it is important to consider gender in relation to the prosperity of cities. First, with just over half of the world's current population living in cities, nearly all future demographic growth will be urban and occur in developing regions and will comprise a majority female component. Cities of the future, especially in the developing world will be marked by feminised urban sex ratios and pronounced in 'older' cohorts (>60 years) and dramatically so among the 'older old' (>80 years). There will also be growing numbers of households headed by women. For example, between the late 1980s and end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, female-headed households as a proportion of all urban households in Latin America increased by a mean of 9.8 percentage points.

Second, there are many specific conditions in cities that exacerbate poverty and which have gendered implications. The urban poor face specific circumstances which can exacerbate and perpetuate poverty. For instance, they spend a disproportionate amount on water, accommodation and transport and are especially affected by changes in food prices. The urban poor also face many practical and health problems due to lack of adequate sanitation and services.<sup>21</sup> Many of these conditions affect women most because they undertake unpaid caring and social reproductive activities such as childcare, caring for the sick, disabled and elderly, washing, cleaning and community organising, as well as building and consolidating housing and providing basic services and infrastructure. All these activities allow the urban economy to function and prosper, even if this labour is seldom recognised or valued.<sup>22</sup>

Third, women make crucially important economic contributions to the 'prosperity of cities' through their paid work. The 'feminisation' of the global labour force tends to be associated with urbanisation, with the related concentration of women in export-manufacturing, the service sector and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT). This can have other important implications for women such as declining fertility, increasing education levels and rising aspirations. It has been suggested that women are key drivers of economic growth and that wealth in the hands of women leads to much more equitable outcomes in terms of the quality of life of families and communities. As such, 'women are a city's greatest asset, and contribute heavily to sustainable urban development'.<sup>23</sup>

Fourth, women are invariably disadvantaged compared with men in cities in terms of equal access to employment, housing, health and education, asset ownership, experiences of urban violence, and ability to exercise their rights. These disadvantages are especially marked for poor urban women residing in slums and informal settlements. In addition, women's contributions are often ignored, especially by city officials, urban planners and development practitioners.

Addressing the barriers to women's participation in cities creates a situation where women's potential is more fully realised and households, communities and governments also reap rewards. It is imperative that women and men should enjoy equal rights and opportunities in cities on moral/ethical, economic and political grounds. Addressing these gender inequalities is also essential in bringing about women's empowerment and especially their economic empowerment. This will not only engender women's well-being but it will increase their individual and collective prosperity as well as the prosperity of the cities in which they reside.

Ultimately, these processes have contradictory outcomes for women, and to a lesser extent men. The key issue is therefore to make sure women's contributions, and especially their non-remunerated tasks are taken into account in order to ensure that urban prosperity can become a reality for all. In turn, this has very important implications for women's empowerment in cities. In order to consider these issues more systematically, the report now turns to the conceptual framework that has been developed to understand urban prosperity and gender.

## URBAN PROSPERITY, GENDER AND EMPOWERMENT NEXUS

### Conceptualising gendered poverty and empowerment

Despite considerable theoretical advances in understanding gendered poverty and a long-standing recognition of the need to 'en-gender' urban analysis and policy, the field of conceptualising gender in relation to urban prosperity is much less established.<sup>24</sup> This is possibly because women are more often the 'losers' rather than 'winners' in urban environments, as they are in societies more generally.

However, recent analyses of 'gendered poverty', and especially the 'feminisation of poverty', provide an important foundation for creating a conceptual framework for the gendered prosperity of cities. This has entailed important critiques of the notion of a 'feminisation of poverty', particularly the argument that most of the world's poor are women and that women's poverty is increasing which is linked with a rise in female headed households, especially in cities. Although women household heads are often income-poor, this hides other advantages for women living on their own. These include being able to distribute household resources as they wish and being less likely to experience 'secondary poverty'. The latter occurs when men withhold income from household budgets for themselves and to the detriment of women and children's well-being. Thus, women heads can control decision-making and live their lives freer from personal constraints.

Yet while these issues have demonstrated that women's poverty cannot be encapsulated by income alone, this does not mean that women do not face multiple challenges when heading their own households. Female heads are not only likely to continue to have disproportionate responsibility for unpaid and care work, which are especially onerous in urban contexts characterised by limited access to basic services and difficult environmental circumstances, but tend also to have to engage in paid work too.<sup>25</sup>

By the same token, 'double burdens' of labour are increasingly affecting all women and has led scholars like Sylvia Chant to advance an alternative formulation of the 'feminisation of poverty' under the rubric of a 'feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation'. This stresses the importance of labour, time and assets and the fact that privation is not associated with female household headship alone.<sup>26</sup> In addition, examining the relationship between gender and poverty requires analysis of labour markets, households and states in a holistic way.<sup>27</sup>

Another important factor in conceptualising gender and the prosperity of cities has been work on women's empowerment and especially their economic empowerment. Although the notion of 'empowerment' is one of the most contested terms used today, it remains very important especially in relation to women and gender. Many draw implicitly and explicitly on the work of Michel Foucault in their thinking on empowerment highlighting it as a process rather than an end state. Following this, Rowlands has identified empowerment as a way of accessing decision-making as well as changing the ways in which people think about themselves in relation to three core dimensions: the 'personal', 'close relationships' and the 'collective'.<sup>28</sup> She developed a typology of different types of power, all of which interrelate and need to be combined (See Box 1.1.1). There can therefore be several pathways to empowerment that take time, effort and structural change in order to be realised.

The notion of 'women's empowerment' has been in wide circulation in policy discourse since the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995, where the Platform for Action was billed as an 'agenda for women's empowerment' that focused on shared power and responsibility. It has also been operationalised by different international agencies.

More recently, however, the concept has been criticised on grounds that since development agencies have adopted the term it has become 'softer' and 'more conciliatory' and fails to address the underlying structural inequalities and pervasive discrimination that requires women to be empowered in the first place.<sup>29</sup> In addition, although many definitions of empowerment refer to 'choice', many poor women do not have

### Box 1.1.1

#### Types of power that underpin empowerment processes

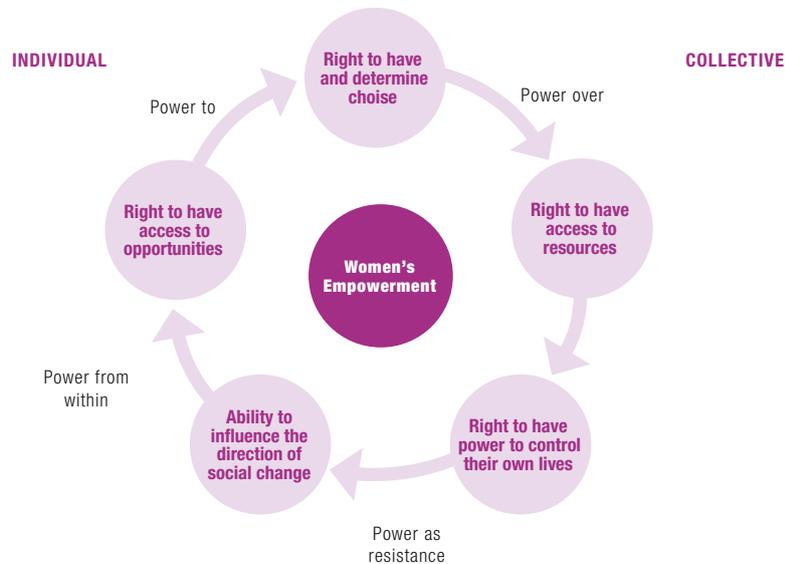
- **Power over:** domination/subordination involving threats of violence, fear and intimidation by individual or group. May be overt.
- **Power from within:** spiritual strength which is self-generated. Refers to self confidence, self awareness and assertiveness. Changes from within and also about challenging power.
- **Power with:** people organising with common purpose or understanding to achieve collective goals. Sense of communion and solidarity as power.
- **Power to:** gain access to full range of human abilities and potential which allows women to have decision-making authority.
- **Power as resistance:** compliment to power over and neither are found alone. Manipulation. Resistance takes lots of forms from subtle to overt

Sources: Rowlands (1996); Chant and McIlwaine (2009)

the luxury of being able to make choices. It can be difficult to impose empowerment through interventions because it entails changing gender ideologies which can only be brought about by psycho-social and political transformation as well as those linked with the material conditions of life (See Figure 1.1.1).<sup>30</sup>

Women's economic empowerment is sometimes used instead of the more general notion of empowerment. However, this too is inherently multidimensional and multi-scalar. It is essential to recognise that women's economic empowerment extends beyond women's economic position in terms of work, income, education and assets to encompass other social and political dimensions.<sup>32</sup> More specifically, this requires skills and resources to compete in markets, fair and equal access to economic institutions, and the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits in terms of exercising power and agency.<sup>33</sup> These ideas have also been incorporated into definitions of women's economic empowerment that have been outlined by various agencies. These include the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) definition that refers to woman's ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions,<sup>34</sup> and UN Women's framework which focuses on increasing assets for women.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 1.1.1

**Conceptualising women's empowerment<sup>31</sup>****Conceptualising gender and urban prosperity**

It is clear that a 'holistic' concept of the prosperity of cities is especially appropriate in respect of gender. This is because of the importance of recognising the multidimensional inputs women invest in generating urban prosperity which is juxtaposed with the multidimensional privations they face. It can be argued that thinking about gender in relation to prosperity arguably provides a sharper focus on the gap between women's inputs to and outcomes from the wealth-generating possibilities of cities and the implications of these processes for women's economic empowerment

Conceptualising the gendered nature of urban prosperity therefore involves interactions across a range of spheres and processes in cities. Sylvia Chant (2011b; 2013) has developed a framework for analysing these issues identifying the critical elements in conceptualising gender and the prosperity of cities. Especially important in the notion of gender disparities are the pervasive inequalities that exist between women and men in relation to their access to resources, power, opportunities, and freedom of movement. These revolve around the following: gender and urban demographics, gender divisions of labour in the urban economy, gender disparities in human capital; gender gaps in physical and financial capital/assets, gender disparities in space, mobility and connectivity, and gender disparities in power and rights (Figure 1.1.2).

It is also essential to note that all these issues are interrelated in complex ways. In addition, each set of elements relates directly to the issue of economic empowerment, and in order to be able to understand economic empowerment all these need to be considered to varying degrees depending on the context. Furthermore, ensuring urban prosperity through harnessing women's potential necessitates consideration of the economic empowerment of women at individual and collective levels. Prior to presenting the urban prosperity and gendered economic empowerment nexus the following is an elaboration of the core components outlined in Figure 1.1.2.

**Gender and urban demographics**

A range of demographic factors play an important part in establishing the context for comprehending women's lives and their intersections with prosperity in urban environments.

**Fertility and reproductive rights**

A key process is the relationship between the demographic transition and urbanisation of which a key aspect is lower fertility levels in cities. The latter is generally regarded as a key dimension in women's empowerment.<sup>37</sup> However, despite lower Total Fertility Rates (TFRs) in urban as opposed to rural areas, access to safe and adequate contraception is uneven with the result that fertility is higher among poorer groups of the population and in slums than in wealthier urban neighbourhoods. These disparities are rooted in a range of

Figure 1.1.2

**Critical elements in conceptualising gender and the prosperity of cities<sup>36</sup>**

factors including lack of information on reproductive health, unmet needs for family planning and an above-average incidence of teenage pregnancy and early marriage in slums. Similar patterns exist in various other countries for which data are available, and also show that this is often associated with early school drop-out among girls, which undoubtedly plays a part in perpetuating gender gaps in urban prosperity.

These gaps are also underpinned by social relations in that women may be denied rights to use birth control measures where paternity is socially important to men. The ability of young women in particular to exert control over their fertility is affected by disparities between their own age and economic status and those of male partners on whom they may rely for support. In addition, children are an important economic, social, and emotional resource for poor urban residents, as well as a means of women legitimising their 'female' identities, all of which have implications for women's empowerment.<sup>38</sup>

### Cities of women

Many cities in the developing world have a predominantly or growing population of women. Feminised urban sex ratios reflect the cumulative gender-selectivity of rural-urban migration, with Latin America standing out as a region in which more women than men have moved to towns and cities over the past several decades, along with some countries in Southeast Asia such as Thailand and Viet Nam.<sup>39</sup>

Traditionally lower levels of female rural-urban migration in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have been explained by factors such as socio-cultural restrictions on independent female movement, virilocal marriage (where a married couple reside with the husband's parents), and the encouragement of young men to gain experience in the city as a form of masculine 'rite of passage'.<sup>40</sup> Also important has been the comparative lack of employment opportunities for women in towns and cities. However, upward trends in female migration in these regions also stem from rural women's cumulative disadvantage in land acquisition and inheritance coupled with economic deterioration in the countryside.<sup>41</sup> Also important have been women who are HIV-positive moving to access medical treatment in urban areas, as well as to avoid stigmatisation, escape domestic violence and a range of other 'harmful traditional practices' such as Female Genital Cutting (FGC).<sup>42</sup>

### Cities of older women

In most countries of the developing world, urban sex ratios are most pronounced in 'older' cohorts (>60 years) and dramatically so among the 'older old' (>80 years). In sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries, 'older old' women outnumber their male counterparts by nearly two to one, while in those for East Asia the ratio is nearly 150 to 100. Even in India, where the ratio is significantly lower, the older old cohort is still distinctly feminised. Given a common association between advanced age and poverty, especially

among women, this phenomenon effectively undermines urban prosperity. See Annex 1 Urban Sex Ratios by 10- year age cohort – two most urbanised countries in major developing regions.

### 'Cities of female-headed households'

In countries with 'feminised' urban sex ratios, female-headed households are particularly common in towns and cities. In Latin America for example, there have been dramatic rises in urban female household headship over the past twenty years. Between the late 1980s and end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, female-headed households as a proportion of all urban households increased by a mean of 9.8 percentage points. Paraguay saw the greatest rise with a 17 percentage point change, followed by the region's three most urbanised countries (Argentina, Brazil and Chile).

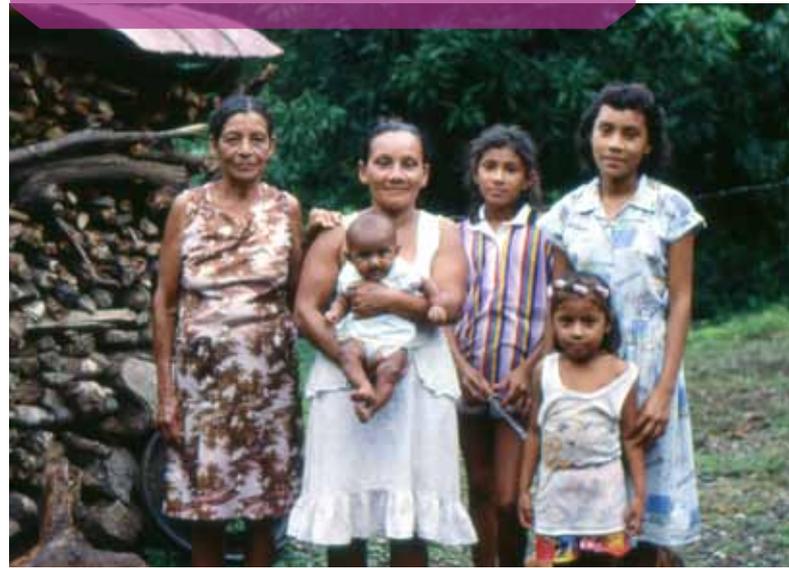
Despite the general tendency for rising levels of female household headship in urban areas to parallel upward trends in urbanisation, there is no significant statistical relationship between the two. For example, Panama has experienced a 21 per cent increase in urbanisation in the past two decades, but a rise in urban female household headship of only 8 per cent, whereas urbanisation in Uruguay has nudged up by a mere 3 per cent, compared with a 13 per cent increase in the proportion of urban households headed by women.<sup>43</sup>

The tendency for female headed households to be more prevalent in urban than rural areas is not just a function of demographics, but of a wide range of economic and social factors associated with urban environments. These include greater access to employment and independent earnings, lessened entanglement in and control by patriarchal kinship systems, and higher levels of urban female land and property ownership.<sup>44</sup>

### Gendered divisions of labour in the urban economy

The health of urban economies owes as much to the unpaid 'reproductive' labour that fall disproportionately on women's shoulders at household and community levels as to the more valued remunerated work where men's labour is concentrated and which is registered in GDP and in the System of National Accounts (SNA).<sup>45</sup> Although women across developing regions are increasingly engaging in paid as well as unpaid activities, this has not been matched by an increase in domestic labour and unpaid care work among men.<sup>46</sup> These inequities add-up to a female-biased reproduction tax<sup>47</sup> which undermines women's productivity gains and their prospects of benefitting from and contributing to urban prosperity. In turn, due to a combination of gender discrimination and persistent links between women and unpaid tasks, women's labour in the marketplace is frequently accorded lower value regardless of the work itself.<sup>48</sup> In addition, women's remunerated activities tend to be informal rather than formal, and home-based rather than

Four-generational female-headed household in a peri-urban slum in Santa Cruz, Costa Rica  
© UN-Habitat/Sylvia Chant



extra-domestic. They are also of a smaller, less capitalised scale than men's income-generating ventures and almost always with lower remuneration.<sup>49</sup> There is also widespread 'segmentation by sex' within urban labour markets associated with wage gaps and other forms of inequality such as uneven access to health insurance and pensions which are determined by a combination of social and gender norms and market forces.<sup>50</sup>

Another important consideration in analysing gender and urban prosperity from the perspective of labour and productivity relates to the inter-generational effects of women's increasing involvement in remunerated work. Since reproductive labour displays a remarkably persistent association with women, and given major deficits in non-family forms of domestic and unpaid care support, when mothers work, their daughters often have to assume greater shares of reproductive labour which may provoke absenteeism from, or weaker performance, at school or early-drop out, thereby inhibiting their own accumulation of human capital.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, there is a long-standing debate about the extent to which paid employment empowers women. On one hand, are those who suggest that women are fairly uniformly exploited by their incorporation into the labour market. On the other hand, are those who argue that women's paid employment is emancipatory and fairly uniformly positive. The reality is somewhere in between and it depends on context, place, type of work, life course, and the interplay between working conditions and wider social relations. Of critical importance is whether work is 'alienating or fulfilling', at home or outside home. It is the type of work that is significant in terms of empowerment rather than labour force involvement in itself, as well as a commensurate redistribution of unpaid reproductive labour to men at the household level.<sup>52</sup>

## Gender disparities in human capital

Education, human capital development and a skilled workforce are foundational to urban prosperity. Education, vocational training and skills development provide people with opportunities to develop their capacities to enhance participation in all economic, social, cultural and political spheres of urban life. Gender disparities in human capital, are critical in terms of women's participation in labour markets and economic growth overall.<sup>51</sup>

Gambian schoolgirl minding infant  
© UN-Habitat/Sylvia Chant



Human capital is also an integral aspect of 'personhood', affecting women's general capacities, their self-esteem and their ability to exert agency.<sup>54</sup> Educated women, on average, delay marriage and childbirth, are less vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, enjoy more power in their homes and in public arenas, and have fewer children who also tend to be healthier and better educated.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, the accumulation of human capital is essential for ensuring women's empowerment and especially their economic empowerment as well as contributing to the wider prosperity of cities.

In terms of Millennium Development Goal 2, while improvements in primary school education have been substantial in many countries, they have not been sufficient to meet the goal of universal primary education by 2015. There are disparities in education between slum and non-slum parts of the cities. In Delhi, for instance, which harbours one of the largest disparities in urban India, the gap is 19 per cent for children aged 6-17 years in general and in Nigeria slum dwelling children are up to 35 per cent less likely to attend school than their non-slum counterparts. These disparities tend to grow up the educational hierarchy. The multiple barriers to girls' education not only affect women and their families but also impede the prosperity of all.

## Gender gaps in physical and financial capital/assets

Gender gaps in what can be viewed as productive assets such as land and property constitute another fundamental element in analysing unequal shares of urban prosperity. In most parts of the world women's access to these major assets is compromised through male-biased inheritance, discriminatory titling procedures, female disenfranchisement on death or desertion by spouses, or separation and divorce, and male control of property even where women possess legal or customary entitlements to conjugal or paternal holdings.<sup>56</sup>

The location and quality of land and housing can have major effects on the lives of women given the disproportionate time they spend in the home in their roles as primary providers of domestic labour and unpaid care work, especially in slums. While property is a 'private' asset, access to public goods such as infrastructure and especially public transportation as well as various physical investments in urban environments such as street lighting, parks, community centres or meeting places all affect women's safety, productivity and empowerment.

Women's equitable access to financial assets such as credit, savings, insurance, and remittance transfers is crucial not only in terms of reducing poverty but also in ensuring their economic empowerment and the wider prosperity of cities. The arena that has received most attention in relation to such assets has been micro-finance referring to banking and financial services, usually through small lending programmes which target low-income groups and especially women who have traditionally been excluded from formal financial systems. Drawing on the Grameen Bank experience in Bangladesh, in 2007 micro-finance organisations across the world had 154.8 million clients of which 106.6 million were among the poorest in the society and among which 83 per cent of the latter were women.<sup>57</sup> Although this lending to women was initially for instrumental reasons in that they were found to be more likely to pay back their loans, early research claimed these initiatives could empower women. However, evidence from a range of different contexts has since shown that micro-finance does not automatically empower women but that it depends on the context and the other institutional mechanisms in place to support women.<sup>58</sup>

Despite a huge diversity in the types of micro-finance initiatives available in terms of collective and individual lending and types of loans, it is widely acknowledged that some form of educational and organisational initiatives need to be provided alongside the provision of credit if women are to benefit significantly. For instance, Pro Mujer which works in several Latin American countries including Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Nicaragua and Mexico provides holistic micro-finance initiatives that revolve around various types of financial services, business and empowerment training that include a focus on gender-based violence, communication and leadership skills, as well as low-cost health care services.<sup>59</sup>

PARDO - Ciclovía, BOGOTÁ.  
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### Gender divisions in space, mobility and connectivity

Women are often much more constrained than men in terms of their physical access to urban space. This is not only on account of the association of reproductive labour with the home, but because of strong symbolic dimensions surrounding the ‘forbidden’ and ‘permitted’ use of private and public spaces. The latter are governed by patriarchal power relations and norms of female propriety, which may require certain modes of dress, behaviour and limitations on social interaction to render women ‘invisible’ or unapproachable.<sup>60</sup>

Part of this is linked with violence against women in cities. Evidence suggests that violence against women by male partners tends to be less prevalent in cities than rural areas but violence by non-partners tends to be higher in urban areas.<sup>61</sup> In cities, it has also been shown that living in urban slums can lead to a greater incidence of violence against women, especially that perpetrated by someone who is *not* a partner.<sup>62</sup> Although violence against women is extremely prevalent in the private spaces of the home, it is more likely to occur in certain public spaces such as at and around toilets, at schools, in drinking bars, and in secluded areas such as narrow lanes and open fields.<sup>63</sup> In terms of sanitary facilities, for example, where toilets

are located far from people’s dwellings there is evidence from Mumbai and Pune that women and girls face risks of violence and attacks if they walk alone to use them, especially at night.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, use of space among women is also cross-cut by time. In particular, women have much more restricted mobility at night linked with their safety and fear of violence. Issues of access to and provision of quality and affordable public transport are also crucial in determining women’s movement within cities.<sup>65</sup>

It is also critical to note that even in the new ‘digital age’ where technology has the potential to diminish the constraints posed by physical limitations, women’s connectivity with others is commonly hampered by a gendered ‘digital divide’.<sup>66</sup> However, while women’s access to computing skills and equipment and to internet access is much more limited than men’s, gender gaps are much less marked for more simple digital technology such as mobile phones.<sup>67</sup> Mobile phones may be used by families concerned for the safety of daughters working night shifts in India’s urban call centres, for example.<sup>68</sup> Digital connectivity also provides for easing rural-urban linkages by introducing changing perceptions of distance and permitting more frequent personal contact and resource flows between source and destination areas.<sup>69</sup> Yet this does not necessarily transform gender. Recognising that migration can reinforce, as well as challenge, gender roles and relations,<sup>70</sup> mobile telephony may subject female migrants, who are often under intense pressure normatively and pragmatically to remit to source areas, to greater monitoring and surveillance, thereby making them less able to resist economic and other demands from rural kin. By the same token, the ability to remain in touch with family back home may also facilitate greater levels of independent female migration, including of mothers with young children, which detaches women from some of the physical, if not financial and emotional, investments they are expected to make in their maternal and other familial roles. What these diverse possibilities mean in terms of the potential gains to women from urban prosperity remains largely uncharted, but will benefit from dedicated monitoring.

### Gender disparities in power and rights

A final critical component of conceptualising the interrelationships between gender and urban prosperity relates to gender differences in power and rights. These differences exist at all scales – from the personal, through household, community and city-wide, and ultimately national levels. They are also mediated by informal and formal mechanisms. Although there is evidence of increased mobilisation and organisation of women at the grassroots, not least in relation to the popular uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 and 2012, there remain major gender disparities in the more formal political realms of

civic engagement and governance.<sup>71</sup> Not only are women frequently under-represented in formal political structures, including trade unions, cooperative and workers' associations, which marginalise their economic roles,<sup>72</sup> but where they do participate at the grassroots, they are often engaged in struggles for basic services.<sup>73</sup>

The recent shift towards decentralised governance has the potential to bring development decisions closer to communities and to reach those most marginalised such as particular groups of women. However, work undertaken by a range of grassroots women's organisations has shown that for decentralisation to be meaningful to these women, their capacities to access entitlements and participate effectively in local governance must be enhanced. Unless women become active partners with cities and local governments, they will continue to remain on the margins of governance processes and to be excluded from development decisions that impact their communities.<sup>74</sup>

In the case of Peru, decentralisation has led to increased women's engagement, organised around a series of laws that include citizen protection and mandates for participation. Women have engaged more in public affair through Local Coordinating Councils (LCCs) and in vigilance and monitoring committees. Projects such as the *Casa de la Mujer* (Women's Home) have been central in addressing women's issues like domestic violence and the equitable allocation of resources to women.<sup>75</sup> An integral aspect of these types of projects has been the training and organisation of grassroots

women as leaders in their communities through 'local to local dialogues' which not only enhances women's decision-making power but also deepens democracy.<sup>76</sup>

### Conceptualising gender empowerment and urban prosperity nexus

Using the framework on gender and urban prosperity as the foundation, it is useful to incorporate issues of women's empowerment and especially their economic empowerment within the nexus. This highlights not only the range of gender disparities that need to be taken into account in order to generate prosperity, but also that reducing gender inequalities and inequities must be addressed in order to bring about women's empowerment in cities at individual and collective levels as well as through a range of formal and informal institutions (Figure 1.1.3)

### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, PROSPERITY AND URBANISATION

Conceptual frameworks such as that outlined in Figure 1.1.3 are simplifications of reality. However, they can assist in identifying the sectors and issues that need to be addressed if women are to take advantage of urban prosperity as a way of improving their life chances. Yet it is also essential to remember that the relationships between urbanisation and prosperity in different cities around the world will play out in a wide range of



Two young women in Cairo's Tahrir Square play their part in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution  
© UN-Habitat/Taylor Barr

Figure 1.1.3

**Gender and urban prosperity nexus<sup>77</sup>**

diverse ways, and there may be a ‘cut-off’ point when societies are more than 70 per cent urbanised.<sup>78</sup> In the case of the rapidly growing economies of the world, although urban per capita GDP is expected to rise by 9 per cent per year in India and 10 per cent in China and by 2025 China’s cities will generate 20 per cent of global GDP, evidence remains mixed as to how such phenomenal economic growth rates intersect with increases in national or urban prosperity.<sup>79</sup>

In terms of gender, there are some, but no definitive systematic links between levels of poverty, per capita GNI, urbanisation, equality and/or gender equality across developing regions. For example, while the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) correlates with GNI to some degree, the relationship appears to be driven primarily by Latin America which is marked by pervasive inequality that appears to be associated with a pronounced gender gap in income. In addition, the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) also exhibit a strong positive correlation with the UNDP’s Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). As a country decreases its share of multi-dimensional poor, the SIGI moves closer towards equality.

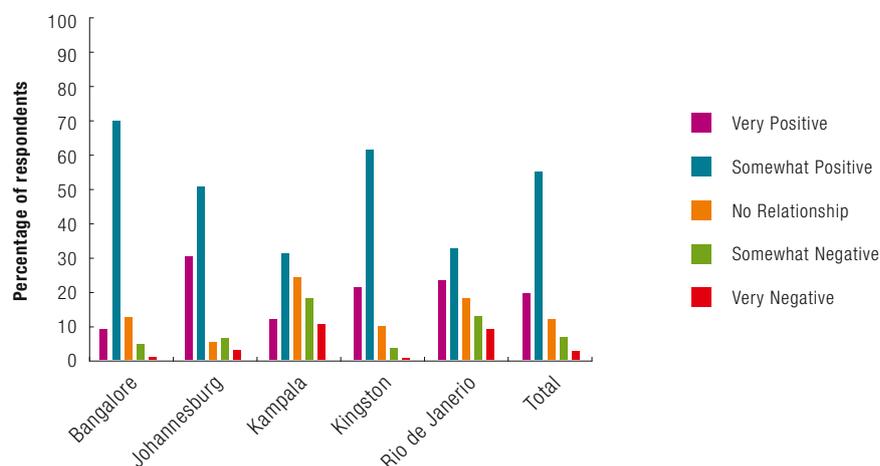
“Urbanisation helps in improving the prosperity of women but it doesn’t mean that rural women cannot have a prosperous life; it all depends upon how well policies are made and implemented.”

Evidence from the UN-Habitat survey across the five cities highlights some of these trends. A largely positive view on the relationship between urbanisation and the prosperity of women in general emerged, as declared by almost one-third of respondents in Johannesburg (31 per cent), one-quarter in Rio de Janeiro (24 per cent) and 22 per cent in Kingston. In Bangalore and Kampala positive views were held by fewer people (10 per cent and 13 per cent respectively). Indeed, in Kampala, 11.5 per cent felt that there was a ‘very negative’ relationship between urbanisation and women’s prosperity as did 10 per cent in Rio de Janeiro (See Figure 1.1.4). In the case of Bangalore one respondent makes an important point:

However, from a slightly different angle, it emerged that only a minority of people in the five survey cities felt that women were actually perceived to be prosperous across all types of dimensions (in terms of quality of life, productivity, infrastructure, and equality). While in Kampala, this was a high of 14 per cent, only 4 per cent of people in Rio de Janeiro and Kingston thought that women were prosperous across the board. At the other end of the spectrum, Kampala again emerged as an outlier with 22 per cent of people stating that women were not prosperous in any dimensions (with 6 per cent in Rio de Janeiro, 5 per cent in Bangalore, 2 per cent in Johannesburg and no-one in Kingston). Reflecting the largely negative camp, a respondent in Bangalore noted: ‘Several women and children live deplorable conditions in slums. They earn their living begging or running small businesses (cigarette shops), health care and other facilities in the cities are unimaginably out of their reach’.

Figure 1.1.4

## Perceptions of relationship between urbanisation and prosperity of women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

Note: 'Positive' means that higher levels of urbanisation are associated with higher levels of prosperity – as opposed to lower levels of prosperity.

Such interpretations have a lot to do with the view that income inequalities between rich and poor women in cities were significant. For instance, almost three-quarters of people in Kingston felt that inequalities were 'very large' (74 per cent), followed by 60 per cent in Johannesburg and 48.5 per cent in Bangalore. Only in Kampala were they perceived as less important (15 per cent noted that they were very large while 11.5 per cent stated that they were insignificant). The survey also highlighted how people felt that economic growth was broadly related with gender equity in all cities except in

Kampala where two-thirds felt that there was no relationship or a negative one.

Based on combined scores, 'access to quality education' was identified as the most important element contributing to women's prosperity in cities, followed by 'meaningful employment' and 'access to quality of health care', especially in Kingston on all counts. 'Access to sports and recreational facilities' and 'quality of city environment' were perceived as the least important, especially in Kampala (See Table 1.1.2).

Table 1.1.2

## Perceptions of elements that contribute to women's prosperity in cities

Cities → Factors	Bangalore	Johannesburg	Kampala	Kingston	Rio de Janeiro	Total	Rank
Meaningful employment	3.51	3.41	3.09	3.75	3.24	3.40	2
Adequate housing	3.08	3.12	3.07	3.34	3.10	3.14	7
Quality of city environment	3.07	3.03	3.11	2.99	3.22	3.09	9
Adequate and affordable transportation	3.33	3.46	2.99	3.32	3.14	3.24	5
Safety and security of life	3.25	3.18	3.01	3.25	3.23	3.19	6
Access to new technologies	3.51	3.27	2.86	3.47	3.29	3.28	4
Access to sports and recreational facilities	3.07	3.26	2.95	3.08	3.21	3.10	8
Access to quality education	3.75	3.86	2.97	4.11	3.26	3.57	1
Access to quality health care	3.50	3.59	2.92	3.84	3.21	3.39	3

Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

Note: Responses 1 → Does not contribute to 5 → Contributes highly

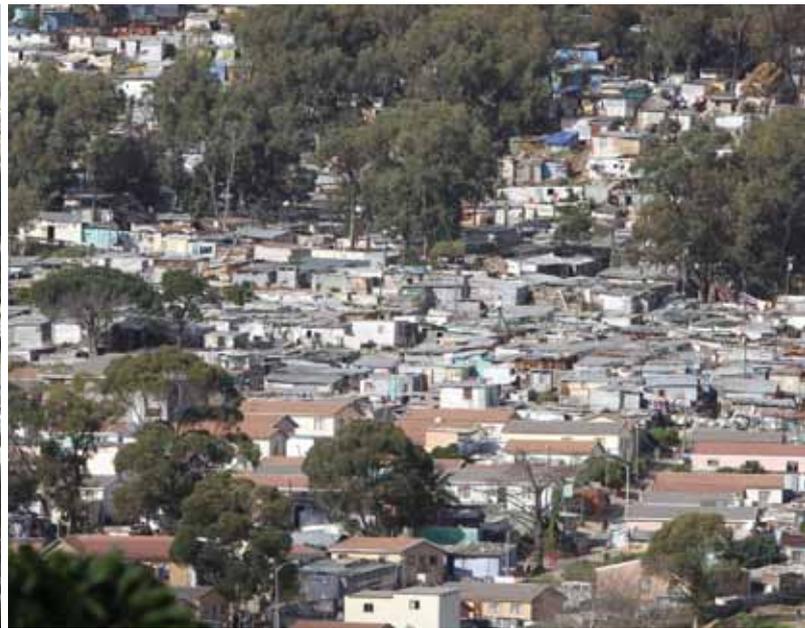
With the exception of Bangalore, most respondents considered the lack of productive employment opportunity and/or income poverty were the main barriers preventing the city becoming more prosperous for women, especially in Kingston (53 per cent). This was closely followed by poor

governance and weak institutions. All these factors as well as those identified in Table 1.1.2 relate in different ways to the gender empowerment and urban prosperity nexus outlined above and they will be discussed and addressed in the various chapters to follow.

## Endnotes

1. World Bank (2009a)
2. Chant and Datu (2011a, b)
3. UNFPA (2007); also Chen and Ravallion (2007); Jones and Corbridge (2008)
4. Harpham (2009)
5. UN-Habitat (2010a)
6. Beall et al (2010)
7. See also debates on the multidimensionality of poverty (Chant, 2007a, 2008; Moser, 2006)
8. Satterthwaite (2007); UNFPA (2007)
9. Dierwechter (2008); Duany et al (2010)
10. Geller (2003)
11. Freire et al (2003); Fischer and Amekudzi (2011); Rana (2011); UN-Habitat (2009; 2010c)
12. Lefebvre (1986); Harvey (2008)
13. UN-Habitat (2010c, p. 7)
14. Tsenkova (2007); UN-Habitat (2010b)
15. World Bank (2011c, p. 3)
16. World Bank and Ellis (2007)
17. Morrison et al (2010, p. 103)
18. Chant (2011b, 2012a)
19. Beall and Fox (2009)
20. Gilbert (2007; 2009)
21. Tacoli (2012)
22. Chant (2011b; 2013a); Tacoli (2012)
23. UN-Habitat (2012, p. 2)
24. See Chant (ed.) (2010); Kabeer (2003) on gendered poverty; Castells (1978); Chant (1996, 2007b); Jarvis et al (2009); Moser (1985, 1995) on gendered urban analysis
25. Chant (ed.) (2010)
26. Chant (2007a; 2008)
27. UNRISD (2010a)
28. Rowlands (1996); Chant and McIlwaine (2009) for a summary
29. Cornwall (2007)
30. Kabeer (2008a)
31. McIlwaine (2012 compiled from Kabeer et al [2011]; Rowlands [1996])
32. Kabeer et al (2011)
33. Golla et al (2011)
34. Golla et al. (2011); UN-Habitat (2012)
35. Chant and McIlwaine (2013)
36. Chant (2011b; 2013a)
37. Dyson (2010); UNFPA (2007)
38. Chant and Touray (2012b)
39. Chant (1998); Chant and McIlwaine (2009, pp. 86-7)
40. Tacoli and Mabala (2010)
41. Tacoli (2010)
42. Chant (2013b); Chant and Touray (2012a,b)
43. Chant and Datu (2011b)
44. Bradshaw (1995); Chant (1997); Momsen (2010)
45. Perrons (2010); Razavi (2007, p. 4-5)
46. Chant (2007a); ECLAC (2004)
47. Palmer (1992)
48. Perrons (2010); Perrons and Plomien (2010)
49. Chant and Pedwell (2008); Chen (2010a); Chen et al (2004); Kabeer (2008a, b)
50. Chen (2010a); Chen et al (2004); Heintz (2010)
51. CPRC (2010); González de la Rocha (1994); Moser (1992)
52. Kabeer (2008a,b); Kabeer et al (2011)
53. Arbache et al (2010); Klasen (2002); World Bank (2011c, p. 210)
54. Evans (2011)
55. Grown (2005); Lloyd (2009); Plan International (2009)
56. Chant (2012a); CPRC (2010); Deere (2010) Hughes and Wickeri (2011); Moser (2010); Varley (2007)
57. UN-DESA (2009)
58. Kabeer (2008a); Mayoux (2001)
59. UN-DESA (2009); also <http://promujer.org/>
60. Fenster (2005); Jarvis et al (2009); Vera-Sanso (2006)
61. McIlwaine (2013); Tacoli (2012)
62. Hindin and Adair (2002)
63. Tacoli (2012)
64. Bapat and Agarwal (2003)
65. Khosla (2009); Kunieda and Gauthier (2007)
66. Perrons (2004)
67. Scott et al (2004, p. 1)
68. Patel (2010)
69. de Bruijn (2008); also Donner (2008, p. 24)
70. Chant (1998); Jolly and Reeves (2005)
71. UN-Habitat (2008b, p. 3); See also Patel and Mittin (2010)
72. Chen (2010b)
73. Beall (2010); Lind (2010); MirafTAB (2010)
74. Huairou Commission (2010a)
75. Huairou Commission (2010a)
76. Goldenberg (2008)
77. UN-Habitat (2011)
78. UN-Habitat (2010c, p. 5)
79. Dobbs et al (2011, p. 30)

# Chapter 1.2



## Regional Variations in Urbanisation, Gender Equality and The ‘Prosperity Of Cities’

Factors shaping the links between ‘place’ and ‘prosperity’, and specific urban places and prosperity,<sup>1</sup> remain difficult to generalise, including as they do, migratory flows, natural and social factor endowments, historical legacies (and anachronisms), and the logic of macro-economic shifts.<sup>2,3</sup>

### THE AFRICAN REGION

Sub-Saharan Africa is still at a relatively early stage of urbanisation, with not quite 40 per cent of its population living in towns and cities.<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that only 143 of the region’s cities are included in the MckInsey Global Institute’s ‘Cityscope’ database of just over 2000 cities worldwide with populations of 150,000 or more in Western Europe and the USA, and 200,000 or more in the rest of the world. These cities, many of which are clustered on the west coast of the continent, produce 50 per cent of the region’s GDP, a figure that is anticipated to rise to 60 per cent by 2025,<sup>5</sup> but they are also beset by a range of challenges. These include high levels of poverty, and informal economic activity, with the rate of slum growth being more or less on a par with the regional urban growth rate of 4per cent p.a.<sup>6</sup>

The African region as a whole has a burgeoning and largely underemployed male youth bulge,<sup>7</sup> whose common ‘demonisation’ does little to counter potential threats to stability and development,<sup>8</sup> nor to draw attention to the fact that levels of unemployment among female youth are usually greater not only within the region but also elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Management and capacity problems for African cities are also compounded by rapid expansion.<sup>10</sup> However, new growth opportunities

Out-of-work members of Gambian Voo.  
© UN-Habitat/Sylvia Chant



provided through the spread of telecommunications, coupled with better leadership and scale economies has put African cities on the verge of productivity growth for the first time. Whether or not this is likely to benefit women – or indeed men -- is explored later in this chapter.

## THE ASIAN REGION

Although a far smaller proportion of the population in Asia is urban, at 42 per cent,<sup>11</sup> the region houses the largest share of the world's mega cities (>10 million inhabitants), with China (sometimes dubbed 'the new "workshop" or "factory" of the world'), and India ('the new "office" of the world'),<sup>12</sup> leading a distinctive new wave of metropolitan expansion. On the heels of an average annual growth rate of 2.4 per cent, for example, India's urban inhabitants numbered 345 million in 2009, equating to 30 per cent of the national population.<sup>13</sup> China's urban population is much larger than India's: 586 million people in 2009, equating to 44 per cent of the total population compared with only 27 per cent ten years earlier, and reflecting an average annual urban population growth rate of 3.3 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

While Asia as a whole has been the most successful developing region to date in reducing the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day, which fell from 60 per cent to 16 per cent between 1990 and 2005 in Eastern Asia, and from 39 per cent to 19 per cent in Southeast Asia, it is perhaps no surprise, given India's dominance within Southern Asia, that poverty incidence in this sub-region showed a less impressive drop -- from 49 per cent to 39 per cent.<sup>15</sup> This leads to the conclusion that growth and global economic integration need to be more carefully managed by the state.<sup>16</sup> Also important to bear in mind is that Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in the region remains substantially lower (less than half) than in Latin America and the Caribbean, at \$3163 per capita in East Asia and the Pacific, and \$1107 in South Asia.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, and perhaps serving as a further caution against any automatic association between levels of urbanisation and 'prosperity' -- and gender -- East Asia and the Pacific has the highest aggregate regional score (0.467) on the UNDP's recently launched Gender inequality Index (GII). (See also below).

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN REGION

With an estimated urban population of 79 per cent, Latin America not only has the highest share of urban population in the world,<sup>18</sup> but has also one of the most concentrated patterns of economic activity. Latin America's top ten cities accounted for 35 per cent of GDP in the region in 2007 (as compared with 25-30 per cent in the USA and Europe).<sup>19</sup> However, while Latin American cities grew very rapidly in the past and captured decided scale benefits, some analysts argue they are running into trouble now for the same reason.<sup>20</sup> Among new

'diseconomies' are urban sprawl and hampered mobility.

Another problem is that the physical expansion of some urban centres has engulfed neighbouring towns outside city jurisdictions. This has entailed the fragmentation of political boundaries, with the spread of management responsibilities among multiple bodies leading to uncoordinated planning and development.<sup>21</sup> As a consequence the rate of population growth has already slowed down in some of Latin America's major metropolis, inward migration has fallen, and people have begun moving to 'midsize cities'.<sup>22</sup> Considerations regarding environmental quality are a further factor in recent inter-urban migration in Latin America with evidence suggesting that concern about children's well-being makes women key drivers in decisions to move to smaller, less congested, and perceptibly less polluted cities.<sup>23</sup>

A Palestinian girl attending a UNRWA school side-steps the rubble of a damaged home.  
© Shabtai Gold/IRIN



## Gender Equality, Wealth, Poverty and Urbanisation Regional Variations

In the meantime, and as indicated by the general data presented in Tables 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, there are some, but certainly no definitive systematic links between levels of poverty, per capita GNI, urbanisation, equality and/or gender equality across developing regions.

Table 1.2.1 reveals a strong fit between urbanisation and GNI per capita. We can also see a broad inverse relationship

Table 1.2.1

**GNI per capita, poverty, urbanisation and gender inequality in developing regions<sup>1</sup>**

	Gross National Income (GNI) per capita USD	Proportion of people living on less than USD 1.25 a day (International Poverty Line/IPL)	Distribution of the world's Multi-dimensional Poor (MDP) living in developing countries <sup>2</sup>	Level of urbanisation	Gender Inequality Index (GII) <sup>3</sup> (where 1 indicates equality according to selected indicators)	Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) <sup>4</sup> (where 1 indicate equality according to selected indicators)	Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) <sup>5</sup> (where 0 indicates equality according to selected indicators)
Eastern Asia	3,163	16% (Eastern Asia)/19% (South-eastern Asia)	15%	45%	0.467%	-	0.0639
Southern Asia	1,107	39%	51%	30%	0.739%	0.655	0.260
Latin America	7,007	8%	3%	79%	0.609%	0.691	0.0178
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,125	51%	28%	37%	0.735%	0.645	0.186
Middle East & Northern Africa	3,597	3% (Northern Africa)/6% (Western Asia)	2%	58%	0.699%	0.609	0.203

Sources: Hausmann et al (2010), OECD (2009), UN (2010a), UNDP (2010), World Bank (2011b).

**Notes:**

- Different sources define regions differently which makes direct comparisons difficult. The World Bank and UNDP include data for South Eastern Asian countries within their regional figure for Southern/Eastern Asia. Also, while UNDP provides data for 'Arab States', the UN differentiates between Northern African and Western Asian countries. See also notes 3 and 4 below.
- The UNDP's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which was introduced in 2010, is not calculated for all countries as yet. Nor are regionally-aggregated scores available, only the percentage distribution of the world's 1.75 billion multi-dimensionally poor as shown in the table. The MPI is a three-dimensional index comprising health (as measured by nutrition and child mortality), education (children enrolled and years of schooling), and living standards (comprising cooking fuel, toilet, water, electricity, floor material and basic assets such as a radio or bicycle). 'Multidimensional poverty' is deemed to apply where people are deprived in at least 30% of the ten weighted indicators. The score derived combines the percentage of the population who are multi-dimensionally poor with the average number of deprivations they suffer from: the higher the score, the greater the level of multidimensional poverty.
- The UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII) aggregates inequalities in reproductive health (as measured by adolescent fertility and maternal mortality), empowerment (share of parliamentary seats and higher education attainment levels) and labour market (labour force participation), produces a score between 0 and 1, with 0 representing the highest level of inequality, and 1 total equality. NB The regional aggregate figure for the GII in this table is for East Asia and the Pacific.
- The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) is a composite of four 'pillars' consisting of 14 variables. These include economic participation and opportunity (as quantified by measuring advancement, remuneration and participation gaps, where advancement is composed from the female to male ratio among legislators, senior officials and managers and the female to male ratio among professional and technical workers) educational attainment (measured by primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratios and literacy rates), health and survival (sex ratio at birth and life expectancies) and political empowerment (female legislators and the ratio of female to male ministerial-level positions). Scores are produced through a four step process, ranging from 0 to 1, with 1 representing the highest level of equality and 0 the greatest level of inequality. NB The regional aggregate figure for the GGGI is for Asia and the Pacific.
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Social Institutions and Gender Index is a measure of twelve social institutions variables categorised under five main areas: family code (early marriage, polygamy, parental authority and inheritance), physical integrity (violence against women and female genital mutilation), son preference (calculated from missing women), civil liberties (freedom of movement and freedom of press) and ownership rights (women's access to land, women's access to property other than land and women's access to credit). Taken together these produce a score between 0 and 1, with 0 representing the highest level of equality, and 1 very high inequality.

between GNI per capita and poverty incidence, despite some notable exceptions. For example, Northern Africa is less urbanised and has far lower average income than Latin America. Yet North Africa has the poverty incidence of Latin America, a region with marked inequality. Although this now appears to be on the decline, thanks largely to substantial upturns in social spending in countries such as Brazil and Chile,<sup>24</sup> as Table 1.2.2 indicates, Brazil, one of Latin America's most urbanised societies, suffers extreme polarisation between the rich and the poor.

Similarly, Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have comparable levels of per capita GNI but dissimilar rates of poverty incidence. This would appear to confirm earlier observations that economic prosperity does not always trickle down to the poor.

When it comes to the interrelationships of gender with these variables, results are also mixed. For example, the UNDP's

Gender Inequality Index (GII) does not correspond with any other of the selected indicators in Table 1.2.1, although some relationships can be found between its composite parts and dimensions of economic prosperity or urbanisation. While the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) does correlate with GNI to some degree, the relationship appears to be driven primarily by Latin America which, as already alluded to, is marked by pervasive inequality that appears to be associated with a pronounced gender gap in income.

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) exhibits more correlations with Table 1.2.1 indicators than the other gender inequality measures, showing a particularly strong relationship with GNI. As regional wealth increases, there is an accompanying increase in gender equality, as measured by the SIGI components. This may owe to the fact that wealthier countries have, on average, more and stronger social

Table 1.2.2

**Inequality (Gini coefficient),<sup>1</sup> percent urban slum population, multi- dimensional poverty (MPI) and gender inequality<sup>2</sup> – three most urbanised countries in major developing regions**

	Per cent urban	Per cent urban slum population (2007, unless noted)	Gini Coefficient	Multidimensional Poor living in country (MPI)	Gender Inequality Index (GII) <sup>2</sup> (where 1 indicates equality according to selected indicators)	Global Gender Gap Index (GGI)(where 1 indicate equality according to selected indicators)	Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (where 0 indicates equality according to selected indicators)
<b>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</b>							
Argentina	92	23.5	45.8	0.011	0.534	0.719	0.0037899
Chile	89	9.0 (2005)	22.6	-	0.505	0.701	0.0195128
Brazil	86	28.0	53.9	0.039	0.631	0.666	0.0188021
<b>South Asia</b>							
Pakistan	37	47.5 (2005)	32.7	0.275	0.721	0.547	0.283243
India	30	32.1	36.8	0.296	0.748	0.616	0.318112
Bangladesh	28	70.8 (2005)	31.0	0.291	0.734	0.689	0.244648
<b>East Asia</b>							
Malaysia	71	-	46.2	-	0.493	0.645	-
China	44	31.0	41.5	0.056	0.405	0.689	0.217856
Lao PDR	32	79.3 (2005)	36.7	0.267	0.650	-	0.0357687
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>							
Gabon	86	38.7(2005)	41.5	0.161	0.678	-	0.218922
Botswana	60	-	61.0	-	0.663	0.688	0.0810172
Cameroon	58	46.6	44.6	0.299	0.763	0.611	0.216512
<i>Sources: Hausmann et al (2010), OECD (2009), UN (2010a,d), UNDP (2010), World Bank (2011b)</i>							

**Notes:**

1. The Gini coefficient is a measure of the inequality of income or wealth distribution in a country. The coefficient is calculated from the ratio of two areas on a Lorenz curve. A value of 0 indicates total income equality; that is all wealth is distributed equally among all members of the population. A value of 1 represents total inequality. Scores may range between 0 and 1. The Gini coefficient has been criticised by some scholars who argue that it is not useful when comparing countries of very different population

size. Furthermore, it says nothing of the absolute wealth of a country; a wealthy country and poor country may have the same Gini coefficient but in the poor nation many people may not even have access to basic necessities.

2. For components of the GII, GGGI and SIGI please refer to notes in Table 1.2.1

institutions which protect women. The SIGI also exhibits a strong positive correlation with UNDP's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). As a country decreases its share of multi-dimensional poor, the SIGI moves closer towards equality. This relationship becomes even stronger when removing the two outlier regions. Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa, which have the highest and lowest inequality respectively, but also the two lowest shares of the multidimensional poor (MDP). Omitting these two regions, based on their low population share, significantly improves the correlation, as seen in Figure 1.2.1.

While the indicators discussed serve to highlight that there are some connections between gender equality, wealth, poverty and urbanisation, these cannot be precisely nor consistently specified on the basis of quantitative measures.

## CHALLENGES OF COLLECTING AND USING SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA ON CITIES

Potentially complicating factors in respect of assessing the wider relationships between gender and urban prosperity in relation to national, regional and global statistics concerns discrepancies in regional definitions among different organisations, as well as deficits in sex-disaggregated data. A dearth of comprehensive sex-disaggregated quantitative data, especially for poorer countries compromises the reliable geographical coverage of aggregate gender indicators such as the GGGI and the SIGI.<sup>25</sup>

The indicators for gender in MDG 3, for example, notably the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary education, women's share of non-agricultural employment, and proportion of seats held by national parliaments, exclude crucial elements vital to women's lives.



These limitations are evident in the survey cities. For example, only a minority (27 per cent) felt that different organisations in the city (such as government departments/institutions, civil society, city authorities, private sector, bilateral and multilateral organisations) used sex-disaggregated data and evidence in the formulation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies/programmes. While over one-third perceived this to be the case in Kampala (34.5 per cent), only 22 per cent did so in Rio de Janeiro.

On a slightly more positive note, it was felt that 42 per cent of city government officials and decision-makers used baseline figures of women's access to and/or usage of secure housing, basic infrastructure, quality education, quality health care, and social security. In Johannesburg, Rio de Janeiro and Kingston, this was around half, with a low of 27 per cent in Kampala.

Despite these caveats, drawing on the conceptual building blocks outlined in the gender empowerment and urban prosperity nexus, the following chapter provides key highlights regarding gender and the 'quality of life' in cities as one of the key dimensions of prosperity.

## Endnotes

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- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1. World Bank (2009b)                         | 12. Ghosh (2010, p. 1)                                      | 22. Dobbs et al (2011, p. 13)  |
| 2. Storper and Scott (2009)                   | 13. World Bank (2011b, p. 167)                              | 23. Izazola (2004); Izazola et al (2006)                                 |
| 3. UN-Habitat (2010c, p. 5)                   | 14. <i>ibid</i> ; See also Yeh et al (2011)                 | 24. Loyka (2011)   |
| 4. UN-Habitat (2010)                          | 15. UN (2010a, pp. 6-7)                                     | 25. Drechsler and Jütting (2010)   |
| 5. Dobbs et al (2011, p. 31)                  | 16. Ghosh (2010)  | 26. Chant (2006, 2007a); also Buvinic and King (2007)                    |
| 6. UNFPA (2007); World Bank (2011b, p. 168)   | 17. World Bank (2011b, p. 12; also Table 1.5)               | 27. Antrobus (2004); Chant (2007b); Johnsson-Latham (2010); Saith (2006) |
| 7. UN-HABITAT/UNECA (2008)                    | 18. Rodgers et al (2011)                                    | 28. Chant (2006)   |
| 8. Mabala (2011)                              | 19. Dobbs et al (2011, p. 13)                               | 29. Chant (2001a, b); Deere and Doss (2006); Morrison et al (2010)       |
| 9. Chant (2012a)                              | 20. <i>ibid</i> .   | 30. Chandrasekhar and Mukhopadhyay (2008)                                |
| 10. Hughes and Wickeri (2011); Poulsen (2010) | 21. Campesi (2010); Dobbs et al (2011, p. 13); Moser (2009) | 31. Jones and Thomas de Benítez (2010)                                   |
| 11. UN-Habitat (2010a)                        |   |  |

## Part Two

# Gender and the Prosperity of Cities



# Chapter 2.1



## Gender, Quality Of Life And Prosperity Of Cities

This chapter considers a range of factors that underpin ‘quality of life’ in cities in relation to gender and urban prosperity with a specific focus on housing, health and gender-based violence. In relation to the gender empowerment and urban prosperity nexus, the chapter highlights gender disparities in physical and financial capital and assets as well as the gaps in power and rights. It also emphasises that there remains considerable scope for reducing these gender inequalities and providing women with opportunities to access resources and opportunities in relation to their quality of life that can lead not only to wider urban prosperity but also to women’s empowerment.

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN’S QUALITY OF LIFE IN CITIES

The survey highlighted how urban residents felt that the policies for promoting quality of life in their cities were generally adequate although they needed significantly more attention. For instance, while one-quarter thought that they were ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’, more than one-third (34 per cent) felt that they were ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. The most positive were those living in Johannesburg where 45 per cent thought they were ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ with the most negative residing in Rio de Janeiro where 56 per cent felt they were ‘very poor’ or ‘poor’. This is further reflected in the fact that 40 per cent of people felt that their city was ‘not fully committed’ to promoting quality of life for women. This was very marked

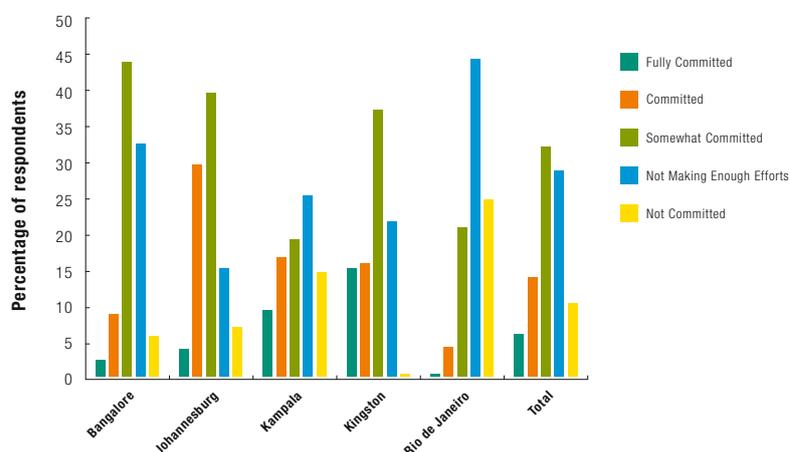
among those living in Rio de Janeiro with 70 per cent stating their city was not committed compared with only 22 per cent in Kingston and 23 per cent in Johannesburg (See Figure 2.1.1).

Woman at hatcliffe extension evictions Zimbabwe.  
© UN-Habitat



Figure 2.1.1

## Perceptions of commitment of city policies to promote quality of life of women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

## WOMEN, GENDER AND HOUSING

Housing is widely regarded as an essential human need and right, as reflected in its incorporation into the Millennium Development Goals, with MDG 7, Target D being to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. This is actually one of the few MDG targets that has been reached a decade ahead of schedule, with 220 million people having moved out of slum conditions between 2000 and 2010 alone.<sup>1</sup> However, despite the fact that the original benchmark was arguably set too low (at only around one-tenth of slum dwellers worldwide), progress has been geographically varied. Moreover, although the proportion of urban residents living in slums has dropped in most developing regions, with China and India at the forefront, in absolute terms, the number of slum dwellers has continued to rise.<sup>2</sup>

These trends are especially pertinent to women, not only because they often constitute a larger than average share of people in slums, but because of strong linkages between women and the 'domestic domain'.<sup>3</sup> Housing is a key physical, economic and social asset for women. Not only do women rear children in their houses, but it is also their main site of social network creation and income generation.<sup>4</sup> Housing is also critical to the identity, dignity and sense of belonging of individuals, especially if their rights are upheld by law. Even when people start out in precarious shelter, housing can be a meaningful pathway out of poverty and in turn, a route to prosperity.<sup>5</sup>

## Women's rights to land and housing

Gender equality in rights to land and housing has been established in a number of international treaties and conventions, including Article 16 of CEDAW (Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women).<sup>6</sup> Subsequent developments include the reaffirmation in 2007 at the UN's Human Rights Council in New York, of 'the human right to adequate housing' as 'the right of every woman, man, youth and child to gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity'. In 2010, General Recommendation 27 was adopted by the CEDAW Committee, emphasising older women's rights to adequate housing and protection against forced evictions and homelessness. The importance of housing for women also features in UN-Habitat's Global Campaign for Secure Tenure, as well as in the World Urban Campaign.<sup>7</sup> Yet despite these provisions, gender continues to be a major axis of discrimination in land and property ownership. For example, UNICEF estimates for a range of Latin American countries that women are seldom more than 25 per cent of landowners, while the OECD estimates that for 82 countries with a population of over 1 million outside the OECD and EU, only 15 per cent of women own land.<sup>8</sup>

In the survey, 64 per cent of people across all cities except Kampala (which was excluded) felt that more than half of all women had no access to secure housing. However, it also emerged that 28 per cent in all cities thought that existing efforts to attain gender equity in access to housing tenure were

'advanced' or 'very advanced', especially in Johannesburg (54 per cent) and Kingston (49 per cent), but with 21 per cent stating there was 'no equity' in Rio de Janeiro.

The root causes of differential access to secure tenure are complex. One factor is uneven discrimination against women in inheritance, ranging from situations, as in Swaziland, where women have no right to inherit property, to those in which they are only legally entitled to lesser shares than men. In addition, in some cases, women's statutory rights are compromised by lack of knowledge, plural legal systems, and socio-cultural emphasis on the prerogatives of males and their blood relations over land and property.<sup>9</sup> It is also worth noting that even if there appears to be equality in property rights in principle, this is far less likely in practice.



Woman and child resisting eviction from an inner-city slum in Buenos Aires, Argentina.  
© UN-Habitat/Pepe Mateos

Male bias in inheritance and property acts therefore as major obstacle to gender equality and empowerment. Male ownership effectively equates with male control over women and there is widespread discrimination against women in nearly all aspects of housing.<sup>10</sup> Given male rights, women commonly face eviction and/or homelessness in the event of divorce or desertion. The same applies to widows who may be subject to 'property grabbing' by their in-laws, as has been noted in India in the context of women whose spouses have died of HIV/AIDS, a phenomenon also widely observed in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>11</sup>

Negative outcomes of these processes are especially important where women are poor. The only alternatives for widows facing destitution through dispossession may be to subject themselves

to various demeaning or self-sacrificial strategies to retain rights to property, such as committing to post-conjugal celibacy, or entering into forced unions with their spouses' brothers (Levirate marriage).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, women may be disenfranchised as daughters, regardless of the efforts they have made to support parents and/or brothers economically. In some cases, as noted for India, mothers may favour the inheritance of sons over daughters given the expectation that the former will provide for them in their old age.<sup>13</sup> Even where both spouses are alive, and women may be legal owners of land or property, their rights over sale, transfer, or daily use may be flouted.<sup>14</sup>

Although women's long-term prospects of securing property are better in urban areas than in the countryside, partly because of greater social and economic opportunities and partly because more land and property is acquired through the market rather than inheritance, women still face widespread discrimination in cities. For example, one-third of owner-occupiers were female in a UN Gender and Habitat survey in 16 low-income urban communities in Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Sri Lanka, Colombia and Costa Rica.<sup>15</sup>

Rare exceptions include South Africa, where thanks to the Department of Housing's prioritisation of equal or preferred access to female household heads under the government subsidy programme, such units are no less likely than other households to own their home or to live in formal shelter.<sup>16</sup> However, the UN-Habitat survey has also shown that although men and women in Johannesburg are theoretically both eligible for housing and land subsidy support, these services are invariably registered in the names of men.<sup>17</sup>

Gender discrimination also obstructs women's access to rental shelter, which has been more neglected policy-wise with fewer provisions to protect women as a result.<sup>18</sup> In Tanzania, for example, in cases where couples in rental accommodation divorce, men are more likely to stay behind. In turn, limited access by single women is compounded in some cases by stigma against HIV/AIDS.<sup>19</sup> Women renters may also be discriminated against in relation to sexuality, either because of issues of propriety of single women without male 'guardians' as in southern India,<sup>20</sup> or in terms of lesbian women finding it difficult to rent as in Quito, Ecuador.<sup>21</sup>

Common explanations for gender disparities in accessing shelter as a whole include women's limited access to stable employment and earnings, finance and credit. Even where women may be able to access housing, the prospect of property taxes may discourage them from claiming title.<sup>22</sup> Additional factors dissuading women from pursuing title in their own right, or even opting for joint spousal registration, include deeply entrenched patterns of patriarchy which require women to defer to men's wishes in respect of ownership and management of household assets.<sup>23</sup> The injustice of these gender disparities is further underscored by the fact that women

frequently make substantial contributions of time, money and labour to creating the housing stock in urban areas of the South where between 25 per cent and 60 per cent is self-financed and/or built.<sup>24</sup>

Given substantial gaps between international human rights provisions, government legislation and actual practice, various efforts have been made to introduce pro-female land and property titling as a means of bolstering women's empowerment (See Boxes 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). UN-Habitat, for example, is the secretariat of a multi-stakeholder Global Land Tools Network (GLTN) which aims to 'promote practical approaches – particularly through recognition of a continuum of land rights' to enhance tenure security'.<sup>25</sup> Although the GLTN does not focus solely on individual land titling for women, a range of examples where this, or joint titling, is endorsed by formal or customary law (or a combination of the two), suggest that strengthening women's land and property rights has important spin-offs in a number of areas.

For instance, in Peru regularisation of title for urban squatters released time for women, as well as men, to engage in activities other than protection of their properties.<sup>145</sup> In

#### Box 2.1.2

##### The evolution of women's land rights in Nepal

In 2002 Nepal eventually passed the Country Code (11th Amendment Act), nearly ten years after demands by gender equality advocates in the country, which provided for equal inheritance rights for unmarried daughters and sons. However, this measure only went part-way since married women still stood to lose their natal property rights.

In 2006, as Nepal emerged from a decade of conflict, children were able to claim citizenship through their mothers for the first time through the Gender Equality Act which also extended divorce rights as well as further protecting women against domestic and sexual violence. With specific regard to property, married women were granted the right to keep inherited property, as well as being entitled to use property without the consent of male family members.

In 2007, the Ministry of Finance introduced gender-responsive budgeting which resulted in an increase of government spending directly responsive to women's needs from 11 to 17 per cent between 2007 to 2010, as well as a 10 per cent tax exemption for land registered in women's names, which aimed to incentivise families to share their property with daughters, sisters and wives. As a result, households reporting some degree of ownership among women more than doubled, from 11 per cent to 35 per cent, between 2001 and 2009.

Source: UN Women (2011, pp. 22-3)

Vietnam, a World Bank land titling programme enhanced women's access to loans, and therefore business start-up and expansion.<sup>26</sup> In Zambia, Habitat for Humanity's 'Zambia Women Build' launch resulted in improvements in women's personal safety and security.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence from the survey highlighted that only 23 per cent of those interviewed noted that their city had policies to address the barriers facing women in securing land and property tenure. As few as 13 per cent of respondents in Bangalore stated that policies existed compared to 33 per cent in Johannesburg.

Women's limited access to land and property in cities can massively affect their ability to generate urban prosperity insofar as it restricts their possibilities for establishing microenterprises.<sup>28</sup> Scope for entrepreneurial activities is limited by landlords, or by fellow family members or residents in cramped overcrowded dwellings or multi-occupancy compounds. Not only may women lack a physical base or space appropriate for storing and/or protecting their produce or machinery, but poor location and inadequate services and infrastructure place further obstacles to urban productivity and prosperity.

Despite women's increased access to informal financial assets through a range of micro-finance organisations run by NGOs as well as public and commercial banks, they still remain excluded from many formal financial services. Indeed, there is also evidence that the shift towards greater commercialisation of banking for the poor has led to a decline in access among women. The primary reasons for this revolve around the importance of providing assistance to women beyond lending and credit as noted in relation to the *Por Mujer* organisation's work in Latin America. However, even among women entrepreneurs, access to finance remains more limited than for men. For example, in South Africa, women comprised only 5 per cent of clients in the Black Economic Empowerment Equity Fund of a major bank after two years of operation.<sup>29</sup>

## WOMEN, GENDER AND HEALTH

### An 'urban penalty' in health for slum women

There is evidence to suggest that slum populations generally fare worse in terms of physical and mental ill-health alike than non-slum residents linked with inadequate public healthcare and problems of spatial inaccessibility, as well as by inability to afford costly private alternatives.<sup>30</sup> In turn, most developing countries now face a 'double disease burden' of non-communicable and communicable disease.<sup>31</sup> Research based on India's 2005-6 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) in the context of eight large Indian cities – Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Indore, Meerut, Mumbai and Nagpur – revealed that slum dwellers suffer a disproportionate risk of

communicable illness such as tuberculosis. The prevalence of malnutrition in India and Bangladesh is more than double in slums than in non-slum areas, at 54 per cent versus 21 per cent, and 51.4 per cent versus 24 per cent respectively (UN-Habitat, 2010d:1). In the Democratic Republic of Congo, too, 41 per cent of children are malnourished in slums compared with 16 per cent of their non-slum counterparts.

Furthermore, slum dwellers also suffer a disproportionate vulnerability to health conditions linked with inadequate healthcare and diet, such as anaemia.<sup>32</sup> There is also evidence that behaviourally-related health issues such as smoking are more prevalent in slums. For example, in Bangladesh smoking cigarettes and 'bidis' (hand-rolled cigarettes which have higher concentrations of tar and nicotine) is more widespread in slums. This has 'devastating effects' for people living in poverty in terms of diverting income from food expenditure and exacerbating the risks of respiratory disease commonly associated with overcrowded and poorly-ventilated dwellings.<sup>33</sup>

Unfavourable health conditions in slums have led to the notion of an 'urban penalty' in health.<sup>34</sup> This suggests that even if conditions tend to be better than in rural areas, the 'urban advantage' in respect of lower mortality rates and nutritional status for children in particular disappears once wealth, education and other socio-economic indicators are controlled for.<sup>35</sup>

For women in slums, the urban penalty is arguably greater than for men as the risks to physical and mental well-being are sharpened by a range of 'stressors' attached to their inputs

to household reproduction in challenging circumstances.<sup>36</sup> For example, the use in cooking of solid fuels such as biomass (wood and crop residues), coal and charcoal, are far more harmful to individuals through lung and atmosphere polluting hydrocarbons, and carcinogens than 'cleaner' more expensive alternatives such as kerosene, liquid petroleum, gas and electricity. This is especially the case in cramped, poorly-ventilated spaces, such that indoor air pollution has been termed a 'quiet and neglected killer' of poor women and children.<sup>37</sup> In a survey in Accra, Ghana, nearly 30 per cent of poor women reported respiratory problems in the two weeks prior, which was more than twice the rate among women of middling income, and ten times that of wealthy women.<sup>38</sup> Where piped domestic water supplies are not available, severe fatigue, strain on joints, and so on, can arise from having to carry vessels over long distances, often up- or down-hill on rough footpaths, or over ditches and open sewers. In terms of mental health, at a global level, depression has been found to disproportionately affect women and the poor.<sup>39</sup> Recent evidence from Cape Town, South Africa demonstrates a higher prevalence of Common Mental Disorders (CMDs) in peri-urban slums (35 per cent) compared with rural areas (27 per cent), and that gender (being female), unemployment and substance abuse are the most common correlates.<sup>40</sup> In such circumstances, basic upgrading of urban slums can have major positive effects on women's general health as in the award-winning multi-stakeholder Ahmedabad Slum Networking Programme in India (See also Box 2.1.3 on Agra).<sup>41</sup> Service improvements such as electrification and water access are not only likely to improve health outcomes in immediate ways, but also to alleviate the strains attached to longer-term consequences of ill-health. These include coping with the loss of household earners, caring for the sick and dying, which might be especially marked among female-headed households who, in some contexts experience an above-average gendered 'urban penalty' in health.<sup>42</sup>

On a final point, the UN-Habitat survey highlighted that only 36 per cent of those in the case study cities thought that there was 'advanced' or 'very advanced' gender equity in access to health services. However, there were marked differences according to the city with 64 per cent of those in Johannesburg and 63 per cent of those in Kingston viewing access as 'advanced'. This compared with 19 per cent of people in Rio de Janeiro who felt that there was no gender equity in access. Related to this, only 45.5 per cent thought that their city offered affordable medical services to women. Although this rose to 63 per cent in Johannesburg and to 60 per cent in Kingston, only 20 per cent of residents in Rio de Janeiro determined that such services were available.

South Sudan nurses and midwives march in Juba to mark International Day of the Nurse.  
© Elizabeth Deacon/IRIN



## Box 2.1.3

**The multiple impacts of multidimensional slum upgrading on women in Agra, India**

In the city of Agra, a tourism-based urban economy which is home to the internationally-renowned spectacles of the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, an initiative called the Crosscutting Agra Programme (CAP), has been working to improve sanitation in low-income communities and to enhance livelihoods among young women and men in participatory and inclusive ways. CAP is supported by the Agra Municipal Corporation (Agra Nagar Nigam) and USAID, and enlists the help of an urban development NGO, CURE (Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence) in community mobilisation, organisation and planning.

Recognising that women are most affected by poor sanitation, their participation was sought in the design, location and construction of household and community toilets, with women themselves contributing 50% of the costs of toilet construction, providing labour, and overseeing the building process. A women's Toilet Savings Group was established to help women to attain the funds necessary for personal toilets, with loans also provided from a Community Credit Facility (CCF). In one of the communities covered by the project, Yamuna Bridge, critical design inputs proposed by women for toilets and bathing areas included ledges for soap and hooks for clothes, more open and visible toilets for children, and the organisation of washing areas which would better build 'social capital' and enhance safety and security for young women and children.

In line with 'slum upgrading plus' principles, CAP has also helped women to form enterprise groups that help them to benefit from the prosperity generated by Agra's tourism value chain, not only providing space for livelihood activities and training in finance management and client engagement, but also setting-up an alliance with the private sector for the development of tourism-based products. As a result of this initiative, women's daily incomes have grown up to ten-fold and their livelihoods have become more sustainable, with over 100 days of work a year.

The CAP settlements in Agra have not only been better 'mainstreamed' into the city economy, but into the city system as a whole, thereby increasing access by residents to a range of municipal services.

*Source: Khosla (2009:46-7).*

**Urban health, gender and the Millennium Development Goals**

Health features explicitly in three of the Millennium Development Goals, notably MDG 4 - reduce child mortality, MDG 5- improve maternal health, and MDG 6 – combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Some progress has been made in MDG 4's objective of reducing by two-thirds the under-5 mortality rate between 1990 and 2015, with a drop of 28 per cent in developing countries since 1990 and an accelerated rate of decline from 2000 onwards. However, in many poor countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, preventable child mortality remains excessively high.<sup>43</sup> This disproportionately affects girls, particularly in parts of East Asia, South Asia and North Africa where 'son preference' contributes to a neglect of girls' health needs, most notably where healthcare costs are borne by families themselves.<sup>44</sup>

The goal of reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015 also looks to be unattainable. Despite a 34 per cent drop in maternal deaths in developing regions the current mean annual rate of decline (2.3 per cent) is far short of the 5.5 per cent required.<sup>45</sup> Maternal mortality is widely regarded as an indicator of women's status, since although most maternal deaths are avoidable with increasing numbers of women now receiving antenatal care, this is compromised by poverty and early and frequent pregnancies. These frequently stem from male control over female sexuality.<sup>46</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa stands out as the region with the highest maternal mortality levels, at 640 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in urban areas (and 870 in rural areas) as against developing region averages of 290 and 450 respectively.<sup>47</sup>

Shortages of trained midwives are partly responsible for the fact that many women fail to receive recommended levels of care during their pregnancies.<sup>48</sup> In Kenya, for example, low or delayed take-up of antenatal care in Nairobi slums reduces the proportion of deliveries attended by skilled personnel. Although antenatal care is free in Kenya, the charging of fees for births or complications in hospitals, as well as the stigmatisation of mothers without possession of antenatal cards act as deterrents to poor women.<sup>49</sup> Other critical factors are that women in poverty often undertake heavy and physically hard workloads, especially in the run-up to childbirth, which places them at risk of miscarriage or other complications. The latter is compounded by the fact that intimate partner violence often increases when women are pregnant, particularly where husbands are jobless or under severe economic pressure (See also below).

A graffiti on Anti-Rape Campaign in Nairobi, Kenya.  
© Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat



Better progress has been made in MDG 6's aim to halt and/or reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. HIV infection rates seem to have peaked in 1999, and declined significantly since 2002, thanks largely to a massive scale-up in Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART). However, in absolute terms the number of people living with HIV is rising, partly because they are living longer with the condition, but also because treatment is still short of universal and public information campaigns are not always effective.<sup>50</sup> As for other diseases comprised under MDG 6, tuberculosis (TB) is the second highest cause of death after HIV/AIDS, with only marginal improvement witnessed in recent years. Although substantial progress has been made in tackling malaria, it remains responsible for over 850,000 deaths a year, of which 90 per cent occur in Africa.<sup>51</sup>

Although women comprise just over 50 per cent of HIV-affected persons worldwide, this figure is nearly 60 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. Young women in urban areas are at particular risk, with those aged 15-24 years being up to eight times more likely to contract the disease than their male counterparts.<sup>52</sup> Slums again feature prominently with a study in Korogocho, Nairobi, finding that HIV prevalence was nearly three times the national average of 6.1 per cent.<sup>53</sup> Young women's greater vulnerability to HIV infection is partly due to their greater physiological vulnerability, but also to socio-cultural factors, such as first intercourse with sexually-experienced older men. This frequently intersects with poverty insofar as poor urban women's and girls' dependence on cash income and limited livelihood opportunities increase the possibility of unsafe 'transactional sex'.<sup>54</sup> For example, slum

dwelling girls face a greater likelihood of early sexual debut associated with lack of privacy, insecurity and gender-based violence (individual and gang-based). In addition, people may already have weak immune systems resulting from poor nutrition and other communicable diseases, thus increasing their susceptibility to infection and accelerated progression from HIV to AIDS.<sup>55</sup>

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CITIES

Violence against women affects an estimated one in three women across the world, which makes women twice as likely to suffer acts of violent aggression as their male counterparts.<sup>56</sup> It is generally acknowledged that rates of crime and all types of violence are higher in cities than in the countryside. Within the broader context of rates of violent crime increasing globally from 6 to 8.8 incidents per 100,000 persons between 1990 and 2000, much of this increase has been in cities.<sup>57</sup> As outlined in Chapter 1.1, there are a range of issues that make violence against women and gender-based violence a critical issue in cities. Somewhat inevitably, urban violence does not only affect women and girls, with young men also being at high risk, especially in slums where becoming part of a youth gang can be the only viable means of livelihood.<sup>58</sup> Membership of gangs linked to drugs and street violence is often associated with the premature mortality of men.<sup>59</sup> However, women are the most likely to experience gender-based violence especially in poor communities and particularly by non-partners. There

are range of sites and spaces in cities where violence is more likely to occur. These include toilets, at schools, in drinking bars, and in secluded areas.<sup>60</sup> This is compounded by flimsy housing, poor street lighting, inadequate public transport and lack of security patrols. Therefore, the lack of infrastructure in cities contributes to gender-based violence and makes women more vulnerable to break-ins, theft and rape (See Box 2.1.4). In addition, the frequent anonymity and social isolation of female urban dwellers, may make them more vulnerable to attack from strangers, but also to receive limited help when affected by intimate partner abuse.<sup>61</sup>

#### Box 2.1.4

##### Women's concerns about urban security and safety in Cape Town, South Africa

In April 2011, at the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign's monthly residential meeting in the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area, informally referred to as Blikkiesdorp, or 'Tin Can Town' in Afrikaans, residents voluntarily gathered to discuss their personal security concerns within the community. Among the routine discussions of endemic crime and the regular break-ins, which afford residents little to no personal security over their possessions, a comment surfaced from Nadia, a resident who had years ago been evicted from her home closer to Cape Town's city centre. Raising her voice above the sounds drifting over from the adjacent shacks, Nadia expressed in front of her fellow residents, both male and female, her deep concern over the lack of municipal repair of the streetlights lining the dirt road that leads to the main highway. The non-functioning of the streetlights has posed particular problems for women, rendering them vulnerable to harassment, theft, physical abuse, and sexual violence. In the darkness of morning's early hours, when many of the Area's women begin their hours-long commute towards Cape Town's City Centre, often involving a protracted walk followed by multiple minibus trips, the functioning presence of streetlights deters crime and allows for residents' safe passage through an otherwise-unsecured area. Nadia's complaint illustrates one of the many ways in which women's safety can be compromised by the simple lack of municipal service delivery in informal settlements. Yet, women's safety can also be greatly improved with the effective installation and maintenance of streetlights. The installation and maintenance of streetlights in slums and other low-income housing areas throughout the Global South represent one opportunity to improve the safety and well-being of the poor, particularly women, in a way that the residents themselves have personally shown to be both productive and in demand.

Source: Fleming (2011)

While young women appear to be particularly prone to sexual abuse, including gang rape, frail and elderly women may also be vulnerable along with women who 'transgress' heteronormative boundaries such as those who, in one form or another, live 'independently'. This includes lone women and lone mothers, who are often so insecure about living without men that they opt to stay in abusive relationships with 'real or make-do "husbands"' as noted for slums in Chittagong and Dhaka in Bangladesh, Hyderabad in India and Nairobi, Kenya.<sup>62</sup> Sexuality is another issue, with a reported 90 per cent of lesbian women in Quito, Ecuador, having suffered abuse in their neighbourhoods on account of 'lesbophobia'.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, there are also a series of 'triggers' in cities that can induce violence against women which include witnessing intimate partner violence as child and child abuse, an absent or rejecting father, low educational level and high rates of employment among women, youth, HIV status and male alcohol and substance abuse.<sup>64</sup> Some of these conditions exist in the countryside, but are often heightened in cities, especially women's greater labour force participation which appears to antagonise some men.

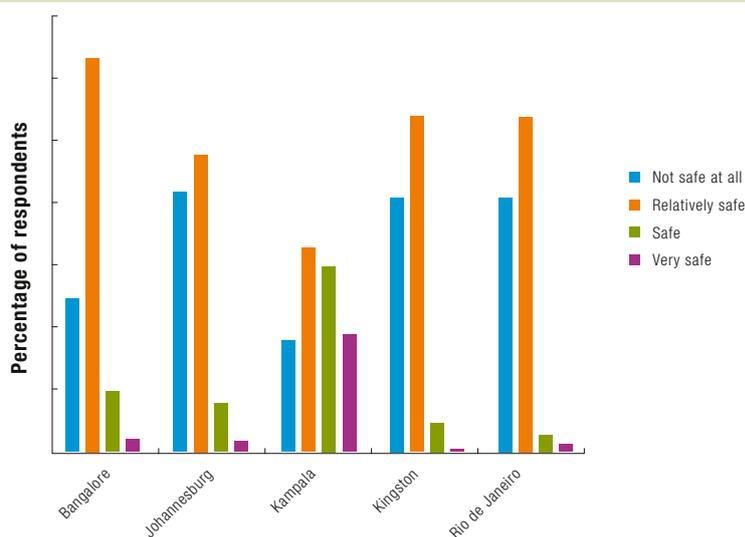
The most well-known example of this is the femicides in Mexico and Central America. Although these brutal killings are experienced by many poor women in cities, they are especially concentrated among *maquila* factory workers who work in export manufacturing factories owned by transnational corporations involved in the assembly factories of garments and electronics. The reasons for these femicides are rooted in a wide range of complex issues but are ultimately an expression of extreme gender discrimination. Some have suggested that the *maquila* workers are targeted because they are the preferred workers in the factories which can leave men unemployed and lead to male resentment against women's economic and social independence.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, in a study in the Philippines, it has been shown that non-partner violence is more widespread in cities than rural areas and that the process of urbanisation can lead to 'stress-induced violence'.<sup>66</sup> In the case of violence linked with alcohol abuse on the part of men and its perpetration in drinking places, research has shown that bars, cantinas, taverns and *shebeens* are especially dangerous places for women to frequent, or in some instances even to pass by, because of the risk from sexual violence. In the case of Guatemala City, women living in one poor community reported being afraid to go near cantinas because they thought they would be raped or men would expose themselves to them or try and 'touch them'.<sup>67</sup>

Evidence from the survey shows that security and safety were major concerns in all the cities. For instance, one third of urban dwellers did 'not feel safe at all' in their city. This was especially marked in Johannesburg (42 per cent), Kingston

Figure 2.1.2

## Perceptions of safety and security for women in cities



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

(41 per cent) and Rio de Janeiro (41 per cent) all of which are cities that have notable problems with urban violence. The only city where people reported feeling 'very safe' in any significant number was in Kampala (19 per cent) (Figure 2.1.2).

The importance of addressing violence in urban contexts is widely recognised at city-wide, national and international levels. In 2009, the Global Programme on Safe Cities Free from Violence against Women was launched by UN-Habitat in conjunction with UNIFEM (now subsumed under UN Women).<sup>68</sup> This followed from UN-Habitat's Safer Cities Programme, which has supported local authorities in developing countries to prevent crime and violence through city-wide advocacy and training.<sup>69</sup> For example, Cebu in the Philippines has introduced a host of initiatives to reduce violence against women and is the first city in the country to introduce a 'Gender Code' and in 2004 earned the UN-Habitat award of 'Women Friendly City'.

To date a number of countries have established women only police stations in a bid to combat violence against women, especially to encourage women to report crimes perpetrated against them. The first women's police station (DDM - *Delegacia da Mulher*) was created in São Paulo, Brazil in 1985 mainly in response to mass women's demonstrations demanding women's rights. The legislation creating this police station decreed that everyone working there had to be a woman with the aim of reducing violence against women and charging them with investigating and prosecuting violence against women. By the mid-2000s, there were 125 women's police stations in the state of São Paulo, and 339 throughout Brazil, with 475 units nationwide by 2010.<sup>70</sup> Similar developments

have been noted in Tanzania with the formation of the Tanzania Police Female Network (TPFNet) leading to the opening of gender desks in police stations, and in South Africa.<sup>71</sup> The Philippines opened its first women-only police stations in Manila in 2008.

Effective urban planning, design and governance from a gender perspective can also enhance urban safety and security in cities. This approach has also been referred to as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) which entails using a primarily spatial and design perspective to reducing violence.<sup>72</sup> These might include public-private partnerships, such as the 'Adopt a Light' initiative in Nairobi, which since 2002, has illuminated key thoroughfares in and around the capital's major slums, generating revenue for the scheme through selling advertising space on lampposts.<sup>73</sup> While these types of initiatives focus mainly on risk-reduction, they have proved to be successful in reducing the incidence of violence although it is also essential to combine these with other projects that also address deep-seated gender inequalities.

Women's organisations in partnership with *inter alia* neighbourhoods, international agencies, cities and local authorities, and central governments have also been active in promoting innovative approaches to elimination of violence against women. Women's safety audits, for example, have been used in several cities with reductions in the incidence of violence against women being reported. The Bantay Banay Campaign in the Philippines is another example which has contributed to a significant reduction in cases of domestic violence. (See Box 2.1.5).

## Box 2.1.5

**Domestic violence in Cebu City, the Philippines: the 'Bantay Banay' programme**

Located in the Western Visayas, Cebu City forms part of Metro Cebu, which is the second largest urban settlement in the Philippines after the capital, Metro Manila.

Cebu is not only renowned as a hub of export industry in the country and for its major contributions to national prosperity, but also for its record on promoting gender equality and empowering women. Here, the locally-based NGO Lihok Pilipina launched a flagship programme against domestic violence in the early 1990s, known as 'Bantay Banay', which means 'Family Watch' in Cebuano (the local language). The programme aims to make everyone responsive to, and responsible for, addressing violence against women, by sensitising key stakeholders such as women and men in communities, barangay (neighbourhood) officials, local doctors, health workers, and police officers to the need to identify and eliminate gender-based violence. This entails becoming familiar with the signs and symptoms of domestic violence, and raising levels of reporting. In some neighbourhoods of the city Bantay Banay has been so successful that battering by husbands has fallen from affecting 60 per cent to 20 per cent of the female population.

*Source:* Chant (2007a, p. 198)

Gender-based violence compounds a series of other risks to life and well-being, such as lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, which compromise women's potential to generate as well as enjoy urban prosperity.<sup>74</sup> Without adequate attention to the need for a gendered approach to urban planning, these processes can undermine urban prosperity.

Indeed, more generally a gendered planning approach is required from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective. In terms of the former, gender-sensitive professional codes of conduct and institutional mechanisms that include women in all aspects of the planning process are required and backed-up by legislation where necessary. At the other end of the spectrum, there is considerable scope for urban planners to engage much more fully with grassroots organisations, and especially those run by and representing women such as the Huairou Commission, the Society for the Promotion of Resource Area Centres (SPARC) and the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA).<sup>75</sup>

## Endnotes

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1. UN-Habitat (2010a)
2. Chant (2007b, 2012a)
3. MirafTAB (2001); Quisumbing (2010)
4. Moser (2006, 2009)
5. Hughes and Wickeri (2011, p. 814-5); UN-Habitat (2006a); Varley (2007)
6. UN-Habitat (2007a); UN-Habitat (2010b); UNHRC (2009, p. 22)
7. UNICEF (2007, Figure 3.4); OECD (2012, p. 4)
8. COHRE (2004); CPRC (2010); Hughes and Wickeri (2011)
9. UN-Habitat (2008b); See also Hughes and Wickeri (2011, p. 850)
10. Nakray (2010); Rakodi (2010); Sweetman (2008)
11. COHRE (2004, 2008); Nakray (2010); UN-Habitat (2007a, p. 8)
12. Chant (2007a, pp. 181-3 on The Gambia); Jackson (2003)
13. Chant (2007b); Varley (2007)
14. MirafTAB (2001)
15. Goebel et al (2010, p. 578)
16. Also Moser and Felton (2010) on Ecuador
17. Gilbert (2003); Kumar (2010); MirafTAB (2001)
18. Hughes and Wickeri (2011)
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20. Benavides Llerena et al (2007)
21. Benschop (2004); COHRE (2004); Khosla (2009, p. 39)
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23. Chant (1987, 1996); D'Cruz and Satterthwaite (2005, p. 9)
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26. World Bank (2011a)
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44. Hesketh and Xing (2006, p. 13271-5)
45. UN (2010a, p. 30-1)
46. Graham (2004); Fraser (2005); UNDP (2005, p. 33)
47. UN (2010a, p. 32-4, 2010c, p. 1)
48. Save the Children (2011b, p. 16-20)
49. Essendi et al (2010); Ochako et al (2011)
50. UNAIDS (2010, p. 7-8); UN (2010a, p. 45)
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52. UNAIDS (2010)
53. Sverdiik (2011, p. 131)
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63. Benavides Llerena et al (2007)
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71. Hughes and Wickeri (2011, p. 856); UN Women (2011, p. 57)
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## Chapter 2.2



### Gender, Infrastructure and Prosperity of Cities

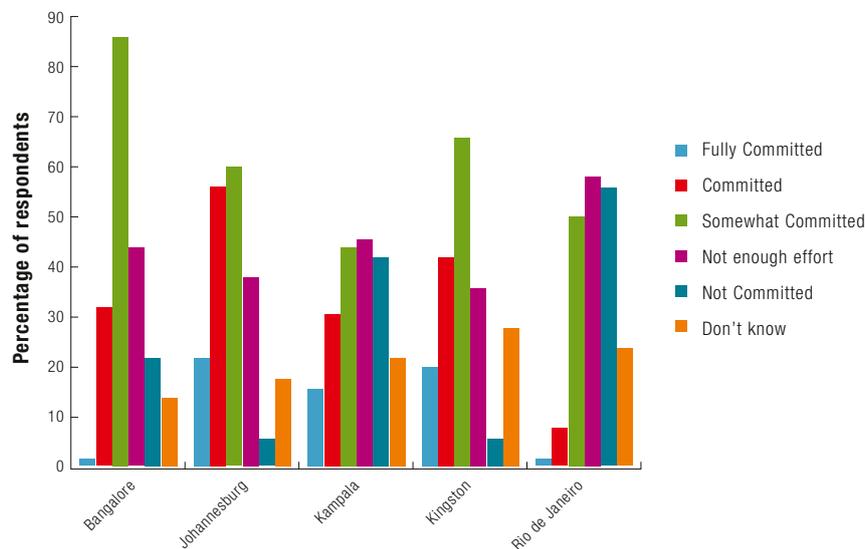
This chapter outlines some of the key issues in relation to the importance of access to adequate infrastructure in cities in terms of enhancing women's prosperity and economic empowerment. This relates directly to the arena of gender disparities in physical and financial assets and capital as part of the gender and urban prosperity nexus of which infrastructure plays an important role. While infrastructure relates to various physical aspects of urban environments linked with territorial space, fixtures and connections, as in urban mass transport, pavements or sidewalks, street lighting, and parks, it also deals with community centres or meeting places, nurseries, elderly care homes, and sports and recreational facilities. In turn, these link closely with aspects of productivity as well as spatial mobility and connectivity. While some aspects of urban infrastructure were discussed in Chapter 2.1 on quality of life, this chapter will focus specifically on water and sanitation, public transport and the role of community centres and meeting places in cities.

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN'S ACCESS TO INFRASTRUCTURE IN CITIES

The survey revealed that the extent to which urban dwellers felt their city was fully committed to promoting infrastructural development to fully engage women in urban development and productive work was variable. Although over half (53 per cent) thought that their cities were committed in some form, only 22 per cent stated that they were 'fully committed' or 'committed'. The highest perceived levels of commitment were found in Johannesburg where 39 per cent were 'committed' or 'fully committed' together with Kingston (31 per cent) (Figure 2.2.1).

This general perception that infrastructure resources were not really adequate in providing equal support for the productive activities of women and men, especially in terms of the specific needs of women, was further reflected in the survey. For example, only 29.5 per cent of respondents felt that infrastructure was 'adequate', with lows of 15 per cent in Rio de Janeiro and 18.5 per cent in Kingston. More positive views were held in Kampala (where 46 per cent thought infrastructure was 'adequate') and in Johannesburg (50 per cent).

Figure 2.2.1

**Commitment of city to promoting infrastructure development to engage women in urban development and productive work**

Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

More specifically, the nature of women's access to particular types of infrastructure was assessed in the survey cities. It emerged that the most problematic area was access to sanitation, especially in Bangalore and Rio de Janeiro. Access to infrastructure for recreation was also very limited for women, again particularly for those in Bangalore and Rio de Janeiro. Access to telecommunications was perceived to be the most developed, especially in Kingston (Table 2.2.1).

In relation to how much infrastructure development contributes to the quality of various aspects of women's lives in cities, it is instructive that improved access to education and health services was thought to be the most important, especially in Kingston and Johannesburg. Improved mobility for women was also identified as important, especially in Kingston. The creation of improved home/work environment was thought to be the least significant, presumably because it was such a general issue (See Table 2.2.2).

Table 2.2.1

**Ranking of access to different types of urban infrastructure by women**

Cities → Factors	Bangalore	Johannesburg	Kampala	Kingston	Rio de Janeiro	Total	Rank
Transport	3.15	3.33	2.93	3.70	2.53	3.11	4
Water	2.60	3.48	2.97	3.92	3.09	3.16	3
Electricity	2.90	3.34	2.88	3.96	3.23	3.23	2
Sanitation	2.52	3.25	2.98	3.41	2.59	2.91	6
Telecommunication infrastructure	3.38	3.34	3.11	4.02	3.18	3.40	1
Infrastructure for recreation	2.68	3.19	2.87	3.28	2.78	2.93	5

**Note:** Responses 1 → least advanced to 5 → most advanced  
Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

Statisticians entering data into the database for further processing and analysis, Turkmenistan.  
© World Bank



Table 2.2.2

### Ranking of contribution of infrastructure development to women's lives

Cities→ Factors	Bangalore	Johannesburg	Kampala	Kingston	Rio de Janeiro	Total	Rank
Inclusive economic growth	2.87	3.18	2.99	3.20	2.48	2.93	3
Reduction of women's poverty	2.60	3.00	3.07	2.92	2.33	2.77	4
Improved mobility of women	2.99	3.15	3.05	3.35	2.43	2.98	2
Creation of improved home/work environment	2.75	2.92	2.89	2.91	2.31	2.75	5
Improved access to education and health for women	3.13	3.44	3.05	3.63	2.40	3.11	1

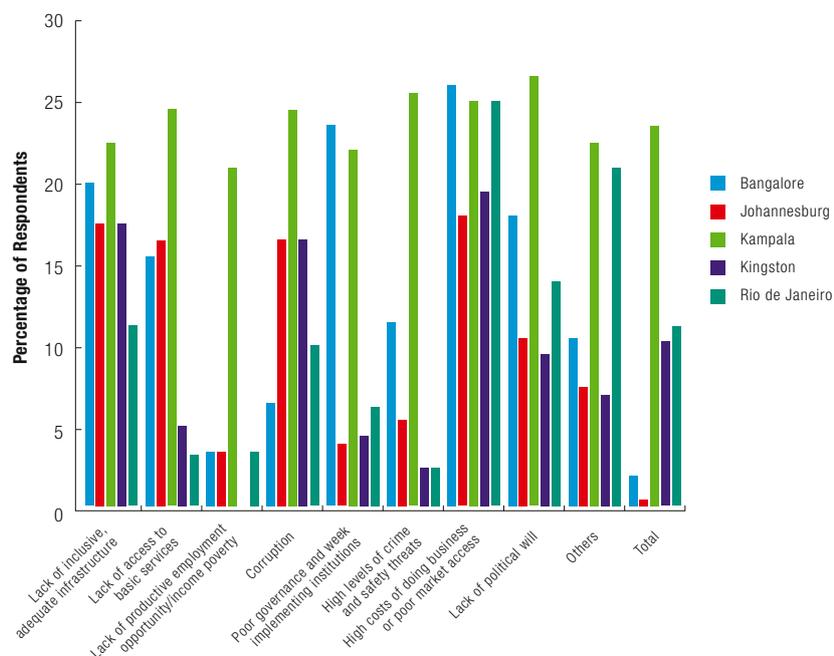
**Note:** Responses 1→ not contributing to 5→ fully contributing  
*Source:* UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

The most commonly identified infrastructure problems acting as barriers to the prosperity of women were sanitation and the burden of disease which was cited by 50 per cent or more people in Bangalore, Kampala and Rio de Janeiro. This was followed by congested roads identified as a barrier by 45 per cent in Kampala and 40 per cent in Bangalore. The least important barrier was interruption of telephone lines, cited by only 13 per cent of people, and only by 7 per cent in Bangalore, Johannesburg, and Rio de Janeiro and by no-one in Kingston (Figure 2.2.2).

In most cities, it is clear that the most important effect of infrastructure underdevelopment on the lives of women is increased cost of living cited by 36 per cent. This was perceived as particularly important in Bangalore and Kingston. The second most important issue was poor proximity to employment opportunities and markets, identified by 21 per cent of people, with those in Rio de Janeiro and Kingston especially concerned (See Figure 2.2.3).

Figure 2.2.2

## Barriers affecting infrastructure underdevelopment on lives of women (per cent answering yes)



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

## GENDER AND BASIC SERVICES

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation were established as human rights by the UN Human Rights Council in 2010, adding impetus to MDG 7 Target C, which is to 'reduce by half the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015'. Yet although access to water is progressing in line with this target, it is important to note that this does not cover water for bathing, washing and cleaning.<sup>1</sup> Improvements in sanitation are less encouraging, with major shortfalls in many regions.

While rural areas are particularly deprived, urban slums bear a substantial brunt of deficits.<sup>2</sup> In countries such as Tanzania, for example, improvements in urban sanitation are often cancelled out by demographic growth. This means that in informal settlements in Morogoro and Dar es Salaam, pressure on sanitation facilities forces several households to share a single pit latrine, which poses extreme discomfort and risks to health, and also presents a major challenge of labour and affordability in relation to cleaning.<sup>3</sup> In India, in Delhi, Meerut, Indore and Nagpur, between one-third and one-half of poor households practice open defecation (OD), where bodily waste is left exposed, including in uncovered pit latrines.<sup>4</sup>

Lack of services not only impacts women's and girls' workloads, but can also seriously compromise their dignity and self-respect. As described graphically by Catarina de Albuquerque, UN Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to safe drinking water and sanitation:

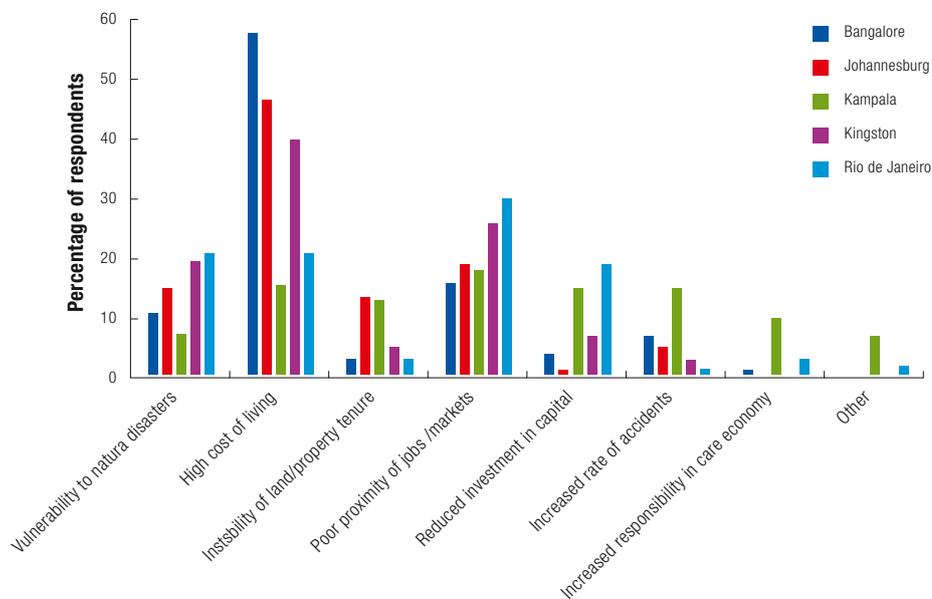
'Sanitation is not just about health, housing, education, work, gender equality, and the ability to survive. Sanitation, more than many other human rights issues, evokes the concept of human dignity; consider the vulnerability and shame that so many people experience every day when, again, they are forced to defecate in the open, in a bucket or a plastic bag... Dignity closely relates to self-respect, which is difficult to maintain when being forced to squat down in the open, with no respect for privacy, not having the opportunity to clean oneself after defecating and facing the constant threat of assault in such a vulnerable moment'<sup>5</sup>.

The UN-Habitat survey revealed that 38 per cent thought that there was 'advanced' or 'very advanced' gender equity in access to water, especially in Kingston (62 per cent). The least advanced was in Bangalore where 14 per cent thought there was 'no equity'. Access to sanitation was thought to be less equitable with only 33.5 per cent perceiving access to be 'advanced' or 'very advanced', although this was as high as 55 per cent of those in Kingston. The least advanced was thought to be in Rio de Janeiro where 14 per cent thought that there was 'no equity'.

Small-scale qualitative research on service provision and women's time poverty suggests that gender-inequitable time burdens resulting from service deficits constrain women's ability to participate in all spheres of urban prosperity.<sup>6</sup> Where decent services do not exist, or are too expensive, women have

Figure 2.2.3

## Most important effects of infrastructure underdevelopment on lives of women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

to engage in several forms of labour in order to compensate. For example, the costs of water may be 8-10 times higher from private than public suppliers.<sup>7</sup> Where dwellings lack domestic mains-supplied water, women have to collect it from public standpipes, wells, boreholes, rivers, or storage drums served by private tankers. Even if journeys are short in terms of distance, they may take long to perform where traversing inhospitable terrain, or queuing at the outlet is involved. At communal sources, women may have to compete with one another and with male water vendors creating stress and conflict. There may even be personal risk of injury or death, as documented for Pune, India, where one girl's efforts to secure an early place in a queue for a water tanker led to her being crushed under its wheels.<sup>8</sup> The poor quality of water purchased from informal operators may raise people's susceptibility to conditions such as diarrhoea.<sup>9</sup>

Where electricity is not available, time has to be spent collecting or buying fuel and making fires to cook and heat water and to shop on a daily basis due to lack of refrigeration. Where there is no municipal rubbish collection, or people cannot afford to pay for private waste contractors, women have to dispose of solid waste and in cases where there is no domestic sanitation, faecal matter and waste water. This adds massively to women's 'time poverty'.<sup>10</sup> The heavy 'reproduction tax' (as coined by Ingrid Palme in 1992) exacted by these burdens reduces women's potential for rest and recreation, not

to mention well-remunerated 'decent work', as well as having knock-on effects on human capital formation among younger generations of women.

In the survey, 40 per cent of respondents thought that gender equity in access to electricity was 'advanced' or 'very advanced', especially the case in Kingston (70 per cent). Those in Kampala were the least optimistic in that 10 per cent thought there was 'no equity'.

Women role in community development, Myanmar.  
© Veronica Wijaya/UN-Habitat



## GENDER AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In many parts of the world access to public space in urban areas is gender-differentiated, with women facing particular constraints to movement. This can seriously jeopardise women's prospects of sharing in urban prosperity by resulting in lower literacy rates through non-attendance at school, and restricted labour force participation.<sup>11</sup> Social and cultural constraints on women's movements, and the fact that they may be the last in households to claim use of any form of vehicle, and gender-blind transport planning can also be detrimental to the well-being and prosperity of women in cities.<sup>12</sup>

The design of public transportation often assumes male labour patterns, prioritising travel from peri-urban areas to city centres during 'peak hours'. This neglects women's engagement in domestic, informal, part-time work in peripheral areas, non-peak journeys, and heavy household and care burdens that require multi-purpose, multi-stop excursions, with obstacles compounded for elderly and disabled women.<sup>13</sup> In addition, women and men who are informally employed and have to carry their produce and equipment with them are heavily constrained by poor public transport facilities.<sup>14</sup>

Another major problem regarding women and girl's use of public transport is personal safety and security. Where transport connections are situated in isolated or poorly-lit areas, or bus and train carriages are heavily overcrowded and/or inadequately or ineffectively staffed, women and girls face verbal, sexual and physical harassment. This can result in physical harm,

psychological anxiety and fear of moving around the city.<sup>15</sup>

In the survey, just over half stated that women increasingly had access to safe and secure public transport. This was most marked in the case of Bangalore where 60 per cent thought this, compared with a low of 33 per cent in Rio de Janeiro. Overall, though these perceptions are encouraging in that there appears to be some move towards recognising the importance of safe public transport for women.

One way of making transport safer is to provide women only-buses and/or train carriages. Such initiatives have been introduced in cities as diverse as Mexico City, Cairo, Jakarta, Japan, New Delhi, Rio de Janeiro and Moscow. However, although these can provide an immediate solution to harassment and danger experienced by women, they will not transform gender relations. It is also important to recognise that city streets do not need to be home to traffic, especially private motorised vehicles, which are usually owned by men and pose threats of injury and contamination.<sup>16</sup> Although sometimes the introduction of simple low-cost improvements, such as pavement-widening or pedestrianisation, can make a huge difference to women's movement around cities, broader initiatives, comprising several complementary interventions, are required to ensure gender equitable intra-urban mobility. Showcase examples include the recent major regenerations that have taken place in a range of Colombian cities at the hands of powerful and popular mayors such as Enrique Peñalosa in Bogotá and Sergio Fajardo in Medellín (See Box 2.2.1).

Checking progress and quality, Dam under construction in Sri Lanka.  
© Lakshman Nadaraja/World Bank



## Box 2.2.1

**Gender dimensions of improved connectivity in cities: the Bogotá experience under Mayor Enrique Peñalosa**

One of most important priorities advanced during Bogotá Mayor, Enrique Peñalosa's, time in office (1998-2001) was the 'de-marginalisation' and/or 'inclusion of low-income and informal workers and residents' in the country's capital. Policies were pursued to dismantle the barriers preventing poorer citizens from accessing the benefits of urban life by 'equalising' city residents before the state. Providing services to traditionally marginalised groups created stronger social cohesion by ending preferential public treatment for the more affluent. During his relatively brief administration Peñalosa extended access to water to all Bogotá homes, and implemented radical reforms in transport, infrastructure and the use of urban space. Peñalosa sought to maximise popular mobility through prioritising walkway and bicycle lane projects over cars, which provided healthy, low-cost, non-polluting travel options. He also actively promoted Bogotá's 'Sunday Ciclovía' tradition, a weekly car-free event which since the 1970s has closed 120 kilometres of road in the city to all but pedestrians and those using non-motorised vehicles such as bicycles and roller skates.

When cities are 'designed for people, not cars', and spaces are opened-up for recreation and socialising through pedestrian- and people-friendly projects this can lessen the social inequality that comes with a stratified transport system which favours richer motorists over poorer mass transit users. The high quality TransMilenio bus rapid transit system introduced by Peñalosa is now 84 kilometres in length, and offers safe, affordable and reliable public transport which is accessible to the residents of Bogotá's slums. Serving an average of 1.7 million passengers

a day, the system provides universal access to all stations and buses in trunk lines which cater to the needs of women, the disabled and the elderly. Indeed, through TransMilenio, Peñalosa addressed a major obstacle to income-earning by poor women who previously had to source work within walking distance of their homes to avoid paying hefty transport fares. Women who can access numerous quality and flexible transportation options benefit from such investments because their trips are often for multiple purposes, even though an integrated ticketing system enabling multiple trips taken by women would improve matters further. Gender-sensitive investments which reduce the risks and constraints attached to 'dangerous and unreliable mass transit' can also benefit men.

Building on the legacy of Antanas Mockus who was very keen to recruit women in all processes, and to incorporate more female police officers, Peñalosa sought process-related reforms as well. Project teams engaged a number of young professional women and men, increasing efficiency and avoiding the corruption-related pitfalls that plague many infrastructure initiatives run by seasoned bureaucrats. Cities that enable women to fulfil their potential of playing important roles at all stages of local governance, from strategic planning to urban crisis response are clearly able to access a greater pool of talent. Bogotá's transformation demonstrates how improved access to urban infrastructure can contribute to increasing gender-inclusive prosperity in its widest sense.

*Source:* Castro and Echeverri (2011); Kunieda and Gauthier (2007); Montezuma (2005)

## GENDER AND COMMUNITY SPACES IN CITIES

Given that women are often much more constrained than men in terms of their physical access to urban space, it is important to consider the types of infrastructure required in order to ameliorate their burdens beyond improved access to public transport. One aspect of this is claiming physical, everyday public space as a way of transforming and making visible women's public roles as well as sharing reproductive and productive burdens, and providing recreational activities.

Such public and community spaces for women may not only involve parks and playground, but buildings that are created to meet a common practical need or concern. However, it is also common for new functions and activities to be added over time as new needs emerge in the community. One example is that of the Mother Centres in Germany which began as a drop-in

place for mothers to overcome social isolation. Yet they soon became places for childcare, food cooperatives and income generation activities.<sup>17</sup>

Another aspect of these spaces is that they often begin by serving women's traditional roles but over time they begin to organise and challenge prevailing inequalities. One renowned example of these types of spaces is the communal kitchens in Lima, Peru. They began as a way of providing food and assistance to the poor of slum areas and involved 20-30 women per kitchen buying foodstuffs, preparing meals either focused on the space within a member's house or by building a new space. Over time, they joined with wider cooperative movements that challenged government policies. By the late 1990, 40,000 low-income women gathered in 2,000 sites across Lima to feed 200,000 poor people.<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes communal spaces are started relatively spontaneously as part of self-help initiatives, while in some cases they are created by an organisation who then invites the marginalised to use them. In reality there are many overlaps in the types of spaces. In most instances, they aim to improve women's lives in ways that directly or indirectly contribute to enhancing their prosperity in cities. One example of this are community-based and community-run pharmacy outlets or Botika Binhis in poor urban neighbourhoods in Manila, the Philippines. While this chapter has highlighted the importance of providing infrastructure for women in cities in order to generate prosperity, such provision also needs to be combined with policies that address gender equity to which the report now turns.



## Endnotes

1. Joshi et al (2011, p. 102)
2. UN (2010a, p. 61-2)
3. Hughes and Wickeri (2011, p. 892)
4. Kar and Chambers (2008)
5. Extract from a 2009 report cited in Amnesty International (2010, p. 25)
6. Chant (1984, 2007b)
7. Chant (2007b, p. 62); also Brown (2010)
8. Bapat and Agarwal (2003, p. 86); Thompson et al (2000) on Kenya
9. Sverdlik (2011) on Indonesia
10. Gammage (2010); Khosla (2009); Morrison et al (2010)
11. Kantor (2002); World Bank (2011c, p. 169)
12. Jarvis et al (2009)
13. Kunieda and Gauthier (2007); UN-Habitat (2009, p. 126)
14. Jarvis et al (2009); Kunieda and Gauthier (2007); Tran and Schlyter (2010)
15. Fernando and Porter (2002)
16. Hughes and Wickeri (2011); Khosla (2009, p. 17)
17. Yonder and Tamaki for the Huairou Commission (2010)
18. Lind (1997, 2002); Yonder and Tamaki for the Huairou Commission (2010)

# Chapter 2.3



## Gender, Productivity, Employment and Prosperity of Cities

This chapter focuses primarily on the ‘gender divisions of labour in the urban economy’ as well as ‘gender disparities in human capital’ that both form key elements of the gender empowerment and urban prosperity nexus. It also highlights how employment is one of the key dimensions of women’s economic empowerment in cities with great potential to contribute to urban prosperity. Yet it is also acknowledged that women’s economic empowerment extends far beyond unpaid and paid employment, even if it remains a very important dimension in relation to their economic advancement. Employment in particular can be highly exploitative of women, and their participation in the urban economy can also exacerbate gender inequalities rather than ameliorate them as illustrated by the ‘gender disparities in power and rights’ aspect of the nexus. It is in the sphere of urban productivity, where women’s multiple disadvantages across the spectrum of domestic, community and city-wide space, affect their ability to study, and to acquire vocational skills and training. By the same token, it is also the sphere where enhancing women’s prosperity in cities has the most immediate potential.

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN’S PRODUCTIVITY IN CITIES

The survey highlighted that 68 per cent thought that policies to promote productivity among women in cities were ‘good’, ‘very good’ or excellent’. Those in Rio de Janeiro were the least positive (51 per cent) while those in Johannesburg were the most (84 per cent). Related with this, 61 per cent thought that their city was committed to the promotion of women’s productivity in some form, although only one-quarter felt they were ‘committed’ or ‘fully committed’. Those in Kingston and Johannesburg were the most likely to say their city was ‘committed’, with people in Rio de Janeiro the least likely.

Among the factors identified as important in making the city more productive for women, especially in Kingston, Rio de Janeiro and Johannesburg, entrepreneurship emerged as most significant. This was followed by skills development to enhance human resources, to better manage organisational structures, and to maximise investments in new technologies. The second most important factor was investment in increasing physical capital stocks to reduce women’s burden and enhance productivity. Strategic development in terms of conducting gender responsive city-wide economic analysis, exploring diverse development and approaches to diversify growth as well as financial development defined as better management of revenue sources and expenditure and expanding access to capital markets were viewed as the least important, especially in Kampala and Johannesburg (See Table 2.3.1).

Table 2.3.1

## Ranking of factors making the city more productive for women

Cities→ Factors	Bangalore	Johannesburg	Kampala	Kingston	Rio de Janeiro	Total	Rank
Competition	2.93	2.95	3.01	3.21	2.89	3.00	5
Innovation	3.16	2.97	2.84	3.18	3.06	3.04	4
Skills development	3.28	3.14	2.94	3.41	3.24	3.20	2
Investment	3.10	2.94	2.88	3.24	3.10	3.06	3
Entrepreneurship	3.25	3.32	2.90	3.45	3.37	3.25	1
Strategic development	3.00	2.88	2.92	2.59	2.96	2.88	7
Financial management	3.07	2.63	3.03	3.09	2.92	2.97	6

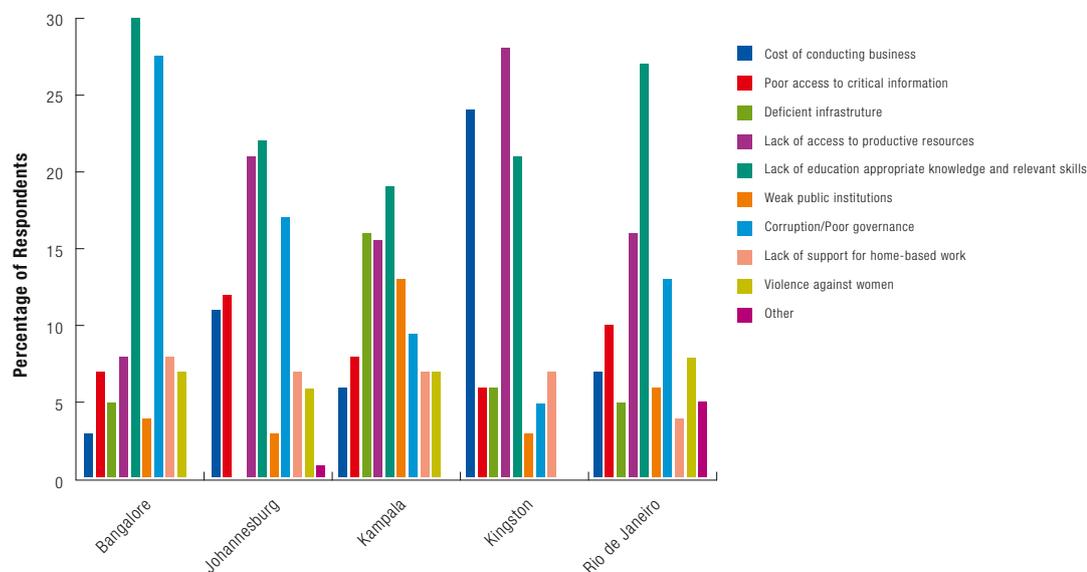
**Note:** Responses 1→ Not Effective to 5→ Most Effective  
**Source:** UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

Women's empowerment is undoubtedly linked with economic productivity (See below). The survey highlighted that lack of education and appropriate knowledge and skills were the main set of obstacles for women (identified in 24 per cent of cases) followed by lack of access to productive resources. The former set of issues was especially identified in the case of Bangalore (30 per cent) and in Kingston for the latter (27 per cent) (Figure 2.3.1).

Less than one-third of all respondents (31 per cent) felt that existing efforts to attain gender equity in access to employment opportunities were 'advanced' or 'very advanced', especially in Kingston (51.5 per cent) and Johannesburg (44 per cent). Those in Rio de Janeiro were the least positive with 18 per cent stating that efforts were 'very weak'.

Figure 2.3.1

## Obstacles to generating economic productivity and empowerment of women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

Broadly similar patterns emerged in relation to gender equity in access to education in that almost half of all respondents (49 per cent) felt that existing efforts were advanced or very advanced, especially in Kingston (82 per cent) and Johannesburg (62 per cent). Those in Rio de Janeiro were the least positive with 19 per cent stating that efforts were very weak.

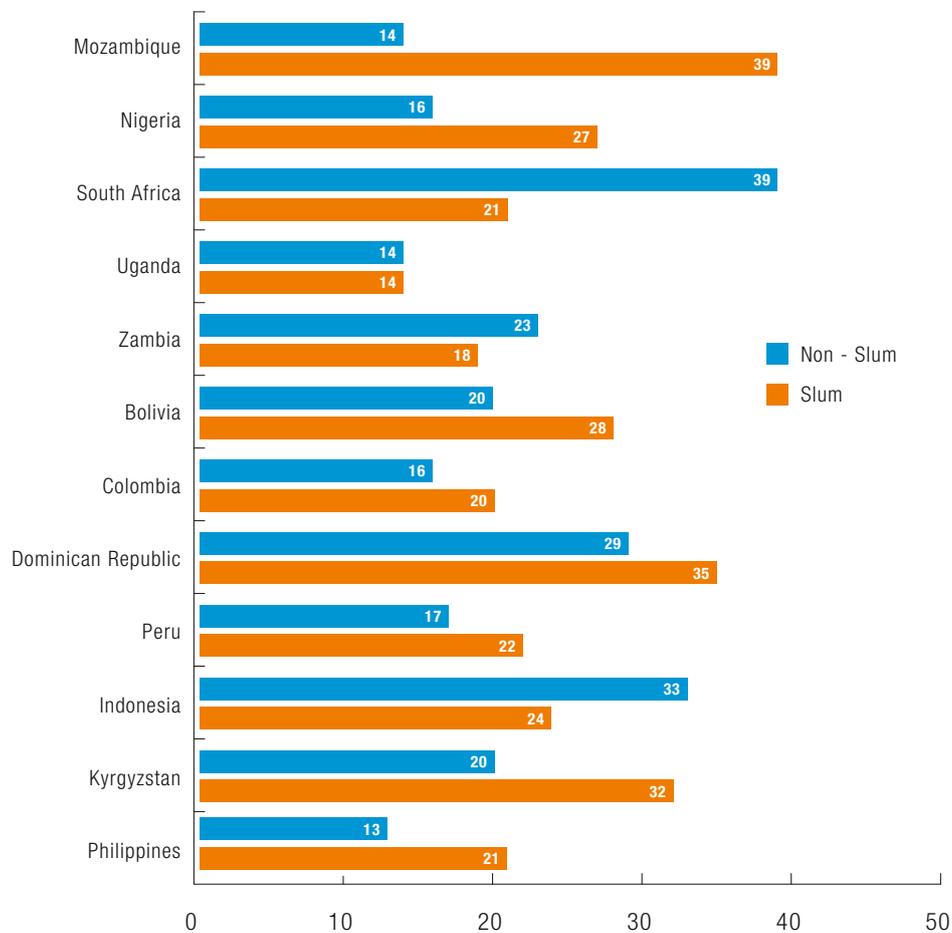
## EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND HUMAN CAPITAL ARE KEY FOR URBAN PRODUCTIVITY

Education, human capital and a skilled workforce are central to generating urban prosperity. Most importantly is that there are positive effects in educating women in that those with schooling are more likely to marry and have children later, have lower fertility levels, and also be healthier which can have important effects on their wider empowerment.<sup>1</sup>

While there have been marked reductions in gender disparities in primary school enrolments, tying in with the Millennium Development Goal 2 to achieve universal primary education by 2015, these improvements are less notable at secondary and tertiary levels. Although women outnumber men in tertiary education in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia, they remain poorly represented in traditionally 'masculine' fields of science and engineering.<sup>2</sup> Also important is that completion of education, especially at secondary and tertiary levels, is often disproportionately low for women. Although urban girls tend to be somewhat more advantaged than their rural counterparts, this is not always the case in urban slums, where early school drop-out is higher than in non-slum parts of the cities in many countries (See Figure 2.3.2). In major Indian cities for example, such as Delhi the proportion of women with no education or less than five years

Figure 2.3.2

Female school drop-out due to pregnancy and early marriage, slum and non-slum residence in selected countries (percentage)



Source: Adapted from UN-Habitat (2010e: Figure 2.9, 23)

of schooling is 57 per cent in slums, compared with 28 per cent in non-slum areas, and in Kolkata the respective levels are 51 per cent and 28 per cent.<sup>3</sup> At the bottom of the hierarchy, gender disparities are especially stark with women constituting approximately two-thirds of 774 million adult illiterates, a proportion which has seen little change in recent decades.<sup>4</sup>

These patterns of declining access were also observed from the UN-Habitat survey in that two-thirds felt that pre-primary school education was accessible to both women and men equally, especially in Bangalore (84 per cent) but not in Rio de Janeiro (41 per cent). The same pattern was identified in relation to primary school with 69 per cent stating that it was equally accessible, especially in Kingston (86 per cent) and Bangalore (85 per cent), but again with only 47 per cent of people in Rio de Janeiro thinking such. Although secondary schooling was perceived as less equal in terms of accessibility overall (62 per cent), 81 per cent and 80 per cent of those in Bangalore and Kingston felt this, unlike in Rio de Janeiro (37.5 per cent). Access to vocational training was viewed as more limited for women with only 58 per cent thinking it was equal overall, although this view was held by only 29 per cent in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, only 52 per cent felt that access to university was equal for women and men, with only 25 per cent

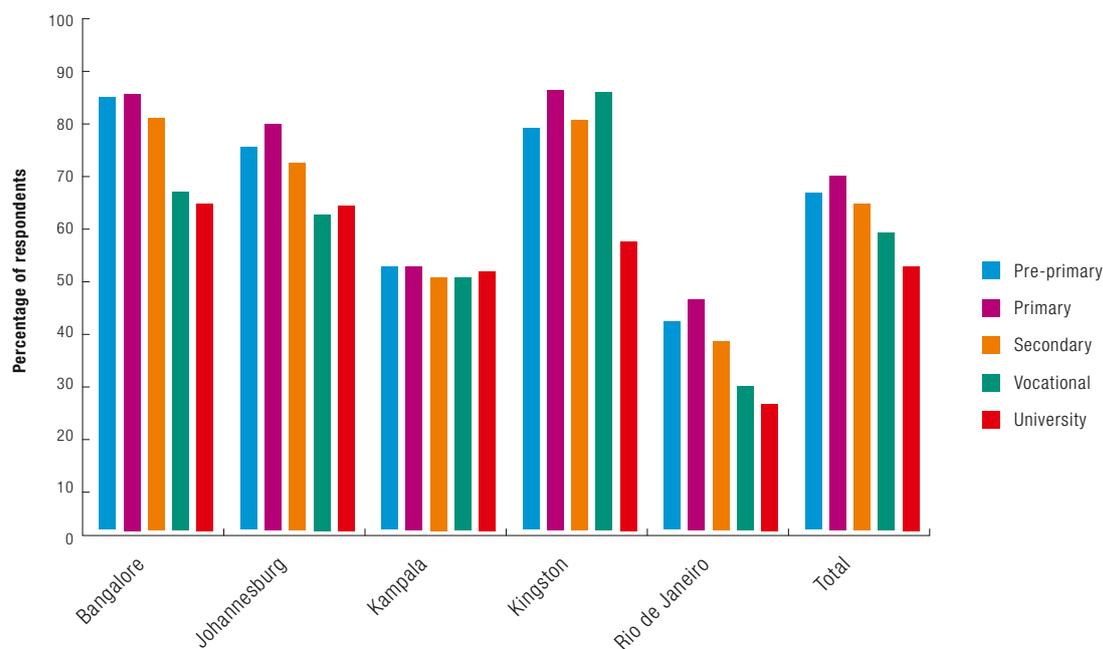
in Rio de Janeiro stating this (Figure 2.3.3). It was clear that restricted access to education for women was a major issue in the Brazilian case, while in the Indian study access was viewed as much more egalitarian.

The multiple barriers to girls' education are also important to highlight. Although poor slum-dwelling children may be hampered from private study by lack of space, light, peace and tranquillity, or basic infrastructure, girls almost invariably have to spend more time out of school carrying out domestic chores.<sup>5</sup> Young women may also be withdrawn from school if their parents or guardians do not regard girls' education as important, or because their labour is needed to help with household finances.<sup>6</sup> One of the respondents from the survey in Johannesburg reflected on this: 'Many women in our society lack education and this has infiltrated to the next generation, therefore leading to a vicious cycle of poverty'.

Interventions to redress these problems need to be holistic. There is evidence that many governments around the world have already been implementing innovative projects to address gender disparities in educational attainment (Box 2.3.1).

Figure 2.3.3

### Equality of access to high quality and affordable educational opportunities



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

## BOX 2.3.1

**'Girl Friendly' schools initiative in The Gambia**

In The Gambia, a 'Girl Friendly' schools initiative was formally launched in 2001 with the support of UNICEF. This led to establishment of a dedicated Girls' Education Unit (since 2004 the Gender Education Unit) within the Department of State for Education and the waiving of junior secondary school fees for girls. Related strategies have included the training of more female teachers, the establishment of school-linked mothers' clubs, subsidies for the purchase of uniforms and educational materials, scholarship schemes, and workshops to encourage girls to go into traditionally 'male' subjects such as science, mathematics and technology. The construction of female-only toilet blocks has also been instrumental in encouraging more parents to let their daughters attend school. Nonetheless, only younger generations of Gambians have benefited from recent advances in educational provision, with less than half (46 per cent) of the population being literate at a national level, and the average female literacy rate (37 per cent) being far lower than men's (60 per cent). Moreover, girls are disproportionately represented among the 15 per cent of Gambian youth educated in 'madrassa' (traditional Islamic) schools, which have been slow in incorporating non-traditional, secular, and vocational, subjects into their curricula.

Sources: Chant (2013b), Chant and Touray (2012a,b)

Vocational training and apprenticeships are also deeply imbued with gender inequalities in that these tend to be heavily sex-segregated. For example, in Ghana and The Gambia, young poor urban women tend to enrol in training such as hairdressing, beauty therapy, dressmaking and cloth dying, rather than more remunerative 'masculine' trades such as metalwork, plumbing and carpentry, or newer ones such as Information Technology (IT).<sup>7</sup> Addressing such inequalities is now recognised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) who argue that investing in vocational training, which is both gender-sensitive, as well as responsive to the demands of the labour market, can help facilitate poor women's (and men's) entry into work.<sup>8</sup> This can, in turn, contribute to urban prosperity.

Evidence from the survey illustrates that only just over one-third of cities (34 per cent) were thought to take advantage of opportunities to re-skill the work orientation of women in order to keep pace with the rapidly changing work environment and to facilitate their transition into more productive sectors of the economy. Those in Johannesburg were the most likely to re-skill women (47 per cent) while people in Rio de Janeiro felt most negatively (only 17 per cent).

## GENDER, EMPLOYMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY IN CITIES

Although education and training are central to creating the conditions for the effective use of labour power in cities, the most direct contributors to productivity are unpaid and paid employment. However, there are marked gendered divisions of labour in urban economies with women disproportionately concentrated in unpaid reproductive work.

### Women's unpaid reproductive and caring work

The health and prosperity of urban economies owes as much to the unpaid 'reproductive' labour which goes on within households and communities as to formally acknowledged and valued activities. For this reason, feminist scholars have increasingly used the term 'care economy' to underline the role of 'reproductive' activities in producing 'value' which include 'unpaid work', care work', and 'unpaid care work' (See Box 2.3.2).<sup>9</sup>

The reasons why unpaid work falls disproportionately upon women shoulders relate to deep-seated gender divisions of labour linked with norms surrounding women's association with childbirth, children and the home.<sup>10</sup> Although women across developing regions are increasingly engaging in paid work, this does not seem to have been matched by an increase in domestic labour and unpaid care work on the part of men.<sup>11</sup> This is even the case in countries such as Cuba where legislative changes and political campaigns to encourage men to share domestic work have been in place for several decades.<sup>12</sup> Because of gender discrimination and persistent links between women

Poster compiled by low-income women, Lihok Pilipina NGO, CebuCity, Philippines.  
© UN-Habitat/Sylvia Chant



## BOX 2.3.2

**Terminological distinctions between unpaid work, carework and unpaid care work**

Although the terms 'unpaid work', 'care work' and 'unpaid care work' are often used interchangeably, there are important distinctions among them.

**Unpaid work:** comprises a wide range of activities, including unpaid work in family businesses, subsistence activities such as the collection of fuel or water, and care of persons with family or non-family connections. While the former two are now nominally included in the System of National Accounts (SNA), the unpaid care of childcare, the elderly, sick and so on is not.

**Carework:** involves direct care of persons, including able-bodied adults, as well as children, elderly people, and those who are sick or disabled, on a paid or unpaid basis. Paid carers include nannies, nurses, child-minders, careworkers for senior citizens, and so on, who may work in the public, private or not-for-profit sector. Other people who provide care, although this may not be an explicit part of their work contract, include domestic workers. Parents, too, if on paid 'parental leave', are not technically doing 'unpaid carework'.

**Unpaid carework:** refers to the work of caring for persons with no explicit monetary reward. The vast bulk of unpaid carework is undertaken within the household or family context, but 'voluntary' unpaid carework may also extend to the neighbourhood or community level, or for institutions

Source: Adapted from Razavi (2007, Box 1.6)

'the subordinate role of women ... enables the minimal maintenance of its (the city's) housing, transport and public facilities ... because women guarantee unpaid transportation (movement of people and merchandise), because they repair their homes, because they make meals when there are no canteens, because they spend more time shopping around, because they look after others' children when there are no nurseries and because they offer "free entertainment" to the producers when there is a social vacuum and an absence of cultural creativity... if women who "do nothing" ever stopped to do "only that", the whole urban structure as we know it would become completely incapable of maintaining its functions'<sup>227</sup>

and unpaid tasks, women's paid labour in the marketplace is frequently given lower value regardless of the work itself.<sup>13</sup>

This means that women are spending more time involved in income-generating activities while also continuing to undertake the bulk of unpaid domestic labour and care work, the latter which was recognised as far back as the 1970s by Manuel Castells as vital to the functioning of cities:

**Women's employment in the formal economy**

Women's remunerated activities are also integral to urban prosperity, even if these tend to be informal rather than formal and home-based rather than extra-domestic and with much lower remuneration.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the importance of addressing work in general and gender gaps in particular is recognised in one of the three indicators in MDG3, to promote gender equality and empower women. Also critical is that in 2008, a target was also added to MDG 1 to 'achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people' (See Box 2.3.3).

In relation to formal work that is registered and enumerated, women currently represent approximately 40 per cent of the global labour force. In many countries, this share is increasing rapidly as societies urbanise. For example, in Bangladesh, between 1995 and 2000, the labour force participation of women aged 20-24 years grew by nearly 250 per cent. Although women constitute a greater share of the world's

Mumbai, India.  
© Caylee Hong/UN-Habitat



## BOX 2.3.3

**Strategic Objectives of the ILO's 'Decent Work' Agenda****1) Employment**

This refers to job creation through sound and sustainable investment and growth, access to the benefits of the global economy, supportive public policies and an enabling environment for entrepreneurship.

**2) Standards and fundamental principles and rights at work**

Following on from the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998, this objective calls for the creation of work that does not involve forced labour, exploitation, discrimination and denial of association (e.g. prohibition on the formation of trade unions).

**3) Social protection**

This principle is concerned with ensuring that workers have formal protection for old age, invalidity, sickness and health care, and with creating safe and dignified working conditions.

**4) Social dialogue**

This advocates the opening of channels of communication between different stakeholders in the economy, and particularly about giving workers in the informal economy more of a voice and representation.

*Sources: ILO (2001)*

agricultural labour force than in its total labour force (43 per cent versus 40 per cent),<sup>15</sup> the expansion of urban-based economic sectors has generated new opportunities for female income-generation, particularly in commerce and services (See Figure 2.3.4).

Within the service sector, domestic service is especially important. This ranges from employing between 4 and 10 per cent of the workforce of developing economies in which between 74 and 94 per cent of workers are women.<sup>16</sup>

Although sub-Saharan Africa stands out as the only region where more than half (59 per cent) of the labour force is engaged in agriculture, the proportion was 79 per cent in 1965. As of 2009, the shares of the labour force in industry and services were 11 per cent and 30 per cent respectively, which is considerably lower than in other regions. (See Figure 2.3.5)<sup>17</sup>

One key area where women workers have been a preferred workforce, and which has been crucial in contributing to the prosperity of cities has been in export-processing manufacturing employment. This process has been associated with the 'global feminisation of labour' where, in addition to

more jobs acquiring the characteristics typically associated with female jobs insofar as being precarious, under-paid and low-skilled, women make-up between 70 per cent and 90 per cent of workers in multinational electronics and garments factories.<sup>18</sup>

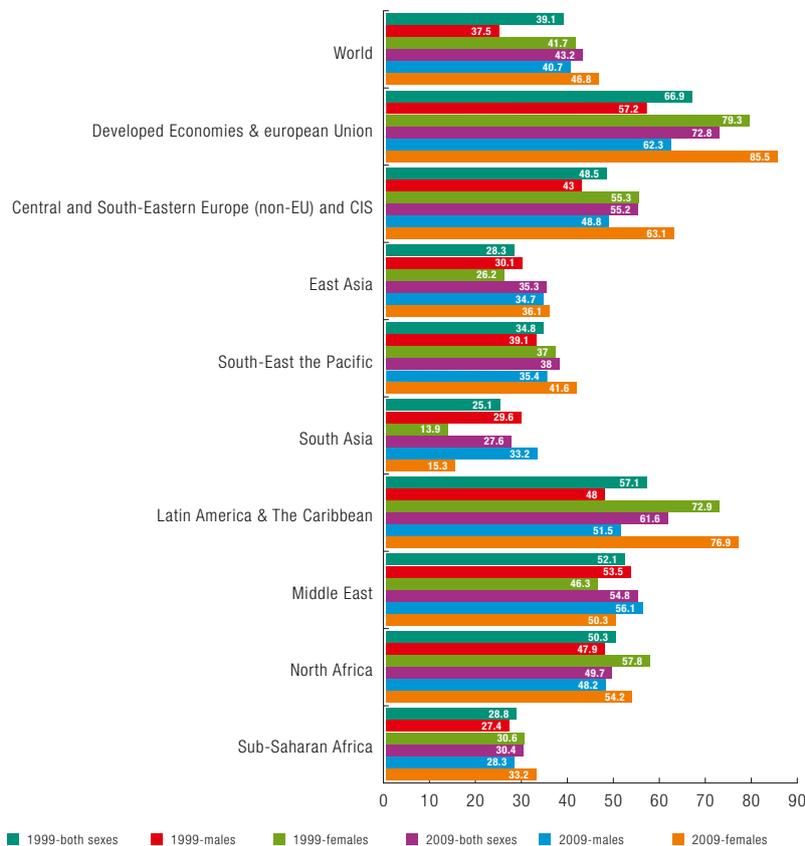
While there are positive implications for women as a preferred labour force in terms of affording them greater opportunities to delay marriage and to enjoy more decision-making power at the household level, it has been widely reported that women have been recruited on account of assumptions that stereotype them as docile, cheap and efficient. In turn, the working conditions that prevail in many export-processing factories are extremely detrimental to women's (and men's) physical and psychological health.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the gains for women from their increased productivity are not uniformly positive.

Indeed, the increasing 'feminisation of labour' associated with urbanisation has also been accompanied by a notable 'informalisation of labour' across developing regions, particularly since the debt crisis of the 1980s and the neoliberal economic reforms which have followed in its wake. These parallel processes have generated considerable discussion as to whether 'informalisation' and 'feminisation' are mutually causal, especially given that the 'feminisation of labour' not only refers to the increased presence of women in the ranks of remunerated workers, but also to the fact that increasing shares of work in the global economy have come to be marked by attributes normally associated with women's activities, most of which are poorly paid and informal in nature, and lacking in social protection and benefits such as maternity leave.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, evidence of the fall-out of the recent global financial crisis suggests that this is impacting heavily on the poorest workers in the informal economy, who are generally female.<sup>21</sup> There is little doubt that one of the major barriers to women's full participation in the creation of urban prosperity, and in its rewards, are the major cleavages to be found in all aspects of urban productivity. As such, while it is generally assumed that rising levels of engagement in economic activity are 'good' for women is important to acknowledge that upward trends may not entail increases in recognition, rewards and quality of work.<sup>22</sup>

The development of ICT has the potential to provide a more level playing field for male and female workers in urban economies. Although women comprise the bulk of workers in call centre and teleworking occupations these jobs are usually restricted to the educated, English-speaking middle classes. In addition, while they provide women with much higher earnings than in other jobs as well as greater spatial and temporal freedom (in terms of being able to move around the city more freely during the day and night), they still face a wider range of restrictions. In the case of Indian call centres, women continue to be controlled and rarely attain genuine career enhancement.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 2.3.4

Service sector employment shares by gender and region, 1999 - 2009 (percentage)



Source: Compiled from ILO (2011: Table A10,67)

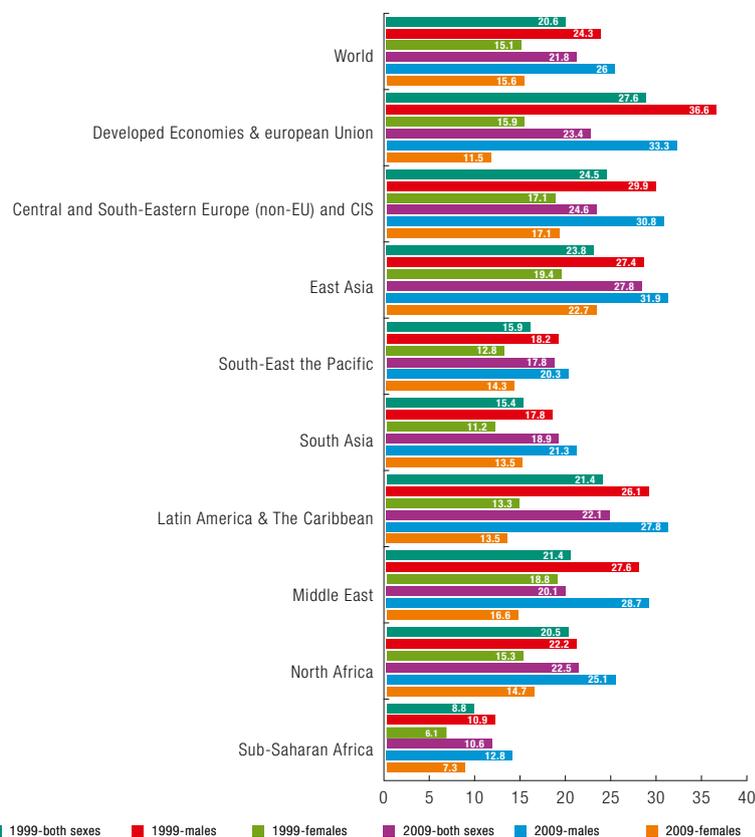
It is important to remember that some women in developing world cities are involved in professional occupations in the upper tiers of industry, services and the public sector and that these have increased over time. However, the World Economic Forum's *Corporate Gender Gap Report* which surveyed 600 of the world's largest employers across sixteen different industries in twenty major OECD countries noted that women are generally clustered in entry- or mid-level positions.<sup>24</sup> In turn, female representation on the boards of large firms in Europe is only 12 per cent, and in the Americas 10 per cent, dropping to 7 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and only 3 per cent in the Middle East and Africa.<sup>25</sup>

### Women's employment in the informal economy

Although there are complex linkages between formal and informal economies, women throughout the world continue to be over-represented in the latter in occupations which are unregistered, poorly paid, and lacking social protection.<sup>26</sup> Although it is difficult to measure trends in informal employment, the ILO has noted that there have been increases in what it calls 'vulnerable employment', comprising own-account and unpaid family workers. This broadly equates to informal employment with women being over-represented in this type of work.<sup>27</sup>

Figure 2.3.5

## Industrial employment shares by gender and region, 1999 - 2009 (percentage)



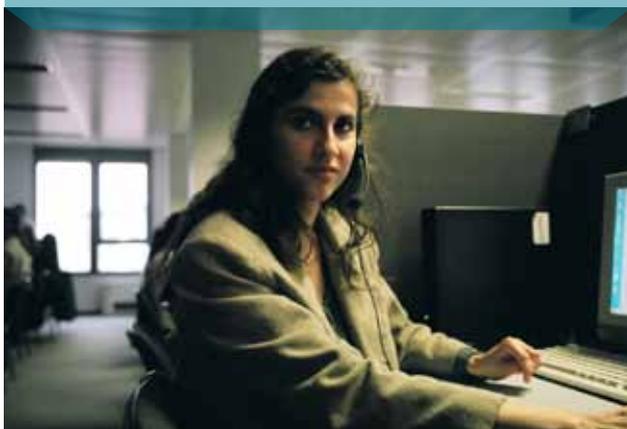
Source: Compiled from ILO (2011: Table A10,67)

On one hand, this has been linked with a shift towards outsourcing of manufacturing production from factories to small-scale workshops and individuals working in their own homes who are usually women. On the other, women have been increasingly setting-up their own small-scale businesses in street-vending, stalls or shops, and domestic-based manufacturing units, as well as working in home-based commercial enterprises. Many informal workers combine one or more activity in their daily struggles for livelihood, and women usually have to dovetail informal work with childcare and other reproductive tasks. In addition, informal work is usually part of wider and more complex livelihood strategies that women in particular create. These invariably revolve around mobilising various types of assets and resources such as human and social capital as well as developing strategies to deal with a decline in consumption, such as buying cheaper or second hand clothes, and reducing spending on food and drink.<sup>28</sup>

Within the informal economy, gaps between women and men are especially marked. This is related with women's restricted use of space linked with moral codes that inhibit women's spatial mobility, as well as their lower levels of human capital, limited access to start-up capital, and secondary role in 'family businesses'.<sup>29</sup> Women's informal economic activities are commonly based at home, except in cases where they have very little option other than to engage in risky jobs such as sex work.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, women are often found in the lower echelons of the informal economy compared with men (See Figure 2.3.6).

There are also specific constraints associated with slum-dwelling that can limit women's ability to develop informal income-generating options. These include peripheral locations which preclude access to markets, as well as competition among women in similar situations who may only have scope to engage in a narrow range of basic activities.<sup>31</sup> Profits from home-based businesses are also compromised by the non-existence or poor

A woman works in a call center. Romania.  
© Flore de Prêneuf / World Bank



and erratic nature of power and water supplies.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the recent global financial crisis suggests that conditions for women working in the informal sector are worsening.<sup>33</sup> However, despite multiple constraints, poor women’s home-based ventures often provide critical inputs to household

livelihoods and can develop seeds of urban prosperity at the grassroots.

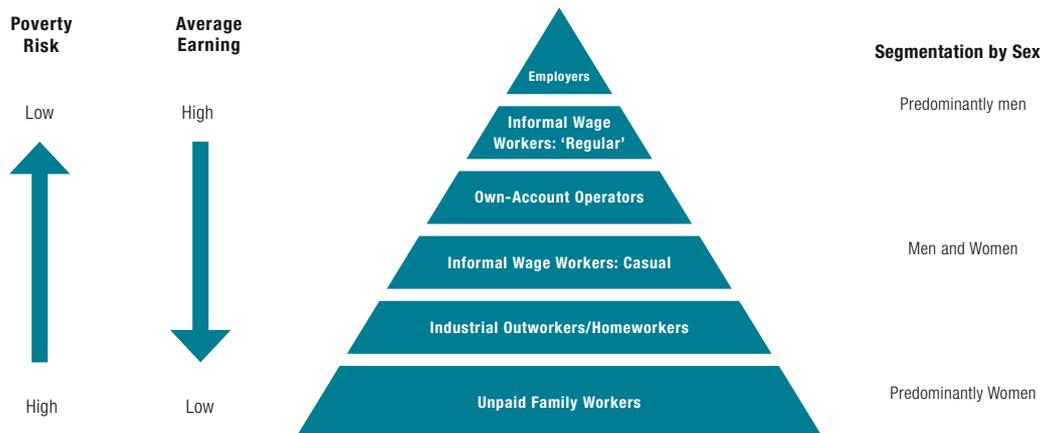
The UN-Habitat survey highlighted that only just over one-third (35 per cent) of city dwellers thought that their cities had programmes that addressed the needs of women working in the informal sector, especially in Kampala (49 per cent) and Bangalore (42 per cent), but much less so in Rio de Janeiro (19 per cent). In cases where programmes existed, almost half (48 per cent) thought that these sought to legalise informal activities, while 44 per cent aimed to move informal sector workers into the formal economy. In addition, 42 per cent felt that these programmes aimed to improve the quality of informal sector employment.

### New horizons for enhancing women’s productivity in cities: ICT and mobile phones

Enhancing women’s productivity involves generating activities that allow women to develop skills to enable them to exit poorly paid informal employment as well as exploitative jobs in export-manufacturing factories and sex work.

Figure 2.3.6

#### Segmentation by sex within the informal economy



Source: Chen (2010a, Figure 71.1, 468)

It is the type of work that women undertake that is more significant in empowering women rather than labour force involvement alone.<sup>34</sup> Given the importance of the digital revolution to growth and urban prosperity, it is no surprise that ICT access features in MDG 8 in relation to increasing telephone lines, cellular subscribers and internet users per 100 population.<sup>35</sup> Given low entry and maintenance costs, the spread of everyday accessible technologies such as mobile phones has been rapid, especially in Africa which now has the fastest-growing market worldwide.<sup>36</sup>

Woman using mobile phone. Honiara, Solomon Islands.  
© Alison Ofoatalau /World Bank



It is also now recognised that ICT has the potential for improving women's lives by enhancing their access to information, but also in improving their productivity. The latter is through expanding their skill sets and opening up opportunities for wage employment and 'techno-preneurship' in the fields of e-commerce and computerised small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as allowing for 'remote working'.<sup>37</sup> Even basic or entry-level technology, such as mobile telephony can improve social interaction and act

as a time-saving communication device. Enhanced access to information, for example, facilitates prosperity by reducing uncertainty and transaction costs, enabling traders to secure better deals, lessening their reliance on intermediaries, and widening access to a broader range of buyers.<sup>38</sup> Evidence from Africa reveals that usage is predominantly for financial arrangements such as the transfer of money for agricultural produce, and for the trade of perishable goods, and for increasing the speed and efficiency of rural-urban remittance transfers.<sup>39</sup>

A number of policy initiatives have attempted to improve women's digital literacy and access to information technologies in recent years (See Box 2.3.4). Many of these draw on one of the most well-known examples of the 'phone ladies' of Bangladesh who borrow equipment from the Grameen Bank's Village Phone Programme and set-up phone booths. While these are based in the countryside, they have also extended to cities across the developing world, with important implications for women's economic empowerment and urban prosperity.<sup>40</sup>

However, it is also important to acknowledge the persistence of a gendered 'digital divide' particularly in respect of access to more sophisticated new technologies such as computer hardware, and to the internet. To date women's employment in ICT tends to be confined to low-level routine tasks such as data entry rather than more creative and strategic roles in software design and management.<sup>41</sup> Although some women have been able to secure niches in comparatively well-paid work in the digital sector, such as in call centre work<sup>42</sup> gender gaps continue to exist as cautioned by UNRISD.<sup>43</sup>

Women in general and poor women in particular, are less likely than men to gain computer skills. This is partly a function of greater illiteracy among women, and to the fact that girls may miss out on school-based IT training which is not normally taught until secondary and tertiary levels. Beyond this, women are less likely to enjoy the mobility, social licence and funds necessary to access public internet facilities.<sup>44</sup> In Indonesia, for example, girls aged 15-24 are half as likely as boys and young men to use the internet, with parental restrictions on girls' use of public space disavouring their access to internet cafés.<sup>45</sup>

'The boom of information technology services and of the off-shoring of office work by multinational companies have opened-up career opportunities in formal skill-intensive employment for educated, English-speaking women from the urban middle classes. While women make up a large share of the workforce in this emerging sector, segmentation and discrimination along the lines of gender, caste and class are widespread, and women tend to be concentrated in low-end occupations'

## BOX 2.3.4

**Women in Liberia and the 'Trade at Hand – Business Opportunities for your Cell Phone' project**

Liberia's 'Trade at Hand' programme, developed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in collaboration with Liberia's Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCIL) and launched in 2009, aims to 'empower' women economically and to enhance productivity more generally – both of which are primary objectives of incumbent President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's government – through ICT. Initially linking fifty women traders in Monrovia with fifty women farmers through a mobile phone software system, the programme provides information on products, quantity, prices, location and transport via SMS, allows exchanges of offers, and matches sale and purchase demands. In order to include illiterate women, the system uses readily recognisable symbols.

As a result of the programme, market women save money and time, no longer making multiple phone calls to sellers as they can view many offers simultaneously, and secure competitive prices and high quality goods. At the same time farmers can off-load their produce and thereby minimise wastage. Liberia's national economic development benefits from increased efficiency of food flow into towns, for consumption and export, aiding infrastructural and economic revival in the aftermath of its 14-year civil war, and allowing women to play a critical role. Trade at Hand has also been successfully implemented in Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso.

Recognising Liberia's high unemployment rate (85 per cent) and low ICT development and trade infrastructure, programmes such as Trade at Hand may be most successful when accompanied by interventions to combat social and economic exclusion.

*Sources:* Gakuru et al (2009); ITC (2009); USDS (2011)

In addition, ICT presents risks as well as opportunities. Women, especially adolescent girls, are more vulnerable to cyber-abuse such as misguided contact with traffickers and perpetrators of sexual assault.<sup>46</sup> This relates to the fact that 'cyberculture' is difficult to regulate. Also important is that poor urban residents, especially women, are often disadvantaged in access to digital technology. Current aspirations for one laptop per child (OLPC) seem out of reach for the poorest nations of the world, with even middle-income countries struggling to make the requisite investments.<sup>47</sup> Even if ICT can improve the cost-efficiency of microenterprises, it cannot solve large scale urban unemployment. In light of this, other investments in

microenterprise support as well as job creation may be more fruitful priorities if gender-equitable urban prosperity is to be achieved and sustained.

**Enhancing women's productivity in cities and the green economy**

Another area with potential benefits for poor women relates to the 'green economy' in urban areas. This builds on what some women already do insofar as they recycle and/or elaborate a range of products from discarded waste such as tin cans, paper, glassware and clothing. However, despite clear benefits for the environment, the scope for significant increases in women's access to urban prosperity remains limited. For example, female and child waste pickers are more likely than their male counterparts to be engaged in the primary picking of waste, while men tend to do the sorting and selling. In turn, the introduction of 'sustainable waste management systems' in various South African cities has often led to restricted access by waste pickers to municipal dumps or the ability to bid for solid waste management contracts. Waste pickers are also frequently squeezed out or penalised when municipal governments embark upon public-private partnerships for landfill recycling, with women workers being most affected by exclusion from collective bargaining agreements (See Box 2.3.5).<sup>48</sup>

**CAPTURING AND ENHANCING WOMEN'S PRODUCTIVITY AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN CITIES**

In light of notable gender gaps in 'decent work deficits',<sup>49</sup> it is timely that calls for 'decent work' – the priority theme of the 55th session of Commission on Status of Women (CSW) in 2011 – have been reinforced by calls to improve women's access to what the ILO calls 'decent work' which is sustainable, protected, well-paid and secure (See Box 2.3.3). In particular, this entails increased female enrolment in education, facilitating women's transition to decent work through training and networking, developing public awareness campaigns to encourage women's entry into non-traditional sectors, and engaging men, employers and the state to recognise and alleviate women's reproductive work.<sup>50</sup> If these issues are addressed then the seeds for true empowerment can be firmly planted.

One key area where positive progress has been made has been in relation to grassroots women's organising in cities as well as the work of some trade unions and labour associations. Evidence from around the world shows that many organisations have been successful in enhancing women's productivity as well as leading to their economic empowerment. The case of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India is one of the most renowned examples. With SEWA meaning 'to serve' in most Indian languages, SEWA was recognised as a union

## BOX 2.3.5

**Women and the 'green economy': organising waste pickers in Pune, India**

India's National Action Plan for Climate Change (2000) and National Environmental Policy (2006) recognise the major contribution of wastepickers to carbon reduction and environmental protection and also their rights to collect and recycle waste. This is massively important to the lives and livelihoods of informal urban workers throughout India, including several women.

In the city of Pune, for example, women constitute 90 per cent of the approximately 9500 waste collectors in the city, who fall into three main groups: 1) those who collect waste from public bins and the street; 2) those who work in landfill sites, and 3) those who work on a door-to-door basis with trolleys buying waste that people do not dispose in bins because it is of some value, such as paper and empty beer bottles.

Two-thirds of waste workers belong to the Waste Collectors Union KKP KP which, in partnership with local authorities, has promoted a socially and ecologically innovative model of waste recovery. The new model emerged out of a study conducted in 2007 on the composition of waste collected from public bins by about 90 trucks in Pune and taken to the city's dumpsites. On finding that 90 per cent of this waste was biodegradable, the KKP KP proposed dropping all but ten of the 90 trucks, and

encouraged households to separate their waste at source. This allowed biodegradable waste to be composted in situ, leaving the waste workers to collect from their homes only non-degradable rubbish for the dumps. In addition, a sorting shed has been provided by the municipality that allows pickers to sort their waste in each other's company, rather than at home.

This initiative not only saves money, but has considerable environmental, social and gender benefits, such as raising women's incomes and situating them at the centre of 'green' economic activities.

One woman, Suman, who started her waste collection activities at the age of 13, and who began by picking up recyclable material from the roadside and public bins, has found union membership and the transition to door-to-door collection extremely positive for her life and livelihood. She not only works fewer hours and collects better quality waste, but also enjoys social interaction with her clients. An additional spin-off of KKP KP membership has been that two of her four children have received scholarships from the union, with one currently studying for a Masters degree in journalism, and another now working as manager of the union's scrap shops.

*Sources: Chen (2011), Shekar (2009), Stevens (2009, p. 16)*

in 1972 focusing on organising female informal economy workers. It has since grown substantially, absorbing more and more trades; in 2006, SEWA had a membership in India of nearly 1 million spread over nine states. The main goals of the organisation are to organise women workers to gain access to security in work, food and social protection. However, they have worked in a huge range of fields and helped to establish other organisations as well as belonging to several other umbrella organisations.<sup>51</sup>

Grassroots women's organisations have also been influential in challenging gender stereotyping of occupations through combining training initiatives with job creation and small business development. One example of this is the Women's Construction Collective (WCC) of Kingston, Jamaica which is a national non-profit organisation that trains and supports low-income women in construction employment which is a non-traditional sector for women. It provides information, training, and services to the construction industry in general, and specifically to low-income women (mainly in repair and maintenance, carpentry and basic masonry). Its core activities are livelihood development and gender equity in

the field of construction. Together, the aim is to empower women economically in a sustainable way that challenges gender stereotypes. By 2010, WCC had trained over 500 women in construction trades, created a space where women could meet to discuss the issues they experienced on the job, provided technical support to the construction industry and promoted women in the industry through membership in the Incorporated Masterbuilders Association of Jamaica.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, it is important to return to a core question surrounding women's productivity and economic empowerment. Is the extent to which rising levels of engagement in economic activity 'good' for women? It is now acknowledged that upward trends may not entail increases in recognition, rewards and quality of work. In turn, there has been little evidence of men or boys stepping up assistance in the domestic sphere. This makes women's empowerment much more difficult to attain, as does the continual lack of well-paid, rewarding jobs in cities of the world.<sup>54</sup> In addition, economic empowerment can only be attainable if women have access to many key dimensions of infrastructure in cities, to which the next chapter turns.

## Endnotes

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1. Grown (2005); Lloyd (2009); Plan International (2009)
2. UN-DESA (2010, p. 43); See also Chant with Craske (2003)
3. Gupta et al (2009, Figure 2.11, p. 32)
4. UN-DESA (2010, p.43)
5. Chant and Touray (2012b); Hughes and Wickeri (2011, p. 889)
6. Jones and Chant (2009)
7. Jones and Chant (2009)
8. ILO (2008b)
9. Budlender (2004); Elson (1999); Folbre (1994)
10. Chant (1996); Razavi (2007)
11. Chant (2007a); ECLAC (2004)
12. Pearson (1997)
13. Perrons (2010); Perrons and Plomien (2010)
14. Castells (1978, p. 177-8, cited in Chant, 1984, 2007b)
15. Chant and Pedwell (2008); Chen (2010a); Chen et al (2004)
16. World Bank (2011c, p. 236)
17. UN Women (2011, p. 35)
18. ILO (2011: Table A10, p. 67)
19. Elson and Pearson (1981); Standing (1999)
20. Chant and Mcllwaine (1995); Chant and Mcllwaine (2009, Chapter 5)
21. Chen et al (2004); Kabeer (2008b); ILO (2010c); Moghadam (1995); UN-DESA/ UNDAW (2009); UNRISD (2010a, p. 107).
22. Floro et al (2010); Horn (2010)
23. ILO (2010a)
24. Patel (2010)
25. Chant (2011b, p. 103)
26. World Bank (2011c, p. 204)
27. Chen et al (2004)
28. ILO (2011, p. 21); UN-DESA (2010, p. 76-80)
29. Chant and Mcllwaine (2009, Chapter 6)
30. Chant and Pedwell (2008); Chen (2010a); Meagher (2010)
31. See for example, Chant and Mcllwaine (1995)
32. Standing (1999)
33. Chant (2007b)
34. Tacoli (2012)
35. Kabeer (2008a); Kabeer et al (2011 on Bangladesh)
36. UN (2010a)
37. de Bruijn et al (2009)
38. Buskens and Webb (2009)
39. Moodley (2005)
40. Scott et al (2004)
41. Aminuzzaman, Baldersheim and Jamil (2003)
42. Lugo and Sampson (2008); Mitter and Rowbotham (eds,1997)
43. Patel (2010)
44. UNRISD (2010a, p.119)
45. Khosla (2009, p. 40); Perrons (2004)
46. Plan International (2010)
47. Plan International (2010)
48. Warschauer and Ames (2010)
49. Samson (2009)
50. Kantor (2010; also Chen (2010a)
51. UNCSW (2011)
52. Chant and Mcllwaine (2009, pp. 299-300); Chen (2006)
53. Yonder and Tamaki for Huairou Commission (2010)
54. Chant (2007a); ILO (2010a), World Bank (2011c, p. 173)

# Chapter 2.4



## Gender, Equity-Based Development and Prosperity

Gender equity is central to ensuring the equal distribution of the benefits of prosperity in cities. In particular it is essential in protecting the rights of women and ensuring that they have full access not only to material resources in cities, but also to civic participation in social, political and cultural spheres. In terms of the gender and urban prosperity nexus, equity is especially relevant to the issue of gender disparities in power and rights. The focus of this chapter is therefore on addressing some of the underlying inequalities in cities as well as on how to ensure that women's rights are recognised in reality through opening up channels of formal and informal empowerment.

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER EQUITY IN CITIES

Addressing gender equity is essential in generating economic development and promoting prosperity for women. The survey showed that there was thought to be a generally positive relationship between these in the case study cities in that 47 per cent thought the relationship was 'somewhat positive' with a further 18 per cent suggesting it was 'highly positive'. Perceptions in Kingston and Johannesburg were the most positive (with 78 per cent in the latter and 77 per cent in the former stating there was a positive relationship). Few felt there was a negative relationship except in Kampala (See Figure

2.4.1).

Levels of commitment towards promoting gender equity through the equitable distribution and redistribution of development benefits were also broadly positive in the cities although there was significant room for improvement. While more than half (54 per cent) felt that there was some form of commitment to the equal participation of all women in social, economic, political and cultural spheres, only 23.5 per cent thought that their city was 'committed' or 'fully committed'. Those living in Johannesburg were the most likely to identify commitment towards gender equity (81 per cent identifying some form), with those in Rio de Janeiro noting the least commitment (25.5 per cent stating there was no commitment at all).

Related with this, 61 per cent thought that gender disparities in access to different social, economic and political opportunities were being reduced. This was especially the case in Johannesburg (75 per cent) and Kingston (69 per cent). Views were more negative in Kampala where 51 per cent stated that they were not being reduced. In terms of access to power and decision-making, 36 per cent stated that efforts to attain gender equity in terms of opportunity for free expression were advanced or very advanced, especially in Kingston (52 per cent) and to a lesser extent in Johannesburg (43 per cent).

Only 25 per cent felt that women had 'advanced' or 'very advanced' equal access to political representation, especially in Johannesburg (39 per cent) and Kingston (38 per cent). Kampala and Rio de Janeiro were both thought to have the least advanced access to representation. Perceptions on access to decision-making in general was slightly more positive in that 30

per cent felt that women have advance or very advanced equal access, especially in Kingston (47 per cent). Again, people in Rio de Janeiro were the most likely to state that there was no equity in access (26 per cent).

Attitudes towards the factors that limited the ability to achieve greater levels of equity between women and men in cities were also elicited. The most limiting factor identified was a history of class inequality which was especially important in Rio de Janeiro as well as in Kingston. This was followed by a history of ethnic and racial inequality which again was particularly noted in Rio de Janeiro and Johannesburg. The least limiting factor identified was lack of democracy and the related non-representative governing bodies (See Table 2.4.1).

Somewhat worrying is that only 54 per cent of people thought that human rights were recognised and promoted in their city, especially in Johannesburg (77 per cent). This compared with only 37 per cent in Rio de Janeiro.

## GENDER AND FORMAL URBAN POLITICS

Engagement in urban politics and governance is not just a fundamental right, but an integral and potentially major route to gender equality in urban prosperity. Accordingly, the importance of active involvement by women in civic participation has been stressed by UN-Habitat, not least in its Gender Equality Action Plan.<sup>1</sup> Given that the hub of national politics and protest is usually urban-based,<sup>2</sup> the fact that women's parliamentary representation is one of the three main indicators in MDG 3, to 'promote gender equality and

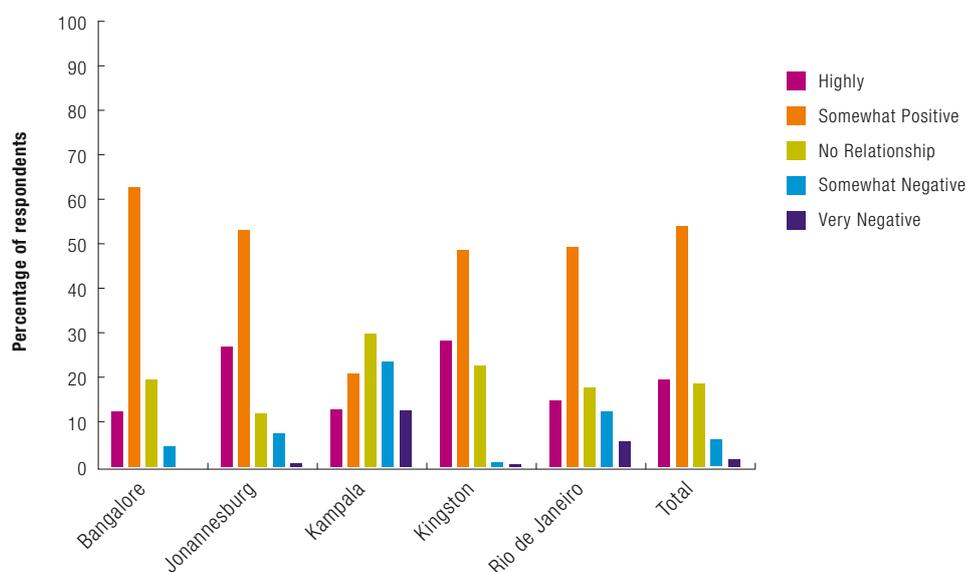
empower women', is a further step in the right direction. Some advances have occurred in women holding seats in national parliaments in the past decade, even if under-representation remains persistent in developed and developing countries alike.<sup>3</sup> In only 23 countries of the world, for example, do women comprise over 30 per cent of the lower or single house of the national parliament (See Figure 2.4.2).

At ministerial levels, gender gaps increase dramatically.<sup>4</sup> Taking into account local councillors as well as parliamentarians, only 1 in 5 are female in a diverse range of contexts.<sup>5</sup> Recent research shows that female politicians often only last single terms due to unrealistic expectations in respect of time commitments (given their disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities and unpaid care work). They are also expected to enact gender-friendly measures, and they are prone to criticism and discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

Whether or not this will prove to be the case in the many countries in Latin America where female presidents have recently been voted in for the first time, only time will tell. But what seems better established is that affirmative action measures, such as quota systems, are critical to increasing female political representation. In Nepal, for example, a new quota seems to have played a major part in bringing women's representation to the Constituent Assembly to an unprecedented 33 per cent in the 2008 elections.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, by 2006, nearly 40 countries had introduced gender quotas in parliamentary elections.

Figure 2.4.1

### Relationship between economic development and gender equity



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

Table 2.4.1

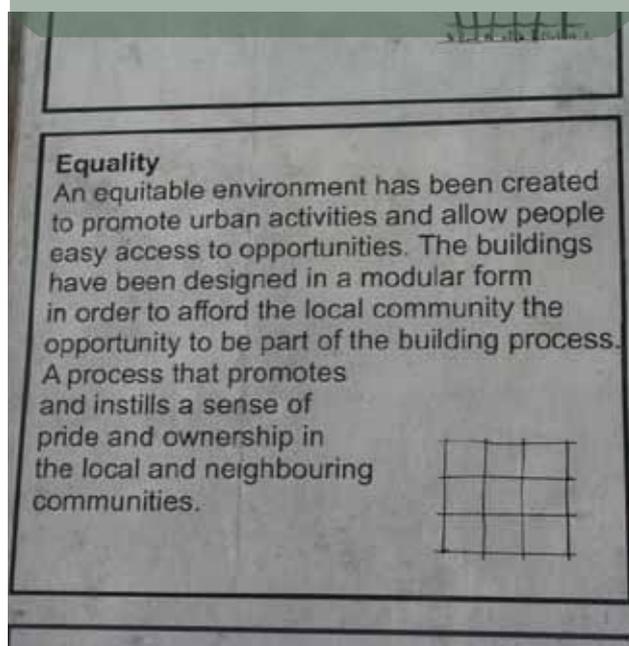
**Factors limiting ability to achieve greater levels of equity**

Cities→ Factors	Bangalore	Johannesburg	Kampala	Kingston	Rio de Janeiro	Total	Rank
History of gender inequality	3.22	3.62	3.10	2.79	3.97	3.32	5
History of class inequality	3.11	3.69	2.96	3.91	4.05	3.50	1
History of racial/ethnic inequality	3.02	3.89	3.02	3.21	3.98	3.37	2
Institutionalised discriminatory practices	3.02	3.32	3.07	3.19	3.59	3.22	6
Ineffective government institutions/policies	3.34	3.27	2.98	3.35	3.74	3.33	4
Non-representative governing bodies	3.22	3.20	2.85	3.01	3.48	3.14	8
Lack of education and awareness	3.26	3.33	2.99	3.24	3.90	3.33	4
Weak civil society	3.27	2.91	3.19	3.32	3.80	3.32	5
Lack of democracy	2.94	2.70	3.09	2.48	3.08	2.88	9
Lack of access to just legal systems	3.24	3.17	2.92	2.94	3.71	3.19	7
Lack of resources to support sound policy	3.22	3.14	3.07	3.69	3.63	3.35	3

**Note:** Responses 1→Not limiting to 5→ Very limiting  
**Source:** UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

However, according to a grassroots leader from GROOTS Peru, 'Affirmative action does not necessarily change structures of power'.<sup>8</sup> Such mandates are a step in the right direction, but it is equally important to bridge the gap between women elected to public office on the one hand and grassroots women's groups, NGOs and gender experts on the other (See below).

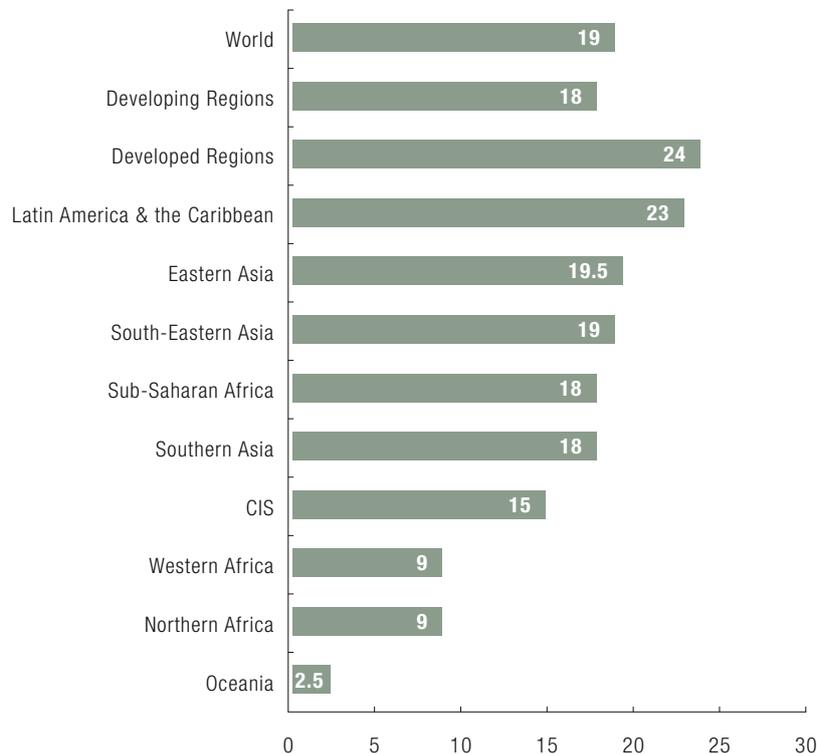
Walter Sisulu Square, Soweto, Johannesburg.  
 © UN-Habitat/Michael Keith



Another important issue however, is the actual effect of women's formal political participation. For example, India has experienced among the highest increases in women's representation in local government across the developing world as a result of the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act introduced in 1992, which required 30 per cent of seats on local councils 'panchayati raj' to be occupied by women.<sup>9</sup> This is despite the common claim that women's enforced and perhaps rather arbitrary recruitment into the panchayati raj has led to their being proxies for male household members ('parshad patis').<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in South Africa where active campaigning has led to the share of female councillors rising from 19 per cent to 28 per cent within a five year period,<sup>11</sup> some have argued that this has meant little for poor black women especially in terms of cutting child support and other welfare provisions.<sup>12</sup>

However, others have suggested that the presence of women in formal decision-making bodies has played a critical role in helping to prioritise matters of fundamental importance in women's daily lives, such as basic infrastructure and services.<sup>13</sup> Yet optimism about this trend should be tempered, first because it may do little to change women's association and responsibilities for traditionally 'female' concerns; second, because of the way that 'female empowerment' often comes at the cost of taking on greater obligations in the unpaid sphere; and third because local government entities are often resource-constrained, and often offer limited bases for power, influence and transformation.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 2.4.2

**Proportion of seats in lower or single house of parliament held by women, 2010 (%)**

Source: Adapted from UN (2010a, p.25)

Woman casting her vote during 2013 presidential election in Nairobi, Kenya.  
© Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat



These concerns are echoed by others working in the context of South Africa as well as further afield.<sup>15</sup> For example, in Ecuador and Venezuela, under transitions to more left wing governments in the past two decades, in which women's rising political participation has featured prominently, the framing of women as 'problem-solvers' for poverty in their communities has served to compensate for weak welfare states.<sup>16</sup>

## GENDER AND INFORMAL URBAN POLITICS

Building on a long legacy of women engaging in collective struggle in towns and cities around the world for basic services and infrastructure, housing, healthcare, and rights to use public urban space for informal economic activity, there is a mounting female presence in informal as well as formal structures of governance.<sup>17</sup> In Latin America, for example, there was an unprecedented mobilisation of poor urban women in defence of household and neighbourhood survival which took place during the 1980s era of recession and structural adjustment. This was also linked with an increasingly vocal and demanding women's movement more generally which coincided with and fuelled a wave of democratisation and decentralisation within and beyond the region.<sup>18</sup>

Coupled with the general spread of ‘rights-based’ and ‘multi-stakeholder’ agendas in local-level governance, these tendencies have been central to opening up new political spaces for women. For example, in Brazil, women have been the majority of participants in budgetary assemblies in Porto Alegre, which has been a pioneer in inclusive urban governance. However, there have also been problems in that women’s engagement in movements and programmes around basic services and poverty reduction tend to feminise responsibility in ways that burden women even more, sideline men further, and neglect

strategic gender interests in favour of practical gender needs (in terms of challenging gender ideologies and power relations).<sup>19</sup> In addition, it has been noted that a gender perspective is included on grounds of effectiveness and efficiency of projects. For example, in a World Bank-funded slum upgrading project in the Venezuelan capital, Carácas, gender did not explicitly feature in the original design of the project, but became co-opted once the initiative got underway, mainly on account of women’s cost-saving contributions (See Box 2.4.1).

Criticisms of a utilitarian approach to gender, even where

#### BOX 2.4.1

##### Instrumentalising gender in a slum upgrading project, Carácas, Venezuela

The Carácas Slum Upgrading Project (CAMEBA) was launched in 2000 as a community driven development (CDD) initiative oriented to improving the conditions of selected slum neighbourhoods in the Metropolitan Area of Carácas and covering around 15 per cent of the overall slum population. Gender was not an explicit goal in the project’s design phase but an early change of management in FUNDACOMUN, the decentralised government agency responsible for funding CAMEBA, helped to raise women’s profile. More specifically, women became active participants in community consultations and training, as well as playing a major role as ‘neighbour inspectors’ (remunerated community representatives responsible for supervising construction works), as construction workers and as project staff. The World Bank undertook a review of this project as part of a study of ‘good gender practices’ in Latin America and the Caribbean. It determined that the involvement of women in CAMEBA had been resoundingly positive on account of women’s ‘..commitment to solve community problems and their constant presence in slums’, concluding ‘..women’s gender roles make them central stakeholders in improving the physical infrastructure in poor urban communities’.

While it is arguably difficult to see how such a project could transform gender when it relies heavily on women’s existing roles, female participants were offered training workshops which covered, inter alia, gender identity, self-esteem, violence and children’s rights and citizenship. Moreover, many women have been taken on board as remunerated project staff, which has helped to strengthen financial security for themselves and their households. Other alleged benefits for women have been a ‘heightened sense of empowerment’, a greater ability to solve problems and deal with crises, and positive shifts in gender role models for girls.

The question of ‘who benefits’ most, however, is pertinent here, with evidence that the ‘returns’ of women’s participation to the project are not insubstantial. For example, women have played an important role in facilitating project staff’s interaction with their communities, in attending meetings, in improving the quality of civil works, and guaranteeing their maintenance. One important advantage from the project perspective is that women’s better use of materials and staff time than men generates cost savings. This has led the World Bank to pronounce that ‘Women’s participation in CAMEBA has resulted in more efficient and sustainable project operations’ (their emphasis), and that ‘the returns of a gender focus in CDD projects are extremely high given that investing in the participation of women represents no significant additional cost to the fixed costs of investing in communities’ (apparently some of the workshops for women would have been run for all community members anyway).

The World Bank’s overall conclusions and ‘lessons learned’ (presented verbatim) were:

- Women’s constant presence in the slums makes them direct project interlocutors and crucial agents during project implementation
- Women’s commitment to solving the problems of their communities makes them an indispensable ally for projects aimed at improving community services
- In the case of CAMEBA, women’s engagement in the project has translated into better-quality civil works, improved work maintenance, smoother project-community relations and higher project impact
- At the same time, their participation has benefited women, their families and communities by means of improving households’ well-being and strengthening community institutional capacity

Source: Chant (2007b, Box 8)

Women in Buenos Aires, Argentina, made homeless by fire in their slum settlement, demand a response from the municipal authorities.  
© UN-Habitat/Pepe Mateos



'rights' and 'empowerment' might be professed aims, are found in a range of broader initiatives around poverty reduction. These may not be specifically urban, but by the very nature of rising urban populations affect legions of women in towns and cities in developing countries. Harnessing women's 'empowerment' to poverty reduction tends not only to blur the distinctions between poverty and gendered privation but also frequently involves using women as a 'conduit of policy'.<sup>20</sup> This capitalises on and often 're-traditionalises' women's altruistic and maternal roles.<sup>21</sup>

This has been the case in the context of Poverty Reduction Strategy Policies (PRSPs),<sup>22</sup> in microfinance schemes,<sup>23</sup> and in conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs),<sup>24</sup> and appears to do little to effect change in the status quo. Although there may be some benefits for some women resulting from pan-national anti-poverty interventions, this may not only be dependent on the type of group and context, as revealed by contrasting outcomes for indigenous women in different parts of Mexico from the Oportunidades CCT.<sup>25</sup>

Regardless of whether women's civic participation remains of a more 'bottom-up' than formal nature, it is critical to acknowledge that identification with 'traditional roles' may be deployed by women themselves in convincing others about the legitimacy of their concerns. Demands made by women on the state can prove successful, often by 'harnessing their maternal roles to political claims making and advocacy for justice and for better conditions and social support for their families and communities'.<sup>26</sup>

To work around these problems, and to ensure that gender equality goals remain uppermost, fully-fledged gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), which can potentially correct planning and investment decisions within government spending and help to increase public awareness of, and accountability to, gender equality, is undoubtedly part of the answer. In urban areas gender-responsive budgeting should help to achieve three main aims. First, the balancing of gender needs. Second, guarantees of pro-female urban expenditures in areas such as water supply, sanitation and infrastructure, and third, women-specific urban spending in the arenas of housing, markets, public transport and recreational centres.<sup>27</sup> However, although the introduction of gender budgeting in a number of countries has scored some successes, obstacles often include fractional amounts of overall budgets, lack of capacity in gender-awareness, and lukewarm political will.<sup>28</sup>

Despite some important benefits for women from formal and informal modes of civic participation, if women's engagement is prioritised only in the interests of creating wealth for all, then one of the biggest questions is how other benefits come about. In the short-term, to entrap women in the largely unpaid and fundamentally altruistic work of building better cities arguably goes against the grain of transforming gender relations or creating a more equal share of urban prosperity among women and men. However, without women's engagement, especially in decision-making positions, there is little likelihood of granting gender issues a seat at the political and policy table. This engagement is especially important at the grassroots level where there have been some very important initiatives in recent years.

As part of decentralisation efforts, there has been a shift towards community participation and the increased role of women in local governance. They have engaged with government and others through inclusive partnerships. However, one of the key challenges is recognising, legitimising and formally resourcing women's work. In the case of *Servicios Educativo El Augustino* (SEA) in Peru SEA, a precedent through the participatory budgeting process has been set by which funding for women's on-going activities has been lobbied for.<sup>29</sup>

This chapter has highlighted the importance of developing mechanisms for change not only in generating urban prosperity for women, but also long-term economic empowerment. This needs to be done through widening women's choices and opportunities and challenging deep-seated power structures which have excluded women from decision-making for so long in so many countries. The report now turns to discuss some policies and institutions through which this can be achieved.

## Endnotes

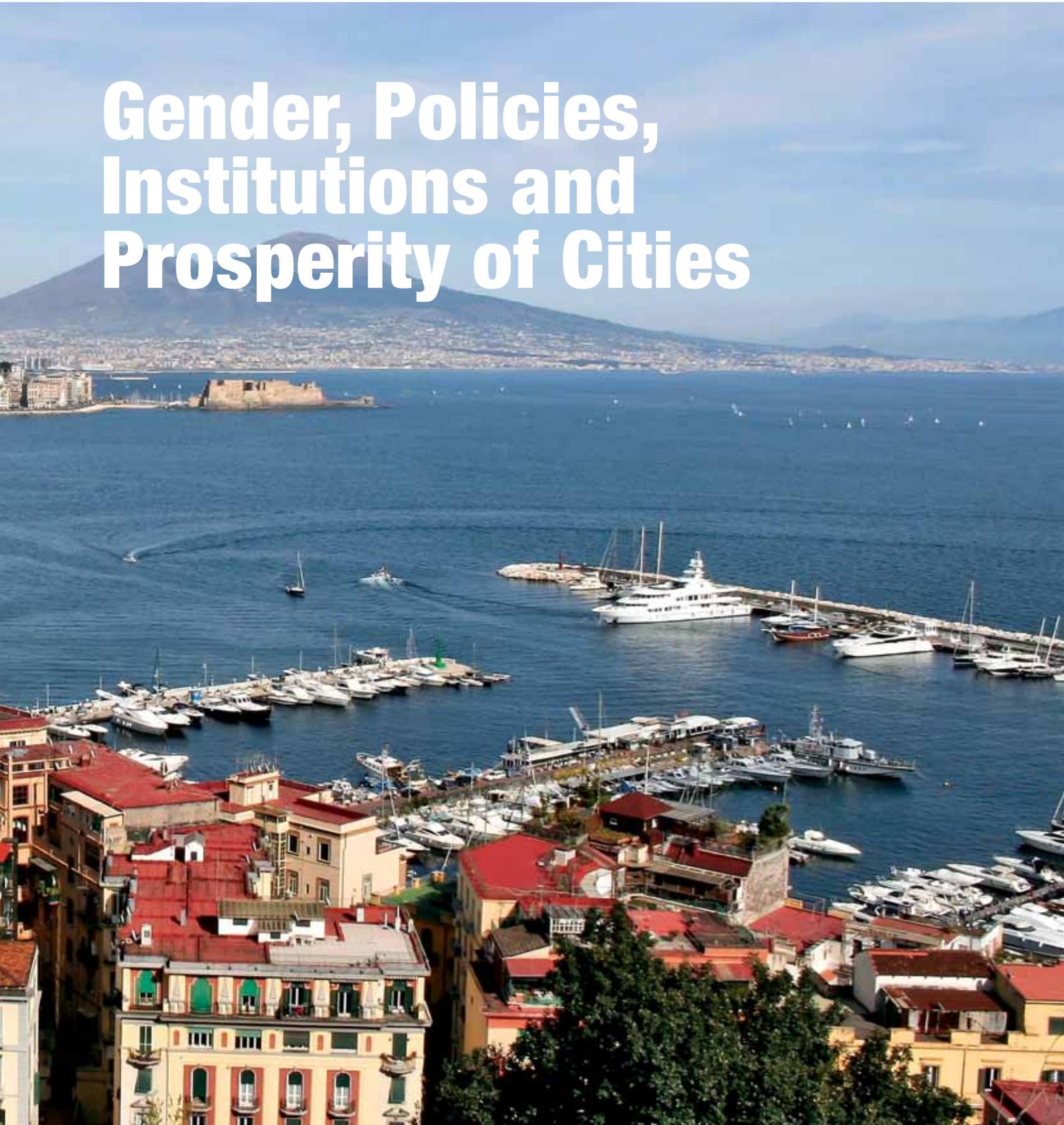
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1. UN-Habitat (2008b); UN-Habitat (2010b)
2. Dyson (2010)
3. UN (2010a, p. 25)
4. UNIFEM (2008, p. 26)
5. UN-Habitat (2008b, p. 3); See also Patel and Mitlin (2010)
6. Pedwell and Perrons (2007)
7. UN Women (2011, p. 23)
8. Huairou Commission (2011)
9. Jarvis et al (2009, p. 240-1); Khosla (2009)
10. Khosla (2009, p. 10)
11. Beall (2010, p. 634)
12. Benjamin (2007, p. 198)
13. Beall (2010); UN Women (2011, p. 23)
14. Beall (2010, p. 636)
15. MirafTAB (2010)
16. Lind (2002)
17. Patel and Mitlin (2004, 2010); Rai (2009)
18. Chant with Craske (2003, Chapters 2 & 3)
19. Molyneux (1984, 2001); Moser (1989, 1993)
20. Jackson (1996); Molyneux (2006)
21. Chant (2008); Tabbush (2010)
22. Bradshaw and Linneker (2010)
23. Maclean (2010); Roy (2010); Sweetman (2010)
24. Bradshaw (2008)
25. González de la Rocha (2010)
26. Razavi (2007, p. 26); See also Chant with Craske (2003, Chapters 2 & 3)
27. Khosla (2009, p. 30)
28. Elson (1998); Elson and Sharp (2010)
29. Huairou Commission (2010b)

# Part Three



# Gender, Policies, Institutions and Prosperity of Cities



# Chapter 3.1



## Gender Policies, Institutions and Prosperity of Cities

This final chapter outlines the importance of creating gender-sensitive and gender-equitable cities in order to generate prosperity for women and for urban areas themselves. It then assesses the nature of existing policies and institutional mechanisms that contribute to making women more prosperous in cities. In addition to a consideration of the perceptions of gender policies in the case study cities, the chapter outlines some appropriate ways to address ‘quality of life and infrastructure’, ‘productivity’ and ‘equity in power and rights’ for increasing women’s prosperity in cities, consolidating the suggestions made in each individual chapter. As indicated in the gender and urban poverty nexus, these ultimately aim to make women not only economically empowered and prosperous, but also provide them with greater access to social and political resources and opportunities as well as the freedom to make choices. It is essential that policies address the various dimensions simultaneously and in a multi-stakeholder manner.

### GENDER-SENSITIVE AND GENDER-EQUITABLE PROSPEROUS CITIES

Gender equitable cities have the potential not only to reward women for their multiple efforts, but also to be more prosperous (See Box 3.1.1). Gender equity is also based on gender sensitivity in that equity cannot be reached without recognition that women and men have different and invariably unequal experiences in cities. Only by addressing these disparities can economic empowerment and prosperity be achieved. Therefore, there is a major need to tackle gender imbalances in the contributions to, and benefits from, urban prosperity. This requires looking at inputs, as well as outcomes, in terms of housing, service and infrastructure provision, productivity, political participation and decision-making, access to and control of productive resources like land, credit and technologies at different scales, extending from the home, through neighbourhood/community, city and nation.

The instrumental use of women to make cities and urban policies more efficient is unlikely to change relational aspects of gender.<sup>1</sup> It is critical not only to address the ‘practical gender needs’ of women in urban environments but ‘strategic gender interests’ in terms of addressing deep-seated gender ideologies and power relations if a more equal distribution of urban prosperity is to come about.<sup>2</sup> In addressing the various

## BOX 3.1.1

**A gender-sensitive prosperous city**

- Contributes to poverty reduction by harnessing the wealth produced by female and male citizens in investments that ensure better living standards and quality of life for all
- Provides equal opportunities for women and men to access decent work and earn a decent income, including through labour market legislation, flexible approaches to the use of public spaces and amenities, adequate and safe transport, and access to digital technology
- Contains adequate infrastructure and physical services (including childcare facilities and other forms of care support) that reduce women's unpaid and reproductive labour and carework, 'time poverty', and exposure to health risks
- Provides opportunities for adequate and affordable shelter for all and strengthens women's formal and informal rights over property
- Promotes women's and men's safety from violence at household, neighbourhood and city-wide levels
- Invests in social services such as education, healthcare, childcare, recreational and sports facilities that enhance women's and men's capacities to lead productive and fulfilling lives in economic, social and cultural spheres
- Promotes the full engagement and representation of women in civic participation and urban governance

Source: UN-Habitat (2012)

components of the gender empowerment and urban poverty nexus it is also important to remember that some of these issues (for example, selected aspects of urban demographics such as migrant selectivity and ageing) are long-term and contextual in nature, whereas others are potentially more immediately responsive to policy.

## PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN CITIES

### Existence and nature of gender policies

Almost half of the respondents in the UN-Habitat case study cities stated that they had a gender policy (47 per cent). While this reflects a lack of awareness of gender issues in cities from a policy perspective, this was especially marked in Kingston. In contrast, in Johannesburg, many more residents reported that there was a gender policy (See Figure 3.1.1).

However, when asked generally about which efforts have been most influential in making cities more prosperous for women, specific gender inclusive urban planning was cited by only 13 per cent. This compared with 26 per cent who identified policies and programmes promoting equal employment opportunities and 19 per cent who stated improved access to basic service provision. Having said this, those in Johannesburg and Kampala felt that gender inclusive planning was important; in Johannesburg this was second only to policies and programmes promoting equal employment opportunities and, in Kampala, was the most important type of effort.

From a slightly different perspective, almost half (46 per cent) stated that their city had a policy that successfully contributed to gender equity. While 69.5 per cent felt this to be the case in Johannesburg, only 21 per cent stated this in Rio de Janeiro. The actual policy or action thought to be most important in making the city more gender equitable was increased access to employment (19 per cent). However, social protection, training for skills development and equal pay and value for equal work were all thought to be important. Social protection was thought to be especially important in Rio de Janeiro, whereas access to employment was identified in Johannesburg and training for skills development in Kingston (See Table 3.1.1).

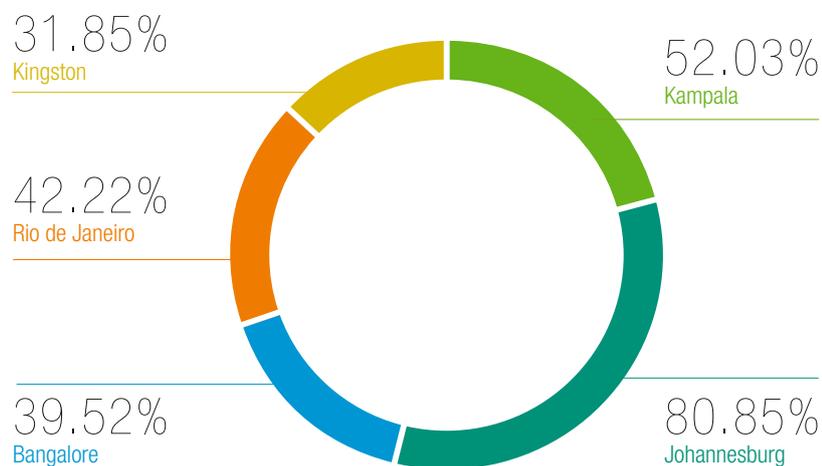
Related with this, but in a more concrete manner, only 44 per cent that their city had or is creating, comprehensive social support systems which effectively address the vulnerabilities faced disproportionately by women (for example, acting as a

Educating women on composting, Siddhipur, India.  
© UN-Habitat



Figure 3.1.1

## Perceptions of whether the city has a gender policy



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

single parent/earner, gender-based violence, maternal health issues). Again, however, those in Johannesburg were more positive (62 per cent) with lows in Rio de Janeiro (33 per cent) and Bangalore (36 per cent). In turn, only 38 per cent of urban dwellers stated that their city had local initiatives that dealt effectively with the reduction of social disparities especially in health and education, between women and men in terms of access, quality and outcomes. Even in Johannesburg, only 51 per cent felt that these initiatives existed.

As well as the nature of the policies, it emerged that almost two-thirds of urban dwellers (62 per cent) felt that women were involved disproportionately in the design, provision, management, and monitoring related to the local economy, infrastructure, and social services. Women were thought to be most involved in Kingston (83 per cent) and in Johannesburg (68 per cent) and least involved in Kampala (52 per cent). Related with this, two-thirds (66 per cent) thought that highly qualified women and men with an awareness of gender issues were in influential public sector/private sector positions

Table 3.1.1

## Most notable initiative being implemented to make city more gender equitable (per cent)

Cities→ Notable policy	Bangalore	Johannesburg	Kampala	Kingston	Rio de Janeiro	Total
Training for skill development	23.5	17	9	33	14	17
Increased access to employment	23.5	36	11.5	20	0	19
Social protection	16	21	20	3	45	18
Fiscal incentives	12	6.5	18	0	10	11
Projects for poor and marginalised	6	10	18	13	24	14
Equal pay and value	18.5	9	17	31	7	17
Others	0	0	7	0	0	3
						100

Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

relevant to policy in relation to economic growth/poverty alleviation, labour, social security, health, and education policy. Again, this was especially the case in Kingston (80 per cent) and thought to be least likely in Kampala (53 per cent).

### Implementation of gender policies and the role of institutions

Although around half of urban dwellers felt that gender policies existed in their cities, slightly more felt that there was a broad commitment to implementing them (See also Chapter 2.4). This was also explored at different scales with awareness being highest at the country level (12 per cent stating they were 'most aware'), especially in Johannesburg (24 per cent), followed by the city level (8 per cent), again in Johannesburg (14 per cent). The level with least awareness was the state with only 6 per cent identifying it as the 'most aware', especially in Kampala (13.5 per cent). In terms of the interrelations between these levels, only 41 per cent thought that they worked together to promote gender equality, although 65 per cent felt this to be the case in Johannesburg and only 31 per cent in Rio de Janeiro. However, the qualitative data suggested that people felt that it was very important work across these scales as one respondent from Johannesburg noted: 'Growth and progress for women is not a farfetched system, it just needs everyone from government to city residents to work together for the good and improvement of gender equity'.

NGOs and civil society emerged as the most important actors in bringing about gender equality in cities cited by more than a third, with particularly important roles in Rio de Janeiro and Kingston. Government was also identified as important by just under one-third although this was much higher in Johannesburg. Trade unions and parliamentarians were seen as the least important (See Table 3.1.2).

In terms of funding policies to reduce gender inequalities, almost half the resources (47 per cent) came from governments across all cities. This is followed some way behind by NGOs (20 per cent). Government funding of such policies was perceived to be especially high in Johannesburg (83 per cent) and Bangalore (60 per cent), while NGO funding was important in Kingston and Rio de Janeiro (27 per cent). The private sector and donors played much smaller roles in providing 12 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. The qualitative data also suggested that people felt that funding needs to be increased. For example, a respondent from Kampala noted: 'I think that gender equality for women is important; in order to be achieved a lot of effort has to be put in gender

The Oneputa Combined School goes from Grade 1 through to Grade 10. The computer section, where students often have to double up in class.  
© John Hogg World Bank



Table 3.1.2

#### Most effective actor in bringing about gender equality (per cent)

Cities → Actor	Bangalore	Johannesburg	Kampala	Kingston	Rio de Janeiro	Total
Government/ public institutions	36	61	8	30	27	30
Parliamentarians	3	12	15.5	3	1	7
Trade unions	3	6	17	5	5	7
NGOs/ civil society	41	11	25	44	47	35
Judges and courts	7	2	11.5	10	11	9
Professional implementing programmes	6	7	11.5	10	11	9
Others	4	0	5	4	6	4
						100

Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

awareness to sensitise the people and also increase in the funding for activities of women’.

Confidence in the financial, technical, managerial and leadership capacity of institutions to collect information and use it in the provision of gender sensitive policies, programmes, and services was not high with one-third thinking that they did not possess it. This was lowest in Johannesburg (19 per cent) and highest in Bangalore.

It also emerged that 42 per cent of urban dwellers thought that there was gender discrimination against women in the city in the implementation of public policies, programmes and initiatives. This was especially marked in Bangalore, where 50 per cent felt this was the case, together with Kampala (49 per cent). Only in Kingston was discrimination thought to be less of a problem (cited by 29 per cent). One of the core reasons why initiatives promoting gender equity were not effective was lack of political will which was identified in over one-quarter of cases overall (26 per cent) and by half in Rio de Janeiro. Lack of gender awareness also emerged as important in 20 per cent of cases, particularly in Bangalore.

## GENDER-SENSITIVE AND GENDER-EQUITABLE URBAN POLICIES

### Policies to address women’s unpaid reproductive work

While this section addresses the range of possible policies to reduce gender inequalities in ‘quality of life and infrastructure’, ‘productivity’ and ‘equity in power and rights’ for increasing women’s prosperity in cities, it is vital at the outset to highlight one of the most fundamental issues affecting gender equality, namely women’s unpaid reproductive work.<sup>3</sup>

Unpaid reproductive work needs much greater valorisation and support given its critical role in ensuring the daily regeneration of the labour force, the functioning of cities, and contributions to the urban prosperity. This labour needs to be recognised not only in itself but on grounds that it constrains women’s participation in paid employment, as well as in social, political and cultural realms. In particular, it inhibits the development of capabilities among younger generations of women who may have to take on burdens of mothers and other female kin, and can also seriously disadvantage children of both sexes. These responsibilities are likely to be ever more burdensome in light of the recent global financial crisis.<sup>4</sup> Only when all people are recognised as those who need, give and receive care can gender equality be achieved.<sup>5</sup>

Women’s efforts can clearly be supported in a number of ways, and benefits may well ensue from a multi-pronged approach. Direct attention to the burdens of childcare and other types of unpaid care work typically performed by women, can include paid community-based options, workplace



nurseries and care homes, state parental or carer support transfers, and dedicated private and/or public facilities. While women’s care burdens might be alleviated in part through cash transfers,<sup>6</sup> the provision of public services for care-related needs is more favourable, mainly because it challenges the persistent identification of women with reproductive labour and its status as a ‘private’ responsibility.

Where such services exist they should be subsidised and affordable, and within easy reach of people’s homes. One successful example that has been instituted throughout Latin American countries such as Costa Rica and Colombia are ‘*Hogares Comunitarios*’ (Community Households) programmes which provide subsidised childcare in poor neighbourhoods via the training of local women as ‘community mothers’.<sup>7</sup> However, since it is women who are the paid carers of children, and mothers who deliver and collect their offspring, this type of programme still reinforces women’s primary female identification with care.

An essential part of any multidimensional perspective is the valorisation of women’s care roles through the promotion of greater public sensitisation to the societal value of care and the encouragement of more equal engagement by women and men in this unrecognised work.<sup>8</sup> One way of doing this is for policies to provide incentives for men to share in care work, such as through paternity leave, and changes in ‘paid work cultures’ including shorter and more flexible working days. This might also include a possible requirement that to qualify for use of public care facilities men should play a part in delivery and collection of care-receivers.

One example that addresses women's time poverty was developed by UNDP who installed hundreds of diesel-run generators, known as multi-functional platforms, across Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal to help ease some of the most time-consuming chores for women, such as fetching water, grinding and milling. The scheme freed up a daily average of two to four hours for women in Burkina Faso and contributed to increasing the owners' annual income by an average of US\$55 in 2009, producing net profits of US\$248 per unit.<sup>9</sup>

### Policies to address quality of life and infrastructure

The unpaid work that women perform in their homes and neighbourhoods not only relates to care in terms of feeding children or attending to sick or elderly individuals, but to a more extended range of activities that affect quality of life. These include saving household resources by shopping around, preparing of nutritious meals on low incomes, conserving water and power for environmental as well as financial ends. The ability to carry out these tasks is underpinned by access to adequate housing, health, education and basic urban services, as well as freedom from gender-based violence.

Although most urban dwellers in the case study cities thought that there was some policy commitment towards addressing women's quality of life. It is also instructive that 40 per cent felt that their city was not making enough effort or was not committed at all. In turn, although 62 per cent of city residents perceived policies promoting quality of life for women as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent', it is also instructive that 38

per cent felt they were 'poor' or 'very poor', especially in Rio de Janeiro (58 per cent). Kampala had the highest proportion stating that policies were 'very good' or 'excellent' (33 per cent) (See Figure 3.1.2).

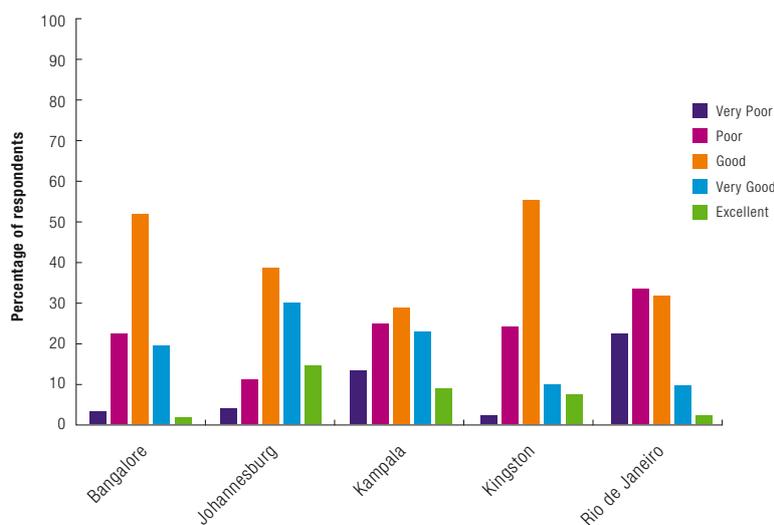
Access to and security in housing is one of the fundamentally important aspects of improving women's quality of life in cities. While urbanisation offers unprecedented potential to do away with deep-seated patriarchal power structures, as Hughes and Wickeri comment: '... urban growth must be managed in a way that ensures women's full realisation of their right to adequate housing'.<sup>10</sup> This should extend to all women, including the particularly marginalised constituencies of elderly women, widows, sick and disabled women, and lesbians.

Closer compliance with the provisions of CEDAW and other relevant international human rights instruments can be approached in a plethora of ways, including through state, NGO and private sector support of the numerous initiatives generated by women themselves in the form of group savings and collective land acquisition and building schemes.<sup>11</sup> Partnerships can take the form of gender-responsive housing finance, assistance in obtaining tenure security, subsidised materials, and training in construction techniques.<sup>12</sup>

A holistic approach is necessary to increase pro-female housing rights initiatives, such as in statutory joint or individual titling, or mechanisms to ensure that women are fully represented on committees which decide on land rights in communities which observe customary law.<sup>13</sup> Support for paralegal services which assist women in their ability to

Figure 3.1.2

#### Rating of policies promoting quality of life of women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

realise their land and shelter entitlements is also crucial. This is evidenced in Nigeria where the Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) works to help widows defend their inheritance rights.<sup>14</sup> Recalling the importance of rental accommodation for urban women, interventions to promote their access to, and security in, this sector should not be neglected.<sup>15</sup>

For women in rental and owner- or quasi-owner-occupied housing alike, greater media exposure of abuses in respect of tenure security, shelter adequacy and personal safety could also raise visibility and public accountability. Although, women's lack of knowledge of their rights, and societal awareness of when those rights are violated, whether within or outside the justice system, are generally more compromised in rural than in urban areas, media dissemination and campaigns can undoubtedly be effective, and could be strengthened further by increasing poor women's access to ICT.

Another core area affecting women's quality of life is the need to reduce violence against women in cities. Evidence from the case study cities highlights that there is an important need to address this as 56 per cent stated that there were no policies in their city to address issues of security and safety, especially in Kingston (68 per cent). UN-Habitat usefully outlines a range of policy approaches at the local level in cities that address urban crime and violence, all of which are gendered in some way. Some of these types of interventions focus on gender-based violence in public spheres while others address domestic violence specifically.<sup>16</sup> One example reflecting the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach from Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa illustrates how gender-based violence can be reduced in cities in relation

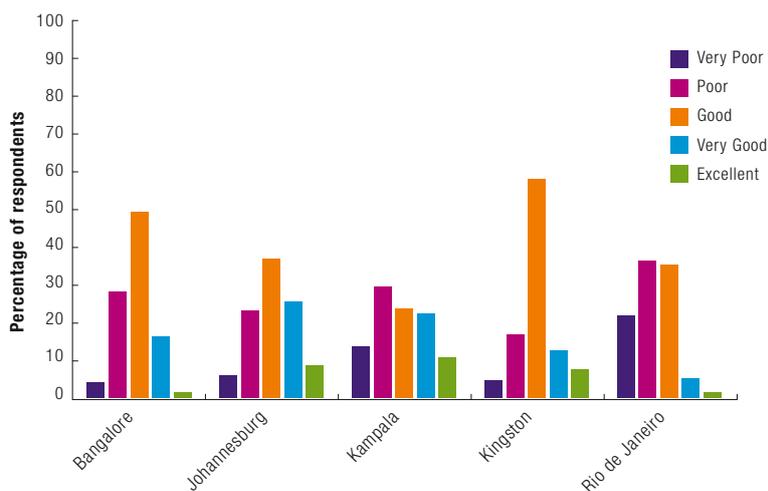
to upgrading or changing the urban infrastructure and physical fabric of the city in some way. For example, if outside toilets are phased out then women are much less likely to put themselves in situations of risk. However, it is essential to combine these with other projects that also address deep-seated gender inequalities otherwise long-term reduction in gender-based violence will not be ensured.<sup>17</sup>

This might also include strengthening formal criminal justice systems and policing from a gender perspective. Many of the early interventions to reduce gender-based violence in general focused on changing legislation, often prompted by the campaigning of women's movements. In the 1980s and 1990s, legal reforms were instituted in many countries focusing criminalisation of perpetrators. However, there remain serious problems in terms of implementation. In the case of India, for example there have been three decades of lobbying by the women's movement to address domestic violence with many legislative changes linked primarily with Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (Anti-Cruelty Act) and Section 304B (Dowry Death Act). However, despite legislation, the number of dowry crimes and domestic violence has increased from 6,208 in 2003 to 8,172 in 2008.<sup>314</sup> Other judicial interventions have been women's police stations discussed in Chapter 2.1.

Reflecting similar findings to those for quality of life, although 62 per cent of city dwellers felt that policies promoting infrastructure were good, very good or excellent, it is notable that 38 per cent thought that they were poor or very poor, especially in Rio de Janeiro. Again, those in Kampala were the most positive with 11 per cent stating that policies were excellent (See Figure 3.1.3).

Figure 3.1.3

### Rating of policies promoting infrastructure for women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

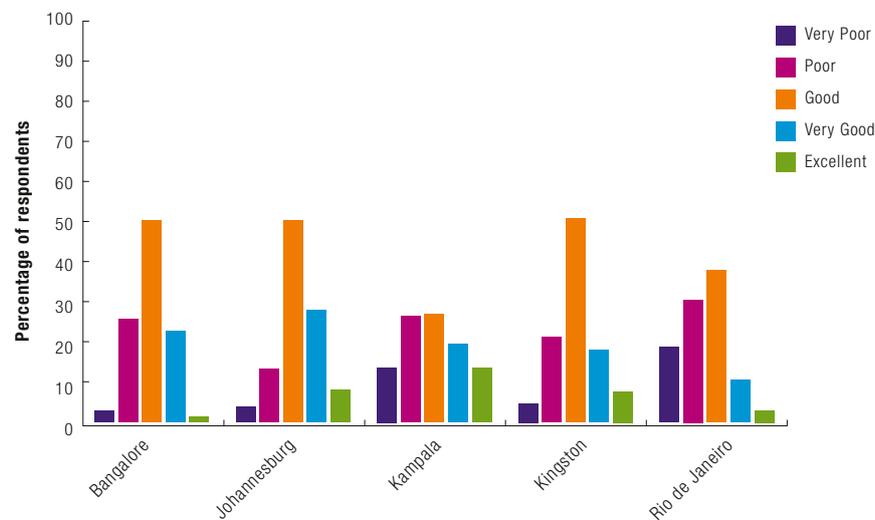
It is clear that greater public investment in services would undoubtedly reduce women's reproductive labour burdens. In turn, the planning, design, use and management of these services should ideally involve the participation of women and men.<sup>18</sup> The same applies to physical infrastructure, with sex-disaggregated research being a vital tool for gender-sensitive transport planning.<sup>19</sup>

As discussed above, single-issue interventions in transport, or the creation of nominally gender-friendly public spaces and amenities, may not benefit women unless complementary

measures are put in place, such as street lighting. However, as the Khayelitsha example above illustrates, there can be multiple benefits from improving women's access to infrastructure. Similarly, training women in, and facilitating their access to, virtual spaces and connectivity through digital technology is important. However, it is not enough when the physical spaces they inhabit remain subject to erratic or unaffordable power supplies, where women lack income to purchase the necessary equipment, or where social conventions inhibit their engagement in the 'modern' economy.

Figure 3.1.4

### Rating of policies promoting productivity for women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

### Policies to address productivity

Ensuring women's rights to adequate housing, services and infrastructure, along with education, training and work also plays a major part in enhancing women's access to, and benefits from, productivity and to urban prosperity in gender-equitable ways. According to the survey, perceptions of policies for promoting productivity for women were generally positive with 68 per cent stating that they were good, very good or excellent, especially in Johannesburg (35 per cent) and Kampala (33 per cent). Yet, one-third (32.5 per cent) still felt that they were poor or very poor, especially in Rio de Janeiro (49 per cent) (See Figure 3.1.4).

While various MDG targets have been important in enhancing women's access to education and employment, much more needs to be done to cater to the needs of women

workers, along with increasing numbers of male workers, who are likely to remain disproportionately engaged in the informal urban economy. Further informalisation is likely as some cities de-industrialise or formal manufacturing plants are reduced in favour of offloading jobs into the home working sector, and public sector employment is scaled down in the interests of cost-cutting. As pointed out in the context of a recent workshop on 'Inclusive Cities' in New Delhi, since 80 per cent of urban workers in India are informally employed, and like many other developing nations India's economy is a 'hybrid' of 'modern-traditional' and 'formal-informal' activities, economic diversity and informal businesses should be promoted rather than penalised.<sup>317</sup>

Urban policies concerning land and land-use are vital here, with restrictions on home-based enterprise, widespread slum clearance, the gating of middle-income and elite residential

neighbourhoods, and constrained access by informal entrepreneurs to public spaces often exacting huge tolls on women's ability to avoid poverty, let alone to achieve any form of 'prosperity'. Aside from recognising the rights of informal workers in the city through land channels, and acknowledging that there is no single solution given the diversity of such work, a variety of mechanisms for supporting small businesses and the self-employed, at the same time as promoting 'decent work', might be considered.

These include better provision of vocational educational and training with a view to enhancing the diversification of often competitive informal activities, easier access to loans on favourable terms, assistance in promoting greater health and safety at work, and the reduction and/or phasing of costs of formalisation.<sup>20</sup> Encouraging and supporting associations of female informal entrepreneurs is also important to strengthen their often marginalised position and activities. The power of organisation is not only indicated by the huge diversity of examples of women workers' organising across the world (See Chapter 2.2), but also features in Chen's '3V' framework for the working poor. Comprising the imperatives of 'voice', 'visibility' and 'validity', this serves as another potentially fruitful step towards greater gender equality in prosperity in urban environments (See Box 3.1.2).<sup>21</sup>

It is essential to remember that access to decent opportunities to generate income can have important positive implications for women's economic empowerment. The extensive research on the role of micro-enterprises in women's lives has illustrated that, although they do not unequivocally empower women, access to loans to establish small businesses can significantly improve women's lives and give them more decision-making power across a range of domains.

One example here is the Lumanti Support Group for Shelter in Kathmandu and Lalitpur in Nepal who established a Micro Finance Programme in Slum and Squatter Communities - the Pragati Mahila Utthan Savings and Credit Cooperative. Their mission is to empower landless squatter women through economic self-reliance and income-generating activities in order to reduce women's dependency on moneylenders and to increase the number of women working in leadership positions within their communities. It was found that the micro-finance project led to change oppressive power relations at inter and intra household levels as well as greater well-being for children and families more widely. It was also discovered that women were better leaders than men as well as successful entrepreneurs able to overcome impoverishment.<sup>22</sup>

It is also critical to remember that not all women are informally employed and that general questions pertaining to productivity need to be tackled.<sup>23</sup> In particular, the lower value accorded to women's labour needs to be addressed as well as overt and covert discrimination against women in recruitment

## BOX 3.1.2

## The '3V' framework

To ensure that economic policies are (re)oriented towards creating more and better employment, the working poor, especially women, need to be empowered to hold policy makers accountable.

This requires three enabling conditions:

**'Visibility'** - requires that the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy are visible in labour force statistics. More countries need to collect statistics on informal employment, broadly defined, and countries that already do so need to improve the quality of the statistics that they collect. Also, all forms of informal employment need to be integrated into economic models of labour markets. Since existing models focus on the supply and demand of wage labour, the self-employed tend to be excluded. A second area of neglect pertains to insufficient delineation between different types of waged workers. A third problem is that the extent of underemployment is not taken into account, despite its role in providing a more accurate measure of the 'employment problem' in developing countries than open unemployment.

**'Voice'** - the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy, need a representative – and stronger -- voice in the processes and institutions that determine economic policies and formulate the 'rules of the (economic) game'. This requires building and supporting organisations of informal workers and extending the coverage of existing trade unions, cooperatives, and other worker organisations to include informal workers. This also requires making rule-setting and policymaking institutions more inclusive and helping representatives of the working poor gain 'a seat at the (policy) table'.

**'Validity'** - refers to recognition and validation. The working poor, especially women, in the informal economy need legal identity and validity as workers and economic agents, and also need to be recognised as legitimate targets of employment policy.

Source: Adapted from Chen (2010a)

and promotion. In addition, it is not just poor women who have been organising and for whom economic empowerment is relevant, nor that organising has focused on the workplace. There are many examples whereby professional women have organised and/or where interventions have targeted women beyond the grassroots. For example, in Mexico, a federal programme called Generosidad awards a "Gender Equity Seal" to private firms. These are granted through an independent evaluation that assesses a company's achievement of specific

standards related to gender equity, including recruitment, career advancement, training and reducing sexual harassment. By 2006, 117 companies had obtained the Seal.<sup>24</sup>

### Policies to address equity in power and rights

In the case study cities, 63 per cent of city dwellers felt that policies promoting equity for women were good, very good or excellent, especially in Johannesburg (77 per cent). Again, however, 37 per cent thought that the policies were poor or very poor, especially in Rio de Janeiro (60.5 per cent) (See Figure 3.1.5). This suggests that there is still much to do (See Chapter 2.4). Therefore, gender-equitable prosperous cities need to promote women's and men's participation in civic engagement and urban governance and politics, while avoiding the situation whereby high levels of women's activism at the grassroots do not translate into high-profile representation in formal municipal or political arenas.

Imperative in efforts to support such engagement should be the recognition of state-society synergies in that progressive national policy reform rarely happens through social mobilisation or state action alone but through collaborative efforts of civil society and governments and especially through partnerships with grassroots organisations.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is in the NGO sector where many important initiatives have been developed.

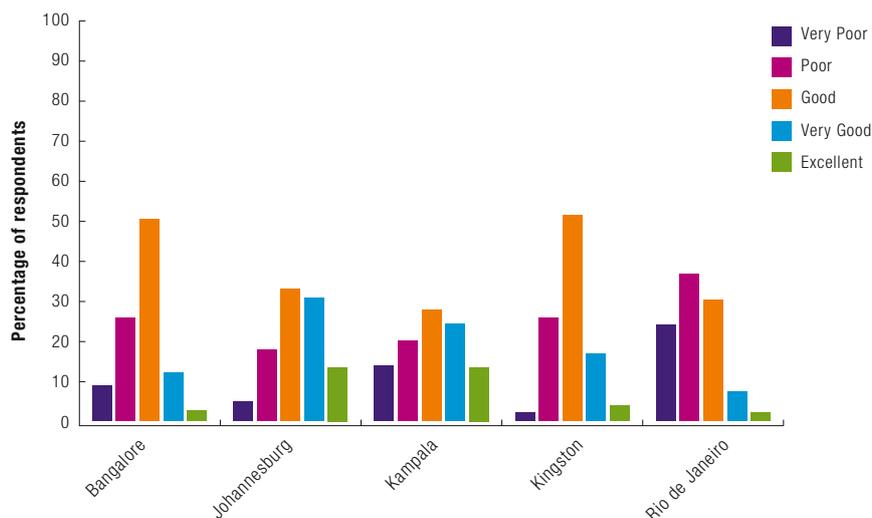
The Local to Local Dialogue initiative pioneered by the Huairou Commission in collaboration with UN-Habitat and inspired by organisations such as SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres) and Mahila Matila

in India, is an approach which develops 'locally designed strategies whereby grassroots women's groups initiate and engage in on-going dialogue with local authorities, government, private sector and others to negotiate a range of issues and priorities to influence policies, plans and programmes in ways that address women's priorities'.<sup>26</sup> This tool builds collective action, capacity building and alliances as well as information. For example, in Tanzania, the Mpambano Women's Group and Mshikamano Housing Group in Dar es Salaam, found that advancing the Dialogue meant that they had to learn about the legislation, regulations and procedures for grievance redress. They also had to invest in understanding how the municipal structure functioned and where the decision-making powers are located.<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, they can also empower women to have much greater decision-making power both formally and informally. This also relates to the importance of peer exchanges which is a learning tool that grassroots women's organisations have used for many years to learn from the experiences and practices of each other.

Also critical in bringing about change is to remember that change rarely happens overnight. For example, there is mounting evidence of the limitations of gender mainstreaming, ad hoc workshops and women's invitations to decision-making fora – where their participation is often token and muted).<sup>28</sup> Another long-term initiative is to work through existing educational structures wherein younger generations of women and men are encouraged to develop interest in, and are equipped with the practical tools to engage with, civic issues, thereby enhancing participation from the bottom-up.

Figure 3.1.5

#### Rating of policies promoting equity for women



Source: UN-Habitat Survey, 2012

One well-known example comes from Nicaragua and especially the work of Puntos de Encuentro. They developed a communication strategy called *Somos Diferentes, Somos Iguales* (We are Different, We are Equal) that deals with women's rights and gender equality targeting young people in particular. The strategy includes a national television series (*Sexto Sentido*, or Sixth Sense), a radio talk show for youth and community activities that include training workshops for young people as well as youth leadership camps. Evaluation of the strategy found some positive change in terms of gender attitudes.<sup>29</sup>

Also part of designing gender-responsive pro-prosperity measures is to correct the common dilemma posed for women by involving them predominantly or exclusively in anti-poverty programmes where they usually end up with more unpaid work on their shoulders.<sup>30</sup> In order to counter the 'feminisation of responsibility'<sup>31</sup> or adverse effects of the 'feminisation of policy',<sup>32</sup> it is vital for poverty reduction programmes to promote the greater engagement of men.

While 'Smart Economics' thinking seems to have encroached into the urban development agenda, with concepts of 'smarter cities', it is important to acknowledge that although mobilising investments in women can have huge impacts on the generation of wealth, there is also a serious danger of instrumentalising gender (under the auspices of promoting 'gender equality') to meet these ends. This misses the vital point of evening-out women's and men's inputs and rewards in urban environments.

It is therefore paramount that the principles of gender rights and justice remain uppermost in urban prosperity discourse and planning.<sup>35</sup> At the bottom line this will involve attempts to ensure equality of opportunity through effective monitoring and enforcement, and to enjoin (and ensure) not only female, but male participation in all institutions at all scales from the micro to the macro.

Last but not least, international agencies including UN-Habitat should ensure that gender is mainstreamed into their flagship reports. UN-Habitat, for example, should ensure that future editions of the State of the World's Cities and the Global Report on Human Settlements adequately respond to gender equality and women's empowerment so as to raise the visibility of gender at all levels of policy dialogue and engagement. Given that gender inequalities are still so stark and that mainstreaming remains uneven and often limited in its impacts in respect of improving the lives of women, dedicated gender-sensitive reports remain extremely important. More generally, only by recognising the intersections of cities with patriarchal relations, and eliminating male bias in the institutions which give rise to gender inequality, will fairer shares of urban prosperity become a right and reality for women in cities everywhere. Only then will women living in cities become fully empowered individually and collectively across all spheres and scales of urban life.

## Endnotes

1. Johnson (2005, p. 57)
2. Molyneux (1985); Moser (1993)
3. Reeves, Parfitt and Archer (2012); UN-DESA (2009)
4. Pearson (2010, p. 422)
5. Razavi (2007, p. 26)
6. Razavi (2007, p. 25)
7. Moser and McIlwaine (2004); Sancho Montero (1995)
8. Chant (2007a); UNCSW (2009)
9. [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG\\_FS\\_3\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_FS_3_EN.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2012)
10. Hughes and Wickeri (2011, p. 839)
11. D'Cruz and Satterthwaite (2005)
12. Chant (1996); Mills (2010); Patel and Mitlin (2010)
13. Chant (2007b); CPRC (2010); Cooper (2010); Varley (2007)
14. COHRE (2004, p. 77-8)
15. Mirafab (2001, p. 156)
16. UN-Habitat (2007)
17. Moser and McIlwaine (2006); McIlwaine (2011)
18. McIlwaine (2011)
19. AMC (2005); Ivens (2008); Joshi et al (2011)
20. Fernando and Porter (2002)
21. Chen (2011)
22. Chant and McIlwaine (2009, Chapter 6)
23. Chen (2010a); See also Perrons (2010)
24. Lumanti Support Group for Shelter (2006); Yonder and Tamaki for the Huairou Commission (2011)
25. Perrons (2010); Perrons and Plomien (2010)
26. [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG\\_FS\\_3\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_FS_3_EN.pdf)(accessed 30 May 2012)
27. Gaventa and McGee, eds (2010); Khosla (2009)
28. Huairou Commission (2004, p. 12)
29. Huairou Commission (2004, p. 25)
30. Goetz and Hassim, eds (2003); Parpart (2009); Cornwall (2007)
31. WHO (2009)
32. Concern and Oxfam (2011); Molyneux (2006, 2007)
33. Chant (2008)
34. Roy (2009)
35. Chant (2012b)

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# STATE OF WOMEN IN CITIES 2012-2013

## Gender and the Prosperity of Cities

There are two main standpoints that propagate the benefits of urbanisation. One is that cities are associated with opportunities for wealth generation. Concomitant to this is the idea that urban women supposedly enjoy greater social, economic, political opportunities and freedoms than their rural counterparts. However, the notable gender gaps in labour and employment, decent work, pay, tenure rights, access to and accumulation of assets, personal security and safety and representation in formal structures of urban governance, show that women are often the last to benefit from the prosperity of cities.

The State of Women in Cities 2012/2013 Report focuses on Gender and the Prosperity of Cities. The Report examines the gender dimensions of the defining characteristics of a prosperous city- productivity, infrastructure development, quality of life, equity and social inclusion and environmental sustainability. It provides a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between gender and prosperity and also reviews policies and institutional framework relevant for mainstreaming gender concerns in cities.

From Bangalore, India to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, inequity of economic opportunities and of access to social infrastructure, such as water and sanitation, secure housing, health facilities inter alia were observed. Drawing from the findings of UN-Habitat's survey of five cities, expert opinions and perceptions of informal urban dwellers on issues related to urbanisation and prosperity of women, the Report details policy recommendations and actionable steps that can improve quality of life and infrastructure, productivity and promote equity in power and rights across various country contexts.

In sum, the Report advocates that a holistic approach to understanding the gendered nature of urban prosperity is required to capture women's contributions.

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**UN**  **HABITAT**

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P O Box 30030, Nairobi, 00100, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 762 3120

Fax: +254 20 762 34266/7 (Central office)

E-Mail : [infohabitat@unhabitat.org](mailto:infohabitat@unhabitat.org)

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