

# REALIZING GENDER- EQUALITY IN CITIES

A Guidance Note for  
Development Practitioners

**Cities Alliance**  
Cities Without Slums





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Too often development partners consider Gender Mainstreaming as a specialized project, or fail to provide practical examples for decision-makers and sectoral specialists within development agencies. Against this background and to inspire all those that programme for cities, this guidance note aims to illustrate how results of gender-responsive programming for and in cities can be realized. It provides a simple but holistic framework for Gender-Mainstreaming in Cities and illustrative examples of projects.

Experiences of living, working and socializing in the same city can vary according to gender. Gender inequality is exacerbated for individuals belonging to lower-income groups, discriminated racial/ethnic groups, or if they are disabled. Despite these different realities, it continues to be the norm that gender is rarely considered in the planning and management of cities. On the contrary, the impact of interventions is generally assumed to be gender neutral, and not “shaped by or in the interest of a particular gender.”<sup>1</sup>

While it is clear that most policies often do not openly discriminate against women, they nonetheless often have far-reaching gender impacts. Policies that do not explicitly consider and address the role of gender are typically ineffective, exclusionary and likely to fail city and citizens alike. The default reality is that policies, customs and practices covertly discriminate against women throughout the world, limiting their opportunities and rights.

Economic discrimination manifested in less access to work and lower wages for women leads to a loss in purchasing power, social status and persistent poverty.<sup>2</sup>

Gender mainstreaming – more cities promoting gender equality - is a globally-accepted approach for addressing such gender inequalities. Its function is to assess the implications of any planned action, policy or programme on women and men – in all areas and at all levels – before decisions are made, and then monitored throughout the whole process. It is a strategy for making the unique concerns of both women and men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes so that both women and men benefit, and inequality is not perpetuated.<sup>3</sup>

Gender mainstreaming in cities can be achieved in a variety of sectors and policies, plans and regulation

(See Figure 1). Cities Alliance believes that by taking gender considerations into account, and by ensuring the generation and maintenance of gender-disaggregated data, policy makers can ensure that policies are better targeted, services and resources are more effectively provisioned, and residents enjoy greater equality.<sup>4</sup>

Cities can also reap significant development benefits from instituting policies and practices that promote gender equality. By offering men and women equal access to education, childcare facilities, safe public transport, markets, and employment, cities gain a larger workforce with increased purchasing power. Decision-making also becomes more inclusive; when women are represented in local, regional and national decision-making processes, it generally leads to better informed decisions on how to design services and use resources efficiently.

# WHAT CAN BE DONE TO FOSTER GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN CITIES?

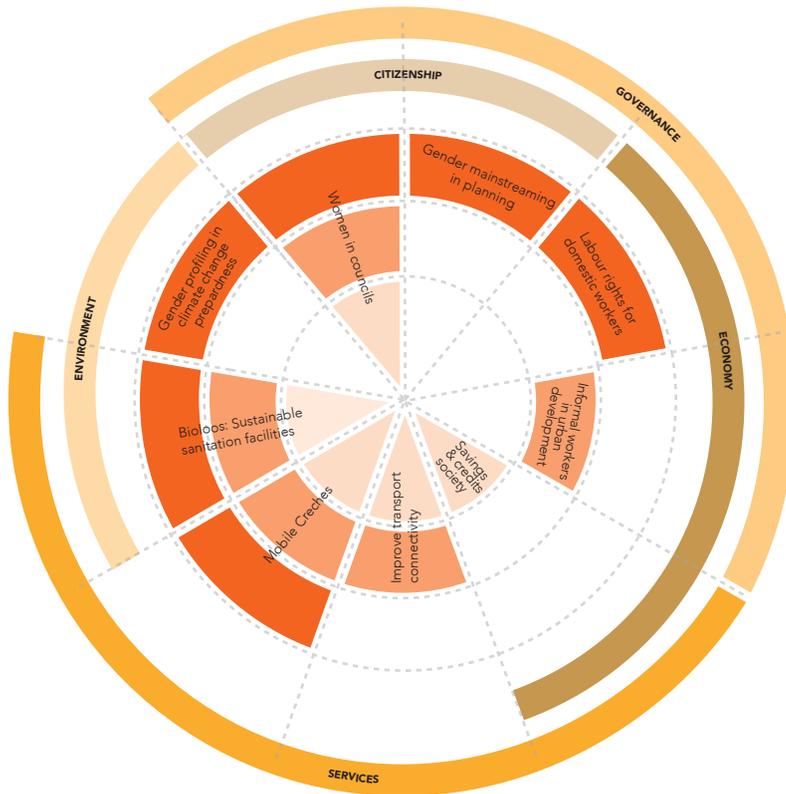


Integrating gender needs and strategic interests in urban development is only successful when governments, municipal staff and elected representatives assume responsibility for promoting gender equality and treat it as part of their core business.

The case studies presented in this paper illustrate what can be done at national, city and neighbourhood scale, across key spheres of societies – governance, citizenship, services, economy and environment – to promote gender mainstreaming in cities.

These cases demonstrate that a gender-responsive approach can be implemented across all sectors, at different levels (national, citywide, or neighbourhood). It can (and should) also be initiated, implemented and supported by different actors: national or local government, NGOs, community-based groups, the private sector, or a combination or partnership of these.

**FIGURE 1** A framework for gender mainstreaming in cities



### Services

- Improved access to public health services for women
- Access to banking & credit services
- Affordable child-care services
- Sanitation services
- Gender sensitive transport services

### Economy

- Provision of labour rights
- Improving access to conventionally male employment sectors
- Legal recognition of informal, domestic, and unpaid workers
- Support to gender-based employment collectives
- Provision of technical, legal and financial assistance to low-income women

### Citizenship

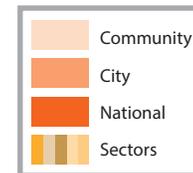
- Equal property rights
- Improved access to education for girls
- Equal wages
- Prevention of domestic violence
- Safety audits to make cities safer for women

### Governance

- Equal property rights
- Inclusive urban planning
- Gender representation quotas for national and local level governments
- Gender quotas for inclusion in local level leadership
- Enhancing the gender mainstreaming capacity of national, local level offices

### Environment

- Gender sensitive disaster management
- Increased access to sanitation
- Improved access to healthy cooking fuel
- Increased access to potable water
- Safe public spaces for women and girls



The figure comprehensively presents interventions for gender mainstreaming in cities. They cover different sectors, which fall within the Cities Alliance's normative framework for change. The interventions are at the various hierarchical levels of governance and often there are inter-linkages and overlaps in terms of implementation and impacts between sectors and levels of governance.



## THEME: GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENSHIP

### A national law in South Africa

South Africa promulgated national law in 1998 that provides spaces for women's representation on council and ward committees as well as participation in public meetings.<sup>5</sup> The law has led to a modest but nonetheless important political presence of women in local government. The number of women elected to council committees increased from 38% in 2011 to 41% in 2016. In ward committees there was a more significant increase, with the number of seats held by women jumping from 17% in 2000 to 37% in 2006.<sup>6</sup>

Through statutory participatory integrated development planning (IDP) processes and associated ward committees, "women influenced planning outcomes in ways that spoke to their gender interests."<sup>7</sup> IDP planning processes have increased women's participation in municipal governance, and women's attendance and participation at public meetings. Women councilors are centrally involved in promoting women's rights, HIV/AIDS awareness, poverty alleviation initiatives, establishing co-operatives and crèches, accessing funds and training, and sourcing farming equipment for women. Notably, they also ensure that ward level meetings are held at times and venues suitable for women. Despite advances achieved through the IDP process, much remains to be done. "Gender equity and social transformation remain distant goals and working towards them will continue to require considerable efforts from municipal stakeholders and civil society organisations."<sup>8</sup>



## City-level gender mainstreaming in Costa Rica

Belén, a canton in the Heredia province of Costa Rica<sup>9, 10</sup> with a population of 21,085 over an area of 12.5 km<sup>2</sup> is carrying out gender mainstreaming at the strategic and operative level. Key achievements so far include:

- Incorporating gender into the work of all municipal units, with concrete goals and actions on gender equity matters;
- Improving staff attitudes and work culture through gender awareness workshops;
- Building dialogue, strengthening partnerships with women's groups, and developing a public awareness campaign;
- Improving how gender is addressed in urban development projects, which have had a real effect on citizens' everyday lives; and
- Serving as a pilot for eight other municipalities.

## Gender equality in local politics: a step forward for Tunisia

For the first time in its history, in May 2018, a woman mayor was elected to run the capital city, Tunis.<sup>11</sup>

This is one of the highlights of the new Tunisian electoral code resulting from the decentralization and ongoing



*Ms Souad Abderrahim, the first female mayor of Tunis*

democratic transition of Tunisia, which both promotes and guarantees the effective participation of women in the municipal and regional political scene.

In 2014 the Tunisian Parliament adopted an amendment guaranteeing increased representation of women in local political life. This reform, which applies to both municipal and regional elections, includes in article 49 of the electoral law the promotion of "horizontal and vertical" parity.

Through the former, all electoral lists in Tunisian municipal elections must include an equal number of women and men; while the latter requires the alternation of men and women within the list. Supported by 127 out of 134 delegates, these two principals were adopted by the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP), the Tunisian Parliament, on June 15, 2016, and were subsequently applied during the municipal elections of May 2018.

There are many legislative advances proving the importance and the fundamental place occupied by women in Tunisian society: whether on the issue of abortion, the prohibition of polygamy, inheritance or in many other areas, progress on women's rights is evident.

## THEME: SERVICES

### The need for gender-equitable mobility in cities

Constraints to women's mobility can lead to lower literacy rates through non-attendance at school and restrict their participation in the labour force. The design of public transportation often neglects the different mobility patterns of women.

Women also face issues of personal safety related to isolated or poorly-lit connections and stops, as well as overcrowded buses and trains. Providing women-only buses and/or train carriages – as Mexico City, Cairo, Jakarta, Japan, New Delhi, Rio de Janeiro and Moscow have done – can help. Another effective approach is the “Between Two Stops” service in Montreal, Canada, which enables women to get on the bus between stops at night.<sup>12</sup> Other simple low-cost improvements, such as widening pavements or expanding pedestrian zones, can improve women's movement around cities.

Technology too is used to improve the mobility of women. The mobile map-based app, SafetiPin, developed in partnership with many international organisations, including Cities Alliance empowers both women and decision makers by collecting data through crowd-sourcing and other methods to provide a “safety score” of public spaces (including bus stops). This allows women to choose routes which are safest and helps decision makers improve public spaces to foster the safety and mobility of women.<sup>13, 14</sup>

### Lessening inequality through transport design in Bogotá

To ensure gender-equitable mobility within cities, broad initiatives are required. An example is the regeneration of Bogotá, Colombia, initially driven by Mayor Enrique Peñalosa from 1998 to 2001.<sup>15</sup> Under his leadership, Bogotá prioritised walkway and bicycle lane projects and showed that cities designed for people can lessen social inequality. The high-quality TransMilenio bus rapid transit system is now 84km long, offering safe, affordable and reliable public transport accessible to all residents, including those living in Bogotá's slums. Serving 1.7 million passengers a day, it provides flexible transport options that address the needs of women, the disabled and the elderly, removing a major obstacle to income-earning by poor women who previously had to find work within walking distance of their homes. These gender-sensitive investments reduce the risks and constraints of dangerous and unreliable mass transit, benefit men and women alike, and contribute to a more inclusive and productive city.

### Increasing women's access to employment in India with Mobile Crèches

City governments can encourage and support existing non-governmental initiatives which have a big impact on the poor and the city. A good example is the Mobile Crèche initiative in India.<sup>16,17,18,19</sup> India's construction sector employs over 44 million people, with a largely migrant labour force. Some 35% of construction workers are women, and many are forced

## CASE STUDIES

to bring their children to work. Mobile Crèches was founded in 1969 in Delhi to promote child-friendly construction sites. Programmes include providing healthy preschool activities and nutrition, trying to send students to municipal schools, and training women to become teachers.

The experience of Mobile Crèches shows that greater public investment in affordable, accessible public services reduces women's time burdens and increases their access to sustainable livelihoods and productive economic activities. By 2016-17, Mobile Crèches had reached almost 750,000 children, established 650 daycare centres, trained 6,500 child-care workers, and trained and supported 250 government crèches.

Mobile Crèches takes a participatory approach by bringing different stakeholders together, such as local government and NGOs. It provides evidence-based policy recommendations to lobby government for policy changes in public service provision, increased budget allocations for programmes, and improved implementation. It also lobbies for state-run crèches, maternity entitlements, and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres with more spending and design improvements.

Although the focus of Mobile Crèches is on female construction workers, it generates economic, educational and health benefits that impact the entire low-income migrant community. However, the initiative does face challenges, including providing support to migrant construction workers who are constantly on the move, weak political will, and uncertainty over whether long-term institutional and behavioural changes in childcare practices can be scaled up and sustained.





## THEME: ECONOMY

### Integrating informal workers into the local economy in Chiang Rai, Thailand

In some areas of the world informal work accounts for up to 90% of the total employment for women. This leaves female workers without any labour law protections and social benefits which can have a long-term impact on their livelihood and lives.<sup>20</sup>

In Thailand, the city of Chiang Rai and HomeNet Thailand spearheaded an initiative that has increased the recognition and integration of informal marginalised workers, especially women, in local economic development and urban planning.<sup>21</sup>

Launched in 2016 with the support of the European Union, the Inclusive Urban Development for Informal Workers initiative targeted the north of Thailand, where some 70% of the workers are informally employed. The Chiang Rai Municipality was strongly motivated to undertake the project, since its thriving tourism industry depends on informal institutions such as the Walking Street and Night Bazar markets.

As a result of the project, two member-based organisations were established in 2017: The Walking Street Association, which represents vendors participating in Chiang Rai's Saturday evening market; and the Restaurant and Vendor Association of Chiang Rai. The municipality helped the

organisations with recruitment, provision of meeting spaces, and increased their involvement in city policy planning.

The city engaged with vendors on the current vending policies, welcoming their feedback and suggestions. City authorities also raised awareness among informal workers about special social security packages and enrolled them in courses to introduce them to more competitive markets.

In a similar vein, the Federation of Petty Traders and Informal Worker's Union of Liberia (FEPTIWUL) overcame years of conflict with the local government to sign a landmark Memorandum of Understanding with the Monrovia City Council in September 2018. The (Agreement) MoU establishes parity between the parties, ensures regular dialogue and monitoring, and has facilitated a constructive relationship with the police. The results include reduced police harassment, regulated trading, improved street cleanliness and the demonstration of the potential of dialogue and partnership between city and citizens.<sup>22</sup>

### Protecting domestic workers through national policy in Uruguay

In 2012, Uruguay became the first country in the world to ratify the International Labour Organization's Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), guaranteeing domestic workers labour protections.<sup>23</sup>

There are an estimated 53 million domestic workers worldwide, of which 83 per cent are women and girls.

Employing domestic workers is very common in cities,<sup>24</sup> and under this convention they are guaranteed a minimum wage, set working hours, and collective bargaining rights.

By ratifying the convention, Uruguay put the rights of domestic workers on a par with those of other remunerated workers.<sup>25</sup> In 2014, Uruguay took the welfare of domestic workers a step further and automatically insured all registered domestic workers in case of accidents at work.<sup>26</sup> As a result of these efforts to lift up domestic workers, Uruguay is now considered a world leader in the policy field.

## THEME: ENVIRONMENT

### Adapting cyclone shelters in Bangladesh to make them more appealing for women

The urban poor often live in areas that are flood-prone and water-logged, making them vulnerable to disease and water contamination, and placing them at risk of serious health problems.

Women are disproportionately impacted by these environmental risks. In 1970, the Bhola Cyclone claimed about 300,000 lives in Bangladesh, with female victims outnumbering male victims 14:1. When the equally powerful Cyclone Sidr hit in 2007, there were some 3,500 casualties, with the ratio of female to male deaths down to 5:1. This drop in ratio is attributed to increased involvement by women as preparedness champions, although many women

still perceived shelters as insecure places with little privacy.<sup>27</sup>

Commissioned by Bangladesh's national government, the Centre for Global Change researched how climate change affects women and what this means for infrastructure. The gender profile of climate change showed that women often did not use cyclone shelters because of poor sanitary and security arrangements.

After the 2007 cyclone, the government built 4,500 new shelters in the coastal belt. Crucially, it changed the design criteria in a gender sensitive way to address sanitary arrangements after intense advocacy from the Centre for Global Change.<sup>28</sup> Multi-purpose shelters are now designed with water supply systems and water storage, sanitation systems, food storage and relief supplies. They have three to four classrooms with separate bathrooms, which allow for women and children to take refuge in separate spaces with separate facilities in the event of a disaster.<sup>29</sup>

Despite this, basic gender facilities continue to be uncommon in cyclone shelters in Bangladesh, with only about 31 per cent having separate toilet facilities for women.<sup>30</sup>

### Empowering women with eco-friendly sanitation systems in India

Women living in overcrowded urban areas often face physical danger, insecurity and an increased risk of disease due to inadequate or total lack of sanitation facilities. Many women are forced to practice open defecation, despite sanitation

## CASE STUDIES

programmes warning of the dangers, and sanitation programmes rarely take gender into consideration as a constraint to accessing sanitation.<sup>31</sup> In India, some 600 million people have inadequate or no access to sanitation facilities. In 2014, the Government launched the Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Mission to make India open-defecation free within five years.

In areas where conventional sanitation is a challenge, the women-led organisation Banka BioLoo is a community-level organisation providing access to safe, eco-friendly sustainable sanitation. The waste is used to produce bio-gas and pathogen-free water which avoids the contamination of groundwater and turns human waste into a resource. The model is scalable across different geographic and climatological terrains,<sup>32</sup> including cities. This is one of the many initiatives currently taking place in the cities of India.

Another organisation, Shelter Associates, has built 5200 toilets under their One Home One Toilet programme in 15 municipal wards of Pune Municipal Cooperation. They have managed to convert many slums into open defecation free slums.<sup>33</sup> The results of this have been recorded through a study which found that there was a 61% improvement in the safety women reported they felt and a 64% improvement in privacy through improvements in sanitation.<sup>34</sup>



# MAINSTREAM GENDER



# SUMMARY

These case studies illustrate both the importance and the impact of mainstreaming gender responsive planning in cities. Such planning does not just improve the lives of the women in the city but leads to an improvement in the overall well-being of the city and its economy.

A range of different factors can play a part in the success of such mainstreaming, ranging from the benefits of a clear and well-resourced policy backing the gender development plan, to simple but effective gender considerations when building sanitation and sanctuary facilities.

At one level, advocating for policies and resources to increase the role of women in political representation, and catering for their specific needs in city design and management, amounts to little more than a combination of common sense, and a vital ingredient of good urban governance. At another level, it also shows that this issue is not being addressed as consistently and seriously as necessary. For its part, the Cities Alliance will continue to place the issue of gender at the centre of all its activities.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND KEY LESSONS

Successfully institutionalising gender mainstreaming requires adequate urban planning frameworks and legislation at national levels.<sup>35</sup> As with most governance issues, this includes the challenge of ensuring coherence between sectors, and also between different tiers of government.

The case studies outlined in this paper suggest the following important factors for success:

- Strong efforts at the national level play a key role, such as a national enabling legislation to facilitate change in South Africa's national law or in India the nation-wide mission Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- Motivated leadership to implement, monitor and maintain gender mainstreaming, as in the case of Bogotá's transport system.
- Ongoing implementation, support and monitoring with appropriate statistics and data collection, exemplified by the experience of Belén, Costa Rica.
- Community-initiated projects and partnerships between government, NGOs and community members can enhance sustainable implementation at scale, as demonstrated by the sanitation programmes of Shelter Associates in Pune and Sangli.
- Formation of organisations and cooperatives as seen in Chiang Rai, Thailand and Morovia, Liberia can mobilise working women in the cities into getting social benefits and provisions.
- Research studies on the impacts of gender-neutral infrastructure can be critical in mobilising governments to build gender responsive city infrastructure.
- Interventions in a specific sector or level can have a broader reach and achieve benefits across the board, such as India's Mobile Crèches initiative.

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AUTHORS: Felicity Kitchin, University of Durban;  
Prerna Bhardwaj, Cities Alliance Secretariat  
TECHNICAL SUPERVISION: Dr Rene Peter Hohmann,  
Cities Alliance Secretariat

COMMUNICATION COORDINATION:  
Charlotta Hallqvist, Cities Alliance Secretariat

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