MAINSTREAMING
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URBAN
FRAMEWORKS

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National Institute of Urban Affairs

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Shombi Sharp
UN Resident Coordinator in India

By 2030, the share of people living in urban spaces is expected to rise to 60 percent, with the vast majority of this growth set to occur in developing countries. Cities are the engines that drive growth, innovation, and economic opportunity. Yet rapid urbanisation also challenges the ability of urban planners, policymakers and local governments to ensure inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities for all. This is doubly true for women, persons living with disabilities, and others whose needs are not always reflected in cities often planned and designed by men with men in mind. Gender equality and inclusion in urban planning means building cities that work for everyone, women and men, girls and boys, and persons living with disabilities. This means ensuring that women and girls can work, play, and travel in public spaces reliably without fear of harassment or violence. It means cities that are accessible and free from barriers, whether they be material, economic, or social. And it means cities that are climate resilient and prepared for disasters.

India's G20 Presidency has placed a timely and welcome focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at the very moment we reach the halfway mark and the world finds itself in urgent need of such leadership to, in the words of the UN Secretary-General, 'rescue' the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under India's G20 Presidency, Urban20 (U20) brings together globally leading cities to seek solutions to these and other challenges in urban development, including water security, governance, finance, digital futures, and the importance of environmentally responsible behaviours. The interlinkages between gender equality and urbanization are well-recognised in the SDGs. Closing the gender gap in cities is critical to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, and a central priority of the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III.

I am proud of the collaborative efforts between UN Women and other Agencies in the UN Country Team in India and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in promoting gender-inclusive and gender-responsive cities within the U20 Engagement Group. Mainstreaming women's empowerment across all levels of urban planning, design, and policymaking in G20 and beyond can be the game changer we need for the economic development, safety, and resilience of our built world.

This report, 'Mainstreaming Women-Led Urban Framework' provides actionable insights and best practices for policymakers, urban planners, and other stakeholders to close gaps and achieve cities that work for everyone. On behalf of the United Nations in India, I warmly congratulate U20 for developing this report. Let us seize this moment and transform our cities into vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable spaces for people of all genders, ages, and abilities.

Hitesh Vaidya
Director
National Institute of Urban Affairs

The need to integrate gender across urban ecosystems is urgent and integral to the development of cities. Cities need a women-led, inclusive and responsive approach.

It is with this intent that the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) band UN Women came together early this year to ensure we institutionalise gender responsiveness in the urban space. Our partnership got glued in the year of G-20 when India is leading the group and when NIUA is the technical secretariat for the urban track -the U20. We agreed to use U-20 as a point to converge and see how gender can be integrated across the six varied areas under this.

This kicked off with UN Women resources getting integrated with the NIUA team and curating a two-day dialogue that brought about 60 thought leaders working at the intersection of women and urban spaces. 'Mainstreaming Women-Led Urban Framework' is an outcome of this dialogue which saw in-depth discussions across six broad thematic areas. A young enthusiastic women-led organisation Kubernien Initiative, helped us curate this report by bringing in their expertise to the table.

By bringing together experts, practitioners, and advocates from diverse backgrounds, NIUA and UN Women have created a comprehensive action plan that highlights how women can be integrated across all U20 pillars and how with possible partnerships and collaborations.

It charts a roadmap for transforming urban landscapes into inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive environments. By integrating the gender and inclusion lens across the U-20 framework, we can foster environmentally conscious behaviour, ensure water security, mobilise climate finance, celebrate local identities, embrace digital urban futures, and strengthen urban governance.

I encourage policymakers, urban practitioners, civil society organisations, and all stakeholders to delve into the findings and recommendations presented in this report. Let us leverage this women-led framework for the U-20 as a catalyst for change, creating cities and communities where the rights, needs, and aspirations of women are fully recognised and fulfilled.

And most of all, I commend all our partners for their stellar work. Together, we can build a future where urban spaces become inclusive, sustainable, and equitable, leaving no one behind.

Susan Ferguson
Country Representative
UN Women India

Cities are projected to be home to two-thirds of the world's population by 2050. A majority of this urban growth is expected to occur in African and Asian cities. By 2030, an estimated 60% of the global population will reside in urban areas, with India alone experiencing a 40% increase in its urban population by the same year. As the world's most populous country, India has a unique opportunity to shape the future of its urban centers. With over 377 million people spread across 6,166 metropolises, India's urban landscape presents both challenges and opportunities.

Historically, city planning has been influenced by power dynamics and gendered notions, limiting women's participation and access to spaces. However, the rapid urban growth we are witnessing presents an opportunity to integrate gender-responsive planning and design principles. By doing so, we can foster the development of innovative, inclusive, and livable cities that cater to the diverse needs of all communities.

To build inclusive cities, we must recognise that women are valuable assets to cities, and contribute to the economy through formal and informal channels. It is also imperative to gather gender-disaggregated data across city landscapes and integrate gender-specific designs and planning as integral components of urban development.

As we embark on India's G20 Presidency, centred around 'Women-Led Development', the Urban20 (U20) engagement track offers a unique opportunity to drive meaningful change. The pillars of the U20, spanning growth, infrastructure, economy, politics, and social spheres, require women's active participation, expertise, and experience. By prioritising women's involvement and safety in public spaces, we can create cities that are more inclusive and less prone to gender-based violence.

Ambika Vishwanath
Director
Kubernein Initiative

Cities, traditionally built for and by men, have largely been male-dominated spaces. However, as populations grow and societies change, so must our cities that are purported to be the drivers and engines of a nation's future. To not only grow with and for women but all sections of society.

If cities are to adapt to rapidly changing global norms, they must do so wholly, without prejudice or hindrance to any inhabitant. Change is difficult but not impossible, and research shows us that cities, both the sprawling megapolis' like Mumbai or smaller burgeoning ones like Mysuru, can adapt. It is often a question of understanding what is needed, gathering data, analysing, asking the relevant questions, learning from traditional and shared experiences, and of course financing and political will.

To work on these aspects and more, Kubernein Initiative is proud to partner with NIUA and UN Women to collectively create a better future for Urban India. As knowledge partners that work to bring an inclusive lens to various aspects of policy making in India and beyond, we see the inclusion of gender perspectives as a crucial aspect of nation building, and an important and necessary step forward.

The road ahead is challenging, our cities and communities are dealing with systems entrenched for several generations. However, by embracing a transformation approach and starting with the comprehensive framework detailed in this report, cities can achieve a paradigm shift.

It is time to move towards asking how we can recognise and integrate the substantial contribution of women in urban growth – this report provides several avenues and options for all, from governance institutions and policy makers to members of the civil society. Just as our societies advance and adapt to the future, we will continue to work with our partners on evolving these ideas and concepts to create urban spaces and futures that provide dignity of life to all.

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CSO: Civil Society Organisation

DBT: Direct Benefit Transfer

DRR: Disaster Risk Reduction

ERB: Encourage Environmentally Responsible Behaviour

ESG: Environmental, Social, and Governance

GCF: Green Climate Fund

ITI: Industrial Training Institute

JAM: Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile

KPI: Key Performance Indicator

MeitY: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

MHM: Menstrual Hygiene Management

MSME: Micro Small and Medium Enterprise

NULM: National Urban Livelihood Mission

PwD: Public Works Department

RWA: Resident Welfare Association

SHG: Self Help Group

ULB: Urban Local Body

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

abbreviations

introduction

This report serves as an introductory guide to the fundamental principles and strategies that underpin the creation of an urban gender action framework. This section highlights the context and the need to integrate gender perspectives within urban strategy.

Women constitute half of the urban population and play integral roles as active contributors to the global economy, mobilisers of communities, leaders in various governmental, national, and international forums, caregivers, and multifaceted agents of change. However, across the globe, they are consistently underrepresented, their contributions often unacknowledged, and their voices unrecognised. On an average, women occupy a mere 34.3% of elected seats in local governments worldwide (UN Women, 2022). In India, while at the local governance levels women are almost at 50 percent, the numbers decrease in higher levels of political representation. Compounding this issue is the absence of gendered perspectives in urban planning, encompassing everything from housing to public transport or places of leisure, which have historically been shaped from the viewpoint of able-bodied males.

India has one of the fastest growing urban populations globally with over 50 percent of the population expected to reside in cities by 2030. As the global population progressively gravitates towards urban spaces,

it becomes paramount for urban strategies to incorporate the voices and active participation of women, that have inherently been managers of households, communities and natural resources, often contributing informally to the development of cities and the economy. It is vital to recognise that women are not a homogenous group; they encompass different communities, age groups, socio-economic statuses. Women also face heightened vulnerabilities, including but not limited to violence, poverty, exclusion from decision-making processes, and the burden of unpaid domestic and care work. Harnessing the wealth of perspectives and experiences that women bring to the urban ecosystem effectively will lead to greater growth of societies as well as the cultivation of inclusive and equitable urban environments.

Creating equitable societies and growth fundamentally necessitates increased representation across the spectrum of urban planning and strategies, both in numbers and in agency. City planning and governance must acknowledge the gender differential and unique

Men

65.7%

percentage of elected representatives worldwide

34.3%

Women

by **2030,**
over **50%**
of the Indian population is
expected to
live in cities
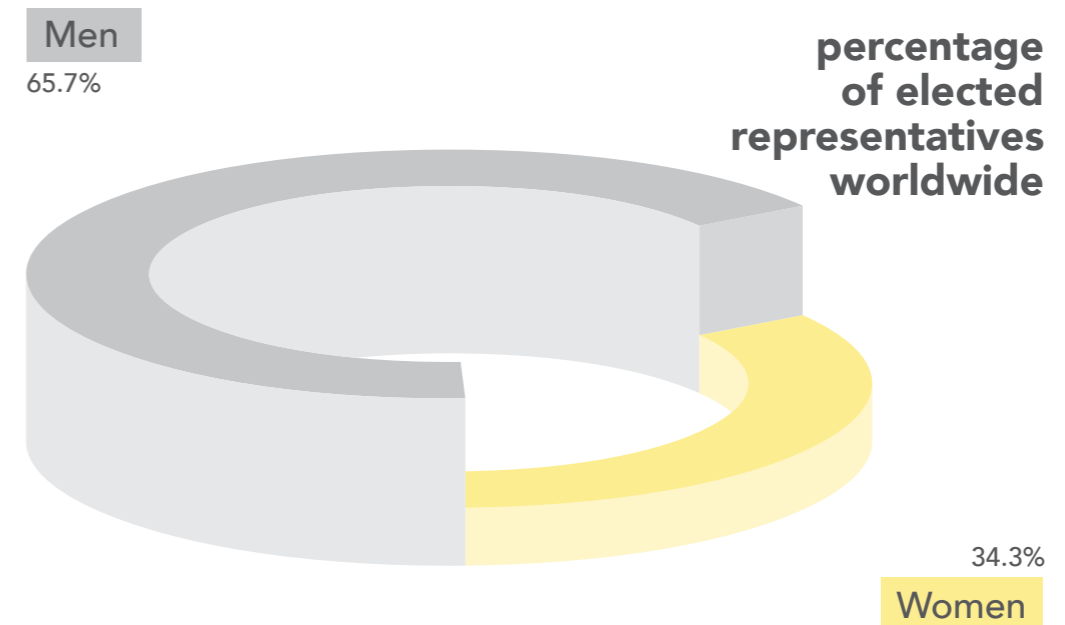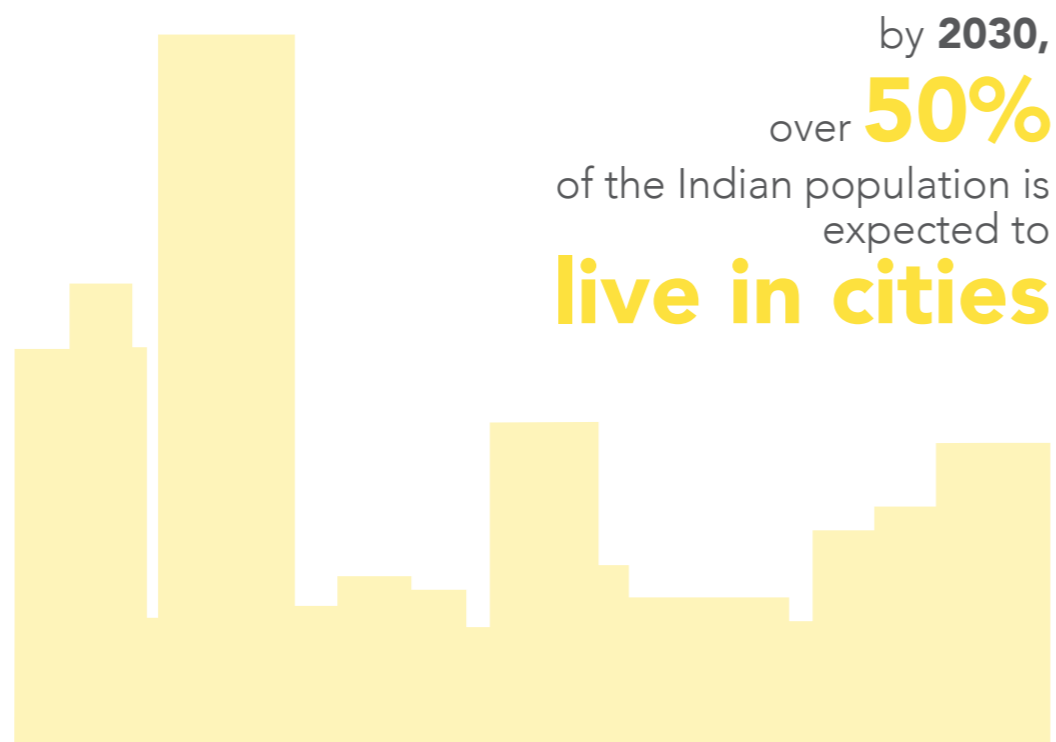
needs of women in accessing urban infrastructures and institutions, which have often been overlooked. Measures can range from enhanced public lighting, inclusive and secure transportation systems, hygienic sanitation facilities, and access to resources, to reimaging local frameworks that aid in enhanced governance systems. The task is large, but small measures can create the necessary ripple effects for lasting change that allows for a wider spectrum of voices and perspectives. Neglecting gendered perspectives in city building perpetuates the double marginalisation of half the urban population, subjecting them to discrimination in multiple forms and limiting their access to resources and decision-making power.

Conscientious urban planning, coupled with equitable allocation of public services and the redressal of specific requirements pertaining to historically disadvantaged communities, including women and young people, is paramount for realising equality in terms of opportunities, security, and overall growth outcomes. Gender equality has been shown to foster innovation, enhance productivity, and improve governance within cities (World Bank Group, 2020). By recognising the pivotal role of women and embracing gender-responsive approaches, cities can nurture inclusive and sustainable urban environments that enhance the well-being of all residents while advancing gender equality and empowerment.

Urban20 and Women

The inclusion of gender perspectives in urban development has emerged as a crucial aspect of the Urban20 framework within the larger G20 process. In its year of the G20 Presidency (2022-23), India has embraced a transformative approach by shifting the focus from 'development of women' to 'women-led development'. A paradigm shift that recognises the active and substantial contribution of women to global growth, while also emphasising their participation, leadership, and decision-making capabilities.

Through integrating a gender lens into urban development strategies, the U20 aims to create a platform that guarantees equitable access for all citizens to both private and public forums. This commitment aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality, which serves as a prerequisite for achieving SDG 11, dedicated to fostering sustainable, resilient, and inclusive cities and human settlements. Ensuring equal opportunities for women to contribute, influence, and shape urban development processes is not only a matter of social justice but also contributes to sustainable urbanisation

and overall economic growth (UN Women, 2014). There is substantial evidence corroborating the impact of gender-inclusive policies in reducing poverty rates, improving educational outcomes, and increasing social cohesion (OECD, 2019). A robust gender lens that is integrated across all areas of urban governance will serve to foster an environment that is economically prosperous, socially just, resilient, and inclusive for all its residents.

This report presents an in-depth analysis of the strategies to integrate gender perspectives into urban development within the Urban20 framework of the G20. It attempts to bring in the gender lens across the six U20 pillars, namely environmentally responsible behaviours, water security, climate finance, championing local identity, catalysing digital urban futures, and reinventing frameworks for urban governance and planning. To do this, it offers targeted and actionable interventions that can be adopted by communities, CSOs, private and public sector institutions and pathways for better integration and collaboration. The question is no longer if or why but when and how; this report offers the path forward.

women
and
heightened
vulnerabilities

gender inequality

poverty

exclusion from decision-making

burden of unpaid care work

the dialogue

This report is drawn from the insights shared across two-days of deliberation on identifying gender entry points within urban strategy and planning, specifically the six Urban20 pillars under India's G20 Presidency. This section presents the process, overarching insights and the common themes that emerged from the two days of deliberations.

A two-day dialogue dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, hosted by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), as the technical secretariat of the U20, and its partner, UN Women, and supported by knowledge partner Kubernien Initiative, brought together 60 thought leaders working on the diverse intersections of the urban ecosystem and gender. The group explored and discussed in detail what integration of gender into all aspects of urban planning would look like in practice. The dialogue imagined cities from a woman's perspective and laid out strategies for integrating women's participation across all spheres of the urban ecosystem.

The round table discussions emphasised the significance of ensuring women's representation and creating an inclusive environment. It was acknowledged that representation should be intersectional, considering factors such as class, caste, location, age, and disability. This approach aims to challenge existing power structures and establish frameworks accessible to all women, including those from marginalised and vulnerable communities. These measures would facilitate the transition to more inclusive institutions that cater to the needs of diverse groups of women.

The dialogue resulted in actionable recommendations that provide a clear roadmap for women's involvement and solutions across the six priority areas of U20. Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities were discussed, along with the importance of implementing and funding agencies. While multiple actors are involved, including those affected by policies, the challenge lies in the process and capacity. Drawing from lived experiences, knowledge, and collective learning, the dialogue participants proposed diverse pathways to achieve the desired outcomes. Since cities are dynamic and complex, there is a need for adaptable and resilient structures and frameworks. The following overarching ideas serve as starting points for cities at different stages of growth and progress, enabling them to initiate systems of change.

sixty
thought leaders
working on the
diverse intersections
of the
urban ecosystem and **gender**

representation
intersectional, intersectoral and intergenerational pathways

advancing from pilot to policy to action
mainstreaming gender in urban development

capturing small data
enhancing gender-responsive urban development

recognising the care economy
in urban development

capacity building and training
for gender-responsive urban development

promoting women's leadership
in gender-responsive urban development

Representation
Intersectional, Intersectoral and Intergenerational Pathways

Promoting gender equality requires recognising and upholding rights, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering inclusive representation through intersectional, intersectoral, and intergenerational approaches while designing city strategies. While women are often treated as a homogenous unit, an intersectional lens is imperative to ensure that no one is left behind. Focusing on specific sectors and participatory engagement allows for targeted interventions to tackle gender disparities and ensure equal access to resources, services, and opportunities. Intersectoral approaches promote collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, civil society organisations, and the private sector.

Advancing from Pilot to Policy to Action
Mainstreaming Gender in Urban Development

To achieve gender equality in urban development, successful pilot initiatives must lead to comprehensive policies and tangible outcomes with matching grants. Often the hardest transition is from pilot to policy and thus a robust monitoring, evaluation and rebuilding mechanism can play a key role in encouraging evidence-based decision-making and progress-tracking. There is need for periodic review of programmatic interventions.

Capacity Building and Training
for Gender-responsive Urban Development

Strengthening the knowledge, skills, and capacities of men and women engaged in policy making, governance, and urban planning is essential. Capacity building initiatives need to raise awareness about gender issues, promote gender analysis in policy formulation and implementation, and foster the development of gender-responsive urban planning practices. Special attention must be given to providing training and capacity building opportunities for women, including recruitment and retention strategies.

Promoting Women's Leadership
in Gender-responsive Urban Development

Promoting women's leadership is a fundamental aspect of gender-responsive urban development. Creating enabling environments that empower and support women leaders at all levels, understanding and subsequently removing barriers to women's political participation and leadership, and fostering mentorship and capacity-building programmes are key strategies. By nurturing women's leadership, cities can benefit from diverse perspectives, innovative solutions, and inclusive governance.

Capturing Small Data
Enhancing Gender-responsive Urban Development

A comprehensive approach to capturing small data, including data integrity, standardisation, innovation, collection, and transmission, is a crucial step in engendering the discourse on urbanisation. Accessible and reliable evidence, using innovative technology, facilitates the design of just policies, realistic evaluation and feeds into the building and strengthening of institutions. By incorporating gender-disaggregated data into data collection systems, cities gain a nuanced understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by women and men in urban settings.

Recognising the Care Economy
in Urban Development

As primary caregivers, women often face disproportionate responsibilities in childcare and elderly care, which limits their participation in economic and social activities. Investing in social infrastructure, such as affordable and quality childcare, healthcare, and social protection systems, reduces the burden of unpaid care work on women and promotes their economic empowerment. Recognising and remunerating care work, promoting work-life balance, and ensuring equal opportunities in the care sector will create gender-responsive urban environments.

recommendations

Gender inclusion is a fundamental aspect of urban development that requires the active participation of women. To ensure meaningful integration, it is crucial to move beyond theoretical discussions and incorporate gender considerations into policy design and implementation. This report examines the gender inclusion strategy of U20 and offers a comprehensive framework for city governments and policymakers to adopt, while understanding that stages of growth and needs might differ and thus solutions and ideas must be customised.

While identifying gender entry points is an essential step in building inclusive cities, it is imperative to develop forward looking policies that facilitate the transition from policy to action. This section brings together forward looking and action oriented recommendations across the six Urban20 pillars that can be adopted by city governments.

1 Encouraging Environmentally Responsible Behaviours

Environmentally Responsible Behaviours (ERB) in cities presents vast opportunities for accelerating SDG 11 targets. ERB is defined as a movement of people's concerns towards the environment and the willingness to take pro-environmental actions (Cottrell and Graefe, 1997). This is rooted in the narrative that environmental problems are largely created by human behaviour and can be resolved by human behaviour as well (Staats et al., 2004). Cities are measured in currencies of economic growth, which makes alignment with ERB principles complicated in a single point agenda. Globally, middle-class spending is expected to almost triple by 2030. Developing economies, such as India, are expected to witness 4x growth in consumer spending (McKinsey, 2016). Due to its direct buy-in with people, governments, and institutions, can encourage environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB) in cities to accelerate SDG 11 targets.

out of
432 million
women of working age
in India,

343 million
come under the
unorganised employed sector
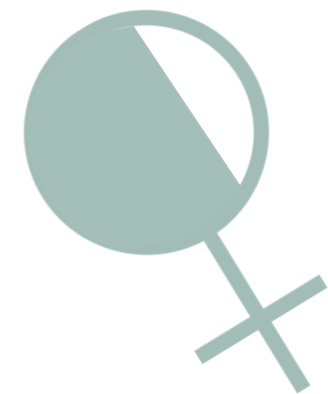
the International Panel on Climate Change (2022) affirms that **behavioural change** has the potential to reduce global emissions by **40-70%** by **2050**.

Behavioural change is also important to the sustainability of cities against climate change. The International Panel on Climate Change (2022) says behavioural change has the potential to reduce global emissions by 40-70% by 2050.

Women are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, disasters, unregulated development, while also being largely invisible and underrepresented in urban strategy and climate action. With limited representation within policies, institutions, and leadership- women fail to access basic facilities and decision-making power in governance decisions that affect them.

Women and the Green Economy
Women's role and influence over the household and communities can be leveraged to skill them in emerging green jobs through engagement with MSME's and NULM. At present, out of 432 million women of working age in India, 343 million come under the unorganised employed sector - leaving a high percentage of vulnerable working women (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2023). McKinsey Global Institute has estimated that India could add US$ 770 billion to its GDP by 2025 (McKinsey, 2015) by giving women equal opportunities.

The transition to green jobs with women trained and promoted as solution developers, service providers, designers and innovators will prompt a more meaningful participation in climate change response in the emerging green economy.

The green economy has the potential to bridge gender gaps that exacerbate the vulnerability of women as they earn less, have fewer assets, and carry the burden of unpaid care work. The transition to the green economy, however, must take cognizance of existing gender inequalities in the energy sector. For instance, the Gujarat Resilience City Program by the World Bank in Ahmedabad is an initiative that focuses on upskilling women and providing them with certifications to take on more significant roles. Encouraging more women-led initiatives, particularly in ERBs, can result in higher engagement and uptake of solutions in the green economy, care economy and bringing about positive environmental behaviours across the urban landscape. The strategy for ERB should have both top down and bottom up approaches that are participatory and inclusive to women, who may otherwise face multiple layers of marginalisation through this transition.

Recommendations

a. Integrating Gender Responsive policy and systemic interventions

- Engage private players and social sector organisations to create robust data collection systems for ULBs to collect sex, age, and disability disaggregated data to better inform policy design

- Integrate monitoring and evaluation frameworks and auditing policies related to women. Utilising indicators, outcomes and impacts to track interventions in government projects and programmes

- Increase the thrust on education as an important tool by sensitising teachers, upgrading curriculums, and increasing awareness amongst children and young adults on ERB. Here the impact of climate vulnerabilities on women should be a layer that is incorporated

- Integrate women-led initiatives and projects in sectors that are closely linked to nudging ERB on energy, water management and distribution, waste management, mobility and MSME's

- Increase the participation of women in framing climate policies by mandating an equal or higher representation of women in politics and governance systems

- Accounting for gender action interventions within state and city climate action plans, as well as training women on community based early warning systems to elevating women to decision-making roles in recovery committees

- Encourage recruitment and retention of women in the workplace to ensure that the transition to green jobs protects the rights of women on all fronts

- Ensure insurance policies are available for workers in the waste management sector, especially women who are exposed to physical and financial vulnerability

- Ensure the impact of devastating climate events need to be looked at with more granularity, with an understanding and implementation of compensation by gender specific recovery needs

b. Capacity building and technical inputs to city governments through a multi-disciplinary participation of ULBs

- Engage with ULBs, city level committees, social sector and private organisations to design and implement community awareness and training for adopting sustainable lifestyles across energy, water use and waste generation

- Provide training and awareness campaigns to city governments and helping them build their capacities to integrate gender in climate action planning through a systemic and social approach

- Create a learning platform for cities to engage with each other and learn from experiences and knowledge

- Create platforms to bring women and men together to build socialisation and sharing of city spaces through partnerships with expert institutions, think tanks and women's grassroot organisations

- Engage social sector institutions to conduct awareness campaigns with women and at the community level on reducing/maintaining energy consumption and creating systems that encourage switching to renewable energy sources

- Develop mentorship programmes for women on climate legal frameworks, policies, and political participation by ULBs in collaboration with local institutions and civil society organisations

- Engage with Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) to ensure behavioural nudges and participation in segregation of wastes at the household level

- Recognise the role of the care economy and facilitating the creation of safe micro enterprises for women and by women on child care assistance, community kitchens etc through targeted government intervention

2 Ensuring Water Security

Globally, an estimated 650 million urban citizens will face water scarcity in 2025 (C40 Cities). The growing shortage of water in urban cities across the globe, along with rising population, increases the vulnerability of women and children. One important reason for this is that women and young girls around the globe bear the burden of conserving and providing water for household and livelihood needs. The UN Commission on the status of women says women are crucial intermediaries between ecosystem services and society and are essential actors in safeguarding and conserving natural resources. Water stress will also have a disproportionate impact on poverty and food security of women (UN Women, 2019). Women who are more vulnerable to poverty need to be key stakeholders in the future design and implementation (Frontiers, 2022). Mainstreaming gender into the Water-Energy-Food nexus will help facilitate policy synergies across the sectors that are otherwise treated in silos.

It is important to note that women experience water insecurity differently from men. Water is not only associated with growth and livelihoods but also safety and health for women in terms of increasing vulnerabilities to waterborne diseases, access to inadequate drinking water and physical violence (Gupta, 2020). In many parts of the developing world, girls and young women spend hours every day in water-gathering work for their households, often under dangerous conditions.

Policies and systems in place backed by gender disaggregated data must look to address the physical vulnerabilities that women face with respect to health and sanitation, livelihood, safety, and water induced disasters.
Active involvement and leadership of women in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services and infrastructure could lead to more effective problem solving. While women's role in water management has been recognised since the 1992 Dublin Principle, their active participation in planning, decision-making and implementation has been inadequate. A 2019 World Bank Report, which collected data from 64 water and sanitation utilities in 28 economies, found that women
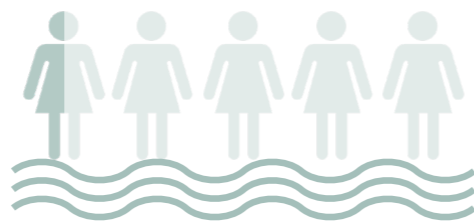
water stress will also have a
disproportionate
impact on **poverty** and
women's **food security**
(UN Women, 2019)

globally, **less than one in five** water sector workers are **women**

are grossly underrepresented in water leadership roles and in managerial and technical positions. Less than one in five water workers are women, including female managers. The report also found one in three utilities in the sample had no female engineers and 12% of utilities had no female managers. However, there is overrepresentation of women in unpaid work roles under the water sector, including in water carriage. Globally, less than one in five water sector workers are women. The development of water infrastructure in cities must be balanced with equitable and stronger participation of women in the design and operation of water systems, distribution, and policymaking activities.

Solution building in the sector of water security must seek to mobilise communities at the micro level and additionally mobilise financing, partnerships with government and institutional bodies, along with experts, to promote active participation by women. Climate change is fast altering water behaviours, which could lead to rapid depletion of natural resources in urban areas disproportionately affecting women and children. Integrating active participation of women across all sectors of water security, planning, implementation, and governance can increase the efficiency of cities and well-being of communities and safeguard urban ecosystems.

Recommendations
a. Build frameworks and systems for efficient policy and planning

- Partner with women-led organisations and CSO's to provide technical support to urban/national statistical offices to localise data surveys on women-specific issues and ensure effective and inclusive implementation of routine data collections, aligning with gender specific indicators

- Bring together government ministries that work on urban ecosystems with women-led organisations to provide gender sensitive assessment reports, data analysis and collection, and vulnerability studies to create documentation and literature on women, water, and urban strategies

- Integrate remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) based master plans through government bodies to enable localised solutions

- Organising city and local consultations on specific gender needs to connect policy makers, urban local bodies, municipalities and CSOs to correlate and better connect policies and water infrastructure planning and understand water security from a gendered perspective

b. Create enabling systems for women's leadership

- Create guidelines for relevant Ministries/Government departments to address gender pay gaps in the water employment sector. Use learnings from the guidelines and subsequent assessments to inform the design and development of training opportunities and mentorship opportunities for women

- Create enabling policies to push for private sector and CSOs connected to the water sector to attract, recruit, and retain women in water and urban employment and leadership

- Ensuring women's representation in the technical sanitation and water infrastructure sector through increased employment of women as STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) managers and part of the service delivery chain

- Create fellowships and modules for women in partnership with technical institutions and urban local bodies to train women in emerging technologies such as remote sensing, field investigations, GIS surveys and water quality testing across the urban communities

c. Collaboration and mobilisation of women for community driven initiatives

- Building capacity of women on water expertise and literacy by providing concrete short term educational programmes with certification, in partnership with local bodies, CSO and technical institutions, which would lead to behavioural change and influence water related decision making processes and planning across WASH, DRR, water management and conservation

- Engage with women across all levels of governance from the citizen community to wards, municipalities, urban local bodies, and city level councils through formal integration of women's participation in water, waste, sanitation, and disaster management units/bodies/departments. Through the creation of localised, as well as upscaled policies on accountability, representation and effective services provided to women

- Provide resource support to Urban Local Bodies (ULB's) as needed to enable smaller, economically weaker cities and towns to implement changes in policies

- Convene dialogues and workshops between women, CSO's, ULBs and government departments in targeted marginalised locations to discuss issues on water access, benefit sharing and amplifying the decision-making roles of women

- Integrate Menstrual hygiene Management (MHM) across all sanitation initiatives in private and public settings through partnerships of governments with appropriate CSOs and trained experts

- Identify best practices, traditional and nature-based solutions to water management like rainwater harvesting, mangrove conservation, drought, and flood adaptation techniques

- Encourage CSOs to support in documentation and upscaling of such practices by women, produced as knowledge products in urban research and planning and disseminated through government bodies and networks. For example, involving women in designing sanitation systems that focus on dignity, safety, and cleanliness

d. Mobilising Water Funds and financing with appropriate partnerships to empower women led initiatives

- Divert resources through subsidies and direct benefit transfers (CSR) to women residing in water scarce urban poor settlements

- Engage in partnerships with Corporate Social Responsibility funds to support urban water initiatives,

surveys, and integrating gender sensitivity in understanding the deeper issues of sustainability and gender inclusion by Urban Local Bodies

- Identify gaps and working with relevant agencies to plug the gaps to ensure that long term water security goals are met

3 Accelerating Climate Finance

Gender-responsive climate finance plays a critical role in addressing the key pillars of Urban20 and is an integral aspect of the broader discourse on urban climate resilience. Integrating gender considerations in climate finance planning, resource allocation, and implementation is necessary to address gender disparities, enhance the impact of climate investments, and promote sustainable development. By adopting a gender-responsive approach and incorporating equity, equality, and poverty dimensions, climate finance can be accelerated.

Women play a vital role in building climate resilience, and are central to community engagement as primary responders to the adverse impacts of climate change. Women also face unique challenges due to their social roles and responsibilities, rendering them more vulnerable to climate change impacts. For instance, according to the UN data, women account for 80% of people displaced by climate change (UNHCR, 2022).

To effectively mitigate climate change, it is crucial to ensure sufficient and targeted resource mobilisation that aligns with climate action around resilience, adaptation, and mitigation. For instance, providing microfinance opportunities for women-led initiatives, focused on addressing climate change, is crucial. A report from the European Investment Fund highlights that women-led firms have higher environmental, social, and governance scores than other companies, and that businesses with greater representation of women in leadership positions have better track records of adopting environmentally friendly practices (European Investment Fund, 2023). Gender-responsive strategies also significantly enhance the effectiveness of climate investments. For example, a study conducted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, reveals that gender-responsive projects achieve more emission reductions, compared to projects that do not prioritise gender considerations.

women account for
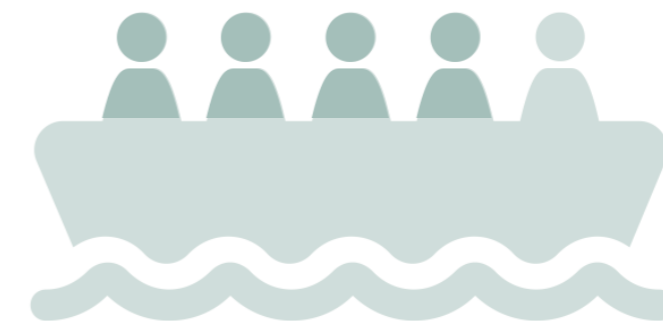
80%
of people
displaced

by

climate change

gender-responsive

projects achieve more **emission reductions**

compared to projects that do not prioritise gender considerations

It is also essential to establish mechanisms that integrate women's requirements into city budgeting frameworks, and address gender inequities within climate action initiatives. Integrating gender considerations in climate finance and prioritising gender-responsive strategies are essential to enhance the impact and sustainability of climate investments.

Existing Mechanisms

The Green Climate Fund, a leading global climate finance mechanism, has made important commitments to gender mainstreaming. Currently, according to the GCF's own calculation, 28.8% of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of its funded adaptation measures are female (Green Climate Fund, 2023). Additionally, the City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS 2.0) programme, championed by the National Institute of Urban Affairs, and developed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, emphasises gender interventions in project proposals. This program recognises that gender-responsive approaches lead to better outcomes and are crucial for achieving sustainable urban development goals. The commitments made by institutions like the Green Climate Fund and initiatives like CITIIS 2.0 signify the growing inclusion of gender in climate finance. Moving forward, it is imperative to prioritise gender-responsive strategies to accelerate climate finance and ensure a more equitable and sustainable future.

Recommendations

a. Gender budgeting and developing targeted financial instruments

- Conduct a gender-based assessment of budgets and incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process across all climate action initiatives under ULBs

- Recognise and leverage existing financial instruments such as Orange Bonds for integrating gender considerations within climate financing

- Engage with the private sector to create innovative financial instruments, such as gender bonds, or sustainability bonds, designed with a gender lens, to direct funding towards inclusive climate action initiatives

- Integrate gender related metrics to monitor and evaluate frameworks for funding climate change initiatives by global funds

b. Increase women's accessibility to climate finance

- Design and implement government programmes focussed on providing access to microcredit to women-led businesses and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for climate action initiatives

- Adjust collateral requirements by banks and financial intermediaries and help women access finance at concessional rates

- Introduce diversified financial instruments across public and private financial institutions for supporting women-driven small businesses and MSMEs, including other financial services for mitigating vulnerability, such as microinsurance

c. Create inclusive policy frameworks and programmes

- Engage in consultations with women community leaders and women's groups while designing government schemes and programmes

- Incorporate criteria for gender and disability inclusion into government procurements, project formulation processes, and funding or grant programmes

- Incorporate gender-focussed metrics within Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks across private and social sector organisations to engender investment decisions

- Invest in building public infrastructure such as walking paths, safe and accessible public transport addressing the differential needs of women

- Support community and women-led action in marginalised/urban poor/urban at-risk communities to design and implement low cost, localised disaster risk reduction related solutions to reduce financial burdens

d. Capacity building and women's economic empowerment

- Invest in upskilling, capacity building and training of women through vocational training programmes in central and state universities to increase their employability in green jobs

- Strengthen Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) as hubs of reskilling and training by introducing targeted schemes for women

- Engage in partnerships with private sector organisations to provide apprenticeship and training opportunities within emerging sectors such as green hydrogen, clean energy, and sustainable cooling

28.8%

of Green Climate Funds direct and indirect beneficiaries of its

funded adaptation measures

are female

- Through public-private partnerships, increase funding for local communities and women-led local action around disaster relief and risk reduction

e. Strengthening women's representation in decision making

- Provide women access to and representation within decision

making forums and boards for public and private climate financing institutions and funds

- Increase women's representation in Urban local bodies and public financial decision-making institutions through electoral quotas and reservations

4

Championing Local Identity

City spaces and narratives have been historically built by and for men, leading to gaps and limitations in the overall design and delivery of public goods and services. Women and girls use cities differently. Various studies have shown that women's mobility is 'dictated' by their experience of safety and availability of hygienic sanitation facilities (Gender and Sanitation Value Chain: A Review of the Evidence, 2018, Mobility and Safety of Women: Interlinkages With Labour Force Participation, 2021). Women use public transport more as most do not have private transport ownership and multitask between care, labour, and work, running more errands and making more short travels. Integrating better footpaths and streetlights for women can go a long way in empowering a woman's mobility and therefore freedom.

Actively involving and integrating local identity articulation and participation of women and communities will add a new dimension to understanding city spaces and how women and men experience it differently. Local spaces and identity structures can shape crucial conditions for gender equality in cities.

Cities from the perspective of women and girls
Reimagining cities from the perspectives of women and girls requires not just participation but also integration of women's voices into urban planning systems, acknowledging and responding to women's untapped potential and their fast-changing role in society. Engagement with local organisations such as NGOs, NPOs, CBOs that work with women and include aspects of urban planning, community

development, and advocacy within their initiatives must be supported by Urban Local Bodies.

Collecting data and information on local community engagement in urban areas plays a vital role in capturing diverse and inclusive perspectives of women in cities. However, it is crucial to ensure that such data collection goes beyond digitally savvy women or English-speaking individuals. To achieve this, it is important to engage with local communities and organisations, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A notable example is Vienna, which has been a model for gender mainstreaming for decades. They initiated a photography exhibit in the 1990s to showcase how women interacted with the city, leading to the establishment of a City Women's office, and driving systemic change (Apolitical, 2017). This highlights the transformative power of such inclusive data collection methods in promoting gender equality in urban environments.

Need for systemic change in urban ecosystem
As primary caregivers and household managers, women are mostly restricted to micro roles and local geographies. However, the role of women has also been changing with more women moving into the workforce, and cities need to adapt to the demands and needs of women. Including women's experiences of using cities in planning can reduce the time women spend travelling which exposes them to greater threats. South African townships, increased the number of public toilets for women, which led to a reduction in

sexual violence against women by 30% (Kaplan, 2015).

India's "Vocal for Local" call under the G20 is a great example of harnessing local identities to enable equal participation of men and women, including the most marginalised, in various economic activities, such as taking part in local entrepreneurial ventures, exploring economic opportunities, or starting their individual entrepreneurship journeys.
For instance, in Indian cities, street vendors constitute more than 10 million businesses and more than half of them are led by women as per data from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (Social Laws Today, 2023).

Recommendations
a. Creating social and community networks for women in urban communities

- Integrate gendered perspectives and experiences in planning recreational spaces, such as safe parks for women. Women from migrant families and who work in non-formal sectors do not get adequate leisure time and therefore building parks and spaces from a gendered lens gives women opportunities to socialise, network and build communities of their own

- Bring together communities, civic groups, local government bodies and women led organisations to organise and raise awareness through local level councils on safety, security, and association of cultural inclusivity in the areas

- Facilitate partnerships with various local level workers associations – both formal and non-formal and Self-Help Groups to mobilise

women for information sharing and circulation across all domains of local opportunities, policies, political participation, and others

- Plan procurement for women targeted projects and initiatives on planning, culture, heritage, and art in collaboration with ULBs, local communities and identified institutions. Target women-led organisations that work at the local level with opportunities to build capacities for more women participants

b. Encouraging the establishment of women-owned businesses, cooperatives, and community-based organisations

- Provide training to women's groups and associations in partnership with ULBs, local CSOs and skill building departments to map the potential of local micro enterprises and provide financial and skill training, hand holding and marketing support to women

- Promote the role of women in heritage management by leveraging indigenous knowledge and lived histories

- Create formal workspaces and employment opportunities in the care sector through collaboration with urban local bodies and registered organisations

- Introduce policies that acknowledge and inform larger mainstreaming of women in heritage conservation

- Ensure skill-based training programmes for women in the context of their local identities and specific needs and aspirations of their communities

- Identify unique skills and talents through community engagement and design tailored programmes that leverage existing knowledge and skills and align with the cultural context and traditional practices

- Equip women with practical, market-oriented training, including technical skills, business management, and entrepreneurship, to establish successful businesses while overcoming social barriers to opportunities

c. Documentation and Recognition of urban histories and narratives from a gendered perspective

- Provide skilling support to research and documentation beneficiaries and help them understand the importance of documentation of their understanding of cities

- Adopt a co-creation approach in data collection through a process of consultation that integrates active participation of women and their lived connection with city spaces, with relevant stakeholders

- Partner with local organisations, women-led institutions, and governments to build community data observatories. For example, how Green Artha and Mahila Housing Trust captured small data in cities by identifying household consumptions, behaviours, and norms

- Collect gender disaggregated data using quantitative and qualitative methodologies through government surveys and collaboration with SHGs, women-led organisations and local bodies
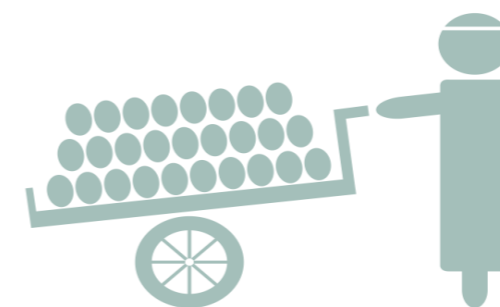
in **indian cities,** street vendors constitute more than

10 million individuals

where over **50 percent** are **women**

5 Catalysing Digital Urban Futures

It is estimated that more than 70% of the world's population will live in cities by 2050. (UN Habitat, 2022) Rising population necessitates new, innovative solutions that are rooted in emerging technology. Digitalisation is the foundation of a smart city, and as it becomes increasingly prevalent, it is essential to prioritise gender considerations within this evolving landscape. Women, in particular, encounter distinct obstacles regarding access to, and representation, within the digital domain, which needs to be clearly recognised and addressed.

Access to Technology and Representation

Access to technology and the internet plays a pivotal role in harnessing the advantages of digitalisation in a city. Unarguably, women across the globe face barriers that hinder their access to these resources.2022 data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations' specialised agency for information and communication technologies, shows that 63 % of women use the internet globally versus 69 % of men.

Globally,

63% of women us internet as opposed to
69% of men

In relative terms, this means that the global Internet user gender gap stands at 6%. In India, the digital gender gap is even more pronounced: only 48% of women had internet access in 2022 (Internet and Mobile Association of India, 2022).

Addressing the digital gender divide is imperative to ensure women are not left behind in an increasingly digital future. It is crucial for cities to create an enabling environment where women are able to reap the benefits of digital technologies, and access economic opportunities. By incorporating gender-inclusive approaches, cities can create frameworks to place women front and centre, promoting inclusive and sustainable urban development.

The Role of Gender-Disaggregated Data

The future of sustainable cities hinges on strengthening digital ecosystems for effective city management, including climate risk mapping, infrastructure management, and service delivery. Collecting gender-disaggregated data is a critical step to support policymakers in comprehending the specific barriers faced by women and formulating effective policies to enhance women's digital access and reduce structural barriers that hinder representation within the digital domain. The current lack of gender-disaggregated data impedes progress in bridging the gender digital divide and developing inclusive strategies. By prioritising gender equality, collecting gender-disaggregated data, and fostering inclusive strategies, cities can harness the full potential of digital technologies to create inclusive urban ecosystems that benefit all residents, irrespective of their gender.

Recommendations

a. Collection, identification and Use of Gender Disaggregated Data and Metrics

- Integrate gender specific metrics within data collection platforms and within relevant MeitY guidelines for developing digital systems

- Leverage existing datasets such as database of cards issued to below poverty level families for subsidised food grains, to collate gender, age, and disability disaggregated data

- Design systems within ULBs to collect disaggregated data on differential impacts of disasters and vulnerability to disasters by integrating metrics for sex, location, economic and social status

- Define performance in urban and semi-urban regions to monitor inclusion of gender metrics and gender considerations within policies and programmes

- Utilise city data officers within the Smart Cities Mission to collect and collate gender disaggregated data

- Utilise gender disaggregated data as evidence while creating guidelines for women centric policies and programmes

- Develop data exchange platforms to track social issues and concerns, and relevant data. Build awareness among women users of technology to access more relevant content, and subsequently more to improve access for other demographics

b. Facilitating Women's Access to Digital Infrastructure

- Encourage technology providers to create accessible and user-friendly digital products in different languages and formats enabling them to cater to diverse populations

- Collaborate with private players to leverage existing infrastructure such as public wi-fi networks, increasing accessibility and introducing subsidies for marginalised women

- Use digital platforms to document women's opinions and stories, which can be used as anecdotal data identify challenges women face

c. Prioritising Capacity Building and Skilling

- Raise awareness among young women on the importance of STEM education to access better employment opportunities

- Encouraging private sector organisations to introduce internships and short-term employment within the technology sector

- Leverage existing infrastructure like Anganwadi centres, incubation hubs and transportation systems for digital training

d. Promoting Women in Leadership Roles at the Grassroots Level and within Cities

- Identify barriers to women's participation in existing public forums

- Build capacities of women councillors as decision makers at the local level

- Involve women through community groups (ward committees) in decision making processes to facilitate digital inclusion

- Increase women's participation in city administrations by including gender focussed metrics in city surveys and relevant online platforms

e. Investing in Inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure and Policies at the National Level

- Prioritise the inclusion of gender within the initial stages of development of digital public infrastructure, such as the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) Trinity and One Nation One Ration Card

6 Re-imagining Frameworks for Urban Governance and Planning

Urban areas, as drivers of economic growth and development, play a vital role in shaping the trajectory of societies. However, it is crucial to recognise that cities are not uniform in how they impact different genders and communities. Structural inequities often prevail over the voices and experiences of women and other marginalised groups. For instance, a majority of women are employed in the urban informal workforce, in low-wage, low-growth jobs without social protection. They also have limited access to quality work opportunities. Women and girls are also disproportionately affected by gender-based violence in urban settings. Recognising these inequities within cities is key to designing targeted interventions to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different genders.

Integrating Gender-Responsive Urban Governance

Gender-responsive urban governance is a critical step towards fostering inclusive and equitable cities. It involves promoting gender-balanced representation in decision-making processes, both in formal and informal structures. Research has shown that when women are involved in urban governance, policy outcomes are more likely to address gender inequalities and advance women's rights. By ensuring women's active participation in decision-making processes, cities can harness the potential of diverse perspectives and experiences to develop inclusive policies.

For example, considering the safety and accessibility of public spaces is crucial to promoting women's full and equal participation in urban life. Moreover, urban planners need to consider the impact of infrastructure projects on gender dynamics while creating environments that are safe, inclusive, and supportive of women's rights and opportunities. This, however, requires concerted efforts to recognise gender inequities and enhancing gender responsive urban governance. Such actions will contribute not only to gender equality but also to the overall well-being and prosperity of urban populations.

Research has shown that when women are involved in **urban governance**, policy outcomes are **more likely** to address **gender inequalities** and advance women's rights

Recommendations

a. Strengthen Participatory Processes

- Integrate gender perspectives in urban governance and City Master Plans through the implementation of participatory mechanisms, such as stakeholder consultations

- Monitor and track gender metrics within city plans through gender advisory committees established at the community level with the support of ULBs

- Identify ward level vulnerabilities and concerns faced by women across cities through surveys and studies. Use insights drawn from surveys to allocate budgets according to spatial vulnerabilities within wards

- Recognise women community leaders and practitioners, and create avenues within RWAs and Urban Local Bodies to engage them on decision making platforms, committees, and forums

b. Use of Spatial and Gender-Disaggregated Data

- Engage in private-public partnerships to develop systems for collecting micro-level data for city planning, encompassing public health, safety, access, migration statistics etc.

- Leverage existing gender disaggregated data and analyse it for service delivery by municipal corporations. Create government-owned central and open data repositories, which are accessible to all to enable more integrated urban planning

- Develop standard metrics to collect localised, granular, and disaggregated data on transportation, domestic activities, and other relevant factors, from different government departments

- Use insights from spatial data as evidence to design programmes and policies on waste management, decentralised service centres, and the integration of Self-Help group (SHG) models to support women-owned businesses

c. Promote Inclusive and Accessible Public Spaces

- Enable free and unrestricted access (including special needs) to public spaces such as toilets, parks, etc. for advancing community engagement and social inclusion, while also reviewing existing policies to strengthen them

- Strengthen public transportation systems with a focus on improving last mile connectivity, including access to remote areas within the cities to ensure increased access and safety for women

- Strengthen government data systems by collaborating with private players to integrate real time information-gathering of mobility patterns by men and women

d. Dynamic and Localised Planning

- Develop gender-responsive 20-year-plans for cities, integrating them into Master Plans for cities that are yet to design such plans

- Introduce the position of city gender officers within Urban Local Bodies to include a gender lens in city level urban strategies

- Integrate gender justice agendas into long-term city plans. Adopt lenses such as age, class, caste, and attachment to ensure planning is not just gender-neutral but also inclusive and just. Focus on justice rather than paternalistic inclusion in urban planning practices

- Integrate the care economy into urban strategy and planning, recognising informal and invisible labour. Government lands can be allocated for multi-use space to establish facilities such as child care centres, elderly care centres, and support services for single parents at the neighbourhood level

- Ensure the development of accessible and safe neighbourhoods, community centres for child care, slum rehabilitation in urban strategy

- Ensure universal coverage of early warning systems for women, Persons with Disabilities, marginalised and vulnerable communities, with gender specific action plans for local disaster risk reduction (DRR) and management that may not always feature in larger state level plans

considering the **safety** and **accessibility** of public spaces is **crucial** to promoting women's full and equal **participation** in urban life.

looking ahead

Every U20 cycle has unique offerings.
The idea of this engagement,
dialogue is for it to culminate into
tangible offerings and a futuristic way
forward

To realise the potential of our cities, it is important to prioritise the perspectives of women, who are not only participants and beneficiaries but active contributors to the development of cities and their economies.

By ensuring that women have equal opportunities and influence in shaping urban development, we can build cities that are environmentally sustainable, socially just and inclusive while also being economically viable.

What began as a promise between UN Women and NIUA led by the City Climate Alliance under the 'Alliance@U20' banner to bring in gender into the U20 framework has resulted in this report.

This report serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, urban planners, and stakeholders, offering guidance on how to advance gender equality within the Urban20 framework and create cities that thrive on diversity, equality, and resilience. The path towards sustainable and inclusive urban development starts with acknowledging and addressing the unique needs and contributions of women, ultimately leading to a more prosperous future for all.

It emphasises the critical role of integrating gender perspectives into urban development to establish inclusive, sustainable, and just cities. It underscores the importance of recognising and valuing women's contributions while ensuring their equal participation in leadership and decision-making capabilities within the Urban20 framework of the G20.

The report outlines actionable interventions that cities can embrace across key dimensions of urban development through the adoption of a gender lens. By implementing these recommendations, cities can cultivate sustainable urban environments that enhance the well-being of all residents while advancing gender equality and empowerment. These action points have been derived from extensive deliberations and discussions among stakeholders from diverse institutions within civil society, the private sector, and public institutions. They emphasise the significance of collaboration and co-creation of solutions to address gender inequities and climate-centric challenges.

This NIUA-UN Women association is not restricted to this report. An urban gender unit could be constituted as a way forward that will continue to build on the partnership that has been supported by almost 60 thought leaders working across the intersection of cities and diverse urban governance and management.

Together, we will serve to magnify and integrate gender capacities across several dimensions of urban cities. The aim will be to create interventions in policies that can be adopted and practised across all scales through an alliance of partners and networks committed to mainstream and institutionalise gender as an integral component to urban planning, design and, of course, living.

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