

International Journal of Policy Sciences and Law
Volume 1, Issue 1

Gender Equality and Sustainable
Urbanisation: Analysis, Best Practices
and Recommendations for India

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Abstract

The UN estimates that by 2030 five billion people will live in cities by 2030. Cities must be made safe for women, which will have positive benefits in terms of their health and well-being, their freedom to move around and to participate fully in all the benefits of urban life. In developing countries, such as India, safety concerns and limited access to transport reduce the probability of women participating in the labour market by 16.5 percent. The issues, hence, faced by women become enfolded into domains of accessibility, education, employment, legal hurdles, infrastructure, mobility, and urban political participation. This paper is both review-oriented and recommendatory in nature and aims to (a) conduct a SWOT analysis of the status of urban women in India, and (b) recommend policy changes for India on the basis of best practises from countries around the world when it comes to inculcating gender equal practices into sustainable urbanisation. This paper has analysed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to urban women in India and has delineated a roadmap to factor-in these notions into the sustainable development and good governance of cities in India. It aimed to project the scope of improvement through four verticals - education, technological integration, economic development, and policy and political participation. Linkages have been established between the measures of sustainable urbanisation and gender-sensitive policy-making which can be implemented in Indian cities.

1.0 Introduction

Urbanization, as defined by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is the proportion of the total population living in areas classed as urban. It reflects transformations in national economies, with growing numbers of people moving away from employment in agriculture and into industry and service sectors, and in the process increasing their productivity.¹ As such, urbanization has improved the way people work and live, and provided opportunities for higher living standards, life expectancy, better environment, and education.² For women, urbanization can transform their lives as it is closely related to greater access to employment opportunities and lower fertility levels. Women also play a key role in sustainable urban cities through their paid and unpaid labor as primary caregivers in households (UNFPA, 2017).³

Laying the Basis for Rural-Urban Migration

People are drawn to cities for jobs, innovation, culture, science and other opportunities. By 2030, five billion people will live in cities (UNDP, 2018).⁴ Along with increasing urban population come challenges to those who live in urban areas, since there is a higher proportion of women within the urban population overall, and a concentration of women-headed households in urban centers, these affect women more. Besides, women continue to make up the majority of people living in poverty. Therefore, it is important that sustainable development ensures a roadmap for sustainable cities and highlights gender equality (UNDP, 2018).⁵

However, women are faced with challenges in the process of urbanization. For example, women are often in a disadvantaged position when competing in the labor market. It is also hard for them to gain equal access to education, healthcare as well as assets. Moreover, sexual violence and other forms of violence restricts women's freedom and benefits from urbanization. Therefore, it is vital to create gender-sensitive spaces in urban areas.

Sustainable Urbanisation for Women and the Challenges it Faces

Cities are often engines of economic growth and social advancement, but rapid urbanisation in most of the developing world has also resulted in stark inequalities between the rich and the poor, environmental degradation and growing numbers of slum dwellers - notions that are bound to deepen the inequalities that exist in the disfavour of women.

While urbanisation offers many benefits, the ugly face of urbanisation is urban poverty, which often has the most severe impact on women and girls. The world's 828 million slum dwellers suffer in varying degrees from poor sanitation, inadequate access to clean water, crime, unemployment, threats of evictions, overcrowding and poor quality housing (UN Women, 2010).⁶

Women in cities often suffer disproportionately, not only because they are, on average, poorer than men (three-fifths of the world's one billion poorest people are women and girls), but often also because they experience greater difficulty in accessing resources and services tailored to their needs, and decision-making opportunities (Women Watch, 2010).⁷

The current development of urban infrastructure and the built environment needs to be redesigned to promote greater gender equality in the use and benefits of urban space. Many of the past and present trends in urban planning and development reflect the male perspective regarding the role of women as primary caregivers. Viewing families, communities, towns,

cities, and regions from a gender perspective requires a radical shift both in thinking and in actions.

Other dimensions of gender equality with respect to sustainable urbanisation

Status of women in urban areas is higher than that of women in rural areas. Urban women are comparatively more educated and liberal. Against 25.1 percent literate women in rural areas, there are 54 per cent literate women in urban areas according to the census of 1991. Some of them are working too, (16.5% urban women belonged to the labour force in 1993- 94). As such, they are not only aware of their economic, social and political rights but they also use these rights to save themselves from being humiliated and exploited. The average age of girls at marriage in cities is also higher than the corresponding age in villages (Mondal, n.d.).⁸

Women have to play the part of mother, wife, daughter and many more, which are stressful roles in the context of any society. Each role is affected by the process of urbanization. In addition, women also become part of the labor force and contribute to household income. The positive impact of urbanization can be summarized as - improvement in the literacy rate, increased self-dependency, increased liberty, and more opportunities for public employment. Urbanization, particularly in the developing countries, significantly affects the social support system of women belonging to low socio-economic status, which makes them more vulnerable for anxiety and depression (Kar, 2015).⁹

2.0 SWOT Analysis: Current State of Urban Women in India

As we grapple with the crises of the twenty-first century, we are also faced with the task of addressing and realising the Sustainable Development Goals. When developing countries such as India undertake the processes of urbanisation, it is essential to bear in mind the two-pronged demands of gender-based and environmentally sustainable approaches to it.

A SWOT Analysis of the current state of urban women in India aims to tackle the former of these two notions in the light of sustainable, responsible, and inclusive urbanisation.

An analysis of these particular issues sheds light on the imperative factors where policy action can be strategized in order to factor-in gender-based inequalities into sustainable urbanisation practises.

Issues	Strengths	Opportunities	Weaknesses	Threats
Urban Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education is treated as a fundamental right for all citizens of the country under RTE. - Availability of government schools and community schools. - Legal mechanism and provision to support education of students and to increase participation of women in education. - Increasing number of youth into education as change-makers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government schools and colleges are increasing and efforts are put into making them accessible . - Reservation to students coming from low income groups and special quotas for women in colleges and schools. - Appreciation to single girl-child for scoring above 80% in secondary exams. - Various community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of awareness among the parents and guidance needed. - Presence of cultural societal norms that becomes hindrances to the accessibility for women in education. - Weak implementation of the existing scheme. Higher education such as college and universities is not looked at under any legal provision. Focus remains primarily at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Despite the presence of legal provision, weak implementation makes it only a paper tiger and its ineffectiveness increases inequality and gender gap in education - Presence of socio cultural norm leads to gender stereotypes and gender gaps in education - Mental health of students is disturbed and is not taken into account. - Lack of toilets prevent women from joining school giving a rise

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of mid may schemes and hostels for students - Rules for private schools and colleges to have seats for low income groups and provide scholarship . - Innovative framework and practice due to digitalization - Vocational training and skill development is becoming important - Increasing role of state and other private firms to build a partnership 	<p>organisations, NGOs & NSSs are willing to take steps and help in sensitizing and promoting the importance of education and bridging gender gaps.</p> <p>- Skill based learning</p> <p>Partnership with various community organisations and firms to improve education and bring technology as part of education .</p> <p>Regular inspection by third party to</p>	<p>elementary education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of resources to avail the opportunities. - Lack of willingness of public officials to work and help. - Inadequate facilities. - Unequal accessibility (education of male child is still given more importance as compared to females, females are forced to the household chores and join women of the house as helpers to work and earn - the country still has 46% of illiterate 	<p>to the dropout rates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of teacher training and curriculum design affects the quality of education that students receive - Due to lack of awareness of scholarship and reservation, women are left illiterate and then become a part of the vicious cycle of poverty - Corruption in education sector and inequitable distribution of resources becomes a major threat to the development of education
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	<p>to improve education.</p> <p>- Introduction of a committee that assesses the school on a holistic basis and not academically.</p>	<p>ensure the quality and presence of teachers.</p> <p>Subsidised education and hostels for making education accessible and affordable.</p>	<p>females as compared to 24% males)</p> <p>- Poor quality of education in government school.</p> <p>- Problem of curriculum design and content</p> <p>- Lack of proper infrastructure.</p> <p>- Need for teacher training</p> <p>- Lack of counsellors to guide mental health of students.</p> <p>- Corruption in education and resources, leading to stagnancy.</p>	
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<p>Employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of legal provision and schemes to boost women participation in the work sector like The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna, Stand Up India Scheme in the recent times. - Efforts by the ministries to train women and enhance their skills for better accessibility. - Improved partnership of state and community organisations to help bring women in mainstream’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of the population of India is youth , thus giving an opportunity to bring them towards mainstream through job creation. -Community organisation, NGO and other women centers are increasing their roles to support women. - Using technologies to aware women and people about the various organisations that are working and making job opportunities accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less than 30% of working age women are currently in work compared to nearly 80% of men. - Persisting stigma surrounding the ideas of women working - Lack to create labour intensive manufacturing jobs which creates job opportunities for women - Cultural expectation that married women should prioritise housework and care work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevalence of socio cultural norms leads to gender gaps existing in employment roles. - Lack of willingness of employers to employ married and/or pregnant women due to pregnancy leads to drop out of women from the workforce in the formal sector. - Lack of safe environment has increased the threat of sexual harassment and violence . - Difficulty in accessing public spaces equally due to poor infrastructure.
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	<p>- Measures such as E-Haat to bring employment opportunities for women entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>- Increased role of self help groups in women and small micro finance setup by women and examples like Iijjat Papad are bringing new opportunities.</p> <p>- Setting up agencies that pay better remuneration for home workers or helpers, and look after the other safety factors and proper rest periods.</p> <p>- Setting up of equal opportunity cells in major private firms.</p>	<p>- Lack of safe and conducive environment</p> <p>- Lack of equal pay parity</p> <p>- Women working as housemaids are not paid sufficiently</p> <p>- Majority of women employed informally in low paying jobs.</p> <p>- Due to high regulatory cost in the formal sector we do not see sufficient job creation to absorb female workers.</p> <p>- Lack of gender based reform in tandem with labour market reform.</p>	<p>- Due to far off work locations, commute time and transportation fees are neglected and the wages that they get are very low resulting in pay disparity.</p> <p>- Increased load of work leading to hypertension and anxiety. Affects the mental well being of the individual.</p> <p>- Increase in gender gap and fall in the country's overall employment rate.</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compulsion of having separate washrooms according to legal provisions of labour law. - Having a gender grievance cell in institutions and universities. - Subsidies due to various schemes for women to easily get loans from the formal sector and start work. - Increased role of NGOs and volunteers to help women start their entrepreneurial journey and bring them into the mainstream. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor regulation of labour standard and legal redressal for female factory workers. - Lack of on-site childcare or public convenience facilities for women - Issue regarding location of work and work hour flexibility. 	
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Health and Safety: Infrastructure and Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better access to education and employment due to positive changes in social norms - Approachable law and order system in urban areas, additional support by organisations such as NCW, DCW - Easier access to credit and finance in urban areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better access to services and opportunities - As cities grow, better exposure to world-class amenities, and a chance to contribute to the same - Avenues for innovation and entrepreneurship in she-economy - As Smart Cities come into the picture, mobility and access issues can be factored into urbanisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of free and safe access to public spaces - Lack of sustainable access to public transport - Lack of on-site childcare or public convenience facilities (such as period-friendly toilets) for women - Poor or unaffordable housing services - Distance from place or work or study or health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of sexual harassment and gender-based violence - Difficulty in accessing public spaces equally to men due to poor infrastructure - Increase in commute time, poor quality of life - Gendered impact of environmental hazards - Limited access to water and sanitation - Unpaid work

			- Unsafe neighbourhoods	
Legal Safeguards or Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of reaching out to organisations such as the National Commission for Women or Delhi Commission for Women in case of issues - Legal safeguards in place, such as the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act (which safeguards the rights of the girl child) and Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher scope for women to raise their voices and reach out to judicial systems in urban areas - Better connectivity and telecom facilities to enable positive connections. - Better aid of NGOs, NPOs and community organisations - Mental health care provisions also available in certain cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio-economic and cultural barriers in access to justice. - Lack of prompt justice delivery - Lack of emergency services - Poor workplace security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental and emotional stress due to lack of safety and legal protection in real terms - Societal pressure - Victimization and gaslighting in case of violations - Harassment or discrimination
Urban Political Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women in positions of authority tend to: resolve national 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reservation for women in Lok Sabha, Rajya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patriarchal and male dominated political arena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women lag behind on several potential determinants of

	<p>crises without resorting to violence, advocate for social issues that benefit all, and allocate budgets to health and education</p> <p>- Women in policymaking and politics can play instrumental roles in giving rise to gender-responsive budgeting, further giving rise to an equitable approach to urbanisation and urban planning.</p> <p>- This would further lead to stronger families, more equitable society, and better cities.</p> <p>- Women in policy making</p>	<p>Sabha and other institutions.</p> <p>- Promotion of women in leadership and decision-making roles at all levels, including at peace negotiation tables and in humanitarian emergencies.</p> <p>- Support women's leadership in the workplace through greater inclusion in executive positions and on corporate boards.</p> <p>- Offer training programs for young people, women, and men on political</p>	<p>- Lack of awareness and incentive among women towards various social and political issues that hinder their political and community engagement.</p> <p>- Lack of enough female roles models</p> <p>- Lack of responsible and empowering education for the girl-child</p> <p>- Lack of women political leaders and policymakers in the urban set-ups</p> <p>- Fewer women undertaking positions of responsibility in</p>	<p>political participation, such as knowledge about how political institutions work, their self-assessed leadership skills, and their voice in key household decisions.</p> <p>- Lack of female leadership in families, communities, corporations, and the government</p> <p>- Skewed policy-making that does not factor in the inequalities against women</p> <p>- Reinforcement of the various restrictions against women.</p>
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	<p>also make women's and children's health a priority - giving rise to better urban health.</p> <p>- They also give focused attention to pertinent social issues and demonstrate increased peacebuilding.</p> <p>- They also contribute better to economic prosperity.</p>	<p>systems, girls' and women's right to participation, and roles in decision-making , as well as unconscious bias training and inclusion.</p>	<p>urban political bodies</p> <p>- Women having to face stigma and social evils as a result of partaking in political spheres</p>	
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3.0 Case Studies

A. Investing in Women in Nagareyama, Japan

The Japanese city of Nagareyama, located on the eastern side of Tokyo, has been promoting the creation of a family-friendly city where both men and women can balance their professional careers and family duties as part of an investment strategy to attract more working age residents and contribute to boosting the local economy¹⁰. The strategy included the development of a survey to identify specific working women needs and

priorities, which was used to inform the design of public policies¹¹. As the survey showed that local women prioritized a combination of convenient access to public transportation and easy access to work with organized public and green spaces suitable for parenting, targeted interventions by the city government included the creation of children transportation services next to the city's train station, which enables working parents to drop their kids off on their way to work in a safe place from where they are taken by teachers to childcare facilities and nursery schools.¹² This service is convenient for working mothers because most women have to commute to Tokyo for work and many children go to childcare facilities located in different districts, which would add additional stops to the daily commuting for at least one of the parents.¹³ The city also promoted the creation of public spaces with recreational facilities for children of different ages, an entrepreneurship program designed specifically for women, and the provision of subsidies for residents willing to launch their own businesses in vacant commercial properties located in the city (Urban 20 White Paper, 2018).¹⁴

B. Increasing women's participation in policy making in Bogotá, Columbia

Colombia has undertaken a number of positive actions to ensure that women get fair representation in government. There are two key laws that ensure that women are represented both as elected officials and public servants. Law 581 of year 2000 establishes the participation of women in at least 30% of the top decision-making positions in the public administration. Law 1475 of 2011 establishes the participation of women in at least 30% of the political parties election ballots.¹⁵ While these legal safeguards are a strong example of affirmative action taken to ensure that women have equal voice in government, their implementation has proven challenging: at the national level the quota is met, but there are large variations among ministries and agencies, and women are particularly poorly represented in senior management positions.¹⁶ However, at the local level, Bogota has promoted a review of its territorial policy from a gender equality perspective, and has used urban planning to tackle safety and mobility challenges for women. Furthermore, the local authorities have prioritized children and safe public spaces, identifying inclusion as a core focus for the urban planning process (Urban 20 White Paper, 2018).¹⁷

From these two cases, it can be discerned that positive reinforcements of gender equality can be beneficial towards analysing and implementing urban sustainability in the Indian cities. Involving women structurally in the process of policy-making can bring about positive changes towards making a gender-sensitive urban world.

4.0 Correlation between Urbanisation, Sustainability, and Gender

The negative consequences of urbanization are disproportionately borne by poor working women and men, young and old. These result from high living densities, overcrowded and inadequate housing, environmentally hazardous living conditions, and rising incidences of urban violence, as well as inadequate basic services such as safe and affordable water, sanitation, drainage, electricity, and solid waste management, in addition to educational, health, and social services.

Furthermore, women's and girls' unpaid work in the home, such as domestic work and care work, has not been taken into consideration when planning and managing cities.

In addition to urbanization itself, the lack of inclusive, gender-sensitive, and pro-poor policy frameworks and governance have led to exclusionary trends in urban development. This divide can be seen by the growing number of gated communities, private security teams, high-rise apartment complexes, shopping malls, parks, and recreational facilities designated for the elite; meanwhile, marginalized groups and the poor majority face evictions and lack of housing, infrastructure, and services. This 'urban planning for the few' does not promote sustainability and economic stability (IWPR & NDI, n.d.).¹⁸

5.0 Gender-Sensitive Governance

Gender-sensitive governance is defined as both the substantive representation of women in urban decision making and enhanced awareness and understanding of gender-specific needs within the governance structure (Beall 1996a). It elevates the voices and participation of women in urban decision-making processes, giving them agency to affect change for issues of importance to both women and men. It works to identify gaps in policy and service provision that disproportionately affect the lives of urban women, and acknowledges women's unique contributions to urban settings in the formation of policy responses. It involves the meaningful

interaction between representatives of government at all levels with grassroots women's movements and civil society groups that actively advocate for women's issues and gender equality. (Beall 1996a; UNIFEM 2008). And finally, gender-sensitive governance fundamentally keeps power holders and institutions of governance accountable to women, demanding dedication to the goals of gender equality in policy and planning, and ensuring that institutions of governance have the capacity to acknowledge and respond to the disparate experiences of women in cities (UNIFEM 2008).

Establishing Gender-Sensitive Governance

Establishing governance that is gender-sensitive requires certain fundamental transformations within existing relationships and institutions of public affairs to effectively eradicate the wide range of barriers to women's full participation in urban society and public affairs (IWPR & NDI, n.d.).¹⁹

The functioning and administration of systems in India, at times, tend to be such that it favours the dominant entities or groups in its organizational choices, at times owing to institutional biases - which are typically disfavorable to women. This stems from many social and sociological factors, which can further be tackled on a public-policy level.

Successfully establishing gender-sensitive governance, therefore, must involve a shift in gendered power relations within the institutions of governance to avoid replicating the underlying social norms that have historically excluded women from public policy and urban decision making (IWPR & NDI, n.d.).

Especially in the Indian context, it is essential to establish conversations and create communication systems within and outside institutions such that voices of men and women are incorporated equally and dialogue between them is also ensured.

Implementing Gender-Sensitive Governance

Rethinking budgeting processes to ensure financial resources are allocated equitably to causes that affect women; ensuring gender parity at all levels to avoid clustering female public servants at the most vulnerable rungs of government, or equipping institutions with the capacity to apply a gender lens to policy implementation, are just a few necessary reforms needed to make good governance gender-sensitive in nature.

6.0 Gender-Sensitive Urban Planning

In addition to urbanization itself, the lack of inclusive, gender-sensitive, and pro-poor policy frameworks and governance have led to exclusionary trends in urban development. This divide can be seen by the growing number of gated communities, private security teams, high-rise apartment complexes, shopping malls, parks, and recreational facilities designated for the elite; meanwhile, marginalized groups and the poor majority face evictions and lack of housing, infrastructure, and services. This 'urban planning for the few' does not promote sustainability and economic stability.

India has been ranked 112th among 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index for 2020 as per the World Economic Forum ranking lower than even neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. In the Global Gender Gap Report, the WEF also reports that women now earn what men used to a decade ago, testifying the tardy progress being made in closing the gender gap. McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) released a stunning report on global gender parity, which showed that if women were to participate in the global economy to the same extent as men, they would add nearly \$28 trillion or 26% more to the global economy. The report examines several aspects of gender parity including equality in work, access to essential services and enablers of economic opportunity, legal protection and the political voice, and physical security and autonomy. Based on these aspects, India's gender parity score (GPS) was found to be one of the lowest at 0.48, much lower than that of sub-Saharan Africa at 0.57. The MGI found a high correlation between per capita income, urbanization and gender parity.

However, better gender parity in urban, as opposed to rural areas, could be true only in theory. A 2013 report on women and men in India, by the Central Statistical Organization, found that the urban sex ratio is only 929 compared with 949 in rural India and that the national workforce participation rate for women is only 25.5% when compared with 53.3% for men. As per this report, the urban female workforce participation rate is only 15%, compared with 54% for men (Sridhar, 2015).²⁰

Studies on spatial inequalities in India demonstrates that rural to urban mobility seldom translates into social mobility and spatial segregation by caste and religion is becoming increasingly visible. Studies also indicate that Proportion of women within the Urban population is growing and there is a concentration of women-headed households in urban centres. Given the

intersection between class, caste and gender in India –especially in terms of safety, violence and control over resources, the need for gender-sensitive policy approach is required (Ratho, 2020).²¹ Thus, engaging women in the political process and advocating for gender equity is critical to establishing urban governance too. When women’s priorities aren’t incorporated into urban planning and governance, they are marginalized and the idea of sustainable urbanization does not prevail.

Integrating a gender-sensitive approach into processes of urban planning and design has the potential to make cities more inclusive in terms of the groups they serve and the rights of whom they respect and protect. Urban planning is part of the larger context of urban governance and management. The local government must recognize the systemic impacts of discrimination. The examination of urban governance with gender and socio-economic dynamics of the city in mind is a critical starting point in the assurance of equalities, inclusion, and urban sustainability. More specifically, low-income women, men, and other marginalized groups require further attention and inclusion in policies, projects, and decision making (UN Habitat, 2012).²²

Gender mainstreaming has emerged as a potential mechanism for integrating gender-sensitive awareness across levels of government, as well as throughout municipal functions, service delivery, and other elements of urban planning and design (UN Habitat, 2012).²³

Gender mainstreaming across local governments, municipal functions, and service delivery offers an opportunity to create inclusive cities respecting the human rights of women and men of all ages and of diverse backgrounds. Only when the diverse experiences and needs of women and men are integrated into urban planning and design will it be possible to form inclusive urban planning procedures, public spaces, and land management (UN Habitat, 2012).²⁴

Urban planning and design provide city and national governments with a set of tested approaches, guidelines, and tools to address these challenges. What follows is support for the management of growth, as well as improved sustainability, efficiency, equity, and safety through planning and design at different scales. These include the slum and neighbourhood, district, city, regional, national, and supra-national scales. Key approaches to achieving sustainable urban development include the following:

- Based on the principle of subsidiary, improving policies and legislation regarding urban planning and sustainability

- Increasing capacities of institutions and stakeholders to undertake and effectively implement urban planning processes at the most appropriate and adequate scale, and in participatory and inclusive ways
- The integration of new urban planning and design initiatives into current urban planning frameworks (UN Habitat, 2012).²⁵

UN-Habitat's Regional and Metropolitan Planning Section focuses on five key areas and provides a framework for the countries to adopt for urban planning to make a gender-sensitive design.

- National Urban Policies
- Review of national frameworks for urban and regional planning
- City-region Development Strategies
- Planning for intermediate cities and market towns
- Urban Development Strategies for transport and energy corridors

Gender mainstreaming means integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects. Women and men have different needs and living conditions and circumstances, including unequal access to and control over power, resources, human rights and institutions, including the justice system. The situations also differ according to country, region, age, ethnic or social origin, or other factors. The aim of gender mainstreaming is to take into account these differences when designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and projects so that they benefit both women and men and do not increase inequality but enhance gender equality (Council of Europe, n.d.).²⁶

Gender mainstreaming in this context means:

- Thinking about the way labour markets work and their impact on women's and men's employment
- Considering family structures, parental roles, and domestic labour – e.g. care work – and how this impacts women's, men's, and children's lives in the short and long term
- Analysing gender dynamics in private and public institutions to form recommendations on how to mainstream gender-sensitive policies and practices across all sectors
- Reshaping the systems at large rather than adding small-scale activities
- Responding to the root causes of inequality and putting remedial action in motion

- Building partnerships between women and men to ensure both participate fully in society's development and benefit equally from society's resources
- Ensuring that initiatives respond to gender differences as well as work to reduce gender inequality and discrimination
- Asking the right questions to see where limited resources should be best diverted.
- Increasing attention to men and their role in creating a more equal society that is empowering and inclusive of women and girls (UN Habitat, 2012).²⁷

Gender mainstreaming and intersectional analysis can offer tools that help integrate gender and diversity into urban planning and design. Much civil society and human rights organizations provide good practices for promoting equality in access to land, the security of tenure, housing, safety in public transport systems. Having a policy framework for gender equality and human rights will greatly advance equality for inclusive and sustainable cities.

While policies, projects, and tools must be fine-tuned to fit the local context and specific thematic issues, general strategies can be used as a starting point to work on a wide range of gender issues. The following strategies work together to address the discrimination and exclusion women experience in cities while offering a way forward to design cities that empower women and girls and include them in decision-making processes and urban planning and design (UN Habitat, 2012).²⁸

7.0 Urbanisation: Definitions and Points of Consideration

Rapidly growing cities and towns are faced with a range of developmental choices that are bound to shape their growth and long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability. This process of urbanization is typically skewed against women since urban women have less equitable contributions to make to the process. The outcome of one set of choices often influences outcomes in other dimensions also, further increasing the complexity of the decision processes and overall development pathways for cities (UNDP, 2016).²⁹

In such a context, it becomes essential to consider approaches characterised by the following factors, while planning the process of urbanisation and considering urban design:

1. Sustainability

Urban planning should keep into account sustainable transport and mobility systems that are accessible in nature - both in terms of affordability and structure,

efficient energy systems, environmental protection measures, and waste management mechanisms. Since women are at a disadvantage when accessing such amenities, it is essential to factor-in women-specific design into the same.

2. Inclusivity

The spatial growth of cities can vary, depending on the policy choices made by decision-makers as well as variables such as the availability of cheap land in surrounding areas to establish settlements (UNDP, 2016).³⁰ Benefits of urbanisation, hence, may accrue to only certain groups residing in cities. Since spatial equality and social equality go hand in hand, public space and land development should be made inclusive in nature. Even in urban governance systems, openness and participation should be accounted for - especially in the context of women, since they have been long regarded as the second-gender, and doing so will provide the much-needed gendered-voice to the processes of urbanisation and policy-making.

3. Resilience

Last but not the least, rapid growth and development can often lead to unsafe growth in hazard-prone sites. Cities if not planned and maintained appropriately, can lead to urban conflict, violence, and crime. It is essential to ensure such public policy in place that safeguards the urban areas against such threats since crimes against women are at large and most prominent in Indian cities, it is essential to make our cities resilient.

8.0 Recommendations specific to the Indian context

Role of education

Education plays a major role in promoting gender equality in sustainable urbanisation and some of the measures that can be taken to improve the present condition are:

- Focusing on skill-based learning and vocational training.
- Improving the quality of education through methods like – teacher training and proper incentives, quality pay to the teachers and also having biometrics for marking attendance so that no class is left unattended.

- Regular inspections of government schools to make sure funds allocated are used properly via a third-party mechanism so that corruption can be reduced.
- Similar inspection to be done on private schools via committees like NAAC to make sure seats reserved to low-income groups are properly filled via the deserving candidates and equal opportunity is provided.
- Promotion of digital learning and online platforms for education and providing certification courses at an affordable rate so that accessibility to employment is easier at the later stage.
- Gender equality through curriculum needs to be promoted, teachers, the administration needs to address the discrimination faced by women and promote gender equality and positive self-concept through curriculum and life skill approach covering areas such as family life education, legal literacy and lifesaving skill could be incorporated.
- The National Policy on Education and Program of Action highlights the need to improve the social, nutritional and health status of girls and strengthen support services like drinking water. Early Childhood Care and Education is an integral component of Universal Elementary Education. The need to revise textbooks and remove gender bias and gender sensitize all educational personnel so that gender equality can be internalized is the need of the hour.
- Central and State government to build partnerships with NGO and community organizations working for the betterment of the education sector and help them access school so as to devise better strategies for improving. More organizations like Teach for India and Pratham need to be encouraged to come ahead and help students.
- Increasing the interest of young professionals and specifically women by providing paid internships or fellowships in the education sector can help in dual roles. It helps the student learn the skills beyond their books to develop an understanding among the students by hands-on learning. This has been a scheme run by the Delhi Government.
- To make education accessible and affordable, the Government of India has a lot of legal provision and schemes like Beti Padhao Beti Bachao, Saakshar Bharat,

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and many more, all these needs to be implemented well on the ground and promoted well so that women and other people know about their entitlement and can get them. For the same legal help, advisors are to be appointed to help women fill forms and other help needed for accessing the school or higher education.

- A lot of students don't have access to education due to the high fees and the idea that if they pay a fee they won't be able to earn bread, to combat this mindset, ideas like the Mid-Day Meal program need to be supported not only by the Centre but also state governments too. Also, an affordable cost for education needs to be fixed for higher education.
- Lastly and majorly the community needs to be gender sensitized and made to understand that providing women education won't be harmful and that it is essential for the growth of what. A lot of women face stress and anxiety and support from the counsellors if provided can better the situation.

Role of technology

Ensuring that women have access to public space includes utilizing the increasingly important digital sphere. The role of technology is very important to help women and promote gender equality and sustainable urbanization. Some of the measures that can be incorporated are-

- Steps have to be taken to bridge the digital divide, since the gender gap in access to the Internet via mobile phones is greatly unfavourable to women, with females being 23% less likely to use the Internet in low-medium income groups.
- Programs like 'Google's Internet Saathi' have been beneficial in training and educating women throughout villages in India on the benefits of internet use and teaching them basic research skills needs to be promoted and this initiative needs to be scaled up to other geographies and income groups as well, in order to bridge the gap.
- With increase in technologies women can also be empowered to earn through online platforms and to promote women employment, more initiatives like Mahil-e-Haat that provides a bilingual online platform to help aspiring women,

self-help group to showcase their products and service has been very beneficial as it attracted more than 17 lakh visitors since its launch, needs to be set up in each state and needs to be promoted by state and centre.

- Program and Schemes like Mahila Shakti Kendra, Working Women to help and empower rural women with opportunities for skill development and ensure availability of safe convenient accommodation for working with daycare facilities needs to be well implemented on ground and women need to be made aware of their entitlements and that such schemes are there for them.
- With the growth of Internet and digitization, more importance to online learning platforms and formalisation of certification that women can obtain via online means needs to be done, so that more and more women enrol and employment is boosted.
- With the emergence of new technologies and increasing internet, women can now have new avenues to exert their voice and agencies. Posting online through blogs or other social media platforms can help women amplify their voice and exert their position which might otherwise be limited.
- An application like Suraksha app, launched by the Karnataka govt is a huge leap in space of active police-controlled evidence-based approach to capture the perpetrators of violence against women. The app, which can be downloaded free on smartphones will help women in distress to alert police for help, as it is linked to the police control room and patrolling vehicles in the city, similar apps need to be promoted pan India so as to improve women safety.
- Tech giants should come up with initiatives to help and empower women and reduce the digital divide and gender gap in accessing the internet. Reliance partnership with GSMA's Connected Women Initiative is one such ingenuity to bridge the gender gap in digital adoption and literacy among women in India. The joint venture is designed to help empower more women with increased access to, and use of, life-enhancing digital services. It will also help women overcome hurdles that they face in accessing and using mobile internet and mobile money services.

- Numerous government and private sector-led initiatives are underway to train women to use specific applications like YouTube and PayTM. This is likely to yield positive results in the short-term by allowing women to access information and have greater control over their finances even when they are unable to, or are not allowed to venture out. However, this internet and communication technology-specific training can be problematic as a long-term strategy. While the digital economy allows opportunities for ‘Flexi-work’ and diminishes the reliance on physical workspaces, digital literacy must not aid in reinforcing the traditionally gendered segregation of private and public. Unless accompanied by broader shifts in social and cultural belief systems, it can lead to further restrictions on the mobility and autonomy of women. Therefore, unless these digital skilling programs are grounded within a broader education curriculum, they will create a generation of young people that are essentially only application operators, capable of specific tasks; not informed or empowered individuals capable of navigating and challenging deeply entrenched social customs and norms (Aneja & Mishra, n.d.).³¹
- For a section of Indian women, new employment opportunities are also being created through the platform and shared economy, permitting them to circumvent barriers of physical mobility and balancing work-home commitments. However, this ‘gig-economy’ can create new forms of contractual employment, without access to the social benefits and workplace protection that comes with formal employment. Structural discrimination against women makes them particularly vulnerable and reinforces the need to develop alternative social protection mechanism to help them get access to social benefits and workplace protection. (Aneja & Mishra, n.d.).³²
- It is estimated that the chances of women benefiting from opportunities accrued by the information society will be one third less than for men. Yet, India’s ICT policies and women’s empowerment strategies operate within separate silos. Although it’s already apparent that in the digital age, ‘online’ and ‘offline’ will be intertwined, policy communities and conversations continue to be fragmented. It’s time to acknowledge that technology by itself is not empowering; it must be

interlinked with broader policy interventions across social sectors. Otherwise, the digital age will only marginalise the marginalised, and exacerbate existing hierarchies between genders (Aneja & Mishra, n.d.).³

Role of equal economic accessibility

Women in India represent 29 per cent of the labour force, down from 35 per cent in 2004. More than half of the work done by women in India is unpaid, and almost all of it is informal and unprotected. Women are not well represented in most sectors, including business leaders. Though they comprise almost 40 per cent of agricultural labour, they control only 9 per cent of land in India. Women are also shut out of the formal financial system. Nearly half of India's women do not have a bank or savings accounts for their own use, and 60 per cent of women have no valuable assets to their name. It is unsurprising then that at 17 per cent, India has a lower share of women's contribution to the GDP than the global average of 37 per cent. In addition, women face great physical insecurity.

The economic impact of achieving gender equality in India is estimated to be US\$700 billion of added GDP by 2025. The IMF estimates that equal participation of women in the workforce will increase India's GDP by 27 per cent, measure to support women economically and empower them is (UN India, 2018):³⁴

- The Government of India had developed schemes like Mudra to support micro and small enterprises and direct benefit transfers under the Jan Dhan Yojana seeks to empower women. Women entrepreneurs account for about 78 per cent of the total number of borrowers under Mudra, such schemes need to be well implemented and promoted well so that women get better access to them.
- Evidence suggests that the availability of child care is strongly associated with an increase in women's labour force participation and productivity. Child care, particularly high-quality child care, is one of the most important enablers of women's economic empowerment and can have a positive impact on children's learning, thus there is a need to provide child care in every part of the country (Maret, 2016).³⁵

- Women are concentrated in the informal sector, which includes jobs that are unregulated and insecure, like street vending. Policies designed to move workers from the informal sector to the formal sector can significantly benefit women. Working in the formal economy is more likely to empower women because it is associated with more control over their own incomes than they would have in informal work. Studies suggest that strengthening the collective bargaining capacity of women workers in this sector and improving awareness of women's rights is important to ensure that income levels and working conditions improve in the formal economy (Maret, 2016).³⁶
- Private firms and companies need to have equal opportunity cells for allowing women accessibility in employment.
- Economic survey 2017-2018 emphasised on the need to disaggregate data by gender so that there is a proper understanding of women status in India.
- Community organisations and NGOs helping women to develop skills and generate earnings need to be supported by the government and promoted so that more such organizations come up.
- For the women who work as domestic helpers, caretakers, or house help, agencies should be set up, which on behalf of them would undertake the recruiting process. Establishing an organised agency could also help to avoid any sexual or workplace harassment and promote fair pay and ensure basic holidays and help.

Role of policymaking and political engagement

Based on their everyday experience, women acquire deep and insightful knowledge of what is needed in and for the built environment, such as the design of public space, infrastructure, and services to meet the needs of all members of the community. In order for this knowledge to be mobilized and made productive for urban governance and development, neighbourhoods and local governments must find ways of organizing themselves as learning organizations. They should create a framework of opportunities for the active participation of residents in the development of their neighbourhoods, towns, cities, and regions. They need to establish an enabling context

for identifying and assessing local capacities and for linking formal with informal knowledge (Jaekel and van Geldermalsen, 2006).³⁷

To ensure and establish gender-sensitive governance at a macro-level requires the involvement of women in the processes of policymaking and political engagement to allow for adequate representation at policy-level and facilitate long-term, sustainable changes in the systems.

This can be achieved to some extent by doing the following:

- Conduct gender-analysis across relevant projects, policies, campaigns, and organizations.
- Increase gender-based data collection.
- Apply gender mainstreaming across national and local policies.
- Encourage grass-roots women's participation and empowerment.
- Engage men and boys to advocate for women's rights and gender equality.
- Establish women's monitoring mechanisms.
- Create gender-sensitive and inclusive public spaces.
- Offer gender-sensitive training to key city stakeholders (police, transportation operatives, urban planners, and national and local government officials).

9.0 Conclusion

The literature review undertaken has revealed the true nature of the heterogeneous and sensitive social positioning of urban women in India, and how their condition can be improved through a two-pronged approach of community integration and policy interventions. The paper has been successful and instrumental in shedding light on a step-wise approach to the same.

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