Gender and Economic Policy Discussion Forum

The City as an Inclusive Space through a Gender and Equity Lens.

FORUM IX | 5 SEPTEMBER 2013

BRIEFING NOTE 9

HIGHLIGHTS / KEY POINTS

- By 2030 more than two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities and most of this rapid urban population growth is expected to take place in developing countries.
- In addition to offering opportunities of employment, economic prosperity, better access to services as well as a cultural life, for women, cities also offer the opportunity to escape the rigidity of patriarchal norms.
- An inclusive city is one in which every citizen has an equal right to the services, amenities, resources and to express her/his economic, cultural, religious and political will. A city can be inclusive in terms of space, economy and the way it functions.
- Few women, especially poor women, however, benefit from the urban prosperity of cities due to discrimination, undervaluation of their productive work as well as gender based violence.
- Urban planning affects the sustainability, accessibility, usability and quality of a place.
 Women experience and use the urban environment in different ways than men.
 Gender neutral planning may accentuate gender differences.
- Lack of affordable housing and permanent land rights for the urban poor result in the formation of informal, illegal and unplanned settlements called slums out of which the informal economy with job insecurity, low wages and dangerous work conditions operates.
- Most formal city planning exercises do not recognize informal economy activities (in which women are disproportionately concentrated) despite the importance of these activities in the survival of cities.
- The idea of women's safety is embedded in spatial equity and income equity. Safety perceptions are linked to women's capacity to gain autonomy and appropriate public spaces in the pursuit of their domestic and livelihood responsibilities.

The ninth Gender and Economic Policy (GEP) Discussion Forum on 'The City as an Inclusive Space through a Gender and Equity Lens' was held at the India International Centre on the 5th of September, 2013. The discussion raised the issue that for urban prosperity to reach all citizens of the city efforts have to be made to build an inclusive city based on gender considerations.

What is an Inclusive City?

Over half of the world's population currently resides in urban areas. By 2030, more than two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities and towns, and most of the rapid urban population growth is expected to take place in developing countries.² There are several reasons for which people are attracted to urban areas: cities are centres of economic growth and so hold the promise of employment and economic prosperity. The city also attracts for it offers the possibility of better access to services as well as a cultural life. Likewise, for women, urbanization is often associated with greater independence. It offers the possibility of paid employment outside the family, lower fertility rates and some relaxation of the rigid social values that subordinate women to men.3 However, the fruits of the city are often enjoyed only by a few. Few women, especially poor women, benefit from the urban prosperity of cities due to discrimination, undervaluation of their productive work as well as gender based violence. Women face inequalities in terms of access to decent work, human capital acquisition, physical and financial assets, mobility, personal safety and representation in formal structures of urban governance."While women..... contribute significantly to the 'prosperity of cities' through providing essential services,....., provisioning economically for households, and enhancing the 'quality of life' in their homes and communities, they are often the last to benefit".4

For urban prosperity to reach women, efforts have to be made to build an inclusive city. It is important to state here that urban women comprise of a highly heterogeneous group. An inclusive city, thus, is one in which every citizen- rich, poor, educated, illiterate, young, old, and male or female has an equal right to the services, amenities and resources of the city.

Additionally, the citizen is free to express her/his economic, cultural, religious and political will. A city can be inclusive in terms of space, economy and its physiology i.e. how it functions.

Spatial Equity

"Most cities and towns are planned and built to suit the needs of a particular category—the able-bodied, childless, working male." These spaces and structures, designed mostly by male planners, privilege their living and working conditions over that of the other residents of the city – women and the poor. Women experience and use the urban environment in different ways from men and thus have different priorities in terms of services and infrastructure. Urban planning affects the sustainability, accessibility, usability and quality of a place. If gender differences are not recognized and taken into account, urban planning may in fact accentuate these very gender differences. For instance, women and men have distinct transport requirements. Men's use of public transport tends to be monodimensional - home to work to home, along major arteries - where work is located and only during peak rush hour. Women, however, are the major users of public transit, using it mostly off-peak hours and for journeys that are broken several times in pursuit of various domestic responsibilities. Poor planning coupled with inadequate services increase women's time and income poverty. This stems from women's double burden of unpaid caring and social reproductive activities such as childcare and domestic labour services required for the reproduction of the labour force- and underpaid formal or informal work. Balancing paid work with domestic responsibilities is dependent on mobility, especially in the case of segregated urban spaces – with differentiated spaces for home and work. Such differences need to be recognized for the urban space to be as productive for women as it

City planning is particularly not poor friendly, the brunt of which is suffered most by poor women. In developing countries urban expansion is accompanied with the formation of informal, illegal and unplanned settlements: slums.6 Such settlements spring up as a result of lack of affordable housing and permanent land rights for the urban poor. Slums are expressions of income inequality as well as inefficient land and housing markets, ineffective financial mechanisms and poor urban planning.⁷ The urban poor living in such informal settlements are usually cut off from most basic services, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, affordable health care, energy, housing, and education. Lack of access to these services has a particular gendered impact as it increases women's time poverty as well as endangers their livelihood earning capabilities. Lack of access to services such as water and sanitation also impacts women's dignity and self-respect. Women, particularly poor women, suffer on account of having to use shared toilet and bathing facilities. Hence, they restrict the number of times they use or ask their children to accompany them to the toilets. This, additionally, has an impact on their health.

Slums are often mistaken by authorities as transient phenomena. Therefore, slums are rarely legalized and urban policies are drafted so as to minimize their visibility. For instance, the Rajiv Awas Yojana with an objective to augment the supply of affordable housing prescribes the construction of houses with 21-27 square metres carpet area for the economically weaker section (those with annual household income of up to Rs. 1 lakh). Aparna Das argues that universal application of this scheme would only further squeeze slum households - as in the case of Raipur, where the average area covered by a slum household was 40 square metres. Drawing from her experience in the cities of Raipur and Tirupati, she argues that the concept of spatial equity is yet to be adopted in the planning process in India. The discourse of spatial justice, she adds, is hijacked by the idea of land value although in most cities slums occupy merely 5-10% of the city's total land. In Raipur, for instance, 80% of the city slums were occupied the high-value core city area, although comprising of just 5% of the city's total land and 35% of its population. Thus, the poor settled around Telebanda Lake were evicted and resettled in housing facility provided under Basic Services to Urban Poor (BSUP) project of JnNURM, 15 kms outside the city centre. The housing society lacked essential services water and sanitation as well as adequate public transport facility that hit women the worst.8

City planning, particularly in Asia, has been focussed on upgrading cities to world-class status: with infrastructural development, high-quality transport, information and communication technologies, modern industrial parks, high-rise housing and shopping complexes. Such city planning is usually exclusionary; over-looking the needs of the marginalized communities. Therefore, Renu Khosla argues, city plans never address how many poor women would have access to water and sanitation with the laying of new pipelines, how many would benefit from the construction of high-speed motorized roadways and so on. She states, "the grim reality is that planners have written the urban poor, particularly women, off the urban script". 10

Urban poor women residing in the slums also suffer from lack of formal identity. In most such settlements only 20% of the residents have identity cards, such as ration cards, which make them eligible to access entitlements, subsidies and services. Poor women are more likely to not have such identity proofs, making them vulnerable to exploitation.¹¹

How inclusive has JnNURM been?

The Government of India launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) in 2005-06. The mission described as the most ambitious programme of urban renewal in the country's history, had under its purview three interrelated and complimentary components—governance, infrastructure development and provision of basic services to the poor. The primary objective of the mission was to create economically productive, efficient, equitable and responsive cities. It envisaged a total investment of approximately \$20 Billion over seven years. The mission comprised of two sub-missions: Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG) and Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP). The sub-mission on UIG, administered by the Ministry of Urban Development, focussed on development of infrastructure projects related to water supply and sanitation, sewerage, solid waste management, road network, urban transport and redevelopment of old city areas with a view to upgrade infrastructure therein, etc. The sub-mission on BSUP, administered by the Ministryof Housing and Poverty Alleviation, on the other hand focussed on integrated development of slums, provision of basic services and other related civic amenities to the urban poor.

Over the years JnNURM has been questioned on several grounds ranging from exclusion of the poor, bias towards developed states and metropolitan cities, focus on infrastructural development over improving services for the poor, and undemocratic and non-participatory city planning. Exclusion of the economically and socially weaker sections, including women, has been one of the main criticisms levied against the mission. The criticism has been the strongest particularly in the context of BSUP, which aimed at provision of land tenure, slum upgrading and poverty reduction. Studies on the ground have found that in the name of slum upgradation poor quality (lack of basic services) contractor built houses were made available and in some cases slum dwellers were relocated to the periphery of the city, away from their source of livelihood. The intended beneficiaries were found to have not been involved or consulted with regard to in situ upgradation or relocation; neither were they consulted regarding the design of the house or the area of relocation. Women faced greater challenges in such situations due to lack of adequate basic services and loss of source of livelihood.

JnNURM also envisaged implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, according to which one-third of all elected representatives is to be women. Additionally, participation of stakeholders was stated as a requirement in the preparation of City Development Plans (CDPs) as well as in the implementation of Community Participation Law (CPL). The CPL aims to strengthen municipal governance by engaging citizens through Area Sabhas (consisting of all registered voters of a polling booth) in municipal functions. Studies have revealed that neither CDPs have been participatory nor have all the eligible states under JnNURM implemented CPL. Participation of women (poor women in particular) in urban governance has been reported as unequal, un-realized and easily abused. Women thus continue to be seen as proxies for male family members and are also found to be severely limited in fulfilling their duties as elected representatives due to lack of human capital formation and time poverty resulting from their domestic responsibilities.

Economic Equity

Cities are major hubs of economic activity. "Cities benefit from the efficiency gains and consumption benefits arising from location advantages, economies of scale and agglomeration economies, including lower prices for inputs, greater access to specialized services, lower transaction costs, and more fluid knowledge sharing...... The competitive advantages of cities are even more important in developing countries, where poor transportation and communication infrastructure in the hinterland exacerbates the cities' location advantages that enable firms to access not only the larger domestic markets within the cities themselves, but also export markets." The advantages of the city attract additional investments in services and infrastructure.

Around the world, about 85% of all new employment opportunities take place in the informal economy. ¹⁵ In

the year 2009-10 the informal economy accounted for 67% of the total employment in urban areas of India. 16 The substantial size of the informal sector is accounted to low rates of industrialization and availability of surplus labour. Population in urban areas has grown unabated (natural growth and migration) while creation of jobs in the formal sector has dwindled. "The capital intensity of modern urban enterprises, industrial location policy, energy crises, industrial sickness, labour unrest, restrictive legislation, frozen housing activity and the low level of investment in the development of urban infrastructure and services have colluded to keep down the growth of urban formal employment." 17 In developing countries, people in slums are more likely to work in the informal sector as lack of formal land rights, poor labour markets and public utilities lower access to formal employment. Although informal employment, with job insecurity, low wages and dangerous work conditions, is argued to trap people in 'perpetual poverty'¹⁸ it functions as a buffer zone between formal employment and unemployment.

Informality has significant gender dimensions as women are disproportionately concentrated in the informal economy and particularly in low-profit activities. 19 Women in the informal sector have increased with outsourcing of manufacturing to small workshops and homes. They are engaged in the informal economy as home-based workers, street traders, waste-pickers, construction workers, domestic workers and so on. Women's unpaid household labour along with restricted spatial mobility, lower levels of human capital and limited access to start-up capital render them suitable for informal employment only. Balancing paid work with care work is one of the main problems that working women face in urban areas. Poor women, in particular, face this problem as they cannot afford to hire help for the unpaid care work.

In most developing countries informal employment is generally a larger source of employment for women than for men. Despite the low earnings and the precarious nature of work, informal economy makes significant contribution to the family income and is critical for women headed households. The informal economy makes significant contribution to the GDP as well as provides invaluable services required for the sustenance of the formal economy. However, in pursuit of a world-class city, the informal economy is considered an eyesore and a public nuisance. Most formal city planning exercises do not recognize informal economy activities in the city and create plans without taking them into the purview. For instance, allocation of land for specific purposes such as transport corridors leave informal settlements and those engaged in informal economy, particularly women, physically isolated and disconnected from the main city fabric. This not only affects their livelihood earning potential but also has ramifications on the formal economy of the city. Cities, therefore, need mixed land use planning. Urban policies must facilitate economic opportunities for the millions of women and men engaged in the urban informal sector and their contribution to the economy must be acknowledged.

Case of Urban Street Vendors in India

On 6th September, 2013 the Lok Sabha passed the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, 2012. The Bill aims to protect the livelihood rights of street vendors as well as regulate street vending in urban areas. "The Bill's provisions are intended for the protection of small street vendors, about 60% of whom are women". The Bill states that a Town Vending Committee (TVC) shall be constituted in each local authority, which shall issue vending certificates to any registered individual interested in vending (above 14 years). Only those persons with a vending certificate shall be permitted to undertake vending activities in the vending zone specified in the certificate. A street vendor shall not be prevented from exercising this right by any person, police or any authority under any other law. Additionally, every local authority shall in consultation with the planning authority prepare a street vending plan once in every five years to determine restriction-free, restricted and no-vending zones.

The plan shall, as per the Bill, ensure that urban street vending activities do not lead to overcrowding and unsanitary conditions of public spaces, and not impede the movement of the general public. The Bill states that the plan should ensure that the provision of space for street vending is consistent with the existing natural markets. This way the Bill recognizes the importance of "demand-driven, locality-specific, natural markets" where street vendors tend to congregate and operate according to existing patterns of demand. "The recognition of the need to keep vendors in natural market areas goes directly against the global trend of removing street vendors from natural markets and allocating space to them in areas that eventually prove to be commercially not viable. The widespread tendency of local authorities to move vendors out of natural markets deprives urban consumers of convenient retail options; it also exacerbates the cycle of vendors being evicted and then eventually reoccupying the same spaces." The Bills additionally states that the vending plan must take into account the available civic facilities for appropriate use of identified spaces as vending zones. Further, the plan must promote convenient, efficient and cost effective distribution of goods and provision of services.

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, 2012 is based on the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2004 revised and released as National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2009. The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors made India one of the few countries to have a national policy on street vendors with an objective of providing and promoting a supportive environment for them to earn their livelihood, while at the same time reducing congestion and maintaining sanitary conditions in public spaces and streets. The policy and now the Bill is laudable because of the supportive approach it takes towards street vendors, giving them dignity and recognition in the national policy arena. It acknowledges their contribution to urban life, and is designed as a major initiative for urban poverty alleviation.²³ The Bill aims to balance three objectives: securing the right to livelihood of street vendors, ensuring congestion free public spaces and streets, and convenience of vending services for customers.²⁴ However, street vending being a State subject, the purpose of the Bill is restricted to act as a Model Bill, ensuring uniformity in the legal framework across states and union territories.

Inclusive City Physiology

Increasing urbanization has also brought new challenges in terms of conflict, violence and urban governance and citizen security in particular. Violence, in particular, is recognized as a development problem.²⁵ Dreze and Khera, likewise argue that freedom from violence is an aspect of quality of life that has been neglected in development studies. 26 Therefore, another crucial issue of inclusive cities is ensuring safety for all its citizens, particularly women. A city's physiology i.e. the way the city functions has important consequences on the safety of its women folk. The issue of safety of women became topical after the brutal gang rape of a 23 year old girl in Delhi by six men in a moving bus on 16th December 2012. The incident brought to attention lack of women's inclusivity in the ways in which urban spaces, infrastructure and urban policies governing them are designed.

Cities themselves do not generate gender based violence. The process of urbanization can, however, heighten risks for women, making them vulnerable to violence. Violence is associated with economic as well as health costs of women. Configuration of an urban space and the nature of activities therein may result in gender based violence. Makeshift dwellings in slums, for instance, offer little protection to women from violence. Also, areas where sanitation facilities are located (in slums), places where alcohol is bought and consumed, open public spaces such as isolated parks are some of the areas that are reported as places where gender based violence occur. Certain kinds of occupations also render women vulnerable to gender based violence, such as sex work. Fragmented social relations in cities, additionally, are also argued to put women at risk as well as limit the possibilities of coping and exiting from situations of gender based violence.²⁷

Kalpana Viswanath reports from findings of safety perception surveys conducted in Delhi, Kerala and Mumbai by JAGORI that women of all classes have to contend with harassment as part of their daily lives. Young women are particularly vulnerable. Harassment occurs during day as well as night, in both secluded and crowded public spaces. Public transport and roadsides are reported as spaces of high levels of harassment. And poor infrastructure such as lack of streetlights, unusable pavements and lack of public toilets are the main reasons behind lack of safety. Additionally, the burden of ensuring safety falls on women themselves, thus they avoid using certain streets and venturing out in the dark, maintaining a dress code and carrying personal safety items such as pepper spray, etc.²⁸

The idea of women's safety involves strategies, practices and policies which aim to reduce gender based violence (or violence against women), including women's fear of crime as well as creating conditions for women's access and inclusion.²⁹ Safety is embedded in spatial equity and

income equity. "Women's sense of safety, particularly in an urban context, is inextricably linked to the way a city grows and organizes its spaces." Access to and safety of public spaces such as parks, public squares, shopping malls, and community and recreation centres is an issue requiring an immediate solution with the rising cases of rape in the metro cities across the country.

Cities highlight the ways in which power and space interact in terms of what gets built and where. Lack of movement and the fear of space is a form of social exclusion. Cities influence and shape the gendered patterns of insecurity. The physical and social spaces of cities reflect the unequal gender relations in a given society. Safety perceptions are linked to women's capacity to gain autonomy and appropriate public spaces. Some of the spatial factors that influence safety perceptions are: visibility, clear and alternative routes, variety of uses and activities, and the presence of diverse groups of people.31 Increasing accessibility, streetlighting, access to safe and clean public toilets in public spaces and provision of safe and affordable transportation are thus essential for an inclusive city, especially for women and other marginalized groups.

The availability of public transportation is also essential for economic equity. Affordable and accessible public transport service enable women to pursue their economic activities in the formal as well as informal sector. Pursuit of economic activities not only contributes to women's empowerment but is also essential to keep the family afloat in many cases. As discussed earlier, women also provide innumerable services in the informal sector which are crucial for the sustenance of the city. Women's safety is related to freedom from poverty i.e. access to basic services such as drinking water and sanitation, financial security and autonomy. Safety is also the ability to participate fully in community life.

Citing an example of gender insensitive infrastructure in a low income urban settlement, Viswanath argues that inadequacy of essential services such as water and sanitation result in time poverty for young girls and women, eating into the time reserved for economic activity, housework or leisure. It has implication on women's life in terms of their health (unsanitary conditions, avoid eating or drinking in order to skip relieving themselves) as well as dignity and privacy (relieving in public). She thus identifies four broad areas that need to be addressed for the creation of safer cities: an improved policing and legal framework to support victims and work with community mechanisms of justice; gender inclusive urban design, infrastructure and services; supporting community initiatives and addressing vulnerabilities; and, generating knowledge and evidence through safety audits, research studies and so on.32

An explanation provided for the rise of violence against women is their increasing visibility in the public space.

Women's access to commercial and public spaces is argued to be sites of crisis of Indian masculinity.33 It becomes important to state the case of Mumbai here. It is argued that in Mumbai women have been part of the workforce for much longer than in any other Indian city.34 Reliable transport facility and better lighting facilitated the pursuit of economic activity across women of all classes. The city had mixed spatial organization with mixed housing – different classes living in the same neighbourhood – and a mix of residential and commercial buildings such that workplaces were not always alienated from residential and entertainment areas, which kept many areas of the city awake even late in the night. The city also welcomed people form varying social backgrounds. In recent years, however, the landscape of the city is reported to have changed. The real estate market has made it possible for only the wealthy to afford the city, pushing the poor out to the periphery with weak transport facilities connecting them to the city. Increasing identification of the city with sectarian ideology has also worked in alienating certain communities. It is only very recently that the city was stripped of its safe city title. 35

Therefore, contrary to modernist planning that emphasizes zoning, mixed city spaces are essential for a safe city. In India, obsession with creating world-class cities is resulting in cities getting increasingly segmented— the well-off live in privileged pockets and

gated communities, while the less-privileged are relegated to under-resourced neighbourhoods, often at the fringes. "The 'sanitisation' or 'beautification' of cities, where working class communities are re-located to distant sites and street vendors are taken off the roads, actually end up making them more prone to crime and generates a feeling of insecurity. Mixed communities, mixed neighbourhoods, and mixed land use make for a greater sense of safety." Likewise, women have also reported to feel safe in presence of street vendors, hawkers, rickshaw drivers and others who earn their livelihood from the street, reporting them to be the friendly eyes and ears on the street.

Formal city planning with stream-lining and its grid-like structures robs the city of its emotions and sentiments, leading to unsocial consequences. A city plan must thus provide for spaces where such emotions can flourish.³⁷ Thus, we need to un-think the way we have been planning our cities.³⁸ We need to plan cities keeping women and other marginalized groups in mind. We must also actively integrate them into the planning process. An inclusive city will not only improve the quality of life of all its residents but also enhance their livelihood earning potential and generate economic growth. Also, with increased safety citizens, particularly women, may take up more active roles in urban governance, particularly in their neighbourhood by way of community participation.

Endnotes

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cent in urban areas were engaged in the informal component. Source: C.P. Chandrasekhar and Jayati Ghosh, "India still a vast informal economy." The Hindu Business Line, 28 October, 2013, accessed 30 October, 2013, http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/c-p-chandrasekhar/india-still-a-vast-informal-economy/article5282078.ece. National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), which covers the unorganised sector, in the employment and unemployment surveys (EUS)

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²⁴Mandira Kala, "The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill 2012," PRS Legislative Brief, 20 June 2013, accessed 30 October, 2013. http://www.prsindia.org/administrator/uploads/media/Street%20Venders%20Bill/Street%20Vendors%20Bill-%20Brief.pdf

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²⁷Cathy McIlwaine, "Urbanization and gender-based violence: exploring the paradoxes in the global South". Environment & Urbanization Volume 25, No. 1 (2013).

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Speakers at the Forum

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