URBAN GOVERNANCE: WHY GENDER MATTERS

Jo Beall (March 1996)

About the author

Jo Beall works at the London School of Economics and Political Science in the Department of Social Policy. She teaches a Masters Programme on Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries and specializes in gender and diversity issues in social and urban development as well as participation, urban poverty and social exclusion in cities. She is currently researching a number of these issues in the context of solid waste management in South Asia. Jo Beall also writes on South Africa and Colombia and has worked as a consultant with a number of international development organizations, including Oxfam, ODA (UK), SIDA, the OECD, UNDP and UNHCR.

Executive Summary

Urban governance must be gender-sensitive if it is to be equitable, sustainable and effective. Participation and civic engagement are critical determinants of good governance, a concept which addresses issues of social equity and political legitimacy and not merely the efficient management of infrastructure and services. The different ways in which women and men participate in and benefit from urban governance are significantly shaped by prevailing constructions of gender, whose norms, expectations and institutional expressions constrain women's access to the social and economic, and thus political, resources of the city. Most societies ascribe roles and responsibilities to women and men differentially but fail to value, or even account for, the crucial contributions women's labor makes to household and community maintenance. Ironically, such social reproduction allows little time (or, in some cases, permission) for women to participate in civic life in ways which help them to determine their own lives.

A gender-sensitive approach to urban governance has two principal objectives; firstly, to increase women's participation in human settlements development and, secondly, to foster gender-awareness and competence among both women and men in the political arena and planning practice. A concerted approach to the issue of participation is required, including an improvement in women's representation in political structures and their active involvement in advocacy and lobbying for equitable human settlements development through participation in organizations outside of government. The work of such organizations in holding to account mainstream institutions and structures can be strengthened through international cooperation. New and inclusive urban partnerships are also needed, which recognize the interests, contributions and reciprocal potential of women as well as men. Planners must acknowledge the diversity of women, while recognizing that they also generally share specific gender interests arising from a common set of responsibilities and roles. Partnerships between urban dwellers, designers and decision-makers must address both the diversity and commonality of women's experiences and needs.

Given that women experience and use the urban environment in different ways from men, they have different prioritites in terms of services and infrastructure, for example with regard to transport, housing and basic urban services. Such priorities rarely feature in urban policy or investments. Policy-makers and planners, whether women or men, need to be gender-aware in order that women's needs and interests are addressed and women themselves are brought in to the planning process. For example, gender-aware urban planning would be sensitive to the increasing phenomenon of women-maintained households. Their particular vulnerability to poverty and their specific economic survival strategies will only be reflected in urban policy-

making if categories like the "household" and the "neighbourhood" are disaggregated by gender and family type.

Policy and planning with an understanding of gender does not come naturally to professionals, whether women or men. Changes in organisational culture and operational procedures will be required to foster gender-sensitive analyses and consultative processes. Inclusive partnerships in urban governance need to take account of the obstacles to women's involvement in public life, such as a lack of confidence or skills and the burden of multiple responsibilities. Nor are women the only group to be marginalised from political and planning processes. Diversity is a reality of urban development. A gendered approach to planning offers solutions to many of the challenges presented by social and economic diversity. The challenge will be met when the complexity of women and men's social roles is recognised and their involvement in the control of their everyday lives is welcomed.

Introduction

This paper deals with the themes of participation and partnership in urban governance, a concept which refers to both government responsibility and civic engagement. It is informed by the premise that participation in political or organisational processes in the city is related to command over the resources of the city. Moreover, the extent of the contribution made by people to the urban environment may also limit or enhance participation. Put simply, those who already participate in the wealth of the city often have the bargaining power to increase their share. Those with the greatest responsibility for the urban household, neighbourhood and urban environment, may have least time to spare to organise to advance their own interests. To understand this dual approach to participation from a gender perspective means exploring how women and men benefit from and contribute to city life and what it has to offer - as workers, carers, parents, service users and in their leisure time.

This paper looks at gender issues in participation, responsible urban government and civic engagement which are important themes in the Habitat Agenda. Participation is commonly associated with organisational or political participation. However, participation is also about social and economic participation - the extent to which different social groups, and the men and women within them, have access to and control over urban resources.

The Habitat Agenda addresses the issue of social and economic participation as well as organised and political participation. These concerns are made clear, for example, in the chapters of the Agenda's Global Plan of Action dealing with "Adequate Shelter for All" and "Sustainable Human Settlements in an Urbanizing World". They are also evident in the goals of and principles of the Habitat Agenda: equality, eradication of poverty, sustainable development, liveability, family, civic engagement and government responsibility, partnerships, solidarity and international cooperation and coordination. The Agenda is concerned with command over resources as well as access to sites of decision-making power.

There has been insufficient recognition of how women and men use and contribute to the city in different ways; how this is influenced by their different responsibilities in the home and in society and how this in turn affects their ability to engage in public life. Too little has been done to plan and manage cities with women. A fresh perspective is needed, which recognises women as integral players in urban governance and which facilitates their participation in urban partnerships.

In developing this perspective, the paper highlights some critical gender issues in government responsibility and civic engagement in urban areas. I explore the difficulties associated with incorporating a gender perspective into urban policy-making and planning processes and the challenges facing women working to promote women's gender interests in urban practice from different institutional locations.

Linking urban governance and gender

Recent concern with governance in urban areas stems from a more general attention being paid to "good governance" as a development issue. One approach sees governance as essentially preoccupied with questions of financial accountability and administrative efficiency. An alternative approach is one more interested in broader political concerns related to democracy, human rights and participation (Robinson 1995).

At the level of the city, there has been a particularly strong tendency to see urban governance entirely in terms of urban management - the operation and maintenance of infrastructure and services. But cities are not autonomous entities, with various tiers of government intervening in urban areas. They are also located in wider national and international economies, environmental systems and socio-spatial relationships. This managerial perspective blurs both the wider contexts within which urban governance is conducted and the essentially politicised nature of governance. As The World Conference on Metropolitan Governance noted at its meeting in Tokyo in 1993:

> Governance cannot be understood as management. Governance includes the visions we have and the strategic decisions we take. Nor can governance be divided simply into political and technical dimensions. Governance has five fundamental dimensions: 1) political, 2) contextual, 3) constitutional, 4) legal and 5) administrative/managerial. This concept of governance embraces a variety of ideas which encompass intergovernmental relations, such as negotiations, agreements and co-operative ventures among public and private parties. It implies bottom-up decision-making; having all concerned people at every level of government and non-government organisations participate.

Social equity and political legitimacy thus complement administrative efficiency as central concerns of governance. In this conception, good governance becomes a function of not merely efficient management but also of the quality of civic engagement in the processes and structures of governance. Human rights and levels of participation become critical issues in governing cities well, focussing attention on those who are currently marginalised and denied access to the social, economic and political resources of the city.

Gender is an essential construct within which to frame a set of questions regarding the processes and outcomes of marginalisation in the urban environment. Socially conferred roles and responsibilities differentially determine how women and men may contribute to and benefit from city life. Such a general statement does not intend to obscure the diversity and complexity of people's lived experiences in cities around the world. Women, just like men, are not an homogenous group. There are elderly women, working women and women with the majority of responsibilities in the domestic sphere. There are also women who are trying to balance many of these roles at the same time. Nor are women the only group to be excluded from urban governance, from the development of urban policies and from the planning of our cities. Other groups also experience such marginalisation, for example on the basis of race or class.

Appreciating this complexity, however, is an adjunct to and not a replacement for a gendered analysis of responsible government and civic engagement in the city. There is growing evidence that women use and gain from the city in different ways from men, that these ways are not biologically or essentially determined but rather socially constructed and that urban governance needs to be gender-sensitive if these differences are to be accounted for in planning and policy-making. Such gender-sensitivity may be defined as an acknowledgement of and responsiveness to the different roles and responsibilities of women and men in human settlements and the social relations between them. Gender-sensitive urban governance becomes, then, a function of the engagement of urban planners and policy-makers in the lives of urban dwellers. Indeed, this should be a mutual engagement as it is important that the knowledge, energy and expertise of women and men at the grassroots level is brought into the policy-making and planning process.

With this in mind, I am concerned with two critical objectives for achieving gender-sensitive best practice in urban governance. The first is to increase women's participation in the full spectrum of human settlements development. The second is to foster gender awareness and gender competence among both women and men in the political arena, the policy process and in planning practice. These different but related objectives involve different actors, organisations and institutions and require specific skills and interventions. What is best practice for a women's self-help organisation operating at the community level will not be the same as best practice for a gender-sensitive local government department, for an international agency concerned with gender issues in urban affairs, or for urban planners and professionals concerned to build a "gendered city". Nevertheless, gender-sensitive best practice for the entire spectrum of institutions and organisations operating at the urban level needs to be consistently informed by the long term goals of social justice, participatory practice and gender equity.

In addressing these goals, it is important to distinguish between people and perspectives. Women and men (and not genders) organise, participate and engage in urban governance and partnerships. Women make up specific political or interest-based constituencies, either as women or as specific groups of women. They do this in the context of mixed or separate organisations. Women as particular constituencies or interest-based groups can organise with or without explicitly feminist goals, with or without men, within or without broader organisations, in coalitions or autonomously. On the other hand, a gender perspective refers not to a constituency or the participants but to the practice of urban policy-making, planning, management and organisation itself. It refers to a recognition of and responsiveness to the different roles and responsibilities of women and men in human settlements and the social relations between them. An understanding of gender interests and social diversity in urban governance, together with gender-competent urban planning practice, can be equally adopted by women and men practitioners concerned with achieving equitable and participatory human settlements development.

For women to participate in urban policy and planning processes, and for these processes to be made more gender-sensitive, a concerted approach is necessary. The key elements of such an approach are:

- an improvement in women's representation in political structures, because human settlements development is a political as well as a technical and institutional process which benefits from women's participation and from women's perspectives;
- women's active participation in organisations outside of government, playing an advocacy role and providing a demand-driven approach to gender-sensitive human settlements development, through lobbying and making claims on elected representatives, officials and urban development professionals and practitioners;
- a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach to the development of new urban partnerships.

Women's Representation in Public Office

Getting women themselves into the mainstream of public office and the bureaucracy is a vital part of engendering urban governance. The presence of women in public office does not guarantee that the interests of other women will be represented. Political beliefs, ideology, race and class all intersect, and sometimes compete, with the claims of gender, thus complicating the relationship between women in power and their presumed female constituency.

However, this complexity does not diminish the critical importance and the symbolic and practical value of raising the profile of women in public office. Women constitute a significant proportion, sometimes a majority, of urban populations. Where democratic processes prevail, women in public office give meaning to the representative nature of democracy and institutionalise and legitimise women's voices in the sites of power. They also serve as

important role models, which may permit and inspire other women to involve themselves in urban governance. Furthermore, women have particular experiences of and relationships to the urban environment to share. They have proved themselves to be effective change agents in the city, particularly at the local and neighbourhood level which they know intimately and on which they have strong views and invaluable suggestions. This experience and expertise should be drawn upon.

Nevertheless there continue to be a number of obstacles to women's engagement in public life. In many countries, cultural constraints reinforce more generalised socio-economic handicaps in restricting women's participation in governance. Even in countries which have a good record on women's political representation, such as Germany and Norway, such representation is declining at the national level. In Australia five years ago, nearly half of the mayors of the state capital cities were women. Now there is only one. A councillor from Brisbane reported at a recent OECD Conference on Women and the City that in the recent local elections, the number of women who were elected was cut by two thirds (OECD 1995). Even when the proportion of women remains fairly constant, there is a high turnover of elected women. Such a turnover can interrupt the momentum for change within political, policy and planning processes which women in public office may seek to generate.

Hard won gains are often rolled back, often as a result of women themselves losing steam or burning out, but also when women's interests confront those of more powerful opposing groups. Few societies have yet managed to facilitate women's sustained contribution to political life, even when opportunities exist. This helps explain why women often appear passive when it comes to political life. For female elected representatives to maintain a political career and to fulfil their responsibility to other women by standing for public office, women's multiple roles and responsibilities have to be recognised. Moreover, the practice of government has to accommodate them. The Swedish experience suggests that considerable progress can be made towards increasing the participation of women in policy arenas as well as the labour market, by expanding child-care facilities and parental support. This has made it possible for both women and men to combine productive activities or political life with family responsibilities. Thus, there are legislative and material prerequisites that must be in place for women to take part in public life.

Political responsibility to a women's constituency does not come automatically, whether at national or at metropolitan or municipal levels. Women representatives in public office can be as gender-blind as men. In a study of women MPs in India, for example, Shirin Rai suggests that loyalty to class, caste and a range of other cross-cutting institutional loyalties, limits the representation of women's interests (Rai 1995). The key factor is whether there are institutional structures and linkages to ensure that the specific interests of women are represented by local councils, and whether councillors have transparent, open channels of communication and mechanisms for consultation with their constituencies. In many countries, the necessary political will and awareness are simply lacking.

In general, women are better represented at the local rather than at state or national level, although they still remain a minority at all levels of government. This has led some to view the process of decentralisation as positive for women (for example recent amendments to strengthen the Panchyat Raj in India, and the various efforts towards decentralising government in countries of Latin America) given the fact that they are most likely to enter local politics when going into public office. But decentralisation does not necessarily facilitate women's participation in public office. Increasing the power of local government involves increasing its access to and control over local resources. Such access and control renders local government more important to local economic and political elites and interest groups who are unwilling to relinquish control. Indeed, it has been suggested that decentralisation can increase rather than decrease the number of people engaged in malfeasance (Manor 1995).

Case study 1: Women's Offices in Community Councils in

Austria

In City Councils in Austria, attempts have been made over the past five years to institutionalize women's politics. One of the essential aims of Women's Offices is to mainstream gender issues into public debates, thereby raising the awareness of politicians and the public alike. The Women's Offices work at creating equal opportunities for women and men in professional and every-day life, by supporting initiatives and groups for self-help. The offices themselves are an information base and provide advice, in such fields as legal rights and social matters.

In the city of Graz, there are two Women's Offices. The first was founded in 1986. It supports autonomous women's groups and is politically independent. It does not take part in the decision-making process of the city council. In Vienna, the Office for the Promotion and Coordination of Women's Affairs was installed in 1991 as a municipal department of its own and with its own budget. It is supervised by the Executive City Councilor for Education, Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Women's Issues. The Office is not obliged to participate in decision-making and its staff capacity makes this impossible at present, but it aims to insert a gender perspective into everyday community politics. An important emphasis is laid on urban planning and housing for women.

Source: Austria National Report, OECD High Level Conference on Women in the City, Paris, 4-6 October, 1994.

Nor does decentralization always mean devolution of power - including the transfer of resources and decision-making power along with tasks. It may simply mean privatization, being the transfer of tasks previously performed by state agencies to the private sector. Alternatively, it may refer to the penetration of upper-tier government agencies into lower level arenas of government in order to control those levels. In this case, women in government may be useful in delivering a women's constituency to political parties, without in return being able to represent or respond to the interests of women. Furthermore, local government often is not effective at mobilizing and redistributing local resources, partly because politicians are afraid of becoming unpopular with their constituents, for example through the imposition of new taxation, and partly because representatives of disadvantaged groups frequently have more influence at higher levels in the political system.

Thus, decentralization is no panacea but when it works well it can encourage greater political participation (both electoral participation and participation in organizations of civil society) and can enhance local government responsiveness to local demands. James Manor (1995) argues that:

> Decentralization works best when it encounters a lively civil society (that is, organized interests with some autonomy from the state). If social groups are aware, assertive and well organized for political purposes, they are likely to keep elected representatives well informed of their problems and hard pressed for responses and for effective, honest governance.

In this context, gender-sensitive best practice would be for local government to keep open the channels of communication and foster mechanisms for dialogue with groups and organizations representing women. However, the onus is also on organizations of civil society to facilitate women's participation and the articulation and representation of gender interests.

Community, Advocacy and Gender

Community activism is an important avenue towards greater civic engagement in city level urban planning and policy-making processes. Rhetorical commitment to community consultation is becoming standard procedure for all levels of government. This commitment is usually best translated into effective practice where there is strong community interest, or where communities themselves or interest-based groups within them are well organized. However, while women are active in communities, it is often the case that they are invisible in urban planning processes. Policy-makers and planners often fail to recognize the specific interests of women and fail to consult them or to address their problems. This in turn discourages involvement from women in the community, while policy-makers and planners remain deaf to women's silence and unaware of the impact of their decisions on women's lives.

When women are involved, they are usually active in two ways. On the one hand, they often take up different issues from those which interest men. For example, women are far more likely to organize around health issues than are men, even though both have gendered health care needs (Beall 1995a). This is not altogether surprising given women's social responsibility for home and hearth and family health and child care. It is no coincidence, therefore, that women are most highly represented in social sector ministries and departments concerned with health and education. This pattern is often replicated at the level of community participation and organization.

On the other hand, women and men often take up the same issues but are interested in them in gendered ways. For example, women have gender-specific needs around housing and human settlements. And among women, different groups have different requirements and priorities at different stages of their life cycle and according to the household structures of which they are a part (Falu and Curutchet 1987; Machado 1987; Moser 1987; Nimpuno-Parente 1987).

 Case study 2: Women's Participation in Housing Projects in Canada

Canada offers an excellent example of women's successful involvement in community participation around housing development. Over the last decade women have assumed a significant role in the development, management and ownership of non-profit and cooperative housing. A survey of nearly 60 projects across Canada included more than 1,500 housing units developed and controlled by women.

Housing provision catered for different groups of women, for example lone mothers, women wanting to live collectively, elderly women and transitional housing for women requiring a limited stay, including women's shelters and refuges for women who have been subjected to domestic violence. One example of is Women's Community Cooperative in Hamilton, Ontario, completed in 1988. It is a six story building in a suburban neighbourhood. It has 47 units catering for women aged between 40 and 59 at the time of application. They are a group not well catered for by either the private market or social housing. The residents' committee is responsible for maintenance and social events.

Thus grassroots women's groups have emerged as new participants in the housing system in Canada. They have

The importance of women's grassroots organisations working at community level is becoming better appreciated by governments and external agencies. This is particularly the case when women organise service provision themselves. One of the best known examples of women's organised self-help is the response of women in cities such as Lima, to the economic crisis in Peru. To provide for their own and their families' survival they started "community kitchens" and "glass of milk" committees, with some of these expanding into health and leadership training initiatives (Barrig 1991). It is important, however, that in the context of community organisation women are not confined to self-help and survival strategies, being left to manage communities without resources or political and professional support.

The Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) in Bombay recognises this problem and tries both to address the basic needs of women and work with them to increase their political effectiveness. For example, they support an organisation called Mobile Creches which provides child care for women construction workers on the major construction sites in the city, while during a demolition crisis in the city the most important input they were able to provide women pavement dwellers was "legal literacy". The knowledge and skills they acquired enabled them to fight for their right to shelter (SPARC 1986).

Case study 3: The Orangi Pilot Project, Pakistan

The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Karachi has become one of the best known examples of urban partnership involving low-income households working together to improve conditions in their settlements. OPP, as the NGO, provides technical and organisational support to citizens organised in small neighbourhood groups. People themselves pay the full cost of installing basic sanitation and drainage and assume responsibility for regular maintenance and repair. The municipal authority is now helping to fund this approach and OPP is now working with local NGOs and community organisations in other settlements in Karachi and in other urban centres in Pakistan.

Women are active in local groups, sometimes inleadership positions and invariably in collecting and often providing funds out of household budgets. Women's invaluable organisational role both in the provision and maintenance of services was undermined by poor health among themselves and their families - the reason for their interest in improved environmental conditions and sanitation in the first place. Moreover custom prevented women from travelling long distances to clinics and hospitals. In response to women's problems and interests, and linking these to the overall concerns of the poor, OPP developed a health programme working through women's groups at the level of "the lane", with health care and advice provided on hygiene, nutrition, disease prevention and family planning.

Sources: Hasan 1989; Hasan 1990; Khan 1991.

Issues reach the policy agenda when powerful or well organised groups in society identify and assert their issues as problems. Mainstreaming gender issues and adopting a women's perspective in policy and planning would not have been possible without the sustained, organised force of women over the last two decades. This has been forged through women organising separately, in broad coalitions with men, and through inclusive networks in support of social justice and equitable policy change.

International cooperation and coordination can often facilitate the process of holding mainstream policy-making and planning process to account for their neglect or marginalisation of gender issues. This is particularly the case for women's organisations which can often network at the national and international levels more effectively than within the city. Whether at the local, national or international level, experience suggests that it is primarily the organisational power of women which ensures that political parties take seriously the power of the female vote.

In the Philippines, the historical conjuncture provided by "people's power" and the presidency of Corazon Aquino, together with donor assistance from Unifem at the time, created the opportunity for a uniquely consultative process towards the construction of the Philippine Development Plan for Women (PDPW) in 1989 which paralleled and intersected with the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan of 1987-1992. Here a variety of grassroots organisations were included in the decision-making process, together with the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women and the National Economic and Development Authority. More recently, the government and leaders of the women's movement started preparing for a sequel, a 30 year Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD).

Currently in South Africa, it is the on-going struggle of women within the ANC and of autonomous women's organisations which is insisting that new affirmative action policies combat the legacy of sexual as well as racial discrimination. Shared experience through international networking and the financial support of international donor agencies facilitated a process for drawing up a Women's Charter by the Women's National Coalition of South Africa. The enduring legacy of this process is not only the document produced but the local level organisation which was fostered and which has the potential of continuing to hold the mainstream to account. In Sweden, new women's networks have been recently formed to campaign for better political responsiveness to women's issues. Women joined forces and threatened to register themselves as a women's party if the existing political parties did not take gender issues into account more seriously. This change, which received excellent media coverage, had the desired effect of making established political parties place women's issues higher on the political agenda (OECD 1995).

The cases of the Philippines and South Africa illustrate the value of national campaigns for local level organisation, but women's advocacy can also operate at and for the metropolitan level as well (case study #4 describes an example of such metropolitan level advocacy in more detail).

Case study 4: "Les Femmes et la Ville", Marseille

The association Les Femmes et la Ville (Women and the City) was founded in Marseille in 1990. Its members are researchers in the social sciences, as well as elected representatives and from other women's organizations. Together they aim to foster change by understanding the role of women in the city and gender relations in society. In their fight against exclusion of

women, the association makes a distinction between the action of the public authorities on behalf of women in the city, and the initiatives taken by the women of Marseille themselves, either in formal or informal associations, both to put pressure on the authorities, and to help themselves in neighbourhoods and suburbs, often in the absence of public support.

Marseille boasts a wide range of women's organisations, many of which are affiliated to Les Femmes et la Ville. They include local branches of national and international associations such as the Women's Civic and Social Union, Young Women's Christian Association, University Women, Soroptimists, Wizo, and the Family Planning Association. There are also organisations indigenous to Marseille. The Centre for Guidance, Documentation and Information for Women was created in 1974 and is subsidised by the municipality. It publishes two periodicals which provide a forum for the women of Marseille to express their concerns. It also provides legal advice and undertakes training and "action-research". Another example is FLORA (Women's Struggle: Autonomous Regional Organisation) which is active in the cultural sphere, organising workshops on writing, cinema and other forms of self-expression by women. The Mediterranean Women's Forum is a highly active forum for dialogue.

At the neighbourhood level, there are numerous women's organisations, mainly focusing on the mother-child relationship. Women with school-going children seek opportunities to meet other women. They come together as mothers' groups but this often extends to becoming involved in community responsibilities. Such groups have become very involved in addressing sensitive but pressing issues such as racism and the drugs problem. The women of Marseille, through a network of diverse organisations, are actively involved citizens. Awareness and solidarity are growing among them, and they are becoming better organised.

Source: Yvonne Knibiehler, "Combating Exclusion in Marseille", paper presented to the OECD High Level Conference on Women in the City, Paris, 4-6 October, 1994.

Gender Equity in Urban Partnerships

Civic engagement in urban governance requires new forms of urban partnerships between users, designers and decision-makers. To achieve these, it is important to foster horizontal linkages between different organisations and actors involved in human settlements development: politicians, activists, advocacy groups, self-help organisations, professionals, employers, users and beneficiaries. It is also necessary to maintain vertical linkages between the various levels of political power - local, regional, national and federal - and ensure that the interests of both women and men are represented at each stage. Linkages and partnerships do not necessarily imply gender harmony and lack of conflict as different interest-based groups will defend their interests both within and between organisations. But it does imply keeping the channels of communication open and an inclusive rather than exclusive approach to urban partnerships.

Partnerships should ideally be built on shared interests, reciprocal support and mutual benefit, with each partner contributing according to their respective resources, strengths and areas of

expertise. Reciprocity is built on valuing and legitimising the specific resources of the partners, whether these are material resources, managerial coordination, local information, professional expertise, entrepreneurship or the enthusiasm and energy of residents. Clearly there is a need to recognise the interests, contributions and reciprocal potential of women as well as men. An increasingly common approach to democratising and fostering the concept and process of gender-sensitive partnership, is to consider women as equal stakeholders, with specific interests and needs. While this can be useful, a potential danger is to characterise women en masse as a single group of stakeholders. In reality, they constitute as diverse a group as men involved in urban partnerships. There are both women and men among different participant or partner groups. Women are as likely as men to have opposing as well as complementary interests and concerns. Thus if women are singled out as one, singular group, specific gender issues get ignored.

Furthermore, the stakeholder approach might identify actors, but does not necessarily address the processes and practices by which partnerships are established. Urban partnerships are potentially the vehicle through which bottom-up efforts can intersect or dovetail with top-down approaches. It is vital not only that women participate, but that the partnership process recognises specific concerns of women who have to balance multiple responsibilities that are not always compatible with existing procedures and who are therefore less able to participate with equal experience and skill in male-dominated forums.

Gender-sensitive urban partnerships must recognise the different approaches that women and men often adopt in organisation, negotiation and planning as a result of their socialisation and experience of public life. In addition to having specific interests and concerns, women have particular approaches towards managing their environments. One example is that women tend to establish informal neighbourhood networks through their daily living patterns. This is not because women have some "natural" or intrinsic affinity with the local environment but because they confront their neighbourhoods on a daily basis in the course of the activities they undertake within the existing gender division of labour. These networks can be utilised most effectively towards improved urban planning and decision-making processes.

Source: The Norwegian Ministry of Environment, "A Women's Perspective in Public Planning, Municipal Planning on Women's Terms", March, 1990.

All too frequently women are included in urban partnerships only at the implementation stage and remain excluded from the formulation, design and resource allocation stages of programmes and projects. New forms of partnership, therefore, need to adopt an enabling approach. This should foster (on the part of all parties involved) a commitment to developing inter-organisational relationships conducive to genuine participatory processes that include both women and men, and at all stages. Moreover, it is also acknowledged that genuine participation by diverse groups means "reconceptualising the meaning of "successful" organisations and defining new contractual procedures" (OECD 1995). Strong linkages are needed between grassroots organisations, urban professionals and their organisations and the decision-makers responsible for policy. The more women are involved in all these arenas, the easier it will be to keep local activism robust and to make strong and empowering links.

Case study 6: Grassroots Women Reclaiming and Rebuilding Community: Neighbourhood Women's Renaissance

Neighbourhood Women's Renaissance (NWR) is a three building, thirty-three unit apartment complex which opened in Williamsburg, Brooklyn on the former Greenpoint Hospital site in 1993. A local group of grassroots women from this multi-ethnic low income community, working in a coalition of neighbourhood organisations, led a ten-year campaign to re-develop this site for

an innovative community plan to adapt the former hospital to a multi-complex low income housing site which included a nursing home and community medical clinic.

Twelve years later, forty-five units of affordable housing have been built, the majority owned by Neighbourhood Women's Renaissance Limited Partnership (a subsidiary of Neighbourhood Women of Williamsburg, Greenpoint), the only grassroots women's organisation in the city of New York which owns and operates affordable housing. A mixed victory, the housing currently coexists alongside a city-run 400 bed homeless men's shelter on the same complex. Regrettably, most of the innovative women-centered design concepts NRW sought to implement to demonstrate what poor women need to succeed in work and family, were forcibly dropped by funding agencies who were incapable of planning housing with women at the forefront.

The case is an example of the support structures and barriers grassroots women encounter when they initiate a pro-active, comprehensive community development plan to expand local community control over land re-use and abandoned city buildings, and to ensure that women are empowered to own, design and control significant housing resources which reflect the needs of women and their families. As such it provides insights for planners and urban policy-makers on the participatory planning, design and financing mechanisms that are needed for low income women to serve as empowered community re-developers.

Source: Sandra Schilen, "Case Study: Grassroots Women Reclaiming and Rebuilding Community: Neighbourhood Women's Renaissance", paper presented at the ACCEDE High Level Conference on Women in the City, Paris, 4-6, October, 1994.

Planning with a Gender Perspective

Women experience and use the urban environment in different ways from men and thus have different priorities in terms of services and infrastructure. Despite this, women's interests and needs as users of cities rarely feature in urban policy or investments. This is hardly surprising when women are largely excluded from urban planning decision-making processes. There is a strong argument, therefore, for policy-makers and planners, whether women or men, to be gender aware so that women are consulted and encouraged to participate in the planning process. In the following and final sections, examples of gendered needs in selected urban sectors will be outlined.

The Transport Priorities of Women and Men

Women and men have distinct transport requirements. Yet transport planning often disregards women's priorities because of a focus on mobility rather than accessibility and a preoccupation with the formal sector worker's journey and itinerary. Women's travel needs frequently require transport outside of peak hours and to alternative destinations from those of men. And yet cost cutting inevitably involves a reduction in off-peak services, a consequence of the economy evaluation made by planners using conventional cost/benefit measures which ignore the value of the trips women make in their reproductive role (Levy 1991). It should be noted here that it is not only the priorities of women that are overlooked by conventional transport planning, but also those of men outside of centrally located, formal sector employment.

As mothers and carers, women have to escort others. For example, women are most likely to be the ones looking after young children, elderly or sick relatives, and visiting schools and clinics. It is women who assume most domestic and community management responsibilities and women are prevalent in the informal economy. Women engaged in informal sector activities are often burdened with heavy loads. Moreover, working women usually combine paid work with their domestic responsibilities. Women depend more than men on public transport and walking than on private cars or other vehicles. Yet conditions of travel on public transport are often abysmal. Affordable transport systems circumvent critical destinations, they are overcrowded and sometimes dangerous and are often unreliable and irregular. This hinders women in their domestic and caring responsibilities, impedes their productivity and even threatens their safety.

The Gender Dimensions of Housing and Basic Urban Services

The urban poor are generally denied access to secure land tenure and housing, and to basic infrastructure and services. For political, legal or economic reasons they are often confined to sites that are unsuited to human settlement, such as hill-sides, garbage dumps, swamps and near sources of pollution. Insecurity of tenure discourages the poor from investing in public space; yet there is ample evidence of women organising themselves to improve their surroundings and their security. Moser (1993) cites examples of a range of low-income urban women's organisational activities around health issues, child care, water, waste recycling, self-help housing and transportation, indicating a commitment to urban life unmatched by official support or encouragement.

When housing programmes, upgrading schemes or infrastructure developments present opportunities for the improvement of human settlements, women are often excluded by conventional eligibility criteria; their incomes are too low, or they do not have the time and skills to engage in self-help schemes. For women who are included, either on their own account or within the context of households, they are rarely consulted. Their needs are often ignored in the design of human settlements, the location of housing, and the provision of urban services. A common assumption, for example, is that all productive work takes place outside the home and is undertaken by men. This is certainly not the case in many countries where female-headed households constitute a large and growing proportion of urban dwellers. They frequently have to combine domestic and productive activities, both in terms of utilisation of time and space. The different roles of men and women within the gender division of labour have implications for house design, site layout, zoning and regulatory frameworks more generally (the links between gender and shelter are analysed in depth in Chant 1996).

Case study 7: Considering Women in the Quintas de San Jorge Housing Project, Cordoba, Argentina

Cordoba is the second largest city in Argentina. The local government, elected in 1983 and reelected in 1987, undertook a range of social policies including the construction of dwellings and site and service schemes for the residents of squatter settlements. The Quintas de San Jorge housing project aimed at resettling 365 families from two settlements over a two and a half year period. Different phases of the project saw different types of housing constructed. They are distinguished on the basis of the number of rooms, the functions they were designed for, the lay-out, and the potential for expansion. Dwellings were either finished houses built by private contractors, or self-help construction programmes carried out by mutual aid groups and then assigned to different group members.

An attempt was made to assess the number of women-headed

households and to ensure their access. However, women-headed households were generally assigned the worst sites or dwelling types emerging out of the self-build component of the programme. They were often assigned core houses designed for extension. Although 50 per cent of the core houses had been expanded in the three years following the project, only a few women headed households were able to undertake building improvements.

Modifications were confined to fences to delimit their plots and increase their security, rather than to increase their living space. Overcrowding therefore remained a problem. Overcrowding was also compounded by the fact that the data collected for the project did not reveal the complex variety of kinship and other relationships within households. In particular it disguised the prevalence of women-maintained families living within broader households, multiple generations living under one roof, children from former unions and resident relatives and friends.

Another key design problem which particularly affected women's daily lives was the kitchen being incorporated into the living area, or being too small for the old-fashioned and large furniture and equipment owned by these households. The design also ignored the range of activities that had to take place with the use of either fuel or water. The result was that kitchens became sculleries, and cooking activities continued to take place in open spaces at the back of the dwelling. This was reinforced by the high cost of gas and kerosene, leading women to opt for firewood or charcoal as cooking fuel.

Source: Falu and Curutchet 1991.

Women, as prime users of housing and human settlements, often have insights which can improve design and prevent failure and wastage. Although the grid pattern may be easier to develop in housing projects, it is often resisted by women who, in informal settlements arrange the construction of dwellings on a communal, circular pattern allowing for collective child-minding, greater sociability and security, and reduced isolation. Consultation with women is also important for the design, delivery and maintenance of urban services and communal facilities. Women's responsibility for household and community management gives them a particular vested interest in safe water supply, efficient sanitation, solid waste removal and the provision of affordable and reliable sources of energy.

Single Adult Households and Women-maintained Families

A gender perspective shows that the urbanisation process is being accompanied by an increasing diversity of household types, with single adult households and women-maintained families emerging as an important and growing household form. Single adult households are invariably headed by women. A growing phenomenon is an increase in the number of women-maintained families. In these households the combined income of women family members either exceeds that of men, or is more secure than the wages received by men in casual or irregular employment (Beall 1995b). However, in these households income is low. They are disproportionately affected by unsatisfactory housing, poor urban design, environmental degradation and the failure of local government, city officials or the private sector to respond to their priorities in relation to infrastructure and services.

Women usually earn less than men but this is particularly likely if they are among the growing number of women-headed households both in the industrialised countries of the West and in the developing world. It is estimated that globally one third of households are now de facto women-headed, with the percentage often being higher in urban areas. Urban households headed or maintained by women are likely to be poorer than those headed by men. Women from these households engage in specific economic survival strategies to balance their responsibilities for income-generation and household reproduction and face special problems in relation to child rearing and when engaging in community activities.

Thus, urban policies need to understand and respond to the roles and responsibilities of both men and women, their different access to and control over resources and decision-making, and their mutual and conflictual needs and interests, in part through disaggregating by gender categories currently used in an aggregate way - the "family", "the household", "the community" and "the urban poor".

Source: J Beall, based on advisory work in gender policy and planning with the Presidential Programme for Youth, Women and the Elderly, Republic of Colombia, on developing a gender policy and institutionalising a gender perspective in policy, planning and the decentralisation process, 1992-94.

Conclusion

The city, as both site and symbol of the rapid pace of social change in many societies, has come to represent a critical problematique in development discourse and practice. The tensions between economic growth, social equity and political legitimacy are manifest in cities around the world. These tensions must find some resolution if urban development is to be not only sustainable but humane. Good governance is a concept around which discussion of such tensions may coalesce and this paper has argued that good governance, with its emphasis on civic engagement and participation, can only be properly understood with reference to prevailing constructions of gender. In delineating strategies by which such understanding may be generated, and urban governance become more gender-sensitive, the paper calls for new partnerships between planners and people, the state and civil society but, above all, between women and men.

Women and men are not just workers or homemakers but have a range of social roles in the household, market and community. If the concept of gender helps to uncover the constructed, and thus mutable, nature of these social roles, it also directs attention to the interaction between the organisation of work and other social relationships. The consequence of this interaction for many women is a burden of multiple responsibilities for both social reproduction and economic production, many of which are unremunerated and thus invisible in national accounts and other data used for planning purposes.

Despite this, women often play an important role in urban development, particularly at the neighbourhood level. In some contexts this is being recognised by urban policy makers and professionals and women's participation is sought in public-private partnerships which embrace community participation, urban regeneration or the problems of distressed or conflict-ridden areas. This is often for reasons of project effectiveness, although there is also a genuine and growing appreciation of the value and achievements of women, particularly in local development.

However, women's multiple responsibilities continue to constrain them from full engagement in the processes and institutions of urban governance. Recognising that these responsibilities are a consequence of the interaction between the organisation of work and other social roles implies recognising the interdependence of women and men in efforts to account for and redefine this interaction. Thus, gender-sensitive urban development cannot be the responsibility of women in public office and women planners alone. On the contrary, the development of gender planning competence on the part of all urban professionals is vital.

This includes conducting an analysis of the issues and problems with a gender perspective. It also includes understanding the capacities and vulnerabilities of various participants and the strengths and weaknesses of the different partners involved. It ensures consultation with a diverse range of people, even if that means employing special consultative, participative and planning techniques and taking additional time to reach certain categories of people. These might be women who are "invisible" to gender-blind planners or children who cannot easily make themselves heard in decision-making fora. Policy and planning with a gender or diversity perspective does not come "naturally" to professionals, whether women or men. Decision-makers in local government, public office and planning bodies need to be encouraged to provide training for career and skills development along these lines and to institute operational procedures and an organisational culture which fosters gender-sensitive practice and inclusive partnerships.

Engendering the practice of urban governance directs attention to broader questions of diversity and civic engagement. Women are not the only group to be marginalised from planning and policy-making processes. If civic engagement is to harness the full complement of human energy and creativity, then cities need to be inclusive and to welcome social diversity. This means seeing people not just as workers, but also in other roles, for example as users, clients, pleasure-seekers and participants. While planners compartmentalise different spheres of activity, people do not. Integrated and multi-sectoral approaches to urban development present opportunities for planners to respond to the complexities of peoples' lives, and to recognise difference and diversity. They are also an opportunity to involve both women and men in the control of their everyday lives and thus go far to not only improve gender equality but also develop more effective urban development practice.

References

Barrig, M. 1991. "Women and development in Peru: Old models, new actors" in Environment and Urbanization, 3(2) October.

Beall, J. 1995a. "In Sickness and in Health: Engendering Health Policy for Development", in Third World Planning Review, 12(2) May.

Beall, J. 1995b. "Social Security and Social Networks Among the Urban Poor in Pakistan", in Habitat International, 19(4).

Beall, J. 1996. "Participation in the City: where do women fit in ?", in Gender and Development, 4(1) February.

Chant, S. 1996. Gender, Urban Development and Housing. Habitat Monograph Series #3. UNDP. New York.

Falu, A. and M. Curutchet. 1991. "Rehousing the Urban Poor: looking at women first" in Environment and Urbanization, 3(2) October.

Hasan, A. 1989. "A low cost sewer system by low-income Pakistanis", in Turner, B. ed. Building Community: A Third World Case Book. Habitat International Coalition.

Hasan, A. 1990. "Community organizations and non-government organizations in the urban field in Pakistan", in Environment and Urbanization, 2(1) April.

Khan, A.H. 1991. Orangi Pilot Project Programmes. Orangi Pilot Project. Karachi.

Levy, C. 1991. "Towards Gender-Aware Provision of Urban Transport" in Gender and Third World Development: Module 5. University of Sussex: Institute of Development Studies.

Machado, L. 1987. "The problems for women-headed households in a low-income housing programme in Brazil", in Moser, C. and L. Peake. eds. Women, Housing and Human Settlements. Tavistock Publications.

Manor, J. 1995. "Democratic Decentralization in Africa and Asia" in IDS Bulletin, 26(2).

Molyneux, M. 1985. "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, State Revolution in Nicaragua" in Feminist Studies, 11(2).

Moser, C. 1987. "Mobilization is women's work: struggles for infrastructure in Guayaquil, Ecuador", in Moser, C. and L. Peake. eds. Women, Housing and Human Settlements. Tavistock Publications.

Moser, C. et al. 1993. Urban Poverty in the Context of Structural Adjustment: Recent Evidence and Policy Responses. Washington: World Bank TWU Discussion Paper No. 4.

Nimpuno - Parente, P. 1987. "The struggle for shelter: women in a site and service project in Nairobi, Kenya" in Moser, C. & L. Peake. eds. Women, Housing and Human Settlements. Tavistock Publications.

OECD. 1995. Women in the City: Housing, Services and the Urban Environment. Paris: OECD.

Rai, S. 1995. "Women and Public Power: Women in the Indian Parliament" in IDS Bulletin, 26(3).

Robinson, M. 1995. "Introduction, Towards Democratic Governance", in IDS Bulletin, 26(2) April.

The Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres [SPARC]. 1986. Annual Report. Bombay, India.

Wekerle, G.R. 1993. "Responding to Diversity: housing developed by and for women" in Dandekar, H.C. ed. Shelter, Women and Development: First and Third World Perspectives. George Wahn, Ann Arbor.