

PRESIDIUM MODEL UN CONFERENCE 2017

“Addressing Systematic Gender Inequalities with special emphasis on

A) Gender Sensitive Infrastructure and Right to Property B) Right to Decent Work and Economic Growth C) Right to Reproductive Health”



UNITED NATIONS WOMEN

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Gender Sensitive Infrastructure and Right to Property

For the purpose of this checklist, infrastructure is defined as a structure / space that is used to render services to the general public or a specific group of the general public. So, the term infrastructure refers to public places such as buildings and facilities, including both indoor and outdoor facilities.

Infrastructures may include but are not restricted to: • Work related structures (offices, factories, shops) • Education related structures (schools, universities, nurseries) • Health related structures (hospitals, clinics) • Leisure related structures (restaurants, cinemas) • Culture related structures (museums, heritage sites) • Outdoor spaces (public gardens, playgrounds)

Have you ever thought about how public infrastructure affects your life? How nurseries enable people to participate in employment or education? How street lights, public transport and pedestrian paths enable people to move around safely and independently. How parks and public spaces are important so people can benefit from outdoor activities and enjoy leisure time?

We use infrastructure every day, often without even realizing. It underpins our lives and is essential for the functioning of a society. It is also an effective measure for judging a country's or region's development.

But what does all of this have to do with gender equality?

Infrastructure is meant to address people's needs and make life easier. Therefore, the different roles and needs of women and men who use public infrastructure have to be taken into consideration and addressed.

In Europe, women are more likely to be employed in part-time roles and perform the bulk of unpaid domestic work. They also spend less time on leisure and sporting activities than

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men. The unequal division of roles in the labour market and division of time spent on domestic tasks can have an impact on the way in which women and men use or need certain types of infrastructure.

For example, women are more likely than men to use public transport and take on caring responsibilities for young children. They would therefore benefit more from buses with a lowering platform and a dedicated space to leave their pram. Bus routes with bus stops placed close to schools, nurseries, workplaces and shops would also benefit women and men who use public transport to access these places on a regular basis. These small adjustments could make life easier for people who use buses and travel with children and lead to increased mobility and decrease social isolation.

Research suggests that there is differentiated access to use of and control over infrastructure facilities and services by men and women, linked to inequalities in intra-household relations, property rights and cultural restrictions (Doran 1990). Yet in reality infrastructure projects are often gender insensitive because it is assumed that women and men will automatically equally benefit from new infrastructure, without due acknowledgement of the full range of social and economic impacts, whether positive or negative. Too often, the positive outcomes experienced by women through infrastructural projects have been unintended and unplanned. Well-designed, appropriately located and affordably priced infrastructure can be a powerful tool in the pursuit of gender equality. Therefore, gender mainstreaming should not only be regarded as a factor requiring attention in infrastructure projects but rather must be considered as a critical factor in ensuring the project’s success and sustainability by ensuring that women do not become worse off both absolutely and in relation to men (World Bank 2008).

Gender equality is a critical development tool and strongly recommended into mainstreaming of gender into the key areas of operational focus of the institution, especially infrastructure, such as roads, transportation, energy, ICT, rural water supply and sanitation, to ensure effective inclusive development, gender equality and poverty reduction efforts.

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The objective is to provide a tool for effective mainstreaming of gender in infrastructure programs and projects to: (i) guide task managers and implementation teams to plan, design, implement, monitor and evaluate gender-sensitive and responsive infrastructure projects; and (ii) assist projects implementers to become both agents for ensuring effective gender analysis and mainstreaming of gender in supported infrastructure development interventions.

Infrastructures: Gender Neutral Spaces?

In general, infrastructure is considered as being a structure which hosts individuals in their daily life activities. Structures are considered as being static and while, it is assumed that individuals shape structures, the way structures shape individuals is often neglected. This then leads to the assumption that infrastructure is a gender neutral space. Such an assumption, does not consider gender as a factor which affects the way we experience infrastructures. So in reality infrastructure plays a very important role in development of communities and has a fundamental impact on people’s economic, social and cultural activities.

Below, are two examples of how gender affects the way we access or use infrastructures: A woman choosing a street route that is considered safer than others; and A museum where all the exhibitions are telling stories about men and men’s hardship.

Potential Gender Issues in Infrastructure Projects

A gender issue can be defined as any issue which arises due to one’s social constructed gender or biological sex. Below are some potential gender issues in infrastructure projects:

Privacy Issues Example: Any public infrastructure but especially entertainment and leisure spaces which usually have a high influx of people should provide a breastfeeding room to provide women with the necessary privacy and comfort to feed their children.

Safety Issues Example: Infrastructure must be well lit and designed in a way that ensures individuals feel safe and comfortable accessing the building at all times of the day.

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Inadequate planning might lead to exposure to crime, such as sexual harassment, rape or mugging.

Accessibility Issues Example: Roads and pavements have to be accessible and safe for parents, guardians and caretakers using pushchairs in order to ensure a safe pedestrian environment. Moreover, road and pavements must also be accessible and safe for elderly persons using support frames. For example, rugged paving stones, cobbles and uneven roads are not adequate. Another gender issue related to accessibility and infrastructure is public transport, which must be fully accessible – for example, by having low ramps and enough space for pushchairs / support frames. Parking spaces must also be easily accessible to parents, guardians and caretakers using pushchairs by being located near a lift and also spacious enough to be able open the car doors with ease. Furthermore, another issue concerning gender and accessibility is related to disability. Separate toilet facilities must be provided for males with a disability and for females with a disability, rather than providing one toilet for both genders.

Biological Issues Example: Infrastructure must be designed in such a way that ensures pregnant women have easy access to a lift and staircases and also comfortable seating. Adequate breastfeeding facilities should also be provided in a public infrastructure.

Childcare Issues Example: An infrastructure must have ramps and wide entrances which allow parents, guardians and caretakers to easily access a building as well as a lift. Any public infrastructure must ensure multiple and flexible use of its space, in order to ensure that individuals are able to carry out their different social roles at ease. Moreover, toilet facilities must ensure that both women and men have access to baby changing facilities. Further to this, if there are no toilet facilities which parents, guardians and caretakers can access with their children, separate from the usual male and female toilets, children’s toilet facilities should be provided.

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Women’s Land & Property Rights

In many countries around the world, women’s property rights are limited by social norms, customs and legislation hampering their economic status and opportunities to overcome poverty. Even in countries where women constitute the majority of small farmers and do more than 75% of the agricultural work, they are routinely denied the right to own the land they cultivate and depend on to raise their families.

Ownership of land and property empowers women and provides income and security. Without resources such as land, women have limited say in household decision-making, and no recourse to the assets during crises. This often relates to other vulnerabilities such as domestic violence and HIV and AIDS.

In regions of conflict, the impact of unequal land rights has particularly serious consequences for women — often the only survivors. In conflict and post-conflict situations, the number of women-headed households often increases sharply as many men have either been killed or are absent. Without their husbands, brothers or fathers — in whose name land and property titles are traditionally held — they find themselves denied access to their homes and fields by male family members, former in-laws or neighbors. Without the security of a home or income, women and their families fall into poverty traps and struggle for livelihoods, education, sanitation, health care, and other basic rights.

In recent years, international agreements have repeatedly reiterated the importance of women’s land and property rights.

- The Beijing Platform for Action affirmed that women’s right to inheritance and ownership of land and property should be recognized.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has underscored it, referring to rural women’s rights to equal treatment in land and agrarian reform processes.

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- Women’s property rights are an implicit part of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, specifically Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and Goal 3 on gender equality.

UN Women advocates for women’s land and property rights as part of its core strategy to enhance women’s economic security and rights and reduce feminized poverty. There is a strong focus on ensuring that women benefit from equal rights to property under the law, as well as in actual practice at the grassroots level.

- In Aceh, UN Women’s gender advisor worked with the Agency for Recovery and Reconstruction for Aceh and Nias (BRR) to implement a joint land titling policy so women and men are included on titles.

BACKGROUND: WHY FOCUS ON WOMEN AND LAND?

Women’s access to, use of and control over land and other productive resources are essential to ensuring their right to equality and to an adequate standard of living. These resources help to ensure that women are able to provide for their day-to-day needs and those of their families, and to weather some of life’s most difficult challenges. Women’s access to land and other productive resources is integrally linked to discussions around global food security, sustainable economic development, as well as the pressing fight against the HIV epidemic and prevention of and responses to gender-based violence. Throughout the world, gender inequality when it comes to land and other productive resources is intimately related to women’s poverty and exclusion. The obstacles which prevent women from effectively enjoying these rights are complex and to a large extent context specific. Still, many overarching similarities are apparent.

Barriers which prevent women’s access to, control and use of land and other productive resources often include inadequate legal standards and/or ineffective implementation at national and local levels, as well as discriminatory cultural attitudes and practices at the

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institutional and community level. In many communities gender disparities with regard to land and other productive resources are linked to assumptions that men, as heads of households, control and manage land – implicitly reflecting ideas that women are incapable of managing productive resources such as land effectively, that productive resources given to women are “lost to another family” in the event of marriage, divorce or (male) death, and that men will provide for women’s financial security. Challenging these discriminatory ideas is critical.

In recent years there has been increased recognition of the importance of women’s access to, use of and control over productive resources, including land. There is a positive correlation between ensuring women’s rights to land and other productive resources and improved household welfare, as well as enhanced enjoyment of a broad range of rights for women. This holds true in both rural and urban areas. As a consequence, women acquire more power and autonomy in their families and communities, as well as in their economic and political relationships. Rural women also feel that secure land rights in particular increase their social and political status, and improve their sense of confidence and security. By diminishing the threat of forced eviction or poverty, direct and secure land rights boost women’s bargaining power in the home and improve their levels of public participation.

In the context of HIV, women’s rights to inheritance and property are “... a crucial factor in reducing women’s vulnerability to violence and HIV, as well as empowering women to cope with the social and economic impact of the epidemic at the household level”. Similarly positive effects have been reported in connection with domestic violence, with research showing that women’s ownership of property is associated with lower levels of both physical and psychological violence. Evidence also suggests that countries where women lack landownership rights or access to credit have on average 60 per cent and 85 percent more malnourished children, respectively. Important progress has been made in legal protection.

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For example, over the past few decades, many countries have reformed their constitutions and national laws to guarantee women’s equal property and inheritance rights. According to UN Women, at least 115 countries specifically recognize women’s property rights on equal terms with men. Such progress has not been uniform.⁸ Levels of legal protection are uneven and in many countries there are still significant gaps in the legal framework.

A major part of the remaining challenge revolves around implementation and enforcement. Even in countries where good laws exist, women frequently do not enjoy their rights to access and control productive resources. Implementation is too often hindered by sociocultural norms and women’s lack of knowledge of their entitlements. There is no one-size-fits-all solution; but lessons have been learned. “Socioeconomic contexts determine the appropriateness of different types of rights to land and property – including individual rights, joint-titling and group rights. Continued efforts are needed to promote gender-sensitive legislation, enforce existing legislation, make judicial systems more accessible and responsive to women, and provide legal aid to women seeking to claim their rights.”

SOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/RealizingWomensRightstoLand.pdf>

https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects_and_Specific_Initiatives/Gender_Mainstreaming-in_Practise/gmip_checklist_en.pdf