Gender Responsive Urban Planning

This editorial is based on **Ensuring women's right to the city** which was published in The Indian Express on 09/08/2023. It talks about the Gender Responsive Urban Planning and Challenges pertaining to it.

For Prelims: **Oxfam Report**, **Urbanization**

For Mains: Importance of Gender-Responsive Urban Planning in India.

Gender-responsive urban planning is an approach that **recognizes and addresses the different needs, preferences, and experiences of women and men** in urban spaces. It **aims to create cities that are inclusive, safe, accessible, and sustainable for all genders.** Gender-responsive urban planning considers how gender interacts with other factors such as **age, class, caste, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation to shape people's access to opportunities** and resources in the city.

In India, where **urbanization** is reshaping the social and economic fabric, the concept of gender-responsive urban planning gains even more significance. This approach involves rethinking traditional urban design strategies and policies to address gender-specific **challenges, and the balancing of domestic and professional responsibilities**. By integrating gender perspectives into urban planning, India can create environments that empower women, enhance their participation in the urban workforce, and contribute to their overall well-being.

Why is Gender-Responsive Urban Planning Important for India?

- **Presence of Violence and Fear:**
  - Women experience various forms of violence and harassment in **public spaces, such as streets, markets, parks, buses, trains, etc.**
    - This affects their mobility, freedom, and participation in the city.
  - According to a **2021 ORF study** across 140 Indian cities, 52 % of women turned down opportunities for education and employment due to lack of safety.
  - **A 2019 Ola study** revealed that only 9% of women from 11 cities felt it was safe to use public transport.
- **Unpaid Care Work:**
  - Women bear the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, such as domestic chores, child care, elder care, etc.
  - This limits their time and energy for paid work, education, leisure, and civic engagement.
  - **A 2018 ILO research points out** that Indian **women spend 297 minutes on housework a day, while men spend 31.**
  - A 2021 **Oxfam report** showed that **Indian women and girls put in 3.26 billion hours**

of unpaid care work daily.
- **Absence of Gender Policies and Practices:**
  - Urban planning and management often do not take into account the diverse realities and needs of women and men in the city.
  - **For example**, public transport systems **may not be affordable, accessible, or safe** for women
    - Public toilets may not be adequate or clean for women
    - Public spaces may not be designed or maintained for women's comfort and security; etc.
  - These gender inequalities have negative impacts on women's well-being, empowerment, and human rights.
  - They also hamper the social and economic development of the city and the country.
    - Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a gender-responsive approach to urban planning that ensures equal opportunities and outcomes for all genders.

What are the Related Initiatives?

- **Atal Mission for Urban Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U)**
- **Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework 2.0**
- **TULIP-The Urban Learning Internship Program**
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India)**

What are the Challenges of Gender Responsive Planning?

- **Lack of Gender-Disaggregated Data:**
  - Many urban planners and decision-makers do not have access to reliable and relevant data that reflects the different **needs, preferences, and experiences of women and men in the city.**
    - This makes it difficult to identify and **address the gaps and inequalities** that affect women's access to urban opportunities and resources.
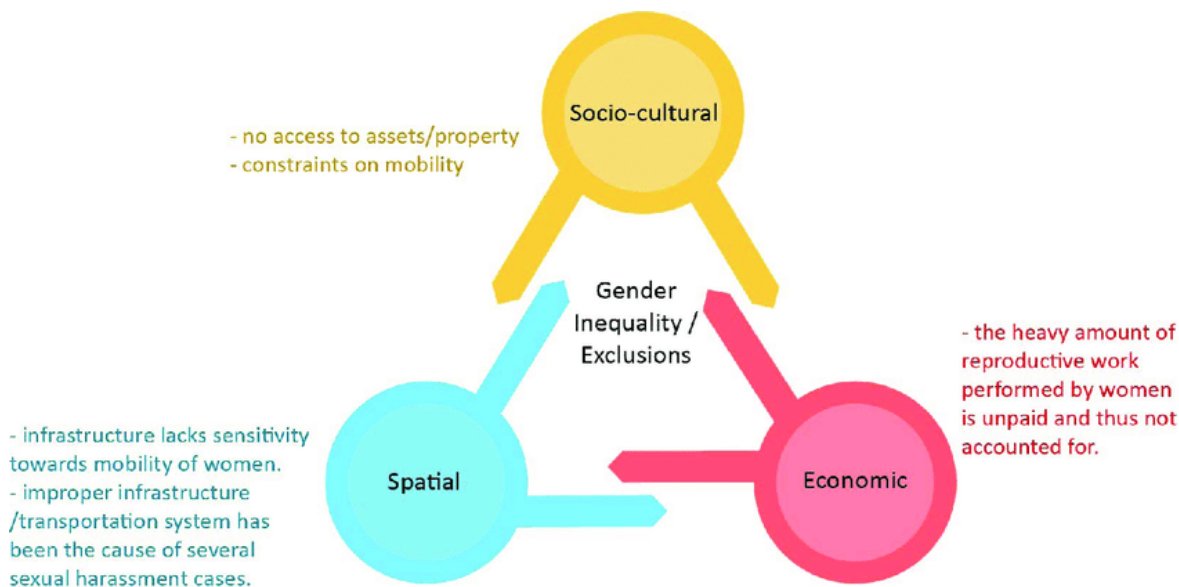- **Lack of Diverse Participation:**
  - Women and other marginalized groups are often **excluded or underrepresented in urban planning and design processes.**
  - Their voices and perspectives are not heard or valued in shaping the city.
  - This leads to urban policies and programs that **do not reflect or respond to their realities and aspirations.**
- **Lack of Gender Awareness and Capacity:**
  - Many urban practitioners, government authorities, and communities lack awareness of the importance of gender inclusion in urban planning and design.
  - They also lack **the skills, tools, and resources to effectively implement gender-responsive strategies.**
    - This results in urban interventions that are **gender-blind or even gender-biased.**
- **Lack of Political Will and Commitment:**
  - Gender-responsive urban planning **requires a strong political will and commitment** from all levels of governance and leadership.
  - It also requires adequate **funding, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms** to ensure its implementation and impact.
    - However, these are often lacking or insufficient in many contexts, especially where gender equality is not a priority or is met with resistance.

Socio-cultural

- no access to assets/property
- constraints on mobility

Gender Inequality / Exclusions

- the heavy amount of reproductive work performed by women is unpaid and thus not accounted for.

Spatial

- infrastructure lacks sensitivity towards mobility of women.
- improper infrastructure /transportation system has been the cause of several sexual harassment cases.

Economic

How can Gender-Responsive Urban Planning be Implemented in India?

- **Generating Gender-Disaggregated Data:**
  - Data is essential for understanding the situation and needs of different groups of people in the city.
  - However, most urban data is not disaggregated by gender or other relevant factors.
    - Therefore, it is important to **collect and analyze data** that reflects the diversity of urban populations and their experiences. This can help identify gaps, challenges, priorities, and opportunities for gender-responsive interventions.
- **Engaging Diverse Stakeholders:**
  - Gender-responsive urban planning **should be participatory and inclusive of all stakeholders**, especially those who are often marginalized or excluded from decision-making processes.
  - This includes women and men from different backgrounds, ages, abilities, and identities.
  - Their voices and perspectives should **inform the design, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of urban policies** and programs.
- **Addressing Multiple Dimensions of Gender Inequality**:
  - Gender-responsive urban planning should address not only the physical aspects of the city but also the **social, economic, cultural, and political aspects** that affect people's lives.
    - This means tackling the root causes of gender inequality such as **patriarchal norms, stereotypes, discrimination, and violence.**
  - It also means promoting positive changes such as gender awareness, empowerment, and solidarity among urban communities.
- **Implementing Transformative Policies and Programs:**
  - Gender-responsive urban planning **should aim to create tangible changes** in the city that improve the quality of life for all genders.
  - This can **include policies and programs such as:**
    - Providing safe, affordable, accessible, and reliable public transport systems for women.
    - Building adequate, clean, and gender-sensitive public toilets for women.
    - Creating safe, inclusive, and vibrant public spaces for women.
    - Enhancing women's access to employment, education, health care, and social protection.
    - Supporting women's participation in urban governance, leadership, and civic engagement.
    - Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in public spaces.
    - Recognizing, reducing, redistributing, and rewarding unpaid care work.
- **Adopting Some Good Practices:**
  - The **Pink Bus initiative in Bhopal**, which provides free and safe bus services for women and girls.

- The Gender Inclusive Cities Programme, which works with local governments and civil society organizations in **Delhi, Dar es Salaam, Petrozavodsk, and Rosario** to make public spaces safer and more inclusive for women.
- The **Women-Friendly City Project in Seoul,** which aims to create a city that is comfortable, safe, and convenient for women through various measures such as gender budgeting, gender impact assessment, gender-sensitive design, and gender education.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the importance and challenges of gender-responsive urban planning in India. Suggest some measures to make Indian cities more inclusive, safe, and sustainable for all genders.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world? (2017)

(a) World Economic Forum
(b) UN Human Rights Council
(c) UN Women
(d) World Health Organization

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q: How does patriarchy impact the position of middle class working women in India?**(2014)**

PDF Refernece URL: https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/gender-responsive-urban-planning