



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:**

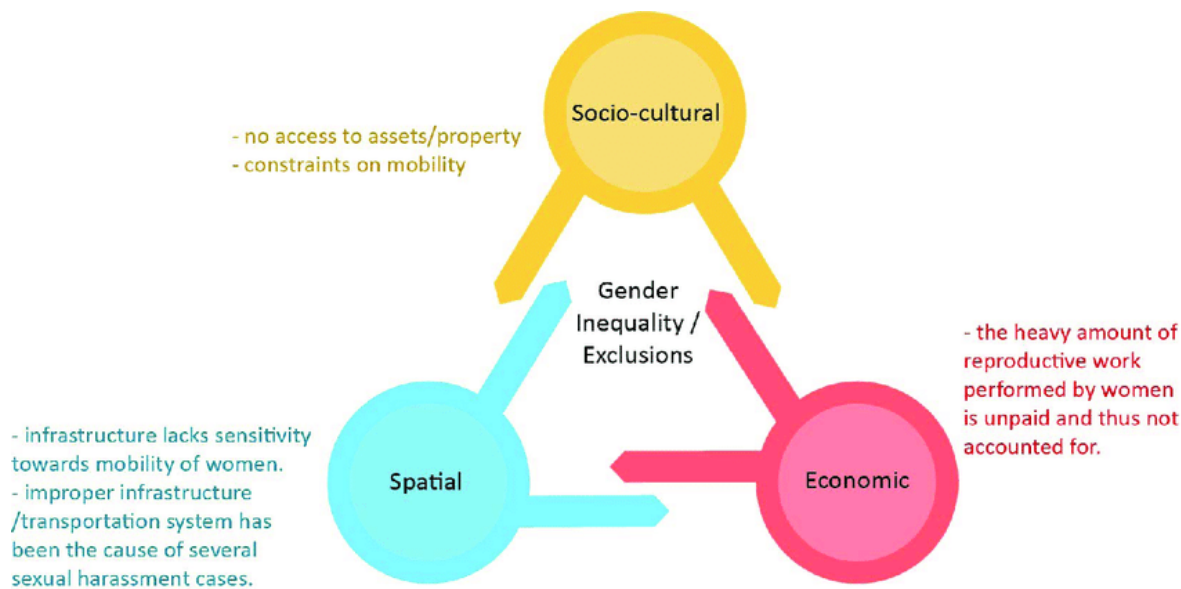
- Women and other marginalized groups are often **excluded or underrepresented in urban planning and design processes.**
- Their voices and perspectives are not heard or valued in shaping the city.
- This leads to urban policies and programs that **do not reflect or respond to their realities and aspirations.**

▪ **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.



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 Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/gender-responsive-urban-planning>