



Women on the road to Habitat III Engendering the New Urban Agenda Mid-Term Review

The Huairou Commission has brought together hundreds of women leaders and men allies from various social sectors (grassroots, academia, civil society organizations, local government, private sector) for the purpose of *Engendering the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. The Habitat Agenda remains a key political platform for promoting the policies and programs that affect the daily lives of women – housing and security of tenure, employment opportunities, access to basic services, transport, etc.

Established in 1995 at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Huairou Commission (HC) is a global coalition facilitating grassroots women’s groups to directly represent their community development and empowerment priorities in development decision-making (local to global). During the UN Habitat II Conference in 1996 until now, the Huairou Commission has functioned as a lead organizer and strategic convener of a diverse range of women’s groups and constituencies cooperating to engender and expand women’s influence in the sustainable human settlements and urban development field.¹ In the Habitat III consultative process, HC has insured women are well represented in the multiple consultative processes that will produce a zero draft of the New Urban Agenda in May, 2016. In service to this outcome, HC has also co-chaired the Women’s Partner Constituent Group (WPCG), to build consensus, informed advocacy and member state support for the women’s agenda—which will continue through to Quito

We celebrate the participatory advancement and innovation of the Habitat III process that fostered the involvement of diverse urban stakeholders in the design of the New Urban Agenda via multiple processes. It is a significant advancement in the way these global policy processes are conducted. The members of the Huairou Commission have worked hard and involved 100’s of its members, partners and allies from around the world to build a women’s platform in the NUA.

This summary and evaluation of where and how diverse women have participated in the reviews, discussions and priority setting activities to date, presented below, indicates that a significant number of women have taken pro-active leadership. Women have assisted in the review of issue papers and policy unit and acted as vocal advocates in regional and thematic consultations to position principles and policy recommendations that will empower women, improve their quality of life, and produce more equitable cities and towns by 2030.

¹The HC network connects members from over forty countries who cooperate on a variety of thematic initiatives—pioneering and sharing good practices and lessons and jointly advocating for global policy change. Securing women’s access to and effective control of housing and land, promoting women’s leadership in building resilient communities and championing decentralized gender responsive local governance processes are among HC’s current themes

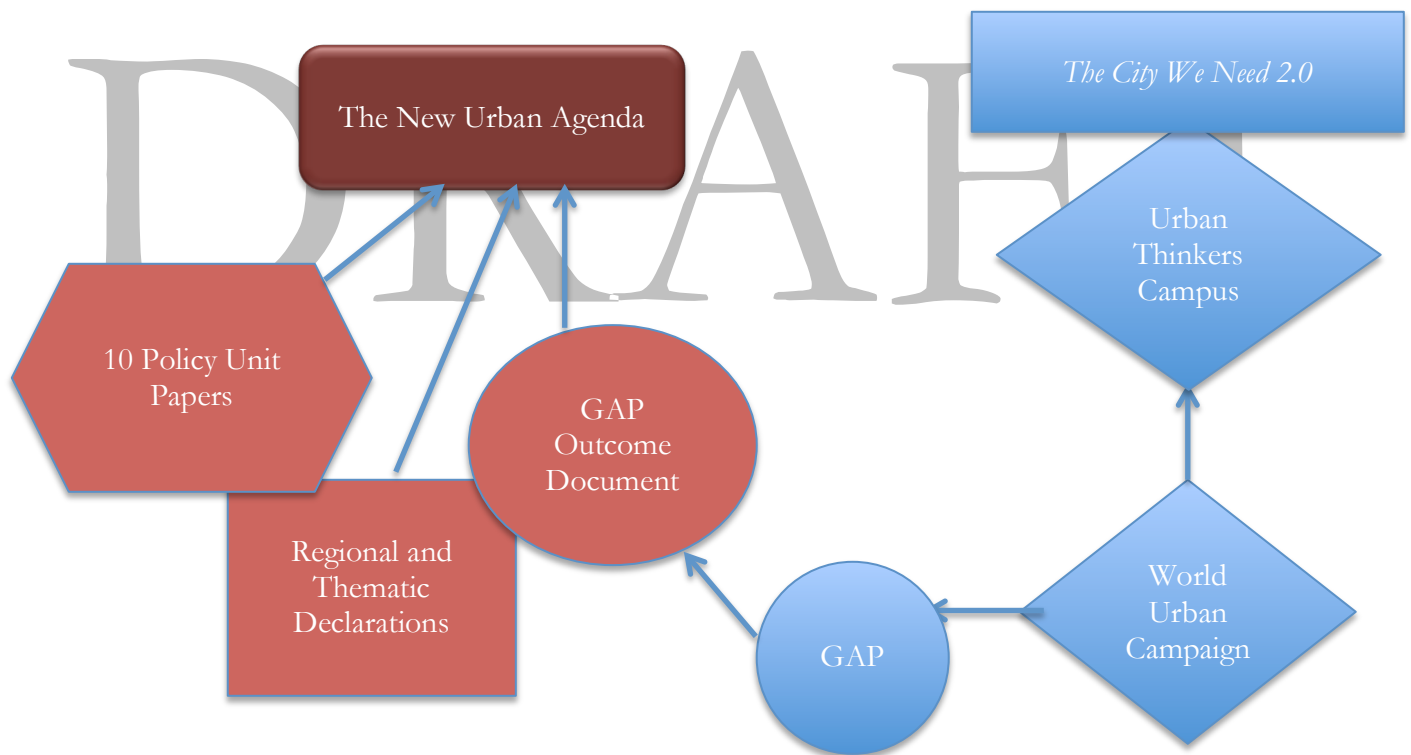




Our intention in publicizing this mid-process review is to broaden the audience awareness and support of these efforts. It is intended to help the women’s movement understand how essential housing, basic services, tenure security, decentralized local governance etc. are to gender equality and to help the professional, male dominated urban development network realize how critical these positions are to promoting inclusive cities and catalyzing SDG implementation. We also hope it will help active women’s groups and others supportive of a gender-just NUA, strategize and scale up organizing efforts to get further, faster.

This review will spell out how the Huairou Commission organized to involve women and men in building an engendered Urban Agenda – inclusive of women’s participation and priorities in design and implementation of urban development. It will focus on the Habitat III and *The City We Need 2.0* drafting processes led by Habitat III Secretariat and World Urban Campaign² respectively.

THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT DESIGN



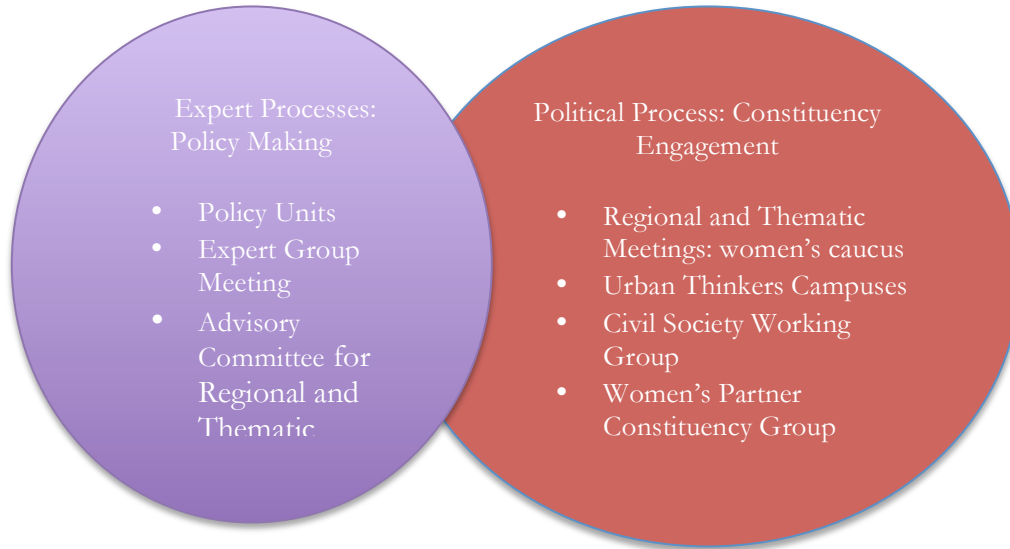
More detailed information can be found at habitat3.org; worldurbancampaign.org

² World Urban Campaign is a partner to the UN-Habitat, representing civil society coalition in urban development. They lead a parallel to Habitat III process, which consists of Urban Thinkers Campuses. Civil society organizations host campuses, where they provide their collective recommendations and policy priorities for urban development. The recommendations feed into the *City We Need 2.0* document. World Urban Campaign is directly engaged in the Habitat III process via the General Assembly of Partners, which was found by the WUC.





HUIROU COMMISSION IN THE HABITAT III PROCESSES



DRAFT

SLOW START: FROM ISSUE PAPERS TO POLICY UNIT PAPERS

We started by involving a wide variety of our women and men leaders to review all of the **22 Issue Papers** that were drafted by the UN experts and staff from various UN agencies. The papers laid groundwork and a framework for the New Urban Agenda by identifying the main issues faced by urban development stakeholders.³

The Issue Papers overall lacked recognition of women’s agency and their roles as stakeholder in urban development. 8 Issue Papers have 0-1 references to women and/or gender. Majority of the issue papers reference women only 0-3 times.

Issue Paper	"Gender"	"Women"
Issue Paper 1: Inclusive Cities	13	16
Issue Paper 2: Migration and Refugees in Urban Areas	0	0
Issue Paper 3: Safer Cities	2	8
Issue Paper 4: Urban Culture and Heritage	0	1
Issue Paper 5: Urban Rules and Legislation	0	0
Issue Paper 6: Urban Governance	3	9

³ Our member group MIRA had translated all of the 22 Issue Papers into Spanish. The Habitat III published their translations as an official translation of the papers online.





Issue Paper 7: Municipal Finance	0	0
Issue Paper 8: Urban and Spatial Planning and Design	0	2
Issue Paper 9: Urban Land	3	3
Issue Paper 10: Urban-Rural Linkages	0	3
Issue Paper 11: Public Spaces	3	3
Issue Paper 12: Local Economic Development	4	4
Issue Paper 13: Jobs and Livelihoods	4	12
Issue Paper 14: Informal Sector	3	14
Issue Paper 15: Urban Resilience	0	1
Issue Paper 16: Urban Ecosystems and Resource Management	0	0
Issue Paper 17: Cities and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management	0	1
Issue Paper 18: Urban Infrastructure and Basic Services, including Energy	1	1
Issue Paper 19: Transport and Mobility	0	6
Issue Paper 20: Housing	2	2
Issue Paper 21: Smart Cities	0	1
Issue Paper 22: Informal Settlements	0	3
Total:	38	90

- Only the Issue Papers 4 and 19 acknowledge the gendered dimension of violence and particular women and girls’ vulnerabilities in terms of urban safety: public spaces, mobility and work.
- The most significant mention of women is in the Issue Paper 9 “Urban Land”. It explicitly recognizes women’s role as food producers in the developing countries. However, this acknowledgement did not carry further to the expert process and was completely **lost** in the PU papers.
- There are also some considerations for the need to collect sex-disaggregated data to measure development effort.

The UN agencies’ expert staff produced the Issue Papers. Although they have some references to women – the safety concerns in urban space, mobility and work, they show a limited understanding of women’s roles and their agency in urban development. Building on the initial Issue Papers, **10 Policy Units (PUs)** were formed. Each of them had 20 experts – 30% of whom represented governments and 70% civil society. The PU process was a seminal step towards inclusivity in urban development because for the first time in the UN process history **grassroots women** invited to join the PU expert teams. Their goal was to analyze specific thematic areas within the umbrella of urbanization and come up with actionable recommendations for sustainable and inclusive urban development. However, the Huairou Commission was concerned with the lack of a stand-alone Policy Unit on Gender and decided to take proactive initiative.

In order to respond to existing knowledge gaps and the lack of a stand-alone gender policy unit, the Huairou Commission in partnership with the Habitat III Secretariat hosted an **Expert Group Meeting** in September – before the Policy Unit process begun - in New York City. It brought together progressive experts on the topic from institutional and non-institutional backgrounds: the grassroots, academia, local and national governments and international institutions to deliver specific gender-





sensitive urban development recommendations and indicators. The EGM *Engendering the New Urban Agenda* report was distributed to all the 200 HIII Policy Unit experts, 15 of which represented Huairou Commission and were tasked with including women’s priorities in the PU papers.

Policy Unit	Corresponding Issue Paper
PU1 Right to the City and Cities for All	Inclusive Cities
PU2 Socio-Cultural Urban Framework	Migration and Refugees in Urban Areas Safer Cities Urban Culture and Heritage
PU3 National Urban Policies	Urban Rules and Legislation
PU4 Urban Governance Capacity and Institutional Development	Urban Governance
PU5 Municipal Finance and Local Fiscal Systems	Municipal Finance
PU 6 Urban Spatial Strategies: Land and Market Segregation	Urban and Spatial Planning and Design Urban Land Urban-rural Linkages Public Space
PU7 Urban Economic Development Strategies	Local Economic Development Jobs and Livelihoods Informal Sector
PU8 Urban Ecology and Resilience	Urban Resilience Urban Ecosystems and Resource Management Cities and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction
PU9 Urban Services and Technology PU10 Housing Policies	Urban Infrastructure and Basic Services, Including Energy Transport and Mobility Housing Smart Cities Informal Settlements

The PU process consisted of two stages – the policy unit framework production and the policy unit paper. Four trends regarding references to women emerged in the **Policy Unit Frameworks**.

- 1) The PUs begin using gender empowerment language and references to women overall are substantially augmented; all the PU frameworks except PU7 name women as a NUA constituency.
- 2) The majority of the PUs legitimizes women’s claims to receive equal access to the opportunities and benefits of urban development; some even recognize the gender-specific vulnerabilities that call for special consideration in urban frameworks, such as gender-violence, security of tenure, transportation, legal rights, etc.
- 3) PUs 1, 2, and 8 identified women as an urban development stakeholder and stress their invaluable leadership and knowledge of development in the local contexts. Policy Units 1 and 2 called for building institutional support to women’s empowerment via securing their equal rights, equal representation in the government, and promoting leadership programs and education for women and girls.





- 4) All the Policy Unit Frameworks fell short of engendering the urban development infrastructure to fully facilitate the equitable inclusion of women.

In transforming the Frameworks into **Policy Papers**, there was pushback against creating so-called preferential treatment for women from among the minorities and marginalized groups. In spite the fact that women compose half of the world's population, there was a strong resistance to introduce the necessary measures to attain gender-equality in urban development policy. The Policy Papers therefore show both general and very specific victories and losses, especially in regards to securing recognition of women's agency in development and engendering of the infrastructure in the urban paradigm.

General victories:

- Consistent call throughout all Policy Papers to collect gender-disaggregated data with a mention of engaging the people involved in the collection process specifically in PU8.
- Transition towards more gender-conscious language that emphasizes the diversity of stakeholder constituencies, calling for additional measures to secure equal representation of women in leadership positions. The Policy Papers more thoroughly employ gender empowerment language.

Specific victories:

- Acknowledgement that public space and safety in urban areas is a women's issue. Gender perspective is referred to as integral to spatial urban planning due to women's vulnerability to violence in public spaces and their restricted mobility.
- The Policy Papers call for gender-responsive policies in the areas of housing and secure tenure and integration into urban economy.
- Some of the papers acknowledge the contributions of care economy to the urban economic paradigms.
- Policy Unit 8 refers to women as agents of their own empowerment and to their capacity to introduce social change.

Despite these gains, the Policy Papers overall insufficiently discuss women's role as stakeholders and generally designate issues of engendering under the purview of the government sector and other institutions. There is a lack of consideration of women's contributions to development partnerships and localization.

MOBILIZING POLITICAL WILL

During the Habitat III process, a series of **Regional and Thematic Meetings** were held. Prior to the meetings, the Huairou Commission had identified local hosts for each of the regional meetings, who organized local and regional women's constituency in daily **women's caucuses** and for other forms of participation. The women's caucus tradition dates back to the Habitat II process. The caucuses serve a multi-fold function: 1) they support women's political organizing as it is a space to debate development priorities; 2) The caucuses enable to build links between women's groups at the local and global levels; 3) The allow to lobby local and national government representatives and other stakeholders to support women's priorities.





Our regional grassroots leader from Africa reflected on the value of women's caucus during the Pretoria Thematic Meeting on Informal Settlements:

"We each in go round shared our expectation on how we want the final declaration should look like. I talked about ensuring the document reflecting the priorities of the grassroots women living in informal settlements and the document speaking to ensure participation of women in all planning, monitoring and data collection, and I shared that as a women constituency our biggest contribution to the Habitat 3 has been to engender the New Urban Agenda and we feel so bad when we get a draft that does not say anything on the role of women and recognition of grassroots women as key contributors."

– Violet Shivutse

In addition to the time-tested women's caucus tradition, the Huairou Commission got engaged in the new collective civil society stakeholder organizing process – the General Assembly of Partners. At the dawn of its initiation under the umbrella of the World Urban Campaign, the Huairou Commission was elected to lead **Women Partner Constituency Group**. Currently, the Women's PCG consists of more than 60 member organizations with a steadily growing number. The Huairou Commission also supports Farmers, Grassroots and Indigenous Partner Constituency Groups. Moreover, the Commission has successfully endorsed formation of the Older Persons' Constituency Group. Engagement in the GAP creates yet another platform for women to strengthen their political capital in the Habitat III process. Moreover, it enables women to continue lobbying for an inclusive partnership approach to development implementation post-Habitat III.

CLAIMING SPACE IN REGIONAL AND THEMATIC MEETINGS

For the first time in the Habitat history, **grassroots women were invited to join the Advisory Committees for the Regional and Thematic Declarations**. Initially, the Declaration drafting posed its own challenges for integrating the gender perspective, principally because the drafting remained under the purview of government agencies with limited civil society representation. However, it increased significantly as time went on due to relentless advocacy by Habitat III Secretariat, GAP and other civil society organizations, i.e. the Huairou Commission on behalf of the grassroots women. The successes in Regional and Thematic Declarations are credit to progressive partnership building between the Huairou Commission (as a co-chair of Women's PCG) and GAP, local meeting organizers and Habitat III Secretariat – all of whom opened spaces for women's inclusion in Advisory Committees for the Regional and Thematic Declarations.

- The Toluca Declaration (Latin America and the Caribbean) employed gender-conscious language throughout and recognized women's roles in care economy (supporting the PU1 position).
- The Prague Declaration (Europe and North America) supports the PUs recommendations for engendering urban spatial development.
- The Jakarta Declaration (Asia-Pacific) mentions women only in the context of the urban development constituencies.





- Three out of the seven Thematic Meeting Declarations – Barcelona, Pretoria and the Mexico City – pay consideration to specific women’s issues in urban development, such as safety in public spaces, informal settlements upgrading, and discrimination in terms of access to financial and business structures.

In addition to **women’s caucuses and Advisory Committees**, the Commission had also organized to include grassroots women as plenary panel speakers during the meetings and hosted or partnered on multiple gender, women, and, particularly, grassroots women focused side events:

Meeting	Side Event
Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting	Title N/A
Africa Regional Meeting	Grassroots Women Driving Sustainable Urban Growth
Europe and North America Regional Meeting	Global Grassroots Lessons for Europe: Engaging Local Government for Participatory Governance and Inclusive Cities for the European Habitat Engendering the City We Need Gender/climate Change and the Urban Agenda
Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting	Women Building the Habitat Agenda: Urban Thinkers Campus Indigenous Cities Fair, Diverse and Participatory Habitats – Citizen Contributions to the NUA Grassroots Power: Inclusion and Community Empowerment in Building Resilient Cities Inclusive and Safer Cities for women
Mexico Thematic Meeting on Financing the NUA	Participatory Gender-Budgeting in the NUA
Pretoria Thematic Meeting on Informal Settlements	Informal Settlements: Productive Centers for Resident Organizing and Livelihoods

A ROAD AHEAD

Amidst the achievements, we should not forget that gender equality is a goal that calls for a comprehensive systematic implementation. Therefore, it is essential to point out still existing gaps that prevent from realizing the vision of a gender-responsive city. The gaps were identified using the Women’s Partner Constituency Group Policy Statement and the Expert Group Meeting Recommendations:

- **Adopt urban and territorial planning with a gender perspective.** The gender perspective is an instrument to promote equity between women and men. An urban and territorial planning starts recognizing differences and discriminations of gender on benefits use and land tenure in their different dimensions. It is essential to review the urban mechanisms of planning, evaluation and follow-up from a perspective that takes into account the women’s right to the city. And incorporate the gender perspective on local public policies, programs, projects. Additionally, it should include sustainable financing and gender budgeting.
- **Time management conscious urban infrastructure.** Time is an indicator to measure





inequities between men and women. According to INEGI (Mexico) and other studies (INE, Uruguay; IBGE, Brazil;) women work on average 16 hours per week more than men on a “total work”, which is the sum of productive work (formal or informal) and, the reproductive. Therefore, it is important not only to have access to services but have services nearby and available 24/7 to facilitate women’s availability, especially of those working irregular hours. Time management also requires consideration for time-efficient mobility infrastructure that would balance women’s formal and informal work commitments.

- **To include policies that integrate women’s rights and promote equality when caring for dependents.** The care of the dependent population, children, elderly, and people with disabilities should be a joint responsibility between men and women, not a responsibility exclusive to the latter. Policies regarding care should respond to the context of the territories and to the fact that women usually have the burden of caring for their dependents. In that sense, urban planning should include women’s needs and demands to increase their financial autonomy.
- **Promote a comprehensive systematic solution to gender violence.** It is fundamental to reject any form of violence, especially political violence that limits the freedom of women to exercise their rights, for example on elections. It is important to have clear processes to promote women’s participation in politics, the empowerment to exercise civil rights, community mobilizations through improvement of public space and dialogues with public organizations. In this regard, it is crucial promote gender equality in public and social agendas.
- **Design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs are carried out in partnership with organized community groups.** Communities, especially grassroots women, are empowered to create and consolidate their own development solutions; Explicitly appoints implementation and monitoring roles for communities, specially organized constituencies of grassroots women; which means, ensuring that they are adequately resourced and within an enabling environment for mutually beneficial partnerships with local and national government and institutional actors that recognize, promote and strengthen grassroots participation in decision-making.
- Introduces **gender budgeting** on all decision making levels (international, national, local) as an analytic and governance tool to promote gender equality.
- **Develop laws and urban policies that promote the economic and social security of informal workers** and their contributions to the local economy. Create pathways for incremental formalization and integration of informal workers, to guarantee decent livelihoods for all with prioritization of policies to leverage marginalization of informal women’s workers, who remain over-represented in the informal sector.

PUSHING FROM ALL DIRECTIONS

To make sure the women’s perspectives are thoroughly integrated in the urban development policy process, the Huirou Commission organized for the World Urban Campaign’s **Urban Thinkers Campuses**. The Commission supported four gender thematic campuses. The recommendations coming from the campuses were considered for *The City We Need 2.0* document:





- General recommendations promoting a gender perspective and women’s empowerment were included in this final document, such as on promoting gender perspective and women’s empowerment.
- One overarching win includes the fact that the four gendered about a third of the total UTC participants (7,700 people for 26 UTCs according to the HIII website). Total participants for the four gendered UTCs were 2,398.
- In the four gender-specific UTCs women were highlighted as “society transformers” and recommendations were to support them as such. UTC8 in New York specifically highlighted “xi. Women’s empowerment and gender responsive urban service delivery” and “xii. Participatory governance and budgeting mechanisms that work for grassroots women, informal economy workers and slum dwellers” as two of twelve key interests of participants as well as the need for women leaders in the New Urban Agenda.
- The Mexico City UTC had the largest turnout of all the campuses (1,937) with 70% of the participants being women. In contrast some of the UTCs, such as Philippines and Switzerland had only men listed as speakers with other campuses having men as majority of the speakers. The representative aspect draws attention since one of the recommendations that came out of the Mexico City UTC was “The city we need is equitable for women and men” and although it had the biggest participant turnout, the recommendation did not make the final cut into *The City We Need 2.0* document.
- In *The City We Need 2.0* (TCWN 2.0), specific wins include 33 mentions of women and 11 mentions of gender. Grassroots organizations and Women are among the 14 constituent groups represented in TCWN 2.0. Women are key actors are recognized in the fourth paragraph of Principle 1 (relatively early in the text). In principle 4 on governance, women’s significant role within their communities is expressly recognized. In principle 9 about the safety of cities, TCWN 2.0 mentions the need to involve women and girls in planning, design and budgeting of cities.

Moreover, the Huairou Commission has joined the *Right to the City Platform* with HIC and has been engaged in the *Safer Cities* campaign. Meanwhile, due to its long-lasting support for the pro-poor development agenda, which would capture priorities of the grassroots women, it has been actively collaborating with WIEGO and SDI in order to collectively lobby for bringing grassroots voices to the fore and engendering the grassroots policies and priorities in the NUA.

WAY FORWARD

Overall, we see a steady progression towards women’s inclusion and engagement in the design and implementation of urban development. The relentless individual and collective advocacy effort on behalf of the Huairou Commission’s members has secured women’s representation in the political process. However, women lack sufficient consideration for their agentic capacity. There is still a long road ahead for women to becoming formalized agents of change of the inequality structures in the urban development context and towards design and implementation of an urban development infrastructure that would be equally accessible to both genders. Therefore, more effort has to be put in exposing women’s capacity for leadership and successful effort in the context of urban development and partnership building.





- **Inclusivity is not a concept but the new way of development.** Therefore, the development stakeholders – from government and the civil society – should not be debating who should be included but how to maximize inclusion of all the development stakeholders, especially that of the grassroots women who experience intersectional marginalization by virtue of being women and grassroots;
- **Habitat III New Urban Agenda must be aligned with the SDGs.** If the Habitat III Conference is to build off of and reinforce the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it must take an integrated approach and respect and strengthen the links between SDG 11 and SDG5 alongside every single SDG. The SDG 5 on Gender Equality specifically seeks to “End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere,” and recognizes the social and economic role played by women and girls worldwide. The New Urban Agenda must do the same in formally engaging women of all levels of society in the context of urban development and partnership building. However, the national governments and the civil society stakeholders can and do push back against women’s priorities. We must align our positions;
- **Rethinking multi-stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of the NUA.** It is an action-oriented agenda that has **the principles of partnerships inclusivity and decentralization** at its core. In order to attain its vision, the NUA will have to recognize and respect the leading roles of women in their own empowerment and the grassroots in community in empowerment. The Habitat III process so far shows that we need to rethink the paradigms of stakeholder partnership building with each other and with the local and national governments in order to attain an actionable agreement on the NUA and attain sustainability.

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