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Engendering the New Urban Agenda:
Comments on the Zero Draft

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HUAIROU COMMISSION
Women, Homes & Community

Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

Abstract

This document serves as a guide to analyzing the Zero Draft (ZD) of New Urban Agenda (NUA) through a gender lens, with special attention paid to local implementation where NUA's vision and transformative commitments make the greatest impact. The comments and guidance provided here are divided in three parts. Firstly, the analysis starts by assessing where and how gender is embedded in the ZD. It does so by looking at where the text displays the strongest commitment to gender equality

and women's empowerment, as well as where that analysis should be strengthened. Secondly, the paper offers avenues for strengthening the ZD by examining the extent to which critical ideas and innovative approaches were discussed in the official regional and thematic meetings but do not appear in the ZD. Thirdly, the paper discusses how multilateral and multi-level partnerships may look like in order to implement an engendered Habitat III agenda.

This paper—product of collaboration between Cities Alliance and the Huairou Commission—is part of a larger effort of the Cities Alliance to develop key advocacy messages relating to Habitat III. Since gender has become a corporate priority of the Cities Alliance, it was decided that the Joint Work Programme on Habitat III would also produce a set of comments on the Zero Draft (ZD) of the New Urban Agenda, which focuses on gender assessment of the ZD and other outcome documents. The Cities Alliance's Joint Work Programme on Achieving Gender Equality in Cities was facilitated and was an active part of this endeavor.

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Engendering the New Urban Agenda: Comments on the Zero Draft¹

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This Working Paper disseminates the findings of work in progress to encourage the exchange of ideas about development issues. An objective of the paper is to get the findings out quickly, even if the presentations are less than fully polished. The paper carries the name of the author and should be cited accordingly. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author. They do not necessarily represent the view of the views of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) or the policies and viewpoints of the Cities Alliance Secretariat or its members.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a long process of negotiations, regional and thematic meetings, and issue papers produced by policy units, the Zero Draft (ZD) of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) was released on May 6, 2016. Intended to be a commentary on the ZD, the objective of the present paper is three-fold. Firstly, it assesses the text of the ZD from a gender perspective. Secondly, it analyzes the extent to which the other Habitat III outcome documents contain issue commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Lastly, the paper highlights some emerging trends in order to propose guiding questions for post-Habitat III discussions.

Part 1, "Initial Assessment of the Zero Draft through a Gender Lens," points out that although ZD's Right to the City framework explicitly includes women, and gender equality and women's empowerment are enshrined in NUA's vision, gender-sensitive approaches are not consistently applied in the policy recommendations and implementations. The document is strong on mentioning women's participation in decision-making; linking urban safety to women and girls; connecting tenure security to women's empowerment, gender equality, and human rights. However, it is weak on addressing structures of inequality that continues to bar women many spheres of society, such as accessing basic services and securing food, etc. It also neglects to recognize women's dual burden of performing both paid (e.g. employment) and unpaid labor (e.g. childrearing, caregiving). Most importantly, NUA needs to recognize women as active agents and equal partners in urban prosperity and sustainable development.

Part 2, "Assessing the milestones leading to the Zero Draft through a Gender Lens," comparing the shortcomings of ZD in gender issues to the declarations from official regional and thematic meetings. ZD downplays a number of issues that are clearly important to the delegates who gathered from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin American and the Caribbean, and Europe. Meeting delegates call joining different scales of influences, co-creating economies, co-monitoring innovations, and imbedding participation at all stages of planning and implementation in order to meet current and future challenges in the city. In this vision, gender equality is integral to an inclusive urban economy, and empowerment of women is tied to sustainability and resilience.

Part 3, "Partnerships to implement an urban agenda beyond Habitat III," points out that global platforms must speak to each other so as to be a concerted effort rather than a collection of institutional silos that may siphon international funding and financing into different directions. Secondly, the main challenge for multi-level and multi-sectoral partnerships will be to provide structures and incentives so innovative solutions can be scaled up and scaled horizontally. Thirdly, monitoring is essential for adaptive leadership and gender-responsive programs and institutions. The document concludes by stating that engendering the New Urban Agenda is an achievable goal. This is due in large part to the hundreds and thousands of women and their male allies who have demonstrated that community-led solutions to addressing challenges in housing, land tenure, care economy, neighborhood safety, livelihoods and employment, food and nutrition, resilience building, and ecological sustainability are not only possible, but have been replicated and scaled up. However, the NUA needs to be more pro-active and innovative in its commitment to gender-responsiveness at all levels and sectors.

ENGENDERING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA: COMMENTS ON THE ZERO DRAFT

This document serves as a guide to analyzing the Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda through a gender lens, with special attention paid to local implementation where its vision and transformative commitments make the greatest impact.

Although based on desk analyses rather than on a broad consultative process, the paper draws from statements and comments made by gender experts and grassroots women leaders who have actively taken part in the Habitat III regional and thematic meetings leading up to the Zero Draft. Further to that, the comments presented here are also a reflection of perspectives and recommendations made by members of the Huairou Commission in various global platforms and expert group meetings. For this reason, the analytical framework puts greater emphasis on the realities of grassroots women in urban and peri-urban areas. The underlying premise of the arguments put forward here are that when development solutions support women living in the most vulnerable situations, then all women, as well as men, will benefit from outcomes that are just and inclusive.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part is a general and initial assessment of the Zero Draft from a gender perspective. The second part analyzes the extent to which the other Habitat III outcome documents reflect a gender perspective and issue commitments to empowering women as a key constituency group for delivering the New Urban Agenda. By combining these two sets of analyses, the third part suggests how a multi-stakeholder partnership could develop around a coherent vision of cities that are gender-responsive, gender-equitable, and resilient.

Part 1 – Initial assessment of the Zero Draft through a gender lens

General comments

The Zero Draft's "Right to the City" framework starts out strong by making explicit mention of the importance of women. In the preamble and in the declaration, "full respect of human rights for all" includes achieving gender equality, empowering women and girls, reducing poverty, and creating jobs and generating equitable prosperity (para. 4). Moreover, the vision of a people-centered New Urban Agenda recognizes women's participation in decision-making (para. 5).

Additional places where the Zero Draft is strong in recognizing women's needs are safety and tenure. Its acknowledgement that violence against women occurs in both public and domestic spaces, and a call for action to address women and girls' safety and protection in both of these spheres is significant (para. 40). The Zero Draft also makes multiple mentions of women's access to land, housing and employment. It recognizes "plurality of tenure types," commits to developing "fit-for-purpose gender-responsive solutions within the continuum of land rights," and pays "particular attention to women's tenure security as a cornerstone to their empowerment and gender equality and the realization of human rights" (para. 33).

Nonetheless, closer examination of Zero Draft's implementation section reveals that women are often referred to in a general way -- as one of many marginalized groups and without any distinction of different groups of women. It has the effect of making women "disappear" because

women also constitute the youth, the ageing, the disabled, the migrants, the refugees, among many others as well. By grouping women as an indistinct category, the Zero Draft nullifies its inclusive commitments no matter how well intentioned they might appear.

The missing analytical framework

Zero Draft's human rights framework can benefit from a deepened analysis of gender gaps, and an accounting for when and why women are overrepresented in the urban poor population or in the informal economy. Gender experts and grassroots women consistently point out that women's productive and reproductive roles need to be imbedded in all policy analysis because women have the double burden of performing both paid (e.g. employment) and unpaid labor (e.g. childrearing, caregiving). Moreover, an intersectional analysis is required to address gender along with ethnicity, age, income, education, etc. Crises such as climate change, affordable housing, and employment impact women differently at different stages of their lifecycles. Systemic barriers to different groups of women's access to services or claiming their rights may not be apparent until an intersectional analysis is conducted.

Women as agents of transformative change

The Zero Draft also does not go far enough in recognizing women's agency in transforming the multiple vulnerable situations to which they are submitted in their daily lives. The New Urban Agenda needs to regard women as equal partners in resilience building and urban prosperity (that is not limited to economic growth). For historically, women's knowledge and abilities have contributed to sustainable solutions in all levels of society. It is time to recognize them as co-creators of a just and equitable city.

Therefore, in developing capacity to implement the New Urban Agenda, women leaders in government, the private sector, civil society, academia, and grassroots organizations and networks need to be included explicitly. Resourcing women to participate equally in decision and policymaking will result in more inclusive, balanced and dynamic governance. Moreover, engaging grassroots women in mapping vulnerabilities and hazards have proved to be effective ways for communities to take ownership and develop resilience practices against the impacts of climate change and disaster. It is time to go beyond recognizing the vulnerable situations that women find themselves, and focus on their role as both agents and the main referents of transformative change.

Specific themes

Themes that should be explicitly connected to gender equality and women's empowerment

The "social function of land" is mentioned (para. 5), but it could refer to a continuum of ownership rights – customary, communal, statutory, etc. more explicitly. This framing can support other parts of the Zero Draft where women's land tenure is mentioned.

The Zero Draft is strong in supporting integrated spatial planning, taking advantage of dense and mixed-use areas, and improving links to transportation. While not often connected to gender equality, this is a particularly important issue for women because it lessens the time women have to travel between their paid and unpaid work (family and community caregiving) and to access essential municipal services (such as health and education, among others).

Decentralization and empowering local authorities is an important step towards making government more gender responsive. The paragraph "Participatory planning and budgeting, citizen-based monitoring, self-enumeration and co-planning that are rooted in new forms of direct partnership between state organizations and civil society" (para. 102) can make explicit

connections to gender budgeting—the process of allocating resources to support women’s concerns, or conducting gender assessment of an agency’s budget. Additionally, inclusion of women-led organizations in participatory planning, budgeting, and monitoring would ensure that public expenditures are responsive to the socio-economic realities of women.

Data about the city and its citizens provide crucial quantitative indicators. The Zero Draft mentions the importance of “data disaggregation to allow a differentiated analysis of housing supply and demand considering the specific social, economic, and cultural dynamics on subnational levels” (para. 109). The data needs to be sex-disaggregated in order for government and civil society to monitor gender-equitable policies and implementation. Moreover, authorities need to enlist community-based organizations and grassroots women to design and participate in data collection so no one is left behind.

Where issues of importance to gender equity and women’s empowerment are missing

The Zero Draft recognizes “equitable and affordable access to basic physical and social infrastructure for all” (para. 25) but health and educational facilities are mentioned only once or twice. There is no mention of childcare and elderly care facilities. A gender-equitable city includes the care economy as part of its productive activities, and that women’s unpaid and unrecognized labor is supported.

Food insecurity is a major concern for grassroots women and it is missing from the Zero Draft. The issue is becoming more and more urgent because of climate change. There is one mention of agriculture in the context of land reserves (para. 105) but falls short of connecting it to urban-rural linkages and how it affects women, food and nutrition. This is because small-scale food production for household consumption and selling at the market is a major productive activity of women living in peri-urban areas, especially in developing countries. An inclusive city needs to take into account small household farmers who produce food to sell in the city, and should develop measures to address those who do not have enough to eat, have low caloric intake, or whose daily diet is of low nutritional value.

The concept of sustainable consumption and production has a strong presence in the Zero Draft. But ecological balance also needs to consider the central role women play in accessing clean water, collecting fuel, and providing food. Grassroots women have historically learned from each other on how to live sustainably and encourage their families and children to do the same. This gendered dimension needs to be considered in understanding the city’s ecological footprint.

Not usually considered a women’s issue, cultural heritage and traditional knowledge mentioned in the Zero Draft affect women nonetheless. Urban heritage are often located in dense multi-use city centers, amongst dilapidating housing stock, and have higher concentration of people living in poverty. As such, less emphasis needs to be placed on “master plans, zoning guidelines, and strategic growth policies” (para. 38, para. 124) that are often focused on capturing real estate values. Instead, community groups, housing advocates, grassroots women and minorities can play active roles in making collective decisions about the future of shared cultural heritage.

The relationship between intangible cultural heritage and women may be more complicated than originally appears (para. 38). On the one hand, it could give recognition to the kinds of traditional knowledge that women pass down from one generation to the next. On the other, certain forms of traditional culture reproduce age-old patterns of discrimination. Therefore, safeguarding of culture should not undermine human rights and gender equality.

The Zero Drafts acknowledges the precariousness of migrants and refugees, but fail to acknowledge the additional vulnerabilities women migrants, IDPs, and refugees face. Women

often lack legal protection and face discrimination, exclusion and intimidation. Without adequate protection, they are at risk of being trafficked, forced into sexual labor, rape and harassment.

Summary of initial assessment

The Zero Draft does not present a cohesive and coherent agenda to achieving gender equity or a framework for an inclusive gender-responsive city. Although empowering women and girls is enshrined in the vision, the document falls short of recommendations that address the multiple realities of women in their productive and reproductive roles, their life cycles, as well as level of education, ethnicity, citizenship status, among others. Issues surrounding land and housing, livelihood and employment, and the care economy are more obviously connected to women's well-being in the text. Yet, transportation, agriculture, food production, sustainability, disaster risks and climate change, municipal finance, migration, and culture are no less important because they are connected to women's health, safety, and political participation. Most crucially, the New Urban Agenda, if it indeed aims to be new, needs to shift from portraying women as a marginalized group into seeing them as agents of transformative change.

Part 2 - Assessing the milestones leading to the Zero Draft through a gender lens

The preparation and release of the Zero Draft was built upon a multi-faceted consultative process. This part analyzes the extent to which the other outcome documents reflect a gender perspective and issue commitments to empowering women as a key constituency group for delivering a NUA.

Habitat III's preparatory process includes the production of ten policy papers intended to outline the sectoral and thematic dimensions essential to the NUA. No policy unit was established to address gender equality and women's empowerment nor were instructions issued to the ten standing units to treat gender as a crosscutting issue. However, references to gender and/or women were in the background papers prepared for the policy unit deliberations. During the policy debates, the role of women, women's empowerment, and gender analysis were highlighted in issues concerning data collection, stakeholder constituencies, public leadership, safety, urban economy, housing and land tenure policies, care economy, and urban ecology and resilience.

Official inputs to the Habitat III process also include high-level regional and thematic meetings. A wide range of participants debated priorities for the NUA. Policy recommendations in the form of a final participants' declaration were compiled. These meetings aimed at building consensus on strategic actions and political commitments. Regional meetings were held in Jakarta (Asia-Pacific), Abuja (Africa), Prague (Europe), and Toluca (Latin America and the Caribbean). The seven thematic meetings held in different cities focused on sustainable energy, public space, intermediate cities, financing, metropolitan areas, civic engagement, and informal settlements.

The following sections provide a general assessment of the relationship between the Zero Draft and policy recommendations in the participants' declarations resulting from the eleven official regional and thematic meetings. Particular attention is paid to the way issues concerning women, women's empowerment, and gender equality have been ignored, downplayed, or highlighted in the Zero Draft.

Emerging Issues

An expansive definition of urban governance

The first task of rethinking the urban agenda in Habitat III is “Embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlements, more appropriate policies can embrace urbanization across physical space, bridging urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks.” As such, participants of regional and thematic meetings articulated a vision of territorial management and urban governance that encourages multi-level partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms that women-led organizations and grassroots networks have been advocating for decades.

It is generally accepted that the rapid rate of urbanization and unpredictable human settlement patterns are changing faster than municipal and national government can cope. In Africa’s regional meeting, the Abuja Declaration recognizes that human settlements need to be understood “in a continuum which reinforces economic, social and environmental linkages across metropolises, cities and medium-sized towns to villages where most of the continent’s population still reside.” Therefore, partnerships need to be multi-sectoral and present at all levels including the participation of non-state actors. In the Asia-Pacific regional meeting, delegates also encourage “deriving new and effective multi-level and collaborative governance systems to better manage the complex challenges of interconnected urban spaces, to not be constrained by the limits of administrative and political boundaries.”

Perhaps it is in Latin America, Central America, and the Caribbean that delegates went further to define a more dynamic model of urban governance. The Toluca Declaration recommends improving “joint and multilevel urban governance in all spheres and at all scales of cities: networks and systems of cities, mega cities, metropolis, intermediate and small cities, including their relation to all rural sectors, promoting the development of mechanisms and legal frameworks that guarantee the collaboration and coordination between municipalities and between different levels of government.”

This dynamic concept of urban governance is echoed in the “Financing Urban Development” declaration. It recognizes how urban complexity is driving metropolitan economies, defined as “intertwining institutional network that goes beyond the traditional municipal focus, where multi-level and different administrative structures overlap in the same territory.” Moreover, metropolitan areas are distinguished as “functional areas, as they do not coincide with the administrative structure, boundaries and sectoral vision of traditional politics.” This new territorial concept is not descriptive, but strategically aimed to address inequality. For the declaration points out how this institutional framework promotes “the harmonious development and prosperity of the various territories and regions, balancing urban and rural areas, centers and peripheries, as a means to reduce inequities and provide more development opportunities to the neediest populations.”

As such, stakeholders are challenged to be adaptive and agile, innovating with different clustering of sectors and experimenting with partnership models between state and non-state actors at multiple geographic scales. The Zero Draft reflects some of this language but downplays a dynamic model of urban governance, opting instead for “integrate approaches” to “sectoral policies at different levels/scales of political administration” (para. 103).

People-centered development requiring stakeholders participation at all stages of planning, implementation and monitoring

The Zero Draft enshrines a “people-centered vision” (para. 3) at the front and center of its declaration. It affirms the declarations from the regional meetings. The Jakarta Declaration calls

for “a radical shift in the way cities are planned, developed and managed, with people seen as change agents rather than beneficiaries.” The Prague Declaration underscores that “Citizens should be involved and consulted at all stages of the policy cycle, from planning to implementation, in a well-designed system of multi-level governance.” Whereas the Toluca Declaration went further, calling for “a space for dialogue, joint development and joint monitoring between national government, sub-national governments, and representatives of civil society and the private sector, which also guarantees the commitment and sustainability of the process.”

Disaggregated data for urban governance

While the Zero Draft falls short of pointing out the importance of disaggregated data to a gender-equitable city, three of the declarations mention disaggregated data collection and reporting as an important part of urban planning and management.

In the thematic meeting “Metropolitan Areas” in Montreal, delegates “recognize that urban and metropolitan planning benefit... from the full use of disaggregated data, segregated by age, gender and territory, on socio- demographic and economic trends, etc.” Similarly, in the thematic meeting “Sustainable Energy and Cities” in Abu Dhabi, delegates emphasize “the critical need for commitments to incorporate the gender dimension of sustainable energy in the urban planning and implementation of sustainable energy, including through such measures as the reporting of gender-disaggregated data on access to energy and finance for energy, as well as employment in the energy sector.”

Women’s public leadership and social justice

Although the Zero Draft adopted concepts of gender equality and women’s empowerment, it is in the thematic meeting “Informal Settlements” in Pretoria that delegates went the furthest. Here, the declaration calls for “empowering women living in informal settlements by increasing their public leadership in upgrading housing, basic services and public space in their communities, providing gender-responsive tenure security and land rights, and investing in livelihood, enterprise and credit initiatives to measurably improve their economic status.”

The Prague Declaration is the most progressive on the issue of gender equality and social justice by recognizing the causes of discrimination and inequalities as “a result of other forms of exclusion and unequal power relations owing to race, ethnicity, culture, caste, class, age, ability or disability, sexual orientation, religion.” The Zero Draft fails to connect or refer to unequal power relationships and social and economic exclusion.

Women at the center of innovative and productive cities

In the Zero Draft, gender equality is often framed as a human right. In the regional and thematic meetings, however, gender equality is one of the prerequisites of economic growth. In this vein, the declaration on “Financing Urban Development” encourages “the private sector to contribute to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment as well as through increased investments in female-owned companies or businesses.” Similarly, the Prague Declaration validates that gender equality and women’s empowerment are integral to the social wellbeing and economic production of cities. Under good governance, “Women’s empowerment and women’s full and equal participation in the economy are vital to achieve sustainable development and significantly enhance economic growth and productivity.”

Municipal finance in the Zero Draft tends to be narrowly focused. But in the declaration on Financing Urban Development, gender mainstreaming is mentioned in “financial empowerment, capacity building, transparency and accountability.” It recommends that “national and local civil servants and administrations are empowered with adequate knowledge and skills to tackle financial

issues in the whole project design, development and implementation cycle mainstreaming gender throughout the whole process...”

While not mentioning women specifically, the “Financing Urban Development” declaration provides many entry points to consider women’s productive and reproductive roles in “social and solidarity economy.” Delegates “consider that social and solidarity economy and finance constitute a source of resilience to the recurrent crises capable of catalyzing the redistribution of wealth and financial innovation, and are conducive to partnerships that will bring about transformational changes in urban development patterns.” Moreover, it goes further by pointing out that the results would “redress historical social and economic exclusion of disadvantaged groups.” Cooperative and community development banks, solidarity savings, local savings-based retail bonds, energy production citizens’ cooperatives, participatory planning and budgeting, community supported agriculture, and community land trusts received special mention for catalyzing inclusive economic growth and strengthening the livelihoods of the urban poor. Since grassroots women have historically used many of these financing strategies, this declaration opens new ways to mainstream women and grassroots-led practices in the New Urban Agenda.

Recognizing women’s unpaid labor

In the regional and thematic meetings, delegates gave strong recognition of women’s unpaid and informal labor. The Zero Draft is silent on this issue.

The “Informal Settlements” declaration in Pretoria emphasizes “women’s multiple roles as family and community caregivers and income generators, produces gender specific needs that informal settlement upgrading and development must address to be effective and responsive.”

Explicitly mentioning women’s unpaid domestic work, the Toluca Declaration recommends the New Urban Agenda includes, under the category of urban and territorial planning, promotion of “inclusive economies...such as: solidarity with financial support mechanisms, informal, social, and circular economies that especially recognize the role of women in them, valuing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid domestic work.” This recommendation is the farthest delegates have gone to recognize women’s multiple productive and reproductive roles.

In the thematic meeting “Public Spaces” in Barcelona, delegates cite that public space should contribute to the health and recreation benefits of people in vulnerable situations. They bridge multiple functions of public space to support women’s caregiving roles. It states that public space can “facilitate a more equitable distribution of duties that traditionally have fallen mainly on the shoulders of women within the domestic field.”

Social function of land and the spectrum of housing and tenure

The Zero Draft refers to the social function of land and the need for a greater range of housing options. Regional deliberations were more explicit and detailed on these issues. Given that housing and land strategies help women secure homes and access livelihoods and have been championed by gender experts and grassroots women leaders, the following declarations are important:

To expand housing options, the Toluca Declaration prioritizes “adequate financing schemes, technical and financial assistance to those who produce their own housing, and the development of new markets such as renting, renting with the option of buying (leasing)... providing different forms of tenure” in order to guarantee security of housing. It also links the promotion and the social and ecological functions of land to enhancing urban food safety and nutrition. Historically, housing tenure and land are important issues for grassroots women. While the Zero Draft adopts

the language and concepts from this declaration (para. 105), it has yet to link them to other commitments and recommendations related to gender equity.

In the “Financing Urban Development” thematic meeting, delegates point out that “urban development is not only about governments financing urban infrastructure, a large part of the funds can be channeled and administered through local populations, including formal and informal land markets, via cooperatives and specialized organizations in the social production of the habitat, with clear rules and in the context of transparency and accountability.” When financing come from within communities, local stakeholders share responsibilities in directing its use and self-monitor. This is an enabling environment for grassroots women-led development initiatives to take root.

Summary

This preliminary assessment of the outcome documents from the official regional and thematic meetings reveals a number of shortcomings in the Zero Draft. A people-centered vision of the New Urban Agenda should not be constrained by the limits of administrative and political boundaries. To address current and future urbanization challenges, stakeholders are tasked to combine sectors, join different scales of influences, co-create economies, co-monitor innovations, and imbed participation at all stages of planning and implementation. In this vision, gender equality is integral to an inclusive urban economy, and empowerment of women is tied to sustainability and resilience. Participants who gathered in Pretoria, Abuja, Abu Dhabi, Barcelona, Prague, Tel Aviv, Jakarta, Montreal, Toluca, Mexico City, and Cuenca recognize the dynamic and interconnected nature of human settlements, built environment, and ecology. They presented bold visions, progressive agendas, and comprehensive policy recommendations that will drive Habitat III’s process beyond the Zero Draft.

PART 3 -- Partnerships to implement an urban agenda beyond Habitat III

Emerging Trends

Coming in the heels of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, Habitat III is an opportunity to fine-tune existing or configure new strategies for sustainable development by integrating gender equality, human rights, and the empowerment of women and girls. In order to realize these long-term goals and target indicators, putting women at the front and center of transformative change should be not only about recognizing intersectionality but also about the interconnectedness of sectors and interrelationships of territorial scopes. Therefore, the global platforms must speak to each other so as drive joint efforts rather than staying within institutional silos that could siphon international funding and financing into different directions.

There is no prescriptive formula for partnerships that could meet the realities of women amidst rapidly changing urban complexities. The following sections present action-oriented approaches that emerge out of outcome documents produced by various processes catalyzed by Habitat III. It identifies trends and raise questions that should guide innovative thinking in the post-Habitat III environment.

Platforms, clusters, and bundles

Forming institutional partnerships entail clustering and bundling shared goals and objectives beyond individual institution’s mandate. Given the diverse practices and accomplishments of organized constituencies of communities, grassroots coalitions, women’s networks, informal

economy workers, and other groups living and working in marginalized areas, what kind of platforms facilitate the co-planning and joint implementation of multi-faceted approaches to connect the global agenda and targets contained in the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction? How can collaborative efforts ensure participatory solutions for communities?

Scaling up and scaling horizontally

Complex urban systems require agile solutions around core principles that can be scaled up and/or horizontally. Investments in grassroots organizing, women's public leadership, and indigenous expert knowledge in a single sector may result in solutions that can be replicated and multiplied in different sectors. Some solutions self-replicate, but others require seeding and nurturing. Can multi-sector multi-scale partnerships provide structures and incentives?

Observe, track, and tether

Whether is it grassroots tactics or grand strategies, monitoring is essential for adaptive leadership and gender-responsive programs and institutions. Observatories facilitate collection of data, track progress, and analyze outcomes for partners and stakeholders. In order to realize gender as a cross-cutting theme in the global targets, what are some of the ways to resource communities to collect gender-disaggregated data and encourage communities and institutions to amplify innovations?

Conclusion

Initial assessments of the Zero Draft and the eleven declarations from the regional and thematic meetings reveal that engendering the New Urban Agenda is an achievable goal. This is due in large part to the hundreds and thousands of women and their male allies who have demonstrated that community-led solutions to addressing challenges in housing, land tenure, care economy, neighborhood safety, livelihoods and employment, food and nutrition, resilience building, and ecological sustainability are not only possible, but have been replicated and scaled up. The recommendations and guiding questions contained in this report are but one step towards catalyzing partnerships and collaborations to achieving greater outcomes spelled out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.