



**UN-HABITAT**  
**GENDER**  
**JOURNEY**

## Gender History of UN-Habitat

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### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In common with most of women's empowerment and gender equality work in UN-Habitat, this document is a collective effort of many persons. It has benefited from the input of a cross-section of women (principally) and men – grassroots, professional, government and United Nations – who have contributed to UN-Habitat gender mainstreaming for more than three decades. Their names, networks and organisations are mentioned throughout the document. The Gender Equality Unit of UN-Habitat, the UN-Habitat Gender Advisory Board and the Huairou Commission have been central in advocating for and production of this history. Thanks to grassroots women worldwide, who have shown that solutions informed by realities and work on the ground can have significant policy impacts and must be recognised and supported.

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# **UN-HABITAT GENDER JOURNEY**



## FOREWORD

Gender equality is at the heart of the New Urban Agenda and of UN-Habitat activities. Since 1985 we have been carrying out many projects and programmes to advance gender equality in urban development.

The first step towards incorporating gender in the organization's work was the establishment of the Women and Habitat Programme in 1990. This was followed by an institutional gender policy approved in 1996, the year of the Second World Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). The policy titled "*Gendered habitat: working with women and men in human settlements development*," sought to ensure that women and men participated in, and benefitted equitably from interventions of UN-Habitat and partners. Successive gender policies and action plans have been based on the same principle: how the work of UN-Habitat can promote gender equality in the urban development process.

It was no accident that UN-Habitat approved the organization's first gender policy in 1996. The *Habitat Agenda* was adopted in Istanbul in the same year, and has been widely acknowledged as a vastly gender sensitive document. This was the result of concerted efforts of UN-Habitat staff, the women's movement, rights-based civil society as well as many supportive governments. The process of formulating the gender policy ran parallel to the preparations for the International Women's Conference (Beijing 1995) and Habitat II, and benefitted from both conferences and their outcomes.

Twenty years later, we continue to work intensively towards an urban design which provides security, confidence and inclusiveness for women in cities. In Habitat III, we are aiming at adopting a New Urban Agenda which encompasses the principles of equality and inclusiveness of which gender equality forms an integral part.

We are in a crucial moment for urbanization. Urbanization has become a global trend; an engine of development and a transformative force that can lead the world to overcome challenges related to sustainability, climate change, poverty, exclusion and gender inequality. Equality for women in an urban world is progress for all.



*Dr. Joan Clos  
UN-Habitat's Executive Director*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AGGI</b>	UN-Habitat Advisory Group on Gender Issues
<b>AWAS</b>	Asian Women and Shelter Network
<b>BP Programme</b>	Best Practices Programme
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based Organizations
<b>CDP</b>	Community Development Programme
<b>CHS</b>	Commission for Human Settlements
<b>CPR</b>	Committee of Permanent Representatives
<b>DED</b>	Deputy Executive Director
<b>DPU</b>	Development Planning Unit
<b>EGM</b>	Expert Group Meeting
<b>FEMUM</b>	Federation of Women Municipalists of Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>GC</b>	Governing Council
<b>GEAP</b>	Gender Equality Action Plan
<b>GLTN</b>	Global Land Tool Network
<b>GMU</b>	Gender Mainstreaming Unit
<b>GROOTS International</b>	Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood
<b>GWIA</b>	Grassroots Women's International Academy
<b>HIC</b>	Habitat International Council (later Coalition)
<b>HIC Women and Shelter Network</b>	Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Network
<b>HIC-WHN</b>	Habitat International Coalition Women and Habitat Network
<b>ICW</b>	International Council of Women
<b>IYSH</b>	International Year of Shelter for the Homeless
<b>JPO</b>	Junior Professional Officers
<b>NCW</b>	Netherlands Council of Women
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organizations
<b>PREPCOMS</b>	Preparatory Committees
<b>PWG</b>	Partners Working Group
<b>ROAP</b>	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
<b>ROLAC</b>	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>SPARC</b>	Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers
<b>SWAP</b>	System Wide Action Plan
<b>TCBB</b>	Training and Capacity Building Branch
<b>ThemCom</b>	Thematic Committee
<b>UNCHS</b>	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
<b>UNCSDDHA</b>	United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UN-INSTRAW</b>	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
<b>WEDO</b>	Women, Environment and Development
<b>WHP</b>	Women and Habitat Programme
<b>WHSDP</b>	Women in Human Settlements Development Programme



## PREFACE

In 2012, UN-Habitat established the Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) as an independent body to advise the Executive Director on all issues related to gender matters in the agency's work. One of the first requests of AGGI members was for a document on the gender history of UN-Habitat, convinced of the value of such a document in informing the organisation's current gender work. This gender history is commissioned by UN-Habitat in response to AGGI's request. Many past and present staff members and partners of UN-Habitat have contributed through availing documents, giving interviews, writing text and making comments.

Gender equality is about power relations and rights. Mainstreaming gender in development programmes means addressing equally the needs of men and women, boys and girls, in the design and implementation of such programmes. Very often gender mainstreaming involves addressing specifically the situation of women and girls, a historically discriminated group, with targeted interventions including affirmative action where necessary. Gender mainstreaming also means equally bringing the voices of women and men into the development debate and agenda – an incredibly political process. The history of gender mainstreaming in UN-Habitat tells how government, professional, NGO and grassroots women made up a powerful constituency to bring a gender perspective to a gender neutral institution – UN-Habitat. It demonstrates the wide variety of strategies and organizing work that took place in order to bring about the change.

In common with many political processes, the UN-Habitat gender story involved identifying points of entry, finding appropriate champions, building alliances, lobbying and networking in order to continually safeguard and expand gained ground. The strategies took advantage of national, regional and international agendas and their processes as well as the governance structures of UN-Habitat. Both grassroots and professional women contributed - and continue to contribute - directly to programme formulation and implementation in a mutually reinforcing relationship benefiting both UN-Habitat and the women and their constituencies.

This history also shows that the fight for gender equality cannot and must not be left to women alone. A significant part of the alliance building targeted men, especially those in positions of influence in government. At the same time the women responsible for the gender function in UN-Habitat counted on the support of key men allies within the agency at critical points - including the allocation of resources.

The *Habitat Agenda*, the outcome document of the Second United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat II, 1996) is widely acknowledged as being gender sensitive. The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) will be held in 2016. This is an opportune moment to reflect on how the *Habitat Agenda* was engendered, how gender has been mainstreamed and how gender work can be maintained and enhanced to keep pace with changing times.



## INTRODUCTION: *Whose story and where do we start?*

This document attempts to capture the early history and institutional memory on gender equality and women's empowerment work in UN-Habitat. It describes its evolution and the internal processes and significant milestones that shaped it. It also endeavors to capture some of the most influential external trends and events as well as the significant partners involved.

Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie, in her now famous lecture, *The Danger of the Single Story*, discusses the danger of a single narrative. According to Adichie, a single story emerges when one carries a one-dimensional view of a reality that can only be explained by a variety of stories.

This document represents one story, the institutional story of UN-Habitat. The histories of the partners – notably the Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Network (HIC Women & Shelter Network), Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS International), the International Council of Women and the Huairou Commission which they formed – are an integral part of the story, and are included.

Such histories are not reproduced in detail here and can be accessed elsewhere, as they represent an important dimension of the story. This story is about the partnership of the Networks who formed the Huairou Commission, key staff inside of UN-Habitat and governments like Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands; and the actions and results of this partnership.

Every story has a beginning and (usually) an end. Beginnings can be difficult to delineate (hence “*once upon a time*”). Where to end a story is often determined by the story itself or its intention. The Terms of

Reference for this story asked for the end to be the establishment of AGGI in 2012. The date for the beginning of the story has been set by the author at 1985. Hopefully, it will become clear why Nairobi 1985 is a reasonable place to begin the story of the gender journey of UN-Habitat.

A chronological approach has proved to be the most convenient and is used for the most part. Within the chronological account, defined periods correspond to major UN-Habitat events and /or internal reform – agency-wide or specific to gender mainstreaming. In some instances there was a need to repeat the same events/facts in a chronological context and when illustrating strategies used, in which cases cross references have been provided.

The concluding section seeks to highlight some observations and lessons learned from the entire period – 1985-2012 – and to understand the strategies and organizing that took place to engender the work of UN-Habitat.



Image 1: Second meeting of the UN-Habitat Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI), Nairobi UN Gigiri . 30 November - 1 December 2012

Front row (l-r): Esther Mwaura-Muiru, Ramzia Aleryani, Ana Falu, Aminata Traore (Chair of AGGI), Joan Clos, Janice Peterson, Carmen Griffiths, Sri Sofjan

Second row: Thomas Ball, Margaret Swalleh, Jaana Mioch, Diane Dumashie, Siraj Sait, Teresa Boccia, Sylvie Cohen

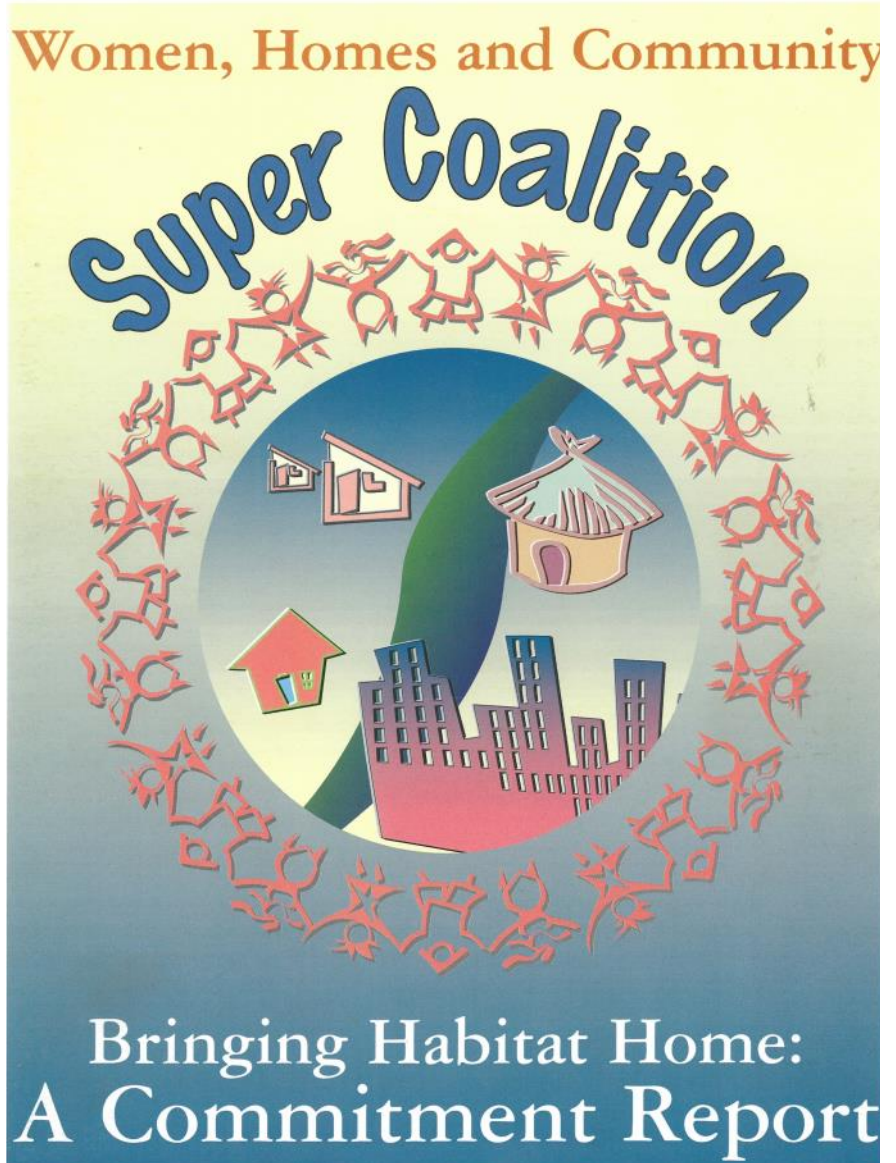
Third row: Angela Mwai, Ester Borrás, Naison Mutizwa-Mangiza, Cecilia Andresson, Lia Cacciotoli

## **CHAPTER ONE:** ***Background: 1978 to 1985***

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was established in 1978 as the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS).

The setting up of the UNCHS was a main outcome of the First Habitat meeting which took place in Vancouver, Canada in 1976. The founding resolution for the United Nations Center for Human Settlements was adopted at that historical meeting.

The actual establishment of the organization and the moving of the Center for Housing and Building from New York to Nairobi took place in 1978.



UNCHS (Habitat) was mandated to be the lead United Nations (UN) agency guiding efforts to improve the living environment in rural and urban areas. Since the Habitat II conference – Istanbul 1996 – UN-Habitat has increasingly focused on urban areas due to rapid urbanization globally and has become the lead UN organization on cities and urban areas.

It was elevated to a United Nations Programme in 2001 to become the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). For convenience in this document only the name UN-Habitat will be used even when referring to its forerunner, UNCHS. Hardly any attention was paid to women and gender issues until 1985, everything was gender neutral.

The International Women's Year (1975) and the subsequent United Nations Decade for Women (1976-

1985) served to highlight the status of women globally. An international conference, the UN Third World Conference on Women, was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 to appraise the achievements of the decade. The outcome document of this conference was the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*. Another significant outcome of the women's decade was the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW).

The *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies* outlined action required from local, national, regional and international actors. It contained many of the now accepted principles of gender in development such as participation; recognizing women not just as beneficiaries but as participants in formulating development policies, programmes and projects; proper information for

programming including sex-disaggregated data; among others.

At the Nairobi 1985 meeting, the issues of Women and Habitat were addressed at the parallel Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Forum, which was part of the UN conference, in a workshop led by Habitat International Council (later Coalition – HIC), Mazingira Institute and the Netherlands Council of Women (NCW).

Diana Lee-Smith, who would much later become UN-Habitat's Gender Unit coordinator, was part of this effort. This workshop developed a programmatic approach to the subject and initiated a move to establish a Global Network on Women and Habitat led by HIC and NCW.

The vision for GROOTS International also originated at the

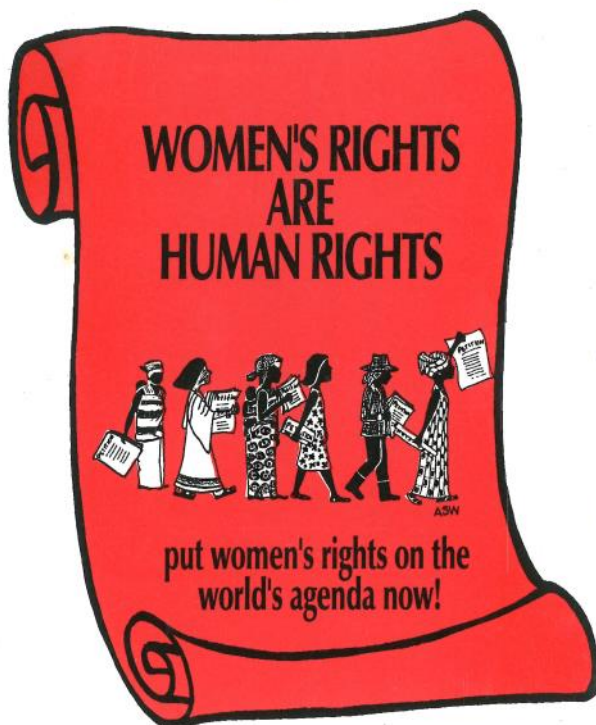


Image 2: Diana Lee Smith - first Chief of the Gender Unit

1985 Nairobi Forum. GROOTS International was founded by Jan Peterson and Caroline Pezzullo alongside a group of women from six other countries. Well aware of the absence of grassroots women's voices at the conference, they wanted to ensure that grassroots women leaders who worked in human settlement would in future have their own platform.

Overall, there was close coordination between the NGO Forum and the official meeting in influencing wording of the *Forward Looking Strategies* with regard to the mandate of UN-Habitat. There were references to women's access to housing, land and property, appropriate design of housing and infrastructure to take care of the needs of women, finance for housing, non-traditional skills for women in the shelter sector, and specific attention to women heading households.

A specific reference to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) – 1987 – asked that: *“Government efforts for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless should incorporate assessments of the shelter needs of women and encourage the design and implementation of innovative projects that will increase women's access to services and finance...”* (para 212, *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies*).

Two other significant demands in the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies* were:

- to give women opportunities to participate in regional and international conferences; and
- for governments and the international community to look for ways to use the potential of NGOs in development.



Image 3: Catalina Trujillo (holding hat), first chief of the Women and Habitat Programme, with Miloon Kothari (second from right), UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing from 2000-2008. Miloon and the subsequent Rapporteur were important champions of UN-HABITAT's gender mainstreaming work.

Throughout the Decade for Women, there was pressure on UN agencies to have designated women's focal points. UN-Habitat appointed one in 1984 to prepare for the 1985 UN Women's Conference. The staff member, Aliye Celik, added this work to her existing and already full portfolio. This practice was quite common at the time: the women's focal point was always a woman, and the function was usually an addition to a full "substantive" agenda.

The UN-Habitat women's focal point existing portfolio was Construction Technology and Materials and Energy, to which she added women and construction/building materials as well as women's role in the provision of energy, completely new angles for looking at women *vis-à-vis* housing and space.

The Women's Focal Point made efforts to include organizations active in women and habitat issues worldwide in meetings organized by UN-Habitat and to promote inter-agency cooperation on the issue, such as organizing the meeting in Vienna in December 1985 of the

UN Branch for Advancement of Women. Addressing women and shelter and aimed at bringing women's participation to all levels of shelter policies and projects, the meeting assembled representatives from women's national machineries in 17 countries to begin implementing the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies* with regard to the shelter sector, including construction.

This was funded with left over money from the Nairobi UN Women's Conference. Lily Hutjes of the ICW, now part of the Huairou Commission, was one of the women commissioned to do a case study.

Celik organised and attended numerous meetings and presented papers on those topics and worked with partners in other UN entities as well as in NGOs, for example the Women and Habitat Workshop at the NGO Forum during the Nairobi Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985; and Human Settlements, A Critical Factor Women and Environmental Crisis Workshop, also in Nairobi 1985.

Another 1985 event, the Training Workshop on Women and Shelter co-organised with United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (UNCSDHA) in Vienna, was significant because it was the first partnership with GROOTS International and the National Congress for Neighbourhood Women which later became part of the Huairou Commission. Evidence of the impact of all these was seen in the marked interest of partners in the Commission on Human Settlements that took place in Istanbul in 1986 – partners attended and played an active role throughout the Commission. This was the beginning of UN-Habitat trend of working closely with major stakeholder groups, which contributed to advancing the gender agenda.

During this period a number of publications such as *“Women and Human Settlements”* were prepared in UN-Habitat as well as a section of the Joint United Nations Information Committee kit, with the UNCSDHA, Geneva 1985.

### WOMEN'S FOCAL POINT IN THE UN-HABITAT NEW YORK OFFICE

After 1987, Aliye Celik moved to New York as the chief of the UN-Habitat New York office, and a new focal point was appointed in Nairobi. However, Celik continued with many activities at the New York UN headquarters, organizing and attending meetings on women's issues as well as establishing partnerships. She also helped to identify Ayse Kudat as a new women's focal point for Nairobi through partnerships with several women's organizations and coalitions.

It is worth noting that during this period it was important to create awareness, develop the discussion and build momentum on women's human settlements issues. Hence conferences and seminars as well as case studies and publications were key avenues to this end. In addition, conferences helped to bring together a critical mass of women's voices and to link women from different sectors – international organizations, national governments and NGO/ community sectors.

As pointed out above, the New York office chief functioned effectively as an out-posted UN-Habitat women's focal point and we outline here just some of her activities over the subsequent years, organizing, co-organizing or participating in conferences, seminars and workshops. Some examples:

- “Housing Options for Women International Conference” with the National Congress for Neighbourhood Women, Camden, NJ, 1987;
- Women and the Construction Sector with the NGO Committee on IYSH, New York 1987;

- “Women and Global Settlements” with International Council of Women, Washington DC 1988;
- Women and Shelter Seminar with UNCSDHA, St Vincent and Grenadines 1988;
- Women and Human Settlements, with UN-INSTRAW, New York 1989; and
- Conference on Shelter, Women and Development, First and Third World Perspectives, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, 1992.

She was also a member of the International Task Force of GROOTS International between 1987-1995. Such partnerships with women's NGOs like GROOTS International, Women, Environment and Development (WEDO), ICW, Soroptimists and later, the Huairou Commission, continued over many years.

All these activities were done in close cooperation with the headquarters in Nairobi.

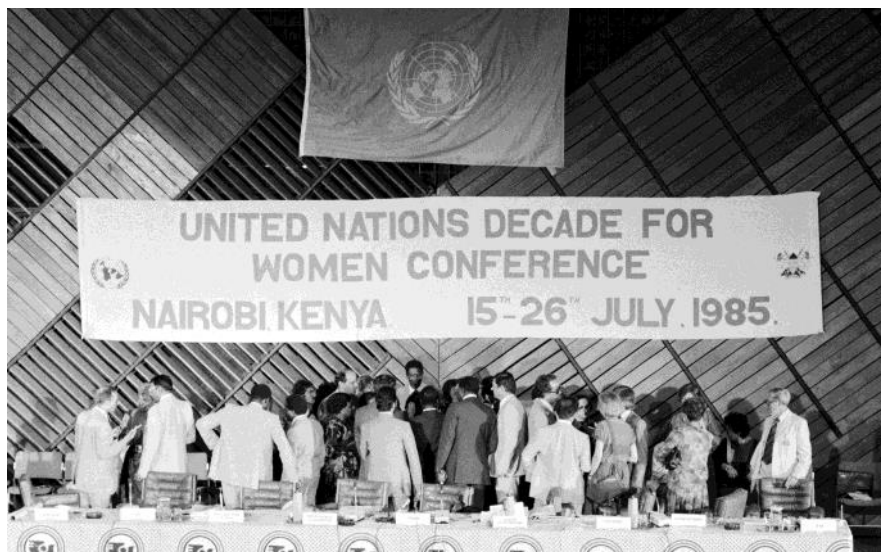


Image 4: UN Decade for Women Conference, Nairobi, 1985 © UN Photo/Milton Grant

**F**ire from below and fire from above” was a slogan and a way of running campaigns that women community activists from the Philippines ... often talked about. To borrow from this fire metaphor, the gender work at UN-Habitat required “fire from all sides.” Women from within UN-Habitat worked with activists from the civil society and the feminist movement to push the women’s agenda.

An important aspect of awareness and partnership building was inter-agency collaboration within the UN system. Activities included organising Women and Human Settlements Consultations during the Commission on the Status of Women (1995), strong collaboration with the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) as well as the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women; membership in: the *Ad Hoc* Interagency Group on Women, Environment and Development (1991-1995); the Interagency Advisory Committee for the (Beijing) Fourth World Conference on Women (1993-1995); and the UN Group of Focal Points on Women (1996-2000). This collaboration enhanced the Beijing and Habitat II processes. Celik also attended the meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and was an active member of the UNIFEM Committee for Best Practices.

Overall, her inputs were important for the gender programme by ensuring that whatever was going on in New York was reflected in the work in Nairobi headquarters and that all the organizations in New York were made aware that when they were planning any activities about women they had to include women and shelter, human settlements and land issues.

*“Fire from below and fire from above”* was a slogan and a way of running campaigns that women community activists from the Philippines (Fides Bagasao, Tessie Fernandes and others) often talked about. To borrow from this fire metaphor, the gender work at UN-Habitat required

“fire from all sides.” Women from within UN-Habitat worked with activists from the civil society and the feminist movement to push the women’s agenda. Many governments helped the cause, providing political and financial support – but this also required lobbying from within and without UN-Habitat, often through supportive women and men in government. Some key supporters we can mention here include Elisabet Viklund from Sweden, Outi Berghall, Finland, Nibert Braakhuis, Netherlands, Per Nygaard, Anne Lunde, Norway and many others. Many strategies were used to bring women and women’s issues into the international public debate.

A few of the strategies are highlighted below. Some were used early in the process, others later. Almost all of them in different forms or in combinations are applicable throughout the gender history, and continue to be used to date.

## STRATEGIES

### CONFERENCES

Conferences, especially regional and inter-regional ones, were consistently used to put women’s rights on the agenda. In the Nairobi Women’s Conference in 1985, key Habitat partners, including Diana Lee Smith and the HIC colleagues forwarded resolutions on women and land that were adopted.

### MOBILIZING RESOURCES, LARGE AND SMALL

As an example, staff inside of UN-Habitat (Aliye Celik and Ayse Kudat) secured left over money from the 1985 Women’s Nairobi Conference.

It was used to establish a meeting on Women and Land in Vienna in 1985 under the leadership of Aliye Celik. At this workshop key women working on land issues were brought in - one part of the work helped frame program work inside of UN-Habitat and another externally - the National Congress of Neighbourhood Women in the US agreed to host a women housing and land conference in the USA as part of the IYSH.

It brought together 150 grassroots women leaders and professionals – academics, policy makers from 36 US states and 8 countries. Ingrid Munro head of the IYSH was a key note speaker at the conference held in Camden New Jersey in 1987. A decade later the Women and Habitat Programme developed a single page flyer “send a sister to Istanbul” and managed to raise small (and not so small) grants for women’s participation in Habitat II.

On their part, many women who came to conferences with large per diems showed solidarity by contributing cash to support less funded women. Alternatively, pooling resources with others and staying in modest accommodation, increased the numbers of women that could participate.

### 1986—1989: USED THE IYSH PROCESS AND THE GLOBAL SHELTER STRATEGY TO THE YEAR 2000

Staff at UN-Habitat as part of the IYSH activities, and in the formulation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, asked UN-Habitat to hold regional seminars on identifying the priorities of women for UN-Habitat.

The regional meetings (held in Colombia, Indonesia, Trinidad and Zambia) culminated in an inter-regional seminar in Nairobi in 1989. They were pulled together by Caroline Pezzullo of GROOTS International who was a consultant on the project and Aliye Celik, the UN-Habitat women's focal point.

The resulting work plan recommended the establishment of the Women and Habitat Programme at UNCHS. An Activist was purposely sought for the post of coordinator.

Catalina Trujillo from Colombia's FEDEVIVIENDA, which was affiliated with HIC, was subsequently appointed to the post. She had been involved in IYSH activities as well as the regional and inter-regional seminars.

### WOMEN'S NETWORKS

Catalina Trujillo, working with women's activists (and assisted by friendly governments (Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) pushed through CHS Resolution 13/13 of 1991.

This resolution formalized the relationship between the HIC Women and Shelter Network and UN-Habitat. In 1995, the Huairou Commission: Women, Homes and Communities was founded at the Grassroots Tent coordinated by GROOTS International and the National Congress of Neighbourhood Women at the 4th World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995.

Wally N'Dow the chair of the Habitat II process with Catalina Trujillo went to the grassroots tent at the NGO Forum in the Beijing Conference, searching for strong women leaders to support Habitat II which was 10 months later than Beijing.

They came to the Grassroots Tent and N'Dow, impressed by the planning work done for Habitat II there on women and land, declared the formation of at the Huairou Commission. He and Catalina invited all the top level women in the UN to be on it and supported Jan Peterson and GROOTS International to be the lead organizer and developer of the Commission.

“From Beijing to Istanbul” became the slogan for ensuring that women's issues from the Beijing conferences were carried forward to, and improved upon in Istanbul.



Image 5: Jan Peterson, Founder and Chair of the Secretariat of the Huairou Commission (far left) at the “Unheard voices of women: water, sanitation and human settlement” event, 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development © UN Photo/Rick Bajornas



## HABITAT II: WOMEN MADE VISIBLE AND TRENDS BEYOND 1996

### SUPER COALITION

A strategy to build the power of women by forming -the women's networks linked up to have more power – GROOTS International, National Congress of Neighbourhood Women, ICW, WEDO, Asian Women and Shelter Network (AWAS), HIC Women and Shelter, which later became the Women and Habitat Network (HIC -WHN).

### HIGH LEVEL WOMEN

UN-Habitat Executive Director with the support of Catalina Trujillo nominated for the Commission high level women in and outside of the UN – Noeleen Heyzer, head of UNIFEM, Angela King, UN Division for the Advancement of Women, Bella Abzug (WEDO), Wangari Maathai (later to become a Nobel Peace Laureate) and others.

### DAILY WOMEN'S CAUCUS

This was facilitated by all the networks and led by WEDO who created it as a tool to be used to consolidate and bring women together at UN conferences, a result of which was 133 references to women brought to the Habitat Agenda thanks to an intensive cooperation and negotiating between friendly governments, women in government delegations and women's organizations and networks.

This practice has continued to date and the Women's Caucus has become a feature of all UN-Habitat Governing Council, the World

Urban Forum as well as other major meetings (not just of UN-Habitat).

### DAILY DEBRIEFING

This was organised by the Super Coalition each day so delegates, women's networks and civil society participants could debrief on the happenings of the day and make sure that important issues were not being compromised or that previous gains were not being rolled back. This included assigning women to work in key night sessions (often targeted by non-progressive governments wishing to block pro-women's rights resolutions but supported by friendly governments who worked during night sessions to find adoptable formulations).

### DAILY CHILDCARE

This was facilitated by the Mother Centres of Europe, not only enabled women with children to attend the conference, but also made visible the work of women and their organizing capabilities.

### HABITAT II WORKSHOPS

55 workshop's with women's focus highlighted women's issues and GROOTS International created the Our Best Practice Campaign to identify grassroots women solutions, and later went on to partner with the Best Practices Programme of UN-Habitat.

### SECURING A PHYSICAL AND SYMBOLIC SPACE FOR WOMEN

**1995-96:** In preparation for the Istanbul conference, the Turkish UN mission in New York provided a free office for the women at the Turkish Centre.

This office was used by the GROOTS International/Super Coalition/ during preparations for the Habitat II conference. Aliye Celik, UN-Habitat, helped to secure this office. Similarly, in Istanbul Sengul Ackar of the Foundation for the Support of Women worked to host women coming from all over the world.

At UN-Habitat, Catalina ensured that the Huairou Commission had a "home room" during the major meetings, including sessions of the Commission on Human Settlements (now Governing Council). The room was used for "regrouping" - meeting, leaving messages and keeping documents. The Super Coalition also ran daily women's caucuses and at the end of the day debriefing meetings.

Beyond the physical space the Women and Habitat Programme, in partnership with the women's networks established a practice of bringing grassroots and professional women as well as women in governance positions to UN meetings. GROOTS Kenya led the first such initiative with over 200 women attending the Habitat Governing Council. Part of this effort included securing a per diem for grassroots women participants as many could not attend without minimum financial assistance – transport plus the cost of leaving their informal sector businesses for the duration of the meeting.

The amounts of per diems involved were very small but it was a significant achievement to get them approved. This was a practice that some other UN-Habitat programmes subsequently emulated, often consulting the Women and Habitat Programme on the modalities.

### GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY (GWIA)

GROOTS International has been facilitating a GWIA before every World Urban Forum since 2004 in Barcelona, and involves large numbers of grassroots women leaders in the Forum.

### ENLISTING THE SUPPORT OF MALE FEMINISTS

In the early years it was very clear to the Women and Habitat team that having male colleagues actively promoting and doing gender work helped to reduce the boxing of gender into “a women’s thing.” Some of the early internal trainees on gender were men – notably staff from the Training Unit, the Water and Sanitation Section, the Community Development Programme and the Sustainable Cities Programme.

### COOPERATION WITH FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS

Support from friendly governments was essential to get resolutions adopted on gender issues, both as separate gender resolutions, or as components of other resolutions. Similarly, friendly governments provided, or pushed for, funding and other resources for gender work. Earmarked funding or “soft” ear marking of core funding, from friendly governments, were prerequisite for implementing gender focused programmes as well as conferences and meetings, and for the participation of women in more general meetings. Further, such governments applied pressure on UN-Habitat senior management on many issues concerning programming, resource allocation and internal policy support for gender mainstreaming.



Image 6: Preparatory Committee for HABITAT II during a three –day organizational session on 5 March 1993 © UN Photo/Milton Grant

### WORLD HABITAT DAY

World Habitat Day (especially 1995 and 2000) was used to draw attention to the issues around women’s empowerment and gender equality and to highlight women’s work in cities and neighbourhoods. In addition, many English, French and Spanish pamphlets and documents were published by WHP, many with partners, to highlight the issues around women’s empowerment and gender equality.

### AGGI

In 2011, Norway presented a resolution which included a proposal to establish an independent group of experts to advise the UN-Habitat Executive Director on all issues related to gender matters in the agency’s work.

The Governing Council (GC) resolution 23/1 tasked the Executive Director with setting up an advisory group on gender issues consisting of representatives of women’s organizations (both grassroots and

and professional), academic institutions, private sector, local authorities, and policy makers and decision makers in Government; taking into account equal regional representation, to advise the Executive Director on all issues related to gender mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations Human Settlement Programme.

The resolution was adopted after which a joint working group from the Huairou Commission, and UN-Habitat managed the process culminating in the selection of members of the AGGI. Experts on gender issues and habitat issues from all regions were appointed members AGGI – they include Ana Falú (of HIC Women and Shelter Network from the 1980s), Jan Peterson, Esther Mwaura-Muiru and Carmen Griffiths all GROOTS International/Huairou Commission long-time supporters of gender work in UN-Habitat.

## REPORTING STRUCTURE

The Deputy Executive Director (DED), has the oversight on engendering the agency, the gender staff, now headed by Angela Mwai, are located in the Programme Division but report directly to the DED. This was a recommendation from an analysis on the gender architecture of UN-Habitat as well as previous gender evaluations. The consultant who worked on gender architecture was Sarah Murison, formerly of UNDP and one of the original high level women appointed to the Huairou Commission, and participating in the women's workshops at the Habitat II Conference.

## ROLE OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Since the establishment of UN-Habitat, several governments have been strong in supporting women's empowerment and gender issues. The support has taken the form of advocacy in the appropriate arenas – including at the UN-Habitat Governing Council, availing human resources (sponsoring junior professional officers or funding for posts) as well as direct funding to relevant activities.

The areas outlined below apply throughout the gender story of UN-Habitat.

## ADVOCACY AND GOVERNANCE

During this period there was extensive civil society activity in the area, supported by several governments, following up the recommendations of the *Forward Looking Strategies*. IYSH-1987 activities were widely supported by numerous donors, as well as in resolutions of the UN-Habitat's

governing body (then the Human Settlements Commission). There was extensive preparation for IYSH-1987, including a global initiative to document NGO activity developed as part of UN-Habitat's program. Gender and women's activities featured strongly in the NGO documentation and follow-up action plans. In addition, there were numerous international meetings on women and shelter in different countries, supported by governments but run by civil society.

These included the Habitat Forum Berlin Workshop on Women and Habitat, the Canadian IYSH Conference Working Group on Women and Shelter in Ottawa, "Our Homes: Ourselves" the IYSH

Conference in UK as well as the IYSH Global Forum Working Group on Women and Shelter held in Nairobi as part of the UN-Habitat-supported program. Notable also for being held in the global South, the IYSH Women and Shelter Seminar in Harare in December 1987, supported by the Swedish government, brought together 13 African countries and two liberation movements, and built upon the IYSH NGO Plan of Action for the region developed in 1986 at the Nairobi NGO Forum.

In 1988 the governments of Norway and the Netherlands supported UN-Habitat Regional Women and Shelter Seminars in Bali, Indonesia (Asia), Tunisia (Francophone Africa), St Vincent (Caribbean) Peru (Latin America) and Zambia (Anglophone Africa).

The chair of these Regional Seminars was the UN-Habitat women's focal point Ayse Kudat. The goal was to get regional input from several international and national women's

organizations on the theme: Women in Human Settlements Development and Management. Lily Hutjes of ICW was invited by Ayse Kudat to write a case study on the influence (what and how) of Dutch Women's Advisory Committees on the practical quality of housing and construction in the Netherlands, as a preparation for the upcoming Regional Seminars.

The Concluding Seminar was held in Nairobi in 1989 and was chaired by Caroline Pezullo from Neighbourhood Women. It was convened as an international meeting of government and civil society activists to help the agency develop its program on women's issues and it was recommended to set up a women's program in UN-Habitat. This recommendation, passed to the Human Settlements Commission, paved the way for establishing the Women in Human Settlements Development Programme the following year.

UN member states provide both the mandate and oversight for the work of UN entities. In the case of UN-Habitat, in addition to the UN General Assembly, and the various committees, the most significant oversight body is the Governing Council (GC) – previously known as the Commission for Human Settlements (CHS).

Each GC makes resolutions and approves the work programme and budget, as well as other policy documents. It also reviews progress on implementation of resolutions and work programme passed by previous GC. In the period between GC sessions, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) based in Nairobi meets regularly for monitoring and oversight.

Since the early years, several governments have been outstanding in negotiating and monitoring the implementation of gender resolutions in the GC. The first gender resolution was 13/13 passed in 1991. Since then there has been a gender resolution in all GCs with the exception of CHS-15 of 2001 and GC-22 of 2009 (see Annex 1). The resolutions make diverse demands including gender policy, staffing of the units with gender functions, funding for the programmes and participation of women civil society networks.

Similar advocacy and governance support has accompanied the processes for the 1995 Beijing and 1996 Habitat II (Istanbul) conferences as well as the Habitat II review (Istanbul+5).

Over the years, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have been the most significant national governments on advocating on gender issues through the UN-Habitat governance process. Other governments that have been supportive include; Canada,

Colombia, Spain, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom and USA.

National governments have also played a key role in holding senior management accountable on gender, through the GC and the CPR as well as through accountability or financial resources allocated. Several governments collaborated closely with representatives of women NGOs, when collecting input for advocacy and texts, for resolutions and outcome documents.

On the other hand, there have also been governments that have been hostile to gender work, especially the resolutions, the negotiated documents and the participation of civil society (including women's organizations) in the governance processes of UN-Habitat and the right-based approach to programme work.

## RESOURCES FOR GENDER WORK

In addition to political support, resources for gender work has historically been provided by the

same governments cited above - Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, and more recently Spain. The two main categories of resources have been personnel and earmarked financial resources. Junior Professional Officers (JPO) have been provided by (chronologically) Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark and twice by Norway. In addition, Norway funded the post of the Gender Unit coordinator for several years after its establishment. This represented a significant amount of money.

Financial resources have been provided for funding posts, programme activities, and support to the work of the main women's networks that partner with UN-Habitat - including their participation in key regional and inter-regional events. The main financial resources providers have been Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Spain.



## CHAPTER TWO: 1986 to 1995

In 1990, UN-Habitat published “Shelter for All: the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.”

Some attempts were made to address women’s issues, including those highlighted in the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies*. A look at this document today reveals that although “participation of women as both contributors and beneficiaries,” was mentioned as one of the basic principles, there was little else that indicated a focus on women.

This is not to say that attempts were not made towards women’s participation in the implementation of the strategy – including guidance to governments undertaking housing programmes. Also the process of formulating this document provided yet another opportunity to examine women’s needs, roles and opportunities in the human settlements development.

The IYSH 1987, as well as the work around *the Global Strategy for Shelter* resulted in a number of regional and international meetings that brought together UN-Habitat and women from academic, government and NGO sectors, and others doing shelter related work. Some of these women were also from the feminist movement and some had been involved in activities for the UN Decade for Women.

During this time, the main NGO network engaging UN-Habitat was the Habitat International Council, which later became the Habitat International Coalition (HIC). HIC

was itself going through an internal transformation to make it more responsive to the global south, as well as have meaningful representation of women in its governance structure, and pay more attention to women in its work. In 1988, the HIC General Assembly accepted the principle of women’s equal representation on the HIC Board and sub-committees, as well as the establishment of the HIC Women and Shelter Network.

Latin America (as an example) illustrates a convergence of three during this period: the feminist movement, a very active and politically aware civil society and human settlements professionals who were also part of the first two groups. The process leading towards the 1995 Beijing brought high visibility to women’s networks and a visible effort to introduce urban and housing issues in the feminist agenda (Ana Falú, Mirina Curuchet, Olga Segovia and others were already writing on the issue).

At the same time, the HIC was bringing together diverse thinking and approaches from all the world regions and HIC was already exerting pressure on UN-Habitat vis a vis the right-based approach to human settlements development, and gender equality.

The Women in Human Settlements Development Programme (WHSDP), which later became the Women and Habitat Programme (WHP), was launched in UN-Habitat in late 1990.

The first coordinator of the programme (Catalina Trujillo) recalls receiving a job offer and being required to “report immediately.”

At the time, she was engaged in an inter-regional women’s exchange

(the Bombay-Bogota exchange) which she had to leave – the Bombay-Bogota exchange was one of the early grassroots exchange, organized by the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC (India)) and FEDEVTVIENDA (Colombia) with the support of Homeless International – headed by Ruth McLeod who was also in HIC Women and Shelter Network.

On arrival in Nairobi she found that nobody in the substantive division she was to work in was expecting her or had prepared for her arrival. She had no office, no equipment and no support staff. The level of the post was P3, which was not exactly commensurate with the level and scope of responsibilities. This level was revised upwards seven years after she took the job. She initially had an 11-month contract, often given when the organisation is hiring for a time-bound activity or does not have a properly established post. This *ad hoc* nature of providing staff and resources for gender work persists to date, and will be referred to in the concluding observations.

The WHSDP coordinator worked alone for one year until she got a JPO from Sweden funded by the Swedish government. Up to 1996, two more JPOs were provided by Netherlands and Denmark. During the period 1991-2000, the staffing of the WHP varied from two to four women.

Apart from the coordinator' post, which was a core regular budget post, other staff were provided for through extra-budgetary sources – JPOs and staff paid from project funds. Initial funding came from Denmark (taken from part of the funding for the Community Development Programme), Finland and the Netherlands.

The WHP was located in the Training Unit, and closely linked to the then DANIDA-funded Community Development Programme (CDP), one of the longest-running UN-Habitat programmes. CDP developed, and incrementally improved its gender component. The WHP coordinator was involved in gender training as well as programme formulation and monitoring. As part of the Training Unit, she also participated in training of UN-Habitat partners – local and national government institutions and provided gender-specific input for the unit's training manuals and other products.

The coordinator of the programme came from the NGO sector in Colombia and had been a member of HIC, and the HIC Women and Shelter Network. She had also been involved in some of the regional and international meetings around the Global Strategy for Shelter. She therefore had many links to women and women's organisations in the human settlements sector.

To design the initial programme of the WHP, the coordinator consulted women's organizations and networks. Some of the first programmes of the WHP focused on participatory data gathering to arrive at Women's Empowerment Indicators; Women in Construction; and successfully working with women's networks to engender the *Habitat Agenda*.

The felt need to link with women "on the ground" led to WHP continuing to actively linking with women's NGOs, principally, the HIC Women and Habitat Network (HIC-WHN). The author, Wandia Seaforth was recruited specifically as a "networking officer" and regularly sent out news notes to women's

organizations – the content included developments at UN-Habitat as well as news gathered from women's organizations.

The relationship with non-governmental organizations had been recognized in 1991 in a resolution of the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Human Settlements (now UN-Habitat Governing Council). Resolution 13/13 1991 among other things invited governments and UN-Habitat to develop close cooperation with HIC Women and Shelter Network and similar NGOs at national, regional and international levels.

Consequently, the coordinator of the HIC Women and Shelter Network, then based in Nairobi, held regular consultations with the WHP and HIC Women and Shelter Network focal points made various inputs to the programme. Since 1995 when the "Super Coalition Women on Homes, Community," in Huairou near Beijing was given the name 'Huairou Commission' by Wally N'Dow, all women's organizations engaged in women and habitat issues came together, under that same umbrella name, and continued to engage with UN-Habitat.

The team in the WHP from 1990 to 1999 (at different times) consisted of Catalina, coordinator, Annika Tonqvist, provided by Sweden, Marieke Van Geldermalsen, provided by Netherlands, Irene Brasholt provided by Denmark, Wandia Seaforth, Francoise Ngendahayo and Angela Hakizimana. The last three were paid for with project funds provided by Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.



Image 7: Plenary, general view at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China © UN Photo/Yao Da Wei

The major event on women and gender in this time period was the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. The preparatory process saw massive mobilization of women's organizations worldwide, including those concerned with women and habitat. HIC Women and Shelter Network mobilized through its regional structures to identify issues of concern to grassroots women and bring them, and the women themselves, to meetings, including in China, so as to influence the outcome.

This involved internal informal training and organization of delegates as well as network and coalition-building with other women's organisations, all with the support and encouragement of the WHP of UN-Habitat. International, the ICW, and WEDO.

Thus the Super-Coalition on Women, Homes and Community was formed, linking the efforts of HIC Women and Shelter Network, GROOTS International, the ICW, and WEDO.

One issue identified at grassroots level by HIC Women and Shelter Network delegates was the unequal rights of women to own and inherit property, including land and housing. This became the *cause célèbre* that almost brought negotiations on the text of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to a standstill.

Backstage meetings resolved the issue with the now-established wording on giving "...women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property..." (Platform for Action 60

(f) and 61 (b)), existing Human Rights instruments such as CEDAW and others and enlisting the support of delegates from Islamic countries by citing the principles of gender equality contained in the Qu'ran.

This major achievement of the women's movement led to follow-up activities and reforms in policy and practice worldwide. Although women continue to be disadvantaged in property inheritance and ownership, this was the breakthrough achievement that began the process of reform, and it was driven by WHP support.

UN-Habitat continued its work in the area, led by the WHO in coordination with the Gender Unit's role in mainstreaming within the organization. Primarily, women's property rights became an integral part of UN-Habitat's Campaign for





Image 8: Women attending the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China © UN Photo/Milton Grant

Secure Tenure. Women’s rights to land and property in Islamic countries became a special focus and area of support by UN-Habitat, taking advantage of its partnership with HIC’s Centre on Land Rights and Evictions based in Cairo, which also took up the cause of women’s property rights following the Beijing and Habitat II advances in international agreements.

The NGO forum at the Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Huairou, outside Beijing. This led to the Executive Director of Habitat dubbing the Super-Coalition and its allies there as the “Huairou Commission”, which he saw as a major force for reform and action on Women and Habitat issues, uniting civil society and UN efforts. Combined with the power of GA resolution 13/13 four years earlier, this initiated a period of

unprecedented collaboration between civil society women’s organizations and the UN at multiple levels, not least in the two campaigns of UN-Habitat on Secure Tenure and Good Governance which came later on in 1999. This collaboration continues up to today.

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## CHAPTER THREE: 1996 to 1999

In June 1996, the City Summit, also called Habitat II or the Second World Conference on Human Settlements, was held in Istanbul, Turkey.

Thousands of people representing national government, local authorities, NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) participated. Among the NGOs and CBOs, women's organizations were some of the most active, organized and networked in monitoring the official part of the conference and ensuring that the outcome was gender sensitive and women friendly.

The Habitat Agenda, 1996, the main outcome document of the Istanbul Conference 1996 contains 30 references to "gender" and no less than 110 to "women/girls" The references point to areas that need to be addressed in order to empower women. They include recognition of the human rights of women, greater participation of women in public and political life at all levels, capacity building for women, women's right to land, housing and property etc. There are also calls to recognize and value women's knowledge and contribution in planning and managing urban areas.

In Paragraph 46, parties commit themselves to:

- Integrating gender perspectives in human settlement related legislation, policies, programmes and projects through the application of gender sensitive analysis;
- Developing conceptual and practical methodologies for incorporating gender in human settlements planning, development and evaluation including the development of indicators;
- Collecting, analysing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and information on human settlements issues including statistical means which recognise the unremunerated work of women for use in policy and programme planning and implementation;
- Integrating a gender perspective in the design and implementation of environmentally sound and sustainable resource management mechanisms, production techniques and infrastructure development in rural and urban areas;
- The formulation and strengthening of policies and practices to promote the full and equal participation of women in human settlement planning and decision making.

The preparatory process for the Habitat II conference involved many national, regional and inter-regional activities including the Preparatory Committees (PREPCOMS).

These activities included establishment of National Habitat Committees, preparation of national reports, compilation of indicators, holding of national and regional meetings as well as drafting and debate on the Habitat Agenda. The various drafts of the Habitat Agenda were influenced by these processes in which national governments played key roles.

Members of the Huairou Commission mobilized women across the world to participate and trained those who attended UN meetings on how to do so meaningfully and effectively.

Apart from the continued push on women's right to the inheritance of property as in Beijing, gains on numerous other issues were achieved by this means. For the indicators programme, a module on *Taking Gender into Account* was developed in collaboration with the WHP. Countries were encouraged to have broad-based, gender balanced National Habitat Committees.

Even though it is generally assessed that countries did not really use the gender module, there were some attempts to reflect gender issues in the national reports, and to disaggregate data by sex in some of the countries.

In addition, the Best Practices (BP) Programme of UN-Habitat was launched in 1995 and the first BP winners awarded in Istanbul and an exhibition mounted displaying all the shortlisted practices.

One of the winners was a women's empowerment initiative while several others had benefited women in various ways including housing, livelihoods and community participation. Gender equality and social inclusion was recognized as one of the BP selection criteria.

Ensuring that the Habitat Agenda equally addressed the needs and roles of women and men required the concerted efforts of many women's organizations, as well as supportive governments and individual women and men in government delegations in the Habitat II preparatory process, and in Istanbul.

It involved many months of strategizing by many women and women's organizations, coalitions and alliances including the Huairou Commission.

The Huairou Commission builds partnerships among grassroots women's representatives and those of NGOs, the private sector, local government, UN-Habitat and other UN agencies. Its establishment was initially to ensure that grassroots women's concerns would have a strong presence at the Habitat II Conference and in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda after the conference.

Its Habitat II activities drew on the experience of the Super Coalition on Women, Homes and Community. The Super Coalition had members from: HIC Women and Shelter Network, GROOTS International, ICW, and WEDO. Subsequently, the Women for Peace Network and AWAS also became members.

At the 1996 Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) all the past efforts came together, with women's groups joining to present a very strong front, and to make a huge impact on the outcome documents. The work of the New York Office included a strong collaboration with UNIFEM and UN-INSTRAW as well as the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

Joint panel meetings and interagency collaboration was very common. The chief of the UN-Habitat New York office attended the meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and was an active member of the UNIFEM Committee for Best Practices.

The Huairou Commission continues to partner with UN-Habitat and other UN agencies, which will be addressed with more detail later in the document. The first UN-Habitat Gender Policy was approved towards the end of 1996. It was written by two consultants associated with the Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London after extensive consultations within UN-Habitat.

The Policy recommended the establishment of a Gender Unit to focus on gender mainstreaming within UN-Habitat, while retaining the WHP to continue working on women's empowerment activities and outreach to women's organizations.

The Gender Mainstreaming Unit (GMU) was adopted in a resolution at the General Council negotiated by Norway. It was also funded by Norway for several years. A Gender Unit was established in 1997 to support implementation of the policy.

The coordinator was Diana Lee-Smith, former coordinator of HIC Women and Shelter Network, who had collaborated with the WHP. The head of the GMU was a P4, again this job could have been established a level higher. This unit worked alongside the WHP which focused primarily on external issues – mainly women's empowerment and relations with women's organizations, while the Gender Unit focused on internal gender mainstreaming issues.

This institutional structure, recommended by the consultants, and considered a best practice by the women's movement, was a progressive and effective approach for addressing gender issues.



# The Habitat Agenda



## Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements

7. As human beings are at the centre of our concern for sustainable development, they are the basis for our actions as in implementing the Habitat Agenda. We recognize the particular needs of women, children and youth for safe, healthy and secure living conditions. We shall intensify our efforts to eradicate poverty and discrimination, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and to provide for basic needs, such as education, nutrition and life-span health care services, and, especially, adequate shelter for all. To this end, we commit ourselves to improving the living conditions in human settlements in ways that are consonant with local needs and realities, and we acknowledge the need to address the global, economic, social and environmental trends to ensure the creation of better living environments for all people. We shall also ensure the full and equal participation of all women and men, and the effective participation of youth, in political, economic and social life. We shall promote full accessibility for people with disabilities, as well as gender equality in policies, programmes and projects for shelter and sustainable human settlements development. We make these commitments with particular reference to the more than one billion people living in absolute poverty and to the members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups identified in the Habitat Agenda.

Image 9: Paragraph 7 of The Habitat Agenda recognizes the need for women's participation  
Source: *Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, 1996*

The Gender Unit began with a high profile intranet campaign for staff and an assessment of capacity and attitudes among all professional staff that placed them in “supportive”, “neutral”, or “opposed” categories, for which specific strategies were designed in follow-up work 1998-2001, namely:

1. Training courses for staff, both General Service and Professional. Over 200 staff were trained by consultants whose capacity was built by the Gender Coordinator, who designed and managed the programme.
2. Information Bulletins – monthly email messages from the Gender Coordinator that reached all staff including headquarters, regional and national positions.
3. The Gender Task Force that met monthly on voluntary basis comprised 25% of headquarters professional staff, half men and half women and devised and

implemented a number of mainstreaming measures, including:

- Gendering the UN Habitat planning and budgeting process.
- Institutionalising and making gender a requirement for approval in the inter-divisional Project Review Committee and development of a Project Cycle Manual including gender analysis.
- Self-assessment and gender programme development in many UN-Habitat programs including the Urban Management Programme, Sustainable Cities Program, the Land Unit and the Water and Sanitation Programme.

This collaborative approach to institutional management made significant changes in the gender capacity of UN-Habitat. Much of the progress was made through coordinated action between the Gender Unit and WHP as well as through the external partner collaboration with the Huairou Commission and its member organizations, implementing GA Resolution 13/13 of 1991.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Istanbul +5 to 2001

### ISTANBUL +5

The Istanbul+5 process, as well as the conference session and the aftermath, all contributed to gender mainstreaming.

A booklet, *Gendered Implementation of the Habitat Agenda: a summary of activities from 1996-2001* was produced by UN-Habitat, Diana Lee Smith specially requested by Ana Tibajuka, the Executive Director, before the conference in May 2001.

The five-year review of the outcome of the Habitat II Istanbul Conference was also undertaken in 2001. Dubbed Istanbul+5, its objective was to assess the



the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Governments were invited to submit national reports following a prescribed format, and were asked to report progress, constraints to implementation and new emerging challenges. This effort culminated in the UN General Assembly Special Session held in June 2001.

The official review process for Istanbul+5 began in October 1999 with the issuing of the "Guidelines for Country reporting," developed

by UN-Habitat. The guidelines were developed through a consultative process involving UN-Habitat staff, national governments and Habitat Agenda partners, chief among them, women's organizations. Some of the interesting country differences were in the areas of presence or absence of gender-disaggregated data, leading to inadequate or no information on gender aspects under the key items to be reported on, including the most obvious gender-sensitive sub-sections such as: improving access

improving access to secure tenure, providing equal access to land, promoting social integration, encouraging and supporting participation and civic engagement, promoting gender equality in human settlements development, etc.

Issues of legal, economic and social barriers to women's access to adequate shelter did emerge from many country reports. However, there were differences in the hard data provided to illustrate problems and solutions. A significant observation was that some themes were best documented by countries having broad-based and participatory governance processes with an enhanced role for local authorities and provisions for the equitable participation of women.

The 2001 Declaration on cities and other human settlements in the new millennium, the main outcome document of the Istanbul+5 session, retained all of the important gender commitments from the Habitat Agenda. Additionally, the need to value and support the voluntary work of community-based organizations (many of them women's) was acknowledged.

During the Special Session in New York, the Huairou Commission held a GWIA to highlight grassroots women's Best Practices through women's voluntary work in communities and cities. Presentations from all the regions looked at women's work in redesigning public space, improving urban security, responding to disasters and participating in post-disaster rebuilding of settlements and communities. What was emerging from the GWIA was that women's organizations had come up with innovative practices, using minimal resources in difficult circumstances.





Image 10: Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, briefs correspondents ahead of a special General Assembly session on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, 2001 © UN Photo/Evan Schneider



During the Special Session in New York, the Huairou Commission held a GWIA to highlight grassroots women's Best Practices through women's voluntary work in communities and cities. Presentations from all the regions looked at women's work in redesigning public space, improving urban security, responding to disasters and participating in post-disaster rebuilding of settlements and communities.

What was emerging from the GWIA was that women's organizations had come up with innovative practices, using minimal resources in difficult circumstances. What the women were trying to demonstrate was that they had a great deal of knowledge based on practical experience; and that they were perfecting their strategies by sharing them with each other.

For example, women who had worked in the earthquake-affected areas of Turkey and India, exchanged strategies with women working in post-conflict areas in Europe and Central America. The exchange was not just on how to address women's needs and concerns, but on how to be inclusive, how to make best use of scarce resources and how to maintain the social fabric during the reconstruction period – in other words, how to build resilience. In post-conflict areas, women were also involved in peace building to minimize future conflict.

The Huairou Commission also undertook a gender evaluation of the Thematic Committee (ThemCom) – the substantive component of the Special Session, presenting case studies on successful implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The gender evaluation pointed out good areas but also many shortcomings from a gender perspective.

These included: choice of case studies presented, gender issues highlighted (or not) and gender balance in key speakers. UN-Habitat received the feedback positively and undertook to address the issues in future forums.

Some of the areas that international institutions such as UN-Habitat could take up in order to enhance the implementation of the Habitat Agenda from a gender perspective stood out from the Istanbul+5 process. One was the need to support national governments and local authorities in collecting gender disaggregated data and information. Another was the need to support women's organizations, especially community-based women, in documenting their work.

Related to this was analysing the work of women's organisations to extract lessons learnt and policy applications. Many community-based women's initiatives were addressing various forms of exclusion. What lessons could be learned from them, and how could they inform policy?

Several UN-Habitat programmes have subsequently designed and implemented programmes with a distinct gender analysis and/or extensive partnerships with women's organizations. Examples are programmes addressing women's and girls' safety – including design of public space; gender-responsive land administration; and responses to climate change. Thus the I+5 review process provided evidence that many of the approaches taken by UN-Habitat in addressing women's and gender concerns were valid.

The Istanbul+5 process also underscored the importance of working with women professionals as well as gender experts in the

human settlements sector – for example women planners and transport experts. It also reconfirmed that gender mainstreaming in the public sector (local and national government) remained very much a political issue requiring advocacy and alliance building.

However, this period also witnessed retrenchment of staff dealing with gender issues within UN-Habitat itself as a secretariat. During a period of reorganization and financial cutbacks, senior UN-Habitat staff decided on staff redeployments affecting how women and gender issues were being addressed.

It was difficult to separate women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming work because at the time so much of the effort needed to be on levelling the playing field. In 2000 the head of the WHP was re-assigned to the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) where she continued working on gender and women's issues as well as her other duties. At headquarters the WHP was merged into the Gender Unit, and essentially disappeared.

This Gender Unit was staffed by three staff members at the outset and located in the Urban Secretariat. However, the head of the Gender Unit was subsequently relocated to the office of the Executive Director with specific gender-related tasks. She resigned her position and left the UN in mid-2001.

The other two staff members remained in the Gender Unit, located in the then Urban Secretariat, and continued with gender mainstreaming. Some of the structures created, such as the Gender Task Force which brought secretariat staff together to work on the issues quickly collapsed.

The Istanbul+5 process also underscored the importance of working with women professionals as well as gender experts in the human settlements sector – for example women planners and transport experts. It also reconfirmed that gender mainstreaming in the public sector (local and national government) remained very much a political issue requiring advocacy and alliance building.

The Gender Task Force was subsequently revived around 2003.

## **GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS: GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SECURE TENURE**

In particular, the work done on gender mainstreaming (including links to grassroots women's organizations) in this period strongly influenced the two global campaigns, on Good Governance and Secure Tenure, launched by UN-Habitat in 1999.

These were part of the major restructuring (including retrenchment) in the organization. The two campaigns recognized very early the centrality of gender equality and the need to have a rights-based approach.

Both the Gender Unit and the women's networks who were partners were significantly involved in the campaigns from the outset.

In the early stages, the Gender Unit contributed two concept papers on Women and secure tenure for the tenure campaign, and Policy Paper on Women and Urban Governance for the governance campaign.

There was also an extensive study on women's right to land and housing property in East Africa. Among the women's networks, the HIC Women and Shelter Network took a lead in the secure tenure campaign. GROOTS International took the lead in the governance campaign.

The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and ROLAC had

many gender programmes and activities related to the two campaigns including a competition on gender-responsive municipalities (ROAP with Mariko Sato), links to the Federation of Women Municipalists of Latin America and the Caribbean (FEMUM). Catalina Trujillo, now working in ROLAC also found the campaigns very useful tools for doing gender work.

## CHAPTER FIVE: 2002 to 2012

In reality, and as UN-Habitat eventually concluded, it was difficult to separate the campaigns in many areas due to their various inter-related aspects.

For example, women are often unable to participate in governance because of poverty issues, which are often related to not having rights to assets such as land and housing property. At the same time, poor governance impacts negatively on women's ability to access these resources, even when the rights are provided for in law. As a result, the women's networks increasingly addressed the two campaigns together.



The AWAS had initiated a methodology called Local-to-Local Dialogue – for dialogues between community groups and local authorities – initially introduced in India, Malaysia and Nepal.

The dialogues always centred on real community needs such as poor sanitation, post-disaster reconstruction, improving the living environment, etc. The Good Governance Campaign partnered with the Huairou Commission to

produce a manual on Local-to-local dialogues as part of the campaign's toolkit series. The dialogues that were implemented and documented involved women's organizations from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, and covered issues pertaining to good governance as well as access to land, housing and better living environments – in effect, issues pertaining to both campaigns. Indeed, the Local-to-local dialogue methodology can be used in diverse settings where

inclusiveness is called for, and where marginalized communities seek to find a voice.

During the period 2002-2011, the GMU made efforts to increase the scope and depth of gender mainstreaming within UN-Habitat, to expand the partners' base; and to introduce the urban dimension to the UN's inter-agency work on gender. The revised gender policy had just been approved, and a new coordinator for the GMU had just been recruited.

In the new organization chart, the GMU was supposed to have two established professional posts, including the coordinator who was then supposed to source for a JPO, and project staff paid for after fund raising.

In reality, the only established post remained that of the coordinator. Subsequently she got a JPO funded by Norway, as well as intermittent project staff paid for from Project funds.

The new GMU coordinator, Lucia Kiwala, came on board in September 2002, and began by holding an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in which diverse groups (grassroots, professional, academic, multi-lateral) from all regions participated. The EGM came up with a set of recommendations on priority focus areas for follow up at the local, national, regional and international levels.

These included ongoing capacity building among UN-Habitat staff, applied research on women's status in human settlements, and women's economic empowerment through the human settlements development process.



The main areas of focus for gender mainstreaming during this period were:

- Development and implementation of a programme on “women’s empowerment through access to land and housing;
- Capacity building for UN-Habitat staff;
- Engagement with:
  - women’s organizations;
  - specific UN-Habitat programmes, including regional offices; and
  - engagement in UN Inter-agency gender work to include the urban dimension.

## WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ACCESS TO LAND AND HOUSING

This was a combination of research and project work piloted in Uganda and Tanzania, with the final objective of house ownership for women through Women’s Land Access Trusts. This programme was already being developed prior to the arrival of Lucia Kiwala, as part of a Dutch partnership funding to UN-Habitat, but it also corresponded to one of the recommendations from the EGM.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building for UN-Habitat staff was carried out initially for staff members in Nairobi, by consultants from the DPU of the University College London. Regional Offices were trained via different arrangements, including travel by the GMU chief to the ROAP and the ROLAC. Capacity building for Habitat Agenda Partners was carried out in conjunction with the Training and Capacity Building Branch

(TCBB), and included a partnership with the Golda Meir International Training Centre in Israel.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS

The GMU maintained collaborative working links with networks that were already working with UN-Habitat, chiefly the Huairou Commission and the HIC-WHN. At the same time, GMU also made efforts to expand the catchment to bring in other women’s constituencies and groups including women in governance positions and those in Habitat-related professions. A parallel approach to national and regional gender institutions was made.

With the Huairou Commission, the main lines of work included (but were not limited to):

- Consultation on overall gender mainstreaming in UN-Habitat including work with other programmes of UN-Habitat - for example, with Land Unit on women’s land rights, Safer Cities Programme and ROLAC on women’s and girls’ safety;
- Influencing UN processes including the UN-Habitat Governing Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women;
- Joint projects with the Huairou Commission and other UN agencies, notably with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNIFEM on women’s and girls’ safety (cited above).

## REGIONAL OFFICES

The ROLAC had several programmes on gender mainstreaming, with the active

collaboration of the GMU in Nairobi headquarters. These programmes included:

- Continuous efforts by ROLAC to have a gender perspective in all the programmes, which was supported by four training manuals on gender:
  - Gender mainstreaming in general
  - Safety and security
  - Land
  - Local government;
- Gender training for ROLAC staff;
- A programme addressing violence against women and girls – including a best practice awards programme; and
- Work with the FEMUM.

ROAP has had a large project portfolio including several on post-disaster reconstruction. Continuous engagement with ROAP included:

- providing gender Terms of Reference for staff at the country level;
- developing questionnaires for assessing gender at the country level;
- training for Habitat Programme Managers; and
- running an awards programme on gender responsive local governments with the support of the GMU and the BP Programme.

At the World Urban Forum 2010 in Rio de Janeiro, GMU and TCBB undertook gender training for Habitat Programme Managers and Chief Technical Advisers from Africa, Arab States, Asia and Latin America & the Caribbean. In addition, ROAP ran an awards programme on gender responsive local governments with the support of the GMU and the BP Programme.



Image 11: Jubilant exhibitors at the World Urban Forum 5 (WUF5) closing ceremony, Brazil, 2010. Gender training was an integral part of WUF 5. © UN Habitat/Julius Mwelu

## GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

In response to Governing Council Resolution 22/7 of 2009, GEAP was formulated to bring UN-Habitat in line with other UN agencies, regarding gender mainstreaming strategies; and enhance coordination and coherence in gender mainstreaming work within UN-Habitat. Formulation and implementation of the GEAP was also mandated by the UN Economic and Social Council and was part of the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) for gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-SWAP requires each UN agency to adopt a gender policy and strategy/plan of action.

The GEAP was formulated through a participatory process with the divisions of UN-Habitat, including the regional offices; and then with partners – in four different meetings held with partners. The plan covered 2008-2013 and had six strategic result areas namely:

- Advocacy and monitoring gender equality in cities;
- Urban planning, governance and management;
- Land and housing; access to environmentally sound urban basic services;
- Strengthened human settlements finance systems; and
- UN-Habitat commitment to gender balance and gender mainstreaming in programmes.

An assessment of progress to 2013 was conducted by an independent consultant, and a detailed progress report published; therefore, GEAP will not be described in detail here.

In summary, GEAP was a commendable first and even brave step given its scope. More than a dozen initiatives/outputs from more than 10 programmes/sections of UN-Habitat were the result of the first GEAP. Some of the initiatives are still ongoing. Several challenges have been encountered which need to be addressed in subsequent phases of GEAP.

## UN-HABITAT FLAGSHIP REPORTS

Gender mainstreaming within the Global Report for Human Settlements and the State of the World's Cities Report has greatly enhanced participation of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit including:

- Identification of thematic gender experts to serve as advisors or contributors to the reports; some of the experts were paid for by GMU.
- Publication of one edition of a Women in Cities Report;
- Related to producing the reports was substantial engagement with the Global Urban Observatory for the production of gender indicators.

## EXPANDING PARTNERS BASE

The GMU took on several initiatives to expand the women's constituency collaborating with UN-Habitat. This included assisting the Huairou Commission in identifying additional organizations in Africa and Latin America, linking to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and to Metropolis.

GMU also reached out to women working in urban-related professions – for example, a workshop in the Monterrey Safer Cities Conference (2007) where an event was organized by women experts on gender and public space. One outcome of this event was a joint programme on women's safety between Women in Cities International; a Jamaican woman university professor and her students; and UNDP.

Later UNDP took over and expanded the programme. Subsequently, UNIFEM and UN-

Habitat signed a Memorandum of Understanding for follow up work.

## OTHER PROGRAMMES OF UN-HABITAT

During the same period (2002-2011) UN-Habitat programmes, including field projects were also working to mainstream gender through various avenues including: ensuring more effective participation of women, putting in measures to increase women's benefits from projects, having a specific gender component as well as (more fundamentally) introducing a rights approach in programming.

The Water and Sanitation work of UN-Habitat had a dedicated staff member for many years. Angela Hakizimana formerly of the Gender Unit, run a programme for systematically incorporating gender into the programme and actively used gender and women's networks working in this area.

Work included gender training for programme staff and beneficiaries as

well as monitoring gender aspects from project formulation to implementation and evaluation.

In 2013, a stock taking of gender mainstreaming initiatives in UN-Habitat was undertaken for the period 2008-2012. The list contains 26 projects from all the regions, and covers diverse thematic areas of UN-Habitat's work such as:

- Planning and design of public space;
- Safety and security;
- Access to land and housing property including through good land administration policy and practice;
- Post conflict/disaster recovery;
- Access to basic services – such as water and sanitation; and
- Participation in governance.

The projects in question are at different stages of implementation, with different levels of the participation of the GMU (direct versus indirect) and have various degrees of success *vis a vis* gender mainstreaming. However, all show



Image 12: Clean water, a challenge for women in Harar town, Ethiopia. Water and sanitation has been a key part of UN-Habitat's work © UN Habitat



evidence of a growing recognition within UN-Habitat that incorporating gender not only enhances inclusiveness, but also improves the overall quality of a programme or project.

## AGGI

In 2011, Norway presented a resolution to the UN-Habitat Governing Council. The *Resolution on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Sustainable Urban Development* (GC23/21) was subsequently adopted.

The resolution specifically requested the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to "set up an advisory group on gender issues consisting of representatives of women's organizations, academic institutions, the private sector, local authorities and policy makers and decision makers in Governments, taking into account equal regional representation, to advise the Executive Director on all issues related to gender mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and to provide oversight regarding the implementation of the GEAP within the existing programme of work and budget".

Follow up to the adoption of the resolution a Partners Working Group (PWG) was constituted through collaboration between the Huairou Commission and UN-Habitat. The PWG was mandated to formulate a terms of reference for the AGGI and to define a roadmap and process for selecting members to the AGGI.

The government of Norway – as the initial sponsor of the resolution – was represented in this process. The search for AGGI members was

was carried out through publicity via UN-Habitat staff, partners and the agency's website. The CPR to UN-Habitat was also involved.

The nomination form required information on prospective candidates to include gender, nationality, age group, organization – (government, NGO, academic, professional, women grassroots and private) as well as area/s of expertise corresponding to UN-Habitat's seven focus areas. This was in an effort to respond to the diversity required by the resolution.

The process culminated in the inauguration of AGGI in 2012 at the World Urban Forum in Naples. Experts on gender issues and habitat issues from all regions were appointed members of the new group including Ana Falú (of HIC Women and Shelter Network from the 1980s), Jan Peterson, Esther Mwaura-Muiru and Carmen Griffiths all GROOTS International/Huairou Commission long-time supporters of gender work in UN-Habitat.

AGGI is "guided by the principles of integrity, transparency, trust and accountability". Its role is to advance women's empowerment and gender equality in sustainable urban development; through the provision of strategic guidance and advice, across policies, programme work and budgeting at global, regional, national and local levels.

The overall work of AGGI addresses and impacts on all thematic areas of UN-Habitat's work. The group meets at least once a year, and submits a report to the Executive Director.

Both the process for establishing AGGI and its membership illustrate many of the strategies and organizing methods used in bringing a gendered approach to the work of UN-Habitat since 1995 - a combination of collaboration, lobbying, alliance building and pressure. The diversity of partners continues to expand and the support of friendly governments remains critical.

**T**he difficulties of introducing gender mainstreaming are common to many organizations and include lack of funding, internal competition for resources, lack of goodwill from senior management and lack of awareness on the importance of gender mainstreaming and/or capacity to make gender aware programming operational.

## CONCLUSION

### OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The scope of this document does not include making recommendations. What is outlined below are some observations from persons consulted while writing this paper, gender evaluations of UN-Habitat and the author's experience as a former staff member of the organisation including service in the gender team.

The difficulties of introducing gender mainstreaming are common to many organizations and include lack of funding, internal competition for resources, lack of goodwill from senior management and lack of awareness on the importance of gender mainstreaming and/or capacity to make gender aware programming operational.

### RECURRENT THEMES

Between 2003 and 2013, three external evaluations of gender mainstreaming were undertaken, among them a progress report on the implementation of the GEAP. It is interesting to note several recurrent observations and comments in all these evaluations. Principally:

#### DISCREPANCY IN COMMITMENT TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

UN-HABITAT has an expressed commitment to gender mainstreaming, however, there are many examples of discrepancy between the expressed commitment,

and the reality on the ground including:

- Resourcing of the gender mainstreaming function – human and financial – has always been, and remains a struggle. Even though gender has been recognized as a core and cross-cutting issue staffing allocations have remained inadequate.

The Gender Unit heads have been part of senior management teams and forums but the level of the coordinator's post has never been at par with other management posts. For the rest of the gender posts, the programme has always had to fundraise. Since 2012 the GMU has been run by a staff member without a post or regular contract. On several occasions (1999, 2001, 2012), gender coordinators have been re-assigned with no provisions made for replacements.

- Mechanisms for holding programmes accountable for gender mainstreaming (whether incentives, sanctions or both) have never been strong. Some have argued that the location of the gender mainstreaming function is critical to this, and suggested it should be located in the Executive Office.

The experience has been that the location – first in Training, then in Research and Monitoring and finally in the Project Office, has not made any visible difference in the way it operates or elicits accountability. The author of this document is not convinced that location in the Executive Office will be any more effective. Rather it is how committed senior management is –

including allocation of resources, how creatively the organization balances the “carrot and stick” and most importantly how continuous internal learning is promoted to show the benefits of gender mainstreaming in improving interventions.

Related to this is the corporate approach to handling cross-cutting issues in general.

### PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Since 2000, there have been several individual programmes that have been strong on gender issues, including some being implemented in very difficult regions such as Afghanistan.

In general, programmes that have had gender focal points with clear responsibilities for gender work have performed better: for example: Water and Sanitation, Land – in particular the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) – Training and Capacity Building and Safer Cities.

Further, programmes that have clear stakeholder analysis that is central to the programme design and implementation tended to better articulate the gender dimension and to do well overall. Examples: Safer Cities Programme, former Sustainable Cities Programme and Urban Management Programme.

### STAFF ATTITUDES

There has been positive progress over the years on staff members’ attitudes towards gender mainstreaming. However, there is still an apparent lack of consistency and coherence of understanding of what gender mainstreaming entails and how it is best achieved.

### INTERNAL LEARNING

Internal learning between programmes regarding gender mainstreaming is less than adequate. Whereas individual programmes do seem to build on lessons learned, collective and progressive building on such lessons does not happen sufficiently across the organization.

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS

The role of external partners – including civil society and professional organizations continues to be critical in effective gender mainstreaming. Partnerships bring in a wider pool of expertise and perspectives.

### PARTNERSHIP BASE

Related to the point above, it is important to continually expand the partnership base in order to benefit from the diversity of knowledge and approaches.

### DIALOGUE

Dialogue between formal and popular (grassroots) knowledge improves the quality and efficacy of interventions – a good example is the GLTN and Huairou Commission partnership on gender-responsiveness of policies and practices in the land sector. This kind of dialogue also benefits from a diversity of partners.

### MEMBER STATES

The influence of gender-friendly member states, including those who provide significant funding, remains essential and a prerequisite to keep gender issues in work programs and budgets.

## PARTNERS, SUPPORTERS AND CHAMPIONS

### NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

The role of national governments, UN member states and the importance of their support is illustrated earlier in this document. Here we only repeat that it remains as important today as when gender-specific work started in UN-Habitat. A continued support both in funding, negotiations to get gender issues into resolutions and into work programs/budgets and influence/pressure by donors on senior management are essential to avoid “backsliding”.

### CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND IN PARTICULAR WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS

There is no doubt that the involvement of civil society partners over the years has played a significant part in gender mainstreaming in UN-Habitat. Partnerships **bring together a diversity of disciplines, skills, perspectives and resources** that are not available in any one institution. In best case scenarios, partners complement each other and bring value added to each other’s work as well as to their joint endeavours.

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN UN-HABITAT

Three main areas will be mentioned here: Civil society and in particular women’s organizations have played a key advocacy role in international and regional events as well as in the GC of UN-Habitat.

This advocacy role has focused on highlighting gender issues in the work of UN-Habitat and voicing UN-Habitat issues in other United Nations forums where they

they participate – for example, the Huairou Commission in the Commission on the Status of Women. The most prominent civil society groups have been (in historical order) HIC, the HIC Women and Shelter Network and the HIC-WHN -Latin America, and the Huairou Commission, which is a network of many networks, and with a far reach.

The relation between HIC/HIC Women and Shelter Network and UN-Habitat was strategic and had practical influence on the Commission on Human Settlements and UN-Habitat itself – staff members and early gender work.

Other later accredited organizations like the ICW and the Super Coalition/Huairou Commission built on this civil society space and brought in more grassroots-based and political information on women's issues and input to resolutions and outcome document. Such input was forwarded by several governments like Norway (with Per Nygaard, Anne Lunde and others being in the frontline):

- Civil society organisations were pushing for the recognition of housing as a human right, long before the UN adopted a rights-based approach to programming. Within the rights-based approach, gender equality has always been a key component.

Beyond advocacy, partners have collaborated in programme implementation and have brought the diversity and immediacy of the knowledge and methodologies from the ground, that has contributed to programmes promoting social inclusion.

This should hopefully, be enhanced by recent requirement that UN work should adopt a rights-based approach.

- Two UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Adequate Housing – Miloon Kothari and Raquel Rollnick have been very strong on the gender dimension, as well as on the rights-based approach.

More recently, UN-Habitat has constituted an AGGI, which has a significant proportion of members from the civil society or with a history of work in the civil society. This is no doubt due to the historic relationship with civil society around rights and social inclusion issues.

The activities, lobbying and work for the Habitat III conference shows the need not only to be aware of the history of the gender struggle but also to ensure that past gains are not lost, but built upon.

While it is now generally accepted to recognize gender issues and women's rights, the realisation of such rights in practical terms, including resources, must be continually fought for, reviewed, reinforced and enhanced.

## ANNEX I

### GENDER RESOLUTIONS FROM THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND GOVERNING COUNCIL (GC) OF UN-HABITAT (EXTRACTS OF REQUESTS FOR ACTION)

#### 1991, RESOLUTION 13/13: PROMOTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

1. Urges Governments to identify the methods within shelter strategy development and implementation, that reveal and strengthen the role of women in settlement and development;
2. Requests the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to strengthen the role and competence of the Centre in gender-sensitive shelter strategy development and to increase its efforts to provide support to Governments in this field;
3. Further requests the Executive Director to review and develop a more comprehensive policy on Women in Development which ensures gender-sensitive methods in the total work programme and budget of all the divisions within the Centre, in a manner that relates gender-sensitivity training to specific technical aspects of the work of Professional staff members of the Centre;
4. Also requests the Executive Director to manage the financial resources of the Centre so that there is adequate financial and administrative support to the Women in Development focal point of the Centre, within the resources already available;
5. Invites Governments and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to develop closer cooperation with the Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Network and similar non-governmental organizations at national, regional and international levels;
6. Requests the Executive Director to report to the Commission on Human Settlements at its fourteenth session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in this resolution.

#### 1993, RESOLUTION 14/4: PROMOTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT

1. Urges all Governments to implement measures in the development of a shelter strategy which strengthen the participation and empowerment of women in settlement development and management at local, regional and national levels;
2. Also urges Governments to review and, if necessary, repeal any gender-discriminatory legislation in the field of human settlements development;
3. Invites active collaboration between Governments, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and relevant non-governmental organizations at international and national levels as well as community-based organizations in the implementation of measures to improve the condition of women in the design, development, governing and management of human settlements;
4. Requests the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to continue to strengthen the role and competence of the Centre in gender-sensitive shelter-strategy development, and to increase efforts to provide support to Governments in this field, particularly through the Urban Management Programme;
5. Also requests the Executive Director to review the set of key indicators which are being developed for monitoring shelter sector performance in terms of their gender sensitivity and to include indicators that are conducive to identifying the possibly disadvantaged position of women in the housing sector in the Shelter Sector Performance Indicators;
6. Further requests the Executive Director to formulate guidelines on legal rights to house and land tenure and access to credit for women, particularly for women heading households;
7. Further requests the Executive Director to incorporate the above-mentioned measures in all relevant parts of the work programme of the Centre for the biennium 1994-1995;
8. Requests the Executive Director to prepare a substantive contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995, either separately or in conjunction with special themes, to be considered

- at its fifteenth session, with a view to providing advice on practical and concrete action on settlements issues;
9. Also requests the Executive Director to use the above-mentioned contribution and other relevant outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women as an essential part of the documentation for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II);
  10. Invites Governments to continue and, if possible, to increase their support to this programme area through the various financial mechanisms of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat);
  11. Further requests the Executive Director to report to the Commission on Human Settlements at its fifteenth session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution.

### 1995, RESOLUTION 15/3: PROMOTING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT

1. Urges all Governments to implement measures in the human settlements development sector that strengthen the participation and empowerment of women in human settlements development and management at local, regional and national levels, and to develop programmes that ensure women the right to land and house-ownership and tenure and access to credit, with special emphasis on women living in poverty;
2. Also urges Governments to review and, if necessary, repeal any gender-discriminatory legislation in the field of human settlements development;
3. Further urges Governments to utilize women's knowledge of and contribution to sustainable consumption and production in human settlements by including women as decision makers and managers in human settlements development projects and programmes;
4. Requests Governments to include gender-impact analyses as an essential step in the development and monitoring of human settlements programmes and policies;
5. Invites Governments and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to strengthen their collaboration with relevant non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in facilitating the participation of women in sustainable human settlements development;
6. Commends the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) for the efforts to strengthen the role and competence of the Centre in gender-sensitive shelter-strategy development, as described in the reports on women's participation in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and promoting the advancement of women in human settlements, through its Women in Human Settlements Development Programme;
7. Requests the Executive Director to continue to strengthen the role and competence of the Centre in gender-sensitive human settlements development;
8. Also requests the Executive Director to include in the guidelines on legal rights to housing and land tenure and access to credit for women the issue of gender-impact analysis on human settlements programmes and policies;
9. Further requests the Executive Director, in his substantive contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in Beijing in September 1995, to emphasize the issues highlighted in the paragraphs above;
10. Further requests the Executive Director to incorporate the abovementioned measures in all relevant parts of the work programme of the Centre for the biennium 1996-1997;
11. Invites the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to include the above-mentioned issues in the preparations for the Conference;
12. Invites Governments to continue and, if possible, increase their support through the various financial mechanisms of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to this programme area and, in this connection, consider the potential of new and innovative methods of financing;
13. Further requests the Executive Director to report to the Commission at its sixteenth session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution.

### 1997, RESOLUTION 16/6: WOMEN IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT

1. Urges Governments to ensure a gender-sensitive implementation of their national plans of action;
2. Requests the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to integrate fully a gender perspective into all activities of the Centre;
3. Also requests the creation of a gender coordination unit directly under the Executive Director in order to mainstream the gender perspective in all policies, projects, programmes and activities of the Centre, with adequate resources allocated from within the existing resources of the Centre, but without diverting resources from the Centre's Women in Human Settlements Development Programme;
4. Further requests the Executive Director to ensure gender balance in the Centre in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/67 of 12 December 1996 on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat;
5. Invites Governments to give financial and other support to the Centre's Women in Human Settlements Development Programme;
6. Urges Governments to encourage the full and equal participation of women in decision-making to ensure their contribution to sustainable human settlements development and ensure that the benefits of development are equally shared by all members of society;
7. Confirms that governmental institutions and civil society organizations may play an important advisory role to the Centre on human settlements matters from the perspective of women; in this context, a process may be initiated by the Executive Director to maximize the contribution of women's civil society organizations to such an advisory role on human settlements;
8. Requests the Executive Director to include a report on the implementation of the present resolution on women in human settlements development in his progress report to the Commission on Human Settlements at its seventeenth session.

### 1999, RESOLUTION 17/11: WOMEN IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT AND IN THE UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT)

1. Requests that the empowerment of women as one of the primary indicators put forth in the strategic vision for a revitalized United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) be translated into clear policy and action and promptly implemented in the Centre's work;
2. Invites the Centre to involve, to this purpose, existing expertise outside the Centre, in particular global women's networks;
3. Commends the Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) on the establishment of the Gender Unit in November 1998;
4. Requests the Acting Executive Director to ensure that both the Gender Unit and the Women and Habitat Programme are equipped, with immediate effect and within available resources, to meet the challenges of effectively implementing the new strategic vision;
5. Also requests the Acting Executive Director to develop, by the year 2000, a gender action plan to implement General Assembly resolution 53/119, including the goal of achieving a 50/50 gender distribution in staffing;
6. Urges the Acting Executive Director to make full use of the revitalization process to implement this gender action plan in all categories of posts;
7. Invites member Governments to ensure financial and other support to both the Gender Unit and the Women and Habitat Programme;
8. Requests the Acting Executive Director to include a report on the implementation of the present resolution in his progress report to the Commission on Human Settlements at its eighteenth session.



### 2003, RESOLUTION 19/16: WOMEN'S ROLE AND RIGHTS IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT AND SLUM UPGRADING

1. Requests the Executive Director, in developing and implementing UN-Habitat gender policy, to promote the full integration of gender perspectives in all activities of UN-Habitat, especially in the campaigns on secure tenure and urban governance and in slum upgrading projects;
2. Requests the Executive Director in consultation with Governments to develop or, where they already exist, to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring the impact of human settlement policies and programmes on the lives and work of women in cities, especially those in low-income areas and slums, as well as strengthening women's networks and other organizations active in this area;
3. Invites Governments to increase financial and other assistance to UN-Habitat to enable the Programme to strengthen the mainstreaming of gender issues and the work of the Gender Coordinating Unit, in particular in support of gender-specific slum upgrading projects and especially those related to employment creation, women's empowerment, housing improvement and property rights;
4. Also requests Governments to promote and protect women's equal access to adequate housing, property and land including rights to inheritance, and to secure access to credit through appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative measures;
5. Encourages Governments to support the transformation of customs and practices that discriminate against women and deny women security of tenure and equal ownership of, access to and control over land and equal rights to own property and to adequate housing;
6. Urges Governments to address the issue of forced relocation and forced evictions from home and land, and to eliminate its disproportionate impact on women;
7. Urges Governments to promote the effective participation of women in human settlements planning and development at all levels of government and in particular to utilize the untapped resources and knowledge of urban, poor women in local community development;
8. Also urges Governments to ensure gender sensitive implementation of slum upgrading programmes and in particular to emphasize poor women's rights and equal access to adequate housing and land and need for secure tenure, basic amenities and income generating activities and education and measures to protect women and girls against violence;
9. Requests Governments to promote credit schemes for shelter and income generating activities that are affordable to poor women in particular those affected by HIV/AIDS;
10. Also requests the Executive Director to include a report on the implementation of the present resolution in her progress report to the Governing Council at its twentieth and future sessions.

### 2005, RESOLUTION 20/7: GENDER EQUALITY IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT

1. Requests Governments and local authorities to involve women in decision-making at all levels of government and to encourage their participation in human settlements development planning, strengthen gender mainstreaming in local governance, including in resource allocation and delivery of basic services including water and sanitation programmes;
2. Encourages Governments and local authorities to adopt appropriate policies and to provide mechanisms and resources for addressing violence and causes of violence against women in human settlements in all its forms and to develop partnerships with relevant organizations;
3. Urges Governments and other partners to recognize and address in a non-discriminatory way, in post-conflict and disaster situations, the special needs, vulnerabilities, priorities and capacities of women;
4. Urges Governments to review and if necessary to revise policies, laws and other practices that are discriminatory against women, especially with regard to property rights and to promote proactive policies in favour of strengthening effective women's rights to land and shelter;
5. Calls upon the Executive Director to ensure that all normative and operational activities developed and implemented by the various divisions, branches and units of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme address gender equality and women's empowerment in human settlements development by incorporating gender impact assessment and gender disaggregated data criteria in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these activities;

6. Requests the Executive Director in cooperation with Habitat Agenda partners to prepare information material and disseminate best practices on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in human settlements development at the local, municipal and national levels;
7. Also requests the Executive Director to include a report on the implementation of the present resolution in her progress report to the Governing Council at its twenty-first session.

## 2007, RESOLUTION 21/9: WOMEN'S LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO FINANCE

The Governing Council

1. Recalling the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which entered into force on 3 September 1981,
2. Recalling also the linkage between the Habitat Agenda, the Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which recognize the importance of land, housing and property to women's livelihoods,
3. Recalling further its resolution 19/16 of 9 May 2003 on women's roles and rights in human settlements development and slum upgrading, especially its request to Governments to promote credit schemes for shelter and income-generating activities that are affordable to poor women, in particular those affected by HIV/AIDS, General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex, 18 December 1979.
4. Bearing in mind paragraph 20 of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and paragraph 58 (e) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome by which the world's leaders resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways of combating poverty, and of ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology,
5. Mindful of the important role of partnerships in the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the contribution of the Huairou Commission, Slum Dwellers International and other women partners in mobilizing grassroots women's organizations to participate actively in the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and in gender mainstreaming, Stressing the need for concerted action at all levels to attain the internationally agreed development goals and targets on water and sanitation, slum upgrading and slum prevention, Emphasizing that women form the majority of the urban poor, especially those living in slums;
6. Requests the Executive Director, in implementing the Habitat Agenda, to promote access to finance by low-income women, either as individuals, in cooperatives or in other associated forms, as a major contribution to the overall implementation of the Habitat Agenda and to urban poverty reduction;
7. Also requests the Executive Director, in implementing the Habitat Agenda, to develop a gender action plan with gender-specific performance indicators to ensure concrete, measurable gains for the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment;
8. Urges Governments and their development partners to support women's land access trusts, housing cooperatives and other women's organizations, including grassroots organizations, working on land, housing and housing finance to realize women's access to land, housing, housing finance, and security of tenure;
9. Requests the Executive Director to report on the implementation of the present resolution in the progress report to the Governing Council at its twenty-second session.

## 2011, RESOLUTION 23/1: GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

1. Requests the Executive Director to strengthen the Gender Mainstreaming Unit and, with the Unit, to manage a unified system of gender focal points and a gender task force effective throughout the United Nations Human Settlements Programme;
2. Encourages the Executive Director to continue strengthening staff capacity and competency in gender mainstreaming, including in the regional offices;
3. Encourages the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to incorporate fully a gender perspective into all its work;
4. Requests the Executive Director to encourage the establishment of a consultative mechanism with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the gender units of the United Nations

Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, and other relevant agencies with a focus on human settlements, to promote coherence, coordination and alignment within the United Nations system and, in particular, to involve grass-roots women and community-based organizations to inform these consultations;

5. Also requests the Executive Director to set up an advisory group on gender issues consisting of representatives of women's organizations (both grass-roots and professional organizations), academic institutions, the private sector, local authorities and policymakers and decision makers in Governments, taking into account equal regional representation, to advise the Executive Director on all issues related to gender mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and to provide oversight regarding the implementation of the gender equality action plan within the existing programme of work and budget;
6. Requests the Executive Director to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth and future sessions.

### 2013, RESOLUTION 24/4: GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT TO CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

1. Requests the Executive Director to strengthen and support the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in executing the two-fold gender strategy comprising, first, the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in the normative work and operational programmes of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in all key focus areas; and, second, the setting up of policies and programmes needed to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment;
2. Urges the Executive Director to form partnerships with civil society organizations, including networks of women's leaders in local governments, the private sector, the media, grass-roots women's and community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and experts, building on their leadership in and knowledge of sustainable and gender-responsive urban development;
3. Requests the Executive Director to make optimal use of the Advisory Group on Gender Issues by building on its guidance regarding the overall mainstreaming of gender within the organization and effective integration of gender equality policies and programmes when implementing the strategic plan and programme of work;
4. Urges the Executive Director to align the gender policy and plan of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme with the system-wide action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment;
5. Invites national and local governments to develop and strengthen their policies and programmes to effectively support and to collect data disaggregated by sex and age and disseminate information on women's increased representation in local government and women's economic contributions to cities' prosperity; and to address the causes, consequences and impacts of and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls through prevention measures, with specific attention to women's and girls' safety in private and public spaces, as defined in the Safer Cities Programme and promoted by the Global Network on Safer Cities;
6. Requests the Executive Director to allocate adequate resources for gender mainstreaming within the organization's programmes and activities.

This document attempts to capture the early history and institutional memory on gender equality and women's empowerment work in UN-Habitat. It describes its evolution and the internal processes and significant milestones that shaped it. It also endeavors to capture some of the most influential external trends and events as well as the significant partners involved.

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