UN-HABITAT

Aide-Memoire

Expert Group Meeting on Gender and Women's Issues in Human Settlements, Nairobi, Kenya, 18-20 February 2003

A. Background

With the rapid rate of urbanisation, exacerbated by increased rural - urban drift, the main casualties are women and children who form the majority of the urban poor. The feminization of poverty is an issue, which requires urgent attention by all those involved in designing and implementing human settlement policies and programmes. Improving the lives of slum dwellers by 2020 as stipulated in the Millennium development goal 7 target 11 will not be fully attained if sufficient attention is not given to gender issues in general, and the situation of women in particular.

Governments in the HABITAT Agenda reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality in human settlement development, and to incorporating gender perspectives in human settlements-related legislation, policies, and programmes and project in particular. They stressed a need for formulating and strengthening policies and practices to promote the full and equal participation of women in human settlements planning and decision-making. Furthermore, governments expressed a need for undertaking legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and the ownership of land and other property.

Since the 80s UN-HABITAT has promoted women and gender issues in its work and also supported women's networks working in this area. First, the Women in Human Settlement Development Programme was established. Later the Gender Policy Unit was created in line with HABITAT 's Gender Policy, first adopted in 1996. These two programmes worked to encourage addressing of gender issues and involvement of women in human settlement development programmes UN-HABITAT and partners. They also provided support for implementation of the gender policy, which was adopted in 1997 and revised in 2001.

The Strategic Vision (1999) for UN Centre for Human Settlements adopted by the 17th Session of the Commission on Human Settlements stated that empowerment of women was to be used as one indicator of the success of UN HABITAT's interventions. However, much remains to be done to illustrate and make visible the impact of human settlements development programmes on women at the national and local levels. There is need to identify the critical gender issues in human settlements, as they have emerged over the last ten years. There is also a need to revitalise programmes, which promote gender and women's issues in human settlements at the national and regional levels; and to strengthen existing women's networks, as well as, identify and support new partners working in this area.

B. Objectives of the Expert Group Meeting

The objectives of the Expert Group Meeting are the following:

- To examine critical gender and women's issues in human settlements, identify priority areas for action and make practical recommendations for programmes and activities to be implemented at the regional, national and local levels by governments, UN-HABITAT, international and regional organisations and NGOs.
- To propose monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess 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.
- To explore ways of strengthening women's networks and other organisations working in this area.
- To discuss modalities of establishing a network of gender experts in the area of human settlements for continuous identification of, and dialogue, among gender experts

C. Structure and provisional agenda

The meeting will be held over a period of three days, 18-20 February 2003 at the United Nations Complex, Gigiri, Nairobi Kenya. It will take the form of plenary and group discussions and presentations. In plenary, speakers will present an overview and regional perspectives of critical gender and women's issues in human settlements, as well as successful case studies. Women and representatives of NGOs working for the urban poor in the slums of Nairobi will also give their testimonies.

D. Participants

Participants and observers from governments, women's networks, and regional and international organisations will attend.

E. Organisation and funding

The meeting is being organised by UN HABITAT with financial support provided by the government of Norway. Participants funded by UN HABITAT will be provided with a return economy class air ticket using the most direct and economical route available, as well as, subsistence allowance at the UN Per diem rate for Nairobi for the duration of the meeting to cover accommodation meals and other incidental expenses.

F. Registration and Administrative Arrangements

Participants and observers are invited to register starting from 8.30 am on Tuesday, 18 February 2003. All are encouraged to endeavor to depart from their respective countries early enough to arrive in time for the meeting.

UN-HABITAT

G. Contacts

All contacts relating to the Expert Group Meeting should be made to:

1. Ms Lucia Kiwala
Chief, Gender Mainstreaming Unit
UN HABITAT
P O Box 30030
Nairobi,
Kenya
Tel: + 254 2 623025
Fax: + 254 2 623080
Email: Lucia.Kiwala@unhabitat.org

2. Mr. Lawrence Macharia
Gender Mainstreaming Unit
UN HABITAT
P O Box 30030
Nairobi,
Kenya
Tel: + 254 2 623025
Fax: + 254 2 623080