

Cities for Women, Women for Cities



Selected Success Stories from
India and Around the Globe

Janaagraha is a Bengaluru-based not-for-profit institution working to transform the quality of life in India's cities and towns. It defines quality of life as comprising quality of infrastructure and services, and quality of citizenship. To achieve its mission, Janaagraha works with councillors and citizens to catalyse active citizenship in city neighbourhoods, and with governments to institute reforms to city-systems. Janaagraha has worked extensively on urban policy and governance reforms for over two decades, including on Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, and with XIII, XIV, XV Finance Commissions, and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. Janaagraha's current portfolio of work includes engagements with the XVI Finance Commission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, NITI Aayog, Capacity Building Commission, state governments of Odisha, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh, and the 5th State Finance Commission of Karnataka.

Find out more at www.janaagraha.org

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Cities for Women, Women for Cities

Selected Success Stories from India
and Around the Globe

The City She Sees



A city is truly progressive when every woman feels safe, heard, and empowered. My mission is to ensure that Patna grows in infrastructure and inclusivity with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, making it a model city. I have introduced initiatives such as improved street lighting to ensure women's safety at night, the construction of pink toilets, and the presence of policewomen in parks and other public places. These will help make Patna more gender-inclusive.

Sita Sahu,
Mayor, Patna Municipal Corporation, Bihar Corporation, Bihar



I used to sweep these streets every morning, and I know what it feels like to be invisible. Today, as deputy mayor, my dream is to make Gaya a place where no woman feels unsafe or unheard, a city where women live with safety, dignity, and opportunity, and help lead it, from cleaning the streets to planning them.

Chinta Devi,
Deputy Mayor, Gaya Municipal Corporation, Bihar Corporation, Bihar



I dream of a Delhi that feels like it is truly ours.
Where I can step out for a walk, day or night, without thinking twice. I love the night sky ... but I have had to fear it.
I want less of mindless crowds chasing money and status, and more of sensitivity, works that heal, art, nature, and free expression.
I want calm streets, kind people, and freedom that feels real.
I do not want to just fit in. I want to feel safe, seen, and free.
I dream of a city where I can live fully, not carefully.

Medha,
MA Psychology student, University of Delhi



The City



Even when the sun scorches my head and the ground burns beneath my feet, I keep walking. For people like me, who have no choice but to walk, the heat is not just uncomfortable - it is a real struggle. I work in two buildings. I am on the road for a total of 1.5 hours every day, during the hottest hours of the afternoon, because I can not change my timings. The heat does not feel normal anymore, and it seems to get worse each year. I often wonder - is anyone doing anything about it? I do not find many things so difficult in life, but this intense heat is my biggest challenge.

Soni,
Domestic worker, Rajasthan Jaipur, Rajasthan



As a homemaker in Mumbai, I have always felt that the city does not fully cater to women's everyday needs. We rely on so many public spaces, such as markets, schools, childcare centres, and clinics, yet basic things are missing. I remember when my kids were younger, there were barely any proper playgrounds or open areas for them to play. And even now, something as basic as clean, safe toilets for women is hard to find. A city like Mumbai should think more about the women who keep it running every day.

Monika Tibrewal,
Homemaker, Maharashtra Mumbai, Maharashtra



She Sees

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Executive summary



Making cities work for women

Across the world, cities that take gender seriously are more inclusive and liveable. There is now growing evidence that women-centric urban governance can lead to a better quality of life, not only for women, but for all city residents. Gender-inclusive planning has been linked to improvements in everyday city services and systems, such as, more efficient and widely used public transport, stronger crime prevention, better access to water and sanitation, and higher citizen satisfaction with Urban Local Governments (ULGs). Cities with greater women's representation in ULGs also tend to invest more in health, education, water, and sanitation – sectors that strengthen everyday quality of life.

Over the past three decades, Indian cities have witnessed significant shifts – more girls are completing their education, more women are entering the formal workforce, and more are utilising public transportation, healthcare systems, and financial services than ever before. At the same time, more women are stepping into leadership in cities, participating in governance, and challenging how urban life has long excluded their needs and aspirations.

However, even as women claim cities in new ways, many domains of these urban spaces fail to reflect their everyday realities. Streets remain unsafe, infrastructure is unresponsive, and decision-making spaces rarely centre the voices of women, particularly those from marginalised communities.

This reality sits alongside one of the most powerful enablers of women's participation in urban governance in India, through the reservation of seats for women in ULGs, mandated through the 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1992.

Today,

16 states

have increased this reservation to 50 per cent, enabling tens of thousands of women – many first-time representatives – to enter city councils.



Women now make up at least 46 per cent, or 40,118 in total, of city councillors. In several cities, such as Patna, Bhubaneswar, and Ranchi, women councillors outnumber men.

At the same time, the journey from presence to power remains uneven. Women in office are still sometimes treated as proxies, limiting their ability to influence decision-making. Women's representation, while essential as a first step, is not always sufficient in itself. For example, a review of municipal laws across 10 Indian cities shows that women's roles in planning, budgeting, and participation are only weakly defined, and gender-inclusive language is rarely used. Many of the systems that shape our cities were not originally designed with women's experiences in mind.

Keeping these realities in mind, Janaagraha has compiled 32 success stories from India and around the world – stories of women not only participating in urban governance, but actively transforming it. From Mumbai's gender budgeting and Chennai's Gender and Policy Lab to Bogotá's Care Blocks and Barcelona's Feminist Municipalism, these

examples show what becomes possible when governance is rooted in care, community, and inclusion.

The stories in this compilation were selected using a city-systems lens, examining how gender, with a focus on women, is embedded across urban planning and design, state capacities, including finance and human resources, and decentralised participatory governance.



The 32 cases included here were selected because they illustrate initiatives that have sought to embed gender considerations within urban laws, policies, processes and, institutional design.

This could be through institutional reforms or targeted programmes that demonstrate pathways for broader systemic change. Interventions affecting urban areas but without a meaningful role for ULGs, which are central to long-term urban transformation, were excluded. The report presents six cases from India and six from around the globe in detail, with the remaining cases documented in the annexure. For analytical clarity, the success stories are organised under two complementary dimensions:

1. Cities for Women
2. Women for Cities.

The first highlights efforts to design policies, infrastructure, and services to respond to women's needs, while the second focuses on initiatives that strengthen women's participation and leadership in urban governance.

Each success story outlines the context of the initiative, the process of intervention, and its impact. Together, these stories illustrate not only what is possible, but how change can be adapted, scaled, and institutionalised within urban governance. Across these success stories, seven key ingredients emerge for creating cities that work for women and enable their representation and agency.

Together, these stories illustrate not only what is possible, but how change can be adapted, scaled, and institutionalised within urban governance.

- ▲ **Legal and policy mandates** that mainstream gender in urban governance. Dedicated institutional mechanisms, such as gender cells and capacity-building for bureaucrats to apply gender frameworks meaningfully.
- ▲ **Inclusive planning and design processes** that centre women's care, mobility, safety, and livelihood concerns.
- ▲ **Gender-responsive budgeting** that links public spending to impact assessments, participatory processes, and measurable outcomes.
- ▲ **Women-led collectives and SHGs** as vehicles for service delivery, planning, and accountability.
- ▲ **Leadership development for women mayors and councillors** through systemic training and support.
- ▲ **Representation of women** in formal citizen-participation platforms.
- ▲ **Use of technology and data** to identify and address gender gaps.



Cities built for and by women tend to be more inclusive, safer, sustainable, and ultimately better for everyone. The task ahead is not simply to add women into existing structures, but to fundamentally reimagine those structures. This compilation, 'Cities for Women, Women for Cities: Selected Success Stories from India and Around the Globe', aims to contribute to that reimagining.

Inside this compilation

Section 1 - Context	Section II - Success Stories	Section III - Insights	Annexures
Sets the background for the compilation	12 success stories from India and around the globe under two categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cities for Women2. Women for Cities.	Key cross-cutting lessons from the success stories	I- Methodology II- Summaries of remaining 20 success stories

1

Urban India
through her
lens:

**Mapping the
reality of women
in cities**





Womenⁱ constitute nearly half of India's total population, about

181.6 million
(48%)

of whom live in urban areas.¹

Over the past two decades, women in urban India have experienced significant transformation. Today, they are more likely to complete school and pursue higher education, access affordable healthcare, and enter the formal workforce. Cities are increasingly within reach due to improved public transportation, digital connectivity, and platforms for community participation (Refer to Figure 1).

In July 1993, India ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)², just a month after the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA), which established a framework for decentralised urban governance, came into effect.

“

Did you know?

The **74th** Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1991 by Sheila Kaul, the then Union Minister for Urban Development. She is one of only two women to have served as Union Urban Development Minister, the other being Mohsina Kidwai.

”

ⁱWe define women as those who were Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB), trans women, and those who identify as women

Figure 1

Progress of women in urban India

Urban female literacy rate has consistently risen, from

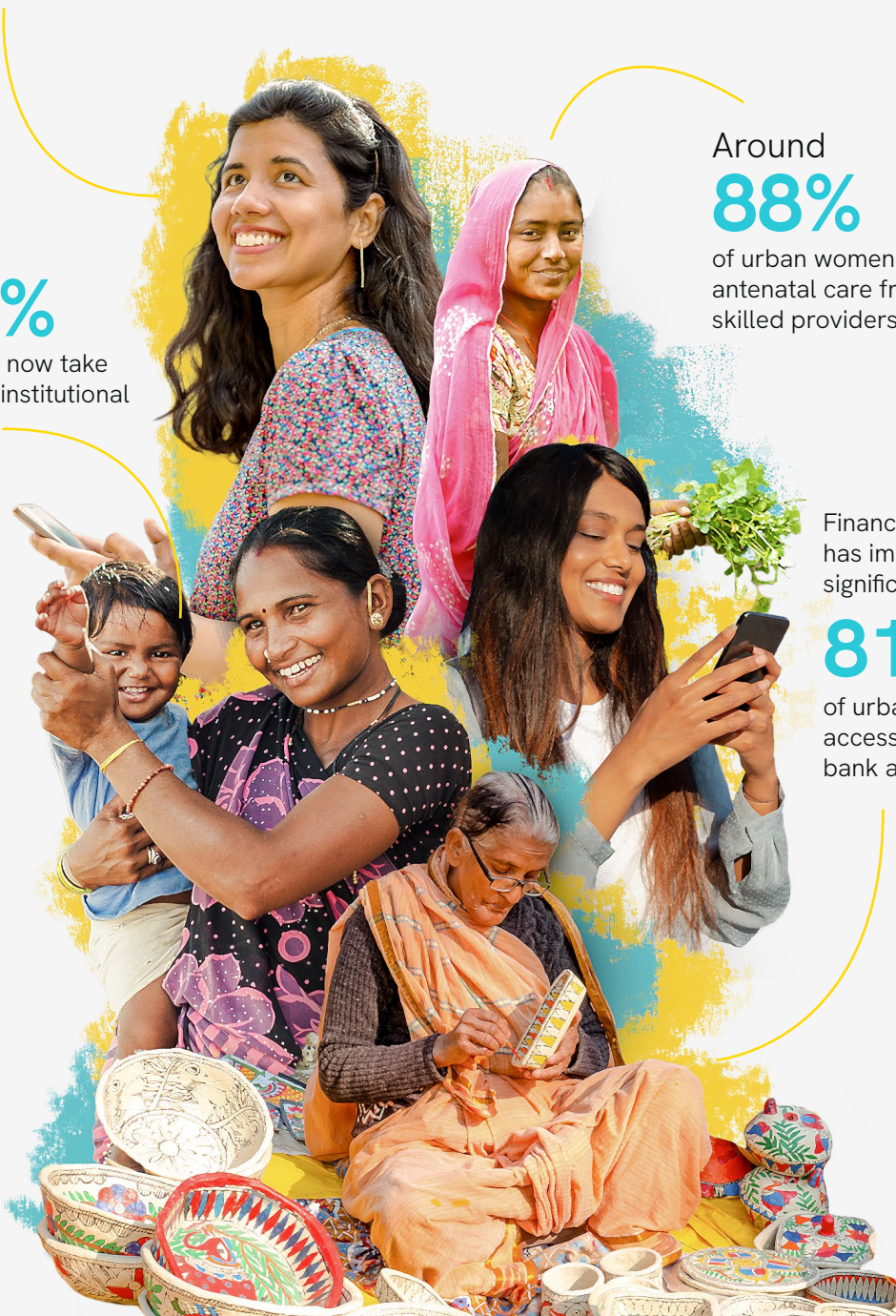
56% to **80%**
in 1981 in 2011

Over **94%**
of births now take place in institutional settings

Around **88%**
of urban women receive antenatal care from skilled providers.

Financial inclusion has improved significantly, with

81%
of urban women accessing their bank accounts.



There are a number of missions, programmes, schemes, and policies across various levels of governments to support urban women.

Initiatives at the union, state, and ULG levels have sought to address the needs of women and other marginalised genders in urban settings. India formally integrated gender mainstreamingⁱⁱ into its urban policy frameworks in the early 2000s.³ A key milestone was the National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (NUHHP), 2007⁴, which explicitly recognised women's housing rights and promoted their participation in urban governance.⁵ The policy marked a significant shift towards a more inclusive urban development agenda, embedding gender considerations into planning, service delivery, and housing access.⁶

At the union level, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) introduced several programmes, such as the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)⁷, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)⁸, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban (PMAY-U)⁹, Swacch Bharat Mission–Urban (SBM-U)¹⁰, and the Smart Cities Mission¹¹, all of which include gender perspectives in their guidelines.

Apart from MoHUA, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has implemented several key schemes to empower urban women. Mission Shakti, with a budget of INR 5,000 crores in 2025¹², includes sub-schemes such as One Stop Centres, Women's Helpline, and Nari Adalats, providing comprehensive support to women facing violence and discrimination. The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) provides conditional cash transfers to pregnant and

lactating women, supporting maternal health and nutrition, with INR 4.19 crores disbursed¹³. Additionally, the National Creche Scheme and Working Women Hostel Scheme facilitate women's workforce participation by offering childcare services and safe accommodation.¹⁴

Further, several state governments have begun integrating gender perspectives into urban policy and service delivery. In Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES)¹⁵, launched in 2020 as a pilot livelihood intervention provides wage employment opportunities at minimum wages within specific ULGs.¹⁶ An assessment conducted by the State Planning Commission found that the programme to be particularly effective in increasing urban women's participation in the formal workforce.¹⁷ In Odisha, the government introduced a decentralised



A key milestone was the National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy 2007, which explicitly recognised women's housing rights and promoted their participation in urban governance

ⁱⁱ *Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*
 Source: United Nations Economic and Social Council. (1997). *Agreed conclusions 1997/2: Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.* United Nations.

solid waste management model in 2019 that places women at its core. The initiative is anchored in partnerships with over 5,000 women from 2,560 self-help groups, along with members of the transgender community, demonstrating an inclusive approach to urban service delivery.¹⁸

Kerala has also advanced its gender policy framework with the release of the draft Women's Policy, 2024, building on earlier policies introduced in 1996, 2009, and 2015.¹⁹ In response to the state's evolving socio-political and economic landscape between 2015 and 2023, the revised policy proposes a comprehensive framework to strengthen gender equality. Key provisions include legal safeguards for women's financial independence, mandatory gender audits of laws, gender-sensitive protocols in educational institutions, expanded legal literacy and healthcare access, and the documentation of women's social history in Kerala.²⁰

Finally, at the ULG level, examples remain limited but instructive. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), for instance, has undertaken targeted efforts to mainstream gender, consistently allocating 2-3 per cent of its total budget to programmes focused on women's health, sanitation, education, and economic empowerment.²¹



Progress has been made, but our cities can do more for women.

While urban India has made notable strides toward gender inclusion, progress has been neither uniform nor comprehensive. Women remain insufficiently centred in the way cities are planned, governed, and experienced. Historically, urban spaces - in India and globally - have reflected male-centric priorities, often overlooking the diverse needs of women. Our analysis identifies three critical opportunities for reform:

01 Integrating gender considerations into the legal framework of urban governance

An analysis of municipal laws across 9 cities, and of women’s roles in five core themes across city-systems reveals the limited integration of gender considerations within urban governance frameworks. (Refer Table 1).

Table 1

Gender perspective in municipal laws

City	Mandates on the role of women in				Use of gender-neutral language
	Planning and design	Municipal budgeting	City council	Platforms for citizen participation	
Bengaluru	x	✓	✓	✓	!
Cuttack	!	x	✓	x	x
Faridabad	x	x	x	✓	x
Guwahati	x	x	✓*	x	x
Indore	x	x	✓*	x	x
Jaipur	x	x	✓	x	!
Kochi	x	x	✓	x	!
Mumbai	x	x	✓	x	!
Panaji	x	x	✓	x	!
Patna	x	x	✓	✓	!

Note:

! denotes a limited role

* The provision is only with regard to the 50 per cent women’s reservation in the city council.

Source: Based on the assessment of municipal laws and corresponding rules applicable to the ten cities assessed, as of June 2025.

The analysis reveals several critical insights:

- ▲ **None of the cities reviewed have legal mandates requiring women’s participation or explicitly integrating a gender perspective into urban planning and design.** An exception is Bhubaneswar, with Section 497 of the Odisha Municipal Corporation Act, 2003, which mandates that the resettlement of dwellers from untenable sites ensure the participation of primary stakeholders, particularly women, in planning and decision-making. The provision further requires that women’s specific needs and constraints be explicitly addressed during the resettlement process. A similar gap is evident in municipal budgeting frameworks. Bengaluru stands out as the only city in the review to institutionalise women’s participation in fiscal decision-making and participatory budgeting processes.
- ▲ **When it comes to women’s voices being represented in the city council, 7 out of 10 cities are mandated to reserve 50 per cent of seats in the city council for women.** Further, in a few cities, there are provisions to ensure women’s representation in municipal governance structures. For instance, Bengaluru, Panaji, Kochi, Mumbai, and Cuttack are mandated to form standing committees specifically dedicated to women’s welfare. In case of Jaipur, Section 55 of the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009, requires that at least two women out of a total of seven councillors be represented in the executive committee of municipal corporations. In case of Bhopal, on similar lines, Section 37 of the Madhya Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1956, provides for the inclusion of at least one woman in the mayor-in-council, the key decision-making body of the municipal corporation.
- ▲ With respect to women’s voices in citizen participation platforms, **only four cities – Bengaluru, Patna, Faridabad, Kochi – have explicit legal mandates requiring women’s participation in bodies such as ward committees and area sabhas**, with reservation quotas ranging from 33 to 50 per cent reservation.
- ▲ **None of the cities reviewed consistently employ gender-neutral language across their municipal laws.** The only partial exceptions are Bengaluru, Jaipur, Kochi, Mumbai, Patna, and Panaji, where both 'chairman' and 'chairperson' are used interchangeably to refer to the head of various committees.





02

Strengthening women's representation and agency in urban governance

While India has made significant strides in increasing women's representation in local politics, the persistence of proxy representation cannot be overlooked. In some instances, gender reservation quotas have resulted in women serving as nominal representatives, with real decision-making power exercised by male relatives. For example, a study in Jaipur found that several women elected to the Jaipur Municipal Corporation acted as proxies for husbands or sons who were ineligible to contest due to seat reservations for women.²²

This is despite substantial evidence that women often practise transformative leadership, prioritising community-centred issues such as access to clean water, public facilities, environmental sustainability, childcare, and education.²³ A study of women councillors in Kolkata found them to be active and robust in programme implementation, with a high fund utilisation rate ranging from 60 per cent to 90 per cent, showcasing exemplary leadership qualities.²⁴

However, realising the full potential of women leaders requires sustained investment in capacity-building. Janaagraha's 'City Leaders' study highlights the need for structured leadership training programmes for women councillors across India. The study finds that many women councillors face challenges in understanding their roles and navigating institutional processes, limiting their access to resources and decision-making forums. It further highlights the need for targeted state-led initiatives to strengthen women's confidence and build competencies in communication, technology, and financial management.²⁵

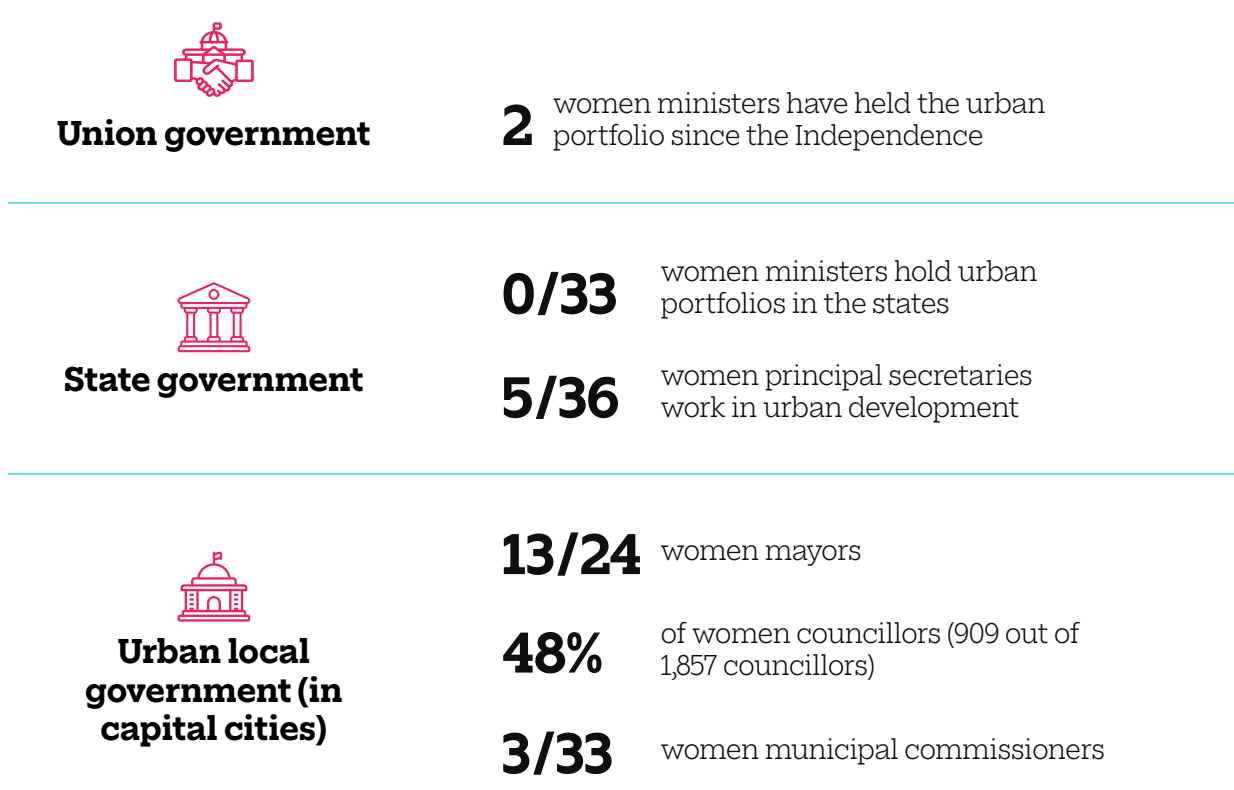
Janaagraha's 'City Leaders' study highlights the need for structured leadership training programmes for women councillors across India.



Yet even as women navigate these internal barriers, structural inequities in representation continue to limit their foothold in positions of real authority. While the 74th CAA strengthened women’s presence in city councils through a 33 per cent reservation mandate, their representation in key decision-making positions remains limited. Our analysis (Refer to Figure 2) shows that this underrepresentation spans both political and bureaucratic spheres, constraining women’s influence over how cities are shaped and restricting their access to leadership positions with greater authority and impact.

Figure 2

Representation of women in key urban decision-making roles



Source: Data was gathered from official websites and newspaper reports, as of April 2025.

Note:

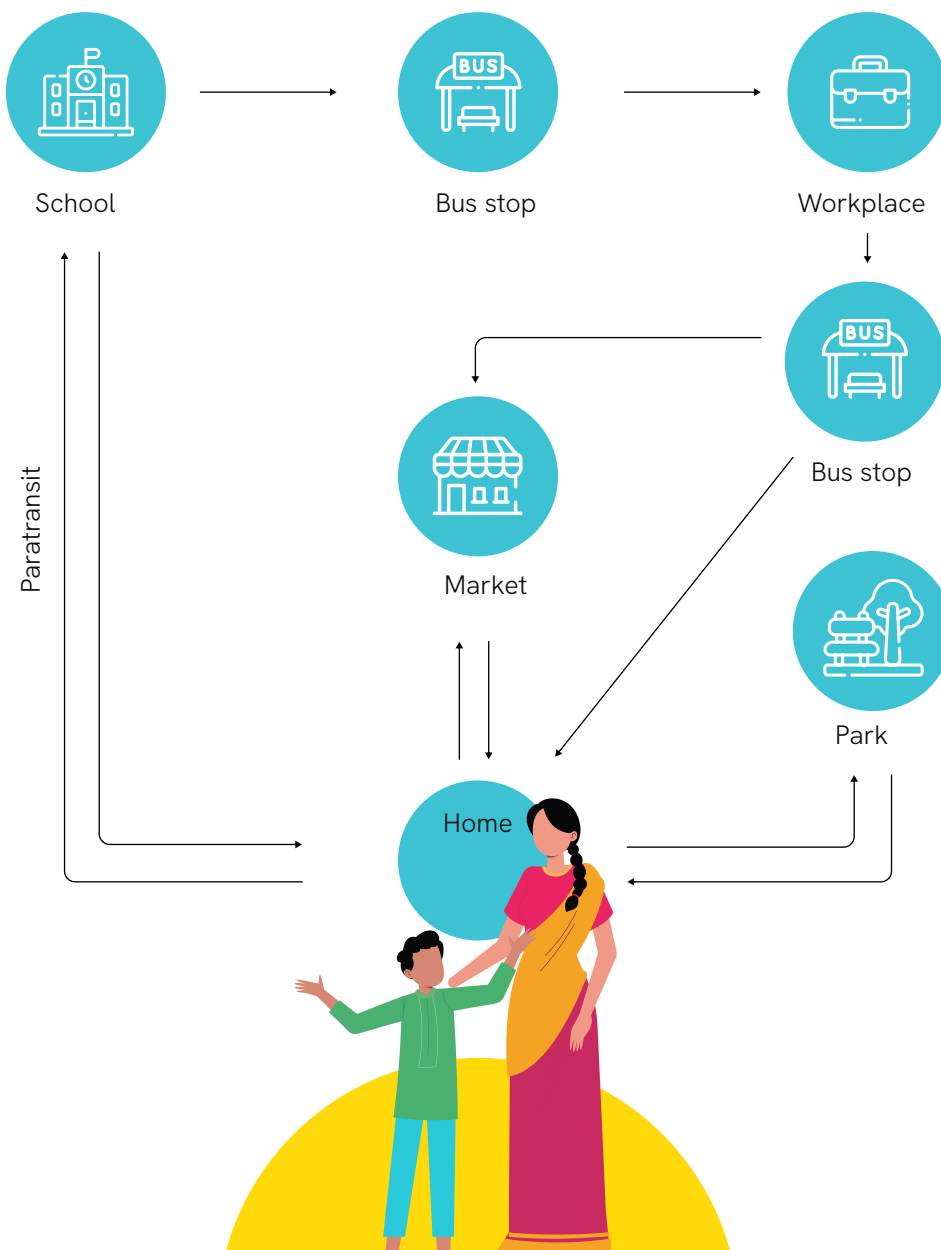
- Karnataka has 3 ministers and Tamil Nadu has 2 ministers handling urban development and municipal administration.
- The council of Ministers has been dissolved in Manipur owing to the imposition of President's rule.
- Union territories - Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Ladakh - do not have legislative assemblies.
- Tamil Nadu has two principal secretaries for the departments of urban development and water supply, and municipal administration.
- Principal secretaries of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu, Ladakh, and Manipur could not be verified.
- There are no active councils in the ULGs of Bengaluru, Jammu, Mumbai, Shillong, Imphal, and Puducherry.
- Data on council members was not available for the ULGs of Sri Vijayapuram, Silvassa, Leh, and Kohima.
- Data on mayors not available for the ULGs of Sri Vijaya Puram and Kohima.
- As Chandigarh is a UT and the capital of Punjab and Haryana, it is counted only once. Hence, there are 33 unique capital cities across the 35 states/UTs. Lakshadweep has been excluded as it does not have an ULG.

03 Designing urban infrastructure that suits women's needs

Women are among the largest users of public and non-motorised transport across urban India. According to the 2011 Census, on average, 45 per cent of women commute to work on foot and 22 per cent by bus, compared to 27 per cent and 14 per cent of men, respectively.²⁶ Despite this high reliance on public transport, systems are seldom designed around women's mobility patterns. Research shows that women are more likely to undertake multi-stop journeys or travel during off-peak hours, a phenomenon known as 'trip chaining' due to their caregiving responsibilities (Refer to Figure 3). Yet, most public transport networks continue to prioritise linear, point-to-point commuting, overlooking these complex and time-sensitive travel needs.²⁷

Figure 3

Women's urban mobility often involves trip-chaining – linking multiple destinations such as school, work, markets, and parks in a single journey



Against this background, this compendium is an attempt to understand what can bring about successful mainstreaming of women in urban governance. It synthesises 32 success stories selected from a longer list of examples from India and around the world based on institutionalised practices of gender mainstreaming. These success stories highlight both large and small innovations and offer practical insights into what has worked, under what conditions, and with what impact. They serve not only as inspiration but also potentially as blueprints that can be contextualised, adapted, and scaled within Indian urban systems.

These success stories are anchored in Janaagraha’s City-Systems framework (Refer to Figure 4), which understands cities not as projects to be fixed piecemeal, but as systems to be managed.

At its core, the framework brings together three interdependent pillars:



Sound Urban planning and design



Strong State capacities in finance and human resources

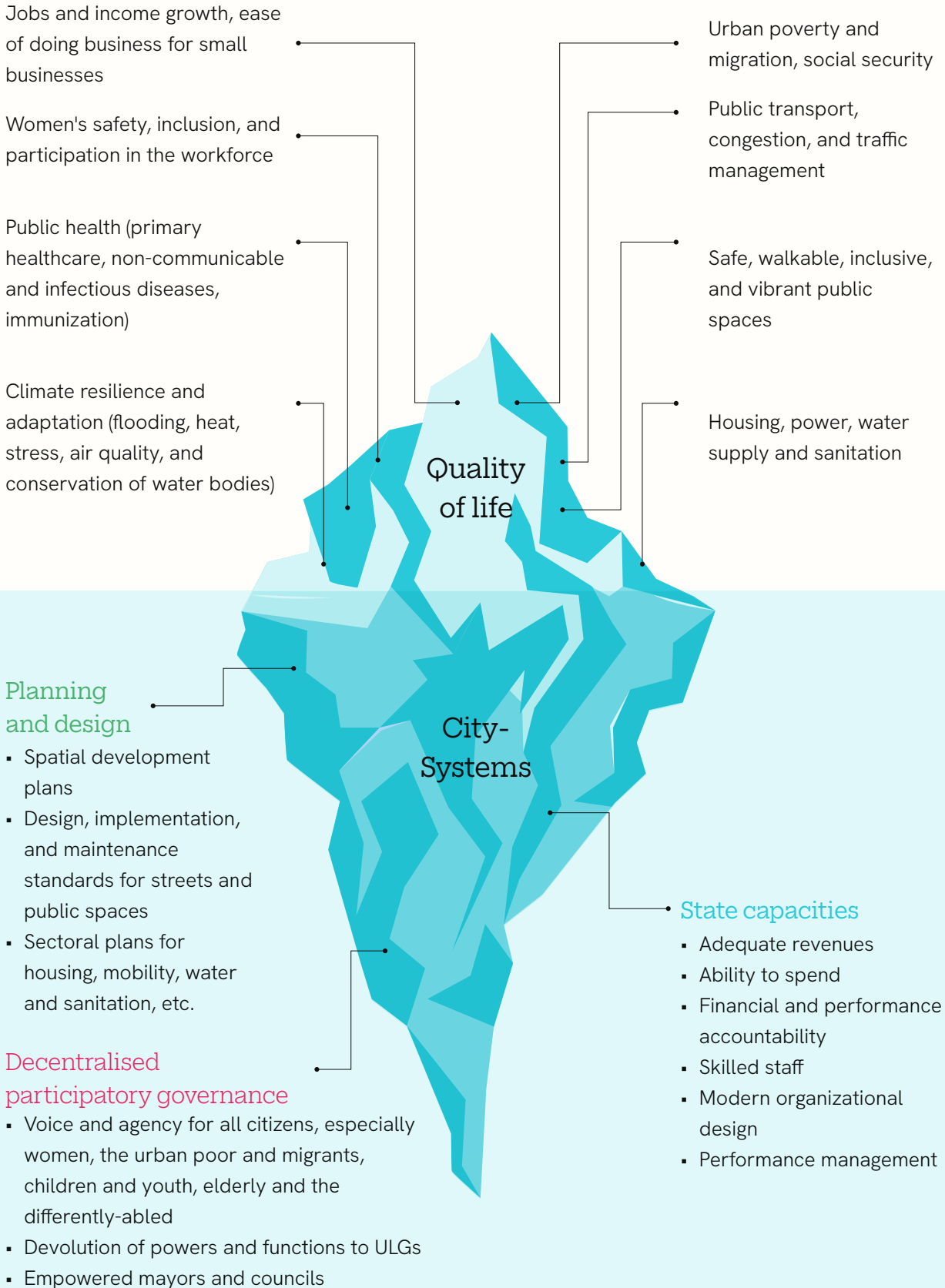


Empowered decentralised urban local governance with meaningful citizen participation



Figure 4

Janaagraha's City-Systems Framework



The quality of planning determines whether housing remains affordable, mobility efficient, services accessible, and public spaces inclusive. Where planning is weak, cities face rising land costs, congestion, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental stress. Moreover, cities function best when power, resources, and accountability are vested in local governments. Elected mayors and councils, positioned closest to citizens, are more responsive to local realities than distant state or union authorities. Parallely, ULGs must also possess the fiscal strength, institutional capability, and professional expertise required to plan, finance, and manage complex urban systems. Managing a modern city demands specialised skills across planning, engineering, public health, finance, and technology.

This compendium is based primarily on secondary research covering the period 1990–2023. It began with a review of 109 gender-related policies and programmes to identify initiatives advancing women’s inclusion. This was followed by extensive desk research to identify potential success stories from India and around the world, aligned with Janaagraha’s City-Systems framework.

From this pool, 32 success stories (14 from India and 18 global) were selected, ensuring geographic diversity and assessing the extent of leadership by ULGs. Priority was given to systemic initiatives oriented towards institutionalisation, while programmes that impacted urban areas but had no substantive role for ULGs were excluded. The final selection was validated through consultations with gender experts to ensure relevance and completeness. (Refer to Annexure I for a detailed methodology)

The compendium is structured to move from illustration to synthesis. It first presents a curated set of in-depth examples to ground the discussion, and then draws out the broader lessons emerging from them.

Section II presents 12 detailed success stories – six from India and six from across the globe. These are first organised under the two complementary categories:

- 1. Cities for Women**
- 2. Women for Cities**

This distinction reflects two sides of gender-responsive urban transformation. The first focuses on who shapes the city; the second focuses on how the city is shaped. They are further grouped by geography (India and Global). The intention is to provide both conceptual clarity and contextual diversity, enabling readers to see how similar principles are applied across different institutional and socio-political settings.

Section III synthesises the cross-cutting insights and lessons emerging from these detailed success stories. Rather than restating individual examples, it distills broader patterns, institutional enablers, and design principles that can inform future urban policy and practice.

Annexure I sets out the detailed methodology, including the criteria, filters, and evaluative lens used to identify and assess the success stories. **Annexure II presents the remaining success stories** in a concise format. While summarized, They follow the same classification structure as Section II to maintain analytical consistency.

2

The city of her dreams



Creating women-centric cities requires moving beyond isolated programmes towards systemic change in how cities are designed and governed. Gender mainstreaming in urban contexts operates along two interlinked dimensions: the extent to which and how women participate in shaping the city, and how the city’s systems respond to their needs.

Both are essential. Without women’s voice and leadership in decision-making, urban priorities may remain exclusionary; without institutional changes in planning, policy, and budgeting, participation alone cannot translate into tangible outcomes.

Framing the success stories: Cities for Women, Women for Cities

Gender-responsive urban transformation depends on two interrelated dimensions: who shapes the city and how the city is shaped. Cities become more inclusive when women participate meaningfully in governance, and when urban systems are designed to respond to women’s needs and lived realities.

1. Cities for Women
2. Women for Cities!

Cities for Women highlights efforts to redesign urban policies, infrastructure, and services to respond to women’s needs. Women for Cities focuses on initiatives that strengthen women’s representation, leadership, and participation in urban governance. (Refer to Table 2)

To reflect these complementary dimensions, the success stories in this report are organised under two categories:

Table 2

Framework for classifying success stories

Dimension	Focus	Examples of interventions
Cities for Women	Urban systems responding to women's needs	Gender budgeting, care infrastructure, safety design
Women for Cities	Women shaping urban governance	Reservation in councils, leadership training, participatory planning

These categories should not be viewed in isolation. Women’s participation in governance often drives gender-responsive policies, infrastructure and services while gender-responsive systems enable greater participation and agency for women. While the success stories were originally selected using Janaagraha’s City-Systems framework, this classification provides a clearer way to illustrate how gender mainstreaming operates within urban governance.

Cities for Women

This category focuses on interventions where city- systems i.e - policies, laws, processes, infrastructure, and services are redesigned to be gender-responsive. Here, the emphasis shifts from participation to outcomes - ensuring that the municipal laws, and budgeting processes, and the

built environment reflect women's needs and lived realities. It includes initiatives related to gender-inclusive urban planning and design, gender mainstreaming in municipal laws and policies, and institutionalised gender budgeting at the municipal level.

Stories from India

01 Gender mainstreaming in missions, programmes, and schemes by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs



Overview

MoHUA,²⁸ has increasingly integrated gender considerations into urban space through its missions, programmes, and schemes, as outlined here:



Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana

National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)²⁹

NULM was launched in 2013 to uplift the urban poor by providing opportunities for skill development, employment, and entrepreneurship. In 2015, the scheme was subsumed under the DAY, becoming DAY-NULM. Gender mainstreaming has been an integral part of NULM from its inception, with a mission mandate that a significant majority (at least 70 per cent) of SHGs formed under the Social Mobilisation and Institution Development (SM&ID) should consist of urban poor, particularly women.³⁰



Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)³¹

Launched on 02 October 2014, on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, the SBM-U aims to eliminate open defecation and improve solid waste management in urban areas, thereby enhancing the overall sanitation and hygiene standards across Indian cities. From its inception, SBM-U recognised the critical role of women in achieving sanitation goals with emphasis on women's safety, dignity, and active participation in sanitation initiatives.³²



Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)³³

AMRUT was launched on the same day as SCM to provide basic civic amenities and improve the quality of life, particularly for the urban poor. AMRUT 2.0³⁴ has integrated gender and social inclusion into urban infrastructure projects.



Smart Cities Mission (SCM)³⁵

The SCM was launched on 25 June 2015, with the primary objective to promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to their citizens, including a clean and sustainable environment through the application of 'smart' solutions. The initial guidelines of the SCM did not explicitly focus on gender mainstreaming. However, the guidelines mention that citizen safety, especially the safety of women, children and the elderly, is an integral aspect of smart cities in India.³⁶ In 2020, initiatives under the mission, such as the Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge (NNC),³⁷ emphasised the importance of creating inclusive and accessible public spaces for all.



Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U)³⁸

PMAY-U was also launched on 25 June 2015, as a flagship initiative under the 'Housing for All' mission, aiming to provide affordable housing to the urban poor, including Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Low-Income Groups (LIG), and Middle-Income Groups (MIG). PMAY-U has incorporated gender mainstreaming as a fundamental component³⁹ to empower women and promote gender equality through key features such as mandatory female ownership, inclusive eligibility criteria, spreading awareness, and financial inclusion.

Process

A key point to note is that each of these initiatives embedded the gender components of the implementation mechanisms into the design itself, ensuring intent translated into action. For example, DAY-NULM prioritised the organisation of urban poor women into SHGs, facilitating access to credit, skill development, and income-generating activities to invest in their businesses and improve their economic status. In 2023, DAY-NULM partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support women entrepreneurs, thereby thinking of the intervention in its entirety.^{40,41}

The SheRises⁴² initiative housed under the SCM was designed by Safetipin a civil society organisation with aim to shape cities where every woman has a voice, in collaboration with MoHUA, providing a comprehensive framework for integrating gender perspectives into urban planning. The aim is to provide city administrators with a tool to audit and recalibrate their cities. This framework has been piloted in six smart cities and provides a solid base for using a gender lens while designing the cities.ⁱⁱⁱ

Other programmes have attempted to draw out clear guidelines which focus on women having an active role as both decision makers and beneficiaries. For example, under AMRUT 2.0, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) guidelines⁴³ stipulate that urban infrastructure projects should be designed and implemented with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion.

As of 2025,
1,762 projects
 worth INR 140 crores have been approved under AMRUT Mitra.⁴⁴

AMRUT Mitra engaged women SHGs in critical aspects of the water sector, including demand management, quality testing, and infrastructure operations.

Similarly, in 2019, MoHUA released guidelines to ensure gender considerations are integrated into sanitation planning and implementation. SBM-U focused on creating women-friendly toilets to address challenges of safety, privacy, and dignity for women. The SBM-U also brought programmes such as the 'Rani Mistris', where women are trained as masons, building the toilets in their communities.⁴⁵ This not only enabled them to acquire new skills, but also strengthened their confidence, leadership capacities, and agency to shape their communities' futures, ultimately paving the way for some to take on leadership roles in local governance.⁴⁶ SBM-U 2.0 further strengthens these aspects by encouraging women-led sanitation enterprises, promoting the inclusion of women in urban sanitation committees, and deploying 'SafaiMitras' to address gender safety protocols.

The PMAY-U Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) and Beneficiary-Led Construction (BLC) verticals ensure inclusion by stipulating that the woman must be either the sole or co-owner of the house.



ⁱⁱⁱ Bengaluru, Jabalpur, Kakinada, Kohima, and Warangal

Impact

SBM-U has improved access to gender-sensitive sanitation infrastructure, with more than 3.8 lakh public and community toilets, many of which have dedicated women's sections and menstrual hygiene facilities.⁴⁷

DAY-NULM has led to the formation of more than 6.8 lakh women's SHGs in urban areas.

Under PMAY-U 2.0, more than 2.67 lakh houses have been sanctioned exclusively in the name of women, including single women and widows. Additionally, 90 houses have been allotted to transgender persons.⁴⁸

More than 4,600 women SHG members⁴⁹ under the AMRUT Mitra initiative have been actively engaged in various water sector activities, including demand management, quality testing, infrastructure operations, and maintenance.

02 Gender mainstreaming by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation



Overview

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC),⁵⁰ also known as the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), is India's largest ULG in terms of population, serving approximately 20 million. BMC has undertaken multiple initiatives to advance gender mainstreaming and inclusivity.⁵¹ BMC has

been publishing a separate account of its gender budget since FY 2009-10, becoming the first ULG in the country to do so, as part of a broader effort to align with India's national push for gender-responsive budgeting, which was introduced at the national level in 2005-06.^{iv} In a landmark move, Mumbai became the first Indian city to integrate gender into urban planning through the Mumbai Development Plan 2034,⁵² which reserves 24 wards

^{iv} All schemes with 100% allocation towards women and child issues are included in the gender budget

for developing women-focused physical and social infrastructure.⁵³ BMC has also launched the 'City for Her' campaign,⁵⁴ a collaborative effort with civil society, urban planners, and experts, aimed at integrating gender perspectives into urban planning to enhance the safety, inclusivity, and accessibility of public spaces and services for women and girls.

Process

Mumbai comprises a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, each with distinct socio-economic backgrounds and varying needs. BMC has taken measures to incorporate the needs of women across different age groups, religion, castes, economic backgrounds, and other identities into its planning processes, promoting inclusivity in the city. In 2019, BMC constituted a gender advisory committee to promote gender equity in governance and urban planning. The committee played an instrumental role in ensuring that the ULG's programmes and budgets reflect the needs and concerns of women, girls, and other vulnerable gender groups. The Mumbai Development Plan 2034 includes a dedicated chapter, 'Gender, Special Groups, and Social Equity,' outlining strategies to make the city more accommodating for women.⁵⁵

In 2019,

BMC

constituted a gender advisory committee to promote gender equity in governance and urban planning.



©Shutterstock

Impact

The gender budget saw an eight-fold increase from INR 30 crores in 2011-12 to INR 250 crores in 2023-24⁵⁶ allocating 2-3 per cent of its total budget consistently to gender initiatives.⁵⁷

To improve sanitation and comfort, exclusive toilet blocks equipped with changing and resting facilities have been constructed in every ward.

BMC has designated land specifically for women-focused initiatives⁵⁸ including the establishment of Aadhaar Kendras, childcare centres, shelters for survivors of domestic violence, old-age homes, and accommodations for female travellers.

It has also established dedicated women's clinics that provide maternal and child healthcare services, along with nutritional support for pregnant and lactating women.

03 Gender and Policy Lab by the Greater Chennai Corporation



Overview

The Gender and Policy Lab (GPL)⁵⁹ was operationalised in February 2022 by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) under the Nirbhaya funds as part of the Chennai City Partnership (CCP) between the Government of Tamil Nadu and the World Bank. The objective of GPL is to enhance women’s access to opportunities by improving safety and gender responsiveness in public spaces and transport through a collaborative approach involving multiple government departments, civil society organisations, elected representatives, and academic and research institutions.

The initiatives under GPL focus on four pillars:



Assessing the ground situation



Creating awareness in the city



Strengthening existing policies to make them gender-friendly



Enhancing infrastructure and services for women and girls

Process

Through a mix of surveys, continuous evaluations, and innovative platforms, GPL is ensuring inclusivity is intentional and prioritized. For example, GPL conducted studies on women's use of public transport and presence in public spaces, taking the initiative to address the issues that affected women at the policy level. The studies examined how public spaces could be made safer and more accessible for women, surveying 3,000 individuals in Chennai. This included household-level interviews with 1,402 women, 565 men, and 100 transgender persons. The surveys were conducted in various public spaces such as local streets, popular markets, religious sites, parks, beaches, areas near educational institutions, and transportation hubs including bus stops, auto stands, metro stations, and suburban railway stations. The lab also conducts consultations with children to include diverse voices and perspectives. The GPL evaluates policies, toolkits, and terms of reference (ToRs) from diverse departments and agencies to ensure the inclusion of gender considerations, including in frameworks such as the State Women Policy, State Elderly Policy, and Tamil Nadu's SDG agenda. To bring in more voices of women into the policy-making

fold, the lab introduced a 'Citizens for Safe Mobility' fellowship⁶⁰ programme for interested citizens to engage with issues of gender inclusivity in urban planning and mobility.

The upcoming Third Master Plan for Chennai will also incorporate gender perspectives. This programme underscores the importance of collaborative efforts and data-driven policies in advancing gender equality in urban settings.



Impact

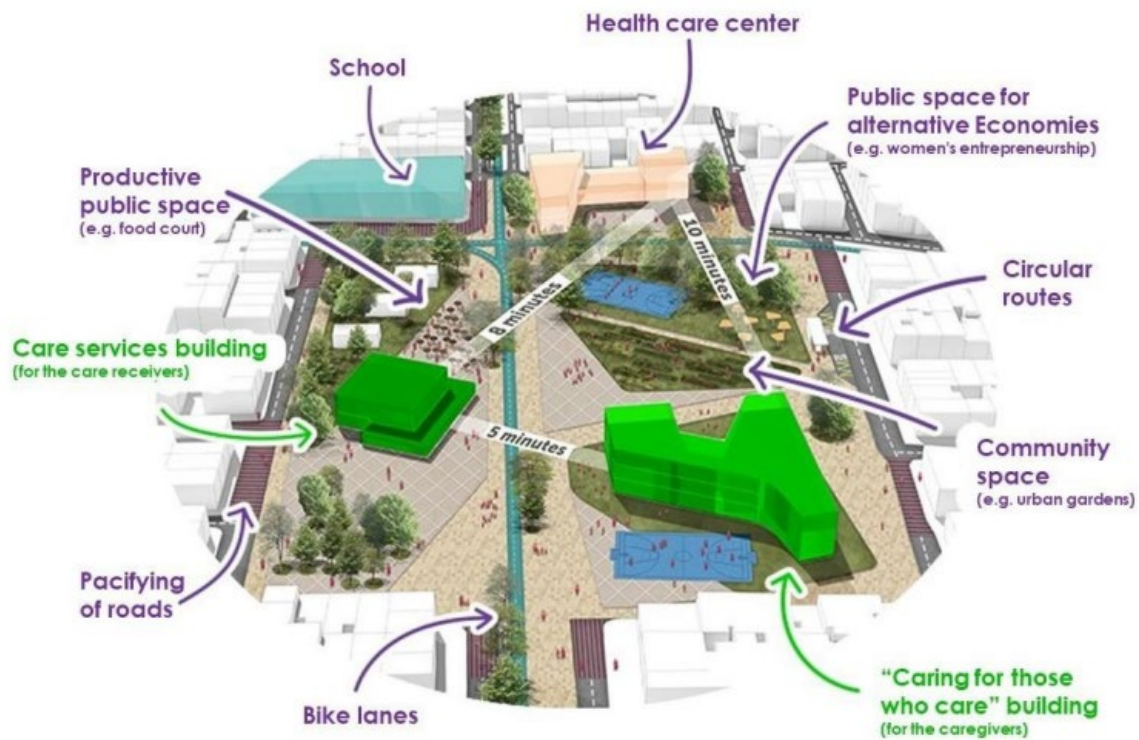
This pioneering initiative by GCC is the first of its kind within ULGs across India, aiming to promote gender mainstreaming and enhance safety for women in the city. The initiative continually strives to bridge the gap between public demand for gender safety and inclusivity.

The results of the safety audits conducted by GPL in partnership with Safetipin led to the allocation of INR 69 crores to achieve 100 per cent streetlight coverage across Chennai.⁶¹

The GPL has established gender clubs in 162 GCC-run schools, engaging over 9,800 students in discussions and activities aimed at challenging gender stereotypes.⁶²

Stories from around the globe

04 Care Block system by the City of Bogota, Colombia



Sample structure of Care Blocks⁶³

Overview

The City of Bogotá⁶⁴ launched the Care Block programme⁶⁵ in 2020, to put women at the centre of the city's urban transformation and future planning. It aimed to recognise the contribution of caregivers, redistribute the responsibility of caregiving more equitably, and reduce the proportion of women's unpaid care work so that they could pursue personal development activities.⁶⁶ It reorganised urban planning by

providing accessible Care Blocks, which served as 'anchoring buildings', within a 15–20 minute walk. These Blocks offered mostly unpaid women caregivers financial opportunities, wellness services, professional training, and care and leisure services for dependents. The Care system aims to establish a new social agreement that shares unpaid care work among the State, the community, and the society, in alignment with Bogotá's recent measures promoting gender equity.

Process

Care Blocks are designed to help women take care of themselves, allowing them to unwind, grow as individuals, and become involved in public life. Through this system, the city government introduced a new urban planning approach that aimed to reduce reliance on public transport, especially for women, caregivers, and care receivers. Care Buses for rural and peripheral areas are arranged to provide mobility and access. The city's innovation lab, 'Ibolab' supports the process of streamlining caregiver registration to access services. The city has also established the Care Alliance, a collaborative network of private, academic, and civil society actors ensuring caregivers have a voice in decision-making. During the design phase, the city conducted 21 focus group discussions and 17 interviews with caregivers. Women of various races, sexual orientations, and those with disabilities were among the participants, contributing a wide range of perspectives.⁶⁷ Bogotá's city development plan has integrated a cross-cutting gender approach through the office of the Secretary of Women, by incorporating gender perspectives and hiring gender experts to promote equality and uphold women's rights in every programme and policy. For instance, the

city launched La Rolita,⁶⁸ the first public electric bus operator, and has recruited and trained women (many of whom have no prior driving experience) for roles in driving, maintenance, and administration. The programme offers flexible hours, psychosocial support, and facilities such as lactation rooms and childcare spaces to support women's retention in the workforce. The city also has the Purple Line, a 24/7, toll-free hotline offering legal, psychological, and counselling support to women facing gender-based violence or rights violations. Together, these initiatives reflect Bogotá's comprehensive approach to gender equity, addressing both cultural norms and structural barriers to women's full participation in society.⁶⁹

During the design phase, the city conducted

21 focus group

discussions and 17 interviews with caregivers.

Impact

Between 2020 and 2022, Bogotá developed 14 Care Blocks and introduced mobile units to extend care services to rural areas. The Blocks have served 6,00,000 women with more than 3,00,000 services by August 2023.⁷⁰ Interestingly, post its implementation, the political participation of women increased by 2.9 per cent in the 2023 election

Looking ahead, Bogotá aims to establish 45 Care Blocks by 2035, supported by circular public transport routes to improve accessibility. This spatial care model forms a core component of the city's 2022–2035 development plan, promoting gender equality and sustainable urban development.⁷¹

In 2022, the initiative won the Bloomberg Philanthropies Global Mayors Challenge.⁷² The OECD and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Centre for Government Innovation highlighted Care Blocks as a global example of social innovation in their 2023 'Global Trends' report.

05 Women Development Code by the Naga City Government, Philippines



Overview

In the 1980s, Naga City faced stagnation, rising unemployment, poor services, and homelessness, but by the late 1990s it had transformed into one of the country's fastest growing cities through effective governance. Critical to this achievement was introduction of the 1995 Empowerment Ordinance, which institutionalised citizen participation, and within that context, mainstreamed gender in urban governance.⁷³ In 2003, the City Government of Naga⁷⁴ took another landmark step toward gender equality: the Women Development Code⁷⁵ (Ordinance No. 2003-045). This ordinance mandates the allocation of at least 10 per cent of the city's annual budget (excluding personnel services) to gender and development programmes, ensuring sustained financial support for women's initiatives.⁷⁶ It also created strong institutional

mechanisms to support women's rights, including the Naga City Integrated Gender and Development Office (IGDO) and the Naga City Council for Women (NCCW).⁷⁷ The city's approach has been widely recognised as a model of local gender mainstreaming in the Philippines.

In 2003, the Women Development Code ordinance mandated the allocation of at least

10 per cent

of the city's annual budget to gender and development programmes.

Process

The Women Development Code of Naga City is a collaborative effort between the ULG and local women's groups, designed to institutionalise gender initiatives and ensure their continuity beyond changes in political leadership. The code has institutionalised several key mandates to ensure consistent implementation and long-term sustainability. Additionally, the Naga City Women's Council Ordinance, which serves as a structured coordination and feedback mechanism, formalised collaboration between all relevant city departments and women's organisations to address gender issues in policy planning, implementation, and monitoring. It also formalised active public-private partnerships to ensure effective execution and accountability. Further institutional support came from the Labour-Management Cooperation Ordinance, which mandated gender representation within the city's labour council. It is composed of representatives from government, employers, and employees, ensuring that women's perspectives are included in employment-related policymaking. Key initiatives implemented under the Women Development Code include Task Force Sagip, which was established to enforce the code's mandate to prevent the spread of pornographic or indecent materials and to protect individuals from sexual exploitation.⁷⁸ The Naga City Home Care Center offers a safe halfway shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, operated by a non-government

organisation but funded by the city government. Additionally, the Naga City Bantay Familia Initiative facilitates the delivery of all government and private services to women and children who are victims of violence from the city level down to the barangay (ward) level.⁷⁹



Impact

By 2022, the city had invested over PHP 100 million (approximately USD 1.8 million) in gender and development.⁸⁰ The Philippine Commission on Women⁸¹ has highlighted its approach as a model for gender mainstreaming.

The commission has also noted that programmes such as Bantay Familia, through its advocacy and educational services delivered down to the barangay level, have actively promoted a culture of gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence.⁸²

06 Gender Mainstreaming Project by the City Government of Vienna, Austria



Overview

The exhibition titled *'Who Owns Public Space - Women's Everyday Life in the City'* in 1991 drew attention to the needs of women in the city, highlighting everyday routes and experiences of women in Vienna.⁸³ Since 1998, Austria has made a firm commitment, both legally and politically, to achieve gender equality at all levels through the Austrian Federal Constitution.⁸⁴ Since 2000, the Inter-ministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming (IMAG GM) has supported and facilitated the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all federal ministries and at all political levels.⁸⁵ In 2000, the City Government initiated the Gender Mainstreaming Project. It aimed to achieve structural integration of gender perspectives into all city policies, programmes, and projects. To boost gender equality initiatives, the city set up a dedicated Gender Mainstreaming Department (MA 57)^v within the administration. This department was initially launched as a project with three staff members and became a regular city department in 2011.⁸⁶

Process

The city administration of Vienna,⁸⁷ known as Stadtverwaltung, is responsible for the overall governance and operational structure of the city of Vienna, led by the mayor and city council. It sets policies, oversees budgeting, and ensures coordination across departments. The city administration of Vienna integrated gender-sensitive urban design, transportation planning, data disaggregation, and gender analysis, as well as institutionalisation, to implement its gender mainstreaming project.

^{vi} The gender mainstreaming initiative in Vienna was implemented in three phases, starting with targeted integration in select departments and subsequently expanding across the entire city administration. This process ultimately embedded the principles in all key administrative sectors, with each government official applying them within their respective responsibilities. In 2002, Mariahilf⁸⁸ was chosen as the 'Gender Mainstreaming Pilot District'. The 'Master Project'

^v City Departments Known as Magistratsabteilungen or MAs Are Individual Units Within the City Administration, Each Responsible for A Specific Area of Service or Policy Implementation.

^{vi} Gender Mainstreaming in Planning and Construction in Europe, and Implementation of Principles set out in Transport Master Plan 2003 Relevant to Pedestrian Traffic in Gender Mainstreaming Pilot District Mariahilf.

phase, launched in a meeting in July 2004, offered departments a platform to exchange experiences and marked the launch of Vienna’s gender budgeting resolution, aimed at broader institutional gender mainstreaming. The Vienna women’s health programme,⁸⁹ (‘Her-Programme’),

was also launched to enhance medical, psychological, and social services for women. A sustained awareness campaign targeting political and administrative personnel continued the process of both gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming.

Impact

Political resolutions on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting were passed during the city government’s closed meetings in October 2004 and January 2005, respectively. Till 2020, the city government had implemented^{vii} more than 60 gender-sensitive projects.⁹⁰

The initiative has been internationally recognised as a pioneer⁹¹ in gender-sensitive urban planning and evolving with time to yield better results.⁹² It has influenced similar initiatives in cities such as Berlin, Barcelona, Stockholm, and Copenhagen.

In 2025, Vienna received the Access City Award from the European Commission and the European Disability Forum⁹³ for efforts towards an inclusive city.

07 Women Friendly City Project by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, South Korea



^{vii} Few Examples- Gender Sensitive Housing Design - ‘Frauen-Werk-Stadt’, Gender Sensitive, Transport Planning - Mariahilf District Pilot, Gender Sensitive Masterplanning - Aspern Seestadt, Gender Sensitive Park Design - Einsiedler Park Pilot, Gender Sensitive Services - Domestic Violence Training, Gender Sensitive Budgeting, Gender-Sensitive Education - Day-Care Reforms

Overview

The Seoul Metropolitan Government initiated the Women Friendly City Project (WFCP) in 2007.⁹⁴ It aimed to reflect women's voices in every policy decision made by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, with the goal of improving public spaces, increasing job opportunities, and supporting work-life balance for women. Essentially, it worked to minimise the inconveniences women faced in their daily lives and to make the city a place where women could be happy and comfortable. A committee that comprises representatives from women's civic groups, municipal officials, and urban experts oversees the project.

Process

WFCP adopted a comprehensive, participatory approach to integrate women's perspectives into urban policy and design by conducting surveys and expert consultations to identify daily inconveniences faced by women and then modifying them into more women-friendly alternatives. It established the 'Partners Group' of experts and the 'Prosumer Group' of citizens, fostering collaboration between policymakers and residents. By 2009, the project had been streamlined, and the existing 90 programmes were reviewed, with 30 additional programmes added.⁹⁵ Women-friendly public space guidelines were laid down, and 258 facilities were certified as gender inclusive. The project also identified 15 diverse women's groups in Seoul to receive the inputs. These efforts helped expand the project and improve quality of life for women. Rather than dealing with symbolic policy-making, the project focused on delivering tangible benefits to women across various domains, including caregiving, job creation, safety, convenience, and cultural enrichment, by making their living environment more convenient and sustainable.⁹⁶ The project

stood out for its city-wide coordination and scope, involving 135 government departments, 13 partner organisations, and 25 autonomous districts while selecting businesses and implementing initiatives. An institutional framework, including a range of expert and civic groups, was established to incorporate diverse women's perspectives and experiences, enabling women to participate proactively in the planning and execution of policies.⁹⁷ Community participation tools, including regular meetings, small expert group meetings, online advice and feedback systems, and on-site participation and monitoring were implemented. The Seoul Metropolitan Government has promoted women's safety citywide through its phased Safe City for Women initiatives, from Version 1.0 to 3.0.⁹⁸ The projects were then promoted in the private sector by granting certification to qualified facilities.

Women-friendly public space guidelines were laid down, and **258 facilities** were certified as gender inclusive.



Impact

The WFCP led to the development of guidelines for women-friendly restrooms, parking spaces, walking environments, parks, and apartment complexes, and resulted in certification for 280 qualified facilities.

This certification increased the number of women-friendly parking spaces, restrooms, CCTVs, emergency bells, and other parameters. According to a survey, customer satisfaction rose significantly from 68.2 per cent in 2007 to 83.2 per cent in 2008.

WFCP continues to be a cornerstone of the city's gender-inclusive urban development strategy, evolving by embedding technically advanced projects.⁹⁹ The United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) honoured the WFCP in 2010.¹⁰⁰

Over the last several years, Seoul Metropolitan Government has gone on to launch various new projects to support the economic growth and inclusion of women into the labour force, such as the Seoul Women Project.

Launched in 2023, the project actively supports women returning to the workforce after career breaks due to pregnancy, childbirth, and caregiving, helping them rebuild confidence, skills, and professional momentum.¹⁰¹

08 Feminist Municipalism by Barcelona City Council, Spain



Overview

In 2015, the Barcelona City Council (BCC),¹⁰² under the leadership of Mayor Ada Colau, adopted a feminist municipalism governance approach to integrate gender equity and care into aspects of city planning and public policy.¹⁰³ It aimed to establish policies to eliminate inequalities between men and women and enable women to enjoy and contribute on equal terms with men in every area of daily life, such as healthcare, leisure, sports, work, and culture. The initiative is guided by principles of feminism and focuses on institutional transformation, the care economy, a rights-based approach, and neighbourhood-centric development.¹⁰⁴

2021-25 and the Gender Equality Strategy.¹⁰⁶ Gender mainstreaming tools, such as gender impact assessment, gender-responsive budgeting, capacity building, and training of officials, as well as disaggregated data collection, were incorporated to address and transform the structural aspects of gender inequality and sexism across public policies, institutions, and services. BCC collaborated with universities, research institutions, women’s organisations, and international networks, such as the United Cities and Local Governments to ensure the participation of diverse stakeholders in the initiative. This collaboration fostered inclusive policy development, knowledge exchange, and evidence-based strategies for advancing gender equality.

Process

The process focused on the structural transformation of the city governance, planning, and service delivery. To strengthen its institutional framework, BCC established dedicated bodies such as the Barcelona Municipal Women’s Council – an advisory forum that integrates women’s voices and gender perspectives into public policy – and the LGBTQIA+ Council, which advances equal rights, freedom, and social recognition for LGBTQIA+ communities across the city.¹⁰⁵ To reinforce strategic planning, BCC developed and adopted the Gender Justice Plan

To reinforce strategic planning, BCC developed and adopted the

Gender Justice Plan

2021–2025 and the Gender Equality Strategy.

Impact

Since its launch, the initiative has made tremendous progress in gender mainstreaming through the steps taken for institutional strengthening, improved strategic planning, neighbourhood-level participation, capacity building, and other initiatives.

Between 2017 and 2021, 1,517 gender clauses were built into municipal procurement, and by 2022, 71 per cent of municipal entities adopted internal equality plans and protocols against gender-based harassment, with 92 per cent of municipal regulations incorporating the gender perspective.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, the budget for fighting gender inequality doubled in 2020 (to nearly 650 million euros).

Women for Cities

This category includes interventions that strengthen women's agency, representation, and participation within urban governance systems. The emphasis is on enabling women not merely as beneficiaries of policy, but as decision-makers, planners, and leaders shaping urban outcomes. It covers initiatives that ensure adequate representation

and capacity of women in city governments, effective voice and agency in urban planning and design processes, meaningful participation in municipal resource allocation and budgeting, and active neighbourhood-level engagement in local governance.

Stories from India

01 India's constitutional mandate for women's participation in city councils



Overview

The Constitution of India vide Article 243T of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992)¹⁰⁸ mandates at least 33 per cent rotational reservation of the seats for women, including scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes in the city council.

Countries such as Nepal,¹⁰⁹ Pakistan,¹¹⁰ Bangladesh,¹¹¹ Rwanda,¹¹² among others, are some of the other countries with reservations for women in the city councils.¹¹³ As of 2023, more than 130 countries¹¹⁴ have adopted some form of gender quota to increase women’s political representation, including legislated quotas, reserved seats, and voluntary party measures



and this remains one of the most powerful mechanisms to ensure participation of women at city level decision-making.^{viii}

Process

As local government is a state subject, respective state governments implemented the constitutional mandate by amending the municipal legislation to reserve one-third of councillor seats and chairperson posts for women. These reservations are implemented through a rotation system, with designated wards changing each election cycle. Since the Constitution specifies only a minimum threshold, 16 states¹¹⁵ have gone further by reserving up to 50 per cent of the city councils’ seats for women. This has significantly increased women’s political participation at the grassroots level and has served as a foundational step toward gender-inclusive governance in many Indian cities.

Since the Constitution specifies only a minimum threshold, 16 states have gone further by reserving up to 50 per cent of the city councils’ seats for women.

Impact

In 17 of India’s capital cities, the representation of women exceeds even their state mandate. Women constitute more than 60 per cent of the city councils in Patna, Ranchi, and Bhubaneswar. This also has a multiplying effect, encouraging other young women to aspire to positions of leadership.

A study of women councillors in the Jaipur Municipal Corporation highlights the rise of independent and capable leaders who have chosen politics as a career, demonstrating skills and effectiveness on par with their male counterparts.

Similarly, a study conducted in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation¹¹⁶ found that women councillors performed well in implementing programmes and prioritising community welfare and services.

^{viii} Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Gujrat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura.

02 Kudumbashree by the Government of Kerala



Overview

Launched in 1997 under the People's Plan Campaign in Kerala, Kudumbashree is a women-led poverty eradication mission built on community networks – Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs), Area Development Societies (ADS), and Community Development Societies (CDS) – designed to strengthen livelihoods and improve the quality of life of low-income families. Its main goal was to focus on improving women's lives by enabling livelihood development, promoting women participation in local governance (both urban and rural areas), and public service delivery.

Process

Inspired by the success of participatory development models in Alappuzha and Malappuram in the early 1990s, and in the broader context of the devolution of powers to the local governments, and the People's Plan Campaign, the Kerala government decided to establish the Kudumbashree, meaning 'prosperity of the family'.¹¹⁷ Within the Kudumbashree structure, NHGs form the foundational tier, each comprising 15 to 40 women from economically weaker households. At the second tier, ADS are constituted at the ward level by federating 10 to 15 NHGs under the respective local government. At the apex, CDS brings together all ADS units within a local government area, serving as the highest decision-making and coordinating body in the network.¹¹⁸

The Kudumbashree women, through their community network, contribute to the development of 'micro-plans' and 'mini-plans', which are then consolidated into a 'CDS Action Plan', a demand plan presented to local governments. This bottom-up approach ensures that local governance planning reflects the community's needs and priorities. The mission, which initially aimed to provide financial support to destitute and impoverished women, has grown to significantly enhance the capacity of women and champion them as active participants in society. The local governments work in tandem with the network to empower women to become active leaders and run enterprises through

various strategies, including information and trade, skill upgradation, thrift-credit operations (microfinance), and infrastructure development.¹¹⁹

These enterprises range from catering and tailoring to innovative ventures such as mobile laundries and urban farming, significantly contributing to the economic development of urban communities.

Impact

Kudumbashree has been instrumental in promoting micro-enterprises in urban Kerala, providing employment opportunities to approximately 4.5 million women across various sectors.¹²⁰ Additionally, it has fostered a path to increase women's representation and leadership in local governance, from 11,773 candidates in the 2010 local elections to 15,000 in 2020.¹²¹

Kudumbashree, as a National Resource Organisation under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NULM), offers technical expertise to other Indian states. Serving as the nodal agency for NULM in Kerala, Kudumbashree has consistently demonstrated excellence in implementing the livelihoods mission. Its outstanding performance was recognised once again in 2023, when Kerala was ranked as the top-performing state in the SPARK (Systematic Progressive Analytical Real-time Ranking) system for the fifth consecutive year.¹²³

The mission also supports the delivery of services related to public health, environment, and sanitation, through the 'Kudumbashree Haritha Karma Sena: Kerala Model of Cleanliness'. 35,214 women have collected 50,190 tonnes of inorganic waste and sold it to the Clean Kerala company and received INR 341 crores as user fees, and INR 7.8 crores as remuneration.¹²²

The Kudumbashree model, through its integrated approach combining empowerment, livelihoods, and service delivery, offers a replicable framework for inclusive urban development across India.

03 Jaga Mission by the Government of Odisha



Overview

The Jaga Mission,¹²⁴ officially known as the Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission, is an innovative urban transformation initiative launched by the Government of Odisha in May 2018. The aim was to provide land tenure security and comprehensive infrastructure upgrades to slum dwellers, improve their quality of life, and transform slums into liveable habitats. A cornerstone of the mission was its commitment to gender inclusion and gender equality, with active promotion of women's leadership and participation in urban governance. Through the integration of women into decision-making roles and providing them ownership rights and livelihood opportunities, the mission aimed to address systemic gender disparities in urban space.

Process

The first big step which ensured empowerment was that the mission granted land rights to slum dwellers, but with a clear emphasis on joint ownership for women through the Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act, 2017.¹²⁵ Slum Dwellers' Associations (SDA)¹²⁶ were formed for each slum to oversee housing and infrastructure improvements, with the stipulation that 50 per cent of the community members of these associations must be women or from other marginalised groups, such as transgender people and those with disabilities.¹²⁷ The mission ensured active participation of women by directly engaging them to carry out development work, instead of outsourcing it to private contractors. This led to

the creation of better livelihood opportunities and also built a strong sense of ownership and accountability among the community involved. The state government also supported women's leadership through Mission Shakti Groups (MSGs), SHGs, and SDAs in every urban slum, and this approach formed a strong network of local organisations, creating a 'fourth' tier of governance to implement government schemes and interventions.¹²⁸ These women-led collectives, such as SDAs and MSGs, worked closely with the ULGs to implement various schemes, including Mukhya Mantri Karma Tatpar Abhiyan (MUKTA).¹²⁹ MUKTA was launched to support migrant labourers and the urban workforce, with

a focus on a community-driven, participatory, and bottom-up approach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, women-led SHGs and SDAs were crucial in maintaining safety protocols within urban poor settlements.¹³⁰

By empowering women within these associations, the mission ensured women's voices are an integral part of urban planning and development decisions.

Impact

The mission resulted in 1,73,000 families being provided with land rights, including provisions for joint ownership with women, 100 per cent electricity connections, and water connections to 2,919 and 2,724 slums, respectively.

The initiative trained more than 7,500 SDA leaders.¹³² With women comprising more than half of the participants, these trainings strengthened their capacities in leadership, organizational and financial management, and meaningful community engagement.

Apart from this, 2,919 SDAs have signed agreements with their respective ULGs, for which 43,785 leaders have been trained. Overall, 1,680 slums have been delisted, making 28 cities slum-free entirely in the state.¹³¹

Jaga Mission was honoured with the Bronze World Habitat Award in 2019 and 2023 for its groundbreaking work.¹³³

Stories from around the globe

04 CanWILL programme by Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Canada



Overview

In 2021, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) initiated the CanWILL (Canadian Women in Local Leadership)¹³⁴ programme to increase the participation and retention of women in leadership positions within Canada's ULGs. It focuses on empowering women from underrepresented and marginalised groups, including Black women, women of colour, and

members of the LGBTQIA+ community, among others. Building on the foundation laid by CanWILL, FCM now extends its gender equality efforts through its ongoing programme (2021-27), Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL),¹³⁵ which supports women's participation in local governance and strengthens the capacity of ULGs in Benin, Cambodia, Ghana, Sri Lanka, and Zambia.¹³⁶

Process

The CanWILL initiative began with the objective of addressing the gender gap in women's representation in local governance. It achieves its goals through a series of methods, including campaigns, funding grants, research, provision of scholarly literature, and access to online courses on municipal governance, as well as awareness campaigns.

The programme offers Gender-Based Analysis (GBA)¹³⁷ courses that highlight the importance of adopting a gender-inclusive approach in the public sector and equip ULGs with techniques to make their policies and practices more inclusive. It has conducted free workshops for women leaders on digital citizenship, online safety, and techniques to prevent gender-based violence.¹³⁸

Their Inclusive Community Initiative,¹³⁹ launched in the same year, provided

18 grants

of up to 10,000 to ULGs to encourage women to take up leadership positions in the municipalities.

They then tackle systematic challenges that restrict effective leadership in local governance through leveraging a variety of interventions including steering committees, institutional assessments, professional networks, and creating environments friendly towards inclusivity.¹⁴⁰

Recognising that ULGs are essential players in fostering a positive environment for all community members, CanWILL conducted events that invited trans rights advocates to address methods that promote inclusivity towards the LGBTQIA+ community. The CanWILL project has compiled several reports of local governments in Canada and across the world as an online resource library to serve as an example to stakeholders in ULGs, encouraging them to adopt a diverse and representative approach in their work.¹⁴¹ This comprehensive resource library spans key areas such as budgeting and financing, engaging youth and other underrepresented groups, advancing gender equity, addressing gender-based violence, supporting women in leadership, and achieving measurable gender targets.¹⁴²

Impact

CanWILL helped ULGs address women's lack of confidence and absence of support networks by creating platforms for dialogue on gender inclusivity.

As of 2023, women represented 31 per cent of all municipal elected representatives in Canada, 22 per cent of mayoral positions, and 33 per cent of councillor positions.¹⁴³

By collaborating with communities and local governments, the programme made the municipal process more accessible and empowered women to participate in decision-making actively.

16 per cent of Canadian ULGs have achieved or surpassed gender parity, with women comprising at least half of council members in these jurisdictions. Since 2015, women's representation has increased by 5 percentage points in mayoral positions and 6 percentage points in councillor roles.¹⁴⁴

3

Towards women- centric cities





The success stories featured^{ix} demonstrate how cities across India and the globe are making progress – at times incrementally, at times transformationally – toward placing women at the heart of urban governance.

Together, they offer robust evidence that inclusive cities can shape a more sustainable and equitable future. Whether through safer and more accessible public spaces, expanded political participation, or more responsive service delivery, these experiences demonstrate that cities designed with women in mind are not only more just but also more resilient and effective .

Drawing on Janaagraha’s City-Systems framework, the following abstracted lessons outline the systemic shifts needed to build cities that centre women’s needs and leadership.

^{ix}. 12 success stories are discussed in the main body of the report, while the remaining 20 are in Annexure -II

01 Embed gender, starting with women, into urban laws, policies, processes, and institutions to build cities that work for all. Equip officials at all levels in the government with targeted training and capacity building to effectively implement these policies

In India, the 74th CAA, which mandates one-third reservation for women in ULGs, has been further enhanced to 50% in 16 states opening doors for women's political representation at the grassroots level. Globally, several cities provide compelling models for institutionalising gender in urban governance. In Naga City (Philippines), the Women Development Code mandates that 10 per cent of the city's annual budget be allocated for gender and development programmes, complemented by a women's council that enables structured collaboration between city departments and women's groups. Manila's (Philippines) GRLG Programme integrates gender into local governance and enforces anti-discrimination policies. In Vienna (Austria), a dedicated gender mainstreaming department ensures gender priorities are embedded in planning and administration.

For India, scaling integration of gender requires a systemic shift. This includes harmonising municipal laws to embed gender mandates establishing dedicated gender units within ULGs to lead and coordinate mainstreaming efforts; and allocating specific budgets alongside strengthening implementation capacity. While the focus of this study has primarily been on women, these efforts must also extend to LGBTQIA+ communities to build truly inclusive cities.

Capacity building of municipal officials in applying gender frameworks is essential to ensure their meaningful and sustained integration into urban governance.



02 Engage women not only as users of space but as co-creators of cities. Participatory, gender-disaggregated planning and design processes must be the norm

Chennai’s Gender and Policy Lab embeds gender-responsive planning into governance, focusing on mobility and safety audits that shape street design and transit policy. The integration of gender perspectives in spatial development plans, such as the Mumbai Development Plan 2034 and Chennai’s upcoming Master Plans, shows early promise.

Bogotá’s (Colombia) Care Blocks demonstrate how participatory design rooted in women’s everyday realities leads to inclusive and accessible infrastructure. Whether it is street lighting, crèche facilities, or safe commuting routes, planning must reflect the diversity of users. Bogotá’s CARE model also demonstrates how placing essential services within a 15-minute walking distance can transform women’s access to the city, enabling them to achieve autonomy, access employment opportunities, practice self-care, and engage in public life. Sejong’s (South Korea) Women-Friendly Special District exemplifies how gender can be embedded in spatial and regulatory frameworks.

To mainstream gender in planning and design, Indian cities must institutionalise it across all levels by integrating gender mandates into spatial planning laws, strengthening urban planning departments with dedicated gender expertise, and incorporating the lived experiences of women into design standards and project cycles. Initiatives such as safety audits, 15-minute neighbourhoods, and inclusive street design must be backed by legal, financial, and administrative support.



03 Institutionalise gender budgeting to ensure resources are allocated to address gender disparities and promote equitable cities

In India, Mumbai's BMC pioneered gender budgeting in 2011, increasing its allocations eightfold to support women-centric initiatives such as Aadhar Kendras, shelters for domestic violence survivors, and public sanitation improvements. However, this effort is limited to gender tagging, which is a technical or administrative process of labelling or identifying public expenditures, schemes, or projects that have gender-related objectives or benefits.

Globally, cities such as Vienna have institutionalised gender budgeting since 2005, implementing more than 60 gender-sensitive projects by 2020 and setting a benchmark for inclusive governance. Reykjavík (Iceland) adopted gender budgeting in 2011 to promote balanced

public investment while Barcelona's 2021–25 Gender Justice Plan links budgeting with impact assessments, training, and disaggregated data. Penang and Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam) illustrate the power of combining gender-responsive budgeting with participatory planning.

India's cities should move beyond gender tagging and adopt gender budgeting, a systematic process of planning, allocating, and auditing public expenditures, to promote gender equality and address gender-specific needs. Indian cities can also adopt tools such as gender impact assessments and participatory processes to ensure budgets reflect the diverse needs of women and marginalised communities, not just in allocation, but also in design and implementation.

04 Enable women-led collectives not as supplementary actors, but as foundational to urban capacity, and to organise for dignity, livelihoods, and local service delivery

In India, national missions such as DAY-NULM and AMRUT have increased women's participation in SHGs and infrastructure projects. AMRUT Mitra and SBM's Rani Mistri initiative demonstrate how integrating women into infrastructure delivery systems enhances ownership and accountability. Kerala's Kudumbashree exemplifies how women's community networks can deliver critical public services, generate livelihoods, and deepen governance. Apart from the objective to eradicate poverty, the mission has strengthened social trust, empowered women with financial independence and leadership skills, and drastically increased

their participation in local governance. The decentralised solid waste management system in Odisha is also a remarkable example of integrating women into the formal workforce in cities. By forming SHGs and letting them take the lead on solid waste management, women have the opportunity to work in managerial capacities and maintain dignified livelihoods, while simultaneously improving service delivery in their cities. Navi Disha in Pimpri-Chinchwad, where women's SHGs manage sanitation facilities, demonstrates how co-production models build dignity, ownership, and better services.

Globally, Bogotá's (Colombia) Care Alliance, Barcelona's (Spain) Feminist Municipalism, and Los Angeles's (United States) Gender Equity Action Plan in urban transportation highlight the importance of intentionally supporting underrepresented women, including women of colour and transgenders, in leading local governance.

India has made significant headway through women's SHGs, which demonstrate how women's participation can strengthen service delivery,

build livelihoods, and foster local accountability. The next step is to move from programmatic success to systemic recognition, treating these models not as exceptions or add-ons, but as integral to how cities are planned, governed, and serviced. These systems are not supplementary but are foundational urban capacity, shifting from top-down approaches to a community co-production approach, and acknowledging care work, mobility, and access to services as central to urban equity.



05 Invest in systematic leadership programmes and networks, enabling institutions to unlock women's full leadership potential

India's constitutional reservation for women in ULGs has significantly improved their representation. However, true agency requires investment in leadership development. Evidence shows women leaders often drive transformative governance, prioritising basic services, community needs, and effective implementation. Strengthening their agency and institutional capacity is essential for sustainable urban governance.

CanWILL programme (Canada) illustrates how targeted mentoring, training, and financial support empower women leaders and transform governance cultures. The programme helped address women's lack of confidence in participating in public forums and aided in creating conducive environments to foster gender inclusivity. Vienna's Gender Mainstreaming strategy (Austria) includes the training of politicians, alongside public officials and planners.

Politicians, especially those in decision-making roles within city departments and district councils, are offered tailored workshops and sensitisation programmes to ensure that gender considerations are reflected at all levels of governance, not just technical, but also political. Bogotá's (Colombia) Care Alliance offer political skills training for beneficiaries, which has led to increased participation of women in city politics.

India must go beyond quotas and invest in sustained leadership development of women mayors and councillors. This includes structured mentoring, capacity building, and peer networks tailored to women in ULGs. Furthermore, political skills training can be imparted at the community level, fostering a new generation of women leaders. India can also embed gender equity within its political party structures, candidate selection processes, and local electoral systems, creating an ecosystem where women's leadership is nurtured, recognised, and sustained.



06 Institutionalise women's voices in decision-making by taking participation beyond consultation

Odisha's JAGA Mission demonstrates how the legal and financial empowerment of slum-level associations makes decentralisation a reality. Integrating these bodies into formal platforms for citizen participation ensures women's voices are part of planning and service delivery.

Similarly, the Integrated Programme for Social Inclusion, implemented by the Santo André (Brazil) municipal government, demonstrates a method for actively involving the community, particularly women, in decision-making processes related to health and housing interventions. The programme led to improved reproductive health services and created income-generating opportunities for women, fixing the gender disparity. Likewise, the City Government of Naga (Phillipines) formalised the participation of women's organisations to address gender issues in policy planning,

implementation, and monitoring. The city's approach is a model for gender mainstreaming that institutionalised women's voice beyond consultation. Meanwhile, ULGs of Barcelona (Spain), Bogotá (Colombia), Los Angeles, and New York (USA) have taken meaningful steps to include LGBTQIA+ communities in city planning, budgeting, and service delivery.

India can strengthen participatory governance by institutionalising women's voices in formal platforms for citizen engagement. This requires municipal laws to mandate women's representation in bodies such as ward committees and area sabhas. Additionally, grassroots collectives, particularly those led by women, should be formally recognised and integrated into planning, budgeting, and monitoring processes.

07 Make gender inequities visible and actionable through technology and data

Chennai's Gender and Policy Lab is a pioneering initiative that utilises gender-disaggregated data to inform policy and planning decisions, particularly in areas such as mobility and safety.

Initiatives such as SIGBA in Buenos Aires (Argentina) enable data-driven gender budgeting by tracking the impacts of public spending across demographics. Sejong (South Korea) and Vienna (Austria) use gender impact assessments to evaluate policies and plans through a gender lens, institutionalising gender considerations in urban decision-making.

India must build robust municipal data ecosystems that can disaggregate, analyse, and act on gendered evidence, especially at the ward and neighbourhood levels. These systems should also recognise the intersection of gender with class, caste, age, and disability. Strengthening institutional capacity within ULGs to leverage data and technology for gender-based planning, monitoring, and evaluation is equally critical.



Figure 5

Key ingredients for mainstreaming women in urban governance



Legal and policy mandates that mainstream gender in the governance of cities.

Dedicated institutional mechanisms like gender cells and capacity building of bureaucrats to implement policy and apply gender frameworks meaningfully.



Gender-responsive budgeting, linking allocations to impact assessments, participatory processes, and measurable outcomes.



Systematic leadership training for women mayors and councillors.



Inclusive planning and design processes that centre care, mobility, safety, and livelihood concerns of women.



Women-led collectives and SHGs as vehicles for service delivery, planning, and accountability.



Representation of women in formal platforms for citizen participation.



Technology and data to identify and address gender gaps.



Conclusion

Introducing, sustaining, and scaling gender mainstreaming practices in India requires recognition of the institutional fragmentation in urban governance, the weak capacities of ULGs, and deep social hierarchies that often exclude women and other gender minorities.

The path forward involves investing in municipal capacity, embedding gender concerns into national and state urban missions, and ensuring accountability through measurable outcomes. Ultimately, mainstreaming gender in Indian cities is not a standalone project - it is a fundamental shift in how cities are imagined, planned, and governed. By embedding gender as a core lens across planning, capacities, and participatory governance, cities can create more equitable, safe, and sustainable futures, not just for women, but for all.



Annexure I - Methodology

Objective

The compilation, 'Cities for Women, Women for Cities: Selected Success Stories from India and Around the Globe' examines best practices in gender-responsive urban governance. It brings together exemplary initiatives from India and around the world that can be adapted, replicated, or contextualised across Indian cities.

Framework

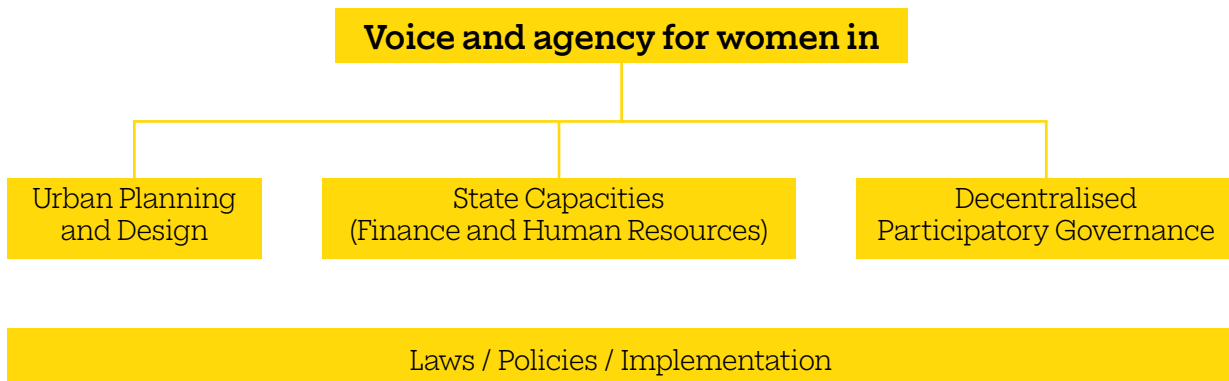
The success stories from India and across the globe have been selected based on initiatives – spanning laws, policies, and implementation – that strengthen women’s voice and agency within the broader framework of city-systems, that is, urban

governance (Refer to Figure 6). Janaagraha’s city-systems framework conceptualises urban governance as comprising three distinct yet interrelated components:

- ▲ **Urban Planning Design (UPD)** – including spatial planning, land management, and the design of public spaces
- ▲ **State Capacities (SC)** – encompassing municipal finance and human resources
- ▲ **Decentralised Participatory Governance (DPG)** – featuring empowered and accountable mayors and councils, alongside citizen participation in neighbourhood-level governance

Figure 6

Framework used for identifying the success stories from India and around the globe



Method

This compilation primarily adopts a secondary research methodology, comprising the following steps:

- ▲ **Compilation of policies and programmes:**
A review of 109 gender-related policies and programmes in India to identify initiatives focused on advancing women’s inclusion.
- ▲ **Secondary research and case identification:**
Extensive secondary-based research to identify potential success stories from India and around the globe, aligned with Janaagraha’s city-systems framework.

- ▲ of 32 success stories – 14 from India and 18 from around the globe – ensuring geographic diversity and assessing the extent of leadership by ULGs (Refer Table 3). Priority was given to systemic initiatives oriented toward institutionalisation, while programmes impacting urban areas but lacking a substantive role for ULGs were excluded.

- ▲ **Expert consultation:** Engagement with gender experts to validate and refine the selection of relevant success stories.

▲ **Study period:** 1990–2023

Selection of success stories: Identification

Table 3

List of success stories of mainstreaming women in urban governance

#	Case Study	City/Region	Country	Primary Category
1	Gender Mainstreaming in MoHUA Missions & Schemes	All cities	India	Cities for Women
2	Gender Mainstreaming by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation	Mumbai	India	Cities for Women
3	Gender and Policy Lab	Chennai	India	Cities for Women
4	Care System of Bogotá	Bogotá	Colombia	Cities for Women
5	Women Development Code	Naga City	Philippines	Cities for Women
6	Gender Mainstreaming by City Government of Vienna	Vienna	Austria	Cities for Women
7	Women Friendly City Project	Seoul	South Korea	Cities for Women
8	Feminist Municipalism by Barcelona City Council	Barcelona	Spain	Cities for Women

#	Case Study	City/Region	Country	Primary Category
9	Gender Budgeting by Pune Municipal Corporation	Pune	India	Cities for Women
10	Gender-Inclusive Public Spaces — Mumbai Development Plan 2034	Mumbai	India	Cities for Women
11	Pink Auto Service	Surat	India	Cities for Women
12	Integrated Programme for Social Inclusion	Santo André	Brazil	Cities for Women
13	Gender Indicator System — SIGBA	Buenos Aires	Argentina	Cities for Women
14	Bicycle and Walk Safe Programme	Hermosillo	Mexico	Cities for Women
15	Port Moresby Safe City & Safe Public Spaces	Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea	Cities for Women
16	Gender Equality in Public Transport Initiative	Ho Chi Minh City	Vietnam	Cities for Women
17	City Commission on Gender Equity	New York City	USA	Cities for Women
18	Gender Budgeting	Reykjavík	Iceland	Cities for Women
19	Gender Responsive Participatory Budgeting	Penang	Malaysia	Cities for Women
20	Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning — Women-Friendly Special District	Sejong	South Korea	Cities for Women
21	Gender Equity Action Plan in Urban Transportation	Los Angeles	USA	Cities for Women
22	Gender Responsive Local Governance Programme	Manila	Philippines	Cities for Women
23	India's constitutional mandate for women's participation in city councils	All cities	India	Women for Cities
24	Kudumbashree Mission	Kerala	India	Women for Cities

#	Case Study	City/Region	Country	Primary Category
25	Jaga Mission (Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission)	Odisha	India	Women for Cities
26	CanWILL Programme by Federation of Canadian Municipalities	All cities	Canada	Women for Cities
27	Navi Disha — Community Toilet Model	Pimpri Chinchwad	India	Women for Cities
28	AMRUT Mitra Initiative	AMRUT cities	India	Women for Cities
29	Livelihood & Empowerment of Women Waste Workers	Ahmedabad	India	Women for Cities
30	Babaramdev Nagar Sanitation Model	Jaipur	India	Women for Cities
31	Decentralised Urban Solid Waste Management	Odisha	India	Women for Cities
32	BASIC START Project	Bangsamoro	Philippines	Women for Cities

Annexure II - Other success stories from India and around the globe

This annexure presents 20 additional success stories identified through the same methodology and analytical framework as the detailed cases in Section II. While presented in a concise format, these cases reflect systemic and institutionalised approaches to gender mainstreaming within urban governance.

The success stories are organised under the two categories - 'Cities for Women' and 'Women for Cities' - and further grouped by geography to maintain consistency with the main analysis.

Cities for Women

Stories from India

01

Gender budgeting by the Pune Municipal Corporation

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC)¹⁴⁵ initiated its gender budgeting efforts in 2009–10, marking a significant step towards integrating gender perspectives into urban governance. PMC targeted the integration of a gender perspective into all stages of the budgetary process, focusing on initiatives such as constructing toilets for women, establishing crèches, providing financial grants to SHGs and self-employed women, and others, ensuring that needs are systematically addressed in urban planning and service delivery.¹⁴⁶ To further develop its gender budgeting exercise, the ULG has also collaborated with the All India Institute of Local Self Government (AIILSG), Mumbai, to create a framework for making the city more women-friendly, identifying the needs and issues of women from different socio-economic strata.¹⁴⁷ As per 2025–26 PMC budget of INR 12,618 crores, INR 169 crores (around 1.34 per cent) has been allocated to the Women and Child Welfare Fund, covering initiatives such as a gender responsibility study group, women's safety measures, night shelters, and self-defense centres across the city.

02

Pink Auto Service by the Surat Municipal Corporation

The Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC)¹⁴⁸ launched the Pink Auto Service in 2017 to provide safe and reliable transportation for women.¹⁴⁹ This initiative features women-driven auto-rickshaws, ensuring security and economic empowerment for female drivers. The project aimed to enhance women's mobility, safety, and financial independence in the city. The SMC selected 70 women and assisted them in securing licenses and obtaining loans at a lower rate for purchasing auto-rickshaws and for the operation of the fleet. Particular attention has been given to areas with higher concentrations of women, such as neighbourhoods surrounding girls' schools. Women drivers have reported daily earnings of INR 700–800, resulting in a monthly income of between INR 20,000 and INR 40,000. Still operating today,¹⁵⁰ the pink autos have become a symbol of women's empowerment in Surat, challenging traditional gender roles and inspiring confidence among female commuters.¹⁵¹

03

Gender-inclusive public spaces by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation

In 2020, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) pioneered the inclusion of gender in its urban plan, the Revised Draft Development Plan (RDDP) 2034.¹⁵² It did so through land reservations in the city's 24 wards, to create physical-social infrastructure for women. This has been made possible through a decade of voluntary efforts by a diverse group of women who have campaigned, written, and petitioned to improve women's workforce participation in the city. They identified domestic responsibilities and inadequate urban infrastructure to share this burden as key barriers limiting women's participation. BMC has collaborated with various women's organisations¹⁵³ to incorporate gender perspectives into urban planning and to create more inclusive mobility systems by using gender-disaggregated data. This is potentially leading to the reservation of land parcels that offer infrastructure and services, such as multipurpose housing, neighbourhood care centres, old age homes, student hostels, and homeless shelters, specifically catering to the needs of women.¹⁵⁴

Stories from around the globe

04

The Integrated Programme for Social Inclusion by the Santo André Municipal Government, Brazil

The Santo André municipal government¹⁵⁵ initiated the Integrated Programme for Social Inclusion in 1997 to address multidimensional poverty with a strong emphasis on gender equality. The programme targeted the four informal settlements of Sacadura Cabral, Tamarutaca, Capuava, and Quilombo II and implemented coordinated interventions in housing and health.¹⁵⁶ Within this, the Gender and Citizenship Program was the result of a partnership between the Santo André, Municipality and the Centre for Health Studies. A key feature was the active involvement of community members, particularly women,

in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment. The initiative not only improved reproductive health services but also created income-generating opportunities for women, fostering greater gender equity. The foundational principles of the initiative continue to influence the city's long-term strategic planning initiative – Santo André 500 Years¹ – launched in 2023.¹⁵⁷ The city also has state-run programmes for women, which includes Mil Mulheres¹⁵⁸, the Productive Inclusion Plan, which provides professional training to women living in extreme poverty.

05

Gender Indicator System, by the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina

The Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires,^{*} through its key city departments of the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses, General Directorate of Women, and General Secretariat, launched the Gender Indicator System of Buenos Aires (SIGBA)¹⁵⁹ in 2017. Legally mandated by Law No.5,924¹⁶⁰ to record and capture how public policies affect men and women differently and guarantee the incorporation of a gender perspective in all statistical outputs, SIGBA is an open-source platform designed to monitor and address gender disparities in the city. SIGBA provides comprehensive data across three key dimensions: economic autonomy, decision-making autonomy, and physical autonomy. The platform integrates data from various government programmes and external sources, offering insights into labour market access, public safety, healthcare availability, and more. Its open-source nature allows users to download data in standard formats, fostering transparency and civic engagement.¹⁶¹ The system's development was supported by technical assistance from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and UN Women.¹⁶² Within a year, SIGBA compiled 92 indicators, enabling policymakers to identify structural inequalities and design targeted interventions that contributed to the city's efforts in promoting inclusive urban development.¹⁶³

06

Walk Safe programme by the Municipality of Hermosillo, Mexico

Hermosillo, a rapidly industrialising city with growing job opportunities, faced a significant barrier: unsafe commutes for working women. In response, the ULG launched the Walk Safe pilot programme in 2022 to enhance public safety through improved lighting in high-risk neighbourhoods.¹⁶⁴ With women comprising over 42 per cent of the population and nearly 200,000 working outside the home, gender-based violence emerged as a significant concern. Backed by a budget of 1.2 million pesos (approximately USD 67,000), the initiative strengthened public safety infrastructure by improving street lighting maintenance, installing 24/7 surveillance systems – including video cameras and panic buttons directly linked to municipal security – providing free Wi-Fi along 10 designated routes, and installing 200 bollards. The project used crime data to identify hotspots near employment hubs and designed targeted interventions, emphasizing community input and ownership. The Walk Safe programme became official through an agreement by the Municipal Energy and Climate Change Agency and was added to the 2021–2024 Municipal Development Plan and the General Law of Mobility and Road Safety.¹⁶⁵ The programme has increased women's confidence in public spaces, reduced personal car use and emissions, and fostered

^{*} Official name- *Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (GCBA)*

community gatherings. The success led to the scaling of the initiative to 30 additional locations across the city by the end of 2023.¹⁶⁶

07

The Port Moresby Safe City and Safe Public Spaces initiative by the National Capital District Commission, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

In response to widespread harassment and violence against women on public transport, the National Capital District Commission (NCDC), Port Moresby,¹⁶⁷ under the leadership of Powes Parkop, Governor, launched the Meri Seif Bus programme in 2014. This initiative, part of the UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme, offers women-only buses to provide a secure and reliable means of transportation. The service has enabled women and girls to access education, healthcare, and employment opportunities without fear, significantly improving their mobility and autonomy. By 2019, the programme had expanded to Lae, Papua New Guinea's second-largest city, and had facilitated more than 135,000 safe trips for women and children in Port Moresby alone.¹⁶⁸ The initiative has been recognised as a best practice in promoting gender-responsive urban planning. In addition to women bus drivers, who challenge traditional gender roles and provide new employment opportunities, more than 3,800 women vendors and 12,000 customers, predominantly women, have benefited from a safer market environment.¹⁶⁹ The programme is currently inactive due to insufficient funds to procure new buses, while the existing second-hand fleet has become non-operational. As of 2025, a fundraising campaign has been launched to revive the initiative. Its non-operational status highlights a broader issue: without institutionalised policy backing and sustainable financing mechanisms, such programmes remain vulnerable and struggle to achieve long-term continuity.

08

Gender Equality in Public Transport Initiative by Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

In 2017, Ho Chi Minh City launched the Gender Equality in Public Transport Initiative as part of the broader 'Safe Cities for Women and Girls'¹⁷⁰ programme, a collaboration between UN Women, the city's Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA), and other local stakeholders. The initiative aimed to address gender disparities in public transportation by integrating gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) into the planning and management of public passenger transport services.¹⁷¹ This approach involved analysing budget allocations to ensure that resources effectively addressed the specific needs of women and girls, particularly concerning safety and accessibility in public transit. Key activities included conducting baseline surveys to assess women's experiences in public transportation, training city officials on GRB principles, and developing guidelines for implementing gender-sensitive budgeting practices. Recently, drawing on a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) framework and informed by multiple rounds of focus group discussions with women, older persons, and persons with disabilities (PwDs), as well as online surveys, the Ho Chi Minh City government introduced a Smart Ticketing System (STS) for its bus network. To encourage greater use of public transport among women workers and students, the initiative offers multiple payment options to accommodate passengers from diverse socio-

economic backgrounds. It also seeks to optimise routes and improve service efficiency by strengthening coordination among existing bus operators across the city. As a result, the city improved its capacity to design and monitor transport services that are more inclusive and responsive to gender-specific concerns.



New York City Commission on Gender Equity by Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice, New York, USA

The New York City Commission on Gender Equity (CGE), a permanent advisory body under the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice,¹⁷² was established in 2015 to address and eliminate gender-based inequities across the city. Its mission encompasses addressing systemic inequalities that affect women, girls, transgender individuals, and gender non-conforming individuals with a particular focus on economic mobility and opportunity, access to healthcare, safety and prevention.¹⁷³ CGE collaborated with various city departments to integrate gender-responsive budgeting, ensuring that fiscal policies and resource allocations consider the unique needs of all genders.¹⁷⁴ Through public awareness campaigns and policy advisement, CGE has influenced more than 50 city policies and legislations,¹⁷⁵ fostering inclusive urban governance and equitable service delivery. In 2020, Local Law 45 expanded CGE's mandate further to study the extent and impact of gender inequities, assess city agencies through a gender lens, develop equitable recruitment strategies, and submit formal recommendations to the mayor and city council.¹⁷⁶ CGE is also required to present an annual report detailing its progress and future goals, reinforcing its accountability and leadership in advancing gender equity citywide.



Gender budgeting by City Government of Reykjavík, Iceland

In 2011, the city government of Reykjavík¹⁷⁷ (Borgarstjórn Reykjavíkur) and Mayor of Reykjavík (Borgarstjóri) adopted gender-responsive governance by integrating gender budgeting into its policy framework. This approach involves analysing how public spending impacts people of different genders and ensuring that resources are allocated equitably. Through this model, ULG directed more balanced investments toward essential services such as childcare, public transportation, healthcare, and affordable housing, which directly affect women's ability to participate fully in economic and social life. The ULG also utilised gender impact assessments in planning and budgeting decisions, ensuring that policies are inclusive from the outset. Overall, Reykjavík has seen improvements in gender parity in workforce participation, increased civic engagement among women, and more responsive public services. In 2016, the City of Reykjavík and its staff received 'Equality Recognition' from the 'Equality Council' for their pioneering work in implementing gender budgeting and developing the methodology.¹⁷⁸

11

Gender-responsive participatory budgeting by Penang Women's Development Corporation, Penang, Malaysia

The Penang Women's Development Corporation, in partnership with the Penang Island City Council (MBPP) and the Seberang Perai City Council (MBSP), pioneered a gender-responsive participatory budgeting (GRPB) initiative in 2012 to ensure that public resources meet the needs of all community members, particularly women.¹⁷⁹ GRPB aims to provide equitable public expenditure that addresses the diverse needs of the community. The process begins with the collection of sex-disaggregated data and focus group discussions to identify community priorities. Residents then vote on these priorities, directly informing budget allocations toward issues that shape their daily lives, such as improving public parks, infrastructure, and housing in low-income neighbourhoods. The initiative has resulted in more inclusive urban planning and service delivery, fostering a sense of ownership among residents. The innovative approach of combining gender-responsive and participatory budgeting garnered international recognition receiving a special mention in the 8th International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD)¹⁸⁰ for best practice in citizen participation in 2014.¹⁸¹ In 2019, GRPB was successfully institutionalised at the Penang State and Local Governments as part of their Gender Inclusiveness Policy (GIP). Currently, the GRPB approach links communities, agencies, all levels of government, and bridges the gap between citizens and service providers.

12

Gender mainstreaming in urban planning by Sejong City Government, Sejong, South Korea

Sejong Special Self-Governing City Government¹⁸² has proactively integrated gender mainstreaming into its urban planning processes to create inclusive and equitable urban spaces that serve the needs of all residents, in 2016.¹⁸³ The city's planning guidelines explicitly incorporate gender considerations, aiming to ensure that both women and men benefit equally from urban development. This approach involves analysing the impact of urban policies on different genders and making necessary adjustments to promote gender equality in public spaces and services. A key example is the development of the Women-Friendly Special District (WFSD), designed with principles such as low-rise buildings, mixed-use spaces, natural surveillance, and compact transit-oriented development to enhance safety, accessibility, and convenience for women.¹⁸⁴ The city continues to refine its gender-conscious planning by addressing gaps between ideal designs and real-world use, setting a strong precedent for gender mainstreaming that prioritises women's differentiated experiences and daily needs in urban environments.

13

Gender Equity Action Plan in urban transportation by the Los Angeles City Council, Los Angeles, USA

Los Angeles is one of the first US cities to adopt the principles of the CEDAW. Building on this foundation, in 2022, the Los Angeles City Council¹⁸⁵ directed all city departments to develop Racial and Gender

Equity Action Plans. Under this initiative, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT)¹⁸⁶ launched its Gender Equity Action Plan¹⁸⁷ to integrate gender equity into all areas of transportation planning and operations. In 2021, LADOT published the Changing Lanes¹⁸⁸ study, which concluded the Los Angeles transportation system systemically failed women of colour. To advance its Universal Basic Mobility initiatives, LADOT identified high and unpredictable pricing as a key barrier to access, particularly for women – who spend a larger share of their income on travel – and for low-income individuals who rely on essential transport services¹⁸⁹. Partnering with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, LADOT launched the Mobility Wallet pilot programme to provide low-income residents with a transportation allowance that could be spent on transportation services.¹⁹⁰ The initiative began its first phase in 2023 and later launched its second phase which lasted end of 2025.¹⁹¹

14

Gender-Responsive Local Governance programme by City Council, Manila, Philippines

The Gender-Responsive Local Governance (GRLG) programme¹⁹² in Manila is a comprehensive initiative aimed at integrating gender perspectives into local governance structures, policies, and practices. The GRLG programme is anchored in key legal frameworks, including the 1987 Constitution, the Local Government Code of 1991,¹⁹³ and the Magna Carta of Women¹⁹⁴ mandating Local Government Units (LGUs) to promote gender equality. The ULG enforced anti-discrimination policies, including bans on catcalling and harassment. Through training and active engagement with civil society, the ULGs strengthened gender-sensitive planning and community-responsive initiatives. This aided¹⁹⁵ the local government of Manila to win the Seal of Good Local Governance in 2025 for the first time, and a 2 million pesos cash incentive to further finance its initiatives.¹⁹⁶ The GRLG programme in Manila led to improved access to essential services for women and marginalised groups, as well as greater female participation in local governance. It also fostered a cultural shift toward gender sensitivity and institutionalised gender-responsive policies within the ULG.

Women for Cities

Stories from India

01

Navi Disha, a community toilet Model by Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation

The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) initiated the Navi Disha programme¹⁹⁷ in 2023. The aim was to enhance the sanitation infrastructure of urban slums in the city through the operation of community toilets managed completely by women's SHGs.¹⁹⁸ The social development department led extensive community consultations, strengthening women's trust and ownership of the project. The health department was involved in providing training and financial support for the operation and maintenance of the toilets. More than 50,000 families have benefited from the initiative, with more than 500 women actively managing 56 community toilets.¹⁹⁹ The initiative has also improved community

health, created safer spaces for women and children, and has sparked greater involvement of the local population. For this initiative, the PCMC was presented with the Medal of Honor for Urban Innovation at the Guangzhou International Award in China.²⁰⁰

02

AMRUT Mitra initiative by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

The AMRUT Mitra²⁰¹ initiative, introduced under AMRUT 2.0, is a pioneering gender-inclusive effort to engage SHG women in urban water management. Launched in 2021 and currently active, the scheme continues to empower women by involving them in both technical, such as meter reading, leakage detection, and basic plumbing, as well as non-technical roles, such as water quality testing, public awareness campaigns, and maintenance of parks and water bodies. States and ULGs were encouraged to identify SHGs, submit project proposals, and provide training, with projects capped at INR 30 lakhs annually per SHG. Along with facilitating coordination between the AMRUT and DAY-NULM implementing agencies within the ULG, the ULGs are also responsible for tracking progress, reporting on the project status and resolving implementation challenges.²⁰² 201 Notable examples include Telangana, where SHGs have been engaged in maintaining public parks and managing water infrastructure. Similarly, in Assam 'Women for Water, Water for Women' was initiated to envision the involvement of women's SHGs in various aspects of water management, including water demand management and related activities.²⁰³ So far, 1762 projects²⁰⁴ have been approved across 25 states/UTs, involving more than 350 SHGs, underscoring the critical role of women in achieving water quality goals.

03

Livelihood and empowerment of women waste workers by Amdavad Municipal Corporation

The Amdavad Municipal Corporation (AMC)²⁰⁵ in Ahmedabad, in collaboration with the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA),²⁰⁶ implemented initiatives aimed at improving the livelihoods and empowering women waste workers in 2013. These efforts focus on integrating informal women waste pickers into the formal waste management system, thereby improving their working conditions, income, and social recognition. By working closely with the city's waste recyclers, SEWA has organised approximately 49,240 waste pickers and cleaners in Ahmedabad, and secured permanent door-to-door waste collection contracts for 25 women, thereby ensuring stable and sustained livelihoods.²⁰⁷ The SEWA Technology Cell has also developed battery-powered rickshaws to alleviate the burden of waste carried by women ragpickers in the city.²⁰⁸ Similarly, SEWA extended support via a parametric insurance policy, ensuring that the women waste workers receive a payout for each qualifying heatwave (above 43.6°C for two consecutive days) regardless of whether they continue working or incur direct losses.²⁰⁹ The integration of women waste workers in the formal system has led to a substantial increase in earnings from approximately INR 1,500 to INR 6,000 per month.²¹⁰ The initiative has also contributed to environmental sustainability by preventing about 200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions annually.²¹¹

04

Babaramdev Nagar sanitation Model by Jaipur Municipal Corporation

The Babaramdev Nagar sanitation model²¹² in Jaipur stands as a remarkable example of community-driven transformation under the SBM-U. The active collaboration between the local community, women residents, and the municipal corporation played a pivotal role in transforming sanitation conditions by addressing persistent local sanitation failures. Bearing the brunt of inadequate sanitation services, women emerged as powerful agents of change, leading cleanliness drives, spreading awareness about hygiene, and mobilising their neighbours to adopt better waste management practices. Of the 100 households without toilets, the campaign facilitated the construction of toilets in 25 households, with the remaining 75 currently in the process of completion. This initiative underscored the role of women's leadership. Equipped with formal training in the sanitation operations and guidelines of SBM-U, the women engaged with the Slum Development Committee and were tasked with overseeing the maintenance and cleanliness of parks in Babaramdev Nagar.²¹³ Eventually, the committee members, having also taken charge of maintaining the existing community toilets, have fostered change at a behavioural level within the community regarding the importance and necessity of sanitation. As per publicly available records, the initiative has retained momentum and remained active at least until 2024.

05

Decentralised Urban Solid Waste Management model by the Government of Odisha

The Decentralised Solid Waste Management (SWM)²¹⁴ programme was launched in 2019 by the Housing and Urban Development, Government of Odisha, to tackle the growing issue of solid waste in cities. The process of policy formulation and planning at the state level was guided by the frameworks of AMRUT, PMAY-U, SBM-U, and NULM, and adapted to Odisha's local context through schemes such as the Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission (OLHM), also known as the JAGA Mission and BASERA. The programme was implemented through ULGs, with technical and administrative support, in partnership with 5,061 women from 2,650 SHGs, as well as members of transgender communities. The SHGs are involved in asset management and service delivery, creating stable income streams, promoting social inclusion, and expanding economic opportunities at the grassroots level. The primary beneficiaries were women, slum dwellers, and marginalised groups, identified through participatory methods and GIS-based surveys. A digital aspect has been added to the waste management system with the web application 'Ama Sahara'.²¹⁵ 3,019.18 of 4,057 metric tonnes of 'Mo Khata' organic manure generated by December 2022 has been sold out, generating a revenue of INR 6.86 crores. The process improved operational efficiency to 85 per cent across all micro composting centres and material recovery facilities. Out of 1,850+ cities across the country, the top two ULGs from Odisha were selected for the Indian Swachhta League (ISL). The ISL is India's first inter-city competition, led by youth, aimed at building garbage-free cities under SBM-U 2.0.²¹⁶

Stories from around the globe

06

BASIC project in Bangsamoro, Philippines

The Building Autonomous and Stable Institutions and Communities (BASIC) project in the Bangsamoro region of the Philippines was implemented between April 2015 and August 2017, with a focus on supporting peacebuilding through women's empowerment. The project was initiated as part of the peace agreement between the Government of Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. While the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014 laid the foundation for an autonomous Bangsamoro region, the lack of trust among communities and with the government required confidence-building measures to ease the transition in provincial government.²¹⁷ An initiative of the Australian Government, the project was led by Oxfam in partnership with local organisations, including Al Mujadilah Development Foundation, UnYPhil-Women, and WE Act 1325. It sought to recognise the cultural identity and distinct needs of the Bangsamoro people while advancing inclusive development. ULGs played a facilitative role by organising consultations and participatory forums that enabled meaningful community involvement in the peacebuilding process. By bringing together local leaders and community members, the initiative co-developed inclusive development plans prioritising essential services such as education, healthcare, and livelihoods. Oxfam's Women's Empowerment Index has shown significant improvements in women's roles in community decision-making, access to economic opportunities, and confidence in public participation, thereby strengthening trust and cooperation between communities and local authorities, and contributing to long-term stability.²¹⁸

Abbreviations

ADS	Area Development Societies
AIIILSG	All India Institute of Local Self Government
AMRUT	Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation
BASIC	Building Autonomous and Stable Institutions and Communities
BCC	Barcelona City Council
BLC	Beneficiary-Led Construction
BMC	Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation
CanWILL	Canadian Women in Local Leadership
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CDS	Community Development Society
CGE	City Commission on Gender Equity
CLAFs	City-Level Advisory Forums
CLDP	Capacity and Leadership Development Programme
CLSS	Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme
DAY-NULM	Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission
DOLISA	Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
DPG	Decentralised Participatory Governance
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ELPR	Empowered and Legitimate Political Representation
EWS	Economically Weaker Sections
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
GBG Act	Gender Budgeting Guidelines Act
GBA	Gender-Based Analysis
GCC	Greater Chennai Corporation

GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPL	Gender and Policy Lab
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
GRLG	Gender-Responsive Local Governance
GRPB	Gender-Responsive Participatory Budgeting
IGDO	Integrated Gender and Development Office
IOPD	International Observatory on Participatory Democracy
ISL	Indian Swachhta League
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
LADOT	Los Angeles Department of Transportation
LIG	Low Income Groups
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and the 'plus'
LGU	Local Government Units
MBPP	Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang (Penang Island City Council)
MBSP	Majlis Bandaraya Seberang Perai (Seberang Perai City Council)
MCC	Micro Composting Centre
MCGM	Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai
MIG	Middle Income Groups
MoHUA	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRF	Material Recovery Facility
MSG	Mission Shakti Group
MUKTA	Mukhya Mantri Karma Tatpar Abhiyan
NCCW	Naga City Council for Women
NCDC	National Capital District Commission

NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NHG	Neighbourhood Groups
NITI Aayog	National Institution for Transforming India
NNC	Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge
NULM	National Urban Livelihood Mission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLHM	Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission
PCMC	Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation
PHP	Philippine Peso
PMC	Pune Municipal Corporation
PMAY	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
PMAY-U	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban
RDDP	Revised Draft Development Plan
SBM	Swachh Bharat Mission
SBM-U	Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban
SC	State Capacities
SCM	Smart Cities Mission
SDA	Slum Dwellers' Associations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SHGs	Self Help Groups
SIGBA	Gender Indicator System of Buenos Aires
SMC	Surat Municipal Corporation
SM & ID	Social Mobilisation and Institution Development
SPARK	System Progressive Analytical Real-time Ranking
TAP	Transparency, Accountability and Citizen Participation

TNUES	Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme
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ToR	Terms of Reference
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UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
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UCR	Urban Capacities and Resources
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ULGs	Urban Local Governments
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UN	United Nations
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UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
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UNPSA	United Nations Public Services Award
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UPD	Urban Planning and Design
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UT	Union Territory
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WFCP	Women Friendly City Project
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WFSD	Women-Friendly Special District
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