

# **Shelter Women and Development**



**First and Third World Perspectives**

**Editor**

***Hemalata C. Dandekar***

# **Shelter Women and Development**

**F i r s t   a n d   T h i r d   W o r l d   P e r s p e c t i v e s**

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**Hemalata C. Dandekar** *Editor*

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**Cover:**

**Site Plan:** Sites and service project in Mogappair, Madras, India.  
**Photo:** Women inhabitants of Mogappair, by Hemalata C. Dandekar.  
**Elevation:** Amandla Crossing, transitional housing for homeless women and children in Edison, NJ,  
by architects Michael Mostoller and Fred Travisano, Princeton, NJ.

Photographs facing theme introductions were taken at the sites and service project in Mogappair, Madras, India in 1991 by Hemalata C. Dandekar.

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## Preface

This collection of papers is an outcome of a conference, entitled *Shelter, Women, and Development: First and Third World Perspectives*, held at the University of Michigan's College of Architecture and Urban Planning, May 5-7, 1992. The organizers (faculty colleagues, graduate students, and I) wanted to underscore the importance of shelter for women's development in a cross-national, multicultural context. We believed that comparisons and contrasts between First and Third World women's realities and their needs for housing, or shelter, as it is referred to in the Third World, might provide new insights into an issue that had received too little attention from policy makers around the world.

Our original plan for this conference was quite modest: to bring together a handful of established researchers who would present their current thoughts on the relationship between housing and women's development. In discussions with students in the architecture and planning programs at the University of Michigan, the idea of putting out a call for papers and soliciting new and ongoing work on this topic began to appear more exciting. It was clear that the literature on the specific topic of shelter and women's development was not extensive and work encompassing First and Third World situations was virtually nonexistent. We issued a call for papers to ascertain the level of interest in the subject. The call was designed to get the attention not just of academics but also of professional practitioners in architecture and urban planning, activists, and those involved in delivery of services to unsheltered women. In addition to papers, visual and project-related contributions were solicited to highlight the shelter-related products of practitioners and artists.<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on the visual and tangible seemed appropriate for a conference on housing to be hosted by a professional school of architecture and planning and convened in a building shared with a school of art.

The seventy or so abstracts and the numerous expressions of interest in the exhibit that we received confirmed that many people are working in various aspects of this topic. They also illustrated (as reflected by the contributions to this volume) the variety and diversity of approaches being taken. In all, over fifty-five presentations were made at the conference. The exhibit included display boards on built projects and organizations, photography, paintings, sculptures, videos, and poetry. These formal presentations and the numerous informal discussions that took place, some into the early hours of the morning, particularly in the campus housing where many participants were lodged, indicated that the conference was an unequivocal success in establishing



a dialogue between those working on this topic in the First and Third Worlds. Observing the more than two hundred people involved with the event was gratifying to the organizers. Immediately following the conference several participants reported that they had experienced the gathering as "empowering." They used words such as "inspiring," "exciting," and "important" to describe their involvement. Recent graduates of our program have written to me to say that their work on the conference was the most formative and challenging experience in their years here. From a pedagogic and consciousness-raising perspective, it seems clear that this conference was a significant undertaking. We hope that others like it will follow.

The quantity of presentations and the range and diversity of the case evidence made visible a critical mass of individuals working on this topic. The discussions brought to focus the idea that a gendered approach to the provision of shelter can help to bring about development for women. Besides enhancing our understanding of the substantive and conceptual terrain, they revealed strategies effective in furthering women's development through the provision of appropriate shelter. These proceedings reflect one of the major virtues of this particular conference, the many different perspectives. To acknowledge, indeed to celebrate, the diversity of views expressed at this gathering, this volume presents as many of the contributions as possible, reflecting our continuing commitment to maintain the inclusive nature of the conference. Contrasting and diverse ways of looking and thinking about the topic were given a forum for expression. As a result, the papers included here vary greatly in length, style, and intent. The authors range from entry-level graduate students to distinguished policy makers, professionals, and academics with many years of experience in related work. The consequence is some unevenness in substantive content and the academic apparatus provided in the various papers. Given the scarce resources (financial, time, and person power) available to bring this work to the point of publication, I had little recourse but to publish the papers more or less as the authors had submitted them. Despite the lack of total consistency in format or completeness of the citations, my hope is that this is a stimulating and useful contribution to this subject.

Editing has also been kept to a minimum to maintain the different voices of contributors. Two contributions, both from Africa, have been included, even though the authors were not at the conference. One (Scarnecchia) was unable to attend and the other (Oruwari) was denied a visa to enter the U.S.A. Some significant verbal

presentations, for which written papers were not submitted, were summarized from video recordings by the theme moderators. They have been presented as such under the theme moderators' authorship (Khan by Aliyar, Gillette and Snyder by Bergholz). All the sessions were videotaped to document the event, but there are no plans at present to edit these recordings.

In the interest of sharing information and facilitating networking, the conference program, a list of registered conference participants, and a list of books submitted by publishers and displayed in a book stall in the exhibit have been included in Appendices A, B, and C, respectively. The organizers of this conference believe that the discussion deserves to be continued. We therefore invite an other institution to take up this initiative and host a follow-up conference. The information and experience we obtained from our efforts in hosting this conference at the University of Michigan are available to help facilitate such an effort.

*Hemalata C. Dandekar*

Conference Chair

Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 1993

#### Note

1 The resulting exhibit took on a life of its own under the able guidance of two members of the architecture faculty, Professors Melissa Harris and Elizabeth Williams. By featuring projects and buildings, the exhibit complemented the conference and provided a unique view of the action and practice component of effort in this arena. The exhibit has been documented and received recognition elsewhere, including prestigious awards from *Interiors* (January, 1993) and the Association of the Collegiate Schools of Architecture. A list of contributors and the titles of their exhibits can be found in the conference program in Appendix A. A monograph documenting the exhibit and making the work accessible to policy makers, practitioners, academics, and designers is currently in progress.

## Acknowledgements

The University of Michigan co-sponsored this conference with two bodies of the United Nations: the United Nations Center for Human Settlements [UNCHS (Habitat)], and the United Nations Fund for Women and Development (UNIFEM). Further, UNCHS (Habitat) extended financial support toward the publication of this book. At the University of Michigan, an initial grant from the University Council on International Academic Affairs was followed by commitments from Dean Robert Beckley of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, which hosted the conference and provided facilities and staff support; the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies; the Office of the Vice President for Research; the Women's Studies Program; and the Office of the Vice Provost for Minority Affairs.

Ms. Sujata Shetty, a doctoral student in Urban and Regional Planning, was my right hand from the beginning, fundraising, proposal-writing, stage to the closing hours of the conference. Her efforts at making the event work, and her ability to handle stress cheerfully and constructively, were invaluable. The organization of the conference and accompanying exhibit were a collaborative effort that entailed the active involvement of many students and faculty. Too numerous to list here, some are identified under the heading "conference and exhibit organization" in the conference program in Appendix A. The substantive underpinnings of this conference would not have been as robust without these graduate students and faculty who shaped the thematic boundaries and organized the papers that were submitted. This made for cohesion within each theme. One of the blessings of serving as a faculty member for the last fourteen years at the College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan has been the privilege of working with talented and dedicated graduate students who have been drawn here from all over the world. On a research trip to Bombay last November, six months after the conference, I met some of the women who had participated. In various ways they asked, "Where do you get those students? We don't see them here even if they are Indian!" It is these students, their energy and enthusiasm, that made this conference a success. Involvement in this effort is yielding them significant professional and personal benefits, a great source of satisfaction to me.

The monumental tasks of editing, synthesizing, coordinating, standardizing for consistency, retyping, and cajoling, culminating in the publication of this volume, have also been shared. Two friends, Dr. Rudolf B. Schmerl, Director of Research Relations, the University

of Hawaii, and Ms. Janet Lineer, Associate Editor in the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan, promised and provided unconditional help in bringing this manuscript to press. I am very grateful to Dr. Schmerl for his untiring devotion to detailed and careful editorial help and amusing, sometimes caustic, but appropriate commentary on each manuscript. Janet Lineer has worked long and hard at the tedious task of typing or retyping, formatting, standardizing, and making this volume as consistent as possible. Dixie Farquharson, academic secretary in the College, helped in this task at critical junctures. William C. Manspeaker, computer consultant in the College, cheerfully and tirelessly transformed the manuscripts received on computer discs from all over the world, of all sizes and formats, using unknown or unspecified software, so that they were accessible on our machines.

Lynne Buchman, a graduate in Graphic Design from the School of Art at the University of Michigan, designed the cover and layout of this book, bringing style and elegance to the final product. Elizabeth Davenport of George Wahr Publishing Co. believed in this work, understood it, and gave it final shape and coherence. The help of these individuals has made these proceedings possible. My daughter Apurva, who is almost three years old now, has lived gracefully for most of her young life with a mother who has at times been distracted by this "Women and Shelter" undertaking. I am grateful to her for her tolerance. I hope that our collective efforts in this conference and with these proceedings will help to facilitate women's access to shelter, and thus to make life for women of Apurva's generation easier and better.

*Hemalata C. Dandekar*

Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 1993

