

## Chapter 24

### Women's Participation in the Production of Shelter

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Women represent 50% of the world's adult population and one-third of the official labor force. They perform nearly two-thirds of all working hours and receive only one-tenth of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's property. Women's participation in formulating policies, plans, and programs related to the construction sector, as well as women's participation in decision making and managing construction programs and projects, are far from being at a satisfactory level. The construction sector is one of the areas where women's involvement is marginal. Most of the countries that had statistics on the number of women in the construction industry indicated that women's involvement in this field is below 10%. The involvement of more women in the activities of the construction sector would improve output, as well as empower women with more choices and effectiveness in mainstream development activities, creating income-generating activities.

The construction sector makes significant contributions to the socio-economic development process in developing countries, employing a large proportion of a country's labor force and helping in the improvement or acquisition of skills. The sector also stimulates other sectors through economic multiplier effects. Therefore, women's exclusion from the sector is detrimental both to the sector and to women. Women's involvement in the construction sector would increase the available skilled and semi-skilled labor force and would also result in their involvement in the construction sector activities at every stage of construction (e.g., making policy decisions, planning, design implementation, and maintenance of buildings). Women's entrepreneurial roles would contribute to the small-scale industries in the construction sector.

However, women are ill-equipped for participating in the planning, decision-making and building of human settlements, not only because they lack training and education in the sector activities themselves, but also because they do not have the kind of basic education and training that would be necessary to acquire shelter. Women in developing countries usually have two sets of handicaps in participating in the planning, decision making, and building of human settlements. They lack basic knowledge, such as literacy and mathematics, necessary for access to information about housing markets, eligibility for loans, and opportunities in community participation. Second, women lack the education and training to have an active role in the design, planning, management, operation, and construction of human settlements. The solutions are to provide basic education to women and facilitate their participa-

tion in training programs in the construction sector and to create incentives for women to be involved in the planning, design, and management of human settlements.

Women's access to employment, income, and services is directly affected by their involvement in the planning and execution of national policies, as well as women's management and participation in local government, housing, and real estate. Even in developed countries with relatively strong institutional frameworks to ensure women's advancement, women's participation in sectoral decisionmaking has been weak. Although today there is a stronger trend for women's participation in the construction sector than ever before, the weakest area is still in decision making and political decisions. Women's professional representation is low in housing cooperation and grassroots organizations. Even if women are in a clear majority as cooperative members and on committees, they tend to be underrepresented in executive positions.

Usually, there is a strong grassroots participation of women, thinning out at managerial and bureaucratic levels, in improvement of housing. The number of women entering the human settlements sector is traditionally low. Even though there is an increase in many countries, however, women continue to confront difficulties and are pushed into low-paid, low-prestige jobs. There is a tendency to steer women away from building design or decision making positions into interiors, public relations, programming, planning, public sector, and even teaching, whereas positions related to decision-making still remain with men. Men appear to hold absolute domination over administrative and managerial positions and are reluctant to entrust women with power or to promote them.

### **Women's Role in the Informal Construction Sector**

As women are usually unable to gain high-level formal sector employment, they turn to the informal sector. The informal construction and real estate sector forms an important part of human settlements activity in most developing countries. Small-scale contractors, craftsmen, apprentices, unskilled laborers, building materials producers, building materials suppliers, real estate agents, and landlords contribute to the human settlements sector considerably. This is especially true in developing countries where about 60–70% of the urban population live as squatters and 30–50% of housing

stock is in squatters' settlements. One can see that the informal construction sector is as important and strong as the formal one. So one can see the tremendous potential that exists for women in the construction sector. The informal sector is a basis for developing an indigenous construction industry in these countries. There is an enormous potential for expanding production and opening up entrepreneurial roles for women. In some countries, such as Ghana, women play an important role as entrepreneurs, contractors, and owners of plants. Women can invest their savings in these areas, if the informal sector is supported and if such supportive action is directed equally to women and men by:

- Strengthening organizational and managerial capabilities of informal enterprises and promoting relevant skills among women;
- Providing legislative support for the strengthening or establishment of financial institutions, such as credit agencies, cooperatives and building societies, where women can participate on an equal footing with men;
- Providing credit facilities and promoting saving schemes giving equal access to women and men;
- Providing non-financial assistance through training and communications directed to both women and men;
- Promoting self-help programs which aim at facilitating women's participation at all levels; and
- Awarding subcontracts to informal-sector contractors, craftspersons, and others, and using informal-sector products, when appropriate, in government-sponsored projects.

Strengthening the informal sector would help women to get access to income-generating activities within the sector and enhance women's access to formal and informal sector jobs in other non-traditional fields. In many countries, women take an active part in construction and, in some, they help in the preparation of mud bricks and other construction materials. Though it is rare for women to get into income-generating activities, many of them are now helping to produce building materials. In Mexico, a factory assisted by the Inter-American Foundation drew two-thirds of its workforce from women. Projects in Jamaica and Brazil have trained women in metalwork and welding, to produce furnishings and equipment such as show stalls and shelving. A woman in Honduras owns and operates a floor-tile factory. Women have also been involved in the production of building blocks in several countries. In Mombasa, Kenya, women have, on their own initiative, set up a cooperative to make concrete blocks.

The entrepreneurial capacity of women involved in construction is sometimes expressed through women's groups. For instance, Ogago Usafi Women's Group in Kisii, Kenya, is a rural building group that formed in 1984 to initiate income-generating activities by growing maize and beans on rented land and by contracting out labor. Later, the group decided to start a brick-making business and, after trial and error, sent one member for training who then taught others. After 20 months, the group had made and sold about 25,000 bricks. The members have also learned how to build houses for themselves, using a team of about 20 women who volunteer their time. They have found that a house can be nearly completed in a day, if detailed preparation has been done. In their first 20 months, they constructed 66 houses. With the initiative of the Council for Human Ecology, Kenya, a women's cooperative was established to make sun-dried, cement-stabilized bricks. To this end, the Kenya Ministry of Culture and Social Services trained 60 women who started their production by using locally made equipment. The Kabiro women's group in Nairobi is having problems in their block-producing unit due to insufficient land; however, Dandorra women's group is running a profitable building-block production unit.

In Zimbabwe, the rural brick-making industry is dominated by women. This was a result of the post-independence, school-building program which required labor to be mobilized to meet the target for schools in Zimbabwe. Since women were required for the construction of buildings and were the traditional clay workers, it was obvious that they should be employed in the production of bricks. They have since continued developing this industry. Other examples of women in the production of building materials are to be found in Malawi and Mozambique. In Malawi, women have been given the opportunity to learn how to produce fiber-concrete tiles, and some women who have been involved in this scheme have expressed interest in setting up their own businesses, though this has not yet happened. In Mozambique, a series of carpentry and ceramics cooperatives, six in total, involve a large number of women in the making of clay tiles and bricks. In small-scale production units, women and even children play an important role in the production line. There is also a great potential for women to play an entrepreneurial role in building materials, owing to the low investment needed in small-scale production. The exclusion of women from the many skilled occupations in the construction sector not only discriminates against women but also is against the interests of the industry itself. There are examples of women taking positive

action to secure appropriate training and skilled positions within the construction industry. These demonstrate the potential for women in the industry throughout the world.

### **Women's Role in the Formal Construction Sector**

Constraints that hinder women's participation in the formal labor force of the construction sector are, to a large extent, similar to those they face in other mainstream sectors. Limited access to training and education is one of the main constraints to women's involvement in the construction sector, and labor regulations are often used as an excuse for excluding women, although, in reality, women are well used to heavy manual labor, and women in developing countries often carry out hard, unskilled labor for low pay. Certainly, this is no argument against their equal participation in light, technically skilled, and well-paid artisan jobs in the sector.

In Jamaica, a training project was established to equip women to participate in the construction industry. A small-scale training and employment project, focusing on the construction industry, was designed to meet identified needs of the industry and specific job openings. At the beginning of the project, 10 women were trained, and there were commitments from contractors to place them on sites on a trial basis on completion of their training. Every woman who pursued these openings was hired. The group was then extended to 34 women from different communities, with national and international support. At the end of the course, more than 90% of the women trained had been placed in such jobs as plumbing, masonry, carpentry, electrical installation, painting, and steelwork erection. By achieving these skills, women increased their earnings, and the construction industry benefited from the skills generated. Employers were happy with the women's performance and reported reduced violence and pilferage on site and increased productivity, indicating the positive influence of women on the building sites.

The Women in Construction Advisory Group (WICAG) in the U.K. works in consultation with employers, trades unions, policymakers, and training bodies to increase jobs and training opportunities for women in craft and technical jobs. WICAG was set up in 1984 by groups working on women's employment issues, tradeswomen, women trades trainers, and trades union officials. The group felt that an independent project was required, first to examine the underrepresentation of women in craft



and technical jobs, and secondly to work with mainstream industries to bring about changes that tradeswomen themselves have largely initiated.

WICAG provides information, resources, and advice to employers, training agencies, education authorities, community groups, career services, trade unions, and women.

WICAG is contacting schools to encourage girls to take up relevant scientific and technical subjects and to learn manual skills. Local building colleges and employers who take trainees from these colleges are contacted so that "positive action" may be offered to young women to "unlock the doors." A number of women-only training centers, providing courses in electricity, plumbing, plastering, bricklaying, carpentry, joinery, painting, and decorating have been evidence of the considerable numbers of women from all different groups who want to learn these trades. WICAG works with employers in the construction industry to convince them that women can do the jobs in the industry, to discuss with them issues of particular concern with respect to hiring women, to explain the many indirect ways in which existing recruitment practice discriminates on the basis of gender and race, and to suggest "positive action" that would increase the number of female applicants. As a result, employers are now advising WICAG of vacancies, and some changes in recruitment practices have already taken place.

The Non-traditional Employment for Women (NEW) group was set up in 1979 to help poor women find economic self-sufficiency through work in construction and other blue collar trades. NEW trains 300 women each year in blue-collar trades such as construction, building maintenance, and air-conditioning. Trainees have become sheet-metal workers, carpenters, plumbers, ironworkers, electricians, painters, and lathe-operators, and they work with railways, public utilities, housing authorities, and private contractors. In NEW's twelve-week, pre-apprenticeship course, women study mathematics, shopwork, tool usage, drawing interpretation, and physical fitness, and they are instructed in civil rights and legal matters so as to prepare them for any challenges they might meet on the job. There is also a program for high-school girls to educate them about the range of career opportunities open to them. A special literacy and self-sufficiency program concentrates on low-income and single mothers. NEW maintains a computerized job bank to help graduates find positions on construction projects. The construction industry is particularly prejudiced against women, and many graduates suffer on-the-job harassment and discrimina-

tion. Nevertheless, NEW has been able to find a job for every woman who has graduated.

A training program for Caribbean women in non-traditional skills was launched to provide an orientation for women in plumbing, refrigeration, and electrical installation that would allow them to assess whether they wanted to pursue long-term training in those areas. Eighteen young women between the ages of 18 and 25 participated: 14 from Grenada and 4 from Dominica and Saint Vincent. After the assessment, a special two-year accelerated program was planned for the Grenada participants, most of whom did not have the initial academic qualifications to enter the regular program at the Grenada Technical and Vocational Institute (GTVI). They did, however, have the potential to complete the entire technical training, and graduates will receive the normal GTVI diploma. Programs for women in non-traditional fields are being started in other Caribbean countries and are benefiting from direct contact with the Grenada program. In Dominica, participants are being helped to undertake apprenticeship programs that will qualify them to enter the technical college if they wish.

### **Increasing Women's Participation in the Construction Sector**

There are also many successful projects helping women to get access to housing. Technical cooperation projects undertaken by UNCHS (Habitat) often contain components assisting women, training components involving women, and women as active participants and often counterparts. An example is the low-income housing project in Zimbabwe which consists of two pilot projects in KweKwe and Gutu. These pilot projects are being jointly implemented by the communities and the local authorities in the two respective urban and rural areas, together with the Ministry of Construction and National Housing of Zimbabwe, with technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme and UNCHS (Habitat) and capital cost funding from the United States Agency for International Development and the Beverly Building Society. One of the immediate objectives of these projects is to test and monitor new methods of organization in aided, self-help cooperative and communal efforts, including building teams which enable the beneficiaries to be involved closely in the achievement of their own housing solutions. Women in these projects gained experience in community participation, learned how to set up and manage credit facilities, participated in the design and construction of their homes, and availed themselves of employment opportunities in and around the project areas. The value of

women's initiative was shown further in their setting up of a women-headed housing cooperative. Further, women built the houses more speedily than men, who found time to build only when off duty and on weekends (women household heads often took advantage of the building teams to construct their homes).

Women, either as household heads or as part of a family, formed significant target groups. In these pilot projects, housing allocation criteria were designed to consider heads of household regardless of sex. In these projects, 36% (Gutu) and 20% (KweKwe) are women household heads (separated, divorced, deserted, widowed, and single). All are either wage earners or self-employed and support their families with very meager earnings. The pilot projects clearly demonstrate that, with appropriate training and information programs, women heads of household and female spouses can contribute significantly toward successful housing project implementation and management. After the selection and verification of the project's beneficiaries, one-day weekend workshops on the housing process were organized both in KweKwe and Gutu for groups of 50 families each (these workshops were used to highlight such topics as community participation, house designs, construction methods, building materials stores, administrative structures, and financial arrangements). In most cases, the majority of workshop participants were women who not only took an active part in the workshop but also demonstrated their concern for adequate shelter for their families. They voiced doubts and raised questions of interest to them (e.g., concerning loan repayment through a building society). Some of the women showed community leadership qualities and later became prime movers in aided, self-help, and cooperative modes of construction.

Women also played a significant role in the planning, design, and construction of homes. After being allocated plots, they were helped to choose their house plans from among the alternatives available or to design plans of their own. They proposed changes and amendments to suit the circumstances of their families. The project's beneficiaries were provided with a choice of the method of construction either through aided self-help, housing cooperatives, or building brigades. The majority of women heads of household chose the aided, self-help method. Thirteen of them, together with one male household head, formed the first housing cooperative in Gutu, the Masimba Evanhu Housing Cooperative. It has a woman chairperson who took the leadership role to mobilize the group. Most of the members are self-employed vegetable sellers in the nearby market, and

one of them is a 70-year-old widow who now has her first house in Gutu. As of January, 1985, they had completed eight houses, with others at various stages of construction. The actual work is done by labor which they hire and supervise, each contributing Z\$10 each month to the cooperative.

Regardless of the mode of construction, project beneficiaries were given loans in the form of building materials from a central stores building on the site. Since the stores operated seven days a week, the women heads of household and spouses played a major role in the procurement and delivery of materials to their plots. It was a common sight to see women with their babies carried on their backs transporting materials in wheelbarrows, in the tractor/trailers provided by the project, or by hand. Women also took on responsibility in supervising and managing the construction of their houses. When men were employed elsewhere, the women would do the work themselves. During weekends, construction became a family responsibility, with men, women and children living and eating in a temporary shelter while their homes were being built.

Not only were women involved directly and indirectly in the day-to-day construction, management, and maintenance of their houses, they were also employed in various income-generating activities both within and outside the settlements. Women who were actively involved in the construction of houses (mixing concrete and laying the blocks, for instance) acquired new skills from the project. They in turn were hired by other aided, self-help builders and thus supplemented their incomes. The project also offered on-the-job training for two women who did their final field assignments as potential social workers there. Among the project staff are a female development officer and a woman architect. This has been a satisfactory example of the involvement of women in UNCHS (Habitat) technical cooperation projects, many of which deal in part with the integration of women in human settlements development, taking into account their needs and upgrading and making use of their skills. The project showed women participating at different stages in the provision of shelter in different capacities without any additional cost to the project, proving that involvement of women in human settlements development can be an organizational issue rather than a financial one.

In Zimbabwe, the women could choose among different types of construction possibilities (aided self-help, building brigades, etc.). In some cases, only possibilities of aided self-help are considered for women, as in

Panama. The Women's Self-Help Construction Project (WSHOP) of Panama had the goal of constructing 100 houses in San Miguelito, a neighborhood adjacent to Panama City. The project was to be built entirely by women living in slums who had no experience in construction. Fifty houses were completed in 1982. Women had low incomes, low education levels, and high unemployment rates. Forty-five percent of women were heads of households. Short-term training courses for masonry, plumbing, and carpentry were organized. The project supervision and the materials for construction of the houses were provided. Among those households in the project, 45% were headed by women, 35% by men, and 20% by women and men jointly. In households headed by women, 41% of women were not working, 33% were community workers, and the rest were involved in several jobs. The women could cope with the construction work with the help of other members of the family; usually the older children help in domestic activities. The project contributed to the construction skills in the community, although none of the women used their skills again. Living conditions improved, as did commitment to a better neighborhood. However, it is questionable whether such a project should have been carried out only by women versus providing complete equality with men, with emphasis on women's problems. Time was spent on acquiring construction skills that were not used again. Providing training in construction skills would be more useful if that led to continuous income. The training prepared the women to expand their houses and take care of the units, to organize a construction cooperative, and to work as independent contractors on small construction jobs. Only those women who specialized in plumbing and carpentry were interested in applying their skills to generate income in cooperatives or as independent contractors. Women trained in masonry found construction work tiring.

In the traditional societies of Africa, women play a very important role in constructing buildings, e.g., in Dagombas, Mambrusis, and Konkombas in Ghana. Women begin building after celebrating the usual ritual on the chosen site by weeding and sweeping the ground and watering it. After the men complete the walls and roof construction, women plaster in and outside of the buildings, lay and beat the floor, and apply decorative finishes to the walls in the form of incised patterns. In Ghana, women have developed high artistic skills in decorating finished walls. These examples show that women are very successful in the construction sector. The problem is that usually they are not allowed to be involved in jobs requiring any skills. But when they are

involved in jobs requiring skills, they have a very high performance.

Women's access to the construction sector can be achieved through the promotion of women's cooperatives and providing means of finance to women in human settlements activities. Making a special effort to incorporate women is the key issue for women's access to housing and their involvement in the construction sector. Access to credit is important and usually difficult for women to obtain, whether they live in rural or urban areas. Self-help programs through cooperatives and similar thrift institutions are worth supporting by the public sector, but usually are not adequate to meet the demand. Private lending institutions, public information campaigns, and guaranteed loans could be needed. Facilitating access to credit involves adding flexibility to the criteria used to make decisions about credit, and removing some of the arbitrary legal/institutional discriminatory barriers to approving credits to women who head households. Innovative approaches to keeping the cost of credit affordable, thus increasing the probability of cost recovery for the creditor and decreasing the chance of default for the person receiving the loan, are needed.

Cooperative banks geared to women's needs can be one solution for solving women's housing problems, providing institutional infrastructure to commercial banks. They participate in serving the self-employed, providing custody of the cash women receive as loans, aiding in promoting individual and cooperative purchasing, processing and marketing, managing women's savings and the repayment of loans, conducting training programs in the banking habit, and providing social security to members in housing.

Collaboration is needed among researchers, women's organizations, and NGOs in a plan of action concerning women and shelter construction, including: campaigns for changes in social attitudes and public policy, development of technical courses in building for women, promotion of self-help, low-income housing schemes that include infrastructural support, and recognition of the need for full participation of women. Programs should focus on women's interest in entering non-traditional fields and should initiate training programs, keeping in mind lessons learned from others' experiences.

1. The market should be assessed for the need or local demand for certain skills and potential job opportunities.



2. Adequate time should be allowed for pre-planning and preparation to clarify objectives and assess available human and material resources.
3. Thorough screening of participants, taking into account their level of education and paying attention to upgrading female trainees' competence in mathematics and basic science skills to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.
4. Begin with an orientation program for potential trainees to help them understand what will be expected of them during the training program.
5. Sensitize tutors to the situation/needs and learning styles of women trainees, as well as the interrelatedness of the various skills being taught.
6. In addition to basic theory, include appropriate tools for "hands-on" experience, as well as a personal development component to foster self-confidence and group cohesion and to cope with attitudes that trainees are likely to face in society.
7. Pay particular attention to the needs of trainees who have children, so that their participation is not constrained by their domestic responsibilities.
8. Ensure that the program design includes exposure to role models of local tradeswomen, as well as audio-visual presentations by women working in different fields in the region.
9. Contact governmental and private agencies to get their commitment for apprenticeship and job opportunities for trainees.
10. Document the training experience, particularly the factors that promote or inhibit women's participation, and disseminate to authorities and other groups interested in promoting such programs.

Governments should take measures to incorporate women in general adult education programs; specific classes for women's groups in locations accessible to them with child-care facilities, as needed, would be appropriate. NGOs and community groups should pressure authorities to look at the needs of poor women, promote cooperatives or building groups based on existing communities, and promote building materials, products, and industries based on local natural resources.

### **International Seminars on Women and Shelter**

Since the World Conference on Women in 1985, the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat), which has always placed housing policies and programs in the context of national development plans, has been actively engaged in the promotion of women both as beneficiaries and as agents of change in the area of

human settlements. One of the Center's first follow-up activities after the World Conference was an international seminar on women and shelter, organized jointly by the Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs/Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat). That Seminar, held in December, 1985, in Vienna, brought together representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations for women from many countries of the world.

The purpose of the Seminar was to familiarize women's organizations with key issues of settlements management. It was felt that, through familiarization with mainstream development issues, women's organizations could formulate proposals related to them for inclusion in a national agenda for action. At the end of the Seminar, the participants had an increased appreciation of the broad scope of settlements, but felt that, to achieve the greatest impact, it was not enough for women's organizations alone to be made aware of the issues; policy-makers in the settlements sector also had to be familiar with women's perspectives on housing and residential environments. It was stressed that only through joint collaborative efforts could realistic and practical national plans of action evolve. The Commission on Human Settlements, at its ninth session in 1986, recommended regional or subregional seminars to exchange experiences on pilot projects and to define and evaluate the role of women and the organizations that represent them. As a result, work intensified to promote the role of women in the management of settlements. In addition to the resources of the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat), funding required for regional seminars was received from the Governments of The Netherlands and of Norway. The following regional and subregional seminars were organized by the Center and the respective host countries in 1988 and 1989:

1. Asia and the Pacific: 24-29 February 1988 in Indonesia;
2. French-speaking African countries: 28 March-1 April 1988 in Tunisia;
3. Caribbean countries: 6-10 June 1988 in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines;
4. English-speaking African countries: 31 October-4 November 1988 in Zambia; and
5. Latin American countries: 27-31 March 1989 in Argentina.

The participants, who were drawn from governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as from

donor agencies, were all involved in human settlements activities, particularly those concerning women. The objectives of the seminars were:

1. To provide policy and procedural guidance to high-level policymakers in such ministries as housing, public works, and industry on the incorporation of women's concerns in their programs;
2. To provide technical information to representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations on means of ensuring the effective participation of women in human settlements development and management, with particular emphasis on community participation;
3. To facilitate the identification of special problems concerning the participation of women in settlements development and management;
4. To enhance communication and cooperation between institutions dealing with issues concerning women and those dealing with mainstream sectoral development issues;
5. To create a readiness in institutions to support policies, programs, and projects to mobilize the participation of women in the development and upgrading of settlements;
6. To discuss the effectiveness of different communication and information technologies in promoting gender awareness in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, and projects; and
7. To develop national advocacy strategies for the continuous promotion of the involvement of women in the development and management of settlements.

The following key issues were deliberated upon at each regional seminar:

1. The role of women in the formulation and implementation of housing policies;
2. Women and land;
3. The participation of women in housing finance;
4. The participation of women in the construction sector;
5. The participation of women in shelter projects;
6. Women, water and sanitation;
7. Community participation as a means of enhancing the role of women in the development and management of settlements; and
8. Communications and information as instruments to enhance the participation of women in the development and management of settlements.

The Interregional Seminar to Promote the Full Participation of Women in all phases of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 was convened to give further impetus to the process begun by the earlier series of seminars. The participants (governmental and non-

governmental), observers, resource personnel, and donors were drawn from each of the five earlier seminars. The Seminar built on regional experiences to develop a plan of action for the continuation of the process which the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat) had initiated, intended to achieve the following long-term development objectives:

1. To involve women at all levels of the planning and implementation of human settlements policies and programs; and
2. To improve the residential/work environment of women, especially urban and rural low-income women, their families, and communities.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The women in the human settlements development program are now taking a new form with the support of Danida, Global Training Program for Community Participation in Improving Human Settlements, and Strengthening Community Participation in the Development and Operation of Facilities and Services. Both these programs actively support the mainstreaming of women and gender issues. Therefore, emphasis has been given to women's participation and a gender-aware attitude in their activities. The joint FINNIDA/UNCHS project for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national shelter strategy in Uganda is also aware of the need to support the empowerment of women and has specifically asked a consultant to pinpoint women's particular interests and needs so as to include them in the elaboration of the strategy.

UNCHS (Habitat) has a program in the pipeline, entitled Training and Capacity-Building for Women's Groups in Shelter and Shelter-Related Services. A collective effort with UNIFEM, it will be in Indonesia and in Sri Lanka. UNCHS (Habitat) activities and outputs planned for 1992 include:

1. A poster on women, human settlements, and sustainable habitats for International Women's Day on 8 March 1992;
2. A flyer, "Why focus on women?"
3. A video on gender-aware, community-oriented, and environmentally sound approaches to human settlements development;
4. An *ad hoc* Expert Group Meeting on progress achieved to date on women's full participation in the Global Strategy for Shelter (in Africa);
5. A workshop on women and sustainable habitats (in Latin America); and



6. A workshop on regional policy and consultation and gender awareness (in Asia).

We can summarize the approach by saying that women should participate in decision making and in management of construction programs. Training must take account of women's special needs to facilitate their full participation in building work. Women should be encouraged to be involved in income-generating activities in the informal construction sector either as entrepreneurs, contractors, or building materials producers. Appropriate technologies that would promote the fullest and most economic development of local resources of material and labor within overall development objectives should be used, incorporating women in their application and serving women. Building standards should be based on minimum health and safety requirements with particular reference to needs of women and children; standard designs and construction manuals should be elaborated, keeping in view the requirements of women.

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