

GENDER ISSUE GUIDE

GENDER RESPONSIVE URBAN BASIC SERVICES



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Gender Issue Guide: Gender Responsive Urban Basic Services

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Unidentified people waiting for a subway train
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Background

Gender is the way human society deals with male and female bodies. That dealing has many consequences for the lives of women, men, girls and boys.

Gender refers to cultural interpretation and prescription of roles, identities and values assigned to women, men, girls, and boys.

Gender is highly variable across cultures, socially constructed and subject to changes over time. Gender further defines the unequal conditions between women and men. In most societies to be a woman is to be more disadvantaged: with less power, fewer rights and privileges relative to men.

This issue guide focuses attention on urban basic services in order to illuminate the effects of gender on equality of access and inclusion in the areas of urban energy, urban transport and water and sanitation. This issue guide further seeks to broadly outline the where and how of gender responsive interventions in order to strengthen planned and future actions that can go a long way to reduce poverty and overcome obstacles to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender equality means availing similar opportunities to both women and men.

Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and potential to engage in and contribute to political, economic, social and cultural development and to benefit from the outcomes.

Working towards gender equality does not mean treating women and men in the same way.

Gender equity is the process of carrying out the different measures that may be needed for women and men to achieve gender equality. Gender equity is therefore the course of actions that are undertaken to ensure fairness to women and men. For example, such actions may include reviewing and transforming policies and activities in order to take account of women's caring and domestic work so that these tasks are not a barrier to their engagement in the public sphere (UN-Habitat "Gender in Local Government-A Source Book for Trainers" page 19).

Energy, transport and water and sanitation are essential services that support the right to a standard of living crucial for adequate for health, nutrition, safety and well-being. When these basic services are costly, of poor quality, unavailable or inaccessible there is a harmful impact on all poor women, girls, boys and men. However, there is greater negative impact on women and girls than on boys and men. This is often because these basic services are especially important for women and girls given their primary gender roles and responsibilities as mothers, house workers and care givers.

Gender analysis has been an effective method for understanding the above realities of women, men, girls and boys.

Gender analysis is a research and planning method, and is thus a crucial means to assessing and ensuring that resources are being invested for the benefit of all women, men, boys and girls. Several tools are available to assist in gender analysis. However **sex and age disaggregated data** will be essential for a deeper analysis and understanding. Gender analysis provides the vital information that can be applied to expansion and management of water and sanitation facilities, the development of urban energy or to the understanding of mobility and planning of transportation.

Utilising the strategy of **gender mainstreaming** institutions will then be able to respond adequately with explicit benefits to both women and men. Gender

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