

Sustainable Urban Development and Differential Gender in Rondônia (Brazil)

SAIKAT GOGHHAIT
Sambalpur University
India

P.C TRIPATHY
Sambalpur University
India

FABRÍCIO MORAES DE ALMEIDA
Federal University of Rondonia
Porto Velho, Rondonia
Brazil

Abstract:

After establishing the importance of considering gender issues in urban discourse, this paper examines urban development and sustainability from a gender perspective. A gender analysis of key environmental and development issues is done to identify disparities and inequalities. Issues examined include poverty, employment and access to resources. It was discovered that contemporary trends in urban planning and development reflect the male perspective regarding the role of women as primary caregivers. While gender differentials, especially with regards to employment and access to resources tend to favor the male, effects of urbanization are not gender-specific, as both men and women live in and suffer the consequences of dire urban life. Contrary to what has been found in other countries, public spending with work and social policies is concentrated in the elites and, taken as a whole, tends to increase inequality. Redistributive mechanisms that could reverse this inequality, such as taxes and social assistance, are very progressive but proportionally small; consequently their effect is completely offset by the regressive income flows from the State. The paper concludes by advancing principles that can inform urban planning policies in the process of redesigning and redeveloping urban areas in Rondônia (Brazil) to be

more gender-sensitive and inclusive.

Key words: Urbanization, Gender, Economic development, Inequality

1. Introduction

Rondônia's GDP is growing at Chinese rates, especially because of the investments in the electrical sector. Rondônia is the only state of the Northern region of Brazil where the GDP of the interior is greater than the GDP of the capital. Rondônia had a population of 36,935 people in 1950, the population increased to 888,430 in 1980. But most migrants did not get any land upon the arrival in Rondônia and the local indigenous population often lost the land that they already possessed. The state of Rondônia appears to be part of the land policy of the Brazilian state, by the increasing expansion of big landlords, by the destruction of Amazon forest.

This expansion of landlords front is the major cause of the agrarian conflicts. So the study raises the key issues on the exclusion from landownership for Rondônia population creating unemployment and poverty. Guajará-Mirim, situated in the state of Rondônia, and borders the city of Guayaramirim in Bolivia. It covers an area of 82.5 square kilometers, including the urban perimeter of Guajará-Mirim, in northeastern Rondônia. Gender roles and relations to a large extent shape the process of urbanization. The growth of cities and towns causes social, economic and environmental changes that often go beyond city boundaries. (Dankelman 2003).

Economists and policy makers have, for a long time, accepted that economic growth will typically be accompanied by a certain level of inequality. As such, inequality has been viewed as a side-effect of the development process, and not necessarily a negative one. As a consequence, inequality is seldom perceived as a problem on its own and is usually

analysed in conjunction with concerns over poverty and general welfare. However, persistently high levels of inequality have a negative effect on the prospects for economic growth and are associated with forms of social and economic exclusion. Large evidence has shown that countries with high levels of inequality achieve significantly lower economic growth (see for instance Datt and Ravallion 1992). In the specific case of Latin America, Hanmer et al. (1999) have shown that if the levels of inequality do not decrease, the region will have to pursue much higher economic growth rates in order to halve poverty by 2015. In addition, high levels of inequality will imperil social cohesion as they may lead to increases in crime and other forms of social and political conflict. These, in turn, create insecurity and distrust amongst economic agents, which poses a further risk to economic growth and social development.

Even though there are different perspectives to development, there is a general consensus that development will lead to good change manifested in increased capacity of people to have control over material assets, resources and other physical necessities of life. Gender-sensitive approaches to sustainable development should therefore be an integral part of urban policy, programming and practice. UNCSW (1994). Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). Sustainable development combines economic development, social development, and environmental protection with full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. (UN-Habitat 2005).

In order to address the issues of poverty and sustainability on a global scale, The Millennium Declaration was adopted by the member countries of the United Nations in September 2000. They agreed on a set of international development targets, designed to help create a better world. Consequently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

were put forward. Nigeria is a signatory to the Millennium Declaration and has a responsibility to implement the MDGs locally. Goal three focuses on the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment.

Gender interactions between humans and their physical environments, with particular attention to the environmental, economic, social, cultural, and human biological changes that are associated with development are at the root of sustainable development. Gender differentials in the ownership and control of natural resources; dependence on the physical environment for livelihood, security and other needs; exposure to environmental contaminants are usually highlighted and will form the focus of this paper.

Various scholars have studied the challenges of gender perspectives to urban sustainability and development in Rondônia. They include Okoko and Olanrewaju (2000) who focused on women organizations and urban poverty reduction in Akure; and Afonja, Mills Tettey and Amole (2002) who studied gender differentials in access to land and housing in Ibadan;. Others include Coulter (1997), Akinbamijo (2000), Ulloa (2001), Randriamaro (2002), Soetan (2003) and Nwokoro(2006).

2. Theoretical Aspects

The below theoretical aspects and their connections are presented.

2.1. Why Consider Gender?

The term "gender" refers to economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. (UN-Habitat (2003). In almost all societies, women and men differ in their activities and undertakings, regarding access to and control over resources, and participating in decision-making. Riley (1997) identified gender as a social institution, cultural construct and power tool.

There is a danger to confuse "gender" with "women". Sen (1999) posited that the concept of gender is not limited to the male or female species, but goes further to assess the relations between them. As are constantly being renegotiated in the context of changing political, economic, social and cultural environments at the local, national and supra national levels.

Gender analysis entails having knowledge of both women and men's roles and responsibilities, as it is the comparative analysis between these that will highlight the gender inequalities of any society. Gender inequality does not imply that all women are worse than all men. Rather, gender (being male or female) is an important social division characterized by inequality. Being a woman or a man influences people's perspectives and their social expectations.

Gender equality according to the Canada –Ukraine Gender Fund (2004) means that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social, and cultural development, and to benefit from the results. The concept of gender equality acknowledges that different treatment of women and men sometimes required to achieve sameness of results, because of different life conditions or to compensate for past discrimination.

UN-Habitat (2003) states that gender analysis must take into consideration and address differentials in control over and access to land and other resources, inequalities in gender participation and roles in decision-making forums as well as inequalities in representation concerning urban planning and development. According to Akinbami (2000) sustainability can only be achieved when the gender manipulations and ecosystem relationships within the local environment are identified. The collection of gender-differentiated information on the social, environmental, technical and economic aspects of development will render planning for development more efficient and egalitarian, two points which are essential for sustainability.

Among the benefits which derive from integrating gender issues include enhanced social and economic impact of development and more efficient use of resources. Table 1 depicts the majority of the states of the north, Rondônia achieved a lesser fall in inequality than the average in the Brazil.

State	1995-2009	2003-2009
Rondônia (Brazil)	-12.6%	-0.6%

Table 1: Gini index in Rondônia and other indicators for 2009.

Font: PNAD and Ipeadata, 2009.

Table 2 points to several patterns of interaction between poverty and inequality in Rondônia to be illustrated. More important still, the poor population of each part of the country is associated with different patterns of inequality, having different possibilities of social mobility, since the territories are intertwined in a more or less dynamic way with the expansion of the domestic market. The greater the regional and local inequality, the lower the possibility of escaping poverty through traditional mechanisms: income transfer and generation of formal employment.

	Diff. 10 % rich and poor	Diff. 20 % rich and poor	Poverty rate	Number of poor people
Rondônia (Brazil)	36.2	15.6	23.5	351,858

Table 2: PNAD and IPEAdata 2009.

Font: PNAD and IPEAdata, 2009.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (2001) listed the benefits of taking gender concerns into consideration in the design, implementation and review of development programmes as:

- i. Enhanced social and economic impact: Sustainable development depends on integrating environmental, technical and economic considerations with social

and cultural aspects. The active participation of women and men in gathering information differentiated by gender, and the analysis of this information will lead to a more positive social impact. Economic impacts will also be reinforced because the possibilities for consolidating and increasing income related to natural resources will take into account income-generating activities carried out by both women and men.

- ii. Increasing possibilities for successful action: Planning that takes into account gender-based division of labor and gender-based access to resources and control of resources will result in development initiatives based on more complete information. Furthermore, planning based on the full range of social, economic, technical and environmental issues opens up the opportunity for greater exchange of ideas and approaches among the different sectors.
- iii. More efficient use of resources: Taking into account social, environmental, technical and economic considerations will ensure that development activities make better use of often increasingly diminishing resources available. Involving groups and individuals not normally party to planning and decision-making can often lead to gathering information which might not be gained otherwise, better targeting of a variety of beneficiary groups, and narrowing the gap between rich and poor .
- iv. Tapping local knowledge: Tapping the respective knowledge of women and men regarding the management and conservation of natural resources and biological diversity increases the possibilities of successful programmes. Thanks to the collection of gender-differentiated data for planning and

management, it is possible to guarantee that this invaluable source of local technical knowledge is fully utilized.

2.2. Environment and the Gender

The rapid growth of cities and towns is taking place in the context of a deteriorating urban environment. Environmental degradation includes industrial pollution and poor working conditions, as well as the so-called "brown agenda": environmental problems associated with traffic congestion, poor and contaminated water supply; inadequate sanitation, sewerage and drainage; and deficiencies in solid waste management. The urban poor are particularly affected, since they often form neighborhoods in areas that are unsuited to human settlement, such as hillsides, garbage dumps and swampy areas and on lots near sources of industrial pollution. (WEDO Primer 2001)

The critical relationship between gender and natural resources draws its strength from the socially created roles and responsibilities that continue to fall to women in households, communities and ecosystems throughout the world. Women experience everyday life differently than men. Traditional gender roles corner women into juggling multiple responsibilities in the home, at the workplace and in the community (Blumberg 1984). As a result women have a unique knowledge of the environment and the importance of sustainability. Women have primary responsibility for rearing children, and for ensuring sufficient resources to meet children's needs for nutrition, health care and schooling. In developing countries, they are also the main managers of essential household resources like clean water, fuel for cooking and heating and fodder for domestic animals.

Given the variety of women's daily interactions with the environment, they are the most keenly affected by its degradation. Degraded environments mean that women must

spend more time and effort to find fuel or produce food for meeting household needs and ensuring family health. Women, to a large extent, also bear the consequences of environmental policies that ignore the principles of sustainability. Deforestation and water contamination increases the time women must spend seeking fuel wood or safe, clean water, and increase their risk of water-borne disease. Soil erosion, water shortage and crop failures reduce harvest yields; soil exhausted from over-use reduces the productivity of household gardens.

Toxic chemicals and pesticides in air, water and earth are responsible for a variety of women's health risks. They enter body tissues and breast milk, through which they are passed on to infants. In urban settings in particular, air and water pollution can be extreme, and sanitation and waste treatment poor or non-existent, presenting new threats to health, particularly for women, who have the highest levels of exposure.

Environmental health effects of unsustainable environmental practices affect women to a greater extent as recorded by UNIFEM in the 2005 State of the World Population Report are listed below:

- i. Water pollution in Uzbekistan has led to an increase in birth defects and complications in pregnancy.
- ii. Pesticide exposures in Central Sudan are linked to 22 percent of hospital stillbirths.
- iii. Air pollution in the Ukraine has been linked to 21 percent of all illnesses affecting women and children.
- iv. One in three women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer sometime during their lives.
- v. Nuclear contamination in Chelyabinsk, Russia has led to a 21 percent increase in cancer and a 25 percent increase in birth defects. Half the population of child bearing age is sterile.
- vi. In Guatemala, pesticide residues in breast milk are reported to be 250 times the amounts allowed in

cow's milk.

- vii. Most children in China take in DDT from breast milk at levels 10 times higher than internationally accepted maximums.

In considering the urban social environment, it is pertinent to note that many social tensions accompany city life, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. High density, overcrowding, the absence of communal spaces and recreational facilities all contribute to social conflict. The appropriation of household space for production activities, while providing women with the chance to combine productive and domestic tasks, can lead to further stresses on poorer households.

These factors, together with those such as male unemployment and substance abuse, account for increased levels of domestic violence. Violence affects women and men in different ways, both in its nature and where it takes place. Women are often attacked in the home but are also vulnerable outside it. Women's mobility is often restricted by fear of theft or sexual attack in the absence of street lighting or in isolated or crowded places. Women avoid certain destinations or forms of transport, try to travel at certain times of day or in groups.

2.3 Employment, Gender and Poverty

Poverty is more common among the female gender. Women account for over 70% of the world's absolute poor (United Nations, 1996). Women are responsible, in addition to seeking livelihoods, for keeping their homes and providing for their children, and so bear a disproportionate burden, attempting to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity (United Nations, 1995).

Buvinic (1997), adduced the following to be causes of poverty among women:

- a. Women earn less than men do. Statistics show that worldwide, women earn 30 – 40% less than men do. Though women do over 67% of the world's work, they

- earn only 5% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's real estate.
- b. Much of women's work goes unpaid. In fact, women perform 67% of all unpaid work, particularly care giving, worth \$11trillion dollars globally per annum.
 - c. Women face job discrimination and segregation. They consistently find themselves in low-status, low-paying jobs with few opportunities for advancement. They are overrepresented among part-time workers and informal sector operators. Moreover, the kind of paid work that women are more likely to be involved in pays less than the jobs that are predominantly male oriented.
 - d. On the average, women live longer than men. In fact, in countries like Canada, it was discovered that over 50% of the women aged over 65 live alone and in penury, because they have no pensions.
 - e. 68% of single parent families are headed by women (Hartlauer 2003). They are the abandoned wives, young widows, refugee women with children, and victims of teenage pregnancies. It is estimated that about one third of urban households in Nigeria are headed by females (Koopman 1986). As these figures increase globally, so does the incidence of women's poverty.
 - f. Women lack the resources that might help them overcome poverty. These include access to education, social equality, paid employment, land, capital and credit facilities.

A preponderant amount of the poor survive by participating in the informal economy. The informal sector is crucial in creating sustainable livelihoods for millions of urban households because it is a major means through which economic development filters through to the poorer sections of the population. Women are represented in the informal economy mostly as home workers,

domestic aides and home-based entrepreneurs. A higher percentage of people working in the informal sector, relative to the formal sector, are poor. Gender-based discrimination in employment largely explains why more women than men are in informal employment, more women than men are sub-contract workers and dependent employees, and earn less for more work. In a gender analysis of the agricultural sector of Ondo state by Oseni (2003), it was discovered that while women were engaged in the farming of food crops, men were involved in the farming of more profitable cash crops. The study further discovered that there was no significant difference in the number of man-hours put in by both female and male farmers. However, men had larger farms and more access to bank credit, therefore earn more per crop, produce more because of larger farm area and access to credit and are able to expand at a faster rate. Women, on the other hand, apart from dealing with these challenges, are also forced to use part of their produce to feed their families.

This corroborates a World Bank (2005) study which discovered that standard economic models view capital and income as gender-neutral factors of production and consumption. However, evidence from such widely differing countries as Brazil, Cote d'Ivoire, and Bangladesh suggests that women are more likely than men to use their incomes to improve their children's nutrition, health care, and schooling, even when it is considered a man's responsibility to pay for his children's education. Thus, gender-based division of labor and labor market discrimination combine to reduce women's earnings.

2.4 Access to Resources And Gender

This paper will focus on gender and access to urban land and housing and also security of tenure. This is because consideration for land accessibility is vital to the achievement of sustainable development. Access to land automatically

mitigates the problems of homelessness, poverty, unsafe living environment and inadequate housing while encouraging urban governance and political stability (Omirin 2003). The Habitat Agenda's (1996) position is that access to land and security of tenure are strategic prerequisites for the progressive integration of the urban poor and the development of sustainable human settlements. It goes further to advocate that obstacles to equitable access to land and property between men and women be removed.

Property and land tenure relations are critical issues, particularly from a gender perspective. Security of land tenure gives women greater access to credit, provides them with a secure place of residence and work, especially where work is home-based, and improves the well-being of the family. Providing security of tenure to women-supported households leads to greater investment on the part of women, in improvements in property and the physical environment.

Nigeria is a typical patriarchic society where male superiority and dominance originated from historically rooted culture and religion. In Pre-colonial times, females generally were accorded less value and lower social status. Western culture reinforced this anomaly. The modern state has failed to address gender inequality in access to land, in spite of the role that land and the home plays in the lives of the women who are increasingly being saddled with the responsibility of heading and maintaining households, especially in developing countries (Bruce and Lloyd 1991).

When housing programmes and upgrading schemes present opportunities for the improvement of human settlements, women are often excluded. Projects are designed without reference to women's economic, domestic or community responsibilities and have focused on providing for the needs of the presumed male head of household, virtually ignoring the large number of women who head or maintain households. The location of settlements on the periphery of cities can have

particular costs for women: financial costs in terms of transport to work, markets and other facilities, opportunity costs in terms of time and energy, and psychological costs in terms of separation from children.

3. Final Considerations

Differentials in gender relations can be summarized as follows:

- i. Gender and environment: Women, in their traditional role as homemakers are both perpetrators and victims of harmful environmental practices. Given the variety of women's daily interactions with the environment, they are the most keenly affected by its degradation. They are also the primary victims of crime and violence arising in the urban social environment
- ii. Gender and poverty: Disparities between males and females in power and resources, and gender biases in rights and entitlements act to undermine economic growth and contribute to poverty.
- iii. Gender and employment: gender discrimination in employment results in gender gaps in education, access to credit, training and information, quality and location of business premises. This largely explains why more women than men are in informal employment, operating as sub-contract workers and dependent employees, and enjoying less pay for more work.
- iv. Gender and access to resources: because of the custom and religious practices in the typical patriarchic Nigerian society, an increasing number of female headed households are only able to secure unsafe and unhealthy accommodation in illegal slums and squatter settlements and face the constant fear of eviction and displacement.

Therefore, in order to address the issues of urban sustainability and development, measures to ensure gender equity must be pursued. Advancing gender equality, through reversing the various social and economic handicaps that make women voiceless and powerless is one of the best ways of saving the environment (Sen, 1999). Environmental change imposes new stresses and choices on women's and men's lives. It is important to maximize social flexibility and the resources women and men can bring to bear. It is imperative that for men and women, access to credit, education, agricultural and reproductive health services be unhindered. The support of laws and policies on women's rights and equality and on the sustainable use and protection of natural resources are also essential. With such support women and men can create a virtuous circle of sustainability and equity. Without it they are trapped in a vicious spiral of continuing environmental degradation, poverty, high fertility and limited opportunity, leading to environmental and social collapse.

Measures to achieve gender equality especially with regards to urban development and the recommendations are:

Gender considerations are crucial to urban development and sustainability. Participatory and gender-sensitive urban environments require policies and programmes governed by principles of inclusivity. This means ensuring that both women and men have a voice in the development of their community and countries have access to the resources needed to be productive members of society. Inclusive policies include the development of gender disaggregated information on environmental management, gender equity in decision making and gender sensitive strategy formulation. A holistic and integrated approach to urban development, involving partnership and participation of the public, private and community sectors, must involve both women and men at all stages of the development process, from identification through decision-making to implementation.

Decisions about urban design, priorities in urban service provision, policing and public safety need to be based on an understanding of different gender needs and vulnerabilities. This affirms the position of Jaeckel and van Geldermalsen (2006) who posit that reorganization of urban spaces must make provision for the needs of women and children

Rural women are an important link between rural and urban areas: they maintain food security and the general well-being of their families/households. Therefore, improving rural women's status and control over resources should be considered as strategically important in efforts made at all levels towards fostering rural and urban development.

Gender equality is an issue of development effectiveness, not just a matter of political correctness or kindness to women. New evidence demonstrates that when women and men are relatively equal, economies tend to grow faster, the poor move more quickly out of poverty, and the well-being of men, women, and children is enhanced. The primary pathways through which gender systems affect development are labour productivity and the allocative efficiency of the economy, therefore investments in human capital (especially girls' and women's education and health); and physical capital (especially women's access to capital or to the formal sector employment it creates) aid gender equality.

Since women's access to employment and their position in the urban labour market are determined in part by educational attainment and vocational training, it is important that gender disparities in these areas be acknowledged and that steps be taken to improve women's access to education and training

Women's contribution to the development of the city economy through their activities in both the formal and informal sectors should be recognized and matched by support in terms of enterprise development in the form of credit, and training in marketing and management

Housing and land tenure policies and programmes need to recognize the particular constraints faced by women and women-headed households. These need to be addressed in terms of eligibility criteria, access to finance, design, and construction arrangements and location. Resettlement and evictions should be avoided, since they particularly increase the vulnerability of women and children.

Gender relations in the arena of urban politics are not yet well articulated. At a conceptual level, the notion of governance, which refers to relations between civil society and the state, offers a useful entry for thinking about gender relations in the city. Given the active engagement of women in urban-based struggles, the empowerment of women in civil society, politics and in state structures is a basic requisite for "good governance". (Grieco and Turner 1997)

Good governance is critical for sustainable development. A growing body of evidence suggests that gender equality in rights and resources is associated with less corruption and better governance. Attitudinal data from 43 countries suggest that women tend to view corrupt practices more negatively than men do (World Bank, 2003). Therefore, it can be inferred that gender equality may help to promote growth by improving governance. The full integration of women into the political process should be encouraged, so they can take their full part in making policy decisions affecting their lives, including policies on the use of land and other resources; power and energy supply; health and education services; and economic opportunities.

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