



<< < Thumbnails > >>

DN 40 CCI Bulletin

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Women Friendly Cities Challenge: The Intersectionality of Gender and Urban Space

March 8 is International Women's Day, a global day celebrating the achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. As global activism for women's equality has dramatically built momentum over the past several years with movements like #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #TimesNow, women are coming together to #PressforProgress and calling all levels of society to work together to achieve gender parity.

In support of #PressforProgress and creating opportunities to facilitate gender parity, World University Service Canada (WUSC) Advancing Specialized Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Program in collaboration with the Chamber of Construction Industry (CCI), Sri Lanka and Women Transforming Cities (WTC) International are advancing gender



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parity by taking the opportunity to create national and community-based dialog to discuss how cities in Sri Lanka could become more women friendly; thus ensuring safety and improving the quality of life in cities as a whole.

Over the next several months, we will be working together to build awareness of the Women Friendly Cities Challenge initiative by exploring the intersectionality of

gender and urban space in articles that will be published in the CCI Construction Review Paper, WUSC and WTC media outlets. These articles will lead up to a national Women Friendly Cities Challenge forum in June 2018, where multidisciplinary experts in urban planning, architecture, construction and development, academia, local women's organizations, and gender specialists will come together to share their expertise on the intersectionality of gender and urban space and to showcase examples of successful policies and projects that can help make urban spaces friendlier for women and girls. The intended outcome of the Women Friendly Cities Challenge will encourage urban design practitioners to incorporate women's issues and experiences within their practice; to create a network of

local leaders and professionals to advance and implement Women Friendly Cities initiatives in their communities and support allocating an appropriate budget for such initiatives; and to encourage and empower women to participate in decision making processes that impact their lives.

There are over 21.4 million people in Sri Lanka, and 51.5% are women (Department of Census and Statistics, Mid-year 2017 Population Estimates). Urbanization is one of the key processes of social change taking place today. 18.5% of the total population of Sri Lanka live in urban area and the rate of urbanization is 1.1% annually (World Fact Book 2018, Central Intelligence Agency). United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) commissioned a National Study in Sri Lanka in 2015, with 2500 individuals, between

ages 15 - 35 and found that 90% of women endured sexual harassment while taking public transport. This startling number offers a stark reality into women's lives and their vulnerability to violence and public safety. Creating safe and inclusive public spaces has been recognized as important both through SDG 11 as well as the New Urban Agenda.

Some may feel that making a city women friendly excludes others, but this is not the case. Meeting the needs of women will help them fully participate in the life of the city and increase the wellbeing of the community. The impacts of decision-making when designing community infrastructure have profound impact on the lives of residents. Urban planning takes into account many decisions...

Continued on page 42

01 - Page



02 - Page



03 - Page



04 - Page



05 - Page



06 - Page



07 - Page



08 - Page



09 - Page



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