

CAP WOMEN IN PLANNING NETWORK: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

*Olusola Olufemi
Town and Regional Planning
University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg*

Many planning agencies and planning schools across the Commonwealth have very few women planners and potential female planners. The notion that this is insignificant indicates a myopic view and a lack of gender awareness in planning. Lack of gender awareness and insensitivity could continue to be a stumbling block for the progress of planning and development. The role of women in development is now one of the hot themes of aid agencies; planners who fail to incorporate or engender women are likely to be seen by development bodies as obstacles to change rather than as partners.

The existing women in planning networks in UK and Australia need to be sustained, strengthened and such initiatives extended to other countries through the collective effort and support of CAP WiP network.

This article highlights the “intent” of the CAP Women in Planning Network (CAP WiP) and the issues and challenges associated.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

Women’s world conference in Beijing gave the impetus to women’s active and aggressive pursuit of their emancipation (Olufemi, 2000). The Beijing conference marked a milestone in the institutionalizing of policy on women by national governments and United Nations. It was indeed a learning progression stretching over several years of national women’s organizations, movements and endeavours.

The UN declaration of 1976-1985 as the decade for women could be seen as fundamental to the emergence of various transnational women’s movements.

The Decade for women has been instrumental to identifying the important role of women, often invisible, in the economic and social development of their countries and communities. Specifically, the reproductive, nurturing, productive and managerial roles of women come to mind in this instance.

The inclusion of women in development programmes, policies and planning is reflected in the following examples: the government of Thailand developed a comprehensive plan to integrate a gender perspective in the planning process; Peru, Mozambique and Uganda, have been increased the proportion of women in political parties; South Africa has also increased the number of women in the parliament and women holding ministerial posts, it has also set up a Commission on Gender Equality; Pakistan's introduction of co-education has increased the number of girls enrolling in schools; some development projects in Zambia have succeeded in introducing gender sensitive and participation oriented action planning with communities; the various roles played by homeless women federations like SPARC, Namibia and South African Homeless People's Federations in addressing issues of homelessness and building houses for homeless women needs to be commended.

The various developmental approaches: Welfare, Equity, Anti-poverty, Efficiency, Empowerment, Women in Development (WID) and Development Alternatives With Women in a New Era (DAWN), have varied in their ability to meet the practical and strategic gender needs.

The approaches of the 1990s labeled mainstreaming gender takes the differences between the sexes into account. It seeks the active and visible policy of mainstreaming in all policies and programmes. It enables men and women to formulate and express their views and participate in decision-making across all development issues (Reeves, 1999; Schimmel and Wilhemi, 2000).

Purpose

The aim of the CAP WiP network is to link and extend the existing networks and to particularly provide support and contacts to women planners in some under-represented Commonwealth countries that have few women planners.

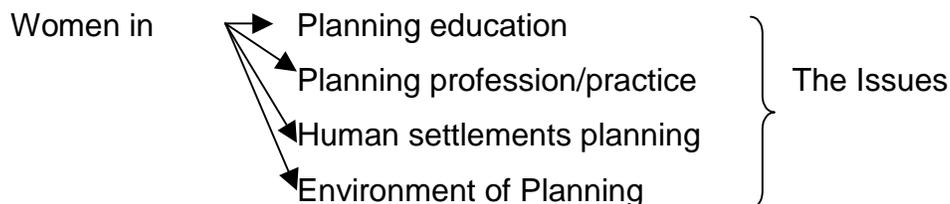
The women in planning network intend to develop a viable and sustainable network for women in planning in Commonwealth member countries/states. Activities of the CAP WiP network would include initiating a study that would focus on the under representation of women in planning and the impact of planning on women's lives.

Objectives of the Women in Planning Network

- ❖ Audit of women in planning groups
- ❖ Promote the role and vision of women in planning
- ❖ Seek active participation of women planners
- ❖ Disseminate information and knowledge about planning through research and publication, CAP Newsletter, Internet, e-mail etc.
- ❖ Contribute to the development of theory and practice in planning
- ❖ Mainstreaming gender in the planning network
- ❖ Promote planning education and profession through awareness and consciousness raising among planners in the profession/community

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

We need a network to address the following issues, consolidate the lessons learned from existing WiP groups and reach out to others.



Planning education

1. Planning education needs to accommodate women. Women's contribution in Planning education should be seen as a gateway to determining the future of our urban and rural environments.
2. Women planners need to be seen, and positioned as mentors, role models, and footprints not footnotes.

Planning profession/Practice

1. Resilience and risk involved, for women, in planning
2. De-emphasizing popular terms used to connote women's under representation e.g. invisibility, exclusion, and gender blindness/insensitivity.
3. Disaggregating women in planning into definable groups such as educated, working class, married/single/divorced/widowed and differently-abled. This would help to get women roles better defined.
4. Eradicating discrimination and harassment of female planners by their male counterparts.

Human settlements planning

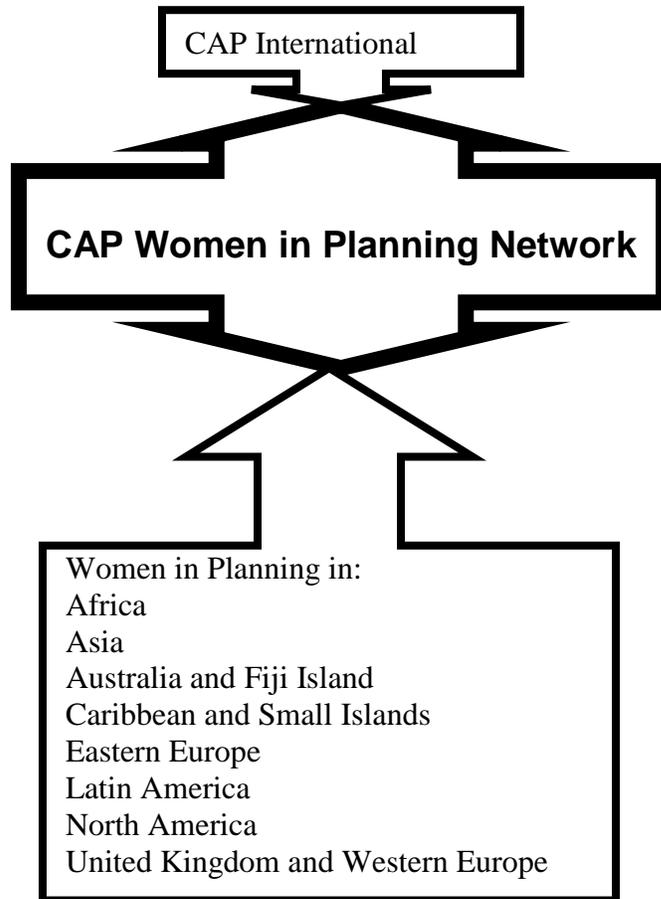
A Planner ensures that a balance is maintained between conflicting demands of people's needs, industrial needs and the environment. Planning is concerned with the human or social elements in relation to the built environment/human settlements. Women planners have a lot to contribute to human settlements planning because women are the major custodians of these settlements.

The environment of planning

The political, economic, socio-cultural and technological (PEST) aspects of the environment impact on planning and planning outcomes. As an international body and with customized approach to individual networks in each continent, CAP WiP network should ensure that their strategies **fit** into the environmental factors (PEST).

Figure 1 gives a conceptual view of the structure/operating dynamics of the women in planning network.

Figure 1: Environmental fit structure



Conclusion

The woman in planning network does not intend to put women in a “silo” or to “isolate” women planners. The idea is for the women to integrate and work together with their male counterparts, taking cognizance of the issues germane to both genders to ensure gender mainstreaming.

This is not just another “women’s thing”. Women’s views, distinct needs and strengths would be complementary to the overall CAP efforts and outputs. Women planners active involvement in making connections, building intellectual relationships, developing networks and sustaining their planning knowledge and

networks through international integration and collaboration is pivotal to achieving planning efficacy, good planning and better planning outcomes.

This article explains what CAP aims to do and invites you to help us achieve it.

Anyone interested should please contact:

Annette O'Donnell

Annette.odonnell@rtpi.org.uk

Or

Olusola Olufemi

041olo@cosmos.wits.ac.za

References

Olufemi, OA (2000), Women's movements: A conceptual view of women's efforts towards their emancipation in the emerging world, *CAP News: The newsletter of the Commonwealth Association of Planners*, Issue no. 1, September.

Reeves, D. (1999), Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Planning, report to RTPI Council 15pp.

Schimmel, B. and Wilhelmi, A. (2000), Gender in Technical Cooperation: Putting mainstreaming into practice, *Development and Cooperation*, no. 3, May/June, p. 12.

E-mail communication with Cliff Hague, CAP President.