

Women's Access to Land and Finance

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SUMMARY

'All rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and that women's equal ownership, access to and control over land and the equal right to own property and to adequate housing contribute to the full realization of human right'.

Human Rights Resolution 2005/25

Slum Upgrading Facility (SUF) of UN-HABITAT's work is directly related to achieving the United Nations Millennium Declaration, particularly the goals of member States to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020, Target 11, Millennium Development Goal No. 7. This paper highlights the reality that this will be difficult to be achieved without a gender-sensitive perspective. Drivers for urban in migration range from economic hardships due to unemployment and lack of employment opportunities to disinheritance and abuse. Hundreds of women move to urban settlements with their families in the hope of building a fruitful future.

The contribution of slum dwellers to the urban economy, specially that of women cannot be overlooked. They contribute by providing essential yet low-paid low-status services such as domestic work, day labour and small businesses. In keeping with the MDG of improving the lives of slum dwellers Slum Upgrading Project SUF in Sri Lanka has created public private partnerships in helping low income families in the slum community in upgrading their living conditions. This is an alternative in a situation where the state does not have sufficient funds to guarantee adequate housing to these slum dwellers. Microfinance is crucial in addressing the problem of adequate housing to slums dwellers because of the perception of them not being credit worthy by the formal financial institutions.

Empowering Women's to mobilize resources and institute action – It is important to accept that communities are in a position to find solutions for their problems provided they are being empowered and organized to do so. Involvement of women of respective communities in decision making – Internal design of housing and facilities to be placed are best known by the women who mostly handle the family requirements. Their involvement in deciding options designs need to be seriously taken into account. Provision of housing finance at low interest with no mortgages for low income households – Formal financial institutions could be reached only by those households who could demonstrate the repayment capacities. However, experience shows that the informal micro finance institutions have reached out to those deprived groups successfully and ensured higher rates of repayments compared to those of 'credible borrowers'. SUF with the Government of Sri Lanka working on a Guarantee mechanism that could therefore be implemented if the formal sector financial institutions are restructured to function through informal micro finance institutions

CURRICULUM VITAE

Mrs. **Ayanthi Gurusinghe**, Country Coordinator for Slum Upgrading Project (PT) of UN HABITAT in Sri Lanka.

She is responsible for managing the Slum Upgrading Project and creating the NATIONAL finance facility of LFSUS (*the above explained fund*) develop bankable projects that promote affordable housing for low-income households and the upgrading of slums. The key feature of the effort is to mobilize the required resources locally and to develop a sustainable low income housing finance programme.

Her past experience includes 12 year Commercial Banking experience from Deutsche Bank AG, and was also involved in Corporate Social Responsibility activities of the Bank.

She is an author of the article on the publication of Mrs. Rupa Silva, President of the Women's Bank, who won the Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life in Geneva 2007

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