

Spatial Planning and Informal Settlements: Women and Adequate Housing

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Key words:

SUMMARY

Surveying extends as far back in history as the Pharaohs; but the three fields of geomatics are fundamentally as important then as they are today. For in the 21st Century the city living space still requires innovative and new ways of management and governance processes.

The life, welfare and social framework, exemplified in adequate housing for all demands a holistic approach. Further, as part of the economic, political, social and cultural characteristics of a society, gender is an important lens for understanding roles and responsibilities within a society, and for designing spatial planning management programs with the people who will be using them.

This paper is a precursor to a wider cross commission activity that looks at Surveyors contributions to facilitating inclusivity of informal settlers into town and city planning and governance activities (Working Group 8.3*).

The paper interest is in the topic of women and housing, with reference to informal settlements, seeking to place this in the context of spatial planning. In line with the conference recognition of three fields of surveying, the focus here is from the perspective of geography. In this context it critically examines purported best practice case studies, describing identified approaches for planning, financing and implementing initiatives.

As its starting point the paper looks specifically at a joint initiative by UN HABITAT and the office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the launch of the UN housing rights programme (UNHRP) in 2002. The substantive focus of this programme is grounded in the Habitat agenda, the main assignment is to report on the state of the realisation of housing rights throughout the world, but as a sub theme a gender perspective was considered by a special Rapporteur, who when appointed, instigated a survey on adequate housing for women,

The paper considers initiatives relating to women's equal access to ownership and control given that informal settlement families are often women headed, as well as referencing earlier work undertaken by FIG that culminated in the publication, Women's Access to Land- FIG Guidelines (No 24). The analysis seeks to understand if various initiatives have quantifiably delivered better housing for women in informal settlements. Linked to this, the paper concludes with the applicability of the Surveyors skills in spatial planning and development to facilitate these processes. It is anticipated that these findings will form the initial thinking from Commission 8 in its contribution to Working Group 8.3.

* Working Group 8.3 - Spatial land planning implications in informal settlements in Cities/ Ports accounting for security of tenure for women and community participation utilising ICZM, planning and GIS tools.

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