

The GAD Approach as an Alternative to Create Viable Housing Environments

Adiyanti Sutandyo-Buchholz

Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Indonesian Technological Institute, Serpong, Indonesia
e-mail: adiyanti@gmx.de

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Abstract

Housing is a basic need after food. Generally, low-income people living in developing countries are still barred access to legal housing process. Whereas in developed countries both women and men participate in housing provision, in developing countries it is in fact still male “business”.

Although lately many concepts and methods were developed to involve women participation in it, yet, they are still subordinate; having limited access both to housing finance (such as housing credit) or being involved in the planning of housing process. Although they are more at home, taking care of children and spend a lot of time in the neighbourhood of their homes. They are the most affected if the access to infrastructure and utilities (such as water and the way to obtain) is insufficient. Due to their small role in creating their housing environments, they are not able to develop themselves, adversely affecting members of the household in improving a better and healthy life.

Some housing projects in developing countries show how low income communities achieved to build their housing as desired, for example participation in a community based organisation. Such projects seem to be successful. However, are such successes enjoyed by the whole family? To create an appropriate housing environment the participation of both genders are required.

This paper will analyse the GAD (Gender and Development) Approach as an alternative to create viable housing environments. GAD approach focuses on the participation of both sexes. Their equity is a fundamental issue. The approach is not the current one (since mid 1990s). However, the transfer of this approach in housing environments is still low. The GAD approach will be tried to be implicated in some housing environment projects experiences which are supposed to be successful. Several case studies in Indonesia are described in this paper. The result will show; whether by means of the GAD approach a viable housing environment can be created both for women and men.

Preface

Beside the physical, housing also affects the mental and social well-being of its residents. It should do more than simply provide security and adequate service to health. The location in terms of the access to employment opportunities and public services is important. The quality and size of housing and the quality of its neighbourhood play also an essential role for privacy, security and an enjoyable domestic life. On the one hand one is able to get such a house from the housing market; where a house is more a product than a process. On the other hand the housing accessibility is a complex and an exhausting way for low income groups. In most developing countries there is no safety net provided by the government for those who find no way of finding a shelter. They often build their house in a long process, depending on time and certain resources available at certain times. Although houses build in this way are far from complete, they still represent a form of shelter and have use values. Hence, for them housing is more a process than a product. They provide shelter either individually or in a group.

CBO and Participation

According to sociology a community is defined as a group of people with face-to-face contact who have a sense of belonging together, have common interests, and values. This group may originate from some individuals or households with the same vision and aim. They can come from the same or a different working place or from a neighbourhood, or through some people who previously knew each other. There is a psychological bond of human beings who belong to a group, where they feel protected and secure. The more a member is involved in a group which is measured based on the element of integrity, the bigger is his/her common bond. Integrity takes place through participation as in co-operation and solidarity of the group. If this group of community is associated, they are organised into a CBO (Community Based Organisation).[1] [2] [3]

The establishment of a CBO inside low income groups can be simple, traditional or officially not registered. But it would be easier for the CBO later to negotiate with agencies, both the government and private sector, e.g. consultant or developer, if they have a formal organisation. The capability of the CBO to plan and implement a housing project depends on its funds and on its management in generating income-raising activities. During the project's process the community may be able to hire experts, such as NGOs (Non Government Organisations), architect / planners, to consult them either in organisational management, negotiating with the government agencies or in technical matters of building. They usually have the necessary skills to organise communities and ideas about technical knowledge.[4] [5]

Participation can be distinguished between participation of some local individuals who decide on their own and the participation of such an organised community. In the concept of community participation the communities are involved in planning and decision making, rather than only in contributing labour (and/or money). The community takes part in the responsibilities, profits, and risks of what they will decide to do, implementing the decisions and sharing in the benefits of the implementation. People can participate and be involved in design and planning, construction, or maintenance of the houses build.

Participation is not concentrated just on bottom-up approach meaning from the point of community only, but both bottom-up and top-down approach.¹ In order to develop a mutual bottom-up and top-

¹ Bottom-up and top-down are understood as a relational approach among actors who take part in for example a housing project. A bottom-up approach is happening if decisions of the project process are coming from the community. Yet they have to adjust and consider as well about for instance technical feasibility, building costs,

down approach all actors, the CBO, local agencies and private sectors need to be grouped in a partnership. It is important too, that the project strategy also consider the themes of poverty alleviation and gender issues.[6] [8]

Gender and GAD Approach

Gender refers to the social differences between women and men in society such as race, ethnicity and social class. Gender roles and expectations are learned and change over time, and vary within and between cultures, shaped by different social and historical values. These values determine the roles that women and men play in all field of life. The concept of gender is vital because it reveals how women's subordination (or men's subordination) is socially constructed. Yet the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined nor is it fixed forever. Besides differences between women and men there may also exist differences among women (or men) themselves in term of socio-economic levels, decision-making power and stage of the life cycle.[9] [10] [11]

The GAD (Gender and Development) approach seeks to have both women and men participate, make decisions and share benefits. The gender equality becomes the focus of attention that opportunities and life chances between them are not dependent on their sex. The GAD approach also seeks to understand women's subordination through analysis of the relation between women and men within the framework of important and relevant factors, such as social class, race and age.

The strategy of GAD approach comprises of:

1. Practical gender needs. These relate to women's traditional gender roles and responsibilities. The challenging of women's subordinate position in society and the existing gender division of labour will not change. Programmes and projects that aim to meet practical needs are relatively short-term ones. They are a response to an immediate perceived necessity and are derived from women's (or men's) concrete life experiences such as water provision, shelter, food, health care, etc.
2. Strategic gender needs. These deal with the participation both of women and men in all projects' processes. They generally address issues of equality and empowerment of women. The empowering to have more opportunities, greater access to resources, and more equal participation with men in decision-making. Hence, strategic interests for women arise from their subordinate position in society and are related to improving women's position. The strategic gender interests are long-term and these interests relate to the gender divisions of labour power and control.

Which programme or a project of gender needs is suitable for the target group depends on its readiness and capabilities, whether the group tends to an immediate perceived necessity or a strategic one. Thus, the willingness of the target group has to be first thoroughly studied.[9] [11] [12] [13] [14]

Projects with GAD approach do not concentrate purely on women projects or just consider women. Women specified projects will be needed if the general conditions put women in a disadvantage position or if a social structure is not appropriately equal in the partnership between women and men.

CBO and GAD approach in housing provision

Buildings can support social structure and create living spaces and living quality, and participation through interaction of participants in a society can vice versa support building development. Hence, building and participation have a correlation. In housing provision both these aspects need to be considered. For most women in developing countries housing and private rooms respectively are

and planning permits which are decided by planners, engineers and local agencies. In this case the latter actors use a top-down approach.[7]

defined as a women's world. There is a global valid pattern that domestic area implies a specific female working and residence area. Therefore related to their participation in housing provision, members of a CBO need to consider a strategy of dwelling and building construction not as a conventional/usual building, but also to pay attention to the circumstances of women's life.

Gender is essential in community based approach, because it affects how communities and households are organised and, in turn, how they relate to the environment around them. Both women and men should play a role in understanding and managing the process of housing provision and the existence of housing environments. A community based approach consciousness of gender has to encourage participation of both women and men within the civil society so that they can better serve as advocates for issues that concern them, their families and their communities. Through the community based approach the CBO can develop strategies for an understanding of how gender shapes the access to, participation in, and agenda of collective activities affecting the housing environments.

The CBO approach to gender within its working structure, assists in breaking down stereotypes such as a woman leader in an organisation is common. Besides, the community based approach uncovers roles that are often overlooked, that women are actually a daily manager of natural resources. In developing countries they often provide water and firewood for the families, take care of the children, tending kitchen gardens, and disposing of garbage. Most men are against taking more responsibility for these roles. Yet, if there are men who try to undertake the gender division of reproductive activity, women sometimes ridiculed them. Women and men may make different uses of the same resources and habitats.

The touch of gender in the CBO helps reveal the multiple institutions that support communities. There are "informal" and "formal" institutional norms in a community. The informal norms are rooted in social relations of marriage, ethnicity or religion and it may not visible to outsiders that women have a greater say in such matters. On the contrary local organisations and institutions may be based on male hierarchies, and public meetings generally are perceived as male spaces. These formal institutional barriers for women need to be recognised in mobilising communal support for housing environmental improvements. More attention should therefore be placed on informal institutions.[15]

Yet it is not participation with gender approach if female members in a CBO are just sitting and listening in a project, whereas the decision makers are men. Women existence and their needs are ignored, so that they are not enabled to influence and share control.² To overcome such matters, small groups consisting only of women are initiated. Through it women may gain confidence by analysing their problem together. Such groups may later on propose various kind of income generating activities for women, like handicrafts or food processing.

Experiences in Indonesia [17] [18]

A Community Based Organisation (CBO) in the form of cooperation planned to build 181 simple houses for its members, located about 40 km in south-western Jakarta. Occupations of the members were heterogenic, from blue-collar to white-collar workers. A housing finance concept was cross-subsidy.³ The location of the housing project is at the periphery of Jakarta. The view is beautiful and

² Based on 'a ladder of participation' that women are just in the position of non participant and token female (Arnstein, 1969). [16]

³ Cross-subsidy here means members with higher income levels subsidise the other members which less income through paying more for their houses. There were different types of houses with varied costs, but all of them were designed simple as a core house. The difference was the more expensive ones were locating in the area with

peaceful with nuances of village life. That was one of among other reasons why middle income members of the CBO wanted to have a house and participate in this project. All members were encouraged to take part in the project processes, from bringing/carrying an idea about the model design to deciding constructions. Members seemed satisfied with the site planning and housing designs.

After the houses were built only 15% from 181 houses were occupied. Reasons from members who have already lived there:

- Lack of infrastructure and public transport, and long distances to working places (in Jakarta): A road connecting to the main road was not asphalted and in bad condition (about 2 km). Only *ojeks* (transportation on motor bikes)⁴ were available as a transport to the main road. One had to change transport several time to the working place. Most of the dwellers did not own vehicles.
- High expenditure for paying transport for the whole family: the expenses of husbands (or wives) going to work, and wives (or husbands) to shopping, children to school.
- For going shopping women (or men) had either to walk to the main road or wait for an *ojek*. One can find *ojeks* early in the morning easily, because that is the time for people going to work, while at that time women (or men) are still busy with housework. It is exhausting especially for women to bring their shopping bags back home on a motorbike with a bad road. Sometimes they needed another *ojek* to transport the bags.
- The houses were not well constructed and used poor materials, giving its inhabitants an uncomfortable feeling, especially at night, of no privacy at all (due to the fact that doors and windows could not be well closed for the reason that their framework was not well fixed) or that one day the house will just collapse on its own.
- Women wished to have a veranda, where they could sit doing handicraft while watching their children playing and natter with the neighbours.⁵

Reasons why many members had not moved there yet:

- Long distance to working places, schools and markets.
- There was no a clinic or medical practice near the settlement.
- Single women were afraid to live there because the settlement was rather isolated.⁶

Results of interviews and a field research⁷:

- Both women and men were impaired by the poor preparation and integration between building process and provision of infrastructure among actors and institutions.
- Lack of communication, coordination and controll caused deficiency of access to resources (i.e. lack of understanding about the groups/CBO, financing, administrative supports) and quality of building materials.
- Participation took place most only among the committee, leader of groups⁸ and very few of the members. Although female members were encouraged to participate, they were the minority and most of them just sit and watched.
- Long distance between house and working place diminished time for communication in the family, either between couples or parent-children.

a nice view and plots of land were bigger and the houses designed as growth houses, so that owners can develop their houses later. On the contrary, the lower-cost houses are row houses with smaller plots.

⁴ *Ojek* from home to the main road cost in 1998 about 30 cent \$.

⁵ Indonesia has a tropic climate. The temperature in Jakarta and surroundings is daily between 29-33°C with high humidity. At noon people like to sit in a veranda in order to avoid the heat.

⁶ In Indonesia it is not so common that women live alone.

⁷ The interviews and field research was held during 1996 and 1999.

⁸ In order to organise easier, members were distributed into several groups. Each group had a leader.

Women in one village in Papua (eastern Indonesia, neighbouring to Papua New Guinea) had to leave home everyday at dawn and walked for about 2.5 km to the river for washing clothes, taking a bath, and fetching water. From this condition they proposed clean water and public bath, washing and toilet facilities (MCK). When the proposal of design was discussed women were not involved. After the design had been accepted, the facilities of clean water and MCK were built in the middle of the village. The room for the public bath and toilet was a closed one and small. For washing they had to wait in queue. Actually during washing clothes they used to natter exchanging information about their village. Most of them went back to the river and the public building was not utilised.

Residents in one village in East Nusa Tenggara (the east of Bali) had a problem to get clean water for drinking, bathing and clothes washing. Every day they must go by truck to a water spring, about 6 km from the village. They paid about 30 cent \$ per person which was expensive for them. Their whole income was expensed just for providing water. They could not go to Sunday service which is an important thing for their spiritual life. Children's education was neglected. When the District Development Programme (PPK)⁹ came to the village, the community proposed water pipes. The public hearing was attended by the village women and men. The women were more concerned to propose the water piped, because it was their daily need and they know better what the village needed urgently with the availability of clean water in the village their life became better. Since there was clean water in the village their life became better. The expenditure was now for other things, such as school payment and transport to church. They could take a bath daily and even cultivate vegetable in their back yard. Through it women can provide food for their families and save more money.

Conclusion

In order to create a viable housing environment all members of a community need to participate. Participation in the whole process means from group forming, ideas of a housing project until living there. The participation can be effective if efforts to enable marginal voices take place as well. To strengthen the capabilities of both women and men, especially who are more marginal, play a significant role. Hence, according to Cornwall and Gaventa (Cornwall, 2000) they should act as 'makers and shapers' instead of as 'users and choosers'. [19] Varieties of relations, connections and institutions in participation is not only limited in the correlation between women and men, but also the connection between "top-down and bottom-up" in the functions or roles of actors that participate in a housing process. Hence the connection between gender and participation is a combination in preparing strategies and tools for the partnership between those actors and simultaneously an equality of needs for both women and men. The identification of the significance of both sexes is translated through an application of buildings and space designs; whether an appropriate housing environment can be created.

Nowadays during a process of a project, which community participation taking place, often "criticisms" are voiced that women are publically considered as subordinate, women because of lower education have a small political presence in community council, so that women need empowerment, etc. Gender issues become noteworthy in the community participation. Yet it should not be directly identified to women-in-general and that men become marginalised through unemployment and productive activities respectively, social institutions and loose alternative opportunities. It could furthermore create an implication of conflict between women and men at the household level and also give rise to the expectation that women would provide more material things. The existence of

⁹ The objective of District Development Programme (PPK) is poverty alleviation through development and capacity enhancement of communities (women and men) and also capacity enhancement of village development agencies.

consciousness about gender concern does not mean that the project's purpose becomes bias either to be a women's project, which it is believed as a project to empower and develop women, or a women issue; thus WID¹⁰ instead of GAD. Instead of concerning only women's access to resources, identification of all participants and stakeholders respectively and recognition of where they need to be differentiated by sex would achieve gender balance in decision-making (compare to [20] [21] [22])

Finally, housing environment is not only a matter of physical buildings and spaces but also related to non physical aspects, such as social-cultural and economy. There is an action and reaction movements between them. A good housing environment provides not only benefits in social economical life of the dwellers, but also gives improvable psychological effect to the younger generations, both girls and boys. In their early ages they are already able to learn how to maintain sustainable development in their environments.

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¹⁰ WID (Women in Development) approaches to projects which are often considered especially for women. The strategy does not take into account the equality between women and men and tends to women disempowerment.

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