

An Analysis of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (Formerly Aurangabad) Smart City: Women's Perspective on Urban Policy

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Abstract:

This work-in-progress paper presents the basic study on women's perspectives within the context of Smart Cities, with a specific focus on the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (formerly Aurangabad) Smart City initiative. The research is part of the "She RISES: Responsive, Inclusive, Safe, and Equitable Spaces, a Framework for Caring Cities" project, undertaken by the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar City administration in collaboration with Safetipin and the Urban Research Foundation. This initiative aims to enhance the inclusivity of the city, particularly from the viewpoint of women.

Our study delves into the concept of a Smart City, emphasizing the critical need to incorporate women's perspectives in Smart City projects from both policy and analytical standpoints. The analysis reveals several gaps and areas needing improvement, providing actionable insights to foster a more equitable and inclusive urban environment for women in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

The recommendations derived from this study are intended to serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, urban planners, and researchers dedicated to promoting inclusive urban development. As the project progresses, further data and insights will continue to refine and enhance our understanding of gender-inclusive urban planning in Smart Cities.

Keywords: Smart City, Women's perspectives, She RISES, Inclusivity, Urban policy, Urban gender equality.

Introduction:

Data shows that 31% of India's population lives in urban areas, contributing 63% of the GDP (Census 2011). By 2030, urban areas are expected to house 40% of the population and contribute 75% of the GDP. To address urbanization challenges, the Indian government launched the Smart City Mission (SCM) in 2015. This scheme, covering 100 cities selected through the "City Challenge," requires cities to submit a Smart City Proposal (SCP) with the help of consulting firms. Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (formerly Aurangabad) was selected in 2016 during round 2 of the SCM for development as a Smart City.¹

Research over the past two decades has showed that men and women experience city life differently, leading to varying levels of participation and ownership (Kalpana Viswanath, 2007; Shilpa Phadke, 2011; Women in Cities International, 2012; Cities Alliance, 2022). Despite making up half the population, women are unable to participate equally in various aspects of urban life. It is essential to understand that women are not a homogenous group; their experiences are shaped by intersecting factors such as age, marital status, socio-economic status, and abilities. Consequently, women's needs and concerns are frequently overlooked in city policies, services, design, and infrastructure.

Feminist scholars argue that cities are designed primarily for men, neglecting women's diverse experiences. Urban theory often fails to incorporate women's perspectives, treating them as a homogenous group. Similarly, smart city initiatives tend to exclude women from the design stage, as seen in policy literature. This tech-centric approach risks mis-framing urban issues and overlooks the varied ways different groups of women experience and navigate cities.³

Research Methodology:

This study utilized secondary data from existing literature and primary data collected through a structured survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. Analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify gaps and opportunities for enhancing gender inclusivity in the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Smart City initiative

Research Objectives:

1. Study the women's perspective in the context of a smart city.
2. Study the She RISES Project initiatives.
3. Develop actionable recommendations for inclusive gender policy.

Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar Smart: City Profile:

Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar city serves as the administrative headquarters of the Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar district, situated at the nexus of rich ancient cultural heritage and swift modernization. It stands as one of the largest urban agglomerations, boasting a population of 1,175,116 according to the 2011 Census, comprising 609,206 males and 565,910 females. This demographic composition highlights that 48% of the population is comprised of women.

She RISES Project: Stakeholder Consultation Discussion at Smart City, Study Inferences:

She RISES- This is a gender-inclusive project initiated by Safetipin, a social impact organization dedicated to creating Responsive, Inclusive, Safe, and Equitable Spaces within urban systems.

In collaboration with the Urban Research Foundation, a local NGO working with the city administration in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, the project has made several inferences regarding the smart city initiative.

An online survey involving 354 working women, along with consultation discussions, provided valuable insights into their expectations for city.

Key Conclusions are:

1. Lack of Gender-Specific Measures: There is a significant deficiency in addressing women's needs within the Smart City projects, highlighting a gap in gender-responsive urban planning.

2. Underrepresentation of Women Stakeholders: Women, making up 48% of the city's population, are not adequately considered in urban development policies, showing a lack of inclusive planning.

3. Unmet Basic Amenities for Women: The need for projects targeting women's concerns suggests that basic amenities for women are not being provided adequately under the Smart City initiative.

Recommendation for Inclusive City Planning:

1. Implement Gender-Specific Measures: Integrate strategies for women's safety and accessibility in Smart City projects, including improved lighting and transportation.
2. Enhance Women's Representation: Ensure women are included in planning and decision-making processes, and regularly consult with women's groups.
3. Address Basic Amenities: Prioritize infrastructure projects for women's needs, such as safe restrooms, childcare, and healthcare facilities.
4. Conduct gender impact assessments for all projects and provide training on gender-inclusive planning to city officials.

These steps will help create a more inclusive Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar smart city.

Conclusion:

The Smart City projects in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar significantly overlook gender-responsive urban planning. There is a notable lack of measures addressing women's specific needs, despite them comprising nearly half of the population. This deficiency highlights a broader gap in inclusive planning, further exacerbated by the underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes.

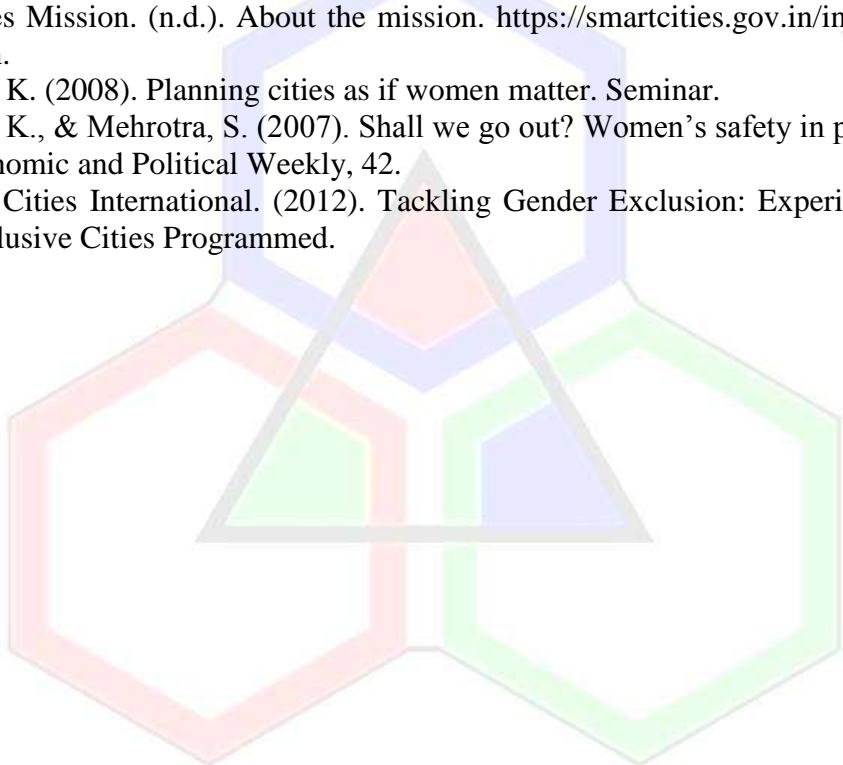
Basic amenities for women, such as safe restrooms, childcare, and healthcare facilities, are insufficiently prioritized. To address these issues, it is essential to implement gender-specific measures, improve women's representation in planning, and ensure regular consultations with women's groups.

Prioritizing infrastructure projects for women's needs and conducting gender impact assessments will promote more inclusive planning. Training city officials on gender-inclusive planning will further integrate these considerations into the city's development agenda. These steps will help create a more equitable and inclusive Smart City for all residents in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

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