

# WOMEN RESSOURCE ZONES: GENDER EQUAL URBAN PLANNING IN INDIA

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## WOMEN RESSOURCE ZONES:

### INTRODUCTION: THE INDIAN CONTEXT, URBAN AND RURAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

In our study and design of a Women Resource Zone (WRZ) as part of the cooperation agreement between SAFP, the Jamia Millia Islamia Faculty of Architecture and Ekistics, and the Barcelona School of Architecture, we looked at both urban and rural areas within the cities of Delhi and Kochi. Therefore, it was important to take into account the national context, i.e. urban and rural planning, development activities and resource allocation in India.

#### *Urban Planning*

India's institutional urban planning framework was implemented at the time of Independence, with the State Town Planning Act. It created town and country planning departments for the implementation of city master plans.

In spite of constitutional amendments<sup>1</sup>, much of the decision making today remains in the hands of states, which are reluctant to delegate authority to cities. This amendment was meant to fully delegate city planning to local governments, and called for the creation of a Metropolitan Planning Committee for all 20 major metropolitan areas and a District Planning Committee for each of the country's 626 districts<sup>2</sup>.

In accordance with article 243 of the constitution which calls for a bottom-up approach to planning, the concept of WRZ and sustainable development areas is based on the premise that citizens should actively participate in neighborhood planning.

Problems also lie in the current administrative structures; at least it is so for cities such as Delhi, which in turn has a big impact on urban planning:

While many cities have mayors, their tenure are short and they rarely have the power to drive new investments, hire key personnel, fund projects or reorganize departments (...) In large cities, power is distributed among the Municipal Commissioner and the Municipal Corporation in a way that makes neither of the two fully accountable for the city's decisions. (...) These commissioners therefore have no long-term stake in the city and invariably shy away from making the big decisions important for the city's long term health<sup>3</sup>.

This characteristic of the Indian administrative structure was felt many times during our study and project design, and will probably keep being an impediment should we attempt to implement a WRZ. The issue of transparency and accountability is also an obstacle when trying to push for development projects, and too much emphasis is placed on the process while there is a lack of stringent monitoring of

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Amendment of Art. 74. towards urban reforms: "it provided for the devolution of 18 functions from state to urban local bodies, to district planning committees, and metropolitan planning committees. Among these functions are land use, urban planning, economic development, water and roads. But thus far, no state has fully devolved the entire slate of assets and functions to cities. (...) The reluctance of State governments and Chief Ministers to devolve powers to the cities remains at the heart of the problem," P. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

outcomes. This should in fact be the opposite, with administrators setting flexible guidelines for project proposals, while ensuring strict measurement of results and follow-up.

Another problem that we came across which related to India's planning mechanisms was that city master plans lack integration across sectors. For instance, figures may be lacking in terms of quality of life targets, anticipated GDP, while little attention is paid to social services and affordable housing. On top of this, when local planning departments do exist in municipal governments, staff numbers and qualifications are insufficient, there isn't enough funding, and modern technologies are lacking. This was particularly apparent in the context of Kochi, where for instance, appropriate GIS mapping of existing land use in the target wards was unavailable.

### **Rural Planning**

"Although its share in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined from over half at Independence to less than one-fifth currently, agriculture remains the predominant sector in terms of employment and livelihood with more than half of India's workforce engaged in it as the principal occupation<sup>4</sup>". Therefore, for rural populations, land is the most important asset.

The percentage of people living in poor households is also higher in rural than urban settings, even more in the case of women. But rural planning in India has mostly been focused on providing short-term employment opportunities for workers who suffer from the seasonal or cyclical nature of rural jobs<sup>5</sup>.

Another form of rural development government led initiative has been the organization of the rural poor into Self-help groups through mobilization campaigns and provision of income generating assets<sup>6</sup>. Much of these groups have focused on the creation of micro-enterprises, capacity building and training. One notable example of such a group is Kudumbashree in Kerala, whose objective is to eradicate poverty through women, and with whom SAFP has worked intensively to promote its concept of WRZ.

Another important aspect of rural development in India has focused on providing adequate housing to all. Unfortunately, the very poor have been left out in the context of the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) housing program, due mainly to the corruption of the PRIs and MLAs or to the active lobbying of certain segments of the beneficiaries<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, those selected under this housing program were not the landless, which actually constitute more than half of the rural homeless. In any case, even the Central government's master plan admits that the houses built under the IAY program have often fallen short of what decent housing is defined as, and the title of these houses have consistently gone to men<sup>8</sup>. However, the government is supposed to ensure that tenure/title go to the women head of households under the new Bharat Nirman Program. The RAY brings hopes as it does plan infrastructure along with housing in its guidelines.

To conclude this introduction to the Indian planning context, it should be noted that both in the urban and rural realms, "the dispersed, unorganized and often household based micro and small enterprises are the largest source of employment after agriculture in the country<sup>9</sup>". This was very clear in both the Delhi and the Kochi contexts. One of the components of the WRZ design was meant to improve

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<sup>4</sup> Planning Commission Government of India. *Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007-2012*. Vol. 3, Agriculture, Rural Development, Industry, Services, and Physical Infrastructure. (2008), Oxford University Press, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

infrastructure and create links between such economic activities in which local women predominantly participate in<sup>10</sup>.

## 1. THE HISTORY BEHIND THE WRZ

### 1.1. Inception of the WRZ concept

The concept of Women Resource Zones (WRZ) was born out of the will to rectify the gross imbalances in terms of resource allocation, be it land, water, housing or income, between men and women in India. Urban planning, resource allocation and management, although provided for by the law, have in practice remained male dominated areas.

While some Indian laws now restore the imbalance in family inheritance, the policy discourse in support of women's equal access and control over "public" resources remains relatively weaker. Women are simply not consulted or taken into account in policy making; neither do they participate in the implementation of these policies on the ground. While researching current trends, laws and programs in urban or rural planning in India, one is struck by the apparent lack of importance given to the absence of women in the planning, implementing and monitoring process.

The idea, as imagined by the leaders of SAFP in collaboration with Consult for Women and Land Rights (CWLR) members across India, was to come up with a concrete solution by which women could be empowered through increased participation in and implementation of urban planning. It is important for woman to be taken into account in both these stages, not only as users of land and resources, but also as managers and suppliers. Giving women easy access to livelihood resources is a first step, but it is not enough. They must have control over these resources, because it is a known fact that by allowing women to manage assets such as water, land, income, etc., not only is women and children's health improved, but the entire community and economy benefits.

The WRZ as a theoretical concept emerged as a women-friendly neighborhood development plan which could be developed as part of a global, district or city-level/rural sustainable development plan. It would take in consideration local women's needs and aspirations, the available infrastructure, the prevailing culture, spatial and geographical characteristics, as well as structural problems that need to be resolved..

### 1.2. Lobbying for the implementation of the WRZ by SAFP

For women to participate actively in the planning and implementation of development projects, in this case through the WRZ, all state and local Panchayat Raj Institutions system (PRI) leaders need to pilot the concept within their areas. For example, this could mean that authorities would sanction area development plans, consciously setting aside at least half of the available natural and infrastructure resources for women groups to manage and monitor.

But first, it has been, and continues to be necessary to recruit and unite other stakeholders, such as NGOs, women's self-help groups, universities, students and other community leaders, around this

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134: For example, "today, the handloom industry directly and indirectly provides livelihood to 124 lakh people, 8 of which 60% are women". In the Okhla district, most of the vocational training and micro-enterprises women participated in consisted of tailoring, beading and embroidery.

project which seeks not only to empower women, but to improve the neighborhood as a whole, to create sustainable community development.

In Delhi, Kerala and other states SAFP has approached many other NGOs and community organizations that would have a potential stake in designing a WRZ. Leaders in the women's movement first thought the concept was too difficult to implement on the ground, and would bring about strong resistance from authorities and traditional forces. After much lobbying, the same people saw the benefits of planning and resource allocation with women in mind, and thanks to intense advocacy work, many organizations took on the subject within their own work.

Over the years, SAFP communicated and met with several Ministers and other government officials. We hope that with the help of thorough studies, pilot project designs and with the support of community leaders as well as other women's groups, authorities will sanction the acceptance and construction of a WRZ within future sustainable development projects. We believe that current trends in the global economy and environment make it essential that the development of cities and countries as a whole be sustainable. For development to be sustainable, it must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.

It is also a multi-dimensional concept which includes social, economic and environmental sustainability. In the past, patriarchal development structures have consistently resulted in the depletion of resources, leading to environmental degradation, conflict over scarce assets, and increasing poverty. Women, traditionally bearing the role of caregivers, are more inclined to manage their environment, both built and natural, in a more sustainable ways. It is essential that they be given the means to participate in the planning of their communities, both rural and urban.

### *1.2. The partnership with Barcelona School of Architecture and Jamia Millia Islamia Faculty of Architecture and Ekistics*

SAFP founder, Ms. Shivani Bhardwaj, met with Dr. Zaida Muxi Martinez of the Barcelona School of Architecture during the Habitat International Coalition's meeting on Women and Housing in Barcelona. Having a common interest in gender sensitive planning, they decided to cooperate on the development of the WRZ concept. First, Dr. Muxi came to India and met with planners and worked with CWLR member Ms D leena. SAFP then coordinated presentation of WRZ with town and country planning office, mission convergence UNIFEM and with School of Planning and Architecture. The learning from this phase of work were published in a document with support of UNIFEM and presented to the National Planning Commission in Nov 2009. In December 2009 Ms. Bhardwaj gave a guest lecture on her project idea to Dr. Muxi Martinez' students in Barcelona. Following her visit, several of the students decided to initiate a trip to India in order to draw up an architectural pilot for what could be a WRZ. It was agreed with Ms. Bhardwaj, based on their specific interests and her past lobbying activities that they would focus on 2 districts: Okhla in Delhi and Edakochi in Kochi.

In anticipation of the students' arrival in Delhi, SAFP staff contacted the Dean of the Jamia Millia Islamia Faculty of Architecture and Ekistics, which itself is located in the Okhla district. With his support, we reached out to students and professors of the faculty, as well as other JMI professors in relevant faculties such as Social Work and Dr. K R Narayanan's Center for Dalit and Minorities studies. With the help of their professors, the JMI students decided to team up with the Barcelona students studying the Okhla district. Thanks to their intimate knowledge of the area, the JMI students were able to guide the Spanish students to complete their proposal.

## **2. AN ONGOING PARTNERSHIP**



## **2.1. In Delhi**

### *2.1.1. JMI Faculty Members*

As stated in the previous section, JMI faculty members who were approached by SAFP for support were instrumental in making the Barcelona students' trip a success. Furthermore, each and every participating professor professed an interest in remaining involved in the unfolding of the WRZ project, after the students' departure from Delhi. Mr. S.M. Akhtar also reaffirmed the faculty's willingness to participate in other such student exchange initiatives in the future.

### *2.2. JMI Students*

The JMI students went above and beyond participating to the Spanish students' orientation to Delhi and its urban planning context. They also volunteered to cooperate with them on their study of Okhla and the design of a WRZ for the district. They were able to provide innovative and concrete solutions to infrastructure problems based on their knowledge of the area, of the culture, of the activities and of Muslim women's situation there.

### *2.3. Muslim Women's Forum*

The Muslim Women's Forum (MWF) is involved in Legal Literacy for Muslim women, voicing concerns of Muslim women to government and interfacing with Ulemas on matters concerning their rights. SAFP came into contact with the MWF through a JMI Professor of Sociology, Dr. Azra Abidi. Professor Abidi actively participated in our project, both by participating in a case study relating to women and property, and by organizing focus group discussions with other MWF members. Because the forum also offers training opportunities for women in Okhla, it was essential for the architecture students to meet with them in order to get a grasp on these women's daily lives, activities and needs. For any neighborhood development plan to succeed, its beneficiaries must adhere to and come to own the design.

### *2.4. Aman Trust*

Aman Panchayat is a public charitable trust whose activities consist in networking, sensitization, research and legal aid programs aimed at strengthening social institutions and resources for the anticipation and prevention of conflict, and at non-violent conflict resolution<sup>11</sup>. SAFP was approached by Jamal Kidwai, Director of Aman Trust, to collaborate on gender and land rights issues. Aman trust had done extensive work on the informal economy in the Okhla district. Therefore, staff from Aman were of great guidance to the students during their trips to Okhla and in explaining the local context.

### *2.5. The Center for Equity and Inclusion*

The Center for Equity and Inclusion (CEQUIN) is a Non Profit Organization, working towards the empowerment of marginalized and excluded sections of the population, with a special focus on women<sup>12</sup>. The center also runs a Gender Resource Center (GRC) in Okhla, under the Delhi Government Mission Convergence initiative, in association with JMI. It focuses on promoting women's political participation and leadership building, addressing violence against women and girls, promoting

<sup>11</sup> Aman Trust Web Site. On line: <http://www.amanpanchayat.org/index.php>.

<sup>12</sup> The Center for Equity and Inclusion. On line: <http://www.cequinindia.org/>.

women's economic empowerment, addressing women's reproductive health as well as promoting nutrition and health of the girl child. CEQUIN has also been partnering with the city government in a campaign called 'Make Delhi Safe for Women', which aims to create awareness and facilitate a movement towards making Delhi a safer for women. The goal is to enforce a 'zero tolerance policy' for violence against women in the public space. This objective is very much in line with SAFP's WRZ project, which also aims at creating women friendly neighborhoods, in which safety is a major component.

Ms. Shivani Bhardwaj has been in contact with one of CEQUIN's founders, Ms. Laura Prabhu, since their time together at UNIFEM. SAFP approached CEQUIN in order to contribute to the Gender Resource Centre's need for space (GRC). SAFP team meet with the women to who their GRC caters to know from them about activities in a neighborhood that women could suggest as part of the WRZ.

### *2.6. Muslim Women's Organization*

The Muslim Women's Organization in Batla House, also in the Okhla district, was founded and run by Ms. Mamduha Majid, who has also dedicated much of her own time and resources (including the donation of her own property to create a trust for the education of Muslim Women) to the cause of marginalized women. SAFP approached Ms. Majid at her organization to administer a survey to the women who receive vocational training in the premises. She also willingly participated in our case study, which has helped us tremendously in further detailing the reality faced by women in Okhla: the Muslim culture to which they adhere, the resources they have access to in the neighborhood, their average income, their property rights, the activities they engage in for economic sustenance, etc.

### *2.7. Zakir Hussain Society*

The Zakir Hussain Society of JMI has set up a vocational training center in Okhla, which offers courses in computer operation, tailoring, embroidery, beading and beauty treatments. SAFP came into contact with the center thanks to Dr. Baran Farooqi, an English Professor at JMI who also participated in SAFP's case studies. The students of the vocational training center, as well as its Manager Professor ..??? and centre coordinator Ms. Shaebana, agreed to participate in SAFP's survey initiative and contributed to the gathering of data on women's access to resources in Okhla.

### *2.8. Mission Convergence*

The Government of Delhi has initiated Mission Convergence called Samajik Suvidha Sangam to converge various social welfare schemes and services in order to ensure the intended beneficiaries, i.e. the poor and marginalized, actually receive what they are entitled to under these government schemes. To fulfill the objective, Mission Convergence works in partnership with NGOs. The GRCs, which were set up under the Bhagidari Program, were designated as the operating structure for Mission Convergence at the community level.

One such NGO in charge of a GRC, Stri Shakti, was chosen by Mission Convergence to administer a women-run canteen in its main office building. SAFP contacted Ms. Rashmi Singh, Head of Mission Convergence, who was also behind the canteen initiative. She agreed to participate in the case study, and has reiterated a strong interest in SAFP's take on replicating women run canteens elsewhere as part of WRZ.

With the help of Ms. Sangita Thakur Varma, of the Communications Department, and Ms. Suruchi Aggarwal, Volunteer Coordinator, we also had access to the Canteen management and staff of the Stri Shakti Canteen, who agreed to participate in a case study, and who guided SAFP and the architecture

students in understanding the kinds of structures, spaces and resources (both human and material) needed to replicate successful women-run canteen and catering services elsewhere in Okhla.

## **2.2. In Kerala**

### *2.2.1. Kudumbashree*

Kudumbashree, an agency of the Kerala state government was launched to eradicate poverty by empowering women. It is built around three pillars: micro credit, entrepreneurship and empowerment, to address the basic needs of the less privileged women, providing them a more dignified life and a better future<sup>13</sup>. Today, Kudumbashree is present in every village, panchayat and municipality in Kerala, and in nearly every ward, colony and hamlet. This was very much apparent to us in Kochi, as everyone we spoke to knew the organization, and most women active in the community have ties to Kudumbashree.

Therefore, Kudumbashree is perhaps the most important actor to collaborate with when working on grass-roots development projects in Kerala. In accordance with what SAFP wants to develop as a WRZ, Kudumbashree's mission is to help women groups to actively participate in the development of their own sustainable community. Such Kudumbashree programs as the Responsible tourism programs, the Special Urban Livelihood Projects and Samagra are some models of local economic development women are currently leading in Kerala. This is precisely the kinds of initiatives that must be linked within a WRZ, which itself is a component of sustainable development zones. Essentially, the goal of a WRZ would be to create infrastructure links that may be missing between women led enterprises or community development programs, such as safe roads, health care centers, production and selling spaces, housing and schools.

When SAFP first approached Kudumbashree with this idea back in 2009, Kudumbashree staff was cooperative, but the WRZ was still in a conceptual stage. Contact was made, planting the seeds for a future cooperation.

When the Spanish architecture student team arrived accompanied by SAFP staff in August 2010, contact was reestablished, and several meetings were organized. First, focus group discussions were organized and visits to the Edakochi district were led by Kudumbashree members in wards 15 and 16. The students were shown operational canteens and a paper bag making facility run by the organization. Very helpful staff at the Fort Cochin office, led by Ms. Cigi Mol, helped the students locate all important landmarks, infrastructure, women's groups, schools, etc. on a map of Edakochi. This task was of crucial importance, as official maps and statistics for this particular district were impossible to locate, and yet were primordial for the design of a WRZ. This process will be detailed below.

The Kudumbashree staff in Kochi expressed their interest in our project, as it is directly relevant to their own work, and we hope to pursue this cooperation in later stages.

### *2.2.2. Inspiration*

Inspiration is an architectural firm based in Kochi, with whom SAFP has been in contact since 2009. The firm specializes in sustainable development projects, including a proposal for a sustainable development zone in Edakochi, which inspired SAFP to lobby for its WRZ to be implemented within Inspiration's project. The project called for the improvement of infrastructure, while respecting the areas no development zones and by implementing conservation measures through the use of zoning and transfers. The logic behind the SDZ was to combine the wards comprising Edakochi into one urban

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<sup>13</sup> Kudumbashree. On line: <http://www.kudumbashree.org/?q=home>.



development unit, in order to limit urban sprawl, commuting distances and the need for polluting vehicles, amongst other things. Unfortunately, due to a lack of political will, the project never went past the conceptual stages. The project itself was so big, no stakeholders, either public or private, were willing to take an investment risk whose potential for gains would be of a long term nature.

However, SAFP decided to trudge on with its plan to design a WRZ in Edakochi, which would still fit in the plans of a potential SDZ. Hopefully, if this micro aspect of a larger sustainable plan gathers political momentum, the Inspiration team will also reconsider taking on the challenge of building a larger SDZ.

### *2.2.3. Habitat Technology Group*

The Spanish student Kochi team took the initiative to visit the Habitat Technology Group (Habitat), based in Thiruvananthapuram, in order to create ties with additional architecture firms in the area, who could eventually be associated to the implementation of women friendly architecture. Habitat is the largest NGO working in the building sector, promoting appropriate technologies and Green Architecture in India today. Of special interest to SAFP, Habitat has been working to empower women in the shelter sector, by educating and training women in the field of building construction. With this expertise, Habitat would be an essential stakeholder for local women to participate in the planning of infrastructure and architecture which would truly cater to their needs. The staff who met with the Spanish students was very interested in the WRZ project, and hopefully the opportunity to cooperate in terms of implementation will present itself sometime in the future.

### *2.2.4. Department of Town Planning of Kerala*

In 2009, Ms. Bhardwaj of SAFP had met with the Department of Town Planning of Kerala, specifically with Mr. Jacob Easow, Senior Town Planner. At that point in time, a SAFP text on women's empowerment through property rights and management of resources was included in the Integrated District Development Plan (IDPP) of Kollam, under the section of Social Welfare, Women and Child Development. The IDPP, which is a new planning program destined to decentralize planning and involve citizens in the process, will be the sort of mechanism permitting the participatory planning which this country needs to make its neighborhoods and cities truly inclusive. The Department also agreed to include WRZs in future call for tenders in area development plans, as part of a gender sub-plan.

During the students' field work in Kerala, we took the opportunity to touch base with the Department in Thiruvananthapuram, to see whether components of the IDPP's Social Welfare, Women and Child Development policy had been carried out, but it is the implementing agencies themselves who are responsible for putting policies into action. For instance, the Social Welfare Department the location of Angawaris (child care centers) were identified and studied: what are the facilities, what are the needs, available infrastructure, etc.

Keeping the lines of contact open with the Department of Town Planning in Kerala will be crucial if the WRZ is to be implemented within area development plans in Edakochi, or any other district in Kerala. In the political context of the state, and considering the active involvement of women's groups in the government, we believe in the possibility of working in partnership with the local authorities and community groups to develop such women-friendly infrastructure.

## **3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT**

Having established the context in which the design of a WRZ took place, we will now look at what actually happened in terms of project development, and how it helped us clarify what a WRZ could look

like in reality, were it to be applied in a designated area. One must keep in mind that an architectural pilot or module is not feasible for this type of project, as any solution to women's infrastructure and resource needs will vary according to the culture, landscape, climate, economy, etc. of the district.

All people and organizations mentioned above provided essential input which allowed the students to make meaningful inferences about women's lives and needs in each area, which led to very different solutions and propositions. One must also be aware that the concept of a women resource zone goes beyond architecture and the physical environment into social and economic considerations. That is, the goal is not only to build sustainable neighborhoods which are safe for women, and which contain the kind of physical infrastructure that they need to be productive without compromising on their women specific needs as spaces for them to own, access and manage for work, rejuvenate and care with adequate connectivity between their homes: centres for use of different ages with public separated bathrooms, well lit roads, stores, multipurpose halls, workspaces, childcare and health facilities, etc.

The WRZ should also provide well designed physical spaces where women can carry out income generating activities, where they could sell their production, where they could join together for recreational purposes, etc.

The infrastructure changes must increase their visibility everywhere in the public realm, thereby gradually changing society's mindset concerning what is and isn't acceptable for a woman to do. For instance, planning for cycle/auto-rickshaw stands<sup>14</sup>, which would be managed by women's NGOs (for example), would give a new legitimacy to this kind of work, and definitely increase women's visibility within the public space. One must always keep in mind that the architecture and urban planning can shape and define social roles, not just the other way around. The idea, therefore, is to change the planning to change the roles.

### **3.1. Okhla**

In Okhla, the surveying of local women, the conduct of case studies and the analysis of the area (infrastructure, women's organizations, training centers, community centers, etc.) could begin before the arrival of the Spanish students, which helped set the stage for the design.

During the focus group discussion at Haji Colony and Abul Fazal areas we were told that a woman has to always stay within the neighborhood. For this reason women can't walk more than fifteen minutes away from their homes, otherwise they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Many incidents of mobile phone and chain snatching were reported. Therefore, the given target was to create an economic and social self-sustainable zone with the neighborhoods which have been studied in the area, Batla House, Haji Colony and Shaheen Bagh, because they each have a specific function, using local resources and creating production and activity fluxes between each other. The goal was to create a 'safe edge net' for woman to walk to work and meetings without any limitations. What has to be established is what women do from their homes to the safe edge to further their community and productive roles. The means the influence area that the edges have would decide the number of edges and general configuration of the project for a local unit and its productivity.

#### *3.1.1. Culture*

Muslims make up the majority of the population in Okhla. As far as women go, traditional practices to which the poorer and less educated population adheres to have a great influence on their mobility and the activities they choose to engage in. For instances, many of the women we interviewed who were

<sup>14</sup> Aman Trust Web Site. On line: <http://www.amanpanchayat.org/index.php>, which incidentally don't exist in Delhi as of yet.

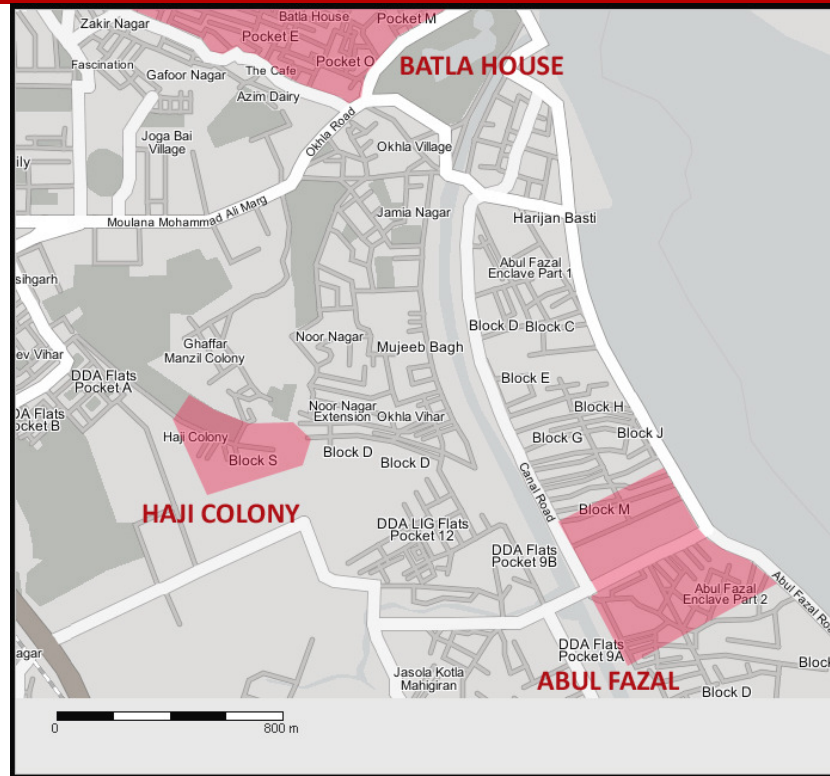
being trained in the Zakir Hussain Society center or the Muslim Women's Organization were reluctant to answer our questions because they feared their husbands might disapprove. Most of them had also taken up this kind of vocational training as it would allow them to work from their home, and tend to their family's needs as they earned some extra income.

Therefore, any WRZ design meant to cater to women in Okhla's would have to keep these constraints in mind. As stated before, we believe applying changes in planning can in fact influence gender roles. At the same time however, any radical change made without consulting the community or getting its approval would surely go to waste. Therefore, in Okhla, plans had to consider women's needs to be close to home, and ideally, to combine their caretaking roles with entrepreneurial roles. For instance, the students suggested planning for GRCs and training centers to be located adjacent to Agawaris and family planning center, and for community centers in the area to provide space for catering services and selling space for local produce which these women could run. The problem is that Government programs do not reach these Muslim communities due to the lack of a development plan, services and equipments. For the time being, there are only two GRCs – not enough for all women in the area.

The Barcelona and JMI students made up a problem tree with the women they interviewed, and here were some constraints relating to the area's culture and societal norms which were identified: the area unsafe for women during the night, it is heavily polluted, there are no rules, the police and neighborhood leaders are corrupt, there is no segregation of space, a no hawkers' zone and animals traffic isn't controlled.

### *3.1.2. Urbanism and spatial layout of the area*

The streets in Okhla, and specifically in the Batla House area in which most of the students' work took place, streets are quite narrow, crowded, the roads are in very poor conditions, dirty, and lighting is insufficient. However, next to important buildings, such as the Community center used for wedding receptions, there is much unused land belonging to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. Around Dhobi Gats, where men earn money washing clothes, there is also a significant amount of empty land which could be allocated to the WRZ plan. In Haji Colony, next to the Muslim Women's Forum, the water supply is lacking, and women must buy water daily, including for the washing of clothing.



*Map of Okhla, outlining the 3 target areas*

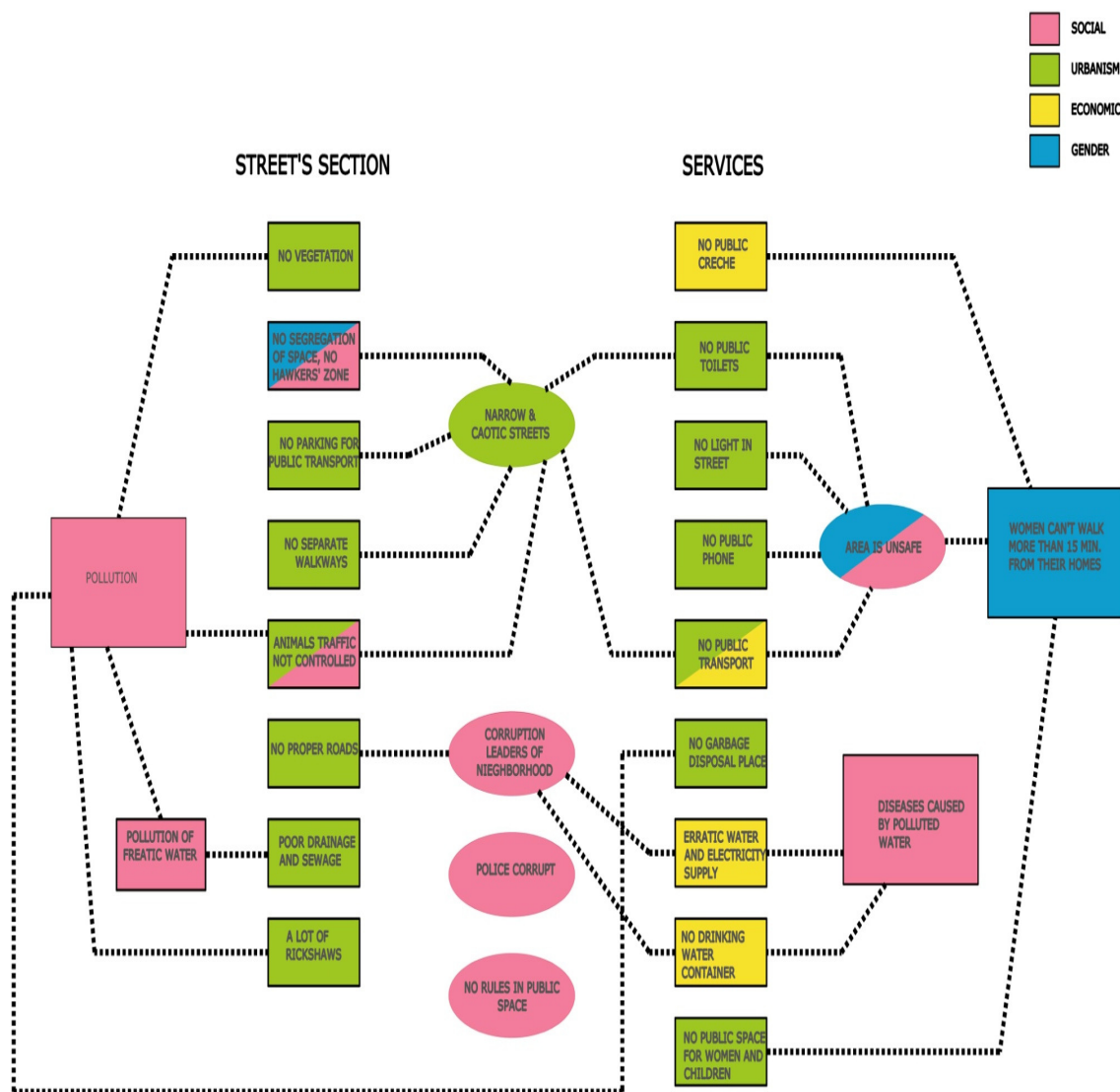
Another problem is that the Okhla community, which is already very traditional as outlined above, does not communicate with areas outside due to single approach roads. 80 000 people are living in a slum area which isn't planned for (i.e. irregular settlements) so no services or equipments are provided.

Within the students' problem tree, the women identified the following issues: no street lighting, no proper roads, no public phone, poor drainage and sewage, no public toilets, no garbage disposal place, no separate walkways, pollution, no parking for public transport, no vegetation, no segregation of space, no hawkers' zone, narrow streets, no public spaces for women and children, animals traffic not controlled, no public transport and a lot of rickshaws.

### *3.1.3. Economic problems*

The Okhla district in general and the Batla House area in particular are developed within an unauthorized mode. The available infrastructure reflects that fact. The students, along with the women who participated in the focus group discussions identified the following issues related to the economic difficulties and lack of proper public funding faced by the area: erratic water and electricity supply, no public toilets, no drinking water container, health problems, no public crèche, no public transport, no segregation of space and no vendors' zone.

The students have taken these variables into account in their plans, but if the WRZ ever becomes part of an actual development scheme in the area, public funds will have to be allocated for the provision of such basic services, taking women's needs in mind when building such infrastructure (i.e. different public spaces need to be made available for community activities that women can manage to gain experience of dealing with infrastructure issues. They will then influence design and ask for spaces and plan for their own needs.



*Analyzing the inter-relationships among community issues and problems using a graphic based on a tree*

### 3.2. Solutions for a WRZ

The following section is also based on the students' presentation, for which they designed the diagrams. They came up with various conceptualizations of easy changes which could make the Okhla district not only safer for women, but that would encourage them to take on a more active role in the management of livelihood resources. The changes suggested would also benefit the community as a whole.

First, there exist some main roads in the area which could be modified, notably between Shaheen Bagh and Batla House. Also new roads could be planned for connecting Batla House, Haji Colony and Shaheen Bagh. These roads could be called S1 – safety road one: These axis-like structures would provide for the whole Okhla area and it would influence 15 minutes of safe walkways:

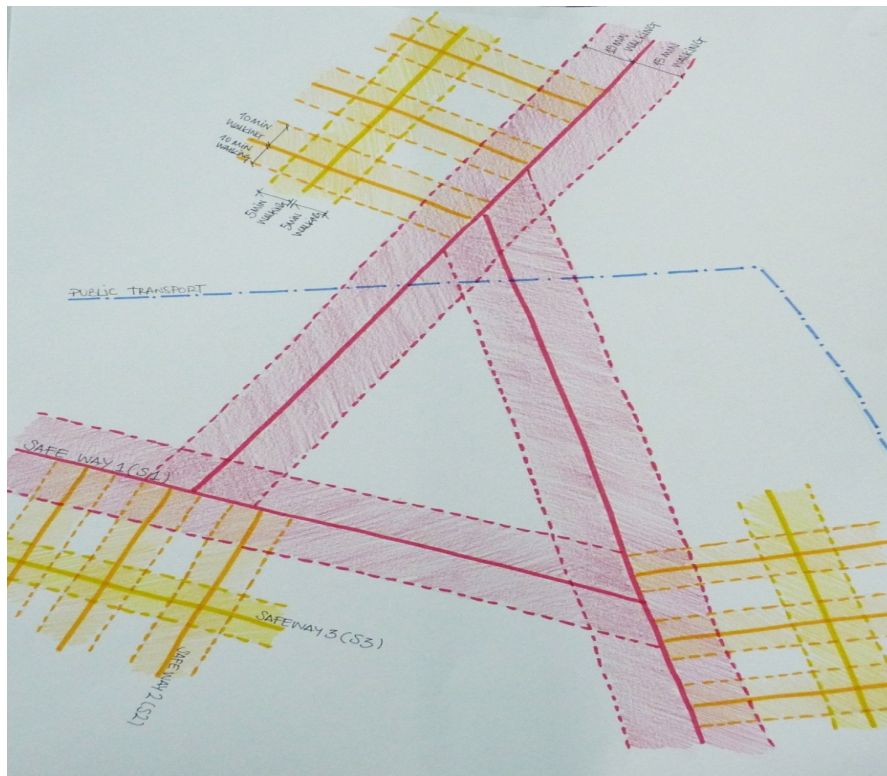
For the S1 road: For making public transport more efficient here, it needs segregation between cars and rickshaws, the later getting more priority. So it would be a two-car lane (6m) and two-rickshaw lane



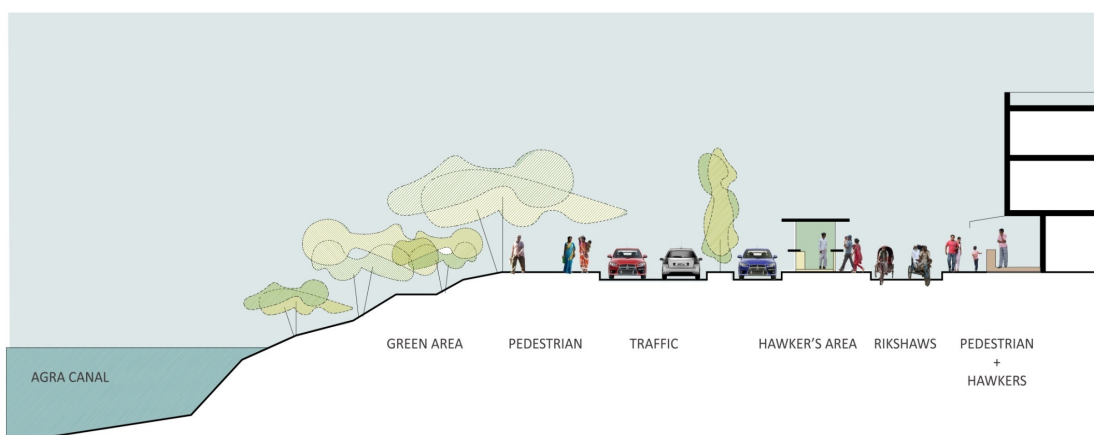
(4m). The section provides enough room for having more public spaces and also legal spaces for Hawkers who can sell to pedestrian and to cars.

The second road referred to as S2 – safety road two: This axis would provide each neighborhood (Batla House, Haji Colony and Shaheen Bagh) and it would influence 10 minutes of safe walkways (170m in zigzag).

Finally, the S3 road– safety road three would provide for the street and influence 5 minutes of safe walkways (100m in zigzag).



*“Safe Edge Net” diagram, with axis roads S1, S2 and S3.*



*Street section of a potential walkway along the canal, structured in a way that not only brings more safety, but also additional economic activities which could be managed by women collectively.*

The students suggested the restructuring of the main equipments and also adding new ones (to make the area safe, more public space, services, etc.). Street width should also be widened, (all long the

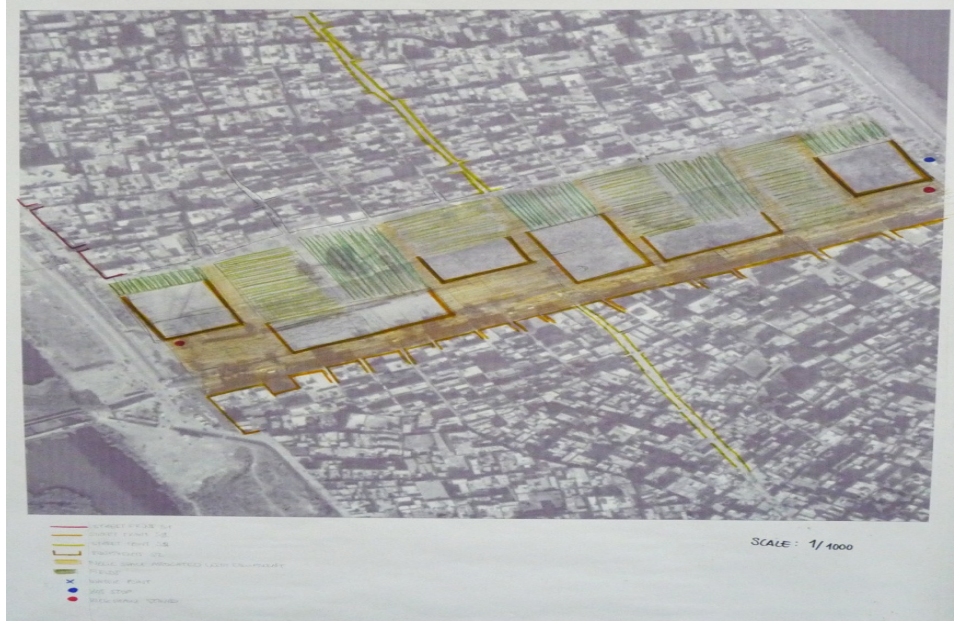
street would be 25m): to set back the street front at the beginning of Batla House, one area (400m<sup>2</sup>) could be modified, as this area is not in a good state right now. From the main road S1, 3 streets S2 begin (see diagram on page 13). These streets already contain public space and its own equipment. Women's associations would ensure the proper functioning of these activities.

Within the available infrastructure identified, here are suggestions that were made, in terms of restoration and allocation for women's groups: "Canteen Weddings" at the community center, washing and ironing centre (by day, near Dobi Ghat) and a night shelter for hawkers (by night).



*Map of suggested changes around Dobi Ghat*

As for Shaheen Bagh, any development plan should take advantage of a big empty land currently existing between Abul Fazal and Shaheen Bagh (4000m<sup>2</sup>). Connection in two directions should be planned for, and the empty space should be restructured having in mind the identity of this area: horticulture. Provide the existing streets with public spaces will also be essential, by creating equipments such as horticulture areas. Main buildings will be located in the extremities of the land and in the intersection of streets S2 and S3 (again, referring to the diagram on page 13). The existing community center could be administered by an NGO and used by all in Abul Fazal and Shaheen Bagh. A migration center should be constructed or an available building should be allocated, to be administered by women, and used by the many poor migrant workers, including rickshaw drivers, who come to live in this area. A water point is also essential for women in the area, not only for their family needs, but also as a point of interaction and socialization for them.



*Map of suggested changes around Shaheen Bagh*

As for the Haji Colony area, which is only a small area of Okhla, it is also one of the most closed and congested. Furthermore, it lacks proper connections with the other areas. There is no provision of equipments, no services, and no appropriate housing. The target plan should connect Haji Colony with the other surrounding neighborhoods, notably through the new roads S1 (see diagram page 13). To provide the necessary economic means to make all these changes, one could take advantage of the horticulture existing.

A night shelter should be built, and later administered by women, for the many rickshaw pullers in the area. Another woman-run canteen would be beneficial, and could also cater to the rickshaw pullers. Additional and appropriate housing as well as a water point are sorely needed in this area.





*Map of suggested changes around Hajji Colony*

### **3.3. Edakochi**

For the study of Edakochi, the work settings were very much different, not only in terms of the area in itself, but also because the previous contacts that were made (i.e. with Kudumbashree, Inspiration, etc.) had been over a year before, and much networking as well as information seeking had to take place before any design could be drawn up for Edakochi.

#### *3.3.1. Culture*

The mix of different religions (Christians, Muslims and Hindus) is very predominant, as temples, mosques and churches are a big part of the community, although Christians form the majority. Contrary to the rest of Kochi and Kerala in general, Edakochi district is quite backwards in terms of education. A major problem reported in that area is that women lack the education and managerial skills necessary to run any entrepreneurial initiative, notably ones that Kudumbashree had tried to put into place. The area being far removed has also posed a problem in terms of project monitoring, which means most micro-enterprise and other such initiatives in the area have failed. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary, in the event that any more development projects, including a WRZ, should be planned in Edakochi, local NGOs should play an active role in implementation and monitoring, while local women should be appropriately trained to ensure that whatever funding and infrastructure is allocated really goes to them<sup>15</sup> and that they should have the skills necessary to achieve economic gains.

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<sup>15</sup> During our interviews with staff from Kudumbashree, it was said that whenever money was given for specific projects in Edakochi, the corrupt, self-appointed heads of neighborhoods would use the money for food or other personal things. Similarly, when women's self-help groups were given startup enterprises, they didn't get sufficient funds to cover all running-costs and so all profits were used for such purposes.

### 3.3.2. Urbanism and spatial layout of the area

There is no urban planning as such in Edakochi. In fact, it could be qualified as a rural area compared to the rest of the city. Only the main road is paved, and most housing settlements concentrate near and around the fishing areas. The problems with this are many, including in terms of women's safety. Most of the poorer houses are located right next to the fishing docks and they are easily accessible. Fishermen returning at night are often inebriated, making it very unsafe for women.

There is no access to running water except at pumps, which are only working four hours out of every day. This means that women, who are traditionally in charge of fetching water, must plan their schedule around this task and waste much time gathering enough water for their entire family during this small window.

Edakochi is also very poorly served by the public transport system, and women especially suffer from this. Indeed, there are some small boats which travel to and from Edakochi to other parts of the city, but women would rather make their routes much longer and use buses, because these boats are traditionally only used by the men.

### 3.3.3. Economic problems

Edakochi is a poor district to begin with, and the local leaders are corrupt, meaning that the little public money which does reach the area is rarely invested in needed infrastructure. Furthermore, the local economy is almost entirely dependant on the fishing industry, with the men catching the fish, and the women drying it, and cleaning out the prawns which are either reserved for exports or given back to men to be sold in the markets. Women, like men, have very little opportunity in terms of income generation.

## 3.4. Solutions for a WRZ

One of the major possibilities would be the development of an eco-tourism village in Edakochi, as no such initiative exists in Kochi, most of it being concentrated in the Fort Cochin area. The beautiful backwater landscape which is also Edakochi's economic backbone could bring in some much needed funds from the booming tourist industry. Such a village should be built using environmentally friendly local materials, such as bamboo, in the tradition of Laurie Baker, the famous architect who made sustainable architecture his trademark in Kerala. Furthermore, it should be run as a women's cooperative, where they could also sell local productions of spices, fish products and traditional art crafts.





Then a proper bus route must be planned and additional boat embarkations to facilitate transport to and from Edakochi, with the boats being managed by women's groups, for them to be women friendly.

A walkway along the ecotourism village which would go along the coast line where there are currently hundreds of Chinese fishing nets, which have come to symbolize Kochi around the world, must be planned for, with a specific beginning, an end point, and landmarks along the way. **Need Google earth maps to be inserted here and more details to be added?**

#### 4. WHERE WE STAND TODAY

As of today, the WRZ has moved from theoretical concept to conceptual design plan, at least in two areas where SAFP has been lobbying, which are Okhla in Delhi and Edakochi in Kochi. From these ideas, we have a basis from which to suggest plans to architecture firms in the area. However, before we do so, we must use our experience, this report, and the plans designed by the students for advocacy and lobbying purposes.

An additional achievement has been raising women's awareness concerning their rights (land rights, property rights, resource rights, safety rights, participatory rights, etc.) and the possibilities offered to them should they claim these rights. Before participating in our interviews, case studies and focus group discussions, most of these women, both in Delhi and in Kochi, had never even thought of themselves as empowered women, beyond their reproductive and caretaking roles. Realizing that they could also actively participate in the development of their communities, earn their own income, manage businesses was entirely new for to them. Hopefully, this questioning will bring on incremental changes in attitudes and in the demands they make from society.

On SAFP's end, the experience of working in collaboration with a team of architecture students was also very beneficial. Much was learned on both sides in terms of project management, negotiating between the advocacy and theoretical aspect and the more technical, architectural point of view. Hopefully, such partnerships will keep being pursued in the future, without which the realization of a WRZ wouldn't be possible.

Securing the support of JMI University was also a very big step for SAFP and determined the success of this design experiment. The guidance and expertise of students and professors, coupled with the fresh outlook and innovative ideas of the Spanish students made for a successful study and preliminary design. JMI's faculty of Architecture has expressed its interest in continuing the partnership with Barcelona, perhaps making it into an exchange program between the two schools. Hopefully, the partnership with the Barcelona School of Architecture will continue in the same vein.

#### 5. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE AND WITH WHOM

The next task SAFP staff and its collaborators must focus on will be to approach local and regional community and political leaders, ministers, municipal corporations and other relevant authorities and get them to agree to earmark available land for a Sustainable development zone, which will include a WRZ. This was achieved through intense lobbying in the city of Kollam's Integrated District Development Plan (IDPP), and although nothing has been implemented yet, this step is necessary and has to be replicated elsewhere.

Once a provision for a WRZ is officially sanctioned in an area development plan or district gender sub-plan, as provided for by the Indian Constitution, we will have to approach corporations and builders who would fund and implement such a project. With sustainable development fast becoming the only way to

go, the long-term benefits, including job creation, new productions and technological innovation far outweigh those of investing in traditional development projects. Private actors can be convinced both on the basis of future profit and by enhancing their corporate social responsibility profile, to invest in the building of WRZs.

But the implementation of this project will not be possible without the women group's continuous support, as well as the support of the area's religious leaders, be it liberal minded Ulemas in Okhla, or priests in Kochi. A partnership with these community leaders must be sought not only to ensure the success of the project, but to have the political clout necessary to convince local and regional governments to take on the WRZ.

We will continue to work with local students and faculty members, and try to approach others, in order to continue our architectural plans, but also to build a Youth Awareness Campaign on Women and Planning. Students in universities across India today will soon enter the workforce and begin their careers as architects, town planners, urban and rural developers, or policy makers. Considering the country's current fast-paced development, it is essential that the next generation take this development in the right direction, and giving women an equal share in this planning will ensure India's future success.

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