

Feminization of the Urban Sector

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Introduction

1. The quality of city management strongly influences the attractiveness of the location of business firms and the growth potential of the city. Two inter-related phenomena affect the efficiency of a city and the fair treatment of its residents. First, urban labour supply tends to expand as rapidly, if not more rapidly than urban labour demand. Second, the demand for urban services including transport, housing and public services, expands more rapidly than their supply. If labour demand and service supply are not efficiently managed by the government, imbalances will result. In this context, the rise of female labour participation and their need for urban services will lead to a need for gender dimension in the consideration of urban growth and development. The era of the feminization of the urban sector has arrived.

Profile of Urban Human Capital

2. The composition and quality of urban labour supply is determined by education and skill level of the population as well as its health and nutritional status. In Malaysia, there is changing profile in the human capital. There is a consistent trend in the intake of undergraduates that indicates an increasing number of better qualified female graduates that outnumber the males. From 2006 to 2010, the intake of female undergraduates in the 20 Malaysian public universities has been at an average of 60 percent of the total student admission. In three cases, UPSI, USIM and UniSZA, the female intake was about 70 per cent in 2010 (August).
3. For academic staff at universities, the number of female academic staff began to exceed their male counterparts since 2008. This reflects the increasingly educated female demographics in Malaysia.

Table 1: Population Census in Malaysia (1991-2009)

Year	1991			2000			2009		
	Male (‘000)	Female (‘000)	Total	Male (‘000)	Female (‘000)	Total	Male (‘000)	Female (‘000)	Total
Malaysia	9,416	9,130	18,546	11,965	11,529	23,494	14,407	13,899	28,306
Kuala Lumpur	648	614	1,262	702	696	1,398	839	817	1,656
Johor Bahru	1,119	1,068	2,187	1,430	1,332	2,762	1,739	1,645	3,384
Penang	563	570	1,133	664	668	1,332	778	799	1,577

4. According to the figures shown in **Table 1** of the Population Census in Malaysia from 1991 until 2009, the population in three major cities increased from 4.58 million in 1991 to 5.49 million in 2000, and to 6.62 million in 2009. The total female population slightly expanded from 2.25 million in 1991 to 2.69 million in 2000, reaching 3.26 million in 2009. The urban growth in the three cities did not correspond to a corresponding growth in female population except in the case of Kuala Lumpur. For Penang and Johor Bahru, the percentage of female population remained more or less constant at 50 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively. By looking at this trend, it shows that the population of women in urban areas, especially in major cities are increasing for the past 18 years. The reasons for concentration in urban areas or large cities are due to best employment opportunities and high living standards due to convenience and attractiveness, and better educational and medical functions. The cities have a concentration of central functions, such as political authority, centres of economic activity, leading universities and etc.

Employment and Labour Market Policies

5. The participation of female in the labour force has shown an increasing trend in the Human Development Index (HDI) Rank 2008. The labour force participation of men and women in the Asia and Pacific region is as shown in **Table 2.**

Table 2: Labour Force Participation in Asia-Pacific Region (1990-2007)

By HDI Rank (2008)		Labour Force Participation					
		Male (% of male population aged 15+)			Female (% of female population aged 15+)		
		1990	2000	2008	1990	2000	2008
10	Japan	77.4	76.4	73.0	50.1	49.3	49.0
23	Singapore	79.3	78.7	76.0	50.7	52.3	54.0
26	Korea	73.4	73.3	72.0	47.0	48.8	50.0
66	Malaysia	80.6	81.0	80.0	42.9	44.3	44.0
102	Sri Lanka	79.2	77.9	75.0	45.5	38.4	35.0
111	Indonesia	81.4	85.0	85.1	50.3	50.2	52.0
134	India	84.7	82.6	81.0	35.1	34.3	33.0
146	Bangladesh	89.1	86.8	83.0	62.0	54.8	58.0

Source: World Bank 2009

However, there are limits for women such as the "glass ceiling" to women's careers. Unfortunately, in this milleninium there still exists inequality in wages although there are laws guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. Women still

earn only 54 to 90 percent of what men earn in the Asia-Pacific. Wage gaps arise from women’s predominance in lower-paid positions; interruptions in their work life, often related to family concerns; and the lower valuation of typically female occupations. Other obstacles include biases of some employers and women’s generally weak bargaining power. Several factors combine to keep women in low-paying and vulnerable urban jobs such as the use of informal networks of neighbours, friends and relatives to find employment and tendency to choose work close to where they live. Domestic care work continues to be considered women’s responsibility, even when women work long hours outside the home. Women in low-paying jobs also often do not have the means to build capabilities that might allow them to move to a higher level. In comparison, male workers’ contacts as well as mobility are greater than women.

6. In Japan, according to the National Personnel Authority (NPA), as of 15 January 2008, the total number of female civil service personnel within the Japanese Central Government is approximately 49,728 personnel. This represents only 16.8 percent out of the 296,000 total civil service personnel under the NPA Pay Scheme. Comparatively, in Malaysia, there is a higher percentage of female civil service personnel in the Malaysian Government, of about 53 per cent for the past five years, as data shown in **Table 3**, from 2006 until 12 November 2010.

Table 3: Total Number of Malaysian Civil Service Personnel and Division of Gender

Year	Total Number of Personnel	Male	Female	Female Percentage
2006	894,901	417,593	477,308	53.3

2007	943,927	440,759	503,168	53.3
2008	1,003,152	470,675	532,477	53.0
2009	1,053,938	495,026	558,912	53.0
2010	1,076,761	505,089	571,672	53.1

Source: Data from Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), PSD

7. With regards to the civil service personnel development, Asian countries such as Japan placed a high importance on women personnel training, especially those in the urban areas. Every year, the National Personnel Authority (NPA) organises “Empowerment Seminar for Women Employees,” targeting female personnel with the objective of improving and developing their careers. This training programme started in 2006, and the basis of this training is the ‘Guidelines concerning the Enlargement of the Recruitment and Promotion of Women Public Employees’. The focus of this training is on human network building between female personnel, for the purpose of enhancing promotion, with the expectation that more female officers will be promoted to managerial positions. NPA decided to develop this training programme, based on the fact that, compared to the other developed countries, Japan is behind other countries in terms of participation of female personnel. Therefore, this new training approach is an opportunity to enhance female personnel participation in social affairs.

Data on the implementation of this training is as shown in the **Table 4** below:

Table 4: Empowerment Seminar for Women Employees of the Japanese Central Government (for the Fiscal Year 2007)

Area	Tokyo Headquarter	Other cities*	Total
Participants	27	300	327
Open seminar for female officials in Tokyo Headquarter		Participants	101

*In Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, Chubu, Kinki, Chugoku, Shikoku and Kyushu region.

Source: National personnel Authority of Japan (NPA)

8. The women personnel training should be considered as one of the important training approach to the Malaysian Government, not only to improve the government's service delivery by strengthening female personnel's competency and networking, but also to maintain their skills and knowledge after certain periods of leave. This argument is based on the fact that the Malaysian Government is not only going to implement 90 days maternity leave for female personnel, but also introduces 1,825 days (five years) unpaid leave to take care of or raise children in 2007. According to Rees (1992), female employees that return to work (after maternity leave or long period of leave) would meet with difficulties in gaining the needed skills, especially the ICT skills. Thus, it is significant that this kind of training should be considered by the Malaysian Government to be one of the strategic components of its personnel training system.
9. Government assistance to local businesses and SMEs to stay afloat in difficult economic times also helps to keep more women employed.

Urban Transport

10. A highly functional, comprehensive and safe urban transportation system such as mass transit system, which connects residential areas or suburbs to the inner city would make it safer for women to commute to work and live in urban areas. Urban public transport in the form of shuttle services by request should be available during night time and weekends for women who work in shifts to ensure their safety, especially from any sexual violence and harassment. The latest development in the Malaysian urban public transportation system, which is the introduction of a special commuter coach for women by KTMB is a good example of feminization of urban policy. Authority and also urban public transportation operators should jointly organize awareness programmes and campaigns to reduce sexual violence and sexual harassment on women in transportations and stations, and their drivers and station workers trained to discourage such harassment.

Access to Social Services

11. Urban policy which are gender-friendly also draws on the context of access to social services and welfare provisions. To improve the people's welfare, it is helpful to try to understand something about the way that people are, and how welfare policies relate to their situation. Social roles, or expectations, determine the range of opportunities for women and men. However, women are exposed to "Role strain" when they are unable to cope with all responsibilities, which according to Goode (1960), "the felt difficulty in fulfilling the role obligation". This means that women are predicted to be exposed to "role strain" as an effect of failure of "role bargains" and "role behavior". This would explain how in urban family institution, women have to take up various roles with increasing overload demand for their responsibilities as wives, mothers, employees and sometimes as 'breadwinners'. This may affect their mental and emotional state. The

current trends in Europe shows that urban women “role bargains” and “role behavior” are changing:

- i. a *strong* 'male breadwinner' model assumes that women's incomes are secondary to men's. This is the model in the United Kingdom and Ireland;
- ii. a *modified* model gives women a special status in relation to motherhood. This is the model in France; and
- iii. a *weak* male breadwinner model allows for women to act as breadwinners in the same way as men. This is the pattern in Sweden, where there have been attempts to introduce a 'dual breadwinner' pattern.

Understanding gender divisions is important for feminization of urban policy. Issues affecting women are one of the agenda which the urban policy must address, including concerns of social services and welfare that are very much related to gender.

12.It is becoming a common phenomenon for urban women in Malaysia nowadays to delay childbearing. This leads to the decreasing birth rates in Malaysia for the past 17 years, as shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Crude Birth Rate in Malaysia (2000 – 2007)

	1990	2000	2005	2006	2007
Total	29.9	23.4	18.5	18.1	18.1
Male - Per('000)	28.4	23.7	18.7	18.4	18.3
Female - Per('000)	27.4	23.1	18.2	17.7	17.8

The reasons for the delay and falling birthrates are due to the difficulties of living in an urban society such as the high cost of having children, the changing role of women and the economic effect of increasing female employment. Therefore,

affordable, safe and quality day care centres should be made available in urban areas for new born babies and small children to enable working women to concentrate on their jobs. Urban authority should consider providing more support and subsidies to existing day care centres so they can provide better services to women in the urban areas. For instance, in Japan, the daycare nursing programmes or services are provided by city governments or municipalities with guidelines and monitoring by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. When a city government decides to establish a daycare centre, the national government will provide subsidies based on a special formula where they give grants to cover construction costs, while the local authority is required to hire a fixed and sufficient number of well-trained nurses for the daycare centres they operate. In addition, the local authority must also conform to the national standards for public space and facilities. Another related urban service which should be made available for new pregnant women and mothers with small children is the provision of wellness centers for those who are neglected by their spouses and families, and who would easily become victims of post-partum depression.

Urban Housing

13. Urban housing should provide park, playground, recreation area or community garden to give women space to enjoy better quality family time with their spouses and children. Important places such as market, school, kindergarten, clinic, dental, clothes shop, hair salon and restaurant should be established in the same or near to residential neighbourhood. Well-funded public library and community centre are also essential. For example, in Japan, progress is being made toward realization of a city centre in which working and living spaces are brought close together, as opposed to the traditional city centre that lacks vitality and serves only as a business area. For example, in the Roppongi Hills area, which is a realization of this new

urban working and living spaces concept, over 30 million people visited the area in just the first 6 months after it opened. This is a proof that this kind of urban space is being accepted by the public.

14. Urban housing environment guidelines should stipulate security measures such as better lighting in urban housing projects, especially in flats and apartments that usually have long, dark, and potentially dangerous stairways and secluded corners.

15. A progressive urban policy should also include a comprehensive eviction prevention programmes for women, especially those who are heads of the low-income households or single parents. This is due to the fact that population continues to migrate into urban areas, that landlords have strong incentives to push out lower-income tenants many of whom are women for new occupancies with higher rentals. Thus, by establishing the eviction prevention programmes, the low-income tenants women can be safeguarded from being displaced and be given sufficient time to address their financial problems.

Health and Nutrition

16. To enable urban policies to be gender-friendly, considerations on health, nutrition and quality of life should be given due attention in all urban or spatial planning. A more inclusive and sensitive community health centers in urban areas should be established to provide disease prevention, medical treatment and services to all patients regardless of social status or ability to pay. These centers should also be equipped to provide maternity care,

reproductive health care services for women, including on baby care, sexual health education and neo-natal care. Lack of focus on these health services would certainly lead to maternal mortality and spread of fatal diseases such as AIDS. According to the 'Asia-Pacific Human Development Report 2010' by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), severe gender inequality has given rise to heightened HIV vulnerability among women in Asia.

17. The proportion of women among people living with HIV in Asia is growing, from 19 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2007. In South Asia, more than 60 per cent of over one million HIV-positive youths aged 15-24 are women. The impact of HIV is most evident at the household level in Asia. Urban poverty contributes to putting women at risk from HIV through their sexual exploitation. In Malaysia, HIV and AIDS reported cases from 2004 until 2008 shows an increasing number of women who are infected as shown in **Table 5** and **Table 6**:

Table 6: Reported HIV cases in Malaysia, 2004-2008

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Male	5,731	5,383	4,955	3,804	2,988
Female	696	737	875	745	704
Total	6,427	6,120	5,830	4,549	3,692
% Female	10.8	12.0	15.0	16.4	19.1

Table 7: Reported AIDS cases in Malaysia, 2004-2008

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008

Male	1,002	1,004	1,620	937	795
Female	146	177	222	193	146
Total	1,148	1,181	1,842	1,130	941
% Female	12.7	15.0	12.1	17.1	15.5

18. Current research shows that Malaysia is facing “obesity crisis” due to the negative effects of unhealthy foods and bad eating habits, especially of its urban population. Instant or fast food with less nutrition and huge amount of calories such as burgers, carbonated drinks, ‘roti canai’ and ‘teh tarik’ due to convenience. Local government can help by promoting more healthy lifestyle and eating habits, especially to women who are usually in charge of preparing meals.

Education

19. In the aspect of education, Government should increase the female students quota for scholarship beside providing more places in universities due to the increasing number of excellent female students every year.

Security and Protection

20. Urban women need security and protection from crime and sexual violence and harassment. Therefore, it is important to organize violence prevention that focuses on community-based solutions rather than increase on protection. For example, local government should reach out to prevent violence and help victims of violence get the legal assistance they need. Groups that focus on working with men to prevent violence are scarce but incredibly important.

Conclusion

21. In conclusion, the gender matters related to employment and labour market policy, social housing and services, urban transportation, health and nutrition, education, and security are vital aspects in all urban systems and policies. These are all sustainability aspects that need to be addressed consistently, if a better quality of life is to be provided for urban women.

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