Analysing Women's Participation: Essential for Upgrading Informal Settlements
(Case Study of Abak Neighborhood, Region No.1 of Tehran)

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Extended Abstract

Introduction
The expansion of informal settlement, particularly in the developing countries, can be considered as a serious challenge for the achievement of different dimensions of sustainable development. This unpleasant phenomenon which pursued the urban poverty and changed the approaches to the above mentioned problem is the outcome of exercising a top-down policy in the development programs of these countries. As a result the clearance approach is being replaced by participation, empowerment and upgrading ones. People participation in urban planning is indeed a pragmatic approach to the problem of urban poverty. It is supposed that participation in informal settlement’s upgrading programs is not only important for the empowerment of their residents, social capital formation but the success of these programs led to more participation. So the essentiality of understanding and analyzing the potentials and the factors for resident’s participation of these neighborhoods are inevitable for achieving the effective participation and is a realistic approach to the problem of such a settlements. The role of women as half of the informal settlement's population with their sense of motherhood and concerns in bringing up their children in a suitable, safe and healthy environment(physically and socially) must not be ignored in upgrading programs. The present research attempts to understand the effective factors in women's participation in the process of upgrading Abek neighborhood. Accordingly it is assumed that there is a significant correlation between the women's socio-economic status and their knowledge of their neighborhood's socio-spatial

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problems with their tendency for participating in renewal programmer of their neighborhood. Also, the shortage of women's suitable land uses in the study area as a motivation for their participation was assumed to be related to the urban management’s ignorance regarding the role of women's participation in upgrading such a settlements.

Methodology
This research conducted by analytical-descriptive method, the data, collected by means of library search and land survey by questionnaire and interview. Abek neighborhood is selected as the spatial framework for this research. The Population (N) of this area includes those women over 30 years old, which were 683 people out of the total number of women's population in the study area. The numbers of population sample were estimated by probability binomial distribution (kocheran equation). For the more accurate estimation a pilot sampling was carried out. According to which p and q was calculated and equaled to 85 and 15 percent. The probability level was 95 percent. Accordingly the numbers of sample population were calculated as 87 but for the matter of accuracy and reducing the sampling error it was increased to 100. In order to allow the sample population to express themselves the questionnaire was mainly designed with the open question. Then the questionnaires were completed randomly. For the better result, the data were first summarized by descriptive statistics and then analyzed by Pearson correlation co-efficient as well as factor analysis.

Results and Discussion
The findings of the present research shows that; although the population sample's socio-economic characters are low (with 74 per cent either close or below the mean level) but due to their relatively high (52 per cent) sense of place i.e. above the mean level the rate of participation among 62 percent of them were either near or above the mean. This is also statistically approved by correlation matrix between the population sample's senses of place with the rate of their participation. The result shows that the higher the sense of place among the samples the higher their tendency for participation. On the other hand the investigation between the rates of the population sample participation with their socio-economic status indicates that the high socio-economic status of the samples does not necessarily mean the increase in the rate of their participation. In fact the rates of participation among the women with lower socio-economic status were unexpectedly higher. Notwithstanding the fact that the low socio-economic status of women can weaken their role in the process of renewal (due to the lack of financial ability), but based on the findings of this research which showed the high women's tendency for participation - due to their sense of place, motherhood and so on... - one can be optimistic on women’s contribution in renewal process of these neighborhood too.

The other finding of this research based on the land survey and collected data by the questionnaire shows the lack of urban management’s adequate attention to the important role of women's participation in the renewal programmers of such a settlements as Abek. This is proved by the inadequacy of cultural, educational and recreational land uses and spaces which are
essential for women's participation in under study area.

Thus; if the aim of urban managers is the renewal of these neighborhoods by the resident's participation they are obliged to rely on the women's participation and accordingly be aware of the effective factor which motivates their participation. Therefore planning for provision of cultural and social land uses such as training and skilled centers as well as providing the women with employment opportunity, can not only promotes their socio-economic status but their sense of place which eventually led to their more participation.

**Conclusion**

From the research findings it can be concluded that the willingness of the women sample for participating in their neighborhood’s upgrading programs is mostly related to their sense of motherhood and their will for the betterment of their children environment rather than an organized empowerment program. This is more interesting when the analysis of data showed that there has not been any correlation between the women sample level of education and their willingness to participate in upgrading programs. Although the importance of level of education must not be disregarded for the women to play a more effective role in urban development programs as whole, but as mentioned above the low level of women sample of the study area has not been an intervening factor for them to feel unable to participate and not to be useful in this programs. So by having knowledge of such deriving force as a sense of motherhood the urban managers should not delay in providing the women -as a half population of these neighborhood- with suitable land uses which can empower them to be more organized and enable and therefor more effective in the above mentioned program.

**Keywords:** Informal Settlement, Women Participation, Empowerment, Abek Neighborhood.