

Innovation and digital technology to enhance the participation of women and girls in cities

“Without innovation, we cannot meet the challenges of our time.” – Message from the UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the UN Innovation Toolkit.

Organizer and co-organizers: UN-Habitat, Global Utmaning, Pangea Accelerator, Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI), Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ghana, SafetiPin, AGGI

Date: Wed 24 Mar 2021, 09:00-10:15 EST

Type: Virtual Panel discussion, Zoom

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Overall theme CSW65:

Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Description of the event:

Innovation and advancements in digital technology are transforming cities. They are transforming industries, the way we do business and the way we receive key basic services. Innovation and technology are also influencing urban development and the way cities are governed. Some are calling this the 4th Industrial revolution and with most of the world now urbanized, cities are where much of this revolution is taking place.

At the United Nations, key documents such as the Secretary General’s [strategy on new technologies](#) and the [Roadmap on digital cooperation](#), underscore the critical role that innovation and technology are to seen play in delivering sustainable development including gender equality.

Innovation and digital technologies have created new communication and collaboration channels, allowing for new approaches to political engagement as well as participation in urban governance and development outcomes. Like many opportunities however, it is important to understand who benefits and how. With Agenda 2030’s commitment to gender equality across all sectors of development, how innovation and digital technology empower women and girls must be understood, engaged with and monitored.

Towns and cities around the world provide a dynamic setting to understand the nexus between innovation, digital technology and the empowerment of women and girls. Innovation and technology have the potential to serve as key drivers of change in cities and provide opportunities to reach women and girls, particularly those considered left behind. Technology and innovation have provided new decision-making platforms so women and girls can both drive and benefit from sustainable urbanization. This is important given they continue to be under-represented in urban decision-making processes across the globe.

At the same time, there is need to identify and explore how and why digital technologies have facilitated and provided opportunities for women and girls to interact and participate in the democratic space. Technology

can be a catalyst for transformative improvement to the lives of women and girls in cities - but more is needed to understand the principles and pre-conditions which must underpin the innovation and technology in order that it delivers change on the ground that puts women at the heart of digital innovation.

With the COVID 19 pandemic, the internet and smartphones have become real "tools for citizenship" and have shown how serious the gender gap in ICT is and how the lack of digital literacy has increased all economic and social inequalities. However, women around the world not only have fewer digital tools available and fewer digital skills than men, but there is also a large gender gap in the number of women and men employed in the ICT sector with unequal economic outputs, fewer opportunities for professional growth, and difficult access to leadership positions. In Europe, for example, women in ICT account for only 17.7% of the entire digital sector" and the gender gap in leadership positions is still almost double than that found in the overall labour force.

This is a central issue. Since technology is not only something that is discovered but also is created, this also means that the design of technologies that enable digital life is largely entrusted to men and also that the datasets on which algorithms work are biased by the underrepresentation of women. Encouraging girls into STEM professions and strengthening basic digital skills in women, especially the elderly, in slums, urban suburbs, and rural areas, is therefore strategic for equality and development of the whole community.

This event aims to showcase a series of impactful initiatives that have used innovation and technology to change the lives of women and girls in cities. The event will focus on how the innovation or technology has improved participatory processes in planning, access to land and basic services, decision making in slum upgrading, and in participatory budgeting. The event will explore how innovation and technology can empower women and girls and contribute to the learning required to understand the principles and pre-conditions needed to deliver gender responsive technology and innovation.

Outcomes of the event:

Participants will learn more about practical and transformative innovations and digital technologies helping to deliver gender responsive cities. Participants will also learn about the principles and pre-conditions required to ensure the innovation and digital technologies deliver the gender responsive outcomes.

Guiding Questions:

Each presentation will be 8-10 minutes sharp. Each presenter is encouraged to focus on the strategic elements of their work, not the detail of the innovation or digital technology per se. Below are some guiding questions to structure the presentation:

1. Briefly outline the project and the innovation and technology used to empower or change the lives of women and girls in cities.
2. Explain how the innovation or the digital technology made a difference? What are the key features or characteristics of this innovation or digital technology that empowers women and girls and enables them to substantially contribute to sustainable urbanization and transformative change on the ground?
3. Based on your work, reflect on the possible principles or pre-conditions required for innovation or digital technology in order to deliver gender responsive outcomes in cities? What are the underlying factors that made this innovation and digital technology deliver gender responsive outcomes? Aside the innovation or digital technology, what other elements are required or necessary to achieve gender-responsive outcomes?

Facilitator: Madam Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Mayor of Freetown

Panelists

Presentation title	Short description	Presenter/Partner
Enhancing Tenure Security of Urban Poor Communities Through the Use and Application of Low-Cost Geospatial Tools – The Case of Muntinlupa City, Philippines.	Presents the Muntinlupa City application of the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM), a pro-poor, gender-responsive and participatory tool to demonstrate how the application of low-cost technology and participatory approaches can be integrated in mobilizing urban poor communities as an empowerment tool to increase women’s leadership and participation and recognize their role in enhancing tenure security.	Ruby Papeleras, Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI) – National Capital Region (NCR) Coordinator
Her City Platform	Her City is a digital toolbox that supports urban development from a girl’s perspective. The toolbox is a joint urban development initiative by the independent think tank Global Utmaning and UN-Habitat. We guide urban actors to implement projects through a step-by-step methodology providing an open and digitally accessible platform for all. Her City provides municipal professionals, urban actors and local decision-makers with a solid toolbox for mainstreaming youth, gender and socioeconomic perspectives by strategically involving girls and young women in urban planning and design.	Tove Julin, Project Manager Global Utmaning
Approaches to women empowerment and gender equality in COVID-19 in informal settlements and slums	Presents the value of multi-governance frameworks, innovations and technology for engaging communities for community-led responses during COVID-19 and in general the needs and opportunities in informal settlements moving towards building back better, reducing inequalities and poverty, with full participation leaving no one and no place behind. Reference will be the UN-Habitat Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme initiated by the Organization of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries and financed by the European Commission as well as complementary actions financed by the COVID-19 Emergency Fund of UN-Habitat financed by SIDA.	Ms Nora Pappoe Senior Development Planning Officer. Policy, Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring &Evaluation; Directorate Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ghana
Innovations empowering women participation in the construction industry	While most industries have had a gradual increase in the number of women employees, getting women into construction has been considerably difficult and experiencing downward trends. This presentation highlights how one innovation in Kenya is changing this narrative.	Ms. Anne Lawi, Kenya Country Director for Pangea Accelerator
Safetipin: An innovative tool creating Safe Public Spaces for Women	Safetipin is a social enterprise that uses technology to collect data for community and women's safety. Safetipin has collaborated to improve safety in more than 20 cities in India and globally. Kalpana has worked on developing and safe city programs for Delhi and other cities in India and globally.	Kalpana Viswanath, Co-founder of SafetiPin; Member of the Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) of UN Habitat and a board member of ICPC , SLOCAT and Jagori.

Programme:

Time	Presentation	Partner/presenter
9am-9.05am	Introduction	Facilitator
9.05-9.55am	5 panel presentations	Presenters
10am-10.25am	Moderated discussion	Facilitator
10.25-10.30am	Closing remarks and thank you	UN-Habitat