

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at digitalization from a gender and development perspective. Women make family, that family makes society. An educated woman can make her child a responsible person in society. But before all of that women should have a strong place in family. In this context gender equality is most important in society. Women and men are equals in every field of all work. There should be equal opportunities for men and women. Women's empowerment can be understood to mean that the "rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female". According to the UN Population Fund, an empowered woman has a sense of self-worth¹. Gender equality is most important in Women empowerment and cultural sustainable development. By providing the same opportunities to women and men, including in decision-making in all kinds of the allocation of resources.

Keywords: Empowerment, Sustainable Development. Growth, Gender, Environment.

Introduction

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) made important provisions for the recognition of women's contributions and their full participation in sustainable development. Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration and "Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development" of Agenda 21 make commitments to strengthening the position of women. The concept of sustainable development Sustainable development is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". It therefore encapsulates the needs of both women and men. Intra generational equity cannot be achieved without addressing the gender relations which underlie prevailing inequity. The most pervasive form of inequality in the world and without serious steps to tackle it, sustainable development cannot be achieved.

The Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment can be defined as a "multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important". Gender role expectations are at high level in society. In the late 1980s the report Our Common Future by the World Commission

Suggestion for our children, their children and grand children, ensuring that the resources they will require for their own well-being are not depleted, and that the natural environment into which they will be born will not be polluted or destroyed.² Sustainable development is conceptualized as resting on economic development, social development and environmental protection three interrelated pillars.

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¹ UN Women: "Position paper on Monitoring Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Opportunities and Challenges", 2015.

² UN Economic Commission for Europe: "Empowering women for sustainable development", Sixty-fourth session, Geneva, 29-31 March 2011

The preservation is a A fourth pillar of cultural diversity has been proposed that reinforce each other and bring about sustainable development. Sustainable development can be revealed as a multifaceted and dynamic process.¹

It is important not to conceptualize as a question of social development alone, but as a cross-cutting issue in economic and socio-cultural development and environmental protection. Sustainable development has been defined.²

Empowering Women for Cultural Sustainable Development

Women's empowerment is a process and Sustainable development encompasses socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects and thus covers an enormously wide domain. So far gender issues have been primarily dealt with as a social issue. This is reflected in the areas of poverty reduction, education and health care in the Millennium Development Goals. UNDP coordinates global and national efforts to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, and environment and sustainable development.³

UNDP focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment not only as human rights, but also because they are a pathway to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.⁴

"Supporting the 2030 Agenda is a top priority for UNDP," said UNDP Administrator Helen Clark. "The SDGs provide us with a common plan and agenda to tackle some of the pressing challenges facing our world such as poverty, climate change and conflict. UNDP has the experience and expertise to drive progress and help support countries on the path to sustainable development."

An Overview of Digitalization and Digital Transformation

According to the fact "Digitalisation is the use of digital technologies and data as well as interconnection that results in new or changes to existing activities These processes lead to shape what is commonly referred to as the digital economy.

The OECD (2020) defines it as "all economic activity reliant on, or significantly enhanced by the use of digital inputs, including digital technologies, digital infrastructure, digital services and data. It refers to all producers and consumers, including government, that are utilizing these digital inputs in their economic activities".⁵ Digital technologies appeared first in the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector itself, and subsequently spread into related activities, such as media and leisure.¹ The digital transformation that was experienced over the last 20 years has not only changed the way that people communicate, but also impacted the way the economy functions.⁶

Major Global and Regional Commitments to Overcome the Digital and Gender Divides

Without access to technology, it is difficult to develop technical skills and it is redundant to have access to technology without first having the skill to utilize it". The gender digital divide is referred to by Thystrup (2020) as the "impaired access to IT infrastructure or IT skills education based on gender".

Over the last two decades, countries have taken steps to close digital divides.⁷ In this process, however, the long-standing gaps between gender eqation have remained unresolved and digitalization has contributed to widening them.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 5 aims at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Target b sets a clear link between ICT and women's empowerment: "Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women". Progress towards its fulfillment is tracked by measuring the "Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex"⁸.

¹ UN World Commission on Environment and Development: "Our Common Future". March 1987.

² Hosman, L. and Pérez Comisso, M.A. (2020), "How Do We Understand "Meaningful Use" of the Internet? Of Divides, Skills and Socio-technical Awareness", *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society* 18(3): 461-479

³ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (2019), *The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, Bonn: IPBES Secretariat.

⁴ UN Economic Commission for Europe: "Empowering women for sustainable development", Sixty-fourth session, Geneva, 29–31 March 2011

⁵ UN World Commission on Environment and Development: "Our Common Future". March 1987.

⁶ Chandra, R. and Collis, S. (2021), "Digital Agriculture for Small-scale Producers: Challenges and Opportunities", *Communication of the Association of Computing Machinery* 64: 12.

⁷ Miskinis, C. (2019), "Digitization in agriculture: what it means and what you need to know" (February 2019) Challenge Advisory,

⁸ Chandra, R. and Collis, S. (2021), "Digital Agriculture for Small-scale Producers: Challenges and Opportunities", *Communication of the Association of Computing Machinery* 64: 12.

The Resources and Appropriation Theory and its Relevance for the Gender Digital Divide

The resources and appropriation theory argues that social inequalities are associated with an unequal distribution of resources, and that an unequal distribution of resources leads to disparities in access to and use of the Internet (Van Dijk, 2005). The process of “appropriation” to the Internet is influenced by personal/social and positional inequalities; age, gender and ethnicity are frequently observed as the cause of the digital divide, along with education attainment and occupation.¹ It is estimated about 60 per cent used the Internet in 2022 (ITU, 2022). Box 2 shows differences in Internet use between regions since the early 2000s; as of now, 92 per cent in developed countries is using the Internet, compared to 66 per cent in other developing countries, and only around 36 per cent in least-developed countries (LDCs).

E-commerce Opportunities

E-commerce can help small businesses – many of which in developing countries are owned by women – by reducing the initial investment costs needed to begin operations. The greater time flexibility associated with online versus offline trade and the possibility to work from any location represent advantages for women who are time and mobility constrained (World Bank and WTO, 2020).

As citizens, women can interact with national and local administrations in a more streamlined, transparent and less time-consuming manner. Technology has the potential to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability of public administration, which can improve women’s access to information, upon condition that investments are made to help women acquire digital skills at par with men.

The Gender Digital Divide - Drivers and Barriers

In addition to digital divides between countries at different levels of development, access and use of digital technologies are also affected by gender.

Women are on average poorer than men and tend to have limited control of household income, they may therefore opt for a basic subscription that allows only limited use of the Internet.² They may also have less access to devices, such as smartphones or laptops, which has an impact on the possibility to use the Internet for business or educational purposes. Among the 23 LDCs where statistics on gender disaggregated mobile phone ownership are available, ownership among women is 13 per cent less than that of men.

Digitalization in Agriculture

In certain cases, as observed in some African countries, women do not have the legal or customary right to own land. Women may also have limited access to financial and banking services. Also, lack – or limited availability – of agricultural extension services for women farmers is often a factor that hinges on women’s productivity as well. All these factors indicate the importance of policy interventions to ensure that gender disparities are overcome, and women are provided with equal opportunities as men to take advantage of digital solutions.

The conclusive section provides policy suggestions towards these goals. Digital technologies can expand access to information on market opportunities (including foreign markets and how to access them), extension and advisory services, prices and products. By doing so, digital technologies can facilitate the integration of smallholders into the domestic, both upstream and downstream, in turn becoming an important instrument for reducing rural poverty and contributing to more sustainable and inclusive development.³ As financial considerations 226 CHAPTER 11 can be a constraint for the adoption of digital technologies, especially in the LDCs, government policies (in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders and in a context in which digital cooperation at the global level is enhanced) are critical to help support the Internet.⁴

Policy Recommendations

This study examined the opportunities that digitalization can provide. It has identified gaps between and within countries that, if not addressed, risk leaving behind countries view that are already at

¹ Hosman, L. and Pérez Comisso, M.A. (2020), “How Do We Understand “Meaningful Use” of the Internet? Of Divides, Skills and Socio-technical Awareness”, *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society* 18(3): 461-479

² Grau-Sarabia, M. and Fuster-Morell, M. (2021), “Gender Approaches in the Study of the Digital Economy: A Systematic Literature Review,” *Palgrave Communications* 8(1): 1-10.

³ Antonio and Tuffley, 2014; OECD, 2019b

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019b), *Digital Opportunities for Trade in Agriculture and Food Sectors*, Paris: OECD Publishing.

the margin of globalization. The centre point of analysis has been on the promises that digitalization can especially bring to women, but also on the gendered barriers and challenges they face. The agricultural sector was selected for sectoral analysis both because it remains a female-intensive sector in many developing countries and because digitalization is a rapidly growing trend within agriculture.

The 2030 Agenda and other global commitments affirm that technological capabilities, especially in ICT, are critical to support women's empowerment, as well as economic productivity, international cooperation and consumption. Technological capabilities set a virtuous circle between access to technology, women's economic empowerment and overall development.

Conclusion

Since digitalization is expected to keep expanding in the coming years, commitments to close gender gaps and digital divides need to be translated into concrete policies and initiatives.¹

There are clear economic benefits for countries to involve more women in the development and in the use of new technologies. However, these positive developments cannot be expected to happen without appropriate supporting measures. Obstacles that negatively impact women's participation in the digital world should be identified, quantified and addressed.

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