ITUWebinars

Promoting gender equality for the use of ICTs in disaster management

8 March 2021
14:30 – 16:00, CET

Join us online!
itu.int/go/Women-ICTs-DM

Event Overview

Aligned with this year's International Women's day theme: "*Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world,*" and to follow up on the advances made on this topic, ITU hosted an online event on March 8th 2021 to highlight the importance of advancing gender equality for the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in disaster risk management, present real experiences on how women have been using technologies to fight COVID-19, and to examine how they have been able to contribute to disaster resilience in their communities.

The 2020 ITU/ETC report [“Women, ICTs and Emergency Telecommunications: Opportunities and Constraints”](#) highlights the importance of women's contributions to, and agency in, both the disaster risk management cycle and the full ICT product life cycle. It finds that gender-based asymmetries exist in both; as well as in the access to, and use of, ICTs in general. These asymmetries widen pre-existing gender-based differentials in mitigating, coping, and adaptive capacities prior to, during, and following disasters.

Women who are otherwise disadvantaged by the triple divide of digital exclusion, rural marginalization, and gender inequalities, face a fourth dimension of risk if they reside in disaster-prone areas.

Panel discussions at this event further examined many of the report's findings and revealed some of the reasons why women benefit less than men from ICTs in disaster risk reduction. These include gender gaps in access and the means to purchase information; opportunities and confidence to engage and participate in the disaster risk management cycle as well as in the ICT product life cycle, from design to deployment to use; opportunities to learn; and deeply rooted perceptions of gender.

During the first panel, which focused on women's empowerment and the link to disaster resilience, panel members discussed cases and opportunities to use ICTs themselves to reduce these gaps, to enable women to take protective measures to reduce their own disaster risk, to make active contributions to disaster risk management, and to take leadership roles to influence disaster and ICT planning and outcomes.

Panel members emphasized that technology is an engine of equality, to include the importance of affordability for both services and devices, skills, and of making sure that support is contextualized (e.g. that information is available in local languages and dialects). The group also discussed the importance of data, and noted that data on connectivity often does not account for women's access to ICTs, particularly if there is only one connection per household or community that is not available to women.

Unique Intersection of Important Issues

Many forums discuss women's issues, impediments to broader access to ICTs, or disaster communications - this event examined the intersection of all three topics. This is of vital importance during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has revealed staggering examples of women's vulnerabilities and the impacts of asymmetries in access to and use of ICTs for disaster resilience.

The second panel included a robust discussion on gender equality, ICTs, and disaster management: challenges and opportunities during the COVID pandemic. The COVID-19 global pandemic has compounded women's vulnerabilities and the impacts of asymmetries in access to and use of ICTs for almost all aspects of economic and social wellbeing. Yet at the same time it has revealed the potency of community-based action, crowd-based innovation, private sector agility and reach, and installed humanitarian systems for disaster mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery. Indeed many agents across the ecosystem with the wherewithal to reduce the double divides of gender and ICT that impact women's disaster resilience have been fully engaged.

Panel members spoke about many inspiring stories and of innovative approaches like blockchain to improve payments to vulnerable communities and adopt new and appropriate technologies. It was also interesting to learn of the way women used technology to become trusted leaders and agents of change. This includes providing mentorship to other women, and shifting perceptions of gender.

We encourage you to view the event recording, which is available on the event website: [Online webinar on "Promoting gender equality for the use of ICTs in disaster management", 08 March 2021, 14:30 to 16:00 CET (itu.int)](#)

Event Speakers and Agenda

Keynote address

- Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)

Moderator

- Ms. Vanessa Gray, Head of Environment and Emergency Telecommunications (EET) division (ITU/BDT)

Panel discussion 1: Women's empowerment and the link to disaster resilience

- Moderator: Ms. Vanessa Gray, Head of EET division
- Panelists:
  - Ms. Sylvia Poll, Head of the Digital Society Division, International Telecommunication Union (ITU/BDT)
  - Ms. Sandra Aceng, Program Manager, WOUGNET Information Sharing and Networking
  - Ms. Diya Nanda, Programme Management Specialist, UN Women Jordan Country Office

Panel discussion 2: Gender equality, ICTs, and disaster management: challenges and opportunities during the COVID pandemic

- Moderator: Dr. Kim Mallalieu, Senior Lecturer, The University of the West Indies and Deputy Chairman, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Trinidad and Tobago
- Panelists:
  - Ms. Maria Saleh, Services for Communities Officer, Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)
  - Ms. Aarti Holla-Maini, Secretary General, EMEA Satellite Operators Association (ESOA)
  - Ms. Branwen Millar, Gender Advisor, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)