

"Women, Technology and the SDGs: Reshaping the Pathways to Change"

September 23

Indian Consulate, New York

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I was well informed with India's unprecedented digital transformation on the world stage but a point of contention that I always debated was the digital parity in terms of access to these technologies to the rural population of India, most importantly the women and the rate of adoption.

At the high-level discussions organized by Reliance Foundation, Observer Research Foundation and United Nations to complement the 77th UNGA discussions, I heard across personal experiences and insights from leaders from multilateral organizations and development sectors directly on how Indian women at the grassroots level are transforming communities with digital technologies are becoming a role model in accelerating progress towards the SDGs.

Anita Bhatia, Assistant Secretary-General, UN Women shared her experience working with women at the grassroots level and spoke about how women in India are redefining the pathways to change through innovative technology solutions in the areas of health, digital literacy, food security, and nutrition, as well as enhancing their ability to access government schemes. Anjali Kaur, Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID also shared a few instances where rural women are using technology to empower not only themselves but also their communities and to bring gender to the fore of the development discourse.

Under Secretary General, Envoy on Technology, United Nations, Amb Amandeep Singh Gill, launched the report "Aspirations, Access & Agency: Women Transforming Lives with Technology" and said that the publication shows that "It's really inspiring how when you bring people, the right process and technology together, magic happens." This ties down to one of the key discussions that we had during one of the classes I am taking this semester. We spoke about how each player has a critical role to play in widespread adoption of a technology – in this case it was the penetration of mobile phone among the rural Indian women. The government played a significant role by designing and formulating a policy intervention taking into account the different barriers such as economic, cultural and social in the case of the rural Indian population, ensuring that women have equal access to connectivity so that they are able to fully participate in the society to access health information, use it for education, government services, financial services. Moreover, given the large population and limited government resources, the role for the private sector in providing the finance and infrastructure and most importantly as discussed in our Innovation for Sustainable Prosperity class, women leaders in India have emerged as agents of technological change and socioeconomic inclusion and are using ICTs to help their communities build pathways to better futures.

Through these conversations, my main takeaways were - India could promote digital financial literacy and the use of ICTs to access banking and financial services. This can be done through imparting digital financial literacy, training communities to operate bank accounts online, and promoting the use of digital payment systems. Secondly, leverage self-help groups to sensitize communities about ICT-enabled self-empowerment since they are particularly well-placed in the social hierarchy within the communities. Third, create platforms to promote the use of technology to spur entrepreneurship and generate livelihoods. Fourth, given that the use of health-based apps and platforms gained momentum during the pandemic, India preserve this momentum and every effort should be made to integrate technology with healthcare systems. Lastly, change mindsets and counter stigmas around women's use of ICTs. It is only through agents of change such as local leaders who can educate communities about the impact of women leaders and the benefits of technology, that these retrograde attitudes will be altered. If a progressive, inclusive society is to be built, women must lead and shape the new moment.

Panel Discussion:

Helen Clark, Former Prime Minister, New Zealand & Board Chair of The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH)

Anita Bhatia, Assistant Secretary-General, UN Women

Anjali Kaur, Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID

Tidhar Wald, Deputy Managing Director, Better Than Cash Alliance

Sylvia G Maier, Clinical Associate Professor, Center for Global Affairs, New York University

Moderator: Vanita Sharma, Advisor, Strategic Initiatives, Reliance Foundation

Launch of the Report:

Amandeep Singh Gill, Under-Secretary-General, Envoy on Technology, United Nations

Valedictory Address:

Auxillia Mngangwa, First Lady, Zimbabwe





WOMEN, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE SDGs

Reshaping The Pathways to Change

SEPTEMBER 23, 2022 | NEW YORK | 11.30 AM



Ministerial Session: The G20 Imperative: Green Growth and Development for All
September 23
Mandarin Oriental, New York
Anushka Shah

This was one of the most enlightening panel discussions I have attended. We all can agree that it is time for the world to seriously think about sustainability, growth, and the global green transition. It is clear more than ever that sustainable development is central for global security and stability, and inclusive green growth is essential for the fight against climate change. To achieve this the world needs to think of catalyzing financial flows, sharing technology and innovation and rebuilding trust in a divided world. This conversation has left me with a fresh perspective on how and whether the G20 stitch together new partnerships, promote more investment in clean and green initiatives and projects as we strive to achieve the 2030 Development Goals.

In the talks about climate change, we often hear about developed nations like the US and China or developing nations such as India and the African continent, but there are so many small nations that are left out of this conversation and not heard. One thing that particularly stood out to me was - As India assumes presidency in the upcoming G-20, Dr. S. Jaishankar, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Government of India emphasized 'The G20 Imperative-Green Growth and Development for All' that the G20 forum will serve as an ideal body to listen to concerns of developing countries. India has invited many nations to participate during its presidency so that more voices get to talk about the real problems of the world which may not necessarily be getting the awareness or recognition that they deserve. From my perspective, this also calls for the need for multilateralism and the importance of its reform.

On the role of the private sector, Borge Brende, President, World Economic Forum, said that the private sector should be an important part of the G20 agenda and could help finance climate change adaptation, an area that needs more attention. He pointed to the important role of multilateral development banks in catalyzing green transitions. Vicky Ford, Minister of State for Development, Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UK, said development efforts must keep climate change in view and innovative financing mechanisms must be deployed to meet the funding needs around the world.

While every leader spoke about the role of the private sector, development banks, financing green transitions in developing nations, aren't these the same conversations that we are having since Copenhagen? The Global North has made several failed promises regarding climate financing. Before COP26, rich nations, such as the US and Canada, moved the deadline of their own pledge to provide \$100 billion per year for climate finance by 2020 (COP15 in Copenhagen) to 2023. Most of the climate finance happening today isn't even reaching the 2015 Paris Agreement Goal (trillions of dollars required each year to restrict global warming) and has been in the form of *loans* and not grants. A lot of the countries in the Global North are also calling this climate finance a "*solidarity fund*". But it's not aid. It's not something that the Global North should be giving to help the Global South. These should be called 'climate reparations' – they act as accountability for the destruction caused to the Global South. We are far from having the necessary transparency and reporting mechanisms, and inclusion needed to tackle the stark urgency of our climate crisis. Development Banks have failed in their commitments, the We are not being flexible enough to react immediately.

This conversation has left me with a thought that I would like to explore over the course at Fletcher - Many of our systems must be seriously restructured. But how can we do that? And what would this possibly look like?



THE G20 IMPERATIVE

Green Growth and Development for All

