



**The UNDP Asia Pacific Gender Equality  
Dispatch** March 2019

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1 - UNDP Thailand

Welcome to the third edition of our bi-annual Gender Equality newsletter from UNDP in Asia and the Pacific!

We are pleased to present to you the new edition of the Gender Equality newsletter. Guided by the progress of the region in areas such as education, health, and economic and political participation, this newsletter has grown to become a communication platform that aims at highlighting how UNDP's programmes have been leveraging gender equality and women's empowerment in order to achieve sustainable development.

Inside this newsletter, you will find four original articles from UNDP Country Offices of the region featuring Pakistan, the Solomon Islands, Cambodia and Bangladesh, highlighting UNDP's wide range of interventions.

We also have the pleasure of featuring articles from UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, presenting work from the LGBTI team on workplace discrimination against LGBTI people, an exclusive interview with Evelyne Batamuliza explaining the interconnected issues of gender equality and climate finance, as well as a photo-story by Mailee Osten-Tan on unpaid care and domestic work.

Inside this newsletter, you will also find two blog articles on UNDP's innovative approaches to prevent gender-based violence in Bhutan, and on the important role of women in innovation throughout the history, written by Christine Wellington Moore. Finally, from our Regional Gender Team, Susie Marie and Luciana Arlidge give their personal reflection on sexual harassment and the power of online movements such as #HearMeToo.

We hope you will enjoy reading these.

*Koh Miyaoi - BRH Regional Gender Advisor*



## Bolstering Women's Independence and Inclusion in Pakistan's Democratic Processes



In developing countries women still remain vastly underrepresented in most areas of social sector development—this is especially true for women's participation in civic, political, and electoral processes - owing to societal norms and lack of knowledge of their fundamental rights.

In Pakistan for instance, women voter turnout has remained lower compared to most low-income developing countries. The gap between male and female registered voters increased from 10.97 million in 2013 to 12.17 million in 2017. If neglected, it was anticipated that in the months leading to the 2018 General Elections, the gap would have further increased. Realising the dire need to take action, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), with support from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), developed a nationwide "Women's National Identity Card (NIC) and Voter Registration Campaign".

During the 9-month period prior to the General Elections, over 4.3 million women were added to the electoral roll, doubling the amount of registrants during the entire period from 2013-2017.

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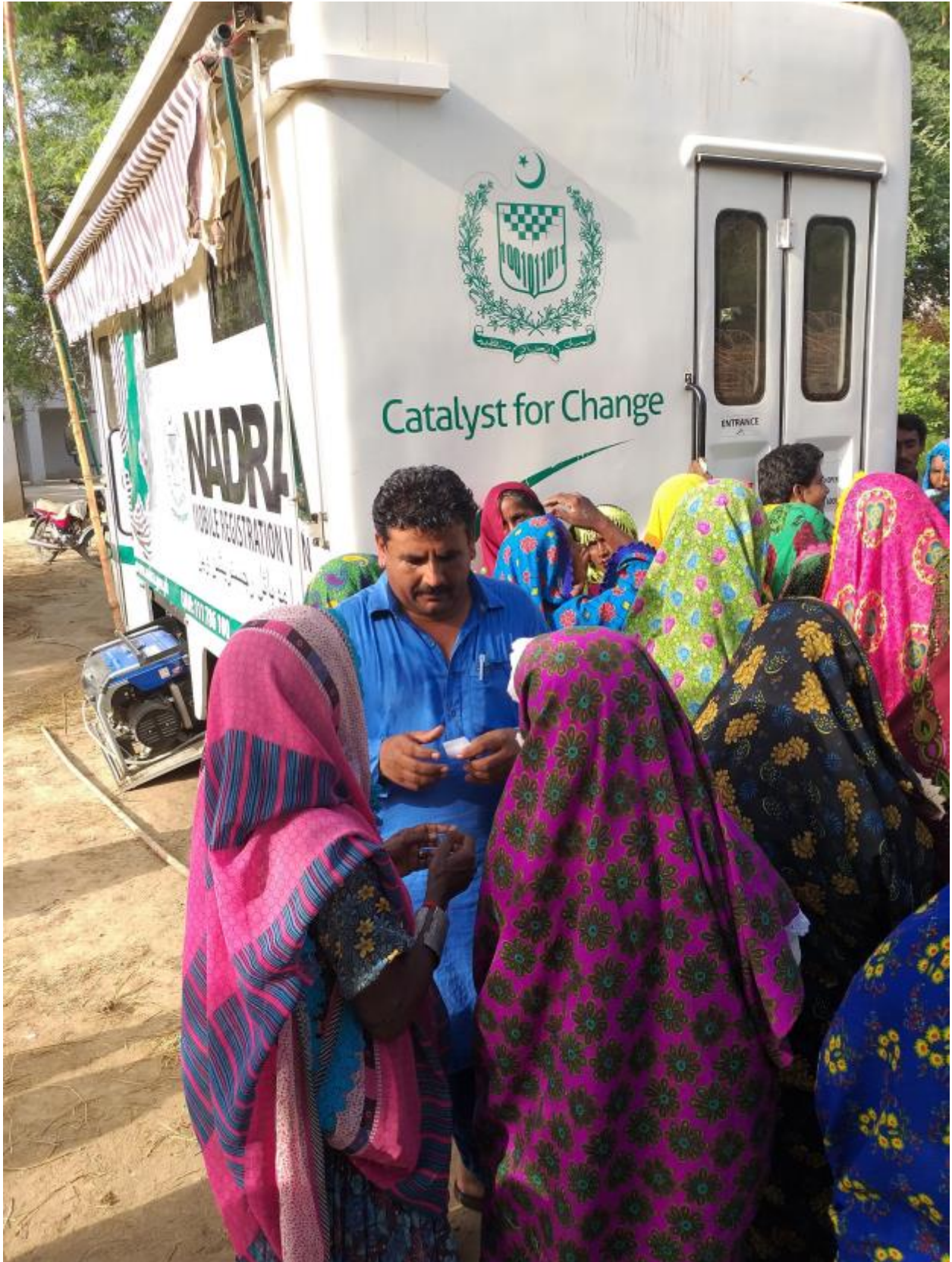
*"I received my first ever NIC today at the Mobile Registration Van" said 63-year-old Gulzar Bibi from district Jhang in rural Pakistan. "This will give me an opportunity to cast a vote in the 2018 General*

**Elections and will enable me to participate in the democratic process of my country” she added excitedly after receiving her NIC at her doorstep.**

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In Pakistan, where women comprise nearly half the population, women’s political participation is particularly important for an inclusive and accountable democratic process to evolve, and for the residents to have power over holding their elected representatives accountable.







3 - UNDP Pakistan

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*A NIC is not only required to access public services, such as to obtain a driving license, open a bank account, start a business, purchase a mobile phone, but it is also a prerequisite for voter registration in Pakistan.*

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A NIC can be requested in person, however, many women in Pakistan often face less visible barriers such as having to travel to the NIC registration centers on their own. Even if, in some instances, they do manage to get to the registration centers, problems often arise as one of the requirements of the registration process is for a blood relative to be present as a verifier at the time of request for registration. As such, **the non-possession of a NIC was identified as the main reason why women were not on the electoral roll**. Any effort to improve women's voter registration and participation could not be successful without National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), Pakistan's Authority for issuing NICs, being part of the process. As a result, UNDP supported the launch of this ECP-led project. This nationwide Campaign was launched in October 2017 in collaboration with NADRA, UNDP and a UNDP-partner Civil Society Organization (CSO), Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability (TDEA), to increase efforts to reduce the gap between male and female voter registration registrants at the grassroots level. TDEA has a network of partner CSOs across Pakistan. This formed an unprecedented partnership between the ECP, NADRA, UNDP and civil society nationwide.





4 - UNDP Pakistan



5 - UNDP Pakistan

Through targeted community efforts, unregistered eligible women were facilitated to obtain their NICs in order to become voters and take advantage of other fundamental rights that become available with a NIC. A series of measures, such as fee waivers for first-time NIC registrants, incentives for NADRA employees to increase efforts for NIC registrations by women, coordinated utilization of mobile registration vans, and increasing working hours for selected NADRA field offices were adopted to facilitate the registration of women. In addition, existing ECP working groups were actively engaged to mobilise and inform the public. Various inclusive voter information activities were held targeting women, and men, to raise awareness on women's electoral participation.

The Campaign was officially launched nine months prior to Pakistan's 2018 General Elections.

On Pakistan's National Voters Day 2018, the President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, acknowledged the efforts to improve the electoral roll – specifically highlighting the Campaign, and encouraged women and youth to register and actively participate in the country's political processes.

Moving forward, with support of UNDP, the ECP plans for a continuation of the Campaign and create opportunities to strengthen the existing partnerships between the ECP, NADRA and civil society as part of a broader, longer-term registration and awareness Campaign with a focus to increase electoral participation and awareness of women, transgenders, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

*Words: Samia Mani, Anam Zafar and Mehr Hassan, Elections Project Team, UNDP Pakistan*



6 - UNDP Pakistan



## Overcoming Employment Discrimination: The Case for Economic Inclusion of LGBTI People



Being criticized for the way you dress, behave or speak, hiding your true self, being the subject of jokes and gossip...these are some of the challenges facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people across the region at their place of work.

Some tell of being turned down for a job because the interviewer disapproved of their physical appearance, which did not match their expectations based on what a man or a woman should look like. Others tell stories of how they have suffered discrimination on the job simply because their behaviour, identity and expression differ from the prevalent norms in society.

[The stories](#) illustrate a reality that LGBTI people face daily at work.

In the Asia-Pacific region, LGBTI people are among the most marginalized populations. While there have been improvements in achieving gender equality, LGBTI people continue to face persistent stigma and discrimination. Making a successful business career, or even a decent living can be an extremely difficult goal for them to reach. A range of barriers appear along the way: being rejected for positions, denied promotions, harassment, dismissal or being forced to leave jobs, and denial of partner benefits that are available to heterosexual couples.

But things are changing albeit slowly.

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*There is increasing recognition internationally that diversity and inclusion are good for business.*

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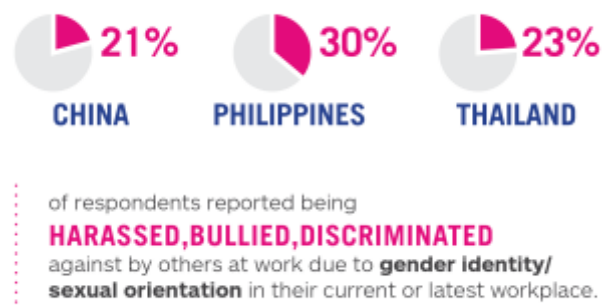
Coalitions of global companies, such as [Open for Business](#), are raising awareness in the private sector, making the business case for LGBTI inclusion. And studies show that gender equality plays a critical role in reducing poverty and contributing to positive outcomes for human development and human capital, among other things.

[UNDP's Being LGBTI in Asia Pacific programme](#) has been working to raise awareness about such issue for LGBTI people in Asia, and generating the evidence needed for policy reform.

One [study](#) found that transgender applicants in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam were only half as likely as cisgender applicants to receive a positive response for job applications, and be selected for a job interview. While such discrimination is likely to lead to unemployment, it also negatively affects emotional and economic wellbeing. It adds pressure to work in the informal sector including in sex work, subsequently increasing vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

If successful in securing a job, employment discrimination continues beyond the recruitment stage. In a joint UNDP-ILO [study](#), 21% of LGBTI people respondents in China, 30% in the Philippines and 23% in Thailand reported being harassed, bullied or discriminated against by others at work due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE). Those who experienced employment discrimination said they felt pressured to conform to gender norms whilst becoming less satisfied at the work environment and were more likely to consider quitting their jobs.

In the very few workplaces with LGBTI-inclusive policies, the study showed that such policies positively lead to higher levels of job satisfaction and less discrimination.



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## THE TOP THREE NEGATIVE TREATMENTS REPORTED

### WERE THE SAME FOR ALL THREE COUNTRIES

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1 People making jokes or slurs about LGBTI persons.

2 Gossiping or sharing rumours about certain LGBTI co-workers.

3 Making critical comments about how LGBTI co-workers dress, behave or speak.

#### IMPLICATION:

LGBTI people often experience a rather hostile workplace ridden with harassment, bullying and discrimination.

## WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBTI PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE?

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► LGBTI people surveyed experienced difficulties right from the beginning of the job search.



\* SOGIE: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

Through research, UNDP and its partners are generating the data needed to discuss policy and programming for economic inclusion of LGBTI people across the region. Civil society, governments, private sectors and development partners will need to work together to create more inclusive and diverse workplaces that guarantee fair working conditions for everyone regardless of their SOGIE a win-win for business, LGBTI people and the economy as a whole.



*Background photo credit: rawpixel/Unsplash*

*Words: Katri Kivioja, Programme Specialist at the HIV, Health and Development unit at UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub & Angel Treasa Roni, Research and Programme Implementation Consultant at UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub*

## From chickens to baby goods: The journey to business success in the Solomon Islands



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*For Florence Isihanua, the chicken came first.*

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After years of struggling to find a job or start a small business in the Solomon Islands, she felt poultry farming would be a profitable venture.

And it was.

As the chickens and eggs multiplied, her resources grew, she started to make a tidy profit. For five years her business flourished until cheap chicken imports flooded the market. It was difficult to compete.

She still needed to provide for her family, so in 2011 she pivoted.

With four boxes of nappies made of a material that was hard to find in the country, Florence exploited a niche in the market for high-quality baby products.

Soon, the empty counters in her 40-square-meter Honiara shop were loaded with clothing and baby goods. In 2014, she opened a second branch in the city center and employed a staff of eight.

Today at 36, Florence, a mother of two, is an experienced entrepreneur who manages a successful retail business.

In a country where older men dominate the business landscape, she is an anomaly.



7 - Florence Isihanua arranges products in the Hyundai Mall branch of Baby & Fashion in Honiara on 22 January 2019. Photo: UNDP/Merinda Valley

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*“I have to make myself heard in the business community in Honiara.”*

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Women in Solomon Islands are more likely than men to experience [challenges](#) in starting a business such as lower levels of education, financial illiteracy, and intimidation by officials. [Gender norms and customs](#) often leave women with limited control of resources, which makes it tougher for them to use assets such as land as collateral for loans and raise capital.

According to the World Bank’s Enterprise Survey data from 2015, only [12.8%](#) of firms in Solomon Islands are owned by women — significantly lower than the 28% average for East Asia and the Pacific region.

Banking facilities are inaccessible for many women, they frequently face discrimination in securing loans and other forms of credit and often lack the necessary identification. Confusion about tax obligations also prevents women from transitioning from small-scale enterprises to formal businesses.

Women have a harder time resisting pressure from *wantoks* – *close friends* – and male relatives who pressure them for money or free goods, hindering savings and the reinvestment necessary to build a business.

Although Florence was able to secure her first shop without bribes or hassles, she said acquiring commercial space is typically contingent on who you know, and how much you pay them under the table. It has been a tough climb, but along the way she has learned critical lessons: earning respect in the business community takes convincing and sharp negotiating skills.

Now, Florence wants to help others like her to navigate the business world, especially youth. In a culture that values age and experience, the potential of youth to pursue creative ventures is often overlooked.

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*In Solomon Islands, around 70% of the population is under 34, and most of them are either unemployed or inactive.*

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Solomon Islands' youth policy prioritizes employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. To explore how to design a co-working space to facilitate youth entrepreneurship Florence and several other young entrepreneurs participated in a workshop held by the Young Entrepreneurs Council Solomon Islands (YECSI) and UNDP.

**The result:** lumiWaka – a resource center launched in 2019 to empower youth so that they can collaborate and navigate the turns of business development. Florence is excited to share ideas here to help others progress from small, informal enterprises to successful companies. “I am always learning and also happy to share my experience with younger ones,” she said.



8 - Young entrepreneurs suggest layouts for lumiWaka at the design workshop organized by YECSI and UNDP in Honiara on 27 November 2018. Photo: Tomoko Kashiwazaki





9 - Young entrepreneurs Florence Isihanua and Brown Thompson Eroi share their ideas during the lumiWaka design workshop in Honiara on 27 November 2018. Photo: UNDP/Tomoko Kashiwazaki



10 - Young entrepreneurs discuss challenges to operating a business in Solomon Islands during training at lumiWaka on 19 February 2019. Photo: UNDP/Merinda Valley



*11 - Young entrepreneurs discuss challenges to operating a business in Solomon Islands during training at lumiWaka on 19 February 2019. Photo: UNDP/Merinda Valley*

By offering office facilities, regular training and opportunities to network with peers and experienced members of the business community, the co-working space will help youth overcome common barriers to establishing a business.

The project especially aims to address challenges facing young businesswomen, and how to get them engaged in lumiWaka. The prevailing mindset is that a formal business requires more planning, capital, and other resources than they can manage.

With the lumiWaka co-working space as a ladder to the higher ranks of Solomon Islands' business sphere and inspiring guides like Florence, the goal is to have more youth and women become prosperous entrepreneurs.

*Words: Merinda Valley, Communications Specialist, UNDP Solomon Islands & Tomoko Kashiwazaki, Communications Specialist, UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji*



12 - Young entrepreneurs share how aspects of Solomon Islands culture challenge business owners during training at lumiWaka on 19 February 2019. Photo: UNDP/Merinda Valley

## Women in demining: breaking barriers to serve with a purpose in Cambodia



Cambodia suffered through decades of civil conflict, resulting in a high number of casualties by landmines or other explosive remnants of war. Efforts to clear these mines have been intensive – demining efforts have so far contributed to **a decline in casualties from roughly 3,000 annually in the 1990s to 58 in 2018**. For years, demining has been predominately conducted by men – in fact, more than 80% of those supporting demining operations in Cambodia are men.

But this demographic is slowly changing.

Compared to 17% in 2017, in 2018 about 20% of deminers were women (1). This indicates that, despite the hazards and threats deminers experience, operators are nevertheless stepping up and recruiting more women to support demining efforts.

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*Achieving gender equality in the workplace, like demining, empowers women and drives economies.*

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Demining has opened doors for a better and productive life for Yi Loeum and her family. Yi Loeum has been demining for the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) in Battambang and feels proud of her



work potentially saving a lot of lives. She and her colleagues work at great peril – cautiously digging underground to search for silent killers that affected many lives in Cambodia.

She is supported through UNDP's Clearing for Results Project with the Cambodian Government, which have encouraged more women participation and visibility in the sector. The project ensures equal participation of women and men in decision-making roles in mine action activities, the empowerment of the role of women in peacekeeping operation, and addresses the issue of the Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). Although the work sounds terrifying, women in the sector have gained an extraordinary level of confidence in themselves from being in the field.



13 - Women in demining heading to work (Photo by CMAA)/UNDP Cambodia



But Yi Loeum's community was not always as supportive. Her parents also saw demining as a dangerous job, unfit for women.

She still persevered as she saw in this job an opportunity to prove herself more than capable of the work, and that dangers of demining can be avoided if proper trainings are taken. Yi Loeum believes that gender stereotypes act as barriers for women's employment, and especially for those who also aim to serve their community.

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*"Women like Yi Loeum are at the forefront of creating a mine free Cambodia," says Edwin Faigmane, UNDP Mine Action Specialist. "However, most people are not aware that women take part in one of the most dangerous sectors present in several parts of the world".*

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Her courage and perseverance have enabled Yi Loeum to show confidence in herself and she has become an inspiration to others around her.

"I appreciate the great support I now have from the community. The way they perceive women deminers has completely changed. Now, they see the benefits and would like to join the profession as well," she adds.

Building an inclusive and accepting working environment is another key component to opening opportunities for women in unconventional sectors.

"I don't believe that women are unfit for demining. Yi Loeum is one of our most outstanding deminers in the field, and she works hard and has a goal to help save our community. This inspired me to do better in my job. This unit is like a family and we all welcome each other [new comers]. I am also learning from Yi Loeum because she has more experience than I have", shared one of Yi Loeum's male colleagues.

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### *Benefits of equality*

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Women in demining not only help their country recover from decades of warfare, they also improve their earning potential.

The hazardous nature of the job equates to higher income opportunities. In fact, Yi Loeum could support her family. She built a new house for her parents with her earnings and supported four of her six younger sisters with their education.

Personal growth – the ultimate wealth of knowledge gained and increased capacity from trainings were most beneficial for Yi Loeum.

Women have become better acknowledged in the workforce, gradually breaking down the mainstream perception that women are unfit for certain jobs. As a society, we must encourage people to go beyond stereotypes because everyone can contribute in their own way regardless of gender. We need to foster



an environment where all individuals feel included, safe and respected. It's time to break barriers and end gender stereotypes in workplaces.

(1) One of UNDP's partners, Halo Trust, has strongly supported gender equality by ensuring an equal number of women and men deminers are involved in its operations in Cambodia.

*Words: Johanna Legarta is an Outreach and Communications Officer for the Clearing for Results – Mine Action for Human Development (CfR - MafHD project of UNDP Cambodia)*



15 - Women in demining from the Cambodian Mine Action Project/UNDP Cambodia



## Interview: Gender & Climate Change Financing



Gender equality and climate change financing can sound very abstract, especially for people that do not work with climate change issues. This is why we have invited Evelyne Batamuliza, Gender and Climate Change Specialist at UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, for an interview to explain this connection and its importance. Evelyne has been providing technical and advisory service for UNDP's 'Strengthening the Governance of Climate Change Finance to Enhance Gender Equality Programme'.



<https://sway.office.com/t6Vop0HC7jxMwqhh#content=GhEHw3sPTNxd63>

*How is the project contributing to addressing gender equality in the governance of climate change finance?*

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Regarding climate threats, you must ask yourself who are the people most affected and why.

The Governance of Climate Change Finance project seeks to strengthen the effectiveness of climate change programmes but also seeks to move beyond that, by making it more inclusive whether we are talking about public (domestic/international) or private finance. Our work involves putting a strong emphasis on ensuring that gender equality and poverty reduction issues are addressed through out the planned interventions.

For that, we need to bring into this conversation the groups that are usually marginalized in terms of access to natural resources and public participation whether it is women, people with disabilities or indigenous people.

Our entry point has always been through the ministries of finance because we must work with those responsible for deciding where the budget should be allocated and how. Our work with them includes budget preparation, formulation, tracking, and monitoring.

Hence, our team works both at the regional and country-level to create a stronger understanding of the linkages between climate change finance and variables of gender and poverty reduction. For example, supporting budget reforms to take place in countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Pacific, we ensure budget officials are sensitized enough about the benefits of investing in gender and poverty reduction as part of climate change financing.

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*Why should gender equality be considered for climate policy and climate finance?*

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With all the studies that are out there, we cannot claim that climate policy and climate finance are effective, if they are not responding to the issues of gender equality and poverty reduction.

Unless we assume that these issues do not exist in society anymore. But we know that this is not the case. There is a structural inequality in terms of access to land, access to finance and access to livelihood. We also know that women and men are impacted differently by climate change, owing to the different roles that they play in the agricultural sector.

So, if the inequality embedded in the system is not acknowledged when deciding how to allocate the funds to programmes for adaptation and mitigation two things will happen. Either it reinforces the inequality that already exists, or the existing inequality will remain unchanged.



17 - UNDP Thailand

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*Ensuring gender equity in public finance management sounds very challenging. What are UNDP's strengths and opportunities in taking on this challenge?*

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Worldwide UNDP has established a niche in supporting governments in the public finance management reforms, ensuring the greater effectiveness, accountability and transparency of the budget preparation system. UNDP's strengths have been around improving budget policy, facilitating discussions on drafting and adopting legislative acts to promote reforms in results-based budgeting and medium-term budget planning and improving legal and regulatory frameworks.

So, why is so easy for UNDP now to also tackle that with climate change issues? With gender issues and social inclusion?

Because it is not a standalone initiative. It is added with all the other initiatives that UNDP has been working with the Ministries. UNDP is not a new actor in the field, it is well-established with credibility supported by its projects track record.

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*How can gender equality help maximize the impact of climate finance?*

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You can't be talking about adaptation when you are not looking at the issues of land rights. Who has the rights to adapt? Who has the rights to determine where the water should come from and when and how? And if the water is not there, who is most affected? When decisions surrounding climate change financing are made inside the boardroom, the shareholders tend to ignore the daily struggles in the lives of normal people. For instance, due to climate change, women in rural areas are being forced to walk for miles to fetch water.

When we bring the human face to the table, we get a different conversation. It is not even necessary to ask why we should talk about climate change issues or why gender and climate change issues matter. You actually say how do we make our intervention effective. By doing so, the people most affected are

brought at the forefront and are given the opportunity to be heard and to determine the priorities. Their participation fills in the gaps that must be considered to maximize the impact of climate finance.



18 - Photo: Luciana Arlidge / UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub



**Bangladeshi women withstanding climate change**



Forty-one year-old Dulali Ray and her husband, from Radhanagar village in Deluti Union of Khulna, a coastal district in Bangladesh, was hit hard by cyclone Aila in 2009. They survived the natural disaster with their son and rebuilt their lives, but her woes did not end there. Her husband passed away two years ago.

One of her major sources of income were her two cows. However, it was very difficult for her to source food and freshwater for them as the water and soil in Deluti area are prone to high salinity levels. She managed to turn this around by growing hydroponic grass — using a method that does not require soil and can be done using plastic or steel trays — to feed her cows, which drastically improved her income.

Hydroponic farming was introduced in Deluti by the Union Parishad (UP) (1), with support from UNDP. Dulali now uses this alternative technology and as a result, her cows produce more milk, bringing her a higher monthly profit.

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*“My son was able to get an education because of these two cows. This new way of growing grass has changed everything for me,” she said.*

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She has been teaching other women in her area about hydroponic farming, as well as branching out to a crab farming cooperative. There are nine such cooperatives in Deluti Union that farm saltwater crabs — a proven climate-adaptive livelihood— operated entirely by village women.



19 - Photo: Amit Kumar/ UNDP Bangladesh





20 - Photo: Amit Kumar/ UNDP Bangladesh

One of those involved, Bishakha Sheel, 35, is the sole earning member of the family, as her husband was left paralysed in an accident. She lost her property due to river erosion, and her only means of earning was to work on other people's farmlands on meagre wages.

She is part of a 10-women cooperative who were trained on crab farming by Khulna University professors. With her share of the crab harvest profit, she has been able to help her family. The current profit margin may be small, but the cooperative is happy to have a new income source that does not depend on freshwater.

Near the UP, a pond called Padma Pukur is a major source of freshwater for villagers. It was inaccessible to women in the past, as there wasn't a proper ghat surrounding the pond. With UNDP's help, the UP built a serviceable ghat (2) on one end of the pond and installed lights on all corners. The ghat has also alleviated the risk of saline intrusion through leaching from the nearby rivers and regular storm surges. In addition, stairs and a meeting spot was built into the design to allow women a space for respite when they travel to fetch water.

In these areas, women are most vulnerable to climate change. They are usually in charge of collecting water and ensuring nutrition for their families. Due to high salinity levels, freshwater sources are far and few, forcing them to travel miles to collect and carry water back to grow crops in their yard, and take care of livestock. Moreover, male out-migration often leaves women with the additional sole burden of caring for their families.





21 - Photo: Amit Kumar/ UNDP Bangladesh

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*UNDP and the UP's goal is to provide them with alternative climate-adaptive livelihoods, and make it easier for them to collect freshwater—to make them better equipped to face climate change.*

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As part of the partnership with UNDP, Deluti Union Parishad conducted risk assessments, developed a baseline study and a climate action plan, specifically identifying and prioritising access to saline-free drinking water and adaptive livelihood options for women. They prioritised women's challenges and selected a hundred women for this pilot project.

The UP conducted a union-wide survey taking into account women's land ownership, quality of land (i.e. salinity), annual income, infants and school-going children, and if they were affected by cyclone Aila or lived in a cyclone-prone area.



22 - Photo: Amit Kumar/ UNDP Bangladesh

They were trained on hydroponics and crab farming in a newly-built women's centre. The spacious facility provides a space for training and knowledge-sharing, and the construction of a day-care centre is underway.

Deluti Union Parishad ensured they were afforded skills training and received start-up capital to comfortably conduct their business. With this support, the women were able to invest in crab farming using a cooperative model; few also started growing hydroponic crops.

The knowledge and information generated through the piloting in Deluti have been reflected and scaled up through [LoGIC project](#) of the Bangladesh Government and UNDP, which will facilitate 72 UPs (2% of total UPs in Bangladesh) integrating climate resilience investment plans that prioritise women.

The women in Deluti Union Parishad are spirited and hardworking, despite living in poverty in an unfavourable climate. They enjoy hydroponics and crab farming, and they hope to grow their business.

“Before we launched this project with UNDP, we had little knowledge about climate change and its effect on women particularly. We learned about targeting beneficiaries and tackling climate change through this project, and have given special priority to women and climate action in our 2018-19 budget,” said Ripon Kumar Mondal, Union Parishad Chairman.

Deluti Union Parishad hopes to involve private sector partners in the women's future endeavours to provide them with a steadier source of income, and help them build more skills.

*(1) Union Parishad, or Union Council is the smallest rural administrative and local government unit in Bangladesh*

*(2) A ghat is a flight of steps leading down to a waterbody*

*Words: Aanila Kishwar Tarannum, National Consultant (Communications), UNDP Bangladesh*



23 - Photo: UNDP Bangladesh



## A woman's place is in the home...? How design thinking can challenge entrenched social attitudes



How can we break down bad behaviours for the better, faster?

For instance, what will it take to tackle an age-old problem such as unpaid care and domestic work? How does one disrupt a trajectory where many women across the world increasingly find themselves expected to do two full-time jobs: one paid and one unpaid.

Now innovative approaches like design thinking could potentially provide new solutions to stubborn problems.

Housework is still largely considered a woman's job. While progress has been made to encourage women to obtain employment - through training programmes, investment in education and skills development, and policy changes – even when they have a career, women continue to have the added assumed responsibility of looking after children and relatives, doing the laundry, cleaning, cooking, and fetching water and food.

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*This unpaid care and domestic work remains the main barrier to women's economic empowerment, preventing women from getting into, remaining in, and progressing in the labour force.*

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Other implications include increased time stress and time poverty, missed opportunities for the uptake of skills, education and socialisation, and a negative impact on health. Importantly, the added drudgery of unpaid care and domestic work also leads to reinstating the gendered division of labour, further reinforcing inequalities and standing in the way of women's empowerment.

In Asia and the Pacific, men perform the lowest share of unpaid care work of all other regions at [1 hour and 4 minutes a day](#), sinking to [31 minutes in India](#) and just [28 minutes in Pakistan](#).





Design thinking is a human-centred technique to solve problems in a creative and innovative way. It works around understanding the user or those individuals impacted, challenge assumptions, and redefining the problem of unpaid care and domestic work in such a way as to identify strategies and solutions that are not immediately apparent. Design thinking is fundamentally lateral problem-solving, and actively challenges preconceived ideas.

In Hyderabad, UNDP India's [Disha](#) project (supported by the IKEA Foundation), UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, WeHub, and [Youth Co:Lab](#) (a regional initiative co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation) came together in an Open Ideation Workshop, discussing the challenges and opportunities around reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work using this approach.

To change people's behaviour towards and perception of unpaid work, participants considered a few different options. One solution proposed by the participants involved working together with major advertising companies and agencies, and offering them gender-responsive training. The advertising industry in the Asia region has grown exponentially. By encouraging images used in advertising to take a more gender-neutral approach, they could potentially influence the narrative of gender roles in the home and help redistribute unpaid work more fairly between women and men.



24 - Open Ideation Workshop, Hyderabad, India

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*A key barrier to the greater participation of women in the workforce is the unavailability of reliable and affordable childcare services.*

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These have yet to be developed in most countries, so families depend on mothers or grandparents for nurturing infants and children. Some private companies have started to provide day-care facilities for their employees, but these are very few. Increased support from governments is needed to develop services, including through policies that can incentivize private provision. Another solution proposed by the workshop was a community volunteering project, where parents living in condos would be encouraged offer a few hours of their time each week to look after their neighbours children after school on a rotating basis. This would create some free time for parents returning from work.





*25 - Open Ideation Workshop, Hyderabad, India*

To change people's behaviour towards and perception of unpaid work, participants considered a few different options. One solution proposed by the participants involved working together with major advertising companies and agencies, and offering them gender-responsive training. The advertising industry in the Asia region has grown exponentially. By encouraging images used in advertising to take a more gender-neutral approach, they could potentially influence the narrative of gender roles in the home and help redistribute unpaid work more fairly between women and men.

A key barrier to the greater participation of women in the workforce is the unavailability of reliable and affordable childcare services. These have yet to be developed in most countries, so families depend on mothers or grandparents for nurturing infants and children. Some private companies have started to provide day-care facilities for their employees, but these are very few. Increased support from governments is needed to develop services, including through policies that can incentivize private provision. Another solution proposed by the workshop was a community volunteering project, where parents living in condos would be encouraged offer a few hours of their time each week to look after their neighbours children after school on a rotating basis. This would create some free time for parents returning from work.

Another option could be to delegate the responsibility to paid workers – hiring housekeepers or professional childcare to support women. According to an ILO report, [around 269 million new jobs could be created if investment in education, health and social work were doubled by 2030.](#)



Others considered the value of workplace awards schemes, like [Gender Equality Seals](#). This would incentivise private sector companies to promote flexible working hours, equal parental leave, and more stringent company policies around gender biases in the workplace. Maternal and paternal leave policies would also do much to allow mothers and fathers to better redistribute family and work responsibilities. Finally, participants considered the value of investments in technology, robotics, and AI to take over some of the work.

[More data still needs to be collected](#) in order to understand the implications unpaid care work has on their population's human development, as well as their economies. While the monetary contribution of unpaid work is not calculated in national accounts, research and national surveys indicate that the value comprises [20 per cent to 60 per cent of GDP across countries in Asia and the Pacific](#). National surveys in this region point out that women spend 2 to 10 times more time in unpaid work compared to men; in countries like Cambodia and Pakistan the disparities are high, with women spending 9 times more time doing unpaid work. [Time-use statistics](#), for one, would be critical for designing policies for inclusive growth.

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*Solving the issue of unpaid work cannot just be done from the top down, and is arguably more to do with breaking ingrained attitudes.*

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The 'male breadwinner' family model remains systemically entrenched in many societies, while women's role as mothers or carers is still often considered biological rather than social. These stereotypical roles influence behaviours: the choices men and women make in their lives.

As a social norm, the problem of unpaid care and domestic work will take some time to solve. But if we can continue to challenge the ways our current societies operate, and recognize and value care and domestic work as a legitimate economic activity, perhaps we can move another step closer towards a more equal world.

*Words: Mailee Osten-Tan, Communications Officer, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub*



## Thimphu's new journey to reduce violence against women and children begins with innovation



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### *Stakeholders Commit to Partnerships to Address Gender-Based Violence (GBV)*

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Experiences and scenes of domestic violence are often accepted as a regular feature of everyday life in a household. Increasingly, national prevalence data are being collected in different countries and the extent of this and other types of gender-based violence is coming to light.

The recent survey conducted in Bhutan found that the acceptance rate among Bhutanese women of domestic violence stood at as high as 78 percent. In this context, government agencies, civil society organisations and community members, with [the United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#), have started a new initiative to prevent violence against women and children. Among these partners there's full agreement that violence against women and children cannot be tolerated.

Currently, there are a range of interventions in Bhutan focused on responding to and supporting survivors of violence against women and children. However, there is a gap in primary prevention programming. The team has committed to taking an evidence-based approach by addressing the root causes of this violence and focusing on changing harmful social norms. This is a new approach to many stakeholders in Bhutan and required a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach within a new intervention

methodology. Both advocacy and capacity strengthening foundational work was needed to achieve the commitment needed to drive this project forward.

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### *Internal Advocacy and Capacity Strengthening to Drive Forward GBV Prevention Work*

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UNDP Bhutan together with NCWC and RENEW came together to assess the problem of GBV in Bhutan and the actions that need to be taken to address it. They found that most of the programming focused on response and support services, but that prevention was a specific gap. They agreed to embark on a project to pilot an innovative primary prevention of GBV approach. The core project team partners from NCWC, UNDP, and RENEW engaged with regional and global advisors from UNDP to investigate various evidence-based primary prevention approaches and understand the theoretical models underlying these approaches. This investment allowed the core team to “speak with one voice” and lead advocacy and capacity strengthening efforts during a workshop with a wider group of local stakeholders.

The result was that multi-sector stakeholders were able to understand and then support the innovative, community-based primary prevention pilot project during a [validation workshop](#) held in Paro, Bhutan in August 2018. Throughout the workshop, we witnessed the collective resolve to tackle this challenge and build on lessons learned by adapting and contextualising existing evidence-based programme models for the local setting. The determination of project partners and stakeholders was also prompted by the recognition that reducing and ultimately eliminating violence against women and children will contribute to the country’s guiding philosophy, [Gross National Happiness](#).

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### *Prevention Programme Approach: Adapting Evidence-Based Models*

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The new initiative is named *Gakey Lamtoen*, roughly translated as "Way to Happiness". Its main pillar is a community-based participatory primary prevention methodology adapted and contextualized from a methodology that has generated promising results [elsewhere in the world](#). This evidence-based intervention model directly engages caregivers (e.g. parents or other family members, teachers, health care providers, youth and social service workers) and adolescent boys and girls from participating communities, to address the root causes of gender-based violence by aiming to transform problematic social norms such as gender inequality and patriarchal gender roles, harsh discipline of children, and problematic coping strategies such as drinking alcohol. At the same time, protective social norms such as positive relationship building strategies and supportive families will be promoted in order to build happy, healthy, equitable, and supportive homes and schools that are free of violence and discrimination.

Bhutan’s journey with an innovative primary prevention model has just begun with a solid foundation in multi-sectoral commitment, understanding evidence-based models, and continuing advocacy and capacity strengthening within the team and with stakeholders.



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*Global Project on Innovative Approaches to GBV Programming*

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This intervention is one of seven pilots that are part of the UNDP global project funded by the Republic of Korea on 'Ending GBV and Achieving the SDGs'. This global initiative is testing innovative approaches through integrating a Gender-based Violence lens into broader development projects and local planning and financing projects.

*Background photo credit: Faris Mohammed/Unsplash.com*

*Words: Anik Gevers, Koh Miyaoi, Sangay Wangmo and Tashi Choden*

*Originally published in the [Sexual Violence Research Initiative](#).*





**Blog** Women in Innovation: Far More than a Matter of Achieving Gender Equity by *Christine Wellington-Moore*



Trivia time! How many women in science do you know? And what about women inventors? Have you ever come across the name [Ada Lovelace](#), the world's first computer programmer?

Innovation, private sector, and gender are three words commonly used when we are talking about business in the private sector, with a sustainable development approach. There is a glaring underrepresentation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematical (STEM) careers, across the world.

As we celebrate [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#), it is important to note that fewer than 30% of researchers are women.

My work with the Montreal Protocol/Chemicals Unit of UNDP, includes engaging with the private sector, to transform their cooling/chiller equipment production lines to 'non-Ozone Depleting and low Global Warming Potential (GWP)' alternative technologies. As our recent report on [Gender Analysis and Gender Action Plan](#) shows, it has been hard to track gender in this sector. Indeed, the contribution of women is either overlooked or assumed non-existent.

It is well known that achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) will require STEM skills, but also social science skills such as economics, organizational psychology, and more. For this, an "all hands-on-deck" approach must be considered, pulling together a wide range of skill sets.

The [Next Einstein Forum \(NEF\)](#), Africa's global forum for science in Africa, puts it best: "A state that does not educate and train women is like a man who only trains his right arm." Equal access to opportunities in STEM for women translates in bringing more of the neglected half of the global population to innovate for a greater good."

Even though more women are attaining higher education, this is not translating into higher participation in the workplace. A recent report on [Women in Science](#) cites some concerning statistics using the Latin American context, one of the *best* regions for women in science. Here women make up 60% of tertiary graduates - surpassing all other regions worldwide –but when it comes to STEM disciplines this percentage drops to 36. Compounding the problem is the under-representation of women in STEM leadership.

One exception is China's [Moon Tech operation](#), which I have been lucky to visit. There you see proof of the cadre of female inventors and engineers from across the world who have contributed to creating technology used in everyone's home. Moon Tech's Deputy Chief Engineer is Jiang Shaoming, responsible for developing the innovative and low GWP technology on the refrigeration system.

It is inspiring to hear her talk about her work.



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*"I'm passionate about promoting safety, environmental conservation, and energy efficiency in this industry. This is why I've invested so much time and effort into the design of this refrigeration system," she says.*

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Women like Jiang Shaoming represent the continuity of the brilliant work done by other inspiring women throughout history. Women such as [Lillian Moller Gilbreth](#), a multi-role woman, who contributed as an eminent industrial psychologist, engineer, and inventor whilst taking care of her household with **twelve children!**

Also, we are all beginning to learn of all the women of colour who have contributed to space and military programs. [Katherine Johnson](#) (made famous through the movie *Hidden Figures*) had a central

role in calculating key trajectories for Alan Shepard, the first American in space, and for the Apollo 11 flight to the moon in 1969. These are a few examples, but there are countless others, unrecognized or underrecognized who have made invaluable contributions.

Ensuring equal opportunity for women in innovation and technology is not simply a matter of fairness. It is imperative to the survival of this planet, and everything on it.

*Background photo: A laboratory technician conducts an experiment in the chemical laboratory of the Rubber Research Center in Hat Yai. Photo Credit: UN/UNDP Photo 154172 Maggie Hopp*

*Words: Christine Wellington-Moore, UNDP Regional Programme Advisor, Montreal Protocol/Chemicals*

**Blog** My solo ride on the subway  
Marie

by Susie



*“Hey, did you know that Rennes is the smallest European city to have a subway?”* I like to throw out that line when I meet new people. Little did I know how that line intersects the issue of gender equality.

I come from Rennes, (Brittany, France) a city with slightly less than 215,000 inhabitants, and in spite of its size it boasts a subway system. The city’s public transportation is very well implemented and developed, we take the subway, the bus, and can travel around easily without a car.

Due to this, when I moved to Cambodia last year, this is probably what struck me the most: Tuk-tuks were the only mean of transport in Phnom Penh. During that time, I also took a short trip to Kuala Lumpur, and for the first time in my life I used a women-only carriage, and when an older man sat next to me in a women-only carriage and started saying things that he shouldn’t say, that’s when something else struck me: after months living in Cambodia without subway or buses, I almost forgot what it felt like to be harassed in public transport.



But it is hard to forget when you have first been harassed in a public bus at 15. It is hard to forget all those times when the subway is so overcrowded in the morning that some take this opportunity to get too close to others. And you can't forget all those times when taking the bus at night sounds as unsafe as walking home after dark.

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*In fact, public transit is often where women, and men, are harassed or assaulted for the first time*

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This is an endemic issue that takes place all over the world, from France to Sri Lanka, women feel unsafe using public transportation. But today, more than 54% of the global population lives in cities, and in 2030 this will rise to 60%. Today, violence against women and girls is a common theme that runs deep in urban areas as well. According to a report from the French High Council on Gender Equality, [100% of the women interviewed who use public transportation](#) have reported having experienced at least once sexual harassment or assault in public transport. [In Sri Lanka 90% of women experience sexual harassment in public transport](#). As the numbers show, something that should be as simple as using public transportation is a real challenge for women.

A challenge that some have to go through every single day.



26 - Photo credit: Lee Blanchflower/Unsplash

At the end of last year, we launched the 16 Days of Activism Campaign against Gender-Based Violence with the hashtag HearMeToo. 16 days to learn, speak up, and reflect on our own experiences. A few weeks later, it now feels like a good time to put those reflections on paper, and think about what this means to me.

To me, the #HearMeToo campaign was the occasion to shed light on the many different forms of violence that women experience. While we often tend to associate gender-based violence with physical domestic violence, there are so many different forms of violence that need to be called out.

Public transportation has obviously many advantages, it's deemed safer than individual vehicles, it improves access, it creates community cohesion, etc.; and I am well aware of that because of where I come from.

For this reason, we need to highlight the fact that violence against women takes many different forms, from sexual harassment on the street, on public transport, or in other public places, women's mobility is at risk.

Many cities are now trying to discourage the use of cars to tackle traffic pollution, and some have even been experimenting making public transportation free to encourage people to leave their car at home. But if we want to keep improving urban spaces so that it can benefit all, we need to incorporate women's need for safety and security. And aside from that, we need to address violent behaviours entrenched in social norms that allow men to feel entitled to harass women once they enter the public space.

That's why we need campaigns like #HearMeToo, so that these behaviours are finally being called out.

So I'll keep asking people if they know that I come from the smallest European city to have a subway, but I hope that soon enough I'll be able to think of it as a safe space for all.

*Background photo credit: Paul Dufour/Unsplash.com*



*Susie Marie is an intern with the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub Gender Team, she recently graduated with an Erasmus Mundus M.A. from the University of Groningen, Netherlands.*



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*January 2nd of 2019 started like any other day.*

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The phone alarm rang at 6.45 am. Automatically I pulled the pillow over my face to allow for a few more minutes of sleep. Then, as my morning ritual goes, I got up, made a cup of tea, and picked up my phone. As I was scrolling through the news, I came across the statement “It is a New Era in Brazil: Boys wear blue and girls wear pink!”. Those were the words of the Minister of Human Rights, Family and Women of the Brazilian government, spoken right after she took office on the first day of the year.

I was shocked, but not surprised. For the past few years, my home country Brazil has witnessed a trend in speeches and language that combats “[gender ideology](#)” - a concept that is meaningless say several academics. But it is used as a smoke-screen to win followers and gain support for more conservative public policies, particularly in education. This concept sees open discussions about gender as a threat to family and religious values.

According to several studies, concepts as simple as the colours girls and boys commonly wear reflect gender norms that are so firmly rooted in society. And until recently most people didn’t even question these norms. For example, feelings of vulnerability and enforced acceptance caused by sexual harassment in public and private environments are often not spoken about.

In 2015, this changed in Brazil for many of us when one hashtag became a source of liberation and protest: [#meuprimeiroassedio](#) (“my first harassment”). It led women to share their stories of sexual

violence or abuse. Over 82,000 personal stories were shared on social media in less than 4 days, all across the country. This organic movement encouraged me to talk more freely about these issues with friends, family members and acquaintances. By sharing our experiences, we learned together that we were not alone and began to empower ourselves and no longer accept this gender-based violence as a normal part of our daily lives.



<https://sway.office.com/t6Vop0HC7jxMwqhh#content=tsje7yvMJNXt5V>

27 - © Illustration by Neda Hajmomeni

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### *It broke the silence.*

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Real women sharing our life histories, marked by violence, trauma or harassment from an early age. We were no longer statistics. Our voices became one that said: “Enough!”. Enough of this violence, enough of this submission, enough of this role, that we all are forced to play.

This does not mean that the problem has been solved and that we live happily ever after. The movement exposed a tragic and alarming issue and the dire need for change.

In the first 24 hours of 2019 in Brazil, around [3,300 women](#) were subject to domestic violence and three were killed simply because of their gender (femicide).

So, for me, the [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#) in 2018, held deep meaning. On one hand, this gave me the opportunity to see that even on the other side of the world in completely different cultures similar problems exist. On the other hand, I became aware and inspired by amazing examples of [empowered women](#) and projects where [men are part of the solution](#) for gender parity.

This has shown me how traditional gender roles are linked negatively to [social inequalities](#) and [cases of violence](#) worldwide. Perceptions of a “woman’s role is to cook for her husband” to “blame for inciting of sexual assault” are still common. For change to take root we must provide everyone with equal opportunity. Lessons need to start in early childhood, with topics such as the role of women in society and [comprehensive sexuality education](#).



When we have open conversations about gender norms we get a better understanding of ourselves. We learn that we are allowed to say no. An education on gender equality leads to powerful gains. It seeks to break the vicious cycle of sexism and gender-based violence and opens a world of possibilities. We become more tolerant and accepting of other people's differences. Whether someone likes to wear blue or pink, or whether they want to be a princess or a warrior or even both! It is the person's choice.

It is now 7.50 am. I am ready to go to work, wearing my blue dress, striding into a world where gender equality is on the rise.

*Words: Luciana Arlidge, Gender Intern, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub. She holds a Master's degree in Economic Growth, Population and Development from Lund University (Sweden).*

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