



Technology Facilitation Mechanism- Progress report
IATT works stream on Gender and Science, Technology and Innovation

Update on Engagement

April 2021

Covid-19 has shone a bright light on existing gender inequalities and much has been written and said about how the health and socio-economic crises are negatively impacting women and girls and setting the world back in the effort to achieve the SDGs. One of the areas that is simultaneously important to achieving the SDGs and where substantial gender gaps persist is in science, technology and innovation (STI).

Gender equality is central to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is cross-cutting in nature. Progress in its attainment will accelerate the pace for all the SDGs.

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, Gender Equality remains a global and cross-sectoral challenge. In the field of STI, underpinning most of the SDGs, women remain under-represented. Without the equal participation of women and girls in STI, humanity loses half of its innovative potential in finding solutions to the world most pressing challenges. It is from this perspective, that the work of the UN Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) Gender and STI Group finds context. In the wake of Covid-19, leapfrogging will be needed in science and technology to get on track for the Decade of Action. Thus, the work of the Group is more important than ever.

In 2019- 2021, the Group continued advocacy for the equal participation of women in STI, by monitoring and tracking trends, supporting initiatives that have the potential of triggering the changes needed, raising awareness and promoting a better understanding of what it takes to shape environments that encourage and retain women in STI, and to make STI careers and studies more attractive for girls and women.

More specifically, in 2020 the Group contributed to the IATT Workshop on STI for SDGs, held in February in preparation for the 2020 STI Forum, and participated in a Panel discussion aimed to support a dedicated session on Gender and STI to be included in the Forum's Program to discuss recent developments, challenges and innovative approaches to achieve progress on the gender equality in STI track. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the Forum did not take place.

However, in the same vein, members of the Group co-sponsored and participated in the celebration of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, held on February 11 and 12, at UNHQ, and

contributed to a number of Panels and sessions promoting STI studies and careers to women and girls. In addition, in support of the International Day, some members of the group held a side event – a data science and tech storytelling event for 50 7th and 8th grade girls in New York City on tackling the issue of food waste in schools.

The Group also planned an event entitled “Gender Equality in STI: Driving a Sustainable Future” on the first day of the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The event was to bring together a broad range of stakeholders from academia, businesses, government and international organizations to look at the global trends and efforts to address the gender gap and discuss barriers that hold women from participation in STI fields. The event aimed at promoting a better understanding of the issues at stake, including educational content, culture, and enabling workplace environments for women and girls in STI. Due to the COVID-19 crisis the format of the CSW64 was altered leading to the cancellation of all side events. The Event was rescheduled and took place virtually on October 7, 2020 with the support of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria and marked the International Day of the Girl. Participants reflected on progress achieved in empowering girls and women through STI to fully contribute to the unfinished agenda, as well as the next steps required for more girls and women to be able to access, learn, and thrive through STEM, especially during and beyond the Covid-19 crisis. There was wide consensus among the speakers from government, UN agencies, academia, civil society and businesses large and small on the actions needed to make sustained progress. Speakers highlighted the importance of encouraging girls to participate in STEM and ensuring girls’ equal access to STEM education at an early age to build the pipeline. Speakers also underscored the importance of mentorship and visible role models and other support, including childcare, peer support groups and even physical spaces, to create a more inclusive environment in STEM studies and workplaces. Participants spoke of the importance of a clear vision and action plan for sustainable progress, highlighting the need for sustained investment and prioritization to see results. The importance of disaggregated data and tracking results was also emphasized. Another dimension flagged was the need to overcome stereotypes and combat myths and outdated norms about associations between girls and women and STEM. Engaging men and boys as partners and allies in these efforts was identified as another key success factor.

Another International Day important for gender and STI is International Girls in ICT Day, celebrated on the fourth Thursday in April. Many virtual events took place. The President of the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General and a number of UN Missions promoted the issue of gender and ICT that day through statements and/or on social media. In addition, several IATT member organizations promoted the day on social media. Between Girls in ICT day 2020 and Girls in ICT day 2022 (the 10-year anniversary of Girls in ICT Day), a number of Group members are being tapped to identify a woman in tech from their organization for the Talking Tech: Girls and Women in ICT virtual interview series that seeks to inspire girls and young women to take up or continue studies in STI and seek out such careers. We had last reported that more than 20 intergenerational interviews had been recorded, including a number featuring role model women in tech from the UN System – and today the Talking Tech initiative has now matched over 120 women from around the world for intergenerational interviews exploring tech careers, including tech careers at the UN. Many more matches are in the pipeline.

The Group also published a second edition of its Brochure on Gender and STI initiatives – showcasing recent initiatives on Gender and STI by some 14 contributing UN entities members of the IATT. In 2020, UNIDO and WMO joined the Group. The 2020 brochure aims at increasing the visibility of the engagement of the UN system on this important agenda and to build complementarity and synergies in action. The Brochure is available [here](#) and will be made available at the 2021 next STI Forum.

Some Group Members are bringing their expertise and experience to UN Women’s Technology and Innovation Action Coalition for Generation Equality.

In 2021 – members of the group participated in the celebration of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science held on February 11 and co-sponsored the UNHQ event held on the occasion and contributing to the panel discussions.

On the margins of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the co-leads of the Group held an event entitled “Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Innovation: Towards an Inclusive STI Ecosystem”. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria and aimed at showcasing select national experiences/initiatives from different regions in support of the equal participation of women in STI, and at inspiring others to forge enabling and inclusive STI environments to retain female talents. Participants were also invited to share their thoughts on policies that can increase the participation and retention of women in STI and share examples of government policy practices that are working to achieve this result. The recording of the session is available [here](#).

On the margins of the 2021 STI Forum, ITU, UNECLAC, UNESCO, UNESCWA, UNIDO, UNOOSA, WIPO and WFP are co-organizing an event on Gender and STI: Towards an Inclusive STI Ecosystem and Connectivity for All. The event will present a platform for the sharing of select national perspectives on efforts and to closing the gender gap and associated challenges.

The Group is preparing for the publication of the Third Edition of its Brochure on Gender and STI – which will showcase recent programs of work within the UN System in support of women empowerment in STI fields. The Brochure is intended to promote visibility and understanding of the System’s engagement and offerings for advancing this agenda.

The Group is co-led by WIPO, ITU and UNESCO and is supported by UN-DESA as Secretariat for the IATT. Its membership includes IAEA, ICGEB, ITC, UNCTAD, UNECLAC, UNESCWA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOOSA, WFP and WMO.

More information is available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/womeninscience>.