Gender-IS-Citizenship

Final Technical Report

Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society – An Asia-wide Research Programme

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Abstract: The final technical report of the 'Gender and citizenship in the information society' (CITIGEN)- an Asia-wide research programme, provides an overview of the programme experience from its inception in 2010 to its culmination in 2012. This report details the theoretical and programmatic learnings and outcomes from the various projects that were a part of CITIGEN, along with our own learning at IT for Change, as the principal coordinator of the programme.

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1.   Basic project information

Title: 'Gender and citizenship in the information society' (CITIGEN) Asia-wide research programme

Abstract: The 'Gender and citizenship in the information society' (CITIGEN) programme has aimed at exploring the opportunities and challenges that have emerged in the current network society context for women's citizenship in the global South. Towards this, the programme has supported six research projects across various locations in South Asia between 2010-12. Additionally, the programme has created a South-South network of feminist scholar-activists and practitioners who are working at the intersections of ICTs and women's rights; and are invested in understanding the changing nature of the State-citizen relationship in the emerging techno-social paradigm for its gendered nuances and outcomes.

Keywords: Gender, ICTs, citizenship, information society, network society, global south, feminist approach.

2.   The research problem

The 'Gender and citizenship in the information society'(CITIGEN) research programme explored the notion of marginalised women's citizenship as a normative project, an aspiration for equitable social membership, contained in the promise of the newly emerging, networked techno-social order. Both network society theorists and traditional theorists have acknowledged how the digital revolution has fundamentally transformed the global socio-economic and political order because of the ability of the new Information and Communication Technologies(ICTs) to compress time and space. However, most mainstream theories have tended to focus largely on the economic transformations, and less commonly on the changes at the realm of the social, by-passing the shifts in the global political order. The CITIGEN research programme is an attempt to re-centre the political, in the contemporary research agenda on the changing techno-social paradigm.

The Internet has carved out new online public spaces that are simultaneously an extension of, and a disjunction from, national public spheres. These new online public spheres have rendered obsolete the traditional distinctions between the space of the 'private' and that of the 'public', resulting in the opening up of opportunities for a number of traditionally disadvantaged groups, including women, to participate in public-political debates. At the same time, concerns have been raised about the efficacy of these spaces in influencing mainstream political debates, as the global 'communications communities' of the new online spaces are not necessarily able to function as 'political communities' of citizens. In fact, in the current global order, the very notion of citizenship needs reexamination: in a world economy marked by migration and the rising power of transnational corporations, and with the rapid growth of unbounded trans-local communities, a foundational shift has occurred in State-citizen relationships. There is much to read in empirical investigations, but feminist

approaches would exhort concomitant recourse to fundamentals of political philosophy and a search for contemporary ethics to bind observation and interpretation into robust theoretical frameworks.

The CITIGEN programme has sought to understand the impact of this transformational moment on the rights, entitlements and agency of marginalised women in the global South, in order to evolve such a theoretical framework and identify broad directions for policy.

The initial objectives of CITIGEN were as follows:

1. To understand how the emerging techno-social paradigm shaped by the new ICTs recasts the citizenship of women, particularly marginalised women.

2. To explore how technological affordances interact with the social and institutional environment to shape women's citizenship.

3. To propose ways forward for practice and policy in relation to information and communication domains, in a manner which centres women's citizenship.

4. To build a network of researchers and scholars engaged in policy research and advocacy on information society and gender issues, in the Asia region.

The sub-objectives evolved over the two years of the programme, through the various research projects and network-building efforts, which are briefly described in later sections.

The key research questions initially proposed by CITIGEN, in order to build a theoretical framework on gender and citizenship in the information society, were as follows:

1. How does the trans-local nature of the public sphere being shaped by the new ICTs change meanings of citizenship for marginalised women?

2. Within national and sub-national contexts, how do new technologies mediate women's substantive citizenship? How do citizenship practices, leveraging new technologies, challenge and redefine boundaries of women's formal citizenship in local contexts? How do new technologies enhance institutional accountability as well as the participation of marginalised women in local governance?

3. How do women renegotiate gender and challenge local power structures by creating and shaping local publics using digital media?

4. What are the conceptual tools that enable us to understand how inclusion and participation on the Internet is gendered? For instance, how do we understand hegemonic masculinities in relation to the public sphere shaped by the Internet, particularly from the standpoint of marginalised women? How do we unpack and interpret the openness and/or publicness of the basic architecture of the Internet from a feminist perspective?

5. How do current regimes governing online spaces - content on the Internet, social networking sites, search engines etc. - influence gender related outcomes? How do women's rights and citizenship get framed in the local-global information society continuum?

6. How do national policy frameworks shape technology appropriation by women for their social and political empowerment? For example, what kind of policies and institutional mechanisms are needed to support women's local media in the new digital environment? How do different policy approaches to knowledge – public domain, commons, commercial licensing, community ownership – impact women's appropriation of techno-social spaces? What are the interconnections between 'open technology paradigms' and emancipatory feminist frameworks?

3.   Objectives

At the start of the CITIGEN programme, IT for Change undertook a scoping process with visits to various South and South-east Asian countries, engaging in deliberations with scholars and inviting pre-proposals from organisations interested in research projects in the region. A [workshop](#) was held with prospective partners in July 2010, after which six research projects in six countries were finalised. These were:

1. *Influences of New Media in Negotiating Citizenship Rights of Marginalised Women in Bangladesh*

   A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with Ananya Raihan (Principal Researcher), Dnet, Bangladesh. The research aimed at understanding the level and extent of marginalised women's participation in creating alternative discourses through new media. This was to be done through the launch of a citizen journalism platform (www.write3.com) under which a dominant theme would be women's citizenship. The platform was to work through a mobile phone-based application, enabling users to upload photos, video or audio messages. In addition, workshops were to be organised to train representatives of grassroots organisations to use the platform and its applications, to report on women's issues.

2. *Women's online participation and the transformation of citizenship in Hong Kong and Guangzhou*

   An MoU was signed with Hong Kong In media (Researchers – Iam Chong and Lam Oi Wan). Their research aimed at exploring the dynamics of the insurgency of multiple counter and alternative public spheres in the context of Guangzhou (mainland China) and Hong Kong characterised by authoritarianism and post-colonialism respectively. The research focused on the implications of the use of new social media and online platforms by women's organisations and activists, for women's citizenship.

3. *The power to organise and engage: the use of ICTs by women migrant domestic workers' organisations*

   An MoU was signed with APWLD[1] – Thailand (Researchers – Hsiao Chuan Hsia and Philippa Smales). Their research focused on the use of ICTs by migrant women domestic workers' organisations in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Through their research, they hoped to map the many dimensions of the topic, articulating clearly the gaps in the existing work but also the current use of ICTs by migrant women domestic workers, the obstacles they face in accessing technology and the multiple opportunities opened up by mobile phones for their political engagement.

4. *Empowering women leaders at the local level: translating descriptive representation to substantive representation through ICTs*

   An MoU was signed with IIT[2] Chennai (Researchers: Binitha Thampi and J. Devika). The India team undertook an action research project for the empowerment of women political leaders at the local level, exploring the role of ICTs in effecting their substantive representation in local government institutions in Kerala (India).

5. *Strengthening Capacities and Linkages of Civil Society Groups and Academic Institutions to Promote Gender-Sensitive and Rights-Based Perspectives through Citizens' Electoral Participation*

   An MoU was signed with *Likhaan,* a grassroots organisation working on women's reproductive rights in the Philippines (Researcher: Sylvia Claudio-Estrada). This project also adopted an action research method, under which a citizen-journalists' platform was to be created and youth groups from marginalised communities were to be enabled to make use of digital technologies for sharing their views on the need for the passage of a reproductive health bill in the Philippines, a context where the mainstream discourse on reproductive and sexual health has been historically dominated by the Catholic church.

6. *Women and the New Media in the Margins of the Sri Lankan State*

   An MoU was signed with the Women and Media Collective (Researchers: Sepali Kottegoda, Sitralega Mounaguru, Sachini Perera, Sarala Emmanuel). The Women and Media Collective focused on researching women's engagement with two initiatives using new media at the local and national level. At the local level, *Minmini News*, a SMS-based community news network of rural women in Batticaloa district, and its impact on women's access to knowledge and their empowerment; and at the national level, a new media campaign, focussing on the importance of enhancing women's participation and representation in mainstream politics. Additionally, the team examined the national tele-centres programme in Sri Lanka.

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[1]Asia-Pacific Forum on Women,Law and Development.
[2] Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai.

In addition to the six research projects, IT for Change also commissioned 'think-pieces' – short, reflective papers from prominent scholars and practitioners studying the intersections between the micro-context of community information ecologies and macro socio-political developments. The think pieces were authored by Farida Shaheed, Margarita Salas, Supinya Klangnarong, Heike Jensen, Desiree Lewis and Crystal Orderson.

The following project processes were key to the evolution of the projects and the understanding that researchers built across contexts, over the life of the project – the literature review in the form of the State of Art document; mid-term reflections through the Narratives of Change document; continual engagement through email discussions; sharing of papers and articles and other resources across the partners; and participating in the workshops convened by IT for Change during the duration of the programme.

In April 2011 (26th to 28th), IT for Change organised a three day Midterm Review Workshop for the research programme at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, Delhi. The objectives of the workshop were to review and reflect upon the emerging insights from each research project in relation to the questions and core concepts of the programme; build a big picture connected to the theoretical imperatives of the programme as a whole; and explore the elements of a 'Southern' discourse on women's citizenship in the information society and This workshop brought together CITIGEN researchers and think-piece writers, with scholars working on feminist frameworks from a Southern perspective.   Individuals who were identified as potential contributors to the network's research goals were invited to comment and present their perspectives on the project's ongoing work in order to expand and deepen the debates and discussions.

In 2012 February (15th to 17th), IT for Change held the Research Validation Meeting at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. Its objective was to take stock of the work done and reflect upon the questions and concerns framing the research endeavour. There was a felt need to look back at the research findings and re-map the analytical field along with those who may be new to the network, as well as to re-frame the field of feminist knowledge and praxis in this emerging domain. In this meeting too, scholars from outside the network were invited to comment and contribute.

Throughout the two year period of the research programme, the insights from the periodic reviews and discussions along with the research insights and think piece contributions have enabled the nuancing of the initial set of research questions. The complexity of the network society and its increasing influence in re-assembling social processes (especially in the global South, owing to the diffusion of the mobile phone) has thrown up newer questions on the nature of participation and the methods of accessing citizenship, especially by marginalised women in the South. It has become increasingly clear that there is a need to engage with the questions of the politics of technology architectures, and connect these questions to the structural analysis of gender relations at the macro, meso and micro level.

The conjoining of the two, would then enable us to acquire a deeper understanding of how marginalised women navigate the emerging techno-social paradigm.

Thus the overall research agenda was iteratively refined over the two years of the life of the programme, and insights were gained through the various research projects, think pieces and discussions. Each team, except Bangladesh (who did not wrap up the project and thus reneged their commitment), produced [a final research report](#) (which details their entire project) and [a policy brief](#), at the end of the project period, giving clear policy suggestions on the use of ICTs by marginalised women. These have been widely distributed in their respective countries and in events that CITIGEN partners have participated such as [The International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development (ICTD) 2012](#), the [AWID Forum in 2012](#), [the Asia Pacific Feminist Forum (APFF)](#) etc. The meta-level analysis of the project outcomes will be part of the introduction of a book that will include articles from the CITIGEN research community and few other scholars.

The network building took place with the initial teams of CITIGEN researchers and think-piece writers. One of the steps taken to strengthen communication between the partners has been the creation of a group mail id (gender-IS-citizenship@googlegroups.com) where readings, thoughts and ideas connected with the various areas of the research programme are shared and put up for debate and discussion. Currently the e-mail group has 65 members who are scholars/practitioners in the field of gender and ICTs and it is still vibrant, beyond the life of the project.

IT for Change has also produced a CITIGEN Bulletin at regular intervals, to disseminate the latest news from the network, videos, interviews and readings, during the duration of the programme. A vibrant website of the programme has been maintained to ensure sharing and dissemination of research insights to a wider audience. More information can be availed at [www.gender-IS-citizenship.net](#).

4. Methodology

Based on feminist methodological perspectives, CITIGEN has drawn upon a variety of methods, including ethnography, survey research, action-research, cross-cultural research, philosophical argumentation, discourse analysis and case studies. In keeping with the feminist research tradition, the programme has underscored a commitment to 'knowledge as emancipation', privileging knowledge creation for progressive social change. The empirical studies and conceptual dimensions have foregrounded the experiences of marginalised women from developing countries in the Asian context.

Four of the teams, Thailand-Taiwan, India, Philippines and Sri Lanka, adopted an action-research design in their projects. The China project involved the use of structured and semi-structured interviews with feminist actors in China to study their use and perception of

ICTs. The think pieces have also adopted various methods such as literature reviews, discourse analysis etc.

The teams shared their methodological issues in their technical reports to IT for Change. The ones undertaking action research felt that the two year programme design was not sufficient for an action research project to be implemented and reach its mature outcomes. A larger window of time was required to fully register the impacts of the project. The Philippines team pointed out that it was very useful for the action research to be couched within, or interlinked with, social movements and institutional structures, which would allow for its sustainability and continuity in the post programme period (something that we have evidenced in our ongoing interactions with them especially for their article in the proposed book that is to be published by Zubaan Books).

Some teams faced problems in accessing and collecting data as in the case of the China team who found it difficult to get people to respond to their questions, as interviews were not granted easily and conversations were often guarded.

5. Programmatic activities

The main activities undertaken as part of the CITIGEN programme are detailed below:

1. *Initial scoping and inception workshop (July 2010)*: The programme began in March 2010 with an initial scoping visit undertaken by IT for Change in select countries in Asia. The visit covered Bangladesh, Philippines, Hong Kong and Malaysia. By June, 2010, after the call for proposals was disseminated, an advisory group consisting of Srilatha Batliwala, Andrea Cornwall, Lisa McLaughlin and Parminder Jeet Singh, assisted by Anita Gurumurthy, the coordinator of the Programme, selected a few promising proposals and decided to have an inception workshop in Bengaluru. The workshop was held between July 27th to 30th, and provided a space for rich discussions and some intense debates, captured in the workshop report.

2. *July 2010 to April 2011*: Post the workshop, MoUs were signed with various teams. Simultaneously, some MoUs were also signed with potential think piece authors from the field. There were some initial setbacks with some teams dropping out and new ones joining, but by early 2011, the teams began submitting the literature review for their research project in the form of the State of Art (SOA) documents. By March 2011, several of them also submitted the mid-stream review document called the 'Narratives of Change'. These were finalised and put online on the website.

3. *Mid-stream review meeting of the network (April 2011)*: A mid-stream review meeting took place from 26to to 28th of April 2011 where the researchers and think piece writers along with other scholars and practitioners from the field were invited. The meeting was organised in Delhi. It reviewed and reflected upon the emerging insights from the programme.

4. *April 2011 to February 2012*: Through this period the research teams implemented their projects and wrote their research reports and also produced policy briefs based on the key insights from their research studies. These reports were reviewed and sent back with comments and after necessary changes were incorporated, finalised for dissemination. The policy briefs were also finalised and then printed by IT for Change.

    During this period, a series of think-pieces were commissioned by IT for Change to bring in new perspectives for thinking through the interconnections between gender, technology and society, which could also enable the research teams to bolster their research frameworks. IT for Change also undertook some research of its own, for developing two think pieces on the mobile phone and the telecentres phenomena. The final think-pieces have been uploaded on the programme website.

    Simultaneously, IT for Change submitted applications for co-ordinating panels at mainstream international events such as the ICTD Conference, AWID Forum etc., which represent critical spaces for the discourse on gender, technology and society. (More information on the events CITIGEN participated in is in the next section.)

5. *CITIGEN Research validation meeting (February 2012)*: From 15th to 17th of February, a research validation meeting was held in Bengaluru to consolidate the various research outcomes and papers from the network. A larger synthesis was presented along with emergent questions from the current outcomes. The meeting report was widely circulated. The collective research work has been taken forward into a book project, details of which are discussed in a subsequent section of the report.

6. *Partner initiatives*: The CITIGEN researchers have within their respective countries, conducted several workshops for the benefit of research or for the dissemination of the research work. For example, the Thailand-Taiwan work has resulted in a guide for migrant women domestic workers called 'Mobilise' as an advocacy tool which outlines for the women, the advantages of the mobile phone and how it can be used to organise for the collective demand of their human rights. The China team is also coming out with a publication, 'Roses on the wall' which shares the experiences of women activists and gender issues in China. Other teams such as the India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh teams held workshops regularly on different aspects of their research work. For example, the Sri Lanka team has successfully created a community of Sinhalese and Tamil women bloggers to bring in a feminist perspective to the online public sphere. They have even set up a new media unit to carry forward the work on exploring the possibilities that new media offers for feminist activism, in the post-programme period. At almost all project sites, national level dialogues were held before the finalisation of the project report.

a. Learnings from the implementation and management of the programme:

Managing a network of feminist activists and scholars was never going to be an easy task, given that members of any network are most likely embedded in multiple roles, the mandate of the network being just one. This meant that researchers were juggling with their time and had heavy demands on their schedule. Many of them were scholars of repute and activists very busy with advocacy. On numerous occasions , keeping to the time line of the programme was difficult and challenging. This also meant that online forums were only partially successful as the onus to share and disseminate the insights and reflections on ICTs seemed to largely fall on IT for Change. Members also often felt vexed by the strong outcome driven model of the programme, especially as all felt that the time line was cramped. The managerial orientation therefore did compromise somewhat the affective aspects of the global network, with too little time and space for bonding and connecting.

We agree with the view of the network members that research programmes need to have well spread out time-lines that provide sufficient time for researchers to truly explore the nuances of their undertakings and engage more deeply with their research. On another note, it was felt that conversations through the two large meetings of the network during the programmatic cycle were very useful in pulling the network together and also bringing everyone on the same page as far as the research agenda was concerned. The influx of new members in these meetings has also been a healthy process of bringing challenging new questions and perspectives to the network, helping the network gain a deeper insight into the contemporary emergent issues.

One of the unfortunate outcomes of the programme was that the Bangladesh partners were unable to complete their research. They signed the MoU late in the programme and were erratic in the schedule and later stopped responding to IT for Change's request for clarifications on the project progress and outcomes. Therefore, the Bangladesh project was closed, after the first financial reporting by the team. The gains of the programme were overwhelmingly positive and this outlier was therefore considered a learning in the art of management and collaborative work, rather than a failure.

6.   Project outputs

a. Conceptual field building

The collective understanding of the CITIGEN network has been growing through the project trajectory as evidenced by the growing complexity of questions regarding the architecture of this emergent network society and the power flows enabled by the current structure, over the life of the programme. Both the meetings have been spaces of confluence, where scholars and practitioners along with the CITIGEN researchers and think piece writers have brought their valuable insights to the issue and have contributed to asking critical questions pointed at the micro, meso and macro level. The specific outcomes of the six research

projects have given us an idea of the enabling and the disabling factors that affect women's citizenship in the information society, and have shown the crucial role of mainstream policy frameworks and the technological architecture. Think pieces have brought forth questions on how the material reality of marginalised women embedded in social structures intertwines with the new ICT based reality.

The synthesis report of the programme, the final research reports of the projects along with policy briefs and the think pieces form the final outputs of this programme, which will be also be consolidated into a book that is currently under production with *Zubaan*, a key feminist publishing house in India. The field of feminist enquiry into ICTs is still nascent in the global South, and CITIGEN has provided the opportunity to begin building an important critical conversation on this new paradigmatic shift. It is IT for Change's hope that through the coming years, this network will be maintained and strengthened through further engagement and conversation and help build a Southern feminist approach to ICTD.

The CITIGEN researchers also expressed the feeling that the individual projects had enabled them to view ICTs from a more critical frame. For instance, Sepali, member of the Sri Lanka team, shared that though they had entered the programme with grave doubts and reluctance, looking back at the end of the project, they felt that the programme had provided them new ground to explore and engage with.

b. Network building

The process of network building has been a challenge through the programme, as it involved the delicate task of ensuring that time lines are met, yet researchers or think piece writers are not pushed into tight deadlines. As mentioned previously, several tools have enabled the creation of the network to its present form, with 65 members. An important one is the google groups (gender-is-citizenship@googlegroups.com) being maintained by IT for Change where articles, news reports, latest news from the network, updates, questions, views etc. have been shared and aired. The bulletins of CITIGEN have also enabled in galvanising the conversation, and enhancing sharing of updates and related information. Although the network did not become as active as initially desired, it emerged as an effective space for galvanising the various members of the network around various issues. For example, the ICTD 2012 organisers asked Southern practitioners and scholars who were accessing travel scholarships, to attend mandatory training. When this communication was shared with the network members, at once researchers felt the need to express their collective dissent to such a pointedly hierarchical approach to Southern scholarship and practice.

The two workshops became important forums through which new actors were invited and then subsumed by the network. The wide dissemination of the workshop reports through various networks, individuals and organisations, increased the impact and visibility of the programme. The vision of the network was also shared at various forums by the members

of the network, under the aegis of CITIGEN. These events are mentioned in the following section.

The [website of CITIGEN](#) has been the central access point for the programme and has emerged as the space in which all information pertaining to the programme, the outcomes of the various projects , details of the teams, videos and interviews from the interactions etc. are all available online. Members of the network have continued their journey in this domain and are currently exploring new projects together (see http://www.gender-is-citizenship.net/women-and-governance/ for more information).

c. Capacity building

Capacity building within the programme has taken place at two levels. One has been IT for Change's sharing of its learnings and perspectives from its own work in the field of ICTD, in order to   build the understanding of the partner researchers who are new to the field for initiating a joint critical conversation around the subject. The second one relates to the capacity building that the researchers undertook with the constituency they decided to work with. This varied across the projects – the India team worked with elected women representatives and linked them through a common online platform; the Sri Lanka team built a women's news network and a network of women bloggers; the Philippines team worked with marginalised youth and women from slums and trained them to be online citizen journalists; the Thailand-Taiwan team worked with migrant women domestic workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan to build networks; and the China team worked with women activists in the region.

d. Policy and practice (advocacy)

One of the important objectives of the research programme was to take forward the learnings and outcomes from the programme and widely disseminate them in various fora including policy related ones.

One of the final outputs of each of the researches was a policy brief, which provided a brief outline of the research conducted and the relevant policy recommendations based on the research outcomes. Other important documents which were widely disseminated include the SOA (State of the Art reports), think pieces and workshop reports.

Dissemination also took place through other means such as the following:

i. CITIGEN at AWID Forum 2012

IT for Change, on behalf of CITIGEN, submitted a proposal to hold a session at the AWID Forum 2012 entitled *'Understanding 'network society' - Political economy conversations with the CITIGEN research community'* which was accepted. The session was structured as a World Café and was hosted by network members: Binitha Thampi, Margarita Salas, Kate Lappin, Sepali Kottegoda, Andrea Cornwall, Srilatha Batliwala and Anita Gurumurthy. A

movie was screened to be shown at the Forum, and can be accessed at http://www.gender-is-citizenship.net/citigen/News_and_Events .

ii. CITIGEN at ICTD 2012

The fifth international conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development (ICTD 2012) hosted at the Georgia Institute of Technology was held from March 12th to 15[th,] 2012 in Atlanta, USA. CITIGEN participated and held an open session titled 'How the information society recasts women's citizenship – Stories from the CITIGEN programme'. Anita Gurumurthy, Desiree Lewis, Kate Lappin and Parminder Jeet Singh represented the network at the event.

iii. CITIGEN at Asia Pacific Feminist Forum, Thailand

The Asia Pacific Feminist Forum was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 12-14 December 2011. Anita Gurumurthy represented the network and took a session on13 December 2011 on 'Using technology to empower women'.

iv. CITIGEN at Internet Governance Forum 2011

IT for Change participated in an APC pre-event workshop on 'Internet Governance and Women's Rights' held just before the Internet Governance Forum (Kenya) which took place from 27th to 30th of September 2011. A Research Brief: 'Insights along the way- A mid-stream report of the CITIGEN research network' was disseminated at the workshop and the forum. To read a report on the event by Dafne Sabanes Plou, click here.

v. Kerala team at Women in Politics Conference, East Timor 2011

Binitha V. Thampi and J. Devika from the CITIGEN network attended the 2011 Women in Politics Conference that was held in Dili, East Timor between 29 September – 1 October. Titled 'Amplifying the Voices of Women in Politics: The Second Asia-Pacific Conference on Women in Politics and Governance', the conference provided an opportunity for feminists from the region to collaboratively ideate on the issues and challenges that women's participation in politics has thrown up.

vi. IT for Change at MobilePlus, Chennai 2011

Chloé Zollman and Arpita Joshi from IT for Change made a presentation entitled 'Recasting the potential of mobile phones for gender equality' at the MobilePlus Conference, held in MSSRF (Chennai), 15-17 September 2011. The presentation reflected the ongoing work on the think piece being developed by IT for Change.

vii. What ICTs can do for gender responsive service delivery. UN Women workshop

Anita Gurumurthy attended the UN Women workshop on 'Leading Innovations for Gender Responsible Service Delivery' at Dar-es Salam, Tanzania (21-22 June 2011). The workshop was part of the United Nations Public Service Forum being organised by UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs along with other UN entities such as UN Office of Drugs and

Crime. Anita spoke on 'What information and communications technologies can do for gender responsive service delivery', presenting ITfC's experiences from the field project of *Prakriye* - Centre of Community Informatics and Development and the CITIGEN programme.

viii. Insights from CITIGEN in FLACSO publication

Following her presentation and participation in the the conference on 'Gender equity policies - New scenarios, actors and articulations' (Buenos Aires, Argentina in November 2010), Anita Gurumurthy has written a chapter entitled 'Scenarios, actors and articulations - A feminist, network society reading' which includes insights from CITIGEN, for the forthcoming publication by FLACSO called 'Gender Equity in prospective: research and policies', edited by Gloria Bonder.

ix. CITIGEN insights in UNDP e-discussion

In a response to an invitation to IT for Change for participating in an e-discussion on 'New media and democratic space' organised by UN Development Programme's Asia Pacific Regional Centre, we presented the emerging insights from the CITIGEN programme. Specifically, we shared the findings from India, Sri Lanka and China project along with the perspective provided by Farida Shaheed in her think piece.

7. Project outcomes

The outcomes of the programme envisaged initially were as below, and they have been achieved well:

1. Develop a framework that will provide useful points of departure for policy and programme design processes at national, sub-national, sub-global and global levels.

   These directions have been formally published in the policy briefs and in the writings of the programme. Thanks to the programme, the power of the core idea has crystallised in many forms, taking root in many a space but espousing a citizenship frame of reference – from the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, and handbooks of NGOs for migrant women's rights to renewed debates on the role of community telecentres at national levels. The programme has been seen as relevant at global and sub-global levels for its discursive content.

2. The process of analysis and knowledge creation will also be a useful collaborative platform for engaging gender and development scholars in 'new' questions that pertain to contemporary challenges for and opportunities in realising gender equality.

   For long, traditional gender and development actors have been shying away from the ICT field. The current conjuncture however has moved scholars across disciplines and activists and practitioners across domains to shake off their apathy, inhibition and

ambivalence, to come to terms with the ICT beast in the room. The programme came at a critical time. It produced informed research that retains a theoretical edge and a strong practice and policy flavour, arguing the directions of development from a feminist standpoint. The network that the programme has produced, continues to engage on and off, empathising with IT for Change's leadership and lending the power of solidarity when needed. Undoubtedly, scholars and activists who started off rather tentatively with this programme as network members undertaking a project or writing a think piece have embraced the network society agenda, taking it forward in their own ways. This deep impact has perhaps been the most valuable contribution of the programme.

3. The programme will also make use of existing networks in the region and globally to position the process as a significant endeavour in social science research, thus eliciting academic, policy and advocacy interest on the issues the programme seeks to address.

    The research network set up through this programme has been interfacing with other networks through IT for Change's networks as well as through the individual networks of participating researchers. The interest from many quarters to know more about the programme and engage has been tremendous. The selection of the CITIGEN applications in global conferences is one indication of the same. However, the short duration of a programme of rather large ambitions does tend to cut back on those very possibilities that originally were envisioned as valuable for longer term impacts of the work done.

4. Active pushing of the findings and the framework of the research programme will be attempted through online spaces and modalities, which the programme secretariat will continue to support post the 18 month period of this programme. The programme will publish a book that will be disseminated through IDRC's networks in addition to the networks of the participating researchers and institutions.

    We have entered into an agreement with Zubaan (an India-based feminist publishing house) for bringing out the book, on 'Feminist Visions of the Network Society', under a Creative Commons License.

    The proposed book builds from the conceptual contributions of the CITIGEN network. It will explore the performance of citizenship in network society as a techno-social process, specifically investigating:

    · How marginalised women define their positionality and place; generate new norms, practices and cultures; and make claims through digital space (how modes of agency and active citizenship are recast)

· The transforming public-political space – the political agora – of feminist action, for its discursive content and relational architectures (how the online meets the off-line to create new thresholds and spaces).

It is hoped that the book would be an important contribution not only to multi-disciplinary scholarship on gender, democracy and development, but also present pioneering analysis for a radical interpretation of network society. The book is being planned as a compilation of 14 essays of about 6000 to 8000 words, combining empirical and theoretical approaches. The authors are at work on their chapters, and while many articles / chapters have come in, a few are still in the pipeline. Getting academics, especially feminist scholars who usually have one foot in the advocacy space to keep to deadlines has been a hard task, as we have discovered.

5. The programme will attempt to mobilise additional funding to hold a post-programme workshop that can bring together researchers, policy makers and grassroots actors from the global South to reflect upon the relevance of, and share their insights to build upon the findings of, this programme in research, policy and programmatic areas.

    The [Research Validation Meeting](#) held during the last leg of the programme has enabled the fulfilment of this objective.

6. Policy bodies will be actively encouraged to take cognizance of the research outputs through a clear advocacy strategy that is collectively designed and implemented by the grantees and programme secretariat. This will include global as well as national level agencies, and leading donors in the region working on broad issues of citizenship, rights and gender. The secretariat will actively explore strategic communication design for this purpose, to get beyond academic language into making 'real' change possible.

    Project outcomes in the form of long term changes in behaviours, attitudes, practices, capacities, policies, relationships, technologies, etc. that promote sustainable and equitable development and reduce poverty only show up in a longer span of time as the intervention or research begins to permeate larger groups over a longer duration of time. For example, the India team admitted that their project was still in the middle of its implementation period and deeper impacts and outcomes would only be visible in a larger frame of time. Notably though, several research partners have expressed the desire to continue with their action-research projects or take them further through other institutional support, implying a change in their own interaction, understanding and use of technology. The unanticipated and serendipitous effects of CITIGEN are quite palpable to those of us who have been associated in the ICT and information society space.

We would like to share the voices of the CITIGEN community of researchers as an indicator of the programme's strong impact.

"I would like to express my thanks to IT for Change. Overall, we feel that this collaboration has been just what Women and Media Collective needed at this point in our work and our lives!" - *Sepali Kottegoda, Director, Women and Media Collective*

"Our collaboration with IT for Change has allowed us to benefit from a community of researchers and thinkers who engaged, challenged and influenced our work. We developed new advocacy positions that we have taken globally on migrant domestic worker rights. We expanded our own approach to ICT as an organising tool but also as a politicised and contested space. Thanks so much to IT for Change for the opportunity to engage in thoughtful research and discussion around ICT and democracy from a feminist perspective. It expanded our capabilities!" - *Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator, APWLD*

"It has been a fascinating experience to be involved in the CITIGEN programme. I have learnt an enormous amount from the research, and from the exciting discussions that we had in Delhi when we came together to consider emerging themes and issues arising from the research projects. It has made me all the more aware of the complexities of activist engagement with new media, as well as opening up a world of new possibilities and experiences. The programme has achieved a lot." - *Andrea Cornwall, Professor, University of Sussex, United Kingdom*

"From early 2010 to the present, it has been my great fortune to collaborate with IT for Change in working on two gender and information society projects: as an advisor for the Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society programme, and as a research collaborator in the Women Enterprise and Information Technology project. Critically, each of these programmes engages with the experiences of women who most often have been treated as 'targets', rather than 'subjects', of development. I have no doubt that both projects will yield results that have a ripple effect in influencing perspectives and practices oriented to enhancing gender equity and social justice beyond their respective research scopes."- *Lisa McLaughlin, Associate Professor, Miami University, Ohio, United States*

"For years, IT for Change has been at the forefront of linking Information Society concerns with gender equality and social justice concerns. In a nutshell, all of the core concepts evoked by "gender and citizenship in Information Society" - publics, human rights, governance - are crucial in theoretical as well as political terms, and all are currently in flux and require close scrutiny, particularly so from the vantage point of gender. I am very much looking forward to the findings of CITIGEN" - *Heike Jensen, Ph.D., Postdoctoral researcher and lecturer, Department of Gender Studies of Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany*

8.   Overall risk and recommendations

The ICTD and information society field has been heavily influenced by Northern actors. Programmatic and policy approaches have been influenced by development discourses privileging top-down experimental transgressions into community life, in some well-meaning and some motivated initiatives of academia, private sector and international development agencies. Evidence from bottom-up, embedded and rights-based approaches in the field, as articulated by scholar-activists coming from a critical feminist tradition, is crucial for building a counter discourse. This task however is subject to challenges coming from current conversations on the network society, where there is a baggage associated with ICTD. Donor fatigue in the area and mainstreaming into specialised   fields has somewhat diminished the learnings that cut across domains on the vital dimensions of participation, inclusion, contestation and transformation. The careful effort of programmes such as CITIGEN in nurturing spaces for knowledge production and pertinent research come to nought when not supported over time. The effort is essentially political and needs longer term investing.

The terrain of gender studies has tended to be pulled in the directions of cultural critique that do not necessarily carry strong and clear political economy intonations. Devoid of the latter, the former ends up as an endeavour gratifying intellectual curiosity at the expense of social critique that can offer lenses to read, interpret and act upon inequality and injustice. The niche that CITIGEN occupies requires wider support from the donor community for its cutting edge exposition of the politics of technology, where gender may be seen as a place-holder category for scrutinising exclusion. In network society research, the makings of exclusionary and exploitative systems holds special place at the current juncture. How the work of CITIGEN can inform further work in these directions is a question that does arise at the end of this phase.

The creation of policy frameworks which will define technology use, diffusion and architecture in the coming years needs robust evidence around the particular implications of technology as social practice. CITIGEN was an opportunity to begin this critical conversation. The researches, papers and reports combined with efforts to build a like-minded community and share the emergent views, has resulted in strengthening the feminist critique of the information society, breaking new theoretical ground and contributing to transformational politics. Such collaborative research spaces coming from a legacy of progressive feminist politics are extremely valuable and need support from the donor community.