2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment: "Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies"
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Contribution by UN Women

1. What is your assessment regarding the main risks faced by your membership currently and in the next 10 years, within the context of the work of your Office?

Some of the immediate risks envisioned include: violent extremism, climate change, conflict, growing inequality, and resource shortages. However, this list is not exhaustive and each of these challenges cannot be dealt with in isolation, as they are interrelated and in some cases mutually reinforcing.

2. Please kindly rate a short list of vulnerabilities faced by Member States as identified by your Office in the course of its undertaking of its mandates:

- Extreme Weather & Natural Disaster
  Very Vulnerable

- External trade or Economic shocks

  Somewhat Vulnerable

- Food Crises

  Very Vulnerable

- Unemployment/Underemployment

  Somewhat Vulnerable

- Cyberattacks

  Very Vulnerable

- Governance

  Somewhat Vulnerable

- Large-Scale Migration

  Somewhat Vulnerable

- Water Crises

  Very Vulnerable

- Environmental Disaster

  Somewhat Vulnerable

- Data Fraud/Theft

  Very Vulnerable

- Social unrest/conflict

  Somewhat Vulnerable

- Infrastructure

  Somewhat Vulnerable

3. What are the highlights of your Office's current work in terms of leveraging technology and innovation to build more sustainable and resilient societies?

For the time being, UN Women is interested in exploring various initiatives which aim to leverage innovation, accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, reach populations most at risk of being left behind and deliver results at scale. If successful, this suite of projects would be aggregated into a suite of apps tailored to the specific needs of the women and girls served by UN Women:

1) BuyfromWomen enterprise platform – a data-driven enterprise platform that connects women to information, markets and finance and helps them build a track record to access financing. It also provides them with critical information on weather, market prices and incoming opportunities via text messages.

2) Blockchain for women in fragile contexts - Blockchain has the potential to enable transformative changes in the sending and receiving digital assets, and building economic identity for under-privileged women. UN Women will pilot blockchain-enabled solutions for the financial inclusion of women, e.g. money transfer, and payments on cash for work or sales. Pilots will be deployed and potentially scaled through UN Women's Programmes for Disaster Risk Reduction (Gender Inequality of Risk) and Crisis Response and Recovery (LEAP-Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection).

3) Virtual Skills School - An e-learning portal with access to a broad range of capacity development content for UN Women's programmes. It serves as an online content aggregator, which delivers localized trainings on thematic areas and practices through mobile phones.

4) Preventing sexual and gender-based violence in South Africa - UN Women is prototyping mobile solutions to address gender based violence. This solution is being piloted in South Africa and can be then localized and extended to other contexts.

5) Big data – UN Women is exploring the potential of leveraging big data to improve gender-sensitive and gender-responsive research, project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation thereby improving understanding, advocacy, and investments around gender.

6) Leveraging the use of virtual reality to sensitize users to the situations of women in difficult circumstances (including refugee camps etc.)

4. Please provide an assessment of resilience gaps, or vulnerabilities, and areas requiring urgent attention within the context of the work of your Office and pertaining to building more sustainable and resilient societies for the advancement of the 2030 Agenda.

There are a multitude of key threats / risks which have the potential to contribute to / amplify resilience gaps or vulnerabilities within societies. UN Women is positioning itself to better respond to these challenges and our ambition to achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030 by fully embracing innovation as a mentality, as a modality of work, and to support and amply women innovators who are themselves building solutions that have potential for transformative change. This means: Rethinking how we define problems to tackle, who we engage and how we engage them, how we deliver, and how we learn and scale. Challenging the status quo where desired change is not happening. Responding to entrenched and structural problems, complexities, and supporting adaptiveness and resilience by using ALL minds, perspectives and tools at our disposal. Embracing or developing new models, tools and technologies, insights, disciplines. Influencing the broader innovation community to address gender equality and women's empowerment issues. Making innovation by and for women core to achieving the SDGs, including SDG 5b and Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Ensuring girls and women have 21st century opportunities and influence For each risk, UN Women is proactively targeting key barriers and intractable problems where progress is slow and leverage ICTs in order to accelerate and scale-up the impact of UN Women's programmatic work: In response to the impacts of climate change (and as part of its programming on addressing the gender gap in agriculture, UN Women has developed BuyfromWomen: Buy from Women uses a low-cost end-to-end supply chain system that enables women farmers to have a 360 degree view of the farming life-cycle (seed to harvest to cash); access videos and trainings on crop life-cycle and financial literacy as well as information on global prices, farming practices, and weather conditions; connect to buyers and finance in a digitally enabled and mobile facilitated manner that reduced transaction, transportation and time costs; and connect to a network for other women farmers On disaster preparedness, UN Women is leveraging big data to strengthen policies, increase capacity, and give more space for women's voices and leadership to drive gender-responsive DRR plans and provisions at country level, so that when disasters occur women can

be effectively protected and served by them In response to the impacts of displacement, and the priorities of conflict affected, resource constrained populations, UN Women is exploring innovative technologies on ID management, including through blockchain. Ongoing and new crises have resulted in more than 145 million people around the world currently in need of humanitarian assistance, as well as an unprecedented number of 65.5 million people being forcibly displaced. Roughly half of all displaced persons are women and girls, who are differently and often disproportionately affected by the crises. Additionally, many of the crises that we face today are protracted with an average period of displacement lasting between 17 and 26 years. Given the magnitude of the needs combined with the long periods of displacement, this is not only a humanitarian issue but also a development and peacebuilding issue that requires a concerted response UN Women is linking cash-based transfers (CBTs) in humanitarian settings to blockchain technology in order to create an economic identity for women. This will be linked to their civil identity through ID cards, with digitally enabled chips. Food related CBTs will also be extended to include grants or loans for SME development by women entrepreneurs. This facilitates the engagement of women in early recovery efforts and bridges the humanitarian and development divide.

5. Please share the most important challenges and opportunities, as well as valuable lessons learned, your Office has encountered in supporting the advancement of the 2030 Agenda through the use of technology and innovation to strengthen resilience and inclusion in an integrated manner. If your Office has work related to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, please share any specific initiatives undertaken to reduce disaster risk through the Framework.

Barriers underlying the gender gap in innovation and technology:
• Limited market awareness & investment in innovations that meet the needs of women, including the lack of understanding about the unique needs of women; constrained market demand for gender-responsive innovations
• Gender-blind approach to innovation: including lack of methodologies, tools and sex-disaggregated data; limited sharing of knowledge and practices
• Under-representation of women as innovators and entrepreneurs, e.g. gender-science stereotypes; biases in recruiting, promoting and evaluating processes;
• Lack of proof of concepts of investing in innovations for women and girls
Challenges in mainstreaming innovation into UN work:
• Increasingly the UN is trying to solve in crisis contexts, and crises are inherently inimical to innovation because they are contexts that don't necessarily allow for experimentation
• The UN (and other actors) may often be too focused on being a source of innovation rather than a convener and enabler of innovators, and could better adopt a more supportive and enabling posture for innovation
Where the UN chooses to innovate, the following challenges remain:
• Changing established ways of thinking and implementing projects. Innovative ideas are often generated from outside of the box, including by exploring new tools, utilizing digital data for efficiency and transparency, and by encouraging the formation of new partnerships etc.
• Revising operational procedures to allow for innovative tests & pilots. An efficient support system must be established, so that pilots can be rapidly rolled out and their success/failure immediately evaluated to generate evidence on what works and what does not.
• The need for cross-unit collaboration. Innovation should not remain isolated in innovation labs. Great benefits can be expected if a cross-sectoral approach is used in the design stage, enabling synergies through joint evaluation of problems, as well as risk and mitigation planning.
Opportunities:
• Wide-spread interest from various sectors (i.e. public sector) in innovation, and a keen interest in supporting the SDGs and Agenda 2030. In this context, PPP collaborations have the potential to be leveraged and expanded.
• More and more technology solutions are made available in both developed and emerging markets. This offers plenty of options for the UN to choose from when seeking to address a specific problem, and would further save time if the localization has been done well.

On the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: UN Women has initiated a partnership with UNISDR and the IFRC to set up a programme to support mainstreaming of gender into disaster risk reduction efforts in line with the requirements of the Sendai Framework. This programme, entitled Gender Inequality of Risk, looks at ways to improve data, strengthen policies, increase capacity, and give more space for women's voices and leadership to drive gender-responsive DRR plans and provisions at country level, so that when disasters occur women can be effectively protected and served by them.

6. Please share strategies, plans, policies or initiatives in which your Office has been involved where different stakeholders – such as government, civil society organizations, private sector and academia – have engaged in coordinated actions to enhance resilience at the local, national or international levels. What approaches have proven effective in this respect?

UN Women believes that gender equality is a prerequisite for resilience. Societies where women are disempowered, lack access to and control over economic resources, have limited or no say in decision making, and are subjected to violence, cannot be resilient. UN Women's programmes address these various aspects of gender equality as a foundation for resilience. All UN Women's programmes seek to achieve change through coordinated actions with partners. For example:
• In the area of women's voice and leadership – UN Women supports initiatives such as the African Women's Leadership Initiative -- this two-year initiative, launched in December 2017, aims to strengthen African women leaders' capacity to build sustainable peace in the continent. It will establish a network of African women leaders, facilitate their participation in major international and regional events and invest in increasing African women's participation in national electoral processes, among other measures. (http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/12/launch-of-womens-leadership-initiative-for-peace-and-stability-in-africa)
• In the area of economic empowerment, UN Women served as the Secretariat for the High Level Panel on economic empowerment (https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/who-we-are/initiatives/sg-high-level-panel-on-womens-economic-empowerment)
• In the area of violence against women, UN Women serves as the Secretariat for the Spotlight Initiative
• In the area of Women, Peace and Security, UN Women brings together government and civil society partners at national level to develop National Action Plans for the implementation of SCR 1325 which include provisions to prevent conflict
• In DRR, UN Women has initiated a partnership with UNISDR and the IFRC to set up a programme to support mainstreaming of gender into disaster risk reduction efforts in line with the requirements of the Sendai Framework. This programme, entitled Gender Inequality of Risk, looks at ways to improve data, strengthen policies, increase capacity, and give more space for women's voices and leadership to drive gender-responsive DRR plans and provisions at country level, so that when disasters occur women can be effectively protected and served by them.

7. Please share the most relevant examples and recommendations related to your Office's work in building more sustainable and resilient societies using technology and innovation, as well as emerging issues in this area likely to affect the achievement of the SDGs.

Please see answers to questions 2 and 5.

8. What can ECOSOC do to better leverage the work of the UN system in supporting countries to pursue integrated policies and apply technology and innovative solutions at the national, regional and global levels, to effectively enhance resilience and manage risks in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

The ECOSOC may wish to consider:
1. Continuing to emphasize innovation as a theme in the QCPR, and encourage through the QCPR and other means, UN entities to adopt an approach to innovation for resilience whereby it a) provides space and catalyzes innovation among partners and stakeholders; b) serves as an incubator to pilot innovative

approaches; and c) takes full advantage of innovation and technology for the UN's own resilience programming.

2. Encouraging joined-up approaches across the UN system to avoid competition, overlap and missed opportunities. This can include through ensuring that innovative approaches reported across the Executive Boards are considered in the context of Joint Board meetings to promote coherence across agencies, funds and programmes.