Ninth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial
Side Event Summary

Gender and Geospatial Research and Analysis

Concept Note

I. Background

With 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators (of which 54 are gender-specific), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a historic global commitment to achieve gender equality by 2030. Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is not only an explicit goal but also a driver of sustainable development in all its dimensions, from ending poverty and hunger, promoting prosperity and inclusive growth and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies to securing the protection of the planet and its natural resources.[1]

However, the challenges for gender-responsive monitoring of the SDGs are daunting: data that accurately reflect the challenges faced by women in their daily lives, including in undervalued areas such as time spent on caring for family members, are woefully inadequate and in some cases, data on entire groups of women and girls are unavailable. Pervasive gender data gaps across the SDG framework severely limit the global community's ability to monitor progress on gender equality: only 26 per cent (14 out of 54) gender-specific SDG indicators can be reliably monitored globally.[2] Addressing these gaps requires strengthening conventional data collection capacities within national statistical systems and harnessing the potential of non-conventional data sources, such as geospatial information systems (GIS).

Geospatial technologies are increasingly regarded as an invaluable tool for addressing critical challenges related to measuring and monitoring the SDGs.[3] Despite the growing recognition of the power of spatial data and analysis for monitoring the SDGs, to date applications for gender equality concerns remain limited. There are few studies exists where GIS applications have been used to help reveal spatial patterns in gender equality issues such as securing land rights for women, reducing maternal mortality rates, unpaid care and domestic work etc.[4] Maximising the potential of geospatial information can

---

[1] See UN Women. 2018. Why Gender Equality Matters Across All SDGS.

[2] UN Women. 2018. Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Based on UN Women's calculations. Updated as of June 2019.

[3] UN GGIM. 2015. Future trends in geospatial information management: the five to ten year vision. Second Edition.

[4] https://www.geospatialworld.net/blogs/how-geospatial-technologies-can-help-in-achieving-gender-equality/.

yield new insights on gender equality issues not typically ascertained from traditional data sources and can provide important opportunities for addressing gender data gaps across the SDGs.

The Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics (CEGS), a collaboration between Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) and UN Women, was launched in September 2018 as a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing and innovation on gender statistics and to contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As part of its Innovation Lab function, the CEGS aims to play a key role in unlocking the potential uses of geospatial information to yield new insights in gender statistics as well as and contribute to building a multidisciplinary network of experts in this field, in the effort to make this work more visible and widely available. In this regard, this event will aim to convene experts from within the global geospatial community to learn how geospatial information can be further harnessed to measure progress on gender equality and women's empowerment and how this work can be advanced through the CEGS.

II. Objectives and themes for discussion

On the margins of the ninth session of the UN-GGIM, the CEGS, in partnership with INEGI and UN Women's Research and Data Section, organized a side event on "Gender and Geospatial Research and Analysis." The side event brought together experts from the UN-GGIM community, Member States, academia, civil society and private sector actors to explore and discuss how GIS can be used to fill critical knowledge gaps around gender equality.

Participants
Papa Seck, Chief Statistician, UN Women (Moderator)
Paloma Merodio, Vice President, INEGI and chair of the UN-GGIM Americas   *Topic: Why gender equality matters for the work of the UN-GGIM?*
Linda Peters, Global Business Development Manager, Esri   *Topic: Gender statistics story maps – GIS tools for achieving the SDGs*
Allison Williams, Research Chair in Gender, Work and Health, McMaster University   *Topic: How GIS can be used to inform research around measuring unpaid care work*
Saskia Cohick, President, Women in GIS Network (WiGIS)   *Topic: Network building: Experiences from WiGIS*
Margarita Paras, Researcher, INEGI-CEGS   *Topic: Update on current work of INEGI-CEGS on GISc*
Luis Gonzalez, Statistician, United Nations Statistics Division   *Topic: FIS4SDGs: Opportunities for monitoring SDG 5*

Questions and Discussion: Summary[5]

The Gender and Geospatial Research and Analysis side event brought together members of the UN-GGIM and geospatial community, the UN system, civil society, academia and the private sector to discuss opportunities for using geospatial data and tools to fill critical knowledge gaps around gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics (CEGS), a ground-breaking partnership between UN Women and INEGI, through its Innovation Lab is exploring the potential uses of geospatial information to yield new insights on gender statistics as well as contribute to building a multidisciplinary network of experts in this field, in the effort to make this work more visible and widely available.

Participants reinforced that research on gender and geospatial is very limited and in many cases not available nor disseminated. However, it was noted that there are opportunities further exploring how spatial data and tools can contribute to improving global understanding on gender issues, such as unpaid care work, women's economic empowerment and prevalence of violence against women.

Network building, such as Women in GIS network and WeCAN, present an important opportunity to bring women practitioners together and have a dialogue on important gender issues. GIS tools for data visualizations, such as gender statistics story maps – a collaboration through Esri and UNSD - can further shed light on important was highlighted. Participants also emphasized the need to empower women working in the field of GIS and encourage more women to work in STEM.

Lastly, it was recommended that: 1) the creation of a formal expert group on GIS and Gender will be explored through the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Gender Statistics to bring together statisticians and geographers; 2) contribute to UN-GGIM Americas efforts to create a mapping of women working in GIS to further strengthen women's voices within the global geospatial community and 3) the Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics (CEGS) will organize a Global Forum on Gender and Geospatial Research in 2020 to disseminate and showcase current gender & GIS research initiatives and contribute towards building a strong multi-disciplinary network of experts.

---

[5] This summary and key messages was prepared by Women Count.

Key Messages

- The Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics (CEGS) can be used as a platform to foster collaboration through a network to bring together experts working in GIS and Gender to share experiences and increase the visibility of gender and geospatial research and analysis. In 2020, the CEGS will host a Global Forum on Gender and Geospatial Research to further showcase the work of practitioners and experts in this field.

- There is an inherent lack of gender research using spatial data and GIS tools and very little is known in this regard. However, this presents an important opportunity to further explore and unlock the potential of GIS to help fill knowledge gaps on gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly related to unpaid care and domestic work, disaster risk reduction and women's economic empowerment, etc. There are few efforts being done, such as through McMaster University, to analyze how GIS data can shed light on important gender differences related to women's unpaid care work, particularly related to caregivers assisted transport.

- There is a need to foster greater collaboration between the statistical and geographic communities. GIS creates opportunities to work across siloes, to integrate statistical and geospatial information that can benefit countries abilities to monitor the SDGs from a cross-cutting gender perspective. The IAEG on Gender Statistics could be an important space to explore how to better foster this collaboration to bring gender statisticians and geographers together.

- Strong urge to empower women working in GIS and STEM and to provide a platform, such as a network, to share experiences and strengthen women's voices within the global geospatial community. Network building, such as Women in GIS network and WeCAN, present an important opportunity to bring women practitioners together and have a dialogue around how to empower women in the field and around important gender issues.

- Overall, gender and geospatial research is of high interest within the UNGGIM community, but more work needs to be done to further explore how GIS can be used to advance gender research. This event was the first step in creating a dialogue around gender within the UNGGIM formal sessions.