

Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making, October 10-11, 2022

Agenda Item 3

COVID-19 pandemic and public participation: challenges and opportunities

Statement re challenges from a gender lense

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Good afternoon everyone. I would like to raise a few issues from a gender perspective. It is imperative to consider the gendered digital divide when we speak of online participation, as not everyone can participate in online spaces equally.

We are aware of the digital gender gap and the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated gender inequality due to the pre-existing digital divide. This is about access to technology and access to internet and at the same time about the ability to use the technology and about online skills.

Access is related to the inability to afford such technology (i.a., due to the gendered income gap), and to the lack of time to participate online (i.a., due to the care burden). Furthermore, we need to take into consideration technology skills: the “stereotype” that technology is masculine is still existing and leading to obstacles for women and girls to use the technology and to generate more knowledge in this area.

In addition, there is the challenge of online safety: women and girls are much less likely to be safe online, as online gendered violence is prevalent. 52% of young women globally have experienced some form of digital harm, and 87% believe this problem is getting worse. This is even increasing for women of colour and is more predominant when expressing opinions on political topics.

Thank you!