

Executive summary of the research validation meeting

15-17 February 2012, Bengaluru



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Gender and Citizenship in
the Information Society
Research Programme

Executive Summary
of the Research Validation Meeting Report

**The 'Gender and Citizenship in the Information
Society' (CITIGEN) Research Programme**

15th to 17th February 2012, Bengaluru

Organised by IT for Change and supported by
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Centre (IDRC)

The detailed session by session report of the meeting can be read at :
http://www.gender-is-citizenship.net/Meeting_February_2012



Executive Summary

The [Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society](#) (CITIGEN) research programme, launched in 2010, aimed to explore the notion of marginalised women's citizenship as a normative project or an aspiration for equitable social membership contained in the promise of an emerging techno-social order. Six research partners from Sri Lanka, Philippines, China, Hong Kong / Taiwan, India and Bangladesh studied various aspects of the terrain. Also eminent scholars of the field from Costa Rica, Pakistan, Thailand, Germany and South Africa, wrote think pieces delving into the research subject from their perspectives to further enrich the research process. The research was further enriched by the two large meetings held at the various phases of the programme, which brought in feminist scholars and practitioners from across fields, to share and discuss the tentative outcomes of the programme.

At the end of the appointed two years of the research programme, a research validation meeting of the network was held in National Institute of Advocacy Studies, Bengaluru from the 15th to the 17th of February 2012. It was to be an occasion where the network, now a loose group of researcher-activists and activist-researchers interested in examining the relationship between gender and the information society from the vantage point of women's participation and citizenship, would take stock of the work done and reflect upon the questions and concerns framing the research endeavour that they have been a part of. The researches undertaken by network members have been accomplished in a very short and tight time span, allowing for certain questions to be problematised sharply, although explored only in somewhat reasonable, but not entirely satisfactory, depth. There was felt, a need to look back at the research findings and re-map the analytical field along with those who may be new to the network, and re-frame the field of feminist knowledge and praxis in this emerging domain.

On the 15th of February, two sessions were planned in the second half of the day. [Session 1](#), titled '*What is network society all about? - Feminist analysis of contemporary times*' was designed as a freewheeling conversation with - Andrea Cornwall (Advisor, CITIGEN, and Professor, University of Sussex, UK), Graciela Selaimen (Coordinator, Instituto NUPEF, Brazil), Lam Oi Wan (Regional Editor for Northeast Asia, [globalvoicesonline.org](#), China) and Srilatha Batliwala (Advisor, CITIGEN, and Associate Scholar, AWID, India). The session was anchored by Parminder Jeet Singh (Advisor, CITIGEN, and Executive Director, IT for Change, India). The panel reflected upon critical questions confronting feminist politics in relation to the rise of the global middle class, the fragmentation of the public sphere, cultures of consumerism and hyper-capitalism, and the changing nature of the state. Panelists explored how networked ways of being and doing change institutions, social practices and



norms, requiring new frameworks to grapple with the feminist project of democracy and gender justice.

[Session 2](#) and [Session 3](#), which spanned the 15th and 16th of February, covered the final research and think piece presentations by Francisco dela Tonga (Youth Coordinator, Likhaan, Philippines) and Lisa McLaughlin (Advisor, CITIGEN, and Associate Professor, Miami University, USA); Desiree Lewis, (Think-piece author, CITIGEN, and Associate Professor, University of the Western Cape, South Africa); and Crystal Orderson (Think-piece author, CITIGEN, and Specialist Correspondent, SABC News, South Africa); Philippa Smales, (Researcher, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Thailand); Binitha V. Thampi (Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, India); Chandrika Sepali Kottegoda, (Director, Women and Media Collective, Sri Lanka); and Sarala Emmanuel (Women and Media Collective, Sri Lanka); Lam Oi Wan (Regional Editor for Northeast Asia, globalvoicesonline.org, China) and Michelle Fong, (Campaign and Advocacy, Internet Governance and Freedom Project, Inmedia, China). They covered the context, issues and outcomes of the research projects and the conclusions drawn by the think pieces.

[Session 4](#) - '*Can we grasp the big picture?*' was to address the ecologies shaping gender and citizenship in the network society and to take on the big questions of democratic deficit in global governance, the complexity around free speech in relation to the national and global Internets, network capitalism, and the commodification of sexuality. Moderated by Andrea, the session included two presentations. Heike Jensen (Think-piece author, CITIGEN, and Post-doctoral researcher and lecturer, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany) presented on 'Big business and big brother: Revisiting 'old' issues around gender and citizenship in the network society' and Parminder Jeet Singh presented on 'ACTA, SOPA, IG and the rest: Making sense of the global politics shaping network society and gender justice'.

[Session 5](#) encompassed three power speeches made by Gayatri Buragohain (Executive Director, Feminist Approach to Technology, India), Aparna Kalley (Project Coordinator, Prakriye – Centre for Community Informatics and Development, IT for Change, India) and Jan Moolman (Women's Rights Projects Coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme, South Africa) and was moderated by Geetanjali Mishra (Executive Director, CREA, India). The session was titled '*What matters in building feminist power through technologies*' and reflected upon the way power relationships are inscribed in the autonomous course of the 'digital everyday'. Question of how technology can be appropriated to serve a collective feminist consciousness and what would be the way to make this happen, were covered.



The last session on the 16th, [Session 6](#), was dedicated to '*A synthesis of CITIGEN's thoughts and practices – What does the network society have to do with discourses of gender and citizenship*' presented by Anita Gurumurthy (Coordinator, CITIGEN, and Executive Director, IT for Change, India). The presentation attempted a tentative synthesis of the research projects and think pieces that have resulted from the CITIGEN network.

The 17th morning began with [Session 7](#) - '*Technology, transformation and tipping points – Case studies of non-linear change*'. The session was moderated by Chandrika Sepali Kottegoda and presentations were made by Jessica Colaco (Research Lead at iHub Research, iHub, Kenya) and Meghana Rao (Manager - Communications, Breakthrough, India). The session demonstrated how progressive community based change can be effected through technologies. Presenters shared experiences and perspectives, elaborating how the nature of technology-induced change presents itself, and what could be the key 'tipping points'.

[Session 8](#), entitled '*Money, a room and network freedoms' – My vision of democracy and gender justice*' was designed as a book-reading session where the two presenters - Disha Mullick (Project Coordinator, Nirantar, India) and Srilatha Batliwala read out quasi-fictional accounts of women's interface with technology. The moderator of the session, Graciela Selaimen, rounded the session by a discussion on the global developments around Internet rights.

[Session 9](#) and [Session 10](#) were called '*Pointers from CITIGEN - What do we need to take away for theory and practice*' and these sessions were meant to present a review and assessment of CITIGEN's research and conceptual contributions from scholars new to the network. Reviews were undertaken by Ranjita Mohanty (Consultant, Local Governance Initiative, Swiss Co-operation Office India & Visiting Scholar, University of Western Cape, South Africa), Shakun Daundiyakhed (Programme Coordinator, Vimochana, India), Lisa McLaughlin, Andrea Cornwall, Phet Sayo (Senior Programme Officer, IDRC, India). The sessions were moderated and tied by Desiree Lewis and Heike Jensen.

The concluding session for the meeting, [Session 11](#), was jointly anchored by Srilatha Batliwala and Anita Gurumurthy. Entitled '*Space for musings – Reflecting about the CITIGEN network and beyond*', it was an open space to reflect upon and look at individual and organisational points of interest in the network and its future.

For details on each session, click on the session links or visit the page:
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