

**Review of the 'Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society' Programme
26th - 28th April 2011
New Delhi**

The Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society (www.gender-IS-citizenship.net) research programme (CITIGEN), was set up by IT for Change (www.ITforChange.net) in 2010, and brings together researchers, scholars, activists and NGOs, to study the gendered context of the emerging techno-social paradigm. Its specific objective has been to understand how the social paradigm shaped by information and communication technologies (ICTs) recasts the citizenship of women, in particular, marginalised women, by examining the interaction of technological affordances with the social and institutional environment.

Focussing on five major thematic areas: local resistance and global solidarities; emancipation and the neo-liberal feminine subject; gender and public discourse in the emerging public spheres; new paradigms of local governance and participatory development; and technology governance and gender politics, the CITIGEN programme seeks to inform policy and practice through conceptual and theoretical contributions.

Some key questions that the programme applies itself to are as follows:

- How does the trans-local nature of the public sphere, being shaped by new information and communications technologies, change meanings of citizenship for marginalised women?
- How do we unpack the discourse on inclusion and participation on the Internet? How do we understand the empowered female subject?
- How do women renegotiate gender and challenge local power structures by creating and shaping local publics using digital media?
- Within national and sub-national contexts, how do new technologies mediate women's substantive citizenship? How do new technologies enhance institutional accountability as well as the participation of marginalised women in local governance?
- How do current regimes governing online spaces - content on the Internet, social networking sites, search engines etc. influence gender related outcomes?
- What kind of technology models maybe more aligned to feminist philosophy? How do national policy frameworks shape technology appropriation by women for their social and political empowerment?

The Review Workshop

Currently, the CITIGEN programme has a community of six research partners and three think piece writers from various countries who are covering a range of thematic areas. Four out of the six are action research projects. Teams are using different methodologies – structured interviews, case studies, narrative analysis – to understand the gendered contexts of citizenship.

- The Thailand/Taiwan team is exploring the use of mobile phones as tools of empowerment by women NGOs working with migrant domestic workers in the region.
- The China team is studying women's organisations and activists, their use of new media and online platforms, and their implications for citizenship in Hong Kong and mainland China.
- The Filipino project has created an online platform that will serve as a space for aggregating and visibilising the experiences and aspirations of marginalised women, men and youth in order to influence reproductive health legislation.
- The Sri Lanka team is researching the wider telecentre context in Sri Lanka and also exploring through action research the appropriation of new media for women's voice and feminist campaigns at the local and national level.
- The India team is working on the issue of the empowerment of women political leaders at the local level, exploring the role of ICTs in effecting their substantive representation in local institutions and creating a knowledge network by interlinking the past and present elected women representatives.
- The Bangladesh team, the youngest addition to the CITIGEN community, has just begun to study the influence of new media on women's political participation in Bangladesh through a citizen journalism platform. They will also explore the role of ICTs in enabling marginalised women to renegotiate their rights in their local contexts.

CITIGEN also has a think piece component to which scholars from Asia and also other regions of the global south will contribute. Think pieces will look at intersections between the micro-context of community information ecologies and macro socio-political developments. It is hoped that these will complement the research projects and galvanise a dialogue on a southern gender and information society discourse.

Ongoing researches are at various stages of completion. In order to begin the process of reflection and a movement towards conceptualisation of emerging insights from the CITIGEN community's work as a whole, IT for Change seeks to organise a workshop between 26th to 28th April 2011 at New Delhi. The meeting will bring together all the research teams, a few think piece writers and the advisors of the network along with a few other scholars and researchers who can help the CITIGEN community in the reflective exercise.

The objectives of this workshop are 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 that speaks to the theoretical imperatives of the programme as a whole, and
- Anchored in emergent theoretical formulations of the programme, explore the elements of a 'southern' discourse on women's citizenship in the information society and implications of the same for practice and policy at national and global levels.

The format will facilitate the articulation of emerging concepts and tentative theories from the ongoing work in CITIGEN, and channel these into a debate on the larger questions of democratic structures and institutions, and their shifting meanings for marginalised women's participation in the information society, as equal citizens. In order to expand and deepen the debates and discussions, a few scholars working on southern feminist frameworks and who are potential contributors to network's research will also be invited to comment on CITIGEN's ongoing work and present their perspectives.