



Thirteenth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Side Event

Inclusion and diversity in geospatial information management

Monday 31 July 2023

13:15 – 14:30

Venue: Conference Room 5

United Nations Headquarters, New York

A. Introduction

1. Geospatial information management is driven by the maxim: “everything that happens, happens somewhere”, but just how inclusive is our representation of the world?
Are traditional methods of portraying location and space really accessible to all?
Are there equal opportunities for people everywhere to reap the benefits generated through the access to and use of geospatial data?
Does our data truly reflect the reality of a diverse global population?

Bridging the digital divide to ensure that geospatial data contributes to a more inclusive, diverse and equitable society is a key challenge. This session debates some of the solutions. The following are some UN programs and initiatives relevant to the topics being addressed and provide existing strategies, frameworks and base line data that will inform the discussions.

2. UN Women is the [United Nations](#) entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality. It works globally to realise the vision of the [SDGs](#) for women and girls, and stands behind women’s equal participation in all aspects of life by focusing on four strategic priorities for women to:
 - [Lead, participate in and benefit equally](#) from governance systems
 - Have [income security, decent work and economic autonomy](#)
 - Live a life free [from all forms of violence](#)
 - Contribute to and have greater influence in [building sustainable peace and resilience](#), and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and [humanitarian action](#)
3. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is a high- level advisory body to the Economic and Social Council. The Forum was established on 28 July 2000 by [resolution 2000/22](#), with the mandate to deal with indigenous issues related to [economic and social development](#), [culture](#), [the environment](#), [education](#), [health](#) and [human rights](#). The Permanent Forum is one of three UN bodies that is mandated to deal specifically with Indigenous Peoples’ issues. The others are the [Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and the [Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). It is important to note the resolution “United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples” (A/RES/61/295) adopted by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007.

This is an open event, and all delegates and observers are invited

The Declaration is the most comprehensive statement of the rights of indigenous peoples ever developed, giving prominence to collective rights to a degree unprecedented in international human rights law.

4. UN Disability Inclusion While several UN entities have relevant and specific responsibilities for mainstreaming disability inclusion, no single entity has the dedicated capacity and authority to actively coordinate, support and track progress. The [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) provides the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the United Nations. The strategy plays a key role in enabling the UN system to support Member States in their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of [the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the Agenda for Humanity, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, other international human rights instruments, and development and humanitarian commitments.
5. The Sustainable Development Goals [Report 2023](#) issued at the midpoint of the implementation of the SDGs sends a sobering message to the world: As we emerge from the global pandemic, we are falling short of meeting most of the Goals by 2030. While certain areas have witnessed progress, there remains a concerning proportion of targets that are either progressing too slowly or regressing.
6. SDG 5 Gender Equality - The 2023 SDG Report shows that the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. Of the Goal 5 indicators, 15.4 per cent are “on track”, 61.5 per cent are at a moderate distance, and 23.1 per cent are far or very far off track. The report highlights slow progress in many areas, highlighting the need to increase women’s share in management and political representation, as well as for stronger protection, policies and enforcement of laws to safeguard women’s land rights. Gender equality is a cross-cutting objective and there is still work to be done to dismantle systemic barriers to achieving Goal 5.
7. SDG 10 Reduced inequalities - The 2023 SDG Report shows that the world is not on track to reduce inequalities. At the midpoint of implementation, the progress assessment chart shows that about 20% of the assessed targets of Goal 10 saw a stagnation or regression below the 2015 baseline. The report highlights that one in six people worldwide has experienced discrimination in some form, with women and people with disabilities disproportionately affected. Racial discrimination, rooted in factors such as ethnicity, colour or language, is among the most common grounds for discrimination worldwide.

B. UN-GGIM and related initiatives

8. A side event on “[Gender and Geospatial Research and Analysis](#)” was held on the margins of the ninth session of the Committee of Experts, where the Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics (CEGS) in partnership with INEGI and UN Women’s Research and Data Section brought together experts from the geospatial community, academia, civil society and private sector to explore and discuss how GIS could be used to fill critical knowledge gaps around gender equality.
9. Two key messages emerged. The first that there is an inherent lack of gender research using spatial data and GIS tools, which impacts on the opportunity to further explore and unlock the potential of GIS to help fill knowledge gaps on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Furthermore, there is a strong urge to empower women working in GIS and STEM by providing a platform or network to share experiences and strengthen their voices within the global geospatial community.
10. On the margins of the twelfth session of the Committee of Experts, UNSD in collaboration with Women+ in Geospatial brought the women of the UN-community together to identify priority issues and explore ways to fill data gaps for SDG 5. In addition to determining the role of the Committee of Experts and the Women in GIS arena, the side event on “[Women in Geospatial](#)” identified issues that

This is an open event, and all delegates and observers are invited

should be addressed, partners and agencies including those from academia, private sector and NGOs to support. The outputs raised awareness, the need to advance the topic and a proposal that the Committee of Experts considers how to coordinate this topic within its programme of work.

11. A special side event was also organised within the programme of the Second UN World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) held in Hyderabad, India in October 2022. Entitled “[Geo-enabling the global village through the celebration of multi-faceted diversity and inclusion approaches](#)” the side event was organised by Women+ in Geospatial with the support of EuroGeographics, Office for National Statistics, Three Trees and a Map PR, and Geospatial Information Science and Engineering Hub, IIT Mumbai. The special side event was split into three sessions. The first session looked at inclusivity and accessibility in geospatial services, highlighting the need to overcome barriers to access geospatial services and ensure inclusivity for under-represented groups. The second session focused on working towards a more diverse global geospatial workforce, in terms of gender, race, religion, ability, and neurodivergency¹, to highlight the need to implement strategies at national level to ensure it reflects the social make up of society. The final session was a hands-on practical session aimed at providing practical advice and experiences to support the younger generation and under-represented at the Congress so they could maximise their UNWGIC experience through networking and building their personal and professional profile. This special side event again highlighted the importance and interest of the topic, bringing to the fore the need to discuss and consider how the topic of diversity and inclusivity can be incorporated within the work of the Committee of Experts.

C. Objectives

12. The aim of this side event is to explore the different ways in which the geospatial community can consider diversity and inclusion of under-represented groups such as persons with disabilities, indigenous groups and gender representations. This includes ensuring access to geospatial data and services, equitable representation in data collection and management, opportunities to acquire the skills and knowledge to harness the value of geospatial information, the voice to be able to participate in technological advancements, and advocating/supporting measures for diverse representation in the geospatial workforce.
13. This topic has been considered in more than one UN-GGIM event, and time for the topic of inclusion and diversity to be brought before the Committee of Experts.
14. The objective of the side event is to:
 - Inform the Committee of Experts of the topic of inclusion and diversity
 - discuss the context of inclusion and diversity and how this links with the work of the Committee of Experts, and
 - consider how the Committee of Experts can consider this topic within its overall programme of work

¹ Neurodivergent is a non-medical umbrella term that describes people with variation in their mental functions, and can include conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other neurological or developmental conditions such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). No brain is the same and everyone has a unique combination of abilities and needs.

D. Proposed Side Event Structure

- Introduction and Moderator: Ingrid Vanden Berghe, UN-GGIM Co Chair, NGI Belgium
- Presentations:
 - Inclusion, Diversity and Equitable Representation: A Canadian perspective, Eric Loubier, Natural Resource Canada
 - Equity - disparities that emerge at intersections of gender and race, indigenous status, income, and wealth, Linda Peters, ESRI
 - Tactile mapping, Frank Tierolff, Kadaster Netherlands
- Panel discussion: Moderator - Ingrid Vanden Berghe, UN-GGIM Co Chair, NGI Belgium
- Panellists:
 - Eric Loubier, Natural Resource Canada
 - Olive Powell, Women in Geospatial
 - Maroale Mimi Chauke, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, South Africa
 - Frank Tierolff, Kadaster Netherlands
 - Linda Peters, ESRI
- Summary and next steps - TBC
- Closing remarks - Ingrid Vanden Berghe, UN-GGIM Co Chair, NGI Belgium

E. Expected outcomes

- Summary of issues and recommendations.
- Decision on how to advance this topic before the Committee of Experts
- Identification of possible next steps

F. Organisers

- The UN-GGIM Expanded Bureau and UNSD