

Video Transcript for Angela L Davis, Joint Programme Coordinator, UN Women Multi Country Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean

0:01

Digital innovation and technology for gender equality was the theme for this year's International Women's Day, commemorated on the 8th March 2023.

0:12

This was aligned with the priority theme for the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, namely Innovation and Technological Change and Education in the digital Age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

0:29

the United Nations observance of International Women's Day sought to recognize and celebrate the women and girls across the globe who are championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education.

0:41

International Women's Day 2023 also sought to explore the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities and also placed the spotlight on the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and ICT facilitated gender based violence.

1:01

To commemorate International Women's Day 2023, UN Women was pleased to host a panel discussion as the first in a series of conversations with Caribbean women on innovation, technology and digitalization as a means to one spotlighting female roles in these areas, 2 discussing the opportunities and challenges with those already in the field, and thirdly, highlighting recommendations to reinforce opportunities and address challenges.

1:30

The first panel discussion was with a group of esteemed Caribbean professional women working in the digital space, who enthusiastically shared with us their insights and reflections on their experience as Trail Blazers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics for this Caribbean region and more broadly, globally.

1:51

Bringing women and other marginalized groups into technology results in more creative solutions and has greater potential for innovations that meet women's needs and promote gender equality.

2:02

Their lack of inclusion, by contrast, comes with massive costs.

2:07

As per the UN Women's Gender Snapshot 2022 report, women's exclusion from the digital world has shaved one trillion U.S.

2:16

dollars from the gross domestic product of low and middle income countries in the past decade, a loss that will grow to 1.5 trillion by 2025 without action.

2:28

Reversing this trend will require tackling the problem of online violence, which a study of 51 countries revealed 38% of women had personally experienced.

2:38

The UN Women Multi Country Office for the Caribbean continues to advance its efforts by supporting countries across the region in addressing critical issues which have demonstrated value in influencing transformative change towards the achievement of gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

2:56

Advances in technology and the digital space provide us with opportunities to form in the form of two new tools and modalities to provide effective, innovative solutions to reach more people in ways that enhance engagement and reduce barriers to information resources and services, including digital financial tools.

3:18

The double edge, however, is that these digital advances and tools can also be used to perpetuate bias, inequality and violence in the lives of women and girls, adding an additional layer to the existing efforts to combat the complex and relentless issues of gender based violence and sexual assault.

3:38

UN Women has been pleased to support the Government of Antigua and Barbuda as one of the regional leaders and innovators in honoring its commitments through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women and other protocols to End Violence against women and Girls.

3:55

Your government has been a trailblazer in recognizing the benefits and utility of modernizing its approach to addressing these critical issues through the application of a systematic strategy and introduction of digital transformative initiatives in this very sensitive area of programming.

4:14

Through support from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, managed by UN Women and which advocates for and finances innovative approaches for preventing and ending violence against women and girls, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda was assisted with the completion of its National Strategic Action Plan on Gender Based Violence.

4:34

This further enabled the country to significantly develop its capacity for the collection, analysis and dissemination of gender statistics, including for sexual assault and gender based violence through the creation of the National Gender Based and Sexual Violence Database.

4:52

the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women also supported the establishment of the Support and Referral Center, which meant that for the first time in the Caribbean, victims of gender based violence, rape, sexual assault and human trafficking now had a one stop center where they could get medical counseling and legal support in one place.

5:13

The SARC introduced this gender sensitive system for the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex disaggregated data, the first of its kind within the country, which incorporates various service providers across government and civil society, inputting data into a centralized data management system specific to gender based violence.

5:34

This database is one of the most up to date and comprehensive data collection systems pertaining to sexual assault and gender based violence.

5:43

Its utility has ushered in a more modern approach to the treatment, investigation and ultimately mitigation of gender based violence and sexual assault cases in Antigua and Barbuda.

5:55

Trinidad and Tobago has identified the data collection system as a model that they would like to replicate with the support of UN Women and UNFPA which is under the current EUUN Spotlight Trinidad and Tobago Country Program.

6:11

Our ongoing work also includes supporting the redevelopment of the beneficiary database under the Social Protection Program in Antigua.

6:20

The Directorate of Gender Affairs through the UN Women Multi Country Office also assisted the Government of Antigua through training

and capacity building to establish a 24 hour crisis hotline and referral pathway modeled on its own lessons in operating its 24 hour National gender based Violence Crisis Hotline and its adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6:46

Which saw the Directorate of Gender Affairs also establish a WhatsApp chat support for victims through the UN Joint Program supported by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security entitled Building Effective Resilience for Human Security in the Caribbean countries, the imperative of gender equality and women's Empowerment in the strengthened agriculture and Agri related small business sector.

7:13

UN Women, in collaboration with FAOUNDP and the ILO, are supporting catalytic investments towards greater human security and resilience in a sector which is continually under risk of environmental and economic threats.

7:28

The project aims through a combination of policy reform, advocacy, Technical Support and services to contribute to human security for farmers in small agro and fisheries related business entrepreneurs, many of whom are women.

7:44

The agricultural sector is extremely vulnerable to disasters and climate change risk and their impacts and is a sector where gender equality is possibly most entrenched.

7:55

Innovation and modernization have been the underlying premise of enhancing market access, productivity, business development, and modernization of business practices, all of which have been aided by the use of technology and digital tools.

8:11

The introduction of different modalities using digital online platforms

proved to be critical for engaging persons during the COVID-19 pandemic, which coincided with the start of this program.

8:22

In real time, we were able to test the value and utility of online engagement with persons in this sector and it was not without its many challenges.

8:32

This was a valuable lesson learned, a lesson in learning opportunity as it helped to better understand where the advantages and limitations were.

8:41

One very notable example of the value added is the introduction of a new digital help desk, which will soon be available for use through an assessment of the landscape across the five beneficiary countries under this program, which includes Antigua and Barbuda.

8:57

It was noted that all islands already have online information on the steps to register as a business, but information on registering as a farmer and accessing Crown lands was not easily accessible on government websites.

9:13

This was noted as a significant barrier to smallholder farmers and Agri business persons, many of whom are women, towards formalizing their businesses and therefore limiting their ability to scale up through their inability to effectively access the several support and incentive schemes already available in country, either through government or the private sector stakeholders.

9:37

Secondary data sources and key informant interviews are required to fully document the process in each country.

9:45

These help desks are important steps towards increasing the gross growth and resilience of these micro, small and medium enterprises across our countries.

9:56

It was therefore recommended that the information be produced in conversational language and featured as small video clips for television and social media platforms or conversational narrative guidebooks and or conversational audio clips for radio.

10:13

The production of the digital help desks will address the recommendation and provide an online resource where persons can in one space find a simplified, country specific step by step guide to critical information related to the agriculture sector which pertains to local guidance on how to register a business, how to register and or access land support and incentive schemes.

10:40

This information was made available for use through various online platforms.

10:45

Agriculture Extension officers and business coaches, some of whom also benefited through this program from training and capacity development to enhance their work with persons in the sector, will be able to use this tool in real time as they engage with agriculture workers wherever they work.

11:03

Taking information to persons and enabling them to access it in their own time also is a step towards greater utility and ultimately greater economic outcomes for these individuals.

11:16

Successes from the UN Trust Fund for Human Security Supported program will provide major impetuses for a broader recognition of the priorities of gender equality and women's empowerment for enhanced resilience, stronger economic growth and a more inclusive society and strengthened human security.

11:38

UN Women pledges its full support to the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda in advancing its digital transformation strategy.

11:46

This is a core aspect of our work in support of the government's national development agenda to further promote women's economic empowerment and gender equality.

11:55

A robust and transformative digital strategy should include data privacy legislation and accountability, digitalization of violence against women and girls, and broader gender based violence referral pathways including the monitoring of Protection Orders, digitally training and digital payments for women entrepreneurs including vendors, support to digitalize social protection payments.

12:21

The systematic collection, analysis and routine dissemination of gender statistics, A gender responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital education can increase the awareness of women and girls regarding their rights and civic engagement.

12:38

Advancements in digital technology offer immense opportunities to address development and humanitarian challenges and to achieve the 20-30 Sustainable Development Goals.

12:49

As we advance in the digital space, we need to be increasingly mindful that the opportunities for the digital revolution also present a risk of perpetuating existing patterns of gender inequality.

13:02

Growing inequalities are becoming increasingly evident in the context of digital skills and access to technologies, with women being left behind as a result of the digital gender divide.

