



Good Practice - Toponomastica Femminile

WP 2

Activity 1 (Good Practice)

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Good Practice Card

Name/ title of practice:	Toponomastica Femminile
Location:	Rome
Size and scale of organization:	300 members
Industry/Sector:	Non-profit
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Additional details:	
Sources of information/References:	

Good Practice/Content

Key focus/bias observed:	Toponomastica Femminile works to address the systematic underrepresentation of women in public spaces. In most Italian cities, only 3–7% of streets are named after women, which mirrors a broader cultural invisibility of women’s contributions to history, science, politics, and the arts. The initiative focuses on gender equity in urban toponymy, linking symbolic recognition to social justice.
Description of the <i>Practice</i>:	Founded in 2012, Toponomastica Femminile is both a research network and a grassroots movement. It documents the disparity in street naming practices, raises awareness through public campaigns, and actively promotes change by proposing new female figures to be commemorated, and by developing ad-hoc training for municipality employees and engage administrators. Beyond advocacy, it has developed educational programs in schools, publications, and exhibitions that connect young people and communities to women’s stories, reinforcing a culture of inclusion and historical memory.
Implementation strategy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice combines participatory research with civic engagement. Volunteers, often in collaboration with schools and universities, survey existing street names and collect data on gender imbalances. Parallel to this, the association proposes alternative naming choices to municipalities, offering dossiers on notable women deserving of recognition. A crucial part of the strategy is collaboration with local governments: by lobbying for municipal regulations and gender-equitable policies, Toponomastica Femminile transforms symbolic advocacy into structural change. The link between awareness-raising and policy adoption is what has allowed the initiative to move from denunciation to measurable impact.
Key actors involved:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice is supported by a wide network of stakeholders. These include feminist and women’s rights organizations, cultural and historical associations, academic and research institutions, schools, universities, and local communities. Public administrations—municipalities and regional governments—play a key role in adopting new naming policies. The media, through coverage of public campaigns and ceremonies, also amplifies the association’s work.
Outcomes and metrics of impact:	The impact of Toponomastica Femminile is visible both in numbers and in cultural perception. The association counts around 300 registered members, more than 400 formal affiliates including institutions, and a social media community of over 24,000 supporters. On the policy side, its campaigns have contributed to concrete increases in the percentage of female street names in cities such as Rome, Milan, and Naples, where local governments have adopted gender-equitable toponymy guidelines. Success is also measured by the number of educational projects realized in schools, the participation of young people in research activities, and the heightened public debate on the symbolic value of naming.
	Despite these advances, the initiative faces structural and cultural barriers. Naming public spaces often involves bureaucratic delays, local resistance, and political dynamics that may not prioritize gender equality. In some cases,



Potential challenges and barriers for implementation:	the lack of knowledge about notable female figures makes it harder for administrations to adopt proposals. Moreover, the symbolic recognition achieved through street naming must be matched by broader systemic changes, to avoid tokenism.
Blueprint for success - recommendations for replication or adaptation of the Practice:	This practice can be replicated in other countries and contexts by adapting the model of participatory research and local government engagement. Key recommendations include building a strong educational component to involve young people in rediscovering women's history, maintaining accessible databases of female figures to propose, and creating alliances with civil society and political institutions. Flexibility is essential: in different contexts, the practice might extend beyond street naming to include statues, public buildings, or cultural heritage sites.
Key lessons learned:	One of the central lessons of Toponomastica Femminile is that symbolic changes in the urban landscape can trigger wider cultural transformations. By engaging schools, local communities, and municipalities together, the initiative demonstrates that visibility in public space is not just about commemoration but about recognition, belonging, and role models for future generations. Another lesson is the importance of persistence: measurable change came after years of advocacy and negotiation, underlining that cultural barriers are slow to shift but not immovable.
Other info/notes:	The initiative has developed strong interdisciplinary ties, producing research publications, exhibitions, and didactic materials. It also collaborates with national campaigns for gender equality, connecting the issue of street naming to broader struggles for women's rights. Its model demonstrates how grassroots activism, when combined with institutional partnerships, can achieve lasting policy changes.



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