

# Women and @ICT

## Frontier Initiative

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### **Women's Empowerment, SDGs and ICT**

Module C1



UNITED NATIONS  
APC@ICT-ESCAP



# Core Content

## Module C1:

### Women's Empowerment, SDGs and ICT

Faheem Hussain

# Women and ICT Frontier Initiative - Core Content

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## Preface

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer tools that can be applied to raise entrepreneurial know-how, and improve access to financing and real-time market information. Member States have recognized the impact that ICTs can bring to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With a vision to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (SDG 5), they called upon nations to “enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women” (Target 5.b).

While ICTs are universally acknowledged as enabling tools for social and economic development, women entrepreneurs in developing countries continue to face disadvantages resulting from their lack of access and capacity to use these technologies. They result from social factors that include poverty, limits to mobility and lower education completion rates. Furthermore, social norms in some countries construe using the Internet or engaging in business as inappropriate for women.

The United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for ICT for Development (UN-APCICT) was established in June 2006 as a regional institute of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). UN-APCICT’s principal mission is to build human and institutional capacities of ESCAP member States to use ICTs for sustainable development. The Centre develops and implements capacity building programmes for government leaders, civil servants, students and youth that have seen wide uptake and institutionalization in human resource development frameworks, and have strengthened capacities to harness ICTs for social and economic development in the region.

In an effort to support the social and economic empowerment of women in Asia and the Pacific through ICT-enabled entrepreneurship, UN-APCICT initiated the **Women and ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI)** flagship programme.

The WIFI modules introduce the readers to the foundation concepts of empowerment and entrepreneurship, and provide the basics of how to apply ICTs for starting and managing a small business. It also strengthens capacities of government leaders and policymakers towards providing an environment for ICT-enabled women entrepreneurs through gender-responsive policies, programmes and services.

Additional resources include a facilitators’ guide that accompanies each WIFI training module to assist trainers in the delivery of the material, and the WIFI InfoBank online platform with supplementary resources on how to use ICT for entrepreneurship.

UN-APCICT embarked on the WIFI programme following a “We D.I.D. It in Partnership” approach, ensuring that the Development, Implementation and Delivery of WIFI are undertaken in an inclusive and participatory manner. The programme draws from the contributions and engagement of stakeholders and partners from governments, women’s associations, civil society, the private sector and other organizations bound by a common goal of ICT capacity development for women’s entrepreneurship.

It is our sincere hope that WIFI can make a meaningful contribution towards achieving our shared goal of women’s empowerment through ICT.

Hyeun-Suk Rhee  
Director  
UN-APCICT/ESCAP

## About the Module

The primary objective of this module is to introduce the key concepts of:

- » Empowerment
- » Women's empowerment, and its barriers and enablers in present times
- » Information and communication technology (ICT), and its challenges and opportunities in promoting women's empowerment
- » The Sustainable Development Goals related to achieving women's empowerment

The module has three main sections, where key concepts are explained with the support of numerous real world examples and case studies. Each section ends with a set of interactive exercises.

Notes for trainers are available at the end of this module to provide suggestions in the delivery of the training to the target audience and the enrichment of this material in their local setting.

### **Learning outcomes**

Upon completion of the module, a learner will be able to:

1. Describe the concept of women's empowerment in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals
2. List the barriers and enablers of women's empowerment
3. Give specific examples of how ICT can support women's empowerment

## Target Audience

The target audience of this module are existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs, policymakers, government officers, community organizers, civil society, and other related stakeholders.

## Duration

6 hours / one training day

## Acknowledgements

UN-APCICT acknowledges the partners who participated in the multiple rounds of review of the training content and who provided invaluable inputs while developing this module. We thank the Pakistan Institute of ICTs for Development (PIID), the Career Executive Service Board (CESB) of the Philippines, and the participants from the consultative meetings, expert group meetings, workshops and field tests. UN-APCICT also recognizes the specific contributions of Faheem Hussein, Maria Juanita R. Macapagal, Usha Rani Vyasulu Reddy, Sayuri Cocco Okada and Janaki Srinivasan, who truly helped shape the module. We thank Christine Apikul for editing the module.

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## List of Acronyms

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>APCICT</b> | Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (United Nations) |
| <b>C1</b>     | WIFI Core Content – Module C1: Women's Empowerment, SDGs and ICT  |
| <b>C2</b>     | WIFI Core Content – Module C2: Enabling Role of ICT for Women Entrepreneurs                                     |
| <b>CEO</b>    | Chief Executive Officer   |
| <b>ESCAP</b>  | Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (United Nations)  |
| <b>FAO</b>    | Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations)  |
| <b>GDP</b>    | Gross Domestic Product  |
| <b>GSMA</b>   | Global Association of Mobile Operators  |
| <b>ICT</b>    | Information and Communication Technology  |
| <b>ITU</b>    | International Telecommunication Union   |
| <b>MDG</b>    | Millennium Development Goal   |
| <b>PSI</b>    | Population Services International   |
| <b>SDG</b>    | Sustainable Development Goal  |
| <b>SMS</b>    | Short Message Service   |
| <b>STEM</b>   | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics  |
| <b>UN</b>     | United Nations  |
| <b>UNDP</b>   | United Nations Development Programme  |
| <b>UNESCO</b> | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  |
| <b>W1</b>     | WIFI Women Entrepreneurs Track – Module W1: Planning a Business Using ICT                                       |
| <b>W2</b>     | WIFI Women Entrepreneurs Track – Module W2: Managing a Business Using ICT                                       |
| <b>WIFI</b>   | Women and ICT Frontier Initiative   |

# I. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the member States of the United Nations collectively agreed to pursue the vision of sustainable development, and set out seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide development efforts. One of the fundamental principles adopted in order to achieve sustainability is that of *inclusiveness*, which means society must leave no one behind in the processes and opportunities for development. Women in particular should benefit from the opportunities for learning, for business, and for connecting to social and economic networks. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are now deeply embedded as the platform through which opportunities are shared, skills training are delivered, and information is gathered.

This module explores how women's empowerment is an integral part of sustainable development, and how ICTs can be tapped to support the social processes that ultimately empower women and include them in the collective journey towards sustainable development.

## II. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND WHY IT MATTERS

**“Empowerment means that people—both women and men—can take control over their lives: set their own agendas, gain skills (or have their own skills and knowledge recognized), increase self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-reliance.”**

UN Women, Women's Empowerment Principles, 2011

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### Learning outcome

Describe the concept of women's empowerment in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals

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### 2.1. What is women's empowerment?

According to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2015* by the World Economic Forum, no country in the world has fully closed the gender gap—or the differences between women's and men's access to and participation in social and economic development. In particular, the gender gap for economic participation remains at 59 per cent.<sup>1</sup> This is against international human rights instruments, which has the principle of gender equality as its central commitment.<sup>2</sup>

As more people are acknowledging that the gender gap hinders global development, the advocacy for women's empowerment is increasing.

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1 World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2015* (2015). Available from <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR2015/cover.pdf>.

2 UN Women, “Gender Equality and Human Rights”, Discussion Paper No. 4, July 2015. Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/goldblatt-fin.pdf>.

Empowerment is largely defined as a process of change that increases choice (resources) and enhances the capacity to make choices favourable to oneself and to society in general.<sup>3</sup> Empowering women is about ensuring that they can participate fully in social, economic and political life.

When individuals are better able to make strategic choices in their lives, it has consequences for their economic and social well-being. Empowered women are an integral part of a developed society. There is in fact a two-way relationship between development and women's empowerment. As women gain better access to healthcare, education, livelihood and political participation, they feel more empowered, and in turn, they are better able to contribute to social and economic development.

Most countries have collectively, as well as individually, made progress towards ensuring women's empowerment within the guidelines of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) until 2015. Consider these global statistics:<sup>4</sup>

- » Health – Compared to 1990, there are 45 per cent fewer maternal deaths globally.
- » Education – All developing regions have or have almost achieved *gender parity* (equality in the access of females and males) in primary education.
- » Politics – From 1995 to 2015, the percentage of women in parliament nearly doubled globally.
- » Business management – 25 women Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) led Fortune 500 companies in 2015, compared to only one in 1999.
- » Entrepreneurship<sup>5</sup> – There are nearly 6 million formal, women-owned small businesses in East Asia. In economies like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam, women-owned businesses are increasing and growing at a fast rate.

However, discrimination against women is still evident:

- » Health – 800 women still die every day from preventable pregnancy-related causes; 99 per cent of these deaths occur in developing countries.
- » Water – Women spend 16 million hours per day collecting water in 25 sub-Saharan countries while men spend 6 million hours.

3 Walter L. Balk, *Managerial Reform and Professional Empowerment in the Public Service* (Westport, CT., Quorum Books, 1996).

4 UN Women, "Infographic: Gender equality – Where are we today?" 25 September 2015.

5 US Department of State, "Speech of US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the APEC Women and the Economy Forum", 12 June 2012.

- » Education – Gender parity in primary education has been widely achieved in the Asia-Pacific region. However, it widens at the secondary and tertiary education levels. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), female students get on average 12.3 years of education from primary to tertiary level in the Asia-Pacific compared to 12.4 for male students.<sup>6</sup>
- » Politics – Only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women in 2015.
- » Business management – Women comprised a mere 5 per cent of all CEOs on the Fortune 500 list in 2015.
- » Work – 50 per cent of the world's working age women (15 or over) are in the labour force, compared to over 75 per cent of working age men, and 50.5 per cent of these world's working women are engaged in vulnerable employment.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, women earn USD 24 less than men.
- » Entrepreneurship – Globally, 48 per cent of entrepreneurs are women but most of them tend to run smaller, informal or subsistence businesses rather than growth-oriented enterprises. This is partly due to their limited access to productive resources compared to men.<sup>8</sup>
- » Land/Bank account ownership – Less than 20 per cent of landholders are women and only 37 per cent of women in South Asia own a bank account.<sup>9</sup>

These statistics listed above are related to the components of women's empowerment:

- » Cognitive – A woman's understanding of the conditions of her subordination in society and the reasons for this;
- » Psychological – A woman's feelings and/or belief that she can act to change her situation;
- » Political – A woman's ability to organize and mobilize for change; and
- » Economic – A woman's ability to engage in productive activity that allow some degree of autonomy.”<sup>10</sup>

6 ESCAP Online Statistical Database. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/statdb/DataExplorer.aspx>.

7 UN Women, "Economic Empowerment of Women", UN Women in Brief, December 2013.

8 World Bank, "Economic Opportunities for Women in East Asia and Pacific Region", 2010.

9 World Bank, "Infographic: Global Findex 2014 - Gender and Income". Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/globalfindex/infographics/infographic-global-findex-2014-gender-income>.

10 Carolyn Medel Anonuevo, ed., *Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathways towards Autonomy* (Hamburg, UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). Available from [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/283\\_102.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/283_102.pdf).



## Case Study 1.

### A woman from South Asia

I grew up in a village. At age six, I started going to school but I had to help my mother cook and clean at home so I did not have much time to do homework. During the times that we had drought, I stopped going to school to help my mother fetch clean water. My only hope was to marry a man who would care for me. I married at age fifteen. I am now thirty years old and I have five children. My husband works hard in the fields to provide food and money for us. I would like to help earn extra money, maybe raise ducks or chickens and sell the eggs, but I cannot get a loan. I might get a job in a factory in town, but women who move a lot between home and work can get raped. I can look after a rich lady's children and stay in her house. It does not pay as much as working but it would be safer. But who would look after my children?

Case Study 1 is a fictional story but it captures the typical profile of a South Asian woman.<sup>11</sup> She would come from the rural area, not be able to complete her education, have many children, and be unable to fully participate in the economy while being occupied with unpaid household and childcare work.

Education can play a part to raise the awareness of unjust treatment, and can provide skills and experience that give the psychological boost for a person to take action. If a woman knows of positive role models or has the support of a community, then she would also feel more empowered over her life. The desired outcome is to have the ability to act on his or her own behalf (*agency*).

Gender equality and empowerment are the rights of any woman. At the individual level, empowerment means that a woman would have different opportunities in life that would have been absent otherwise. She has the chance to raise her own voice, to participate in the political process, and to actively engage in the policy formulation and implementation process within

11 See UN Women, "Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights – Fact Sheet – South Asia", 2015. Available from <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/poww-2015-factsheet-southasia-en.pdf>; and FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture – Closing the gender gap for development* (Rome, 2011). Available from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>.

a democratic system.<sup>12</sup> True empowerment provides women with agency, with the ability to make decisions about her life, and to work on them in order to achieve desired outcomes without any outside influence or fear.

This is critically important for women at the individual level. Agency drives a woman to overcome the systemic societal disadvantages to decide what kind of work or business she wants to do, whether she wants to get married, how many children she wants to have, whether or not she wants to be active in politics, etc.

Effective empowerment has numerous positive impacts on women's lives. It makes sure that women:

- » Are free from violence
- » Have control over their sexual and reproductive rights
- » Can get their voice heard
- » Have social and economic mobility
- » Have the ability to own and control financial assets
- » Have control over their own income

Research shows that if women are empowered through employment, families usually become smaller, are more nutritious and better educated. If women have higher literacy rates and lower fertility rates, then developing countries would generally have lower infant mortality rates. An educated woman gets the opportunity to be a part of a local as well as global workforce, thus contributing to her own and society's collective development.<sup>13</sup>

12 Esther Duflo, "Women Empowerment and Economic Development", *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 50, no. 4 (2012), pp. 1051-1079. Available from <http://economics.mit.edu/files/7417>; and UN Women, "In Brief: Women's Leadership and Political Participation", 2013. Available from <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20womenlgthembriefuswebrev2%20pdf.ashx?v=2&d=20141013T121456>.

13 World Bank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).





## Case Study 2.

### How Atefe boosted the income of local farmers and village women<sup>14</sup>



My name is Atefe Mansoori from Afghanistan. I am 52 years old and the Director of Abdullah Muslim Company, which processes and exports saffron. When I started my company, farmers did not think that I would be able to handle this business, because I am a woman and this is not a woman's job. When I started working to process and export saffron to international markets, the farmers and saffron producers did not want to give me their saffron because they thought that as a woman, I was too weak to handle this business.

With the help of my husband and male members of my family, I sat down with the saffron producers and explained that I have good knowledge, some experience and the ability to run this business. I assured them that they would not suffer losses if they put their trust in me. After many discussions, a couple of saffron farmers agreed to work with me, to test whether I had the ability to handle this business.

Then, I had to convince women to work with me. In my village, women were not used to working outside the home. I talked to their husbands and other members of their families and explained about the benefits of working outside home. I told their husbands: "your wives and daughters will earn money to boost the family income. And the place where your women would work are all full of women." After many, many conversations with each family, they agreed to work with me. Now most of them are businesswomen and they run their own companies.

Gaining visibility, however, brought with it death threats from the religious extremists. Despite several challenges, I never gave up because I knew the only way to eliminate violence against women is to help women become economically independent and empowered. With this in mind, I worked hard and struggled to help women to learn, work and earn. And this worked.

<sup>14</sup> UN Women, "From where I stand: Atefe Mansoori", 9 March 2016. Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/3/from-where-i-stand-atefe-mansoori>.

Women are powerful drivers of economic growth. Effective engagement of women in the national economy has positive socio-economic effects for the corresponding countries. Multiple studies have calculated the positive economic impacts on a country's economy due to the significant increase of women in the workforce. For example, if the gap between female and male workforce is reduced, then gross domestic product (GDP) can increase many-fold in different countries. A gender-balanced workforce would add 5 per cent to **USA's**, 12 per cent to **UAE's**, 34 per cent to **Egypt's**, and 9 per cent to **Japan's** total GDP respectively.<sup>15</sup> An inclusive workforce with women in the Middle East and North Africa will increase the average household earnings by 25 per cent.

In addition to traditional economic contribution, majority of the women globally are engaged in unremunerated work as well. Hence, any policies promoting women's economic empowerment also need to address their critical contribution at the household and related family responsibilities, in order to ensure better recognition and compensation for their overall holistic contribution.

Low female participation at income-generating activities can result in loss of economic development—up to 30 per cent of GDP per capita.<sup>16</sup> In the Asia-Pacific region, hindering women from joining the workforce has the potential of causing a yearly loss of approximately USD 89 billion within the region.<sup>17</sup>



### Something To Do

Among your peers or individually, look into the following issues:

- In terms of women's representation at the local and national levels, in which sectors your country's women are doing well? In which sectors are they lagging behind?
- According UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, how is your country doing? Consult: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>
  - › Is there scope(s) for improvement? If yes, how?

<sup>15</sup> DeAnne Aguirre, Leila Hoteit, Christine Rupp and Karim Sabbagh, *Empowering the Third Billion: Women and the World of Work in 2012* (Booz and Company, 2012). Available from [http://www.strategyand.pwc.com/media/file/Strategyand\\_Empowering-the-Third-Billion\\_Full-Report.pdf](http://www.strategyand.pwc.com/media/file/Strategyand_Empowering-the-Third-Billion_Full-Report.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends 2014: Risk of a jobless recovery?* (Geneva, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> ESCAP, *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2007: Surging Ahead in Uncertain Times* (Bangkok, 2007).

## 2.2 Women's empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are universally applicable goals that balance the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. The SDGs replace the MDGs that had first brought united global action around a 15-year agenda to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and saw progress in several important areas such as reduced poverty, access to water, increased primary school enrolment and reduced child mortality. Still there are many gaps in multiple sectors. For example, reduction in income poverty has not led to reduction in inequality. According to *The Global Gender Gap Report 2015*, since 2006, an additional quarter of a billion women have entered the labour force but the annual pay for women only now equals the amount men were earning ten years ago.<sup>18</sup> The SDGs continue the fight with the mandate to address the issues of poverty and sustainability of a more inclusive development, so that no one is left behind.

The dedicated focus on gender equality and empowerment is needed because there are many changes that have to be made in legislation, social and cultural norms, and economic and political practices. The targets are intended to guide the actions of nations and provide starting points that promote women's empowerment and gender equality by the year 2030. At the same time, the global agreement on the SDGs adopts inclusivity as a principle applicable to *all goals*, and therefore women's empowerment is considered both as one of the key objectives and as a major part of the overall solution.

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<sup>18</sup> World Economic Forum, "Ten Years of the Global Gender Gap". Available from <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/report-highlights/>.

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### Box 1. SDG Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

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SDG 5 is focused on gender issues for gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>19</sup> Its major targets are the following:

- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
  - 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
  - 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
  - 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
  - 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
  - 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action, and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
  - 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
  - 5.b *Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.*
  - 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.
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<sup>19</sup> UN Women, "SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Available from <http://www2.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>.



### Something To Do

Among your peers or individually, look into the following issues:

- In terms of fulfilling the MDGs, how did your country perform? Consult: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/default.aspx>.
- Write down some major opportunities and challenges your country may experience while achieving SDGs.
  - › Identify elements to focus on in order to achieve SDG 5 in your country.

*Note: The MDGs (2000-2015) are a commitment by the United Nations to establish peace and a healthy global economy by focusing on major issues like poverty, children's health, empowerment of women and girls, sustainable environment, disease and development. The MDGs have eight goals.*

## 2.3. ICT for women's empowerment

As we have seen, one of the core targets of SDG 5 is the use of ICT to promote the empowerment of women. Indeed, ICT has a critical role to play in ensuring gender equality and gender empowerment. Access to ICT can empower women to get their voice heard at community, state and international levels. ICT helps women to create their own space and agency. ICT helps women to gain better status within their society and to excel professionally, according to their own choice.<sup>20</sup> ICT not only helps to achieve SDG 5, but also works as a key enabler for achieving the other SDGs.

<sup>20</sup> Houlin Zhao, "ICTs for Sustainable Development #ICT4SDG", *ITUblog*, 23 September 2015. Available from <https://itu4u.wordpress.com/2015/09/23/leading-the-field-icts-for-sustainable-development/>.



### Case Study 3.

#### The Women's Digital Literacy Campaign<sup>21</sup>

The Women's Digital Literacy Campaign provides basic ICT training to women such as knowing how to operate a computer, send an e-mail, and connect with family and friends online. This joint project of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and *Telecentre.org* Foundation has already trained over one million unskilled women from all over the world. The campaign recognizes that for many women in developing countries around the globe, the lack of basic digital literacy is stifling their personal growth and keeping them from reaching their full potential.

With the training embedded within 20,000 community telecentres, a woman can walk into any of them and walk out with the basics of ICT. They gain skills to search for information, connect with a support community, and improve their livelihoods. A range of training materials are available to show how ICT can be used to support various economic activities such as handicrafts, agro-tourism and agriculture.

Some women also train as telecentre trainers to reach other people disadvantaged by sex, age, poverty or disability. All these competencies contribute to women's empowerment.

With each telecentre targeting to help at least 50 disadvantaged women, the digital divide has now been partly closed for more than one million women from all over the world.

*Related links:*

- Telecentre Facebook page: [https://www.facebook.com/telecentrewomen/info?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/telecentrewomen/info?tab=page_info).
- Video of the story of Myrna Padilla, a Filipino woman helped by the programme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELxA9KTz0Sg>.

<sup>21</sup> ITU programmes for women and girls. Available from <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Women-and-Girls/Pages/Women-and-Girls.aspx>.



### Test Yourself

- What is empowerment?
- Why do both women and men need to be engaged in development?
- How can ICT help promote empowerment?
- Do you know of any recent initiatives that are using ICT to promote women's empowerment?



### Key Messages

- Women's empowerment is the process of enabling women to take control of their own lives.
- The SDGs promote women's empowerment by observing the principle of inclusiveness, whereby development must ensure that no one is left behind. The SDG 5 gives special focus to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- ICTs can enable a woman's empowerment because they are tools that can raise awareness on empowerment, encourage literacy and education, connect markets with sellers, and serve as a platform for dialogue.

## III. BARRIERS AND ENABLERS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

There are many barriers and enablers of women's empowerment. Identifying these factors is an important step to understand how to overcome the barriers and promote the enablers. The following subsections describe several of the major factors that hinder or help women's empowerment.<sup>22</sup>

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### Learning outcome

List the barriers and enablers of women's empowerment

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### 3.1. Barriers

#### 3.1.1. Discriminatory social norms and culture

Many of the barriers to women's empowerment are related with the socio-cultural traditions that have prescribed specific roles for women and men. Different discriminatory social and cultural norms and practices usually define the boundaries for women, confining their movements, actions and opportunities within a limited space. Women's everyday decision-making avenues become subject to varying degrees of control by the society. Such acts may include control over decisions on levels of education imparted to women, on places women can visit, whether and how women may work, and the social circles in which they may associate. Some of the traditional laws and regulations, institutional structures, and related organizational behaviour and attitudes can be instrumental behind these actions.

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<sup>22</sup> Women Empowerment, "Key Strategies in Empowering Women". Available from <http://www.womenempowerment.org.in/key-strategies-in-empowering-women.htm>; and Tam O'Neil, Georgia Plank and Pilar Domingo, "Support to women and girls' leadership: A rapid review of the evidence", Overseas Development Institute, April 2015. Available from <https://www.odi.org/publications/9500-women-leadership-capabilities>.



Women's position in the society depends on an array of socio-economic factors, and many of those (e.g., rights to property, power to decide on family issues, education, childcare, employment, etc.) are often overlapping. Social norms have huge influences on deciding upon women's and men's career, society's attitude towards any specific demography, and the level of compensations offered for the services rendered. Such trends affect women's ability to actively participate in the professional domains and to receive due reciprocations.<sup>23</sup>

Political participation is an important aspect of empowerment. Inadequate representation and participation in political activity reduces the opportunities for women's voices and needs to be heard and addressed. Women's voices and needs can only be addressed if they are adequately represented in decision-making bodies. Otherwise, decisions in economic programmes could only assume women's needs rather than specifically address them.

Around the world, the proportion of women elected for public positions are on the rise. In fact since 1997, such participation rate has doubled. However, there is a long way to go for achieving gender parity in this sector. As of August 2015, only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians are females, 11 women are serving as the Head of State, and 10 are working as the Head of Government. Within the Asia-Pacific region the numbers are below global average. Only 18.4 per cent of parliamentarians are women on average across Asian countries. The number is even lower (15.7 per cent) in the Pacific. According to UN Women: "Globally, there are 37 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, as of August 2015, including 6 chambers with no women at all."<sup>24</sup> A World Bank study on women's empowerment shows that: "Even when women enter parliament, they are less likely to hold ministerial posts, are mostly confined to social portfolios when they do so, and rarely hold high official positions."<sup>25</sup>

In terms of workforce participation, a big portion of the working age women are out of the workforce due to social, political, legal and access-related issues. In 2015, the participation rate in the workforce for women was around 50 per cent, and for men

23 World Bank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).

24 UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation – Women in Parliaments". Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>.

25 World Bank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).

it was around 77 per cent. Within the age of 15 to 49, each birth on average takes a woman out of the workforce for around two years.<sup>26</sup>

According to the ESCAP Statistical Yearbook, the female/male ratio of overall employment in 2015 was around 72 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>27</sup>

The status of women's employment in the region looks bleaker when more specific information are sought. Women in the Asia-Pacific are more engaged in service sector employment (60 per cent), followed by agricultural work (26 per cent) and industry employment (12 per cent). Among the employers who have been working on their own account or with some partners, and employed one or more persons to work for them, only 2.5 per cent are women. This number increases up to 17.5 per cent on average when we consider female "own-account workers", who have been engaged in "self-employment jobs" for some time.<sup>28</sup>

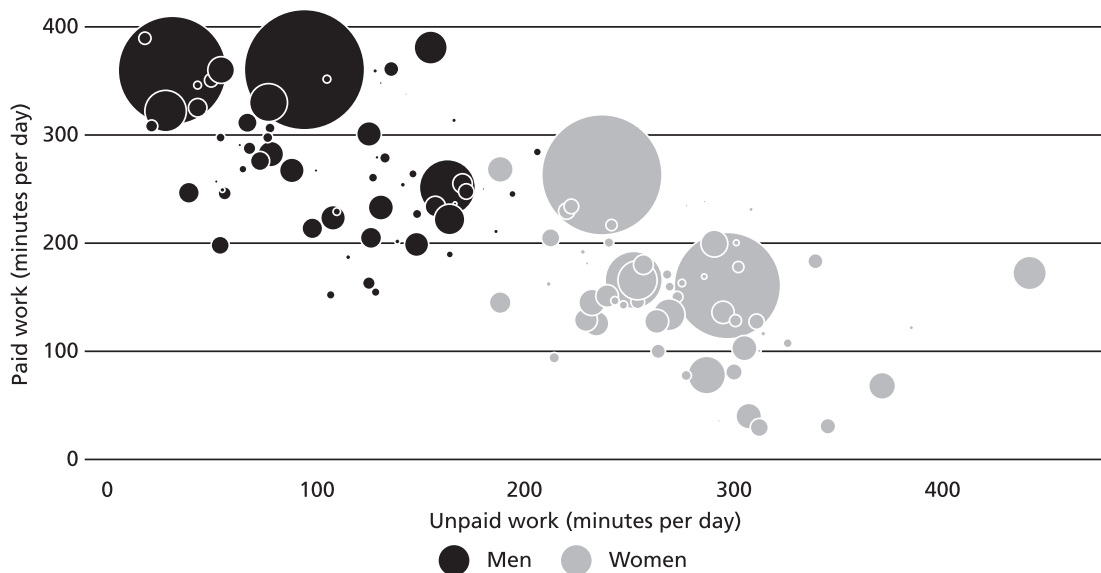
Globally, payroll discrimination is present wherein women earn 24 per cent less than men, with the trend present in all classes of income sources (from the high-earning entertainment and sports industries to the base of the income pyramid of daily labour). This disparity in earnings may be due to the under-representation of women at higher levels of management and in highly-paid occupations. In many cases, women are a silent part of the active workforce, investing their labour and time in diverse workplaces without getting much or any reward, due to social practice of undermining female labour.<sup>29</sup> Unpaid work is another barrier, often comprising domestic work, but also participation in agriculture-based livelihoods. Figure 1 shows that the major burden of unpaid work is on the women workforce worldwide.

26 UNDP, *Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development* (New York, 2015). Available from [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_human\\_development\\_report\\_1.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report_1.pdf).

27 ESCAP Online Statistical Database. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/statdb/DataExplorer.aspx>.

28 Ibid. Data is calculated using the available numbers reported to ESCAP by the member countries in 2013. The year 2013 is chosen because the highest number of Asia-Pacific countries shared their data this year compared with the years 2014 and 2015.

29 Naila Kabeer, "Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development", Centre for Development Policy and Research Discussion Paper 29/12, School of Oriental & African Studies, October 2012. Available from <https://www.soas.ac.uk/cdpr/publications/papers/file80432.pdf>.

**Figure 1** Women take the major burden of unpaid care work


Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development* (New York, 2015).  
 Available from [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_human\\_development\\_report\\_1.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report_1.pdf).

Many societies still strongly perceive that household work and taking care of the families are principally women's responsibility. Hence, women need to at times prioritize family over work, thus adversely affecting their professional performances.

Even if there are efforts to change such scenarios, women in many cases are found to be reluctant to change the status quo in fear of long-term repercussions. These factors often result in women suffering from social isolation and low self-esteem at much higher levels than men.



### Something To Do

Among your peers or individually, look into the following issues:

- What is the present ranking of your country in UNDP's Human Development Index? Consult: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>  
 › Is there scope for improvement? If yes, how?
- In which sectors are women from your country engaged in professionally? Are they facing any discrimination? Consult: <http://www.ilo.org/gender/lang--en/index.htm>



#### Case Study 4.

#### How Soumya overcame her life challenges and helped other women<sup>30</sup>



Soumya is from a rural area of Karnataka state in southern India. For six years, she has worked with the information centres initiative of *IT for Change* supported by *UN Women*. These kiosks, owned and managed by women's collectives, use Internet and mobile phone networking to disseminate information that local

communities can use to demand their rights from local government. As an "infomediary", Soumya uses digital and offline sources to collect the latest information about governmental services that may be useful for women who are socially and economically marginalized. Each month, she visits remote villages to share that information and helps people file applications for entitlements such as welfare payments and subsidies. Here is her story:

When I was 19, my parent forcibly married me off to a relative. My parents are marginal farmers, and they were worried that if they delayed my marriage, they may not find another bridegroom. They gifted my husband some money to help him buy a jeep and start work as a driver. Three months after marriage, I became pregnant and gave up my studies. I was studying for a bachelor's degree in literature, and I had dreams of finding a good job that would help me become financially independent. All seemed well, until I went to my mother's house for the delivery. I had a daughter and this was a momentous occasion for me, and I was expecting my husband to come visit us. He did not show up. It turned out that he had started drinking and gambling, and had sold the jeep to pay his debts. He turned abusive and his drinking worsened. I went back to my parents.

<sup>30</sup> UN Women, "Soumya's Blog: Every woman 'should rise up to the challenges that surround her, and break free'", 5 April 2016. Available from <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/in-focus/youth-voice/soumya-j>.

My mother was in a women's collective that was associated with the information centres initiative, and when this job opened up, her friends informed us about it. Since there was a lot of financial pressure, and I could not completely depend on the charity of my parents or in-laws, I took the job. I learned a lot from the training—not just about computers and technology, but also about bravely facing officials and interacting and speaking up in public meetings.

After working for a few months, I tried to start my life again with my husband. I sent him for addiction counselling. But he lapsed back into his old ways despite my repeated pleas. Finally, it seemed very clear to me that my husband was not going to change at all, or make any effort to do so. I made the really hard decision to move out of his house and go live with my widowed sister. Today, she and I continue to stay together, and she looks after my daughter when I am at work. My daughter is in primary school. I want her to be an independent woman when she grows up. I want her to study as much as she can. It has been hard, but I gain strength when I see other women in similar situations. And I know that my position enables me to reach out to them and extend a supporting hand.

Today, when I go to the villages, I am recognized for the work that I do—by the destitute elderly whose pension applications I have filled; by the women's collectives to whom I have explained how to demand their monthly food rations from the fair price shop in their village; and by the students whom I have advised about vocational training and job opportunities in the government and non-government sectors. My work fills me with joy, and my ambition is to work towards enabling women and children around me to access the right opportunities to lead a life of their choice. My personal experience made me determined that no woman around me should ever feel low and defeated. Instead, she should be able to rise up to the challenges that surround her, and break free.

### 3.1.2. Gender-biased laws and regulatory environment

Constitutions are the underlying basis of state accountability that specify the principles behind executive, legislative and judicial power, and the exercise of rights and obligations of public and private persons and entities. National constitutions do not always state the rights of women and men in a way that eliminates gender-based discrimination nor advance women's rights.

A recent study on gender equality around the world has found that more than 170 countries still have a varied degree of legal barriers present that hinder women from enjoying the same legal and constitutional privileges and protections as men. The study mentions: "Despite the health, economic and ethical motivations for achieving gender equality, women and girls continue to have access to fewer opportunities than men and boys around the world. Closing the gender gap remains one of our greatest challenges."<sup>31</sup>

The research found that protection for women lag primarily in areas of economic and social rights, such as health, work and marriage. Individual women who experienced unjust treatment encounter a justice system (including laws and their application) that in many cases make it difficult for women to legally contest discrimination or receive justice.

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<sup>31</sup> World Policy Analysis Center, *Closing the Gender Gap: A summary of findings and policy recommendations* (2014).

Table 1 shows a snapshot of different legal restrictions on married women around the world.

| <b>Table 1</b>  | <b>Snapshot of different legal restrictions on married women around the world</b>   |
|---|---|
| <b>Restriction<br/>(total number<br/>of countries in<br/>parentheses)</b> | <b>Countries in which married women are restricted compared to married men</b>  |
| Choose where to live (25)   | Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mali, Nicaragua, Niger, Oman, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Republic of Yemen |
| Confer citizenship on her children (16)                                   | Guinea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, and West Bank and Gaza   |
| Get a job without permission (15)   | Bolivia, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Niger, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, and West Bank and Gaza  |
| Travel outside the home (9)   | Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, West Bank and Gaza, and Republic of Yemen  |
| Travel outside the country (4)  | Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Syrian Arab Republic   |

Source: World Bank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).

Where laws do support gender equality, their enforcement effectiveness can be uneven, with some women unable to take advantage of legal protections. Gender-responsive laws can run counter to discriminatory informal and customary laws and practices. This can be seen in some countries over the interpretation of inheritance of property where customary inheritance laws discriminate against female ownership of resources. At times, the judiciary may use the ethnicity of the stakeholders in order to decide on inheritance. In India, the absence of fair statutory rights to land ownership can leave women vulnerable

to displacement from their homes in cases of divorce or widowhood, and can affect their role as a de-facto household head in situations where their men migrate to other places to earn a living.<sup>32</sup>

A woman's ability to own and manage resources such as land is also related to her ability to obtain credit. The close relationship of land ownership and land management to empowerment has great impacts for rural women who obtain food and maintain their livelihoods from land. Even though globally on average, rural women comprise 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force, they own less land than men. Furthermore, female-owned land tends to be smaller and inferior to male-owned land.<sup>33</sup>

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## Box 2. The Gender and Land Rights Database

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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) established an information portal called the **Gender and Land Rights Database** in 2010 with up-to-date country-level information on the legal developments and factors that promote or prevent gender-equitable land tenure. It supports policymakers, legislators and advocates of women's land rights with profiles of 84 countries to-date, sex-disaggregated data on land ownership and land holding, and a Legal Assessment Tool for examining laws in terms of gender-equitable land tenure. With this information portal, FAO hopes to highlight any gender disparities in land tenure and identify the major political, legal and cultural factors that influence gender-equitable land tenure. See <http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/en/>.

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### Something To Do

Among your peers or individually, look into the following issues:

- In your country, are there any laws that discriminate against women in terms of social, legal and professional rights?
- Are there any discriminatory social practices that are not sanctioned by the government but widely practiced?

32 Bina Agarwa, *Are We Not Peasants Too? Land Rights and Women's Claims in India* (New York, Population Council, 2002). Available from [https://docs.escri-net.org/usr\\_doc/Are\\_We\\_Not\\_Peasants\\_Too.pdf](https://docs.escri-net.org/usr_doc/Are_We_Not_Peasants_Too.pdf).

33 FAO, "Gender and Land Rights: Policy Brief", 2010; and SOFA Team and Cheryl Doss, "The Role of Women in Agriculture", ESA Working Paper No. 11-02, FAO, March 2011. Available from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/am307e/am307e00.pdf>.



### 3.1.3. Limited access to public services

Public education and public health services are two areas where access and overall service (quality and outcomes) for women and girls need improvement, because limited access has great consequences for the range of choices available in both the short- and long-term.

A large number of ICT users (predominantly mobile phone subscribers) worldwide do not have enough functional literacy. There are illiterate women who are capable of using a mobile phone and being benefitted, although for more sophisticated use literacy would help. According to some experts, a certain level of education is usually required to get the most out of ICT. When it comes to literacy, women are falling behind men globally. A study by Intel states that: "Across all developing countries, about 75 per cent of women are literate, compared to 86 per cent of men. The difference is much greater in some countries; for example, in India only 51 per cent of women can read and write, whereas 75 per cent of men can. Without this fundamental skill, the Internet will remain out of reach."

Globally, on average, the literacy level of women is on the rise, at least at the primary education level. However, 58 million children at the primary school age are currently out of school and a significant portion of this group are in South Asia.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, in the higher education segments, the disparity between female and male students is still very substantial. Women in different parts of the world are forced to discontinue their education due to poverty, poor infrastructure or lack of awareness. This has resulted in low literacy levels, including technological literacy, among women. Globally, women make up two-thirds of the adult illiterate population according to literacy data from the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO).

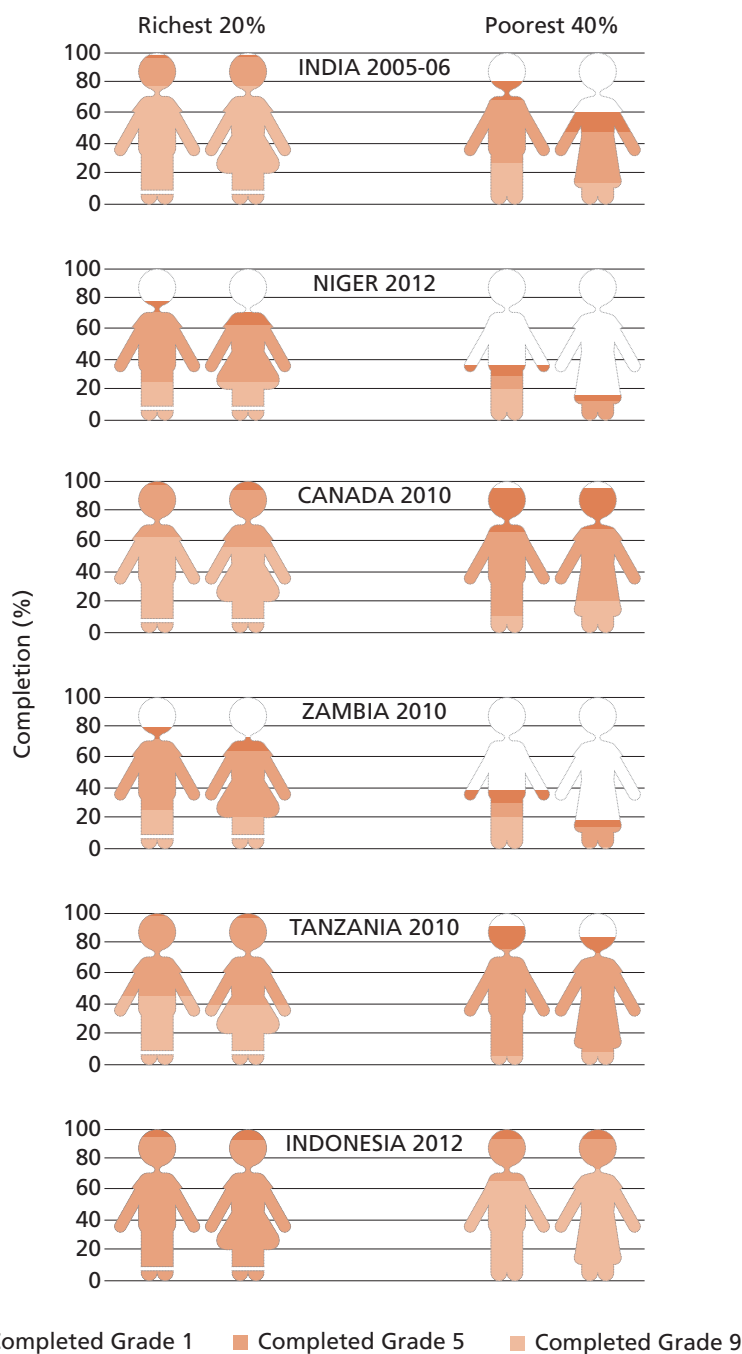
Poverty often increases the gender gap, eventually adversely affecting access to education. Poor women are doubly challenged in the society, due to their financial struggles and the discrimination they face. In Figure 2, we can see that across different countries, a huge divide between the poor and rich female/male students is consistently present. Girls from the poorest households are less likely to complete their primary education than boys, whereas girls and boys from rich households are equally likely to complete primary school.<sup>35</sup>

34 United Nations, "The World's Women 2015: Chapter 3 – Education". Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter3/chapter3.html>.

35 World Bank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).

Figure 2

## Share of 15 to 19-year-olds completing school grades, by wealth quintile and gender



Source: WorldBank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).

### 3.1.4. Violence against women

Violence against women has been used frequently, both at individual and at collective levels to dominate over women. Gender-based violence is a violation of basic human rights and an acute challenge all around the world. Both women and men are at risk from it. However, women have been found to be more at risk of such violence. A study showed that over 35 per cent of women globally have experienced physical or sexual partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.<sup>36</sup> Such violence can also occur at home or in familiar settings. In fact, 1 in 3 women experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.<sup>37</sup>

Not only do such heinous acts adversely affect human relations and the overall growth of any individual, family or society, it also negatively impacts the global economy. Threats to a woman's well-being from sexual harassment, sexual violence, and even cyberstalking can act as a deterrent to entering the business domain, puts limits to mobility due to her own fear or her family's, and can limit online activity that might be productive and socially rewarding. Generally, women face more work-related obstacles than men in the form of biased hiring process and unequal pay, and they are also subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace.

## 3.2. Enablers

### 3.2.1. Engaging other stakeholders

While many traditional social norms are against women's empowerment, there is a growing number of good social practices coming up all around the world that positively impact the welfare of women. Such efforts are inclusive of men, boys and other related stakeholders of the society, working together to ensure a better place for the socio-economic growth of women. This approach is fundamental because the roles for women and men are shaped by society, with both girls and boys given expectations on how they should behave, think

36 WHO, "Violence against women: Intimate partner and sexual violence against women", Factsheet no. 239, January 2016. Available from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>.

37 UN Women, "Infographic: Gender equality – Where are we today?" 25 September 2015. Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2015/9/infographic-gender-equality-where-are-we-today>.

and believe. Addressing the discrimination needs to give positive role models to both girls and boys, to help them perceive the benefits of gender equality for both sexes, and to engage both sexes to prevent violence against women. Empowering women also means empowering men to advocate for gender equality.



### Case Study 5.

#### Ring the bell against domestic violence in India<sup>38</sup>

Indian men and boys have started to break the cycle of violence against women. When they hear a man abusing a woman inside a nearby home, they would ring the doorbell or find a way to interrupt the violence. This campaign known as **Bell Bajao** (“ring the bell” in Hindi) has led to an increased awareness of laws against domestic violence and increased reporting of the crime. Once seen as acceptable, it is making violence against women unacceptable and helping promote a natural alliance among women and men against any form of abusive behaviour.

Related links:

- Bell Bajao homepage <http://www.bellbajao.org/>.
- Why should men care about domestic violence? <http://bellbajao.org/home/men-for-bell-bajao/>.

### 3.2.2. Legal reform and responses

Promoting women's empowerment will require changes in the national constitution, in legal processes and procedures, in government regulations and in budgetary provisions. In order to combat gender-based violence, different countries are enacting specialized laws or incorporating provisions within the existing legal structure. In India, there is now a new law in place that provides the victims of domestic violence the right not be evicted from their marital place, irrespective of its ownership.<sup>39</sup> A study shows that 38 out of the 100 countries analysed have explicitly criminalized marital rape and sexual assault within marriage.<sup>40</sup> These examples show that some countries are in fact changing their policies to address the criminal aspects that are part of the barriers to women's empowerment.

38 Plan International, *The State of the World's Girls: So, What About Boys?* (2011).

39 World Bank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).

40 Ibid.

### Box 3. FAO's Legal Assessment Tool

In order to assess the current status of unequal access to land between women and men, FAO developed a Legal Assessment Tool (LAT). The LAT aims to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the constitution, inheritance, nationality, property rights and access to justice, among others. More specifically, it is designed to:

- Highlight strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for gender-equitable land tenure in the legal framework
- Identify the sources of gender differentiation in the legislation
- Help determine the appropriate course of action for reform

The tool contains a list of around 30 legal indicators for gender-equitable land tenure that are categorized under eight clusters of key elements for target policy intervention, including:

1. Ratification of human rights instruments
2. Elimination of gender-based discrimination in the national constitution
3. Recognition of women's legal capacity
4. Gender equality of rights with respect to nationality
5. Gender equality in property rights
6. Gender equality in inheritance
7. Gender-equitable implementation, dispute mechanisms and access to justice
8. Women's participation in national and local institutions enforcing land legislation

The assessment was conducted in more than 22 countries globally, enabling a global comparison of gender-equitable land tenure presented on an interactive map. For more information about LAT, visit <http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/legislation-assessment-tool/en/>.

### 3.2.3. Increasing women's political participation

Through policies such as setting quotas for women in political seats, and ensuring women's representation in planning bodies at all levels, it is possible to encourage more women to get involved in representative politics. From such policies specifying women's

representation, 25 per cent of the members of parliament were women in 2012.<sup>41</sup> Other means of increasing female political participation could include setting aside funds for capacity building of women towards political participation and leadership. The Philippines has an extensive set of constitutional, legal, regulatory and budgetary provisions for enhancing women's equality.<sup>42</sup> Female political leaders can help change the stereotypes against women in leadership roles.

### 3.2.4. Improving education services for women

According to Plan UK: "An extra year of education increases a girl's income by 10 to 20 per cent and is a significant step on the road to breaking the cycle of poverty. Educated girls mean the chance of a better life for themselves and their children, a more prosperous community, a better workforce, and a wealthier nation."<sup>43</sup> Efforts need to be in place from all the related stakeholders: government, citizens, non-governmental organizations and private education services to work in coherence to make sure gender parity in education is achieved not only at the primary level, but until the tertiary levels, with sufficient post-education employment opportunities for women.

As an effective enabler, it is important to make sure that female students go to school, but at the same time, the development of useful, flexible and interactive curriculum is required. Research on empowerment shows that well-designed formal education facilitates a better and empowering learning experience for students.<sup>44</sup>

Women need particular support and encouragement to enter science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Recent research found significant and positive correlations between STEM education and women with high capabilities. In the research, computer science and engineering female graduates stressed the important

41 Pippa Norris, "Women's Legislative Participation in Western Europe", *Western European Politics*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1985), pp. 90–101; Richard E. Matland, "Enhancing Women's Political Participation: Legislative Recruitment and Electoral Systems", in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Julie Ballington and Azza Karam, eds. (Stockholm, International IDEA, 2005), pp. 93-111; and World Bank, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014). Available from [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice\\_and\\_agency\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Voice_and_agency_LOWRES.pdf).

42 Philippine Commission on Women, "Philippine initiatives to promote women's leadership and political participation". Available from <http://pcw.gov.ph/focus-areas/leadership-political-participation/initiatives>.

43 Plan International, *The State of the World's Girls 2009: Because I am a Girl – Executive Summary* (2009). Available from <http://planCanada.ca/downloads/BIAAG/BIAAGSummaryENGLISH2009.pdf>.

44 Jill Sperandio, "Leadership for Adolescent Girls: The Role of Secondary Schools in Uganda", *Gender & Development*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2010) pp. 57-64.

role of STEM in shaping their future, and in helping them break the glass ceiling in the professional sphere.<sup>45</sup>

Research has shown that women are much more likely than men to start a business out of necessity to ensure their family's survival rather than out of the recognition of a good business opportunity, often because there are no jobs available nor any other options for income generation. This is especially true in developing countries than in developed countries. Entrepreneurship is therefore perceived as an option for women who are marginalized—those who come from poverty with relatively low skills.<sup>46</sup>

By strengthening women's capacity and skills to increase their economic opportunities, research has shown that they are empowered to earn an income, and are more likely to use a large part of their earnings to care for their children and send them to school, accumulate more assets and increase financial security.<sup>47</sup> Entrepreneurship is therefore an economic, socio-cultural and political activity for many women. It is also perceived as a way out of poverty or financial uncertainty, with a significant number of women trying their hand at small businesses during the periods of great need.

### 3.2.5. Leveraging ICT

The opportunities related to the use of ICT are immense. ICT can be used as an educational tool both online and offline, for personal and institutional applications, and for enhancing public service provision to women such as for health and education. ICT can enhance women's political participation by creating and maintaining an environment where they feel comfortable and are able to advocate for their needs and priorities. ICT-based tools can be developed to address women's specific needs.

ICT can provide new opportunities for women's economic empowerment by:

- » Creating business and employment opportunities for women as owners, managers and employees of ICT-based projects

45 Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed and others, "Protibadi: A platform for fighting sexual harassment in urban Bangladesh", in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (2014).

46 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, *2010 Report: Women Entrepreneurs Worldwide* (2011).

47 UN Women, *Decent Work and Women's Economic Empowerment: Good Policy and Practice* (2012).

- » Improving services that are run by women (e.g., literacy programmes, business planning courses, ICT training, access to market and trading information services, and e-commerce initiatives)
- » Offering economic opportunities in salaried employment and entrepreneurship, as well as in the ICT sector itself and in jobs enabled by ICT

Examples of this are explained in the next section.



### Test Yourself

- What can be done to help empower women?
- Is it possible to encourage companies and government offices to design flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women and men?
- How critical are public services for health and education to women's empowerment?
- How can ICT be utilized to effectively target women and other marginalized groups?



### Key Messages

- Women comprise half the world's population and are contributing to socio-economic, political and cultural development.
- Women are relegated on the side as passive participants of development (discrimination), are unable to benefit from public services, and are often victims of violence.
- For women to claim their place as equal partners of development, processes for empowerment must be supported. These processes include promoting entrepreneurship among women, as well as helping them leverage the benefits of ICT.



## IV. HOW CAN ICT PROMISE AND ENABLE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT?

There are many enablers for women's empowerment that can work collectively towards the same goal. Among them, ICT is one of the key drivers that can facilitate the efforts of women's empowerment. With the advancement of new technology, and the widespread use of mobile phones and social network services both in developed and developing countries, ICT is an important enabler to help women overcome their barriers and become creative and innovative in their life. This section explains how ICT can promote and enable women's empowerment.

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### Learning outcome

Give specific examples of how ICT can support women's empowerment

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### 4.1. What is ICT?

ICT refers to all technology for creating, manipulating, storing, managing, sending and receiving information. ICT encompasses a wide range of multimedia and communication tools. It can include, but is not limited to, old media such as radio, television and telephone, as well as new media networks (fixed or wireless Internet), hardware (computers, mobile phones, tablets, etc.) and software (social media services, multimedia applications, mobile apps, etc.).<sup>48</sup>

Since the late 1990s, the emergence of ICT has transformed the way people live, work, socialize and participate in political matters. Recently, with the increasing access in developing countries, a wave of changes is happening even in rural and remote villages

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<sup>48</sup> UN-APCICT, Module 1: *The Linkage between ICT Applications and Meaningful Development*, Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders, 2nd ed. (Incheon, 2011). Available from <http://www.unapcict.org/academy>.

in developing countries. In fact, at the end 2015, there were more than seven billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide and, in the past few years, the number has been growing explosively in developing countries. In addition, the number of Internet users has increased rapidly. Currently, 3.2 billion people are using the Internet, of which 2 billion are from developing countries.<sup>49</sup>

The increased ICT access offers a new avenue for innovative services and changes. For instance, a mobile phone is not only used to talk to friends and family, but is also used to find information, exchange e-mails and photos, and even shop and make payment. Social network services, such as Facebook and Twitter, provide a new platform for engaging people, sharing news, promoting businesses and participating in politics.



### Something To Do

Among your peers or individually, look into the following issues:

- What is the present ranking of your country in the World Economic Forum's Network Readiness Index? Consult: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-information-technology-report-2015/network-readiness-index/>
  - › Is there scope for improvement? If yes, how?

## 4.2. ICT opportunities for women's empowerment

### 4.2.1. Enhanced communications and access to information

ICT offers women a cost-effective way to build and maintain communication with families and friends, as well as with business customers and suppliers. Research illustrates that women leverage phones and the Internet to stay in touch with their families and friends in circumstances where migration or long commutes are a significant factor.<sup>50</sup>

49 ITU, "ICT Facts and Figures: The World in 2015", May 2015. Available from <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2015.pdf>.

50 S. N. Amin, V. Ganepola, F. Hussain, S. Kaiser and M. Mostafa, "Impact of conducting gender research on the researchers in the context of Muslim communities in developing countries", in *Journal Advances in Gender Research: Special Issue on "At the Centre: Feminism, Social Science and Knowledge"*, vol. 20., M.T. Segal, ed. (Emerald, USA, 2015); and Rachel Masika and Savita Bailur, "Negotiating Women's Agency through ICTs: A Comparative Study of Uganda and India", in *Gender Technology and Development*, vol. 19, no. 1 (March 2015), pp. 43-69.

For example, in China where many young women left their rural hometown to find work in urban factories, several researchers have pointed out how mobile phones become the preferred tools for maintaining communication with the families they have left behind in villages, while connecting them to a community of other women who migrated elsewhere. In another instance, Indian fisher women in Kerala, India use mobile phones to keep in touch with their families as they travel to purchase fish. In the wake of rising competition and the globalization of their local fish markets, their travels have only increased and phones provide them with a way to cope with their changing economic realities.

Besides communication, ICT enables effective access to information and knowledge resources that can address specific needs of women, such as maternity care, childcare, education and agriculture. A user-centered ICT solution “Krishi-Mitra” facilitates capacity building among the low-literate and illiterate rural farming communities in India. Literally translated as “Agro-Friend”, the user interface of the ICT solution is designed using audio-visual-textual cues and locally familiar examples for easy communication with its primary users, the rural farmers. This solution assisted the two-way interactions between farmers and the agricultural experts.<sup>51</sup>



### Case Study 6.

#### Interview with Nasibakhon Aminova, founder of TajikMama

Nasibakhon Aminova, age 36, is the founder of TajikMama.tj, which provides a variety of information on parenting and education online for Tajikistan parents. Today, TajikMama has more than 8,500 members in its Facebook group.

#### What was the main reason for establishing TajikMama?

After living in Moscow for five years, I returned to Tajikistan and was faced with a challenge of finding a good school for my sons. In Russia, there were large online communities of active Russian mothers who helped each other with advice on parenting and schooling. In contrast, I could not find any information online about schools in my area. Virtually no educational institution had an official webpage.

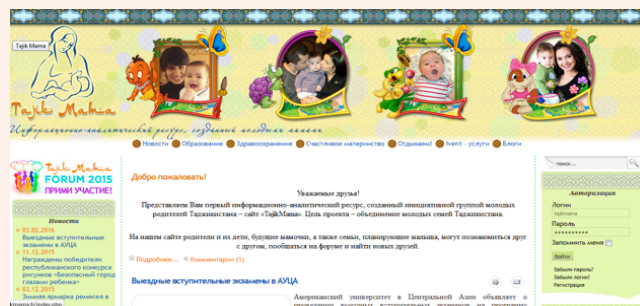
51 Rajasee Rege and Shubhada Nagarkar, “Krishi-Mitra: Case Study of a User-centric ICT Solution for Semi-literate and Illiterate Farmers in India”, *The Chartered Institute for IT*, 2010. Available from <http://ewic.bcs.org/content/ConWebDoc/35776>.

### How did you start up TajikMama?

In March 2012, I opened a Facebook group with a small group of friends and acquaintances. There were 25 of us to start. We shared information, advice, and addresses and contact numbers of schools and kindergartens. After two months, I launched the TajikMama website (<http://www.tajikmama.tj>) so that the information can be available to those who do not use Facebook. The site grew steadily with more information, and more people joined our group—not just mothers and fathers, but also future parents, grandfathers and grandmothers, and even municipal government officials and schools.

### How did you raise funds for your business?

Initially, it was my own money with occasional donations from friends. Now I have advertisements and other commercial interests on the website. I also organize regular charity campaigns and events for parents and children across the country, including “Handmade TajikMama” that allows all mothers on maternity leave or housewives to sell their handmade products on the TajikMama platform.



### What makes TajikMama unique from other e-businesses?

TajikMama unites all users as parents. We may be lawyers, doctors or engineers but we are parents as well. Subscribers send information about schools, and since most schools still do not have official websites, this information is very useful to other parents. TajikMama has become a social movement for “conscious parenthood”.

### What advice would you give to aspiring women entrepreneurs?

The point is to genuinely love what you are doing. It will not work if you are not genuine about it. If you know you are doing a good thing that could change your life and the lives of people around you, then you can make a big difference.

### 4.2.2. Access to public services

Since ICT enables the delivery of information and services regardless of time and distance, it can provide essential public services such as education, healthcare and financial services through online or mobile media to a wider range of people including those who used to be excluded or were unable to access such services. Different services such as taxation, land registration, passport application, and other government-related services can be completed using ICT with greater convenience and efficiency, making the lives of women easier.

UNESCO and Nokia initiated a mobile learning programme to help empower women and girls. Through basic mobile handsets and SMS messages, the programme provided various educational content and learning materials specifically for women and girls to direct their own lives, and become confident and knowledgeable about their rights and goals.

Healthcare is one of the major development sectors that is being positively changed through the application of ICT. ICT is heavily used both at institutional and personal levels, to maintain medical information, ensure communication between health facilities, and expand the medical knowledge base (both offline and online). ICT is also being used to effectively provide innovative solutions on health-related services, especially in geographically and economically challenged regions. Women in the rural and semi-urban areas in developing countries are benefiting considerably from the ICT innovations in healthcare.

For example, in Indonesia, the Aceh Besar Midwives with Mobile Phones Programme uses cost-effective ICT solutions to improve maternal and infant health. This programme equips the field-level midwives with mobile phones and a customized SMS system that allows them to store and update patients' health information into a central database. Moreover, it facilitates voice communication between the midwives and specialist doctors. In India, Projecting Health is an initiative that develops audio-visual content on maternal and children's health issues. These materials are then distributed among the target audience (local women) near their homes and communities via health workers. The main objective behind this programme is to ensure the availability of critical information for women through ICT so that they can make informed decision on healthcare.<sup>52</sup> In Case Study 7, another popular health service innovation by a mobile operator in Myanmar is highlighted.

<sup>52</sup> PATH, "Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition Global Program". Available from <http://sites.path.org/mchn/our-projects/maternal-and-newborn-health/projecting-health/>.



## Case Study 7.

### Maymay app by Ooredoo, Myanmar<sup>53</sup>



#### What is it?

Maymay is a mobile-based healthcare service for maternity care designed by Ooredoo, a mobile telecom operator in Myanmar. Launched in 2014, Maymay (“mother” in the local language) provides pregnant women information and updates on childcare and health issues via their mobile phones. The programme is developed by Ooredoo, the Global Association of Mobile Operators (GSMA), Population Services International (PSI) and Koekoe Tech. It also partnered with the GSMA Connected Women Programme, United States Agency for International Development, United Nations and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women.

#### How does it work?

Myanmar currently faces a number of issues related to maternal health, including a high infant and maternal mortality rate and significant levels of baby malnutrition. With over 70 per cent of births occurring without any professional medical service, information about maternal and child health is scarce among young parents, pregnant women and their families. To solve these issues, Maymay app provides the following services:

- Maternal health advice notifications – Users of the app receive three maternal health advice alerts per week, tailored to the stage of the user’s pregnancy.
- Doctor locator service – The app uses the user’s GPS location and a database of Burmese healthcare professionals to provide users with information on, and the location of, their nearest healthcare worker through Google Maps.

<sup>53</sup> GSMA, “Connected Women Programme”. Available from <http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programmes/connected-women>.

- User profile – Users of the app are required to enter details of their last menstrual period or expected due date in order for the notifications to be timed with the stage of their pregnancy. Messages are also adapted for whether or not it is the user's first pregnancy, and the user can switch notifications on and off at any time.

To ensure that this information is credible, the advice is obtained from the Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action, and approved by Myanmar's Ministry of Health prior to dissemination. The information disseminated is kept relevant through the localization and translation of texts by PSI's Myanmar doctors. It is free and can be accessed on iOS and Android phones.

### Impact

Today Maymay has more than 11,000 users in Myanmar. Despite mobile subscriber penetration in Myanmar estimated at a mere 25 per cent of the population, Ooredoo's Maymay app has received over 10,000 downloads and 40,000 Facebook followers as of January 2015. It aims to reach over 30,000 downloads by mid-2016. Maymay was awarded the Consumer Service Innovation Award at the Global Telecoms Business Innovation Awards 2015, and the Best Community Telecom Project Award at the Telecom Asia Awards 2015.

### 4.2.3. Opportunities for socio-economic participation

ICT is considered as one of the key delivery mechanisms for development all over the world. The proliferation of the Internet, wireless communication, and the applied synergy among different forms of communication technologies have helped to empower the global population and ensure better lives for the present and future generations. The significance of ICT in the socio-economic development is even higher for women, including those who are living below the poverty line. In fact, doubling the number of women and girls online would generate an estimated additional USD 13 billion to USD 18 billion in GDP across developing countries. It would unleash a market of new platform sales and network access amounting to an estimated USD 50 billion to USD 70 billion.<sup>54</sup> Across the developed and developing world, use of the Internet can potentially boost women's income. In a recent multi-country study by Intel, nearly half of the women use the Internet for job searches,

54 Intel Corporation, *Women and the Web* (2012). Available from <http://www.intel.com/content/dam/www/public/us/en/documents/pdf/women-and-the-web.pdf>.

and around 30 per cent of the female Internet users are exploring online resources to earn additional income. One respondent from India mentioned that the Internet provided her the chance to be engaged in “freelancing... all over the world.”<sup>55</sup>

An example of ICT helping women to be financially empowered is Usaha Wanita mobile service, which has been designed by the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women for Indonesian women entrepreneurs who need information to guide them through their efforts to lower their costs and expand their enterprises. Details on this service is mentioned in Case Study 8.



## Case Study 8.

### Usaha Wanita mobile service in Indonesia<sup>56</sup>



#### What is it?

The Usaha Wanita mobile service was initiated in Indonesia in 2012, in partnership with ExxonMobil Foundation, Nokia and Indosat. In Indonesian language, Usaha Wanita means business women. Based on in-depth research to determine the key barriers facing women entrepreneurs in Indonesia, this service has been developed as a teaching tool to help women entrepreneurs overcome specific challenges by providing essential business tips and market information through a mobile app. Usaha Wanita provides hands-on business development support with Mercy Corps Indonesia and has delivered business capacity building training for 2,000 women.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, “Usaha Wanita Mobile Service in Indonesia”. Available from <http://www.cherieblairfoundation.org/usaha-wanita-mobile-service-in-indonesia/>.



### Impact

The Usaha Wanita mobile service has reached more than 14,000 women in Indonesia. It was first delivered to women entrepreneurs in Nigeria and Tanzania, and reached more than 100,000 women in total. It won the Best Consumer Innovation Award at the Global Telecoms Business 2013 Awards. Usaha Wanita complements Indosat's women-focused mobile initiative, Info Wanita, which provides important information on financial management, life skills, health and childcare delivered using SMS.

The use of ICT can increase efficiency by saving time and money. In both rural and urban areas, ICT has simplified many time-consuming issues (e.g., long distance document transfer and sharing, bill payment, job search, etc.) that once took hours to be done. Nowadays, small, medium and large size businesses are using ICT platforms effectively to communicate with existing customers, localize and promote their products, and reach out to new networks and consumer bases. However, there are still a lot of disparities in terms of the ability to access and apply ICT in work and daily activities, especially in the developing regions.

#### 4.2.4. Opportunities for political participation

One of the important dimensions in the holistic empowerment of women is increased political awareness and the active public participation of women. Here, ICT continues to play a critical role in driving women's political empowerment. There have been many political movements that were initiated and advocated widely through the online presence of women activists using various social media. For instance, in Occupy movements of USA, Arab Spring movements in Egypt, Bahrain and Tunisia, and the Shahbag movement in Bangladesh, we have witnessed the active participation of thousands of women, both online and offline.<sup>57</sup>

Gender researchers have found that new media (e.g. social media, websites and mobile apps) has the potential to assist women, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds, in flattening the traditional social hierarchies.<sup>58</sup> ICT provides a platform for women to be connected

57 Rupak Bhatta, "The Shahbag Generation of Bangladesh", *The Assam Chronicle*, 24 September 2014. Available from <http://assamchronicle.com/news/shahbag-generation-bangladesh>.

58 Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

and raise their voice against various social issues. For example, “Take Back The Tech” is a global campaign that addresses the issue of violence against women and ICT. This campaign raises awareness against the risks of violence women face online or through mobile networks. It also shares ways to prevent such acts using collective actions, social media campaign and effective use of technologies. In the Asia-Pacific region, Take Back The Tech events have been organized in at least nine countries in Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. These events are supported by women's rights and ICT organizations.<sup>59</sup>

In the developed world, the gender gap in accessing political information online is getting smaller. According to Pew Research Center, in 2010, 25 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women used the Internet as the main source of political campaign and election news. In a recent research on European Union parliamentarians, it was found that ICT helps women politicians to be more open and effective in getting their message across to the general population, avoiding the traditional communication channels and related barriers. Such barriers, according to the female politicians, usually try to define “female” roles within the government and can hamper their careers.

ICT and social media are instrumental in encouraging women to be more engaged in politics, and get their voices heard on issues that are at times sidelined by the traditional media outlets. A recent research on women's empowerment in South Asia revealed that women in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan consider ICT as a window to the outside world, and as a platform to get their voices heard. ICT helps women create their own space to communicate and share their socio-political thoughts.<sup>60</sup>



### Something To Do

Among your peers or individually, look into the following issues:

- In your community/country, what are the ways in which ICT can help women to empower themselves?
- What are the specific ways in which ICT can help your community's women in entrepreneurship, education, health and political participation?

59 Take Back the Tech, “Asia”. Available from <https://www.takebackthetech.net/region/asia>.

60 Jennifer L. Solotaroff and Rohini Prabha Pande, *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2014). Available from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/20153/9781464801716.pdf>.

### 4.3. Challenges to women's use of ICT

Women tend to be disadvantaged in accessing and utilizing the power of ICT. On average, around 25 per cent less women are using the Internet than men. A similar gap can be seen across South Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa.

The digital divide refers to the gap between different population groups and regions in terms of availability, accessibility, affordability, and usage of ICT-enabled applications and solutions (i.e., telephone, personal computers, the Internet and other digital innovations). At present, only 15 per cent of the global population can afford broadband service. Mobile telephony, the most widely used ICT application, has reached around 80 per cent of the people on the globe. However, approximately 2 billion people at present do not have their own phones, and nearly 60 per cent of the global population are not connected online.

This is partly due to the high cost of the telecommunication infrastructure (e.g. broadband or mobile backbone network and antennas), particularly for large rural areas with sparse populations. Even for areas with networks available, the high cost for end users can be a barrier to further use of ICTs, especially among women and elders in marginalized communities. The Intel study, *Women and the Web* found that: "Affordability was cited as a barrier by those who were not yet online, as well as by current users for why they were not using the Internet more. Although there were other gender-specific barriers more frequently reported as constraints, the cost of access clearly remains a barrier that disproportionately affects women."<sup>61</sup>

Increased connectivity also does not ensure equity in information gathering and sharing. Developing regions are significantly under-represented online in terms of availability of localized content, 85 per cent of the total user-generated content indexed by Google originates from USA, Canada and Europe.

Furthermore, recent reports show that on average, one in every five women in Egypt and India considers the Internet as an inappropriate space for them. They believe getting engaged to online-related activities are not useful and would not be approved by their family. In certain communities around the world, such inhibition to the Internet came as a continuation of internalized gender norms. Many societies perceive women as less skilful in ICT.

<sup>61</sup> Intel Corporation, *Women and the Web* (2012). Available from <http://www.intel.com/content/dam/www/public/us/en/documents/pdf/women-and-the-web.pdf>.

Such stereotypes give women less access to the related facilities within the workplace, academia and public access points.<sup>62</sup>

While ICT has helped to empower women socially and economically, different ICT applications and related implications have also ushered in numerous threats. Violence against women online is on the rise all over the world. In developed and developing countries alike, women are fallen victims to online bullying, blackmails, revenge porn, cyberstalking, and online activities that result in mental and physical harm. Lack of awareness among the general population on ways to prevent or report such crimes have made the impact of such incidents even worse.<sup>63</sup> Privacy violations in social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp have affected women users badly. Especially in traditional societies, such incidents are used as pretexts to ban women from using different ICT applications.<sup>64</sup> Online violence and crimes against women have put women's personal safety at risk and hindered the process of gaining women's empowerment using ICT-enabled options.

Poor enforcement of online usage policies, ICT policies and cyberlaws has made ICT interventions and online space unsafe for women users. For example, more than 100 governments around the globe have formulated official policies for broadband Internet and the telecommunication sectors. However, these plans are often designed without connecting with gender-related challenges, i.e., safe access to public Internet sites and the respectful representation of women and girls on sites.<sup>65</sup>

One of the primary reasons behind poor policy formulation and implementation is the lack of good data. More specifically, governments need to have access to up-to-date sex-disaggregated data on technology use. This in-depth information can help them to better analyse the situation in the field and act accordingly.<sup>66</sup>

In some cases, existing laws were found to be ineffective in prosecuting the criminals behind revenge porn, online blackmailing and other related crimes, even in developed countries. In the emerging economies, there are incidents where the victims were found

62 Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed and others, "Protibadi: A platform for fighting sexual harassment in urban Bangladesh", in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (2014).

63 Intel Corporation, *Women and the Web* (2012). Available from <http://www.intel.com/content/dam/www/public/us/en/documents/pdf/women-and-the-web.pdf>.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

to be worse off as the legal systems did not have any clear guidelines on protecting them from online crimes or crimes committed using ICTs.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the potential and proven benefits of ICT for women's empowerment, there still exist some obstacles for more women to use ICTs to make their lives better. Recent research found that the discriminatory offline practices against women are often transferred or multiplied using online tools and applications. In many cases, women are unable to establish their agency using ICT as they fail to get out of the real world's patriarchal status quo.



### Test Yourself

- What type of ICT applications are helpful for women?
- How can women leverage technology for economic freedom and subsequently empowerment?
- What are the challenges to women's use of ICTs? How can such barriers be lifted?



### Key Messages

- ICT can be used to aid social transformation and ultimately help empower women and men.
- The benefit from ICTs for women's empowerment is that it can improve the access to information, public service delivery, and economic and political participation.
- Socio-economic factors can prevent women from actively using ICTs to help themselves and take control of their lives.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Salter and Thomas Crofts, "Responding to revenge porn: Challenges to online legal impunity", in *New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law*, L. Comella and S. Tarrant, eds. (2015) Available from [http://www.academia.edu/7833345/Responding\\_to\\_revenge\\_porn\\_Challenges\\_to\\_online\\_legal\\_impunity](http://www.academia.edu/7833345/Responding_to_revenge_porn_Challenges_to_online_legal_impunity).

## V. SUMMARY

This module explored the issues critical to women's empowerment, through recent case studies and examples, covering both the challenges and opportunities related to the empowering processes. The evident connections with the newly adopted SDGs were also highlighted. The three sections of the module focused on the key socio-economic elements, policy formulation and regulatory practices, and the role of ICT as an effective tool to empower women and attain the SDGs (especially SDG 5). Findings show that ICT can be harnessed to help women to empower themselves economically, socially and politically. ICT has dramatically increased the opportunities for economic and social transformation. *Module C2: Enabling Role of ICT for Women Entrepreneurs* takes this process of enquiry further and explores the role of ICT in supporting successful women's entrepreneurship, which eventually will contribute to the overall empowerment process of women.

# ANNEX

## Notes for Trainers

*Module C1: Women's Empowerment, SDGs and ICT* is designed to have value for different sets of audiences (entrepreneurs and policymakers) and in varied and changing national conditions. The module is also designed to be presented, in whole or in part, and in different modes, on- and off-line. The module may be studied by individuals and by groups independently, in training institutions, as well as within government offices. The background of the participants, as well as the duration of the training sessions will determine the extent of detail in the presentation of content. The following “Notes” offer trainers some ideas and suggestions for presenting the module content more effectively.

## Content and methodology

This module explores how women's empowerment is an integral part of sustainable development, and how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be tapped to support the social processes that ultimately empower women and include them in the collective journey towards sustainable development.

The first section introduces concepts on women's empowerment, its importance, and elaborates with real world examples.

The second section elaborates on the major enablers and barriers related to women's empowerment, especially in the domains of education, policy formulation and regulatory environment, entrepreneurship, and socio-cultural norms.

The third section examines the role of ICT in promoting and enabling women's empowerment and the related challenges.

## Intended target audience

This module is aimed at aspiring as well as present women entrepreneurs, and community development practitioners. The intended target audience also includes development actors in government including ministers, parliamentarians, political actors, senior government officials, strategic planners and analysts. Furthermore, the private sector investors, ICT service providers, and other related stakeholders can be a part of the intended audience. The module is also relevant to civil society, i.e., academia, education, research, non-governmental organizations, as well as other development actors working on women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, and ICT at the local and community levels.

*Module C1* is adaptable. The diversity of challenges and opportunities in ensuring women's empowerment, successful entrepreneurial ventures, and the related use of ICTs is very rich, as we can observe in this module. There are many country and region specific elements of information and expertise that can be considered critically important for the audience in focus. With the resources mentioned in the module, some research, and some consultation, variations of the module for application to different audience can be developed.

## Structuring the sessions

Depending on the audience, time availability, and local settings and conditions, the content of the module can be presented in different structured time capsules. What could be covered in sessions of different durations is outlined below. Trainers are invited to modify the session structure based on their own understanding of the country and audience.

*Module C1* is best made an interactive learning experience. Participants are expected to engage and contribute to the discussions. Because of the novelty of the topic, participation is essential for gathering information about case studies and user experience.

## For a 90-minute session

Provide an overview of the module. Refer to the introductory parts of each section to build your workshop content, and emphasize issues of most relevance to the participants. You may also choose to focus on particular sections of the module, for example, related to the enablers and barriers of women's empowerment, and the role of ICT in enabling and promoting women's empowerment.

If the participants are entrepreneurs, then the trainers need to spend more time on:

- » Case studies related to women's empowerment
- » ICT-related innovations (tools and applications for empowerment)

If the participants are policymakers, then the trainers need to spend more time on:

- » Case studies related to successful women's empowerment
- » Policy formulation and regulatory environment for women's empowerment
  - › Success stories and challenges
  - › International and local policy/regulatory practices
  - › Role of ICT



### For a three-hour session

This would be an expansion of the 90-minute session structured to provide greater focus on certain sections. Depending on the background of participants, you may wish to run through the module overview, and then focus on particular sections or subsections.

A three-hour session may also be divided into two 90-minute sessions as follows:

- » The first session can cover the first and second sections of the module, and include related case study discussions, group exercises, and in-session reflections and discussions on the SDGs related to a particular country/community.
- » The second session can be spent on the third section, with related case study discussions, group exercises, and in-session discussions on the region specific challenges and opportunities of ICT.

See the “**Something To Do**” boxes for examples of group exercises that can be conducted.

Based on the type of the participants, the selected case studies and group exercises will vary. For entrepreneurs, provide more examples of how ICT applications are used to support women’s empowerment. For policymakers, the focus needs to be on exploring connections between policy practices and empowerment/ICT applications.

### For a full day session (6 hours duration)

- » For the morning session, provide an overview of each section and focus on issues in selected sections, depending on the type of the participants. Similar to a three-hour session, for entrepreneurs, focus on the content of women’s empowerment and ICT applications from all the three sections of the module. For the policymakers, focus should be on the policy and regulatory practices.
- » For the afternoon session, focus needs to be on discussions related to case studies, reflection questions and interactive exercises. Entrepreneur participants should be assigned in identifying the key challenges and opportunities they perceive in achieving women’s empowerment in their society’s context. Policymakers need to be engaged in a SWOT analysis exercise<sup>68</sup> of the existing policies related to women’s empowerment and ICT in the related country. Both the groups need to have a reflective discussion on their ICT wish list to avail the best out of the technology, as well as on the challenges they are facing in using ICTs.
- » Encourage group discussions and assign practical exercises in between PowerPoint presentations.

<sup>68</sup> SWOT analysis is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and is a structured planning and evaluation method. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT\\_analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis).

## Participation in Module C1

The module is designed for self-study as well as for “classroom” delivery. Thus, each section of the module begins with a statement of learning outcomes and ends with a summary of key points. Learners may use the learning outcomes and summary of key points as a basis for assessing their progress throughout the module. Each section also contains discussion questions and practical exercises that may be accomplished by individual learners or used by trainers. These questions and exercises are designed to enable learners to draw on their own experience to benchmark the content and to think reflectively on the issues presented.

## About the Author

Faheem Hussain has over 10 years of experience in research on information and communication technology for development (ICTD), global higher education, and technology policy consulting. At present, he is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Technology and Society at State University of New York (SUNY) in the Republic of Korea. Previously, he worked as a faculty in Carnegie Mellon University's Qatar Campus and in the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh. He holds his Ph.D. in Engineering and Public Policy from Carnegie Mellon University, USA. His present research interests encompass ICTD, women's empowerment, public policy, social media and Internet freedom. He has been involved as a Technology Policy Specialist in numerous research projects with a number of United Nations organizations (e.g., UN-APCICT and UNDP), international development agencies (e.g., Ford Foundation and IDRC), and international think tanks (e.g., Freedom House and LIRNEasia), in the fields of technology, public policy and development.

## UN-APCICT

The United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UN-APCICT) is a subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). UN-APCICT aims to strengthen the efforts of the member countries of ESCAP to use information and communication technology (ICT) in their socio-economic development through human and institutional capacity building. UN-APCICT's work is focused on three pillars:

1. Training – To enhance the ICT knowledge and skills of policymakers and ICT professionals, and strengthen the capacity of ICT trainers and ICT training institutions;
2. Research – To undertake analytical studies related to human resource development in ICT; and
3. Advisory – To provide advisory services on human resource development programmes to ESCAP members and associate members.

UN-APCICT is located at Incheon, Republic of Korea.

*<http://www.unapcict.org>*

## ESCAP

ESCAP is the regional development arm of the United Nations and serves as the main economic and social development centre for the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific. Its mandate is to foster cooperation between its 53 members and 9 associate members. ESCAP provides the strategic link between global and country-level programmes and issues. It supports governments of countries in the region in consolidating regional positions and advocates regional approaches to meeting the region's unique socio-economic challenges in a globalizing world. The ESCAP office is located at Bangkok, Thailand.

*<http://www.unescap.org>*



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