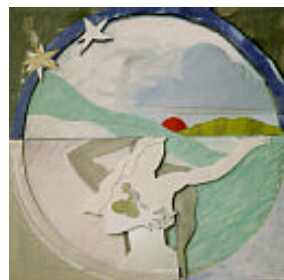


Equitable access to information and communication is fundamental for maximizing the impact of ICT

ICT & Gender



FEBRUARY 2002

Gender and Development Group, PREM, World Bank

Why are gender issues important in the Information, Communication and Technology sector?

Men and women have different needs and constraints to accessing and using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Integrating gender considerations into ICT strategies and policies will enable policy-makers and implementors to better address these differences which in turn will lead to more successful projects.

Women face considerably higher barriers in terms of literacy, access to education and information, productive and financial resources, and time.

Many of the obstacles women face in accessing and using technology are entrenched in behavioral, cultural, and religious practices. Unless explicit measures are taken to address these divides, there is a risk that ICT will increase gender disparities and that the impact of ICT will not be maximized.

Cultural: Cultural and social attitudes often discriminate against women's participation in the fields of science and technology and limit their opportunities in the area of ICT.

Economic: Women are often financially dependent upon men or do not have control over household expenditures. This makes accessing ICT services more difficult.

Educational: Inequitable allocation of education and training resources often favors boys and men.

Seclusion: In some countries, women's seclusion from the public arena makes accessing community internet centers difficult.

When gender issues are included in policy and strategy, ICT offers ways for both women and men to overcome barriers of distance, to access in

formation and markets, and participate in new income earning activities.

Checklist of Issues

- What are the gender differences in access to ICT (such as literacy, technical skills, cost of computers, language, culture etc.)?
- How does the use of ICT affect men and women differently?
- Are both men and women included in ICT decision making? Are gender issues considered when setting national ICT priorities?

What is the World Bank Doing in Gender and ICT?

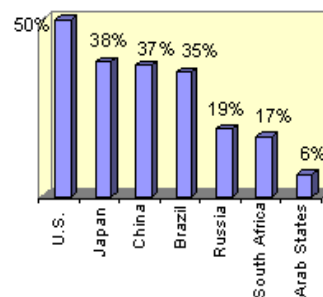
To raise awareness of gender and ICT issues, the World Bank has formed the *Gender and the Digital Divide Seminar Series* in October 2000. Through this program internal and external specialists are invited to discuss the impact that ICT has on gender relations as well as innovative ways ICT is being used to overcome gender inequalities and bridge the digital divide.

The Global ICT Group and the Gender and Development Group are conducting a comprehensive study, "Engendering ICTs." This study will help Bank task managers incorporate gender into ICT projects and provide guidance on the design of gender-sensitive ICT interventions.

The *infoDev* is mainstreaming gender in their operations and has prepared a study to review gender balance in previous projects as well as identify focus areas and strategies for bridging the gender digital divide. Based on the results from the study, a hands-on course for staff takes place in March, this year. (www.infodev.org)
The Agricultural Knowledge and

Information Systems and Gender in Rural Development Thematic Groups have jointly commissioned a review of rural development projects to develop best practices and clinics for task managers and country teams to integrate ICTs in rural information provision including support to women farmers and rural entrepreneurs.

% Internet Users that are Women



<http://www.aed.org>

Addressing gender issues in the ICT sector... some examples

Women have benefited greatly from South Korea's push to make higher education available online. In corporate South Korea, more than 35 percent of high-level IT positions are now held by women. (<http://chronicle.com>)

In Africa 70% of agricultural produce is handled by women. By using farm radios women farmers can obtain information in local languages on markets, agricultural inputs, food preservation and storage without traveling far, or being dependent on a middleman. Combining Internet and traditional communication channels can improve the effectiveness and reach of radios.