



Need of ICT Education in Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

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ABSTRACT

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Information and communications are closely linked to power and the ability to affect change. ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer etc. Socially the majorities of Indian women are still tradition bound and are in disadvantageous position. ICTs are emerging as a powerful tool for women empowerment in a developing country like India.

Educational level had significant effect on different variable of women empowerment like Self confidence, Self awareness, Independence and Feeling of freedom. This kind of study can be used to create awareness among women for betterment of their live. And may be concluded that the information and communication technology empower a women in various areas like social, educational, personal, psychological, political, technological and economical.

"Information is power to a woman entrepreneur, and one of the best tools for a woman entrepreneur is providing Internet services, secretarial services and telecenters ... We need special consideration for women's groups, to have specific telecenters which address the needs of women. ... And while women are aware of the challenges they face among themselves, we need men who are policymakers to hear the voices of women." - Achamyesh Ashenafi, President, Addis Ababa Women Entrepreneurs Association, Ethiopia and Managing Director, Konimix Trading

The ICTs have in empowering women entrepreneurs and providing new opportunities to strengthen their businesses. Using mobile phones, electronic platforms, radio, TV, blogs and the Internet, women entrepreneurs are reaching out to customers and building their businesses in ways they could not do before. While persisting challenges exist especially in rural areas, effective use of ICTs is helping women entrepreneurs to overcome several barriers.

KEYWORDS : Women Empowerment and ICT

INTRODUCTION

"India is a country of grand contradictions. While it is a global leader in the knowledge economy, it is also home to more than half the world's poor and illiterate people, most of whom are women." (Reddi&Sinha, 2004).

The sex ratio improved slightly from 933 in 2001 to 940 in 2011. The gender gap between male (82.14%) and female (65.4%) literacy rates remain high at 17.10 as per 2011 Census. It is an important fact that no society will progress satisfactorily unless women, who constitute almost half of their population are given equal opportunities. The first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "To awaken the people, it is women who must be awakened; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves" (quoted in Pillai, 1995; p. 62). So there is a greater need for bringing women in to mainstream of development of India. ICT opens up a direct window for women to the outside world. Information now flows to them without distortion or any form of censoring, and they have access to same information as their male counterpart. ICT are closely linked to power and the ability to affect change. It can create new opportunities by expanding information flows and by making communications more accessible, people living in poverty can make better choices, voice their opinions, demand their rights and have more power over their own lives.

Information technology has become a potent force in transforming social, economic, and political life globally. More and more, development strategists see the need for developing countries to embrace information technology both as a way to avoid further economic and social marginalization as well as to offer opportunities for both growth and diversification of their economies. Women within developing countries are in the deepest part of the divide, further removed from the information age than are the men whose poverty they share. The gender gap in the digital divide is of increasing concern; if access to and use of these technologies is directly linked to social and economic development, then it is imperative to ensure that women in developing countries understand the significance of these technologies and use them. If not, lack of access to information and communication technologies becomes a significant factor in the further marginalization of women from the economic, social, and political mainstream of their countries and of the world. Without full participation in the use of information technology, women are left without the key to participation in the global world of the twenty-first century. ICT can be a powerful catalyst for political, social and types of empower-

ment of women, and the promotion of gender equality. The empowerment of women through enhancing their skills, knowledge, access to and use of information technologies. It also included a strategic objective: "Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication".

Our Honorable President Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam calls this revolution of information as a nationwide movement to make India a superpower by using ICTs in both rural and urban areas. The development and proliferation of electronically communicated information has accelerated economic and social change across all areas of human activity worldwide – and it continues to do so at a rapid pace. While the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) remains concentrated largely in the developed world, ICT diffusion is beginning to reach developing countries, including poor rural areas, bringing with it high hopes of positive development outcomes. Socially the majorities of Indian women are still tradition bound and are in a disadvantageous position. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The GOI had maintained and support of women empowerment in plan and policy documents including Five years plans, the Panchayati raj, Acts and the National Policy for Women.

ICT and Women

In the recent past, ICTs have been added to the women and gender equality debate. ICTs are being presented as a tool having potential to benefit women's 'empowerment' and a number of ICT projects that specifically target women have been established in several developed and underdeveloped countries. Before going to study the role of ICTs in women empowerment, is necessary to understand what is ICT.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a diverse set of technological tools and resources to create, disseminate, store, bring value addition and manage information. The ICT sector consists of segments as diverse as telecommunications, television and radio broadcasting, computer hardware, software and services and electronic media, for example, the internet and electronic mail.

In India, as elsewhere in the developing world, women play a central role in family, community and social development. However, women

often remain invisible and unheard. Women more than men have to balance the complexities of surviving in extreme poverty, yet these women are excluded from discussion because they are often illiterate, they lack confidence and they lack mobility. ICT offer the opportunities for direct, interactive communication even by those who lack skills, who are illiterate, lack mobility and have little self-confidence.

ICTs can play a crucial role in empowering women entrepreneurs, especially when coupled with policies addressing constraints that they face at the macro and systemic level.

- ICTs are especially well adapted for women entrepreneurs who are often juggling family with entrepreneurial responsibilities and can benefit strongly from the time efficiencies and location flexibilities which ICTs make possible.
- Empowering women entrepreneurs through ICTs requires a multi-stakeholder effort. There is a need for collaboration between governments, UN agencies, the private sector, business intermediaries and civil society to support the use of different ICTs among women entrepreneurs. It is also important that the perspective of women entrepreneurs at the grass-root level can be effectively brought to the attention of policy makers, which are often men.
- The diversity of women entrepreneurs was emphasized. The value of different ICTs to a woman entrepreneur varies depending on the nature and size of business, the geographical location, industry and the capabilities needed to make use of the technology.
- Women's entrepreneurship associations can play an important role in helping to bring ICTs to women entrepreneurs, especially in developing countries. Strengthening the ICT capacity of such associations in developing countries may be an effective strategy.
- ICT capacity-building and training is essential for women entrepreneurs in Africa to benefit from the opportunities which ICTs offer. Literacy constraints where many women cannot read or write constrain their use of certain ICTs. Basic training which show women entrepreneurs how to use mobile phones, computers, social media and other ICTs are strongly needed.
- The lack of ICT and electricity infrastructure in rural areas often makes access impossible in rural areas. There is a need to accelerate the effective implementation of relevant infrastructure for women entrepreneurs in rural areas to benefit.
- The empowerment of women entrepreneurs through ICTs must involve partnerships with men and integrate measures that address socio-cultural constraints making it unacceptable for women to use or own different ICTs.
- ICTs are opening up the potential for a number of business ventures for rural women entrepreneurs. It is essential that women entrepreneurs gain greater awareness of these opportunities.

Here are some aspects of life which have a direct influence of ICT especially on women:

- (i) Women's increased access to job Market and improve entrepreneurship using ICT
- (ii) Increase of average household income in villages
- (iii) Women empowerment
- (iv) Shrinking Information Asymmetry through ICT.
- (v) Improved Governance
- (vi) Indigenous Knowledge
- (vii) Easy-Family communication
- (viii) Increase Social awareness

Strategies for ICT for women Entrepreneurship

A proper framework of the strategies for all actors involved for ICT entrepreneurship is a must. The reason is that infrastructure for the ICT or ICT based entrepreneurship cannot be created by individuals. The major actors are academia, government and business.

Academia: Academia needs to develop both entrepreneurial skills and ICT skills among entrepreneurs. The curriculum of training program or even general education programs must include early education on financial management and planning skills, early education on entrepreneurial skills, and encourage students to explore entrepreneurial pursuits during school term as part of credit. It must include early start to ICT skills and use of ICT tools for teaching. It should encourage usage of ICT and highlight role models.

The role of ICT education in the overall empowerment of rural women with reference to:

Social empowerment

- Gaining access to new and useful knowledge, information and awareness about a range of issues, topics and activities of interest to women.
- Participating in various activities with other women and people in positions of influence where you can openly discuss issues, share concerns and experiences, and reflect on issues affecting you.

Technological empowerment

- New knowledge, awareness and understanding about new ICTs and their potential benefits and impacts.
- The development of new skills, experience and greater confidence and competence in using new communication technologies.
- Advice and support in using email and the Internet, provided in ways that often met the participants' needs very well.

Political empowerment

- Having a voice for their rights.
- Feel decision making capacity.
- Networking or meeting with people in government and industry and other women to discuss issues affecting women and women communities, and to organise various actions.

Psychological empowerment

- An increase in self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Feeling more valued, respected.
- Greater motivation, inspiration, enthusiasm and interest to develop new skills and knowledge.
- Feeling much less isolated from others (particularly other supportive women) and, as a result, experiencing greater wellbeing, happiness and enjoyment of life.

Educational empowerment

- ICT deliver information about whole world in a language they understand and a medium that they would be comfortable with.
- Wide knowledge of each area, understanding of new concepts.
- ICT help in non formal and adult women education.

Economical empowerment

- ICT helps them to increase their monthly income.
- ICT provide jobs and opportunities to merge with large industries.
- ICT education makes women economically sound that is source of other all types of women empowerment.

CONCLUSION

In the recent years, through the implementation of various ICT related projects, the women are successful. There are many projects for the greater involvement of women. The main object is to make the women both economically and socially strong. The women can immensely benefit from the use of ICT. ICT has made a tremendous impact in imparting knowledge on modern technology and its uses. NGOs, SHGs working in the field, governmental agencies and other private agencies have also extended their help to promote ICT among the women. The ICT (information and communication technology) empower a woman in various areas like social, educational, psychological, political, technological and economical and well as few degree of disempowerment due to some internal and external reasons.

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