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**Considerations for Gender Advocacy vis-à-vis
ICT Policy and Strategy**

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Considerations for Gender Advocacy vis-à-vis ICT Policy and Strategy

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Abstract

This paper addresses the promotion of gender as a key component of Information and Communications (ICT) policy and strategy processes. It discusses main strategies for the creation of an information society, or knowledge economy, and the implications for gender advocacy of the corresponding policies. The paper uses the World Bank ICT sector good practice statement as a starting point for ICT policy, and provides examples of successful infoDev-funded projects that complement such policy. Finally, it suggests some ways in which gender advocates may be more successful in sensitizing policy- and decision-makers to gender.

1. Introduction

This paper addresses gender issues beginning from the perspective of ICT policy. The purpose is not to dilute or obscure the gender message, but to provide practical guidance for gender advocacy in the ICT policy environment. A risk of this perspective is that “women’s needs and interests will not be served simply by inserting gender considerations into a model that is distorted from the outset”.³ The gender literature on ICTs tends to start from women’s perspectives and discuss how ICT policy should be adapted to it. Martinez and Reilly (2002)⁴ go further and suggest that the focus for women’s access to information should not consider ICTs and policy, but ICT *in* policy.

This paper argues that it is possible to adhere to gender equality principles while practicing pragmatic ICT and gender policy. Whereas the general argument for addressing gender is rights-based⁵, meaning that gender should be addressed also in the ICT sector because women and men have equal rights to development, it is suggested that advocacy may be more successful using a ‘business case’ approach.

¹ The author is a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist with the *infoDev* Program of the World Bank. The views presented in this paper are those of the author and should not be attributed to the World Bank or the *infoDev* Program. Thanks to Charles Kenny, World Bank, for valuable comments on this paper.

² The *infoDev* program, www.infodev.org, is a multi-donor initiative hosted by the World Bank. Its mission is to promote the use of Information and Communication Technologies for social and economic development, with an emphasis on the needs of the poor. Since its inception in 1995, the program has funded over 150 applications of ICT relating to a wide variety of sectors and technologies.

³ Sally Burch, Ecuador, quoted in Marcelle (2002).

⁴ Martinez, Reilly (2002).

⁵ A rights-based approach to development is defined by OHCHR as “a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights.”

<http://www.unhcr.ch/development/approaches.html>

The latter approach would focus on why it is a successful strategy to address gender, and identify the incentives for policy-makers to do so, rather than trying to appeal to decision-makers humanitarian responsibilities. Gender mainstreaming is a revolutionary thought in many conservative circles and takes a long time to attain. A more practical effort might be to ‘speak the language’ of current policy makers and ensure the integration of gender at every level, using arguments of rights, but more essentially that of *utility*: The inclusion of women in the sphere of ICTs is a necessary prerequisite for national growth and prosperity, for any nation not to lag behind in the digitalization of the world economy.

The paper discusses ICT policy from the practitioner’s view and considers how gender can be integrated. In this sense, the paper does not deviate from current literature – the overall goals for women’s empowerment through the use of ICT policy are more or less universal. Examples of *infoDev* projects that relate to the policy areas are also presented for the purpose of illustration.

In consideration of the different policy areas that relate to ICT, there may be reason to focus advocacy on a few areas that are particularly important for women. These are areas where current policy is in itself most unlikely to address key gender issues, and where ICT policy can provide greater leverage for women’s empowerment. The paper will conclude by discussing how gender advocates may improve results in terms of affecting current ICT policy, by applying a more pragmatic approach and focusing on providing evidence of productivity improvements achieved through the inclusion of women.

2. Policy and Strategy Areas for Building an Information Society

The World Bank Sector Strategy Paper on ICT⁶ specifies the areas in which governments must implement policies, actions, and initiatives in order to create an information society:

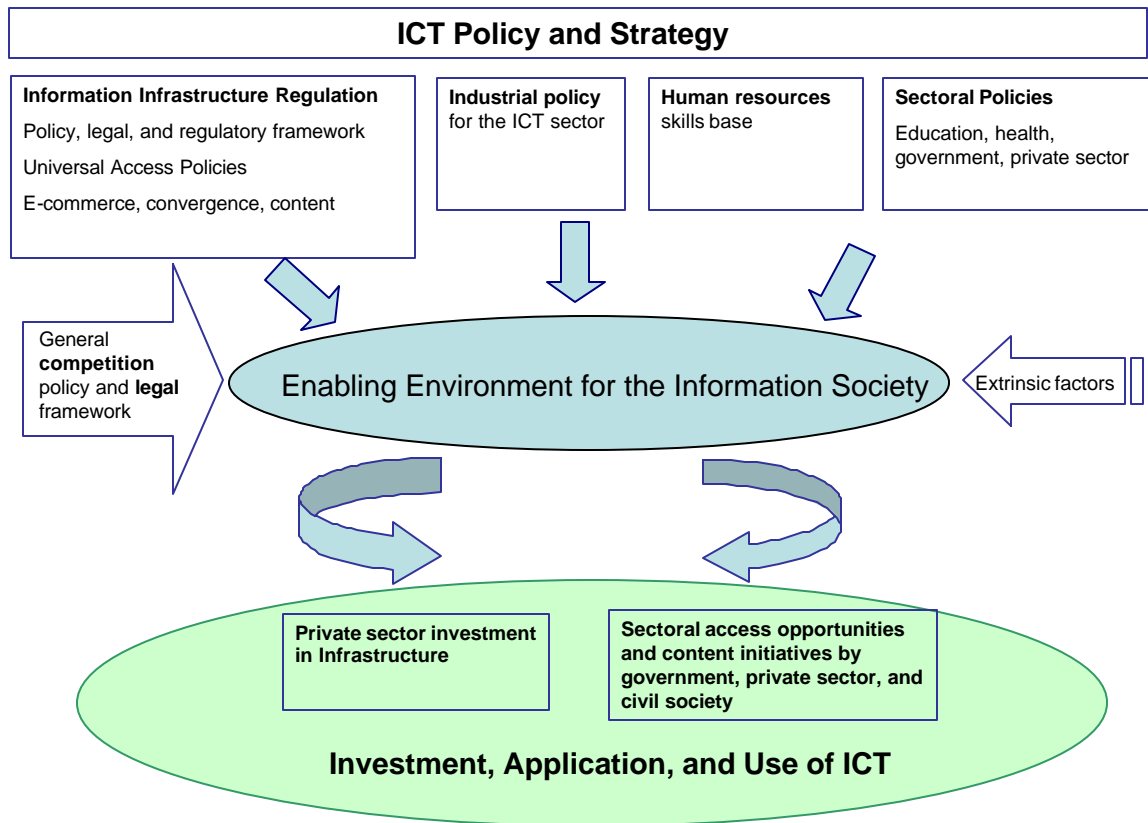
- Information infrastructure policy, consisting of:
 - policy, legal and regulatory framework for telecommunication, broadcast, and postal;
 - e-commerce, content, and convergence legislation;
- Industrial policy for the IT industry;
- Applications in the government, private, and social sectors;
- Human resources skills base;
- General competition policy and legal framework.

Two immediate remarks with implication for gender issues can be made about these areas: First, in several of these policy areas can the *implementation* of policy have more implications for gender equality than the essence of the policy itself. There are numerous examples of how “unwanted” policies can be circumvented, which is why the existence of a policy *per se* is no guarantee for progress in gender equality.

⁶ World Bank (2002), Annex 2, p.46.

Second, the *degree* to which each of these policy areas have implications for women’s role in the information society varies greatly. As we shall discuss, gender advocates may have more reason to concentrate on certain aspects of ICT policy than others.

The figure below is a conceptual model for the enabling environment that ICT policy creates. It highlights the mentioned main areas of ICT policy that together build the enabling environment for an information society. Each area and its implications for gender advocacy will be discussed in turn.



General Competition and Legal Framework

The general competition and legal framework is naturally of utmost importance to women. Although considered extrinsic to the above model, the societal norms and rules that are codified in, for example, ownership and inheritance laws, are likely to have far more impact on gender equality than any ICT policy could ever have. The nature of the ICT sector in any country will be determined by the sociocultural context of that country, to a much greater extent than by the ICT policies it makes.

Information Infrastructure Policy I: Prerequisites for Access

Current best practice in the ICT sector for infrastructure policy includes progressive liberalization of markets, privatization of the preexisting state-owned companies, and the appointment of a regulator independent of both the operators and government. The private sector is to undertake all investment, as government provision of infrastructure is “unsustainable”.⁷ There are a number of complex procedures for this system to have satisfactory outcomes, including interconnection pricing, tariff rebalancing, etc.

Whereas few regulatory best practice statements address gender, the ICT and gender literature holds valid that gender-sensitive infrastructure regulation is such that it gives priority to *connectivity in rural areas* and offers *low-cost solutions*. The ITU Gender-Aware Guidelines states that “the engendered policy process is one that results in universally reaching telecommunications policies”⁸. Consequently, infrastructure regulation that addresses the needs of rural, geographically isolated, or poor populations, i.e. pro-poor policies, will also address the needs of women.

A promising fact, then, is that current best practice in ICT regulations includes pro-poor policies and provisions for universal access. Leading voices in the ICT for Development arena prescribe policies to address the “access gap”.⁹ Such policies include the imposition of universal service obligations, universal access funds, rollout targets, quality targets, or other service commitments to address connectivity in peripheral and isolated areas which are not commercially attractive.¹⁰

The conclusion is that infrastructure regulation policies that follow best practice guidelines and apply inclusive policies are likely to be equally beneficial¹¹ to women and men.

Whereas pro-poor infrastructure policies may address the access gap in terms of service provision in commercially unprofitable geographical areas, they do not address the issue of local points of presence or service provision, i.e. access to devices and application technologies that are needed to benefit from connectivity (for example “telecenters”). The distinction may seem artificial, but is important, as in the gender literature “ICT Policy” is often viewed as one contiguous area, presumably controlled by one authority, when in fact the responsibility for different areas of policy may be addressed by separate regulator/government entities.

The agenda for gender advocates in relation to infrastructure policy should be to support the mainstream agenda of the ICT for Development field today: Independent, market-oriented, yet inclusive regulatory practices.

⁷ World Bank (2002), Annex 1 and 2.

⁸ Jorge (2001).

⁹ The access gap is the difference in access between what is politically and socially desirable and what is commercially feasible. See Navas-Sabater, Dymond, Juntunen (2002), p. 7 f.

¹⁰ Dymond, Oestmann (2002), Navas-Sabater, Dymond, Juntunen (2002), GIPI (2002), Intven (2000), World Bank (2002), Annex 1.

¹¹ Which is not the same as “gender-neutral”.

Information Infrastructure Policy II: Applications for Universal Access

The key access issues for women are those that enable people to appropriate and use the technology. In the regulatory literature, this refers to *applications* of ICT¹² and includes for example:

- Individual access points, such as a telephone;
- Communal access points, such as telecenters;
- Radio and television;
- Internet and e-commerce, e-government, etc.

This is an area where women encounter numerous access challenges, which this paper will not discuss in detail.¹³ It is also an area where seeking to affect policy-making becomes complicated, because:

- Very few countries have elaborate policies for ICT access, and the process and channels for how to formulate policy are still developing;
- Responsibility for policies and implementation may be dispersed over several different ministries and agencies;
- ICT Policy and Strategy are emerging practices, and the lack of consolidation of knowledge about which approaches are effective makes it harder for gender messages to be heard.

The fact that policy-making practices are not yet firm can also be considered an opportunity for gender advocacy – there is great potential for addressing gender from the start.

Key principles for ICT access policies are *cost*, *inclusion* and *flexibility*. Studies of the cost-effectiveness of ICT in education have shown that radio tends to be a significantly more affordable and viable technology for less developed countries than, for example, the internet.¹⁴ Radio is also more widely available and used in rural areas, more affordable for the poorest, and is not dependent on continuous power supply.¹⁵ A low-cost strategy would therefore involve greater reliance on radio.

Mobile telephony is emerging as a strong candidate for low-cost access in poor communities¹⁶, but telephony in general is still expensive compared to radio, and will continue to be a scarce application in the poorest rural or isolated areas.

¹² World Bank (2002), Annex 1.

¹³ See for instance Hafkin and Taggart (2001) for an overview of obstacles to women's access.

¹⁴ Grace, Kenny (2002).

¹⁵ In low-income countries, there are 157 radios per poor people and 0.48 Internet hosts per 1,000 people. World Bank data, 2001, presented in Grace, Kenny (2002).

¹⁶ Dymond, Oestmann (2002).

Strengthening Women's Leadership in Community Development through Radio internet in Brazil is implemented by the non-profit CEMINA and provides education on gender to low-income women by the use of community radio. They are creating online radio programs with gender content and connecting 10 women's community radio stations connected to Internet, so that the stations can download digital material and the use software for digital programming. In addition, they will connect at least three community radio stations in remote areas to broadband Internet, to enable the "streaming" of programs. The radio stations involved in the project will be able to interact with their listeners via email and download information or programs from the Internet based on demand.¹⁷

A focus on general *inclusion* allows for the consideration of not only women, but people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, etc. ICT access policy should address the challenges of various communities and promote pluralism. *Flexibility* has to do with the implementation of the policy and is key to exploring inclusion. If information kiosks are applied in a community, the strata of the community should be allowed to affect the location of the kiosk, which services it offers, which languages it applies, and so on. Without flexibility, the policy becomes static and will inevitably be ineffective or counteractive for some people.

IT: Employment for people with disabilities, implemented by the Trust for the Americas (OAS), trained over 300 people – of which 200 were people with disabilities – in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua in using software and adaptive technology so as to increase their chances of getting jobs. The project used volunteers with high expertise and who had, in some cases, experience from adaptive technologies in their home countries. They also trained staff of local disability organizations, so that they could provide better services to their members. At the end of the training, a few people with disabilities had already achieved jobs, and many thought that their chances of getting one was significantly increased. The training included production and marketing strategies for graphic print shops and was targeted to the commercial sector. An important outcome of this project was that it raised the profile of people with disabilities due to the amount of publicity the project received.

Another key aspect of ICT access policy is to *set goals* for implementation. By setting indicators and targets for inclusion monitoring progress, implementing agencies can measure how well their policies are working, and governments can evaluate the effectiveness of their policies.¹⁸ For a telecenter, examples of goals are number of female users; number of training courses offered exclusively for women/in language Y/for children in ages 10-15, etc; Opening hours; Share of telecenter of revenue resulting from activities X, Y, Z (for example female entrepreneurs' use).

¹⁷ As this project capitalizes on the availability of broadband Internet in Brazil, it could not be exactly replicated in, for example, most African countries. The benefits of community radio, potentially complemented with downloaded over the internet, are still replicable in regions with low bandwidth, however.

¹⁸ Naturally, goals will need to be revised if applied flexibility makes them irrelevant.

Gender advocacy in the applications access policy area should emphasize that the implementation of policies is not gender-neutral. Advocates must demonstrate to policy-makers that people have different abilities to appropriate technology and ensure that policy provides for equal access under unequal circumstances.

One *infoDev* project that assesses the utility for women of ICT access is ***the Inter-City Marketing Network for Women Micro-Entrepreneurs***, which is being implemented by the Foundation for Occupational Development (FOOD) in rural Tamilnadu, India. Community based organizations (CBOs) in 100 villages are linked by cellular phones to a network. Members of the CBOs are women who by using the phone can market their products, investigate demand and target the production to meet demand all within the cell phone network. An ongoing evaluation will be able to tell how much the income of the 2,000 rural women and their families increased by use of the cell phone network.

Industrial Policy

*“Lack of access to ICTs is only a microcosm of existing gender relations in society where for instance, women are socialized towards non-technical careers and not in say, software development, programming or other advanced computer-mediated technologies.”*¹⁹

The *industrial policy* for the ICT sector is of great importance to female workers and women-run enterprises. This includes investment and trade policies, taxation, and other investment promotion efforts such as technology parks, research centers, and business promotion programs.

Few authors have addressed gender issues in industrial policy for the ICT sector. Mitter (2001)²⁰ argues that policies, in order to empower women in the digital economy and to take into account new modes of work such as teleworking, should be developed to address, *inter alia*:

- Occupational hazards related to teleworking and institutions such as call centers;
- Legislative and educational measures to counteract negative consequences on women’s health, career paths, and bargaining power;
- Labor and employment legislation that e.g. address working in night shifts;
- Systems of taxes and subsidies to influence investment flows in the ICT sector.

Although these policies are reasonable and desirable, it should be clear from the situation in many developing country that they come at a certain cost. It may take decades before policies that regulate hardship working conditions can be fully applied in some countries, simply because the higher costs involved imply fewer (or lower paid) jobs. It is nevertheless important that advocates continue seeking improvement in protective legislation, especially where possible at low cost.

¹⁹ Wambui (2002).

²⁰ Mitter (2001), p. 31 f.

Perhaps the most important problem facing women in developing country business contexts is discrimination based on sex. An entrepreneur needs – besides information on a variety of issues, where ICT can be very helpful – access to capital markets for micro finance, to consumer markets for offsetting their products, and to networks for promotion and distribution. Female entrepreneurs find themselves excluded or discriminated in many contexts that are vital for the growth of their business. Progressive industrial policies and creative, persistent leadership in implementing them are therefore needed.

One area of Industrial ICT policy which may be more instrumental for women is e-commerce policy. Women and men are likely to have different patterns of use, both as consumers and producers.²¹ Particularly for the producer side, policies targeted to small-scale enterprises are needed.

Gender-sensitive industrial policy should address the particular challenges that apply to female entrepreneurs. For example, as it is harder for female entrepreneurs to access capital, one appropriate mechanism would be micro-credit programs targeted to women. As female entrepreneurs may be less computer literate, an appropriate policy would offer computer training for women only, etc. Although discrimination will remain a key obstacle to women participation, experience has shown that legislation against discrimination is only a partial solution. Positive policies, however, can empower women and ensure they take action to improve their fate.

The infoDev Incubator Initiative is designed to promote economic growth by fostering private sector development. The program involves the establishment of a support center for incubators, compilation and dissemination of best practices in business incubation, and support to existing incubators as well as the establishment of new ones. Through the initiative, *infoDev* will be able to target underserved regions and countries. Incubators that receive grant funding in subsequent phases will also be encouraged to target female micro-entrepreneurs in the most challenged environments, and to include such objectives in their development plans. Successful incubation models could be scaled up within the country or replicated to other countries.

Human Resources Skills Base Policies

Policies relating to the human resources skills base is of paramount importance from the gender perspective. It concerns long-term growth issues such as the access to ICT in education, “upgrading” the skills of the labor force through government programs in e.g. computer science or engineering, vocational training (e.g. IT training for small-business entrepreneurs), and investment in IT literacy training among the population at large. Whether such programs take gendered needs into account or not will have major effects on the ability of large numbers of girls and women to be competitive in the labor market or use IT to meet their information needs.

²¹ Liu Meng (2002).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG)²² include goals on universal primary education and the empowerment of women. ICT will be instrumental for building the critical skills base for employment in the non-agricultural sectors in developing countries, and there are many examples of how ICT can be used to empower women.

However, there is growing evidence that introducing IT in *primary* education is not a viable strategy. Not only are the costs extremely high, the educational value to students of the inevitably limited access to a small number of computers is arguable.²³ Further, a recent WorldLinks study showed that girls had unequal access to computers in primary schools.²⁴ Investments in computer literacy on any wider scale are therefore likely to be limited to secondary or tertiary education in most low-income countries. Perhaps the greatest potential of IT training is in vocational training; there are a number of promising efforts training female (and male) entrepreneurs in several countries.

The *infoDev* project ***Training for African Women in Internet Working Technology*** is implemented in partnership between Cisco Systems (which has some 8,000 networking academies worldwide) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The project awards full scholarships to young women who come to Addis Ababa for training in Internet networking technology. The training course, which includes a module on gender issues, leads to independent certification as a Certified Networking Associate or a Certified Networking Professional. A gender analysis of the project showed that the trainees gained enormously in self-confidence and self-esteem. In a survey to recent graduates, 71 % of the graduates said that they intended to encourage other women to enter the ICT field and to promote women in ICTs; 41% cent said that they intended to become ICT entrepreneurs; and fully 82 % said they intended to work in the ICT field.²⁵

Gender advocacy in building human skills for an information society should focus on promoting and starting initiatives that target women and women's needs, to reduce the gender divide between men and women on all levels of education. Many efforts to improve education for women, and to increase female enrolment, are already effective. Some critical steps for ICT and gender advocates include:

- Ensuring greater attention to ICT in girls' education on the secondary and tertiary levels;
- Creating awareness of the benefits of ICT among women;
- Promoting female leadership in ICT-related academic fields.

²² <http://www.developmentgoals.org/>

²³ Kenny (2002), Grace and Kenny (2002).

²⁴ <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/digitaldivide/worldlinks.ppt>

²⁵ Hafkin (2002).

ICT Applications

The fourth policy area, which is also of paramount importance to women, is the use of ICT to enhance government, delivery of social services, and applications in primarily the education and health sectors. This area concerns initiatives from the private sector, civil society, and government (national and local).

As mentioned, advocacy work towards these policy areas is more complicated, as the policies tend to be sectoral rather than centralized under one ministry. However it is a key area (or areas) for gender champions, because it allows for independent and pro-active initiatives. It involves projects that target women, the use of the internet for advocacy, etc. Such projects are undertaken under the premise of ICT policy and regulation, but may in fact be conducive to policy if successful.

In Peru, Voxiva is implementing a ***Voice Portal for Health***. The project integrates a telephone-based technology with IT systems to communicate with and gather critical information from remote health care workers and populations. The technology lets health workers connect to the system through any telephone. To use the service, they dial into a secure server, and enter their account number and password. Once connected, they reach a voice menu of options customized to them and their network. For example, health workers can call the voice portal and retrieve voice mail, respond to queries, report disease cases to the epidemiology office, and learn about outbreaks in neighboring towns; access library and other information services, such as databases.

The wealth of initiatives addressing women's needs is an indicator of the growing demand for ICT applications that can serve women as citizens of a political constituency, health care consumers, students, entrepreneurs, and so on. An enhanced role of gender advocates in relation to this area – besides continuing promoting efforts that address women's needs – would be to encourage greater attention to gender in projects that did not originally have explicit gender goals. There are virtually no projects that are gender neutral²⁶, so an increased focus on the needs of women will no doubt increase the number of women benefiting from ICT.

Viva Rio has set up 10 ***Future Stations*** in *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. The stations are physical access points with radio link to the Internet. Linked to the stations are local producer and commercial groups as well as a business agent who will assist the affiliated small-scale entrepreneurs in becoming part of the formal sector. A portal will have information on access to credit, insurance, education, legal services, and other services that small enterprises need. It is not yet known how many female entrepreneurs are benefiting from this service.

²⁶ Hafkin (2002).

3. Challenges to Integrating Gender in ICT Strategy

The obstacles to integration of gender in ICT policy are numerous. Reasons why policy-makers do not address gender in ICT policy include that they are ignorant of the importance of gender in ICT policy; that gender has not previously been part of policy-making, and that the impetus for change is lacking. Policy-makers may also simply be unwilling to integrate gender, for varying reasons which will not be discussed here.

“Even when formal and informal institutions do not distinguish explicitly between males and females, they are generally informed (explicitly or implicitly) by social norms relating to appropriate gender roles. These societal institutions have their own inertia and can be slow and difficult to change – but they are far from static.”²⁷

One might assume that rational, well-informed policy-makers will eventually learn the need to integrate a gender perspective and undertake such a change, but the length of the process can of course be a problem in itself.

When gender *is* addressed in the ICT context, it is sometimes treated as a “special case”.²⁸ This may in part be due to the fact that the vast majority of ICT applications that address gender are women-only projects. The unfortunate consequence of treating gender as a special case is that gender is disregarded, or seen as a non-vital issue, in all central aspects of policy formulation. Gender advocates must pay particular attention to avoid further marginalization of the gender agenda.

In most countries, and especially in societies that can be considered very unequal from a gender perspective, ICT policy is not the most prominent hindrance for an egalitarian information society. In fact, the growth of an e-society in itself may create opportunities for women’s empowerment, that are not attributable to better policy. Consequently, if one seeks to enhance gender equality in the appropriation of ICT, the most crucial policy to improve is most likely not an ICT policy at all.

The *infoDev*-funded **Zahedan ICT Center** in Iran is a comprehensive project designed to promote the use of ICT technology in Baluchistan, the most deprived province of Iran. The Center will provide intensive ICT training, especially targeting youth and women, but also NGOs; teachers; government officials; city council members; and the business sector. The project will promote ICT-based micro-enterprise and employment-generating activities among women and youth. The Science and Arts Foundation, who are implementing the project, SAF, are providing separate but equally equipped computer rooms for males and females. A key component is an “e-shop” that promotes e-commerce for women producers exclusively.

²⁷ World Bank (2001), p. 13.

²⁸ One example is the World Bank Sector Strategy Paper, where gender is treated as one of several “sectors” and addressed in an annex to the report. World Bank (2002), Annex 4.

4. Key Steps to Generating Greater Interest in Gender Among Policy Makers

“Policy-makers face numerous competing demands for public resources and attention, with tight fiscal and administrative budgets. Under these constraints, information and analysis help governments achieve the maximum social gains from the gender-related interventions they choose. Moreover, because the nature of gender disparities differ among societies, effective policy needs to be grounded in analysis that integrates local and national gender concerns.”²⁹

The Business Case for Integrating Gender

A study by the World Bank showed that projects with gender-related action were more likely to have a satisfactory outcome, and to reach their objectives, than projects without such gender-related action.³⁰ Other studies have demonstrated how gender inequality leads to slower economic growth and poverty reduction.³¹ Further, gender disparities tend to be greater among the poorest. These arguments in themselves should be sufficient for every egalitarian policy-maker to address gender. However, studies such as these are rarely extrapolated to technology sectors. There remains a need to demonstrate that the inclusion of women and girls in the ICT sector will increase growth, and that the failure to address gender inequalities in technology matters will increase poverty and exclusion. Gender advocates here need to provide compelling research and quantitative evidence specific to ICT policy and applications, respectively.

Generally Inclusive Policies

The World Bank study, that found projects with gender components to be more effective overall, also recognizes that “such projects may also reflect better identification of the target population, design, and implementation”³². Similarly, a recent *infoDev* study found that projects with greater focus on poverty reduction were more likely to address gender.³³ A more holistic approach – addressing the needs of minority language, religious or ethnic groups, and people with disabilities – will ensure greater attention also to other disadvantaged groups. It may also be more appealing to those who fear feminism, and reduce the risk of gender advocates being ignored as one of many lobby groups.

Gender-responsive Program and Project Design

Project implementing agencies can affect policy-makers by demonstrating results on the ground. Successful projects that demonstrate the gains to society of women’s empowerment are perhaps the strongest argument for addressing gender, and may lead to efforts being scaled up or replicated. The ICT for Development community needs to undertake more pilot projects that take gender into account – not merely projects that address women only, but projects where gender is “mainstreamed” – and disseminate its successes to policy-makers.

²⁹ World Bank (2001), p. 27.

³⁰ Murphy (1997), p. 20 f.

³¹ Note in particular World Bank (2001).

³² Murphy (1997), p. 21.

³³ Unpublished.

Gender Analysis

Gender analysis is an exercise to understand differential impacts of project or policy design, implementation, and outcomes for women and men, respectively. A wider application of gender analysis to ICT projects in the public and private sectors, particularly if they result in quantitative evidence, can bring key gender concerns to the attention of policy-makers. In particular local gender analysis is an effective and inexpensive way to increase attention to gender.³⁴ A gender analysis of 120 projects in the *infoDev* portfolio, including in-depth case studies of six projects, brought attention to gender issues and changed the course of management action.³⁵ Similar analyses can easily be applied to government projects, and resources should be directed towards doing so.

Communication with Policy-makers

In order to successfully convey their message to policy-makers, gender advocates need to, to some extent, adopt the same terminology and scope of agenda that policy-makers have. This is not intended in any way to compromise or diminish the gender message. Consider the vendor of pharmaceuticals who uses the language of physicians to describe medication benefits, or the corporate consultant who uses productivity measures to demonstrate how management action will raise profits. Whereas rights-based arguments are likely to gain policy-makers sympathy and agreement in principle, it is unlikely to change their behavior or priorities, and can easily be fended off with arguments of insufficient resources, multiple priorities, etc. Therefore, gender advocates need to show policy-makers how greater attention to gender will increase the effectiveness of policy.

Data, Research, and Indicators

The World Bank's Global ICT Department monitors a number of indicators relevant to the growth and development of ICT sectors. A recent attempt to monitor indicators for gender equality failed, as there were no relevant data available. There are no data on tele-density or internet access, labor market statistics, or ICT training statistics that are measured globally and relevant to gender equality in ICT. In the end, the indicator chosen was enrolment in secondary education, which is an indirect indicator at most.³⁶

The lack of indicators is detrimental to current ICT research. For example, it means that most e-readiness assessments cannot give much evidence as to the various states of readiness within a population. Given that E-readiness assessments are generally influential for, and seen as forces driving, ICT policy, this lack of data likely contributes to greater gender inequality in the ICT area.

³⁴ Chamberlain (2002).

³⁵ Chamberlain, Hafkin, Huyer (2002).

³⁶ The ongoing World Bank study "Engendering ICTs" will undertake research to develop indicators on women and ICT in developing countries.

Quantitative Monitoring and Evaluation

The lack of evaluation in many ICT projects makes it difficult to measure gender impact. When indicators are not defined at the beginning of a project, and baseline studies are not conducted, it will be difficult to quantify the impact of a project for women and men, respectively. The result is the so-called anecdotal evidence. Whereas anecdotal evidence or stories sometimes are very telling, a key disadvantage is that they cannot be compounded or synthesized, so there will be difficulty aggregating results over several studies. Further, stories rarely give an objective view of just *how* good something was, meaning that comparison of different projects and approaches is difficult. In the end, it is more powerful to show that approach A gave an increase in women's income of 30 %, whereas approach B only led to a corresponding increase of 10 %.

Female Participation in Policy-Making

It may seem obvious that greater representation of women in government and other policy-making areas will lead to increased attention to gender. This link is not automatic, however: Recent *infoDev* research found that women may not necessarily be gender-sensitive.³⁷ However, in areas where women are discriminated against, such as business, the experience of women will be invaluable for the identification of key action areas. Women may also be better equipped to identify key approaches to skills development.

5. Conclusion

This paper discussed the implications for gender advocacy of different areas of ICT policy. The analysis suggests that infrastructure policy may be less urgent for gender advocates, as current best practice in the area addresses the needs of women. Instead, policy advocacy efforts should be intensified in areas relating to applications of ICT, the development of industrial policy, and the building of a human skills base. Pilot project applications of ICT should continue to be promoted in areas that are important to women.

The paper also discussed some strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of gender advocacy in ICT policy. These strategies include focusing on the business case for why gender integration should be a policy goal and providing the quantitative evidence to support it. It may also be helpful to promote generally inclusive policies rather than only a gender focus. Finally, gender advocates can perhaps be most effective in driving efforts that address women's needs, and in ensuring that these programs are properly evaluated and that the (presumably good) results are disseminated.

Seeking a more effective approach to gender advocacy and promoting a rights-based perspective are complementary, not mutually exclusive, strategies for pursuing greater attention to gender in ICT policy. However, in conducting policy advocacy for greater gender equality in the ICT sector, the most important policies to address are likely not related to ICT at all.

³⁷ Liu Meng (2002), Chamberlain (2002).

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