

women 2000 and beyond



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The role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a tool for development has attracted the sustained attention of the United Nations over recent years. Strategic partnerships have been developed with donors, the private sector and civil society, and working groups and task forces have been established to enhance inter-

in access. For instance, in 2003, the United States reported 5,558 Internet users per 10,000 persons, compared with 690 users per 10,000 persons in Asia and 156 users per 10,000 persons in Africa.⁷

The enthusiasm over the rapid growth of ICT and their applications have generated a variety of initiatives to foster the use of ICT for development, including research, projects, workshops and other activities. Many of these initiatives are directed at addressing the growing digital divide. Increased attention is being paid to reviewing and evaluating the impact of these initiatives. Early findings point to mixed results about the impact of 10 years of experience in ICT for development.

An InfoDev report published in 2003 suggests that despite the vast amounts of resources that have been invested in efforts to increase access to ICT in developing countries and among the poor, these technologies have not proven as transformative as expected.⁸ The InfoDev report indicates that to harness ICT more effectively for development and poverty reduction, ICT must be mainstreamed as tools for broader strategies and programmes for building opportunity and empowering the poor. The report further states that the ICT for development agenda should identify the broader changes required in developing countries, the role ICT can have in effecting these changes, and to be more selective and strategic about the attention and resources devoted to the dissemination of these technologies.⁹

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While there is recognition of the potential of ICT as a tool for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a “gender divide” has also been identified, reflected in the lower numbers of women accessing and using ICT compared with men. Unless this gender

divide is specifically addressed, there is a risk that ICT may exacerbate existing inequalities between women and men and create new forms of inequality.

If, however, the gender dimensions of ICT—in terms of access and use, capacity-building opportunities, employment and potential for empowerment—are explicitly identified and addressed, ICT can be a powerful catalyst for political and social empowerment of women, and the promotion of gender equality.

This report provides a summary of critical gender equality issues related to ICT and development and outlines potential opportunities for women’s economic, social and political empowerment. Key strategies and tools to address the gender digital divide in national and international contexts are presented. Examples of good practice on gender equality and ICT are elaborated throughout the report.

The report focuses on the two-fold need to address the gender divide and reduce inequalities related to ICT and to identify ways to use ICT proactively and effectively to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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Over the past decade, the United Nations intergovernmental processes have played a leading role in identifying key issues and proposing strategic actions to enhance women’s empowerment through ICT. An emerging gender divide was identified in 1995 by the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD) in research conducted in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on

Women. The Commission identified significant gender differences in levels of access to, control of and advantages accruing from a wide range of technological developments.¹⁰

Later that same year, the Ministerial Declaration on Development and Inter-

der mainstreaming—one on Mainstreaming Gender in ITU-D Programmes³³—which recognized that a “gender dimension in telecommunications” is critical to the attainment of the goal of universal access; and another one on Gender Mainstreaming in IT—which called for gender mainstreaming in all programmes of the ITU.³⁴ As a result of these resolutions, ITU created a gender unit with the support of the Norwegian Government to advance the work in preparation for WSIS.³⁵

Advocacy for women’s improved access to ICT, and attention to gender perspectives in the development and use of ICT has significantly increased in the United Nations in the context of preparations for the WSIS. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) established a Task Force on Gender and Information and Communication Technologies to coordinate the activities of all United Nations entities working on gender equality and ICT in preparation for WSIS. The Task Force produced fact sheets on gender and ICT for WSIS Phase I, with contributions from a broad range of United Nations entities.³⁶ Information on specific activities of other entities of the United Nations can be accessed through the inter-agency website, Women Watch.³⁷

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Gender equality advocates from civil society organizations, Governments, United Nations bodies and international agencies participated in regional and global preparatory meetings and made a strong case for including recommendations on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the WSIS Declaration of

Principles and Plan of Action. In meetings held in many parts of the world over a two-year period from early 2002, including in Bamako, Budapest, Tokyo, Bavaro, Paris and Geneva, gender equality advocates organized their efforts through the Gender Caucus and the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group.

One major success of these efforts was the development of partnerships and collaboration between Member States, intergovernmental agencies and other stakeholders which resulted from the increased networking, awareness-raising and knowledge sharing in the WSIS process. While the work of gender advocates is reflected directly in both the WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, a number of the objectives relating to attention paid to gender perspectives in the outcome documents were met.

One strong paragraph was included in the first section of the Declaration of Principles which stated, “[w]e affirm that development of ICT provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors in, the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICT as a tool to that end”.³⁸

The Plan of Action contains references to the special needs of women in relation to capacity-building (removing the gender barriers to ICT education and training); enabling environment (promotion of participation of women in formulating ICT policies); ICT applications (e-health and e-employment); cultural diversity and identity (strengthening programmes focused on gender-sensitive curricula in formal and non-formal education and media literacy); media (balanced and diverse portrayal); follow-up and

evaluation (gender-specific indicators on ICT use and needs and measurable performance indicators to assess the impact of funded ICT projects on the lives of women and girls should be developed).

A factor inhibiting adequate attention to gender equality perspectives was the lack of delegations at the Summit with expertise or experience with gender equality and women’s empowerment issues. Many delegations were comprised of trade and telecommunications ministry staff. Another major challenge of gender equality advocacy in WSIS was the assumption that gender advocacy is primarily women’s work. Gender equality advocates often had to lobby for attention to gender perspectives in the context of the regional and thematic caucuses within civil society (for example, in relation to media, network security and human rights).

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The Declaration of Principles from WSIS 2003 in Geneva outlined a “common vision” for the information society “premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.³⁹ The WSIS Plan of Action⁴⁰ articulates concrete actions to advance the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those in the Millennium Declaration,

Mechanisms and Internet Governance established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Gender equality advocates have focused on networking to address the broad range of issues during the preparations for the second phase of the WSIS from a gender perspective.⁴² Priority areas for intervention have included lobbying for the incorporation of gender awareness in the development of national level ICT policies and "e-strategies"; and developing ICT indicators and targets as a tool for achieving the development goals of the Millennium Declaration.⁴³

Financing ICT for Development is a critical gender equality issue. Several briefing and position papers have been commissioned by UNDP which have been based on consultations with organizations active in gender and ICT advocacy. The findings and conclusions of the Task Force make reference to the importance of integrating ICT policies into poverty reduction strategies; of funding civil society community networks because of their effectiveness in expanding ICT access to rural low-income populations; and of identifying further ways and means of lowering the costs of delivery to under-served markets and promoting community access. Ensuring adequate funding for ICT initiatives for women, and replication and upscaling of positive innovations and pilot projects, remains a challenge which needs to be addressed in the context of financing mechanisms.

In the formation of the United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance,⁴⁴ gender equality was one of the primary criteria used in the selection of candidates. Of the 39 members, seven are women, with a stakeholder balance of Government (18), private sector (6) and civil society (15). Two members of the WSIS Gender Caucus and NGO Gender Strategies Working Group are also on the Working Group.

The broad definition of Internet governance utilized by the Working Group includes issues related to content (such as spam and "illegal and harmful content"), and use (such as use of the Internet for fraud or criminal activities). The Working Group has prioritized the importance of Internet governance in relation to developmental aspects of the Internet, such as universal and affordable access to infrastructure, content, cultural and linguistic diversity, training and capacity-building. Gender equality issues were covered in the developmental aspects of Internet governance, in particular capacity-building in developing countries and other access concerns.

There has been active and visible gender advocacy in the work on Internet governance. However, constraints in identifying clear points for intervention and action on gender equality are faced when Internet governance is viewed from a largely technical perspective. Issues such as access to infrastructure, content and use, as well as intellectual property rights and developmental aspects, provide gender advocates with clearer entry points for intervention. Opportunities need to be identified for ensuring that recommendations for future governance arrangements address the need to create more effective means for women to participate in governance processes.

A Forum on Gender and ICTs for the World Summit on the Information Society 2005 was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 24-25 June in 2005, with participants from 36 countries, representing academia, NGOs, Governments, international organizations and the private sector. The Seoul-Gyeonggi Declaration on Equal Participation of Women in the Information Society⁴⁵ prepared by participants at the Forum emphasized the need to ensure integration of gender perspectives in the ICT financing discussions, including through gender-sensitive budgeting and specific interventions for women, taking into account the needs of marginalized

women. In relation to ICT governance mechanisms, the Declaration recommends establishment of multi-stakeholder mechanisms at both the global and national levels, with opportunities for participation of women. Other issues emphasized in the Declaration included the need for sex-disaggregated data, capacity-building in gender analysis of ICT policies and programmes, increased employment opportunities for women, enhanced opportunities for women's involvement in ICT decision-making, and investment in infrastructure and services specifically for women.

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Analysis of gender issues in ICT builds on previous gender analysis of technology. Technologies are socially constructed and thus have different impacts on women and men.⁴⁶ Women's capacity to exploit the potential of the new ICT as tools for empowerment is constrained in different ways. Some constraints are linked to factors that affect both women and men, including technical infrastructure, connection costs, computer literacy and language skills. These overall constraints are, however, exacerbated in many cases by gender-based determinants which particularly disadvantage women.⁴⁷

Most poor women in developing countries are further removed from the information age than the men whose poverty they share.⁴⁸ Women need ICT for the same reasons as men; to access information of importance to their productive, reproductive and community roles and to obtain additional resources. Access to ICT can enable women and men to gain a stronger voice in their communities, their Government and at the global level. ICT also offers women flexibility in time and space and can be of particular value to women who face social isolation, including many women in developing countries.

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In addition to physical access to the technology and the ability to utilize it, access also refers to the ability to make use of the information and the resources provided. The factors identified as constraints to access and use, i.e. poverty, illiteracy, including computer illiteracy, and language barriers are particularly acute for women. Women are, for example, less likely to own communication assets, such as radios, mobile phones and computers. In addition, women's access to and use of ICT is constrained by factors that go beyond issues of technological infrastructure. Socially constructed gender roles and relationships play a key role in determining the capacity of women and men to participate on equal terms in the information society.⁴⁹ A UNESCO report on "Gender Issues in the Information Society" points out that the capability of women to effectively use information obtained through ICT is clearly dependent on many social factors, including literacy and education, geographic location, mobility and social class.⁵⁰

Women are in the minority of users in almost all developed and developing countries. The trend for differentiation in use starts early, as seen in the United States where boys are five times more likely than girls to use home computers and parents spend twice as much on ICT prod-

ucts for their sons as they do for their daughters.⁵¹

The development of infrastructure includes many decisions about the location of facilities, the type of tech-

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Experience has shown that reaching women in developing countries, particularly in rural areas, is facilitated by using multiple forms of media and communications technologies, i.e. ensuring that new technologies, such as computers and the Internet, are combined with technologies that reach more women such as radio, television and print media. The provision of relevant local language content, via affordable and easy-to-use technologies that are accessible to an audience with limited reading skills, is crucial if ICT are to meet the needs of women in developing countries.

One of the strategies adopted to increase access of remote areas and marginalized groups to ICT is the development of public access centres, such as telecentres, information centres or cybercafes. Telecentres can be part of existing institutions—such as health centres, schools and community centres.

In many cases, the location of and arrangements around public access centres are decided without considering the constraints for women, such as inappropriate opening times (including evenings), security issues and lack of transport. Women's multiple roles

and responsibilities may limit the time they have available to use such facilities. In addition, women tend to have less disposable income to spend on communications than men. Telecentres can fail to reach women because attention is largely focused on the hardware, and not on content of information or the social context.⁵³ As a result, it is further maintained that public ICT facilities have a tendency to become men-only spaces; effectively inhibiting women's

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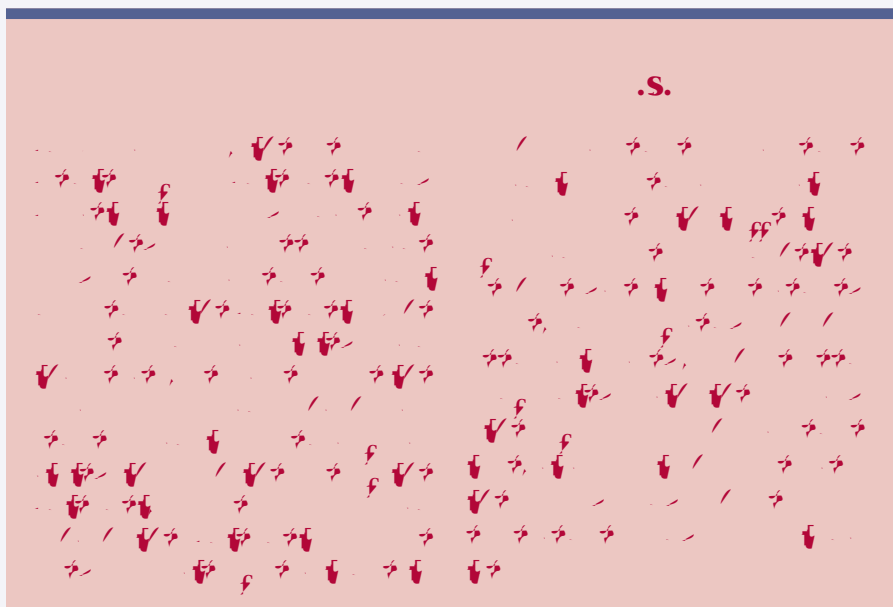
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women's access to and use of ICT.

women benefit from this new form of employment and the implications of the type of work women do in the sector. On the one hand, some researchers claim that outsourcing has created different requirements for labour, involving only a limited number of highly skilled professional workers and a large pool of semi-skilled workers. Two reports presented at the regional 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, organized by ESCAP, stated that outsourcing "shows clear signs of labour market segmentation by gender, caste and class".⁶⁸ These reports also indicated that women employed in business process outsourcing are mostly from the urban and educated sections of their societies. This pattern of development, while reducing unemployment among educated women, will not contribute significantly to reversing the unemployment of lower-skilled women and could in the long-term, reinforce current socio-economic inequities.

Research by other scholars on women and ICT in Asia presents outsourcing as a major opportunity for the economic empowerment of women. With an expected 500 per cent increase in India's ICT services and back-office work, involving jobs for four million people and accounting for seven per cent of GDP by 2008,⁶⁹ women's employment in this sector is expected to grow.⁷⁰

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munity that can both respond to these issues and take action.⁸⁹ The women's movement has begun to address the enabling role of ICT in combating violence against women. The Internet has been used effectively to mobilize activists against pornography.⁹⁰

Women's groups must participate in the development of policies, legislation and other actions to combat the exploitation of women and girls. One critical approach is to increase women's use of the space provided by ICT to discuss and debate violence against women on the Internet.



In developing countries, there has been an increase in pro-poor ICT for development initiatives. A study by the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) on ICT for poverty reduction strategies states that trends show that "ICT have been applied to systemic improvements important to poverty reduction such as education, health and social services delivery, broader Government transparency and accountability, and helping empower citizens and build social organization

around rights and gender equality".⁹¹ However, the study also cautions that while documentation of experiences is increasing, there continues to be a need to consolidate research and evaluate lessons that will facilitate effective ICT for development strategies, including support for pro-poor initiatives such as girls' access to primary education.

Women's empowerment is focused on increasing their power to take control over decisions that shape their lives, including in relation to access to resources, participation in decision-making and control over distribution of benefits. For women who can access and use them, ICT offer potential, especially in terms of reducing poverty, improving governance, overcoming isolation, and providing a voice. However, existing persistent gender discrimination in labour markets, in education and training opportunities, and allocation of financial resources for entrepreneurship and business development, negatively impact on women's potential to fully utilize ICT for economic, social and political empowerment.

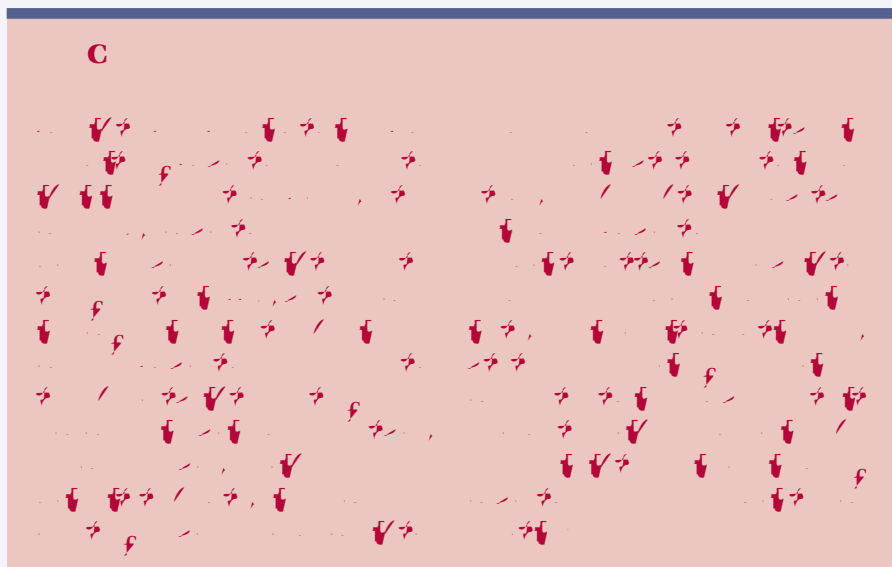
There is a growing body of evidence on the benefits of ICT for women's empowerment, through increasing their access to health, nutrition, education and other human

development opportunities, such as political participation. Women's sustainable livelihoods can be enhanced through expanded access of women producers and traders to markets, and to education, training and employment opportunities. By using one of the most important democratizing aspects of the Internet—the creation of secure online spaces that are protected from harassment—women are enjoying freedom of expression and privacy of communication to oppose gender discrimination and to promote women's human rights.

Experiences throughout Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean illustrate creative solutions to provide access to and use of ICT as a tool for participation and, most importantly, to contribute to women's empowerment. For example, the Multimedia Caravan project in Senegal provided rural women with the opportunity to develop their own ideas on how ICT can be used to further their development needs and goals. In Kenya, women and men weavers were trained in using the Internet to learn new weaving techniques and access more realistic prices for their products. In Uganda, the Uganda Media Women's Association established a radio programme—Mama FM—where women can actively participate and learn about development issues such as human rights, children, governance, nutrition, health, among others. In Poland, the Network of East-West Women disseminated information to enhance women's participation in the European Union accession process in European Union candidate countries. These projects illustrate the scope of ICT and clearly show that technologies such as radio, television and CD-ROMs are perfectly acceptable, and in many cases more effective forms of ICT than web-based solutions, as they can resolve issues such as language, illiteracy or access to the Internet.⁹²

The advent of new technologies and the growing convergence of all media have had a major impact on

the information and communication
work undertaken by the women's



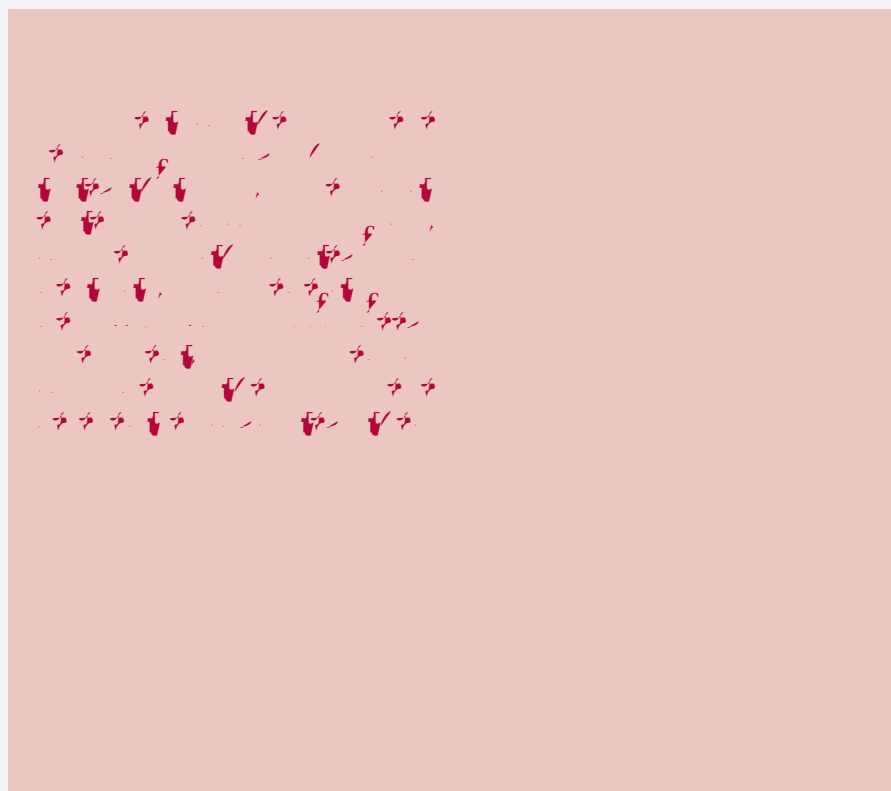
ICT interventions that are directed at economically empowering women capitalize on the potential of these technologies as knowledge and networking tools for women as producers and distributors of goods and services. The tools are used to connect women to new and wider markets, broaden their social networks and provide them with information that opens up important economic opportunities.

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

- Creating business and employment opportunities for women as owners and managers of ICT-accessed projects, as well as employees of new business ventures;
- Creating an environment, including through training, where women feel comfortable participating in community development activities and advocating for their needs and priorities;
- Developing ICT-based tools that address women's specific needs and are run by women (for example, literacy programmes, business planning courses, ICT training,

access to market and trading information services and e-commerce initiatives); and

- Offering economic opportunities in salaried employment and entrepreneurship, as well as in the ICT sector itself and in jobs enabled by ICT.

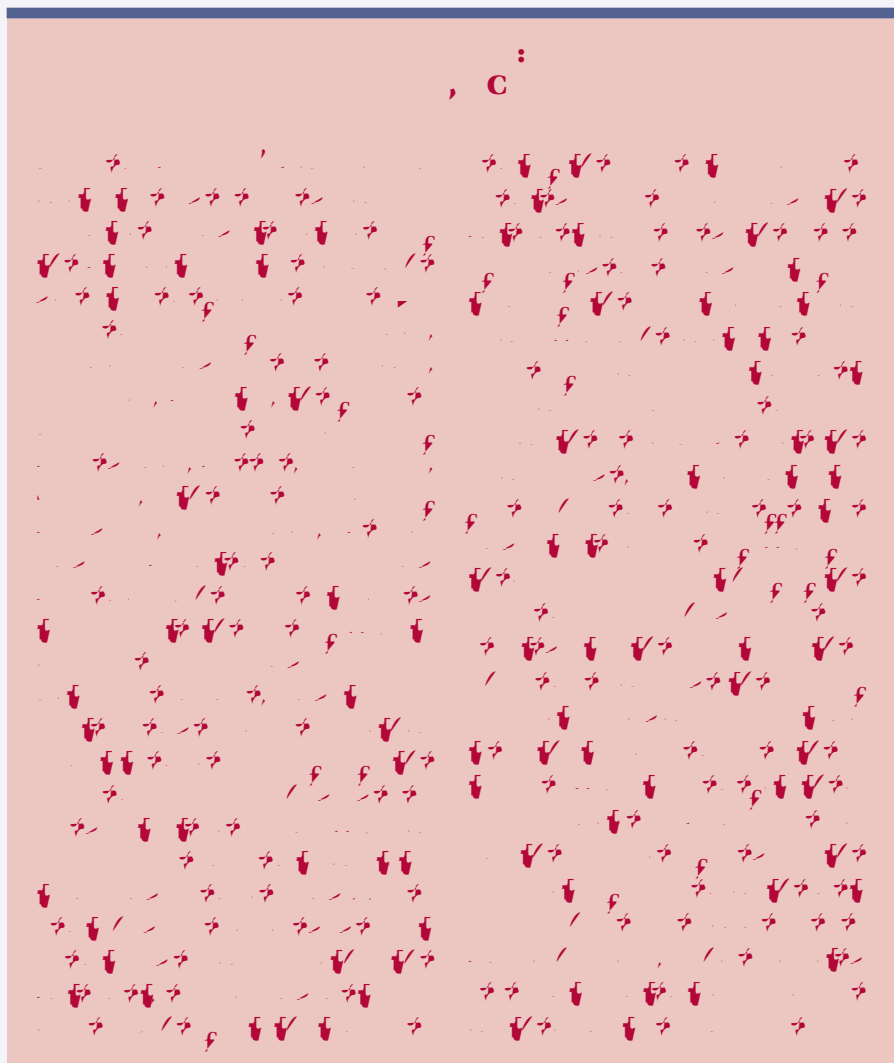


Programmes and initiatives have demonstrated how ICT can be an instrument for women's economic empowerment, such as the Grameen Phones Programme in Bangladesh, the Development through Radio Programme in Zimbabwe, and the deployment of competitive wireless options in Bolivia and the Dominican Republic, particularly for women in the informal sector.⁹⁵

E-commerce initiatives can link women producers and traders directly to markets at national, regional or even global levels, allowing them to restructure their economic activities and bypass middlemen and male-dominated and exploitative market structures.⁹⁶ In Gujarat, India, women dairy producers use the Dairy Information System Kiosk (DISK), which manages a database of all milk cattle and provides information about veterinary services and other practical information about the dairy sector.⁹⁷

Notwithstanding these innovative approaches, availability and access to the necessary facilities for women

remain major concerns. Even a project such as the CD-ROM project in Uganda requires access to a community telecentre or community access point where computers and special assistance are available to cre-



equality, and empowering minorities.¹⁰⁶ It can be particularly powerful in providing a voice to women who have been isolated and invisible.

In recent years, e-governance has become a priority area of many Governments resulting in the implementation of programmes that apply ICT in delivering Government services and promoting transparency and accountability. Beyond delivery of Government services and information to the public using electronic means, e-governance focuses on using these new technologies to strengthen the public voice to revitalize democratic processes, and refocus the management, structure, and oversight of Government to better serve the public interest.¹⁰⁷

E-governance is significant for the exercise of citizenship and direct public participation in Government activities, both of which are key elements in women's empowerment and achievement of gender equality. Gender-responsive governance involves the active and meaningful participation of women in all levels of decision-making and ensuring greater transparency and accountability in government.

Information technology can contribute to increasing women's networking for social and political advocacy, strengthening women's participation in the political process, supporting the work of elected women officials, and increasing women's access to government and its services.



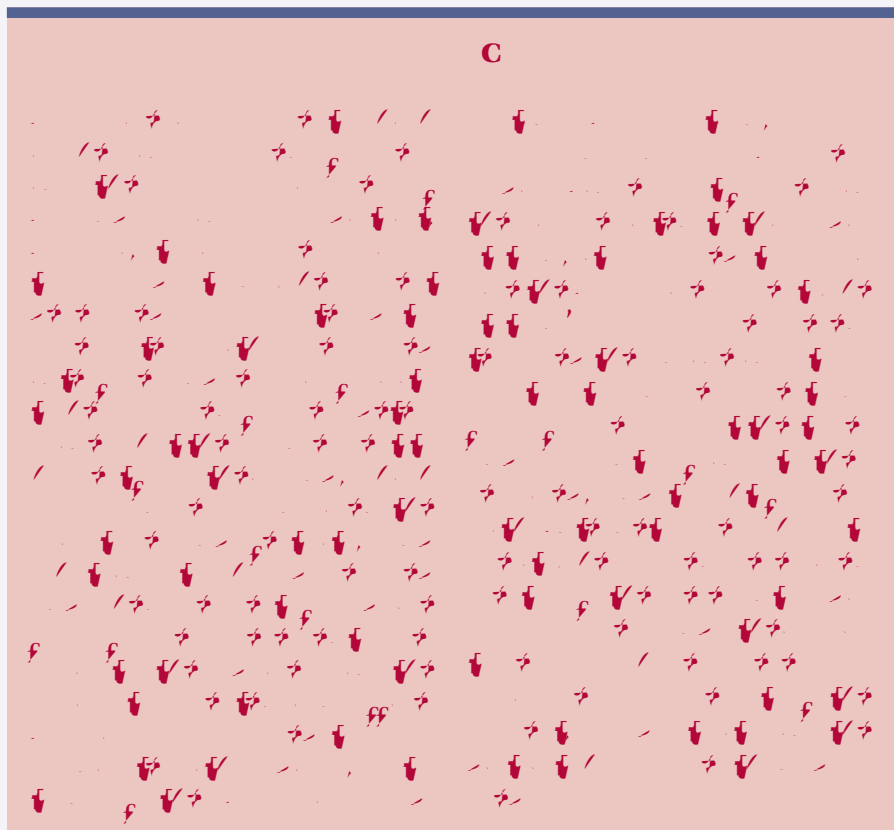
ICT is a forceful tool to improve governance and strengthen democracy and citizen empowerment. It can help foster more transparent governance by enhancing interaction between government and citizens, revitalizing civic institutions and public debate, promoting equity and





A virtual space can provide positive information on violence against women and a safe place for victims and survivors of violence to discuss their experiences or to seek help. For women to benefit from these spaces, they need access and capacities to utilize ICT in this manner. For ICT to be an effective tool for advocacy on violence against women, the needs and realities of women must be identified and addressed. This requires capacity-building efforts for women to enable them to trust and use ICT as a medium for communicating about their experiences. Affordable access points for women must also be provided. Experience has shown that it is important to complement Internet-based advocacy with more traditional forms of communication media.

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specific indicators on ICT use and needs. Sex-disaggregated data is not being collected on a regular basis at the national, regional or global levels. As a result, the gender digital divide remains unmeasured and invisible. Standard presentations of ICT statistics have paid little or no attention to gender equality issues. The World Bank statistical database, "ICT at a Glance", prepared by the Development Data Group, for example, provides breakdowns by country but without disaggregation by sex for any of the indicators.

Areas where sex-disaggregated statistics and indicators are needed have been identified as access and usage, content, employment, education, consideration of gender issues in national ICT policy, representation in decision-making and the relative impact of ICT on women and men.¹⁰⁸ It is difficult to get gender-specific data on use by country for developing countries. As a result, existing statistics on Internet usage need to be interpreted with caution.¹⁰⁹ In

developing countries where women make up a high percentage of users, populations with access to the Internet constitute a small elite, as seen in Indonesia, Mexico and Philippines.¹¹⁰

Gender-specific, as well as gender-sensitive, indicators at the national level are required to support policy makers in defining gender-sensitive goals and recommendations. At the project level, the collection of sex-disaggregated data is necessary to assess if women and men benefit equally from projects and to identify necessary corrective actions.

Few countries or areas collect gender-specific ICT statistics. Those that do are largely countries or areas where the gender digital divide is least marked. Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Iceland, Ireland, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand and the United States all collect sex-disaggregated ICT usage statistics. In all of these countries or areas, the percentage of female Internet users

as a percentage of total Internet users is 45 per cent or more. In most African countries, where such data is not collected by official statistics sources, estimates of female Internet use as a percentage of total use are 25 per cent or less.¹¹¹

The only area where ITU systematically collects sex-disaggregated telecommunications/ICT statistics is the employment of women by telecommunications service providers.¹¹² While it is valuable to know that women comprise the majority of employees in telecommunications companies, the type of work that women are engaged in and whether women have accessed higher-income, highly-skilled and decision-making positions must also be taken into account.

ITU has recognized that it is important to go beyond the numbers of women and men employed, to documenting the posts they hold and analysing changes over time.¹¹³ ITU has recently embarked on a project to compile and analyse quantitative and qualitative gender-sensitive information from national and international sources. This information, which could eventually be compiled into a database, will provide an important source of sex-disaggregated ICT statistics.¹¹⁴

A major source of sex-differentiated statistics and indicators on ICT presently available are market research surveys from a number of countries where Internet commerce is already significant or anticipated.¹¹⁵ The data available from these sources, however, concentrate on Internet usage and online behaviour, with reference to commercial/market analysis.¹¹⁶

Some of the most interesting and substantial work on the collection of gender and ICT statistics is being conducted by the Republic of Korea. Since 2000, the Korean Network Information Center¹¹⁷ has undertaken and published quarterly surveys of Internet use, averaging 5,700 users, with some 20 categories of data collected and disaggregated by sex, and in most cases, age.

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Gender issues need to be identified and addressed in all aspects of development and implementation of ICT policy and regulatory frameworks. Such frameworks cover a range of issues, including the development of a national communication infrastructure (including technology choices), Government information services, and tariffs and pricing, which influence women's access to and use of ICT. Policies and regulatory frameworks, including legal protection and the right to privacy and anonymity in transactions, interaction and expression, directly affect the rights and security of users, and are of concern to women as well as men.

Despite the importance of ICT policy decisions at the national level related to women's access and use, ICT policies in most countries give inadequate attention to gender equality perspectives. Further, too few efforts are made to improve women's access to ICT and to increase women's participation in decision-making and management. In 2001, a six-country¹²¹ study carried out by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) related to the provision of networking and telecommunications infrastructure, the facilitation of e-commerce, human resource development, and the promotion of good governance and citizens' participation illustrated the lack of attention to gender equality goals and women's advancement in national ICT development frameworks and strategies.¹²²

There has been relatively little involvement of national machineries for the advancement of women or of civil society groups. Improved processes of consultation and participation need to be developed and more women should be involved at decision-making levels. Efforts should be made in these processes to ensure that women's specific needs are addressed, particularly in relation to access, use and employment. This

would require adequate resource allocations to support initiatives focused on increasing the access to and use of ICT by women for their empowerment.¹²³

Some positive examples have, however, been identified. A number of countries in Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and South Africa) have taken valuable steps towards gender equality in ICT policy. For instance, the Telecommunications Act of South Africa includes provisions to redress gender imbalance and other areas of disadvantage.¹²⁴ In Asia, the Republic of Korea has set an important precedent by establishing a proactive ICT

Gender concerns have to be addressed in initial stages of ICT projects to ensure that the needs and priorities of both women and men are appropriately considered and that gender equality goals are embedded in project design. A study undertaken by the World Bank in 2002 of 80 ICT projects concluded that gender issues were rarely articulated in product design and implementation, often because donors do not request this information.¹²⁶ Broad gender main-

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Gender equality advocates have also initiated awards to highlight good practices. The Gender and ICT Awards programme was inaugurated during the WSIS in Geneva in December 2003. This awards programme was conceived to recognize gender and ICT initiatives globally and to provide further impetus for mainstreaming gender perspectives in the field of ICT. Four innovative and effective projects that use ICT for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment were recognized and received grants to further their work. The award winners came from India, Romania and Uganda addressed issues of rural women and armed conflict, political empowerment of women mayors and poverty reduction strategies for poor women. The Gender and ICT Awards are organized by the Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme¹³¹ and the Global Knowledge Partnership.¹³² The Gender and ICT Awards will also be awarded in 2005 and will focus on the use of ICT for women's economic empowerment.¹³³

In 2003, the GenARDIS (Gender and Agriculture/Rural Development in the Information Society) established a Small Grants Fund to Address Gender Issues in Information and Communication Technologies for Agricultural and Rural Development in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. GenARDIS partners include the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) and the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos).¹³⁴ The competitive awards programme was set up to improve outreach to rural women who comprise the majority of the poor. The programme responds to gender issues in the urban-rural digital divide in ICT infrastructure and to other con-

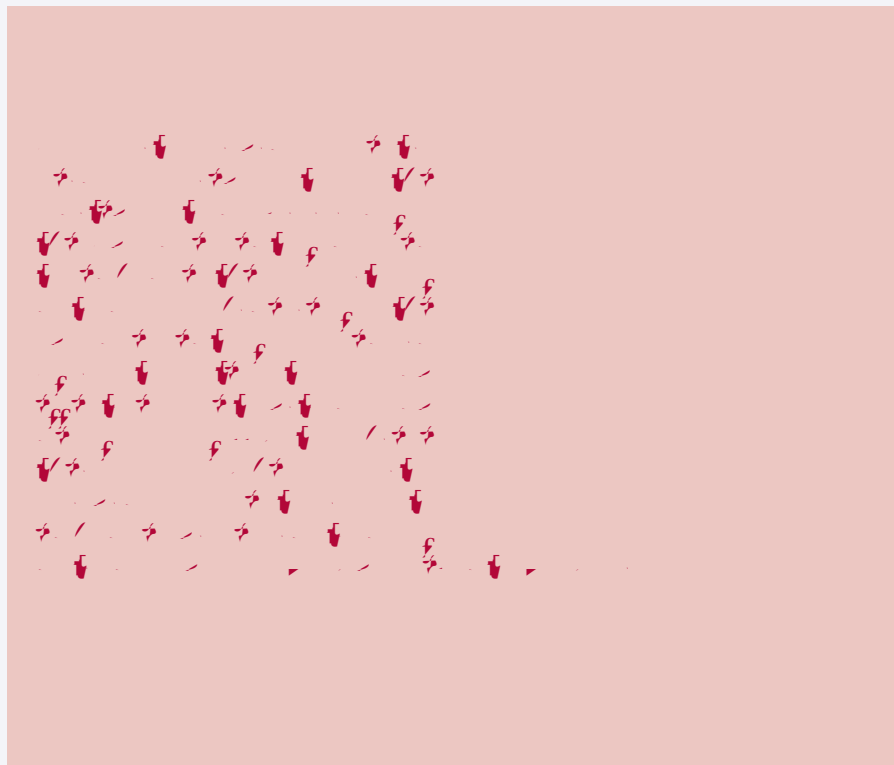
straints that disadvantage women, including language, literacy, heavy workloads and cultural attitudes.

women through ICT. Emphasis is placed on the need for women in developing and developed countries to share knowledge, strategies and experiences to develop their capacity to engender the ICT policy-making and regulation process.

In August 2004, the WSIS Gender Caucus launched a competitive programme of small research grants (funded by bilateral donors) to support innovative research on gender and information communications technologies from 2004 to 2005.¹³⁷ It is anticipated that the supported research will be presented at the Gender Caucus panels to be held during the second WSIS in Tunis in November 2005. The overall objective of the programme is to enlarge the knowledge base for gender-sensitive policy on information communications technologies. Research topics include the analysis and evaluation of efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into ICT policy; applications and content including case studies; and theories and methodologies for better understanding and analysing the relationship between ICT and gender equality.



The Commission on the Status of Women, in its consideration of gender equality and ICT at its forty-seventh session, recommended that action be taken to “strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women, including through the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources and the provision of technical expertise, to take a lead advocacy role with respect to media and ICTs and gender equality, and support their involvement in national, regional and international processes related to media and ICTs issues, and enhance coordination among ministries responsible for ICTs,



national machineries for the advancement of women, the private sector and gender advocacy NGOs within countries”.¹³⁸

It is also important that women’s ministries and agencies, gender focal points, and gender advocates educate themselves and their membership on ICT issues and their relevance to women and consequently coordinate their efforts to participate in and influence telecommunications and ICT policy processes and programmes.¹³⁹ These groups should be involved in the development of national gender equality and ICT agendas and the provision of training on gender equality and ICT for Government bodies involved in national ICT policy development.



The World Summit on the Information Society has led to a stronger recognition of the value of people-centred rather than technology-

centred ICT development and the need to integrate ICT policies with sectoral policies in all areas, such as health, education, agriculture, labour and industry. It has also highlighted the importance of aligning ICT policies with national poverty reduction strategies and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the follow-up to the WSIS process, a key priority should be ensuring that gender perspectives are incorporated into the development and implementation of e-strategies at the national level. This will require concerted action from gender equality advocates in Governments, civil society organizations and networks, and international and regional organizations, including United Nations entities. New partnerships are needed with development partners such as academic institutions, the private sector and venture capital funds.

An enabling environment at the national level requires that overall gender equality policies give attention to ICT and that gender perspectives are taken into account in identifying the ICT implications in policies in all sec-

tor areas. Governments must be committed to adopting specific legislative, regulatory and administrative measures to promote gender equality in the ICT sector, and to developing capacity and creating monitoring frameworks to ensure implementation. Gender-sensitive budget processes should ensure that national and local budgets allocate specific resources to support strategies that will increase women's participation in the information economy and ensure that women gain access to new employment opportunities in the ICT sector. Such measures must recognize the diversity of women and their roles as producers and consumers of ICT; identify the differential impact of ICT on women and men; and respond to the different development needs and priorities of women throughout their life cycle.

Another crucial element is ensuring the active participation of all stakeholders in the policy process, including national machineries for the advancement of women and women's groups and networks, and providing adequate resources for their work. This includes supporting research, compiling sex disaggregated statistics on ICT use and employment in the ICT sector, developing gender-specific indicators, and

initiating innovative pilot projects to increase women's access to and use of ICT.

Gender equality advocates in national machineries and civil society need to educate themselves about ICT policy issues and become more actively involved in the policy process at the national level, including by strengthening their capacity to monitor national actions in ICT-related areas. To support this work, a more substantial body of evidence needs to be developed that can demonstrate the links between gender and ICT for development. An important goal must also be to take every opportunity to sensitize policy makers about the importance of gender issues in ICT through briefings, consultation and training.

National machineries for the advancement of women should increase the use of ICT in their work for the advancement of women and gender equality, for example, to support their role as advocates and catalysts for gender mainstreaming, to facilitate the production of relevant information on national priorities and to enhance networking and the sharing of good practices at national and regional levels. National machineries should advocate for relevant content on women and gender issues on all

official Government websites, in addition to those websites that specifically address gender equality issues. Priority should also be given to proactively influencing national ICT policy formulation and implementation, and, in particular, the positions of national delegations to the World Summit on the Information Society and other international and regional meetings on ICT. Participation of women in these meetings should be supported.

Donors, including from the private sector, can play a catalytic role by mobilizing resources to support innovative projects which promote gender equality in ICT. Examples include the production and/or repackaging of content particularly relevant to women's interests and concerns; the support of women as producers of content, including at local levels; enhancing women's participation and representation in business and professional organizations related to the ICT sector; promoting and strengthening women's entrepreneurship in the ICT sector, including by identifying and disseminating positive role models; and facilitating the creation of networks, mentoring programmes, and the development of business support programmes and linkages between national and regional diaspora.



¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2000, para. 6.

² United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (UN ICT) Task Force, 2002, para. 2.

³ United Nations, 2003a.

⁴ United Nations, 2003c.

⁵ Gillian Marcelle, 2000.

⁶ Concepcion Garcia Ramilo and Pi Villanueva, 2001, p. 6.

⁷ ITU, 2005.

⁸ Kerry S. McNamara, 2003, p. 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ United Nations Commission on Science and Technology Gender Working Group, 1995.

¹¹ Natasha Primo, 2003, pp. 11-12.

¹² United Nations, 1995.

¹³ Ibid., Critical Area of Concern J, Women and the Media, Strategic Objective J.

¹⁴ Ibid., Strategic Objective J.1.

¹⁵ United Nations, 2000a.

¹⁶ Ibid., IV, B (78) (e) and D (100) (b).

¹⁷ United Nations Economic and Social Council, op. cit., para. 17.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UN ICT Task Force, op. cit., Short Term Actions, Point 7.

²⁰ Ibid., paras. 1, 6 and 11.

²¹ Agreed conclusions on the participation and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women. See United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

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⁶⁸ Javati Ghosh, 2004, and Nancy Hafkin, 2004.

⁶⁹ x Endnote 2004./F6 O Tf

^f In 2003, E-homemakers conducted an evaluation plan called "A Study on How Gender Dynamics Affect Teleworkers' Performance in Malaysia". The main objective of the evaluation was to explore how women's family lives and home situations affect teleworking and their job performance. <http://www.ehomemakers.net/>

^g Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC-WNSP), op. cit., Report on the M4M Interviews and Focus Group Discussions, available from http://www.apcwomen.org/gem/gem_tool/phase2/m4m_visit_report.doc

^h See Kyonggi Women's Development Center, <http://www.womenpro.or.kr/>

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Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes, Bangkok, Thailand, 7-10 September 2004. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/Events/High-level%20meeting%20Sep%202004/English/Nancy%20Hafkin.pdf>

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A flagship publication of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the *2005 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* addresses key issues related to women and international migration. The migration of women has always been an important component of international migration. A gender perspective is essential to understanding both the causes and consequences of international migration despite that a dearth of data on women and migration makes it difficult to assess the full implications of international migration for women. Migrant women contribute to the economic development of their country of destination and to the country of origin through financial contributions from remittances, the improvement of their own skills or their contributions to the improvement of the education and skills of the next generation. Women often migrate officially as dependent family members of other migrants or to marry someone in another country. Various international instruments specifically or generally enumerate the rights of migrants. Many national laws on emigration and immigration of voluntary migrants include discriminatory provisions that affect the protection of migrant women. Refugee women and girls face particular problems regarding their legal and physical protection. The trafficking of people for prostitution and forced labour is one of the fastest growing areas of international criminal activity and one that is of increasing concern to the international community. International migration affects gender

