



# “Role of Information Communication Technology in Empowering Women of India”

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## ABSTRACT

Women empowerment gives a woman right to live a respectful, ambitious and peaceful life. It is an essential tool to bring about changes in their socio-economic condition. Through their empowerment women gain control over decision making in the home, community, society and nation and also, they gain greater share of control over knowledge, money and power. It helps them to establish their own image in the society. The world is in middle of a knowledge revolution, complemented by opening up of entirely new vistas and opportunities in communication technologies. ICTs and the Internet offer vast, new and unprecedented opportunities for human development and empowerment. The gender gap is one of the most significant inequalities to be amplified by the digital revolution, and cuts across all social and income groups. Inequality in women's access and participation in to communications system is the main cause of their insufficient mobilization to promote contribution to society. The ICT sector consists of telecommunications, television and radio broadcasting, computer hardware, software and services and electronic media. ICT has a significant role in empowerment of women. It's wide access to information, promoting knowledge, increase opportunities in employment, entrepreneurship development and economic improvement etc. Disparity in women's access and participation in all communication systems, especially the media, and their insufficient mobilization to promote women's contribution to society. Besides this, the present study explores the barriers to the usage of ICTs by women and suggests measures to improve their access and participation in ICT.

**KEYWORDS:** Women empowerment, ICT, software, Entrepreneurship Development, Barriers and Strategies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said that, “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”. (Pillai, 1995) So there is a crucial need to empower women for the development of India. Empower is a multidimensional word including social, physical, spiritual, mental, political and psychological aspects. Empower means personal growth in decision making, analyzing critical situations, coping with all circumstances and facing adverse challenges. Internet provides them a platform where people can interact with each other without hesitation as they are unaware of each other's identity. Especially women can show their emotions, views, feelings and opinion freely.

ICT provides a direct window for women to the outside world. Information flows to them without distortion and they have access to same information as their male counterparts. ICT are closely linked to power and the capability 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 vital force in transforming social, economic, and political life across the globe. 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 discrimination 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 gap, further removed from the information age than are the men whose poverty they share. The gender divide in the digital gap 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. Lack of access to information and communication technologies becomes a crucial factor in the further vulnerability 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 access to global world of the twenty-first century.

Technological revolution in ICTs has led to the emergence of a knowledge economy but the inability of developing countries to maximize the benefits of this revolution is a significant barrier to their participation in this knowledge economy. Knowledge transfer through education and training has been a central concern of women empowerment initiatives over the years. Recent developments in ICTs offer great potential to support and enhance education and training for development. Given the particular constraints to education and training in rural areas it is here that the potential impact of ICTs on knowledge development is greatest. It is becoming more open, more participatory and more demand driven, involving interactivity, negotiation and two-way information exchanges. There is a new emphasis on the acquisition of information and enabling the rural poor women to request information specific to their particular livelihood needs.

### ICT

Present era is of technology and among the technology Information Communication Technology (ICT) is the most important. It is a power and playing vital role in all aspect of human life.

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

### ROLE OF 'ICT' IN GENDER EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women in the context of knowledge societies entails building up the abilities and skills of women to gain insight into the issues affecting them and also building up their capacity to voice their concerns. In this context ICTs are emerging as a powerful tool for women empowerment in many developing countries. There has been a rapid growth in the ICT sector since the late 1980s and the use of ICT has dramatically expanded since the 1990. In 2022, ICT has become an indispensable part of human lives and playing a essential role in bringing gender equality at workplaces.

### WOMEN AND ICT

A large group of workingwomen of India is in the primary and unorganized sectors. The majorities of Indian women are in a disadvantageous position socially.

Since globalization is opening up the Indian economy suddenly at a very high speed, during the past decades, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that leave behind national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, attitude, behavior and skills especially of children and young adults and women. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the progress of women.

More women are involved in careers in the ICT sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence working of media. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping and discrimination that can be found in local, national and international media organizations. The continued projection of negative, weak and degrading images of women in media communications - electronic, print, visual and audio - must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a tremendously growing world.

### ICT contribution to Women Empowerment

- Women's increased access to job Market and entrepreneurship using ICT
- Sociopreneurship is increasing with the use of ICT
- Increase in income
- Women empowerment and development



- Access to any type of information has become easy
- Improved Governance
- Indigenous Knowledge
- Smooth communication with family
- Increase awareness of society
- Easy participation in social concerns
- Dissemination of rights-based information for women by different women groups, networking actresses and organizations like UN
- ICT amplify women's voices, and help publicize women's experiences and perspectives.

#### **BARRIERS TO USE AND ACCESS OF ICT FOR WOMEN**

- ❖ Little awareness and knowledge regarding the full range of opportunities offered by ICT other than access to information.
- ❖ As most of the relevant information available in public domain is in English language, rural women find it hard to comprehend or imply for their use.
- ❖ Women has limited time. As the information is overloaded on internet, it takes a lot of time to search for the relevant content.
- ❖ Lack of clear National Policy for promoting ICT for women empowerment and development.
- ❖ Poor ICT infrastructure, inefficient telephone services, lack of electricity in many remote areas and frequent power cuts.
- ❖ Lack of computer skills on various areas including hardware and software installation and maintenance, internet and non-internet skills such as telnet, FTP, mailing etc.
- ❖ Social and cultural barriers regarding educating women also affect the use of ICT by women.

#### **STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO ICT**

- ❖ Equitable access to ICT technology and the autonomy to receive and produce the information relevant to their concerns and perspectives are significant issues for women. They therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of new technology and policies in order to participate fully in its growth and impact.
- ❖ There is need to use a rights-based approach to ICT policy development, where everyone has the right to access to ICTs. Only then, we can work toward securing universal access to ICTs and consequently promote and facilitate the use of ICTs for women's empowerment.

❖ Personal ownership of ICT is not accessible in the coming future for the vast majority of women in developing countries. Hence, the question of where and how they can gain access to ICT becomes significant. This is an area where intermediary organizations can help bridge the gap of connectivity. They can ensure that email accounts, bulletin boards, search engines, mailing lists, and other useful functions serve as communication, networking and collaboration channels among women's groups, and between women and the outside world. In order to facilitate access for women from other classes and sectors, these intermediary organizations need to be strategically located in local institutions to libraries, women's studies departments, colleges, institutes, community centers etc.

❖ The potential of ICT for women in developing countries is greatly dependent upon their levels of technical skill and education and is the crucial requirement for accessing knowledge from the global pool. Government and NGOs need to impart technical education on the use of ICT as a part of both formal and informal education system and to initiate distance learning and vocational courses and training. It needs to be realized that information and communication technology by itself cannot answer all the problems facing women's development, but it does bring new information resources and can open new communication channels for disadvantaged communities.

❖ Promote the enrollment of girls in ICT programs by providing incentives such as scholarships, fellowships and grants.

❖ Language access must be addressed as a serious constraint to gender equity on the international ICT policy level. Language options have to be taken as a political issue, an issue that must be in the policy decision making.

❖ All educational institutes by law should offer free basic computer knowledge to women of all ages.

❖ ICT awareness camps and programmes should be organized on regular basis in rural areas.

❖ Internet facilities should be available everywhere including the remote ones.

❖ Free computer centers should be opened at rural area for providing basic knowledge of computer skills to rural youth and women.

❖ E-governance should be deployed everywhere so that women can also participate freely in decision making and policy formulation.

❖ ICT can be used in women security field as well as by installing cameras, emergency apps and providing access to all locations.



❖ Digital library should be there including all the books available.

#### **SAFETY APPS THAT EMPOWER WOMEN**

##### ❖ **Safetipin**

SafetiPin is a complete safety app specially designed to keep women safe. It consists of all set of features such as GPS tracking, emergency contact numbers, directions to safe locations, pins or alerts for unsafe areas and also gives safest route option. It supports a wide range of features that help women to proactively plan and respond to situations affecting a woman's personal safety.

##### ❖ **Raksha**

This is the most effective safety alert app designed to ensure women's safety. Just by pressing a button, she will be able to send alerts to her loved ones with her location in a situation of distress. Even if the App is switched off and isn't running then also, she will be able to send alerts by pressing the volume key for just three seconds. The app also has SOS functionality and can also send SMS if a person is in a non-internet zone.

##### ❖ **Himmat**

This app is launched by Delhi police especially for the working women who travel alone sometimes late at night. Once the User registers at Delhi Police website, they will receive a registration key (OTP) which has to be entered to complete the application configuration.

If the user raises the SOS then, apart from the friends or family the location information and audio-video is transmitted simultaneously to police from the app.

##### ❖ **Women Safety**

This Safety Alert App is designed to check the safety for Women, Kids and everyone during an emergency. If a person is stuck in an unsafe place just by pressing a button, all the details related to the location will be sent to the dear ones. It will also send an SMS to a preconfigured number along with the person's location and a link of Google Maps.

##### ❖ **Smart 24x7**

This Personal Safety App is designed to keep women and senior citizens safe 24/7 and is supported by the various states' police. The app sends panic alerts to emergency contacts when the user presses PANIC Button during a threat and get instant help from nearest Police, Hospitals or Fire station. If GPS is not working alert will be generated through SMS. This app can also do voice recording, photographs during the threat situation and transfers these to the police station also.

##### ❖ **Shake2Safety**

This is the easiest to use the app in case of an accident, harassment, robbery or any natural threats.

The user just needs to shake their smartphone or just press the power button four times to send an SOS text or call to the already registered numbers. It also works with the locked screen on and even without an internet connection.

##### ❖ **bSafe**

This is an ultimate safety app which ensures the security of women. It allows you to set up your own personal safety network of friends, family and co-workers. You can also set alarm that will trigger if you have not checked in time.

Along with this, there is Guardian Alert button will immediately notify your friends and family members with the GPS location and video at the time of threat.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

ICT have the potential to reach those women who are out from the reach of any other source of media, thereby empowering them to participate in socio-economic progress and make effective decision on the issues that affect them. Recent developments in ICTs offer great potential to support and enhance education and training for women. Given the particular constraints to education and training for rural women it is here that the potential impact of ICTs on knowledge development is enormous. It is becoming more open, more participatory and more demand driven, involving interactivity, negotiation and two-way communication. There is a new emphasis on the acquisition of information and enabling the rural poor women to have specific information for their particular livelihood needs. In the recent times, a good number of apps are available for women which plays a crucial role in providing safety and security to them.

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