

A Study of Empowering Minority Women using ICT as a Catalyst for Political Belongingness

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Abstract – *The application of ICTs in political, economic and social issues can have a significant impact on development. Information and Communications Technologies are the set of all the available technologies that can be used to disseminate information so that the communications becomes easy to comprehend. It is emerging as a powerful tool for empowerment of the all sectors of the society.. The Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) as a tool for development has attracted the sustained attention of the Indian government. India is one of the largest democracies in the world and it's the matter of great pride. It has got the representation of thousands of socio cultural religious groups and therefore it represents largest groups of minorities also . The issues of minorities for development has been an important agenda as in India minorities are facing lots of trivial issues that questions on exercising of their political rights. Many policies have been made for making the minorities women empowered for their political issues. But in reality there is, however, a big gap between noble intentions and actual realizations. Through this paper the author wants to discuss the present status of political awareness of minority women in India and the problems faced in making them aware. And in order to make them aware of their political rights it is realized that it is imperative to disseminate information by usage of various media that can reach to the areas where positive interventions are required. Therefore this paper presents the critical analysis of how ICTs have acted as a powerful catalyst for political, economic and hence social empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality of minorities group which became one of the main aims of millennium development goals (United Nations 2005:3). The study used critical analysis of the observations, group discussions and review of documents to collect secondary and primary data.*

Keyword: - ICT, Minority women etc.

INTRODUCTION

The application of ICTs in political, economic and social issues can have a significant impact on development. Information and Communications Technologies are the set of all the available technologies that can be used to disseminate information so that the communications becomes easy to comprehend. It is emerging as a powerful tool for empowerment of the all sectors of the society. It has played a

significant role in the empowerment of all sectors of society especially the weaker section sections of society who have limited access to the knowledge due to various constraints. In India women development has shown a significantly low movement but overall the contribution of ICT in creating of awareness in minority women has been significant.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A need analysis was conducted in the form of various researches available and by taking unstructured interviews. A needs analysis defines the nature, size, type and scope of a problem, its indicators, the causes of the need, and the consequences of not addressing the need.

The aim of this research was to identify and interpret socio-economic factors associated with low access to ICT education in women, discuss the present status of political awareness of minority women in India and the problems faced in making them aware. And in order to make them aware of their political rights it is realized that it is imperative to disseminate information by usage of various media that can reach to the areas where positive interventions are required.

The research questions were:

- (i) Whether the minority women have access to ICTs?
- (ii) What is their understanding of the nature and concept of ICTs?
- (iii) What are the issues of access to these ICTs by minority women?
- (iv) Do they have any relevance of ICTs in their daily lives?
- (v) What factors of hindrance on access to ICTs?
- (vi) Who is best support on creating awareness on the usage and developing their skills of using ICT?

AREAS OF ICT INTERVENTIONS IN CREATION OF AWARENESS

- (a) Providing information to women about gender and ICTs and access to tools and resources that facilitate women's ease of access to key information;
- (b) Providing regional support to women's organisations through developing their ability to network by using ICTs strategically;
- (c) Lobbying and advocating around gender and ICT policy at a regional and global level including media-related global meetings and via partnerships with civil society organisations;
- (d) Delivering ICT training for minority women for protection of the self and building up life skills for better negotiations of their survival skills organisations, networks and initiatives;
- (e) Empowering in the area of eco and ICTs;
- (f) Sensitising minority women for their legal rights

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED FOR CREATION ICT AWARENESS

Though number of efforts is being made in making minority women aware about their economic, social, political issues and for empowering them but still there is a vast gap in a between noble intentions and actual realizations. There are various controllable and uncontrollable reasons to it. There are many factors that impact women's access to knowledge. There are many challenges faced by women and rural women in particular are less likely to prioritize ICTs in

their daily lives as they have less time and less comfort in using

(a) ICTs based services. Some recurring obstacles include:

- (i) Women have fewer resources and less income available to secure the use of ICTs.
- (ii) Women and girls are often illiterate and lack access to education.
- (iii) Gender stereotyping and socialization says that “technology is not for girls or Women”.
- (iv) In typical rural communities, men control the technology, thus excluding women from an awareness of how ICTs can contribute to improving livelihoods.
- (v) The focus of Capacity development is only on technology-related skills which are not sufficient when addressing the disparities caused by gender imbalances.

There are numerous obstacles as stated above which act as a hindrance in making minority women to get aware of their social and political rights. Due to this the condition of women continues to be in a state of dismal and their life attitudes do not get change. The gender stereotyping is probably one of the important reasons which create this situation. It is not considered important that there is a need to make women aware of their rights. Women are using phones as important means of Information Technology but however they are not using it for getting aware of day to day social and political scenario .It is used for chats and calling . In fact majority of the population does not use the availability of net and phones for constructive work .There is a dearth of

information and skills of using the Information technologies in positive and effective manner. The need of skill development of using the net judiciously is advocated. Efforts should be taken by Government and Non-Government organizations for the skill development of using the available information and communication Technologies so that it yields best of the results and helps in the creation and development of well awakened society.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that minority women have a lot of challenges before them. Though there are existing mechanisms at national, regional and international level to protect them, it must also be elucidated that many of these mechanisms, especially the formal ones, have their own limitations. Information Communication Technology if used judiciously can help to fight against these challenges. Various available researches reveal the fact that there is an inadequate awareness of available ICT. Ignorance breeds discrimination and probably that is the main reason why there is a disparity in the position of the gender. Moreover when rights are violated the whole progress of society gets hampers. So this study stresses on the need of empowering every sect of the society and it can be very well done through employing various ways of using different types of ICT.

The overall impact of ICT on women’s position as revealed through this research as reflected in intended and unintended outcomes is to some extent positive and heartening. The study demonstrated that the majority of minority women who seek to obtain awareness through ICT to enhance the quality of their lives through acquiring knowledge, enhancing their employment position and earning power, or enhancing

their employment opportunities. The analysis has revealed that the majority of women, whether in employment or not, did perceive a positive impact in terms of ability to gain economic and societal empowerment. It looks to be less emphasized by women is the ability to use ICT as a tool for societal and community development, and to some extent as networking and socialization means.

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