

AMIC Seminar on New Communication
Technologies, Democracy and Women in Asia :
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USING NCTs to PROMOTE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION in the DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

SWOT analysis:

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESS | OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to info" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → knowledge → power • Provide opportunities for teleworking • Gender desegregated data • Reduce social control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perpetuate status-quo • lack of infrastructure • lack of literacy (Reading ability) • lack of computer literacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise/Reinforce positive social values of women • Raise consciousness of women's rights and roles in family, community and society • Encourage communication/networking among women • Share universal values through subtle persuasion in dramas • Flatter/decentralize power centers/male power/social control. • To gain voice through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Government → Private Corporations → NGOs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginalization • lack of |

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SWOT ANALYSIS: PLAN OF ACTIONS, STRATEGIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

| GOVERNMENTS | NCOs | PRIVATE CORPORATIONS | INDIVIDUALS | COMMUNITY |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Training • Monitoring • Producing • Provide Infrastructure • Leadership by example • Policy making • Regulate the NCTs industry • Organise NCTs forum/discussion platform • Smart schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Monitoring (Watchdog) • Pressure groups • Opinion leader • Organise NCT fora/discussion platform | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can work closely with Governments to promote NCTs • Provide training / facilities • Help set up infrastructure to narrow the gap between info poor & info rich • Distance education / learning • Adult education - free education • Smart house / Smart School • Production hse/companies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → music - the lyrics → drama/film - the script/message | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude change • Use NCTs • Innovate • Create • Respond • Lead through example for family member & kids • Encourage use of NCTs to immediate family members • Technology + Society practice of NCTs at workplace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - writers - researchers - academics • Educate the Young • No gender bias in educating NCTs to sons and daughters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise activities • Attitude change through Church, Mosque temple • Opinion Leaders • Community leaders use NCTs to generate youth interest to integrate members of community • Relate use of NCT to the community activities • raise social consciousness • Raise social consciousness & awareness of Women. |

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Seminar on 'New Communication Technologies, Women
and Democracy'
organised by AMIC and Bangkok University
with support from DANIDA and UNESCO
October 19-21, 1995

A group of 30 media scholars, NGOs and practitioners from 30 Asian countries met in Bangkok from October 19-22 at a seminar on 'New Communication Technologies, Women and Democracy' organised by AMIC and Bangkok University with support from DANIDA and UNESCO. It came up with the following recommendations:

Preamble

1. Democracy and development go hand in hand.
2. The right to information and communication must be recognised as a fundamental human right, the fulfilment of which is a prerequisite for both democracy and development.
3. Fulfilment of this right implies public access to, participation in and control of information and communication, including NCTs.
4. The state has a responsibility to ensure the fulfilment of this right for all citizens, specially those who are socially, economically and/or politically disadvantaged.
5. NCTs can play a vital role in promoting access and participation in the democratic and developmental process.
6. NCTs are an extension of existing forms of communications and not a replacement of those forms. In fact, they are most effective when used in tandem with people's media, such as folk art forms, soap operas, community and family interactions, to deconstruct gender stereotypes.
7. While NCTs can serve as a tool to meet the information and communication needs of a variety of publics, in a variety of contexts, it must be recognised that the development and establishment of NCT infrastructures implies certain ideological commitments -- political and economic -- which could impose limitations on their use for the promotion of democratic and developmental processes.
8. Alongside measures to facilitate women's access to NCTs, they should also be ensured greater control over these technologies.
9. There is a need to recognise the undervalued contribution of women in the domestic sector without which men's access to technology would be greatly restricted, and quantify, wherever possible, the extent of such inputs.
10. While the development and establishment of NCT infrastructures is increasingly dependent on private capital investment, the use of these infrastructures must not be dictated by market forces alone.
11. NCTs should be used to narrow rather than widen the existing imbalances in access to, participation in, and control of information and communication.
12. It should be recognised that NCTs are a powerful tool that can exacerbate both the tendencies towards radical fragmentation and radical homogenisation, either of which could constrict the public sphere of informed debate and decision making.

13. NCTs should be viewed in the wider context of political, economic, social, and cultural environment into which they are introduced. In order to maximise the potential of NCTs to promote democracy and development, we have to recognise the need to create time and space for people, specially women, to integrate them into their lives.

14. For the greatest impact, men, as well as women, should be viewed as agents in the democratisation of access and control of NCTs.

Recommendations

1. Continue systematic conscientization and awareness-building efforts by women's groups and NGOs as well as governments on the potentials and pitfalls of NCTs.

2. GOs and NGOs should conduct practical (hands-on) ^{in popularising} training which the public can avail of.

Some organisations that provide training on the use of NCTs should be tapped for this purpose - such as Association of International Education Councils, Association for Progressive Communications, Isis International-Manila. UNESCO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNDP, the Women and Development Programme of ESCAP, UNDP, UNIFEM should also support such efforts. Corporations such as IBM, AT & T should also be persuaded to pitch in by pointing to their obligation and responsibility in ploughing back a percentage of their profits into enhancing the human condition in the industry.

3. In building the necessary NCT infrastructures, government and private entities should take into account its impact on health, environment soundness and sustainability.

4. NCTs should be treated as a public utility. Governments and private entities should make NCTs available and affordable for the use of the general public. In view of the impending monopolistic trends within the information industry, this public space should be safeguarded from being appropriated by commercial and vested interest power groups. Channels should be allocated for public.

5. Software manufacturers should develop more user-friendly and appropriate programs using local languages.

6. Research should be conducted on the impact and potential of NCTs in individual countries as well as comparative studies of several countries, with specific reference to women, development and democracy.

Exchange of case studies and information relating to women's empowerment within the region could be a catalyst for sparking off a gender conscientisation process in areas where it does not already exist.

7. A pan-Asian information exchange network, such as a web site, could be set up to draw up a resource directory of information on gender issues.

8. A code of conduct could be drawn up and enforced by governments in tandem with the industry to ensure that women are viewed not merely as consumers but also as generators of information. This would translate itself into increased involvement of women in the information industry and a greater protection of their rights.

9. A conscious effort should be made to examine the role of language used in NCTs in perpetuating gender biases.

10. The need for more interaction and cross-fertilisation between the women's rights movement and other fora for human rights such as the environment movement, alternative technology groups and so on, so that gender sensitisation percolates through all levels of society, and is not restricted to groups of women.

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RELC International Hotel

**Panel Discussion: Access of New Communication
Technologies to Women in Education and Work:
Stories the Papers Tell**

1. Preamble

2. Stories of Four Women:

a. Maureen

b. Hui Ming

c. Joanne

d. Mei Lin

3. Some Statistics