

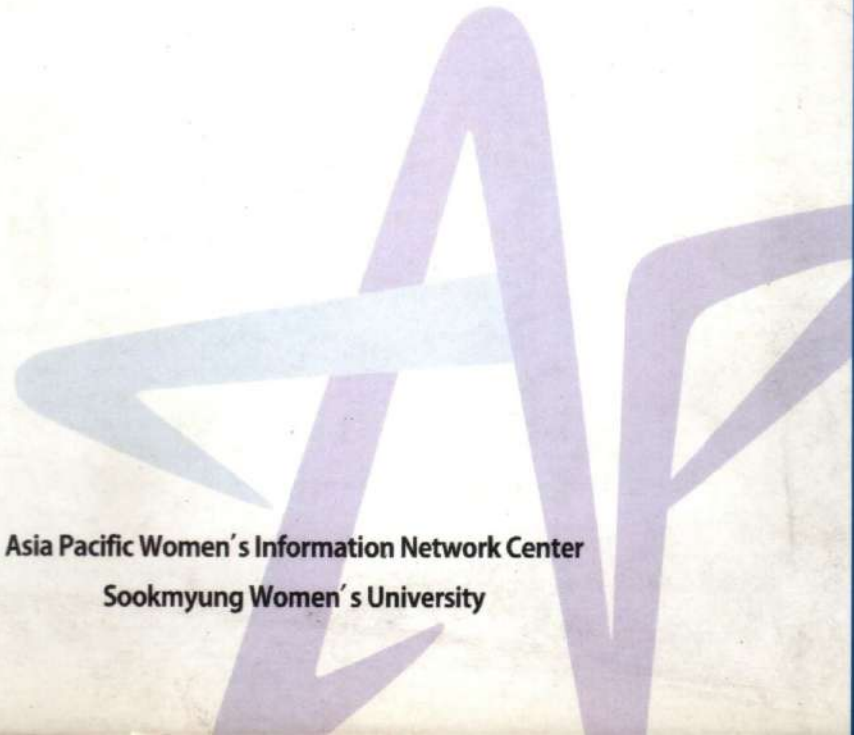
NATCCO

ISSN 1229-7437

2011 • Volume 12

APWIN

Gender Empowerment through Women's Socioeconomic Participation



Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center
Sookmyung Women's University



ISSN 1229-7437

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APWIN is an annual journal specialized in gender and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for development, published since 1999 by the Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center at Sookmyung Women's University.

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Published in 2011 by Sookmyung Women's University

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ISSN 1229-7437

Printed in Seoul, Korea

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CONTENTS

Editorial	5
Articles	
ICTs and its Social Meanings: Women in the Margins of Thailand	9
<i>Mary Luz Menguita-Feranil</i>	
Dilemma of International Female Migrant Workers as Agent of Rural Development in Indonesia.....	21
<i>Lala M. Kolopaking</i>	
eBunda: Building Collaboration through Radio Broadcast.....	43
<i>Nur 'Azimah Zaili, Rozana Yunos</i>	
Intel Easy Steps Program: Empowering Women through Digital Literacy	51
<i>Russell J. Campbell</i>	
Selection of the Priority Countries in the ICT Sector for the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation	57
<i>Yoo-Jin Han, Haley Hyun</i>	
e-Government for Women in Korea: Implications to Developing Countries in Asia	78
<i>Dong Ju Choi, Hanah Zoo</i>	
APWIN Guidelines for Contributors.....	110

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Editorial

The untapped potential of women is considered a key to drive national economic development and to spur social changes in many developing countries. Notably, the Beijing Declaration on Women and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) acknowledged that investing in women's capacity building is one of the most urgent and strategic goals of international development community.

Despite the efforts to date however, women, as a group representing half of the world's population, yet earn just 10 percent of the world's income. According to the latest Global Gender Gap report published by the World Economic Forum in 2011, economic and political participation continue to show the largest gaps around the world, compared to a steady catch-up in other aspects including the health and survival and education attainment. Lack of access to, and control over productive resources is one of the major factors that hamper women's equal participation in economic activities and decision-making process.

Since 1996, the Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center (APWINC) has helped women in developing countries fulfill their economic potential and drive economic and social changes in their communities, particularly tapping into the transformative power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Additionally, APWINC strives to leverage the strong global network of government officials and academics in Gender & ICT field that the Center has accumulated over a decade, to raise awareness of the importance of improving

women's socioeconomic potential and to help move this global agenda to the next level.

In this issue of *APWIN journal* for 2011, we are delighted to feature six papers that highlight various local and regional efforts to improve women's socioeconomic potential through creative use of ICT.

First, Mary Luz Menguita-Feranil looks at the implication ICTs' influence in the lives of marginalized women migrant workers and refugees in Thailand. Her research delves into the specific context of a repressive military regime of Burma, and examines how such an environment influences women's community empowerment through the use of ICT.

Lala M. Kolopaking's ethno-survey spotlights the case of international female migrant workers from Indonesia. He explores the complicated social recognition of female migrant workers which often conveys dual meanings -- a change agent in rural communities on one hand and a stigmatized unskilled worker in informal sector on the other.

Nur 'AzimahZaili and RozanaYunos examine the case of eBunda community radio in Brunei Darussalam. Their research highlights the utilization of community radio station in combination with social networking sites, SMS and live chats. They present an interesting example of women's community empowerment, as to how to choose the right, appropriate combination of technologies to maximize the program outreach.

Russell Campbell presents a case of a digital literacy program for women in a corporate social responsibility initiative of Intel. The article provides clear evidence that the potential of a broader public-private partnership for women's socioeconomic empowerment program is strong.

Finally, submissions by Yoo-Jin Han and Haley Hyun and by Dong Ju Choi and Hanah Zoo present findings from two studies recently conducted by the APWINC research team. Han and Hyun feature the ASEAN – Korean cooperation effort commissioned by the ASEAN. Choi and Zoo present the case of Korean e-Government services for women, conducted in part of a regional research commissioned by the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG).

We would like to thank all the contributors to this volume for gladly sharing their successful experiences and knowledge with the APWIN readers.

Editor, APWIN

Dong Ju Choi

ICTs and its Social Meanings: Women in the Margins of Thailand¹

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Abstract

This paper seeks to surface the social implications of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for marginalized women in Thailand-Burma border as brought about by globalization and technological change. Many of the debates surrounding ICTs have been centered on technologies as drivers of growth and transformation of economies in the information economy and knowledge society. While it has helped the economies of most developed countries, the urban-rural divide in sharing the benefits derived from ICTs in most developing countries such as Thailand persist. A notable implication is ICTs' influence in the lives of marginalized women migrant workers and refugees in Thailand in the context of community empowerment from a repressive military regime of Burma. The enabling environment of ICTs in the border created significant difference in their survival as freedom of information, communication and mobility had been largely repressed inside their own country. This paper

¹ This work was part of the study undertaken in Thailand "Cybercafés and Telecentres: Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Thailand and was presented in ICTD2010 International Conference Postgraduate Strand, Royal Holloway, University of London, December 13-16, 2010. It was supported by the Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program through the University Pompeu Fabra UPF), Barcelona, Spain to Assess the Impact of Public Access to ICTs grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada. The author acknowledged technical support from Francisco J. Proenza, (UPF) Erwin Alampay (adviser), WEAVE staff and co-researchers, interpreters, community-based organizations in Mae Sot, and Burmese women migrants and refugees interviewed.

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argues that opportunities for women to access and use ICTs may be seen along several perspectives ranging from binding family ties, social networking and expanding relations to a broader perspective as learning arena, venue for advocacy and amplifying women's voices and sites for cultural expression and entertainment. However, while use of ICTs allow for processes of information and communication that were previously impossible to attain to a group of women, a large number of women is still excluded in the process.

Keywords

Information and communications technologies, globalization, social implications, women migrant workers

Introduction

Globally, the rapid evolution of ICTs² over the past decade has resulted in the further improvement of economic opportunities through information sharing. This situation is evident in most of the developed countries in the North while leaving behind the developing countries such as in the global South with the exceptions of Singapore, Korea, and Japan³. A prevailing concern in the access of ICTs also emerged that has widened digital divide within and across countries specifically in the Asia-Pacific Region. Consequently, the gap has become more alarming in the context of marginalization of rural communities coupled with the widening information opportunity gaps between rural and urban communities. Rural communities particularly women there, face the risks of socioeconomic development.

Women use ICTs less than men, access the internet less and spend less time, and do not have the same levels of access at work (Nsibriano, 2009; Kennedy et al, 2003; Hongladarom, 2003). Most of the digital divide studies had focused on

² Refers to the use of internet and mobile phones in this paper

³ Global IT Report 2009-2010.