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Role of ICT in Women Empowerment

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Abstract—*In developing countries women are abused in various sectors. Submissiveness and servility is in their nature because of the inequality they are facing. Despite the great growth of education in many countries women are still not considered as equal gender everywhere. The status of women is considered to be inferior even after her great contribution to society. It is the right time for women to stand for her. Women empowerment is a burning issue these days. Various NGOs are working for the betterment of women and give them training for self-independence. Government is also taking this issue seriously and has announced various policies in favor of women. In this scenario Information and Communication Technology is also playing an important role. Through ICT women are getting security, awareness, knowledge, employments, confidence, popularity etc. This paper brings into notice the role of Information and Communication Technology in women empowerment. Here various cases have been discussed to give a light on the changes ICT has brought to the society. It also suggests the steps to be taken for women empowerment through ICT.*

Keywords: Education, Women Empowerment, Social- change, Awareness

1. INTRODUCTION

Nature of our society is male dominating from starting so work done by women were never recognized and appreciated. Nobody has ever mentioned about their contribution in music. The famous musician Jane Pirone has created www.drummergirl.com as a reaction to negative experiences faced by her. Her motto was to encourage future female drummers like her. Her efforts also bring to notice the importance of ICT as without paying anything all the people can get information about female drummers on web. She has mentioned that WWW gave her a platform to bring social change. [1] To develop women friendly work environment leading companies are now offering benefits like crèches, and option to relocate to city of their choice in case of transfer of the husband. According to a survey done by Internet and Mobile Association of India in 2009 reveals that there are 6.5 million claimed internet users, 4.18 million active internet users. [2] Empower is a multidimensional word including social, physical, spiritual, mental, political and psychological dimensions. Empower means personal growth in decision making, analyzing critical situations, coping with all circumstances and facing challenges. Internet gives them a

platform where people can interact with each other with hesitation as they are unaware of each other's identity. Especially women can show their emotions, views, feelings and opinion more openly. In text communication there is no inferior feeling of how you looks, how you talks or how somebody is looking at you. Psychological impact of writing also gives them strength. [3]

2. ROLE OF IT IN SOCIAL CHANGE

World Wide Web is an immense source of information. This paper shows that people are now noticing the WWW as a true representative of social change. It has been broadly used for obtaining any information at any time independent of the location. However now it is also being used to create awareness in society. Small groups working on various social stigmas can easily use the WWW to reach masses, like discrimination against women or inequalities between men and women. WWW is becoming more popular among women to get recognition. www.cybergirl.com and www.bust.com are examples of such sites which has played a major role in women empowerment. www.drummergirl.com is also playing the same role as providing inspiration to female drummers which are usually not accepted in society. [1] ICT is playing an important role in changing the attitude and perspective of society towards women. It is creating a psychological comfort level of women at their work place by providing them additional knowledge and skills. Psychological empowerment can be at organizational level, personal level or social level. Through Internet, television, radio and mobile phones women are getting information about all the real incidents happening in world and learning skills to tackle situations; it is helping to bring leadership qualities in them. [4] ICT has provided new term E- governance; all the developing countries are working on this. It can get greater access to services, greater accountability, transparency and citizen empowerment, strategic reward such as improved decision making through information, improved knowledge sharing and organizational learning, improved interactions with citizens, other government organizations and businesses and industry, improve market relationships between government and private sectors and greater ability for organizational change management. Use of e-governance by citizens will also

increase their trust in government and develop a positive view towards government policies. [5]

3. SUPPORTING FIRMS

There are various firms working in this direction which includes government agencies, NGO's, educational institutes, radio stations, industries etc.

3.1 NGO's – Some are listed below: [2]

- **Smile (Savitri Marketing Institution for Ladies Empowerment)** - It organizes various IT seminars for women in collaboration with IT companies like NIIT organizes a seminar named Swift Jyoti. It was 18 hour program designed for women from 6 to 60 years. The motive was to literate women about computer and its benefits.
- **SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association)** – It works to support rural women.
- **Ujjas Innovation** – In this various views about different issues related to women are released in a newsletter called “Ujjas”. The newsletter went on air on All India Radio Bhuj Station in Gujarat. By this effort the channel wants to bring light on the condition of women in various areas.
- **The Dhan Foundation and Swayam Krishi Sangam** – they are working for poor women to educate them about ICT so that they can get the respect, honor, strength, independence that they deserve.

3.2 Industries

Various companies like IBM, HCL, GOOGLE, MICROSOFT, TCS etc are providing a variety of services to attract women employees like maternity leaves, child care leaves, flexible working hours, work from home facility, pick and drop facility etc. According to article of economictimes.india.com this scheme is working so currently, Infosys is having the largest percentage of women at 33.4%, followed by TCS 30% and Wipro 29%. [6]

3.3 Government Agencies

- Government has provided various policies for girls like free education, reservation in jobs, admissions, elected members of local bodies, member of board of directors in public limited companies etc.
- Government is giving loan and subsidies to women for higher studies, projects and research.
- Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC) has launched e-mahile project for women over 11 districts. And each woman is given free laptop, printer, camera and projector for their use. The project also

includes yoga classes and personality development classes for women as added advantage.

- **Gyandoot:** Gyandoot is an e-government project started by the state government of MP (India) for rural people. [6]

4. STUDIES CONDUCTED

- A survey was conducted on 102 employees in a government organization to collect data. Most employees had been using the computers (95%) and the Internet for more than 1year (90%). Also, 25% of employees used Internet regularly for 4–8h per day, while 72% indicated that they used the Internet daily for 1–3h. There were employees who were not using the Internet at all (3%). Of the 97% employees who did use Internet, 70% used it to interact with other employees within the organization. [5]
- Centre for Empowerment of Women, Anna University, Chennai in Collaboration with Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited conducted the training programme “Building skills of Self-Help Group women in establishing and maintaining the Information Kiosks.” The sample size of the study was 69 SHG women out of which only 30 percent said that they joined this training for improving their knowledge in computer. Only 27 percent of the samples are working and not even a single woman has set the kiosk. [7]

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The majority of women in the developing world do not have access to ICTs due to variety of barriers as such the infrastructural, social, cultural and linguistic.

To make women independent, powerful and strong in all fields with the help of ICT necessary actions are to be taken at regional, national and international level. ICT provide resources, information and opportunities for development. Some of the recommendations are listed below: [8][9][10]

- All educational institutes by law should offer free basic knowledge of computer to women of all ages.
- ICT awareness camps should be organized on regular basis in rural areas
- Internet facilities should be available at all locations including the remote ones
- Free computer centers should be opened at rural area for providing basic knowledge of computer
- E –government should be deployed everywhere so that women can also participate freely in decision making

- ICT can be used in women security field as well by installing cameras, emergency apps and providing access to all locations.
- Digital library should be there including all the books available throughout

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