

Research on the Role of e-Government to Promote Gender Equality in the Asia Pacific

Background

The delivery of public services online, as well as the interactive nature of e-Government through the Internet has also opened a new perspective on women's participation in the public sector. Thanks to the participatory communication process and easier access to information, e-Government is expected to provide greater opportunities for women and contribute to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals by promoting gender equality and empowering women. With this belief, the two issues of gender empowerment and ICT application in the public sector have been placed at the top of many development research agenda in recent years.

However, particularly in the Asia Pacific region, not many researchers have taken a view on combining the two aspects of gender and e-government together and explore the role of e-government in the promotion of women's rights. Why is it crucial for women to have an open channel of participation in the public sector decision-making process and how does the Government help in this endeavor? What are the conditions required to fully benefit from such technological advancement? What are the concerns specific to the Asia Pacific region?

In view of the above context, the contribution of this Research Project to the field of gender and ICT will be unique for two reasons.

First, the project **will document new and emerging case studies of gender empowerment in the public sector, providing a compendium of good practices in the Asia Pacific**. Particularly, countries in the Asia Pacific have made a significant advancement in ICT during the past years, and as a result, a number of e-Government initiatives have been implemented with a strong political support from the national governments. The research project will offer insights to understand the ingredients of success including the opportunities and challenges of e-Government implementation to achieve gender equalities in public administration.

Secondly, **the collection of case studies will build on a wider initiative to empower women through ICT, from the perspective that ICT creates new channels for social awareness and mobilizing resources for resource-poor women**. The survey analysis of selected Asia Pacific countries will question the extent to which the ongoing e-government initiatives address women's needs and reflect gender perspectives, in an effort to draw out regional trends and recommendations for the future.

Objectives

UNPOG and APWINC will enter a new field of research investigating the role of e-Government to empower women and promote gender equality in the Asia Pacific region.

In particular, the project aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine how ICT tools present new opportunities and challenges to support gender equality goals at the national government level

- To develop country level case studies on gender empowerment in the public sector in the Asia Pacific
- To contribute to establish baseline information to develop e-governance strategies for gender empowerment at the global level and thereby help achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals

Regional Coverage

The target region of the project shall be ten to fifteen countries in the Asia Pacific region. Country preference concerning the location, stage of development, level of implementation of e-government or current gender situation will be determined upon consultation with project partners.

Partnerships

Initiator and supporter of the project will be the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG). The Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center (APWINC) at Sookmyung Women's University, a research institute specialized in gender empowerment and ICT will participate as a research partner. Potentially, relevant institutions in the target Asia-Pacific countries will join the project to support country-specific case studies and regional survey.