

Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Capacity to Promote E-Government for Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific

4-5 October 2016

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AIDE-MEMOIRE

1. Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by Member States during the 2015 United Nations General Assembly affirmed that “The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies.” (paragraph 15, A/70/L.1). However, against a backdrop of rapid growth in access and technology, many segments of the world’s population are still being left behind. Globally, 43% of the world’s population have some form of regular access to the internet, leaving 4.2 billion people without connectivity and access to enjoy the same opportunities. Across Asia and the Pacific, only 36% of households had a computer and 42% had fixed mobile-broadband subscriptions¹. Women in particular are at a disadvantage. It is estimated that women are 14% less likely to own a mobile phone than men, a proportion that rises to as much as 38% in South Asia².

In recognition of the potential contribution of ICTs for women’s empowerment, the ‘enabler’ target 5b of the Sustainable Development Goals aims to ‘enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women’. More specifically, the United Nations General Assembly has highlighted the role of e-government for women’s empowerment, urging Member States “To improve and broaden women’s access to information and communications technologies, including e-government tools, in order to enable political participation and to promote engagement in broader democratic processes, while also improving the responsiveness of these technologies to women’s needs, including those of marginalized women” (A/RES/66/130, sub-paragraph 6h).

Governments in Asia and the Pacific have been proactive in harnessing ICTs to enhance their public administrations and service delivery through e-Government. The high-demand for ESCAP capacity development services in e-Government highlights the increasing interest and demand in this area. However, there is little awareness and capacity to address the gender dimension of e-Government. Only 28% of countries in Asia and 29% of countries in Oceania offered some sort of online services for women in 2014.³

¹ Key 2005-2015 ICT data for the world, ITU <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx> ; The State of the Broadband 2015, The Broadband Commission for Digital Development, ITU and UNESCO, 2015

² Bridging the gender gap: Mobile access and usage in low and middle-income countries, The GSMA Connected Women Global Development Alliance, 2015

³ United Nations E-Government Survey ‘e-Government for the Future We Want’, 2014, UN DESA, figure 6.13, Page 138

The 2014 United Nations E-Government Survey highlighted the potential of E-Government to facilitate participatory decision-making and inclusive service delivery for vulnerable groups, including women, through e-participation and a multi-channel approach. E-Government can advance the rights of women through better institutional coordination and gender mainstreaming across line ministries; accountability mechanisms that help respond to women's needs, as well as online channels to engage women in co-creating or co-producing services that better serve their own needs.

In light of the above, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in partnership with the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, has implemented a project on "e-Government for Women's Empowerment" to enhance knowledge and capacity in this area. The project has completed its first phase with a review of the three dimensions of the e-Government ecosystem, (online service delivery, citizen update/participation and connectivity). Drawing on 12 case studies from 5 countries (Australia, Fiji, India, Philippines, Republic of Korea), the project examined how the potential of e-Government was being utilised to address the needs of women.

The study has confirmed a gender gap in e-Government strategies across the region. It stressed that Governments, at varying stages of e-Government development, require further understanding and awareness of how to empower women and mainstream gender in their e-Government policies and strategies. Nevertheless, the country cases "suggest that gender-responsive e-government interventions lead to many positive outcomes for gender equality. They enhance women's self-esteem, enable women to challenge traditional norms and build peer connections, boost their confidence to participate in the job market, bring them vital information on entitlements, and give them access to mechanisms of redress. They also transform public institutions, making them technically and politically more capable of delivering gender inclusive services." The study can be accessed via <http://egov4women.unescapsdd.org/>.

As the project enters its second phase, it aims to develop online training of trainer modules to address the gender deficit and strengthen government capacity to develop and implement policies that promote e-Government as a tool for women's empowerment. An "Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Capacity to Promote E-Government for Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific" will be convened from 4 to 5 October 2016 to seek input and consult experts on the design and content of the training modules.

2. Objectives and Expected Outcomes

A two-day "Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Capacity to Promote E-Government for Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific" will convene experts from the region to:

- Review the training module framework to provide input on its structure, covering the following aspects:
 - Learning objectives for each module;
 - Proposed sub-topics and thematic areas in the design; and
 - Methods to effectively meet learning outcomes.
- Identify future steps towards the application of the training modules, including online modalities.
- Share knowledge and good practices on promoting e-government for women's empowerment.

The expected outcomes of the EGM will be:

- ✓ Feedback on training module framework is provided.
- ✓ Future steps on the application of the training modules are mapped.
- ✓ Cutting-edge knowledge is shared on what has worked and what has not, and why, in making e-government a significant strategy for gender equality.

3. Participation and Format

The EGM will bring together experts from government, civil society, academia and international organisations who are engaged in the design and implementation of e-government policies and programmes, as well as in the area of gender and ICT. The EGM will seek input and ideas on the training modules and future steps through interactive discussion and group work.

Expected Contribution from Participants

Participants are expected to actively contribute, in accordance with their expertise, as follows:

- Share concrete examples, experience and knowledge on issues relevant to e-government and/or ICT for women's empowerment, including on:
 - Gender, governance and e-government;
 - Gender-responsive e-government service delivery, e-participation and connectivity;
 - Tracking implementation of gender-responsive and e-government programmes.
- Share concrete examples, experience and knowledge on developing and rolling-out training material on gender programmes or e-government for wider application within line ministries.

A draft outline of the training framework and tentative programme will be shared with participants prior to the EGM.