

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EMPOWERING WOMEN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

JUIT, WAKNAGHAT, SOLAN, HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA, 1-3 JUNE 2013

BRIEF REPORT

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has dramatically changed the world. It is a powerful driver that has enhanced the living conditions and opportunities for the nations around the globe. The ICT sector has become a key economic factor for the developed as well as the developing countries alike and has opened the channels for new ways of working, interacting and learning for both men and women. It has however been observed that the involvement of women in ICT sector is highly inadequate, particularly in the developing nations and there is a 'gender divide' resulting in lower numbers of women accessing and using ICT compared with men. Unless this problem is specifically addressed, there is a risk that ICT may exacerbate existing inequalities between women and men and create new forms of inequality. The existing persistent gender discrimination in labour markets, education and training opportunities and allocation of financial resources for entrepreneurship and business development negatively impact women's potential to fully utilise ICT for economic, social and political empowerment. If the gender dimensions of ICT in terms of access and use, capacity building opportunities, employment and potential for empowerment are explicitly identified and addressed, these can be a powerful catalyst for economic, political and social empowerment of women, and the promotion of gender equality.

In order to deliberate on these issues, the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre) and the JUIT Centre for Women Studies, Jaypee University of Information Technology (JUIT), Wagnaghat-Solan, India organised an International Conference on '**Empowering Women in Developing Countries through Information & Communication Technologies**' at JUIT-Wagnaghat, District Solan (HP), India, during 1-3 June 2013. Initiatives: Women in Development (IWID) and Rural Education and Development (READ) - India were the collaborators of this scientific event.

The Inaugural Session started with opening remarks by Prof. Nirupama Prakash, Coordinator, JUIT Centre for Women Studies and Head, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences (HSS), JUIT. After a welcome address by Prof. Ravi Prakash, Vice Chancellor, JUIT, Prof. Arun P. Kulshreshtha, Director & Executive Head, NAM S&T Centre presented the genesis of the event and also briefly described the activities of the Centre. This was followed by the Lightning of Lamp and the Presidential Address by Dr. Y. Medury, COO, Jaypee Education System. The Key Note address was given by the Guest of Honour, Mr. Timothy D. Neely, Chief of Environment, Science and Technology Affairs, US Embassy in New Delhi which was followed by addresses by the distinguished guests, Dr. Vinita Sharma, Head, Science for Equity, Empowerment & Development Division, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India and Dr. Chandra Shekhar, Director, CSIR-Central Electronics Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-CEERI), Pilani. The session was concluded with an address by Brig. (Retd.) Balbir Singh, Director, JUIT and Vote of Thanks by Ms. Triambica Gautam of the HSS-JUIT and the group photograph.

46 specialists from 20 countries, namely, Angola, Egypt, The Gambia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Venezuela, Vietnam and the host country India participated in this International Conference. 22 overseas participants were from Angola [Dr. Zacarias

Hendrick Da Costa Bumba, Head of the Center of Documentation & Information and Deputy Director of the Minister's Office, Ministry of Family and Women Promotion]; Egypt [Prof. Dr. Shireen Kamal Assem Abdel-Halim Assem, Deputy Director and Head of Research, Agriculture Research Center (ARC), Agricultural Genetic Engineering Research Institute (AGERI), Giza]; The Gambia [Mrs. Bintou Dibba, Principal Science, Technology and Innovation Officer, Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology]; Indonesia [Dr. Finarya Legoh, Principal Engineer, The Agency for Assessment and Application of Technology (BPPT)]; Iraq [Mrs. Ruqaya Abdul Muhsin Ali, Official, Information Technology Center (IT), Ministry of Science and Technology]; Kenya [Mrs. Catherine Kathure Kaimenyi, Assistant Lecturer, Chuka University]; Malawi [Mrs. Catherine Chaweza, Chief Information Officer, National Commission for Science and Technology]; Malaysia [Ms. Puspadevi Kuppusamy, Information Technology Officer, ICT Policy Division, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation]; Mauritius [Ms. Doonmoon Swapnah Sheetal, Coordinator, Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare]; Myanmar [Prof. Dr. Khin Mar Lar Tun, University of Computer Studies]; Nepal [Mrs. Parbati Pudasaini, Sr. Promotional Officer, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST)]; Nigeria [Mrs. Ejuya Oluwafemi Lyabode, Assistant Director, Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Abuja and Ms. Nweze Chinwendu Nancy, Human Resource Manager, Niger-Delta Woman Development Agency]; South Africa [Mrs. Matema Salome Rabodiba, Software Developer, University of Limpopo and Ms. Mmamakanye Pitse-Boshomane, Senior Researcher and Network Manager, Meraka Institute, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)]; Sri Lanka [Ms. Weliveriya Liyanage Sumika Perera, Chief Coordinator, Women's Resource Center]; Sudan [Ms. Hanan Mohamed A/Karim Abbas, CSR and Sustainable Development Advisor, Global Compact Association, Businessmen and Employees Federation; and Ms. Eiman Elrasheed Eltayeb Diab, Head, Department of the Pollution and Environmental Studies, Institute of Natural Resource and Environment, and Dr. Maha Ali Abdel Latif, Researcher, Desertification Research Institute, National Center for Research]; Togo [Dr. Yao Namoin, Junior Lecturer, Institute of Information Science, Communication and Arts (ISICA), University of Lome]; Uganda [Dr. Julianne Sansa Otim, Head, Department of Networks, School of Computing & Informatics Technology, College of Computing & Information Sciences, Makerere University]; Venezuela [Ms. Marianly Tovar, International Analyst, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation]; and Vietnam [Ms. Nguyen Huong Thu, Official, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST)]. From the NAM S&T Centre, Prof. Arun P. Kulshreshtha, Director & Executive Head; Mr. M. Bandyopadhyay, Senior Expert & Administrative Officer; Ms. Isha Sehgal, Research Assistant and In-Charge (Publications), Ms. Divya Sai, Scientist, Mrs. Pinky Singh, Project Assistant and Ms. Payal Sehgal, Research Assistant attended the event.

The overall programme of the Workshop was conducted in four technical sessions with the themes (I) 'Critical Gender Equality Issues related to ICT in Developing Countries', (II) 'Importance of ICT in Empowering Women in Developing Countries – Exploring Potential Opportunities for Women's Economic, Social, Health and Political Empowerment', (III) 'Role of NGOs in addressing Issues related to Women Empowerment through ICT with Special Focus on Rural Women', and (IV) 'Sharing and Analysing Best Practices on Gender Equality and ICT'. These sessions were co-chaired respectively by (I) Prof. (Dr.) Shireen Kamal Assem Abdel-Halim Assem (Egypt) and Mr. M.K. Singh [IFS, CCF, Govt. of Chattisgarh, Raipur, India], (II) Mrs. Ejuya Oluwafemi Lyabode (Nigeria) and Mr. R. Saha [Senior Adviser, Confederation of Indian Industries (CII, India)] / Dr. Sunita Saxena [Director, National Institute of Pathology (NIP), ICMR, New Delhi], India; (III) Mrs. Bintou Dibba (The Gambia) and Ms. Geeta Malhotra

[Country Director, READ – India]; and (IV) Ms. Hanan Mohamed Karim Abbas (Sudan) and Dr. Jyotsna Chatterjee [Founder member, IWID India]. Dr. Anupriya Kaur, Ms. Nina Jindal, Mr. Puneet Sood, Ms. Neha Agarwal and Dr. Amit Srivastav, HSS-JUIT were the respective Session Coordinators.

22 scientific papers and country status reports presented by the foreign participants during the Conference were on 'Women and the Importance of Domestic Use of Information and Communication Technologies' by Mr. Zacarias Hendrick da Costa Bumba of Angola; 'The Roles and Responsibilities of Academic Institutions to encourage Women Participation in ICT Related Disciplines' by Prof. Dr. Shireen Kamal Assem Abdel-Halim Assem of Egypt; 'Country Status Report on ICT in The Gambia' by Mrs. Bintou Dibba of The Gambia; 'Empowering Science and Technology Communication through Information and Communication Technology: Cases of Indonesia' by Dr. Finarya Legoh of Indonesia; 'Empowerment of Women in Iraq by using the Information and Communication Technology (ICT)' by Mrs. Ruqaya Abdul Muhsin Ali of Iraq; 'A Framework for Use of ICT as a Women's Tool for Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas of Kenya' by Mrs. Catherine Kathure Kaimenyi of Kenya; 'Empowering Rural Women for Socio-Economic Development through the Use of ICT: Challenges and Opportunities for Malawi' by Mrs. Catherine Chaweza of Malawi; 'Women's Empowerment through ICT - Case Study of 2 projects under Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), Malaysia' by Ms. Puspadevi Kuppusamy of Malaysia; 'Empowering Women in Mauritius' by Ms. Swapnah Sheetal Doonmoon of Mauritius; 'Myanmar Women and Girls in ICT Education' by Dr. Khin Mar Lar Tun of Myanmar; 'Women Empowerment through Information and Communication Technology in Nepal' by Mrs. Parbati Paudasaini of Nepal; 'Computer Aided Design of Spray Dryer' by Mrs. Ejuya Oluwafemi Lyabode of Nigeria; 'Gender Issues Affecting Development of Rural Women in ICT' by Mrs. Matema Salome Rabodiba of South Africa; 'Mobile Technology Empowering Community Care Givers in KwaZulu Natal' by Ms. Mmamakanye Pitse-Boshomane of South Africa; 'The Challenges of Information and Communication Technology for Rural Women's Empowerment in Sri Lanka' by Ms. Weliveriya Liyanage Sumika Perera of Sri Lanka; 'Women in the Research and Development Institution: Case Study - National Center of Research' by Ms. Eiman Elrasheed Eltayeb Diab of Sudan; 'Empowering Women Skills in combating Desertification in Sudan' by Dr. Maha Ali Abdel Latif of Sudan; 'Women's Empowerment Gap and Sustainable Development in Sudan' by Ms. Hanan Mohamed A/Karim Abbas of Sudan; 'The Empowerment of Women in Developing Countries through ICT: the Case of Togo' by Dr. Yao Namoin of Togo; 'Uganda's Women Empowerment Journey - A Focus on ICTs' by Dr. Julianne Sansa Otim of Uganda; 'Role of the Venezuelan Women in Information & Communication Technologies (ICT's)' by Ms. Marianly Tovar of Venezuela; and 'Women and Information Communication Technology: Vietnam's Fact, Prospect, and Recommendations' by Ms. Nguyen Huong Thu of Vietnam.

17 scientific papers presented by the Indian participants were on 'Information Technology for Women Empowerment: The Case of *Suvidha Kendras* under Mission Convergence' by Dr. Sunita Sangar and Dr. Deepa Ahluwalia of the National Mission for Empowerment of Women and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India; 'Ability Directed Empowerment' by Mr. R. Saha of CII; 'Empowering Women with Awareness and Screening may help Them fight the Risk of Breast Cancer' by Dr. Sunita Saxena, Director, NIP-ICMR; 'Empowerment of Women to manage Their Own Health' by Mr. Arun Datta, Senior Vice President HR, Medanta Medicity, Global Health Pvt Ltd, Gurgaon; 'Empowering Young Women in Developing Countries through ICT' by Dr. Suman Kapur, Dean, Research and Consultancy, Faculty-In-charge Education Development Division and Professor, Biological Sciences Department, Birla Institute of

Technology and Science, BITS-Pilani, Hyderabad Campus, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh; 'Community & Individual Health: Empowering Women through ICT' by Dr. R.P. Pareek, Professor and Medical Superintendent, BITS, Pilani (Raj.); 'Technology Transfer and Partnerships for Women's Empowerment: Status in India' by Dr. Heena K. Bijli, Associate Professor, Community Resource Management and Extension, School of Continuing Education, IGNOU, New Delhi; 'Role of NGOs in promoting Rural Women Empowerment through ICT in India' by Ms. Jane Schukoske, Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Rural Research and Development (IRRAD), Gurgaon; 'ICT and Women's Empowerment: A Paradigm Shift needed in Outlook' by Dr. Archita Bhatta, Science and Environment Journalist, Scidev.net, alertnet.org, New Delhi; 'Gender Issues and Sensitization in Forests' by Mr. Mudit Kumar Singh, IFS, Director, State Academy of Administration, Government of Chhattisgarh, Raipur; 'Empowerment of Dalit Women with ICT in India' by Dr. Jagjit Kaur, PG Government College, Chandigarh; 'Telecentre on Wheels – Empowerment of Women through ICT' by Dr. Mondira Dutta, Director and Division Coordinator, Central Asian Area Studies Programme, CSCSEASWPS, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi; 'Empowering Women in Developing Countries through Information Communication Technologies' by Ms. Geeta Malhotra, Country Director, READ India; 'Globalizing India: The Sunshine sector and Its Shadows: The Call Center Industry: A Case Study' by Dr. Rekha Pande, Director, Centre for Women's Studies, University of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh; 'Violence against Women and ICTs' by Dr. Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri, Associate Professor of English and Head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, I.I.T Ropar, Rupnagar, Punjab; and 'Empowerment Through Education' by Dr. C. Hilda Devi, Director I/C, Centre for Women Studies, Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikonal, Tamilnadu. Ms. Isha Sehgal, Ms. Pinky Singh and Ms. Parul Sehgal of the NAM S&T Centre presented a paper on 'Social Security of Women in Developing Countries through the Application of Information and Communication Technologies'. They also recited a poem – '*I am the martyr*' – by Aya Chebbi of Tunisia, which represent the true spirit and essence of women empowerment.

The Concluding and Valedictory Session was co-chaired by Prof. Jane Schukoske, CEO, IRRAD-India and Prof. T.S. Lamba, Dean A&R, JUIT and shared their thoughts on the Conference themes. Prof. Arun P. Kulshreshtha, Director, NAM S&T Centre made a presentation on 'The Role of the NAM S&T Centre for South – South Cooperation in Science & Technology'. The Technical Sessions were summed up by Prof. Nirupama Prakash and Prof. Suman Kapur.

Subsequently, after considerable deliberations a set of recommendations titled 'Waknaghat Recommendations – 2013 on Empowering Women in Developing Countries through Information and Communication Technologies' were unanimously adopted.

The Conference ended with the handing over of the Participation Certificates to the participants.

As part of the cultural programmes, the participants made a visit to one of the famous hill stations of India, Shimla.

The participants thanked the organisers for the successful and fruitful organisation of the Conference and for excellent hospitality and arrangements made for the delegates, and unanimously hoped that more similar events will be held in future with a focus on Women Empowerment on various issues.