

“Toward Equal Access of Knowledge for Women through ICT and Media”

By

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Dr. Chonchanok organized and gave a talk in Workshop “Toward Equal Access of Knowledge for Women through ICT and Media” on 6 March 2003, Church Center, 11th Floor. Her talk addressed the following:

- **The Status of Digital Divide:** About 74% of Internet users are from 15 countries. The difference in Internet used per 100 populations is drastic – it is 30.3 for developed countries and 2.8 for developing countries. Regional digital-divide is apparent as top 25 countries in network readiness consists of 14 countries from Western Europe, 7 from Asia and Oceania, 2 from North America, 1 from Central and Eastern Europe, and 1 from Middle East and North Africa.
- **The current status:** Gender digital divide is felt but not substantiated by data due to the lack of gender-sensitive ICT indicators. Many women are stuck in low end jobs in ICT. Government is also focused too much on the Internet rather than other media to increase access to information for women.
- **The goal:** Women should have equal access to knowledge through ICT and Media.
- **The approach:** Two critical needs to attain the goal for each country are
 - (1) leaders who have vision and commitment in using ICT as strategy to develop the country and
 - (2) a strategic ICT plan that is gender-sensitive. Three supporting elements for such plan are
 - (i) Gender-sensitive ICT indicators,
 - (ii) ICT Education, and
 - (iii) ICT infrastructure (both physical and content).
- **The making of leaders with ICT vision:** Dr. Chonchanok gave examples of ICT training for top government officials and Member of Parliaments in Thailand as way to encourage policy makers to incorporating ICT in National Plan. Dr. Chonchanok also gave examples about private sector effort, such as OPPY program (Old People Play Young) which teach people above 45 years old about Internet and computer usage. Over 70% of the students are women; about 34% of these women are business owners.
- **Gender-sensitive ICT Indicators:** Only Thailand and Korea have detailed ICT indicators on Internet usage by gender. This lack of data ~~is undermining~~ **can undermine the effort to formulate a strategy to address gender aspects** in National ICT plans.
- **Physical infrastructure:** Dr. Chonchanok **informed about** the approach in various countries to set up internet booths at post offices and various government agencies including the setting up of Telecenters (or Community Information and Communication Centers) in rural areas. Dr. Chonchanok pointed why many Telecenters failed to make a difference in enabling women to gain access to knowledge.
- **Content Development:** The need to bridge the “knowledge-divide” required Telecenters to serve as information factory for local people. It should have a “knowledge broker” who extracts relevance information of interest to the local community. Such information should be further formulated in local language as well as in appropriate format for local communication channel, such as radio, video, newspaper, street theatre. Several examples are given.

Ref: CSW Paper No.8.