

Kyrgyzstan – addressing woman the “digital divide”

Women in Kyrgyzstan have long predominated in the public sectors: health, education and social security. Such sectors that have suffered cutbacks in jobs and where the jobs that remain have become increasingly badly paid.

Women’s restricted mobility for cultural and family reasons has limited their opportunities to enter the new business economy. Women also lack networks and access to information or communication to join social life. Poor economy, legislation, traditions make her dependent on the circumstances and bad reforms of the transitional period. 55% of the population live in poverty. Kyrgyzstan doesn’t have it’s own resources to change situation and has to relay on foreign aid.

Access to and use Information Communication Technology could play an important role in economic and social development. More than 50% of telecommunication sector in the country belong to the government. Cities and towns more or less equip with telephones (including mobile) TV, Internet, E-mail, etc. In the remote and rural areas, infrastructure for the telecommunications is destroyed and people hardly can get access.

Percentage of the population in the regions remains low. The richest part of the population, International agencies, some institutions which cold receive grants (including some women NGOs) can use modern communication technologies. ICT companies, including those which belong to the government existing in our country never focus on the improvement of women’s status.

Women, the most marginalized part of the population, should be in the focus of the national programmes for the development. The national programme for the next 10 years has been set out in cooperation with large donor agencies including the World Bank and ADB. One of the most important policies of the CDF should be gender mainstreaming. In response to the growing “digital divide”; the Digital Partnership could be set up as a unique international partnership with IT users and suppliers, educators, NGO’s and community leaders. Resource Centers in the rural regions established by NGO sector could provide a platform for a wide range of partners to contribute resources, technology, equipment, educational content, training and technical assistance.

Government is not able to contribute to these programmes and resources today, but it could use the power to regulate development through the responsible ministries, donors, existing business. The shortage of ICT skills could be covered by basic ICT training programmes set up in different institutions: schools, colleges, community centers through programmes of the existing donor agencies and contribution of businesses. Sunday or summer schools for girls and women would be one of the alternative approaches which would not cost too much for the Government.

One of the important issue is the content ICT programmes. How to achieve effectiveness in resolving women issues: women and children rights, food security, prevention, of trafficking in girls and women, conflict prevention, prevention of domestic violence and many others. Problems which government law enforcement bodies hardly recognize could be taken up by women and human rights NGOs, political parties, the regional women networks for advocating women’s interests.

State Committee for family and gender should work more extensively to reflect women's issues.

Lessons learned

1. To explore possibilities to encourage IC to change policy by including gender mainstreaming
2. To discuss these issues with NGOs working on gender
3. To raise a problem through media to attract attention of interested group and raise public awareness
4. Recommendations which were worked out by secretariat mostly applicable in Kyrgyzstan in the future perspective.