

RAP publication 2003/16

# Report of the Asian regional expert consultation on Rural women in knowledge society



December 16 - 19, 2002  
Hyderabad, India



Organisers:  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the  
United Nations  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific,  
Bangkok, Thailand



ICRISAT

International Crops Research Institute  
for the Semi-Arid Tropics, Patancheru, India

In collaboration with the  
Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, Canada

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**Rural women in knowledge society**

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©FAO 2003  
ISBN:974-7946-45-9

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Printed in November 2003

## Foreword

In the current millennium the Asia and Pacific region needs to be prepared to focus on pathways for development in a world marked by forces of globalization, agriculture transformation and the explosion of information and communications driven economies. In these exciting times of new opportunities, the region still has to steer its energies to meet the persisting problems of poverty, feminization of agriculture and uneven food security. While the emerging technologies are heralded as drivers of growth, labelling the transformation as information economy and knowledge society, the persisting rural and urban divide in sharing the prosperity should not be overlooked. In the region, there has been documented evidence on the unequal access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) both among the countries and within the countries between rural and urban residents. While it is widely acknowledged that these technologies can expand the options for better life, it should also be recognized that the prevailing imbalance in access to ICTs could amplify rural disparities in economic and social participation opportunities.

In this milieu of transformation in the global economic and social development driven by the information and communication technologies, rural communities, particularly rural women, face both risks and opportunities for economic and social advancement. FAO recognizes the importance of ICTs as tools that could serve the rural community by improving access, quality and relevance of information to support livelihood and food security strategies. Hence, FAO Gender and Development service has a technical focus on harnessing ICTs for the advancement of rural women. In the context of World Summit for Information Society (WSIS), Gender and Development Program of FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has organized a regional consultation on *rural women in knowledge society*. The primary purpose of the consultation was to examine with development stakeholders, the value of ICTs for every segment of global society. Stakeholders' exploration was done in particular reference to those who have been marginalized in the previous phases of technological revolutions, namely rural communities, illiterate rural women and populations living in resource poor environments and isolated areas.

The institutional partners for organizing the regional consultation were FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics-India, and Commonwealth of Learning, Canada. The consultation brought together key actors from Asia, drawn from government agencies, private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies. The participants represented the following countries and region: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, China, India, China-Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region, Malaysia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam and the United Kingdom.

The FAO Asia-Pacific report of the consultation on *rural women in knowledge society* presents an overview of the stakeholders' deliberations and recommendations as relevant to ICTs and rural women, and distance education and rural women. These recommendations will feed into various processes that design the Plan of Action for WSIS to improve the effectiveness of ICTs in development to address the persisting problems of gender inequality, poverty and food insecurity.

I also take this opportunity to thank the institutional partners who collaborated with FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in bringing out this publication.

October 2003

He Changchui  
Assistant Director General and  
Regional Representative  
FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific  
Bangkok, Thailand

## Foreword

The ongoing knowledge revolution catalyzed by increased access to contemporary information and communication technology (ICT) has provided unprecedented opportunities to enhance global food security. The Third System Review (1999) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) pointed out that international agricultural research should take advantage of the knowledge revolution and be in the forefront of harnessing knowledge power to enhance global food security. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), a constituent of the CGIAR, has taken steps to transform this vision into reality. It has formed partnerships with a variety of stakeholders in the emerging ICT for Development (ICT4D) movement in Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa. One of the key concerns of actors in this movement is the need to avoid top-down, technology-driven approaches. Another is to avoid the development of new inequities, especially in the rural areas, where social and economic arrangements may unwittingly cause an exacerbation of the digital divide.

Women, as principal custodians of local knowledge, wisdom and conservation practices need to be at the forefront of using contemporary ICTs for knowledge creation and sharing. Hence, there is a need to adopt a pro-active approach in involving women in ICT4D activities.

ICRISAT has had a long relationship with the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) and was happy to accept an invitation from the Gender and Development group in FAO-RAP to facilitate and organize a regional consultation on *rural women in knowledge society*. We believe that the blending of non-formal or open/distance learning approaches with contemporary ICT in rural development will offer opportunities to bring rural women and youth into accessing knowledge derived from international and national scientific research. We are happy that the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), a valued partner in promoting open and distance learning, came forward to extend support to the consultation organized by FAO-RAPA and ICRISAT. A number of recommendations that arose from the consultation are directly relevant to the work of the CGIAR centers.

ICRISAT, in collaboration with several other CGIAR centers and partners in the national agricultural research systems, has launched a Virtual Academy for the Semi-Arid Tropics (VASAT) that blends a community-based, bottom-up information sharing approach led by rural women and youth with a technology-mediated virtual college of experts to enhance drought preparedness among the vulnerable rural families in Asia and Africa.

This publication contains a summary of the deliberations and the recommendations. We thank FAO-RAP for the opportunity to host this consultation and the COL for their collaboration.

William D. Dar  
Director General  
ICRISAT

October 2003

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

APDIP	Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme
CABTS	China Agricultural Broadcast and Television School
CDROM	Compact Disc-Read Only Memory
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CSW	Committee on the Status of Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
IANWGE	Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technology for Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IT	Information Technology
NARES	National Agricultural Research and Education Systems
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODL	Open/Distance Learning
ORBICOM	UNESCO Network of Chairs in Communication
PDA	Population Development Association
UN	United Nations
UNDAW	United Nations Division for Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WB	World Bank
WSIS	World Summit on Information Society

## Technical background

The rapid advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the last decade have led to a significant creation of wealth, creating unprecedented means and opportunities to share information sources and knowledge. Simultaneously, there has been a concern about the widening digital divide within and across nations, primarily caused by inequitable access to ICTs and their attendant benefits. The digital divide is more alarming in the context of marginalisation of rural communities and the widening information and opportunity gaps between rural and urban communities.

A number of experimental or pilot activities have been initiated all over the world, especially in Asia, which aim to address the challenge of narrowing the digital divide. Such projects have shown that a blend of innovative technology development and financing, and fostering use of ICTs as a common resource can offer new opportunities for rural women and men to derive benefits from the use of contemporary ICTs. Many of these initiatives require sources of information, knowledge and expertise, available in considerable measure in the intergovernmental organisations, non-government organisations and in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system, all of which work towards enhancing food security and reducing poverty. Through these initiatives, new ways have now become available to take such expertise and knowledge to those partners in development who need them most. With the enhancement in the definition of national agricultural research and education systems (NARES) to include new partners, particularly, the non-profit and for-profit private sector, it is now possible to apply our combined knowledge to make an impact on the broad issue of food security. It should also be acknowledged that the partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for rural education provides a potential avenue for the introduction of ICTs-based education for rural development.

The recent debates on overcoming the digital divide are indicative of increasing interest among international agencies and investors in promoting the use of ICTs in development (UNDP 2001; IFPRI 2000). South Asia is ranked among the regions with a relatively low rank in human development achievement as well as in terms of the gender development index. The two significant aspects of human development are health and education. In health, access to food and food security are important elements. In today's world of complex institutional interactions, education should also include access to and effective use of information to guide decisions and to shape both livelihood and living strategies. Information access to all stakeholders in the community also facilitates gender-balanced participation in economic and political spheres.

FAO recognises the importance of ICTs as tools that serve the rural community by improving access, quality and relevance of information to support livelihood and food security strategies. The international community has emphasised the importance of viewing access to information from a rights perspective, and opportunities are now available that allow blending the rights approach to information with the sustainable livelihoods approach. Prior to the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), it is important that the development community examines the value of ICTs for every segment of global society and particularly for those who have been marginalised in the previous phases of technological revolutions, namely rural communities, illiterate



rural women and populations living in resource poor environments and isolated areas. ICTs offer the opportunity to bring their concerns into the mainstream of development as well as to empower them with information to connect to the outside world, creating opportunities to explore alternative approaches to livelihood and lifestyles.

Within the United Nations the great concern looming ahead is that gender considerations should become an integral part of the WSIS process and proceedings to ensure gender equality in the information-driven economic development and knowledge society. In the year 2003, the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) focused on the issue of ICTs as tools for the advancement of women; the outcome provides advice to the Secretary General of the UN on the situation and to the ICT Task Force in the UN as well. FAO, as a member of the Gender and ICT Working Group in the region, as a member of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) task-force on ICTs and gender, and through participation in CSW, provides inputs to the dialogue and the process to ensure gender equality in the global agenda for ICTs for development and social participation. Within the organisation, FAO has identified ICTs and gender considerations as a key technical area in the Gender and Population Division in collaboration with other technical units.

In this region, it is important to recognise the contrast of Asian talent driving the IT-based global economy and the marginalisation of Asian rural women in the information economy. Remedial strategies should be designed to address the spatial and gender imbalances in access to ICT resources. In the south Asian region an additional concern is the high prevalence of illiteracy among rural women, which presents a further obstacle to the advancement of women in ICTs-driven development. In the Asian region, the mature distance education/open university systems have served the urban population well, but have had little impact on rural residents.

On the education front a productive partnership should be forged between distance education/open learning educational systems and well-developed agriculture education systems to expand the educational options leading to improvement of the social and economic situation for rural women and girls. It is yet another type of education for all challenges to be managed within the dynamics of the knowledge society with gender equality. The support and technical contribution of the Commonwealth of Learning to this consultation demonstrates the joint commitment of the agencies involved to take distance education to rural women.

In this milieu, the present consultation's outcome with the participation of regional experts makes a substantial technical contribution to support FAO in advising the relevant bodies within the UN, as well as in the global and national arena in developing strategies for harnessing ICTs and distance education systems for the advancement of rural women.

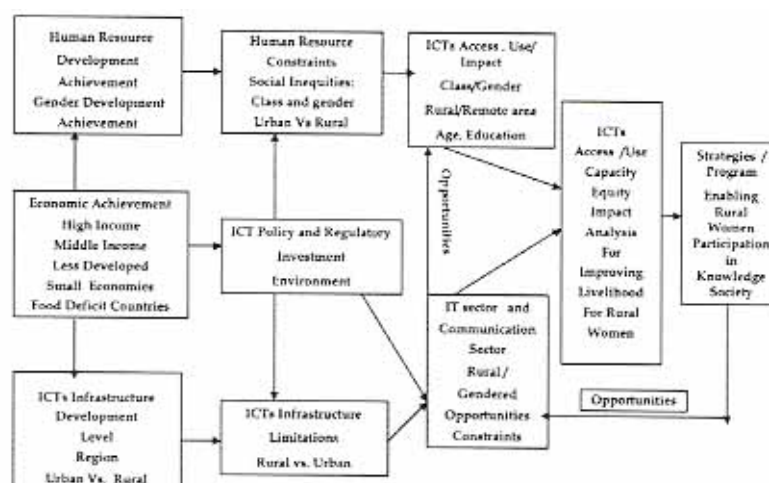
## Consultation framework, purpose and outcomes

This consultation was designed to address issues relating to two of the most critical components of the digital divide, namely rural communities and women, and to explore with partners, the processes, designs and models that can have a positive bearing on these issues. There are a number of studies documenting the disparity between rural and urban locations in access to ICTs. Far fewer studies are available on the gender specific impact of ICTs, especially on women living in rural areas. A position paper prepared earlier this year analysed selected pilot initiatives in various countries in Asia. From its findings it emerges that any new initiative in information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) needs to reflect on the following issues:

- Enabling participation of rural women in an information economy and knowledge society.
- Facilitating skill and expertise development among rural communities, particularly rural women, in the context of the introduction and spread of new rural micro enterprises, ICTs, and Integrated Natural Resource Management. These development interventions are technical skill and knowledge intensive, and aim to foster the adoption of improved management approaches to rural production and employment.
- Enabling rural women's organisations in the use of ICTs for networking opportunities.
- Improving opportunities for distance learning (including an emphasis on instruction at a basic level) to address the inequity in rural educational access.

The position paper titled *Programme approaches for Asian rural women in knowledge society* that guided the consultation was included as FAO and ICRISAT background paper in the consultation resource package. A general conceptual view developed in this paper illustrating the links on programme approaches to create opportunities for Asian rural women in knowledge society is presented below in Figure 1:

**Figure1. Gender and Class in ICTs access and Opportunities**



*The following are the consultation outcomes:*

- Publication of a summary of the proceedings of the consultation in electronic and hard copy format for global access.
- A regional network to monitor the efforts in the area of ICTs and Rural Women.
- Recommendations to strengthen FAO's work in the technical area of harnessing ICTs for the advancement of rural women.
- Regional experts' recommendations to guide FAO's technical input to the global dialogue on Gender and ICTs with specific relevance to rural women, as well as to advise the FAO member countries in gender mainstreaming in ICTs policy and programme spheres relevant to rural women.
- Consolidation of the recommendations of the proceedings to form the basis for a multi-stakeholder, multi-partner regional project on *Asian rural women in knowledge society*.

## **Programme and participants**

The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific supported the regional consultation in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning. ICRISAT provided the technical and organization support to the consultation, which was held on its campus at Patancheru near Hyderabad, India from 16 to 19 December, 2002.

The four-day consultation programme included an opening session, special presentations, and technical sessions that included resource paper presentations and case studies focusing on ICTs-based rural development and distance education to provide livelihood and education opportunities for rural women, a closing session, and small group sessions. The complete programme for the consultation is included as Annexure 1.

The consultation brought together key actors from Asia, drawn from government agencies, private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international agencies. They represented diverse areas of expertise from selected ICT4D projects, academia, agri-business, ICT companies, private foundations supporting rural education and ICT outreach, open/distance learning, agriculture extension, poverty alleviation programmes and rural women's programmes and women's studies. Their experiences spanned a wide range of activities and fields of studies, from training and information sciences and impact evaluation, to innovative ICT applications for rural development, and promoting ICTs and distance education for the advancement of rural communities in the national and global agenda. Observers from various national women's studies programmes, open universities and rural development projects for women with focus on ICTs were also present.

The participants represented the following countries and regions: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, China and Hong Kong SAR, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam and the United Kingdom. Among the participants, invited resource persons with specific thematic assignments were from Canada, China and Hong Kong SAR and the United Kingdom. Indian participants represented the private sector, and innovative academic and government programmes. Representatives of FAO, the Commonwealth of Learning and ICRISAT

fully participated in the consultation. The list of 41 participants is included as Annexure 2.

## **Presentations**

The consultation presentations can be grouped as: addresses by key officers in FAO, Commonwealth of Learning and ICRISAT and special guests; invited resource papers; and case studies from various countries on ICTs for development with a focus on improving opportunities for women and on distance education programmes directed at rural women and rural girls in the region. The presentations are listed below. The complete documentation of the presentations was provided separately on a CDROM to the participants and on request.

### **Special Addresses**

#### **a) Opening Session**

*Special Address: Digital Dividend vs. Digital Divide*

Mr S. Sivakumar, Chief Executive of Agri-Businesses, ITC Limited, India

*Opening Remarks*

Mr Daniel Gustafson, FAO Representative for India and Bhutan

*Presidential Address: Rural Women in Contemporary Knowledge Society*

Mr William D. Dar, Director-General, ICRISAT

#### **b) Closing Session**

*Opening Remarks*

Mr Dyno Keatinge, Deputy Director-General – Research, ICRISAT

*Presidential Address*

Ms Sathi Nair, Chief Secretary to the Government of Andhra Pradesh

*Valedictory Address*

Mr Gajaraj Dhanarajan, President and CEO, COL

### **Consultation partners' presentations on institutional programmes**

*FAO Framework for Harnessing ICTs for Advancement of Rural Women*

Ms Revathi Balakrishnan

Senior Gender and Development Officer

FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

*ICRISAT Plans for Virtual University*

Mr Rex Navarro

Head of the Information Resource Management Office, ICRISAT

*Programme Focus of the Commonwealth of Learning*

Ms Usha Reddi

Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia Communication  
Division, Commonwealth of Learning, New Delhi

**Resource papers**

*Gender and ICTs in the Context of Agriculture and Rural Development*

Ms Eva Rathgeber, Joint Chair Women's Studies, Carleton University/ University  
of Ottawa, Canada

*Regional Review 1: ICT for Development in India: Under the Veil*

Mr Frederic Noronha, Facilitator, Bytes for All, India

*Regional Review 2: ICTs for Rural Development –An Asian Perspective*

Mr Roger Harris, ICT4D Consultant, China and Hong Kong SAR

*Highlights from UNDAW Expert Group Meeting on Information and communication  
technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and  
empowerment of women and FAO Consultation Link to the UNDAW Efforts.*

Ms Revathi Balakrishnan, Senior Gender and Development Officer, FAO  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

*International Conference on Information Technology, Communications and  
Development (ITCD 2002): Highlights.*

Ms Hana Kobayashi, Associate Professional Officer, Gender, Participatory  
Approach and Policies, Sustainable Development Group, FAO Regional Office for  
Asia and the Pacific

*Highlights from the Digital Review of Asia Pacific: An ORBICOMM-IDRC-APDIP  
Initiative*

Mr V. Balaji, Information Resource Management Office, ICRISAT

**Country case studies on ICTs for rural development: recent experiences and  
innovations as applicable to rural women**

*India: ICTs for Empowering the Rural Indian Women*

Ms M. J. Asmita, Programme Manager, Marathmoli,  
Mumbai, India

*Korea, Republic of: ICTs for Rural Women in Korea*

Ms Young-Joo Paik, Korean Women's Development  
Institute, Korea

- Malaysia:* *Integrating Malaysian Rural Women in National ICTs Framework*  
Ms Poline Bala, University of Malaysia at Sarawak, Malaysia
- Philippines:* *Women In ICTs Projects in Rural Areas: The Philippines Experience*  
Ms Teodora Acoba-Battad, Central Luzon State University, Philippines
- Sri Lanka:* *ICTs for Rural Women in Sri Lanka: Recent Experience and Innovations*  
Mr K. D. G. Kulatunga, Open University, Sri Lanka
- Thailand:* *ICTs for Empowering Asian Rural Women: Thai Rural Women*  
Ms Kamolrat Intaraat, Kasetsart University, Thailand
- Viet Nam:* *Viet Nam Country Report: Rural Women in Knowledge Society*  
Ms Bui Le Diem, Angiang University. Viet Nam

***Panel presentation and discussion: ICTs for development with a focus on rural population: private sector partnership innovations***

- Bangladesh:* *The Digital Economy: Change the Perceptions: Grameen Experience*  
Ms Nazneen Sultana, Managing Director, Grameen Communications, Bangladesh (convener)
- India:* *ITC E–Chaupal Experience*  
Mr V. V. Rajasekar, ITC E-Chaupal, India
- India:* *Universalisation of Elementary Education: Azim Premji Foundation*  
Mr S. Giridhar, Azim Premji Foundation, India
- India:* *IT for Social Development*  
Mr Sudhir Ahluwalia, Tata Consultancy Services, India
- United Kingdom:* *The Special 3-for-1 Deal*  
Mr Ziv Navoth, Verve! Consultants, UK

***ICTs in rural capacity building for knowledge sharing and social entrepreneurship with gender balanced impacts – host country experiences***

- Business Models for sustainable development*  
Ms Meera Shenoy, Velugu Project, Andhra Pradesh, India (convenor)

*Notes from the Field*

Ms Richa Kumar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

*Computer on Wheels*

Ms Rajeswari Pingali, Formerly Digital Vision Fellow at Stanford University

*M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation's Experience*

Mr S. Senthil Kumaran, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, India

*Private Extension: Is it Possible?*

Mr T. Harishchandra Prasad, Managing Director, Samaikhya Agri-Tech, India

***Distance learning for rural women and girls: basic education and skill development***

*China: Distance Education in Agriculture—Helping Rural Women in China Progress with the World*

Mr Zeng Yichun, Vice President, CABTS, Beijing, China

*India: A Network for Farmers, Rural Women, Village Workers, Voluntary Agencies and for all those who are interested in Rural Development and Socio-Economic Transformation*

Mr Ram Takwale, Former Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, India

*India: Using ICTs to Empower Rural Women Lessons to Learn, Points to Ponder*

Ms Usha Reddi, Director, COL Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi, India

*Sri Lanka: Distance Learning for Rural Women and Girls-Basic Education and Skills Development*

Ms Uma Coomaraswamy, Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka

*Thailand: Country Case Study: Light House Project, Thailand*

Mr Chaikot Samnaran, Coordinator of the Light House project, PDA, Bangkok, Thailand

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations are presented under the three general categories, namely gender-responsive ICTs for development, distance education for rural women and girls, and innovative partnerships for gender-responsive initiatives in the knowledge society.

### **Gender-responsive ICTs for development**

The turn of the millennium saw the world moving into a global “knowledge society.” Numerous international development organisations proclaimed “knowledge” generation, sharing, or utilisation as their core business and they began to reformulate their corporate programming within a “knowledge” framework. At the

heart of the new focus on “knowledge” is the assumption that information is the key to social, economic, and political development and for the first time in human history, computer- and telephone-based technologies provide the means to transmit information instantaneously around the world. The economic implications are enormous; by the turn of the century, four of the five most valuable companies in the world were associated with the communications business (Skuse 2001). The time/space compression facilitated by the new technologies has become a centrepiece of globalisation. However, developing countries are profiting only marginally from the jobs associated with the new knowledge economy. International Labour Organization’s (ILO) *World Employment Report* of 2000 estimated that only five percent of the service sector jobs in industrialised countries could be transferred to developing countries (Alcántara 2001).

A recent World Bank report noted that there is evidence that in high-income countries, skilled workers have benefited most from information communications technologies (ICTs). In fact, the Internet has the potential to be a stronger force for inequality than earlier communication technologies because it is expensive, requires a high level of education and skill to operate, uses languages not widely spoken by the poor, and needs skilled personnel, electricity and a critical mass of users to make it sustainable (World Bank 2002). In the context of these obstacles, the barriers against women in rural communities using ICTs are likely to be even more pronounced.

At the outset, it should be noted that some of the discussion about the potential of ICTs for “leapfrogging” development processes, especially at the community level, has been wildly optimistic. It is clear that the technologies have potential to help grassroots communities gain access to knowledge and information that can have a positive impact on their lives, and also to democratise their relations with government by opening up regular channels of communication. However, they can just as easily serve to further isolate rural people, because of the complex infrastructure, cost and skill base involved in their utilisation. Some development experts continue to argue that there are more pressing problems such as clean water and good nutrition that should be addressed first and that the relationship between the eradication of poverty and information technology is not necessarily strong.

Nonetheless, it is clear that information and communication technologies are having a major impact in the North and increasingly among the elites of the South. It is reasonable to expect that there is also potential for impact on rural communities of the South. There have already been many attempts to introduce ICTs into rural communities, but the majority of the community-level ICT projects that have sprung up in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean during the past five or six years have been donor- or NGO-inspired and funded. Sustainability has been a problem. Most have been small-scale pilot initiatives and few have focused exclusively on women.

In most countries the private sector is a major partner in the diffusion of ICTs, especially cellular telephones, and it is clear that the opportunities for profits are less immediate in rural areas, particularly for Internet-related technologies. National governments have usually invested in the provision of goods and services in urban rather than in rural areas, so it is not surprising that there has been relatively little incentive to spread ICTs – apart from cellular telephones – to rural areas. Consequently much of the activity has been undertaken by NGOs or by UN-affiliated organisations.



The major constraints to diffusion of benefits of information and communication technologies to rural communities, and within these communities to rural women, are identified globally. Historically there is valid evidence to demonstrate that rural women have been disadvantaged in their access to agriculture technologies and technical education. The most common constraints are female illiteracy and the commonly dominant language being alien, lack of local content, techno-phobia, inadequate Infrastructure and technical expertise, social and cultural biases, and inadequate access. Design of ICTs-based interventions should take into consideration these gender-specific constraints if they are to harness these technologies as instruments for the advancement of rural women. Such a new architecture for ICT4D would demand a change in the traditional perspective that technology is gender and class neutral.

In this context, all solutions need to be contextually situated – what works in one country may not work in another. There is a need to consider differences in such factors as age, caste, disability, race, and religion alongside gender differences. Some of these recommendations relate to programmes that may already exist in different forms in countries of the region; others are general suggestions that could guide the implementation of new programmes.

#### *a. Sustainability*

- ✦ The movement to digitise government services (such as land title provision) could be harnessed to provide the infrastructure (in the form of community e-government access points) to expand access and use of community ICT kiosks. E-governance programmes could be extended to incorporate social services; these access points could also be a means of providing otherwise “non-profitable” community education.
- ✦ Capacity building should be promoted for networking among women (women’s or community user groups at village level) who may be better equipped to fund/manage/sustain the management of telecentres.
- ✦ Content modules should be locally appropriate. Development of such modules in some cases may be self-financing but in others will require sustained subsidy and support.
- ✦ At times, national regulatory policies adversely impact access to ICTs among the rural population; measures are needed to overcome these barriers.
- ✦ IT literacy should be broadly defined not only in terms of IT familiarity and user skills but also to include support services and maintenance of IT equipment in rural environment.
- ✦ There should be positive discrimination of girls, women and other disadvantaged groups to encourage a larger number to acquire competency in IT user skills and to access services.

- ▲ To help girls and women enter the information economy and knowledge society, it is important to support mentoring and positive discrimination at a very early age to increase girls' enrolment and participation in hard sciences and technology centred education. It is also important to reexamine how IT is conceptualised and taught, and to become sensitive to gender biases in the instructional framework and methodology.

*b. Documentation*

- ▲ A collection of case studies should be designed and carried out to understand the thinking that drives innovative national ICT policies and for-profit projects that support rural ICT initiatives.
- ▲ Successful and failed ICT4D projects should be systematically analysed to create learning that will then facilitate development of sustainable interventions.
- ▲ Processes should be carefully documented (how the project is introduced, participants chosen, nature of the partnerships, financial details, which group is providing what resources, lessons learned, weaknesses, strengths) and evaluated. The results should be disseminated to all parties concerned; this process should be a built-in component of every ICT project.
- ▲ Gender differentiated information and sex segregated statistical data should be produced for all ICT initiatives.

*c. Content*

- ▲ The idea should be promoted that rural women are information/knowledge providers (not simply information consumers), particularly of indigenous knowledge. This should be reflected in the design of ICTs.
- ▲ The state/national government should provide directives emphasising that relevant information from various departments be regularly updated and made available in time to rural user groups – district and block level agencies can be given responsibility for updating content on a regular basis.
- ▲ There should be guidelines for ensuring quality and authenticity of content.
- ▲ Content should be specific to the local situation and need. Material should be in the local language and presented in a user-friendly manner; it should be sensitive to gender concerns.
- ▲ Use of ICTs should be promoted in a manner convergent with the traditional media in use. Traditional communication forms should be kept in mind while developing content and planning dissemination modalities.

#### *d. Capacity building*

- ⤴ Design of training curricula should be based on the local context and must include gender sensitisation for both men and women.
- ⤴ Training should facilitate the development of problem solving skills. The training approach should treat users as active interpreters of information and not just passive recipients.
- ⤴ E-extension should receive special attention in the region both in terms of ICT application and content of the programmes so as to expand technology access to rural women.
- ⤴ It is crucial to improve the capacity of staff serving the extension system in terms of IT competency and the application of IT based systems of information management and technology transfer.
- ⤴ All training curricula should be developed in a participatory manner involving the intended learners, particularly rural women.

#### *e. Access*

- ⤴ Research and Development should be promoted to build cost-effective technological solutions for rural contexts/ public needs.
- ⤴ Positive discrimination in favour of women and other under-served groups should be part of ICT policy at the national level.
- ⤴ Inter-sectoral collaboration and partnerships should be promoted between relevant national and local level agencies to design comprehensive programmes to bring information to rural women for livelihood support. Departments like rural development, agriculture, animal husbandry, natural resource management, horticulture, etc. should be included.
- ⤴ Pilot projects should be evaluated and monitored to develop a set of lessons that can serve as prototypes that can then be modified or implemented on a larger scale.
- ⤴ Community ownership (participation in decision making) should be promoted, with sensitivity to gender, caste, class, education and other divides.
- ⤴ Telecentres or information kiosks should be managed by a village representative committee to promote a sense of ownership. Such committees should be encouraged to come up with creative ways to earn money from services in the telecentre and from other sources in the village to defray the cost of maintaining the centre.

- ▲ A certain percentage of the budget of government organisations working in rural development should be allocated to enhancing the capability of rural women in using ICTs.
- ▲ ICTs-driven learning systems provide opportunities to offer integrated information packages addressing the multiple needs of communities and households. Hence efforts should be made to develop integrated information packages for ICTs-based learning systems to assist rural communities.

*f. Evaluation*

- ▲ Multidisciplinary approaches should be used to develop pilot initiatives consisting of anthropologists, human-development experts, technologists, information specialists, language experts, etc. Such projects should be promptly evaluated using carefully chosen indicators of outcomes, focusing not only on success and failure but on learning accrued and impact achieved.
- ▲ The appropriate tools for evaluation should be developed to include participation of beneficiaries, especially women and under-served groups.
- ▲ In assessing the effectiveness of information the focus should be on the active learning process of the learner.

*g. E-commerce*

- ▲ E-commerce initiatives should be supported by institutional mechanisms and capacity building exercises to ensure that women benefit from these opportunities.

**Distance education for rural women and girls**

The goal set in March 1990 was to have basic education for all and universal literacy by 2000. Thirteen years later, it is clear that the progress has been much slower than anticipated. The response to this failure, at the global level, has been to shift the time frame forward, by another fifteen years to 2015. The goal of “Basic Education for All” remains distant for many partly because of additional population growth but also because of the inability of the present structures to cope with the scale and complexity of the challenge.

Existing educational institutions need to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing world. In the light of the failure to achieve “Education for All”, the global development community has realised that existing forms of basic education provision simply do not seem to be up to the job. Conventional educational organisations are noted for their slow pace of internal change.

Some of the critical challenges facing conventional education structures and practices are:

- Increasing access to educational opportunities.
- Providing educational input of good quality.
- Making educational opportunities available at affordable cost.
- Enhancing the relevance of education to societal and individual needs.
- Providing opportunities for life-long-learning.
- Reaching disadvantaged groups.

It is here that the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) approach becomes a crucial alternative. It can also be a supplement or complement to conventional learning. For the benefit of a wider audience it would be important to define the terms commonly used in the field of education and distance education.

Basic education is a difficult term to define. It can apply equally to young children inside or outside schools and to adults, inside or outside formal education structure or the labour market.

The Jomtien Conference of 1990 defined basic learning needs as comprising:

“Both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning” (UNESCO, 1990).

Basic Education thus refers to education addressed to both adults and children. It includes primary education programmes and programmes equivalent to primary and in many countries up to junior secondary education. It also includes those programmes with alternative curricula, including such areas as basic health, nutrition, family planning, literacy, agriculture and other life-related and vocational skills.

Audiences for such basic education at a distance would be:

- children in classrooms
- out-of-school children and adults who have lost out on the opportunity for education with their peer group for whatever reason.

These out-of-school audiences possess a set of characteristics far more difficult to describe than that of the more captive audiences found in the school classrooms. The characteristics vary along a number of dimensions, some of the more significant ones being age, formal educational experience, gender, physical location, health, ethnicity, culture and language.

Open learning refers to an organisational activity based on the use of teaching materials in which the constraints on study are minimised either in terms of access or of time and place, pace, methods of study or any combination of these.

Distance education is an educational process in which for the majority of the time of the learning, the teacher and learner are removed in space or time from each other.

Distance education programmes that have hitherto largely been confined to the tertiary sector have to be now harnessed to expand access to education for a broader audience.

In the formal education system, ODL is used for several distinct purposes, both within conventional schools and outside the classroom context. Within the school system ODL programmes are used to supplement classroom teaching and to expand the range of programmes available in schools with limited resources.

Outside the conventional system, ODL programmes provide a substitute for face-to-face interaction for learners who cannot attend school. They also offer the official curriculum to those who are beyond the school system but want a formal qualification. Distance Learning has special characteristics, which should be used to increase access to learning for rural women and girls. The following recommendations are aimed at improving the access to distance education among rural women and girls.

- ⤴ Educational opportunities for overall improvement in quality of life of rural women and girls should primarily be related to livelihood and be appropriate to their localities in terms of skill development and capacity building with facilities available as close to the community as possible.
  - While the component of income generation for individual and self-help groups should be inherent to any educational programme, opportunities for life-long learning and for certification should also be fostered.
  - Focused short-term programmes should address varied issues and themes of relevance with immediate applicability.
  - These distance education opportunities should be designed so as to emancipate and empower women.
- ⤴ The prospective users (rural women and girls) should be involved in the entire process of developing the programmes, content, delivery methodologies, learning processes, and assessment, and in the use of innovative technologies. Such a participatory approach can help ensure quality, relevance of content and technologies.
- ⤴ Working partnerships of a non-exploitative nature should be nurtured at different levels among existing agricultural educational systems, open and distance learning systems, private sector, grassroots NGOs and local government for life-long learning through all modes of education, Key participants in the partnership should be the learner-beneficiaries (rural women and girls).
- ⤴ The available infrastructure, operational mechanisms, resources and technologies of the open and distance learning systems should be used wherever they are available. Delivery mechanisms, i.e., ICTs, should be appropriate, deliverable, as well as acceptable and readily available to rural women and girls.
- ⤴ Governments must actively develop and pursue gender-focused policies as opposed to maintaining a gender-neutral stance and take specific steps to develop and disseminate critical gender-disaggregated data. Such data should be evaluated and monitored on a regular basis.

- ⤴ All such policies must be embedded in a holistic, cultural, historical and socio-economic perspective with respect to traditional and rural women's indigenous knowledge systems. Synergies between ICTs and traditional knowledge systems already existing in rural communities must be identified and promoted.
- ⤴ Sustainability includes financial, technological, academic and social aspects. It is critical that these aspects be addressed as a continuous process of policy formulation, programming, planning and monitoring of all aspects of knowledge systems of rural women.
- ⤴ Rural women should be encouraged to take advantage of extensive and mature open university systems to learn about emerging new technologies (IT, biotechnology, agriculture technologies, improved production and processing methods) and the curriculum of the open university and distance education should be adjusted accordingly.
- ⤴ It is important that young girls are encouraged to take up the study of science and math education at school level in distance education based programmes to facilitate their effective participation in the knowledge society.
- ⤴ Capacity building should ensure the development of a pool of service providers to translate and interpret knowledge and technology so that they may be applied to benefit rural women.

### **Innovative partnerships for gender-responsive initiatives in the knowledge society**

In the ICTs for Development agenda, stakeholders will be different from those in the traditional development programmes. The new actors will be the private sector for-profit group that is leading the ICT innovations and interventions in the Asian Region. In order to make gender-sensitive ICT4D programmes sustainable, and if they are to become an integral part of rural development initiatives, the cooperation of all interested sectors is crucial. Hence, the consultation invited the participation and views of the private sector to explore innovative partnerships for gender-responsive initiatives in ICTs for development. This section summarizes the recommendations that consider the potential for involving the for-profit sector in such initiatives. Increasingly, the for-profit corporate sector is recognising that it must play an important role in social innovations to balance corporate responsibility with motives of profitability. Social responsibility is not only an indicator of good corporate governance, but it also is an important measure by which the investing public judges the corporate entity. For these reasons, many actors in the for-profit sector have indicated an interest in becoming involved in development projects, either in terms of granting funds, providing expertise, or implementing programmes. From the cases presented in the consultation it is clear that in India, many private sector organisations see themselves as the link between IT opportunities and the rural community, and this perspective can be used to generate development advantage, particularly in the effort to increase opportunities for rural women to participate in the knowledge society.

Experience from experiments by small private groups, ranging from use of community and HAM radio as well as corporate extension services has provided important insights into the ways in which such partnerships can shape development efforts. Cooperation between government and professional groups can lead to changes in policy on the part of government, and more efficient and quicker implementation by professionals. Project implementers must recognise that rural people are both consumers and producers of knowledge, and that rural communities represent an important client group—a factor that makes such projects attractive to the for-profit sector.

But it is important to recognize the prevailing wide polarization of views on the positive and negative aspects of such partnerships and the potential risks if the partnerships are do not address the relative differences in resources and bargaining power vested among the various actors.

Suggestions made by the panellists fall into two main categories: (1) ICTs for rural development—private sector partnership innovations, and (2) ICTs in rural capacity building for knowledge sharing and social entrepreneurship with gender-balanced impacts.

#### **a. ICTs for rural development: potential private sector partnerships**

While concerns exist regarding the modality and balance of power in private-public-NGO partnerships, there is a general consensus that such partnerships are both desirable and necessary to promote ICTs for development in Asia. Particularly important foundations for such partnerships are issues of sustainability, infrastructure creation, setting of clear objectives, and transferability of knowledge generated in urban centres to the rural space. It was recommended that the following concerns be addressed when such partnerships are created:

- ✦ The needs of the community concerned must be continuously assessed and objectives spelt out at the beginning. The content and design of ICTs must reflect changing needs and the desired objectives of the community.
- ✦ It is important to identify and nurture good leadership from the outset in all projects.
- ✦ Value creation must be a continuous process if the project is to be sustainable.
- ✦ Constraints must be turned into opportunities.
- ✦ Solutions must be comprehensive, and cover every sector of the rural economy.
- ✦ The focus must be on practical applications of ICTs. Software must suit the needs of the rural community.
- ✦ Reliable and speedy advisory services must be made available.
- ✦ NGOs must sensitise the for-profit sector to bring gender perspectives to their projects. Supplementary support programmes are needed to take care of the extended needs of women and children (e.g. childcare for working women, or women in training, counselling).
- ✦ NGOs must be willing to pay for what they want, on reasonable terms, since private sector may invest considerable resources in research and development.



## **b. ICTs in rural human resource development**

In this context, rural HRD is defined to include gender-responsive capacity-building for knowledge sharing and social entrepreneurship. Gender is an essential component in planning ICTs for rural capacity building. Encouraging women's participation is critical to capacity building and to successful implementation of a project. Any successful intervention to promote gender-balanced impacts must be linked to the experiences of women. Despite all their constraints and problems, women do well as entrepreneurs, field workers, rural ICT-kiosk operator, etc., especially when they are connected to self-help groups and when financial incentives are strong. Women's participation will be enhanced if learning centres and other places of activity are in locations where women feel safe and comfortable. Development workers must recognise and take into account the many socio-cultural factors that influence the lives and identities of women in rural communities. Power relationships are as much if not more of an issue than access, when it comes to technology and other resources. This recognition must permeate the creation of content for ICTs to include different groups of rural women. Partnerships that involve not-for-profit and for-profit groups can work well together to create access to technology provided they are sensitive and responsive to gender issues.

Specific recommendations include the following:

- ⤴ ICT applications must emerge from the needs of rural women and men as farmers and producers and project implementers must ensure that they are not simply adding to the burden women already carry.
- ⤴ A combination of professionals and community activists would make the project sustainable.
- ⤴ Villages should be given ownership of the scheme so that they can make it sustainable.
- ⤴ Training of rural men and women should include computer skills, both in terms of use and maintenance.
- ⤴ Women should be targeted as primary clients in information campaigns.
- ⤴ Efforts should be increased to include more female extension workers in projects.
- ⤴ Programmes and projects should have a good communication strategy.
- ⤴ Partnerships should include different kinds of agencies and organizations, each with a different area of responsibility.
- ⤴ The focus should be on skills and knowledge transfer to rural communities, so that they can sustain the project.
- ⤴ Decision support systems should be developed at the farmer level.
- ⤴ Services must be provided for a fee, so that they are valued.

- ⤴ Technological information needs to be translated into market information, because farmers need support in terms of information that can empower them as actors in a competitive market.
- ⤴ Every project and every village must be treated as a unique situation; there is no universal solution.

## **Regional strategy/suggestions for regional project**

The preliminary suggestions for regional collaboration and regional activities focusing on gender-responsive ICTs for development and distance education for rural women and girls are presented in this section.

### **Gender-responsive ICTs for development**

- ⤴ The Asia-Pacific regional experience in ICTs for development has been initiated by a diverse group of NGOs, the private sector as well as the public sector. Thus the development of the knowledge society is marked by diversity in programme and leadership. Such diversity in leadership in fostering knowledge society should be documented and analysed in terms of its relevance to sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and gender responsiveness. The evolutionary models and their outcomes, both positive and negative should provide guidelines for future interventions in fostering a gender-responsive knowledge society. The action can be undertaken by FAO with other UN bodies in the region in collaboration with national institutions in the region.
- ⤴ A clearinghouse of ICT projects should be created – with quality control and process documentation, and contact information for project leaders – based on close collaboration between agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, WB, private initiatives like Digital Dividend).
- ⤴ The modality adopted by countries in the region for ICTs-driven development is mostly a reaction to globalisation and aggressive initiatives by private sector, hence there may be no clearly articulated ICT policy. Therefore it would be crucial to target leadership in both government and private sector to ensure gender-responsive ICT policies and programmes.
- ⤴ It would be important to analyse the IT and CT policies in the region for gender responsiveness with the recognition that ministerial divisions could exist among the information and communication responsibilities at the national level.
- ⤴ A regional gender-sensitive ICT training module should be designed, taking into account contextual differences within the region.
- ⤴ A Rural ICT Initiative Handbook should be developed, which includes guidelines and recommendations for planning, implementing and evaluating rural ICT projects. The Handbook should be responsive to gender concerns.

- ⤴ Technology access policy at the national level should include a clear design on how to incorporate rural people and rural women in particular in the larger framework.

#### **Distance education for rural women**

The following resources should be developed within the region:

- ⤴ A resource database of gender-disaggregated data of the region.
- ⤴ A database of indigenous knowledge systems.
- ⤴ Resource mapping of existing programmes, innovative practices, projects, and case studies that focus on the situation of rural women and girls.
- ⤴ A database of existing partnerships among the stakeholders.

#### **Publication**

A consolidated publication of case studies will be prepared, to form an analytical work that will be distributed by global marketing agencies. For this purpose an editorial committee to review and edit the conference presentations before compilation has been constituted. In the meantime, these summary proceedings of the consultation shall be circulated widely among all stakeholders.

The proposed editorial review committee:

Mr V. Balaji, ICRISAT, Patancheru, India

Ms Eva Rathgerber, Joint Chair of Women's Studies, Université d'Ottawa/Carleton University, Ottawa

Ms Uma Coomaraswamy, Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka

Ms Usha Reddi, COL, New Delhi, India

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## Asian Regional Expert Consultation on Rural Women in Knowledge Society



### PROGRAMME

#### **15 December 2002 (Sunday)**

- Arrival of Participants
- Evening: Registration

#### **16 December 2002 (Monday)**

0900-1030

#### ***Inaugural Session***

##### ***Opening remarks***

Ms Revathi Balakrishnan  
Senior Gender and Development Officer  
FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Mr Rex Navarro  
Head of the Information Resource Management Office  
ICRISAT

Ms Usha Reddi  
Commonwealth of Learning, New Delhi

##### ***Special Address***

Mr S. Sivakumar  
Chief Executive of Agri-Businesses, ITC Limited, India

##### ***Opening Remarks***

Mr Daniel Gustafson, FAO Representative in India

##### ***Presidential Address***

Mr William D. Dar, Director General, ICRISAT

##### ***Vote of thanks***

Mr S. Srinivas, Head, LIS, IRMO, ICRISAT

1100-1100

Tea/Coffee

1100-1200

#### ***Invited Resource Paper and Discussion:***

*Chair* : Ms Revathi Balakrishnan

#### ***Gender and ICTs in Agriculture and Rural Development Agenda***

Ms Eva Rathgeber, Joint Chair, Women's Studies, Carleton  
University, Ottawa, Canada

1200 – 1230	<b>Introduction to Participants (mutual)</b> <b>Programme Arrangements and Overview</b> Mr B. Ramkumar, IRMO, ICRISAT
1230 – 1330	Lunch
1330 – 1500	<b>Regional Overview: ICTs in Development</b> <i>Chair</i> : Ms Uma Coomaraswamy  <b>Regional Review 1: South Asia</b> Mr Frederic Noronha, Facilitator, Bytes for All  <b>Regional Review 2: General</b> Mr Roger Harris, ICT4D Consultant, China and Hong Kong SAR
1500 – 1530	Tea/Coffee
1530 – 1730	<b>Session I Country Case Studies on ICTs for Rural Development: Recent Experience and Innovations as Applicable to Rural Women</b> <i>Chair</i> : Ms Eva Rathgeber  <i>Malaysia</i> : Ms Poline Bala, University of Malaysia at Sarawak  <i>Philippines</i> : Ms Teodora Acoba-Battad, Central Luzon State University  <i>Thailand</i> : Ms Kamolrat Intaraat, Kasetsart University  <i>Viet Nam</i> : Ms Bui Le Diem, Angiang University

**17 December 2002 (Tuesday)**

0800 – 0945	<b>Session II Case Studies on ICTs for Rural Development: Recent Experience and Innovations as Applicable to Rural Women</b>  <i>Chair</i> : Mr Roger Harris  Sri Lanka : Mr K.D.G. Kulatunga, Open University, Sri Lanka  Korea, Rep : Ms Young-Joo Paik, Korean Women's Development Institute  India : Ms M. J. Asmita, Programme Manager, Marathmoli
0945 – 1000	Tea/Coffee

1000 – 1200	<p><b><i>Panel Presentation and Discussion:</i></b> ICTs for Development with Focus on Rural Population: Private Sector Partnership Innovations</p> <p>Ms Nazneen Sultana, Grameen Communications, Bangladesh (convenor)</p> <p>Mr V. V. Rajasekar, ITC E-Chaupal, India</p> <p>Mr S. Giridhar, Azim Premji Foundation, India</p> <p>Mr Ziv Navoth, Verve! Consultants, UK</p> <p>Mr Sudhir Ahluwalia, Tata Consultancy Services, India</p>
1200 – 1400	Lunch
1415 – 1600	<p><b><i>Thematic Presentation and Discussion:</i></b> ICTs in Rural Capacity Building for Knowledge Sharing and Social Entrepreneurship with Gender Balanced Impacts (host country experiences)</p> <p>Ms Meera Shenoy, Velugu Project, AP State, India (convenor)</p> <p>Ms Richa Kumar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA</p> <p>Ms Rajeswari Pingali, Formerly Digital Vision Fellow at Stanford University</p> <p>Mr S. Senthil Kumaran, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, India</p> <p>Mr T. Harishchandra Prasad, Managing Director, Samaikhya Agri-Tech, India</p> <p><i>Rapporteur:</i> Susan White</p>
1600 – 1615	Tea/Coffee
1615 – 1800	<p><b><i>Thematic Presentation and Discussion</i></b></p> <p>Distance Learning for Rural Women and Girls: Basic Education and Skill Development</p> <p><i>Chair :</i> Mr Gajaraj Dhanarajan, President and CEO, COL</p> <p>Mr Zeng Yichun, Vice President, CABTS, Beijing, China</p> <p>Ms Uma Coomaraswamy, Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka</p> <p>Mr Chaikot Samnaran, Coordinator of the Light house project, PDA, Thailand</p>

Mr Ram Takwale, Former Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, India

Ms Usha Reddi, COL

*Rapporteur:* Mr Surya Gunjal

**18 December 2002 (Wednesday)**

0830 – 1000

***Special Presentations and Discussions***

*Chair :* Mr C. L.L. Gowda

*Highlights from UNDAW Expert Group Meeting on Information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women and FAO Consultation Link to the UNDAW Efforts.*

Ms Revathi Balakrishnan, Senior Gender and Development Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

*International Conference on Information Technology, Communications and Development (ITCD 2002): Highlights*  
Ms Hana Kobayashi, Associate Professional Officer, Gender, Participatory Approach and Policies, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

*Highlights from the Digital Review of Asia Pacific: an ORBICOM-IDRC-APDIP initiative*

Mr V. Balaji, IRMO. ICRISAT

*Rapporteur:* Ms Poline Bala

1000 – 1030

Tea/Coffee

1030 – 1230

***Group Discussion in Thematic Sessions***

- ICTs for development with focus on rural population: private sector partnership innovations and ICTs in rural capacity building for knowledge sharing and social entrepreneurship with gender balanced impacts
- Distance learning for rural women and girls: basic education and skill development

1230 – 1330

Lunch

1330 – 1500

***Group Discussions (continued)***

1500 – 1530

Tea/Coffee



1530 – 1700                      *Chair* : Ms Eva Rathgeber  
Presentations of highlights and recommendations from small  
group sessions

**19 December 2002 (Thursday)**

0900 – 1045                      ***Regional strategies: Discussions and adoption of action  
strategy and report***

*Chair* : Ms Revathi Balakrishnan

1045 – 1100                      Tea/Coffee

1130 – 1230                      ***Valedictory Session:***

***Opening Remarks***

Mr Dyno Keatinge, Deputy Director-General – Research  
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***Highlights of the Consultation***

Ms Revathi Balakrishnan, Senior Gender and Diversity Officer  
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***Presidential Address***

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***Valedictory Address***

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***Vote of Thanks***

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ISBN: 974-7946-45-9

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October 2003