WOMEN IN ICT

In Search of an Identity

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Foreword

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a booming industry worldwide. With an annual compounded growth rate of 11% globally, the ICT market offers huge prospects for both individuals and businesses. As the number of job vacancies increases in the market, the demand for skilled human resource is sure to accelerate as well. As the global ICT market booms, there will be a lack of skilled human resource and a failure to attract women into the industry will be a serious mistake.

Although the ICT has been experiencing noteworthy growth in Nepal, there is a comparatively lower participation of women than men. There is no doubt that ICT can be a tool for promoting women in both national and international trade and development. It can be used as an instrument by women in fighting widespread gender disparity and improving their overall status. Despite these opportunities, there are barriers still inhibiting Nepalese women from using ICT, which can only be of help to those who are educated and know how to operate computers and surf the Internet. The reality is that nearly two thirds of the world's illiterate are women, and one out of every two women in the developing countries is illiterate. Besides, most women live in rural areas where access to information technology is very low.

In many cultures, women studying science and technology courses are often looked down upon because people believe that women are too emotional and can't think logically and scientifically. Consequently, women are encouraged to take up an easier field of study and not enter the technical field. Many ICT jobs such as radio and video jockeys, news readers, etc. require night shifts which is not culturally acceptable for women.

Many researches have shown that women's participation in decision making

positions such as in senior management or board of directors or other similar high-ranking posts can be counted on one's fingers. Very low employment opportunities are given to women in the field of ICT as it is believed that women are less competitive in this sector. Therefore, there is an urgent need not only to build up women's capacity in the ICT sector but also to sensitize them on the prospect of ICT. They require basic literacy and computer skills. Moreover, they need to be equipped with the skills necessary to prepare them as ICT users, creators, designers and managers. Girls should be encouraged to demand and choose ICT courses by generating awareness about how ICT skills can enable them to pursue a wide range of careers. Their hidden potentialities have to be raised by motivating and encouraging them to be the front runners in ICT. Positive discriminatory measures have to be undertaken by the government and the civil society has to be pro-active in engaging in such a movement.

In the changed democratic context of Nepal there is a need to review the policies and regulations for supporting the wider participation of marginalized communities as well as women. Interactions and events like this will provide concrete suggestions to review these regulations. We are grateful to all the support received from different sectors to initiate this process of crafting future directions for enhancing the participation of women in ICT.

Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali
Executive Director

Preface

Nepal has a population of about 22.7 million, with the rural population accounting for 90.8% of the total. Women constitute 50.4% of the total population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001), but their rural literacy rate is 36.5% and the urban rate of women literacy is 61.5% (Women in Governance, 2003). Inadequate literacy and exposure of these women do not make them confident of playing with different tools and techniques.

For every 1000 persons in Nepal, there are 32 telephone lines, 6 mobile phones, 8 TV sets, 39 radio access, 5 personal computers and 60 persons have internet access. UN statistics show that only 22% of Asian women have access to the internet. On the other hand, there is a larger number of male software developers than female. According to the IDEC study of 2001, the Asia/Pacific region, with 1.7 million software developers, is currently the number two producer of development talent, surpassing Western Europe's 1.6 million developers, but well behind North America's 2.6 million professional developers. There are very few women software developers in the world and fewer in developing countries like Nepal.

Women have very little access to economic resources though the average working period for women is 16 hours. Women are pre-occupied with their social responsibilities. There are very few mechanisms that can increase women's access to financial resources. Since ICT is too expensive for the government and private sectors must adopt a mechanism that will make the use of these technologies affordable to women and thus raise the standards of their lives.

Telecenters are considered to be strong mechanisms for minimizing the digital divide. In most cases, these centers are planned as per the need of the community NOT focusing on the need of women as such. The location and time of operation of these centers are of major concern as these factors

prevent women from benefiting from these centers. On the other hand, a woman friendly environment within the center should be promoted so that women do not feel awkward in using these centers as information banks.

There is very little participation of women in political governance. Women constitute 5.8% in the House of Representatives and 9.6% in local governance. There is no participation of women in ICT decision making bodies. Most women confine themselves to operator's level. There should be strong steps to promote professionalism and competency of women so that they can contribute to policy making procedures.

BellaSAP, a consolidated structure of Bellanet and SAP International has organized an event on "Women in ICT: In Search of an Identity" together with the Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) and the Kathmandu College of Management (KCM). We are hopeful that the event will be regarded as a pioneering effort in bringing together women working in ICT on a common platform to craft future directions for promoting women's participation in ICT. A woman in ICT Committee has been a major output of the event. We believe that the committee can be an impetus for ensuring the quality participation of women in ICT arena of the country.

We are encouraged by the strong support of all the organizers and co-organizers of the event in conceptualizing and implementing the event. The strong commitment of all the participants has helped outline recommendations to the government and the civil society involved in ICT. We are indebted to the efforts and participation of women despite a sudden Nepal Bandh on the first day of the event. We firmly believe that our efforts will support in increasing the participation of women in the ICT sector of Nepal.

Ms. Shikha Shrestha
Program Coordinator
BellaSAP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's information age, ICT is a vital tool for bridging the digital divide. For a land-locked country like Nepal, ICT can be particularly helpful in the economic development of the country given the geographical isolation of many areas. The ICT sector has opened its doors to many job prospects such as telecommuting, outsourcing, telecenters and the like. Although, there are job opportunities in this field, the entry, particularly of women into the ICT job market is very low.

According to the ITU World Telecommunication/ ICT Indicators Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 15-7 January 2003, women are absent from the decision making roles in ICT. These structures include the boards and senior management of IT companies, senior managers and advisors of policy and regulatory organizations, technical standard setting organizations, industry and professional organizations such as the Internet society, national policy and regulatory organizations and international development.

As such, it is most necessary to understand the reasons for the low participation of women in the ICT sector and come up with ways to motivate and encourage them to choose careers in ICT. In this scenario, BellaSAP initiated a project titled "Women in ICT". As a first step towards this, a workshop "Women in ICT: In Search of an Identity" was organized from 19-20 December, 2006 at SAP Falcha. The closed camp on the first day saw the active participation of women from different sectors of ICT despite the bandh declared on that day. The closed women's camp was followed by a mixed group sharing where men shared their views on the issue. The findings and suggestions of the previous day were shared with the government representatives and other guests during the closing ceremony

the next day.

The main issue raised in the workshop was "Why are women left behind in the ICT movement?" To discuss this issue, a knowledge management toolkit named Open Space Methodology was used. The participants came up with different causes/reasons for the low participation of women and marketed their ideas in the marketplace. Following this, different feather group discusiions took place.

According to the participants, the lack of women participation in the ICT sector was due to the lack of self-confidence of the women themselves and the socio-cultural barriers imposed by the society. Culturally, women have the responsibility of taking care of the family and also balancing the professional life. Moreover, they are also more conscious of and sensitive towards the views of the society and hence restrain from doing anything that is out of the ordinary.

A lack of ICT awareness is another major reason why women pursue careers in fields other than ICT. Careers in ICT are often mistakenly perceived as being a man's field. ICT jobs are perceived as having lower human interaction. By nature, women prefer to choose jobs that have more interaction. Hence, the wrong perception of the ICT job puts women at a disadvantage. Additionally, the courses taught are more theoretical than practical, thereby many lose interest in the subject.

Another major reason is the lack of job opportunities after graduation. Identifying role mentors in this field is also difficult. Women have lower access to resources compared to men. Many cybercafés and information kiosks are crowded with boys and hence girls do not feel comfortable in these places. Also, there aren't many platforms provided where women can put forward their issues and concerns to the authorities concerned.

Now, to address these issues, a proper and effective networking of women and organizations working in the ICT field has to be established. This network will then be responsible for promoting the participation of women in this field and advocacy of these issues to the people concerned. Issue marketing is another major initiation that needs to be made. Moreover, the development of an inventory of women professionals and organizations working with similar issues and projects would be an added asset.

Women too have to realize their true potential and bring it to the forefront. Building their self-confidence will ultimately help women to raise their voices. As such, capacity building interventions such as workshops, trainings etc. will also help women to refine their potential and have more confidence in themselves. Moreover, the working environment of organizations also has to be conducive to women employees. But, all this will be incomplete without the assistance of the governmental authorities. Proper policies and gender sensitive regulations have to be formulated to encourage women to participate in ICT related jobs. The recognition of women ICT entrepreneurs by both the civil society and the Government will boost their confidence and will also act as a motivating factor for other women working or planning to work in the field.

In this regard, the workshop proved to be quite beneficial by coming up with some concrete suggestions to increase the participation of women in the ICT field. Both the civil society and the Government viewed the recommendations of the participants positively. All in all, the future of ICT in Nepal looks bright but there is still a long way to go before substantial number of women participate in this field and reach decision-making levels. With the support and initiation from both the civil society and the Government, however, a lot can be achieved.

Women comprise half of the population of Nepal. However, women are still lagging behind in ICT movement of the country. It should put forward strategic actions for increasing quality participation of women in ICT arena.

1. BACKGROUND

Information technology (IT) has become a potent force in transforming social, economic, and political life globally. Without its incorporation into the information age, there is little chance for countries or regions to develop. More and more concern is being shown about the impact on those left on the other side of the digital divide-the division between the information "haves" and "have nots". The ICT is a tool of production (routine office work, data entry, manufacturing, computer industry ,jobs, programming, and related work) and tool of communication (creating and exchanging information).

The ICT Movement in Nepal was initiated with the introduction of the IBM 1401 Computer System for processing the Census Data in 1971. Looking at the potential of IT, the erstwhile His Majesty's Government (HMG) of Nepal established an autonomous centre named the Electronic Data Processing Center (EPDC) in 1974, later renamed the National Computer Center (NCC) in 1978. The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), which was established in 1996, took a lead role in promoting and facilitating the effective use of IT in Nepal. Besides, the National IT Development Council, the National IT Coordination Committee, the National IT Center and the IT Park Development Committee are some other institutions established within the country (P. B. Adiga, 2002, Country Paper of Nepal, ASP Seminar for Industry Association in the ICT sectors, Bangkok).

The Government of Nepal has also recognized the potential benefits that the ICT field can bring to the country, given the geographical isolation of many areas in Nepal. Even the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include ICT accessibility as a target as it can act as a backbone to interconnecting

the rural areas of Nepal into a common information network. Consequently, the Government has also brought forward an IT policy to encourage IT related activities. Likewise, an IT park is also being developed in Dhulikhel.

Although the establishment of an institution is a preliminary step for facilitating any process, some policy guidelines will help these institutions perform well in the long run. The Nepali government started to prepare the National Information Technology (IT) policy in the late 1990s. The National Planning Commission was delegated the responsibility of preparing the IT Policy. After a year, the IT policy 2000 was prepared to place Nepal on the global map of information technology within the next five years.

From the proliferation of technology perspective, most of the significant institutions like banking and financial institutions, tourism related institutions like hotels, airlines, travel agencies etc., transport e.g. airline, long distance buses etc., industries etc. have already been computerized and offer computer-based services in the country. A number of government organizations have also undertaken considerable efforts to computerize their services. The level of ICT Penetration within different segments of the society is as given here: Government 10%, International NGOs 100%, MNCs 100%, Large Business Houses 70%, Medium Companies 50%, SMEs 10%, Financial Sector 80%, Travel Trade 80% and Distribution 30%. With newer concepts like outsourcing and the like, many new avenues have opened up for a developing and land-locked country like Nepal. Many overseas companies have opened up their franchises here. In addition, companies in countries abroad prefer to have their IT projects outsourced here due to lower labor cost.

Women constitute nearly half of the population i.e. 50.04% of the total population of 22,736,934 (National Population Census 2001). Equality means that girls and women should have equal opportunity to education, equal

access to income, and assets to control their own fertility. Therefore, strategies should be designed to give women easy access to Information and Communication Technology. This will lead to an efficient e-governing mechanism, which is only possible when the government and civil society are gender sensitive in the planning phase of ICT4D. As Nepal is in the primitive stage of ICT4D, it will be easier to incorporate gender sensitive planning. It is a favorable condition for establishing the concept of women friendly ICT4D in Nepal.

Available data indicates that women are conspicuously absent from the decision making structure in information technology in both developed and developing countries. These structures includes the boards and senior management of IT companies, senior management and advisors of policy and regulatory organizations, technical standards setting organizations, industry and professional organizations such as the Internet society, national policy and regulatory organizations, and international development organizations and agencies etc (ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 15-17 January 2003).

IT can be an important tool in meeting women's basic needs and can provide access to resources to lead women out of poverty. Women comprise 19% of the IT workforce and 37 % of employees in the IT-enabled service sector in India. There is 20 % in the software industry of Brazil. In Malaysia, where the government has made significant investments in education and training for both men and women, women have entered managerial and administrative positions in substantial numbers and are well represented in computer programming positions in banking, telecommunications, and insurance.

The IT Policy of Nepal, 2004 is still in a discussion phase. The vision of the policy document is that "By the year 2015, Nepal will have transformed

itself into a knowledge based society by becoming fully capable of harnessing information and communication technologies and through the means, achieving the goal of good governance, poverty reduction and social and economic development".

There are five strategies in the policy document. While reviewing the document, it is interesting to note that the IT Policy of Nepal is very gender neutral. There is not even a single provision to make ICT accessible to women and other marginalized sections of the country. Is it because the government thinks that women already have access to this technology or is it because this is still not a priority area for the government? This is a crucial question for the state.

In today's job market, women are as competitive and competent as men. Be it in the banking sector, or development, or the medical field, women have proved their expertise. But, the IT field tells a different story. As much as there is a proliferation of job opportunities in the field of IT, very few women occupy these positions. This is not a scenario prevalent not only in Nepal, but also rather dishearteningly; in most countries in the world.

Women's access to information technology is not a simple question of whether there is a computer connected to the Internet that women can use. Different factors influence this disparity in ICT like education, income levels, gender, caste, etc. The UNDP Human Development Report, 1999 on the gender aspects of the use of ICT and ICT related services showed that women accounted for 38% of the users in the United States, 25% in Brazil, 17% in Japan and South Africa, 16% in Russia, only 7% in China and a mere 4% in the Arab States (S. Huyer and T. Sikoska, 2003, Overcoming the Gender Digital Divide: Understanding of ICTs and their Potential for the Empowerment of Women, INSTRAW Research Paper Series No. 1). It clearly

indicated that there was minimal access of women to ICT. This situation is even worse in developing countries like Nepal.

It indicates a need for consolidating a strong force for mainstreaming women in the Information and Communication Technology movement of Nepal. There should be different interventions for promoting the leadership of women in ICT so that they can play a pro-active role in influencing policies particularly ICT policy which is a gender neutral policy of the country. There should be promotion of creating a knowledge platform for addressing the issue of minimal participation of women in the ICT arena particularly at the decision making level.

In this context, BellaSAP, a consolidated structure of Bellanet Asia and SAP International organized an event on "Women in ICT: In Search of an Identity" on December 19 & 20, 2006 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The event was co-organized by Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) and Kathmandu College of Management (KCM). The goal of the event was to promote the quality participation of women in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) movement of Nepal. The specific obectives of the event were to analyze issues, concerns and opportunities of women in ICT and to outline future directions and areas of collaboration.

Despite bandh, women participants gathered on the first day for crafting future directions for promoting participation of women in ICT. Women themselves should lead for changing their lives. However, development actors should help rural women acquire knowledge on ICT and its relevance.

2. PROCEEDING GLIMPSES

Despite the bandh called by the Maoists from 10a.m to 4p.m, the first day of the workshop (19th November, 2006) saw active participation from more than 30 enthusiastic women. The program started with the welcome speech of Ms. Shikha Shrestha, Program Coordinator of Bellanet Asia. In her speech she thanked all the women present for showing determination despite the political disturbance. She also highlighted the major issues of the workshop and stated that this event will show that women are capable of participating not only at the operation level but also at the policy level of the ICT field.

Dr. Rohit Nepali, Executive Director of SAP-International welcomed all the women participants and highlighted the necessity to discuss the topic "Why are women left behind in the field of ICT?". He further added that even though women comprise 51% of the total population in Nepal, they have not been able to come forward. A substantial presence of women in the field of ICT and at the decision making levels is still to be made.

After the welcome session, the closed women's camp started with the presentation titled 'Women Empowerment through ICT: Streamlining the Capacity' by Prof. Timila Yami. Her presentation highlighted ICT as a potent force in transforming social economic and political life globally. She said that the global information society stands upon the logic of capital. Therefore, if there is a right of women in the global economy, then the poorest woman should also have equal rights, which is called equity share. So, today women globally are considering these issues of inclusion and equity share. These poor women face technological constraints because there are no telephones, electricity, wireless connectivity in villages and

also social and economic constraints of illiteracy, language problems and high access costs.

The main issue of the workshop was "Why are women left behind in ICT movement?". In order to find the reasons or causes for this an open space methodology was incorporated into the proceedings. Each participant presented and marketed her idea to other participants in order to get their participation in the respective topic. Consequently, the participants discussed the different causes of the inadequate participation of women in the ICT sector.

Participants also raised issues on the importance of making men aware of women's decision making skills. The discussion also emphasized the need to publish women success stories so that they can influence other women. The group mentioned the importance of following a mixed strategy where ICT men and women get integrated so that they become gender sensitive. The discussion also outlined the necessity of identifying women with their own performance and capability. Another question raised during the discussion was 'What can we do to increase job opportunities for women?' The open space discussion then ended with the formation of a women in ICT forum.

The next session of the workshop was a mixed group sharing where male participants joined the women's group. Ms. Geeta Pradhan from SAP Nepal gave a brief presentation on the key findings of the open space discussion. Male participants from the floor commented on the discussed issue. Mr. Bishnu Raj Adhikary, the Principal of KCM expressed his opinion that women themselves were responsible for their backwardness in the field of ICT due to their lack of interest. He also stated that there was a lower participation of women in the CISCO training conducted by the college. He said that women identification is very important to improve their

participation in the field of ICT. The women participants also highlighted the importance of a student quota for women but one of the male participant found this suggestion impractical. According to him, the quota system may work if it is provided at the primary level but not at a higher level of education but he emphasized the importance of family support and freedom for women to come forward.

Dr Rohit Kumar Nepali shared that the presence of resourceful women in the country is an opportunity. Women have the capacity in themselves; sometimes they just don't know it. Women cannot prove their capacities until they are faced with challenges. If women want to broaden their capacity they need to capitalize it, it all depends on women themselves and the way they manage it.

On the second day, Ms. Shikha Shrestha welcomed all the participants. She opined that since women comprised over 50% of the population, until and unless these women take part in ICT, Nepal's development scenario cannot change. It has been found that the country's Information and Communication policy is very gender insensitive and also when designing ICT for the programs there have been gender insensitivity in planning and implementation phase. Ms. Shrestha also said that even the women present in the field of ICT were working in an isolated manner. So it's very important for women to be united to have a platform.

Mr. Biplav Man Singh, the President of CAN, then formally welcomed all the participants. He stated that CAN had been raising its voice for women's participation in the field of ICT and pointed out that statistics showed very low women's participation. It had been trying to involve women members in its executive committee as well as general membership.

After this, Mr. Bishnu Raj Adhikary, Principal of KCM stated the objective

of the event. He said that women showed lower participation not just in the ICT sector but in other sectors as well. We say that women are left behind in this digital world but it's very important to know how behind they are so that we can figure out the present status of women in this sector. We must try and make an effort to involve rural women in this field. This practice will help not only the men but also the women to become familiar with the ICT field.

Ms. Shalini Wadhwa (CEO/Managing Editor of Voice of Women(VOW))said that ICT could act as a strong force to bring women to the forefront and gain their true potential. Women need to constantly learn and upgrade their skills and ICT can help them do so. She also spoke on the need for awards and recognition to encourage women to come into the ICT field. According to her, everyday, women need to reinvent themselves and tap their potential. The women need to take personal responsibility for their lives. Life gives many opportunities women just need to grasp it. Society may point fingers at women who step into a male dominated field and women require support from their families as well, but women without support have come forward and succeeded as well. The ICT sector opens more opportunities now than in the past. Ms. Wadhwa stated that the change in ICT movement may provide women with the identity they are looking for.

Ms. Arzu Rana Deuba, President of Management Association of Nepal (MAN) spoke about how women have to play different roles in their lives. In fact, women have to work harder than men since their lives become more complicated after marriage and child bearing. She said that the women present in the workshop were a pioneering group. Many Nepalese women would look up to them as role models for they had entered into computers and technology, a largely male dominated sector. She added that when she

talked to rural women about what skills they wanted to acquire, most said that they wanted to learn computers. Ms. Deuba told the participants of the seminar not to expect too much from the government and said that they should work on their own, become organized and influence people at the policy making level. At the end of her speech, Ms. Deuba asked the organizers of the seminar to start a fund for women in the ICT sector.

Mr. Bal Krishna Prasai, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology said that women had an important role to play in the ICT sector of the new Nepal. The ICT sector comes under the Ministry of Science and Technology, under which two sections work specifically for the ICT sector. He said that the ICT policy 2000 would be improved upon. Mr Prasai elaborated how ICT was a cross cutting topic and the true development of ICT in the country would require the cooperation of different ministries. People in rural areas don't know anything about computers. Similarly, students in private schools learn computers from an early age whereas in government schools the students don't even get to see a computer.

Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali, Executive Director of SAP International thanked the chief guest, guests and participants of the workshop. He said that women needed to work together and work for a common goal. A database of the women and their skills could be created and this could help in taking further steps. It could even be expanded to include women in the rural area. He further added that ICT is the future and the participants were working towards the future of the country. The participants could help rural women acquire ICT knowledge and assist as mentors to them. Furthermore, the women needed to come together, form a larger group and make their voices heard at the policy making level.

Methodology of the event plays critical role in creating an interactive environment that facilitates effective knowledge sharing amongst participants. Different methodologies like Open Space and Speed Dating had helped participants to express their views in a systematic manner.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Open Space Technology

Open Space is a self-organizing practice of inner discipline and collective activity which releases the creativity and leadership inherent in people. By inviting people to take responsibility for what they care about, Open Space establishes a marketplace for inquiry, reflection and learning, bringing out the best in both the individuals and the whole.

In order to move the methodology effectively, an agenda wall was created before hand. It was made sure that there was enough space for pasting lots of agenda in a time slot. In the case of gender discussion, it was anticipated that there would be some common causes from more participants. A News Room was also created for prompt documentation of the sessions. There was a long table with 5 computers with an event specifed wiki. A team leader was also selected for coordinating the documentation process.

- *Invite participants in the circle*

Ms. Shikha Shrestha invited participants in the circle. She shared that the circle denoted that everyone shared an equal status with expertise in respective fields. Lots of knowledge remained embedded inside the heart of women. The time had come to explore these hidden potentialities. The circle also denoted that women should be together and committed to tap opportunities for promoting increased access of women in information and communication technology as well as to tackle challenges that hinder women's active participation. The lack of participation of women in technology had caused inadequate access of information related to their

lives. It made women unconfident and not bold enough to voice their views and concerns.

▪ *Explain process of Open Space*

Ms. Smriti Pradhan shared on the Principles and Law of Open Space. An animation of Open Space was used to explain the process.

There are four principles of Open Space. These principles will guide Open Space through a journey full of surprises.

- ▪ Whenever it starts is the right time

  Sometimes, it takes time to gear up the discussion. Creative moves can take longer than expected. We need to take all these things slowly and be patient. Whenever it started will be the right time for discussion.

- ▪ Whoever comes are the right people

  Whoever comes to the group are the people who are qualified participants who care for the topic and who can contribute more with full commitment. These are the ones who can jointly work together to address these concerns.

- ▪ Whatever happens is the only thing that could have

  We may have lots of expectations based on our past experiences. However, due to limited time and resources, there are only a few things that can happen NOW. So, we need to acknowledge what we achieve through a group exercise.

- When it's over, it's over

Creativity has its own rhythm. We need to be attentive to this rhythm of creativity but not to the clock. When the group thinks that it is over then there is no need to worry, if the rhythm is stopped then it is over. If the time is not sufficient, and if the group is committed then it is free to allocate another convenient time for further discussion.

- Law of Mobility

We should feel free to use our two feet. If we realize that our contribution to the group is over then we should feel free to use our two feet. As the bumble fees and butterflies help in cross pollination, these users of two feet also help in cross fertilizing the ideas that will support in promoting creativity.

▪ *Opening the Market Place*

Ms. Shikha invited participants to put forward their agenda. She declared that the theme of the discussion was "Why are women left behind in the ICT movement of Nepal?". She also clarified the role of the idea initiator before opening up the market place. Some of the roles of the idea initiator are:

- Write and paste an agenda card with an idea and name

- Explain briefly the agenda in order to draw attention of other group on the agenda for feather group discussion

- Presence in an assigned place and time in a feather group discussion of the agenda

- Designate a facilitator and rapporteur for the feather group discussion

- Coordinate process of documenting major findings of the discussion in the wiki

Ms. Shikha requested the participants to come forward to share their views on the cause of the inadequate participation of women in the ICT movement of Nepal.

▪ *Invitation to Sign Up*

When everyone had finished raising the issues and putting them in different time slots in the agenda wall, the facilitator invited people to sign up on the topic of individual interest and expertise. They were reminded again of the Principles of Open Space and the Law of Two Feet.

▪ *Feather Group Discussions*

Small circles each with papers and markers were set up. Differnt coordinators for the session were identified for four groups, viz:Group 1: Binisha, Group 2: Jyoti, Group 3: Luna and Group 4: Prabita.

Role of the coordinators were clarified hand before as:

- Set up space with markers, flip chart board with papers and chairs in a small circle

- Facilitate process of selecting a facilitator and a reporter for the group discussion

- If there is no one in the group for facilitating the event, then facilitate (optional)

- Coordinate process of documenting the findings of the discussion in wiki

- Documentation format is: Idea/ Cause, Name of Idea Initiator, Names of Participants, Highlights of discussion and Way forward

- Coordinate process of printing findings of the discussion and hand it over for roaming wall

A facilitator was selected for gearing up the discussion and a reporter for documenting the findings of the discussion based on the documentation framework made available to each group member. The reporter made sure that the highlights of the discussion were captured and the report was made available on the News Wall.

▪ *Sharing the findings*

There was not enough time for sharing the findings in detail. However, all the reports of the feather group discussions were printed and pasted on the wall. Participants were also reminded at the end of the workshop to go through the wall to find out the major findings of other group discussions.

▪ *Closing Circle*

Ms. Shikha thanked all the participants for their valuable inputs. She opined that the inputs of the participants had helped in crafting recommendations for the civil society as well as the government to ensure the effective participation of women in ICT. She stated that the event was just a first step in women's ICT movement. She hoped that the committee formed would play an active role in promoting women's role in the ICT arena of the country.

3.2. Speed Dating

Ms. Shikha requested the participants to introduce each other using the Speed Dating methodology. She said that the technique had been used in different restaurants to find a life partner. In this event, the methodology was selected to help participants find potential partners to work together. She requested participants to select someone they did not know for introduction. Some of the conversation starters were:

- My name is …. and yours..

- I work in the field of women in ICT and you..

- I graduated from Kathmandu University and you..

- My passion for work is promoting women in ICT and yours..

It was found that participants were smart enough to find partners for introduction. There were 3 rounds of introduction. However, participants found time to introduce even 12 new participants during the introduction session. Most of the participants appreciated this innovative mode of introduction that provided them opportunities to know about new people who can be potential partners.

3.3. Wiki

Wiki was used as a good platform for documenting findings of the event. Women participants had shown their great enthusiasm in recording highlights of feather group discussions. There were separate pages created for Women's Closed Camp, Mixed Group Sharing and Closing Session. Concept Notes, presentations and other information of the event were also made available to all the participants via wiki. Special consideration was taken to minimize conflict in entering the pages by the number of

participants at a time. It was realized that methodology should also incorporate some extra time slots for recording the findings as well as the feelings of participants towards the event.

3.4. After Action Review

A core organizing team performed the After Action Review (AAR) to review the progress and effectiveness of the event. The team members discussed what went well, what did not go well and what could have been done better.

It was shared that the happiest moment was that the event occurred with satisfactory participation despite the bandh. There was good support from partner organizations. Valuable inputs of the participants in drafting future directions were also appreciated. The proposal of creating an online platform and a women's committee was also helpful in developing future plans and providing continuity to the process that had been initiated. There was a good team effort and internal exercises for distilling and refining future directions.

Some external sources tried to impose upon outputs of the event. To avoid such incidents in the future, it was suggested that expectations should be outlined before hand. The chief guest and many motivational speakers were absent due to the sudden announcement of Nepal Bandh. Thus, it was noted that there should be a strong communication link-up with invited speakers and the media in future events. A press release can also be circulated to ensure media coverage of the event.

It was also realized that there should be enough time in the methodology for documenting findings of the event in wiki. The wiki platform can also be used for capturing views of the participants. This platform could be used as a platform for evaluation.

Government should support women for increasing their leadership quality as well as access to financial resources. On the other hand, civil society should promote policy influencing for gender sensitive ICT environment.

4. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Recommendations for the Government

Participants brainstormed on the role of the Government in ensuring quality participation of women in the ICT movement of Nepal. It was suggested that the state should play a critical role in promoting the professional competencies of women so that they can provide quality inputs in the involved sectors. There should also be enough attempts made for increasing women's access to financial resources.

Some of the major recommendations made for the government in the area of Women in ICT Leadership Development are:

- **Support forums and platforms of women in ICT**

It was recommended that the government should play a critical role in bringing women together to raise the issues of women in ICT. The government should also initiate the development of a database of women in ICT and their innovations. The creative efforts of women should be recognized. These women should also be included in the policy making structures to make the policies more gender sensitive. On the other hand, government should also lead the promotion of knowledge platforms of women to share their experiences and knowledge.

- **Promote positive discriminatory policies and regulations**

Women are still far behind in the ICT movement in Nepal. This will be an injustice to women if they are to compete with men on equal footage. There should be positive discriminatory policies and regulations to ensure

the participation of women in ICT. Provisions can be made for reservation and/ or scholarship for girl candidates to pursue ICT education at different levels. These positive discrimination should also be applied while recruiting people for positions related to ICT4D of government as well as ICT policy making   structures.

- **Inclusion of compulsory ICT curriculum particularly in government schools**

There is a vast difference in the curriculums of government and private schools. This disparity is creating a wide knowledge gap in society. The curriculums of most private schools contain ICT which should be made compulsory in government schools. Young children should be given opportunities to play with and learn from computers. The government should be bold enough to initiate the expansion of the coverage of ICT education.

- **Gender budgeting to support women in ICT**

The government should practice gender budgeting to support the proliferation of ICT among women. Although some women are working in ICT, they do not have enough knowledge and skills to influence policies. There should be budgetary provisions or training courses for these women to enchance their ICT competency and managerial skills.

ICT should be used to promote the lives of women. This tool should be integrated into women empowerment schemes. There are very good examples in India and Bangladesh of mainstreaming ICT for women's empowerment. Nepal maintains a rich mix of micro-finance institutions. Among the different models, the community based savings and credit organization (SCO) has proven to be extremely effective in serving women clients. Gender budgeting should also consider investing in interventions of SCO embedded with the strategic use of ICTs.

Women all over the world want and need information on sexuality and sexual health and access to appropriate information and services to help them make the right decisions. The issue becomes more important since half the world's population is under the age of 25 and half of all new HIV infections occur in young women. There should be some budget allocated for disseminating information on health and education to women with the innovative use of ICTs.

Some of the recommendations for promoting ICT Employment Opportunities for women are:

- **Promotion of women entrepreneurs**

Gender equality and economic development go hand in hand. Since the early 1980s, policymakers and planners have become acutely aware of the economic significance of women's productive activities and the nature of their contribution to income generation. It has been firmly established that women in Nepal are vital and productive contributors to the national economy but their access to knowledge, skills, resources, opportunities and power still remain rather low (Shtrii Shakti, 1995).

The government should support women entrepreneurs to increase their access to financial resources. There should be provisions for tax exemptions and bank credits to encourage women entrepreneurs. There are different ICT based institutions working in the country. The government can play a strong role in linking these ICT entrepreneurs with women enterprises. The government should provide financial support to integrate ICT and women enterprises to expand the scope of their enterprises. On the other hand, the government can play a strong role in generating employment opportunities to rural women by linking up ICT with micro enterprise interventions of rural women.

- **Inclusion of women in decision making structure**

Nepalese women have participated widely in political movements even during crisis. However, once the crisis is over these women forces are relegated again to the domestic arena (Women and Politics Worldwide, New Haven Yale University, 1994). Despite constitutional provisions and the participation of women in political movements, there is very little participation of women in decision making structures. This is also true in ICT decision making positions. There is no woman representative in any ICT decision making level. There should be a quota and/or reservation for skilled and competent women in Government Institutions.

The government should also play a pro-active role in increasing the participation of women in the ICT divisions of NGOs, INGOs and the Corporate Sector. There should be motivational packages for NGOs and INGOs so that they will be encouraged to increase women's voices in their ICT interventions. On the other hand, the corporate sector is profit oriented. The government should provide compensation packages to ensure the participation of women in the corporate world of ICT.

- **Promote conducive working environment for women**

Forty-five percent of women aged 10 and above are listed as economically active, while the corresponding figure for men is 68% (Census, 1991). The growth rate in the female labor force exceeded that of males between 1981-1991, but they are still confined to a few activities indicating their disadvantaged position in reaping the benefits of diversification in many areas of employment.

Women are responsive to lots of social responsibilities. They have multiple roles to perform in their homes before thinking about external work. They are supposed to prioritize their social responsibilities more than their

careers. There are many women including young mothers who do not have enough time and opportunity to work in offices. These women should be given opportunities to work online from their homes. In India, there are many examples of women earning a lot from their homes and taking care of their social responsibilities. The government can play a strong role in recognizing the relevance of e-learning, e-working and e-banking, baby care facilities, etc.

4.2. Recommendations for Civil Society working on ICT4D

There is a large number of Civil Society Organizations working in Nepal. These organizations have shown their strong roles in the arena of advocacy and awareness building in restoring democracy in the country. These organizations should also support the process of increasing the quality participation of women in the ICT domain of the country. It was suggested that the CSOs working on ICT4D can also largely support the process of increasing the participation of women.

Some of the recommendations for Gender Sensitive ICT4D Awareness are:

- **Prove the credibility of women by sharing success stories**

Some women have been successful in creating a credible image in the ICT sector. These success stories should be collected and shared to motivate other women professionals. A knowledge platform of women should be adopted to share knowledge and innovations. It would help change the mind set of people and show that women can also work creatively and successfully in the ICT4D domain.

A talent hunt for women in ICT can be organized. Women working in ICT in the country should be awarded for their contribution to the ICT sector. This recognition will also motivate other young women to get involved in ICT jobs and career.

▪ Sensitization camps for encouraging participation of women in ICT

Women are more creative and responsive than their male counter parts. These creative talents should also be used in the ICT sector. There should be different awareness and sensitization camps to counter the technological phobia of women. These camps would break the psychological mindset of women that ICT is a man's domain.

Since NGOs have implemented different micro-credit interventions, a mechanism should be developed to integrate the strategic use of ICT to expand micro enterprises. Nepal should also learn from experiences like Grameen Phone where women use technology to promote their enterprises.

The media plays a strong role in raising issues at different levels. It should be sensitized on the ability of women to work in the ICT arena of the country. The success stories of these women should be given wide coverage to encourage other women to get involved in the ICT sector. There should also be a sharing of the challenges faced by women in ICT. Linkage building with the media should be done to ensure enough coverage of the issues of the inadequate participation of women in ICT.

- **Local content development**

The content of the internet plays a significant role in raising interest in internet based tools. Most of the content is in English but only a low percentage of people can read and write in English. Therefore, the English based internet has been useful to only a limited population of the country. The development of a national system should be prioritized for information access to these poor grass roots women. The civil society involved in rural areas in coordination with ICT professionals should develop the content as per the need of rural women.

There should be coordination among different content developing organizations. These organizations should also adopt philosophies of sharing the content freely with other stakeholders to create a wider positive impact of the content especially in rural areas. There should be knowledge sharing mechanisms developed among these organizations so that they can benefit from each other.

Some recommendations on the area of Advocacy and Linkage Building are:

- **Advocate for women's space in decision making**

Women's participation as voters and their awareness about their rights have increased in general. Their willingness to participate in the political process has increased in the last decade. However, there is minimal participation of women in decision making. In the case of ICT decision making structures of ICTs, there is literally no participation of women. It indicates the need for a strong voice from the Civil Society sector to ensure the participation of women in decision making.

Corruption and nepotism are prevalent in countries like Nepal. Most of the decision making positions are occupied not by professionals but by those linked with high bodies. Therefore, there is a need for advocacy to ensure transparent recruitment/placement mechanisms to ensure that the right people are in the right place. It would support in the placement of professional and competent people as per requirements of the posts.

The Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) has been widely used to review ICT changes world wide. The Civil Society should monitor the performance of the government against the commitments stated in policy documents. There should be an inclusion of gender performance indicators to review the government efforts in the ICT arena.

- ▪ **Promote women's network**

Motivated by concerns of poverty and injustice throughout Asia women have been coming together in groups and formal organizations to work for their rights, to improve their status in society and to improve their daily lives. There is an increase in women's organizations and networks in Nepal. These organizations have proven their credibility in changing the political scenario of the country.

There is a need to create a network of Women working in ICT with concrete plans for the future. The first step of the network should be preparation of profiles and inventories of women working in ICT. On the other hand, Women in ICT networks should also develop linkage with other women's networks for addressing issues of the inadequate participation of women in ICT.

- **Pressurize government for increasing access of women to ICTs**

Women have very little access to economic resources though their average working hours is 16. Women own 8.1% of total landholdings, 4% household have female ownership and women constitute 8% of civil service positions (Nepal Human Development Report, 2004). Women employment access is limited only to 16.5% and other opportunities are being used by men counterparts in the country (FWLD, 1998). The cost of accessing the internet and email is very expensive in Nepal. The Civil Society should advocate for a decreased in connection rates as well as the creation of some community spaces for free access to these technologies.

The extension of infrastructure, particularly wireless and satellite communication to the rural mass is crucial for increasing women's access to information technology. It is indeed the government's responsibility to provide this access. These demands should be raised by civil society sectors involved in ICT arena. On the other hand, there are some ISPs that are committed to providing internet services to rural areas. There is a need for recognizing such market sectors that are also inclined to allocate some of their resources to the social sector. However, these providers should also be gender sensitized so that they will make special efforts to network women into the wireless community.

The workshop brought Nepalese women together in crafting future directions for raising women's voice in ICT sector. ICT should be used for promoting quality lives of poor rural women in Nepal.

5. CONCLUSION

Nepal seems relatively inclined to gender neutrality in IT Planning, Policy formulation and implementation. It does not mean that there have not been any initiatives taken by the government. With the support of the UNDP, the government has established some telecenters. The Parbat telecenter is one of the best telecenters established by the government. The operator of the center is a grass roots level young girl who is computer literate and is providing information to villagers as per their requirements. Is it enough to have women only in the operational phase? Should the status of these women be upgraded so that they have a say in managing these centers?

The seminar proved very beneficial for bringing together Nepalese women in the ICT sector. Before the seminar, there was no network among the women who were in ICT but after the seminar they found out about each other. The seminar helped to bring together Nepalese women who were engaged in various ICT sectors within the Kathmandu Valley. The participants of the seminar were also able to discuss and bring out the issues that mattered to them. They put forward their views to the authority concerned. The problems faced by the women in the ICT sector were put forward and the participants were encouraged to come up with the solutions to them. Thus, the seminar enabled the participants to learn from each other as well. The seminar encouraged Nepalese women to work in the ICT sector.

When Muhammad Yunus proposed giving rural women access to telephones in a nation where only 0.3 percent of the population had a mainline telephone, the government resisted. Yunus recalls people saying: "You got

to be crazy to think of giving cell phones to illiterate poor women in the villages who never saw a conventional telephone in their lives; she would not know how to dial a number; anyway who is she going to call?" Today there are over 2,200 telephone ladies employed by Grameen Telecom (a branch of Grameen Phone) in Bangladesh. And the number is growing. Grameen Telecom has set a goal of creating 40,000 village phone ladies. There is a need for some visionary leaders like Yunus in Nepal.

Providing information related to economic opportunities is essential for empowering women and this is possible through women friendly ICT. Because the country is heavily dependent on agriculture, different agro based information and tele-agro services can be provided to rural areas giving more emphasis to women. It is to be noted that women constitute a major agriculture force in the country. ICT can also be used for increasing access to formal and non-formal education, health services and information and other government services. It will ultimately improve the quality of the life of women and their families. However, the transformation process should be SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent) in order to ensure the sustainability of the transformation process.

6.ANNEX

6.1 DETAIL PROCEEDINGS OF DAY ONE OF THE WORKSHOP

On 19th November, 2006, in spite of the bandh called by the Maoists from 10a.m to 4p.m, more than 30 enthusiastic women participated in the workshop "Women in ICT: In Search of Identity". The two -day workshop was organized by BellaSAP (SAP International and Bellanet South) in co-organization with Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) and Kathmandu College of Management (KCM).

The program started at 10:30 a.m with a welcome speech by Ms. Shikha Shrestha, Program Coordinator at BellaSAP. During the speech she thanked all the women present for showing the determination despite the political disturbance. She also highlighted the major issues of the workshop and stated that this event will be a start to show that women are capable to participate not only in operation level but also in the policy level.

Welcome Note:
Dr. Rohit K. Nepali, ED, SAP International

The Chairman of the program Dr. Rohit Nepali, Executive Director of SAP-International gave a welcome speech in which he highlighted that it was very necessary to discuss "Why are women left behind in the field of ICT?" He said that even though 51% of the population of Nepal is women they are not able to come forward. Though there are technically capable women there has not been any substantial presence in the field of ICT and also at the decision making level. As this is a technical line the strategies should

be different. Women need to have technical know-how. Without capacity, placement is difficult. They need to show that they are technically competent. He stated that we need to discuss issues like "Do we need to build up political pressure?", "How can we increase women's qualitative participation in ICT?", "What will be the future action?", "How can women reach the decision making level?". He also stated that until and unless women make a decision that they can do it and build up their own decision making capability they can't reach the policy making level.

Introduction: Speed Dating

The Speed dating methodology was used to introduce new participants to the event. It was a lot of fun as everyone rushed to find new friends and to know more about their partners. After it was over everyone stated that they had a good time and lots of fun performing this activity. Some of the participants opined that the methodology focused more on the quantitative approach rather than the qualitative approach.

Presentation on 'Women Empowerment through ICT: Streamlining the Capacity': Prof.Timila Yami, Institute of Engineering Pulchowk

The first woman in IT , Prof. Timila Yami shared her views and experiences. She stated that Information technology (IT) has become a potent force in transforming social, economic and political life globally. Without its incorporation into the information age, there was little chance for countries or regions to develop. She stated that the gap between haves and have nots of information has been a problem which can only be minimized with the help of ICT.

She also presented the ICT- Women Empowerment model where she focused on Access to Strategic Information, Contact and Communication with concerned communities, Comprehension, Consensus and Coalition, Greater Control and Capacity to act and Empowerment. She said that strategic information means the information of issues at the planning phase, so if we have this information we can plan our lives and our children's lives according to it. [1]

Ms. Shikha Shrestha thanked Prof. Timila Yami for her informative and motivating presentation. She said that telecentres of Nepal were gender insensitive. Although there were fewer telecenters than in India, those established were in locations convenient to men and mostly used by them. We can surely bring change if we protest in a united voice. She said that men state that there are no women able to participate at the policy level but if they look carefully, there are many capable women. So, in a united voice we should encourage men to make women inclusive at the policy level.

During the plenary discussion different queries were raised on the presentation of Prof. Timila Yami. She said that when a CD on poultry farming was distributed to some villagers there was an increase in the production of eggs and enabling them to export these eggs to Chennai. ICT information like the CD can communicate information in a productive way.

Adding to Ms. Timila Yami's answer Ms. Shikha Shrestha further clarified the meaning of the telecenter. She said that telecenters do not mean women using computer. That will be a long-term vision but at this point of time

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1 Please refer to Annex 3 for detail information

they want the rural women to benefit from information provided by the ICT like computers, TV, radios etc.

It was opined that genuine issues were discussed in Ms. Yami's presentation. It is very true that the ministry implements program and does not follow up. The Ministry is following top down strategies and women participation is limited to the operation level. Women are not involved in the decision level and financial affairs. There is nepotism in the ministry. There is a lack of integration at the policy level.

Prof Yami shared that networking has carried out only on paper but not in practice. There are lots of practical problems. Talking about women studying computer science, a survey showed that 1.34 crore people are unemployed in Nepal and 60% of them are people below 25 years of age. If a large number of people below 25 years are unemployed there is a high chance of them becoming terrorists. In India there are 50 % and they are making an effort to reduce them whereas in Nepal no step has been taken so far. Even if women are only involved at the operator level we can empower then if they are committed. We need to talk with women leaders. There is a clear indication that there is a need for creating a network of women working in ICT.

Open Space Methodology: Why are women left behind in the ICT Movement of Nepal?

The second methodology that the workshop followed was the open space methodology. The inclusion of a free flow of ideas and the interactive technology are the fundamental principles of this methodology. The placing of the participants in a circle signified their unity and equality. The circle opened their discussion with the issue 'Why are women left behind in the

field of ICT?' Each participant was required to write one main cause leading to this issue on a metacard.

The Participants' opinion on the main issue of the workshop became the main agenda of the program. Each participant presented and marketed each idea to other participants in order to get their participation in the respective topic. Different reasons were given, some were similar some different but each in its own way was relevant to the main issue of the workshop.

After lunch the participants discussed four different issues simultaneously. The initiator of the idea and participants supporting that idea were present in each group. Each group was given 20 minutes to discuss the idea and produce its highlights. After 20 minutes, one of the participants from each group entered the highlights and the way forward of the discussion in the wikipedia blog.

The open space discussion came up with many interesting issues. One of the participants stated that there must be gender sensitive ICT awareness and that the people needed to see ICT from the women's point of view. Participants also raised issues on the importance of making men aware of women's decision making skills. The discussion also emphasized the publication of women's success stories so other women can be influenced. The gender budget that had been allotted to women should be properly utilized. The group emphasized the importance of following a mixed strategy where ICT men and women are integrated to become gender sensitive. The discussion also outlined the necessity of identifying women through their own performance and capability. Another question raised during the discussion was 'What can we do to increase job opportunities for women?' The participants then put forth their views. The provision of free training

for women with the help of NGOs and INGOs and a fixed percentage of placement of women in the office must be formulated. The distribution of allowance for women may improve the possibility of their participation. Since women are involved in multiple tasks, it is difficult for them to balance their professional life and household lives so the provision of e-working would be very helpful to achieve e a proper balance. This will also help them get rid of psychological torture. These issues have to be publicized with the help of the media to reach the policy level. These were the views put forth by the participants.

Women in ICT Committee

The open space discussion then ended with the formation of women in ICT forum. The committee members for the forum were also selected on the same day. They were: -

1. Timila Yami – Advisor
2. Pratima Pradhan- Advisor
3. Usha Khadka - Training Coordinator
4. Shikha Shrestha
5. Bina Vaidya
6. Laxmi Gurung
7. Puspa Rizal Chhetri
8. Monica Agrawal
9. Smriti Pradhan
10. Bhawona Upadhya
11. Jyoti Regmi Adhikary
12. Archana Shrestha

Mixed Group Sharing

The next session of the workshop was a mixed group sharing where male participants joined the group. Ms. Geeta Pradhan from SAP Nepal gave a

brief presentation on the key findings of the open space discussion. Male participants from the floor commented on the discussed issue. Mr. Bishnu Raj Adhikary the Principal of KCM expressed his opinion that women themselves were responsible for their backwardness in the field of ICT. Women showed the least interest in this field. He also stated that there was low participation of women in the CISCO training conducted by the college. He said that the identification of women is very important to improve their participation in the field of ICT. To counter his views the floor made a comment that those trainings require high financial expenses which is undoubtedly a parental issue to most of the women population. The floor also suggested that providing training is not adequate, the training institutes also need to follow up with providing proper counseling.

The women participants also highlighted the importance of a student quota for women but one of the male participant found this suggestion impractical. According to him, the quota system may work if it is provided for the primary level but not for higher level education. He emphasized the importance of family support and freedom for women to come forward.

Dr. Nepali shared that the presence of resourceful women in the country is an opportunity. There are many barriers and challenges. We have to convert these challenges into opportunities through our own efforts. Women have the capacity in themselves; sometimes they just don't know it. Women cannot know their capacities until they are faced with challenges; one has to do some soul searching and find the strength within oneself.

It was opined that we should not be relying on the government or society, we should be relying on our inner capacity and available resources. The workshop is the first step towards achieving success. According to him it is not that we lack money. Unutilized money is lying around everywhere.

The World Bank and The UNDP have money that has not been used. The question is are we prepared to take up these challenges. The main question is, how can we support each other? He mentioned that we always say that we are lagging behind, so we need to work on ways to go forward. He also said that the women who participated in the workshop are the cream of the society and are leading the ICT sector which is the future of the world. If women want to broaden their capacity they need to capitalize on it. It all depends on the women themselves and the way they manage it. He pointed out that if you want something you have to get it by yourself rather than by asking others.

More than 50% of women live in rural areas. To involve these women in ICT and to impart their knowledge on them is a big challenge. We can open cyber cafes in places where there is electricity and let the educated women handle these cafes. There are many rural women who have passed SLC exams. Why should they be left behind if they are capable? We can educate them in computer technologies. He told the participants that they could be teachers or guides to them. We have to bring about this revolution and for this the women in ICT have to play an important role. He said that the efforts of only a small number can't draw attention. You need hundreds of thousands of people behind you.

6.2 DETAIL PROCEEDINGS OF DAY TWO OF THE WORKSHOP

The second day of the workshop on 20 December 2006 started with equal joy and enthusiasm as the first day. The program started at 1:30 pm. Ms Shikha Shrestha welcomed the honorable guests and others present on behalf of the organizer and co-organizer of the program.

She said that the year 2000 is considered to be the year of information. We have heard the stories of the utilization of information technology in getting information. She gave a few examples like the Bangladesh Gramin phone, the MSSIF bringing change in the lives of fishermen. After learning success stories abroad we obviously feel that we too can achieve such success in our own country.

Since over 50 percent of the Nepali population is women, she felt that we do not need to mention the importance of women's participation in the field of ICT. Until and unless these women take part in ICT the country's development scenario cannot change.

An evaluation of Nepal's Information and Communication policy has been found to be very gender insensitive and also that even ICT program planning has been very gender insensitive. Ms. Shrestha also said that there were women in the field of ICT but even those present were working in an isolated manner. So it's very important for women to be united to have a platform.

In the end, she on behalf of BellaSAP, CAN and KCM heartily thanked all the participants for accepting the invitation and attending the program.

Welcome Note: Mr. Biplav Man Singh, President of Computer Association of Nepal (CAN)

Mr. Biplav Man Singh, the President of CAN, welcomed all the participants to the workshop. He stated that CAN has been raising its voice for women's participation in the field of ICT and pointed out that CAN statistics show very low women participation in this sector. CAN has been trying to involve women member in its executive committee but there are very few women involved. Now in its teenage, CAN has been organizing various programs throughout the year. It will organize CAN InfoTech from Jan 9th to Jan 14th where they are planning to conduct a seminar at an International level. He said that although CAN had experienced lower women's participation in the field of ICT, he was very happy to see a large number of women participants in the workshop. He also requested participants to show their involvement in the programs organized by the CAN.

People in government have been talking about forming a new Nepal; in this regard we are trying to make it E-Nepal. This is just an approach to make the E of New a little bigger. E-Nepal includes E-Governance, E-Government and Easy Service Centers. In Nepal there are fourteen types of payments, if we can make payment for all these types from one window we can save our time and transaction cost. In E-Nepal we will be talking about e-rupee, it is a scratch card which is already being used by the NTC. It can be used for the Point of Sale (POS) and the Automatic Teller Machine (ATM), so that we can convert paper money into e-rupee.

He also said that if we can make all the work in the government electronic, the work will be much easier and will minimize discrimination. In the government there is a trend of prioritizing the work of one's relatives, so that others get discriminated against. This can be minimized if we move

towards e-Government. To begin with, the government can upload its forms from the web and can be submitted by the people via the web itself. We can even make payments through the web and get our ID cards and passports from the web. This has been in practice in other countries and we are also capable of adopting such practices. According to him if we can make paper-less offices we can save our environment as well as our investment.

He pointed out that it was the first time he saw such large women's participation in ICT. He thanked BellaSAP, SAP-International and KCM for taking the initiative to organize such an event to bring women in ICT together. He also said that it was not the end, but just the beginning. It's difficult to work alone but together we can make a difference.

Mr. Bishnu Raj Adhikary, Principal, Kathmandu College of Management (KCM)

Mr. Bishnu Raj Adhikary started with the objective behind the event, 'Why are women left behind in the field of ICT?' He said that women show lower participation not just in the ICT sector but also in other sectors as well. Although we say that there must be equal participation, it is not true in practice. Today we are in a world of the Digital Divide; it is the indicator of the country's development. We say that women are left behind in this digital world but it's very important to find out how much behind they are so that we can figure out the present status of women in this sector. He added that it was the first time that a discussion on the issue was being held at that level.

The world's top institutes in IT such as Microsoft, Sun Systems and CISCO Systems have been working to increase women's participation in the field of ICT. They have jointly opened many institutes, among them one in Malaysia. This institute was established with the purpose of developing IT in developing countries and to achieve a minimum of 30% women's participation in this sector. This program failed to continue because of the inability to achieve the minimum requirement. Other such free training programs have been conducted but could not be sustained due to a lack of opportunities for positions after completing the training. Women feel that they will not get right placements after the training so they show little in such training programs. Therefore, we need to make them aware of market opportunities in this field.

We must try and make an effort to involve rural women in this field. Connectivity in the rural areas is not a big problem as fiber optics has already been put into operation in the highway. If villagers are provided

with communication centers nearby they can communicate with their relatives living abroad. This practice will help not only the men but also the women to get familiar with the IT field.

While choosing the course of study women usually show the least interest in the engineering field. Although there is a large number of women in architectural engineering there are very few women enrolled in computer engineering. We really need to work hard to attract women to this field of study. We need to support them to build their capacity and for this we have to design a suitable program and form a team that can really take charge. KCM will always be there to provide help and support to build women's capacity in the field of ICT. He stated that they were planning to award women in ICT from Nepal and for this they needed support from the government. Budget had been allocated for the ICT sector and expenses had been made but there was no concrete outcome. We have money; the only thing that we need to get success in this project is the commitment.

Ms. Shalini Wadhwa, CEO, Voice of Women

Ms. Wadhwa began by talking about the impact of ICT at a personal level. She described her experiences while learning the computer a few years back. Ms. Wadha recounted how she had always wanted to learn the 'dohas' of Kabir but hadn't been able to do so for many years. After she had learnt to use the computer she searched for the 'dohas' in the internet and found many beautiful ones.

Ms.Wadhwa said that ICT could act as a strong force to bring women to the forefront and gain their true potential. Women need to constantly learn and upgrade their skills and ICT can help them do so. She also spoke on the need of awards and recognition to encourage women to come into the ICT field. Ms. Wadhwa said that she had suggested awards to be given to women in IT to be given by SAP and KCM. Ms. Wadhwa had been associated with the Boss Top Ten Award and VOW Top Ten Award and she felt honoured to be involved in the Women in IT award. She also said that when people are recognized for their work, they are encouraged to work even harder.

According to Ms. Wadhwa, everyday, women need to reinvent themselves and tap their potential. Women need to take personal responsibility for their lives . Life gives many opportunities women just need to grasp them. The society may point fingers at women who step into a male dominated field. Women require support from their families as well but, women without support have come forward and succeeded as well.

The IT sector opens more opportunities now. In the past women didn't have such opportunities. Nowadays, information and knowledge of opportunities can be got at the click of a button. Ms. Wadhwa stated that

the change in ICT movement may provide women with the identity they are looking for. In the end, Ms.Wadhwa spoke on how the seminar could act as a forum through which women could receive various opportunities through their mutual interactions.

Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba, President, Management Association of Nepal (MAN)

Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba spoke about how women had to play different roles in their lives. It is not easy to play multiple roles and switch from one role to another. Women have to mange both their homes and their careers which is not as easy as it is for men. In fact, women have to work harder than men since their lives become more complicated after marriage and child bearing.

Dr. Deuba also recalled an experience in which she had visited a rural village and discovered that the house in which she was staying had no mirror. The absence of the mirror showed the lack of self identity in the rural women. In the rural areas the women are recognized only as household workers who conceive and look after children , they have no self identity. It may take many, many years for these women to enter the ICT field. Thus, a lot needs to be done at the grassroots level.

In the cities, ICT is a big challenge for women. Even in the cities, when women look into the 'mirror' they see a daughter, a wife and a mother, the real face lies hidden beneath. This may in part be attributed to the upbringing of sons and daughters. Sons are taught from an early age that they have to work outside the house, they should learn to organize things, be aggressive . Whereas, daughters are taught to be polite, do household work and stay indoors.

Dr. Deuba said that the women in the room were a pioneering group and many Nepalese women would look up to then as role models for they had entered into computers and technology, a hugely male dominated sector. She said that when she talked to rural women about what skills they wanted to acquire, most said that they wanted to learn computers. Even though

the women had no way of utilizing their knowledge of computers, they still wanted to learn computers in order to have a better self image and feel that they belonged to the new century. She told the participants of the seminar not to expect too much from the government and said that they should work on their own, become organized and influence people at the policy making level.

In the end of her speech, Ms. Deuba asked the organizers of the seminar to start a fund for women in the ICT sector. She explained that if good ideas and plans can be formulated then there won't be any lack of funds since many non-governmental organizations had unutilized funds.

Mr. Bal Krishna Prasai, Secretary,Ministry of Environment,Science and Technology (MOEST)

Mr. Prasai said that women had an important role to play in the ICT sector of the new Nepal. In Nepal, the ICT sector lags behind. The Ministry of Science and Technology has two sections that work specifically for the ICT sector. He said that the ICT policy 2000 could be improved upon. He also said that the Electronic Transaction Act had been passed by parliament.

Mr Prasai explained how was ICT is a cross cutting topic and the true development of ICT in the country would require the cooperation of different ministries. Mr. Prasai said that $ 75 million was needed for the development of the IT field in Nepal. The ADB had promised to give $30 million, Korea was giving $30 million and the Nepal government would provide $15 million.

Mr. Prasai explained how ICT was o spoke on the impact of ICT in the various ministries. He said that some of the ministries already had websites whereas other ministries were working on putting up their own websites. But still, the computers in the government offices are not fully utilized. Most are used just as substitutes for typewriters.

In Nepal, nearly 90% of the populations don't have access to phones. Even the charges for the internet are very expensive. Those who have phones hesitate to use the internet due to the expensive charges. Thus, we lack the basic infrastructure for the development of ICT.

Mr. Prasai said that there were plans to create and maintain a database of Nepalese citizens to be kept in a server at Singha Durbar. The distribution of passports and citizenships, etc would be computerized, a new national ID card could even be created.

There is a digital divide in the nation. People in rural areas don't know anything about computers. Similarly, students in private schools learn computers from an early age whereas in government schools the students don't even get to see a computer. This divide needs to be eliminated.

Mr. Prasai said the existing infrastructure for ICT was not fully utilized. He gave an example of the IT Park in Dhulikhel. He said that the government had spent a lot of money on the park but it was not used by the Nepalse. He encouraged the women participating in the seminar to work in the IT Park.He also expressed his full commitment to support Women in the IT Committee.

Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali , ED, SAP International

Dr. Nepali began by telling about Hanuman and how he didn't know his own strength. He said that in a similar manner, Nepalese women didn't know their own strength. Just as Hanuman came to know about his strength when he came to a challenge, Nepalese women need to look within themselves to find their true potential. They shouldn't hesitate to face a challenge.

He asked the participants not to rely on the government or the civil societies but to work by themselves. The seminar was a first step i.e., the participants had come together. Now, they needed to work together. They needed to recognize and find their strengths. A database of the women and their skills could be created and this could help in taking further steps. It could even be expanded to include women in rural area.

Dr. Nepali said that ICT was the future and the participants were working towards the future of the country. In order to work in the ICT field, women don't even need to be highly educated, even those with secondary education can operate a cyber café. Dr. Nepali also said that the civil societies should move ahead of the politicians and not the other way around. The women need to come together, form a larger group and make their voices heard. Mr. Nepali in the end thanked the chief guests, guests and all the participants of the seminar.

6.3 PRESENTATION ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ICT: STREAMLINING THE STRATEGY

Prof Timila Yami presented a paper on the Empowerment of women through ICT. Information technology (IT) has become a potent force in transforming social economic, and political life globally. Without its incorporation into the information age, there is little chance for countries or regions to develop. More and more concern is being shown about the impact of those left on the other side of the digital divide-the division between the information "haves" and "have nots". ICT is a tool of production (routine office work, data entry, manufacturing, computer industry ,jobs, programming, and related work) and a tool of communication (creating and exchanging information).

IT can be an important tool in meeting women's basic needs and can provide access to resources to lead women out of poverty. Women comprise 19% of the IT workforce and 37 % of employees in the IT-enabled service sector of India and 20 % of women are engaged in the software industry of Brazil. In Malaysia, the government has made significant investments in education and training for both men and women. Women have entered managerial and administrative positions in substantial numbers and are well represented in computer programming positions in banking, telecommunications, and insurance. 32 % of engineers in Bulgaria but as few as 2.5% of engineers in South Africa

Women's access to information technology is not a simple matter of whether there is a computer connected to the Internet that women can use. Numerous other factors are just as significant in determining whether women can access technology. There are different obstacles to women's access to technology such as education, financial resources, language and

cost. Social and Cultural Norms, skills and location of telecenters are also other barriers for women.

Women's current economic activities include farming, transportation, improved technology, food preservation and storage, trade laws, trends in food production, demand, and processing , improved seeds, alternate crops and weather. Information Intermediaries are IT boutiques d'information stores, CD-ROMs to deliver information on organic gardening, Online agricultural advice, etc.

The new economy focuses on two aspects—e-commerce and outsourcing. Outsourcing includes Tele-working and Tele-services. The size of the international outsourcing industry is estimated at $103 billion in this decade. Data entry and processing- the lower ends of tele-working such as data entry are more realistic possibilities for large numbers of women in developing countries like Nepal

In India, it is expected that 1.1 million people, at least one-third of these being women, will be working in remote data processing. By 2008, women working in data entry in Bangladesh would earn 88 percent more than women with similar profiles working in local jobs. Women who are already in wholesale distribution businesses in developing countries could consider (B2B) , (B2C),or (B2G).IT-Enabled Businesses-In Ghana, a number of women-owned business centers have sprung up offering fax, e-mail and other communications services, There are 10,000 téléboutiques in Senegal; many of the téléboutiques also sell fax, e-mail, and sometimes Internet services. India has hundreds of thousands of small telecommunications businesses. The Indian equivalents of téléboutiques are STD booths, small shops that offer public telephones for long distance calls.

For developing and emerging market countries like Nepal a major area for new jobs is in software programming. Interviews with women participants in a networking training course in India highlighted women's interest in applying their technical skills as trainers rather than as technicians in the industry, due to the trainers' more flexible work schedules Network administration and maintenance. India, Brazil, Israel, Ireland, China and Costa Rica are examples of countries where software industries for export have developed.

When women's participation in political decision making is limited and restricted, it weakens a society's democratic foundations. Conversely, increasing women's participation in public life strengthens fledgling democracies. Worldwide, women represent only 13.8 percent of elected legislators, and they remain underrepresented in most national and international administrative structures.

To end women's isolation and give them a voice ICT can act as a tool for networking women for social and political advocacy.

- · strengthen women's participation in the political process
- · improve the performance of elected women officials
- · improve women's access to the government and its services
- · improve education
- · disseminate indigenous knowledge

IT can offer significant opportunities in Nepal to virtually all girls and women, including poor women living in rural areas. More girls and women need to enter scientific and technological studies so that they can participate in the information society at all levels.

Gender Concerns in IT Policy includes Choice of technology, pricing and tariff issues, licensing issues (ownership and control), Strengthening

technology innovation (R&D), IT-enabled private sector business development, Human resource development for system support, IT labor force participation, Data infrastructure and Policy Elaboration Process.

Women are both vectors and agents of change. They have legitimate rights to self expression and equal access to information society that is relevant and affordable to all sectors of the population. Women's lack of time and multitasking should be considered. Attempts should be made at Generating Demand for IT Education, Making IT Education and Training Available to Girls and Women Ensuring that Women Get the Right Skills. Women with superior communication and listening skills are better than men in navigating the new global economy.

"Poor people need good health, not computers," said Bill Gates. BUT poor women face a double disadvantage in access to resources and voice as they are both poor and they are women. Global information society stands upon the logic of capital giving poorest women little choice to make a claim".

Some Technological Constraints that cannot be ignored are No Telephones, No Electricity, Wireless and Satellite Connectivity, Interlinking Technologies, Social and Economic Constraints, Literacy , Language and Access costs.

Access to Strategic Information includes Contact and Communication with communities concerned, Comprehension, Consensus and Coalition, Greater Control and the Capacity to act. The empowerment process is found to be based on a top down strategy. It aims to change the ICT institutions and agencies to promote women's equality and empowerment in ICTs. Examples of top-down strategies might include: Using political pressure at international conferences and consultations to demonstrate the importance of gender-sound policies and interventions. There is need of a 'watchdog'

to monitor ICT impacts on women, or gathering data as evidence to convince agencies that gender considerations are central to ICTs.

Efforts should be made to use gender analysis tools (frameworks, guidelines, checklists and rosters of women and ICT and gender experts). There should be structural changes made by gender training, financial allocations, staff appointments, and obtaining internal legal mandates).

There should be a promotion of bottom-up strategies that are aimed directly at women, supporting their entry into the mainstream of ICTs. They include removing legal or social barriers that limit women's access to ICTs, enabling them to take initiatives for their involvement in ICT planning and policies. Financial or technical assistance for women should be provided to facilitate access to and control over ICTs, money, credit, training and education

An ICT component should be included in groups, associations and institutions like: self- help groups , youth associations, women's associations, co-operatives, political parties, social service/NGOs/INGOs, religious organizations, farmer's associations, etc.

Problems with TELECENTERs in Nepal include:

- Ownership and control problem of radio and television, Phone, Internet
- Lack of women friendly contents
- Accountability problem
- Value addition problem
- Experience sharing problems
- Electricity, Telecom infrastructure, ISPs problems

Women need to be stakeholders in the community level process of technology harnessing. There are no women in the decision making structure of ICT policy making and governance. There is weak integration with line ministries, INGOs, financial institutions, professionals, and associations.

6.4 FEATHER GROUP DISCUSSION

6.4.1. Discussion Reports

6.4.1.1. Lack of Profound Knowledge/Education among women

Highlights of Discussion

Profound knowledge is required for leadership. There is inadequate education and awareness among women which leads to a lack of confidence and expression among Nepalese women. In the case of ICT, knowledge is important. Without enough knowledge, women cannot be aware of the relevance of ICT in improving their lives and increasing their efficiency. There are lots of women drop outs at the higher level of education. There should be a conducive environment for women to take up higher level studies.

Women have multiple roles to handle. They are supposed to be good wives, daughters in law, mothers and social workers. They have to manage and contribute a lot of their time in managing these social roles. It leaves very little time for women to increase their knowledge and skills.

Some women also suffer from a technology phobia. There should be awareness and sensitizations events like this workshop to break this phobia. They should be made bold enough to face the computer and make the computer work for them.

Way Forward

Education and awareness should start from the home. Women should be given ample opportunities to pursue higher studies.

There should be an internalization process among women to take up a career and challenges. Women should not take jobs merely as a hobby to use time left after family work. There should be awareness camps at various levels to boost the motivation of women.

The government can also take a lead role in encouraging women to take up higher studies. There should be policy reforms to ensure a favourable environment for women that will encourage them to continue their studies. There should be good monitoring mechanisms for controlling the high drop-out rates of women.

ICT can also be used as an innovative tool for promoting education for the illiterate through the use of e-learning modules. There are different successful modules that can be localized and adapted as per the need of local women. On the other hand, the tool can also used for providing information for business, education and health. Different icons can be used so that the less-educated mass can also benefit.

ICT education of women should also be promoted. This can be achieved by educating women and girl children through computer trainings and awareness camps. There should be a provision for dual communication in ICT. There should be access to resources and information. On the other hand, these platforms should be interactive so that they can also provide views and concerns using the online platform.

6.4.1. 2. Socio-cultural barrier
Highlights of Discussion

Women are considered as idols of home. Parents have biased approaches

in treating boys and girls. There is a difference in educational opportunities. Most of the parents provide the best education to their boys who are provided with more access to parental resources than to girls. These discriminations are more prominent in rural areas.

Women also suffer from early marriages that bring social responsibilities. Women have to curtail their desires for further education due to their domestic work. Rising of children and taking care of in-laws are considered to be more important duties of women than pursuing career. There are also inadequate mechanisms of providing information to women who are not aware of their rights.

Way Forward

There are many women who have succeeded in crafting success stories by attaining high positions in their careers. The success stories of these women should be explored and shared widely to create role models for younger generations. It will also provide recognition to challenges conquered by these women while attaining these positions.

The family members should strongly support these women who should also be given freedom in taking decisions that affect their lives. On the other hand, there should be scholarship opportunities for training and education so that they can make
the right decisions in their lives.

6.4.1.3. Male domination in the ICT sector

Highlights of Discussion

Society has been discriminating between girls and boys since their childhood. Girls are given dolls while boys are given cars and planes. In this way, girls are kept away from playing with technology, while boys are given a chance to learn from technology. The mindset of people should be changed and the general treatment as being women vulnerable and incompetent to work in ICT should be changed. There should be a change in cultural attitudes and social norms.

There is also discrimination at the legal level eg: property rights and citizenship. There is inadequate representation of women in politics and governance. The maoists claim that there should be 40% reservation for them in politics. There are only 2 female members represented despite the demand.

It should be noted that these discriminatory social norms and low representation in governance are hindering the process of building confidence among women. There should be different capacity building interventions for promoting the quality participation of women. There should be more opportunities and education for women so that they become bold enough to face the challenges in their lives. There should be a division of household work to allow women to spread their feathers in the outside world.

Way Forward

Education is a must for women to change their perspectives about themselves. Their family members should support them strongly in sharing their social responsibilities and encouraging them to face external challenges. Women should be provided with opportunities to broaden their

perspectives. There should also be large number of interventions at the grassroots level to change the attitude of the rural society.

There should be advocacy and lobbying to change mind-set of people in society and decision making levels. There should be opportunities for women to increase their capabilities. Besides, there should be provisions for including competent women in the decision making structures of ICTs to bring out gender sensitive ICT policies and actions.

6.4.1.4.Inadequate ICT Awareness
Highlights of Discussion

ICT is not a difficult subject which should be included in the ICT curriculum from primary levels. It has been found that most private schools have an ICT curriculum while government schools have not such provisions. It is causing a knowledge gap that should be bridged by including an ICT curriculum in government schools.

There should be good use of ICTs to increase literacy levels. Specific software should be used for non-literate women by using voice and graphic technology. There are lots of examples in India where they are using different e-learning software. Appropriate software should be localized so that grass roots communities can benefit from them. There should also be increased participation of girls in IT projects.

There are also different cases where women have benefited from ICT proliferation. Women can even work from their homes. There should be a

creation of favourable women to increase their affordability to these ICTs. There should be awareness among women entrepreneurs so that they can make maximum use of technology. The ICT sector is most suitable for women because there is no physical work involved. However, there is a need to make women capable of tapping these opportunities.

Way Forward

Women should be devoid of fear in using hi-tech products. They should be bold and courageous enough to face these technologies. Women should initiate ICT jobs from their homes and strong support mechanisms should be provided for women to make them bold and strong.

6.4.1.5.No solution provider by domain specialist

Highlights of Discussion

There should be a provision for sharing individual problems in the right platforms. There should be some domain experts to provide alternative solutions to these problems. There can be different domain experts in different subject areas. There should also be knowledge sharing mechanisms of these domain experts in providing solutions to seekers. These domain experts should be equipped with reliable information.

Way Forward

Role models should be created from domain experts who are experienced. A network must be established to save time, energy and resources. Different web based applications can be used to provide information on different domains from a single platform. There should also be networking among these domain experts to share their knowledge and experiences.

6.4.1.6.Unemployment after getting education

Highlights of Discussion

There is enough manpower to exceed employment options. There are limited positions in the ICT domain. Since the educational system in Nepal is more theoretical than practical, educated people have difficulty in using their educational knowledge in their careers.

There is inadequate motivation to young cadres who are fresh in their jobs. They have to undergo different levels of harassments and humiliations. There is no proper under job training to equip them with managerial skills. Favouritism and nepotism practiced by the employing organizations should be minimized so that the right people stay in the right position.

There are very few women who have reached higher positions. Women face different family barriers and the ICT field needs more knowledge and regular update. On the other hand, many attempts have been made to explore successes of women. Such female role models of the country need to be studied.

Way Forward

Employment opportunities must be created so that women can also have a stake in employment. Women must be given flexible hours so that they can manage their time in their homes. Families should provide strong

support so that women can take time to update their knowledge even after marriage.

There should be advocacy and lobby to make the education system more practical. There should be a component of ICT and managerial skills. There should also be orientation on the professional code of ethics that will help them act professionally in their careers.

6.4.1.7.Inadequate access of women to Financial Resources

Highlights of Discussion

Education for girls is limited to the primary level. Families give more importance to the marriage of their girls than to their education. Women are internalized to grow up as a house decorators rather than professionals. They have multiple roles to play and perform. There should be a change in the attitude of society.

Since people think that ICT is expensive they do not want to involve women in the ICT sector. Men also think that women do not have the capacity to earn, so they do not bother to involve women in the ICT sector. Computers in houses are more accessible to boys than girls. They are discriminated against in their own homes from early childhood. Thus, women develop very little confidence in dealing with this technology.

Way Forward

There is need to change the attitude and mindset of people. There should be a strong focus on compulsory higher education of girls. Women should be encouraged to pursue ICT education. The educational system should be changed to make it more practical

6.4.1.8. Lack of effective networking and advocacy for promoting women in ICT

Highlights of Discussion

There is inadequate networking among women working in ICT. Since women forces are isolated, they need to form a network (forum) of "Women in ICT". These networks should advocate and lobby for the development and implementation of gender sensitive policies. Information should be shared and relayed within the network so that more women and women friendly organizations can join hands and support the initiative of consolidating energies for mainstreaming women in the ICT sector.

Way Forward

Women's forums should play role in joining together forces to raise their voice to increase quality participation of women in ICT. Some of the short term activities for the network are:

- · Creation of members' database

- · Creation of a web platform

- · Collection and sharing of success stories, job/business opportunities

- · ICT Information updates

- · ICT capacity of females

- · Information and knowledge sharing from local to international levels

6.4.1.9.No Platform for Women's Involvement

Highlights of Discussion

A majority of ICT jobs have irregular working hours. It is therefore challenging for women to take up ICT as a career, and strong family support is needed to continue working in this field. In some cases, there should be gender sensitive management to allow women to have more flexible hours.

Society questions the capability of women and women and their creativeness is not trusted. In some cases, women are confident but they are not provided opportunities to prove their capabilities. Men dominate women even when women are capable. There is a lack of gender sensitivity in the work place for women. However, in most cases women are not self confident which is due to inadequate experiences, knowledge and education.

Way Forward

There should be different skill development training and awareness camps to build the confidence of women. The mindset of men, women and society needs to be changed while judging women. Society should offer strong support and encouragement so that
women can face external professional challenges. Women should be given opportunities to express their feelings and creativeness.

There should be positive discriminatory policies and practices for women. There should also be strong knowledge/information sharing mechanisms so that women can tap the available opportunities. The working environment should be gender friendly so that women do not feel threatened when leaving their homes.

Advocacy and lobbying should ensure the representation of women at decision making levels. There should be a network of women in ICT that can provide useful information so that ICT can create linkage with other women working in ICT. Women newcomers can also benefit from the experiences of these women professionals who can provide guidance to deal with challenges and to tap the available opportunities.

6.4.1.10. Lack of confidence

Highlights of Discussion

Females are shy by nature. Family environments and social structural systems force females to stay away from decision making. Women are taught to listen and obey rather than to express their feelings. This internalization process also hinders the women's active participation of women in decision making.

There is also a societal perception that technology is a man's domain. Women are not supposed to work in the technological field. There is a false perception that ICT requires physical abilities that females do not have. Thus, women have to work hard to prove their credibility and competency. There are inadequate opportunities for women to show their professionalism. They also suffer various forms of harassment from their male counterparts.

Way Forward

Women should be bold, strong and free of fear. They should change their perception that ICT is complicated. Women should be provided with skill development opportunities including interpersonal communication to boost

their self-confidence. They should also be provided with good education that will make them competent enough to play a role in decision making.

6.4.1.11.Dominance of men in ICT Policy Making

Highlights of Discussion

Interventions have to make to promote the professionalism of women. Women should be provided with good education as well as capacity building interventions. These interventions will help in increase their self confidence in using their innate potentials.

There should be good profiles of women working in the ICT sector. The success stories of these women should be widely shared to erase the perception of society that women cannot contribute to ICT. There should be linkage and networking among women working in the ICT sector. It will support the raising of consolidated voices to bring gender sensitive ICT policies.

Way Forward

Women should be very consistent in their interest in ICT. They should fight for their rights. There is a need for a strong network that provides them with good information back up while fighting for their rights. There is also a need for a strong monitoring system regarding the policies for women.

ICT awareness is not only required for women but for the whole family. Strong family support is required for women to groom their professional career. However, women should have a strong desire to show their professional competencies. If women are strong in desire, no one can stop them, not even traditional societal structures.

6.4.2 Idea Initiator and Participants

SN	TITLE	IDEA INITIATOR	PARTICIPANTS
1.	Lack of Profound Knowledge-/Education among women	• Pratima Pradhan • Usha Khadka	• Binisha Shrestha • Pratima Pradhan • Usha Khadka • Sampada Karanjit • Shristee Gurung • Ratna Tara Baidya
2.	Socio-cultu-al barrier	• Laxmi gurung • Bina Vaidhya • Janaki Karmachraya • Bhawana Upadhya	• Laxmi gurung • Bina Vaidhyan • Janaki Karmachray • Bhawana Upadhya • Puspa Rizal Chhetri • Archana Shrestha • Sabita Aryal • Timila Yami Thapa • Jyoti Regmi Adhikary
3.	Male domination in ICT sector	• Anjana Lohani	• Luna Malla • Muna Devi Thapa • Sona Thapa • Bhawana Upadhya • Srijana Poudel • Indira Ghimire • Rama Bhurtel • Anjana Lohani • Jyoti Regmi Adhikary
4.	Inadequate ICT Awareness	•Sharmila Shrestha • Guna Keshari Pradhan	• Isha Shrestha • Prabita Shrestha • Sharmila Shrestha • Bhawana Upadhya • Monika Agrawal • Guna Keshari Pradhan • Ekta Silwal

SN	TITLE	IDEA INITIATOR	PARTICIPANTS
5.	No solution provider by domain specialist	• Prof.Timila Yami	• Binisha Shrestha • Timila Yami thapa • Janaki Karmacharya • Beena Baidya • Monika Agrawal • Srishtee Gurung • Ratna Tara Baidya • Srijana Poudel
6.	Unemployme-nt after getting education	• Puspa Rizal Chhetri	• Puspa Rizal Chhetri • Anajana • Archana Shrestha • Indira Ghimire • Usha Khadka • Jyoti Regmi Adhikary
7.	Inadequate access of women to Financial Resources	• Sampada Karanjit	• Luna Malla • Sampada Karanji • Sabita Aryal • Rama Bhurtel
8.	Lack of effective networking and advocacy women in ICTfor promoting	• Geeta Pradhan • Bhawana Upadhyay • Isha Shrestha • Muna Thapa	• Prabita Shrestha • Bhawana Upadhyay • Isha Shrestha • Muna Thapa • Laxmi Gurung • Guna Keshari Pradhan • Geeta Pradhan
9.	No Platform for Women's Involvement	• Isha Shrestha • Sarmila Gurung	• Binisha Shrestha • Isha Shrestha • Sarmila Gurung • Sona Pradhan • Usha Khadka • Puspa Rijal

SN	TITLE	IDEA INITIATOR	PARTICIPANTS
10.	Lack of confidence	• Monika Agrawal	• Monika Agrawal • Laxmi Gurung • Bhawana Upadhyay • Sabita Aryal • Bina Vaidya • Archana Shrestha • Janaki karmacharya • Sarmila Shrestha • Indira Ghimire • Anjana Lohani • Ratna Tara Vaidya • Ekta Silwal • Muna Thapa • Jyoti Regmi Adhikaryl
11.	Dominance of men in ICT Policy Making	• Rama Parajuli Bhurtel	• Luna Malla • Rama Parajuli Bhurtel • Geeta Pradhan • Srishtee Gurung • Sampada Karanjit • Pratima Pradhan • Timila Yami • Laxmi Gurung

6.5 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS PARTICIPATED IN THE WORKSHOP

6.5.1 Participants of Day One (19 December 2006)

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
Women				
1.	Anjana Lohoni	NB Bank		4783975, 9841497913
2.	Archana Sherestha	Elite InfoTech	archana@archa-na.com.np	5537389 9841235288
3.	Bahwana Upadhaya	UN WEP		9851047841, 5542607 ext 2800
4.	Bina Vaidya	TU Central Library (TUCL)	bina_vaidya@h-otmail.com	
5.	Binisha Shrestha	SAP-I	binishas@sapi.-org.np	9841328843
6.	Deepti Khakurel	YTC	yic@sapnepal.-org	9841273954
7.	Ekta Silwal	Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya	ekta@mpp.org-.np	9841200850
8.	Geeta Pradhan	SAP Nepal	geeta.pradhan-@gmail.com	9803298426

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
9.	Guna Keshari Pradhan	Nepal Telecom	guna@ntc.net.np	5530878
10.	Indira Ghimire	TUCL		2150120, 4330834 (Off)
11.	Isha Shrestha	Nepo Technology Pvt. Ltd.	ishrestha@nepotech.com	
12.	Janaki Karmacharya	WECS	jk@wecs.gov.np	
13.	Jyoti Regmi Adhikary	KCM	jyoti@kcm.edu.np	984130123-8
14.	Laxmi Gurung	HLCIT	laxmig2004@hotmail.com	4244820, 4244559
15.	Luna Malla	SAP-I	lunam@sapi.org.np	984127660-8
16.	Monika Agrawal	IOE		985101357-1
17.	Muna Devi Thapa	Mercantile Communication Pvt. Ltd.		984133835-2
18.	Prabita Shrestha	SAP-I	sapifo@sapi.org.np	984137246

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
19.	Prakriti Shrestha	KCM	sh.prakriti@gmail.com	9841372946
20.	Puspa Rizal Chhetri	NIMST		016218751, 9841218678
21.	Rachana Pradhan	KCM	pradhanrachana@hotmail.com	9841202303
22.	Rama Parajuli (Bhurtel)	Radio Nepal		4248981, 4226436 (Off)
23.	Rama Shrestha	S.V. Academy		9841472757
24.	Ratna Tara Baidya	NB Bank		4781917, 9851040664
25.	Sabita Aryal	AEPC		5528335, 5529953
26.	Sabita Thapa	WWF	sabita.thapa@wwfnepal.org	
27.	Sarada Khakurel	Elite InfoTech	kl_sarada@hotmail.com	5552369
28.	Sarmila Shrestha	AEPC		5528335
29.	Sharmila Gurung	Mercantile Solution Pvt. Ltd.		9841483060

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
30.	Shikha Shrestha	BellaSAP	sshrestha@bella-net.org	9841232975
31.	Smriti Pradhan	BellaSAP	smritip@sapi.or-g.np	9841369318
32.	Sona Pradhan	FWLD		4242683
33.	Srishtee Gurung	Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya	srishtee@mpp.o-rg.np	9851081715
34.	Sushma Neupane	Patan +2		9841421392
35.	Timila Yami	IOE		984129809, 4226288
36.	Usha Khadka	WDSETC / FWEAN	wdsetc@wlink.c-om.np	4252014, 9851047625

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
Men				
1.	A R Khanal	NTA	arkhanal@nta.gov.np	4446008
2.	Anjesh Tuladhar	ICIMOD	anjeshtuladhar@gmail.com	9803001462
3.	Anjin Pradhan	KCM	anjin_pradhan@hotmail.com	9841228922
4.	Ashay Thakur	IOE	er.ashay@gmail.com	9841333902
5.	Ashim Karmacharya	YTC	axim7@yahoo.com	
6.	Bibhusan Bista	BellaSAP	bbista@bellanet.org	984125647
7.	Hempal Shrestha	BellaSAP	hshrestha@bellanet.org	9851077031
8.	Kishor Panth	CAN	kishor@can.org.np	
9.	Manohari Shrestha	Samajik Jagaran Tatha Anusandhan		2031215

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS PARTICIPATED IN THE WORKSHOP

6.5.2 Participants of Day Two (20th December 2006)

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
Women				
1.	Anjana Lohoni	NB Bank		4783975, 9841497913
2.	Archana Sherestha	Elite InfoTech	archana@archana.com.np	5537389 9841235288
3.	Bahwana Upadhaya	UN WEP		9851047841, 5542607 ext 2800
4	Binisha Shrestha	SAP-I	binishas@sapi.org.np	9841328843
5	Deepti Khakurel	YTC	yic@sapnepal.org	9841273954
6.	Dr. Arzu Deuba	MAN	arz8a@wlink.com.np	
7.	Ekta Silwal	Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya	ekta@mpp.org.np	9841200850
8.	Elizabeth Fox	Mountain Forum	elizabeth@mtnforum.org	

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
9.	Indira Ghimire	TUCL		2150120, 4330834 (Off)
10.	Indira Rai	KCM	inira_r@hot-mail.com	984130176-7
11.	Isha Shrestha	Nepo Technology Pvt. Ltd.	ishrestha@ne-potech.com	
12.	Janaki Karmacharya	WECS	jk@wecs.gov-.np	
13.	Jyoti Regmi Adhikary	KCM	jyoti@kcm.e-du.np	984130123-8
14.	Laxmi Gurung	HLCIT	laxmig2004@-hotmail.com	4244820, 4244559
15.	Luna Malla	SAP-I	lunam@sapi.-org.np	984127660-8
16.	Minnat Joshi	KCM		
17.	Muna Devi Thapa	Mercantile Communication Pvt. Ltd.		984133835-2
18.	Neema Pant	FIT Nepal	neema@unli-mit.com	
19.	Pragati Shahi	The Kathmandu Post		

SN	Name	Organizati-on	Email	Phone
20.	Prakriti Shrestha	KCM	sh.prakriti@-gmail.com	9841372946
21.	Pratima Pradhan	Nepal Telecom	pratima.prad-han@ntc.net-.np	016200111
22.	Puspa Rizal Chhetri	NIMST		016218751, 9841218678
23.	Rachana Pradhan	KCM	pradhanrach-ana@hotmail-.com	9841202303
24.	Rama Parajuli (Bhurtel)	Radio Nepal		4248981, 4226436 (Off)
25.	Rama Shrestha	S.V. Academy		9841472757
26.	Ratna Tara Baidya	NB Bank		4781917, 9851040664
27.	Sabita Aryal	AEPC		5528335, 5529953
28.	Sabita Thapa	WWF	sabita.thapa-@wwfnepal.-org	
29.	Sarada Khakurel	Elite InfoTech	kl_sarada@h-otmail.com	5552369
30.	Sarmila Shrestha	AEPC		5528335
31.	Shalini Wadhwa	VOW		
32.	Sharmila Gurung	Mercantile Solution Pvt. Ltd.		9841483060

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
33.	Shikha Shrestha	BellaSAP	sshrestha@bella-net.org	9841232975
34.	Smriti Pradhan	BellaSAP	smritip@sapi.or-g.np	9841369318
35.	Sona Pradhan	FWLD		4242683
36.	Srishtee Gurung	Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya	srishtee@mpp.o-rg.np	9851081715
37.	Sushma Neupane	Patan +2		9841421392
38.	Timila Yami	IOE		984129809, 4226288
39.	Usha Khadka	WDSETC / FWEAN	wdsetc@wlink.c-om.np	4252014, 9851047625

SN	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
Men				
1.	A R Khanal	NTA	arkhanal@nta-.gov.np	4446008
2.	Anjesh Tuladhar	ICIMOD	anjeshtuladhar@gmail.com	9803001462
3.	Anjin Pradhan	KCM	anjin_pradhan@hotmail.com	9841228922
4.	Ashay Thakur	IOE	er.ashay@gmail.com	9841333902
5.	Ashim Karmacharya	YTC	axim7@yahoo.com	
6.	Bal Krishna Prasai	Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology		
7.	Bibhusan Bista	BellaSAP	bbista@bellanet.org	984125647
8.	Bishnu Raj Adhikari	KCM		9851052765
9.	Biplav Man Singh	CAN	biplav@castnep.com	
10.	Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali	SAP-I	sapied@sapi.org.np	5522234
11.	Hempal Shrestha	BellaSAP	hshrestha@bellanet.org	9851077031
12.	Kishor Panth	CAN	kishor@can.org.np	
13.	Manohari Shrestha	Samajik Jagaran Tatha Anusandhan		2031215
14.	Mr. Deepak Rauniar	Karmachari Sanchaya Kosh	himhans@wlink.com.np	9851084895

www.womeninict.org

CONTACT

SAP International and Bellanet Asia
P.O. Box 23025, Sanepa Sanchal 2
Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel: 977-1-5522234
Fax: 977-1-5553126
Email: info@sapi.org.np