



REPORT OF THE BROADBAND COMMISSION WORKING GROUP ON GENDER

At the 6th meeting of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development (New York, 2012) Academy Award-winning actor and advocate Geena Davis called for the Commission to set up a new Working Group to examine gender-related issues in broadband access and female empowerment. The resulting report is a comprehensive global study bringing together wide-ranging and ongoing research into technology and gender.

In March 2013, the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development endorsed a fifth broadband advocacy target, calling for gender equality in access to broadband by 2020.

The report finds that there is a significant and pervasive gender divide in broadband access between men and women.

ITU estimates that some 200 million fewer women are online compared with men. Women are coming online later, and more slowly. Without remedial action, it has been estimated that the Internet gender gap could grow to 350 million in three years' time.

Based on ITU projections, by end 2013, of the 2.8 billion Internet users worldwide, 1.3 billion Internet users will be women (or 37% of all women worldwide), compared with 1.5 billion men (41% of all men). But this figure hides big regional variations; the most recent estimates (2011) from sub-Saharan Africa, for example, indicate that there are twice as many men as women on the Internet.

Equality in access to broadband is not only a human rights issue, it makes commercial and economic sense. The World Bank (2009) estimates that every 10% increase in access to broadband results in 1.38% growth in Gross Domestic Product for developing countries. Bringing 600 million additional women and girls online could boost GDP by up to US\$13-18 billion.

Research indicates that women are 21% less likely than men to own a mobile phone, representing a global mobile gender gap of 300 million women and a US\$13 billion missed market opportunity for the mobile industry.

While the world is watching the economic potential of the BRIC economies, the most exciting new emerging market in the world could be women.

Analysts believe that over the next decade the impact of women on the global economy – as producers, entrepreneurs, employees and consumers – could equal or exceed the impact of China's or India's one-billion-plus populations.

IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

- 01** Women are disproportionately under-represented in ICT employment. In OECD countries, women account for fewer than 20% of ICT specialists. In other regions, the disparity is often much higher.

Technology policy should take into account the social implications of ICT policy on all development areas, including gender.

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- 02** Gaps in access to ICTs are also associated with gaps in the advanced ICT skills necessary to access better-paid jobs and online recruitment services. By 2015, it is estimated that 90% of formal employment across all sectors will require tech skills.
 - 03** Education and income gaps affect women's access to ICTs. Women's overall lower incomes hinder the purchase of equipment and payment for access; their globally higher illiteracy rate poses another barrier to access. Across all developing countries, only 75% of women are literate, compared to 86% of men, with far greater gaps in some countries.

LACK OF DATA

Different conclusions based on different measurement methodologies are exacerbated by an acute lack of nationally representative sex-disaggregated ICT data in many countries. It is notable that of all the gender-disaggregated data included in the WEF's Global Gender Gap Report, access to ICTs is not included.

BROADBAND POLICY

- 01** Today, fewer than a third of countries' National Broadband Plans refer to gender.
- 02** Bangladesh, Finland, India, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States all include references to gender in their Plan.
- 03** Where gender is included there is a strong focus on ICT training for women. One example is the Dominican Republic, which aims to achieve a 50% digital literacy rate for women within four years.
- 04** Technology policy should take into account the social implications of ICT policy on all development areas, including gender. ICT policy development does not stand alone, but is closely linked to education, health, governance, inequality, agriculture, finance, science and many other areas – all of which directly impact gender equality.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

01 Integrate Gender into National ICT and Broadband Policies

02 Improve Sex-Disaggregated ICT Statistics and Measurement

03 Take Steps to Boost the Affordability & Usability of ICT Products and Services

04 Improve Relevant and Local Content Online

05 Launch Action Plan for gender equality in access to broadband by 2020