The 14th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women
"Women's Empowerment and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)"

Recommendations

We envision an information society in which all its members, women and men regardless of age, socio-economic or political status, and abilities/disabilities, can disseminate, access, and share information and communicate as equal actors in the development of their societies. Equal and just society is possible only when people's rights to communication, information and development are guaranteed as human rights.

The participants in the 14th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women discussed the issue that ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) has the potential to become an opportunity for the empowerment of women, but that various problems must be resolved in order for this to occur.

Among many benefits of ICT is that it facilitates the participation in public communication of women and marginalized people and communities. It also increases networking and contributes to the social and political empowerment of women. Furthermore, new ICT creates new jobs and opens possibilities for new working styles and new forms of entrepreneurship, thereby accelerating the potential for women's economic empowerment.   New ICT also has great potential in enhancing processes of democratization and strengthening freedom of expression.

On the other hand, access to ICT greatly differs between nations, ethnic groups, rural and urban, women and men, amongst ages, different abilities and as a result of other socio-political factors. If this situation remains unaddressed, it could further exacerbate existing social, political, economic, and cultural gaps amongst people and amongst nations. Moreover, attention must be given to the misuse of ICT, in that it may be used to expand commercialization of sex, including pornography, as well as women's and children's trafficking worldwide, both of which violate women's and children's human rights. ICT has also enhanced the possibility of surveillance and has been an adverse tool in increased militarism globally. However, attempts to codify and control the use of the Internet must not be at the expense of fundamental human rights and freedoms, and the pursuit of peace.

Following these discussions, the participants made the following recommendations for the current and future generations regarding the information society:

1. We should pursue an information society that is based on the principle that the human rights of all people be recognized, respected, and promoted.

2. Citizens and NGOs, central and local governments, international organizations, and ICT-related industries should all make efforts to eliminate the digital divide that exists between nations, ethnic groups, rural and urban, women and men, and between people of all ages, different abilities, and other socio-political factors. Moreover, efforts must be made to ensure that people who are unable to effectively access ICT be engaged in all aspects of social, economic, and political life.

3. Improved information and communication literacy should include not only technical aspects of ICT, but more importantly, critical thinking on the information received, to be able to discern socio-political and cultural implications of information, media, and communication channels. Education on human rights, including women's human rights and children's rights, is also a fundamental element of increased information and communication literacy.

4. By assuming the role of key actors in this new information society, we should work to improve information and communication literacy and ensure that ICT is made available and used in ways that enhance gender equality, the pursuit of social justice and peace, and the empowerment of women.

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All Participants
The 14th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women