

NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Gender and Development Agenda*:

CLOSING THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

(Advancing Gender Equality and Women Empowerment through ICT)

“The so-called digital divide is actually seven gaps in one. There is a technological divide – great gaps in infrastructure. There is content divide. A lot of web-based information is simply not relevant to the real needs of people. And nearly 70 per cent of the world’s websites are in English, at times crowding out local voices and views. There is a gender divide, with women and girls enjoying less access to information technology than men and boys. This can be true of rich and poor countries alike.”

(former) UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

GAD STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

MANDATE

The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), pursuant to Act 3846, as amended, is mandated to:

- Regulate the installation, operation and maintenance of radio stations both for private and public use. (Radio Control Law, Act No. 3846, as amended)
- Regulate and supervise the provision of public telecommunications services (Radio Control Law, Act No. 3846, as amended and Public Telecommunications Policy Act of 1995, RA No. 7925)
- Manage the radio spectrum (Radio Control Law, Act No. 3846, as amended and Public Telecommunications Policy Act of 1995, RA No. 7925)
- Regulate and supervise radio and television broadcast stations, cable television (CATV) and pay television (EO No. 546 and EO No. 205)
- Promote the welfare and protection of consumers of public telecom services.

GAD VISION

Women and men equally contribute to and access and benefit from social and economic resources brought about by increasingly efficient and modern telecommunications services regulated by a gender responsive agency

GAD MISSION

To promote equal opportunity and participation in the regulatory process responsive to the gender-differentiated needs of women and men

GAD GOALS

1. Broader participation especially of rural and indigenous women and men, in development planning system through e-governance
2. Increased access to and benefit of poor and marginalized women and men from industry and countryside development
3. Increased competitiveness of women in MSMEs in expanding digital economies through resource sharing and capacity building in ICT
4. Improved public links and connectivity especially of rural and indigenous women and men during disasters and conflict
5. Improved protection especially of women and girls from gender-based cyber crimes through ICT user protection and information security
6. Enhanced connectivity among lower income groups of women and men through enabling and sustainable ICT environment
7. Gender equality and women empowerment achieved within NTC for both women and men to equally participate and contribute to the work of the organization
8. Policies, programs, projects and knowledge-building activities allow for women and men clients to equitably benefit from ICT, and help reduce inequalities

Legal Basis

RA 9710. Magna Carta of Women Rule IV. Rights and Empowerment. Section 19. Non-discriminatory and Non-derogatory Portrayal of Women in Media and Film

B. The Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) and its attached agencies shall ensure the formulation of policies and implementation of programs pursuant to the Act and these Rules and Regulations ... 3. Create a gender equality committee composed of representatives from the OPS, PCW, various self-regulatory bodies and the **National Telecommunications Commission (NTC)**, MTRCB, FAP, FDCP, OMB, NCCA, representatives of women's media NGOs to promote gender mainstreaming, formulate the gender equality guidelines and Code of Ethics for media, and monitor and evaluate the implementation thereof.

C. The NTC, MTRCB, FAP, FDCP, OMB, NCCA shall ensure that the media and film industries comply with the Act and these Rules and Regulations, including:

1. Formulation of policies and programs to raise consciousness of the general public in recognizing the dignity of women and the role and contribution of women in all spheres of private and public life;
2. Allocation of space, airtime and resources for the airing of advertisements that promote women's human rights;
3. Enhancement of programming, production and image-making that present women's needs, issues and concerns;

4. Ensuring that, in cooperation with all schools of journalism, information and communication, and national media federations and associations, regular trainings on gender equality and gender-based discrimination are integrated in the human resource development components of media organizations and corporations.

RA 9775. Anti-Child Pornography Act. The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) shall promulgate within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this provision which shall include, among others, the installation of filtering software that will block access to or transmission of any form of the child pornography.

1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Chapter IV. Strategic Objectives and Actions, Sec. J. Women and the media, Strategic objective 1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication, No. 239 (a) Encourage the use of communication systems, including new technologies, as a means of strengthening women's participation in democratic processes

2003 Geneva Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society. Paragraph A12. We affirm that development of ICTs provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool to that end.

Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. No. 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Proposed Framework

Technologies that cater to information and communication services vary from print media, fixed telephone lines, to satellite and the Internet. Gillian Marcelle (member of the High Level Panel advising the United Nations on ICT and development issues) defines ICTs as a complex and heterogeneous set of goods, applications, and services used for producing, distributing, processing, and transforming information. It is a sector comprised of segments as diverse as telecommunications, television and radio, computer software & hardware, computer applications, and electronic media such as the Internet.

There is wide recognition of ICT as a potent force for advancing gender equality and women empowerment, but first we have to close the digital gender divide. Access to ICTs is largely gendered and goes beyond issues of technological infrastructure. This means women's capacity to use and enjoy ICT is mediated by her literacy and education level, language barriers, geographic location, mobility, social class and its prevailing culture, as well as her socially prescribed roles.

Infrastructure development involves decisions that are extremely important in determining women's equal access and benefit from ICTs. These include location of facilities, type of technology, costs and pricing. Access to ICT among poor and marginalized sectors is obviously a function of priorities among business sector but can be influenced to a great extent by NTC by virtue of its mandate. Favoring highly urbanized areas is by all means profitable to business but investment in poor and marginalized rural areas can have tremendous positive impact not only on women but on the country's development as a whole. However other major factors are crucial for impactful implementation such as accessibility in terms of roads and transport, power supply, availability of training and education services; support structures to ease women's reproductive concerns which point to a vital collaboration with other organizations such as DOTr, DPWH, NEA, TESDA, DSWD, LBP, PDIC, etc.

Gender issues in ICT cover a broad spectrum from integrating gender perspective to the telecommunications/ICT policies; promoting gender-responsive e-governance; effective use of ICTs and its relative content by women; promoting access and participation of women in the information economy; promoting freedom of information; to countering (if not eliminating) the use of the Internet to perpetuate violence against women and children.

Given this landscape and following the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Action Plan to Close the Digital Gender Gap, the NTC Six-Year GAD Strategic Agenda and GAD Strategic Plan will be working on the two principal goals of Gender and Development: 1) Gender Equality with efforts directed at closing the gap between women and men in terms of welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control of ICT in keeping with Sarah Longwe's framework* and 2) Women Empowerment by harnessing the transformative potential of ICTs both on the individual woman and their communities and government where transformation is fundamental to the realization of women's rights and the realization of just, inclusive and rights-based policies, programs, and projects of NTC.

****Sara Longwe's Levels of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment as cited in the Third Edition of the Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines p. 5***

WELFARE

Addressing the material and physical well-being of women and men, girls and boys. Empowerment here refers to improvement in the physical condition of women and girls.

ACCESS

Ensuring that resources, services, and facilities are made available to women and men. Access is related to the concept of entitlements that are conferred by the state, market, kinship, and other systems. Because women's entitlements are generally more limited, empowerment here means

greater access of women to resources, services, and facilities, and making available to women appropriate and effective means to secure resources, services, and facilities.

CONSCIENTIZATION

Challenging the existing gender division of labor or questioning the beliefs that women's lower socioeconomic position and the traditional gender division of labor are part of the *natural order*, or is "*God-given*," acknowledging the equality between women and men. Empowerment means sensitizing women and men to sexist beliefs and recognizing that women's subordination is not part of the natural order of things, but is imposed by a system of discrimination that is socially constructed, one that can be altered.

PARTICIPATION

Addressing the most visible and obvious phenomenon of inequality between women and men – small proportions of women are found in the legislative assembly or in the management of public organizations and the private sector. When development is confined to the levels of welfare and access, women are treated as passive beneficiaries. Empowering women means making them equal with men who are agents actively involved in the development process.

CONTROL

Confronting the unequal power relations between women and men. Women's increased participation at the decision-making level will lead to their increased development and empowerment when this participation is used to achieve increased control over the factors of production, ensuring women's equal access to resources and the distribution of benefits. Equality of control means a balance of power between women and men, so that neither is in a position of dominance.

Targets and Metrics

1. ACCESS

Women

- communication assets such as radio, smart phones, computer and the technology to gain new knowledge/information and put these into use for her own benefit and the benefit of her family and/or community
- awareness of public and private programs, projects and services that are hugely beneficial to the development of poor and marginalized women
- conversance on current issues in the country and around the globe (Eg. pronouncements of the President, CoVid-19 statistics, weather disturbances, new policies or laws, etc.)
- awareness of the potential benefits of the Internet and the openness to use it (Women have the tendency to not use the Internet because they think they "do not need it" or they "do not want it" or it is "too complex".)
- adaptability (as in not being intimidated) to innovative technology and the confidence to utilize/manipulate new learning platforms in the Internet (Example: YouTube, MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet) for networking, collaborative knowledge production, thereby optimizing new economic opportunities

- use of electronic financial transactions (ATM, online banking, e-wallet such as GCash, PayMaya, GrabPay, etc.)
- available hotline or warmline especially for poor rural and indigenous women who may be caught in the crossfire or calamities and who are simultaneously experiencing gender-based violence

NTC – Policy, Regulation and Supervision, Technology Education and Consumer Protection, Data Measurement

- comprehensive review and analysis of existing policies and regulations to establish gender gaps; stocktaking of what have been accomplished in terms of mainstreaming gender perspective in its programs, activities, and projects (PAPs); synthesis of main policy implications and identifying new policy directions
- new and enhanced policies and regulations that are: 1) evidence-based or based on gender analysis of sex-disaggregated data; 2) innovative and creative with particular emphasis on extending networks (such as through satellites) and digital access to rural areas; 3) clearly adherent to consumer protection principles (Eg. transparency, fair treatment, privacy of client information, security and safety, effective redress); 4) promote access to and affordability and use of connected digital devices (e.g. smart phones, tablets, laptops); 5) mindful of intersecting factors that cause or widen the digital divide (other than geographic) such as age, socio-economic standing, ethnicity, disability, literacy, religion, political affiliation, culture, and gender
- availability and promotion of e-banking and mobile money, especially to women and other disadvantaged sectors
- enhanced programming, production and image-making that present women’s needs, issues and concerns;

2. CONSCIENTIZATION

Women

- perceptual change manifest in how a woman views issues that affect her as a woman (could also be conviction on critical national/global issues); how a woman sees herself as in level of self-esteem and self-confidence in relation to knowledge/information and ICT
- acknowledgement of both her capacities and limitations with regard to ICT as well as her entitlement to the many opportunities brought about by ICT
- knowledge and understanding, ability to articulate and invoke women’s rights
- capacity to make an empowered choice between her personal/career growth and her reproductive responsibilities, or to negotiate with her partner for domestic structural adjustments and seek available services to support her choice
- capacity to confront and stop eVAW (including sexting, bullying, deepfake and deepfake pornography, non-consensual uploading of intimate videos) on grounds that it violates her rights as a woman

Government – Advocacy, Rights-based Digital Education

- programs that promote and advocate digital education among both duty bearers and rights holders addressing the broad range of needs and intersecting considerations among marginalized women

- massive online gender awareness-raising campaign for marginalized women and their husbands/partners and for young girls and their families as a platform for digital inclusion; emphasis on technology-related gender stereotypes usually more favorable to boys
- PAPs that avert women and girls' vulnerability to a whole new form of gender-based violence online considering how women themselves are rapidly shifting paradigms as to what is acceptable and unacceptable in our culture, taking into consideration the unprecedented openness of a significant number of women and girls, to novel forms of self expression and social relationship, and how ICTs can avert vulnerability and violation of women's rights
- policies and programs that raise consciousness of the general public in recognizing the dignity of women and the role and contribution of women in all spheres of private and public life
- space, airtime and resources allocated for airing of advertisements promoting women's human rights

3. PARTICIPATION

Women

- increased labor market participation while enjoying more flexible schedules and being able to combine work and family duties with less stress, this could facilitate accumulation of bankable working experiences making women eligible for managerial positions in the long run, thus, breaking the glass ceiling
- involvement in online activities or collective actions emanating from online campaigns pushing for gender justice, women empowerment and gender equality (including elimination of discriminatory policies)
- community women / community-based women's organizations participating in data gathering, planning, programming and budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects initiated by NTC and/or partner organization
- women (especially rural and indigenous women) participating in e-governance utilizing websites as e-governance tool
- number of women in MSMEs engaged in online business or digital economies; resource sharing among women; and ICT-related capacity building initiated by the women themselves
- use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) as an organizing tool among women

Government – Policy, Data and Measurement/Implementing Mechanism

- coordinated policy action that can help narrow the digital gender divide, enabling enhanced, safer and more affordable access to digital tools
- multi-stakeholder partnership or a stronger co-operation across stakeholders (government, private sector, civil society) to remove barriers to girls and women's full participation in the digital world recognizing that technological fixes cannot address the underlying structural problems that drive the digital gender divide

- concrete policy actions that foster women's and girls' full participation and inclusion in the digital economy, while at the same time addressing stereotypes and social norms that lead to discrimination against women
- sustained, broad-based gender education and advocacy for private sector partners (television/radio networks, telephone companies, internet providers, etc.) to help curb gender disparity in ICT by hiring more women
- awareness raising on gender discrimination and advocacy at community level to dismiss the stereotypical division of labor between husbands and wives
- structural response to gender-based violence by prohibiting gender-based violence in digital spaces and protecting women's rights to participate in digital economy, free from violence
- regular trainings on gender equality and women empowerment integrated in the human resource development components of media organizations and corporations and ICT-related companies, national media federations and associations
- regular school-based fora/symposia on gender equality and women empowerment especially for students of journalism, mass communication, and information technology

4. CONTROL

Women

- increased economic opportunities that come with leadership roles, breaking deep-rooted gender inequalities in the ICT sector
- new expression of citizenship and leadership using new avenues for voice and agency of women; empowered articulation of one's stand on critical issues affecting women and the society at large
- number of women promoted to decision-making posts in the technology sector (NTC, partner private sector, people's organizations)

Government – Implementing Mechanism

- promoting women in the technology sector (also NTC), including into positions of decision-making
- creation of a Representative Political Structure (RPS) where women can influence planning, programming and budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies, enabling mechanisms and PAPS and how these translate to inclusion of marginalized women
- putting in place a structure that obligates inclusion of women sectoral representatives in decision-making structures (not to be confused with participation of organic women decision makers)

**with inputs from Miriam M. Buergo, GAD Consultant*