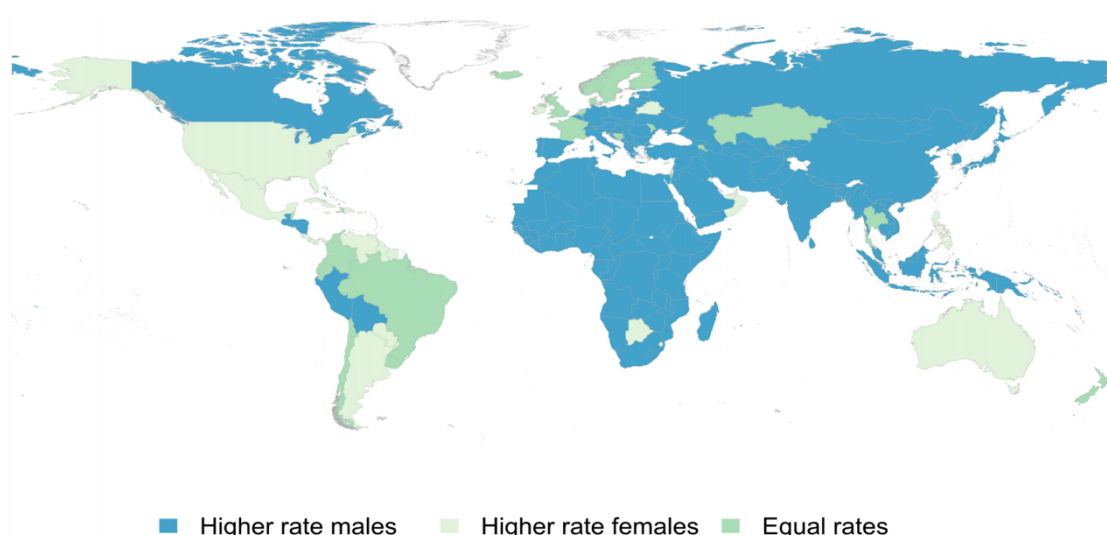|	
Forum:	Commission on the Status of Women
Issue:	Empowering women and girls in rural areas through information and communication technology (ICT)
Student Officer:	Stephanie Wang

Overview

Though great progress has been made in the past decades, gender inequality in most of the rural areas remains unsolved, coexisting with poverty, disjoint living environment, and deep-rooted discriminatory norms such as restricting mobility. Globally, women are 14% less likely than man to own mobile phones; as for more remote and marginalized areas, the

Source: ITU.
Note: * Estimates. Proportions in this chart refer to the number of women/men using the Internet, as a percentage of the respective total female/male population.

Figure 1: Proportion of the individual using the internet, by gender

situation is even worse due to regional culture and the enforcement of local laws; Consequently, many of women living under poverty in remote areas are lacking unbiased representational figure and education for basic literacy skills, which leads to biased stereotype, unemployment and high dependency on male. The gap seems bigger, and continues to widen, in some developing countries; in 2017, African women's internet access rate is 25.3% lower than men's, comparing to the 20.7% in 2013 (Gender and ICTs).
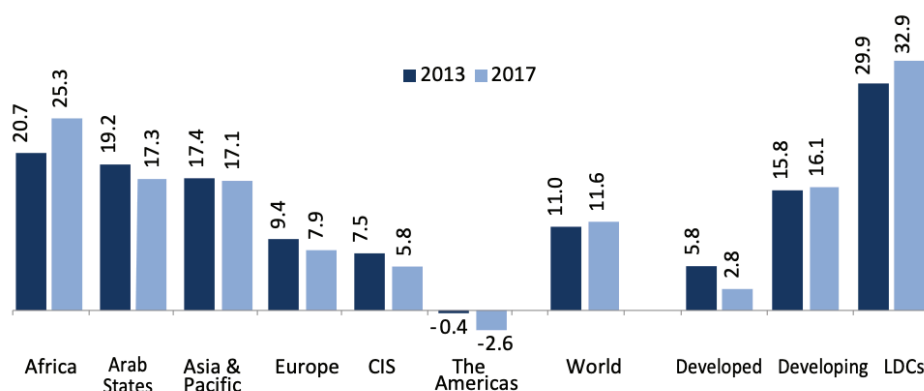
Figure 2: Internet user gender gap (%), 2013 and 2017

The digital divide issue, which increases gender inequality, did not emerge until recent time; However, under the current context of the pervasive usage and rapid development of various types of media and informational technology, which shape the lifestyles of generation Z (Gen-Z), the information and communication technologies (ICTs) not only starts to play a more crucial role in economic and social development, but also a gateway for rural women to the open and globalized world. Gaining the accessibility to information and communication technology provides much more involvement of women in education, health care, and the formal sector of economy, relieving issues of poverty and illiteracy. The topic is also mentioned in target 5.8 of the UN sustainable development goals, which are implemented by member states since 2015 for the prosperity of people and the earth.

Though United Nations has long played an important role on solving gender inequality, it was not until 1995 that they started to identify and propose resolution to empower women through technology. Recently, partnered with African Union Commission (AUO), UN women established the African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI), which aim to inspire interests in coding of African girls across the continent.

Key Terms

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Information and communication technology refers to complex groups of goods, applications, and services used to produce, process, distribute, and transform information, including telecom, TV, radio, computer software and hardware, and electronic media.

The Triple Divide

In rural area, people are facing digital, rural, and gender divide, which are three major aspects that restrict women's self-development. Suffering from both of them simultaneously, rural women are tremendously marginalized.

E-agriculture

As a recent term, e-agriculture means the improvements in information dissemination, access, and interchange osf resources, communication and participation related to agriculture in rural development.

Digital Divide

Digital divide refers to the economic and social disparity between people, specifically regarding to the access, use, and impact of ICTs. Gender digital divide, additionally, refers the inequality of it between men and women.

Timelines

Date	Event
1995	Recognition of the "gender divide" on access to ICTs by the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD) in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women
1995	The adoption of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action produced from the Fourth World Conference on Women
2000	Under the trend towards a knowledge-based economy, ECOSOC adopted a Ministerial Declaration (Millennium Declaration) on the role of information technology, which includes the plan for the 2-phase world summit of the information society. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of the accessibility of technologies, especially ICT.
2003	The phase one of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis was held, drawing UN member states' attention to the use of ICT in gender perspectives. (Phase two of the conference was held in 2005)

July, 2010   Establishment of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Major Organizations Involved

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

UN Women is an organization established in 2011 that strive to empower women in various aspects.

The Division for the Advancement of women (DAW)

The United Nations Environment Program is an international organization that is responsible for leading and coordinating action on environmental matters. It is the one of the major organizations for environmental projects in the world.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

To increase the literacy rate of women in rural regions, assistance from UNESCO related to gender-sensitive education and local culture is necessary.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

A specialized agency that belongs to the United Nations. It generally helps and develop information and communication technologies. This organization keeps collecting various gender-based data and resolution related to ICTs.

Important Documents and Passed Solutions

Due to the recentness of the topic, there was little well-rounded past resolutions. The list below are some related resolution and important publications.

Resolution 66/129. Adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2013 urges member states to further rural women's development,

Gender and ICTs - Mainstreaming gender in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for agriculture and rural development, Sophie Treinen, Alice van der Elstraeten.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome. New York, UN Women, 2014.

The Outcome Document of World Summit on the orld Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005.

Possible Solutions

Constraint by the inferiority of gender and lack of communication with the outer community, empowering rural women through ICTs should be addressed multidimensionally.

Restrained mobility is one of the major obstacles of rural women's development. Except for establishing related physical infrastructures such as expanding mobile service coverage, delegates should recognize the language barriers in non-English-spoken regions. While women and girls in marginalized regions often read local languages that are not pervasively used, the internet content in those languages tend to be insufficient and gender-biased.

On the basis of accessibility of internet, building knowledge and capacity related to ICT is another aspect to consider. Delegates could consider implementing ICT lessons, establishing unbiased female figures, and other means of education in order to resist the detrimental female stereotype, various forms of violence, and the remain of conservative and harmful practices, including child marriage and sexual exploitation.

Finally, it is also crucial to increase women's involvement in labor force, especially ICT-related jobs, especially their participation in local businesses, many of them relating to agriculture. This increase rural women's self-reliant capacity and create a sustainable development path towards more knowledgeable lives.

Bibliography

Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the

United Nations Secretariat. "Women2000 and beyond." *UN Women Watch*, United

Nations, Sept. 2005, www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/w2000-09.05-ict-e.pdf.

Accessed 31 Oct. 2018.

Gender and Development Group, and Global Information and Communication Technologies

Department. *Engendering Information & Communication Technologies*. *The World

Bank*, siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Seminar-

Series/20260878/ictbrochure.pdf. Accessed 31 Oct. 2018.

"ICT Facts and Figures 2017." *International Telecommunication Union*, July 2017,

www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2017.pdf.

Accessed 8 Nov. 2018.

Treinen, Sophie, and Alice Van der Elstraeten. *Gender and ICTs: Mainstreaming Gender in

the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Agriculture and

Rural Development / by Sophie Treinen and Alice Van Der Elstraeten*. E-book, Rome,

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018.