



**E-Government for Women's Empowerment
in Asia and the Pacific**

Country Profiles

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For further information on this report, please contact:

Social Development Division
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Building
Rajadamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel: (66-2) 288-1513
Fax: (66-2) 288-1030
Email: escap-sdd@un.org
Website: www.unescap.org

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Australia

Abbreviations

ATO	Australian Taxation Office
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
DSS	Department of Social Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ID	Identity Card
IT	Information Technology
NBN	National Broadband Network
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSW	New South Wales
OASIS	Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards
OGP	Open Government Partnership
SA	South Australia
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
VAW	Violence against Women

1 E-government origins

With the release in 1994 of the Australian Federal Government's Creative Nation Report, there was a broad realization among Australian state governments in general about the range of opportunities and significant benefits the Internet might provide. Though commerce was the overall subject matter of the document, the release of the report marked the genesis of e-government in the country. The Australian government embarked on its journey to leverage digital opportunity in government, and was among the first government globally to explore the various tools the Internet offered. The underlying strategic vision of the Creative Nations Report was to support the emergence of Australia into a competitive nation. Hence, e-government programmes initially focused their attention on the need to educate industry about the digital opportunity for economic growth.

The first significant policy in the Australian context that acknowledged the importance of addressing the new forms of social marginalization in the age of the Internet was the national digital divide policy adopted by the Federal Government in 1996. In an effort to reduce disparities of access to telecommunications infrastructure and services, \$351m was allocated to projects across regional, rural and remote areas in Australia through the 'Networking the Nation' scheme launched in July 1997. This was to become the first of a number of large-scale infrastructure investments in Australia. By 2006, Australian policy makers were seeking to address the digital divide from a social exclusion lens. The relevant Australian government department at that time, the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) published the following statement on its website.

"Current research indicates that the 'digital divide' is best understood as part of a socio-economic context and related to

the issue of social exclusion. As such, solutions need to go beyond technology. Furthering digital inclusion will require a detailed understanding of the relationship between information, people and technology."¹

¹ DCITA (2006a), cited in Notley, N and Foth, M. (2008), 'Extending Australia's digital policy: an examination of the value of social inclusion and social capital policy frameworks', Australian Social Policy Journal No. 7, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/12021/1/12021b.pdf>, Retrieved 12 November 2015.

2 E-service delivery

From the outset, e-government, or online service delivery, as it was previously known, has been a well-coordinated area of development within Australian governments. Both informal and formal governance arrangements have been well established at the State, Territory and Federal level. Offices of Women and educational bodies have been closely involved in informing and developing relevant policies and designing Internet awareness programmes.

During 2013–15, the language employed by Australian governments could be seen in terms of putting citizens at the centre of service delivery, with the understanding that the delivery of this promise requires putting more services online, opening up government, collaborating on policy design and accepting feedback on performance and then acting upon that feedback in a timely, effective and efficient manner.² Moreover, the notion of 'digital by default' goes beyond making services available in a digital format to focusing on providing the best range of services for citizens, as emphasized by the South Australian ICT strategic plan, 'SA Connected'.

"The evidence is clear – our customers prefer online services, and increasingly, mobile-ready services. Introducing new services, improving old services, whenever possible, our approach will be 'digital by default'.

This does not mean that services will only be provided in a digital format; the focus will be on providing the best range of services to our customers, giving them choice. Some services cannot be made

digital, and some probably shouldn't; however, we will consider whether they can and should, from the start."³

Historically, State and Territory Governments have both played a key role in the provision of services, which form a part of their overall responsibility, including in education and health. They also assist individuals in navigating the different tiers of government and their varying departmental structures. This makes the various State and Territory Governments most often the initial point of online contact for those seeking to understand and access government services. Federal, state and territory governments have effectively worked in tandem as well as in the transition to e-government. The Federal or Commonwealth Government and State and Territory Governments have all enacted similar legislative instruments to best advance e-government initiatives and programmes. All have policies and legislation relevant to the present analysis and for the most part these have supplemented and supported each other.

The majority of State and Territory Governments have updated their digital strategies during 2014, and the prevailing language in most of these strategies is 'digital by design'. Some jurisdictions, including South Australia have gone a step further announcing a Digital by Default Declaration,⁴ which holds that:

"Digital services will be:

- Available online, mobile-ready, easy to use and accessible
- Designed with our customers
- Offer value for money
- Implemented so that where appropriate, data can be made openly available in support of the government's Declaration of Open Data.

² NSW Government (2014), DIGITAL + NSW Government ICT Strategy Update 2014 15, <http://www.finance.nsw.gov.au/resources/digital-2014-ict-strategy-update>, Retrieved 12 November 2015.

³ South Australia Connected: Ready for the Future, http://digital.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/content_files/strategy/SA-Connected-Strategic-Directions-Update-Apr2016.pdf

⁴ The Premier of South Australia, (2014), Digital by Default Declaration, <http://dpc.sa.gov.au/digital-default>, Retrieved 11 November 2015

The government also recognizes that not all members of the community can access digital services equally and that consideration will always be given to their particular needs.⁵

Key issues for law and policy in e-government development, and the extent to which they have been addressed in Australia, are discussed in Box 1.

BOX 1 KEY ISSUES FOR POLICY FORMULATION IN E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT

1 Harmonization with human rights treaty obligations: All e-government policy frameworks and programmes are in harmony with Australia's international human rights treaty obligations to eliminate discrimination on the basis of age, race, sex, pregnancy, marital status and disability.

2 Universalizing Internet access: There is a clear policy push for the development of a National Broadband Network to "ensure all Australians have access to very fast broadband as soon as possible, at affordable prices, and at least cost to taxpayers."⁶ However, Australia does not guarantee a right to Internet access to its citizens.

3 Technical openness: In Australia there is no mandate to deliver e-services on open technology. There is however, a growing trend towards content openness, which manifests as the use of creative commons licensing on governmental websites.

4 Open government data: Australia joined the Open Government Partnership in 2011.⁷ Following this, a central public dataset repository for making public sector information available and reusable by citizens – data.gov.au – was set up. There are Open Data policy frameworks at federal and state levels. State governments have independently taken decisions to release governmental data sets into the public domain, in the public interest.⁸ However, open data policy frameworks still function from what could be described as a 'best endeavours' perspective for cost reasons, and do not fully overlap with the right to information or freedom of information frameworks.

5 Citizen charters: There are a range of different charters guaranteeing responsiveness and accountability of government services, including redress mechanisms. However, these are currently managed at a departmental level only.

6 Data security and privacy: Australia has a complex and thorough body of legislation to ensure data security and privacy. One unresolved issue in this policy debate is the storage of metadata of citizens.

7 Service level agreements and data protection agreements: State, Territory and Federal Governments Crown Law officers draft all government contracts and all contracts for e-service delivery, which contain provisions for Service Level Agreements and data protection.

5 The Premier of South Australia, (2014), Digital by Default Declaration, <http://dpc.sa.gov.au/digital-default>, Retrieved 11 November 2015

6 Letter from the Minister for Communications to the Executive Chairman NBN Co Limited, dated 8 April 2014.

7 The OGP was launched in 2011 to provide an international platform for countries committed to making their governments more open, accountable and responsive to citizens.

8 For example, recently, the New South Wales Office for Women, took the simple but vital step to make public, extensive data on the socio-economic status of women in NSW

2.1 SINGLE ENTRY PORTALS

The development of single entry portals has been a key strategy for the Australian government, in the transition to 'digital by default'. This is because such portals enable data on government programmes and services to be presented through multiple filters, and make different forms of inter-linkages possible.

The critical role that this strategy plays in the Australian context is evident from the United Nations E-government Survey 2014 which highlights, "The Australian e-government portal offers an extensive A to Z list of e-services and forms, both at the federal and local level, as well as connections to national, local and regional government websites. The portal also offers a section for starting a career or looking for a job online; as well as information on starting a business in Australia."⁹

At the state level too, governments have created single entry portals. For example, the South Australian government website provides information about services offered on its portal (<http://www.sa.gov.au>). This follows the lead set by the UK DirectGov service. A central organization oversees the content, writing, publishing, quality control and information architecture to ensure that services are logically presented rather than by department only. Strong governance arrangements are in place to manage the accuracy and currency of the materials and information. The portal also provides a directory of services which details information on service eligibility, the documentation required and where available, details of internal government processes. It also has a feedback mechanism to ensure the continued improvement of the site. The feedback received from citizens is collated and provided to the

concerned agencies on all matters including policy issues. Other State and Territory based services similar to that of the portal exist, and some are in the pipeline, as outlined by relevant government digital strategies.

It is important to note that these online services are not isolated from intermediary channels; that is, all are supported in some form or another by both face-to-face interaction and phone-based enquiry services. Further, in Australia there exists a large network of advocacy, NGO and charitable organizations that provide intermediary support to different community groups and/ or individuals, including new migrants and refugees, in accessing all government services. Support for these intermediary organizations is also seen as part of the role of government in so far as resources allow.

2.2 CITIZEN AUTHENTICATION MECHANISMS IN E-SERVICE DELIVERY

Significant barriers to the provision of some services online are security and privacy concerns and specifically the requirement to identify the user. Australia does not have a national citizen identification system or national ID card and the privacy of all Australian citizens is taken seriously. Establishing the requisite level of confidence in a person's identity is a critical starting point for the delivery of a range of government services and benefits. For example, the myGov service delivery portal set up by the Australian government, tackles the issue of online citizen identity through a transparent 'federated technology' approach. This portal is a national initiative of the Department of Human Services, and it allows people to access government services from the national health system (Medicare), welfare payments (Centrelink), child support, the Department of Health, the Department of Veterans'

⁹ United Nations E-Government Survey (2014), E-government for the future we want, http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2014-Survey/E-Gov_Complete_Survey-2014.pdf, Retrieved February 2015.

Affairs and the National Disability Insurance Agency using one user name and password online and via mobile device applications. Users of the myGov resources are made aware from the outset that they are in charge of their information and nothing is shared between different departments by dint of use of the myGov service.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) joined myGov in March 2014 through its e-tax product, new web and mobile services. myGov recently added a digital mailbox service to provide a secure electronic mail delivery channel for official correspondence. This service links with the Australia Post Digital Mailbox facility and also has potential to link with commercial providers.

On 23rd January 2015, the establishment of a new Federal Government Office, the Digital Transformations Office, was announced to expand the use of the myGov account site across Federal, State, Territory and Local governments. The then Australian Federal Minister for Communications and incumbent Prime Minister of Australia (a champion of digital/e-government) Malcolm Turnbull highlighted his aspirations for the Digital Transformations Office to be made available at every level of government so that "people could have a single, secure, digital identity that enables transactions from the local council, the state government, so everything from childcare allowances, to your rates, stamp duty, traffic fines".¹⁰

3 E-government programmes for women

E-government services for women are not developed in isolation, but form an integral part of specific sectorial policies and frameworks. For example, consider the single window portal set up by the South Australian government, sa.gov.au. A search for the descriptor/ key word 'women' through this site, returns some 347 results, which include information about programmes offered by Local Government, the State Government of South Australia and Federal Government, as well as community groups.¹¹

Similarly, to encourage civil society organizations to become intermediaries in service delivery for marginalized groups, governments in Australia have focused on specifically reaching out to women's rights organizations. Further, grants supporting gender equality efforts are available from National, State and Territory Governments. Current priorities outlined in the criteria for selection are:

- Reducing violence against women;
- Demonstrating Australian Government leadership on gender equality;
- Increasing opportunities for women to contribute to Australian Government decisions;
- Increasing opportunities for women to undertake valued leadership roles; and
- Creating business and workplace cultures that deliver better economic choices and outcomes for women.¹²

¹¹ <http://www.sa.gov.au/search?query=women&collection=sa-gov-web> , Retrieved February 2015

¹² Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2013), Gender Equality for Women Program Guidelines, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/06_2013/part_a_gender_equality_for_women_program_updated_15_may_2013_2_2.pdf , Retrieved 12 November 2015.

The prevailing view in Australia is that women's accessibility to services will be taken care of as members of communities in need rather than on the basis of their gender. Social intervention programmes focused attention on those who were disadvantaged because of what was termed the 'digital divide', that is those members of the community who were assessed as less likely to have access to, or ease of use of, digital technologies. Broadly speaking, individuals facing the following issues, irrespective of gender, have been targeted:

- Those with poor access to technical infrastructure
- Those with low levels of digital literacy
- Indigenous communities
- People with disabilities (including intellectual or mental health issues)¹³
- Economic disadvantage
- Those requiring third party assistance generally

ICT access has not been a major concern for women's groups, a trend that is also reflected in the 2009 findings of the Australian Human Rights Commission regarding women's needs.

*"The primary issues raised by women were economic, social and cultural rights, gender based violence and access to appropriate housing, health, education, advocacy and support services."*¹⁴

In 1997, after nearly a decade of conservative rule, Australians elected the Australian Labor Party to government. In 1998 the

government published Australia's Social Policy No. 7 entitled 'Improving the lives of Australians'. The document comprised two major articles and four social policy notes which included a note entitled "Extending Australia's digital divide policy: an examination of the value of social inclusion and social capital policy."¹⁵ Whilst the note is comprehensive in its examination of identified issues, the paper is silent on the subject of gender. The formulation of e-government policy frameworks therefore reveals an absence of gender-based thinking.

The National Commission of Audit¹⁶ was established in October 2013 as an independent body with a 'broad remit' to review and report on the performance, functions and roles of the Commonwealth government. Phase One of the report which was released in February 2014 made a number of recommendations, including recommendation 62 on e-government. The Commission recommended that the Government accelerate transition to online service delivery through a) a digital strategy; b) consolidating the e-government effort through a single team under the leadership of a Chief Digital Officer and c) appointing a senior minister to champion the digital by default agenda.¹⁷ In May 2015, the Government allocated \$95.4 million Aud of the 2015 budget to establish the Digital Transformation Office (DTO), with the aim to lead the "design development and enhancement of government services, and better link online, telephone and face-to-face delivery channels".¹⁸ However, with regards to the gender dimension, a gender analysis of the first six months of operations of the newly

¹³ For those individuals with vision impairments, the Australian government adheres to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) international web accessibility standards or their predecessors.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Broderick (2009), Speech, Advancing women's rights and gender equality, Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Age Discrimination, Australian Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Law Resource Centre, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/advancing-women-s-rights-and-gender-equality>. Retrieved 28 July 2015.

¹⁵ Notley, N and Foth, M. (2008), 'Extending Australia's digital policy: an examination of the value of social inclusion and social capital policy frameworks', Australian Social Policy Journal No. 7, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/12021/1/12021b.pdf>, Retrieved 12 November 2015.

¹⁶ <http://www.ncoa.gov.au> Retrieved 14 March 2016

¹⁷ <http://www.ncoa.gov.au/report/phase-one/recommendations.html> Retrieved 14 March 2016

¹⁸ http://www.minister.communications.gov.au/malcolm_turnbull/news/investing_in_digital_transformation#VuX-icdU1sM retrieved 14 March 2016

established Digital Transformations Office by the University of Sydney observed,

"It is difficult to conceive, in its current trajectory, that Australia's Digital Transformations Office will contribute much to gender equality and empowerment. A commitment to these objectives is not built into the shape of Australia's information policy, let alone its proposals for online government service design or delivery."¹⁹

The following discussion provides a snapshot of programmes for women that deploy technology for information and services outreach.

3.1 E-GOVERNMENT EFFORTS THAT FOCUS ON ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

[AppointWomen \(Australian Government Boards\)](#),
[BoardLinks \(Australian Government Office for Women\)](#)

These programmes provide information on Australian Government board memberships, including vacancies and the Australian Government's policies, which promote diversity in board membership. They also provide guidance for women interested in becoming a member of a board.

BOX 2 WOMEN ON BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT

A major policy focus in Australia comes from Offices for Women. In recent years it has been well recognized that in Australia there is a need to address the issue of the small number of women sitting on boards of management. This initiative is both multi-pronged and multi-jurisdictional.

The links below provide the best information about this work. Participating organizations have assessed these programmes as having had good outcomes with direct economic benefits relating to the employment of women.

The following programmes are managed and/or were initiated by the Australian Government Office for Women.

- AppointWomen is a Register that gives women an opportunity to be considered for appointment to a variety of Australian Government boards and other decision-making bodies.
- Australian Government Boards provides information on Australian Government board membership, vacancies and the Australian Government's policies to promote board diversity. It gives guidance to those interested in being a member of an Australian Government Board and allows applicants to express an interest in advertised board vacancies.
- BoardLinks improves women's opportunities to gain their first board appointment. The BoardLink network forms connections between the Australian Government and women seeking board positions.

¹⁹ Martin, F and Goggin, G., (forthcoming), Digital Transformations?: Reconstructing the Ubiquitous End-User. The New Politics of Gender and Media Policy in Digital Government Services.

Women in Global Business (Australian Trade Commission)

This is a joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative offered through Austrade, which connects women across Australia who are interested or otherwise involved in international trade and investment possibilities. The programme offers women a central source of information and resources, support and connection. It includes a mentoring programme that connects businesswomen with little or no international experience with businesswomen who already have substantial experience in international trade and investment.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

This agency promotes, articulates and seeks to improve gender equality in Australian workplaces. It works in collaboration with Australian employers and provides online practical advice, tools and continuing education to assist employers in improving their gender performance capacities.

3.2 E-GOVERNMENT EFFORTS IN THE AREA OF COUNSELING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Family Relationships online

This online service provides all families (whether together or separated) with relevant information and advice about family relationship issues. This service is linked to 65 Family Relationship Centres that have been established throughout Australia, with funding from the Federal government.²⁰ The centres are both a

source of information and a source of confidential assistance – and services are offered on a sliding scale, according to sources of income. All centres offer free Internet access.

3.3 E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES THAT TACKLE VAW

The Department of Social Services runs programmes and services specifically to help reduce violence against women and children. One such major initiative, 'Our Watch', is provided in the box below.

BOX 3 OUR WATCH

Our Watch is a not-for-profit organisation, that was set up by the Victorian state government and the Commonwealth government of Australia, in 2013, to facilitate a "sustained and constructive public conversation with the aim of improving the public's awareness of violence against women in Australia, ...growing the primary prevention movement...and encouraging people to take action to prevent violence against women and their children."²¹

Our Watch uses a combination of traditional and new social media outreach, and community events, to create an alternative discourse on gender and sexuality, and break the silence on domestic violence. Currently, it implements the following projects:

- A national media engagement project funded by the Commonwealth Government to improve reporting through media capacity training, website-based resources, a national award scheme and a national survivors' media advocacy programme.

20 <http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/Services/FRC/Pages/default.aspx>, Retrieved 12 November 2015

21 <http://www.ourwatch.org.au/>, Retrieved 12 November 2015

- The Line, a primary prevention youth social marketing campaign, initially developed by the Commonwealth Government, focusing on changing attitudes and behaviors that condone, justify and excuse violence against women by engaging young people in the age group of 12 to 20 years.
- Respectful Relationships Education in Secondary Schools in Victoria which will support up to 30 schools to deliver new curriculum guidance, and embed a whole of school approach to promoting respectful relationships.
- Strengthening hospital responses to family violence in two Victorian hospitals to ensure that doctors, nurses and other staff know how to respond confidently and sensitively when they treat women and their children who have experienced violence.
- Partnering with local organizations to develop tailored violence prevention programmes for two culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Victoria.²²

3.4 ICT INITIATIVES IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

Women's health provides links to information on women's health issues such as menopause, osteoporosis, pregnancy, sexual health, breastfeeding and breast diseases, and gynecological problems. Healthdirect also provides links to some of Australia's most authoritative health organizations and their websites.

4 Digital literacy efforts

Under the management of State and Territory Governments, digital literacy programmes were rolled out from the late 1990s onwards. A major issue, which continues to confront Australia today, is the country's complex geographic make-up. The Australian population is concentrated in its capital cities and along its coast. Distance combined with a sparse population has disadvantaged regional and remote communities generally, with respect to ICT access. Therefore, digital literacy programmes have focused on addressing the concern of proper access to technical infrastructure for these communities, along with helping them gain exposure to the advantages the Internet provides.

Digital literacy programmes in regional areas have been a key policy priority. And these programmes have mainly comprised subsidized and assisted access to computers through an extensive network of public libraries. Public libraries are funded by State and Territory and Local Governments and managed by Local Governments. Local Governments have also provided, and continue to provide, low cost digital literacy training courses. Low cost computers are also made available to the public in libraries and library staff are available to assist in the use of the computers if required.

At a national level, to complement the roll out of new broadband connectivity, new sets of resources in support of digital literacy have been released. These include two community-based programmes. The first entitled 'The Digital Hubs programme' aims at equipping community members in gaining the necessary digital literacy skills to effectively participate in the digital economy. The second, The Digital Enterprise programme has sought to help small-to-medium businesses and not-for-profit organizations improve the way they do business online and to encourage participation in the digital economy.

These programmes have been supported by The Internet Basics website which provides a point of entry for Internet novices and seeks to encourage the building of relevant skills and the necessary confidence needed to get online. The website is designed specifically for those people who are new to the Internet and its use. The website has enabled people who are looking to learn a little more about the Internet, to become confident and also learn about how to stay safe whilst online.

Digital literacy efforts have focused on women by including them in efforts to reach out to members of remote and rural communities. However, despite programmes among aboriginal communities to address the digital divide, a complex set of social issues arising from the social marginalization of these communities contributes to the persistence of a digital divide. In fact, "Indigenous people are 69 per cent less likely than non-Indigenous people to have any internet connection and are half as likely to have broadband access".²³

5 Internet access and citizen uptake of services

5.1 CITIZEN DEMAND FOR SERVICES

According to the most recent Australian Federal Government study on Australians' use and satisfaction with e-government services, by 2011, two thirds of those surveyed had used e-government channels to contact government.²⁴

More recent survey data from Boston Consulting (2014) places the use of online government services by Australians as currently much higher.²⁵ According to the Boston Consulting survey, Australians use online government services more than citizens in any other country, but satisfaction with those services continues to lag behind that of the United States and the UK. The organization surveyed nearly 13,000 users in twelve countries – including the US, UK, France, The Netherlands, Denmark, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Russia – about their experiences with 37 different online government services in 10 categories.

The survey found 96% of Australians have used online government services in the last two years, with 26% of respondents saying they access online government services at least once a week. The Australian average of 9.2 services used over the past two years was the highest among developed countries. 72% of Australian

²³ Dukes, K. (2015), Bridging the digital divide in indigenous communities, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/voice/bridging-the-digital-divide-in-indigenous-communities-20150205-3pjfp.html>, Retrieved 12 November 2015.

²⁴ Department of Finance and Deregulation-Government of Australia (2011), Australians Use and Satisfaction with government services, <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/interacting-with-government-2011/>, Retrieved 12 November 2015

²⁵ Carrasco, M. (2014), Digital Government: Turning the Rhetoric into Reality. The Boston Consulting Group, https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/public_sector_center_consumer_customer_insight_digital_government_turning_rhetoric_into_reality/, Retrieved 28 July 2015.

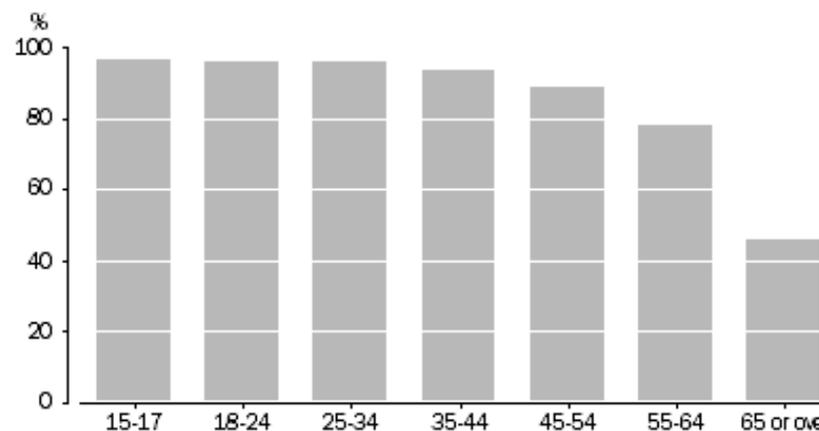
respondents said they would like to receive more government communications online, while 57% said they would like to use digital channels for voting in parliamentary elections. Other in-demand government services include applications and renewals of passports, driver licenses, concession cards, employment services, healthcare and pensions.

When e-government initiatives first came to prominence, the government was in a position to lead by example by educating the public and demonstrating what is possible. The current position in Australia is that demand far outstrips supply. Penetration of smart phones in Australia is the highest in the world. Some commentators are of the view that it is approaching 90%.²⁶ According to Deloitte's consumer media survey it was already at 81% in 2014.²⁷ Where good services are available, smartphone use extends to government services. By way of example, 65% of South Australians renew their motor vehicle registration online and more than 20% of these transactions are performed via mobile devices.

5.2 ONLINE ACCESS: SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA

In 2012–13, 83% of people in Australia, were Internet users.²⁸ Compared to other age groups, the 15 to 17 years age group had the highest proportion of Internet users (at 97%). Those 65 years and above comprised the lowest proportion of Internet users (at 46%). See Figure 1 for details.

FIGURE 1
INTERNET USERS BY AGE GROUP (2012-13)²⁹



(a) As a proportion of total persons in age group.

The proportions of men and women accessing the Internet were found to be almost even, at 84% and 83% respectively³⁰. A further breakdown of data indicates that gender differences become apparent for the age group 65 years and over. In 2012-13, 46% of older persons were Internet users and 44% accessed the Internet from home in the previous 12 months. Despite there being a higher number of females than males in the older persons age group, a greater proportion of male older persons (50%) accessed the Internet at home compared to female older persons (38%). The four most popular types of online activities of older persons were paying bills or banking (55%), accessing government services (50%), social networking and calls over the Internet (both at 30%). Breakdown by sex is shown in Figure 2 below.

²⁶ Rogers Freeman, Emily (2015), Survey: Australian Smartphone and Tablet Usage, Haptic Generation, February 6, <http://www.hapticgeneration.com.au/survey-tells-us-how-australians-use-smartphones-and-tablets/>

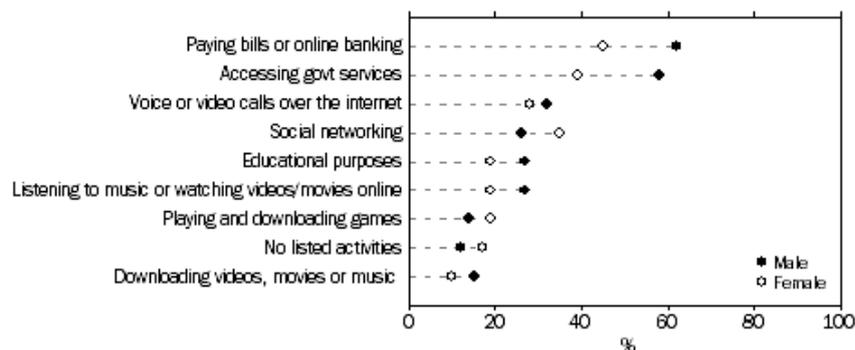
²⁷ Deloitte (2014), Media Consumer Survey 2014, Australia media and digital preferences, 3rd edition http://landing.deloitte.com.au/rs/deloitteaus/images/Deloitte_Media_Consumer_Survey_2014.pdf?mkt_tok=3RkM-MJWWf9wsRonuK%2FPd%2B%2FhmjTEU5z16uUpWaGzi4kz2EFye%2BLIHETpodcMtcVnN7YDBceEJhgyQJx-Pr3CKtEN09dxRhLgAA%3D%3D

²⁸ 'Internet users' refer to people aged 15 years and over, who accessed the Internet from any site within the previous 12 months. Australia Bureau of Statistics (2014), 8146.0 Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2012-13, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/8146.0> Chapter12012-13

²⁹ Australia Bureau of Statistics (2014), 8146.0 Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2012-13

³⁰ Data from Australia Bureau of Statistics.

FIGURE 2
OLDER PERSONS ONLINE ACTIVITIES AT HOME(A),
BY SEX(B), 2012–13³¹



(a) Ranked by total older persons activity popularity.
(b) As a proportion of total older persons with home internet access.

It is clear that older persons, especially older women, are at greater risk of being unable to access online government services, due to their low levels of familiarity in accessing online information about public services. Members of remote and rural Australian communities constitute another key constituency that run the risk of digital exclusion.³²

Connecting SA is an initiative that has attempted to expand people’s access to public information, as highlighted in Box 4 below. This is a critical service, as it follows the steps of other policy frameworks that have foregrounded the importance of access to public information for people’s well being.³³

BOX 4
CONNECTING SA

SA Community is South Australia’s (SA) community information directory. Its purpose is to enable citizens to find out about the help available to them from government, non-government and community services throughout SA and find out how citizens can best connect with, and get involved in their community.

Content available through the directory is crowd sourced and moderated by the SA Community team and ultimately its resources are then made available for reuse through open data licensing. SA Community is also integrated with the official South Australian Government website and portal, thereby connecting its users to government resources without it necessarily being under the care and control of the government. In return the portal is able to extend its community outreach with less constraint than is appropriate when publishing from within formal government channels. The Government of South Australia initiated this work and the portal is already well viewed internationally as an exemplar service.

In a paper published by the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS), that organization cited sa.gov.au as an example of best practice. In early 2012 the model was approved by OASIS as the international standard for government transformation.³⁴

³¹ Australia Bureau of Statistics (2014), 8146.0 Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2012-13.
³² Broadband for the Bush Alliance (2014), Building a better digital future, <http://broadbandforthebush.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Broadband-for-the-Bush-Forum-III-COMMUNIQUE-July2014.pdf>, Retrieved 18 November 2015.
³³ Clark, J. (2010), Social inclusion in the digital age Housing advice for everyone, Project report. 2010 Shelter

³⁴ OASIS, (2012), Transformational Government Framework Primer Version 1.0, <http://docs.oasis-open.org/tgf/TGF-Primer/v1.0/TGF-Primer-v1.0.html>, Retrieved 28 July 2015.

This work is relevant to women's empowerment for a number of reasons including the following:

- Its high use by older women, who are the only Australian female demographic that doesn't have the same Internet adoption rate as men.
- Its use by persons associated with the community and those supporting NGOs and other volunteer organizations. In fact, women in Australia are both recipients of and strong contributors to the volunteer and NGO sectors.

6 Citizen participation

Online engagement, consultation,³⁵ and eDemocracy all form part of the Australian Government's current digital strategy. This ranges from the use of technology in the co-design of services, to wider digitally enabled public consultation methodologies such as citizen juries. The Australian Government Commission of Audit has noted these as areas where there is scope for future development.

"Improved collaboration among government agencies on data and infrastructure can facilitate innovation and increased productivity. Shared service platforms can reduce duplication, achieve economies of scale and reduce support and maintenance overheads.

Government collects and holds a large amount of data for administrative purposes. Greater use could be made of this data to inform policy and decision-making and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programme and service delivery.

Emerging digital technology, including cloud-based services, offers great potential for the government to improve online service delivery and public interaction. E-Government also has the potential to deliver significant efficiencies in service delivery."³⁶

There is clearly a move towards re-conceptualizing the user's role in e-government as that of an active collaborator, rather than as a recipient/client to whom services are delivered. However, recent studies reveal that there is no explicit mention of gender analysis in the requirements to be followed by government agencies when designing their portals and online services. The consideration of

³⁵ Government 2.0 Taskforce (2010), Engage: getting on with Government 2.0, <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/gov20taskforcereport/doc/Government20TaskforceReport.pdf>, Retrieved 12 November 2015.

³⁶ Australian Government National Commission of Audit (2013), Towards Responsible Government, <http://www.ncoa.gov.au/report/appendix-vol-2/10-23-technology.html>, Retrieved 28 July 2015.

the participant-user is strictly a gender-neutral one, as Martin and Goggin (forthcoming) highlight, in their analysis of e-government frameworks in Australia:

“There is no explicit mention of gender awareness or analysis in the mandatory requirements for Australian Government agencies to consider when developing and maintaining their online presence, or in the Government 2.0 Primer, which provides participatory scenarios and tools for government agencies. The Access and Equity in Online Information and Services policy has linguistic and cultural diversity as its meter of accessibility and disadvantage. It also mentions disability, but again gender is not discussed”.³⁷

The Australian Government Digital Transformation Office in the months following this analysis has established a suite of policies and guidelines for government agencies. Whilst continuing to remain silent on the issue of gender it might be argued that risks of gender inequality associated with digital modalities are addressed through its Digital Service Standard.³⁸ The Standard outlines a user centric agile development methodology supported by design guides, which addresses the importance of intermediaries.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

In Australia, policy frameworks focusing on services to the public have the citizen at the forefront of service delivery. Open data and transparency in government are clear goals. Nonetheless as noted by the most recent Federal Government National Commission of Audit report,³⁹ real deliverables still lag behind aspirations. In response to this audit report and other reviews⁴⁰ the Australian Government Digital Transformation Office was established in July 2015 as an executive agency and part of the Prime Minister's portfolio.

The priority for governments in Australia is moving services online with high quality usability design. The public demand for services now outstrips availability. With a strong environment of intermediary community support networks, be they through formal government channels or the NGO sector, the continued investment in quality online delivery should proceed in a manner that does not disadvantage any sector of the Australian community. One of the main barriers to particular services going online is that of creating effective user authentication mechanisms in the absence of a national identity programme. This is being addressed at the national level by the expansion of the myGov facility, which is currently being shaped as a mechanism for authentication that can be used for integrated service delivery.

The default use of technology in service delivery is an important step towards good governance in the information society, but it cannot be the only strategy for inclusive governance. Older women

³⁷ Martin, F and Goggin, G., (forthcoming), Digital Transformations?: Reconstructing the Ubiquitous End-User. The New Politics of Gender and Media Policy in Digital Government Services.

³⁸ <https://www.dto.gov.au/standard/>, Retrieved 8 March 2016

³⁹ Australian Government National Commission of Audit (2013), Towards Responsible Government, <http://www.ncoa.gov.au/report/appendix-vol-2/10-23-technology.html>, Retrieved 28 July 2015

⁴⁰ <https://www.communications.gov.au/who-we-are/department/corporate-plan>, Retrieved 14 March 2016

and indigenous populations lag behind in technology access and require investments that are not merely technological. Given that projects on ICTs and gender in aboriginal communities indicate active participation by women and girls⁴¹, an impetus for reaching women from these communities can be a critical intervention for social inclusion.

The public sector is struggling to accommodate the organizational change impact of new technologies on its operations. There is at times a tension between the technical and business units within departments. With new technologies such as cloud computing, more and more ICT programmes are coming from within business units. This will inevitably accelerate the range of tools available to address gender issues in service delivery and at the policy level. While the role of dedicated ICT professionals in organizational change may give short-term results, the institutionalization of gender-inclusive e-government depends very much on capacities of front line public servants and attention to gender-based research on user experiences.

There is a huge opportunity for governments in Australia to use a combination of strong infrastructure, sound policy and effective legislative frameworks to seize the digital opportunity for women's empowerment and gender equality.

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⁴¹ See for example, the work of David Vadiveloo (recipient of the 2005 Australian Human Rights Commission Award for his work with indigenous and marginalized youth) <http://www.communityprophets.com/>

Fiji

Abbreviations

BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages	ITU	International Telecommunication Union
BOS	Bureau of Statistics	MEA	Multi-Ethnic Affairs
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women	MOE	Ministry of Education
DIA	Department of Indigenous Affairs	PCC	Public Contact Centre
DoW	Department of Women	PRISAP	Pacific Regional ICT Strategic Action Plan
EXMS	Exams Registration and Results Publishing	PSC	Public Service Commission
FAIDP	Framework for Action on ICT for Development in the Pacific	RCBS	Registrar of Companies and Business Systems
GCT	Government Community Telecentre	SCHS	Online Scholarships
GDI	Gender Development Index	SIM	Subscriber Identity Module
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
GII	Government Information Infrastructure	SMS	Short Message Service
GIS	Geographic Information System	TAF	Telecommunications Authority of Fiji
GNI	Gross National Income	UN	United Nations
GOVNET	Government Network	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
HDI	Human Development Index	UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
IATS	Investment Approval Tracking System	UNPOG	United Nations Project Office on Governance
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol
IHRDP	Integrated Human Resource Development Programme	WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
IT	Information Technology		
ITCS	Information Technology and Computing Services		

1 E-government and ICT in the Pacific region

"The Pacific Islands are experiencing a digital transformation that could have major implications, particularly for democratic governance and potentially for the region's development. Some of the fastest-growing rates of mobile phone uptake in the world are changing the way Pacific Islanders communicate, learn, engage in political debate, co-ordinate activities and access services."¹

The rapid uptake of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and digital technologies in particular, has revolutionized social, political and economic landscapes in the Pacific. Although Pacific countries have experienced rapid ICT progress and change, the region as a whole continues to face significant ICT challenges:

- Geographical divide: population spread over widely dispersed islands
- Small population relative to geographical spread
- Poor Infrastructure: Transport, ICT, and energy
 - Tele-density around 10%
 - Mobile density in opened markets >50%
 - Broadband Internet penetration of 1–4%
- Lack of human capacity
- Lack of appropriate legislation

- Outdated policy and legislative frameworks²

The Communication Action Plan (CAP, 1999), Pacific Islands ICT Policy and Plan (PIIPP, 2002) and the Pacific Plan Digital Strategy (PPDS, 2005) have provided direction for ICT development in the region and were key precursors to the regional Framework for Action on ICT for Development in the Pacific (FAIDP, 2010).³ The FAIDP outlines a regional framework to develop and improve ICTs to support development, and in particular, to strengthen governance and sustainable livelihoods. The FAIDP identifies inequality of access by disadvantaged groups, including women, as an issue that needs to be addressed, stating:

"ICT interventions must address the need to reduce inequities, promote access by youth and the disabled, promote gender sensitivity and culture, improve efforts to reduce poverty across and within countries and territories, and facilitate equitable access to adequate, reliable and affordable ICT and services to improve Pacific communities' livelihoods".⁴

Although the FAIDP identifies connecting disadvantaged groups (including women) as a priority, the Framework does not include a gendered strategy to address gender inequality in ICT access.⁵ The absence of a 'gender vision' is likely driven by a lack of information on women's ICT needs, access and use, but is also symptomatic of underlying gender inequalities.

¹ Cave, Danielle (2012), "Digital Islands: How the Pacific's ICT Revolution is Transforming the Region", Lowy Institute for International Policy, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/digital-islands-how-pacifics-ict-revolution-transforming-region>, Retrieved 8 November 2015, pp 3.

² Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2010), New Roadmap for Pacific: The Framework for Action on ICT for Development in the Pacific, ICT Outreach Programme (PICTO), Economic Development Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/7-Mr-Siaosi-Sovaleni-SPC.pdf>, Retrieved 8 November 2015.

³ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2010), Framework for Action on ICT for Development in the Pacific (FAIDP): Information and communication technology (ICT) for development, governance and sustainable livelihoods, June 2010. The FAIDP was formulated in response to the call by Pacific Leaders at the 40th Pacific Islands Forum in Cairns (August 2009) for the Pacific Plan Digital Strategy (PPDS) to be reviewed and updated.

⁴ Guiding principle 5 'Sustainable livelihoods, culture, equity and gender' Ibid, pp 5.

⁵ STRATEGY 2.2.5: Promote and encourage access to and use of ICT by disadvantaged groups such as women, the disabled and youth (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat et al., (2010), pp 9

“Data on the gender divide in the use of ICTs does not exist for most of the Asia-Pacific region. But what is known is that most of the barriers women face in accessing ICTs are the same ones they face when accessing education or economic opportunity of any kind, illiteracy, lack of awareness, poverty, lack of time, low confidence and self-esteem, and socio-cultural norms that restrict mobility. Other barriers to women's access to ICTs can be summed up in three major categories: content relevance, availability and usage.”⁶

In 2011, the Pacific ICT Ministerial Meeting in Noumea endorsed in principle, a Pacific Regional ICT Strategic Action Plan (PRISAP). The PRISAP would provide an implementation plan for the FAIDP and identify stakeholders to take ownership of specifically defined action items. There is a draft PRISAP⁷, but as of 2015, the PRISAP has not been finalised.⁸ A review of the FAIDP⁹ in 2014 found that challenges identified in the FAIDP remain and the lack of a cohesive development pathway for ICT development in the Pacific can be attributed to the absence of PRISAP.¹⁰

2 Gender analysis of the e-government ecosystem in Fiji

Based on results of an initial scoping exercise,¹¹ Fiji was selected as the national case study for the Pacific region. Key rationale for selection included: Fiji's early adoption of an E-government Programme (2006) which was a first in the Pacific region, and Fiji's high Internet penetration, relative to the rest of the region. The trajectory of the E-government Programme to date indicates that Fiji is at an early stage case study of e-government development.

Fiji is located in the south western Pacific Ocean and comprises 332 islands, one third of which are inhabited. According to the most recent census data (2007), just under half (49%) of the population (837,271) lives in rural areas. Fiji has a relatively young population, with 48% under the age of 25 and only 7.5% above the age of 60.¹² In 2013, Fiji's population was estimated at 881,100.¹³

Fiji is classified as a small island developing state¹⁴ with an upper middle income level¹⁵ and the country has one of the most developed economies of the Pacific Island Countries. Fiji's 2014 Human Development Index (HDI) was 88 out of 187 countries (UNDP 2014). Fiji's HDI value for 2013 is 0.724 which is in the high human development category. Between 1980 and 2013, Fiji's HDI

6 Reddi, U. (2011), 'Linkages between ICT applications and meaningful development', The Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders Module Series Module 1, United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UN-APCICT/ESCAP), pp 59.

7 Pacific Regional ICT Strategic Action Plan (PRISAP) 2015–2020 Draft v.2 CROP ICT Working Group University of the South Pacific, Suva, 2014

8 Concept Note Pacific ICT Ministerial & Officials Meetings 2015 17–19 June 2015, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

9 A Review of the 2010 FAIDP v.7 (2014) Secretariat Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific ICT Working Group

10 Concept Note Pacific ICT Ministerial & Officials Meetings 2015 17–19 June 2015, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

11 This comprised desk research, online call for information and key informant interviews. Desk research on e-government policy and programming in the Pacific Island Countries was conducted. The search focused on Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Samoa. An online call for information was posted on list serves and key informant interviews were held (one academic and one regional agency stakeholder). See Appendix C.

12 Fiji Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/index.php/2007-census-of-population>, Retrieved 28 April 2015

13 Ibid.

14 <http://unohrlls.org/meetings-conferences-and-special-events/fiji/>, Retrieved 26 April 2015

15 <http://data.worldbank.org/country/fiji>, Retrieved 26 April 2015

3 Evolution of the institutional ecosystem for e-government in Fiji

3.1 BACKGROUND

Fiji's current e-government development dates back to a 2001 Strategic Plan and subsequent fact finding mission in 2003 on the feasibility of e-government. In 2006, the Government of Fiji formally instituted an e-government programme with the support of a loan from the Government of the People's Republic of China¹⁶. The e-government programme encompassed delivery of government services via an e-government portal and development of the Government Information Infrastructure (GOVNET). GOVNET connects government offices and eCommunity Centres ('Telecentres') located in schools.¹⁷ An early success is demonstrated in the placement of Fiji's Government Online Portal as a finalist in the World Summit Awards in 2007.¹⁸

The Government of Fiji currently identifies four strategic purposes for its E-government Programme:

- To implement financially sustainable service delivery models
- To reinvent services delivery model to provide citizen-centric outcomes

- To enhance operational efficiencies within and across government agencies
- To enhance ICT skills competency of government employees at all levels.¹⁹

3.2 HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY

By 2000, most government ministries and departments in the capital, Suva, were connected to the Internet services provided through the Department of Information Technology and Computing Services (ITCS).²⁰

The first E-government Strategic Plan (2001) was a 10 year plan covering four key areas: e-development (Fiji's IT development); e-government (public sector development); e-business and e-personal.²¹ Commentators have pointed out a shortage of experienced ICT professionals which had a detrimental impact on the development of e-government at this time.²² The ICT and e-government picture in Fiji as of 2006, can be summed up thus:

"The government has adopted ICT applications such as standard financial packages and some government ministries have websites. In the business sector the ICT development is pretty advanced. Governance is the sphere in which Fiji lags behind. For instance, the accessibility of government ministries to existing ICT for effective, efficient and transparent service delivery and to enhance public

¹⁶ <http://www.itc.gov.fj/index.php/egovernment> and <http://www.i-policy.org/2008/08/fiji-e-government-plan.html>, Retrieved 10 March 2015 and Goundar, Sam (2009). An Evaluation of Fiji's E-Government Status: Assessed According to UN Report on Benchmarking E-Government Progress, http://www.academia.edu/999429/An-Evaluation_of_Fijis_E-Government_Status_Assessed_According_to_UN_Report_on_Benchmarking_E-Government_Progress, Retrieved 10 March 2015.

¹⁷ <http://www.itc.gov.fj/index.php/egovernment>, Retrieved 14 April 2015

¹⁸ <http://www.wsa-awards.org.nz/showcase/2007-pacific/fiji-government.html>, Retrieved 15 March 2015

¹⁹ <https://www.egov.gov.fj/default.aspx>, Retrieved 30 March 2015

²⁰ Hassall, G. (2006), ITC Policy and Practice in the Fiji Islands, <http://www.irma-international.org/viewtitle/11425/>, Retrieved 8 November 2015, pp 471.

²¹ Data'3, e-Government Strategic Plan cited in Hassall, G. (2006), op.cit.

²² Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I. (2008), E-governance, corruption and public service delivery: A comparative study of Fiji and Ethiopia, JOAAG, Vol. 3. No. 1.

knowledge of government services is challenged with the high cost of telecommunication and equipment".²³

Pathak et al. contend that the "use of ICT within government in Fiji developed gradually and without an overall guiding strategy"²⁴. This contention is supported by the findings of a survey assessing Fiji's state of e-government readiness in 2006. The survey revealed almost 50% of ministries had no ICT budget plans in place.²⁵

At this time, 12 out of 25 ministries had their own websites²⁶ and e-government services were restricted to the provision of information and forms (e.g. passport application forms) that could be downloaded and printed. No transactions (e.g. payment for services) were possible.

By 2009, almost all ministries and departments had a website and online presence.²⁷ Goundar analyses the progress of the Fiji E-government Programme against the United Nations E-government benchmarking ratings.²⁸

According to this analysis, Fiji had made 100% progress against Stages 1 (Emerging), 3 (Interactive), and 4 (Enhanced) but only 2% progress against Stages 2 (Transactional) and 5 (Seamless). Goundar identifies citizens' lack of credit/debit cards required to complete online transactions as a factor, as well as a general distrust:

"As for the transactional services, there seems to be some reluctance both on the government side and on the citizens' side to fully embrace the idea of e-commerce transactions and online exchange of money with each other."²⁹

In 2011, the National Broadband Policy notes the Department of ITCS had 14 applications online across government ministries and agencies.³⁰ As of 2015, there were 18 applications available on the e-government online portal (see Appendix A). However, the e-government online portal requires updating.³¹

The main e-government policy instrument is the E-government Master Plan.³² The plan articulates a 'holistic' e-government framework, which encompasses both technological and non-technological aspects. The vision is primarily economic, namely, to increase Fiji's Gross Domestic Product and reduce the cost of doing business.³³

"Making government services more accessible, convenient and hassle free has been the strategy adopted by many governments in helping businesses become more competitive as well as in attracting new foreign investments into the country."³⁴

The current Government of Fiji E-government Programme was initially set up in 2006, with three main components which continue to date:³⁵

23 Rahman, Mohammad Habibur & Naz, Rafia (2006), 'Digital Divide Within Society: An Account Of Poverty, Community And E-Governance In Fiji', E-Learning, Volume 3, Number 3, 2006, pp 333.

24 Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I. (2008), op.cit, pp 69.

25 Government of Fiji (2008), Governance of E-government Final Report , <http://www.i-policy.org/2008/08/fiji-e-government-plan.html> , Retrieved 10 March 2015.

26 Chand, Anand (2006), E-Government In The South Pacific Region: Case Studies From Fiji And Solomon Islands, A Paper Presented At E-Government Conference, Organized By Undp And Uncred, Bangkok, Thailand, 24-27 April 2006

27 Goundar, Sam (2009), op.cit.

28 Stage 1. Emerging: an official government online presence is established; Stage 2. Transactional: users can actually pay for services and other transactions online; Stage 3. Interactive: users can download forms, e-mail government officials, and interact via the web; Stage 4. Enhanced: government sites increase, information becomes more dynamic; Stage 5. Seamless: full integration of e-services across administrative boundaries.

29 Goundar, Sam (2009), op.cit, pp 9.

30 Government of Fiji (2011), National Broadband Policy, pp 13.

31 Key informant interviews. See Appendix B for details.

32 Government of Fiji (2007), Fiji E-government Master Plan Final Report.

33 Ibid, pp 18-22.

34 Ibid, pp 20.

35 <http://www.itc.gov.fj/index.php/egovernment/our-e-gov-program> Accessed 20 April 2015

- Public Contact Centre (PCC) - the Government Call Centre for citizens to get clarifications or complain about any government service
- Government Information Infrastructure (GII) - The GII stream is responsible for the upgrading and maintenance of the Government Information infrastructure, which involves:
 - Implementation of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) across various ministries and departments
 - Connection of government offices to the government network (GOVNET)
 - Overseeing the construction of the Government Data Centre
- E-Applications: This stream is responsible for managing and developing the various Government Online Applications and websites, and deploying it on the e-Government SharePoint Framework.

The National Broadband Policy (2011) expands on the third component, stating: "Government shall develop a range of lead applications for delivery of new, enhanced or extended services online using broadband in Health, Education, Tourism and primary production".³⁶

The E-government Programme is implemented by the 'Information Technology & Computing Services Unit' (ITCS) based under the Ministry of Finance (previously the Department of Information Technology & Computing Services). ITCS is the ICT arm of the government and is responsible for policy formulation and expert advice, systems development, information technology infrastructure building and management, training and customer

support.³⁷ ITCS has a head office in Suva, and regional offices in Labasa and Lautoka.³⁸ In 2013, oversight of the e-Government Programme ('e-services') was subcontracted to a private sector company, Pacific Digital Technologies, which has conducted a review of e-government in Fiji to date, and developed a roadmap for future development.³⁹

At a policy level, the strategic vision for e-government is aligned with national strategic frameworks. The e-Government Programme is aligned with key policy instruments:

- National development objectives set out in the Strategic Development Plan (SDP 2003-20): GDP growth; employment and income opportunities; build competency; alleviate poverty; maintain law and order;⁴⁰
- National goal of 'universal access to internationally competitive ICTs'.⁴¹

The government's public statements on e-government have a vision of connectivity between government, business and citizens. In 2014, the Prime Minister expressed a vision for ICT to enable direct delivery to Fijian citizens:

"In reforming and developing its information and communication technology infrastructure, Fiji has adopted a comprehensive approach by combining a national framework for ICT development

³⁷ www.itc.gov.fj, Retrieved 4 May 2015

³⁸ Information, Technology and Computing Services (2009). Fiji e-government – Infrastructure Dependant Fiji e-Government – Infrastructure Dependant Presentation by Network & Communications ITC Services, PACNOG Workshop, November 2009

³⁹ Cabinet paper, not publicly available.

⁴⁰ Government of Fiji (2007), op.cit, pg. 23

⁴¹ Government of Fiji (2002), Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2003-20, pp 90.

with effective and pragmatic policies and initiatives to deliver results directly to the Fijian people".⁴²

Although there is an alignment between e-government vision, and national development and ICT frameworks, there is no focus on gender equality and women's empowerment within this alignment.

3.3 E-GOVERNMENT AND CONNECTIVITY ARCHITECTURE

"Meaningful access to ICT has gone beyond connectivity issues to embrace human, economic and social resources, institutional structures and governance networks, which are central to developmental outcomes."⁴³

Fiji gained Internet access in 1995. The connection to the Southern Cross cable was implemented in 2000, strengthening the island nation's connectivity to the rest of the world.⁴⁴ This new connectivity was not available across the country (concentrated in urban centres) and was expensive. Limited ICT infrastructure and access was identified as leading to a sharp division between rural and urban areas in Fiji.⁴⁵ Chand⁴⁶ identifies a number of barriers to rapid development of e-government in Fiji (and other Pacific Island Countries):

- lack of development of infrastructure in rural areas, particularly access to electricity and telephones;
- remoteness of small islands;
- lack of funds to develop e-government;
- lack of senior computer skilled people; and
- lack of prioritisation of e-government.

The Settlement Agreement (2007) and Telecommunications Promulgation (2008) deregulated and reformed Fiji's telecommunications sector, resulting in large price decreases and increased access.⁴⁷

As with many Pacific countries (and developing countries globally), Fiji's connectivity architecture has leapfrogged over telephone and fixed broadband to mobile Internet connectivity.⁴⁸ Indeed, Fiji's predominantly mobile connectivity reflects the global trend, with mobile phones becoming "increasingly powerful portals granting access to the online world".⁴⁹

The number of mobile phone subscriptions in Fiji grew rapidly from 35 per 100 inhabitants in 2006 to 101.1 per 100 inhabitants in 2013.⁵⁰ There are no official data available on women's uptake of mobile phones.

In the first comparative analysis of e-government and gender inclusion in 11 selected Asia Pacific countries, women's access to

⁴² United Nations (2014), H.E. Mr. Commodore Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister, Fiji, Selected messages on ICT and public service delivery, General Debate, 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly – September 2013.

⁴³ Reddi, U. (2011), op.cit., pp139-140.

⁴⁴ Hassall, G., (2006), op.cit.

⁴⁵ Toland and Purcell, 2002 cited in Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I.(2008),op.cit.

⁴⁶ Chand, Anand (2006),op.cit., pp 4.

⁴⁷ World Bank (2010), 'Telecommunications/ICT development in the Pacific Region: World Bank involvement', Paper presented at Pacific ICT Ministerial Meeting, Tonga, June 2010.

⁴⁸ Cave, Danielle (2012), op.cit., ITU (2014), Measuring the Information Society, https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2014/MIS2014_without_Annex_4.pdf, pp 110.

⁴⁹ Broadband Commission for Digital Development (2014), The State of Broadband 2014: Broadband for all, <http://www.broadbandcommission.org/documents/reports/bb-annualreport2014.pdf>, pp 45.

⁵⁰ <https://www.itu.int/net4/itu-d/icteye/CountryProfile.aspx#AsiaPacific>, Retrieved 26 April 2015

ICT is highlighted as a critical prerequisite for e-government to support gender equality.⁵¹ The Review was unable to access any data on Fijian women's access to ICT infrastructure (affordability; number/location of facilities; digital literacy in relation to men).

ITU STATISTICS FIJI 2013 DATA⁵²

Fixed-telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	8.5
Mobile-cellular	101.1
Fixed (wired)-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	1.2
Mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	53.5
Households with a computer (%)	34.2
Households with Internet access at home (%)	26.7
Individuals using the Internet (%)	37.1

UNITED NATIONS E-GOVERNMENT SURVEY 2014⁵³

Fiji Telecommunication Infrastructure Index	0.2872
Percentage of Individuals using the Internet	33.74
Fixed- telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	10.11
Mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	98.18
Fixed (wired) - broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	1.55
Wireless broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	23.39

Fiji's mobile price plans are among the lowest cost-to-user in the Pacific region: out of twenty regional mobile phone plans, Fiji

has the third cheapest plan for mobile phones (low level use and typical pre-paid use) and sixth cheapest for short message service (SMS) based use.⁵⁴ Over 2012-13, prices dropped across all plans in Fiji.⁵⁵ As a percentage of income, low level mobile data usage costs around 7.5% of average monthly income.⁵⁶ As of 2013, bundles (calls, SMS and data) were not available in Fiji. Personal affordability has dramatically changed following competition in the market and many people have both Digicel and Vodafone SIM cards to take advantage of this competition (e.g. special offers, lower prices to call same provider phone numbers).⁵⁷ Customers are further incentivized to have two phone providers because connectivity can vary between Digicel and Vodafone in different locales.

Broadband

Broadband connectivity is recognized as a key component of the institutional e-government ecosystem. In 2011, Fiji launched its first National Broadband policy, setting out the government's vision for Fiji to become a knowledge based society with reliable and affordable ICT services.⁵⁸ The National Broadband Policy identifies improved broadband as a key driver for: "improved public administration and service delivery through the development of e-government online transactions to improve quality, save cost and increase convenience".⁵⁹ The policy explicitly references universal access and defines access as a "function of availability,

⁵¹ UNPOG (2013), op.cit., pp 5.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ United Nations E-Government Survey (2014), E-government for the future we want, http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2014-Survey/E-Gov_Complete_Survey-2014.pdf, pp 224.

⁵⁴ Hansen, S. (2013), 'Mobile connectivity and affordability in the Pacific: the 2013 update', Presentation for APT / PITA April 2013: Network Strategies, https://www.itu.int/ITU-D/asp/.../ITU-APT-S1_Suella_Hansen.pdf, Retrieved 28 April 2015

⁵⁵ Hansen, S. (2013), op.cit., pp 8-10.

⁵⁶ Hansen, S. (2013), op.cit. Pp 13-15. This compares, for example, with 26% of average monthly income in Solomon Islands.

⁵⁷ Key informant interviews, See Appendix B.

⁵⁸ <http://www.i-policy.org/2011/10/the-fiji-government-launches-national-broadband-policy.html>, Retrieved 13 March 2015

⁵⁹ Government of Fiji (2011), op.cit, pp 4.

affordability and capacity to use".⁶⁰ As such, broadband access shall be addressed in programmes for communities "bypassed by market forces".⁶¹ This includes a specific policy objective to "achieve broadband service availability to 95% to all urban, suburban and rural communities (and 100% of all primary and secondary schools) by 2016".⁶²

Although social inclusion is a stated benefit of increased broadband availability,⁶³ the policy does not include strategic objectives to promote digital inclusion for women or other marginalized groups. The policy does not include a gender budget.

3.4 CITIZEN UPTAKE OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The stated intention of the e-Government Programme is to facilitate services on three levels:

- Government to Government
- Government to Business
- Government to Citizen

The Review was not able to access data on uptake of e-government services at any service level. There are some data available on e-participation at a national level. In 2014, Fiji's global e-participation index⁶⁴ ranking was 84, just under the world average, and a rise

from 109 in 2012.⁶⁵ Fiji's e-participation was 0.3922, highest in the sub-region (Pacific) (and up from 0.0789 in 2012).

Naz's research on the role e-governance can play in public service delivery in Fiji found wide variance in citizens' perception and expectations of service delivery and quality of services.⁶⁶ Research participants (n=198) were asked whether e-governance was having a positive or negative effect on improving services and the way they accessed services. 54.6% felt e-governance was having a very positive/ somewhat positive effect, 23.7% were neutral, and 20.7% felt a very negative/ somewhat negative effect.

A 2006 survey assessing Fiji's state of e-government readiness revealed more than 50% of government services required customers to make at least two trips, and 60% of the services need more than two levels of approvals.⁶⁷ This is in line with commentators' views at the time: "public sector red tape is the biggest hurdle in the way of improved government-citizen relationships."⁶⁸ To date, access to e-government services has not yet broadened to include mobile platform based applications.⁶⁹

Of the four strategic purposes outlined in the e-Government Programme (refer Section 3.1), one is solely focused on stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of government: Reinvent services delivery model to provide citizen-centric outcomes.⁷⁰

The E-government Master Plan states:

⁶⁰ Government of Fiji, (2011), op.cit, pp 8.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Government of Fiji, (2011), op.cit, pp 9-10.

⁶³ Government of Fiji, (2011), op.cit, pp 3-4.

⁶⁴ The e-participation index is derived as a supplementary index to the UN E-Government Survey. It extends the dimension of the Survey by focusing on the use of online services to facilitate provision of information by governments to citizens ("e-information sharing"), interaction with stakeholders ("e-consultation"), and engagement in decision-making processes ("e-decision making"). <http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/E-Participation>, Retrieved 4 May 2015

⁶⁵ <http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/59-Fiji>, Retrieved 20 April 2015

⁶⁶ Naz, Rafia (2009), 'E-Governance for Improved Public Service Delivery in Fiji', *Journal Service Science & Management*, 2009, 3: 190-203, www.SciRP.org/journal/jssm, Retrieved 20 April 2015.

⁶⁷ Government of Fiji (2008), op.cit.

⁶⁸ Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I. (2008), op.cit, pp 75.

⁶⁹ Key informant interviews, See Appendix B.

⁷⁰ <https://www.egov.gov.fj/default.aspx>, Retrieved 30 March 2015

“for E-government to succeed, government departments and agencies must move away from the current practices and reinvent service delivery models that primarily focus on the needs of their major stakeholders i.e. citizens, businesses and government employees...this cannot be solved by technology alone...but requires...sound IT governance and leadership, business process redesign and integration, cooperation amongst government agencies, private-public sector collaboration and adoption of a customer centric mind-set on the part of both government leaders and employees”.⁷¹

The extent to which such a shift in the government-citizen relationship has happened, however, has been questioned. Rahman and Naz point out the risk of ‘top down’ e-government:

“E-governance will definitely fail if the participatory process that it required of a citizen-centric system is not embedded in the initiatives. Our underlying assumption is that if citizens are not included in the e-governance model of development, then the potential of e-governance as a tool for poverty alleviation cannot be harnessed and the digital divide will certainly widen not only between elites in the South and those in the North but also between the rich and the poor within urban and rural areas and between the State and the citizens in a society such as Fiji.”⁷²

Commentators point out the lack of ‘bottom up’ input and demand informing and creating new dynamics in e-government strategy:

“Due to the absence of such an involvement from the very grassroots level, a divide exists between ministries, departments,

agencies of government and the ordinary communities, particularly those living in outer islands and remote locations.”⁷³

“Government agencies in...Fiji do not seem to be much motivated to build sound government-citizen partnerships. Citizens can see little of the internal workings of government.”⁷⁴

“Governments need to develop citizen-centric models that involve increased participation of key stakeholders outside government.”⁷⁵

The government’s vision for e-government has been criticized for lacking focus on the potential of ICT and e-government to address human development.⁷⁶

A 2004 policy submission on the draft IT Policy⁷⁷ by the University of the South Pacific (USP) calls for increased emphasis on the application of ICT to human and social development.⁷⁸ In particular, a lack of vision to harness ICT for poverty reduction has been pointed out. Poverty is a significant issue in Fiji and some academic commentators think e-government initiatives have not been sufficiently integrated into policy attempts to tackle a complex and multidimensional problem.⁷⁹ Further,

“Poverty in Fiji is more about communication and access than lack of physiological needs. It is about being deprived of the information needed to participate in the wider society...at the grassroots level people are still unconnected. They are not empowered to

71 Government of Fiji, (2007), op.cit., pp 25.

72 Rahman, Mohammad Habibur & Naz, Rafia, (2006),op.cit, pp 334.

73 Rahman, Mohammad Habibur & Naz, Rafia, (2006),op.cit, pp 328.

74 Singh, G., R.D. Pathak, R.Naz, R.Belwal, (2010).“E-governance for improved public sector service delivery in India, Ethiopia and Fiji”, International Journal of Public Sector Management, Vol. 23: 3, pp.254 - 275

75 Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I. (2008),op.cit, pp 75.

76 See Chand, Anand (2006), op.cit., and Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I. (2008),op.cit.

77 Government of Fiji (2004). Fiji Information Technology Development Policy eOFIJI The Future Online.

78 Hassall, G.(2006), op.cit.

79 Rahman, Mohammad Habibur & Naz, Rafia, (2006),op.cit, and Chand, Anand (2006), op.cit.

participate in the planning and implementation of policies that affect them.”⁸⁰

Research on e-government, public governance and corruption by Pathak et.al. highlights critical gaps between the people and government with regards to ICT development: “(D)espite repeated government instability, corruption that seems to grow progressively and poverty ..., Fiji has made significant investments in ICT”.⁸¹ Chand criticizes e-government's progress to date, stating that it is predominantly aimed at promoting and servicing the business sector and benefitting middle/upper class citizens who can access Internet services. Under these conditions, poor urban and rural citizens become even further marginalized.⁸²

There is a dearth of recent (post-2010) academic critique of access to e-government and ICT in Fiji, and the most up-to-date data on e-participation indicates greater inclusion (see following section). The deregulation of the Fijian telecommunications sector (2007-08) which resulted in significant price drops for mobile phones, the rise of Internet enabled smart phones and the adoption of 3G and 4G broadband may help explain greater inclusion. However, the extent to which increased Internet access to e-government includes the most marginalized citizens (poor, women, rural) is not clear.

80 Rahman, Mohammad Habibur & Naz, Rafia, (2006), op.cit, pp 326

81 Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I. (2008), op.cit, pp 68.

82 Chand, Anand (2006), op.cit, pp 7.

3.5 CURRENT STATUS OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Fiji's E-government Development Index ranking

In 2014, Fiji ranked as a 'High' E-government Development Index country, coming third highest in Oceania after Australia and New Zealand.⁸³ Fiji's ranking climbed twenty places from 2012 to 2014 (from 105 to 85). Within the Pacific sub-region, Fiji leads across all E-government Development indices (online service delivery; telecommunication infrastructure; human capital).⁸⁴ This picture of e-government represents a shift from the barriers to e-government identified by Chand⁸⁵(see Section 3.3). This change can be accounted for by the development of the Government of Fiji e-Government Programme.

Currently, e-government in Fiji primarily consists of online information and applications for a limited number of services. The government has an official website through which it provides information on various government ministries and current news.⁸⁶ The government site includes official press releases and links to government agencies with their own websites. The e-government webpages indicate around 55 government ministries and agencies and statutory, regulatory entities have their own websites,⁸⁷ including the Fiji Parliament.⁸⁸

83 United Nations E-Government Survey (2014), E-government for the future we want, http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2014-Survey/E-Gov_Complete_Survey-2014.pdf, Retrieved 8 November 2015.

84 The biennial United Nations E-Government Survey report ranks countries in the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) by measuring their use of information and communications technologies to deliver public services. EGDI is composed of three critical dimensions of e-government, namely: scope and quality of online services (Online Service Index, OSI); development status of telecommunication infrastructure (Telecommunication Infrastructure Index, TII); and inherent human capital (Human Capital Index, HCI). <http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/59-Fiji> Accessed 20 April 2015

85 Chand, Anand, (2006), op.cit.

86 www.fiji.gov.fj, Retrieved 20 April 2015

87 <http://www.itc.gov.fj/index.php/egovment/15-about-us/192-other-fijian-government-sites> Retrieved 3 May 2015

88 <http://www.parliament.gov.fj/>, Retrieved 3 May 2015

A number of online government services are available to individuals and businesses via the e-government portal. These include, for example, registration of company names; foreign investors' business applications; application for government scholarships; registration for exams and results publishing; application for forestry licenses; online services for marriage registration (special license) and requests for birth, death and marriage certificates (see Appendix A for a full list of services).⁸⁹

The website of the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation offers information but no online services. There are no links to the e-government online portal or other online services.⁹⁰

Other key elements of the E-government Programme are government-to-government applications. Government stakeholders⁹¹ gave the following examples:

- digitisation of land records (titles and deeds), allowing online availability of all land records to public servants in the relevant Ministry;
- digitisation of medical records accessible by health personnel (each Fijian has a National Health number);
- online tax system accessible by tax professionals. The intention is for tax payers to be able to access tax and superannuation services (Fiji National Provident Fund) online in the future (each Fijian has a Tax Identification Number)
- online applications for specific Ministry programmes used in-house by Ministry staff (rather than for public applications online). An

example given is the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation application for single parent assistance.

The aim is to move most counter services to online services in the next 3-5 years.⁹² An example of two flagship e-government initiatives are outlined in the text boxes below.

BOX 1 **ELECTORAL REGISTRATION**

The Information Technology & Computing Services Department implemented a computerization of the 2001 elections, facilitating registration and verification of voters. A website allowed voters to check their electoral details were correct. While this proved useful during the pre-election period, the website apparently generated a number of privacy issues and as a result was brought offline and the May 2006 election was not put online.⁹³ Privacy issues were resolved for the September 2014 election and the system was again online.⁹⁴ During the 2014 election, voters were able to check online and via mobile phone whether they were registered to vote and their polling station. Each Fijian citizen of voting age has an Electronic Voter Registration Number. Key informant interviews report the system worked very well.

⁸⁹ List of available services at <https://www.egov.gov.fj/default.aspx> is the most up to date information available to the Review, Retrieved 3 May 2015

⁹⁰ <http://www.welfare-women.gov.fj/> Accessed 4 May 2015

⁹¹ Key informant interviews, see Appendix B.

⁹² Key informant interviews, see Appendix B.

⁹³ Chand, Anand, (2006), *op.cit.*, pp 5.

⁹⁴ Key informant interviews, see Appendix B.

BOX 2 **GOVERNMENT TELECENTRES**

The Fijian Government Community Telecentre (GCT) Initiative ('Telecentres') is a flagship Government of Fiji initiative aimed at increasing IT and Internet access for rural, urban and peri-urban communities. The programme began in 2011 under the Ministry of Communications. Most Telecentres (referred to as e-community centres on the Government of Fiji e-government website) are located in schools. Telecentres are open during school hours and after school between 4.00pm - 9.00pm. Access is free and there are Telecentre assistants ('Lab assistants') to provide technical support. There are currently 26 Telecentres nationally. By April 2015, over 125,000 users had accessed Telecentres. The Telecentre programme made it to the nomination round of the 2015 Project Prize (Capacity Building category) by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the only Pacific Island Country to obtain this distinction.

4 Gender equality and women's empowerment priorities in Fiji

4.1 NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

The 2014 National Gender Policy articulates the commitment of the Government of Fiji to gender equality, equity and social justice. The Policy recognizes "ethnicity, disability, religion and gender often intersect and create a multiplicity of sources of discrimination against women in Fiji."⁹⁵ Access to money, a key factor impacting on women's access to technology and ICTs is addressed separately, under poverty alleviation rather than digital access.

Elderly women, widows, and single mothers are identified as especially vulnerable to social economic pressures, disasters and poverty related diseases.⁹⁶ Within this formulation, women's hindered ICT/e-government access is a function of poverty rather than the lack of effective service delivery by the government.

4.2 STATUS OF WOMEN IN FIJI

Fiji ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995.

2014 Human Development Report introduced a new measure, the Gender Development Index (GDI) based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index, defined as a ratio of the female to the

⁹⁵ Government of Fiji (2014). Fiji National Gender Policy Ministry for Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation, <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/db294b55-f2ca-4d44-bc81-f832e73cab6c/NATIONAL-GENDER-POLICY-AWARENESS.aspx>, Retrieved 5 March 2014, pp 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid, pp 22.

male HDI. The 2013 female HDI value for Fiji is 0.679 in contrast with 0.725 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.937. In comparison, the GDI value for Samoa is 0.948.⁹⁷

The Global Gender Gap Index also measures gender disparity across three key measures: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; and health⁹⁸. In the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report, Fiji is ranked 122 out of 142 countries, with a score of 0.629 (0.00 = inequality, 1.00=equality). Due to a lack of relevant data, the Gender Inequality Index and the Multidimensional Poverty Index were not calculated for Fiji's 2014 Human Development Report.⁹⁹

Violence against women and poverty were prioritized as critical gender equality issues by government officials contacted for this research¹⁰⁰. Official statistics and informant interviews strongly concur violence against women is widespread in Fiji: 66% of women have experienced physical abuse; 26% have been beaten while pregnant; 48% of married women have been forced into sex by their husbands; and 13% of women have been otherwise raped. About 74% of domestic violence victims do not go to the police, with some preferring to defer to community or religious leaders while others are reluctant to report abuse at all.¹⁰¹

According to UN Women, Fiji is on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal 5 (improvement of maternal health). Deaths in childbirth are down from 60 per 100,000 live births in 1995 to 28 per 100,000 live births. Additionally, 99% of all births are attended by skilled birth staff. Unmet need for contraceptives has declined to

30% (from 46%) and the adolescent birth rate has almost halved since 1990.

Research into perceptions of gender equality by the Fiji Women's Forum found 61% of respondents¹⁰² feel that men and women currently have equal rights in Fiji, while 36% disagreed. More women than men agreed with the statement (66% of women, 56% of men). Most respondents viewed societal impediments as the major reason women don't stand for election as often as men. The number of parliamentary seats held by women has ranged from zero in 1987 to eight (11% of the 71-seat house) in the 1999 and 2006 elections.¹⁰³

Chattier and Morgan's research on poverty and gender in Fiji examined the complexity and multidimensionality of poverty and, in particular, the gender disparities within conventional measures of poverty.¹⁰⁴ The research covering 162 Fijian and Indo-Fijian men and women from three communities (rural, semi-urban and urban) found that:

*"The resources women may draw upon are often circumscribed by rules, norms and practices which limit their access to and control over resources....women's dependency or lack of autonomy in the household, though not synonymous with income poverty, affects their economic self-sufficiency and decision making capacity."*¹⁰⁵

97 UNDP (2014), Fiji Country Report, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/FJI.pdf, Retrieved 8 November 2015

98 World Economic Forum (2014), World Economic Forum (2014), Fiji Gender Gap Index 2014 Country Profiles, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=FJI>, Retrieved 3 May 2015.

99 UNDP (2014), op.cit.

100 Key informant interviews, see Appendix B.

101 <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/fiji>, Retrieved 3 May 2015

102 Survey respondents (642 women and 569) men in rural and urban locations in Fiji. Fiji Women's Forum (2014), Public Perceptions of Women in Leadership A research project of the Fiji Women's Forum in partnership with International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

103 Fiji Women's Forum (2014), op.cit., pp 3.

104 Chattier, Priva and Morgan, Emele (2012), Poverty and Gender in Fiji Australian Council Research Linkage Grant, Australian National University.

105 Chattier, Priva and Morgan, Emele (2012), op.cit., pp 7.

The gendered division of labour and the limitations it imposes were found to be a key factor across all communities in the research (iTaukei¹⁰⁶, Indo-Fijian, rural and urban).

4.3 E-GOVERNMENT FOR WOMEN?

Globally, the use of mobile phones to achieve e-government objectives, especially for women's empowerment and gender equality is well recognized:

"There is growing evidence that women's use of Internet and mobile phones has a powerful impact on sustainable development, from connecting to healthcare, to tele-working and securing income for family with e-banking. Those countries that have adopted a multi-channel approach to service delivery will open options for greater gender equity and closing the gender divide. This is one area that has seen the largest gaps and also the highest potential of achieving development objectives through e-government initiatives."¹⁰⁷

Fiji e-government initiatives specifically targeted at women are very rare. The review of e-government services in Fiji did not find any online services designed with women's empowerment in mind, namely e-government aimed at advancing the political, social and economic autonomy of women through improved ICT access, resources and networks. There have been examples of mobile application initiatives. This includes an SMS service initiative called mWomen which offers free advice on women's legal rights in relation to gender based violence. mWomen began

as a collaboration between Vodafone and the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (see Case studies report).

In 2012, provision of online services for women in Fiji stood at 0.109 (UNPOG 2013: 42).¹⁰⁸ A 2013 UNPOG study of e-government and gender in Asia Pacific found Fiji to be at an 'emerging' stage (first of four stages)¹⁰⁹ of E-government Readiness for gender equality.¹¹⁰ The UNPOG study recommended that Fiji address gender in e-government by undertaking:

"Key actions...focusing on improving women's access to telecommunication infrastructure and ICT capacity at the grassroots level, as well as raising awareness of the senior officials in the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation to consider the potential of greater ICT application in its gender administration."¹¹¹

mWomen is one of the few gender specific ICT initiatives in Fiji and is a government-private sector initiative. mWomen is designed to provide Fijian women access to help and advice on women's rights and gender based violence issues (see Box 3).

¹⁰⁶ From 2010, iTaukei officially replaced 'indigenous Fijian', <http://www.fijianaffairs.gov.fj/iTaukei.html> , Retrieved 3 May 2015

¹⁰⁷ United Nations E-Government Survey (2014), E-government for the future we want, http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2014-Survey/E-Gov_Complete_Survey-2014.pdf, Retrieved 8 November 2015, pp 103.

¹⁰⁸ UNPOG (2013), op.cit., pp 42.

¹⁰⁹ Four-Stage Model of e-Government – explained in Footnote 23.

¹¹⁰ A composite indicator comprised of: Telecommunications Infrastructure (ICT access 50%; ICT use 50%; Online Services for Women (Website analysis of national gender machinery 100%); Capacity Development (Women's: economic participation (33%), educational attainment 33%, political empowerment 33%); and Capacity Development). The indicator adapts the methodology of the United Nation e-Government Development Index (EGDI)

¹¹¹ UNPOG, (2013), pp 42.

BOX 3 MWOMEN E-SERVICE

The mWomen e-service has been running since March 2013. Initially begun as a partnership between the Department of Women (DoW) and Vodafone, the mWomen e-service is a subscription based SMS service offering daily free advice on women's and children's legal rights, family law and gender based violence. There is also a free short code number that members of the public can call to seek legal advice and counselling (SMS Counsellor). According to DoW, there are currently 25,613 subscribers to the mWomen e-service.

There is a chronic lack of information on women's e-government/ ICT usage and more importantly, women's e-government service needs. Women's usage of services and user satisfaction are not assessed or included in current e-government strategy in Fiji. Gender disaggregated data on website visits, downloads, enquiries and use of e-services are not collected. UNPOG's survey of e-government and gender in Asia Pacific identified collection of gender-disaggregated national statistics as a priority (58%), followed by the need to identify women's ICT and e-government service needs (50%)¹¹² (UNPOG 2013: 43).

While online e-government outreach in Fiji is perceived by government officials to be gender-neutral, such outreach does not pay attention to the gendered underpinnings of the digital divide. The situation for rural women (and especially women in remote islands) is further exacerbated. These women face a greater lack of appropriate access channels and their service requirements include

broader considerations, including public access points, assisted access, and digital literacy focusing on public service uptake.

Delivery of online information and services on the Fiji e-government portal¹¹³ is thus effectively gender neutral without any specific attention to different needs, interests and access women and men have. Interviews with government stakeholders indicate e-government is viewed as gender neutral since "technology does not discriminate". Thus, when asked about e-government priorities for women, stakeholders' primary responses were about 'access to information and services' (i.e. on an equal footing with all other citizens). Responses indicate a techno-centric rather than socio-cultural understanding of equality of access.

It is well known that the digital divide is gendered in developing countries: in these countries, women are 23% less likely to be online than men.¹¹⁴ As noted previously, there are no data available on women and men's digital uptake in Fiji, or relative access to broadband (fixed and mobile) by women compared with men. The 2014 Broadband Commission report notes sex-disaggregated data are not yet widely available for broadband connectivity globally. Taking Internet usage data as a proxy, ITU estimates a gender gap that is more pronounced in the developing world, with 16% fewer women than men using the Internet, compared with only 2% fewer women than men in the developed world.¹¹⁵

The small body of research literature on e-government in Fiji does not include discussion of gender issues, although the digital divide is noted by several scholars.¹¹⁶ Devi's research on small-medium

¹¹³ <https://www.egov.gov.fj>, Retrieved 4 February 2015

¹¹⁴ Women and Poverty, A Global Overview <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/infographic/poverty>, Retrieved 26 January 2015

¹¹⁵ ITU (2013), cited in Broadband Commission (2014), op.cit., pp 42.

¹¹⁶ Rahman, Mohammad Habibur & Naz, Rafia, (2006), op.cit, and Devi, Pramila (n.d.) E-Governance for Small and Medium Enterprises in a Developing Country like Fiji: Potentials and Problems

enterprises (SMEs) uptake of ICTs found the government's ICT and e-governance developments do not sufficiently integrate ICT for business growth.¹¹⁷ Although Devi notes: "It ICT has potential to bridge the gap between rich and poor, urban and rural, North and South, and male and female" and the research sample (n=180) was 38% female, Devi's research does not consider gender as a dimension of ICT and SMEs in Fiji. Rahman and Naz's research among marginalized groups in Fiji (urban poor, women, beggars, elderly and villagers) found a lack of awareness about e-governance and ICTs and a corresponding need for education and capacity building, as well as utilizing more traditional media outlets for information dissemination.

4.4 EXTENT TO WHICH THE E-GOVERNMENT VISION ADDRESSES GENDER EQUALITY PRIORITIES

Although the National Gender Policy aims to "integrate a gender perspective in all development planning and decision making processes" and to "establish a system of gender mainstreaming which binds all sectors of government",¹¹⁸ analysis of e-government policy and interview data reveals this has not yet happened with regard to e-government. The main policy instruments (National Information Technology Development Policy (2004); e-Government Master Plan (2007); and National Broadband Policy (2011) do not specifically mention women and do not contain specific gender equality objectives. The e-Government Master Plan (2007) identifies a number of groups for whom programmes to bridge the digital divide are necessary: senior citizens, workers, homemakers and disabled.¹¹⁹ The National Broadband Policy considers social

inclusion to be a general benefit of broadband access (Government of Fiji 2011: 3).¹²⁰

The National Gender Policy (2014) sets out a number of policy intentions vis-à-vis technology, namely, to: Increase the participation and access of women to the expression of their opinions and to decision making in and through the media including their involvement in new technologies of communication; Provide increased innovative opportunities for women and men engaged in unwaged housework to access information communications technology, lifelong learning, and opportunities for part-time, short and long-term income earning possibilities; Strengthen equitable access by men and women to the factors of agricultural production, paying particular attention to the gender differences in access to and repayment of credit, beneficiaries of land purchase, land titling, amenities, extension services and technology, taking into consideration the disadvantaged position of the most vulnerable women in rural areas Consult with Information Communications Technology specialists from women's media organisations when any reform is contemplated in relation to the regulation of Information Communications Technology".¹²¹ The Policy is very recently endorsed and outcomes are yet to be seen.

117 Devi, Pramila (n.d.), op.cit.

118 Government of Fiji (2014), op.cit., pp 2-3.

119 Government of Fiji, (2007), op.cit., pp 127.

120 Government of Fiji, (2011), op.cit, pp 3.

121 Government of Fiji (2014), op.cit., pp 4, 17, 24 and 19

5 Legislative and policy frameworks

Fiji has an E-government Master Plan,¹²² which has an accompanying governance framework (Government of Fiji 2008).¹²³ According to government officials,¹²⁴ the National Broadband Policy (2011) is the main national strategy guiding ICT and e-government. It is important to note, however, that although the Policy was endorsed, it has not been formally implemented. The Department of Communications states the Policy will be reviewed in 2015.

5.1 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING ICT ARCHITECTURE AND REGULATING E-GOVERNMENT DELIVERY

A national cybercrimes policy is currently in draft form, led by a Cybersecurity Taskforce (Ministry of Home Affairs). Complementing the Crimes Decree (2009), the cybercrimes policy will specifically address online bullying, harassment, threats and hate speech.

There is a regulatory body, the Telecommunications Authority (TAF), established under the Telecommunications Promulgation of 2008 to provide for the regulatory aspect of reform aimed at strengthening the telecom sector, from a monopoly to an open environment. The TAF is responsible for implementing Fiji's telecommunications policy and overseeing spectrum, broadcasting, equipment, frequency links to spectrum and compliance, as well

as mediating the resolution of disputes between licensees or between licensees and consumers.¹²⁵

Fiji does not have a Freedom of Information Bill or a Data Protection Act. Protection of citizen's rights to information and privacy are only covered by existing provisions for rights to privacy and access to information in the Bill of Rights.¹²⁶

The e-Government Master Plan (2007) states developing a "good governance framework" via the establishment of "an ICT authority solely dedicated and empowered to regulate, plan, control, execute and coordinate e-government initiatives is..... critical."¹²⁷ The Governance of e-government Report 2008 is the extant policy framework regulating delivering of e-government services. This governance framework does not include gender considerations beyond identifying women as a target sector (along with "rural, youth, elderly, disadvantaged, industry, schools, health professionals, media, ministerial advisers") in the communications and marketing strategy.¹²⁸ The Governance Framework sets out in detail technical specifications for IT security: "Security defines the methods of protecting information and information systems from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction in order to provide integrity, confidentiality and

¹²² Government of Fiji (2007), op.cit.

¹²³ Government of Fiji (2008), op.cit.

¹²⁴ Key informant interviews, see Appendix B.

¹²⁵ <http://www.taf.org.fj/>, Retrieved 3 May 2015

¹²⁶ 24. Right to privacy—(1) Every person has the right to personal privacy, which includes the right to— (a) confidentiality of their personal information (b) confidentiality of their communications and (c) respect for their private and family life. (2) To the extent that it is necessary, a law may limit, or may authorize the limitation of, the rights set out in subsection (1). 25. Access to information.—(1) Every person has the right of access to— (a) information held by any public office and (b) information held by another person and required for the exercise or protection of any legal right. (2) Every person has the right to the correction or deletion of false or misleading information that affects that person. (3) To the extent that it is necessary, a law may limit, or may authorize the limitation of, the rights set out in subsection (1), and may regulate the procedure under which information held by a public office may be made available. Constitution of Fiji (2012). Came into force 7 September 2013, pp 18-19.

¹²⁷ Government of Fiji (2007), op.cit., pp 67

¹²⁸ Government of Fiji (2008), op.cit., pp 40.

availability".¹²⁹ The implementing agency, ITCS is charged with ensuring data are confidential and protected.¹³⁰

This review was not able to find any information regarding service level and data protection agreements in Public Private Partnership delivery models. It is important to note in this context that delivery and management of the e-Government programme has been contracted to a private sector provider (Pacific Digital Technologies). The precise terms of this (contract and service level agreement) is not known, nor oversight arrangements by the government.

The People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress (2008) identifies the introduction of e-governance as a key measure to enhance public sector efficiency but does not set out principles for responsive and accountable e-government services. The Charter notes a need for Freedom of Information legislation to "ensure good and just governance, including greater transparency and accountability, and to combat corruption".¹³¹ Following the 2014 national election, the Fiji government reaffirmed its intention to pass legislation on 'freedom of information'.¹³²

With regard to accountable and gender governance arrangements, the People's Charter pledges to reduce crime rates against women and children,¹³³ and to support women as public leaders and decision makers at all levels.¹³⁴ Further, the Charter pledges:

"To support all actions to alleviate poverty and strengthen social justice programmes based on need for the disadvantaged in our community, including the enhancement of participation and promotion of the interest of the youth and women."¹³⁵

The Constitution's provision for the Right to Equality and Freedom from Discrimination includes: "race, culture, ethnic or social origin, colour, place of origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, birth, primary language, economic or social or health status, disability, age, religion, conscience, marital status or pregnancy".¹³⁶

129 Ibid, pp 103.

130 Ibid, pp 49.

131 National Council For Building A Better Fiji (2008). Fiji Peoples' Charter For Change, Peace And Progress 15 December 2008, Pp 13.

132 Key informant interviews, see Appendix B for details.

133 Ibid, pp 16.

134 Ibid, pp 21.

135 Ibid, pp 42.

136 Constitution of Fiji (2012), pp 19.

6 Conclusion

The following section presents conclusions about the intersections between the e-government ecosystem in Fiji and gender equality in e-government and accountable governance.

The years without a democratically elected government (2006-14), and the preceding upheavals of four coups, have had a profound impact on governance and public life in Fiji.

During the 1990's and 2000's, political and academic commentators critiqued the Government of Fiji's approach to information rights, stating that there was a general lack of public information and participation in government planning and service delivery.¹³⁷ This was exacerbated for more marginalized citizens (poor and rural).¹³⁸ The lack of public information was linked to a lack of citizens' ability to demand transparent and accountable governance. This context has influenced the introduction of e-government. While there are governance structures in place regulating the ICT and e-government ecosystem, the governance body (identified as critical in the E-government Master Plan) has not yet been established. Developments following the election of September 2014 will be crucial for e-governance.

In the early days of ICT and e-government policy development, emphasis was placed on technological rather than human requirements and benefits and thus a missed opportunity for advancing gender equality

The stated strategic purposes of the E-government Programme in Fiji identify enhanced operational efficiency alongside citizen

centric outcomes. While there has been a continued focus on e-government implementation making existing government operations more efficient, there has not been a concomitant focus on changing the way the government does business. This lack of focus may be further emphasized by operational oversight since 2013 by private sector technical specialists (market forces driven) rather than public sector administrators (public good driven). Despite e-government policy seeking to address Fiji's national economic and social development objectives, the e-Government programme has not been followed through by integrating ICT into poverty alleviation and addressing human development as well as economic growth. ICT access and therefore e-government inclusiveness is not a neutral status quo but requires dedicated government oversight (e.g. dedicated e-government authority) to ensure gender justice. Because the gendered underpinnings of the digital divide are not accounted for in e-government design and implementation, policies and programmes have tended to cast e-government in a gender-neutral manner.

There are no clear connections between gender policies and national ICT / e-government strategy.

This separation has both derived from, and reinforced, the divide between efforts to address gender equality and women's development and e-government implementation. The review findings echo those of an earlier study, that of a "significant gap between the two realms core to the process of gender mainstreaming in e-government – women's capacity development and e-government development".¹³⁹

There have been some shifts in ICT and e-government developments to date for gender equality: anecdotal evidence suggests women's

¹³⁷ Chand, Anand (2006); Naz, Rafia (2009); and Devi, n.d. op.cit.

¹³⁸ Chand, Anand (2006), op.cit.

¹³⁹ UNPOG (2013), op.cit, pg xv.

access to ICT has opened up with cheaper mobile phones and mobile Internet access. Government telecentres have expanded the number of Internet access facilities. However, there are no policies aimed at developing women's ICT access, skills and use, or capacity development programmes explicitly aimed at increasing women's digital literacy. E-government services are not currently designed with a 'gender lens' to identify and deliver women's differing information, service and access needs. This gap is exacerbated by a paucity of data on women's e-government and ICT use. Although national policy instruments: National Gender Policy (2014); Fiji Information Technology Development Policy (2004); Fiji E-government Master Plan (2007); Governance of E-government (2008) seek to address digital inclusion, they do not mandate gendered data collection or consultation to inform policy implementation, nor do they specifically address a gendered citizen focused approach to e-government. Explicitly connecting gender and e-government policy objectives will result in improved gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes.

There is little information available on uptake of e-government services and the effect e-government is having on the relationship between government and citizen.

To date, e-government in Fiji has been focused on technical efficiency gains in service delivery, with interactive access to the government and empowering citizens receiving less emphasis. There is no clear evidence of a changing relationship between government and citizen or the emergence of "new spaces for citizens to participate in their overall development" that e-government initiatives can create.¹⁴⁰ The extent to which operational efficiencies (for example, improved intra and inter-department working and increased IT capacity) have been achieved is difficult to determine. Similarly,

legislative and governance frameworks covering data protection, e-government governance, as well as digital rights and safety (e.g. draft national cybercrimes policy) are an evolving space. There have been no test cases to date.

Overall, global barriers to Internet access¹⁴¹ serve as a checklist to consider the current situation in Fiji:

1 Infrastructure gaps

Although Fiji has a high mobile phone coverage rate, this cannot serve as a proxy for Internet access. The slow roll-out of broadband access in particular, reinforces digital divides within society.

Fijians are adversely affected by a lack of adjacent infrastructure (e.g. electricity grid)

2 User Capability

Fiji has high rates of literacy but digital literacy levels cannot be assumed, particularly for marginalized groups

3 Low incomes and affordability

Fijians enjoy more affordable mobile access (as a percentage of average monthly income) than most Pacific Islanders, but cost remains a significant factor in Internet access (cost of mobile device, data plan and/or Internet cafes)

¹⁴⁰ Gasco, 2003 cited in Pathak, R. D., Singh, G., Belwal, R., Naz, R. & Smith, R. F. I. (2008), op.cit, pp 67.

¹⁴¹ 1. Infrastructure (Lack of mobile Internet coverage or network access; Lack of adjacent infrastructure (e.g. grid electricity); 2. User Capability (Lack of digital literacy; Lack of language literacy; 3. Low incomes and affordability (Low income or consumer purchasing power; Total cost of ownership for device; Cost of data plan; Consumer taxes and fees; and 4. Incentives (Lack of awareness of Internet or relevant use cases; Lack of relevant content and services (e.g., local, localized); Lack of cultural or social acceptance. Identified in a 2014 report (McKinsey and Company, 2014 cited in GMSA 2014, op.cit., pp 5)

4 Incentives

Evidence suggests high levels of awareness, interest and use of Internet particularly in urban and peri-urban areas

- 5 Specific local Internet content (as a proportion of global content) is not known.

APPENDIX A LIST OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES AVAILABLE ONLINE¹⁴²

E-Services online provides government services over the Internet. There are 3 Clusters in which the government will provide services. These are:

- 1 Government to Government Cluster: This cluster focuses on the exchanging of data between government ministries and departments where necessary. These services are only available to government officers.
 - Case management for all the Business cluster services
 - Case management for all the Citizen cluster services
 - Resource and transport bookings for IHRDP Section of National Planning
 - Case management for back office scholarship processing
 - Executive outcome monitoring system for government agencies Annual Corporate Plan Monitoring
 - Social Welfare Management System, electronic registration and assessment of cases and voucher printing
 - People Hub. Data bank for persons information to be shared within various government agencies
- 2 Government to Businesses Cluster: This cluster focuses on providing online services to investors and businesses that need approval from the concerned government authorities. These services require free business user registrations and logins.

¹⁴² <https://www.egov.gov.fj/default.aspx> Accessed 3 May 2015

- Foreign Investment Approval and Tracking IATS Facilitates foreign investors to apply online to start up a business in Fiji
 - Company and Business Registration RCBS Facilitates business registrations for local and foreigners
 - Person Search eBDM A prepay search for persons data as per the births, deaths and marriage registry records. This service is available to selected agencies only
 - Forestry Licences eForestry Allows agents to apply for Forestry Licence
- 3 Government to Citizen Cluster: This cluster focuses on providing government services online to Fiji citizens, whereby citizens will be able to access and extract the required information from the government departments. Also citizens will be able to submit applications online to relevant authorities should the services be available online. These services require free citizen user registrations and logins.
- Exam Registration & Results Publishing EXMS Allows the schools or students to register for external examinations administered by Ministry of Education (MOE) as well and view their results
 - Online Scholarships SCHS Online scholarships application and administration by Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), Multi-Ethnic Affairs (MEA), and the Public Service Commission (PSC)
 - Electronic Geographical Information eGIS An online map shop for the Department of Land and Survey
 - Births, Deaths & Marriages eBDM Online services for marriage registration (special license) and request for births, deaths and marriage certificates
 - Statistics Online eBOS Citizens' access to sale of Statistical Information reports and releases from the Fiji Islands Bureau Of Statistics
 - Forestry Licences eForestry Allows public to apply for Forestry Licence
 - Property Development eProperty Allows public to apply for Property development licence

APPENDIX B KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS SAMPLE FRAME

Stakeholder group	Number
Academic	1
Government	3
Regional Agency	1
Total	5

APPENDIX C METHODOLOGY

Desk research

The following websites were searched:

DFAT www.dfat.govt.au

3iE www.3ieimpact.org

SciDevNet www.scidev.net

Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) <https://www.itu.int>

Digital Review of Asia Pacific <http://www.digital-review.org/>

GMSA <http://www.gsma.com/connectedwomen/>

Pacific Telecommunications Council www.ptc.org

Pacific Island Chapter of the Internet Society <http://www.picisoc.org>

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Initiative (Australian Government) <http://www.pacificwomen.org/>

Association for Progressive Communications <http://www.apc.org/>

Asia and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development <http://www.unapcict.org/>

Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls <http://www.endvawnow.org>

ICT update from the Technical Centre for Rural and Agricultural Cooperation <http://ictupdate.cta.int/>

Emails soliciting information were sent to:

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Pasifika Nexus

Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association

World Bank

Vanuatu National Council of Women

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Online calls for information were posted on the following list serves:

FemLINKPacific

Pacific Women's Information Network (Pacwin)

Search strings

'Mobile' or 'm' or 'e' or 'mobile app*' or 'digital'

Government

'Banking' or 'financ*' or 'money' or 'commerce' or business'

Health

'Education' or 'learning'

Participation

Vanuatu or PNG or Solomon Islands or Samoa

'Women' or 'gender'

Interview guide – Key Informant Interviews

Introductions

Introduce self

Research purpose and how UNESCAP will use findings to identify examples of good practice and develop an e-government and gender equality toolkit for policy makers/implementers

Informed consent explain consent process, invite questions and sign form

Personal background

Please tell me a little about yourself and your current role

E-government in Fiji

How has your organisation been involved in the Fiji Government's E-government Programme?

Probe: what other government departments/ministries has your organisation cooperated with on E-government? On what projects? What has worked well and what could be improved?

Does your organisation use any E-government applications/ ICT for online service delivery? This could include mobile phones for example.

Probe: What are these online service delivery applications?

Are any of these online service delivery applications directed at women?

Is there any data on citizen uptake?

What does the connectivity architecture look like in Fiji? Connectivity architecture includes mobile broadband, fixed broadband, wired/ wireless, services/speed/capacity (servers, apps, platforms)/user-cost and human capacity – what is the digital literacy picture in Fiji?

How do Fijian women access the Internet? Do they face barriers when trying to get online?

Does Fiji have a national ICT/e-Government strategy? What other relevant policy/strategy documents are there?

Gender in Fiji

In your view, what are the key gender equality and women's empowerment priorities in Fiji?

Thinking about your knowledge of e-government applications/ ICT, to what extent do you think they currently consider gender in design and implementation? For example, the 'digital divide' whereby men and women have different access to Internet, ICTs, mobile phones

Key questions for any E-government applications/examples (e.g. mWomen) that emerge:

What is the history of the initiative?

Who was involved? (i.e. which organisations)

Who in the Department/Ministry has responsibility for the initiative? Name/s of key people

What worked well in the collaboration (e.g. between Ministry and Vodafone) What worked less well?

Who is the initiative aimed at?

Were women involved as a particular audience?

Where and how has the initiative been implemented? What offline strategies accompany online strategies?

Do you think the initiative has made any difference? Why/why not? What impact has the initiative had? (at individual level, family/household level, socio-cultural level, economic level) Is there monitoring data?

What has been the uptake? What has been the uptake by women?

Regulatory environment

Do legislative frameworks exist for governing the connectivity infrastructure? For example, are you aware of any of the following instruments in Fiji:

- a Legal and policy frameworks regulating delivery of e-government services
- b Citizens charters for responsive and accountable e-government services
- c Data security and privacy legislation
- d Availability of e-government governance information in the public domain
- e Service level and data protection agreements in PPP delivery models.

Finally, is there anyone you would recommend the Review should speak to?

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Interview consent form

United Nations Economic Social Commission for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP) Review of e-government for Women's Empowerment.

I (insert name) of (insert organisation) agree to participate in this interview for the UNESCAP Review of e-government for Women's Empowerment, as outlined in the information provided to me by Roshika Deo.

I understand that:

My participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time.

Whether or not I participate will not affect any current or future relationships with UNESCAP or any other organisation/agency.

With my permission, the researcher will list my name and role as a contributor to the research in an appendix.

The researcher will seek to keep my information strictly confidential. No information in the report will be attributed to individuals.

I can request any information collected from me to be withdrawn at any time up until the analysis stage.

If I withdraw, I can request that any information collected from me be returned or destroyed.

With my permission, the interview may be taped, and may be transcribed.

Digital recordings, notes, and summaries will be stored securely by the researcher and will not identify me.

I understand the aims of the UNESCAP Review of E-government for Women's Empowerment, have read this consent form, and been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this interview.

India

Abbreviations

BBNL	Bharat Broadband Network Limited	OGD	Open Government Data
CSC	Common Service Centre	OGP	Open Government Platform
DBT	Direct Benefit Transfer	PPP	Public-Private Partnership
DISHA	Digital Saksharata Abhiyan	SCA	Service Centre Agency
DoT	Department of Telecommunications	SDA	State Designated Agency
GBV	Gender-based Violence	SERP	Society for the Elimination of Rural Poverty
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	SIM	Subscriber Identity Module
IT	Information Technology	SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
IVRS	Interactive Voice Response System	SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats
JAM	Jan-Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar card and Mobile number	UIDAI	Unique Identification Authority of India
MIS	Management Information System	UN	United Nations
MMP	Mission Mode Project	VAS	Value Added Services
NDSAP	National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy	VAW	Violence Against Women
NeGP	National e-governance Plan	VLE	Village Level Entrepreneur
NGO	Non-governmental Organization		
NOFN	National Optical Fibre Network		

1 An overview of the context under study

The UN e-government development survey 2014, which assessed the performance of countries along three dimensions – online service delivery, e-participation and infrastructure provisioning – ranked India 118 out of 193 member-states and identified it as a country with a middling level of e-government development.¹

The report also noted that India is one among 7 countries which have “clearly advanced their e-government despite their relatively lower national income²”. For India to continue on its upward trajectory towards building a mature e-government institutional ecosystem, it is vital for the country to work on the larger agenda of enabling all sections of its population to capitalize on the gains of the digital revolution. This is a major gap at present, as the Global Information Technology Report highlights:³

“Despite many clusters of excellence and its knack for frugal innovation, India is not leveraging ICTs for the benefits of its entire population. (...). Uptake of ICTs is among the lowest in the world. When accounting for multiple SIM-card ownership, approximately one-third of the population owns a mobile phone. Smart-phones are the privilege of the very few, with 3 mobile broadband subscriptions for every 100 population. Only 15 percent of the population uses the Internet. By international standards, technology adoption by businesses remains limited, as it does within the government”.

In particular, this divide in the access to the benefits of the Internet and other ICTs is amplified along gender lines. The Intel Women and the Web Study 2013 found that a woman in India is 27% less likely than a man to have Internet access.⁴ Also, less than 40% of India's Internet users are women, a sex ratio that is far lower when compared to other countries.⁵ On a similar note, a research study by the GSMA Foundation found that “only 28% of Indian women own a mobile phone, compared with 40% of men”.⁶

As other research scholars have pointed out, this gender divide in access is symptomatic of other underlying structural divides between women and men, especially in relation to education and employment.⁷ Only 26.6% of adult women in India have completed some secondary education, as against 50.4% of their male counterparts.⁸ Moving on to the area of women's economic participation, we find that a mere 28.8% of Indian women are in the labour market, compared to 80.9% of men.⁹ Further, women are increasingly concentrated in a smaller portion of the economy, as agriculture is steadily becoming feminized due to the out-migration of men into non-farm work.¹⁰

Even in survival and health indicators, gender inequality persists. The maternal mortality rate in India is 190 per 100,000 live births,

1 United Nations (2014), United Nations E-government Survey 2014: E-government for the Future We Want, http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2014-Survey/E-Gov_Complete_Survey-2014.pdf, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

2 Ibid, pp 20.

3 World Economic Forum (2015), The Global Information Technology Report 2015: ICTs for inclusive growth, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_IT_Report_2015.pdf, Retrieved 17 November 2015, pp 26.

4 Intel (2013), Women and the Web: Bridging the Internet gap and creating new global opportunities in low and middle-income countries, http://dalberg.com/documents/Women_Web.pdf, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

5 Hindu (2013), India is now world's third largest Internet user after US, China, <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/internet/india-is-now-worlds-third-largest-internet-user-after-us-china/article5053115.ece>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

6 GSMA (2010), Women and mobile: A global opportunity – A study on the mobile phone gender gap in low and middle-income countries, http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/GSMA_Women_and_Mobile-A_Global_Opportunity.pdf, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

7 Deen-Swarray, M., Gilwald, A. and Morrell, A. (2012), Lifting the veil on ICT gender indicators in Africa, http://www.researchictafrica.net/publications/Evidence_for_ICT_Policy_Action/Policy_Paper_13_-_Lifting_the_veil_on_ICT_gender_indicators_in_Africa.pdf, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

8 UNDP (2014), Human Development Report 2014 – India country note, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/IND.pdf, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

9 Ibid.

10 Desai, S.(2014), Declining sex ratios seen in gender scorecard, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/declining-sex-ratios-seen-in-gender-scorecard/article5801673.ece>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

and though it has been steadily falling in the last decade, the rate of decline is not adequate for the country to meet its Millennium Development Goal targets, by end 2015.¹¹ More worryingly, the child sex ratio has been steadily declining in the past two decades.¹² In fact, this issue of 'missing girls' in the age group of 0-6 years, that can be traced to the rising incidence of sex-selective abortions, is now seen as a 'national emergency' that warrants immediate attention.¹³

The dimension of women's political participation is more promising. Though the current parliament has only 12.15% women representatives, far less than the critical mass of 33%, the percentage of women members of parliament has been steadily increasing in every successive general election, since the first parliamentary elections.¹⁴ At the lowest tier of governance, within the village self-government bodies and the municipal bodies, the percentage of elected women representatives is far higher, thanks to a constitutional amendment mandating one-third of seats in such bodies to be reserved for women.¹⁵ But there is a long road ahead before women's presence can translate into substantive participation, as socio-political structures determine local politics, and control women's exercise of their political agency.¹⁶

On the whole, there is a high level of gender inequality, and a large gap between women and men in terms of social development attainments, in the Indian context. This assessment is corroborated by global studies. The Global Gender Gap Report 2014 ranked India 114 out of 142 countries with respect to attainments in gender equality, based on a composite measure that assessed the relative gaps between women and men in four key areas: health, education, economy and politics.¹⁷ Similarly, India was ranked 132 out of 148 countries covered by the UN Gender Development Index 2014, a gender-disaggregated measure of human development attainments along three main axes, health, education and command over economic resources.¹⁸

11 Ramachandran, S.K. (2014), India may miss U.N. Millennium Development Goal for maternal mortality rate, <http://www.thehindu.com/today-s-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/india-may-miss-un-millennium-development-goal-for-maternal-mortality-rate/article6455727.ece>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

12 Census of India 1991; 2001; 2011.

13 UN Women (2014), Sex Ratios and Gender Biased Sex Selection – History, Debates and Future Directions, <http://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/asiapacific/files/pub-pdf/Sex-Ratios-and-Gender-Biased-Sex-Selection.pdf>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

14 Rao, B.(2015), Women M.Ps in Lok Sabha – How have the numbers changed?, <https://factly.in/women-mps-in-lok-sabha-how-have-the-numbers-changed/>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

15 Government of India (1992), 73rd amendment to the Constitution of India, <http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend/amend73.htm>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

16 Jayal, N.G. (2006), Engendering local democracy: The impact of quotas for women in India's panchayats, Democratization, 13:1,15-35, DOI: 10.1080/13510340500378225.

17 World Economic Forum (2014), Global Gender Gap Report 2014, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

18 UNDP (2014), Human Development Report 2014 – India country note, op.cit.

2 The evolution of e-government in India: the early days

The genesis of 'computerization in governance' efforts in the Indian context can be traced to the early 1960s. It was in the 1990s, however, that the e-government discourse emerged, in parallel with the liberalization of the country's economy, in its current form as 'technology-mediated administrative process-restructuring to promote good governance'.¹⁹ The economic reforms adopted by the Government of India in 1991 to ward off an imminent balance of payments crisis paved the way for a shift in the vision of state-led development, by which the traditional agenda of socialist planning was replaced by that of 'good governance for market-led growth and administrative efficiency'.²⁰ In this transition, ICTs emerged as an important policy priority, for their twin potential for catalyzing growth, and enabling systemic reforms in governance structures.

Firstly, in the decade immediately following the economic reforms, there were a range of policy level developments focused on equipping the country transition to a knowledge economy, such as:

- a The promotion of Foreign Direct Investment in IT and IT-enabled service sectors through the establishment of Software Technology Parks and Export Enterprise Zones, and the institution of tax-holidays;²¹

- b The creation of a separate, dedicated Ministry for Information Technology in 1999;²² and,
- c The adoption of the National Telecommunication Policy 1999, which sought to "provide a balance between the provision of universal service to all uncovered areas, including the rural areas, and the provision of high-level services capable of meeting the needs of the country's economy",²³ through the corporatization of the Department of Telecommunications by separating its policy and licensing functions from service provision functions, enhancing the competitiveness of the telecommunications sector by providing a level playing field to all players, and the establishment of a Universal Service Obligation Fund.

Secondly, there was a focus on leveraging the emerging capacities in IT and IT-enabled service sectors, for "higher efficiency, transparency, accessibility and accountability as well as reduction of procedural complexity that breeds corruption"²⁴ within existing administrative systems, which reflected the approach of the 'New Public Management' paradigm to public sector reform during the 1990s.²⁵ This manifested in developments such as:

- a The formulation of a 12 point e-governance agenda for all Union Ministries and departments, in 2000. This agenda mainly comprised of the following aspects: the digitalization of internal procedures and housekeeping processes, employee capacity-building in ICT skills, and the electronic delivery of services to the public. It was sought to be operationalized through the

¹⁹ Madon, S. (2009), *E-governance for development: A Focus on Rural India*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Gupta, M.P. (2012), 'Tracking the evolution of e-governance in India', in Weerakody, V., *Technology enabled Transformation of the Public Sector: Advances in E-government*, USA: Information Science Reference (An imprint of IGI Global).

²² Since rechristened the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

²³ Department of Telecommunications (1999), *New Telecom Policy*, <http://www.dot.gov.in/telecom-policies/new-telecom-policy-1999>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

²⁴ Das, S.R. and Chandrashekhar, R. (2008), *Capacity-building for E-governance in India*, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan045526.pdf>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

²⁵ Singh, P. (2008), *Recommendations for meaningful and successful e-government in India*, http://www.itforchange.net/sites/default/files/ITFC/ARCPaper_Full.pdf, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

preparation of Ministry/ department-level IT strategies for a five year period, broken down into specific action plans and targets.²⁶

- b The enactment of the IT Act in 2000, that provided a “legal cover” and a “boost” to e-governance through provisions such as granting legal recognition to digital signatures, electronic gazette notifications and digital records.²⁷
- c The launch of a series of bottom-up e-government projects, championed by district level officials who were enthused by social entrepreneurial ideas in the emerging IT sector. These projects mainly focused on setting up single window information and service delivery centres and/or grievance redress points at the community level, supported by a local connectivity solution.²⁸

Some well-known initiatives among these, include:

- The Gyandoot centres, Intranet-enabled community service delivery points initiated by the district administration in Dhar (Madhya Pradesh state).
- The Lokvani centres, digitally-enabled grievance redress points set up by the district administration of Sitapur (Uttar Pradesh state) in partnership with local cybercafe owners.
- The ‘Friends’ and ‘Twins’ single window utility bill-payment centres opened by the district administrations of Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala state) and Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh state).

Not all these initiatives were successes (as they were adversely affected by the lack of a common support infrastructure for

digitalized governance), but they did manage to set the stage for the nascent e-government processes to enter into the maturation phase.

However, policymakers started realizing that to enable a speeding-up of e-government development in the country:

“a programme approach would need to be adopted, which must be guided by a common vision, strategy and approach. This would have the added advantage of enabling huge savings in costs, in terms of sharing the core and support infrastructure, enable interoperability through standards etc, which would result in the citizen having a seamless view of Government.”²⁹

Thus, the stage was set for the development of the first, systematic framework for e-government in the country—the National e-governance Plan.³⁰

26 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (2008), Promoting e-governance: The SMART Way forward, http://arc.gov.in/11threp/ARC_11th_report.htm, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

27 Gupta, M.P. (2012), ‘Tracking the evolution of e-governance in India’, op.cit.

28 Singh, P. (2013), E-governance in India: Existing context and possible scope for UNDP programming over 2013-18, http://www.itforchange.net/E-governance_in_India%3A_Existing_context_and_possible_scope_for_UNDP_programing_over_2013-18, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

29 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (2008), Promoting e-governance: The SMART Way forward, op.cit, pp 106.

30 In Indian policy debates, the idea of e-government is closely intertwined with that of e-governance. This is because the transition to e-government has been primarily viewed as a shift to a new paradigm of governance – one in which new governance arrangements such as partnerships between traditional state agencies and private and third sector agencies, are a key strategy for overcoming inefficiencies in legacy systems.

3 E-gov takes off: National e-governance plan (2006) and its key elements

The National e-governance Plan (NeGP) was formulated by the Department of Information Technology and the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, in 2006, with the vision of “Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man”.

³¹ As the following discussion on its key elements reveals, NeGP provided “a well integrated and solid basis for technology and financial enablement of e-governance activity in India which was hitherto missing”. ³² However, it failed to chalk out a strategy for how digitally-enabled governance reform can bring about accountable governance towards social inclusion and thus, the gender equality agenda was overlooked.

3.1 STATE DATA CENTRES AND SERVICE DELIVERY GATEWAYS: CREATING GOVERNMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR E-SERVICE DELIVERY

The NeGP provided for the establishment of State Data Centres to “consolidate services, applications and infrastructure to provide efficient electronic delivery of (digitally-enabled governance) services”.³³ In particular, the State Data Centres were entrusted

with managing the development of the technical backbones that would enable the transition to online service delivery: the Electronic Service Delivery Gateways and the State Wide Area Networks.

Electronic Service Delivery Gateways are the “standardized interfacing, messaging and routing switch(es) through which various players such as departments, front-end service access providers and back-end service providers can make their applications and data inter-operable”.³⁴ State Wide Area Networks refer to the “converged backbone network for data, voice and video communications throughout a State/Union Territory”.³⁵

3.2 MISSION MODE PROJECTS: A PUSH FOR BACK-END DIGITALIZATION

The NeGP (2006) also focused on speeding up back-end digitalization in specific governmental agencies, in order to enable a quick transition to online service delivery, by instituting 27 Mission Mode Projects – some led by the Union government, others by state governments, and a few that were to be implemented jointly by the Union and state governments.

These Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) mainly supported the design of digitalized service delivery programmes in select areas of governance such as income tax, insurance, pension, passport services, and agriculture, instituting e-service delivery systems at the district level etc. In 2011, 4 additional projects were introduced in the areas of health, education, postal services, and digitalization

³¹ Government of India (2006), National e-Governance Plan, <http://india.gov.in/e-governance/national-e-governance-plan>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

³² Singh, P. (2008), Recommendations for meaningful and successful e-government in India, op.cit., pp 17.

³³ <http://deity.gov.in/content/data-centre>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

³⁴ <http://deity.gov.in/content/nsdg-dpl-e-infra-str>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

³⁵ India has a quasi-federal polity, comprising of states/union territories that are integral parts of the Union of India. For more on State Wide Area Networks, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Wide_Area_Network, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

of the public distribution system in India, which took the total number of MMPS to 31.

In the sections that follow, we proceed to examine 3 MMPs in greater detail:

- 1 The health sector MMP, as it is the only one out of this list of 31 which pertains to a public service specifically targeted at women,
- 2 'Common Service Centre (CSC) scheme' and
- 3 Unique Identification scheme 'Aadhar' (UID)

The CSC and UID projects have been crucial in shaping e-governance development in India, as they have tackled head-on the question of developing an effective and efficient country-wide support architecture for digitally-enabled public service delivery. These 2 projects have also, albeit inadvertently, generated considerable public debate about gender issues and concerns around socially marginalized groups in the transition from legacy systems to e-service delivery.

Health sector MMP

The health sector MMP has focused mainly on the development of a centralized mechanism for tracking the delivery of maternal and child health care services (in specific, a Mother and Child Tracking System) by monitoring front-line health extension workers delivering antenatal and post-natal health care services at the village level. Some state governments have introduced their own innovations, such as the IVR-based health information service of

the Government of Uttar Pradesh,³⁶ and the Health Advice Call Centre of the Government of Maharashtra.³⁷

However, it is important to note here that the overwhelming emphasis of the e-health MMP has been on the creation of "a bureaucratic apparatus that enables centralized tracking of health spending rather than strengthening decentralized community-centred accountability mechanisms³⁸". This has meant that interventions in this area lack a women's rights orientation, and tend to pursue a welfare approach.

'Common Service Centre' scheme/MMP

The Common Service Centre (CSC) scheme, launched in 2006, has sought to set up a country-wide network of ICT-enabled single window service delivery centres, across all 250,000 Gram Panchayats (village self-government bodies), under a public-private partnership model. The scheme's stated objective is that of "develop(ing) a platform that can enable government, private and social sector organizations to align their social and commercial goals for the benefit of the rural population in the remotest corners of the country through a combination of IT-based as well as non-IT-based services".³⁹

36 Khurana, M. (2014), Aarogyam – An ICT-based community centric approach for improving reproductive and child health, <http://nisg.org/files/documents/UP1418303342.pdf>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

37 Rao, A.K. (2014), Case studies on e-governance in India, <http://nisg.org/files/documents/UP1418304090.pdf>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

38 Gurumurthy, A. and Chami, N. (2013), Digital technologies and gender justice in India – An analysis of key policy and programming concerns, <http://itforchange.net/sites/default/files/IT%20for%20Change%20-%20HLP%20Submission%20-%2016%20April%202014-1.pdf>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

39 Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India (2006), Guidelines for implementation of the Common Service Centres Scheme in states, <http://nisg.org/files/documents/A02010001.pdf>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

To realize this objective, the CSC scheme has adopted the following implementation structure:⁴⁰

- at the lowest level, a local Village Level Entrepreneur
- at the middle level, a Service Centre Agency (SCA, loosely analogous to a franchiser). The SCAs are usually big corporate entities.
- at the top level, a governmental body designated by the state, the State Designated Agency (SDA)

The roll-out of the scheme has been smooth only in the few states that have modified the intermediary structure in the scheme guidelines by instituting a dedicated public sector agency, instead of a corporate entity, to perform the role of the SCA.

Fulfilling satisfactorily the twin mandate of financial sustainability and inclusive service delivery has proven to be a tall order for the CSC scheme. In fact, Ray and Kuriyan (2007: pp 1, 10) who studied CSC centres have concluded that the village level entrepreneurs, because of the pressures to break even, may not focus enough on vulnerable groups and marginalized women, who “are less than ideal customers because of their lack of ability (or willingness) to pay for services on an ongoing basis”.⁴¹

Also, in a bid to strengthen the implementation of the CSC scheme, in 2009, the Government of India set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) entitled ‘CSC e-governance Services India Limited’, incorporated as a private company, to monitor the activities of the SCAs. Paradoxically, the SCAs are also shareholders of the company. This raises concerns about the interests that drive policies for the

introduction of ICTs in public service delivery and digital learning programmes.⁴² It also highlights the potential accountability deficit in public-private partnership approaches in e-government implementation.⁴³

The discussion shows how in single window programmes for last mile access the state's intent to empower women and the entrepreneur's profit motive can be at loggerheads. This can undermine women's right to access public information and services.⁴⁴ Weak governance of Private Public Partnerships can also compromise citizen interests of women beneficiaries.

Unique Identification Number/ Aadhar project

The ambitious UID ‘Aadhar’ project is an effort to “create a universal identity infrastructure, a foundation over which public and private agencies can build services and applications that benefit residents across India....(through) issuing every resident a unique identification number linked to the resident's demographic and biometric information, which they can use to identify themselves anywhere in India, and to access a host of benefits and services”.⁴⁵

In other words, the UID project aims at creating a mechanism that will enable the assembling together of various data traces associated with a specific individual, which are currently scattered

⁴⁰ Ibid and IT for Change (2012), Exploring an institutional model for Community Knowledge Centres: A research study for the Karnataka Knowledge Commission, <http://www.itforchange.net/node/969>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

⁴¹ Kuriyan, R. and Ray, I., (2007), Public-Private Partnerships and Information Technologies for Development in India, <http://tier.cs.berkeley.edu/docs/Renee-ppp-ictd2007.pdf>, Retrieved 17 November 2015.

⁴² For example, CSC e-governance Services India Limited has held public consultations that call to question the legitimacy that a corporate entity can have in undertaking policy discussions with the wider public

⁴³ Singh, P.J. (2013), Technology in governance – An agenda for centralisation, privatisation and depoliticisation, http://www.itforchange.net/Technology_in_governance-An_agenda_for_centralisation_privatisation_and_depoliticisation, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁴⁴ Singh, P.J., Gurumurthy, A. and Nandini, C. (2012), Exploring an institutional model for community knowledge centres – A research study for the Karnataka Knowledge Commission, <http://www.itforchange.net/taxonomy/term/317>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁴⁵ UIDAI website (2012), page now offline.

across multiple data-bases of different agencies⁴⁶. This project was formally rolled out in 2009, under the aegis of a governmental agency expressly constituted for this purpose – the Unique Identification Authority of India/ UIDAI.

Aadhar is a critical pivot in the Indian government's current plans for a complete switch-over to direct benefit transfers in lieu of subsidy spending, in order to minimize 'leakages' and corruption in welfare schemes. The support infrastructure the government envisions for this new welfare paradigm goes by the moniker 'JAM' – which stands for Jan-Dhan Yojana (financial inclusion scheme)),⁴⁷ Aadhar Card and Mobile Number. The idea being that bank accounts of welfare beneficiaries can be seeded (the process of linking a database to Aadhar numbers) with their Aadhar Card Number, and mobile numbers linked to Aadhar Cards, in order to create an authentication mechanism for Direct Benefit Transfers (either into bank accounts or using mobile money transfers).⁴⁸

Civil society activists have highlighted a number of problems with the project. Firstly, it was launched without prior parliamentary approval. Secondly, this country-wide personal data collection exercise has not been backed by adequate data protection and privacy safeguards. This is a grave issue as India lacks a strong privacy legislation⁴⁹ with well-rounded clauses on informed consent, and time limitation and purpose limitation of data collection exercises.

Thirdly, there is the danger of "functionality creep"⁵⁰. There is no legal provision that requires the government to re-evaluate the effects on individual privacy, in every instance of Aadhar-seeding (the process of linking a database to Aadhar numbers). What this means is that the government can create massive interlinked databases about citizens.

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Supreme Court of India in 2014, challenging the constitutionality of the Aadhar project. And In its final judgment delivered in 2015, the Court ruled that the linking of Aadhar to welfare schemes could be done on a voluntary basis, but no person could be deprived of any benefit because of the lack of an Aadhar Card. However, in the current context where there is a huge push for Aadhar-enabled Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs), it may well become 'mandatory by default'. In January 2015, the Union Government announced its decision to roll-out such Aadhar-enabled DBTs for 33 different schemes of 14 ministries/departments.⁵¹

46 Lips, A.M.B. 2006. E-Government Under Construction: Challenging Traditional Conceptions of Citizenship. In: V.Koutrakou and P.Nixon (eds) Ctrl, Alt, Delete: Re-booting the State via e-Government. London: Routledge and Chattapadhyay, S. 2014. Information, infrastructure, inclusion: Research Notes on Materiality of Electronic Governance in India. <http://itforchange.net/inclusionroundtable2014/blog/view/94/information-infrastructure-inclusion-research-notes-on-materiality-of-electronic-governance-in-india> Retrieved 15 January 2015.

47 The Jan Dhan Yojana is a financial inclusion scheme that aims at enabling members of marginalized households to open zero-balance bank accounts.

48 Press Information Bureau (2014), Wiping every tear from every eye: The Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhar, and Mobile Numbers Provide the Solution, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=116028> , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

49 Singh, S. (2014), Panel rejects Govt claim that IT Act protects citizen privacy, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/panel-rejects-govt-claim-that-it-act-protects-citizens-privacy/article5685809.ece> , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

50 Menon-Sen, K. (2015), Aadhar: Wrong Number or Big Brother Calling, Socio-legal Review, Vol 11(12).

51 Ramachandran, R. (2015), Narendra Modi government pushes for UPA's direct benefit transfer scheme, http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-28/news/58546672_1_bank-accounts-beneficiaries-dbt , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

4 The contribution of NeGP to e-service delivery

This section is a review of the impacts of the NeGP in its entirety. In 2011, the Prime Minister's Committee on NeGP (the highest policy decision making body on the NeGP) constituted an expert group to review the NeGP, under the chairmanship of Dr. Sam Pitroda⁵² and an expert committee on HR policy in e-governance under the chairmanship of Mr. Nandan Nilekani.⁵³ In 2013, both groups submitted their reports. A SWOT analysis of the NeGP drawing upon the reports of both the expert groups, conducted by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology, revealed that the NeGP succeeded in creating a climate in which central and state government, and other governmental agencies, expanded their forays in e-service delivery:⁵⁴

"The environment created by NeGP has spawned a very large number of eGov projects, though outside NeGP, thus expanding the portfolio of services available online. 24 out of 31 MMPs have gone live and produce(d) over 11 crore (110 million) transactions p.m. Basic ICT infrastructure is available in all States".

Two such innovations designed outside the framework of the Mission Mode Projects in the area of women-directed service delivery are detailed in Box 1.

BOX 1 TWO PROJECTS IN THE AREA OF WOMEN-DIRECTED PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, OUTSIDE THE MMP FRAMEWORK

- a Mission Convergence was launched by the state government of Delhi in 2008, as an effort at creating a government-NGO partnership for gender-inclusive service delivery at the last mile.

The key innovations deployed in the project are detailed below:

- Developing a digitalized inter-departmental database of beneficiaries for enabling the back-end convergence of over 40 different schemes spread across 9 departments. This beneficiary identification process was based on a vulnerability index that took into account not just income poverty but other significant factors of marginalization such as social identity and location of residence.⁵⁵
- Using a pre-existing network of Gender Resource Centres that had been set up in partnership with NGOs, under an earlier governmental programme, in slum pockets and other marginalized urban neighbourhoods in Delhi, as last-mile service delivery points for interfacing with citizens. The rationale guiding this decision was that the NGOs operating the Gender Resource Centres were already sensitive to the local context and attuned to the nuances of gender discrimination – and hence would adopt more inclusive practices of service delivery.

⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Pitroda , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nandan_Nilekani , Retrieved 20 November 2015

⁵⁴ Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2014 circa), e-Kranti: National e-governance Plan 2.0, Draft Detailed Project Report, http://deity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/DPR_on_e-Kranti.pdf , Retrieved 20 November 2015, pp 5.

⁵⁵ Menon-Sen,K. (2015), op.cit.

- Setting up a monitoring system sensitive to the 'NGO' mode of functioning, through the establishment of District Management Units, comprising representatives from civil society organizations (with the exception of those running the Gender Resource Centres) and retired government servants, and housed in the office of the apex official of the district.

Mission Convergence has been the subject of case study research that have focused on documenting good practices in the area of building a gender-inclusive service delivery model on scale.⁵⁶ However, studies have highlighted that political pressure from local Municipal Councilors has interfered with the effective functioning of Mission Convergence – and that building a 'tamper-proof' digitalized beneficiary database in and of itself, does not lead to greater effectiveness in last-mile service delivery.⁵⁷

- b Another pilot initiative is the Poorna Shakti Kendra programme of the National Mission for Empowerment of Women, Government of India that has attempted to build focal points for the convergent delivery of all services directed at women, in select villages.

This rapid increase of supply-side innovation that the NeGP triggered, did not automatically add up to a robust e-service delivery system at the grassroots, as the 2014 SWOT analysis of the NeGP by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology has also noted:⁵⁸

"...NeGP has not become a national movement and could not produce the expected impact on the common man, especially in the rural areas. Emphasis on Standards and interoperability is weak. The degree of process engineering is quite low. Problems of connectivity in rural areas continue to plague the program. Adoption of PPP model has not been adequate. Monitoring and Evaluation systems are weak. There is no accountability for producing timely implementation and for producing qualitative outcomes. Allowing NeGP to proceed along the current direction and at the current pace may result in mass scale disillusion leading to e-governance losing its appeal for transformation of the public sector".

The transition to digitalized service delivery systems without adequate attention to process re-engineering and standards can, as detailed in Box 2, impact quality and effectiveness of service delivery in many ways.

⁵⁶ NISG (2014), Mission Convergence – Government of National Capital Territory, <http://nisg.org/files/documents/UP1418304587.pdf>, Retrieved 20 November 2015 and Singh, P.J., Gurumurthy, A. and Nandini, C. (2012), Exploring an institutional model for community knowledge centres – A research study for the Karnataka Knowledge Commission, op.cit.

⁵⁷ Menon-Sen, K. (2015), op.cit.

⁵⁸ Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2014 circa), e-Kranti: National e-governance Plan 2.0, Draft Detailed Project Report, http://deity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/DPR_on_e-Kranti.pdf, Retrieved 20 November 2015, pp 5.

BOX 2
**THE DIFFICULTIES OF PPP MANAGEMENT IN
DIGITALIZED SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEMS: THE
CASE OF THE NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT
GUARANTEE SCHEME MIS, ANDHRA PRADESH**

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme guarantees 100 days of work to all rural households on demand, or an unemployment allowance if such work cannot be provided. Under the scheme, the village local government/ Panchayat assesses the demand for work in a particular year and initiates a process of community planning to identify key public works that can be undertaken, to generate wage-work opportunities for scheme-applicants. This Scheme has been a game-changer for poor women, and there is strong evidence of it enhancing women's economic empowerment, control over financial resources and autonomy.⁵⁹

However, subversion and manipulation of funds committed to the programme has been noted. The Government of Andhra Pradesh set up a Directorate of Social Audit to put in place annual social audits of the scheme in all the districts of the state as a step towards greater accountability, and developed a comprehensive digital backbone for the scheme implementation.

This Management Information System, with wage records and muster rolls, has instituted an electronic wage payment system using biometric authentication. It provides district-wide data of scheme implementation. The MIS was the product of a PPP and has been appreciated for supporting the community audit

process. A key informant⁶⁰ interviewed for the research flagged that there are frictions between the state and the private sector agency managing the MIS, as the private sector partners were not prompt in responding to requests from the government agency for wage payment transaction records, and there were instances of inaccurate data. Without clear rules about data management underpinning the partnership, de facto control of the data is vested in the private partner. The state agency finds itself in a position of dependency vis-a-vis the private partner, lacking bargaining power in the PPP.

As part of a longer-term strategy to address the current inadequacies in the management of e-service delivery projects by state agencies, the Department of Electronics and Information Technology launched an upgraded version of NeGP – 'NeGP 2.0' which it rechristened e-Kranti (literally e-revolution), in 2014.

⁵⁹ Rukmini, S. (2015), MGNREGS reduced poverty, empowered women, <http://www.thehindu.com/data/mgnrega-reduced-poverty-empowered-women-ncaer/article7530923.ece>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁶⁰ Discussion with Ms. Sowmya Kidambi, Director, Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency, Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, September 2014.

5 e-Kranti/ e-revolution: Revamping e-service delivery and integrating it within an ambitious umbrella programme for a 'Digital India'

E-Kranti, the re-booted national e-government plan seeks to: “redefine NeGP with transformational and outcome oriented e-governance initiatives, enhance the portfolio of citizen centric services...promote rapid replication and integration of e-governance applications and leverage emerging technologies (such as cloud and mobile)...and provide integrated services via inter-operable systems, and build sustainable organisational and human resource capacities”.⁶¹

E-Kranti, as part of its proposed portfolio expansion, is planning to initiate 11 new Mission Mode Projects, one of which will be in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Child Development. This proposed MMP aims at the ICT-enablement of existing services for “welfare and support...training for employment and income generation, awareness generation and gender sensitization”, currently being undertaken by the Ministry.⁶²

E-Kranti further lays down some key priorities such as emphasis on transformative process re-engineering, designing integrated rather

than individual e-service projects, and utilizing the possibilities of cloud technologies in designing e-governance applications.⁶³

On the whole, e-Kranti is an improvement over NeGP 1.0, for the following reasons. NeGP 1.0 was a stand-alone programmatic framework for building a common technical support structure for e-government, through back-end digitization and the creation of digitalized service delivery platforms.

E-Kranti, on the other hand, positions e-service delivery as one dimension (albeit a crucial one) within a larger umbrella programme called Digital India, for transforming India “into a digitally-empowered society and a knowledge economy” with 3 inter-related objectives:

- 1 on-demand provisioning of governance services through digital platforms,
- 2 universalizing access to digital infrastructure, and
- 3 the digital empowerment of citizens.⁶⁴

Launched in 2014, Digital India seeks to build on existing e-government initiatives, as well as initiate new programmes as required, across these 3 axes. The programme addresses some of the problems of NeGP 1.0, with a strong focus on connectivity infrastructure development and citizen participation dimensions along with the supply-side e-service delivery architecture. However, the gender blind-spot remains, as Digital India does not have an explicit vision for women's empowerment and gender equality. e-Kranti, addresses the 'service delivery on demand' axis

⁶¹ Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2014 circa), e-Kranti: National e-governance Plan 2.0, Draft Detailed Project Report, http://deity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/DPR_on_e-Kranti.pdf, Retrieved 20 November 2015, pp 7.

⁶² Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2014 circa), e-Kranti: National e-governance Plan 2.0, Draft Detailed Project Report, http://deity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/DPR_on_e-Kranti.pdf, Retrieved 20 November 2015, pp 74.

⁶³ Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2014 circa), e-Kranti: National e-governance Plan 2.0, op.cit.

⁶⁴ Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2014), Digital India Presentation, <http://pib.nic.in/archive/others/2014/aug/d2014082010.pptx>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

of Digital India. We now proceed to examine how Digital India addresses its other stated objectives.

5.1 UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN DIGITAL INDIA'S VISION

As far as the area of universalizing access to digital infrastructure is concerned, Digital India has attempted to push the pedal on the following preexisting initiatives:

- The Common Service Centre scheme described above,
- The Mobile Seva service delivery gateway launched in 2011 that enables government departments to deliver services to citizens over mobile and tablet interfaces,
- The National Optic Fibre Network scheme,⁶⁵ launched in 2012, that seeks to establish a country-wide high-speed optic-fibre network, to provide broadband access to the 250000 Gram Panchayats (village local self-governments) in the country.

Progress on the ground on the NOFN scheme has been plagued by “delay in timely delivery of material, not having daily monitoring at the Panchayat (village self-government) level, missing coordination between state-run entities involved in rolling out, and (lack of) proper and timely allocation of funds”.⁶⁶ To address these issues/ concerns, the Government of India set up an expert committee earlier this year, to look into the question of speeding up the implementation of the scheme. In addition to reworking the timelines for implementation and setting a new milestone

of December 2017, the Committee has recommended that state governments be encouraged to develop their own models for rolling out the broadband network, in partnership with private players where necessary.⁶⁷

The completion of this scheme is clearly an important milestone for enhancing the maturity of the e-government ecosystem, considering the poor status of last-mile rural connectivity. But in and of itself, in its present form, the scheme may not be able to build an inclusive, infrastructural backbone that can enable women and other marginalized groups to access the benefits of e-government. As a key informant from the Department of Telecommunications⁶⁸ contacted for this study observed:

“While imagining a broadband infrastructure, it is important for us to go beyond a unitary imagination of the broadband at the last mile as an undifferentiated pipe – and think about the different types of services that will run on it. In specific, capacities to handle data-rich services need to be assessed and adequately planned for. Also, it may not be correct to assume that the last-mile broadband retail will be automatically taken care of, by market forces, once the basic infrastructural network up to the Panchayat level is provided by NOFN. As at this point, in rural areas, demand for broadband may not be large enough to attract private players, and so, other creative models for last mile retail involving women's collectives, Gram Panchayats, local cable operators, need to also be examined. Finally, there needs to be investment in developing relevant content services for the rural population using the digital opportunity, in addition to providing for the infrastructure.”

⁶⁵ Since renamed BharatNet. http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-02/news/60756567_1_national-optical-fibre-network-broadband-network-digital-india-programme

⁶⁶ Parmar, B.(2015), NOFN: Will government be able to achieve the targets for the NOFN roll-out?, <http://telecomtalk.info/nofn-will-government-be-able-to-achieve-the-targets-for-nofn-roll-out/131930/>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁶⁷ <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/national-optical-fibre-network-revamp-on-cards/article7261346.ece>

⁶⁸ Name with-held, on request.

One scheme that has attempted to demonstrate a model for the development of such 'relevant content services', for rural women – is the Sanchar Shakti initiative of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). Under this scheme, DoT enters into pilot projects with private sector partners, for providing subsidized mobile-based value-added services such as information about crop prices, governmental programmes, health and social issues etc., to members of women's collectives, in select locations in the country, for a period of 12 months. The subsidy is drawn from the Universal Service Obligation Fund.

The key intended results envisaged by the architects of the scheme, were to "create a demand for information/VAS/ICT services in rural areas (enable the) digital inclusion of rural women, reduce the exploitation and harassment (of women and marginalized groups) due to information asymmetry in rural areas (with respect to) their ... entitlements from the government and equip them to demand greater accountability from the local government machinery".⁶⁹

The scheme seems to have been partly successful in meeting these objectives. As an independent evaluation of one of the pilot projects undertaken under Sanchar Shakti observed:⁷⁰

"(The design of the scheme) cater(s) to a limited set of needs, bringing benefits, but not adequately covering what may be needed to change the information power equations in the local context. The women (beneficiaries) may have queries, and may have citizenship based needs that are not possible to address without human facilitation that entails other resources and investments. A service provider approach may stop at a point from where other pathways for women's information needs may have to

be explored such as institutionalized mechanisms at the grassroots for supporting women in acting upon the information received, by demanding their rights and entitlements."

5.2 EMPOWERMENT, THE DIGITAL INDIA WAY: MAKING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION EFFECTIVE

Digital India focuses on the following pathways for realizing the vision of a digitally empowered citizenry:

- Using digital opportunity for enhancing informational transparency
- Promoting dialogue between government and citizenry
- Universal digital literacy

Using the digital delta for enhancing informational transparency: The push for open data

The Indian government's forays in the realm of Open Data predate Digital India. In fact, the Open Government Platform, was considered "an open source data and content management system that can be customized easily to develop open data portals for various types of agencies, including national government"⁷¹ and was one of the numerous Indo-US collaborations that emerged from the 2010-11 visit of the US President Barack Obama. The development of this platform in 2011 coincided with the drafting of the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy, and "the dominant focus of the Policy (was) towards describing the desired functioning of the Open Government Data Platform of India".⁷²

⁶⁹ <http://usof.gov.in/usof-cms/usof-sanchar-shakti.jsp>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁷⁰ Gurumurthy, A. (2014), Evaluation Note on the Azamgarh pilot project of the Sanchar Shakti scheme, pp 2.

⁷¹ Chattopadhyay, S. (2014), Opening government data through mediation: Exploring the roles, practices and strategies of data intermediary organisations in India, http://ajantriks.github.io/oddc/report/sumandro_oddc_project_report.pdf, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁷² Ibid

The first version of this common data platform (<http://data.gov.in/>) built on an Open Source technical architecture, was launched in May 2012, and an upgraded version in February 2014. All ministries, departments, subordinate offices, organizations, and autonomous bodies (agencies from now on) of the Government of India are required to share all publicly generated non-sensitive data⁷³ on this platform, in human-readable and machine-readable formats.⁷⁴ Though the launch and up-grade of the Open Government Data portal (OGD) and the adoption of the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy are significant milestones in the journey to enhancing transparency of government systems, there is much scope for improvement, as detailed below.

- 1 There are implementation lags in enforcing the NDSAP.⁷⁵ As a recent 2015 research study on OGD reflects, “of the total 52 ministries,⁷⁶ only 32 have uploaded datasets of which 7 have uploaded less than the mandatory 5. Moreover, it remains unclear whether the remaining 25 ministries that have fulfilled the mandatory requirement, have in anyway uploaded all the remaining datasets.”⁷⁷
- 2 The NDSAP does not establish adequate linkages with older legislations for informational transparency in governance – such as the provision of the Right to Information Act 2005⁷⁸ that mandates every governmental agency to declare the total list of datasets maintained by it (in text, audio or video formats), on its website.

⁷³ Data whose sharing is not prohibited by central government acts.

⁷⁴ Agarwal, N. (2015), Open Government Data: An answer to India's growth logjam, <https://www.dropbox.com/s/met5t8bujeydpse/OG3.pdf?dl=0> , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁷⁵ Agarwal, N. (2015), op.cit.

⁷⁶ Central government ministries covered by the NDSAP.

⁷⁷ Agarwal, N. (2015), op.cit.

⁷⁸ As Sumandro Chattapadhyay (2013) observes, an office memo circulated by the Department of Personnel and Training on the guidelines for implementation of suo motu (that is, proactive) disclosure of information under section 4 of the RTI Act 10, has mandated the disclosure of multi-media information held by public agencies (such as, video recordings of meetings and consultation sessions) and adoption of ‘open standards’ for sharing information and data. See Chattapadhyay, S. (2013), Towards an expanded and integrated open government data agenda for India, <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=2591888.2591923> , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

- 3 Decisions about the extent of granularity that is permissible in open data sets, must be taken, with the recognition that privacy of socially disadvantaged individuals, such as marginalized women, are not compromised because of open data publishing. For example, the state government of Karnataka published personal information collected about women from the backward classes, as part of a Socio-Economic Caste Census exercise, on the website of the Backward Classes Commission, a decision that invited adverse comment from the High Court of Karnataka, for the privacy violations involved.⁷⁹

ICT possibilities for furthering state-citizen dialogue

The major initiative under the Digital India umbrella has been the creation of a digital portal in early 2014 (<https://mygov.in/>) where citizens from across the country can “come together to share their expert thoughts, ideas and suggestions with the government in areas related to various policies, programs, schemes etc...and work hand-in-hand with government.”⁸⁰ This portal thus attempts to explore the e-consultation possibilities offered by new digital technologies on a wide range of areas – spanning open discussions on proposed policies and bills, to suggestions on naming government schemes and services that are going to be shortly introduced, to invites to citizens for developing governance apps such as the wire-frame for the Prime Minister's Office's proposed mobile-app. Even gender issues such as girls' education have been discussed on the portal. However, as online deliberations are not tied to a concrete policy formulation/revision process, the portal does not succeed fully in its objective of enhancing citizen-voice in policy forums.

⁷⁹ Gowda, A. (2015), Karnataka government risks women safety, puts out personal data in caste census, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/karnataka-government-caste-census-women-privacy-violated/1/450140.html> , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁸⁰ <https://mygov.in/mygov-faq/> , Retrieved 20 November 2015.

In a context where only 15% of the population has Internet access⁸¹ and a significant proportion of the population is textually non-literate, citizen participation in online spaces tends to exclude marginalized women. Numerous civil society interventions have demonstrated the need for context-appropriate hybrid strategies to support women's local engagement with government such as: participatory mapping using GIS tools to create evidence-based dialogue between women's collectives and local government,⁸² digitalized news portals to enhance community reporting experiments with marginalized women, and so on.⁸³ Significant e-government innovation is still absent in this area, except for one initiative of the Government of Kerala, the Sree Sakthi portal, that is detailed in Box 3.

BOX 3 **THE SREE SAKTHI DIGITAL PORTAL OF MISSION KUDUMBASHREE, GOVERNMENT OF KERALA**

The Sree Sakthi digital portal (<http://www.sreesakthi.org/web/sreesakthi/home>) was launched in 2012, by Mission Kudumbashree, a state-wide programme that has focused on building women's self-help groups and enabling them to access livelihood and income generation opportunities, from 1998. In specific, this portal aims at equipping the state-wide network of women's collectives constituted under the programme to engage in trans-local peer dialogue for furthering their empowerment journeys. The portal emerged due to the efforts of a senior female bureaucrat at the helm of Kudumbashree,⁸⁴ who was keen to explore possibilities for

strengthening the programme, by moving beyond a narrow focus on livelihoods. In an interview in May 2015 for this study, she reflected upon the contextual forces that motivated her to come up with, and push for the Sree Sakthi Portal:

“The common criticism against the Kudumbashree programme from women's rights activists and feminist groups was that it was focusing only on livelihoods and micro-finance issues, and not on strategic gender issues. Though as a government programme it has constituted over 200,000 women's self-help groups across the state, the trainings imparted to women mostly tended to be sessions where women were ‘talked down to’.

My team and I wanted to move beyond this to create an environment which would enable the members of the collectives to challenge received ideas, and also help women leaders from within the collectives emerge as gender resource persons. This ideation led to the design of the Gender Self Learning programme – a participatory community-based training model that focused on catalyzing continual capacity-building processes among women's collectives. Initially, to design the content of the programme, the Gender Team of Kudumbashree went around the state, having free-wheeling discussions with collectives in each district – to understand their priorities and needs. That is how the idea of the portal emerged – as the extension of a space for dialogue. Along with developing the portal; we also computerized the village level offices of the programme that were being managed by representatives of the local women's collectives”.

The portal now enables women from different locations of Kerala state to discuss and debate a number of women's rights issues – ranging from political participation and VAW to health. Women with low levels of digital literacy are assisted by office-bearers of

⁸¹ World Economic Forum (2015), The Global Information Technology Report 2015: ICTs for inclusive growth, op.cit.

⁸² http://43.254.42.216/mwvvc/index.php/IT_for_Change/Journey#Kamalahalli_Panchayat:_Power_of_data_forces_Panchayat_members_to_address_irregularities_in_the_allotment_of_subsidies_under_a_rural_sanitation_scheme, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁸³ <http://khabarlahariya.org/>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁸⁴ Ms. Sarada Muraleedharan, Executive Director, Kudumbashree, 2008-2012 and currently the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.

Kudumbashree in using computers at the village level offices to participate in discussions. Also, when the portal was launched, a cascade model of trainings was adopted to introduce all members of Kudumbashree women's collectives to the basic features of the portal.

Though government-initiated citizen participation initiatives are not yet mature, civil society organizations, especially feminist groups, have been actively using social media and social networking spaces as vibrant arenas for their activism.⁸⁵ However, until recently, the scope of citizen engagement and political voice on these forums was restricted by law; Section 66 A of the Information Technology Act 2000, that made cyber-communication of a "grossly offensive" nature, punishable with 3 years imprisonment and a fine. When it was introduced, this provision of this section was presented as a safe-guard against online hate speech and cyber-abuse, and also as a means of addressing online gender-based violence, as India does not have specific laws safeguarding women from online violence and harassment. However, the ambiguity around the definition of 'grossly offensive' created a grey area, which could allow for attempts to silence activists and members of the public who strongly critiqued their actions.⁸⁶ Only rarely did the legislation help women fight online violence.⁸⁷ In March 2015, the Supreme Court struck down Section 66 A for being 'unconstitutional' holding that it was arbitrary and disproportionately restrictive of the right to free speech.⁸⁸

Universal Digital Literacy

Universal digital literacy has received a massive push under Digital India, through the adoption of a scheme entitled "Digital Saksharata Abhiyan" (National Digital Literacy Mission), that aims at training 50 lakh (5 million) people across the country, in "digital literacy ... which would enable the beneficiaries to use IT and related applications to participate effectively in the democratic process, and enhance their livelihood".⁸⁹ The scheme, launched in 2014-15, is being implemented through a public-private partnership model across the country. State governments are required to appoint partner agencies who will oversee the entire implementation, right from appointing training centres at the local level to supervising the work of the training centres, and ensuring the maintenance of training standards at all centres under their purview. A bidding process is prescribed for the selection of partner agencies, and selected partners are to be paid a piece-rate compensation for successful completion of the qualifying exam by training participants.⁹⁰

At this nascent stage in the roll-out of the Digital Saksharata Abhiyan, one innovative experiment in Kerala demonstrates a possible pathway for designing an effective women-directed digital literacy intervention, under a partnership model. See Box 4 for details.

⁸⁵ Subramanian, Sujatha (2014), From the streets to the web: Feminist Activism on Social Media, <http://cscs.res.in/dataarchive/textfiles/from-the-streets-to-the-web-feminist-activism-on-social-media-sujatha-subramanian-ta-ta-institute-of-social-sciences>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁸⁶ Deccan Herald (2015), Six controversial arrests made under Section 66(a), <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/467477/six-controversial-arrests-made-section.html>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁸⁷ Raza (2012), Dear Sibal, Here is why Section 66 A does not 'protect' women, <http://tech.firstpost.com/news-analysis/dear-sibal-here-is-why-section-66a-does-not-protect-women-212326.html>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁸⁸ Justices J. Chelameswar and Rohinton F. Nariman, cited in (Hindu 2015), SC strikes down 'draconian' Section 66 A, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/supreme-court-strikes-down-section-66-a-of-the-it-act-finds-it-unconstitutional/article7027375.ece>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁸⁹ <http://www.ndlm.in/overview-of-ndlm.html>, Retrieved 20 November 2015.

⁹⁰ <http://www.ndlm.in/training-partners.html>, Retrieved 30 November 2015.

BOX 4

THE E-JAALAKAM INITIATIVE: DIGITAL LITERACY AS CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

E-jaalakam (literally, e-window) is a path-breaking digital literacy initiative that has been developed by the Department of Economics, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam district, (Kerala state), in partnership with the Kerala State IT Mission, an autonomous nodal IT implementation agency of the Department of Information Technology, Government of Kerala. This initiative, launched in 2012, focuses on using women undergraduate students of the college as Master Trainers to conduct digital literacy trainings for women and girls in neighbouring communities, through a cascade model. The Kerala State IT Mission has supported the college in the development of the training material and in developing the curriculum for the training of the Master Trainers. What makes this initiative stand out is its recognition of digital literacy as a pathway that enables women to attain full digital citizenship.

As the architect of this initiative shared in a key informant interview conducted for this research,⁹¹ "The focus of e-jaalakam is to ensure that women and girls know enough about computers and the Internet to access information about various schemes and services, and are familiar with all the government websites. Part of the task is also to change the way women think of their relationship with government. In one of our early trainings, one girl asked me 'Why should I care about all these schemes and services? Someone else at home will take care of it anyway'. I told her, 'It is precisely to counter such a perception about governance being a male preserve that girls should get into e-government transactions'." This initiative won the Chief Ministers' Award for Innovation in Public Services 2013.

For more details see:

<http://www.itmission.kerala.gov.in/e-jaalakam.php>

The Digital Saksharata Abhiyan (DISHA) has been recently extended to cover all Accredited Social Health Activists (front-line health workers who are in charge of delivering maternal and child health care services at the last mile) and workers of the government-run child care centres/creches, across the country.

A key informant from the Department of Electronics and Information Technology⁹² contacted for this research study reflected on the rationale for extending the scheme to female front-line health and child care centre workers, thus:

"Out of the 50 lakh (5 million) individuals we reach out to through the digital literacy scheme DISHA, we recognize that it is important to ensure that women are covered. Women need to be digitally literate to effectively access their entitlements. It is well-known that when women benefit from public services, the whole household benefits. As a conscious strategy to reach out to more women in our digital literacy efforts, we are extending DISHA to cover Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAS) and government creche workers, as women community workers are directly engaged in the delivery of public services specifically targeted at women..."

It is important to recognize that the importance of digital literacy efforts directed at women, was acknowledged, even prior to Digital India. For example, in 2013-14, the Gender Budget Cell of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology identified digital skills training as a key priority area for undertaking gender budgeting exercises. Around the same time, a pilot project (entitled

91 Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan, the Head of the Department of Economics, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, Kerala.

92 Name withheld, on request.

'e-vidya') was undertaken as a partnership project between CSC e-governance Services India Ltd and the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) for providing training on basic computer concepts to 25,000 women across 6 states in the country. This was completed in September 2013; and NMEW is taking stock of the lessons from the pilot, presently.

The key informant from the Department of Electronics and Information Technology, also shed light on this trajectory in the evolution of digital literacy programmes:

"In the Department, we are cognizant that digital skills training enables women's empowerment by opening up their access to the employment opportunities offered by the IT sector. Also, this is a space that has traditionally been dominated by men...and skills training programmes specifically focused on women hence become crucial, and so, we have been prioritizing this area".

On the whole, the most significant shift enabled by Digital India has been its assertion of the importance of demand-side issues in e-governance debates. However, gender related articulations and concerns seem to elude the programme vision and its implementation. In fact, one of the officials interviewed for this research, when asked about the programme's strategic perspective on gender, said: " In Digital India, we are committed to inclusion; this means like accessibility for the disabled, we will also think about women."⁹³

While some top level officials in the system do seem to see targeting women as useful and even important, these sentiments and the islands of innovation spurred by individual leadership in governance hardly amount to a coherent framework for

gender mainstreaming. These lacunae are also compounded by overzealousness to simplify targeting through a unique identity system without privacy safeguards. As key components of Digital India, such as digital literacy, are beginning to be rolled out on a nation-wide scale in right earnest, the complete lack of vision about equipping women and the marginalized towards digital citizenship poses additional concerns.

6 VAW and e-government strategies

In 2012, the media and civil society outrage that followed the brutal gang rape of a young college student in a moving bus in the national capital New Delhi brought VAW renewed attention in policy and programming. The most obvious illustration of this was the establishment of the 'Nirbhaya Fund'⁹⁴ in 2013, a 10 billion INR corpus intended to support governmental and NGO initiatives that seeks to further the safety and dignity of women. In the current context, where using the IT opportunity in every sphere is the dominant mantra, this spotlight on VAW has also spawned a lot of interest in the area of designing digital solutions for women's safety, among government, private and civil society actors. The most common manifestation of this trend has been the development of mobile apps for women in distress. As one commentator observes, "safety apps are dime a dozen in India"⁹⁵ and private mobile companies, civil society organizations as well as government agencies, have taken to the business of app-development, with little assessment regarding their efficacy.

In addition, some state governments such as Andhra Pradesh⁹⁶ and Orissa⁹⁷ have introduced another innovation, which are Internet-enabled kiosks to enable women to report incidents of GBV to the police. Finally, there are two central government proposals in this area, which have been in the pipeline for some time:

- A directive to all mobile phone manufacturers to provide a mandatory SOS alert button on their handsets.
- A scheme covering 32 cities with a population of over one million, for fitting public transport vehicles in these cities with a GPS tracking device, to enable law enforcement agencies to effectively respond to women in distress situations.

An overview of the existing and proposed government-led IT initiatives for addressing VAW reveals that they are not geared to address the core systemic issues that contribute to the problem of gender-based violence, that of the widespread incidence of sexual harassment, lack of basic infrastructure like street lighting in public spaces, absence of gender sensitive policing, etc. Further, policy interventions do not tackle new threats to women's safety and bodily integrity in the online public sphere although there is an urgent need for proactive awareness and education, especially for young people.

As feminist critics have pointed out, an over-valorization of apps reflects a narrow approach that reduces the question of GBV to merely one of dealing with 'stranger danger',⁹⁸ instead of challenging hegemonic gender structures which normalize everyday violence against women. Also, in a context where only 3 out of every 100 individuals have mobile broadband subscriptions, apps-based approaches target only a small proportion of the population, leaving out those women who are most vulnerable to GBV.

The Society for the Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) in Andhra Pradesh has demonstrated an alternative approach to ICT programming in the fight against VAW. SERP's main strategy is

⁹⁴ named for the pseudonym that the media used for the victim in the Delhi case, a word that literally translates as 'Fearless')

⁹⁵ Dhar, S. (2014), Women's Safety Schemes go mobile in India, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/11/womens-safety-schemes-go-mobile-in-india/>, Retrieved 21 November 2015.

⁹⁶ DNA (2015), Andhra Pradesh Police may set up more kiosks to lodge complaints online for women, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-andhra-pradesh-police-may-set-up-more-kiosks-to-lodge-complaints-online-for-women-2118715>, Retrieved 26 August 2015.

⁹⁷ Dash, J. (2014), India's abused women break their silence using ATM-type kiosk, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/11/04/odisha-abuse-iclik-idINKBNOIO0BQ20141104>, Retrieved 21 November 2015.

⁹⁸ Bachan, K. (2012), Can mobile phone apps prevent violence against women?, <http://lindaraffree.com/2012/01/23/can-mobile-phone-apps-prevent-violence-against-women/>, Retrieved 21 November 2015.

to utilize a Self Help Group approach for the economic and social empowerment of poor women. Tackling Gender Based Violence is considered a critical part of this strategy, and hence, in all the villages it works in, SERP created Social Action Committees of women volunteers willing to challenge domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, child marriage, and other such rights-violations against women in their local communities. The Social Action Committee volunteers have been trained to liaise with district-level institutions such as Family Counselling Centres, Free Legal Aid Cell and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to assist women who are facing GBV. In 2012, SERP created an IVR-based reporting and tracking mechanism to support the work of the Social Action Committee in timely reporting of GBV instances in their local communities, and coordinated assistance for individual victims, from the district machinery.

7 The e-government policy gap

India does not have a cohesive policy document on e-government. The closest contender for a policy document on e-government is the National IT Policy 2012, which sets itself the ambitious goal of enabling the “application of technology-enabled approaches to overcome monumental developmental challenges in education, health, skill development, financial inclusion, employment generation, governance etc. to greatly enhance efficiency across the board in the economy”. As a result of its attempt to chalk out a multi-pronged strategic approach for transforming India into a knowledge economy, the policy is able to devote only very little space to discuss the e-government agenda.⁹⁹

Some of the key priorities for e-government outlined in this policy are: implementation of the National e-Governance Plan, mandatory provision of all Government Services through electronic mode within a fixed time frame by enactment of the Electronic Delivery of Services (EDS) Bill,¹⁰⁰ establishment of common service delivery platforms by leveraging technologies like cloud computing, evolving standards for seamless interoperability of data and applications, promoting open standards and open technologies, enhancing institutional framework for capacity building/ training across all levels of government, citizen-engagement frameworks, and promotion of PPPs.

The policy document thus leaves a lot to be desired in terms of re-shaping e-government priorities, merely reinforcing the existing

⁹⁹ Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2012), National Policy on Information Technology, http://deity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/National_20IT_20Policyt%20_20%281%29.pdf, Retrieved 21 November 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Drafted in 2011, the Bill seeks to provide a legal framework to promote “efficient electronic delivery of government services” by mandating the digitalization of all public services, except those that cannot be digitalized, within 5 years of its enactment. Its blanket approach to digitalization and inadequate attention to the fine print of ensuring citizen accessibility in the transition to e-services, has been critiqued by civil society. At present, the debate on the Bill is in a limbo in Parliament.

logic of e-government programming initiated under NeGP 1.0. It has not fulfilled the purpose of a policy framework. Not only is it silent on the question of an inclusive and accountable e-governance system, but it also completely ignores the idea of gender equality.

8 Lack of political will and weak institutional mechanisms for gender

A key informant interview conducted for this research in May 2015 with an official from the Ministry of Women and Child Development¹⁰¹ reveals that a gender review of the National IT Policy is probably underway, but the extent to which such a process can succeed in incorporating women's empowerment and gender equality efforts as a key priority area for e-government is questionable, for two reasons:

- 1 The Ministry of Women and Child Development lacks a clear policy vision of leveraging the potential of ICTs in furthering its existing efforts. While it is true that recently the Ministry has taken up a Mission Mode Project for the digitalization of its various services, there is no strategic vision about how to leverage the digital opportunity for women's empowerment and gender equality. This Project being taken up by the Ministry is more a result of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology's push for overall digitalization of government departments and agencies, and ensuring that the Ministries not covered in the previous round of MMPs can be checked off on their list, this time around. Whilst it is true that the representatives of the Ministry have recently made public statements in global forums on the potential of ICTs in furthering the gender equality agenda,¹⁰² there is no push to incorporate the e-government agenda systematically into preexisting policy frameworks on women's empowerment such as the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001).

¹⁰¹ Name with-held on request.

¹⁰² http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-12/news/60047988_1_gender-equality-gender-budgeting-gender-perspective

- 2 The more worrying issue is the inadequate budgeting to tackle gender-based exclusion, and the intensification of this trend in recent years.¹⁰³ An analysis of the 2015-16 budget of the Government of India reveals that the specific allocation to the Ministry of Women and Child Development has decreased by over 50%¹⁰⁴ when compared to the revised budget of 2014-15; and further, there has been a cut of over 20 per cent, Rs. 20,000 crore (200,000 million), in the gender budget.¹⁰⁵

Against this macro context, addressing the women's empowerment agenda in e-government policy and programming seems to be an uphill task.

9 Conclusions

E-government development in India is currently poised at a critical milestone. This section attempts to bring together the key analytical threads from the previous sections to take stock of where the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment stands in relation to e-government development.

a **No strategic vision on gender equality and women's empowerment in e-government**

India does not have a cohesive policy document on e-government at this juncture except the programmatic document of 'Digital India' (2014), encompassing:

- On-demand provisioning of governance services through digital platforms
- Universalizing access to digital infrastructure
- Digital empowerment of citizens

While Digital India marks a clear departure from previous piecemeal approaches to using ICTs in re-engineering governance and administrative systems, it overlooks completely the significance of e-government for gender equality. It does not spell out a strategic vision for furthering gender equality and women's empowerment in, and through, e-government.

b **Ad-hoc approach to addressing the question of gender-inclusive service delivery**

E-government for women's empowerment is not an idea that has been institutionalized; it is an experimental trend that women's rights champions in public administration have set. There are islands of innovation in e-service delivery such as the Mission

¹⁰³ See the work of development economists Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen.

¹⁰⁴ Though two women-centred initiatives were announced in the 2015-16 budget with much fanfare – the 1000 crore allocation to the preexisting Nirbhaya Fund and 100 crore for the newly launched Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save girl child, Educate girl child) fund, on the whole, the total allocation to the area of women and child development has been slashed by over one-third when compared to the previous year.

¹⁰⁵ Patel, V. (2015), Union Budget 2014-15: What is in store for women?, http://www.academia.edu/14066145/Union_Budget_2014-15_What_is_in_store_for_women_by_Prof._Vibhuti_Patel, Retrieved 21 November 2015.

Convergence initiative of the government of Delhi and the Sree Sakthi portal of the government of Kerala; and the Ministry of Women and Child Development's Mission Mode Project for digitalizing its services. However, these initiatives do not add up to a clear direction on gender mainstreaming in e-service delivery. Such an ad-hoc approach cannot hence bring about sustained, large-scale gains for the gender equality agenda.¹⁰⁶

c Absence of effective PPP frameworks in e-government can compromise last-mile service delivery and citizen interests in governance

Currently, the Indian state has opted for PPP arrangements for last mile service delivery through the Common Service Centre scheme. Village level entrepreneurs and corporate franchisees running last mile service delivery centres have to balance commercial considerations with service delivery. The absence of a citizen entitlements perspective and of gender and social inclusion mandates are a significant reason why the scheme has failed to reach public information and services to women and other socially marginalised groups. Concerns about PPP frameworks with respect to public interest, transparency and accountability have also come up, as in instances of data management and control, and conflict of interest in policy development and service quality monitoring.

d Connectively is largely seen as a technical issue

State policy on connectivity infrastructure and broadband continues to cast connectivity as a technical issue, divorced from the question of creating empowering cultures of use at the last mile. The Sanchar Shakti pilot project that has used the Gender Budget of the Universal Service Obligation Fund, to bring

meaningful connectivity to rural women (through mobile-based informational services) is an exception, and has not been scaled up.

e Online citizen engagement is not tied to concrete processes of policy consultations, and the feedback loop is not effectively closed

Online citizen engagement is a relatively nascent area for e-government programming in India, with the citizen portal mygov. in being launched only in 2014. However, there is no clear process for encouraging women's participation or for closing the feedback loop with citizens, on the policy issues debated or discussed on the portal.

f Digital literacy programmes recognize the need for specifically targeting women, but are narrow in their scope

In 2014, the Indian state launched the Digital Saksharata Abhiyan (DISHA) that aims at equipping 5 million people across the country, in digital skills. A sub-component of this programme specifically targets women community workers. The active participation of girls and women as equal digital citizens depends on wider policy coherence on capacity development, education, employment, political participation and the role of e-government. While Digital India does speak of creating a 'IT-ready workforce from India's small towns and villages in 5 years', the thinking on these lines is not gendered nor geared to take on the aspirations of young women and men.

g The absence of data privacy legislation puts marginalized women at greater risk of social discrimination

Currently, the Indian state is building a national citizen identity card scheme, with a unique identification number, to create a de-duplication mechanism for direct benefit transfers. However, in the

¹⁰⁶ Subramanian, M. (2007), Theory and practice of e-government in India: A gender perspective, <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1328097>, Retrieved 21 November 2015.

absence of data privacy legislation, the risk of tracking, profiling and surveillance of citizens at the margins, increases.

h **Open data policy frameworks exist, but implementation lags behind**

India has made some initial strides in the area of evolving Open data policies through the launch of the Open Government Data portal (OGD) and the adoption of the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP). However, progress in implementing these policies has been very slow, and partly this is because NDSAP stops short of laying down concrete guidelines for developing a full-fledged programme for Open Government Data.¹⁰⁷ Without such a push, there is no progress on overcoming the shortcomings of legacy data systems such as: lack of interconnections between data sets of different departments, interoperability issues, and department-centric rather than citizen-centric focus in presentation. The promise of open data for monitoring gender outcomes of policy and programme implementation cannot be realized in this context.

10 Recommendations

- a Institutionalization of gender equality and gender justice in e-government requires a strong policy and legislative framework. The Digital India programme is not an effective substitute. A policy framework on e-government must be a comprehensive document that strategically outlines the vital role that e-government can play in redressing women's historical exclusion from governance and democracy. The Ministry of Women and Child Development should come out with policy guidelines on 'women's empowerment and e-government' to further women's rights mandates in the information society context.
- b The programmatic framework of Digital India must be reviewed from a gender perspective, and a concrete strategy for furthering women's empowerment and gender equality in and through each of the 3 critical pillars of Digital India – service delivery, connectivity and citizen empowerment – must be formulated. The Ministry of Women and Child Development must be central to this exercise. Coordination mechanisms for integration of the strategic directions thus identified into existing components of the programme and collaboration with the Monitoring Committee on Digital India, the inter-ministerial committee that has already been set up, are important.
- c Gender mainstreaming in e-service delivery should be recognized as a process of designing last-mile service delivery systems that prioritize women's rights and entitlements in relation to information and services. In the design of such systems, commercial considerations and centralized monitoring should not over-ride the equity imperative. In the case of the Common Service Centre scheme, officials of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology and State Designated Agencies involved in monitoring and review, and village level entrepreneurs involved in day-to-day implementation, need capacity-building in

¹⁰⁷ Chattopadhyay, S. (2014), op.cit.

gender-based planning and budgeting and in evaluating gender outcomes.

- d PPPs in e-government should be based on partnership agreements that clearly specify accountability mechanisms for ensuring service quality and data protection. Penalty / recourse in the event of corporate non-compliance with the terms of such agreements are vital to the foundations of a citizen-responsive and women-friendly e-government.
- e Developing broadband infrastructure at the last mile must be seen as an exercise in building empowering cultures of Internet use among marginalized women and other socially vulnerable groups. Gendering the implementation of the Bharat-Net/ National Optic Fibre network, especially by involving women's collectives and organizations in developing last-mile connectivity models is an important way forward. The participation of local government in these models is key to develop creative and context-specific ways to enhance women's and girls' access to online spaces and local public services. Use of mobiles by some state governments for SMS updates in food security¹⁰⁸ and wage payments in employment guarantee programmes¹⁰⁹ show possibilities for effective targeting of women. As mobile-based connectivity improves, it can be a game-changer for bringing women into e-government, more centrally.
- f Online citizen-consultations must be backed by policy instruments that specify follow-up measures that ensure citizens' 'right to be heard'. Historically, women have been marginalized from public policy debates. In developing country contexts, agile design, using hybrid methods, is essential to use emerging

opportunities for online participation to bring women and girls into discussions in the public domain.

- g In digital literacy programmes, curriculum design, module development and teaching-learning processes must be informed by the understanding that digital literacy for women (and men) is not merely an exercise in skills-training, but a strategic pathway for digital citizenship. The involvement of women's organizations in linking digital literacy to social, economic and political empowerment of women can transform the current focus on technical skills. Successful government-civil society partnerships in this area such as Kerala's e-jaalakam need to be replicated on a larger scale.
- h Tackling Violence against Women through techno-solution approaches such as safety-apps may tend to promote simplistic and individual interventions to complex, social realities. There needs to be adequate investment in systemic solutions to enhance institutional capacities to ensure public safety. Data systems for a coordinated response to women's safety can promote effective policing, inter-agency coordination and women-friendly law enforcement.
- i The unique identification number-based direct benefit transfers system that India is currently building must be underpinned by a robust privacy and data protection legislation that protects marginalized women.
- j An effective Open Government Data programme that enables rapid and effective integration of existing databases held by different departments is an urgent imperative in India, for a gender sensitive and citizen-responsive e-government. Such a programme should focus on moving from 'department-centricity to citizen-centricity' in the production, publication and use of data-sets, so that such data can be used for local development and women's empowerment.

¹⁰⁸ Such as the state government of Chattisgarh for example. In fact, the SMS alerts on delivery of food grains to Fair Price Shops is part of the Mission Mode Project on the Public Distribution System. See PIB(2014), End to end computerisation of good governance, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=114041>, Retrieved 26 November 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Such as the state government of Orissa. See http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/mobile-based-wage-payment-for-nrega-workers-114022401028_1.html, Retrieved 26 January 2015.

- k Gender-disaggregated data systems in digitalized service delivery, online access, connectivity and public access need much improvement to support gender-responsive e-government programming.

ANNEX ON METHODOLOGY

DESK RESEARCH: KEY GOVERNMENTAL WEBSITES

<http://deity.gov.in/>

<http://www.ndlm.in/>

<http://www.csc.gov.in/>

<http://mission.delhi.gov.in/>

<http://www.sreesakthi.org/>

<http://www.serp.ap.gov.in/SHGAP/>

<http://mygov.in/>

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Name	Institutional affiliation	Date of interview
Name withheld	Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India	May 2015
Name withheld	Department of Telecommunications, Government of India	March 2015
Name withheld	Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India	March 2015
Name withheld	Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India	March 2015
Ms. Sarada Muraleedharan	Executive Director, Kudumbashree, 2008-2012 and currently the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.	March 2015
Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan	Head of the Department of Economics, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, Kerala.	October 2014
Ms. Sowmya Kidambi	Director, Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency, Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh.	September 2014

Philippines

Abbreviations

APCICT	Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development	MITHI	Medium-term Information & Communications Technology Harmonization Initiative
BAS	Bureau of Agricultural Statistics	MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
BEANS	BAS Electronic Archiving and Network Services	NCRFW	National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women
BFAR	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources	NEDA	National Economic Development Authority
BLES	Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics	OFWs	Overseas Filipino Workers
BNRS	Business Name Registration System	OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
BOT	Build-Operate-Transfer	PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing	PhilGEPS	Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer	PNP	Philippine National Police
CeC	Community e-Centres	POEA	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
CICT	Commission on ICT	PPP	Public- Private Partnership
CIRS	Crime Incident Reporting Systems	RA	Republic Act
DBM	Department of Budget and Management	SSS	Social Security System
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment	TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
DOST	Department of Science and Technology	TOP	TESDA Online Programme
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development	TVET	Technical-Vocational Education and Training
EDGE	Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality	TWC	TESDA Women's Centre
e-FPS	Electronic Filing and Payment System	UHMIS	Unified Health Management Information System
EGDI	E-government Development Index	UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FOI	Freedom of Information	UPOU	University of the Philippines Open University
GAD	Gender and Development	VAW	Violence against Women
GFPS	Gender and Development Focal Point System		
ICT	Information and Communications Technology		
IDI	ICT Development Index		
IT-BPM	Information Technology and Business Process Management		
ITECC	Information Technology and e-commerce Council		
ITU	International Telecommunication Union		
MCW	Magna Carta of Women		
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals		

1 Introduction

The International Telecommunication Union's 2014 ICT Development Index (IDI) ranked the Philippines 98th out of 166 countries surveyed.¹ Within the Asia-Pacific region, the country was ranked 18 out of 28. With regards to e-government, the 2014 UN E-government Development Index (EGDI) classified the Philippines as belonging to the middle EGDI group where e-government services are predominantly delivered through mobile devices. The Philippines ranked 95th out of 192 countries and stood 4th in Southeast Asia.² The country's e-government development is at an advanced level, despite its national income being below the regional average.³

The World Bank's 2012 report on 'Information and Communications for Development: Maximizing Mobile' estimated that there were 101 mobile cellular subscriptions for every 100 Filipinos, of which 96% were prepaid. In fact, in 2010, the mobile cellular network in the country already covered 99% of the population with 80% of households owning a mobile phone.⁴ More recently, in its 2014 country review, GSMA Intelligence reported that there were 50.9 million unique mobile phone subscribers (50% penetration) and 116.6 million unique connections (116% penetration).⁵

The Nielsen Report on the Digital Media Habits and Attitudes of Southeast Asian Consumers found that the Philippines is the only

country in the Southeast Asian region with nearly equal rates of Internet use for women and men aged 15 years and above, with slightly higher rates of Internet use among women.⁶ It also observed that "a significant proportion of digital consumers (in the Philippines) mainly access the Internet through Internet cafés".⁷ According to the report, the Internet penetration in the Philippines almost doubled in 4 years – to 52% in 2014 from 27% in 2010, with mobile phones leading this exponential growth.⁸ In fact, Internet access through mobile phones increased to 35% in 2014 from 9% in 2012. The growth of mobile broadband connectivity, has been accompanied by an increase in the frequency of online visits, and the amount of time spent online. Out of the respondents this report surveyed, fifty eight per cent (58%) said they were online daily – a two-fold increase from the 2013 results.⁹

1 ITU (2014), *Measuring the Information Society*, https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2014/MIS2014_without_Annex_4.pdf, Retrieved September 2014.

2 United Nations E-government Survey (2014), *E-government for the future we want*, http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2014-Survey/E-Gov_Complete_Survey-2014.pdf, Retrieved 8 November 2015, pp 103.

3 Ibid.

4 World Bank (2012), *Information and Communications Development 2012*, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINFORMATIONANDCOMMUNICATIONANDTECHNOLOGIES/Resources/IC4D-2012-tables.pdf>, Retrieved September 2015.

5 GSMA Intelligence (2014), *Country overview: Philippines growth through Innovation*, <https://gsmaintelligence.com/research/?file=141201-philippines.pdf&download>, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

6 Nielsen (2011), *Digital Media Habits and Attitudes of Southeast Asian Consumers*, op. cit. See Annex 3 for more details.

7 Nielsen (2011), *Digital Media Habits and Attitudes of Southeast Asian Consumers*, <http://www.grahamhills.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/71370794-The-digital-media-and-habits-attitudes-of-South-East-Asian-Consumers.pdf>, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

8 Business World (2014), *Mobile access boosts Philippine Internet Use*, <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Economy&title=Mobile-access-boosts-Philippine-Internet-use&id=89744>, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

9 Ibid.

2 Evolution of e-government in the Philippines

The beginnings of e-government development can be traced to the creation of the National Computer Centre in 1971 to start automating the processes of the Philippine Government. Martial Law was declared in 1972 and was only lifted after the 1986 EDSA revolution.¹⁰ After the revolution democratic institutions started functioning and growth-oriented policies were implemented. The Philippines has seen six ICT strategic plans and six implementing agencies in over 20 years, as summarized in Table 1. These plans have often been introduced by the incoming government administrations, were a guiding influence on their implementation and the strategic thrust.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF NATIONAL ICT STRATEGIES AND POLICIES¹¹

Year/implementing agency	National ICT strategy/vision	Action agenda
1986-1992	1987 Constitution Article II "Communications and Information plays a vital role in nation building"	Rebuild a democratic government through leveraging ICTs
1992-1998 Implementing agencies: Department of Transportation and Communication Department of Trade and Industry National Telecommunications Commission	National Information Technology Plan for the 21st Century (1997) Vision: Philippines as a newly industrialized country and Asia's Knowledge Centre	Develop human capital (technical and professional) Invest in research and development in high growth sector Partner with industry and private sector Expand telecommunications infrastructure for increased access and information sharing through the enactment of the Public Telecommunications Policy Act of the Philippines of 1995, for market liberalization.
1998-2001 Implementing agency: Information Technology and Electronic Commerce Council	e-Philippines Strategy Government Information Systems Plan (2000) ¹² Vision: Improvement of the quality of living through ICT	Provide human resource for IT services (BPOs) Promote ICT diffusion in government, community development and education Pass the e-commerce Act Institutionalize the Government Information Systems Plan
2001 – 2010 Implementing agency: Commission on Information and Communications Technology	Philippine Strategic ICT Roadmap (2006-2011) ¹³ Vision: Philippines as an Information Society empowered through ICT Philippine Digital Strategy (2011-2016) ¹⁴ Vision: Philippines empowered by ICT in a connected and networked society to promote economic and social growth, as well as efficient delivery of public services.	Push for ICT diffusion through development of relevant content and access Develop infrastructure for cyber-services (business development) Develop human capital Institutionalize the eGov Fund Push for the creation of a Department of ICT and a national broadband network Encourage transparent government/open governance Develop ICT industry and business innovation Promote digital inclusion Promote digital literacy
2010 – 2016 Implementing agency: Department of Science and Technology-Information and Communications Technology Office	E-government Master Plan ¹⁵ Vision: "A digitally empowered and integrated government that provides responsive and transparent online citizen-centered services for a globally competitive Filipino nation."	Achieve transformative e-Governance by enabling the achievement of good governance goals including operational efficiency, transparency and accountability, enhanced citizen's engagement, and effective delivery of public services.

¹⁰ The EDSA or People Power revolution was a series of popular non-violent demonstrations in the Philippines from 1983 to February 22 to 25, 1986 culminating with the departure of then President Marcos, who has been in power through Martial Law since 1972, and the restoration of the country's democracy. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_Power_Revolution, retrieved September 2015.

¹¹ Sherwin Ona et al (2012): "The Philippines: the Quest for Genuine e-Development", in Hanna, N. K and Knight, P. T., eds., "National Strategies to Harness Information Technology", Springer ; and the National Economic Development Authority (2012), eGovernment Master Plan, <http://www.slideshare.net/godiane/an-analysis-of-the-current-state-of-philippine-ict>, Retrieved September 2015.

¹² National Information Technology Council (2000), Government Information Systems Plan, <http://www.ncc.gov.ph/files/gisp.pdf> Retrieved 13 November 2015.

¹³ Commission for Information and Communications Technology, Philippines (2006), Philippine ICT Roadmap, <http://www.unapcict.org/ecohub/resources/philippine-ict-roadmap>, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

¹⁴ ICT Office (2011), Philippine Digital Strategy, <http://www.ncc.gov.ph/files/PDS.pdf>, Retrieved 13 November 2015

¹⁵ I. gov. ph website (date of upload unavailable), http://i.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/eGovMasterPlan_Final-Version.pdf Retrieved 13 November 2015

2.1 EMERGENCE OF E-GOVERNMENT

The administration under Corazon Aquino was the first to recognize the potential of ICTs in furthering the democratization agenda. It was during this period that the importance of communication and information in nation-building was constitutionally acknowledged. The new constitution that was ratified in 1987 introduced the following provisions on information and communication:

Article 2 "... recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation building", Sections 10, 11 and 19 of Article 12 requires 60% Filipino ownership of public utility corporations and associations and provides for the power of government to regulate foreign investment and monopolies; and Sections 10 and 11 of Article 16 instructs that mass media companies shall be "wholly-owned and managed" by Filipinos and that Congress shall regulate monopolies in mass media when required.¹⁶

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE TO DEVELOP THE PHILIPPINES AS ASIA'S KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

The 1990s saw two key developments in e-government, in particular embraced by the Ramos administration, which were:

- a The enactment of the Public Telecommunications Policy Act of the Philippines of 1995 (Republic Act 795), which liberalized the telecommunications sector and encouraged private ownership of telecommunication services and market competition in the business environment. This legislation contributed to

an increase in tele-density and mobile cellular telephone subscription and provided a "solid base for mobile and land-based telecommunication networks". However, a 2008 assessment pointed to "massive underutilized infrastructure" and a concentration of services in urban areas.¹⁷

- b The launch of the National Information Technology Plan for the 21st Century (IT21) in 1997, which aimed for every business, government agency, school, and home in the Philippines to have access to Information Technology (IT) by 2000. In addition it aimed for IT use to be pervasive in daily life by 2005, and for the country to become a Knowledge Centre for Asia by 2010.¹⁸ It directed all government agencies to have Internet connectivity; encouraged outsourcing of IT projects within government agencies to promote ICT growth; stimulated the growth of the Philippine web; and ordered the development of the Philippine Information Infrastructure framework. This effort has been quite successful. Since 2000, the Business Process Outsourcing and Offshoring (BPO) industry has been a significant driver of economic growth, and this is regarded as one of the reasons for the country's resilience during the 2008 global financial crisis.¹⁹ The BPO and IT sectors are regarded as the "most important job generators" as the industry employs a million of Filipino professionals, particularly in the call center and outsourcing businesses.²⁰

¹⁶ Philippine Constitution 1987, <http://www.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines>, retrieved September 2015.

¹⁷ Lallana and Soriano (2008). Towards Universal Internet Access in the Philippines, http://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30652696/INTEL_-_Towards_Universal_Internet_Access_in_the_Philippines-Research.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJ56TQJRTWSMTNPEA&Expires=1447419080&Signature=yfyb3ny7WwwU-JQzJ7wDI5zmjOyk%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DTowards_Universal_Internet_Access_in_the_.pdf, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

¹⁸ Philippines National Information Technology Council (1997), Philippines National Information Technology Plan for the 21st Century (IT21), <http://www.unapcict.org/ecohub/resources/philippines-national-information-technology-plan-for-the-21st-century-it21>, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

¹⁹ Paderanga, C. W. (2011), Private Sector Assessment: Philippines, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32479/files/psa-philippines-2011.pdf>, retrieved 16 November 2015

²⁰ IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines, <http://www.ibpap.org/media-room/ibpap-news/880-speech-of-ibpap-chairman-danilo-reyes>, Retrieved September 2015.

2.3 DEVELOPING A CITIZEN-CENTRIC E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Estrada administration introduced the Government Information Systems Plan in the year 2000.²¹ It recognized ICT as a catalyst for developing new and better services for the public and provided a foundation for creating an “on-line government”. According to Ona et al (2012),²² the Plan is a citizen-centric e-government strategic framework that empowers local government units to provide digital connectivity, develop and deploy web applications and content for citizens, and develop human capital. The key objectives for e-government at the local level were envisioned as: generating revenue, promoting local entrepreneurship, providing adequate delivery of public services, mobilizing and engaging citizens, and promoting transparency and accountability. During this period, the Republic Act 8792 (Electronic Commerce Act of 2000) was enacted in order to strengthen and fulfill the Government Information Systems Plan. The Information Technology and e-commerce Council (ITECC) was created to streamline the efforts of various ICT-related government agencies to “provide effective and focused leadership in the implementation of ICT policy.”²³

2.4 HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO PROMOTE GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT

The next phase of e-government development under the Arroyo administration recognized the growth potential of the thriving ICT, e-commerce and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sectors, and made developing ICT a priority.²⁴ ITECC proposed the creation of the E-government Fund (eGov Fund) to fund mission-critical, high-impact, and cross-agency strategic ICT projects of government.²⁵ The detailed evaluation criteria used by the eGov fund to select projects were: their potential to contribute to good governance, enhance service delivery, promote social benefits, as well as financial, technical, and operational feasibility, and nature of deliverables and costs involved.²⁶ Among the projects supported by the eGov Fund under the Arroyo Administration were the purchases of vote counting machines as part of the modernization of the Commission on Elections, computerization of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the establishment of the Philippine Business Registry, the creation of the local government portal and the e-Gov portal, and Community e-Centres.

The Commission on ICT (CICT) replaced ITECC in 2004 and became the “primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, regulating, and administrative entity of the executive branch of Government that (would) promote, develop, and regulate integrated and strategic ICT systems and reliable and cost-efficient communication

21 National Information Technology Council (2000), Government Information Systems Plan, <http://www.ncc.gov.ph/files/gisp.pdf>, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

22 Sherwin Ona et al (2012): “The Philippines: the Quest for Genuine e-Development”, in Hanna, N. K and Knight, P. T., eds., “National Strategies to Harness Information Technology”, Springer ; and the National Economic Development Authority (2012), eGovernment Master Plan, <http://www.slideshare.net/godiane/an-analysis-of-the-current-state-of-philippine-ict>, Retrieved September 2015

23 Information Technology and eCommerce Council (ITECC), <http://www.itecc.gov.ph/>, Retrieved 13 November 2015

24 The other priorities of this administration included budget reform, providing universal education, automated elections, improving transportation and digital infrastructure, terminating hostilities with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the New People's Army, providing electricity and water to all, providing opportunities for livelihood and generating 10 million jobs, and decongesting Metro Manila.

25 Department of Science and Technology, Republic of the Philippines, What is E-government Fund (EGF)?, <http://icto.dost.gov.ph/what-is-e-government-fund-egf/>, Retrieved September 2015

26 The qualifying criteria also included the project's consistency with established ICT plans and frameworks, its citizen-centricity, the potential multiplier effect, and an assessment of whether it would work across agencies. See De Rivera, T. D (date unknown), E-government in the Philippines based on the 10 point agenda of President G. M. Arroyo, http://www.cicc.or.jp/japanese/kunibetsu/pdf_ppt/Philippines-E-government_Implementation_in_the_Philippines_Rev10.pdf, Retrieved 13 November 2015.

facilities and services”.²⁷ It was also responsible for administering the eGov Fund. It drafted the Philippine Digital Strategy for 2011-2016 towards the end of the Arroyo administration with a vision of a “digitally empowered, innovative, globally competitive and prosperous society where everyone has reliable, affordable and secure information access in the Philippines... A government that practices accountability and excellence to provide responsive online citizen-centered services...” It recognized that previous e-government policies were gender blind and redefined the purpose and benefits of ICT for the empowerment of women and men and included plans of action to narrow the digital divide.²⁸

PPPs were given a lot of importance in the country's e-government strategy, and in fact, “A thriving knowledge economy through public-private partnerships” was one of the key elements of the vision outlined in the Philippine Digital Strategy 2011-2016. However, such arrangements have not been free from tensions, as the case of the electronic passport project in Box 1 demonstrates.

2.5 HARMONIZING E-GOVERNMENT ECOSYSTEM THROUGH E-GOVERNMENT MASTER PLAN AND PROMOTION OF OPEN DATA

Under the Aquino administration, the CICT was placed under the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) in 2011 and renamed the ICT Office.²⁹ In 2012, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the ICT Office, the National Economic

Development Authority (NEDA), along with civil society groups, drafted the e-Government Master Plan.

The ICT Office is responsible for implementing ICT Ecosystem Development, the use of TV White Space, transforming community e-Centers into techno-entrepreneur centers, e-government harmonization, developing digital competencies of public service employees, establishment of Next Wave Cities to support ICT industry growth, providing support for ICT-enabled start-ups, and strengthening the position in high-growth segments of the value chain in various outsourcing sectors,³⁰ in addition to implementing the Government Information Systems Plan and administering the eGov Fund.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has made it mandatory for government agencies to submit Information Systems Strategic Plans³¹ with their budgets, as part of the Medium-term Information & Communications Technology Harmonization Initiative (MITHI), an e-government and ICT support initiative aiming to ensure interoperability across ICT-related resources, programmes, and projects across government. It launched the Budget ng Bayan³² in 2012, a portal which provides information on the budget cycle, and released the National Budget Circular 542 reiterating compliance for the display of the Transparency Seal³³ on websites of national government agencies.³⁴

²⁷ Republic of the Philippines (2004), Executive Order No. 269 – Creating the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, <http://www.ncc.gov.ph/files/eo269.pdf>, Retrieved 11 November 2015

²⁸ ICT Office (2011), Philippine Digital Strategy, op. cit.

²⁹ Republic of the Philippines (2011), Executive Order No. 47 – Reorganizing, renaming and transferring the Commission of Information and Communications Technology and its attached agencies to the Department of Science and Technology, directing the implementation thereof and for other purposes, <http://www.pcoo.gov.ph/issuances/issuances-eo/EO-47.pdf>, Retrieved 14 November 2015.

³⁰ Department of Science and Technology, Republic of the Philippines, Programs and Projects, <http://icto.dost.gov.ph/major-programs-and-projects/>, Retrieved 14 November 2015

³¹ National Computer Centre (2003), NCC Memorandum Circular Number 2003-02, <http://www.ncc.gov.ph/files/NCC20MC-2003-02-ISSP-July31.pdf>, Retrieved 14 November 2015.

³² <http://budgetngbayan.com/>, Retrieved 14 November 2015.

³³ The transparency seal requires that information about the agency's mandates and functions; names of its officials with their position and designation, and contact information; annual reports; approved budgets and corresponding targets; major programmes and projects; beneficiaries as identified in the applicable special provisions; status of implementation and evaluation reports; annual procurement plan, contracts awarded and the name of contractors/suppliers/consultants, is put out

³⁴ Department of Budget and Management, Republic of the Philippines, Transparency Seal, http://www.dbm.gov.ph/?page_id=4273, Retrieved 14 November 2015.

The DBM is part of the Open Data Task Force, which “aims to make national data searchable, accessible, and useful, with the help of the different agencies of government, and with the participation of the public”.³⁵ It has engaged government agencies to submit data inventories and sets.

The programmes outlined in the various roadmaps developed under various administrations do have the potential to increase women's uptake of e-government, if digital literacy and connectivity issues are addressed. However, the country struggles in implementing e-government laws and policies in a manner that can enable specific, targeted actions for producing tangible, improved outcomes for women.³⁶ There is a need for the ICT Office to work with the Philippines Commission on Women, and other gender-focused governmental agencies and civil society organizations to address the needs of women and ensure their participation – as the following section on a gender analysis of e-government demonstrates.

3 Examining e-government through a gender lens

3.1 WOMEN'S STATUS IN THE PHILIPPINES: AN OVERVIEW

In the UN Gender Development Index 2014, that provides a gendered analysis of a country's human development attainments in the areas of health, education and command over economic resources, the Philippines ranks 17 of 78 countries.³⁷ The 2014 Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum ranks the Philippines 9 out of 142 countries,³⁸ with high ratings for educational attainment, health and survival sub-indices, but low for political empowerment and economic participation categories.

Other statistics testify to the achievements of the country in women's education. In its 2014 report on the progress towards MDGs, the National Economic Development Authority observed that in secondary education, girls consistently outnumber boys.³⁹ The percentage of women in higher and professional education is also increasing. For example, in the school year 2009-2010, 57.44% of graduates were female. Similarly, in the same year, the percentage of professionally licensed women was 64%.⁴⁰ However, access to education is not translating into enhanced economic and political participation.

³⁵ <http://data.gov.ph/about>, Retrieved 14 November 2015.

³⁶ Asian Development Bank (2013), Gender Equality in the Labour Market in the Philippines, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/31194/gender-equality-labor-market-philippines.pdf>, Retrieved 14 November 2015.

³⁷ UNDP Human Development Index Report 2014, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-5-gender-related-development-index-gdi>, Retrieved September 2015.

³⁸ World Economic Forum (2014), The Global Gender Gap Index 2014, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/rankings/>, Retrieved 14 November 2015.

³⁹ NEDA (2014), Fifth Progress Report on Millennium Development Goals 2014, <http://www.gov.ph/2014/08/22/5th-progress-report-millennium-development-goals/>, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

⁴⁰ Shahani, L. R. (2015), Engendering development: the Status of Women in the Philippines, <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/2015/03/02/1428959/engendering-development-status-women-philippines>, Retrieved 16 November 2015

The Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics-Department of Labor and Employment (BLES-DOLE) placed the total number of employed women in the Philippines in 2014 at 15.3 million, a figure that was lower than the total male employment by over 8.2 million.⁴¹ Women are also over-represented in the Business Process Outsourcing industries and in unskilled and unprotected jobs (both in the overseas and domestic economies).⁴²

In the area of women's political empowerment, the lack of women's meaningful representation and participation in elected office and other decision-making bodies, and lack of electoral mechanisms guaranteeing gender balance in political and decision-making positions, continue to be critical concerns.

With regards health, the Fifth Report on Millennium Development Goals (2014) of the National Economic Development Authority stated that maternal mortality ratio in 1990 was 209 per 100,000 live births but the figure has risen to 221 by 2011, after reaching a low of 162 in 2006.⁴³ The performance lag in the health sector can be attributed to the inadequate number of health professionals, the inadequate facilities in rural and marginalized areas, and the influence of the Catholic Church in creating a public discourse discouraging the use of artificial contraceptives.⁴⁴

41 Philippine Statistical Authority 2015, Current Labour Statistics -September 2015, Table 9, <http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/PUBLICATIONS/Current%20Labor%20Statistics/STATISTICAL%20TABLES/PDF/Tab9.pdf>, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

42 Philippine Statistics Authority (2014), One in every two OFWs is an unskilled worker, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/one-every-two-female-ofws-unskilled-worker-results-2013-survey-overseas-philipinos>, Retrieved 16 November 2015; Philippine Commission on Women. Women Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality 2013-2016; Foundation for Media Alternatives (2013), Baseline Reporting of VAW/eVAW and its reporting system in the Philippines, http://www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/philippines_baseline_report_full_text_0.pdf, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

43 National Economic Development Authority (2014), Fifth Progress Report Millenium Development Goals, http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/PH-5TH-MDG-PROGRESS-REPORT_Nov-4-ver.pdf, Retrieved 05 December 2015.

44 "Philippines: Maternal mortality rates 'not making sufficient progress'" (2009), IRIN, March 24, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/83609/philippines-maternal-mortality-rates-not-making-sufficient-progress>, Retrieved September 2015.

3.2 KEY MILESTONES IN THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE GENDER EQUALITY AGENDA IN THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) was established in 1975. The gender equality principle was enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution and, shortly after, the "Women in Nation Building Act" was passed, which promoted the integration of women as full and equal partners in development and nation building.⁴⁵ The NCRFW became the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) in 2009, the lead advocate for government-wide gender mainstreaming, "the strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects in all social, political, civil, and economic spheres so that women and men benefit equally".⁴⁶ The Gender Focal Point System (GFPS) was also introduced. This is a system where a person is identified as a gender focal point "in all government instrumentalities tasked to catalyze and accelerate gender mainstreaming."⁴⁷ The highlights of the gender strategies and policies from the Marcos Administration onward are presented in Annex 1.

The Gender and Development Budget Policy of 1992 allocates at least 5% of the budget of national and local agencies for gender and development programmes. However, the limited number of PCW personnel makes monitoring the implementation of this policy a challenge.⁴⁸ In 2014, the PCW started using the Gender Mainstreaming Monitoring System to track gender mainstreaming

45 Republic Act No. 7192 (1992), <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/population/womenrights/philippines.women.92.pdf>, Retrieved 16 November 2015

46 Philippine Commission on Women and National Economic and Development Authority (2011) <http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/GFP-Memorandum-Circular-2011-1.pdf>

47 Ibid.

48 The PCW is authorized 63 plantilla positions and only 60 have been filled up. Commission on Audit (2012) http://www.coa.gov.ph/phocadownloadpap/userupload/annual_audit_report/ngas/2012/National-Government-Sector/Office-of-the-pres/PCW_ES2012.pdf, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

trends in government. It automates the Gender and Development Plan and Budget and the Gender and Development Accomplishment Report. Many national government agencies and local government units still need to be oriented to the use of the system.

The Philippine government has a strong legal and policy framework to protect and promote women's rights. Aside from the Women in Nation Building (1992) and the Magna Carta of Women (2009), other important legislation for gender equality are the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act, 1995; Anti Sexual Harassment Act, 1995; Anti Rape Law, 1997; Anti-trafficking in Persons Act, 2003; and Anti Violence Against Women and Children Act, 2004.⁴⁹

Currently, some key priority areas being addressed in policy and programming, which address e-government with regards to furthering the women's empowerment and gender equality agenda are:

- a the unequal participation of women in the formal labor market: The 2011-2016 Plan of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has identified the need to address gender equality issues in work and work places; provide labor market intermediation aided by technology to increase geographic, occupational and social mobility; and provide social protection that is critical for equity; among its key priorities. ⁵⁰ DOLE also plans to increase ICT literacy competency to promote a globally competent and flexible workforce.⁵¹
- b Information for agricultural workers and women farmers: As agriculture is a sector of the economy that employs a large number of women, the extension programmes of the Department of

Agriculture such as Farmers' Contact Centers, and the Farmers Information Technology Services Centers where infomediaries assist farmers to access information related to agriculture, fisheries and forestry over the Internet, are also critical for women. However, the extent to which women farmers utilize these services is not clearly known at this point.

- c Protecting the rights of women in low-skilled, low-paid, and unprotected jobs in the informal sector: The PCW's Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality Plan identified the difficulties experienced by women in the informal sector and in the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).⁵²
- d Inclusive health services: The Department of Health crafted the National Objectives for Health 2011-2016, which uses ICT in health programmes and administration. The e-Health Strategic Framework Plan 2013-2017 outlines its programmes for better service delivery including improving the Telemedicine programme. The expansion of the coverage of Philippine Health Insurance and the implementation of the PhilHealth Electronic Claims Systems streamlines key processes like membership and benefits for primary health care in all government and private hospitals and rural health units.⁵³

Since 2007, the Philippine Commission on Women has been working towards institutionalized gender-mainstreaming efforts in Reproductive Health service delivery and population development planning at the national and local level. ⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Asian Development Bank (date unknown), Gender Analysis Summary – Country Partnership Strategy Philippines 2011-16, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cps-phi-2011-2016-ga.pdf>, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

⁵⁰ Department of Labor and Employment(2011), The Philippine Labor and Employment Plan 2011-2016, <http://www.dole.gov.ph/fndr/bong/files/PLEP-26%20April%20version.pdf>, Retrieved 19 November 2015.

⁵¹ Department of Labor and Employment, The Philippine Labor and Employment Plan 2011-2016, op. cit.

⁵² NEWC (2014), Gender and ICT in the Digital Age, NWECL Leader Seminar Report.

⁵³ Department of Health and Department of Science and Technology (2013), Philippines eHealth and Strategic Framework Plan, www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Philippines_eHealthStrategicFrameworkPlan_February02_2014_Release02.pdf, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

⁵⁴ Philippine Commission on Women, Gender mainstreaming and institutionalization in Reproductive Health (RH) service delivery and Population Development Planning, <http://www.pcw.gov.ph/unfpa/gender-mainstreaming-rh-service-delivery-popdev-planning>, Retrieved 18 November 2015.

4 E-service delivery

4.1 KEY MILESTONES IN E-SERVICE DELIVERY

The National Computer Centre issued Memorandum Circular 2003-01 to guide national and local government agencies, on the provisions of Section 27 of the e-Commerce Act which mandates that filing, creation, retention, submission of documents, issuance of permits and receipts, and other transactions of governments should be performed using electronic data messages or electronic documents.⁵⁵

In 2003, 373 of the 399 national government agencies had websites. In 2002, local government units that had web presence were the then 79 provinces, 115 cities, and 966 of the 1,496 municipalities, while state universities and colleges had 100% web presence.

A list of online services available on the websites of national government agencies as of February 2015 is provided in Annex 2. However, the level of web presence of most local government units is still in the initial stages of maturity. This means that on these websites, citizens are only able to get basic information, facility for email communication with departments, and download required forms. Websites are still unable to provide citizens with interactive and integrated features. The National Computer Centre reported in 2011 that 75% of 126 cities had websites, though the majority was in stage 1 or 2 of UN-ASPA e-government development.⁵⁶ The indicators given by the National Computer Centre for these stages are in Annex 3.

The Department of Interior and Local Government launched the Full Disclosure Policy Portal⁵⁷ to make it easier for local government units to comply with the Department's Full Disclosure Policy. Compliance with this policy is a criterion for them to be awarded the Seal of Good Housekeeping along with the accounting and auditing standards of the Commission on Audit. In 2014, the Seal of Good Housekeeping was replaced with the Seal of Good Local Governance, which expanded the award's criteria from good financial housekeeping to a more comprehensive set including disaster preparedness, social protection, business-friendliness and competitiveness, peace and order, and environmental management.⁵⁸

E-government policies and services are drafted and issued at the national level. National government agencies have implemented their own information systems based on their preferred standards. The e-government Master Plan has indicated the importance of standardizing commonly used hardware and software applications to enable interaction between government services. The Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) intends to reform the government procurement system and increase transparency in transactions, and the Electronic Filing and Payment System (e-FPS) was implemented for more efficient tax payments.

According to the Online Service Index of the UN 2014 E-government Development Index, the Philippines ranks 95th out of 143 countries (a rating of 0.4803), with most online services in the emerging and enhanced stages.⁵⁹ Most government agencies provide a link to other government websites and related e-services, if available. The

⁵⁵ National Computer Centre (2003), Guidelines on compliance to the E-commerce Act and stage two and three of the UN-ASPA five stages of e-government, <http://www.elib.gov.ph/results.php?f=subject&q=National+Computer+Center+Memorandum+Circular+No.2003-01+--+August+20%2C+2003>, Retrieved 18 November 2015

⁵⁶ National Computer Centre (2003), Guidelines on compliance to the E-commerce Act and stage two and three of the UN-ASPA five stages of e-government, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Full Disclosure Policy Portal, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Republic of the Philippines, <http://fdpp.blgs.gov.ph/>

⁵⁸ Department of the Interior and Local Government (2014), 2014 Seal of Good Local Governance, http://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF_File/issuances/memo_circulars/DILG-Memo_Circular-2014326-7960dfc5e3.pdf, Retrieved 18 November 2015.

⁵⁹ United Nations E-government Survey (2014), E-government for the future we want, *op. cit.*

government is planning to connect related e-services directed toward serving Overseas Filipino Workers. It also seeks to integrate access to statistical information and data that are currently being produced by multiple national government agencies.

4.2 WOMEN'S INCLUSION IN E-SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

All online government services are open to both women and men. In addition, there are some services that particularly target women. They include:

- a The Technical Vocational Education and Training programme offered by the TESDA women's centre: The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority in the Philippines (TESDA) was set up in the 1990s to "provide direction (and shape) policies, programmes and standards towards quality technical education and skills development". TESDA has set up 15 Regional Centres and 45 Provincial Training Centres in the country, one among which is the TESDA Women's Centre (TWC). The TWC is TESDA's lead training institution for mainstreaming Gender and Development in TVET and sustaining the integration of GAD components into existing technology-based training programmes. In 2013, TWC piloted a blended learning programme, combining traditional teaching-learning methods with online training. The idea underpinning this initiative was that blended learning will result in more effective learning outcomes when compared to online training for marginalized women, who constitute the majority of trainees in TWC programmes. ICT mediated interfaces were combined with classroom interactions, peer support networks, and guidance and mentorship from trainers.
- b The Conditional Cash Transfer Programme of the Department of Social Welfare and Development: The Pantawid Pamilyang

Pilipino Program⁶⁰ is a digitally-enabled conditional cash transfer programme with health and education-related conditions for the participating households implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Government of Philippines. Women beneficiaries make up more than 82% of the programme grantees. Women are also a large proportion of the programme's frontline intermediaries – 'Parent Leaders' – who act as mediators between the programme management and beneficiaries, and whose task is to facilitate grievance redress and track beneficiary compliance in their neighbourhoods.

4.3 ASSESSMENT OF GENDER GAPS IN E-SERVICE DELIVERY

The inclusion of the women's rights agenda is still taking a back seat in e-service delivery, though there are online services addressing women's rights issues.

Despite the gender mainstreaming policies of government, efforts have not deeply penetrated the e-government sector, and as a result, government personnel have varying levels of appreciation for gender concepts and issues. And some emerging issues such as online VAW are not adequately covered in e-government capacity-building. Though there are courses offered by agencies such as the National Computer Centre and the Career Executives Service Board in the area of building e-government leadership, most of these courses are silent on women's empowerment and gender equality issues in e-government. In fact, some trainers interviewed for this research insisted that ICT is gender neutral or that it is difficult to integrate gender in ICT courses.

60 Roughly translated in English as "Bridging Program for the Filipino Family".

5 Digital Literacy

The promotion of digital literacy has been a priority for successive governments but it has not been systematically implemented or fully institutionalized. The introduction and sustainability of the initiatives depends largely on local and national leadership. This explains the uneven levels of investment in digital literacy efforts at the local level and in educational institutions

The Department of Education has implemented ICT initiatives like the Learning Resource Management and Development System⁶¹ (an online library containing free teaching-learning materials available for download) and ICT literacy programmes for primary and secondary education. However, there is no update or assessment in relation to these programmes yet.

Currently, the Department of Education does not offer digital literacy in all public schools. According to an observation from Philippine Statistical Authority (2014), "Some public schools are privileged to have a computer laboratory with 15 to 20 computer units. However, with the current population of students in schools run by the government, not all are guaranteed an opportunity to apply what the computer teacher has taught them, since the student-computer ratio is below the requirement. What is worst is the fact that those schools in far flung areas have no computers at all." The Department of Education reports that Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum programmes are being offered through regional Science High Schools and through special science classes in schools offering science, technology, and engineering courses. In these classes, students go through rigorous training in Math and Science subjects.⁶²

The challenge for government is to sustain and improve these initiatives.

Within the Department of Education is the Bureau of Alternative Learning System, which provides free education to out-of-school youth, including those with disabilities, in their Community Learning Centers. Depending on the strength of local government leadership, these learning centers may offer basic computer education or digital literacy courses. Davao City, for instance, offers basic computer literacy courses to youth with disabilities, out-of-school youth, indigent youth, and adult women who are part of the ten tribes living in the city.⁶³

In 2011, the ICT Office, in partnership with Telecenter.Org, the University of the Philippines, the Philippine CeC Network, Intel Philippines, telecommunication companies and other non-government organizations, launched the Philippine Digital Literacy for Women Campaign, a programme that offers free digital literacy training to women nationwide. The goal was to teach 10,000 women in marginalized areas on how to use computers and the Internet for enhancing their informational access, networking, and development of skills for socio-economic opportunities to improve their lives.⁶⁴

Despite these efforts, the implementation of digital literacy remains inadequate. Initiatives are still insufficient to enabling citizens to acquire capacities to find meaningful information and network in digital spaces relevant to their critical needs. Weak policy direction and leadership in relation to the appreciation and use of ICTs aside, governmental focus has been mainly on providing or procuring hardware and digital devices.

⁶¹ An online library containing downloadable and free teaching and learning materials. See Department of Education (2014), DepEd is committed to enhancing the quality of basic education, <http://www.gov.ph/2014/07/26/deped-remains-committed-to-enhancing-the-quality-of-basic-education/>, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

⁶² Department of Education (2014), Robotics Olympiad victors showcase winning creations, <http://www.deped.gov.ph/stories/robotics-olympiad-victors-showcase-winning-creations>, Retrieved 18 November 2015.

⁶³ <http://www.davaocity.gov.ph/davao/unesco/ict.pdf>, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

⁶⁴ PCW (2012), Local Government Initiative for Women: Tanauan Local Government Brings Computer Literacy at Women's Doorsteps, http://www.pcw.gov.ph/sites/default/files/documents/resources/GWP_magazine_2012_August_issue.pdf, Retrieved 16 November 2015.

6 Connectivity infrastructure

The network infrastructure in the Philippines is driven by the private sector and is dominated by two telecommunication companies. According to ASEAN DNA, the Philippines has the slowest Internet speed in Southeast Asia at 3.6Mbps with a very low adoption rate.⁶⁵ The lowest DSL subscription rate is PhP999 (USD22) and the average monthly family income (2009) is PhP10,750.⁶⁶ As an alternative, Filipinos go to Internet cafés and Community e-Centers (when present) to access the Internet and online government services.

7 Online citizen engagement

Citizens have taken to social media to react on issues such as reproductive health, misuse of pork barrel funds⁶⁷ and Freedom of Information. The social media platforms most commonly used by Filipinos are Facebook and Twitter. Facebook has 30 million users in the Philippines, accounting for 30% of the total population and 90 per cent of the total online population in the country.⁶⁸ Twitter has 9.5 million users in the Philippines.⁶⁹

There is no government-wide policy on the use of social media or other forms of digital engagement. But many government agencies have accounts on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Agencies respond to questions on services with varying levels of timeliness. Issuing policies on the use of social media is left to the discretion of the head of the respective agency. Some public officials and civil servants use their personal social media accounts.⁷⁰ There are also government agencies that do not allow civil servants to use social media during office hours and have no social media presence.

65 "PHL Internet slowest in ASEAN: report" (2014), GMA News Online, April 20, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/357617/scitech/technology/phl-Internet-slowest-in-asean-report>, Retrieved September 2015.

66 PLDT Plan999, <http://pldthome.com/dsl/promos/family-sized-sale>, Retrieved September 2015.

67 In the Philippines, the term "pork barrel" is used to mean funds allocated to the members of the Philippine House of Representatives and the Philippine Senate to spend as they see fit without going through the normal budgetary process or through the Executive Branch. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pork_barrel#Philippines

68 Socialbakers, Philippines Facebook page statistics, <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/philippines>, Retrieved September 2015.

69 Montecillo, Paolo (2012), "Philippines has 9.5M Twitter users, ranks 10th", Philippine Daily Inquirer, August 9, <http://technology.inquirer.net/15189/philippines-has-9-5m-twitter-users-ranks-10th>, Retrieved September 2015.

70 For Example, President Aquino's speechwriter, Assistant Secretary Misleng, complained about the wine being served during an ASEAN function in Vietnam on Twitter. See <http://www.ellentordesillas.com/2010/11/01/tweets-are-forever/>; or the Twitter war on the Aquino administration's lack of preparedness for the tropical storm Falcón. See <http://www.interaksyon.com/article/6749/valte-mitos-magsaysay-trade-barbs-on-twitter-over-pnoys-disaster-preparedness-or-lack-of-it>

8 Existing legislative and policy frameworks on e-Governance

There is no Philippine law that guarantees the right to Internet access. The e-Commerce Act of 2000 (Republic Act 8792)⁷¹ provides for the recognition and use of electronic commercial and non-commercial transactions and documents, and penalties for unlawful use. There are no legislative frameworks regulating the delivery of digitally enabled services or the openness of the technical architecture of the underlying e-services or citizen charters guaranteeing responsiveness and accountability of e-government services, and specifying redress mechanisms.

Philippines Congress passed Republic Act 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012), which provides the legal framework of protecting digitalized personal information of individuals held by government and the private sector and the creation of a National Privacy Commission. The guidelines for implementation of this law are unavailable and the National Privacy Commission is yet to be constituted.

The Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10175) is a law drafted to support the Data Privacy Law. The law defines cybercrime and provides for the prevention, investigation, suppression and the imposition of penalties. Other laws that pertain to right to privacy and confidentiality include the Commonwealth Act No. 591 establishing the Bureau of Census and Statistics in 1940,⁷² Republic Act 1161 (The SSS Law),⁷³ Republic Act 1405 (Bank Secrecy Law),⁷⁴ Republic Act 4200 (Wire Tapping Law),⁷⁵ Republic Act 9372 (Human

Security Act),⁷⁶ Republic Act 8505 (Rape Victim Assistance),⁷⁷ and Republic Act 7610 (Anti-Child Abuse Law).⁷⁸ New laws have been enacted to address e-VAW such as : Republic Act No. 9995 (Anti-Photo and Video Voyeurism Act of 2009), Republic Act No. 9775 (An Act Defining the Crime of Child Pornography, Prescribing Penalties Thereof and for other Purposes), and the aforementioned Republic Act No. 10175 (Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012).

In the absence of a Freedom of Information Law, Section 7 Article III of the Bill of Rights of the 1987 Constitution ensures that "access to official records and documents and paper pertaining to official acts, transaction, or decisions as well as to government research data used as basis of policy development, shall be afforded the citizens, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law." The Freedom of Information Bill (FOI), an integral element of the administration's Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Plan 2012-2016, pursues "greater transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance."⁷⁹ Section 7 of the Bill of Rights recognizes the right of the people to information on matters of public concern.⁸⁰ An FOI Law would bolster the Code of Ethics of government officials and the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

In 2014, the Philippine Senate passed its version of the FOI Bill. The FOI Bill is awaiting its second reading in the House of Representatives, as of March 2015. President Aquino has said that the passage of the FOI Bill is a priority in his final year in office.⁸¹ Like

⁷¹ <http://www.pctc.gov.ph/initiatv/RA8792.htm>, Retrieved September 2015

⁷² <http://census.gov.ph/content/commonwealth-act-no-591>, Retrieved September 2015

⁷³ http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1954/ra_1161_1954.html, Retrieved September 2015

⁷⁴ http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1955/ra_1405_1955.html, Retrieved September 2015.

⁷⁵ http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1965/ra_4200_1965.html, Retrieved September 2015.

⁷⁶ https://www.senate.gov.ph/republic_acts/ra%209372.pdf, Retrieved September 2015.

⁷⁷ http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1998/ra_8505_1998.html, Retrieved September 2015.

⁷⁸ http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1992/ra_7610_1992.html, Retrieved September 2015.

⁷⁹ www.gov.ph/foi/, Retrieved September 2015.

⁸⁰ The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, Article III, Bill of Rights, <http://www.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-article-iii/>, Retrieved September 2015

⁸¹ Calica, Aurea (2015), "Palace: Noy committed to passage of FOI bill", The Philippine Star, July 30, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/07/30/1482519/palace-noy-committed-passage-foi-bill>, Retrieved September 2015.

many other crafted policies the proposed law is silent on gender issues and considerations.

There are bills in Congress that seek to address and fill in the current gaps of the e-government ecosystem (Annex 4). Pending legislation on the right to Internet access, capacity building and digital literacy, the institutionalization of a national government agency dedicated to ICT, e-government, and e-services, will enable the e-government strategy to continue the inclusive and interoperability framework that is being carried out by the e-government Master Plan. Another key legislation that is pending is a bill creating the Department of Information and Communications, which is part of the 2015-16 congressional agenda of the Aquino administration. The bill is expected to establish a more stable and predictable policy and business environment ⁸²

9 Conclusions

- a Strategic vision on women's inclusion and gender equality in policy frameworks: The Philippine government recognizes the challenge of inclusive growth and of making public services, including the online services of government, inclusive. Recent e-government policies, the Philippine Digital Strategy and the e-government Master Plan align and harmonize policies recognizing the role of ICTs for women's empowerment and outline plans of action to narrow the digital and gender divide. Robust scaffolding to the e-government policies and strategies is provided by the country's advanced policies on gender equality and women's rights. The government's gender mainstreaming strategy has been institutionalized through the enactment of the Magna Carta of Women in 2009. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that establishes gender-responsiveness as a key norm required to promote good governance. The Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Magna Carta of Women focuses on supporting, aligning, and consolidating existing efforts of government agencies including ICT and e-government strategies and activities like "Bottom up Budgeting", that seek to further gender equality.
- b Critical challenges in e-government development: An analysis of performance of e-government in the Philippines demonstrates slow growth resulting from unclear e-government structure and leadership. As highlighted in the Medium Term ICT Harmonization Initiative (MITHI) of the e-government Master Plan, the key goals of e-government efforts are strengthening collaboration, interoperability, integrated services, and openness in governance. Similarly, the Philippine Digital Strategy (2011-16) and the e-government Master Plan 2011-16 both consider the establishment of infrastructure and the development of required (governance) applications using interoperable and

inclusive frameworks – to collaborate and share services among government agencies at national and local levels – as a starting point for e-government. Despite this stated vision, the government's historical mode of functioning in silos continues. In the past, e-government and governance reform strategies only reached start-up stages and found it difficult to progress because of political and structural barriers and the lack of supportive policies and laws, as discussed in the previous section.

- c Gender gaps in e-government: Officials involved in e-government policy and programme development do not have strong gender perspectives. As a result, ICT policy development tends to become a largely gender-neutral exercise. This is particularly true for infrastructure policy frameworks, which tend to be urban-centric, exclusionary and gender blind, leaving behind marginalized sectors and vulnerable groups in remote rural areas with limited digital infrastructure and connectivity.

10 Recommendations

- a The ICT Office must work closely with the PCW and other gender-focused stakeholders to address the needs of women and ensure that their concerns are considered from the planning stages of an e-government project until its full implementation. The PCW, through its Focal Point System, must re-double its efforts to ensure gender mainstreaming in e-government. It would be best if a permanent government agency that oversees ICT programmes in the country was present to ensure the continuous and uninterrupted effort of promoting gender in e-government, among others.
- b Gender perspectives should be incorporated in Internet and ICT policy development by enhancing women's representation in decision-making structures in e-government, and encouraging the direct participation of poor and marginalized women in policy development processes.
- c Gender concerns, especially women's right to Internet access and digital literacy, should be addressed through e-government laws and policies, as well as in their implementation at the national and local level. Most importantly, strategic attention to growth and sustainability of gender responsive initiatives in e-government is required.
- d Gender sensitization training should be provided to e-government officials at all levels – those in leadership positions as well as intermediaries at the last mile in e-service delivery systems. The training should include enhancing capabilities to undertake gender sensitive messaging when publicizing e-service delivery arrangements.
- e Gender-disaggregated and open citizen data systems (keeping in mind Gender Equality Guidelines) should be set up in government agencies to enable gender-grounded policy and

- programme design. The availability of government data that is easily understood but does not oversimplify may improve citizen engagement on key political and social issues facilitated by social media.
- f Government should identify socio-economic groups that are at the risk of being left out from the benefits of connectivity, as well as locate underserved or areas not yet served, and design e-government programmes for with them in mind to ensure universal access. It is important to understand the patterns of use of ICT devices and the Internet to increase the relevance of e-government interventions.
 - g It is necessary to provide adequate budget and strengthen concerted action at national and local levels to successfully implement digital literacy initiatives. ICTs in public school systems are an important strategy for building the digital literacy of the population. Policy development should recognize the interconnections between digital literacy, availability of affordable connectivity and infrastructure. Digital literacy trainings for women and girls should encourage them to pursue STEM careers. Further, the sustainability of these programs should be addressed, as they tend to be demanding, when it comes to financial and human resources.
 - h Mobile-based services, especially information services critical to marginalized groups, are an important future frontier for e-government development. The country has 99% mobile coverage⁸³ and in Metro Manila alone, 45% of mobile phone users use their phones to browse the Internet.⁸⁴
 - i Women's access to justice should be ensured, not just offline but also online, not merely by focusing on protectionism and criminalization, but through concrete programmes to prevent VAW in cyberspace.⁸⁵

⁸³ Trading Economics retrieved November 2015 <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/philippines/population-covered-by-mobile-cellular-network-percent-wb-data>. See also GSMA Intelligence Analysis (December 2014) Country Overview: Philippines Growth through Innovation <https://gsmaintelligence.com/research/?file=141201-philippines.pdf&download>

⁸⁴ PhiStar Global (July 2, 2013) "More Filipinos use cellphones as 'mobile computer' study" retrieved 2015 <http://www.phistar.com/headlines/2013/07/02/961059/more-filipinos-use-cellphones-mobile-computers-study>

⁸⁵ Vichel Juguilon and Liza Garcia (2014) "Philippines Country Report" Presentation for NWECS Seminar for Gender Equality Officers and Women Leaders in the Asia Pacific Region; Retrieved 2015 <http://www.nwec.jp/jp/data/7090dd55d2fda2576782f9aca19e355f.pdf>

ANNEX 1

NATIONAL GENDER STRATEGY AND POLICIES UNDER EACH GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION FROM 1975

Administration/Year	Gender Strategy/Policy	Action Agenda
Marcos 1975	Presidential Decree No. 633 Establishment of Advisory body to the President and the Cabinet on policies and programmes for the advancement of women mandated "to review, evaluate, and recommend measures, including priorities to ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development at national, regional and international levels, and to ensure further equality between women and men."	Organize women into a nationwide movement Conduct policy studies and lobbying for the issuance of executive and legislative measures concerning women Establish a clearinghouse and information centre on women; Monitor the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
Aquino (Corazon) 1986-1992	1987 Constitution Republic Act 7192 (Women in Nation Building)	Mainstream Gender Strengthen Institutions through gender mainstreaming
Ramos 1992-1998	Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development 1995 – 2015 Passage of the Gender and Development Budget in annual General Appropriation Act	Build capacity of Government Agencies Implement 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the UN 4th World Conference on Women Allocate a minimum of 5% of total appropriation for gender and development programmes and projects Strengthen the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women as the coordinating body on policies affecting women
Ejercito-Estrada 1998-2001	Executive Orders 208 and 268 Advocacy for development of programmes and projects that benefit women and enable them to participate in the decision making process.	Strengthen Institutions Advocate for the development of programmes and projects that benefit women and enable them to participate in the decision making process
Macapagal-Arroyo 2001-2010	Support in the poverty alleviation agenda Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women (2009) Magna Carta of Women Implementing Rules and Regulations (2010)	Advance and protect human rights, promote women's economic empowerment and gender-responsive governance Promote women's rights and empowerment ^a Review and, when necessary, amend and/or repeal existing laws that are discriminatory to women within three (3) years from the year that Magna Carta comes into effect. Implement rules and regulations called on the different branches and agencies of the government to act on the provision. The Magna Carta of Women is a comprehensive women's human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling and promoting the rights of Filipino women, especially those in the marginalized sectors.

<p>Aquino (Benigno III) 2010 – 2016</p>	<p>Joint Philippine Commission on Women and National Economic Development Authority Memorandum 2011-01 and PCW Memorandum Circular 2014-01 Submission of Policy Issuances on the Creation, Reconstitution and or Strengthening of the Gender and Development Focal Point System (GFPS) and Updated Directory of GFPS Members Joint Philippine Commission on Women-Department of Interior and Local Government-Department of Budget and Management-National Economic Development Authority Joint Memorandum Circular 2013-01 PCW Memorandum Circulars on the preparation of FY2012-2016 budgets and Gender and Development Accomplishment Reports Republic Act 10354 (The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012) PCW Memorandum Circular No. 2014-06 Promoting the Use of Gender Sensitive Language in the Drafting and Review of Legislative Measures PCW Memorandum Circular 2014-02: Implementation of the Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender equality plan 2013-2016 (Women's EDGE Plan)</p>	<p>Provide guidelines for the creation, strengthening and institutionalization of the Gender and Development Focal Point System Provide guidelines on the localization of the Magna Carta of Women Provide PCW issuance on the preparation of annual Gender And Development Plans and budgets and Gender And Development Accomplishment reports Provide for a national policy on responsible parenthood and reproductive health. Use of gender-fair language as a first benchmark of gender sensitivity; encourages the use of non-sexist language in all official documents, communications and issuances aligned with the RA 9710 The Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality (EDGE) Plan operationalizes the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) and fulfils the President's Social Contract in promoting of equal gender opportunity in public policies and programmes. Guides the mainstreaming efforts in government agencies to fulfil obligations in the MCW. Inform the preparation of Gender and Development Plans and budgets of agencies as it highlights priority gender issues and strategies for inclusion in Gender and Development plans and budgets.</p>
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Source: Philippine Commission on Women

^a Chapter IV of the Magna Carta of Women include the following Rights and Empowerment: Right to protection from violence including those committed by the state; incremental increase in the recruitment and training of women in fields that provide services for women victims of gender related offices; protection and security in situations of armed conflict and militarization; mandatory human rights and gender sensitivity training for all government personnel involved in the protection and defense of women against gender based violence; establishment of VAW desk in every barangay; right to protection and security in times of disasters, calamities, and other crisis situations especially in all phases of relief, recovery, rehabilitation and construction efforts including protection from sexual exploitation; right to participation and representations including in the civil service, development councils, planning bodies, international bodies, political parties, private sector, and other policy and decision-making bodies; right to equal treatment before the law; right to equal access and elimination of discrimination in education, scholarships and training; right to equal participation in sports, non-discriminatory and non-derogatory portrayal of women in media and film; right to non-discrimination in employment in the field of military, police and other similar services; right to health –comprehensive health services and education on all aspects of women's health; right to special leave benefits; right in all matters relating to marriage, family relations; Rights of Marginalized Women-right to food security and productive resources; right to localized, accessible, secure and affordable housing; right to decent work; right to livelihood, credit, capital and technology; right to representation and participation in policy-making and decision-making bodies; right to access to information regarding policies on women, including programmes, projects and funding outlays that affect them; right to social protection; recognition and preservation of cultural identity and integrity; and peace and development.



ANNEX 2

LIST OF ONLINE SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE WEBSITES OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AS OF FEBRUARY 2015

Category	Online Service/National Government Agency
Health	<p>PhilHealth Insurance (http://www.philhealth.gov.ph/services/)</p> <p>The Department of Health Intranet: http://home.doh.gov.ph/intra/index.php</p> <p>The Unified Health Management Information System (UHMIS) (http://uhmis.doh.gov.ph/) for data collection, processing, reporting and use of information as necessary to improve efficiency and effectiveness in providing health services.</p>
Agriculture	<p>Philippine Food Security Information System (http://philfsis.psa.gov.ph/index.php/id/1) provides statistical indicators on monthly rainfall, food production index, food available per capita, consumer price index, dietary nutrients and tropical cyclone frequency.</p> <p>Bureau of Agricultural Statistics archiving system (BEANS) (www.bas.gov.ph/)</p> <p>Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Certification and Accreditation online services (www.bfar.da.gov.ph/)</p> <p>E-Learning for Agriculture and Fisheries (www.tca.edu.ph/; ca.uplb.edu.ph/; e-extension.gov.ph/elearning/)</p>
Documents	<p>The Online Application for Basic Certificates (birth, marriage, and death certificates) of the National Statistics Office (NSO) (https://www.ecensus.com.ph/Secure/OnlineApplication.aspx)</p> <p>The system enables citizens to apply for copies of certificates, payment processing and delivery of these certificates, which are basic requirements for any job, travel, educational, banking, and housing application purposes. The NSO incorporates sex disaggregation of the population in its statistical information as part of its gender mainstreaming strategy.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) passport application: http://passport.com.ph/set-appointment</p>
Employment	<p>PhilJobnet (http://www.phil-jobnet.dole.gov.ph/Default.aspx) is a free job search, matching, and referral system service for Filipino job seekers provided by the DOLE. The system expedites the recruitment process of job seekers, employers and recruitment agencies to reduce cost, time, and effort. The system reports to have accumulated 630,000 jobs posting from employers and 164,515 registered users of the system for the first year of their new and enhanced operation.</p>
Overseas Employment	<p>The balik-manggagawa online processing system (https://www.bmonline.ph/) by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) allows individuals to apply and obtain their overseas employment certificate online</p> <p>Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) (http://www.owwa.gov.ph/) information and downloadable forms; 24/7 Hotlines Landline and Mobile numbers</p> <p>Links directing one to OFW services are available in (www.gov.ph) These services are OFW services and procedures, POEA e-registration, Registration of land-based applicants, Registration of seafarers, Documentation of land-based names hires, Hiring and placements of government-hired workers, Documentation of Workers-on-leave, Filing/docketing of cases, Legal assistance and License requirements for recruitment agencies</p>

Online Training and Scholarship Programmes	TESDA Online Programme (TOP) (http://e-tesda.gov.ph) offers Information Technology Courses with the intention of making technical education more accessible to Filipino citizens through the use of the Internet. This programme was created for students, out-of-school youth, unemployed adults, workers and professionals, and Overseas Filipino Workers who would like to take courses at their own pace. University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) (www.upou.ph) Scholarship portals: Scholarships from CHED, DOST scholarship programmes
Business and Trade	The Department of Trade and Industry encourages women's economic empowerment through livelihood participation and enrollment in micro enterprises. The Business Name Registration System's (BNRS) website, (www.bnrs.dti.gov.ph) offers online registration or early renewal of business name registration and payment of fees for sole proprietors of micro and small businesses. Links on how to put up a business in the Philippines is provided in (www.gov.ph). These services are Registering a business name, Registering a partnership or corporation, Trademark registration, Investing in the Philippines, and Public-Private Partnership programmes
Social Security	The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) (https://www.sss.gov.ph/) offers online services for employer and employee registration, to track status of membership and contributions, and online bank payments to SSS.
Housing	Home Development Mutual Fund: Mandatory Monthly Savings for Employees https://www.pagibigfundservices.com/ccpayment/ On the Philippine Government portal, www.gov.ph , the Housing & Land Use Regulatory Board forms is included under housing.
Citizen Engagement	Open Data Portal Some government agencies and local government units have social media accounts that allow citizens to provide feedback.
Welfare and on-line grievance	The Department of Social Welfare and Development (www.gov.ph) is the welfare agency that provides welfare services especially for displaced individuals. It is responsible for the nationwide Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme, which is locally called "Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)". The programme caters to many marginalized families. One of the programme's goals is women's empowerment through better access to health, education, and livelihood. In the implementation of the programme, the use of ICT is crucial in planning, implementation, and monitoring. The use of ICT is introduced in the education of children, youth and community leaders, while this is also much used for programme monitoring. The Grievance reporting system: 4psreklamo@gmail.com ; Pamilya and text hotline 0918-9122813 and the 4Ps Facebook accounts are one of the ways to get immediate feedback from the clients/beneficiaries of the programme. Likewise the communications exercise is also an opportunity for the clients to file complaints and express their thoughts about the programme. Consequently this measure is also able to improve the system and provide risk mitigation measures for the programme. One of the interesting design features of the CCT programme is the internal and external convergence strategy of the DSWD. The strategy enables the CCT beneficiaries to avail and gain access to all the DSWD programmes that cater to the marginalized sector that they have reached and other government services designed to empower the poor. Adoption for Filipinos is a link put together by the government website www.gov.ph and the DSWD.
Transportation, Travel and Tourism	Land Transportation Franchising Regulatory Board (http://ltfrb.gov.ph/main/getinvolved#sthash.u5OdRmuU.dpbs) allows people to file complaints, provides online verifiable confirmation of the availability of certificates, stickers, etc. Metro Manila Development Authority (http://www.mmda.gov.ph/) provides traffic updates and livestreaming. It is available as a mobile application. Information on the train systems and motor vehicle registration are provided on www.gov.ph along with information on tourism and travel clearance for minors.

Security	<p>PNP mobile and hotlines for reporting a crime: http://pnp.gov.ph/portal/index.php/present-projects/75-news/2101-report-a-crime-to-the-pnp</p> <p>PNP Crime Incident Reporting Systems (e-CIRS)</p> <p>Commission on Filipino Overseas-Text mobile numbers for human trafficking situation</p>
Information on natural disasters	<p>Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards-noah.dost.gov.ph/</p> <p>Typhoons-pagasa.dost.gov.ph/</p> <p>Active Volcanoes-http://www.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/</p>
Individual and Business Taxes	<p>Bureau of Internal Revenue www.bir.gov.ph</p> <p>www.gov.ph provided links on how Community tax certificate (sedula), Tax Identification Number (TIN) and BIR tax forms and e-filing system.</p>
Civil Service	<p>For Government Service Insurance System members, www.gsis.gov.ph.</p> <p>Information on Career Service Examinations, Services related to eligibility and Ombudsman clearance were provided at www.gov.ph</p>

ANNEX 3

STAGES OF E-GOVERNMENT DESCRIPTION AND INDICATORS OF THE NATIONAL COMPUTER CENTRE

Stage	UN-ASPA description	Indicators
	<p>Serve as a public information source</p> <p>Provide static information on the government</p> <p>Find FAQs</p> <p>Provide contact information</p>	<p>Telephone Numbers</p> <p>Postal Address</p> <p>Email Address</p> <p>Services Offered</p> <p>Mandate, Organizational Structure, FAQs, Related RAs</p>
Two:Enhanced Web Presence	<p>Provide access to regularly updated specific information</p> <p>Presence of a central government homepage that may act as a portal to other department sites</p> <p>Enable downloading of useful documents or ordering online</p> <p>Enable search features, e-mail and accessible areas for comments</p>	<p>Updated in the past 1.5 months</p> <p>Forms are available (html, word, sometimes zip, pdf)</p> <p>Search function/Site Map</p> <p>Message Board/Feedback Form</p> <p>Newsletters or Publications/Purchase Information</p>
Three: Interactive Web Presence	<p>Presence of a national government website that frequently acts as a portal</p> <p>Enable users to search specialized databases</p> <p>Enable downloading and submitting forms online</p> <p>Emergence of secure sites and passwords</p>	<p>Downloadable Forms (pdf, zip)</p> <p>Specialized Databases</p> <p>On-Line Forms Submission</p> <p>Interactive Elements (Chatroom/Forum/Discussion Board)</p> <p>User Log-in and Password (internal use or public)</p>
Four: Transactional Web Presence	<p>Enable users to conduct complete and secure transactions online</p> <p>Allow users to customize a portal in order to directly access services based on specific needs and priorities</p> <p>Secure sites</p>	<p>Public Use Log-in and Password (NOT exclusive for internal use)</p> <p>Secure</p> <p>On-Line Payment</p> <p>Confirmation of request (e-mail confirmation / acknowledgment receipt)</p> <p>Display of Security and Privacy Policy</p>
Five: Fully Integrated Web Presence	<p>Provide all services and links through a single portal</p> <p>No defined demarcation between various agencies and departments</p> <p>All transactional services offered by government will be available online</p>	<p>Provide all services and links through a single portal</p> <p>No defined demarcation between various agencies and departments</p> <p>All transactional services offered by government will be available online</p>

ANNEX 4 BILLS IN THE 16TH CONGRESS PERTAINING TO E-GOVERNMENT

Topic	Filed bills
Magna Carta on Internet Freedom	Senate Bill 53 (Sen. Santiago) Senate Bill 1091 (Sen. Aquino) House Bill 1100 (Kabataan Party List)
Capacity Building and Digital Literacy	Senate Bill 297 Special Computer Literacy and Information Technology Education Programme Senate Bill 1331 Preparing teachers for Digital Age Learners Act Senate Bill 1382 Adult Education and Information Programmes for Workers and Employees Senate Bill 2124 ICT Education Act of 2014 Senate Bill 1145 Workforce Internet Training Senate Bill 2490 Cybersecurity Education Enhancement Act House Bill 295 An Act Strengthening the Information and Communication Technology Training Programme for Basic Education Teachers Providing Certain Policies and Mechanisms for its Implementation
Formation of a Department of ICT	Senate Bills proposing for the formation of a Department of Information and Communications Technology Senate Bill 358 (Sen Legarda) Senate Bill 818 (Sen Trillanes) Senate Bill 1234 (Sen Ejercito) Senate Bill 2144 (Sen Guingona) Bills in the House of Representative proposing for the formation of a Department of Information and Communications Technology House Bill 937 (Magdalo) House Bill 1516 (Teodoro) House Bill 1815 (Evardone)

E-Services

Senate Bill 497 Transaction Windows and E-Services Act

Senate Bill 801 Local Management Information System Act of 2013 Philippine Statistics Authority (www.psa.gov.ph)

Senate Bill 1510 Frontline Services in Government Agencies

Senate Bill 1660 Convergence Policy Act of the Philippines of 2013 Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (www.pctc.gov.ph)

Department of Education (www.deped.gov.ph)

National Economic Development Authority (www.neda.gov.ph)

Elibrary (www.elib.gov.ph)

Philippine Senate (www.senate.gov.ph)

Philippine House of Representatives (www.congress.gov.ph)

Official Gazette (www.gov.ph)

ANNEX 5 METHODOLOGY

Web search

International Telecommunication Union (<https://www.itu.int>)

Asia and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (www.unapcict.org)

Broadband Commission (www.broadbandcommission.com)

UNPAN (www.unpan.org)

GSMA (www.gsma.com)

Philippine Commission on Women (www.pcw.gov.ph)

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (www.tesda.gov.ph)

Department of Social Welfare and Development (www.dswd.gov.ph)

ICT Office-Department of Science and Technology (www.icto.dost.gov.ph)

Republic of Korea

Abbreviations

G2B	Government to Business
G4C	Government for Citizen
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
KADO	Korean Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion
KISA	National Internet Development Agency
MOIC	Ministry of Information and Communication
MOGE	Ministry of Gender Equality (Former Ministry of Gender Equality & Family)
MOGEF	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family
MOSIP	Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning
MOSPA	Ministry of Security and Public Administration
NIA	National Information Society Agency
RoK	Republic of Korea
SNS	Social Network Services
UN	United Nations

1 Historical trajectory of e-government in the Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea's e-government system has demonstrated rapid progress in the past 20 years. The country has ranked first in the UN E-Government Survey as well as E-participation Index between 2010 and 2014.¹ The Republic of Korea's movement toward e-government started in late 1980s with a revolutionary development of information technologies.² The historical evolution of the e-government system can be categorized into three stages based on the Internet penetration rate: preparation stage (1987~1995), diffusion stage (1996~2002) and maturation stage (2003~now).³

1.1 PREPARATION STAGE (1987~1995)

In this period, the basic database for public management was digitalized and back offices of government agencies were aligned for effective public administration. The Republic of Korea's government's movement toward e-government was initiated with the establishment of the Committee on 'Promoting Administration Computerization' under the Ministry of Government Administration in 1975. The committee established the first (1978~1982) and the second (1983~1986) Basic Plans on Administration Computerization to set out priorities for each ministry's administration computerization. Subsequently, an administrative computing

¹ MOSPA & NIA (2014a), Electronic Government White Paper: 2008-2012, National Informatization Society Agency, pp 13-14.

² MOSPA & NIA (2014a), op.cit., pp 6.

³ MOSPA & NIA (2014a), op.cit.

network was built as part of a national basic information system in late 1980s. The first (1987~1991) and the second (1992~1996) Basic Plans on Constructing an Administrative Computer Network were also established by the Committee on Promoting Administration Computerization.⁴

The administrative computing network facilitated automation of the administration; construction of an integrated database on administrative information scattered across all ministries and government agencies; and network-building among government agencies, providing the basis for online public services in the 1990's, as the Internet started to be widely used by citizens. Six focus areas for the administrative computing network included resident registration, property registration, automobile registration, employment, customs and economic statistics, all of which are closely related to the everyday lives of citizens.⁵

1.2 DIFFUSION STAGE (1996~2002)

In 1996, one year after the Framework Act on Informatization Promotion (1995) was legislated, the first Basic Plan for Promoting Informatization was established as a national ICT master plan, which prompted line ministries' informatization. The second Basic Plan for Promoting Informatization was established in 1999 and was later developed into the Cyber Korea 21 Initiative in the same year. The initiative aimed to lay the groundwork for a knowledge-based nation through informatization to improve national competitiveness and people's lives. Towards this aim, it set out a number of goals, which included to increase investments

in knowledge-based industries to match OECD member country levels; join the top-ten knowledge-based and informatized nations in the world by 2002; expand Internet infrastructure; improve services for citizens and business; and undertake e-literacy training for citizens.

The initiative recognized e-government as a means for improving national productivity and competitiveness. An online patent registration system, online customs information system and one-stop system for management of international freight were introduced. Also, a super-high speed information and communications network was built in this period to provide high speed broadband services in 1,400 towns all over the Republic of Korea.⁶

As for e-government, the government digitalized its administrative procedures by promoting the use of electronic document approval systems, improving information systems of government agencies, expanding online services, and building an integrated administrative information system for enhanced convenience and efficiency in using government administration services. Also, government ministries and government agencies started to create home pages. Under the Official Information Disclosure Act legislated in 1997, they are obliged to release information on civil affairs and laws/regulations, public announcements and policy reports to the public via their webpages. Subsequently, the government set out the 'e-Korea Vision 2006 Plan (2002~2006)', which aims to improve productivity of all the citizens, industries and the government, and to introduce innovation in administrative services and improve efficiency and transparency of the government. Faced by challenges in inter-ministry coordination and harmonization, the government established a presidential special committee on e-government

⁴ MOSIP & NIA(2014b), Achievements of 20 Year's National Informatization. http://www.nia.or.kr/BBS/board_view.asp?BoardID=20111281502566361&id=14452&Order=020101&Flag=100&objpage=0, Retrieved September 2015, pp 14-15.

⁵ MOSIP & NIA(2014b),op.cit., pp 15.

⁶ MOSIPA and NIA (2014b), op.cit.

that comprised vice-ministers of related ministries and civilian experts, and legislated the Electronic Government Act in 2001. The special committee set out 11 focus areas to build an integrated online administration system by sharing administrative information across the ministries. Main achievements during this period include building an online one-stop system for administrative services, including in civil affairs, property and automobile registration (G4C) by integrating databases across ministries; introducing online national tax services; setting up an e-procurement system (G2B); building a national financial information system for real-time monitoring; integrating online systems for four social insurance schemes (health insurance, national pension, workers' compensation insurance and employment insurance).⁷

1.3 MATURATION STAGE (2003~NOW)

The Roh Moo-Hyun administration, which came to power in 2003, continued the e-government efforts initiated by the previous administration, and expanded e-government initiatives by digitalizing processes and integrating information systems of government institutions, while improving accessibility of the public information useful to citizens and industry. It announced the administration's vision and principles on e-government and established an e-government road-map. By doing so, it attempted vertical and horizontal integration of government systems among ministries, improving e-participation of citizens and government-wide information sharing. In 2004, the National Government Organization Act was revised to transfer e-government tasks from the Ministry of Information and Communication to the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, in order to separate the e-government efforts from national informatization efforts. The

Roh Moo-Hyun administration sought networked innovation of service delivery, knowledge for efficiency and transparency in public administration, and citizen participation for realizing sovereignty of the people through e-government.⁸ Visible results of this shift include: the establishment of an integrated public administration database to promote ease of delivery of government services to citizens; digitalization of the work process within government, expansion of online G4C services, creation of an online channel/platform where citizens can voice their complaints, and integration of G2C services and the online channel into a governmental web portal.⁹

The next administration of Lee Myung-bak dissolved the Ministry of Information and Communication, transferred tasks on national informatization to the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, and established the Presidential Committee on National Informatization Strategies to integrate efforts for national informatization and e-government. Subsequently, the Framework Act on Informatization Promotion was revised into the Framework Act on National Informatization in 2009, and Electronic Government Act was also revised in 2010 to unify the operational processes for national informatization and e-government efforts.¹⁰ In 2011, the administration established the Smart E-government Plan to advance the government's services by utilizing developed IT technologies and making government services converge for more participation of, and communication with, citizens. With increased service delivery via mobile phones, citizen access to services and information has improved and their online participation in decision making has expanded.¹¹

7 MOSPA and NIA (2014b), op.cit, pp 15-16

8 MOSPA & NIA, 2014a, op.cit, pp 17-18.

9 Kim, Seok-Ju (2007), 'Main Achievements of Roh Moo-hyun Administration's E-government Efforts and Future Tasks', Journal of Korean Association for Regional Information Society 10(4): 111-134.

10 MOSPA & NIA, 2014b, op.cit, pp 37-39.

11 MOSPA & NIA, 2014a, op.cit, pp 17-18

1.4 GOVERNMENT 3.0 AND E-GOVERNMENT

With the advent of smart society,¹² the Korean government launched the Government 3.0 initiative. The initiative is a new paradigm of public administration, where public information is open to, and shared with, the public, and fragmented coordination among various ministries is integrated.

Compared to the government’s past approaches (Government 1.0 and Government 2.0), it is oriented more to the individual citizen, and pursues the value of expanded democracy with proactive release of public information, promotion of active participation of citizens, and more communication and cooperation.¹³ In this paradigm, public services are to be delivered in an interactive way and in a personalized manner using the possibilities opened up by the wireless Internet and smart phones.¹⁴ Table 1 highlights the differences between Government 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0.

TABLE 1
PARADIGM SHIFTS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

	Government 1.0	Government 2.0	Government 3.0
Orientation	Government-oriented	People-oriented	Personalized/ Individual citizen-oriented
Core value	Efficiency	Democracy	Expanded Democracy
Participation	Government-initiated mobilization	Limited disclosure and limited participation	Preemptive release of public information, active participation by citizens, openness, sharing information, communication/ interaction and cooperation
Public services	One way	Interactive	Interactive and customized
Means/channel	In person	Internet	Wireless Internet and smart mobile phones

The Government 3.0 initiative set out three strategies: pursuing values of openness, sharing, communication and collaboration; transparency and competence; and citizen-oriented services. It aims to provide public services customized for each citizen and create new employment and new growth industries.¹⁵ The government legislated the Act on Promotion of the Provision and Use of Public Data in 2013, pursuing values of openness and citizens’

¹² Smart Society is defined as a society where advanced ICTs transform the way of working and lifestyles, society and culture (NIA, 2011, cited in Park, Sung-Jung(2013), Future Directions and Issues in Women and Family Policies Services in line with Government 3.0., Korean Women’s Development Institute, pp 9). A smart society is characterized by creation and sharing of new data, new services and opportunities with the use of new data, social interconnectedness, and citizens’ intelligent use of ICTs (NIA, 2010 cited in cited in Park, Sung-Jung(2013),op.cit.).

¹³ MOSPA (2014a), op.cit, pp 4-6.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ MOSPA (2014), 2013 Government 3.0 White Paper. Ministry of Security and Public Affairs.

right to know.¹⁶ Also, it opened portal websites for release of public data (data.go.kr) and public information (http://open.go.kr) so that citizens can get online access to public information.¹⁷ See Table 2 for key features of Government 3.0.

TABLE 2
VISION, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND VALUES
OF GOVERNMENT 3.0

Vision	Happiness of all the citizens
Objectives	Service delivery customized for each citizen Creation of new employment and new growth industry
Strategies	Transparency Competence Citizen-oriented service
Values	Openness Sharing Communication Collaboration

Kim (2013)¹⁸ summarizes the paradigm shifts from Government 1.0 to Government 3.0 initiatives: “Citizens used to be recognized as mere subjects of authoritative governmental control under the Government 1.0 paradigm, but the Government 2.0 paradigm moved towards recognizing them as customers of public services. The Government 3.0 paradigm goes one step further: it recognizes

citizens as collaborators and seeks to provide public services tailored to each citizen’s needs” (Kim, 2013: 7-8). This paradigm could contribute to enhanced citizen accessibility to public information and promote citizen participation in improving the delivery of public services.¹⁹ Annex I summarizes the key stages in the evolution of the e-government ecosystem in the Republic of Korea.

¹⁶ The Republic of Korea’s government’s movement toward openness and citizen’s right to know had already been initiated in 1990s with the legislation of the Official Information Disclosure Act. Also see Park, Sung-Jung(2013), op.cit.

¹⁷ Park, Sung-Jung(2013), op.cit.

¹⁸ Kim, Sang-wook (2013),The Government 3.0 and a Paradigm Shift in the Information Services. Paper presented at 85th Women’s Policy Forum: The Government 3.0 and Tasks for Policies on Women and Family. Seoul: Korean Women’s Development Institute, pp 7-8.

¹⁹ Park, Sung-Jung, Seon-Mee Shin, Mi-Hye Chang, Seung-Ah Hong, Dongsik Kim & Soyoung Kwon (2014), A Study on the Consumer-Customized Service Strategy for Women and Family Policies Under Government 3.0, Seoul: Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, pp 12.

2 A gender analysis of e-government

2.1 BRIDGING THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE: A STARTING POINT

The bulk of literature on ICTs and gender highlights that ICTs are a double-edged sword: while they contain great potential for women's empowerment, they can also exacerbate existing inequalities. Recognizing the problem of the gender digital divide, the government started its effort to address the gender digital divide from the late 1990s. The Kim Dae-jung administration (1998~2003) referred to by the sobriquet 'government of the people' was an advocate of women's social participation and strategies for gender mainstreaming, and therefore, it actively supported informatization as an issue of women's human rights.²⁰

Before the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001 as a national women's machinery, the Ministry of Information and Communication (MOIC) mainly led informatization programmes for women, based on the Framework Act on Informatization Promotion and the Act on Eliminating the Digital Divide.²¹ The programmes tended to be short-term programmes ranging from one or two day trainings to one to two month programmes.²² Also, the content of the programmes was limited to providing subsidies for ICT training programmes for women and Internet training classes targeting two million house wives in cooperation with Korean Association of

Computer Academy. Local government programmes were initiated as a part of Local Informatization Initiatives supported by the central government, and their activities were limited to providing information related to women's employment, and recruitment and lifestyles; and free computer training courses for women.²³

Through a cabinet meeting in June 2000, the government established a Plan on Informatization of Ten Million Citizens that further expanded the programme in scale, with ten government ministries, including the MOIC, taking part in it.²⁴ Around 13.8 million beneficiaries, including housewives, farmers and fishermen and local community members were provided with e-literacy trainings, and 434 thousand housewives were trained from 2000 to June 2002.²⁵ As a result, the number of Internet users increased from 3.1 million in 1998 to 24.38 million (around 56 percent of the total population) by the end of 2001, and the rate of female users increased from 7.7 percent in 1998 to 57.8 percent in 2001.²⁶ However, this initiative had a limitation in that most of the training programmes still remained at very basic levels and were not able to adequately promote professional ICT skills. Table 3 indicates the number of beneficiaries across different target groups, which the Informatization of Ten Million Citizens initiative reached out to.

Recognizing this challenge, the Second Step Training Plan on Informatization of Citizens was announced in 2003, which aimed at training 5 million citizens to become information producers as well as information consumers. It aimed at equipping 3.5 million 'e-Koreans' to freely utilize information technologies at work and in their everyday lives, and providing basic trainings for computer and Internet skills for 1.5 million people in vulnerable groups – such

²⁰ Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), Women's Use and Production of Information in the Age of Media Convergence. Korean Women's Development Institute.

²¹ Jung, 2001 cited in Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit, pp 39-40.

²² Jung, Sook-Kyung(2001), Current Projects on Women's Informatization and Their Problems. Informatization Policy 8(2): 54-72.

²³ Jung, Sook-Kyung(2001), op.cit.

²⁴ KADO(2003), 2003 Bridging Digital Divide White Paper. Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

as the disabled and the aged. Under the plan, various e-literacy programmes were provided for marginalized groups by the Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion. One of the programmes aimed to provide e-Biz trainings to housewives.²⁷

TABLE 3
NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES OF THE
INFORMATIZATION OF TEN MILLION CITIZENS
INITIATIVE BY TARGET GROUP (FROM 2000
TO 2002)

Target Group	No. of beneficiaries	Target group	No. of beneficiaries
The disabled	101 thousand	Employees in Private Sector	1,435 thousand
Farmers	129 thousand	Soldiers	623 thousand
Fishermen	16 thousand	Public servants	510 thousand
The aged	443 thousand	Teachers	1,109 thousand
Housewives	434 thousand	Students	3,373 thousand
Inmates of juvenile reformatory and prisons	120 thousand	State-owned enterprise Staffs	153 thousand
Local community members	5,359 thousand	Total	13,805 thousand

Source: MOIC internal data cited in KADO(2003), Bridging the Digital Divide White Paper. Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion.

2.2 EFFORTS LED BY NATIONAL WOMEN’S MACHINERY

The establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE) in 2001 seems to be a turning point for addressing gender in relation to the informatization and e-government issue. The MOGE has since been renamed the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF). The e-literacy programmes initiated by MOGEF have focused on nurturing female IT professionals since 2002, and have attempted to develop women’s human resources as well as their IT capacities. The training programmes have ranged from basic IT skill courses to advanced IT skills courses including trainings, including on JAVA, web design, IT security, and mobile Java. In addition, there have been some IT training programmes that have aimed at developing specific IT skills tailored to so-called women-friendly jobs such as telemarketing, accounting, fashion-styling, 3D animation, shopping mall merchandising, avatar design, photo shop, etc.²⁸

MOGEF’s IT trainings seem to have been effective in helping women enter into the job market. It has been reported that 52 percent of trained job seekers successfully entered the job market in 2003.²⁹

The MOGEF also established the Basic Plan for Promoting Women’s Informatization (2002~2006) which set out a rather aggressive policy vision on realizing gender equality through women’s informatization, taking one step forward from previous approaches and efforts passively focusing on addressing the gender digital divide.³⁰ Its five focus areas ranged from enhancing women’s access to information and building infrastructure for it; improving women’s information literacy; invigorating informatization in

²⁸ KADO(2004). 2004 Bridging Digital Divide White Paper. Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit.

private sector; evaluating and monitoring women’s informatization; and international cooperation.³¹

Every five years, the MOGEF establishes a Basic Plan on Women’s Policy where national policy directions for women’s empowerment and gender equality are broadly defined. MOGEF’s policy directions on women’s informatization are also in line with the Basic Plan on Women’s Policy. Table 4 below summarizes plans on women’s informatization included in the second, third and fourth Basic Plans on Women’s Policy. The second (2003~2007) and the fourth (2013~2017) Basic Plans on Women’s Policy developed by the MOGEF also included women’s informatization as one of the focus areas for women’s policy for five years.³² The third Basic Plan on Women’s Policy (2008~2012) however did not explicitly set out women’s informatization as a focus area as the Ministry of Information and Communication that had led national informatization efforts was dissolved and jurisdiction on IT-related policies got diffused across various ministries.³³ As a result, IT literacy programmes for marginalized groups were greatly scaled down.³⁴ Also, as the Act on Eliminating Digital Divide was abolished in 2009, the informatization programmes for women tended to diminish, except for those targeted at minority women’s groups such as women farmers and international marriage migrant women.³⁵

TABLE 4
INFORMATIZATION ISSUES IN SECOND TO
FOURTH BASIC PLANS ON WOMEN’S POLICIES

Plan	Strategic perspective on Women’s Informatization
The 2nd Basic Plan (2003~2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting women’s informatization - Establishing Informatization Strategic Plan (ISP) (Ministry of Information & Communication and Ministry of Gender Equality) - IT Trainings for women (Ministry of Information & Communication and Ministry of Gender Equality) - Women-net website for women
The 3rd Basic Plan (2007~2012)	No specific plan on women’s informatization
The 4th Basic Plan (2013~2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving women’s IT capacity - Finding measures to bridge gender digital divide in, for example, Internet use, SNS use (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family) - ICT literacy trainings for vulnerable women groups

Source: Korean Womenlink(2014), Women and Media, In Beijing +20 & Post-2015: Changes of Korean Society in Gender Perspectives (November 11. 2014), Korean Women’s Association United and Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, pp. 406-407

2.3 WOMEN-DIRECTED SERVICES

Along with efforts for women’s informatization, the MOGEF has tried to actively use ICTs to better deliver its services. According to a web measurement analysis on MOGEF’s website, it is well-

³¹ Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit.

³² Korean Womenlink (2014), Women and Media, In Beijing +20 & Post-2015: Changes of Korean Society in Gender Perspectives (November 11. 2014), Korean Women’s Association United and Ministry of Gender Equality & Family.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit.

integrated into the national Government for Citizen (G4C) web portal with services and content provided via the website.³⁶

Also, there is demonstrated evidence of the impact of online channels on improving the effectiveness of MOGEF's service delivery.³⁷ Women-net, a platform for online networking among women, is one of the significant e-government efforts of the MOGEF. Its membership amounts to around 5.6 million as of 2014³⁸. It provides information on policies on women and family, and also directs users to cyber-mentoring and e-learning courses for women's career development. Through this portal, MOGEF as a women-focused agency of the government of the Republic of Korea, attempts to better communicate with its policy clients; effectively deliver information on its policies to them; and empower women through various online training programmes. Compared to the main webpage of the MOGEF, the Women-net web portal is designed in a more user-friendly way by displaying various menu bars categorized into needs for specific target groups (working women and mothers, women taking a break from their career, women immigrants who are part of multicultural families) and women situated at different stages of their life cycle, even though quantity and quality of the information on each topic vary.³⁹

In line with the recent Government 3.0 initiative, the MOGEF has opened a section for public data release with a menu bar on its homepage (<http://www.mogef.go.kr>). The section provides a list of public information to be released without request, a platform for requesting information, information on related laws and regulations, budget, etc. The Ministry of Gender Equality and

Family has also interlocked its web portal Women-Net along with various SNS platforms. More recently it has attempted to actively utilize smart phone applications for service delivery.

Table 5 outlines the various ICT services that the MOGEF currently provides. The MOGEF has been operating a web portal named Women-net since 2002 (one year after its establishment). The portal was set up in order to effectively provide information and various services for women's empowerment. In addition to serving as a one-stop-shop portal about the Ministry's services for women, Women-net also has a cyber-mentoring service, which has contributed to women's empowerment in various ways. Recently, the MOGEF has also attempted to actively explore the mobile opportunity for reaching out to women. Sex Offender Alert Application is one such example. By providing information on sexual criminals, it attempts to protect vulnerable groups (such as women, children) from the threat of sexual crimes.

³⁶ Choi, Dong-Ju & Hanah Zoo (2011), E-government for Women in Korea: Implications to Developing Countries in Asia Pacific, APWIN 12: 78-111.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ MOGEF (2014), Internal data source.

³⁹ Park, Sung-Jung, Seon-Mee Shin, Mi-Hye Chang, Seung-Ah Hong, Dongsik Kim & Soyoun Kwon (2014), op.cit., pp 16-23.

TABLE 5
MOGEF'S SERVICES VIA ICTS (INTERNET AND MOBILE)

Webpages	Description
MOGEF Homepage www.mogef.go.kr	main homepage of the MOGEF
Women-net portal www.women.go.kr	provides one-stop information on women's policies to support various issues according to one's life-cycle and specific needs provides e-learning courses, career coaching, cyber-mentoring for women's empowerment provides government services to find locations of nearby facilities for women such as women's development centres, women's crisis centres, etc. Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/women.go.kr
Child-care webpage idolbom.mogef.go.kr	provides information on child-care support provided by MOGEF
E-museum for the Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery www.hermuseum.go.kr	aims to facilitate accurate history education about the comfort women victims violated by the Imperial Japanese Army delivers historical facts, records and data, victim's oral testimonies, photos, artworks and animation film Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/hermuseum
Webpage on the academy for women in managerial level kwla.kigepe.or.kr/front/main.do	provides information on various trainings and leadership programmes for female managers offers online trainings

Webpage on certification of family friendly enterprises ffm.mogef.go.kr	introduces various supporting programmes for family friendly enterprises provides information on policies and support programmes for work and family balance
Webpage on support for international marriage immigrants and multicultural family www.liveinkorea.kr/intro.asp	provides useful information in various languages for married immigrants and multicultural families
Sex Offender Alert Webpage www.sexoffender.go.kr/index.nsc	discloses information on sexual criminals
Mobile Applications	
Sex Offender Alert Application	discloses information on sexual criminals
Work & Family Tap Tap	provides information on policy supports for women's work and family balance
Danuri	provides useful information in various languages for married immigrants and multicultural families

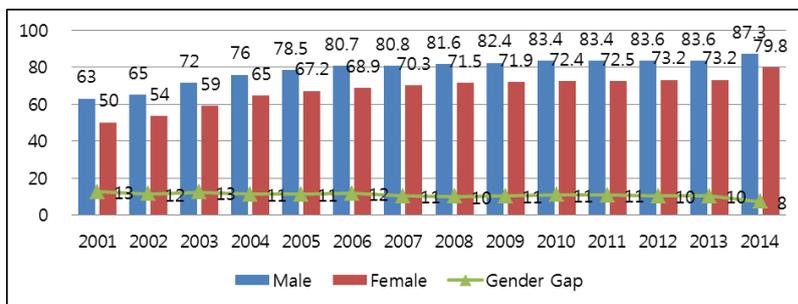
Another good example of women-directed services enabled by ICTs is Safe Return Home Application, led by the Ministry of Security and Public Administration. Utilizing digitalized administrative geographical information, the application helps individuals share details of their geographical location in real time, via texts and SNS services, with family and friend networks. The idea is that such a service can be used as a personal safety measure by individuals, when passing through areas that they consider unsafe.

2.4 WOMEN'S UPTAKE OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Women's Internet access and use

Internet use by both men and women has been increasing for the past years, in Republic of Korea. The gender gap has decreased over the years, and stands at 8%, as of 2014.⁴⁰ See Figure 1 for details.

FIGURE 1
PERCENTAGE OF MALE AND FEMALE INTERNET USERS



Source: KISA Internet Infrastructure statistics, <http://isis.kisa.or.kr>

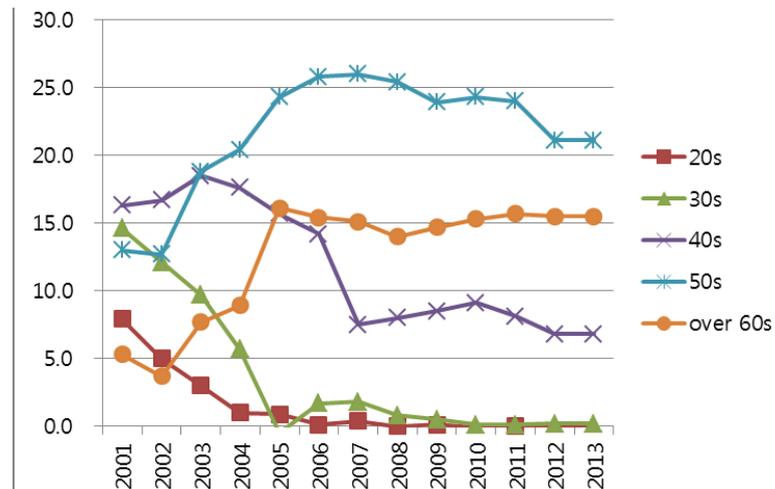
A more detailed examination of the gender gap data for different age groups reveals some differences. As Table 6 and Figure 2 indicates, the gender gap between women and men in their 20's has reversed now, with women Internet users outnumbering men. For users in their 30's, the gender gap has systematically reduced over the years and has now evened out. However, among women and men in their 50's and 60's, the gender gap continues to persist.

TABLE 6
PERCENTAGE OF MALE AND FEMALE INTERNET USERS BY AGE GROUP

Men	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
20s	89	92.3	96	95.8	98.3	98.9	99.5	99.7	99.7	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.8
30s	68.7	75.3	85.4	90.9	90.7	95.4	97.4	99	99	99.3	99.5	99.6	99.6	99.8
40s	43.6	47.5	60.7	71.1	76.4	81.8	82.8	85.9	88.5	91.8	92.4	92.9	92.9	97.8
50s	21.5	24.3	32.2	41.3	47.9	55.8	59.5	61.6	64.2	67.3	69.4	70.6	70.6	89.2
over 60s	6.5	4.5	9.7	15.3	21.3	25.3	26.3	27	28.4	30.5	31.8	33.2	33.2	43.5
Women	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
20s	80.6	87.3	93	94.8	97.4	98.8	99.1	99.7	99.6	99.9	99.9	100	100	100
30s	54.1	63.2	75.7	85.2	91.2	93.7	95.6	98.2	98.5	99.2	99.4	99.4	99.4	99.8
40s	27.3	30.8	42.2	53.5	60.7	67.6	75.3	77.9	80	82.7	84.3	86.1	86.1	97.2
50s	8.5	11.6	13.4	20.9	23.6	30	33.5	36.2	40.3	43	45.4	49.5	49.5	89
over 60s	1.2	0.8	2	6.4	5.2	9.9	11.2	13	13.7	15.2	16.1	17.7	17.7	24.5
Gender Gap	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
20s	7.9	5.0	3.0	1.0	0.9	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2
30s	14.6	12.1	9.7	5.7	-0.5	1.7	1.8	0.8	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.0
40s	16.3	16.7	18.5	17.6	15.7	14.2	7.5	8.0	8.5	9.1	8.1	6.8	6.8	0.6
50s	13.0	12.7	18.8	20.4	24.3	25.8	26.0	25.4	23.9	24.3	24.0	21.1	21.1	6.2
over 60s	5.3	3.7	7.7	8.9	16.1	15.4	15.1	14.0	14.7	15.3	15.7	15.5	15.5	19.0

Source: KISA Internet Infrastructure statistics, <http://isis.kisa.or.kr>

FIGURE 2
GENDER GAP IN INTERNET USE BY AGE GROUP: PERCENTAGE OF MALE USERS MINUS PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE USERS

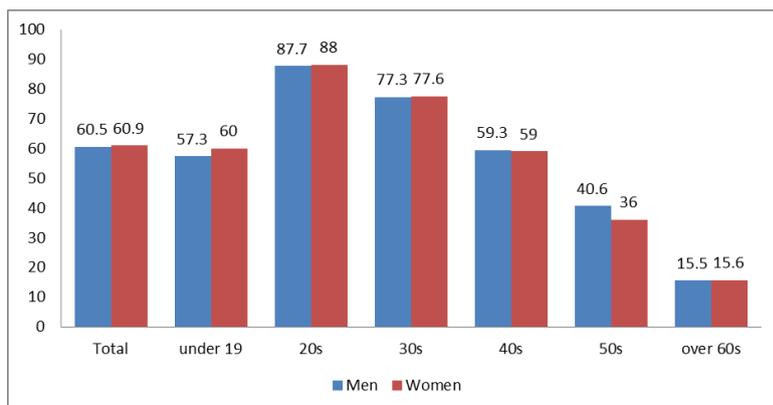


40 KISA Internet Infrastructure statistics, <http://isis.kisa.or.kr>, and Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit.

Source: KISA Internet Infrastructure statistics

As for SNS (Social Network Services) Use, 60.5 percent of men and 60.9 percent of women are using SNS, and there is little gender gap in SNS use. See Figure 3 below.

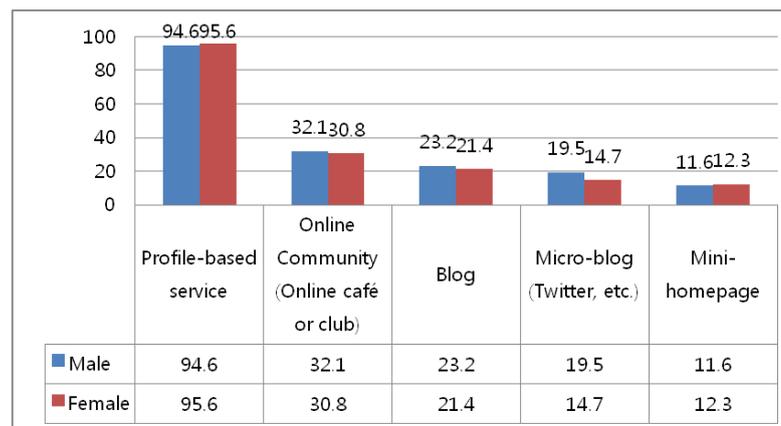
FIGURE 3
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AND MEN INTERNET USERS



Source: KISA&MOSIP(2014). 2014 Internet Use Survey. Korea Internet & Security Agency.

As Figure 4 and Table 7 reveal, the most used SNS are profile-based services for both men and women. There is little gap between men and women's SNS type-preferences, but across all age groups, men are more likely to use micro-blogs than women. Women tend to utilize SNS for various purposes for multiple purposes, when compared to men.⁴¹

FIGURE 4
SNS PREFERENCES OF WOMEN AND MEN USERS (%)



Source: KISA&MOSIP(2014). 2014 Internet Use Survey. Korea Internet & Security Agency.

41 Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit., pp 249-251.

TABLE 7
SNS PREFERENCES OF WOMEN AND MEN BY AGE
(%)

Male	Profile-based service ⁴²	Online Community (Online café or club)	Blog ⁴³	Micro-blog (Twitter, etc.) ⁴⁴	Mini-homepage ⁴⁵
under 19	93.3	24.6	20.3	16	13.8
20s	96.8	36.5	29.9	26.2	15.6
30s	96.7	33.8	24.3	21	12.8
40s	93.1	31.9	21.8	17.5	7.8
50s	91.7	31.1	15.2	12.1	4.7
over 60s	82.9	30.1	11.2	9.9	3.7
Female	Profile-based service	Online Community (Online café or club)	Blog	Micro-blog (Twitter, etc.)	Mini-homepage
under 19	95.1	25.5	19.3	14.9	15.3
20s	96.3	36.8	29	22.9	17.7
30s	95.6	33.7	23.3	15.9	12.8
40s	96.2	28.8	18.4	9.9	7.7
50s	93.6	26.1	10.7	3.2	4.1
over 60s	94.2	12.5	10.4	4.7	2.1

Source: KISA&MOSIP(2014). 2014 Internet Use Survey. Korea Internet & Security Agency.

However, it is pointed out that women's active use of SNS does not necessarily lead to active participation of women in information production or shaping public opinion. The patterns of SNS use among women and men reflect some key differences: while men

are more likely to actively make use of SNS to share opinions, women are more likely to use them as platforms for promoting friendships and familial relationships. ⁴⁶ According to a 2013 survey on the use of, and participation in, social media among women and men, women are less active than men in these spaces. The survey revealed that women's topics of interest focused on child-care and children's education. Also, women participated less than men in online discussions commenting on political issues. ⁴⁷

As for mobile phone use, 96.1 percent of men and 94.5 percent of women use mobile phones as indicated in Figure 5. Also, mobile phone access is higher than Internet access and SNS use, among both men and women. Also, across age groups, the gender gap in mobile access is negligible.

⁴² Social Network Services based on user profile such as Facebook

⁴³ Personal journal for an individual that is publicly accessible via web

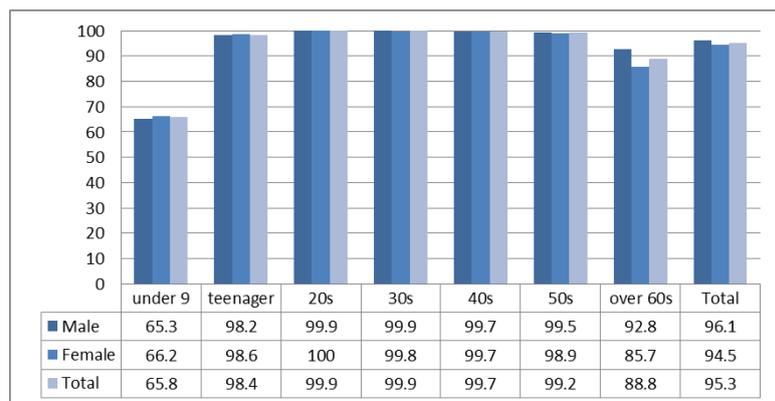
⁴⁴ A type of blog with comparatively short texts enabling constant comment exchange and updates

⁴⁵ A scaled-down personal webpage for individuals

⁴⁶ Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit., pp 31.

⁴⁷ Lee, Soo-Yeon et al.(2013), op.cit., pp 251-254.

FIGURE 5
RATE OF MOBILE PHONE USE AMONG WOMEN AND MEN, DISAGGREGATED BY AGE (%)



Source: KISA&MOSIP(2014). 2014 Internet Use Survey. Korea Internet & Security Agency.

A survey on 4,000 smart phone users also reveals that there is no major gender gap in smart phone use.⁴⁸ Smart phone access is high among both men (95.4%) and women (94.7%).

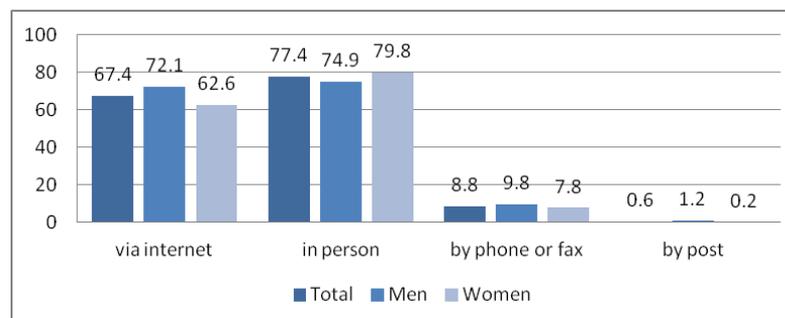
To summarize, the RoK government’s programmes for women’s informatization, since the 1990’s, have certainly had a positive impact on women’s access to and use of the Internet. However, improvement in Internet access varies by age. There is little or no gender gap in Internet use among the younger generation. The gender gap persists among the aged whose ICT accessibility is comparatively low. On the other hand, the recent advent of mobile phones opens up new prospects with respect to providing gender-equal and generation-equal access.

48 NIA(2011). Government 3.0. National Information Society Agency, pp 21.

Women’s uptake of online government services

According to the 2013 ‘User Take-up Survey of E-government Service’,⁴⁹ 67.4 per cent of respondents use public services via the Internet, making it the second most common method for accessing public services surpassed only by face to face interactions (77.4%). See Figure 6 for details.

FIGURE 6
MAIN METHODS USED TO ACCESS PUBLIC SERVICES (%)

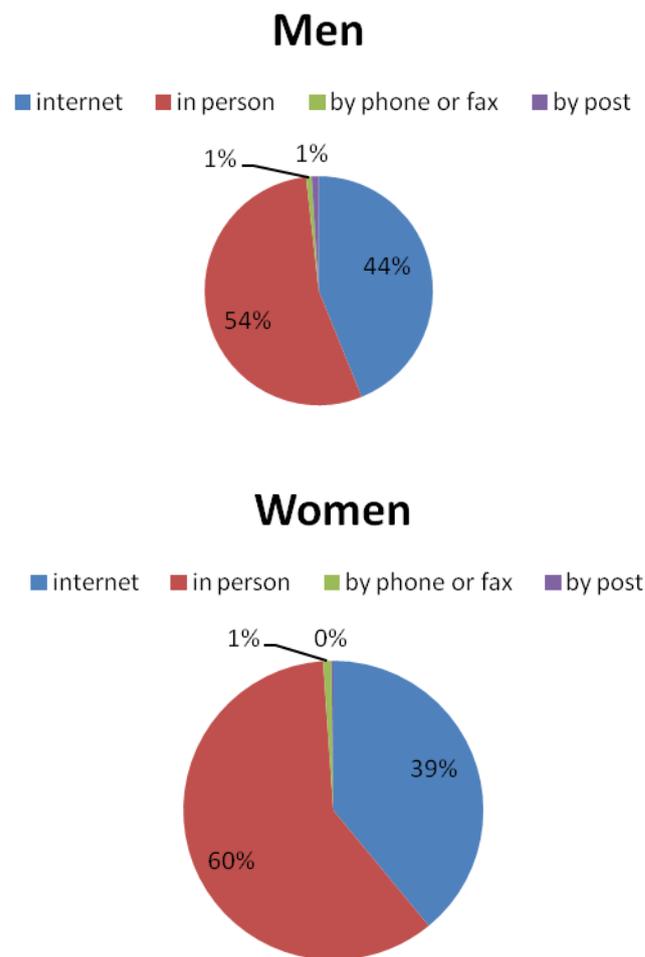


Source: MOSPA&NIA (2013). 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

Women’s preference for using online services tends to be lower than men, and also more women prefer going in person when compared to men. However, the difference is marginal. See Figure 7 for details.

49 MOSPA&NIA (2013). 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

FIGURE 7
PREFERRED METHODS TO ACCESS PUBLIC SERVICES



Source: MOSPA&NIA (2013). 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

Looking at the rates of public service use via Internet among men and women across age groups, it is clear that the gender gap among younger generations, that is, under 30s, is relatively low. Especially for those in their 20’s, there is little gap between men and women’s uses of public services via the Internet. However, as age increases, the gender gap also goes up, as indicated in Table 8.

TABLE 8
RATES OF PUBLIC SERVICE USE BY MEN AND WOMEN VIA INTERNET BY AGE

Age	Total	Men (A)	Women (B)	Gender Gap (A-B)
16~19	75.5	78	73	5
20s	86.3	86.2	86.4	-0.2
30s	85.7	88.3	83.1	5.2
40s	74.1	81.7	66.9	14.8
50s	44.7	55.3	33.7	21.6
60~74	14.9	23.9	4.3	19.6

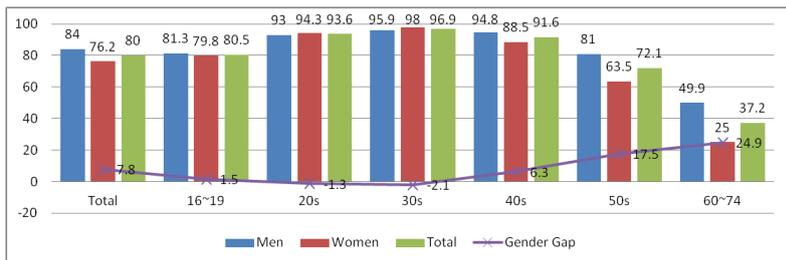
Source: MOSPA&NIA (2013). 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

The survey also revealed that the extent of awareness and patterns of use of e-government services differ among women and men.⁵⁰ 76.2 percent of female respondents are aware of e-government services while 84 percent of male respondents are aware of e-government services Figure 8. Similarly, 62.6 percent of female respondents compared to 72.1 percent of male respondents have used e-government services at least once Figure 9. While examining the data for different age groups, we find that there is

⁵⁰ MOSPA&NIA (2013). 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

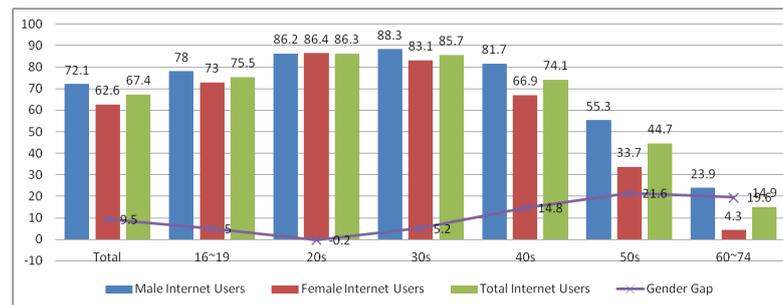
hardly any gender gap in access to e-government services among those in their 20s and 30s. But as age increases, the gender gap in awareness and use of e-government services also goes up.

FIGURE 8
AWARENESS OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES AMONG WOMEN AND MEN SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Source: MOSPA&NIA (2013), 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

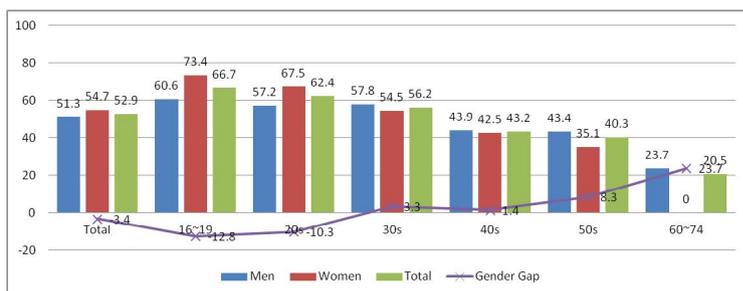
FIGURE 9
UPTAKE OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES AMONG WOMEN AND MEN SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Source: MOSPA&NIA (2013), 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

On the other hand, use of mobile e-government services among women and men tells a different story. The rate of women using mobile e-government services (54.7%) is higher than that of men (51.3%). This tendency is pronounced in people in their 20’s. As age increases, the tendency reverses, but the gender gap is not as much as for non-mobile access to e-government, except in the oldest age group (60 to 74 years). See Figure 10 below for details. There is no in-depth research that can provide a clear explanation on why women tend to prefer mobile e-government services, but it can be inferred to be related to connectivity: women tend to have more connectivity via mobile phones than via the fixed broadband, as shown in the previous section on connectivity.

FIGURE 10
UPTAKE RATES OF MOBILE E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES AMONG WOMEN AND MEN



Source: MOSPA&NIA (2013), 2013 User Take-up Survey of E-government Service.

3 Conclusions

The discussion thus far has revealed a number of insights about gender-responsive e-government design.

Firstly, it is important to establish basic ICT infrastructure at the initial stage, but it is also important to make targeted efforts to address the digital divide faced by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as women, disabled and older persons. The RoK government undertook a lot of efforts to improve the national IT literacy levels, also targeting women in the early 2000s.

Secondly, women's machinery can play a key role in leading efforts to provide women-directed e-government services and ICT trainings. While national infrastructure has been in place in RoK thanks to national informatization and e-government efforts made by the government, the impetus to use the infrastructure for women's empowerment undoubtedly comes from a dedicated agency that leads such efforts. Conversely, a well-established ICT infrastructure provides a breakthrough for the women's machinery to overcome limitations in their budget and human resources. The RoK's MOGE (currently MOGEF) initially started with limited budget and human resources, but was able to overcome these limitations by actively using ICTs from the early days and opening its portal website.

Thirdly, smart phones and innovative web platforms and SNS can be harnessed effectively to provide a new momentum for e-government. In RoK, Government 3.0 uses these latest ICT developments, for citizen participation in service delivery, openness of public information, and greater personalization of interactions between citizens and the state. Since women tend to use mobile-based e-government services more, the use of mobile phone applications for services becomes an important strategy to reach out to women.

ANNEX I SUMMARY OF THE EVOLUTION OF E-GOVERNMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Stages	Background and Trend	Institution/Laws/Policies	Focus
Preparation Stage (1987-1995)	- Pursuing small government and enhanced efficiency of public administration	- Building national basic information system (1st phase: 1987-1991; 2nd phase: 1992-1996) - Establishment of the Ministry of Information and Communication (1994) - Building the foundations for a super-high-speed information communications architecture (1995-1998)	Back office management - Building DB on National Core Information (1987-1991) (Public administration, finance, education and research, defense and security, welfare, postal service, weather , marine freight transportation and copyright)
Diffusion Stage (1996-2002)	- Responding to globalization and opening of the market - Pursuing transparency in public administration and prevention of corruption	- Basic Plan for Promoting Informatization (1996) - 11 priority areas for E-government (2001) - Presidential Special Committee on E-government for effective implementation of projects in 11 priority areas (2001) - Electronic Government Act (2001)	Front office management E-government Projects in the first phase (2001-2003) - Front office: G4C, national tax, E14 alignment of social insurances, procurement - Back office: national finance, HR, educational administration, provincial administration - Infrastructure: electronic distribution of documents, electronic signature, integrated pan- government information centre.
Maturation Stage (2003-now)	- Regarding e-government as an independent policy area - Pursuing smart and mobile government - Pursuing openness, sharing information, communication and collaboration	- Road-map for e-government - 31 priority areas for e-government - Dissolution of the Ministry of Information and Communication; handing over its functions to the Ministry of Public Administration and Security - Merging related laws - Government 3.0 Initiative	E-government projects in the second phase (2003-2007) - 9 front office projects - 13 back office projects - 9 infrastructure projects

Sources: Song, Hui Jun(2008). Historical Review of Korea's Informatization Policies and Future Tasks and MOSPA & NIA, 2014, Electronic Government White Paper: 2008-2012, National Informatization Society Agency, pp 13-14.

ANNEX 2 LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Interviewees	Date	Location
Two officials in National Information Society Agency (NIA)	March 6, 2015	The interviewee's office at NI