

Gender Workshop at the Science Council of Asia

“Women, Small/Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) ICT”

The Session took place on May the 29th, 9:00-12:15

8 speakers made 6 presentations ; Ms.Sjamsiah Achmad (LIPI), Ms.Conception (Chat Garcia Ramilo (APC), Ms.Wati Hermawati and Ms.Achie S. Luhlima (LIPI), Ms. Kumiko Obino (SCJ Interact Japan), Ms.Zhang Jian (China Women’s U), Prof.Yang Luhui and Dr.Shi Penglian (Shandong U)

3 commentators: Prof. Carolyn I. Sobritchea (U of Philippines), Prof. Nancy Lewis (The East West Center), and Prof Yasuko Muramatsu (Tokyo Women’s Christian U).

Chair: Prof. Takako Sodei (Ochanomizu University), Ms. Sjamsiah Achmad (Indoensia)

Organizers: Prof. Hiroko Hara (SCJ/Josai International U) and Matori Yamamoto (SCJ/Hosei U); Prof. Matori Yamamoto (SCJ/Hosei U)

Participants: 35 participants from 10 countries

We would like to thank CAST and the Qindao Municipal People’s Government for hosting the 8th SCA meeting and the Science Council of Japan for sponsoring the workshop. The participants in the Gender Workshop expressed sympathy and offered condolences to all the people of China and especially those in Sichuan for the tremendous catastrophe that they have experienced. The participants noted that, as in all natural disasters, women, children and the elderly are most vulnerable. They reflected, however, that experience has shown that women often exhibit the greatest resilience and are at the heart of rebuilding their ravaged communities. The Asia Pacific region experiences by far the greatest exposure to both geological and climatic natural disasters. Advances in science and technology, including and importantly, ICT can not alter geological or climatic risk but these technologies can help to prepare our societies for these risks, contribute to building more sustainable communities and, importantly, assure that remote communities receive timely warnings.

While the importance of ICT to overall development has been widely recognized, its potential to contribute to gender equality and empowerment of women continues to be a challenge. We need a new rights-based approach to SME and ICT employing a gender and livelihood perspective. The session was planned to explore the situation in Asia. Ms. Garcia Ramilo (the Philippines) and Ms. Hermawati and Ms. Luhulima (Indonesia) presented ongoing ICT-based enterprise examples in Asia such as rural women weavers in Bhutan who developed business plans to manage supply in order to create weaving projects for the local and international markets and another successful

example of establishing a virtual shop for marketing flowers through the internet in Indonesia. Ms. Obino (Japan) presented her successful business example of an interpretation/ translation business which uses ICT in connecting workers/employees of various types in multinational locations. Because of ICT, there are no age/race/genders barriers in her company.

Ms. Zhang explored the impact of ICT on Chinese women's lives based on her ongoing research. Chinese women use ICT almost as much as men do, but female users tend to be influenced by their traditional gender stereotypes. Prof. Yang and Dr. Shi presented on the largely successful Chinese women's political and economic participation, although Chinese women still have a way to go to achieve gender equality.

On the other hand, we have to be aware of the negative impacts of ICT on women's lives. Ms. Hermawati and Ms. Luhulima noted the gender gap in ICT in Indonesia. Ms. Garcia Ramilo also reported the new gender gaps that have emerged with ICT in terms of access, knowledge and training in technology, etc.

Prof. Sobritchea commented on the negative aspects of ICT, e.g. its use for human trafficking, prostitution, pornography etc. In such abusive cases, most victims are women and girls. Measures should be taken to eliminate the negative impacts through working with the governments, international community and media.

Conclusion: ICT is an important tool for the empowerment of women and their success in SME. It is also successfully used by civil society and women's groups to help attain their goals. However, women continue to have unequal access to ICT. ICT can also perpetuate gender stereotypes and can have other negative impacts on women's lives. The session resulted in a spirited and engaged discussion and posed important questions with respect to the future role of the Science Council of Asia in answering these questions and promoting women in science and technology in the region. We look forward to the 9th SCA conference in Singapore next year where we will organize a workshop on "Globalization: Opportunities and Challenges for Gender Equality".

Thank you