# Chapter 12

# Understanding ICT:
## The Potential and Challenges for the Empowerment of Rural Women in Bangladesh

**Nazmunnessa Mahtab**
*University of Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Nehal Mahtab**
*Leeds Metropolitan University, UK*

## ABSTRACT

*This chapter focuses on how e-Governance empowers women, specifically poor rural women. ICT for Development emerged as a new area of work in the mid-1990s at a time when the potential of new technologies was starting to be better understood. In poor countries, particularly rural women in Bangladesh, access to ICTs is still a faraway reality for the vast majority of these women as they are further removed from the information age, as they are unaware of the demonstrated benefit from ICTs to address ground-level development challenges. The barriers they face pose greater problems for the poor rural women, who are more likely to be illiterate, not know English, and lack opportunities for training in computer skills. Access to ICT can enable women to gain a stronger voice in their government and at the global level. ICT also offers women flexibility in time and space and can be of particular value to women who face social isolation, especially the women in the rural areas in Bangladesh. To represent the use of ICT, this chapter focuses on the use of "Mobile Phone" by the rural women of Bangladesh and how the use of mobile phones have helped in empowering rural poor women in Bangladesh.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Defining E-Government

E-Government means different things to different people. Some simply define it as digital government information or a way of engaging in digital transformation with customers. (In present day Bangladesh the announcement/declaration of the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, connotes this definition). For others e-Government simply consists of the creation of a web site where information about political and governmental issues are presented. (This is also true for the case of Bangladesh especially among the common citizens.) This is because they have the idea that they can have access to government information through the web site. These very narrow and limited ways of defining and conceptualizing e-Government restrict the range of potentials, challenges and opportunities it can offer. One of the many reasons for the failure of various e-Government initiatives is related to the limited definitions and vague and misunderstanding of the e-Government concept, processes and functions.

E-Government is a multi-dimensional, complicated and complex concept, which requires a broad definition and understanding in order to be able to design and implement a successful strategy. The advent of the Internet, digital connectivity, the explosion and use of e-commerce and e-business models in the private sector are pressuring public sector to rethink hierarchical bureaucratic organizational models. Customers, citizens and businesses are faced everyday with new innovative e-business and e-commerce models implemented by private sector and made possible by ICT tools and applications and so they are demanding the same from government organizations. (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). According to them government requires to empower, rather than serve, to make a paradigm shift from hierarchy to teamwork and participation, to be vision and mission oriented and customer focused. Thus

we find the worldwide Governments are faced with the potential and challenges of transformation and the need to modernize administration practices and management to a system of "change management practices." (Tapscott, 1996). Further Tapscott and Caston(1993) argued that ICT causes a "paradigm shift" introducing the age of network intelligence, reinventing businesses, governments and individuals. The traditional bureaucratic paradigm, characterized by internal productive inefficiency, functional rationality, departmentalization, hierarchical control and rule-based management (Kaufman, 1977) is being replaced by competitive, knowledge based economy requirements, such as: flexibility, network organization, vertical-horizontal integration, innovative entrepreneurship, organization learning, speed up in service delivery, and a customer driven strategy. These new paradigm thrust the shift toward e-Government paradigm emphasizing coordinated network building, external collaboration. and customer services through ICT.

### E-Governance and Empowerment of Women

The examples of how e-Governance empowers women, specifically poor rural women and girls are very rare. However, theoretically it has shown that most research work had focused on the experience of ICT with women empowerment. Huyer and Sikoska suggested that any approach for women empowerment through ICT needs to support women individually and in groups deals with limitations first, and then with ICT issues. A critical issue for women empowerment through e-Governance is the need for local content with local language. In most developing countries E-Governance is still considered as a new paradigm even for men .(World Bank, 2006). In South and South-East Asia e-Governance started to improve the economic condition of women through micro-credit schemes, thus promoting economic empowerment; providing political consciousness

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: [www.igi-global.com/chapter/understanding-ict/110284](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/understanding-ict/110284)

## Related Content

Determinants of Intention to Use Local E-Government Services in Ghana: The Perspective of Local Government Workers

Isaac Kofi Mensahand Jianing Mi (2018). *International Journal of Technology Diffusion (pp. 41-60).*

[www.irma-international.org/article/determinants-of-intention-to-use-local-e-government-services-in-ghana/201085](http://www.irma-international.org/article/determinants-of-intention-to-use-local-e-government-services-in-ghana/201085)

COVID-19 and the Practice of Digital Diplomacy in Ghana

Josephine Aboagyeand Isaac Nunoo (2024). *Examining the Rapid Advance of Digital Technology in Africa (pp. 63-85).*

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/covid-19-and-the-practice-of-digital-diplomacy-in-ghana/339982](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/covid-19-and-the-practice-of-digital-diplomacy-in-ghana/339982)

Use of Web 2.0 Collaboration Technologies in Egyptian Public Universities: An Exploratory Study

Nahed Azab, Hisham M. Abdelsalamand Sara Gamal (2013). *E-Government Implementation and Practice in Developing Countries (pp. 99-127).*

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/use-web-collaboration-technologies-egyptian/76242](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/use-web-collaboration-technologies-egyptian/76242)

Dynamic Competitive of Geographic Clusters (Such as Micro Regional Systems) in the Generation of Innovative Capabilities

Tomas Gabriel Bas (2012). *Comparing High Technology Firms in Developed and Developing Countries: Cluster Growth Initiatives (pp. 1-13).*

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/dynamic-competitive-geographic-clusters-such/65986](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/dynamic-competitive-geographic-clusters-such/65986)

Teaching Green Information Technology Inside and Outside the Classroom: An Undergraduate Case-Study in the South African Context

Sumarie Roodtand Carina de Villiers (2012). *International Journal of Innovation in the Digital Economy (pp. 60-71).*

[www.irma-international.org/article/teaching-green-information-technology-inside/67565](http://www.irma-international.org/article/teaching-green-information-technology-inside/67565)