


Chapter 9

ICT as a Public Participation Tool for Women Empowerment: An Overview From Kudumbashree, Kerala, India

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ABSTRACT

Public participation is considered one of the most popular initiatives in the process of any regional development. The empowerment of women with respect to different laws, legislation, and schemes is considered an important concern of the 21st century in a developing country, like India. While focusing on socio-economic development with women's empowerment, the promotion of ICT in women's participation is still very limited. In public participation towards women empowerment in Kerala, a government initiative project, Kudumbashree, has been adopted for the analysis of this research to tackle spatial divides and socio-economic inequalities in the research area, whereas the stakeholder (women) shows limited information towards participation, which could be a challenge. Therefore, this chapter, emphasizes the contribution of ICT as an effective tool for public participation in women's empowerment in Kerala. It is used to critically analyze and discuss the importance of ICT in women's participation for their empowerment in the process of development of the region.

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INTRODUCTION

In most of the developing countries, public participation is considered as one of the most dominating initiatives in planning and development of the region (A. Kapoor & Singh, 2020). For the sustainable regional development, it is very imperative to promote women's empowerment that defines the socio-economic status of the community. Towards women's empowerment, public participation is regarded as a progressive exercise as it offers the operational opportunities for the diverse interests of stakeholders to be incorporated (Rodriguez, 2022). It is being the most significant process of mobilization of the both human and natural resources to promote life and environment of the region because government exclusively cannot provide all the required and expected needs for the people (working women) (Asatryan, Baskaran, Grigoriadis, & Heinemann, 2017).

Whereas, incorporation of ICT (information communication technology) in such participation initiatives becomes the most significant tool for promoting women empowerment. ICT act as the linker among neighbours in such deprived community (women) for communication and promotion of empowerment opportunities sustainably (Gil, 2020; Silver, Cohen, & Rainwater, 1988). While focusing on women strengthening towards socio-economic development in Indian cities, the promotion of ICT in women's participation is still limited or negligible in most of the deprived communities. Significantly, the empowerment of women with respect to different laws, administrative setups, legislative structures, government interest activities, and other PPP related schemes, are being considered as the most important concerns of 21st century for a developing country like India.

Kudumbashree means 'prosperity of the family' (Chandrashekhar & Shivaprakash, 2010), which can be effectively promoted through ICT to get truthful women participation. It is used to tackle spatial divides and socio-economic inequalities in the demonstration area. Through Kudumbashree, it is proven as most sustainable women empowerment project in Kerala for poverty eradication, however, the citizen (women) still needs to get education and information (Jose, 2015).

'Kudumbashree' a public participation programme initiated by the government of Kerala to eradicate the pro-poor strata from society by aiming to improve living standard of deprived women in urban and rural areas of Kerala (Minimol & Makesh, 2012). It helps to mitigate gender inequality through participation. It defies the symbol and hope of the family and society as supported women empowerment and strengthen deprived women in the state (Inthiyaz & Jayamma, 2017; Jose, 2015). Women's participation projected to bring such deprived women's talent together to form the pioneer organization that helps to boost their employment and economic security (Islam, 2015). This can be achieved through ICT based microenterprises (Islam, 2015). Kudumbashree proved as most acceptable women empowerment

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