

CULTIVATING VIOLENCE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY? EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

THE INTERNET IS NOT CREATING NEW FORMS OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN, BUT IT IS CREATING NEW WAYS AND MEANS FOR CRIMES TO BE PERPETRATED. HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO CREATING NEW WAYS AND MEANS FOR PEOPLE TO ORGANISE, NETWORK, CAMPAIGN AND BRING ABOUT SOCIAL ACTIONS THAT MAY NOT BE IN THE INTERESTS OF GOVERNMENTS AND CORPORATIONS.

– KAREN BANKS (2001)

Jac sm Kee

SUMMARY

In recent years, information communication technologies (ICTs) and violence against women (VAW) have become intricately entwined. This paper examines how 'new ICTs' – digital technologies like the internet, multi-

media and wireless phones – facilitate or enable a culture of VAW in the areas of Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, and Women in Areas Affected by Conflict. The paper looks at common tensions that arise from interrogating these relationships, then closes with strategies that women working to end violence have implemented using ICTs.

* This brief is a condensed version of the issues paper with the same title written by Jac sm Kee (jac@apcwomen.org) for the Association of Progressive Communications, Women's Networking Support Programme (<http://www.apcwomen.org>). The complete version of the issues paper can be accessed at http://www.genderit.org/upload/ad6d215b74e2a8613f0cf5416c9f3865/VAWICT_JKeeAPCWNSP.pdf.

INTRODUCTION

Although ICTs, particularly the internet, are heralded as the catharsis for today's information age, the existence of a 'digital divide' translates into unequal abilities to benefit from ICT advances. Women's organisations may understand the potential and importance of ICTs, but be unable to prioritise the matter because of limited resources. Technical problems, poor infrastructure, high usage costs, budgetary constraints, psychological barriers, inadequate skills and non-connectivity of national and local organisations are all barriers to access for women.

However, the impact of ICTs in shaping spatial, temporal and social relations is undeniable. Technology-mediated communications transmit cultural messages loaded with gendered, 'raced' and other discourses, which affect how we make sense of our place in the world. There is an urgent need to examine the impact of ICTs on gender relations, particularly because of the male-centric discourses of technology and the media, the historical exclusion of women in these fields, and the dominance of the global economic 'North' in shaping technological advances.

In many ways, this movement has already begun, but the speed with which new forms of ICTs develop means that women's movements must constantly handle new issues such as cyber-stalking, pornography on the Internet, SMS harassment and 'teledildonics'. Although unequal power in gender relations remains central to understanding such new permutations of VAW, the enabling role of ICTs must be made visible and challenged.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ICTS AND VAW?

ICTs: Information communication technologies or 'ICTs' is a broad term that encompasses a range of technologies that meet our communication and information needs, including "a complex and heterogeneous set of goods, applications and services used to produce, distribute, process and transform information". This paper focuses on what are sometimes called 'new' ICTs, or digital technologies that include the internet, multimedia and wireless communications technologies, since feminists have already cogently examined women's engagement with more 'traditional' forms of ICTs. There are two ways to look at ICTs' effects or power:

- **Representation:** ICTs have great potency to transmit and disseminate norms through representations of 'culture' and social structures and relations. Media images reinforce notions of 'difference' between men and women by normalising stereotypes of gender roles as reality. This dynamic is by no means straightforward or simple, as cultures are not homogeneous or static. In addition, the increased diversity of content producers on the internet allows an array of representations that affect gender relations in complex ways. The strands of gender, sexual, cultural, and racial discourses communicated through ICTs must be untangled to assess their role in affecting culture and norms.
- **Communication:** The speed, vastness and relative ease of use of 'new' ICTs reduce distance and time between people, which can have a great influence on social relations. ICTs can allow survivors of VAW to seek information and assistance, but can also endanger survivors if utilised without an understanding of their dimensions. Local strategies by organisations can be compromised by ICTs through issues of privacy, misrepresentation and misunderstanding. On the other hand, organisations have utilised the capabilities of ICTs to network across great distances and mobilise instantaneous action on urgent situations

of VAW. By examining how ICTs have been employed, women's movements can shape stronger solidarities with greater discernment of their potential and limitations.

VAW: Violence and discrimination against women are global social issues. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines VAW as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". A range of international conventions flesh out the various forms of violence that women face, increasingly recognising VAW as impairing or nullifying the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Women's movements across the world are surfacing new instances and facets of VAW that were previously under-politicised. New ICTs play an important function in communicating systemic gender based violence happening in remote locations and facilitate the dissemination of information about such violations with unprecedented rapidity. Through these efforts, the terrain of recognised instances of VAW is constantly shifting. Because this paper cannot address every aspect of VAW, its examination of the dynamics between ICTs and VAW is limited to the areas of **Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, and Women in Areas Affected by Conflict**.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ICTS

Much of the violence faced by women happen within the walls of homes, where many women are (often unpaid) full-time carers and domestic workers. Domestic violence is understood as an abuse of power, where typically a male intimate partner attempts to control and dominate the other partner through physical, psychological and/or sexual violence, or threat of such violence, or through control of her finances, mobility and social life.

Connecting Survivors with Help

With the severe controls usually placed upon a DV survivor's mobility and ability to inform anyone about her circumstances, the internet can be a way to circumvent her isolation. This is even more true for survivors who do not have a nearby support network, or those whose family and friends construe the issue as a private matter, or those who feel shame in admitting the violent relationship to others. The internet can provide survivors information about the dynamics of domestic violence, legal protection and available services for assistance. Some organisations also provide email contacts for first instance counselling that can be followed up with telephone and face-to-face counselling. Email communication accommodates distance as well as relative anonymity, which can give survivors a sense of safety and less anxiety about shaming. Such initial contact could validate survivors' experiences and help them feel that they are not alone, which may enable survivors to take action and break the cycle of violence they are in.

Many women's organisations working on domestic violence use the internet to post information. One study found 24,880 websites indexed under 'family violence' and documented a 37% increase in the materials in just six months. The extent to which online materials actually reach survivors, however, is uncertain, and their efficacy depends largely on whether women have the infrastructure and skills to utilise them. Some organisations also provide digital telephones to their advocates so that they are more accessible to

survivors, since safe times for survivors to call may be limited. With wireless telephones, staff can be mobile while remaining within reach.

Abusers' Use of ICTs

There is increasing documentation on how new ICTs are opening up avenues of control for abusers, particularly where the number of women using ICTs is high. Some technologies that can be used to endanger survivors include:

- **Spy Software:** Commercially available software gives abusers access to all keystrokes made on a computer, including emails, web surfing and internet communication.
- **Wireless Technology to Overhear Private Conversations:** Wireless telephones can be configured to pick up sounds within their proximity, so a batterer can place a phone near the survivor and call to overhear conversations and activities. A strategically positioned scanner can pick up communications over cordless or wireless telephones.
- **Instant Messaging Services:** The log feature in 'real time' communication services such as chatrooms or instant messaging can allow an abuser to monitor conversations.
- **Browser History:** Several web browsers record information about sites a user has recently visited, which can give abusers access to survivors' internet activity.
- **Email Tampering:** Abusers can intercept emails, configure email software to place a copy of mail messages in other inboxes, or check incoming emails remotely before they are downloaded into the home computer. Email programs often store sent messages in the 'Sent Items' folder and deleted messages in a 'Deleted Items' folder, requiring survivors take additional steps to erase records of a correspondence.
- **Visual Surveillance:** Web cams and other equipment, which are small,

relatively low in price and can be installed almost anywhere, can be used to monitor survivors' activities.

- **Tracking Survivors:** Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, which is now commercially available for public use, can be installed in a vehicle for less than USD300 and can log the location, time and speed of the vehicle at all times.

Such innovative use of ICTs by abusers raises concerns about the utility of these technologies in situations of domestic violence. As one advocate in ICTs and domestic violence states, "technology is becoming an integral part of battering tactics". The development of ICTs must take into account ways in which they can be exploited, and in turn, advocates against domestic violence must learn the risks, especially security implications for survivors, of ICTs. Further, advocates must understand ethical and legal issues involved in online service deliveries such as email counselling or referrals to further information, including threats to safety, liability to the service provider, confidentiality breaches, lack of privacy and ineffective service delivery. In deciding whether to invest in emerging ICTs, organisations should weigh the benefits, potential harm, and the ability to overcome that harm within each context. Nonetheless, with ICTs emerging at all levels of society, complete disengagement would be hard to sustain. A more proactive stance is to remain aware of changes and to influence ICT development through active participation.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ICTS

Sexual violence is a broad term that ranges from forcible rape to non-physical types of pressure that compel women and girls to have sex against their will. This paper focuses on connections between sexual violence and ICTs in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Pornography on the Internet

Pornography is big business. A commercial research company estimates pornography as a US\$7 billion dollar industry world-wide, with 12% of websites dedicated to pornography. On average, each internet user receives 4.5 emails that contain pornographic content per day, and roughly 100,000 websites offer child pornography. Various forms of new technologies are used to sexually exploit women, such as digital video disks that enable greater interactivity between users and images; newsgroups and chat-rooms; websites that market pornographic materials and sometimes sex workers; file transfer protocol, peer-to-peer networks and file swapping programmes that enable exchange of materials; and live video chats that can facilitate human trafficking for sexual purposes. Digital television and the internet are powerful because of the ease of access, relatively low cost, good technical quality, and the privacy that they provide.

Although pornography opponents draw a causal link between pornography and violence against women, research draws contradictory and inconclusive results. Distinctions made between sexually explicit and degrading or violent representations largely demonstrate that it is actually the violence rather than the sexual explicitness that produces harmful results in attitudes about rape. In many findings, violence is only a small proportion in overall representation, particularly in older forms of ICTs such as print media, film or video. But research that concentrates on this topic in terms of new ICTs has only begun, and violence has been found to feature more strongly in this medium. In addition, the internet culture of anonymity has arguably enabled child pornography to flourish.

However, one can develop a more nuanced view on this topic. For instance, what constitutes pornography is debatable, since erotic sadomasochistic representations can be read as a symbol of patriarchal power or a disruption of that same power. It is also debatable if pornography or erotica on the internet is always negative, since the ease and cost of producing such materials mean that there are more sites catered for female sexual desires, thus becoming a space for codes of desire usually silenced in discourses on sexualities. New ICTs might also lead to stronger assertions of female sexuality, whether through erotica from women's perceptions or chat-rooms where women can express themselves about a 'taboo' subject.

Though some argue that censorship is the answer, it is often a double-edged sword that must be treated carefully. Because corporations own many pornographic sites, advocating for censorship requires taking into account larger power relations. Internet software filters have been demonstrated as ineffective, and sometimes block feminist related content. Furthermore, private companies that may have other agendas develop the filters, and users may not necessarily have total control over what content is filtered. Communication possibilities opened up by the internet could be also compromised through censorship, either through the erosion of privacy or increased policing that also targets communication not related to pornography.

One compelling approach in relation to pornography and sexual violence on the internet is to increase the spaces for counter-hegemonic representations of women and sexualities instead of further narrowing the space. As stated by Zeb Babar, "Feminists should ... demand a space that helps articulate women's pleasure, desire, and fantasies". Sexual violence and ICT advocates must work in tandem to enable such alternative and counter-hegemonic discourses to flourish.

VAW in Video Games

Digital technologies have also led to an increase of video games. In 2002, estimated sales of electronic games worldwide exceed US\$20 billion dollars and online gaming

continues to grow at 50% annually. Most of this revenue is from boys and men, with 25% more boys than girls in ages between two to seven, and 49% more teenage boys than girls using this medium. Concerns have been raised about the impact of violence in games. Protagonists in such games are usually male, while females are often depicted as sexualised objects to be used, possessed or brutally killed.

Does participation in these games, which are increasingly a large part of youth (and some adult) entertainment cultures, contribute to misogynistic attitudes and/or violent treatment towards women? Some studies have found a correlation, but others have been less conclusive. It is true that there are multiple factors at play in determining how players interpret the games. Imagining a direct correlation not only reduces the idea of active agency in the gamers, but can also miss out important alternative analyses of the issue, such as the relationship between male gamers and contexts of hegemonic masculinities that they struggle with daily. Even so, exposure to degrading representations of women in video games might result in attitudes that are more supportive of sexual violence.

Censorship, again, is not the answer. Design, development and production of both games and internet pornography are predominantly controlled by men, which in turn reflect their perspectives and fantasies. More active engagement and participation in the construction of video games, as well as exposure of misogyny in existing games, are necessary to offer counter-discursive understandings of gender relations in these spaces. Advocates also need to examine the barriers to entry into the electronic games industry. Creation of video games that do not solely cater to boys will increase girl gamers, which can have a positive impact on women's exposure to technology and participation in technological fields as adults.

Digital Voyeurism

The development of digital cameras and mobile telephones means that making short films is relatively easy and cheap for those who can afford these devices. The integration of these devices with the internet

and home computer platforms means that digital information can be easily and quickly copied and disseminated. As the technology develops, the cost of purchasing this equipment will fall and become more available to a wider range of consumers.

Although this is good news because more people can benefit from the advances, these technologies can also be used to abuse women, for example by filming them in sexual or humiliating circumstances without their knowledge, then disseminating or selling the clip in public spaces, or using it as leverage for other forms of harassment and intimidation. This means women can still be objectified, sexualised and rendered as passive bodies, but here, everyone who owns a recording device is potentially a producer instead of just a consumer.

In terms of policy or legal responses, the opinions or experiences of victims are rarely solicited. States are concerned with regulating communication that can easily pass over national borders. This has potential to subvert institutional control over channels of information exchange, which is crucial in management of social behaviour, so ICTs become an avenue for debate over rights to freedom of expression, privacy and censorship. At all levels, the women involved and the harm they experienced disappear under the discourse of communication management. In response, advocates must highlight the perspectives of women who have been harmed and the issue of security and privacy – as opposed to censorship and banning. They must push for the right to not have personal information used or disclosed without express and prior consent.

Creation of Hostile Digital Spaces through Sexual Behaviour

Sexual harassment in the workplace restricts women's participation in that arena. While digital communications do not constitute workspaces, they still remain an important method for women to communicate and participate socially and/or politically. However, harassment has extended and evolved from streets and offices into digital or cyber spaces through the ability of ICTs to track, eavesdrop, record and spy on users. Such harassment includes:

- **Online Harassment:** Online harassment can be defined as: “the intentional crossing of [a person’s] emotional or physical safety boundaries [that] usually involves repeated communications via email or some sort of instant messaging program after the harasser has clearly been told to go away”. A US report on online victimisation of young people through sexual harassment or aggression found that 25% of the youths interviewed experienced at least one of the stress symptoms, including staying away from the internet, feeling jumpy or irritable, not being able to stop thinking about it and losing interest in things. Some examples of online harassment include email or chatroom messages with sexual undertones, unwanted sexual solicitations and approaches, or posting an individual’s personal information on public electronic bulletin boards.
- **Cyberstalking:** This is online harassment where internet, email or other forms of communications devices are used to track and harass an individual, sometimes escalating into offline threats. New digital technologies, such as programmes that mask the stalker’s IP address or digital phone SIM cards that sometimes do not require personal information upon purchase, can make it hard to precisely identify the harasser. Many countries do not have anti-stalking laws, and legislative protection is hard to attain when the identity and location of the stalker cannot be pinpointed. There is also the question of who should be responsible for providing protection: the State because it is a form of crime, telecommunications companies and ISPs because it is an abuse of service, or private individuals. The lack of protection means that victims’ use of the internet can be curtailed, since every online presence could be used by the stalker to trace the victim.

In addition to questions of infrastructure, skills, resources, and time, the creation of hostile digital spaces is another obstacle to women’s ability to access and engage with new ICTs. Online harassment has been used to restrict and control women’s organisa-

tions’ usage of the internet. In Latin America, for example, 15% of women’s groups have faced some kind of harassment – from entrapment to targeted viruses – as a deliberate strategy to obstruct their work. Sexual harassment advocates must examine the changing methods of harassment employed through innovative use of these technologies to better understand how intimidation and control are being perpetrated and, in turn, better support survivors or potential victims through education about safety skills online. Legislation must also take into account the distinctive challenges posed by cyberstalking and online harassment, such as the difficulty of identifying the harasser.

ICTS AND WOMEN IN AREAS OF CONFLICT

Communications technology and militarism are deeply intertwined: the internet was launched through a US Defense Department project; mass communications are crucial in propagating war or controlling a population through censorship; wireless communications technologies allow soldiers to implement strategies. Women are also deeply connected to warfare: systematic rape is a weapon of war; women become repositories of national rhetoric during wartime; women are disproportionately affected by conflict. The relationship between gender and the mass media in times of conflict implicates and impacts a vast number of people.

'Propaganda' Tool

The ability to control channels of mass communication is crucial in the propagation of conflict, and women often suffer as a result. The Rwandan genocide was fuelled by broadcasts over print media and radio, and portrayals of Tutsi women as spies and seductresses contributed to widespread rape of Tutsis. Images of women can also be mobilised to construct discourses of nationality and collective identity. In the war against Afghanistan, the US used an image of a veiled Muslim woman to sustain the rhetoric of 'Islamic' barbarism, with the experiences of individual women overshadowed by the 'War on Terror' narrative. Censorship and control can also play a significant role in shaping public knowledge of an event. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, images of suffering and destruction were barred to create the impression of a clinically precise war. Media institutions continue to profit during conflict, sensationalising or censoring the events to control the news cycle even as they appropriate or edit women's experiences.

New ICTs as an Alternative?

In areas of conflict where access to mainstream media is heavily controlled, women have used new ICTs ingeniously to publicise

their perspectives and experiences. Examples include:

- Use of internet (websites, chatrooms, blogs) and email to keep those outside the war zone informed and provide timely information and first hand accounts;
- Use of hidden cameras to document abuses of women; dissemination of the video clips with appeals for action through 'viral marketing strategies';
- Online petitions that enable quick and easy action for those with access to ICTs;
- Communications infrastructures that link communities of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons with similar groups in other host countries;
- Alternative news sites to counter propaganda and show needs of people on the ground;
- Combinations of new and old technologies – internet radio, video streaming and podcasting technology – for activism promoting human rights and peacebuilding;
- Documentary films and corresponding websites to disseminate information and/or assist in efforts to promote community rebuilding and peace.

However, activists should bear in mind a number of limitations of using ICTs. Mainstream media or government agencies can appropriate images to justify war, such as those depicting the violence faced by Afghan women during the Taliban regime. Further, governments have begun to respond to the use of new ICTs with increased surveillance and regulation. The simplicity of interacting on the internet has also in a sense, normalised conflict; flooding screens with a variety of causes that can lead to disengagement by users. The blurring of genres in films or videos, as well as increased comfort with visual editing and special effects, may result in issues being consumed by users as mere entertainment, or raise scepticism about authenticity. As such, activists must follow up efforts grounded in technology with activities, resources and information that allow viewers to gain information and take action beyond cyberspace.

Raising Women's Voices

To resist being used as passive imagery, women in situations of conflict must present their own narratives and participate in peacebuilding processes. Putting technologies in the hands of women instead of their male counterparts will yield a different perspective and a diversity of experiences and priorities. But ICTs can facilitate this only if women can own them in terms of access, development and control of the technologies. At the same time, new ICTs may not necessarily be the most appropriate tool for women in particular situations of conflict to raise their concerns, engage in peacebuilding efforts or document their perspectives. Technologies must be relevant to the context and effective at reaching the intended beneficiaries; lack of access and imbalanced power relations remain major barriers. Media communications not only inform but structure social relations. In areas of conflict, where violence, loss and devastation so profoundly affect women, women must be able to utilise all forms of communications technology so they are not left out of the process of rebuilding their own lives and communities.

SURFACING THE TENSIONS

There are recurring tensions in the relationship between these types of VAW and new forms of ICTs. Although new ICTs can facilitate organisation, communication and networking, they can also reflect, perpetuate or amplify social inequities caused by existing power imbalances.

In the area of **privacy, security, surveillance and communication**, there are conflicts between individuals' rights to communicate, to freedom of expression, to seek, receive and impart information, to association and assembly, and to participate in cultural life, versus their rights to equality and non discrimination, to liberty and security, and to be free from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. How can the right to information and communication be protected when the content that is produced and disseminated is harmful to women? State regulations and restrictions hinder the ability to realise rights through the use of ICTs, but degrading portrayals of women can cause harm and newer forms of technology threaten to compromise women's safety and security. The debates around this topic often emphasise 'public' political rights, such that violence against women, an issue often relegated to the private spheres of society, faces an uphill struggle to be recognised as needing protection. It is crucial that communication and media rights advocates work together with advocates against VAW to enrich their knowledge of the impact of ICTs.

In terms of **power, culture and digital spaces**, unequal power relations in digital spaces today are linked to the question of access and the fact that the internet is structured by the global 'North'. In utilising new ICTs, great care must be taken to ensure that less powerful perspectives are not submerged. The dominance of English in digital spaces hinders the possibilities of communicating with diverse audiences and portraying narratives of reality. Furthermore, women's rights advocates in privileged locations must not dominate global online dialogues relating to local traditions and cultures, because it might exclude those directly affected because they lack access, control, content and language. Advocates should strive to transform not only

the ability to be connected, but also how technology can enable the destabilisation of embedded hierarchies. The challenge is to create solutions and environments that can allow women from all parts of the world to “use technologies under conditions that are defined by them, and therefore potentially empowering to them,” as noted by Radhika Gajjala.

As the digital discourse continues to expand, advocates must **draw contestable lines** in the discourse by both engaging with ICTs and not over-emphasising their utility. Because of power and development imbalances, it is inevitable that not everyone will benefit from or have access to new ICTs. Although pinning down the dynamics of ICTs and VAW is vital, it is important not to invest too much energy and attention to their increasingly complex applications and thus divert resources that could be better spent elsewhere. In questions of strategic use, focus on ICTs can undermine other methods of communication, knowledge construction and dissemination of information such as trainings, focus groups, and role-playing activities. VAW advocates must be informed about, but not necessarily experts in, ICT developments, so they can knowledgeably recommend how these spaces should operate to not perpetuate existing power imbalances.

RECLAIMING AND EXPLOITING THE POWER OF ICTS

The question remains: how can we use new ICTs to capture their potency and transform social relations? These are some of the ways women have begun to engage with and reclaim ICTs:

- **Unearthing Forgotten Names:** Although the participation of women in the development of technologies has largely been obscured or undervalued, contributions by women are now being revealed and commemorated in conferences and publications. Websites have been created to speak directly to the perspectives and needs of women in computing and to document the continuous involvement of women in various aspects of technology.
- **Sharing Information and Creating Collective Knowledge:** VAW organisations and advocates have used new ICTs to quickly and widely disseminate news and information about rights violations, share strategies and organize dialogues across national borders. This is critical to furthering understanding about the various aspects of VAW.
- **Capacity Building and Education:** Advocates can harness resources and information on the internet to develop capacity building materials in their own contexts and locations and can utilise the interactive capacity of new ICTs to develop online training modules. Such innovative use of technologies can be documented on digital platforms to enable others to generate further creative strategies.
- **Media Alternatives:** New ICTs allow organisations and individuals to produce their own news and articles, circulate these resources and offer alternative perspectives on issues and current events, especially for content not identified as ‘newsworthy’ or presented in a slanted fashion in the mainstream media. ICTs also facilitate campaigns and event organising, resulting in an increase in their scope and visibility to a wider audience.

- **Networking and Building Solidarities:** Organisations working on similar issues in distant locations can build coalitions and networks through ICTs. Digital communications enable quick and relatively cost-effective ways to exchange information, coordinate and mobilise, and can create a 'safe' space for individuals to dialogue and organise around issues that might be 'risky' in physical spaces. This type of community can generate support, create a collective identity, and facilitate conversations and strategising.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores the relationship between and impact of new forms of ICTs on violence against women. Whether new forms of ICTs replicate, amplify or destabilise power relations will depend largely on how closely we monitor their development and discourse. This requires we first understand what digital technology means, then interrogate its impact on society in light of the multiple and shifting strands of political discourse. This process has already begun: feminists and women's rights advocates are consciously and deliberately 'taking back the tech' and indelibly changing what technology is and means.



ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS
Internet and ICTs for Social Justice and Development

APC is an international network of civil society organisations founded in 1990 dedicated to empowering and supporting people working for peace, human rights, development and protection of the environment, through the strategic use of information and communication technology (ICTs).

We work to build a world in which all people have easy, equal and affordable access to the creative potential of ICTs to improve their lives and create more democratic and egalitarian societies.

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The ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION'S WOMEN'S NETWORKING SUPPORT PROGRAMME (APC WNSP) is a global network of over 100 women in 38 countries who support women networking for social change and women's empowerment through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The APC WNSP engages in research, evaluation, training, information facilitation, and network support activities in the fields of gender and ICT policy advocacy, capacity-building and skills-sharing in strategic use of ICT, and women's network-building and sustainability.

The Gender and ICT Policy Monitor - GenderIT.org - is a tool for women's movements, ICT advocates and policy makers to ensure that ICT policy meets women's needs and does not infringe on their rights. The APC WNSP also developed the Gender Evaluation Methodology for internet and ICTs (GEM), an online tool to integrate a gender analysis into evaluations of initiatives that use ICTs for social change.

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