The Gender Digital Divide in Rural Pakistan:

How wide is it & how to bridge it?

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Why measuring the gender digital divide?

- Pakistan characterised by wide gender disparities

➔ Wide range of applications of ICTs for gender equality & women's empowerment internationally & nationally

⬅ Attitudes about women's interaction with technology, literacy, language skills, domestic responsibilities etc. may represent obstacles to female access to ICTs

- Lack of gender-disaggregated ICT indicators !

Image: http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-43441-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Measuring the gap

- *Which ICTs?* Telecommunication (PTCL, mobile, WL), broadcasting (radio, TV) & computer equipment (computer, internet)

- *Which locations?* 2 villages each in Batagram (BG), Bolan (BL), Muzzafargarh (MG) & Tharparkar (TP) districts (lowest on human development index); one covered by mobile phone network(s), one not

- *Which approach?* Quantitative survey with 535 adult women & men; focus group discussions (FGDs) with adult women & girls (8 per district, 6-12 participants each)

Study questions

1. Which ICTs are accessible for & used by women & men?

2. For which purposes are these ICTs utilised?

3. Which effects of ICT use do women & men perceive?

Profiles of survey respondents …

▪≈ half of sample 20-40 years of age (females older)

▪88/76% of female/male respondents married

▪≈ half of sample without access to education

▪Urdu proficiency uncommon amongst women, English almost non-existent

… & profiles of respondents' households

- Average household (HH) size 7 members, larger in MG, smaller in BL

- Wages (& salaries), crop & livestock production main cash income sources

- Half of respondents' HHs earn monthly cash income of Rs. 5,000 or less (excl. subsistence production), highest in BG, lowest in BL/MG; greatest inequality in MG

- Half of respondents' HHs not electrified, none in TP; very irregular supply, but generators very rare

Women's status

- Two thirds/ ≈ one third of females/males without access to education, gender gap widening with level of schooling

- Huge gender differences in health status: ¾ of women ill/injured during 6 months prior to survey vs. ¼ of males

- Wide-spread constraints on female mobility

Image: http://islamizationwatch.blogspot.com/2009_04_26_archive.html

Accessing ICTs
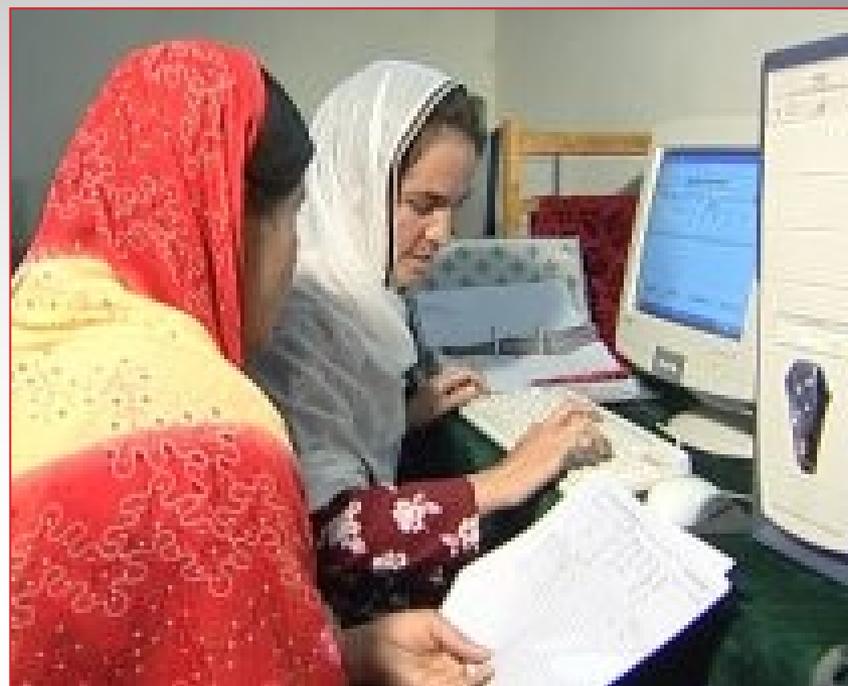
	Fixed	WL	Mobile	Radio	TV	Cable/sat. TV	Computer	Internet
Availability (%)	4.67	7.68	**43.82**	**25.24**	**12.99**	1.89	3.96	1.32
No. (mode)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Female ownership (%)	6.7	0	3.9	2	6.4	0	7.1	0

Image: http://www.i4donline.net/eg/images/news/Rural_women_Hunza_northern_Pakistan.jpg

Using ICTs: telecommunication

▪If available in HH, fixed phone lines most accessible for female telecom users (100% compared to 70% for mobiles)

▪Mostly no permission required for telecom, but wide differences by gender & type of ICT: men rarely need someone else's authorisation, 40% of all female mobile users needs consent (vs. 22% of female fixed line users)

➔ Mobile phone penetration insufficient to improve women's ability to telecommunicate

Image: http://www.usf.org.pk/Rural-Telecom-Programme.aspx

Social norms & telecom use

"S.: Let me explain why people don't like to give mobiles to young girls. In our area, the girls who were using mobiles, they started talking to boys through mobiles. They fixed a time to meet with the boys and run away from home, and in our area, it's very bad if someone will leave the home and parents for a boy and people of our area prefer to kill the girl if she runs away with a boy." (FGD Women 1, Batagram)

"N.: TV is supporting a very negative environment. Some TV channels are promoting vulgarity." (FGD Women 2, Batagram)

Using ICTs: broadcasting

▪Listening to radio available in HH more common amongst men, watching TV more amongst women, both regarding likelihood of use & its duration

▪Mostly, no permission is required for radio/TV use: never for men, sometimes for women (16/6%)

➔ 'Old' ICTs of radio & TV combine advantages of physical availability & comparatively easy access for female users

Using ICTs: computer equipment

▪Widest gender gap in utilisation of computers & internet: 40/20% of females are users vs. 80/100% of males

▪Similar duration of computer use for women & men (median ≈ 7hrs), but comparatively very short duration of internet use by women

▪Permission required for women's computer use in BG

➔ So far, hardly any relevance of computer equipment for women users

Using ICTs outside home

ICT use outside home uncommon for women especially (28% vs. 43% of male respondents)

Telecommunication main type of ICTs utilised outside, far more men use e.g. mobiles elsewhere (27% vs. 14% of female respondents)

➔ Mobility restrictions & other cultural constraints for females to be taken into consideration in ICT4D

Purposes of ICT use
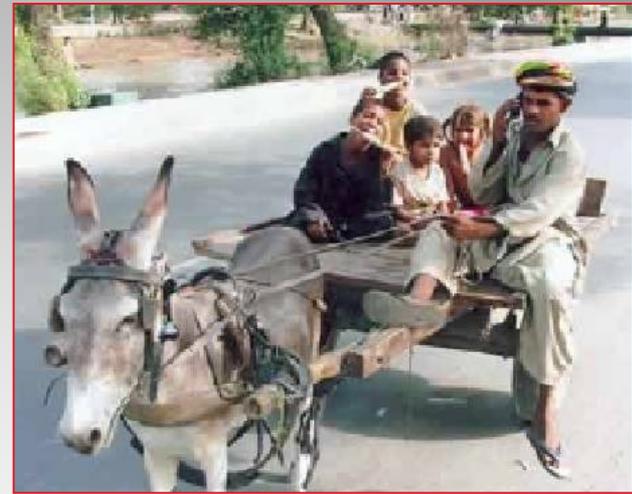
- Main purpose *telecommunication* tools networking with family & friends for both women & men (90%), far lower relevance business/professional use - mainly for male users

- *Broadcasting* equipment utilised chiefly for information access (radio) & entertainment (radio, TV). Use of both tools for leisure more important for women than men

- *Computers* used for educational purposes, internet for leisure

Impact of ICT use reflects purpose

- *Telecommunication*: Whereas men stress access to information & benefits for work, women appreciate easier communication with their family members

- *Broadcasting*: Impact mainly relates to information access & entertainment. Female respondents also mention educational effects, such as learning about child health or cooking, & appreciate radio programmes in local languages

- *Computer*: Improved access to information, but also new business opportunities

Impact of ICT use

"R.: When I miss my parents, I just call them and talk to them, and feel happy." (FGD Girls 1, Batagram)

"P.: […] By watching news I got information how bad the situation in our country has been for the, I think, past two years, but now the situation is getting worse. You can ask where I got all this from, only from the TV." (FGD Women 2, Batagram)

Closing the Gender Gap

➔ Revised IT Policy/interventions to stress role of 'old' ICTs such as radio, TV for development & women's empowerment in particular: accessible & potentially empowering

➔ Implies (public) investment in related infrastructure & (localised) contents

➔ Social norms crucial factors determining women & girls' access to & use of ICTs, to be addressed if universal access to ICTs is policy objective

➔ ICTs not silver bullet for development: Basic development issues, e.g. livelihood insecurity, physical infrastructure, to be addressed first

Image: http://www.internews.org/global/gender/default.shtm

Thanks !

Image: http://www.internews.org/profiles/shikhany.shtm