Women’s empowerment through openness: OER, OEP and the Sustainable Development Goals

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Sustainable Development Goal 5

Target 5b: ‘Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology (ICTs), to promote the empowerment of women’
Women’s empowerment through ICT: the potential

Structure
Institutional Rules, Norms and Practices
- State laws, policies and programmes across domains of information/media/communication/free expression/assembly/civil rights on the Internet/gender equality frameworks and programmes.
- Community gender norms and practices.
- Household gender roles, rules and processes.

ICT Availability and Accessibility

ICT-mediated Capabilities
Informational Power
- Access to information, including on public services/entitlements.
- Memberships in information networks.
- Capacity to produce information.

Communicative Power
- Power to open up official communication channels.
- Power to engage/challenge informal power structures.
- Capacity to critique the status quo.
- Voice or ability to shape/challenge mainstream discourse in the public sphere.
- Use of media for content generation.

Associational Power
- Ability to participate in community issues.
- Ability to participate in formal political groups (political party).
- Membership in community groups and collectives.
- Participation in collective action (filing petitions and holding protests).
- Peer support and solidarity.
- Vibrancy of membership groups and collectives.
- Cross-linkages of groups and collectives.
- Convoking power of collectives to hold public forums.

Agency
Determined by:
- Gender, caste, class, ethnicity.
- Material, financial, natural, geographical, psychological, cultural, social, and educational resources; health and information resources used.

Dimensions of Choice:
- Existence of choice.
- Sense of choice.
- Use of choice.
- Achievement of choice in social, cultural, organisational, economic and political domains.
The reality

WOMEN ARE ABOUT 50% LESS LIKELY THAN MEN TO USE THE INTERNET IN POOR URBAN COMMUNITIES

37% of women we surveyed are Internet users vs. 59% of men.

Access to higher education narrows the gender gap in Internet access

Women who are politically active offline are twice as likely to use the Internet.

Section of infographic: The World Wide Web Foundation CC-BY
### The reality

| Inequalities and Respective Barriers |
|-------------------------------------|
| **Socio-Cultural** (e.g. oppressing gender roles for women in male-dominated societies; religious beliefs and practices, gender-unequal social norms, lack of freedom to make decisions) |
| **Economic** (e.g. lack of economic opportunities, no employment, inability to afford owning ICT equipment, high fees for Internet access) |
| **Demographic** (e.g. lower caste, less education, dominance of English on the Internet, illiteracy, lack of ICT skill) |
| **Psychological** (e.g., beliefs creating an inferiority complex among women and lack of confidence) |
| **Geographic** (e.g. rural vs. urban location, poor transportation infrastructure, long distance to ICT facilities, poor signal strength) |
### Analysis of OERH dataset

**N=7,700**

| N=7635 | Global South 24% | Global North 76% |
|--------|------------------|------------------|
| **Role** |                  |                  |
| 38% informal learners | 45% informal learners |
| 29% formal learners | 28.4% formal learners |
| 32% educators | 23.2% educators |
| **Gender** |                  |                  |
| 62% male | 44% male |
| 36.6% female | 55% female |
| **Age** |                  |                  |
| 28% 25-34 years-old | 22.3% 25-34 years-old |
| **Educational Qualification** |                  |                  |
| 38% postgraduate | 34.5% postgraduate |
| 32% undergraduate | 26% undergraduate |
| **Employment status** |                  |                  |
| 48.3% full-time | 47.2% full-time |
| 13% part-time | 17.7% part-time |
| **English native speakers** |                  |                  |
| 31% | 75% |
| **Internet Access** |                  |                  |
| 56% mobile | 70% mobile |
| 49% home broadband | 89% home broadband |
Research questions

• To what extent are women being empowered in developing countries through OER and OEP?
• What are the barriers to women’s empowerment in developing countries through open educational resources and practices?
• How might those barriers be removed?
## Main reasons for women using OER

|                                    | Global South women | Global North women |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Professional development           | 68%                | 56%                |
| Training others at work            | 22%                | 7%                 |
| Improving non-native language skills| 33%                | 15%                |
| Improving study skills             | 57%                | 48%                |

*Photo: IICD CC-BY*
# Engagement with OER

|                                                 | GLOBAL NORTH |       | GLOBAL SOUTH |       |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                                                 | Count        | %     | Count        | %     |
| I have adapted open educational resources to fit my needs | 668          | 74.1  | 186          | 75.3  |
| I have created open educational resources for study or teaching | 230          | 25.5  | 70           | 28.3  |
| I have created resources myself and published them on a CC license | 78           | 8.6   | 16           | 6.5   |

“I have started feeling that there is no harm in sharing my slides and other study material across the globe…”

Photo: IT for Change CC-BY
Challenges experienced when using OER

- Not being skilled enough to edit resources: 22%
- Getting work colleagues/managers to accept the use of OER: 22%
- Not having connections with OER-using peers: 23%
- Not knowing whether I have permission to use or change a resource: 24%
- Finding resources that are up-to-date: 38%
- Finding resources that are relevant to my local context: 38%
- Finding resources of sufficiently high quality: 43%
- Finding suitable resources in my subject area: 44%
- Overcoming technology problems when downloading resources: 46%
- Knowing where to find resources: 51%

Global South vs. Global North
Impact of OER use on teaching

Impact of OER on teaching: comparing women in the Global North and Global South

- I have broadened my coverage of the curriculum: 69% (Global North), 49% (Global South)
- I use a broader range of teaching and learning methods: 74% (Global North), 59% (Global South)
- I have improved my ICT skills: 65% (Global North), 40% (Global South)
- I make use of a wider range of multimedia: 71% (Global North), 56% (Global South)
- I make more use of culturally diverse resources: 52% (Global North), 32% (Global South)
- I have a more up-to-date knowledge of my subject area: 73% (Global North), 54% (Global South)
- I reflect more on the way that I teach: 66% (Global North), 54% (Global South)
- I more frequently compare my own teaching with others: 40% (Global North), 49% (Global South)
- I collaborate more with colleagues: 43% (Global North), 31% (Global South)
Impact of OER use on teaching - comparison between female and male educators in the Global South

| Impact of OER use on teaching | GLOBAL SOUTH |  |  |
|------------------------------|--------------|---|---|
|                              | FEMALE       | MALE |  |
| I have broadened my coverage of the curriculum | 99 | 69.2 | 124 | 68.5 |
| I use a broader range of teaching and learning methods | 107 | 74.3 | 111 | 63.8 |
| I have improved my skills in information and communication technologies | 90 | 64.7 | 97 | 55.7 |
| I make use of a wider range of multimedia | 96 | 71.1 | 100 | 59.5 |
| I make more use of culturally diverse resources | 65 | 51.6 | 82 | 50.6 |
| I have a more up-to-date knowledge of my subject area | 101 | 73.2 | 108 | 63.2 |
| I reflect more on the way that I teach | 92 | 66.2 | 108 | 65.9 |
| I more frequently compare my own teaching with others | 63 | 48.8 | 87 | 52.4 |
| I now use OER study to develop my teaching | 66 | 56.4 | 71 | 49.3 |
| I collaborate more with colleagues | 54 | 42.9 | 85 | 51.5 |
Implications: Engagement with OER and OEP, and women’s empowerment

- **Financial** power & autonomy through low cost professional development.
- **Informational** power.
- **Associational** power through communities.

Photo: DFID CC-BY-NC-SA
Recommendations
‘In many countries of the world there is gendered access to languages... Whereas men and boys have often had the opportunity to learn the language of power at school, women may only know how to speak their mother tongue’ (Robinson-Pant, 2007).
Release OER in a variety of formats to minimise the cost barrier

- OER don’t have to be digital
- Hard copy
- SD card
- Radio programmes
- Avoid big videos & games
Develop and nurture communities of practice

- Peer-to-peer support & skills development around OER use & open educational practices
- Crowd-sourced translation & localisation
