



Foundation for Media Alternatives

Women's Rights Online

A research and policy advocacy initiative on women's empowerment
through the web

Philippine Report

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Background to the Study
 - a. Context of Internet uptake
 - b. Gender laws and policies
2. Background / Review of policy, legal and social context of women and the web / ICTs
3. Methodology
 - a. Survey methodology
 - Qualitative case studies
4. Data analysis and discussion of findings
 - a. Demographics of the sample
 - b. Landscape of access to and use of information and communications platforms
 - c. State of women's empowerment on and through the web
 - i. Social interaction
 - ii. Women's agency and safety
 - iii. Information-seeking online
 - iv. Online VAW and harassment
 - v. Public and institutional participation
 - vi. Access to associational / collective action spaces
 - vii. Access to economic opportunity
5. Policy Recommendations

Annexes

About FMA, Sida and the World Wide Web Foundation

Executive summary

The situation of women in the Philippines is comparatively positive: according to the Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum the country places first in Asia and ranked ninth in the world in 2014. The protection of women is enshrined in domestic laws, including the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710), passed in 2008. This is a comprehensive women's human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination against women.

Women are active users of mobile phones and the Internet, the uptake of which in the Philippines over the past three decades has been remarkable – more than 100 million Filipinos have access to mobile phones, and Filipino SMS traffic accounts for 10 percent of global traffic, making the Philippines the texting capital of the world. Internet penetration in the country is 41 percent, around 44 million people.¹

This study, designed to understand the gaps in and obstacles to women's use of the Internet in the Philippines, shows that among the urban poor in Manila, women are using the Internet at more or less equal frequency and on equal terms with men. Of the respondents to the survey, 42 percent of women and 48 percent of men had used a computer with the previous six months, and more women (59 percent) than men (47 percent) own or have access to smart phones. More women than men use their mobile phones every day, and more women than men have used the Internet in the last six months. Most female Internet users believe the Internet is a valuable source of emotional support, and see it as a positive resource to help with school work and educational activities.

The primary reason people use the Internet, however, is to connect with family and

¹ See <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>

friends. About a tenth of the Philippines' population is based overseas,² either as permanent residents or as temporary workers in other countries. As such, the Internet is very popular among those with friends or family abroad.³ However, other uses of the Internet such as being a source of information on important matters, a tool for reporting and expressing one's opinions on various relevant issues, as well as in looking for jobs, have yet to be fully grasped and realised by the users.

The country aims to be competitive in the world market and acknowledges that being equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in ICT will contribute to this. One of the areas identified in the Philippine Digital Strategy to become competitive is to push for digital literacy by encouraging citizens' digital media skills. The country acknowledges its small pool of IT skills that needs to be addressed if it wants to be competitive. However, the strategy does not identify how women and girls can be part of this pool of experts.

Nevertheless, digital literacy through education has been a component of education in the Philippines since the late 1990s, at which time the Department of Education established a computerization program that aims to provide public schools "with appropriate technologies that would enhance the teaching-learning process and meet the challenges of the 21st century." This program includes the provision of computer laboratory packages to secondary schools, the provision of e-classroom to elementary schools, the integration of ICT in the school system, and raising the literacy of teachers and students.

This report provides a comprehensive snapshot of a country which, on its face, is a leader in promoting women's access to and use of the Internet. In addition to research and quantitative interviews, this study incorporates the results of a household face-to-face survey conducted in urban poor residential areas in Philippines (with 749 women and 215 men), commissioned by the World Wide Web Foundation and carried out by Ipsos MORI. The survey was part of a series conducted in 10 countries around the world, including Egypt, Colombia, Indonesia, Uganda, Nigeria, Cameroon, Mozambique, Kenya, and India, and when compared against these countries the Philippines appears to be far more effective in facilitating women's access to the Internet and ensuring they are able to use the Internet for a wide range of activities with confidence.

² See <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2013.pdf>

³ For studies related to this, see <http://pcij.org/stories/digital-families/>; also https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/23891/GIS_Philippines_IDS_report.pdf?sequence=1; http://www.researchgate.net/publication/263755230_ICTs_and_Connectedness_in_Families_of_Filipino_Migrant_Workers ; also DNS Digital Life survey of 2012

Yet, as this study highlights, there are some problematic contexts emerging around women's online safety and freedom. Incidences of technology-related harassment of violence against women, while not frequent, are emerging and have been filed in court, but have not yet been successfully prosecuted. Of course, in a society where women continue to experience discrimination and gender inequality, it is not surprising that online they are harassed and experience being abused through misogynistic and hate speeches. This speaks of the need to address the root causes of discrimination and inequality in the Philippines. Some efforts to this end are being undertaken by government, such as the Women's Empowerment Development and Gender Equality Plan of 2013-2016 which addresses the persistent portrayal of women in popular media, including film, television, print and internet sites. Yet the Philippines has a way to go; passing the Freedom of Information Bill, which has been languishing in the Philippines' congress for almost three decades, should be a priority.

1. Background to the study

With a population of more than 92 million people,⁴ the Philippines is the second most populated country in Southeast Asia, the seventh in Asia, and the twelfth in the world. There is almost parity of sex ratio – men at 51 percent and women at 49 percent. Life expectancy at birth is higher for women at 73.1 years compared with 67.6 years for men. The Philippines has a basic literacy rate of 96.1 percent for women and 95.1 percent for men. Women have a 49.7 percent labor participation rate compared to men's 78.3 percent. Poverty incidence of the population is at 25.8 percent.⁵ Rural poverty is higher than the national average.⁶

The Philippines has the fifth-largest urban population in the Asian region.⁷ The average population density of urban areas in the Philippines was at 10,300 people per square kilometer in 2010, the second highest in the region.⁸ The country is home to one of the

⁴ Per 2010 population census, in NSCB Fact Sheet in <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/gender/FS%20on%20WAM%2018mar2013.pdf> . 2014 estimates put the Philippine population at 100.6 million

⁵ See <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/>

⁶ Rural poverty is at 39.4%. In <http://www.usaid.gov/frontiers/2014/publication/section-3-ending-extreme-poverty-in-the-phillippines>

⁷ In http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/01/27/000333037_20150127043815/Rendered/PDF/938770WP0v200P0sion0full0report0web.pdf

⁸ Ibid

region's megacities of 10 million or more inhabitants: the Manila urban area, home to 16.5 million people in 2010.

According to the fifth Philippine progress report on the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), the country may be able to meet half of the eight MDGs in 2015,⁹ namely achieving universal primary education; reducing child mortality; promoting gender equality; and ensuring environmental sustainability. The country has also surpassed the 2015 target of halving the proportion of people with no access to basic sanitation. According to the same report, there were specific aspects of the education and gender equality which the country has "low probability" of solving. These include the ability of schools to keep students from dropping out, and gender equality when it comes to political participation.

Context of internet uptake

The last few years have seen the development of information and communications technology (ICT) in the country. The proliferation of ICTs is transforming various aspects of Filipino lives, including the country's culture, and Filipinos have adapted and embraced its various uses.

The internet was first introduced in the Philippines in 1994 and thus can be considered still in its nascent stages. Infrastructure and policies are still to be fully developed. Human capacity development in ICTs is acknowledged as a need but there is still no integrated national effort. Amidst all these, it is interesting to note that Filipinos have taken well to using the Internet.

Today, more than 100 million Filipinos have access to mobile phones.¹⁰ Ten per cent of global short messaging system (SMS) traffic is from the Philippines, with the average Filipino sending about 600 text messages in a month, according to studies conducted by various agencies.¹¹ The Philippines has been described as the texting capital of the world. Recently, the Philippines has also been tagged as the "selfie" capital of the world, because of the volume of selfies being shared by Filipinos.¹²

Since the introduction of the internet in the Philippines, the number of people using it has exponentially grown.¹³ Data from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) show that internet penetration in the country has reached 41 percent or roughly 44,000,000 people.¹⁴ Although a large portion of the population has not yet accessed the Internet, those

⁹ Philippine MDG report 2014. Available in <http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/MDG-Progress-Report-5-Final.pdf>

¹⁰ 2012 State of Broadband

¹¹ 2009 researches conducted by Reuters, Portio research, NY Times, CTIA.org

¹² See Time magazine's "Cities ranked by selfies: Where are the most selfies taken," available in <http://time.com/selfies-cities-world-rankings/>

¹³ In 1994, there were about 4,000 Filipinos who started using the internet. In www.itu.int

¹⁴ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>

who do use the internet in their work, in school, to do research, and to communicate with other people.

The growth in the number of internet users can be attributed in part to key milestones in the telecommunications industry as well as the recent economic growth in the country.¹⁵ Government support for telecommunications has played a big part in driving internet adoption. The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) in 2005 began the allocation of spectrum licenses to operators. There are currently two main mobile operators in the Philippines – Smart Communications and Globe Telecom. Smart which is owned by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) is the largest operator in the country with 61 percent of connections in the third quarter of 2014.¹⁶ Globe has 39 percent of the connections and the other players – Express Telecom, Now Telecom and Wi-Tribe – account for less than one percent of connections between them.¹⁷

But while the number of internet users is growing, connecting to the internet remains a problem. The average connection speed, according to data from the ICT Office is about 2.1 Mbps, with a little over 8 percent of the users enjoying connection speeds faster than 4 Mbps.¹⁸ This speed is said to be among the lowest in the ASEAN region.¹⁹ At the same time, Filipinos also pay much more than their Asian neighbours. As of May 2015, the country's broadband internet average speed was 3.63 Mbps, ranking it 176th of 202 countries.²⁰ The average mobile internet speed is at 4.43 Mbps, ranking the Philippines 92nd of 112 countries.²¹ To get fast connection, one has to pay a corresponding amount, which does not really translate to the average speed as advertised by the Internet providers. For example Globe Tattoo Plan PhP1599 (US\$35.50) has an internet speed of up to 5Mbps; Smart Bro Power Plug-It Plan PhP1245 (US\$27.60) promises speed of up to 12 Mbps; Sky Broadband Plan PhP1299 (US\$28.85) is up to 10 Mbps; and, PLDT Home Fibr Plan PhP1899 (US\$42.20) is up to 8Mbps.²²

When confronted with the very slow speed and high cost, telcos would cite “problems like replacing old copper cables, dealing with redundant international fiber optic connections that can go beyond their control, confronting geographical issues and raising huge capital while being competitive with pricing.”²³

¹⁵ The Philippines experienced economic growth from 2006 to 2012, with GDP growing at 4 percent annually.

¹⁶ GSMA (2014). Country overview: Philippines Growth through innovation, p. 12

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ In Free Wi-Fi Internet access in public places

¹⁹ See <https://www.stateoftheinternet.com/downloads/pdfs/2014-q4-state-of-the-internet-report-infographic-asia.pdf>

²⁰ State of Philippine Internet May 2015, Available in <http://sulit.ph/blog/state-of-philippine-internet-may-2015/>

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ see http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/103026-pldt-globe-provide-poor-philippines-internet-services-netizens?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=referral

In terms of user devices, laptops (45 percent) are the most preferred over desktops and mobile devices for internet access.²⁴ The ICT Office says that a significant portion of the population still do not benefit from the internet access despite the fact that mobile ownership is growing and mobile penetration is at 103% of the population.²⁵ According to Sen. Bam Aquino during a Senate inquiry into slow internet speed in the Philippines, “about 90 percent of internet users in the Philippines are in [sic] mobile, while only 10 percent use fixed line services.”²⁶

Young people are the biggest consumers of ICT in the Philippines. According to a 2013 study, 71 percent of the online population in the Philippines falls into the age group 15-34 years old.²⁷ Data from the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) survey corroborate this study, saying that 6 in 10 young people aged 15-24 years old are regular internet users, and that more than half have social network and email account, and 78 percent have mobile phones.²⁸ On the average, they spend six hours a week online, some logging in as much as 35 hours of internet use.²⁹

Filipinos also rank among the world’s top users of social networking sites. According to the 2013 South East Asia (SEA) Digital Future in Focus, the Philippines has the highest social network access among SEA countries.³⁰ The top social network preferred by the Filipinos is Facebook (FB), with 92 percent of the social network users having an FB account.³¹ This is followed by Twitter, Tumblr, and LinkedIn. The same study also said that males spend more time online, although when it comes to using social networks, the women are more active.

The Philippine government considers the ICT industry to be an important player in the country’s economic growth. Since the late 1980s, ICTs have been part of the government’s economic plans and programs, and starting with the establishment of technological parks and similar economic zones. In 1993, the National Information Technology Plan 2000 was created with a vision of transforming the Philippines into a knowledge society by the year 2000. In 1995, the Public Telecommunications Policy Act (Republic Act 7925) was enacted to create a competitive environment fostering private ownership of telecommunication services. This resulted in the establishment of solid base mobile and land-based telecommunication networks.

²⁴ In Free Wi-Fi internet access in public spaces

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Statement of Sen. Bam Aquino during a Senate probe on slow internet speed in the Philippines held on 18 August, 2015. See http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/103026-pldt-globe-provide-poor-philippines-internet-services-netizens?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=referral

²⁷ comScore Media Users, March 2013.

²⁸ Findings are based on a national survey of about 17,000 young adults for the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality survey conducted by the University of the Philippines Population Institute.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ In comScore.com. See <http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Presentations-and-Whitepapers/2013/2013-Southeast-Asia-Digital-Future-in-Focus>

³¹ Ibid

The Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan for 2001-2004 laid the policy framework for utilizing ICT as a means to leapfrog the economy and make the Philippines the e-hub of the Asia-Pacific region.

In 2004, the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) was established to address the growth of the information technology sector in the country.³² It drafted the first Philippine ICT Roadmap in 2006, which then became the basis of the Philippine Digital strategy for 2011-2016. The ICT roadmap has four pillars: strategic programs and initiatives: universal access, at the heart of which is the Community e-Center (CeC) program that is envisioned to bridge the digital divide; promotion of free open source software (FOSS); development of human capital through ICT for education programme (ICT4E); and, formulation of a national ICT competency and standards.

The Philippines recently created an e-Government Master Plan which is a blueprint for the integration of ICTs for the government.³³ The plan recognizes the interoperability and harmonization among different agencies of the government and acknowledges the important role that ICT plays in facilitating open and transparent government and the delivery of efficient public services. In 2012, the Information and Communications Office (ICT Office) and the Advance Science and Technology Institute of the Department of Science and Technology launched the Integrated Government Philippines (iGovPhil) project, which aims to enhance government efficiency and effectiveness by using and putting relevant mechanisms to implement interactive, inter-connected and interoperable government applications and online services.

Gender Laws and Policies

The Philippines' 1987 Constitution recognizes the role of women in nation-building, values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights.³⁴ In 1980, the government signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and ratified the same in 1981. In 2008, the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710) was passed. This is a comprehensive women's human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination against women. In terms of gender equality, the Philippines ranks high. It placed first in Asia and ranked ninth in the world in 2014, according to the Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum.³⁵

³² The CICT was established by virtue of Executive Order 269 signed by then President Gloria Arroyo in 2004. In 2011, it was renamed the ICT Office and became an attached office of the Department of Science and Technology

³³ See http://i.gov.ph/pegif/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/eGovMasterPlan_Final-Version.pdf

³⁴ Article II, Section 14 of the Philippine Constitution

³⁵ See http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf

Over the last two decades, several laws designed to protect the rights of women and children were passed, but a review of these policies showed that the term “information and communications technology” has not figured yet in many of the laws. Still, in the last decade the Philippines has been proactive in plugging the gaps in existing legislation through amendments or the creation of new laws to keep up with the changing pace of technology.

The Anti-Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) Act of 2004 (RA 9262) provided a comprehensive framework to address violence against women, including mechanisms to increase reporting, documentation and prosecution of such cases. However, this law included no provision on the use of ICT to commit acts of violence against women. Thus, when this was the law was used to argue the case of a celebrity whose “intimate” video with her ex-boyfriend was spread over the Internet, she lost the case.³⁶ However, the said high profile case paved the way for the speedy passage of the Anti-Photo and Video Voyeurism Act (Republic Act No. 9995) in 2009.³⁷ This piece of legislation has since become a very important point for recourse in cases of technology-related violence against women (VAW). The law prohibits acts of taking, copying, reproducing photos and videos, and publishing these through VCD/DVD, the internet, cellular phones and other devices.

In 2009, the Anti-Child Pornography Act (Republic Act 9775)³⁸ was also passed. Under this Act, service providers are also required to notify the Philippine National Police (PNP) when they obtain information regarding child pornography committed using their server or facility.

To address the growing cybercrime incidences in the country, the Cybercrime Prevention Act (Republic Act 10175)³⁹ was passed in 2012. The law aims to, among others, protect women and children from online exploitation. Interestingly, one section of this law is on the criminalisation of cybersex.

As well, in 2013, legislators from both the Senate and House of Representatives filed separate bills to expand the coverage of the VAWC Act (RA 9262) to include digital harassment.

2. Background review of policy, legal, social context of women and the web/ICTs

³⁶ According to the decision of the Regional Trial Court she lost the case because the cause of her emotional stress was the uploading of the video on the internet and it was not proven who uploaded it, thus the case filed against the ex-boyfriend was dismissed.

³⁷ See http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2010/ra_9995_2010.html to view the full text of the law.

³⁸ See http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2009/ra_9775_2009.html for the full text of the law

³⁹ See <http://www.gov.ph/2012/09/12/republic-act-no-10175/> for the full text of the law

The Philippine Constitution of 1987 sets the framework of the state's accountability for harnessing the potential of ICTs for development and nation-building. The Constitution recognises the role of women in nation-building and ensures the fundamental equality before the law of men and women. It likewise recognises the vital role of communication and information in nation-building, and declares that science and technology are essential for national development and progress.⁴⁰ Further, the Constitution says that "the State shall regulate the transfer and promote the adaptation of technology for the national benefit".⁴¹

The Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development of 1995-2025 recognises the impact of ICTs on the development of women, especially with regards to education and employment. However, this has not really been operationalised in policies. The Magna Carta of Women, adopted in 2009, likewise recognises the role of technology in the development of women. It states that women should be provided with "updated, useful information and gender-sensitive technologies for production, processing, and marketing of food products."⁴² It demands that the State should provide "women-friendly and sustainable agriculture technology" and ensure "right to livelihood, credit, capital and technology".⁴³

To operationalise its IT plans for the country, plans were developed to lay the policy framework for utilising ICT for the country's economy. One of the plans in the Medium Term Development Plan of the Philippines (2001-2004) is the expansion of Community e-Centers (CeCs) or telecenters so that regions can have access to basic ICT.⁴⁴ By 2007, there were 755 CeCs throughout the country and by 2011, there were about 1,416.⁴⁵ Most of these CeCs were established through joint efforts of the public and private sectors. Maintenance of these CeCs are now in the hands of local government units or private organisations that took part in the early phase of the project.

What is interesting to note is that in the Philippines, telecenters or CeCs are patronised more by women than men. According to a study, there is a perception in communities that telecenters were a place mostly for women or where the services cater more to women.⁴⁶

Women in rural areas, according to the same study, use CeCs and internet cafes for social

⁴⁰ 1987 Philippine Constitution, Sec. 10, Art. XIV

⁴¹ 1987 Philippine Constitution, Sec. 12, Art. XIV

⁴² Republic Act 9710, Rule V, Sec. 23

⁴³ RA 9710

⁴⁴ Asian Development Bank Institute (2004). Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: Building e-Community Centres for Rural Development: Report of the Regional Workshop, Bali, Indonesia, p. 137

⁴⁵ See <http://icto.dost.gov.ph/philippine-community-ecenter-cec-program/>

⁴⁶ APC (2010). "Why real men don't use telecenters in the Philippines, available in <http://www.apc.org/en/node/10124>

purposes, like chatting with friends and families abroad.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, men generally use the internet “for games and sometimes pornography.” They also tend to see computers as “a technical device that can be used for work, earning money and for entertainment.”⁴⁸ Among men, privacy is an issue in telecenters whereas in internet cafes, activities are not so closely followed by the personnel.

Taking off from where CeCs left, the Department of Science and Technology – ICT Office (DOST-ICTO) set up Technology for Education or Tech4ED Centers that will serve as “knowledge hubs and delivery channels of government services, digital literacy trainings, alternative learning for basic education, skills training for livelihood and employment, job portals and online market place.”⁴⁹ ICTO aims to establish 42,000 Tech4ED centers in the country.

Another current strategy of the government to bring more people into cyberspace is the provision of free wi-fi in public spaces. In 2015, budget was allocated by government for the provision of free wi-fi in public plazas and parks, public primary and secondary central schools, public libraries, rural health units and government hospitals, state universities and colleges, train stations, airports and seaports, city and municipal halls, and national government offices, with priority being given to lower income municipalities.⁵⁰ DOST-ICTO is in charge of this project that envisions the provision of access to the identified areas around the clock, except when requested by competent authority.⁵¹ Access to the services would require registration, the level of which would vary depending on the speed and bandwidth to be accessed.⁵² But while there is initial funding for the first year of the project, sustainability is not ensured.

Of late, there has also been the ubiquitous proliferation of small internet shops or what is locally known as “Piso Net”⁵³ in many barangays (local villages) all over the country. Such internet shops are very popular among those who want to be connected and yet do not have the computers and internet connection. These are patronised mostly by young people for gaming and social media activities.

Despite all these developments in ICT use and application in the country, there remains the lack of statistics on the actual numbers and usage. Available information are mostly

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ See <http://icto.dost.gov.ph/e-society/>

⁵⁰ DOST (2015). Free Wi-fi internet access in public places, p. 12

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² All users are provided with 256 Kbps bandwidth regardless of level of registration, but at varying degrees of assurance of speed.

⁵³ Piso (peso) is the currency in the Philippines, and with one peso, one can surf the Internet for 4-6 minutes.

sourced from foreign organizations that provide estimates. Moreover, whatever data available are often not gender disaggregated. This has been a perennial issue and challenge to the Philippines that has not been addressed.

While there is no actual data on women's use of ICTs, there is growing evidence that women experience violence online. FMA in partnership with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) has conducted a study on different forms of women's violation that women go through online.⁵⁴ These range from cases of cyber harassment, cyber stalking, identity theft, privacy, uploading of images and videos without consent.

One of the more publicized cases involving technology-related VAW in the country involved an actress whose sex video with her ex-boyfriend went viral on the Internet, to the extent that it was even uploaded in a pornography site. The actress filed a case against her ex-boyfriend for the emotional distress she suffered as a result of the uploading of the said video, citing a provision in the Anti-Violence against Women and Children act (RA 9262). She lost her case because the Court said that it was the uploading of the video that caused the emotional distress and it was not established who uploaded the video, pointing to legal and policy gaps that still exist.

Fortunately, the case paved the way for the speedy passage into law of the Anti-Photo and Video Voyeurism act (RA 9995) in Congress.

Aside from RA 9995, the last few years have also seen the enactment of other laws related to ICT. These include, among others, the Anti-Child Pornography Act (RA 9775), the Data Protection Act (RA 10173), and the Cybercrime Prevention Act (RA 10175). These laws were seen to curb and address the emerging incidences of cybercrimes in the country, but at the same time, some of these laws mandate content regulation of the internet. RA 10175, for instance, was passed in 2012 to address crimes committed against and by means of a computer system, amidst broad debates as to its scope and effect on human rights.⁵⁵ A watered-down version has since been declared constitutional by the Supreme Court, which simultaneously struck down several problematic provisions.

One particular provision of RA 10175 problematic for women and gender advocates was retained. This refers to the "*cybersex*" provision. "Cybersex" was defined in the law as "the wilful engagement, maintenance, control or operation, directly or indirectly, of any

⁵⁴ Fascendini, Flavia and Fialova, K. "Voices from digital spaces: Technology related violence against women," APC, December 2011.

⁵⁵ The passage of the law met with opposition from different groups. Fifteen petitions were filed before the Supreme Court to declare the said law as unconstitutional.

lascivious exhibition of sexual organs or sexual activity, with the aid of a computer system, for favour or consideration.”⁵⁶

Women’s rights groups and advocates, in a statement, pointed out that “the law fails to consider the transnational nature of sexual violence in cyberspace where site owners or operators and buyers are beyond the jurisdiction of the Philippines” and as such may pose “more harm to women who are usual victims of sexual violence in cyberspace.”⁵⁷ Further, the statement says that the law “focuses solely on criminalisation, unmindful of its possible effects and without clear understanding of the inherent nature and characteristics of ICTs relating to violence committed against women.”⁵⁸ Rather than recognise a person’s agency to express sexuality online, sexual behaviour would be effectively criminalised. The provision failed to address the underlying causes of VAW and failed to harness ICT’s potential to promote women empowerment. One Supreme Court justice who wrote a dissenting opinion on the constitutionality of RA 10175 wrote that with the inclusion of the cybersex provision “it seems that we, as a society, are being thrown back to the dark ages.”⁵⁹

Violations of online privacy have also markedly increased especially in relation to social media. A recent landmark Supreme Court ruling on Facebook privacy brought this to the fore (See attached issue paper in Annex). This stemmed from the case of female students, who had posted bikini and smoking/drinking photos to their Facebook friends, being banned by their Catholic school from marching in their high school graduation. Basically ruling in favour of the school, the High Court essentially declared that nothing is ever private on Facebook, thus putting the burden of safeguarding one’s privacy online with the users. The doctrine of “reasonable expectation of privacy” on Facebook now seems to be eroded.⁶⁰

Other bills pending in Congress include the creation of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT). The creation of such a body is expected to “spur ICT development, institutionalise e-government, and manage the country’s ICT environment and direction.”⁶¹ At the Senate, the said bill has passed on third Reading and is just awaiting the approval of its counterpart bill at the lower House.

⁵⁶ Section 4(1)(c) of Republic Act No. 10175

⁵⁷ In “Delete, Undo, Retrieve,” Statement on the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 which was signed by several women’s rights groups and advocates

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Dissenting and concurring opinion of SC Justice Mario Victor Leonen on GR Nos. 203335, p. 69

⁶⁰ Supreme Court decision: *Vivares and Suzara vs. St. Theresa’s College*, GR No. 202666. The merits cannot be discussed extensively here. A case study on this is being drafted by FMA as of presstime.

⁶¹ In “Recto: Creating DICT will allow Transpo dept to focus on transpo mess,” Available in http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2015/0322_recto1.asp

There are also pending bills on SIM card registration that are being opposed by many privacy advocates, as well as bills amending some laws on women to reflect how online space is affecting women (e.g., amendment to the anti-sexual harassment law).

While there are such efforts, the country has not yet passed the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill, which aims, among others, to curb corruption in the bureaucracy by opening government transactions to the public and holding government officials accountable for their actions.⁶² The said bill will also “get our citizens to get involved and participate in government matters” by being able to request for records or information that is under the control of government, subject of course, to reasonable exceptions.⁶³ This bill has been languishing in Congress for the last 27 years.

Efforts of the Philippine government to maximize the use of ICT for development and the delivery of services are laudable. However, it is notable that gender-perspectives in the policies and programs are absent. For instance, the Philippine Digital Strategy (PDS) of 2011-2016 is gender-blind. It did not mention how women can be part of and benefit from technology. It seems that women were not even consulted when drafting the plan. In the 2014 Web Index data, the Philippines ranked the lowest among the 11 countries in East Asia and the Pacific, when it comes to government implementation of gender equity of web access.⁶⁴

3. Methodology

Survey methodology

The World Wide Web Foundation commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a household face-to-face survey in urban poor residential areas in 10 countries. The survey was conducted in the capital cities or main economic hubs of each country which included: Cairo, Egypt; Bogota, Colombia; Jakarta, Indonesia; Kampala, Uganda; Lagos, Nigeria; Manila, Philippines; Maputo, Mozambique; Nairobi, Kenya; New Delhi, India; and Yaounde, Cameroon.

A quota sample of 1,000 face-to-face interviews was completed with 251 men and 749 women between the ages of 18 and 60 living in urban poor areas in the Philippines.⁶⁵ The focus of the data collection was on women, hence the larger sample of women and smaller sample of men. The latter – albeit relatively small sample – is useful for comparative purposes and to provide indication of the gender gap in ICT and internet use in each city.

⁶² See Senate bill No. 1733 in www.senate.gov.ph

⁶³ See <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/03/10/1299296/senate-passes-freedom-information-bill>

⁶⁴ See <http://thewebindex.org/data/?indicator=S13&country=EAS>

⁶⁵ See Table 1 in Annex for reference of sampling areas considered for the survey in the Philippines

Prior to the conduct of a survey in the Philippines, FMA conducted a pilot test of the questionnaire in an urban area in Manila. The observations made by the enumerators and FMA were shared with Ipsos Mori Philippines and their enumerators during a meeting held on May 7 2015.

Qualitative case studies

In addition to the survey research, five (5) focus group discussions (FGDs) with the following groups have also been conducted: young girls in school; youth; urban poor women with home based businesses; young people employed. Three of the FGDs took place in the office of FMA, while the other two were conducted in communities. All in all there were 31 females and 5 males, aged 13 to 74 years old, who took part in the FGDs conducted from the months of June-August 2015 (See Table 2 in Annex).

The FGDs were conducted to surface additional issues that may emerge in relation to the issue of women's use of mobile internet. Questions asked during the FGDs were similar to those that were asked in the survey.

We also did a case study highlighting the issue of privacy in social media (See Annex).

The qualitative research was intended to:

- a) compliment the survey data through narrative and ethnographic techniques,
- b) dig deeper into specific topics identified as priorities by country partners,
- c) lend greater qualitative insight into the priority policy issues for women's rights online.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

A. Demographics of the sample

A total of 1,000 respondents from urban poor areas were selected to participate in the survey conducted in Manila. Of the total, 251 (25 percent) are male and 749 (75 percent) are female, who fall within the age range of 18-60 years old. The median age of the respondents is 39 years old.

Majority of the respondents are either in a live-in relationship or married (78 percent). There were more women who are either married or in a live in relationship (83 percent) than men (61 percent).

Of the total number of respondents, a little more than a fifth (22 percent) of male and a little over a third (35 percent) of female respondents have finished secondary education. Among those who have finished secondary education, majority (83 percent) are women.

Among those who have had some tertiary education, it is also the women who are the majority (70 percent).

44 percent of the total respondents are employed full time, part time or self employed. Six in ten of those fully employed are women. 17 percent of the total respondents are unemployed or in between jobs, and six of ten among them are women.

B. Landscape of access to and use of information and communications platforms (ICTs, internet)

Based on the survey conducted, the following are the trends and differences in internet use and access among men and women.

- 42 percent of the women surveyed said they used the computer in the last 6 months as against 48 percent among men.
- Three-fourths of the women surveyed said they own mobile phones, as against 69 percent of the males. 71 percent of the women who do not own mobile phones have access to such devices. There also seems to be a trend that the higher the level of education, the higher the likelihood of owning a mobile phone.
- A little more than half (56 percent) of those surveyed own or have access to Smart mobile phones. Almost half (47 percent) of the men surveyed own or have access to Smart phones compared to 59 percent of women.
- Six in ten use their mobile phones every day or almost daily. The ratio is almost the same for men (55 percent) and women (61 percent). Majority of these are young people who fall within the age range of 18-34 years old. Most of the respondents use their mobile phones for voice and SMS (62 percent among females and 59 percent among males). A third of the respondents said they use their mobile phones for voice, SMS and internet-based communication.
- 46 percent of the women surveyed said they have used the internet in the last 6 months, as against 42 percent of the males surveyed. It is the younger people who said they have used the internet in the last 6 months (73 percent of those aged 18-24, and 65 percent of those aged 24-29).
- A little less than half of those surveyed (45 percent) have accessed the internet in the last six months. A little more than half (54 percent) of those who own personal mobile phones have accessed the internet during the last six months.
- The top reasons why women's don't use the internet is because they don't have time (24 percent); they don't know how to use the device (22 percent); and affordability, i.e., either it is too expensive or they cannot afford it (16 percent).

Compared to men, there are more women (80 percent) who responded that they don't have time to use the internet.

Compared with most urban poor women, internet connectivity is not a problem with most working women. The working women who participated in our FGDs all have internet connectivity in their offices. They just complain of the slow connectivity. One participant also said that she has no access to other websites and social media in her office because the company has blocked use of those.

In a survey conducted in 2013 among 100 Filipino women professionals, ninety-three percent (93 percent) of the women surveyed claimed they have an easy access to the internet, adding that they have multiple accesses to internet connection. Home is the primary place where women connect to internet (85 percent), followed by the workplace (73 percent). Almost half women also disclosed that they browse the internet daily (48 percent) and others even said several times a day (41 percent). The six percent who stated that they don't have an easy access to internet connect through internet/cyber café.⁶⁶

Cost of Internet Connectivity

On the average, Filipinos spend about P1,000 (US\$22) a month for internet service with speeds of up to 2 Mbps while some telecommunication companies offer speed of up to 5 Mbps for about P2,000 (US\$44) per month.⁶⁷ This is expensive compared to the rates paid by the Philippines' Asian neighbors that have faster internet.

- 68 percent of the survey respondents spend less than P100 (about US\$2.15) week for mobile airtime.
- In terms of gender, females spend a little more than males on a weekly basis (F: 71 percent M: 59 percent).
- There is also hardly a difference in the mobile airtime expenditure among those who are employed and unemployed. 65 percent of those employed spend less than P100 per week, and 64 percent of the unemployed spend the same amount per week.

To save on cost, some of the FGD participants said they avail of promos by telcos. For example, for only P30 (about US\$0.65) one can avail of unlimited call and text to the same network one is using, plus 100MB mobile internet data for one day. However,

⁶⁶ Philippines, in *Development and Delivery of Livelihood-based e-Service for ASEAN Women, 2013* See <http://asean.women.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Philippines-Country-Report.pdf>

⁶⁷ Pronouncement of Senator Bam Aquino during a Senate hearing on the probe of the Philippines' internet speed and rates. See *Probe slow, expensive PH internet – Bam Aquino*. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/56078-probe-slow-expensive-internet-ph>

users complain of the slow and limited data access. Among Filipinos, pre-paid cards are preferred over post paid accounts.⁶⁸

Communicating through e-mails and Social Media

All the students, youth and working women who took part in our FGD said they have e-mail addresses. A few of them have more than one email address – an official one and another one that is intended for their social media activities.

- Majority of female respondents (87 percent) who have accessed the internet in the last 6 months have e-mail addresses.
- Among social media users, almost all (97 percent of females and 95 percent of males surveyed) have Facebook accounts. This is followed by YouTube (42 percent for females and 69 percent for males), and Google+ (29 percent for females and 45 percent for males).
- Women who use social media do so to stay connected with friends, family and other acquaintances (93 percent), and to some extent, to make/connect with new friends (38 percent).

The FGD participants said they use social media to connect with families and friends. It is an easy and convenient way for them to contact friends and family and know their whereabouts and conditions. Social media is also used to chat, for gaming, as well as to access information. Social media, according to an FGD participant, provides real time updates.

The survey results reveal that many still need to be connected and need to understand how the internet can benefit them. They also show the growing relevance of connectivity in the lives of women, thus access has to be addressed.

The country's National Broadband plan is supposed to ensure a set of strategies and actions to achieve universal internet access for every Filipino. Under the plan is the Philippine Digital Strategy 2011-2016 that sets targets for the provision of basic broadband access and internet opportunities for all by 2016. These targets include, among others, the following:

- 80 percent of barangays to have internet access through CeCs of at least 2 Mbps;
- 100 percent of high schools and 80 percent of elementary schools to have internet access;
- 100 percent of government offices have internet access
- all internet central business districts to have available download speeds of 20 Mbps

⁶⁸ About 96 percent of Filipinos use prepaid accounts, according to We Are Social

- 80 percent of households to have access to at least 2 Mbps of broadband connectivity
- Average prices for basic broadband Internet to be reduced by at least 5 percent annually; and
- Investment in infrastructure expansion to increase by at least 10 percent annually.⁶⁹

Based on the current digital situation in the country, it seems not possible to achieve all the targets. The PDS to some extent tried to incorporate the issue of gender. For instance, it talks about developing a gender sensitive national database on education related information and a system of assessing the digital literacy, as well as gender-sensitive training programs for micro companies since a number of micro and small enterprises in the country are women. Other than these, there were no other concrete targets for gender equity in ICT use and access.

C. State of women's empowerment on and through the web

Social interaction

Among those who have used the internet in the last six months, half have communicated with people of the opposite gender online. This is true across all ages.

- Females communicate more with the opposite gender online (53 percent) than males (46 percent).
- Among the women respondents who own or have access to mobile phones, 44 percent regard the internet as a 'very valuable' source of emotional support or advice, while 36 percent see it as 'fairly valuable'. It is interesting to note though that a higher percentage of males (59 percent) regard the internet as 'very valuable' source of emotional support than women.
- Most of the respondents also think that the internet is 'very valuable' and can help with school work and educational activities (64 percent), and almost a quarter of the respondents see it as 'fairly valuable' (23 percent). There is not much difference in opinion among male and female respondents.

Primary reason for using the internet is to connect with family and friends. About a tenth of the Philippines' population is based overseas, either as permanent residents or as temporary workers in other countries.⁷⁰ As such, the internet is very popular among those with friends or family abroad.

⁶⁹ Philippine Digital Strategy 2011-2016

⁷⁰ See <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2013.pdf> for stock estimate of overseas Filipinos

In a survey conducted among 100 professional women in the Philippines in 2013, the two primary reasons women use the internet are for online communication (81 percent) and searching information (75 percent). Most women spend time on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (85 percent), followed by personal websites such as blogs (69 percent) and search engine (65 percent).⁷¹

In the Philippines, there is a high percentage of individuals, both men and women, who are on Facebook.⁷² In fact, it has always been said that social media, or rather Facebook, is the internet in the Philippines. The survey conducted validated that Facebook is the preferred social media account (97 percent of females and 95 percent of males surveyed).

Facebook has arrangements with local telco operators to have the app as part of the services they offer. There are Facebook only plans available for a small fee, or access to Facebook is for free as part of a package availed of. This is not to mention the zero rate or internet.org where Facebook is available for free but with limited data, i.e., some images may not be visible.

One network company said they ran the Free Facebook program to significantly increase their subscriber base, thus resulting in benefits for the company.⁷³ Likewise, the telco said this campaign also “added six million incremental data users in the Philippines.”⁷⁴

Based on the FDGs conducted, young people and women who work have several social media accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They are also active users of Skype and Viber. Most housewives who joined the FGD did not even have their own mobile phones and have to borrow phones from their children or the husband.

The country aims to be competitive in the world market and being equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in ICT will contribute to this. One of the areas identified in the Philippine Digital Strategy to become competitive is to push for digital literacy by encouraging citizens to be skilled in the use of digital media. The country acknowledges its small pool of IT skills that needs to be addressed if it wants to be competitive. However, the same strategy does not identify how women and girls can be part of this pool of experts.

It is important to note that one of the reasons why respondents do not currently use the internet (in the last six months) is because they do not know how to use it (21 percent). More

⁷¹ Philippines, in Development and Delivery of Livelihood-based e-Service for ASEAN Women, 2013 See <http://asean.women.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Philippines-Country-Report.pdf>

⁷² ComScore, 2013

⁷³ In “Driving Internet Adoption in Developing Markets and the Role of Mobile Carriers: A Philippine Case Study. A Globe/Facebook White Paper, 2015 Available in <http://www.globe.com.ph/documents/50301/15939122/2015-03-05+FB+Globe+Whitepaper>

⁷⁴ Ibid

women (22 percent) said they do not know how to use the internet compared to men (18 percent). This should signal to government the need for digital literacy especially among women.

In fairness, digital literacy through education has been a component of education. Since the late 1990s, the Department of Education has put up a computerization program that aims to provide public schools “with appropriate technologies that would enhance the teaching-learning process and meet the challenges of the 21st century.”⁷⁵ This program includes, among others, the provision of computer laboratory packages to secondary schools, the provision of e-classroom to elementary schools, the integration of ICT in the school system, and raising the literacy of teachers and students. However, it remains to be seen how successful this program can be, considering that electricity is still not present in all areas of the country.

Partnerships with private companies have also been explored by government to teach Filipinos how to use technology and be empowered in the digital age. One such project is the “DigiBayanihan” which is a collaboration among Intel Philippines, DOST-ICTO and private sector groups. The project hopes to “put digital literacy at the forefront of the national agenda for human and economic development” by targetting five million Filipinos to be technically skilled by 2015.⁷⁶

In 2013, a law was passed to provide for scholarships in science and technology, as well as strengthen the teaching of mathematics in secondary schools (Republic Act 10612). The same law did not mention how many of these should be women.

It is also important to note the importance not just of digital literacy but also digital rights literacy among the citizenry, which is not a component of all these digital literacy trainings.

Women’s agency and safety

Across all questions as to where respondents seek information when it comes to sickness, drugs and alcohol use, transportation information and route, sex and reproductive health, gender-based violence support, legal rights and community development and projects, television has always been a main source of information for a fifth to a third of all the respondents. The responses of the men and women do not vary much.

⁷⁵ See Department of Education Guidelines on the implementation of the DepEd computerization program in <http://www.deped.gov.ph/orders/do-78-s-2010>

⁷⁶ Digital literacy initiative aims to equip 5M Filipinos with tech skills by 2015. Newsbytes.ph. Available in <http://newsbytes.ph/2015/04/02/digital-literacy-initiative-aims-to-equip-5m-filipinos-with-tech-skills-by-2015/>

Television as a source of news and information, as well as entertainment has always figured high in past researches conducted in the Philippines. A 2011 survey conducted by Nielsen Audience measurement report said that in the Philippines, television is still the most popular media platform in the country.⁷⁷ It remains the main source of entertainment for majority of Filipinos.⁷⁸ Even with the boom of the Internet, tablets and smart phones, Filipinos still turn to television for news and entertainment.⁷⁹ Filipinos spend 3-4 hours per day watching television.⁸⁰ Television penetration in households across the country is 80.5 percent compared to Internet penetration which is from 40 to 50 percent.⁸¹

Information-Seeking Online

The respondents seek information from the experts. For example, when it comes to getting information about illnesses, they get them from hospitals or clinics (55 percent) or health workers (21 percent). A fifth of the respondents and little more than a tenth get information from television and the internet, respectively.

Despite the available information available in government websites about many women-related issues such as sexual and reproductive rights and gender-based violence, many still do not search for such information in these pages. It would seem there is a need to make people aware of the information and services that government websites can offer.

There is also the need to develop local content. This is a weakness that the government has identified in the PDS. There are some on-going efforts by government to make information and othe data available. In 2013, the government launched an e-government masterplan that will guide government agencies in aligning their information systems' strategic plans to the national e-government priorities such as efficiency and transparency.⁸² In January 2014, government launched data.gov, a website that consolidates the data from different government agencies and makes it available in formats meant for easy downloading and use.

Government agencies also have their own websites. Three of the sites that directly relate to women's issues are the portals of the Philippine Commission on Women (www.pcw.gov.ph), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (www.dswd.gov.ph), and the Department of Health (www.doh.gov.ph). An unpublished survey conducted among 100 professional

⁷⁷ See <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/filipinos-still-glued-tube-nielsen-survey-says-20110310-233003-729.html>

⁷⁸ See <http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/tuning-radio-and-television-remain-strong-print-declines>

⁷⁹ From 2014 Kantar media survey. See www.kantar.com, and also <http://www.wheninmanila.com/getting-to-know-the-2014-filipino-tv-viewer/#RtXFTe0qf87aqeA8.99>

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² See <http://manilastandardtoday.com/2013/06/27/ph-egov-masterplan-unveiled/>

women in the Philippines revealed that government websites are not very popular with women (12 percent). There is also low level of awareness of these sites (28 percent), and awareness of government policy that support women's e-service use is even much lower (8 percent).⁸³ It seems that government should be more proactive in making the people aware of the content and services that are in these sites. For instance, the DOH website has information on its women's health and safe motherhood program,⁸⁴ as well as information on its women and child health protection program, on HIV/AIDS, and on breastfeeding. The PCW website has information about laws that are relevant to women, as well as some statistics on women.

There were some FGD participants who claimed they are aware that there are available services online. Most popular of these are the government online forms that are necessary for job applications, like those of the Social Security System (SSS) or the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). Even the mothers who do not use the internet are aware of these online forms because their children use them.

Online VAW and Harassment

With regards to experiences of harassment / bullying via mobile phone, majority of the survey respondents said they did not experience such. This is true for both the male (94 percent) and female (93 percent) respondents.

However, instances of harassment and bullying online surfaced during our FGDs. One of the female participants shared that somebody was able to get hold of an old photo taken with her former boyfriend. This was circulated by an unknown person and for that, there were those who thought she could not move on with her life. She tried to defend herself from the negative comments, but others still persisted. She just decided to ignore the negative comments.

Another FGD participant shared her story of offline and online violence. When she became a muse of a basketball team in their village, there were some girls who thought she was too sure of herself and a flirt, so what they did was search for her account in Facebook. These girls started posting unsavory comments about her. They also were able to get hold of her cellphone number and started criticising her through text. At first this girl just ignored the Facebook comments and harassing text messages. But one day, these girls confronted her and hurt her physically. She immediately reported her case to the village authorities and was about to file a case with the police using as evidence the posts and messages of her harassers, among others.

⁸³ Unpublished survey results on Development and Delivery of Livelihood-based e-Service for ASEAN Women, 2013 See <http://asean.women.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Philippines-Country-Report.pdf>

⁸⁴ See <http://www.doh.gov.ph/node/1076.html>

Indeed, instances of online violence against women have transpired and have been reported. There may not be official statistics as to the actual number of such cases, but more and more of these are being reported in media and to authorities. Cyberspace has also become a site of violence against women and there is a need to address women's safety online.

Issues of privacy and online safety are often ignored by online users. Some of the FGD participants said that they are aware of the privacy setting in their social media accounts. However, there are also a few who admitted that they use only one password for all their social media accounts. Among the girls who participated in the FGD, they admitted that when they were new to Facebook, they would compete with their friends as to who will have the most number of friends online. Thus, they would accept as friends people whom they do not even know.

Among those who have experienced online harassment, they said they have become more careful and started using privacy settings. A few said they have become more careful about what they post online so that they do not get harassed.

Attached to this report is the issue paper on Privacy and Social Media: The Philippine Experience, which looks into how privacy is perceived given today's context.

The Philippines has a law on anti-violence against women and children (RA 9262), which was passed in 2004. The said law however does consider VAW committed or abetted through the use of technology. Since cases of technology-related VAW have started to emerge and cases were being reported, the anti-photo and video voyeurism act (RA 9995) was passed in 2009. In the same year, the anti-child pornography act (RA 9775) was passed in the country. In 2012, the cybercrime prevention act (RA 10175) was passed, as well as the data privacy act (RA10173).

Cases of technology-related VAW, such as uploading of images and video without consent and identity theft, to name a few, have been filed in court. Unfortunately, there have not been many cases that have prospered. Reasons for this would include the slow pace of justice in the system, as well as the costs related to filing a case. It should also be noted that RA 10175 has a provision on cybersex that has raised alarm among women and feminist groups. While the Data Privacy Act has been passed, a Data Privacy Commission has not been created, and its implementing rules and regulations have not been drafted by government.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ While government has not initiated action for the drafting of an IRR for the Data Privacy Act, FMA has drafted one and has conducted several consultations regarding this 'unofficial' draft.

The role of private companies, including internet intermediaries, should be looked into. Considering that many Filipino women use Facebook and some have experienced online harassment and violation, social media companies need also to be proactive and work with women's rights groups to come up with mechanisms to protect women online.⁸⁶

It has often been said that the online world is a reflection of the offline world. Values expressed online may often be the same as that offline. Thus, in a society where women continue to experience discrimination and gender inequality, it is not surprising that online they are harassed and experience being abused through misogynistic and hate speeches. This speaks of the need to address the root causes of discrimination and inequality in society. Government has come up with some policies that would address the derogatory portrayal of women in media and films. Section 19 of the Magna Carta of Women provides for the non-discriminatory and non-derogatory portrayal of women in media and film. The PCW developed the Women's Empowerment Development and Gender Equality Plan of 2013-2016 which addresses the persistent portrayal of women in popular media, including film, television, print and internet sites. The country likewise has a Gender Equality guidelines to protect women against discrimination in media and film, as well as a code of ethics for media formulated by the Media and Gender Equality Committee. These policies may address some gender issues but they need to be monitored, and should be implemented in tandem with an enabling environment and other mechanisms.

Public institutional participation (particularly in the context of urban poverty)

Survey results indicate that a large percentage of both men and women are not active in public political life. Attendance in community meetings to discuss important and controversial issues are low.

- Three in ten have attended such meetings at least once.
- Women (23 percent) attend such meetings more than men (12 percent).
- The older ones (older than 24 years old) are more likely to attend such community meetings.
- At least a tenth (13 percent) of the males surveyed said they have participated in a meeting or an activity of a political party or trade union.

Signing of petitions, contacting local government officials and contacting local government offices are low. The same is true with writing to newspapers, sharing views on important

⁸⁶ The Association for Progressive Communications has studies relating to the role of intermediaries in relation to technology-based violence against women. See apc.org

issues through social media or the internet, organising activities to raise funds, and participating in meetings and activities of political parties and trade unions.

Opinions on public issues are usually relayed to the agency or organisation concerned.

- Important issues facing the community are mostly reported or opinions on these are expressed to the local council offices (15 percent).
- Men (19 percent) are more likely than women (2 percent) to report these to NGOs or community organisations, while women (15 percent) are more likely than men (5 percent) to express their views on television.
- Complaints about government services not working in the neighbourhood are expressed or reported mostly in the local council office (36 percent).
- Men (16 percent) are more likely than women (2 percent) to report these in NGOs/community organisations, while women (12 percent) are more likely than men (4 percent) to report these to the community or religious leaders.
- Reports of corruption are usually reported to local council offices (30 percent), and the police (12 percent).
- Men (18 percent) are more likely than women (2 percent) to report such issue to NGOs/ community organisations.

In the FGDs conducted, many said they do not join online discussions but re-post articles and comments which they find relevant. There are also those who said they rarely post comments but like posts of their friends.

In general, the mobile phone and the internet did not figure high in reporting cases and in expressing opinions on important issues. Mobile phones, social media and the internet are still underutilised when it comes to public institutional participation. While social media is very much used to connect with other people, its other uses and benefits should also be mainstreamed. Other than social media, the other useful and relevant sites and information available online, including government sites should be promoted. Government agencies promoting e-services that would benefit women should also be proactive in promoting their sites and informing the general public, especially women, of what information and services they can get in their websites. These should be part of the communications plan of each government agency, if they really want to reach the most number of people.

It would also help if government passes the Freedom of Information bill that has been languishing in the Philippines' congress for almost three decades, so that people know of the government's willingness to provide information needed by the citizens. Unfortunately, its passage into law is not a priority of this Administration.

Access to associational/collective action spaces

Based on the survey, many women believe that they should be allowed to access the internet in the equally with men.

- A third of the respondents agree that men should have priority over women when it comes to access the internet. More men (60 percent) agree to this than women (23 percent). Majority of those who do not agree to this are women (66 percent) than men (26 percent).
- A third also agree that women should be restricted from using the internet in public places on their own. It is mostly the men (54 percent) rather than women (29 percent) who expressed such agreement. Majority of the women respondents (59 percent) disagree to this statement, with 42 percent of women strongly disagreeing to this. Majority (57 percent) of those who have used the internet in the last six months disagree to this as well. Almost half (47 percent) of those who have not used the internet in the last six months also disagree.
- Four in ten agree that men have the responsibility to restrict what women access in the internet. It is mostly the men (63 percent) who agree to this than the women (33 percent). 47 percent disagree to the statement. More women have expressed disagreement (55 percent) than men (22 percent) on this, with 40 percent of women strongly disagreeing to such.

With reference to personal beliefs about media freedom/government control and importance of this regarding digital rights, the following are the results of the survey:

- Majority of the respondents agree (strongly agree and tend to agree) on a person's right to debate without government interference (76 percent). Men (61 percent) tend to agree strongly than women (42 percent). Those who use the internet tend to agree (81 percent) more than those who do not use the internet (68 percent).
- Majority (72 percent) believe that media should have the right to publish without government interference. Men tend to strongly agree (51 percent) on this issue compared to women (43 percent). Those who use the internet tend to agree more (81 percent) than those who do not use (66 percent). Those who own mobile phones also agree more (75 percent) on this statement than none owners of mobile phones (66 percent). Primary income earners also agree more (77 percent) than those who are not primary income earners (69 percent).
- A little more than half (57 percent) of the respondents also agree that government should have the right to prevent media from publishing things it considers harmful to

society. This is true across genders (male – 56 percent; female – 55 percent). Those who use the internet tend to agree more (62 percent) than those who do not use the internet (50 percent).

- Practice of religion is valuable (very valuable or tend to be valuable) to 74 percent of those who have accessed the internet in the last six months. More men (80 percent) than women (72 percent) said it is valuable to them. The percentage of those who do not own mobile phones (76 percent) than those who do own (74 percent) who said the practice of religion is valuable to them is slightly higher. It should be noted that the Philippines is a largely Catholic country, and thus it is not surprising that practice of religion is valued.

The Philippines is not that restrictive when it comes to people's access and use of the internet. But when it comes to children, there are more restrictions. The anti-child pornography laws (RA 9775) allows for filtering of content. Section 9 of this law mandates the National Telecommunications Commission to "promulgate regulations ... for the installation of filtering software to block access to or transmission of any form of child pornography." The cybercrime prevention act (RA 10175) also had this provision in its initial form, as well as the take down of content. However, these were stricken down when the same provisions were questioned before the supreme court by concerned groups.

With regards policies or directives to provide for digital security training for marginalised and at risk groups, there are none. The burden of making one's self secure online is on the user. FMA is one of the very few NGOs in the Philippines that provides digital security trainings. It has in the past conducted secure online communications (SOC) training for its partner organisations, mostly women's and human rights organisations.

Majority of Filipinos use pre-paid SIM for their mobile phones. Pre-paid SIM card registration is not required, although there is a proposed bill in Congress to have them registered. There are no internet café laws or policy that requires them to enforce user registration or identity requirements. It is also up to internet café owners if they want to enforce such regulation in their establishment. To FMA's knowledge, there is one internet café which is membership-based that requires non-members to register and show their IDs in order for them to use internet.

Access to economic opportunity

Based on the responses of those who own or have access to mobile phones, technology has 'not at all' helped create or expand economic opportunity for many of the respondents (63 percent). It would seem that use of and access to mobile phone have not been maximised for economic benefit. Among those who own mobile phones or have access to them, 67 percent have not used the device to look for a job.

However, during one of the FGDs we conducted among housewives who have their own home-based livelihood, one woman shared that she posted photos of the rugs that she makes on Facebook and as a result, she received several inquiries and additional orders. Another woman also said that texting through mobile phone had made her work easier than. She would just text her order of raw materials to her suppliers and these would be delivered to her, thus saving her the cost of transportation she would have incurred if she had to go to the supplier herself and pick up the items. These women may not have profited much, but their examples show that there is potential in using technology to increase one's earnings.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the landscape of existing government and company policies and the findings of the survey conducted, the following are the issues that should be prioritised and addressed:

Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through ICT. The Philippine government recognises the importance of ICT in the development of the nation and its people. This is reflected in the different ICT policy initiatives that have evolved through the years, whether in the field of education or in the different agencies of the government. These efforts of the government to maximise the use of ICT for development and delivery of services are laudable. However, as one study found out "significantly missing in the many incarnations of the ICT policy initiatives and formulations as well as ICT legislations ... is a clear-cut and unequivocal commitment to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through ICT."⁸⁷ Gender perspectives in these policies and programs are missing. The Philippine Digital Strategy for instance has minimal reference to the issue of gender, does not mention how technology can be used to advance women's issues or how policies can address gender discrimination in technology. Statistics on the characteristics of the ICT labor pool are also missing.

Women's participation in the crafting of policies in relation to ICT development, as well as their roles in ICT development are likewise missing in regional plans. The ASEAN ICT Master Plan of 2015⁸⁸ sees the digital divide as a big challenge to the region and yet made no mention of the gender digital divide. It made mention of people empowerment, capital development and inclusiveness (rural and urban, young and old, with or without disabilities) and yet kept silent on the issue of gender. It did not consider how technology will impact women, how it can be used to advance women's rights, or how they can be used to protect women online.

ICT should be seen not just as a tool for economic development, but also as a means to exercise our freedoms. As the report by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression

⁸⁷ PLCPD and Women's Hub (2004). Gender and IT in the Philippines: A proposed policy framework. Available in http://old.apc.org/english/capacity/policy/mmtk_gender_ictpol_philippines.pdf

⁸⁸ See "We're stronger when we're connected," ASEAN ICT Masterplan 2015

and Opinion to the UN Human Rights Council in May 2011 noted that “the Internet has become a key means by which individuals can exercise their freedom of opinion and expression,” and that “the right to freedom of opinion and expression is as much a fundamental right on its own accord as it is an “enabler” of other rights, including economic, social and cultural rights” (A/HRC/17/27 para. 20 &22).

For women, information and communications technologies have provided vital spheres where they are able to express themselves, assert their rights and identities, initiate and enhance their participation in political and public life. The Report of the working group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice to the UN Human Rights Council in April 2013 noted that “women who are confined in private homes have used ICTs as a means to break out of their isolation and take part in collective action” and that “women who live under threat of attack because of their sexual orientation have found safety in the anonymity of the Internet” (A/HRC/23/50 para. 48).

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW),⁸⁹ as the primary policy-making and coordinating body on women and gender equality concerns, can take an active role in making sure that gender perspectives in ICT policies are included. While there is awareness of the role of ICT in women’s lives, its potential as a tool for development should be maximised. The Philippine Gender Development Plan of 1995-2025 already made mention of the role of ICT in women’s development and this should be followed up. It would also be good if the PCW, as the clearing house and data base for information relating to women, can make sure that there are data on women various participation in economic, social and political life, including data on women’s access and use of new technologies like the Internet.

Development of local content. There is a need to develop local content. While there are government websites that provide information and some e-services, the existence of these should also be largely disseminated. One noticeable characteristic of most government websites is that they are mostly in English and as such may not be accessible to all, especially those who are not well-versed in the English language. The translation of content into Filipino or the local language of a region will be useful. Also, considering that majority of internet users in the Philippines have Facebook accounts, having a Facebook account, on top of the government agency website, where one can seek information, provide comment and interact with an officer or staff of a government agency, will be useful. In fact, a few government agencies have this in place already.

⁸⁹ PCW was formerly known as the National Commission on the Role of the Filipino Women (NCRFW) that was established in 1975 through Presidential Decree No. 633 as an advisory body to the President and the Cabinet on policies and programs for the advancement of women. For more on the functions of the PCW, see <http://www.pcw.gov.ph/pcw/functions>.

Access. There are three main issues relevant to universal access and these are availability of the service in the total geographic territory; accessibility that all citizens can use the service regardless of location, gender, disabilities and other personal characteristics; and, affordability.⁹⁰ Available data suggests that half of the population still have to be introduced to the internet. This means many things to different people. For the general population, this means connecting with families, friends and other people. This may also mean business or academic opportunities for some. For business, the inclusion of about 50 million people online is additional revenue in the next few years. For government, this spells economic growth. Access also means being able to get hold of relevant information or content that are useful to a person. Having access is also a question of knowing how to use the technology and relevant services. Slow connectivity should also be addressed when talking about the issue of access.

We want everyone to be included and to be able to see and realise the opportunities that ICT, and the internet specifically, have to offer. But women's ability to take advantage of ICTs is also dependent on conducive policies and an enabling environment in the country, including a good infrastructure.

Digital literacy. One of the main thrusts of the Philippine Digital Strategy to realise the country's full potential in ICT is digital literacy for all. Government aims to do this by investing in people through education, by cooperation and collaboration with strategic partners, and by developing a gender sensitive national database on education related information. There are on-going government partnerships with the private sector and other initiatives that can be replicated. These include the Digibayanihan program⁹¹ and the Philippine Digital Literacy campaign for women⁹² that seeks to make 10,000 grassroots women digitally literate. FMA is also one of the few organizations that is conducting training and workshops for civil society organisations (CSOs) on digital rights literacy. It has reached out to groups in different regions of the country to conduct workshops on Internet rights, as it connects to human rights. FMA likewise conducts trainings and activities on information and safe online communications.

Digital literacy is also important for lawyers, judges, prosecutors who are handling cybercrime cases, as well as cases of rights violations in relation to technology.

⁹⁰ Chakchouk, M. Definition and Scope of Universal Access/Service. Presentation during the ITU/BDT Arab Regional Workshop on Wireless Broadband Internet Access in Rural Areas held in Damascus, Syria on October 10-12, 2010, Available in <https://www.itu.int/ITU-D/arb/COE/2010/WirelessBroadband/FinalDocuments/Session2-Definition-and-scopeof-UA.pdf>

⁹¹ Digibayanihan is a digital literacy program of Intel Philippines and the DOST eyeing to provide technical skills to Filipinos.

⁹² See <https://www.facebook.com/PDLWC>

Government support for the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics courses should be encouraged, especially for women.

Aside from digital literacy, digital rights literacy should also be addressed.

Review of existing laws and policies. Laws and policies in relation to women and ICT are just emerging. There is a need to review them and see how relevant they are, how they relate to issues of ICT. For instance, the anti-violence against women and children act cannot be used to argue a case on technology related violence against women. Is there a need to amend it or are the existing laws enough? There is also the Cybercrime prevention act and its provision on cybersex. Further studies and research shared among different groups will advance further our understanding of technology as it relates to gender.

Laws do not always serve as a deterrent to the commission of a crime. For instance, despite the passage of the anti-photo and video voyeurism act in 2012, there have still been several reports of images and videos of women being shared and uploaded online without the woman's consent. This means that the problem is deeper than what it appears to be. Indeed, it is the root cause of violence against women that should be addressed.

The law is supposed to provide justice to the aggrieved. But if it takes several years before a case prospers, what kind of justice is being served. Thus, aside from laws, there should also be enabling environments so that aggrieved parties are able to utilise the law, and say that they are able to access justice.

At present, there are pending laws in Congress that should be monitored because of their relevance. These include the creation of the Department of ICT and the Freedom of Information.

Competition policy. There is no competition in the Internet in the Philippines. There are only two major players that control the business. These major players are the ones that resell to small ISPs but at the same time compete with them. There is lack of interconnection among ISPs. Local traffic is still sent abroad only to be brought back to the country, and as such quality becomes poorer and pricing is higher.

There are government agencies in charge of policies and regulations with regards to telecommunications companies, but they should show more teeth in implementing these policies and rules. For instance, PLDT refuses to connect to PHOpenIX, but the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), the government agency that is supposed to monitor telcos, does not seem to find urgency in establishing a domestic IP peering policy. As a result,

Filipinos are paying a higher price compared to our Asian neighbors. On the positive note, it is good that the NTC is now drafting rules covering mobile broadband speed this month.⁹³

Strengthened broadband plan. The National broadband plan is being updated and it is imperative that civil society, and the consumers themselves take part in the consultations that are being held. Currently, the broadband plan is being reviewed and issues like access, speed and affordability are being discussed. Women should take this opportunity to actively participate in the consultations in order to help shape and develop policies to ensure their meaningful access to ICTs, to ensure their safety online, and to promote overall their active participation and empowerment in online spaces.

ICT promises many opportunities for the Philippines, including economic development. But we should also see ICT in the light of how they affect and impact our rights as individuals and as citizens.

⁹³ See http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/103026-pldt-globe-provide-poor-philippines-internet-services-netizens?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=referral

ANNEXES

Table 1. Reference of sampling areas, Manila, Philippines

	BRGYS WITH URBAN POOR	CITY
NORTH	Brgy 181	Caloocan
	Tañong	Malabon
	Tonsuya	Malabon
	Tugatog	Malabon
	Tanza	Navotas
	Daang Hari	Navotas
	North Bay Blvd North	Navotas
	North Bay Blvd South	Navotas
	Hen. T de Leon	Valenzuela
	Malanday	Valenzuela
	Malinta	Valenzuela
	Mapulang Lupa	Valenzuela

	Ugong	Valenzuela
SOUTH	Alabang	Muntinlupa
	Bayanan	Muntinlupa
	Daniel Fajardo	Las Pinas
	BF International	Las Pinas
	San Martin de Porres	Paranaque
	Guadalupe Viejo	Makati
	Brgy. 179	Pasay
	Bagong Tanyag	Taguig
	Western Bicutan	Taguig
EAST	Addition Hills	Mandaluyong
	Highway Hills	Mandaluyong
	Malanday	Marikina
	Tumana	Marikina
	Nangka	Marikina
	Palatiw	Pasig
	Pinagbuhatan	Pasig
CENTRAL	Apolonia Samson	Quezon City
	Baesa	Quezon City
	Bagbag	Quezon City
	Bagong Silangan	Quezon City
	Botocan	Quezon City
	Capri	Quezon City
	Escopa 3	Quezon City
	E. Rodriguez	Quezon City
	Gulod	Quezon City
	Holy Spirit	Quezon City
	Kaligayahan	Quezon City
	Krus na ligas	Quezon City
	Matandang Balara	Quezon City
	Nagkaisang Nayon	Quezon City
	Payatas	Quezon City
	Pinyahan	Quezon City
	Sta Monica	Quezon City
Sauyo	Quezon City	
Tagumpay	Quezon City	
Tatalon	Quezon City	
WEST	Brgy 649	Manila

DataSource:

Basis for the sampling scheme/distribution: Metro Manila: Number of Depressed Households (HUDCC, 2002) (up to municipality only), National Statistics Office 2007 data.

List of Depressed Barangays: Our field teams (Ipsos Phils) identified which barangays were qualified to be sample are Currently, there were no available government/NGO listing identifying specific depressed barangays/ areas within the barangay that are depressed.

Table 2. Characteristics of FGD Respondents

	Students	Housewives	Employed	Others
Total 31	10	16	7	3
Male 6	8	0	1	2
Female 25	2	16	6	1

The Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA) is a non-governmental organisation that assists citizens and communities, including civil society organisations, in their strategic and appropriate use of information and communications technology for democratisation and popular empowerment.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, is a government agency working on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government, with the mission to reduce poverty in the world. Through our work and in cooperation with others, we contribute to implementing Sweden's Policy for Global Development.

Established by the inventor of the Web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the World Wide Web Foundation seeks to establish the open Web as a global public good and a basic right, creating a world where everyone, everywhere can use the Web to communicate, collaborate and innovate freely. The World Wide Web Foundation operates at the confluence of technology and human rights, targeting three key areas: Access, Voice and Participation.