

ICTS AS A TOOL FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN COASTAL AREAS: A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK APPROACH

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Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are widely acknowledged to have the potential to play a vital role in rural development in coastal areas. ICTs as a form of new extension methodology are socially deterministic, with various implications for women in terms of employment and empowerment, dependent on the context within which the ICTs are utilized. Several ICT projects have attempted to adopt these technologies to empower the women, especially with the objectives that women achieve a par with men or that women gain access to decision making processes and positions of power.

The aim of this paper is to highlight ICTs as a tool for women's empowerment in coastal areas, in terms of personal, business and community development. This paper highlights the Information Village Research Project of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, (MSSRF), Chennai, which is one of the ICT projects in rural/coastal areas of India. Next, we present a framework that comprises five factors *viz.*, social, political, psychological, technical, and economic forms of women's empowerment in coastal areas (Figure). Following the framework, we discuss the forms and degrees of women's empowerment experienced in the Information Village Research project of MSSRF.

Studies and experiences of the Information Village Resource Project of MSSRF indicated that ICTs are an effective tool for women empowerment in coastal areas. The study revealed that ICT projects have successfully disseminated the oft changing information and have also empowered the women in coastal areas. The study also revealed that a framework that comprises the five factors of women's empowerment in coastal areas is useful for analyzing the experiences of the users of ICT in these forms of empowerment.

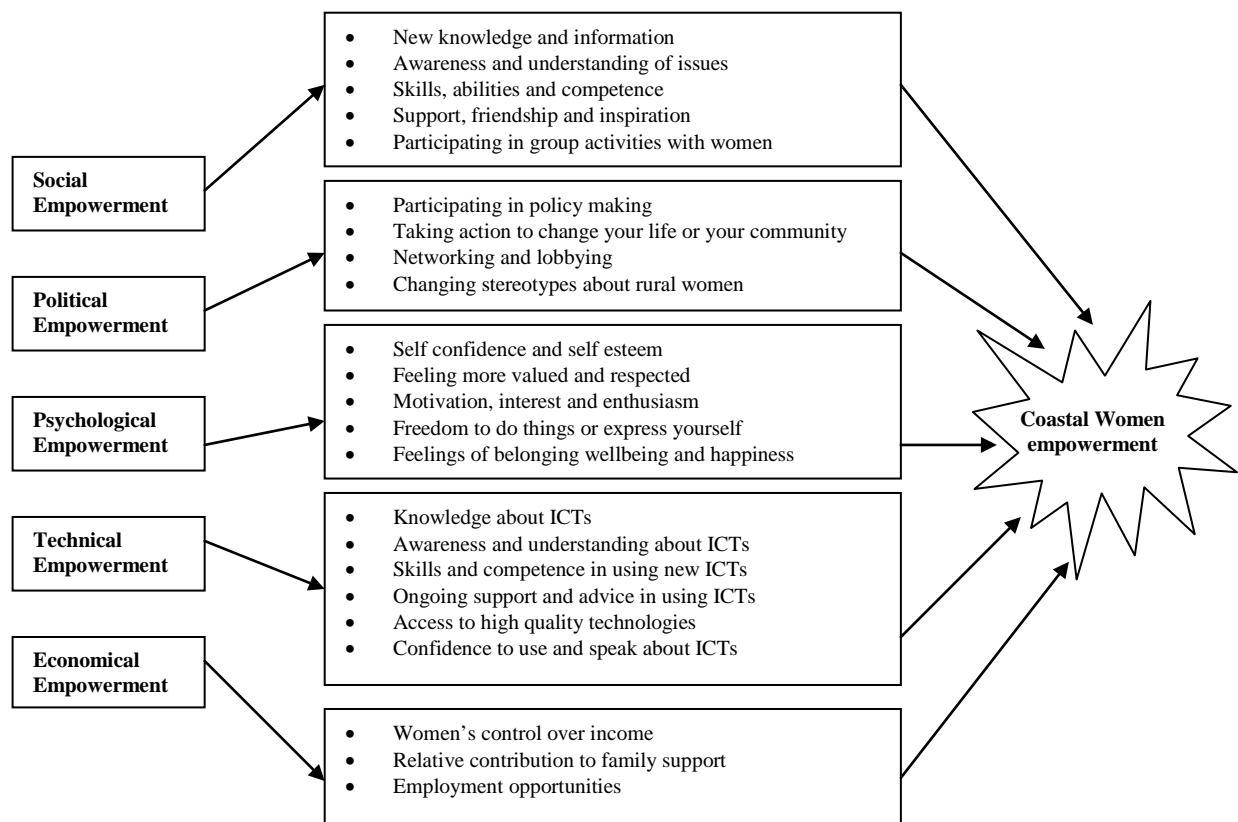


Figure. Forms of women's empowerment in coastal areas and its indicators