



Poverty Eradication and the Knowledge Society



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Outline

- Gender, technology and poverty eradication
- The digital and gender divides
- Access vs. knowledge
- Poverty reduction and the knowledge society



S&T Meeting the needs of society

- After decades of S&T interventions in development, women's overall position has *declined* relative to men, and *women have become disproportionately poor* in relation to the men in their communities.
- Women's S&T activities in their daily work is overlooked
 - They engage in 60-100% of agricultural production activities in the developing world
 - Energy for cooking; gathering of firewood and water
 - Indigenous knowledge
 - Family health care
 - Women make up 2/3 of nonformal sector producers and traders

The women-poverty connection

- Studies have found that:
 - societies that discriminate by gender pay a high price in their ability to develop and to reduce poverty
 - eradicating poverty depends on improving the situation of women and increasing the efficiency of their work

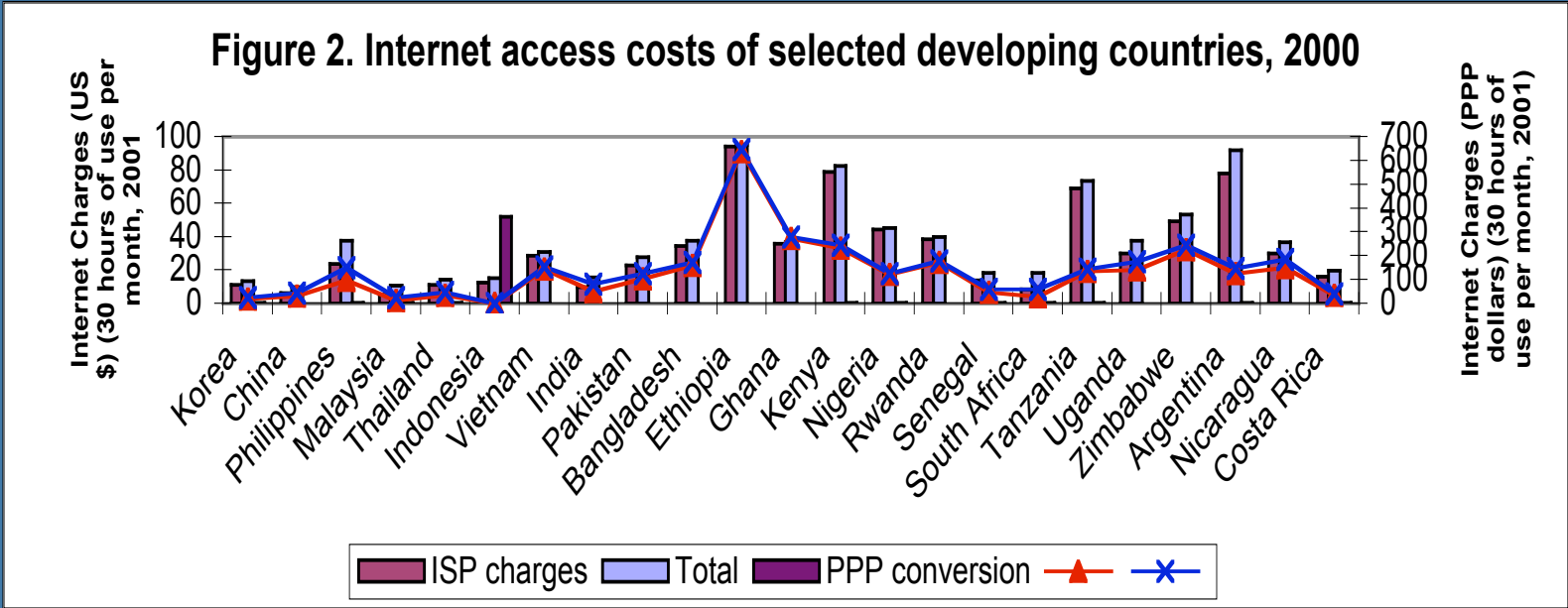
Conversely...

- Reducing the gender gap in health and education reduces individual poverty and encourages economic growth.
- When technologies improve women's production and increase income, children's well-being improves, school enrolment rises, birth rates decrease and environmental conservation increases.

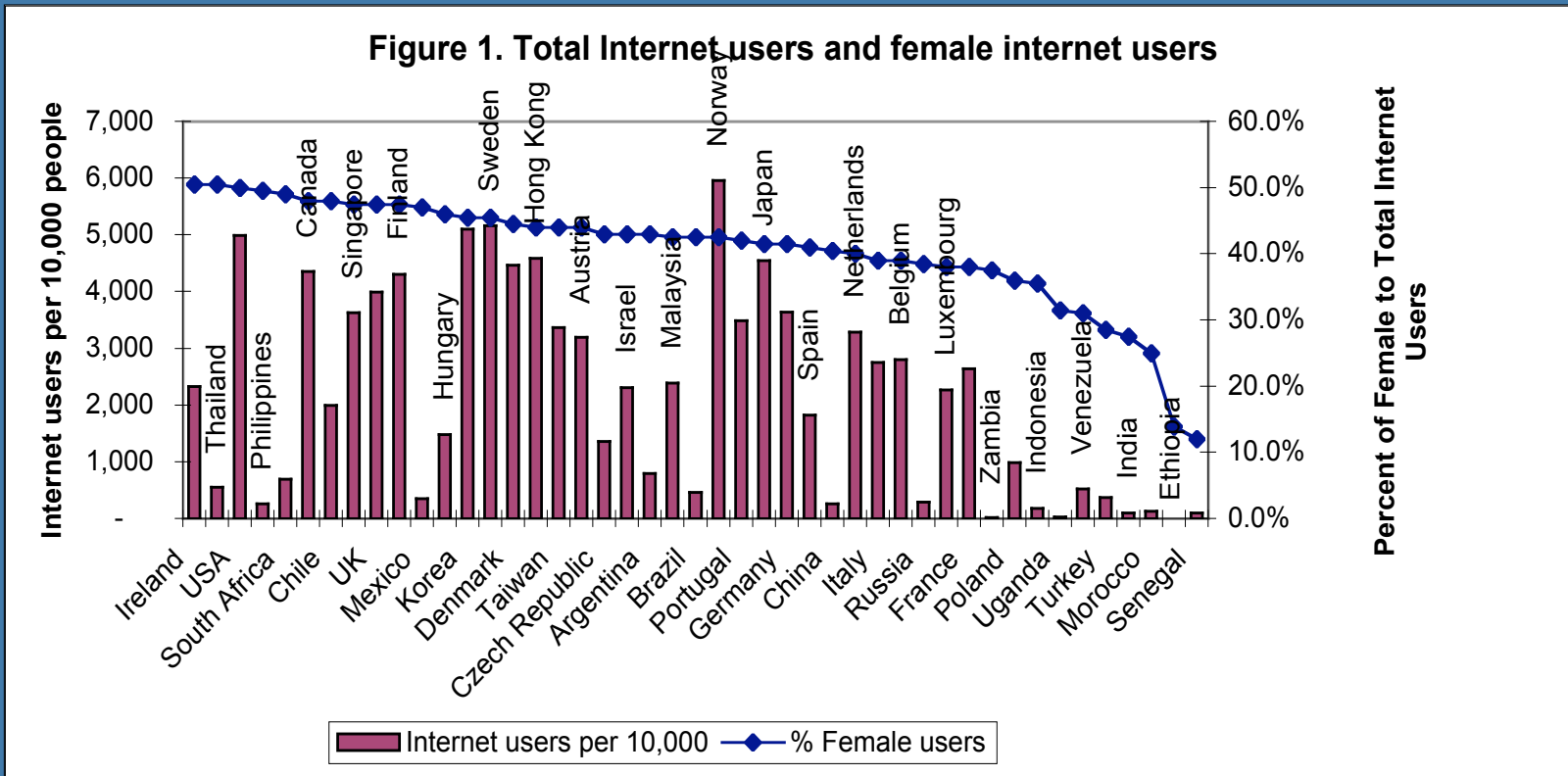
The Digital Divide

Percentage of Internet Users and Global Population, 2002 (ITU)

Region	Population	% Global Population	Users	% Global Users
Africa	788,340,000	13.0	6,781,200	1.3
Latin America	524,000,000	8.6	26,607,300	5.3
North America	314,930,000	5.2	156,335,000	31.1
Asia	3,613,880,000	59.5	156,897,800	31.2
Europe	31,160,000	0.5	8,467,000	29.3
Pacific	31,160,000	0.5	8,467,000	1.7
Total	6,072,880,000	100.0	502,557,500	100.0



The Gender Divide



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- The gender gap is narrowing in certain countries:
 - US and Canada, women are at 51%
 - Singapore, Chile, Hong Kong, Iceland and Thailand: 47-49%
 - China, South Africa and the Scandinavian countries: over 40%

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Why is this a problem?

- Information is a basic development resource
- In general, higher human development is related to higher levels of ICT use – the greater the poverty in a country, the lower the access to ICT
 - Information leads to resources
 - Information leads to opportunities that generate resources
 - Information allows people to make choices and improve their situation

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ICT and the MDGs

- Both the MDGs and the UNDP Human Development Report recognise that ICT are an important tool for countries to increase economic growth and reduce poverty.
- Target 18 of MDG #8: to “make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.”
- UNDP: mainstreaming ICT will contribute to MDGs related to income poverty reduction, education, health, environment and gender equity

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Poverty reduction and the knowledge society

- UNDP on poverty reduction— six critical areas:
 - health, education, and other basic human development factors
 - agriculture and food production
 - ICT infrastructure and telecommunications policy
 - IT employment and use of ICTs in SMEs
 - e-governance and advocacy
 - natural resources management.

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From access to knowledge

- But access is insufficient: what kind of information is being accessed? Who produced it? Who can use it? What is it used for?
 - Passive recipients vs active knowledge/technology developers
 - Knowledge is produced by processing information: assimilated, reflected upon, adapted to experiences, needs, contexts and worldviews

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What are the building blocks of the knowledge society?

- Equality in ICT access, knowledge and use – across all races, sexes and classes – involves:
 - technology fluency;
 - mastery of analytical skills,
 - computer, technology, information and communication concepts;
 - ability to imagine innovative uses for technologies across a range of problems and subjects; and a
 - ability to develop, find and use information and knowledge to improve one's life and expand one's choices.

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Gendered barriers in the knowledge society

- Socio-cultural attitudes
- Lower levels of literacy and education
- Less access to resources
- Triple role
- Value of ICTs to women
- Lack of appropriate infrastructure in areas where they live

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Poverty reduction and the knowledge society: the way forward

- Five main areas of approach:
 - 1 Creating an **enabling environment**
 - Low-cost, accessible technologies which are locally-owned
 - Telecommunications policy which supports access for marginalised and provides access to small entrepreneurs
 - 2 Developing **content** which speaks to local concerns and reflects local knowledge and interests, in local languages
 - 3 Education with ICT and in S&T
 - 4 Promoting increased **employment in the IT sector**
 - 5 Implementing **e-governance** strategies which are accessible; and promoting civil society **lobbying and advocacy**

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