



Information and communication technology empowers women

Women in emerging Asian economies will be big winners in e-commerce and online trade, which will help them overcome geographic isolation and limited access to information and financing.

But obstacles remain.

There were 200 million fewer women internet users than men globally in 2013. Of these women, one in five were less likely than men to own a mobile phone.

A 2013 Asian Development Bank survey of women entrepreneurs in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan suggested some 41 percent had internet-capable mobile phones, but only 16 percent had activated the internet services and only six percent used their phones for business.

Fewer women than men are in the labor force and have business or savings bank accounts.

But several programs using technology to involve women in commerce are under way.

An online program pairs women entrepreneurs in developing countries with partners in developed countries for mentoring and knowledge support focusing on specific business goals.

Outsourcing services enable women to work from home by providing transaction and support services to industries worldwide such as business processes, legal and medical transcription, translation, and editing.

Mobile phones are now used to disseminate information to women farmers, ranging from prevailing market prices to specialized knowledge such as the correct use of sprays and fertilizers. Mobile phone companies partner with women's committees to show how they can better use their phones for business.

E-commerce helps women overcome the challenges of building a business. Working from home lowers overhead and setup costs, makes it easier to access the latest information, and removes geographic limitations through online trading.

This has been a summary of part of [The Development Dimension of E-Commerce in Asia: Opportunities and Challenges](#), by ADBI senior economist [Aladdin Rillo](#) and former ADBI research associate Valdimir dela Cruz.

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