Gender Equity in the Caribbean ICT Sector

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GENDER EQUITY IN THE ICT INDUSTRY

Objective is fair and impartial access to and participation in the ICT sector for both genders!
The Impact of the ICT Sector

ICT Sector accounts for 4-6% of the region’s GDP, > % of other regions. – Lancaster 2015

10% rise in broadband = avg increases in GDP and productivity of 3.2% and 2.6% respectively. -IADB

ICTs cut across all sectors. Engine for economic growth and development

Essential tool in conversion to knowledge based societies.

Investment in ICT is associated with benefits such as higher productivity, lower costs, new economic opportunities, job creation, innovation, increased trade, better services in health and education, and strengthened social cohesion.
The ICT Value Chain and Market in the Caribbean

"ICT Value Chain" - that set of ICT services/products which an individual, company or country can offer to add value to their client/s or external market.

Caribbean’s scope to increase its ICT market size is only limited by our ability to imagine, innovate and create home grown solutions to our own problems.

Consumption to Creation

Many Caribbean countries have not successfully integrated themselves into ICT Value Chains as our share in world ICT exports is miniscule.

Development of export-oriented software and application services industry is critical.

ICTs hold boundless leap frogging possibilities across all sectors
Reality of Female participation in ICT Sector

Data shows high under-participation of women in ICT sector; esp in high income earning ICT positions

Many ICT sector studies & programmes but gender not considered

Often no reliable data on the participation, number and position, of women in the Caribbean ICT industry.
Why is GE in the ICT Sector Important?

“Gender inequality contributes to losses in economic efficiency and effectiveness and these losses affect both W & M adversely”

Globally 50% of W participate in the labor market compared with 77% of M. - World Bank, 2015

Activities to reduce female unemployment will have a greater impact on overall poverty reduction

Female under-representation is a missed opportunity to advance the development and competitiveness of the ICT sector.

- ICT policies often assume a level playing field across gender lines for access to the ICT Sector, esp for higher income earning careers.
- Further growth required along the ICT Value chain. Region thus must allow for full participation of available talent.
# Barriers to Equality in ICT industry

## Structural barriers
- No national gender equality policy
- ICT Policy gender blind, assumes level playing field

## Gender inequality in leadership
- Limits women’s influence on policy making & strategic gender needs

## Attitudes & behaviours
- Assumption - gender inequality in ICT results from women’s free choice

## Practical gender needs of women not considered
- Limited access to day care (few options, cost, limited opening hours)
- Limited access to after school care
# Barriers to Equality in ICT industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>• Limited access to safe transportation in early mornings and late evenings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender in Education</td>
<td>• Gender gaps in ICT education, training, access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities</td>
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<td>Gender socialisation</td>
<td>• Family, school, church peers and media influence gender stereotypes (e.g., girls not good in maths, technical subjects)</td>
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<td>Perception - ICT is for males</td>
<td>• Limits interests of some women, perception that ICTs are for male nerds; limits scope to interact with others</td>
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<td>Education system</td>
<td>• Some changes but original gender bias in S &amp; T subjects limits girls’ career path in ICTs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural biases</td>
<td>• Influences institutional policies &amp; practices. Limits access to investment capital; ‘exclusion’ from informal networks to learn of job opportunities, etc.</td>
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Unequal pay for work of equal value
Women better educated, but earn less than men (Mortley, 2015)
• Confirms broader institutional, social and structural gender barriers

Limited visibility of women in ICT professions, businesses
• 75% of female business owners indicated that their decisions to start their businesses were not influenced by the success of other women in business. (Mortley, 2015)

Challenge of Work Life Balance
• Some women do not apply for top leadership positions, high income jobs or big business ventures because of challenge of balancing paid work and unpaid caregiving work. (Samuels/Dunn interviews, 2015)

Lack of access to affordable finance to:
• Advance ICT certification
• Establish high income ICT businesses
• 45.7% of M vs. 36.5% of W likely to receive fin assistance for startups
• 28.3% of M vs. 12.5% of W likely to receive fin assistance to manage their daily operations
Barriers at Higher Income Levels

- **Lack of spousal support for furthering education**
- **Pregnancy**
  - Some view pregnancy as barrier to women’s upward career mobility
- **Some women complain of sexual harassment**
  - when having to transact business (Mortley 2015)
- **Cultural norms prevent some successful women in ICT from promoting their successes**
- **Less confident in ‘selling’ ideas and skills. More risk averse**
  - despite evidence of capacity to multi-task; organize, & run successful businesses
Strategies to increase opportunities and access to Education, Training and Employment in the ICT Sector

Addressing gender inequalities requires continued efforts to overcome a complex set of interrelated challenges linking gaps in patriarchal norms, socialization, human capital and technology, gender blind policies, women’s disproportionate responsibility for unpaid work, legal & financial discrimination and gender based violence.
Reflections on my STEM journey

- Grew up desirous of being an astronaut
- Seeds of self doubt sewn along racial lines from formative years
- Stark reality for black women in STEM - USA
- JFK – Aug 16, 1998
- Only black female modus
- Slavery model used as teaching aid – bred discomfort
- Matriculation into PE Class
- Attempt to rob and invalidate voice
Reflections on my STEM journey

1. Questions re: validity of admission
2. Mistaken for Janitorial staff
3. Stature, Race, Complexion, Hair, Gender, Age
4. Driving query during interview process
5. Networking challenges in old boys’ club that is ICT Sector
6. Contract negotiations
7. Accusations of disposition betraying desire to show-off
8. Committed to being the change - paradigm shift needed!
Thank You!

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Any Questions?