ICT, Intermediaries, and the Transformation of Gendered Power Structures

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Abstract

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are believed to hold much potential to empower women, both socially and economically, in low-income and rural communities. In this paper, we focus on rural women who mediate ICT use as telecenter operators in India and as helpers and enablers for family members in rural China. We explore under what circumstances they may be able to renegotiate existing gendered power structures. We argue that acts of reconciling or confronting the different spaces they inhabit can allow intermediaries to remake their own identities and positions in their community. This process, rather than the potential associated with ICTs, is where spaces for empowerment often lie.

Keywords: Gender, intermediaries, Global South, India, China, ICT, mobile phones, telecenters