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Barriers to Breakthroughs: Women in Nepal's Information and Communication Technology's Landscape

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Research The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector is recognized as a key driver of economic growth and innovation, both globally and within Nepal. However, despite women comprising over half of Nepal's population and achieving higher university enrollment rates than men, their active participation in the ICT workforce is strikingly low in Nepal, hindering the sector's potential for inclusive and equitable growth. Thus it was essential to provide an evidence-based analysis of the existing landscape, identify specific barriers, and uncover opportunities to empower women in this crucial economic domain. Women in Information Technology (WIIT) in Nepal undertook this task by conducting a survey and research "Barriers to Breakthroughs: Women in Nepal's Information and Communication Technology Landscape" with support from The Asia Foundation (TAF). The study, based on extensive surveys of ICT companies, ICT-enabled companies, professional women and focus group discussions with professionals & stakeholders reveals stark disparities: women constitute only 7.88% of the workforce in Nepalese ICT companies and a mere 0.51% in ICT-enabled firms, with even lower representation in leadership roles. Key challenges identified include significant work-life balance issues, subconscious bias in hiring and promotions, limited access to mentorship & role models, financial constraints for advanced education. Encouragingly, 87.9% of surveyed women reported no pay disparity. In exploring competitive edge women bring to ICT roles, women are highly valued for their ethical professionalism (98.3%), customer relations & communication skills (95.7%) and innovative & problem solving nature (87.1%). Actionable recommendations include hands-on training and networking for young women, mentorship and inclusive policies for organizations, and government-funded scholarships, tax incentives and equitable laws, thus providing Nepal with a foundational data-driven resource for policy makers and industry leaders to design and implement targeted interventions. For the broader Asia Pacific region, this research offers a localized case study that resonates with shared challenges in women's STEM participation. It can also serve as a catalyst for regional dialogue and collaborative efforts to build inclusive digital future.

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