PREFACE

The study entitled **Gender Access to Information and Communication Technologies in Silchar Town with Special Reference to Internet and Mobile Technologies** is an attempt to analyse the patterns of gender access to and impact of ICTs in Indian society. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a force that has changed all aspects of life. Amidst various dimensions of ICT applications, the emergence of education acquires importance for promotion of gender equality as well as empowering women. ICTs are rapidly changing to deliver the promises of universal education around the world. With the advent of ICTs, gender assumes new dimensions of ICT facilities, ICT employability and ICT potential for education-powered gender empowerment and promotion of gender equality. In all societies of the world gender is one of the structural bases of social differences and inequalities. The world people live in is always ordered by gender. Yet, it is also produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interactions. Hence, it is embodied as well as lived by men and women. It encompasses both social divisions and cultural distinctions between men and women, through the characteristics commonly associated with femininity and masculinity. Gender is lived and experienced differently, depending on one's class, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality. Cultural perspectives tend to conceptualize differences between women and men simply in terms of culture or identity while sociologists are more concerned with patterned inequalities. Gender inequalities influence not only the distribution of status, class and power but also the access to means of people's capacity-building such as ICTs in society. ICTs are no doubt bridging the gaps of territories, cultures and times but like other technologies these new technologies are also vulnerable to gender perceptions, identities and differences. The literature available on ICTs reveals that most of males, who are better educated while less women have used computers. These reveal high social inequality. In the information network, marginalized women are illiterate and indigenous are facing difficulties in accessing ICTs which are intermediated by gender perceptions in societies. Policies, programs and projects need to ensure that gender differences and inequalities in the access to and use of ICTs are identified and fully addressed so that such technologies actively promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based disadvantages. ICTs may well and will create inequalities; ICTs are usually not invented primarily to bridge social divides. Technology usually is to the benefit of the technology sense of

the skilled users, which will most probably not keep pace in terms of life opportunities and jobs. The question "How can ICTs bridge social divides?" involves the whole agenda of socio-economic aspects of ICT research in e-Government, e-Work, e-Health and e-Education. Answer to such a question is related to the issue of access specially gender access to ICTs and it is the prominent one among the discourses on the social divides created under the impact of ICTs. Gender access to ICTs is variable in the context of place, culture and economy. Obviously, it is different in a peripheral region like North East India specially Silchar Town.

The chapter1 analyses introduction that formulates the problem in the light of brief review of the studies on ICTs, research questions, objectives, etc. and lays down the methodology of the research.

The chapter 2 analyses the field of the study that gives the context of study in terms of ICT development in Silchar town. The chapter analyses origin and history of Silchar Town. The chapter analysis on two types of ICTs namely old ICTs and new ICTs. Old ICT is a conglomeration of print media, visual and audio-visual media. New ICT is a conglomeration of computer, internet and mobile phone etc.

The chapter 3 analyses social background of the sampled household population that displays socio-economic features of the sampled households and population. The chapter discusses the socio-economic profile of sampled households representing persons that includes male and female. It also analyses socio-economic background of sampled persons such as religion, caste, occupation, economic condition, political and cultural participation in community development programs.

The chapter 4 analyses gender access patterns of old ICTs that brings out the extent and patterns of ICT exposure among the males and females from the sampled households**.** The chapter analyses the emerging pattern of gender access to old ICTs in Silchar town. It also analyses the access of old ICTs such as print media includes newspaper and magazine, audio-visual media includes radio, FM radio, TV that exposed by both male and female of Silchar town. The chapter interprets the social impact of mass media in Silchar town.

The chapter 5 analyses gender access patterns of Internet Communication that discusses the patterns of access and use of Internet among the males and females from the sampled households. The chapter also discusses an emerging pattern of gender access to Internet Technology of Communication in Silchar town. The chapter analyses the gender access to

computer with respect to having knowledge, purpose, place, time span etc. It also analyses the gender access to Internet Technology of Communication that relates to place, purpose, attitude and impact. The chapter interprets the social impact of Internet Technology of Communication in Silchar town.

The chapter 6 analyses gender access patterns of Mobile Phone Communication that discusses the patterns of access and use of mobile phones among the males and females from the sampled households in Silchar town. It also analyses the place of access, facilities, purpose, average bill, land line and mobile phone comparison etc. The chapter discusses the social impact of Mobile Phone Technology of Communication in Silchar town.

Finally, the chapter 7 concludes the study by summarizing the findings and the contributions of this thesis and presents several directions for future research.