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# National ICT Australia invites you to the Victoria Research Laboratory Big Picture Seminar Series Thursday July 3, 2008

The talk will be followed by light refreshments and an opportunity to meet the speaker.

REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR THIS FREE EVENT  
RSVP to [vr1ss@nicta.com.au](mailto:vr1ss@nicta.com.au) by Monday 30 June, 2008

Public Parking is available at an hourly rate at the University Square car park. Enter via Bouverie Street. Local street parking is also available.



**When:** 4-5pm, Thursday July 3, 2008

**Where:** Brown Theatre, Electrical & Electronic Engineering (Building 193), University of Melbourne, Parkville

Samia Melhem, BSc, MSc, MBA

Gender & Socio-Economic Empowerment: The Role of ICTs in developing countries

**ABSTRACT:** In all OECD countries, ICTs are now an ubiquitous and pervasive part of our lives. In developing countries, however, this is not the case. For women of such countries, the high cost of access to ICT infrastructure, illiteracy, lack of skilled labour force, lack of useful and reliable local content as well as cultural stereotypes often prohibit them from using telephony or the internet as a tool to access information. In a globalised world where connectivity and access to knowledge is becoming critical to the success and efficiency of business ventures, should we worry about the gender aspects of information societies in terms of production, consumption and usage trends? Cases on how access to ICTs has helped increase women's economic opportunities in developing countries will be discussed, as well as some ideas on how the public sector in developing countries could benefit from the private sector's experience in incorporating gender neutral policies. The presentation will conclude with a discussion on the role of the multilateral organisations, in particular that of the World Bank Group, as well as the role of universities, think tanks, innovators, educators, and centres of excellence.

**BIOGRAPHY:** Samia Melhem is a member of the e-Government practice group in the Global ICT department at the World Bank (GICT). Her current responsibilities include technical assistance and advisory services related to eGovernment projects in developing countries. In her 20 years of service at the World Bank Group, Samia has worked on ICT4D in a wide variety of sectors and in a wide number of global regions. Her interest is in planning, developing and implementing large scale information systems for governments, as well as using ICT as a tool to support public administration reform. Samia also leads GICT's research on Gender and ICTs, a Knowledge and Learning practice, and chairs the e-Development Thematic Group. She holds degrees in Electrical Engineering (BS), Computer Sciences (MS) and Finance (MBA).

