Involving civil society in ICT policy

The World Summit on the Information Society

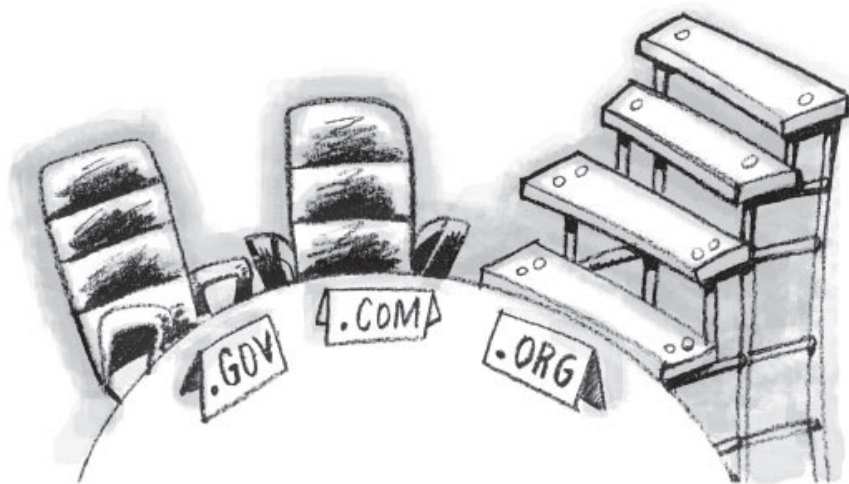# Involving civil society in ICT policy:

The World Summit on the Information Society

APC

The Association for Progressive Communications is an international network of civil society organisations whose mission is to empower and support organisations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies to build strategic communities and initiatives for the purpose of making meaningful contributions to equitable human development, social justice, participatory political processes and environmental sustainability. APC is a founding member of CRIS.

www.apc.org

CRIS Campaign

Communications Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) is an international campaign to ensure that communication rights are central to the information society and to the upcoming World Summit to the Information Society (WSIS). The campaign is sponsored and supported by the Platform for Communication Rights, a group of non-governmental organisations involved in media and communication around the world.

www.crisinfo.org

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations and Acronyms Used in This Book

APC	Association for Progressive Communications
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIPP	Communications and Information Policy Programme (APC)
CRIS	Communication Rights in the Information Society Campaign
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSOs	Civil society organisations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ICTs	Information and communications technologies
IPR	Intellectual property rights
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SACOD	Southern Africa Communications for Development
TRIPs	Trade Related Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organisation
WNSP	Women's Networking Support Programme (APC)
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society

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Introduction

Introduction

About this book

This book has been compiled by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS). It is part of our combined efforts to ensure that communication and internet rights are upheld and protected as fundamental rights throughout the world.

The ability to share information and communicate freely underpin all other human rights, and is a means to strengthen the social, economic and cultural lives of people and communities.

The rapid spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs)[1], and the convergence (or combined use) of different media, is resulting in the emergence of new policies and regulation. A body of governance is being created that can impact directly on access to ICTs and their use. At international, regional and national forums[2] "information society" or "e-readiness" action plans and strategies are being formulated. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is one such forum, and APC and CRIS have opted to engage the process from a critical perspective and are working to mobilise strategic civil society engagement in ICT governance and action planning.

This book is aimed primarily at people from civil society organisations who access and use ICTs to promote peace, development and human rights, and want to advocate for more enabling policy environments. It is designed to build civil society organisations awareness of and capacity to engage in the World Summit on Information Society within the Summit process, and other policy-making spaces at international, regional and national levels. It highlights issues most relevant to civil society and suggests ways to get involved.

Decisions made in ICT policy processes, including the WSIS, will impact on civil society's ability and potential to use ICTs as tools in their work and on the degree of local ownership and control of the production and application of these technologies. The WSIS process provides an opportunity for the perspectives of civil society to be heard and considered. It is, therefore, critical that civil society organisations get involved.

This book reflects the ongoing work in building ICT policy awareness and the active participation in the WSIS process of both APC and CRIS. It draws on work by APC's global and regional Communications and Information Policy and Women's Networking Support Programmes, and it refers to APC and the CRIS campaign's efforts at global, regional and national levels to ensure that human and communication rights are central to the WSIS process. It contains substantive sections on issues that are key for civil society: intellectual property, media ownership, spectrum allocation and universal access to telecommunications.

We hope this book increases understanding of the key issues for civil society and highlights the crucial importance and opportunities for civil society involvement in ICT policy processes which are shaping access to, and use of, ICT at all levels.

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1 The OECD defines ICTs as "the means of generating, processing, transporting and presenting information". ICTs enable people to share information and communicate with each other.

2 For example, the DOT Force http://www.dotforce.org/ and the UN ICT Task Force http://www.unicttaskforce.org/.

Introducing the World Summit on the Information Society

What is the WSIS?

The World Summit on the Information Society (sometimes referred to as "the Summit") is a United Nations conference, led by the International Telecommunications Union, a UN agency older than the United Nations itself.[3]

The goal of the WSIS is to develop a global framework to deal with the challenges posed by the information society.

In some ways, it is similar to other UN world conferences[4] in that it:

- Aims to bring together Heads of State, Executive Heads of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations in a single high-level event (or "world summit"), which has a series of regional conferences, international preparatory committee meetings and intermittent "informal" sessions

- Aims to develop and foster a clear statement of political will (a political "Declaration") and a concrete "Plan of Action" for achieving goals and objectives which reflect the perspectives and interests of all stakeholders.

Is it different from other UN World Conferences?

The WSIS process is different from most other UN Conferences in that it:

- Is a two phase process, culminating in World summits in Geneva (December 10-12, 2003) and Tunis (November 16-18, 2005)

- Includes the private sector as a stakeholder

- Aims to incorporate a multi-stakeholder, consensual approach (reflecting the interests of governments, the private sector and civil society) in all deliberations.

Who are the "stakeholders"?

Stakeholders refer to the three main actors within the WSIS process: governments, the private sector and civil society. In addition, there are many UN agencies and intergovernmental bodies participating in the process.

Governments
One hundred and ninety-one governments are represented through delegations. These representatives tend to come from communications, trade, e-commerce and industry ministries and departments. In some cases, governments may include representatives from other sectors (such as development, education) and can include non-governmental and private sector representation.

The Private Sector
The private sector is represented through the "Co-ordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI)" in the summit. The CCBI is a "vehicle through which to mobilise and coordinate the involvement of the worldwide business community in the processes leading to and culminating in the Summit. The CCBI is made up of –and open to all– representatives of individual business firms, as well as of associations and other organisations that represent business interests"[5]. However, the interests of the private sector from developing countries are not strongly represented in CCBI.

Many feel that the interests of the private sector are overstated, considering existing bi-lateral agreements with nation states, representation through membership of the ITU and even representation through some elements of civil society.

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3 The decision to convene the WSIS was made at an ITU plenipotentiary meeting held in Seattle in 1998.
4 These include the "Earth Summit" (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), Human Rights Conference (Vienna, 1994), Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), Population and Development Conference (Cairo, 1996), Social Summit (Copenhagen, 1995), and the Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and other forms of intolerance (Johannesburg, 2001).

5 http://www.iccwbo.org/home/e_business/wsis.asp

Civil Society

There is no unanimously agreed definition of civil society but however it is defined, it is a diverse gathering of groups, networks and movements with a myriad of views and positions on almost every issue on the WSIS agenda.

It includes representatives from "professional" and grassroots NGOs, the trade union movement, community media activists, mainstream and traditional media interest groups, parliamentarians and local government officials, the scientific and academic community, educators, librarians, volunteers, the disability movement, youth activists, indigenous peoples, "think-tanks", philanthropic institutions, gender advocates and human and communication rights advocates.

What is the process?

All stakeholders are making contributions to development of the Declaration and Action Plan through a range of means including:

- Developing positions and lobbying at the national level to feed into regional processes

- Participating in regional conferences to develop regional consensus positions

- Participating in international preparatory committee meetings to develop global consensus positions

- Making electronic submissions to draft documents between on-site events

How does civil society fit within this process?

Civil society works in a range of formations in developing its inputs to the summit outcomes.

6   Please see www.wsis-cs.org for more information on civil society in the WSIS process.

The Civil Society Plenary (CSP)[6]: is open to everyone and is the main body of civil society for discussion and general decision-making.

The Civil Society Content and Themes Group (CSCT): co-ordinates the work of the numerous regional and thematic caucuses and working groups. It is the main body for discussion and decisions on content-related issues.

The Civil Society Bureau (CSB): which functions as an inter-linkage between the CSCT and the intergovernmental Bureau for procedural and technical issues.

What are the issues?

At the time of writing, all stakeholders have been tasked with negotiating a final version of the Declaration and Action Plan, which will be approved by governments at the summit in Geneva, December 10-12, 2003.

Many civil society organisations are concerned at the lack of political will to address fundamental issues within the WSIS agenda. These issues are reflected in the Civil Society Content and Themes priorities document and include:

- Human rights and communication rights

- Sustainable democratic development

- Erosion of the global knowledge commons

- Literacy, education and research

- Cultural and linguistic diversity

- Gender equality and women's empowerment

- Privacy and security; access and infrastructure

- Lack of affirmation, monitoring and enforcement of existing UN agreements

It is the intention of this handbook to outline some of the critical issues, we, as active members of civil society are advocating within the WSIS process.

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Perspectives from the APC on the World Summit on the Information Society

APC

Perspectives from the APC on the WSIS

Introduction

APC's vision

APC's vision is of *a world in which all people have equal and affordable access to the creative potential of ICTs to improve their lives and create more democratic and egalitarian societies*.[7]

There is little doubt that access to ICTs is expanding; yet this process *excludes* the majority of people in developing countries. Many who *do* have access are unable to use it freely to promote their social, economic and political interests. When people gain access to these technologies, it is mostly as consumers, rather than owners or creators. The growing concentration of ownership and control of ICT can limit its remarkable potential for social empowerment.[8]

APC and the WSIS

The WSIS is an important opportunity to shape the debate about ICTs and their impact on society. The APC and its members have participated actively in the WSIS process since the first UNESCO Civil Society Consultation in February 2002.

APC co-facilitates the civil society regional caucuses from Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. It plays an active role in the information security and gender thematic working groups, and participates in the Civil Society Content and Themes Group that drafts civil society input into the WSIS process. Several APC members and programme representatives are active in national WSIS preparatory processes.[9]

APC believes that ICTs can empower communities and individuals. For this to happen civil society must be active in defining both the vision and action plan that emerge from the WSIS. The voices of CSOs must be heard and their needs addressed. Through building knowledge and networks in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia, APC has been working to increase awareness and broaden civil society participation in ICT policy debates.[10]

Empowering CSOs and women

Two APC programmes focus specifically on ICT policies and "internet rights"[11]: Communications and Information Policy (CIPP) and Women's Networking Support (WNSP). The overall goal of CIPP is to ensure that the needs of civil society are addressed in ICT policy and are supported in practice through active CSO participation in policy and implementation processes.

Incorporating a gender perspective is integral to APC's work. This approach is led by the APC WNSP and is informed by the recognition of unequal power relations between women and men, north and south, rich and poor, urban and rural, connected and unconnected, within and between countries.

Through training, participatory research, evaluation, and advocacy in the area of gender and information technology, the APC WNSP responds to these inequalities and offer opportunities to women from many regions of the world.

The APC recognises that ICTs on their own cannot create gender equality, or end poverty, but we believe that they can be tools for social action and positive social change.

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7   APC vision statement, November 2001
8   High-Level Panel on the Role of ICTs in Development - ECOSOC July 2000:
    A Civil Society Perspective on the "Information Revolution", APC,
    www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x=6291
9   Argentina, Ecuador, South Africa, South Korea, among others.

10 For example, through the development of an "ICT Policy for Civil Society" training
    curriculum and training trainers, and running workshops using this curriculum.
    www.apc.org/english/capacity/policy
11 Ensuring "Internet Rights" for civil society was identified as a priority by APC
    members at an APC Council Meeting (Visegrad, May 2000).

"New information and communication technologies, including the internet, are part of the globalisation process - a process that takes place on unequal terms, and that often increases social and economic inequality between and within countries. At the same time the internet and related tools can be used for resistance, social mobilisation and development when they are in the hands of people and organisations working for freedom and justice." APC Internet Rights Charter

An APC Perspective[12]

The following section contains a synthesis of APC's priorities in relation to the WSIS. It is based on APC's submission[13] on the Draft Declaration of Principles and Action Plan of the second WSIS preparatory committee meeting (Geneva, February 2003) and draws extensively on input from the Civil Society Priorities Document prepared for the WSIS Intersessional (Paris, July 2003).[14]

It represents broadly the views of APC and its members, reflecting regional and women's perspectives and in some instances includes recommended actions. Most importantly, it draws on our vast learning from working collaboratively with many other CSOs and networks.

Creating a fair and just world and achieving sustainable development

The goal of WSIS is to develop a global framework to deal with the challenges posed by the information society. Preparatory discussions have been based on the assumption that the "information society" is a "better" society and that the "knowledge economy" is inherently equitable.

There is a superficial notion, perpetuated in official WSIS documents, that by closing the "digital-divide" development will occur. APC believes that the "digital-divide" itself is a consequence of deeply-rooted structural inequalities and that the digital-divide itself can perpetuate and exacerbate existing inequalities.

There is no certainty that the so-called "knowledge economy" will ensure a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and power. In fact, it reinforces existing inequalities, introduces new forms of exclusion and increases the gap between rich and poor.

It is not merely access to information that will empower people to achieve their full potential, but more equitable access to the world's resources, and the ability to participate effectively in the decisions that impact on their lives.

Equitable societies can only be based on sustainable economic and social development, equality between men and women, human rights and participatory democracies.

Communication rights and human rights

APC believes that the ability to share information and communicate freely using ICTs is vital to the realisation of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)[15] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976).[16] Governments reaffirmed their commitment to human rights as being universal, indivisible, inter-related and interdependent, ten years ago in Vienna at the World Conference on Human Rights.[17]

As new ICTs emerge and new policy and legislation comes into effect, human rights **must** be at the heart of the WSIS. To ensure this, existing rights need to be interpreted, monitored and enforced with specific reference to articles 7, 10, 12, 18, 19, 20, 26, 27 of the UDRH which form the basis of people-centred communication rights.

The priorities statement of civil society made in July 2003 argues that: "We urge government delegates to retain reference to the international bill of human rights as a whole and in particular to rights that make possible new platforms for real community-based and people-centered communications. These should be called communication rights and are of immediate and direct concern to the development of inclusive information and knowledge societies."[18]

12 Refer also to the APC Internet Rights Charter, November 2002.
   www.apc.org/english/rights/charter.shtml#1
13 www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x=12209
14 Civil Society Content and Themes Group, Priorities Document :
   www.worldsummit2003.de/download_en/WSIS-CS-CT-Paris-071203.rtf

15 http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html
16 http://193.194.138.190/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm
17 http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu5/wchr.htm
18 http://212.80.231.85/download_en/WSIS-CS-CT-Prio-080303-en.rtf

Related to the right to communicate securely and privately via online mediums without the threat of undue interception and surveillance:

Article 7
All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law

Article 10
Everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing

Article 12
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation

Related to freedom of expression when using ICTs:

Article 18
Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion…

Article 19
Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

Related to the right to meet and organise using ICTs:

Article 20
Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Related to education and capacity-building to enable people to use and develop ICTs:

Article 26
Right to education. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Related to rights to create and access diverse content (cultural and linguistic) on the internet and other electronic media:

Article 27
Everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Gender equality and women's empowerment [19]

APC is concerned that governments' commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment remain largely absent from the WSIS discussion. Gender equality is central to social, political and economic equity and we call for the enforcement of Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The following section of this book provides a more in-depth discussion of this issue.

"The (WSIS) Declaration must adopt as a statement of principle a fundamental commitment to gender equality, non-discrimination and women's empowerment, and recognise these as non-negotiable and essential prerequisites to an equitable and people-centred development within the Information Society…

The Action Plan should endorse the call of gender and ICT advocates for the development of governance and policy frameworks, the setting of quantitative and qualitative targets, programmes, activities, applications and tools, and a system of monitoring and evaluation which would redress shortcomings of current gender mainstreaming approaches." (Civil Society Priorities Document, July 2003)

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19 Refer to the next section of this document for an in-depth discussion of this issue.

Access, infrastructure development and affordability

The principle of universal access should be redefined and extended to apply to traditional, mass, community and new media. Different needs (for example the needs of people with disabilities) should be acknowledged and a gender perspective incorporated to ensure equitable access for all. The APC believe that *"ICTs should be designed and developed to ensure that they are accessible to and easily used by marginalised groups, people who are not fully literate, minorities, and people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities. Innovations should promote the development of people's different capacities"* (APC Internet Rights Charter).

In the developed world the public sector has traditionally assumed primary responsibility for creating enabling infrastructure environments and ensuring delivery of basic telecommunications services. Notwithstanding resource and capacity limitations, developing country governments should also undertake this responsibility. The development of telecommunications infrastructure, and the setting of rates, tariffs, and equipment and software taxes, should work to make access a reality for all economic groups.

The APC believes that through the creative use of wireless, free and open-source solutions it is possible for governments to create the basic conditions that are needed for people to benefit from ICTs and for the private sector and civil society to participate in extending ICT access and use.

We believe that free and open-source software solutions are more economically sustainable and eventually technically reliable than proprietary software (i.e. software created and upgraded by a sole manufacturer) and therefore deserve special consideration in the WSIS.

ACTIONS should include:

- approaching the cost-burden of infrastructure development in under-developed areas from a global perspective

- commitments to using technologies that can enhance affordable access such as wireless networks and Voice over Internet Protocol

- initiatives that promote affordability in rural areas such as cell phone subsidies and low cost satellite internet access

- initiatives that use free software technical solutions to enable access

- commitments to creating policy environments that enable the use of all the above

- national access and infrastructure plans that address the divide between socio-economic groups and between urban and rural areas

- ensuring democratic management of radio frequencies, including access for community media.

Capacity-building

It is essential that people have access to capacity-building opportunities that will enable them to be creators of ICTs, not just consumers of ICTs. Women and girls should receive specific focus in science and technology training and education.

Developing country governments should approach capacity-building support from vendors of proprietary software and hardware with caution as the support will often be product-focused and so not build skills on a sustainable basis.

ACTIONS should include:

- capacity-building initiatives aimed at creators of ICT solutions

- capacity-building to use free and open-source software

- focus on building local ICT entrepreneurship

- training that builds the ability to manage ICTs and make strategic decisions about ICT use

- capacity-building for the ICT support sector in developing countries

- support for the development of low-cost training methodologies, courses and materials for citizens on how to use ICTs for social development

Content and cultural and linguistic diversity

APC supports the assertion below:
"The (WSIS) Declaration should adopt as a statement of principle the need to respect cultural and linguistic diversity. Communications media and information technologies have a particularly important role to play in sustaining and developing the world's cultures and languages. The implementation of this principle requires support for a plurality of means of information and communication including community-driven communications initiatives."
(Civil Society Priorities Document, July 2003)

ACTIONS needed include:

- legislative, regulatory, technological and financial measures to support communications media and information pluralism

- legislative and regulatory safeguards against the concentration of media ownership in either corporate or government hands

- legislative and regulatory frameworks that reinforce rights for all people, including indigenous peoples and other linguistic and cultural minorities, to access and create information

- support for the development of public service broadcast media including community media

- development of new ICTs, which can reinforce cultural and linguistic diversity through, for example, translation, voice recognition and other means of transcending cultural and linguistic barriers[20]

- initiatives or legislative and regulatory frameworks which promote local content development and dissemination over the range of media

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20 Many of these actions were identified in the Civil Society Priorities Document, July 2003.

Civil liberties, privacy and security

APC believes that one of the most democratising aspects of the internet is that it allows private online spaces. Access to private and safe spaces are essential tools for facilitating dialogue, debate, and sharing of information and experiences. The internet provides the opportunity to network across geographical boundaries and include remote, isolated peoples and communities. It is an important tool for democratic and horizontal organising and networking. As the APC Internet Rights Charter states, "*People must be able to express opinions and ideas, and share information freely when using the internet. The potential of the internet to allow public participation in governance processes, at international, national and local levels, should be utilised to its full.*"

Current policies and legislative trends in the area of information security threaten the democratising potential of ICTs. In a climate of fear and uncertainty governments are grappling to devise means by which they can define and more effectively control "crime", regulate "illegal" or "harmful" content, secure "critical" systems and in the WSIS context, develop a culture of "cyber-security".

There has been a steady stream of policies regulating, monitoring or controlling the movement of people online and offline, at home, in the workplace, across borders primarily in developed countries. A vast amount of personal data on citizens is being retained by intermediary agents and increased collection of data and sharing between governments, agencies and commercial actors is taking place.

These processes are almost impenetrable to civil society and often conducted in secrecy. Very worryingly, "information security" policies tend to be overly broad, ambiguous, and inconsistent with or in contravention with human rights instruments and principles. They often lend undue weight to "national" or "sovereign" interests, at times unnecessarily impinging on the rights and civil liberties of individuals.

One of the greatest threats to "information security" lies in the militarisation of information space,

including the development and deployment of "infowar" technologies and techniques.[21]

In the development of policies and regulatory frameworks, civil liberties, privacy rights and rights to associate freely and engage in public debate and dialogue must be upheld. This should include opposition to the use of legal and economic intimidation, particularly with respect to copyright, trademark and patents, to silence critical voices.

ACTIONS should include:

- Support for activities which promote education and discourse amongst all stakeholders to create a "culture" of security and confidence in the information society

- Creation of inventories of recommended best practice and impact assessment of existing and potential policies

- Developing mechanisms through which local and international stakeholders can ensure equitable and just protection of rights as international legal solutions are devised

- Encouraging the foundations for a future Convention against Information Warfare (Civil Society Priorities, July 2003)

- Legal frameworks that respect the rights of workers to use ICTs in the workplace.

ACTIONS should NOT include:

- Calls by some governments to support the Council of Europe's Cybercrime Convention[22] or models based on the convention.

Civil society organisations have been working for a number of years to educate and inform the convention's development to little avail and are now opposing its ratification because of its overly broad mandate, its insensitivity to local issues and its disregard for civil liberties.

Free software and industrial control of information, and the public domain

APC believes in the freedoms inherent in free software which empowers everyone equally to create, use, modify and copy software.[23]

The impact of existing intellectual property regulation on limiting access to information and knowledge and technological innovation needs serious consideration. A vibrant and rich public domain is essential to sharing knowledge and as such must be protected and extended. Information in the public domain, which includes publicly-funded writing and research, must be freely and easily accessible.

ACTIONS should include:

- Development of national policies that encourage the use of free software in the delivery of public sector services including universal service roll-out

- Development of national policies that recognise and strengthen the public domain, for example by stating that all publicly-funded writing and research, must be freely and easily accessible

- A call for a full review of copyright globally and nationally so that it can be rebuilt as a flexible and adaptable regime geared to enhancing development and supporting creativity

- Actions to nurture and promote open approaches to intellectual creativity such as Creative Commons and Copyleft.[24]

Internet governance

"In an information and communication society, good governance must be based on the values of participation, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. This particularly implies the democratic management of international bodies dealing with ICTs. Given the borderless characteristics of ICTs, decision-making bodies should respect the principles of democracy and openness as well as sovereignty.

21 Such as the deployment of military software or hardware against civilian communications systems, the domination of satellite orbits for military purposes and the purposeful destruction of civilian communication systems during conflicts in violation of international law. (from the Civil Society Priorities Document, July 2003.)
22 http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/WhatYouWant.asp?NT=185
23 Refer also to http://www.gnu.org/, website of the Free Software Foundation.
24 http://creativecommons.org/ and http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/copyleft.html

In particular, the management of the core resources of the internet, such as internet protocols, standards and identifiers such as domain names and IP addresses, must serve the public interest at the global, national and local levels." (Civil Society Priorities Document, July 2003)

The APC agrees with this statement and believes that "*the development and implementation of standards related to the control and operation of the internet increasingly give undue weight to market influences*" and that "*internet governance and standard-setting bodies must be open to participation and scrutiny by all stakeholders, particularly non-commercial stakeholders*".[25]

ACTIONS needed include:

- Establishment of multi-stakeholder governance frameworks for the management of country code top level domains

- Protection of the right to freedom of expression through protection of the right to a presence on the internet through registering a domain

- Respect for linguistic diversity when assigning top level domains (e.g. .edu, .com, all of which are recognisable only for readers of Latinate languages)

- Democratisation of existing internet governance processes such as ICANN.

Strengthening local institutions

APC believes that it is only through strong locally-rooted and -owned institutions that ICTs can be sustainably supported and used for social justice and development. This applies to public, private and civil society sector institutions.

ACTIONS needed include:

- Large-scale investment in building and strengthening locally-owned institutions that support the use of ICTs in developing countries

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25 APC Internet Rights Charter

- Investment in institutions, and in the capacity of existing institutions, to foster the development of innovative ICT solutions suited to local contexts

Affirm previous commitments and ensure linkages between WSIS and other decision-making spaces

It is essential that decisions made in the context of the WSIS consider those that have been and are being made in other related spaces. This applies to all previous UN summits as well as to decisions made in other "supra-national forums such as the Council of Europe (e.g. its CyberCrime Treaty), the European Union (e.g. its Directives on copyright and software patents), the WIPO, the ITU itself (e.g. its new rules on collection tariffs or *taxes de répartition*), the WTO (e.g. its decisions taken within the frame of the GATTS) all have huge potential consequences for knowledge, education and culture." (Civil Society Priorities Document, July 2003)

ACTIONS needed include:

The establishment of a multi-stakeholder observatory committee that would be responsible for:

- mapping decision-making in other political arenas that impacts or intersects with the WSIS agenda;

- establishing a monitoring system to ensure that decisions taken in other political arenas that relate to the information society are consistent with the general framework established by the WSIS process; and

- reporting on decisions made in other political arenas to all stakeholders of the WSIS on a regular basis until December 2005.

"In the development of international legal frameworks, preference should be given to those bodies which empower the effective participation of developing countries in decision-making process to redress the current trend of exporting of frameworks developed by Western countries, to the global level." (Civil Society Priorities Document, July 2003)

APC Women's Networking Support Programme Perspective

About this paper

This paper has been prepared by the APC Women's Networking Support Programme, a network of over 100 women, their organisations and networks, networking for social change and gender justice through the use of ICTs.[26] The APC WNSP has been participating in national, regional and international ICT policy work since 1993 when we began preparations for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).

This paper outlines the values and principles of the APC WNSP, our priority issues, and some areas of action in relation to the WSIS process.

As with many prior processes, our work in the WSIS has been strengthened through collaborative relationships with many other organisations and we note particularly our partnership in the WSIS process with the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group members.[27] We acknowledge the contributions of many other gender and ICT advocates, such as the WSIS Multi-stakeholder Gender Caucus, in strengthening our advocacies and amplifying our voice throughout the process.

Gender And ICT advocacy in the WSIS process

The Fourth World Conference on Women was a watershed in realising the power of information technology as a tool for women's mobilisation, information exchange, and empowerment. Since then, the "gender and ICT" agenda has steadily gained legitimacy as a serious area of concern, mainly through painstaking work by women's organisations and a few international agencies and donors. These efforts have resulted in programmes and projects that are now contributing to empowering women in their individual capacities as well as organisational and community contexts, and are turning development initiatives in local contexts into more sustainable interventions.

The potential benefits for women with the resources to access and use new information and communication technologies are enormous. For society as a whole, ICTs offer immense possibilities for reducing poverty, overcoming women's isolation, giving women a voice, improving governance and advancing gender equality. However, this potential will only be realised if the factors that contribute to the current gender digital-divide are recognised and addressed in the WSIS process, and in all ICT policy-making spaces.

The WSIS preparatory processes have included consistent efforts by women's groups to integrate a gender perspective into all deliberations and drafting of output documents. Many have worked in a mutually respectful, collaborative and constructive way with men and women from the regional caucuses and thematic working groups of the civil society formation. Although small in number, they have been visibly active in many spaces and have made representations to the plenary of the WSIS Preparatory Committee and meetings by both gender and ICT advocates with government delegates, as well the former-president of the WSIS process, Mr Adama Samassekou.

Nonetheless, there continues to be a complete lack of any serious acknowledgement of, and commitment to redress gender imbalances as they relate to women's participation in and benefits from the envisioned information society. There is scant evidence, except for a few notable submissions, that demonstrate seriousness of purpose in addressing the gender dimensions of the information society.

This lack of acknowledgment was evident in the Draft Declaration emerging from the WSIS

26 www.apcwomen.org
27 www.genderit.org

Intersessional meeting, where the most meaningful language concerning the principles of gender equality and inclusion, equality in power and decision-making and women's empowerment was either deleted from the document, or re-formulated in such a way as to render it meaningless.

Our message is simple and clear: if our concerns are not addressed we face the danger that the WSIS process will fail in addressing the needs of women, who comprise over 50% of the world's population, and will in fact contribute to reinforcing and reproducing existing inequalities, discriminations and injustices.

APC WNSP issues for WSIS

Reaffirm commitments

The WSIS must build on global consensus and reaffirm commitments made at previous UN conferences and summits in particular the World Conferences on Women in Nairobi and Beijing, as well as those focussed on the rights of the child, on environment and development, human rights, population and social development.

Human rights and communication rights

Human rights and freedoms, of which women's human rights and freedoms are an integral part, must be at the core of the information society. Human rights and freedoms must be interpreted, enforced and monitored in the context of the information society.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Gender equality and women's empowerment are central elements of social justice, political and economic equality strategies. The participation of women and men, on the basis of equality, is acknowledged as imperative in strategies such as those which aim to eradicate poverty and disease and contribute to conflict-resolution and peace-building.

The WSIS Declaration must adopt as a statement of principle a commitment to gender equality, non-discrimination and women's empowerment, and recognise these as non-negotiable and essential prerequisites for equitable and people-centred development in the information society.

ACTIONS:

- Gender equality should be specifically identified as a cross-cutting issue in relation to the each of the action points in the Draft Action Plan

- All stakeholders must promote equal opportunities for women and girls and enable their active participation in agenda-setting and decision-making processes in the ICT field

- Donors, governments, and the private sector must actively seek to support and build on the innovative practices and lessons of civil society actors, especially women's organisations, that have sought to use ICTs to build a platform for women's voices, for information-sharing, to mobilise women and to empower women by expanding on their livelihood strategies

- Governments and donors should support activities which generate and disseminate accessible information on the application of ICTs for women's empowerment – for example in terms of employment and trade, agriculture, education, improved health, advocacy and networking, peace-building and civic and political participation

- All stakeholders must include a gender perspective throughout the process of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating ICT initiatives. Hence, all stakeholders need to develop indicators, benchmarks, and ICT for development targets that are gender-specific.

ICT governance and policy frameworks

Global, regional and national ICT governance and policy frameworks can either enable full participation in the information society or inhibit people's access to the technology, information and knowledge.

Policy frameworks deal with everything from the development of national communications infrastructure, to the provision of government, health, education, employment and other information services, to broader societal issues such as freedom of expression, privacy and security. Every ICT policy dimension has implications for women and failure to take account of these will certainly lead to negative impacts for women in relation to the impacts for men.

ACTIONS:

- Include women and individuals with expertise in gender issues in all stages of the policy elaboration process to ensure that the gender dimensions can be identified and addressed

- Ensure national and global ICT policies make explicit reference to gender issues to make them relevant to women and increase the opportunities for women and girls to reap developmental benefits from the information age.

Access and infrastructure

Most women in developing countries live in underserved rural and peri-urban areas. Cost is a major impediment to women's access. If women's connectivity is to be increased, emphasis needs to be on *common use* facilities that provide women with affordable information and communication services.

ACTIONS:

- Universal access and community access policies must be underpinned by an understanding of the gender and rural-urban divide and take into account gender differences in mobility, available time, income, literacy levels, and general socio-cultural factors.

- National ICT policies must create an environment where more investment is directed to the expansion of basic telephony and public ICT access infrastructure that links women and others in remote and rural areas, at affordable costs, to information resources and populations in urban areas.

Promote gender awareness in education and training

Gaining access to information and communication technologies will not, in itself, contribute to women's advancement and social development. Much work needs to be done to promote awareness of the organisational applications of ICTs –for instance, for research, networking, lobbying, and conferencing and to demonstrate the role that ICTs can play in advancing gender equality– through trade, agriculture, health, governance, education and so on.

ACTIONS:

- All stakeholders must seek to empower women's and girls' access to and effective use of ICTs at the local level through gender-aware education and training

- Make maximum use of ICTs –for example, through distance education, e-learning and other ICT-based delivery systems- to eliminate gender disparities in literacy, and in primary, secondary and tertiary education

- Take positive steps to ensure equitable gender access to ICT facilities in both formal and informal education and training

- Develop teacher-training courses on gender and ICTs to raise awareness of issues that influence different levels of ICT take-up among girls and boys.

Content and technology choice

Women's viewpoints, knowledge, experiences and concerns are inadequately reflected on the internet, while gender stereotypes predominate. These concerns relate both to issues of sexism and the portrayal of women in media generally, as well as to the need for women to systematise and develop their own perspectives and knowledge, and to ensure that they are reflected in these spaces.

If women are to make use of the internet for education, advocacy or income-generation, more relevant content, pertaining to both substance and language, must be made available through both new and traditional technologies. New technologies such as computers and the internet should not deflect attention and resources from technologies that have been around for longer such as radio, television and video, print, CD-ROMs.

ACTIONS:

- Support initiatives that facilitate women and girls' ability to generate and disseminate content that reflects their own information and development needs

- Encourage innovative combinations of new technologies and traditional technologies that enhance women's opportunities to access information

- Carry out pilot projects to investigate models of information presentation that respond to women's preferred learning-styles, and develop appropriate ICT content-packaging

- Support the development of community media to foster local content production that is also relevant to the communities' information needs.

Privacy, security and safety

Gender issues and women's concerns lie at the heart of creating a "culture of cyber-security".

They include concern about the use of the internet to commercially and violently exploit women and children, the use of the internet to replicate and re-produce stereotypical and violent images of women, the use of the internet to facilitate sex-trafficking of women and trafficking of peoples in general.

They include having secure online spaces to share sensitive information, exchange experiences, build solidarity, facilitate networking, develop campaigns and lobby more effectively.

They include having secure online spaces where women can feel safe from harassment, enjoy freedom of expression and privacy of communication, and are protected from electronic surveillance and monitoring.

The challenge for many gender and ICT advocates lies at the intersection of these concerns.

Current policies and regulatory frameworks which aim to address security issues (such as filtering and blocking software, "internet watch" bodies, increased data retention, surveillance and monitoring) often threaten the rights and security of users, including legal protection and the right to privacy and anonymity in transaction, interaction and expression – all of which are of great concern to women.

Where policy and regulatory frameworks are needed, they should be developed inclusively and transparently with all stakeholders, particularly women.

Where policy and regulatory frameworks are needed, they should be based on a human rights framework consistent with the International Bill of Rights, encompassing rights related to privacy and confidentiality, freedom of expression and opinion and other related rights.

ACTIONS:

- Include women and gender advocates in consultations and policy processes which aim to regulate or control the use of the internet

- Support ICT initiatives which facilitate researching the reasons for, and results of, violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures

- Promote the use of ICTs as an effective tool in distributing information about, and advocating against gender-based violence

- Support ICT initiatives which raise awareness about the realities of sex-trafficking, campaign to stop trafficking, and support women who are victims of trafficking

- Support women's online communities and networks, especially those that address gender dimensions of violence against women, generate locally relevant and appropriate content in local languages and accessible formats

- Support initiatives which promote the relevance and complimentary role of non-computer-based communication mediums such as radio, video, telephone and fax, in the fight against gender-based violence

- Interpret, monitor and enforce rights which empower women to be free from online sexual exploitation and gender-based violence.

Promote the global commons

The privatisation of knowledge and information through copyright, patents and trademarks is ceasing to be an effective means of rewarding creative endeavour or encouraging innovation and can contribute to the growth of inequality and the exploitation of the poor.

ACTIONS:

- All stakeholders must promote the maintenance and growth of the common wealth of human knowledge as a means of reducing global inequality and of providing the conditions for intellectual creativity, sustainable development and respect for human rights.

Science and technology education for women and girls

It is imperative to counter the reproduction of historical patterns of gender segregation in employment in the comparatively young ICT sector. Men are more likely to be found in high-paying, creative work of hardware and software development and internet "start-ups", whereas women employees predominate in low-paid, single-tasked ICT jobs such as cashiers, data-entry or call-centre workers.

ACTIONS:

- Design and implement national policies and programmes that promote science and technology education for women and girls, and that encourage women to entry into high value-added ICT careers

- Develop early interventions and programmes in science and technology that target young girls to increase the number of women in ICT careers.

African Perspective

About this document

This document reflects the perspectives of APC members and partners in Africa[28] on issues emerging from the WSIS and broader ICT governance debates. It includes many of the key issues identified by the WSIS Civil Society Content and Themes Group and the African caucus. It asserts that Africa, as the world region with the least integration of ICTs, requires specific issues be addressed.

The document raises key areas of concern and in some cases suggest actions that can be included in the WSIS.

Africa and the WSIS

If WSIS is to contribute to a more equitable world African realities must be acknowledged and responded to.

The majority of people on the African continent struggle to provide for their basic needs and are not impacted upon by the "information age". African women predominate among people most affected by poverty and social exclusion. Many African people have never made a phone call and don't live within easy walking-distance of a telephone. The dominant medium for accessing information in Africa is via radio and to a lesser extent, television, making media diversity an important goal on the continent.

We hope that the WSIS is founded on a commitment to reaching global consensus to achieve a fairer world. In the information society human rights must be enhanced and deepened. Social, economic and cultural activity should be strengthened. Principles of equality between men and women, diversity, transparency and participation, social and economic justice should underpin the information society.

We are deeply concerned about the lack of support in the WSIS for bedrock principles that indicate a commitment to building a fairer world. There has

been a dominance of positions that rely on market mechanisms to build much-needed basic infrastructure, and an absence of a strong challenge to the ongoing subsidisation of northern trade interests. These positions have not, and cannot, contribute to Africa's development as an international player.

Africa has not benefited significantly from the process of globalisation. In practice the continent has experienced globalisation as a contemporary wave of re-colonisation of markets. Profit generated leaves the continent and the process detracts from self-managed development. For example, the routing of a telephone call made between neighbouring African countries often travels to Europe and back again, and the costs are born by the African user. This is costly and benefits for Africans are negligible.

There is little incentive for northern service providers to change this scenario. Change requires political will and pro-active regulation. We call upon the WSIS to face these challenges and advance global equality.

We fail to see how the information age will ensure equal opportunity without a major shift in global economic imperatives and values. As a region Africa is behind in terms of the realisation of universal human rights that are taken for granted in many places. Without a fundamental commitment to social, economic and human rights the outcomes of WSIS will not change this reality.

Key issues for Africa

The APC believes that:

- The digital divide is not a technical divide but a social-economic divide with specific regional characteristics in Africa. The digital-divide must be examined from a national, regional and global perspective taking gender equity, socio-economic and medium of access to information factors into account,

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28 A list of African members is included in the reference section of this document.

- The information society should not be technology-focused, but people-centred, contextually appropriate, characterised by social justice and framed by human rights,

- The use of free and open-source software in Africa is a base-line mechanism for affordable access, the building of ICT capacity and the development of appropriate locally-owned ICT solutions.

- Africa's entry into the information society cannot be separated from the major challenges that constrain its development. Among these are:

  - Low rates of literacy, especially in languages dominant on the internet

  - Poverty and globally-constructed limitations to Africa-based economic development (e.g. trade subsidisation)

  - Health challenges such as HIV and malaria

  - Debt (international and domestic)

  - Poor basic infrastructure (in transport, energy, telecommunications)

  - Divides between urban and rural areas and fertile coastal and hinterland areas

  - Insufficient public participation and transparent, people-centred governance

  - Insufficient access to education and capacity-building

  - Lack of media diversity in terms of content and ownership

  - Ensuring basic human rights for all Africa's people

Infrastructure

Affordable and accessible ICT infrastructure is a basic requirement for building an information economy in Africa.

ACTIONS needed include:

- A strong internet backbone, an African root server and internet exchange points to ensure logical traffic routing

- A telecommunication infrastructure backbone that facilitates efficient traffic routing within the continent

- Universal provision of access using appropriate, affordable solutions such as wireless networks, Voice over Internet Protocol, cell phone subsidies, and low-cost satellite internet access to promote affordability and reach people in remote areas

- Open standards to be used at all times in infrastructure development

- Political will, leadership, and investment from the public sector in ensuring basic telecommunications infrastructure development

Access to information and knowledge

Prioritisation of affordable solutions which increase access to, and development of, relevant content by people with low literacy and who use minority languages.

Many people are fluent in their own language but not in languages that dominate the internet. Many Africans are rich in knowledge that is neither accessible nor transferable because of limited software solutions catering for cultural and linguistic diversity.

For African people to meaningfully embrace ICTs content must be relevant. 83% of all TV programming available on the international market comes from developed economies where the income from the domestic market has already covered the costs of the production. Local content can only be developed over time and requires resources that are generally a low priority for both governments and aid agencies.

ACTIONS needed include:

- A policy environment that strengthens and expands the global public commons, e.g. all publicly-funded scientific research to available free of charge

- Developing free and open-source applications for translation into local languages

- Public investment in the creation of relevant content in local languages

- Building the capacity of people to create their own content through community-oriented as well as formal education and training programmes and diversified media

- Use of touch screens to ensure computer use by illiterate people

Role of governments, private sector and civil society

Overcoming barriers to Africa's participation in the global information society must be based on multi-stakeholder co-operation. Government, civil society and the private sector all have relevant roles to play.

ACTIONS needed from the *public sector* include:

- Primary responsibility for creating enabling infrastructure and policy environments and ensuring delivery of basic telecommunications services.

Creative use of ICTs in:

- Provision of services to people in remote areas, e.g. through telehealth applications, pension payments, access to government information, registering of births and deaths.

- Ensuring election processes are more efficient and less vulnerable to manipulation

- Improving communication between national governments and traditional authorities

- Strengthening local government

- Transparency in public financial management (e.g. through online procurement)

- Public participation in decision-making

- Dissemination of market information of benefit to small-scale agricultural and fishing enterprises

We want to note that simply focusing on "e-governance" in contexts where the majority of citizens

do not have access to ICTs does not equate to inclusive good governance.

ACTIONS needed from civil society include:

- Monitoring government implementation of WSIS outcomes and other ICT policies and regulation

- Sharing its experience and expertise in using ICTs for development

- Strengthening public participation through use of ICTs to build capacity and access to information at community level

- Facilitating the inclusion of marginalised groups such children, disabled people and minorities through provision of ICT solutions and capacity-building

- Facilitating women's empowerment through using ICTs

ACTIONS needed from private sector include:

- Developing public-private sector partnerships supporting public service-delivery

- Engaging in policy advocacy focused on enabling the provision of ICT services

- Investing in the ICT sector with a focus on long-term gains rather than short-term returns

- Providing new and appropriate technologies which can provide high-quality services at lower costs

Capacity-building

Capacity-building is fundamental and must address the diversity of needs. It should be aimed at strengthening and retaining indigenous capacity.

ACTIONS needed include:

- Financing science and technology education for women and girls

- Creation of opportunities for young people to benefit from ICTs through sustainable integration of ICTs in schools

- Strengthening institutional capacity to make effective use of ICTs in the public, private and civil society sectors through investment in education and training

- Creating investment and learning opportunities for using free and open-source software

- Regulation that ensures private sector investment in building African entrepreneurship.

Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

ICTs must be governed in ways that builds an environment in which people can use them securely and with confidence.

ACTIONS needed include a policy and regulatory framework in which:

- Cyber-crime is addressed

- Policy and regulation protects privacy

- Communications rights as framed by Article 19 (freedom of expression) and other relevant articles of the Universal Human Rights Declaration are guaranteed.[29]

Governance of the ICT sector

Increased capacity for Africans to participate in international ICT decision-making processes is critical.

ACTIONS needed include:

- Participation and agenda-setting by Africans in global ICT governance and resource-allocation forums

- Greater transparency.

Intellectual property rights and the public commons

Applying the rules of physical property ownership to information and knowledge paves the way for commercial exploitation and limits innovation. At the same

time definitions of ownership of knowledge and information might need to be revisited and protection extended to people that are not aware of their rights.

WSIS offers an opportunity to consider the rights of the marginalised and previously excluded people who are the keepers and creators of information that while less visible and unregistered, is increasingly subjected to exploitation. Indigenous plant products and medical knowledge are regularly co-opted by the developed world without a flow of benefits back to the creators and keepers of such knowledge.

ACTIONS needed include:

- Broadening the debate on issues of the *ownership* of information and not merely reinforce existing agreements such as TRIPS[30] which are framed by bias towards developed contexts

- The public commons and information available in the public domain to be secured and expanded.

Existing agreements relevant to the information society

In addition to a renewed commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by WSIS there must be recognition of other United Nations Charters, declarations and agreements and very importantly, a mechanism to monitor implementation and adherence in the context of the information society. As with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) there is on-going contravention of such agreements throughout Africa - a schism between agreed principles and actual practice.

African civil society recognises WSIS' commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)[31] but wants to express a degree of scepticism. A growing body of African scholars and economists question the MDG premise *that 7% growth will achieve a 15% reduction in poverty.*

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29 Refer to "An APC Perspective Communications rights and human rights" in this book for more information on these rights. *pp.13*

30 Refer to http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/trips_e.htm
31 Refer to http://www.developmentgoals.org/

Latin America and the Caribbean Perspective

Introduction

WSIS Resolution 56/183[32] "encourages contributions from all relevant UN bodies and other intergovernmental organisations, including international and regional institutions, non-governmental organisations, civil society and the private sector to actively participate in the intergovernmental preparatory process of the Summit and the Summit itself".

Nonetheless, restrictions placed on civil society's participation have been the biggest downfall of WSIS from the Latin American perspective. The region's presence at preparatory events for the Summit has been very limited.

Despite this members of Latin American and Caribbean civil society have worked tirelessly to achieve recognition as equal actors in the process. They have been working in their own countries, pushing forward concrete and innovative proposals, convinced that the success of the WSIS process will depend on the establishment of relationships among the different stakeholders in a framework of mutual respect, recognising the strengths each actor brings to the table, and the creation of spaces for critical and constructive interventions.

Ecuador has begun a process of consultation with civil society and private sector representatives to develop a national position for WSIS. The political will of the National Connectivity Agenda in Ecuador to work with and recognise the knowledge, expertise and contribution from different social actors is reflected in the development of public policy on crucial information society issues.[33]

Bolivia has been another positive example. Two multi-stakeholder meetings were held to find consensus on the nature and direction of the information society in preparation for the WSIS.

Brazilian civil society organisations are part of the tripartite commission Brazilian Internet Steering Committee which has the responsibility for domain names, internet traffic matters and aspects related to internet names and numbers.[34]

Civil society organisations from the region have come together during the planning for the WSIS. During the second WSIS Preparatory Committee meeting the Latin American and Caribbean Caucus for WSIS (LAC Caucus) was formally established. To date, the Caucus has approximately sixty members who are representatives of non-profit organisations, from the education sector and other civil society groups.

Since February 2003, the group has discussed how to articulate its work and contributions to the preparatory process and defined its structure, goals and plans. The Caucus is an open platform for discussion, action and consensus-building related to the content, processes and other aspects of the WSIS.

It produced specific contributions to the Summit's Declaration of Principles and the Intersessional meeting, by defining priority themes and providing inputs to the Civil Society Contents and Themes Working Group.

However, in spite of these achievements at national and regional level, from the regional perspective, civil society has yet to see concrete opportunities for real and effective multi-sectoral exchange materialise.

APC, and other civil society organisations working in the field of ICTs in the region, see the Summit as a valuable opportunity to contribute to the formation of information societies based on human rights, social justice and development. The Summit is seen in Latin America, especially by the civil society organisations who have become part of the LAC WSIS Caucus, as providing a rallying point for discussion in our countries about the social changes that the information era has brought about and to consider the impact on those it has left behind.

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32 http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/background/resolutions/56_183_unga_2002.pdf
33 The White Book for ICT Education, e-commerce, e-government.

34 http://www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x=12139

Voices from Latin American and the Caribbean: Building coalitions regionally

RedISTIC (the acronym stands for "network for the social impact of ICTs") is a coalition of groups that work on information society-related issues in Latin America and the Caribbean. The coalition emerged spontaneously after members met online, and face-to-face when funding allowed, to plan regional input for WSIS and decided to begin to collaborate on initiatives to procure a real and effective influence on ICT public policies in the region.

The first achievement of RedISTIC is the publication of the book "Latin American and Caribbean Perspectives for WSIS: The Other Side of the Divide". The publication features a sample of significant articles that have been written in the region and are representative of the values that the diverse actors share.

Members include Funredes, ITDG, APC, Alfa-Redi, RITS, Infopolis, Grupo Redes, Acceso, and the Universidad Bolivariana de Chile.

At the same time, it provides a legitimate framework for working democratically in the creation of entry-points to enable civil society organisations to become involved in the design and implementation of human rights-focused public policies and participative and transparent processes related to the provision of ICTs in our countries.

Thematic priorities

The LAC Caucus has urged diverse stakeholders in the Summit to approach the complex set of themes in a holistic way, with the desire to "bring together and reflect on the diversity of political, social, economic and cultural visions and realities and the definition of clear guidelines for the construction of public and private policies, oriented to the reaching of the Millennium Goals, not only in the context of the WSIS debate but also in a long-term approach to the collective construction of a people-centred information society".[35]

The themes and priorities defined by members and organisations of the LAC Caucus have been integrated into a "Priorities Document", developed as a contribution to the intersessional period of the WSIS Process.

The LAC Caucus has defined the following issues as regional priorities: sustainable development, human rights, internet governance, access and infrastructure, community media, gender, education and linguistic and cultural diversity and the global commons.

All themes have the same level of priority for the Caucus. However, the issue of linguistic diversity has been given special attention based on our experience.

What lies ahead?

We believe that it is essential to promote debate in the region around the WSIS process and other ICT policy processes with the goal of strengthening civil society's capacity and involvement in order to encourage the development of shared positions that will benefit our communities and our countries.

Civil society organisations in Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Brazil and Colombia are engaged either in initiatives to deepen the discussion, to develop awareness-raising information in relation to key issues (gender and ICT, internet governance, access, etc.), to promote the importance of multi-stakeholder initiatives and to promote an egalitarian information society agenda.

Not all countries are at the same level. Each country needs to build its own process based on its actual conditions and needs and consider the characteristics of different social actors nationally.

However, the development of consensual civil society regional position around the main priorities of the information society is crucial for the next months. There is a need to build participative, democratic and transparent coalitions, diversifying and strengthening relationships with women's groups, the disability movement, indigenous peoples, alternative media practitioners, and others.

Working at the national level in promoting debate, building capacities and networks are essential in enabling civil society to effectively participate in meaningful ICT policy processes and contribute to the development of a *people-centred* information society.

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35 Documento de Prioridades del Caucus de LAC http://lac.derechos.apc.org/wsis/cdocs.shtml?x=12925

The Asian Perspective

About this document

Civil society organisations including APC members in Asia and the Pacific have participated fully in the official preparatory process of the WSIS since PrepCom I in July 2002 in Geneva.

The main output from Asian civil society is "Civil Society Observations and Response to the Tokyo Declaration"[36] of the Asia-Pacific Regional WSIS Conference held in January 2003. It was inspired by and built on previous Asian civil societies' outputs including: "Declaration of the Asian Civil Society Caucus at PrepCom I in Geneva", "The World Summit on the Information Society: an Asian Response (Nov. 2002, Bangkok)", and "Joint Statement from Asia Civil Society Forum Participants on WSIS (Dec. 2002, Bangkok)".

This document reflects the perspectives of APC members and partners in Asia and the Pacific. APC in Asia supports the broader civil society input and this paper is largely based on the above documents and other contributions.

Preamble

Asia and the Pacific is a region of great diversity in terms of geography, culture, religion and language. It is home to more than half the world's inhabitants, and also to a majority of the planet's poor. It is a centre of global dynamism yet contrasted with gross underdevelopment. In this context, Asians now confront the deep social implications of what is now referred to as the emergent global "information society". We realise that the challenge of globalisation and its effects on the lives of Asian and non-Asians in the region lies in how we can transcend the divides between enabled citizens and marginalised communities and build a global community that upholds the highest public interest through information and communication that is based on social justice, sustainable development, gender equality and human rights.

Key issues

The key areas of focus from the Asian perspective are:

• Global and national access to ICTs (including traditional media systems) that is affordable to all must be ensured. This is necessary to transform ICTs and traditional media into a means of empowerment for all

• Human rights and freedom of expression are central issues in the information society, particularly for Asia. These have been threatened in authoritarian societies through censorship, self-censorship, concentration of media ownership into a few private hands, and new laws designed in the name of "national security" or to counter "harmful content"

• The development of a responsive and responsible public media that supports investigative journalism and citizens' access to information, demands increased accountability on the part of privately owned media, and protects and promotes community-based media

• Special measures need to be taken for promoting the production of local Asian content and protecting indigenous expression of knowledge from commercial exploitation and to avoid the marginalisation of local communities in an environment of rapid and globally-expanding information flow

• A more democratic and inclusive information society must be built using ICTs and traditional information systems to empower women and respond to their needs.

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36 http://www.wsisasia.org/wsis-tokyo/tokyo-statement.html

Key themes and recommended actions

Infrastructure

The importance of affordable and accessible information and communications infrastructure, meaningful content, appropriate capacity-building, and an effective enabling environment must be recognised. Communications infrastructure must be built on principles of fair competition as well as public access and universal service. The principle of universal access must apply to all media such as TV, radio, video and new media.

ACTIONS include:

- Citizens and communities should be offered affordable community information (including internet) access points such as telecentres and cyber-cafes, particularly those which utilize appropriate and affordable technologies (e.g. radio as a gateway to Internet)

- Government should be encouraged to adopt open-source, free software and establish procurement policies and laws to support this. This will reduce dependency on a specific vendor, ensure security, and lower the cost of access

- New ICT hardware and software should have backward compatibility[37], and technical support for hardware and software no longer being produced should be guaranteed.

Access to information and knowledge

The balance between intellectual property rights (IPR) and users' rights in accordance with Article 27 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being challenged and contested within the present IPR regime and the online environment. An overall review of existing IPR regimes is required to restore the balance between IPR and user rights.

ACTIONS include:

- At the UN level, a global review task force should be established to review the relevance of current IPR in today's information society. This task force should make recommendations for the future improvement or transformation of present mechanisms with due consideration to social and technological development

- All outputs from research supported by public funds to be made available in the public domain.

Capacity-building

Citizens and communities should have access to training and support in how to use ICTs to meet their needs use. Investment should focus on relevant, locally-produced capacity-building materials that respond to local needs, especially those of marginalised community and indigenous groups. In addition, public education programmes from government and civil society need to address issues relating to human rights in the information society within a framework of non-discrimination and gender equality.

Building confidence and information security in the use of ICTs

Privacy needs to be protected and surveillance and censorship must not threaten human rights, democracy and freedom of expression.

ACTIONS include:

- Efforts must be made to educate the public on how to express one's own opinion while respecting each other's rights and tolerating one another's freedom of expression. This is required to create an online environment which is free from harassment and discrimination with particular reference to women, children, and minority communities

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37 Backward compatibility is the ability to share data or commands with older versions or systems.

- Reinforcement of the capacity of an individual to have control over their personal information and their access to (uncensored) information. The right to anonymity within the context of advanced surveillance technology and skills should be upheld

- A privacy impact assessment should be introduced at the planning stage of all privacy-related public policies. This assessment should be also applied to private companies which hold a significant amount of personal information about either customers or employees

- The development of an independent social mechanism for protecting privacy. (For example, colleagues in Korea have suggested the establishment of Independent Privacy Committees on all appropriate levels to oversee all public policies concerned with privacy and provide an alternative dispute-resolution service to those whose privacy is infringed.)

- The intention and extent of damage needs to be appropriately taken into account when defining cyber-crime.

Enabling environment for social, political and economic empowerment

Communication rights are fundamental to democracy and human development. The information society offers new opportunities to strengthen, embed and universally endorse these rights. ICT policies must be introduced which enable all to use ICTs regardless of socio-economic status.

Good governance can be achieved when more active public participation is allowed at all levels of planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The transparency of all public activities is a prerequisite and governmental and public information should be disclosed as a basic principle.

ACTIONS include:

- Citizens must have the right to use the internet (as well as traditional media) for communication and to further extend democratic spaces. The right to dialogue, discuss, and assemble must not be threatened by national security laws

- The participation of women and consideration of gender issues should be supported and promoted in all forums which discuss ICT policies in order to realise women's full potential as equal stakeholders, contributors and beneficiaries of the information society

- Employees must have the right to use internet for communication or other activities of labour organisation. Special attention should be paid to marginalised workers such as women, migrant workers, the disabled and irregular workers to be able to have equal access to information and appropriate facilities or support provided that ensures their ability to access information

- A central depository for all national documents (policies, national action/development plans, national budget) and laws should be established and updated regularly, and made equally accessible to all. Processes for citizenship, work permits, government tenders, sale of public land, the allocation of burial ground and granting of permits for places of worship (for communities of religious or ethnic minorities) and the design of development projects which result in the displacement of communities need to be made transparent. These should ideally be available in all main native languages.

- A multi-sectoral/multi-stakeholder governance system should be evolved to ensure the stability, non-censorship and non-commercialisation and/or non-monopolisation of the internet. This system would share the responsibility for, and co-operate on, the stable operation of a hidden primary root server and its copies.

Cultural identity and linguistic diversity, local content and media development

Linguistic and cultural diversity, plurality and gender equality must be the cornerstones of the information society. It is necessary to protect, promote and create possibilities for community-based forms of communication and expression, including the oral based traditions of knowledge transfer.

In addition, civil society acknowledges its role as a major content provider in the information society and should, therefore, be active in the promotion of public awareness on the quality of content of information circulated in society.

ACTIONS include:

- Community-based media and access points should be promoted through financial support and training. These should be offered preferred access to licenses, frequencies and technologies, including technologies that facilitate links between traditional media and new ones.

- The development of policy, procedure and tools to ensure multi-lingualism in cyberspace and in all other forms of media and communication systems must be promoted, and the recognition of different language communities in the development of international standards must be ensured.

Role of government, private sector, and civil society

The participation of civil society in the information society at all levels should be ensured and sustained, from policy planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Government must ensure that market competition is fair and that monopolies are not perpetuated. While governments should promote and facilitate infrastructure-building, provide training, and create an enabling environment for ICTs to be accessible for all, it should not be a regulator of information flow and content.

3

The CRIS Campaign and Key Issues

CRIS

The CRIS Campaign and Key Issues

Introduction

Communication Rights in the 21ˢᵗ Century

Information and communication rights are emerging as a key contested terrain of the century. Media and communication are moving to the centre of societal evolution: in politics and war, in entertainment and identity, in economy and culture, few deny their growing influence and centrality. At the same time, we are told that information and knowledge are the new sources of wealth and well-being and that such advances have apparently given rise to a new society; the "Information Society".

But there is widespread and growing apprehension about the direction we are taking.

- Mass media are increasingly driven by neo-liberal economics and supported by global corporations determined to sweep away all constraints on their activities and extract the last drop of profit. Sanitized, homogenised and commodified, corporate media's goal is to sell consumerism to people and people to advertisers.

- In a new invasion of the common space that is the inheritance of all humankind, the airwaves and spectrum for radio, television and telecommunications are being sliced up and sold to the highest bidders, taken from public regulation and moved to private control.

- The internet, a promising new dimension of the public sphere, is being transformed daily into a solely commercial medium and subjected to ever more surveillance and control under the guise of "security".

- Even as we prepare for the "information society", knowledge and information –the fruits of human creativity- are being fenced off and privatised through ever wider and more rigorously policed intellectual property rights, with ownership concentrated into a few hands, and access sold back to those who can pay.

Thus promises of an imminent "information society", heralding a knowledge-based civilization and yielding untold dividends for education, health, development, democracy and much more, remain as yet a distant dream. Indeed this vision may be little more than an ideologically-driven smokescreen for relentless expansion of corporate control, stifling dissent and manufacturing consent. Global corporate interests are firmly in the lead while most governments are relegated to the role of referee between monoliths wrestling for the greater share of spoils.

In the meantime, scant attention is paid to the need for effective and accessible global and multi-level governance, or to the dangers inherent in the above trends for people and human development.

Yet people worldwide are forging a new vision of *their* information society, one with human rights at its core. New forms of media, networking and knowledge generation are building global communities from the local level, to share knowledge, amplify marginalised voices, organise political action, empower participation, and sustain and celebrate cultural and intellectual creativity and diversity. The *Right to Communicate* is under construction not in the corridors of power, but in the transparent and participatory spaces and needs to be formally recognised

Who is CRIS?

The CRIS campaign –Communication Rights in the Information Society– was launched in November 2001 by the Platform for Communication Rights, an umbrella group of international non-governmental organisations and local networks active in media and communication. Conceived in part to broaden the agenda of the WSIS, the campaign traces its lineage in the recent emergence of a broader global civil society challenging the corporate status quo and aiming to build a world where another people-centred communication is possible.

The campaign is also active locally through regional and national actions, such as CRIS Italy, CRIS Bolivia, CRIS Colombia and CRIS Latin America. For further information, please contact: act@crisinfo.org

The CRIS Charter

Our Vision

Our vision of the "Information Society" is grounded in the Right to Communicate, as a means to enhance human rights and to strengthen the social, economic and cultural lives of people and communities. Crucial to this is that civil society organisations come together to help build an information society based on principles of transparency, diversity, participation and social and economic justice, and inspired by equitable gender, cultural and regional perspectives.

The Four CRIS Pillars

A: Creating spaces for democratic environments

The public sphere is where civil society defines and renews its understanding of itself in its diversity, and in which political structures are subjected to scrutiny and debate and ultimately held to account for their actions. Core characteristics of the public sphere include freedom of speech, access to information, a healthy public domain and a free and undistorted media and communication regime.

Goals

- To reverse trends toward concentration of ownership and control of media

- To reclaim the airways and spectrum as public commons and to tax commercial use for public benefit

- To promote and sustain alternative, truly independent media and public service media, and advance pluralism against government or private monopoly

- To promote freedom of information legislation in public and corporate realms.

B: Reclaiming the use of knowledge and the public domain

Today, copyright is a tool of corporate interests to control ever more of people's knowledge and creativity, including software, denying both creators and society. Globally the WTO and WIPO police the regime with an iron hand, while wealthy countries extract payments from the poor for using knowledge already prised at birth from its creators.

Goals

- To secure a full review of copyright globally and nationally, and rebuild it as a flexible and adaptable regime geared to enhancing development and supporting creativity

- To nurture and promote *development-friendly* approaches to intellectual creativity e.g. open source, copyleft, and collective ownership.

C: Reclaiming civil and political rights in the information society

Moves to weaken judicial oversight and accountability, the erosion of long-standing data protection principles, legal protections and civil liberties, excessive data retention, surveillance and monitoring of online environments on the pretext of combating "cyber crime" and "terrorism", every day diminish our personal freedoms to communicate and deliver ever growing control to governments and corporations.

Goals

- To ensure that the "information society" expands rather than erodes people's rights to privacy, freedom of expression, communication and association.

D: Securing equitable and affordable access

The majority of the world's people lack access to the infrastructure and tools needed to produce and communicate information and knowledge in the information society. Many initiatives, including the WSIS, aim to address this. They usually rest on assumptions that universal access to ICTs will be achieved only through market-driven solutions and that more widespread access will necessarily contribute to poverty alleviation and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We question these assumptions.

Goals

- To lobby for equitable and affordable access to ICTs for *all* people, specifically the marginalised such as women, the disabled, indigenous people and the urban and rural poor

- To promote access as a fundamental right to be realised in the public domain and not dependent on the market forces and profitability

- To secure access to information and knowledge as tools for empowerment

- To outline and pursue the conditions for securing access not just to ICTs but to information societies as a whole, in a way that is financially, culturally, and ecologically sustainable.

Is the "Information Society" a Useful Concept for Civil Society?

Is the term the "Information Society" (or the related "Knowledge Society") useful for civil society? Does it adequately describe the changes in global social structures and processes that are currently taking place? Is there really a new form of society emerging? And if so, a society for whom, and how can it be harnessed to enhance human rights and fulfil pressing human needs?

The information society is not ideologically neutral

The answers to these questions are not at all obvious, as the term bears a heavy ideological burden. As the post-war industrial boom spiralled into stagflation and recession, Daniel Bell's (1973) book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* set the stage for the development of the idea of the "information society". Bell argued that the economic upheaval being experienced by the industrial economies of the North heralded a shift from their being based on the production of goods to that of human services. Computing, scientific research and development, education, health care – such knowledge-based services were to become the backbone of a new post-industrial economy and an information-based society.

Through the 1980s and early 1990s the wholesale transfer of industrial manufacturing to low wage arenas of the South picked up steam, and a flood of studies and reports sponsored by governments and think-tanks followed Bell's lead and framed this economic restructuring as the rise of an "information society." Fuelled by neo-liberal economic policy, free trade, privatisation, deregulation, and structural adjustment became the bywords of an emerging plan that was essentially a means for breathing life back into an ailing capitalist system.

Information technology played a key role in this process. In the global arena it facilitated the rapid movement of both capital and goods, linking the new manufacturing centres in the South with markets in the North. In the North, deregulation of telecommunications markets was envisioned as helping fuel investment and R&D in information technology and thereby providing the technical infrastructure for production and exchange of new information commodities.

Like others before them, when the European Union embarked on a major drive to re-regulate and privatise the telecommunication sector in the mid-1990s, they used the term "information society" specifically to

underline that the new society towards which they were striving would have an important *social* focus. Restructuring was not simply about infrastructure (ultimately to be owned and controlled by the private sector), but also about societal development and investment, ensuring that the benefits reach people.

Unfortunately, activities and budgets targeted at achieving the social goals were minuscule as compared to huge changes wrought by re-regulation and privatisation of the infrastructure. In 1995, the G7 group of industrialised countries introduced its own version of the Global Information Society, again offering a few small pilot applications to promote universal service while vigorously pursuing liberalisation policies that have largely succeeded in de-nationalising the telecommunication industry and are proceeding with the media sector more generally.

In this respect, the "information society" is an invention of the globalisation needs of capital and their supporting governments. While there has, as a result, been major growth in access in many countries of the South, this is largely confined to urban areas and more profitable markets, and most have found themselves on the wrong side of a growing "digital-divide" - a multi-faceted divide that has well-educated, high-income males with "Western" perspectives clearly on top everywhere, North and South.

The WSIS, the Dot Force, and even the UN ICT Task Force are seen by many as simply the latest round in this imbalanced policy development – window-dressing on the most recent drive to impose a neo-liberal model of communications in every corner of the globe. While focusing (to limited effect) on the latest wave of inequity, the "digital-divide", they fail to tackle, or articulate, deeper issues of the huge structural changes we see in the whole information and communication arena.

Rescuing the concept: back to origins

This vision of the information society, driven by the needs of transnational corporations with little more than lip service to real human needs and ever growing inequities, is not endorsed by many in civil soci-

ety. Thus a first step is rehabilitating the term the "Information Society" to assert that there is no single model of the information society, but many possible "information societies". The next step is to determine what kind of information society will best enhance social development and human rights, and whether the WSIS offers an opportunity to join with others in designing and implementing this.

A problem with the current use of information society is that it often presents ICTS, and access to them, as ends in themselves rather than as enabling tools. A focus on the latter would soon raise more fundamental questions that were at the heart of the earliest debates on the information society, or what was then known as "post-industrial" society. In the 1970s, policymakers realised that *information* was playing an increasing role not only in economic sectors (the growth in information workers, services, intelligent goods etc.), but also in social, cultural and political life. The generation, dissemination and effective use of information were becoming critical factors in the dynamic of society. This trend gained impetus in the decades following, and has given rise to the idea of the "knowledge society". Closely related to the "information society", this notion posits a link between information and knowledge, but in a competitive market-led environment. (The "knowledge society", however, comes with its own ideological baggage, that will not be gone into here.)

Key questions for the WSIS

If civil society is to embrace and rescue the notion of an information society it must return to these basics by posing the right questions:

- Who generates and owns information and knowledge? Is it utilised for the private benefit of a few or the public benefit of many?

- How is knowledge disseminated and distributed? Who are the gatekeepers?

- What constrains and facilitates the use of knowledge by people to achieve their goals? Who is positioned best, and who worst, to take advantage of this knowledge?

Further Reading:

Gert Nulens, Nancy Hafkin, Leo Van Audenhove & Bart Cammaerts (eds.), The digital divide in developing countries: Towards an information society in Africa, VUB Press, Brussels, 2001.

Jan Servaes (ed.), Walking on the other side of the information highway. Communication, culture and development in the 21st century, Southbound, Penang, 2000.

Robin Mansell and Uta Wehn (eds.), Knowledge societies. Information technology for sustainable development, Oxford UP, Oxford, 1998.

Frank Webster, Theories of the information society, Routledge, London, 1995.

There are many subsidiary questions: Have global trends in copyright gone too far in supporting corporate owners, at the cost of creativity and the public domain? Is concentration of media ownership threatening political participation and cultural diversity? Will liberalisation in telecommunication constrict universal service policies, especially for rural and poorer users? What impact will the creeping privatisation of radio spectrum have on this public resource? What are the long-term implications of the commercialisation of the knowledge environment, through advertising and the promotion of a consumer ethic, especially in poorer countries? Is the current erosion of privacy and growth in surveillance necessary? What actions are needed to address the causes of the digital-divide? How can youth and women participate and shape information society policies? Can current trends in global governance put human rights at the centre of the information society agenda? Will the information society bring sustainable development for all? The WSIS might offer a timely forum in which to raise these vital issues.

Is the "information society" a useful concept for civil society? Potentially, yes - if it is fleshed out to embrace the full dynamic of information and knowledge in society, and if it focuses on enhancing human rights and social, cultural, and economic development. But if it stops short at discussing the "digital-divide"; if it confuses the means – technologies – with the ends – human development – then it fails to transcend its narrow ideological roots.

Why Should Intellectual Property Rights Matter to Civil Society?

Inventions of the mind –ideas– are very special. All culture and society is built upon innumerable layers of accumulated past knowledge and ideas. In the arts, medicine, education, agriculture, and industry –in almost all areas of human endeavour –knowledge and ideas lie at the base of the flowering of human life and its passions.

Intellectual property rights (IPRs) emerged in the industrialised world as a means to mediate and control the circulation of knowledge, and as a means of balancing the conflicting rights of different groups involved in the generation and use of ideas of economic value. IPRs are premised on concerns that the *creators or authors* of ideas have an economic right to a fair return for their effort and a moral right to not have their ideas misrepresented.

However, ideas are not simply the product of individuals and corporations. For the most part they incorporate and build upon the traditions, collected wisdom, and understanding of social groups and societies. Sometimes they build upon natural creatures and processes that have taken millions of years to evolve. Generally, at least in part, research is financed or subsidised by public funds and taxes, and public institutions are deployed to develop and maintain their social and economic viability. Consequently, *society in general* has a social right to use ideas to the benefit of the public good – especially if they are key to social and physical well-being.

IPRs attempt to balance these rights: the moral, the economic and the social.

Trends in regulation

In information and communication industries *copyright* is the most important form of IPR. However, with the continuing rise of the information society and the development of information commodities,

patents, *trademarks* and *integrated circuits designs* are becoming increasingly relevant.

In the last few decades, three distorting trends have emerged: corporations have emerged as the key owners of copyrighted material; the scope, depth and duration of copyright has grown hugely, to encompass not only intellectual work but also plant and life forms; and copyright owners wield a formidable set of instruments to enforce their rights nationally and internationally.

While IPR had traditionally been used by the cultural industries to reinforce their control over *ideas* and *products*, the threat posed by *copying* in a digital era, has led to a renewed interest in IPR and to increased investments in the proprietorial significance of IP. *In a knowledge economy, any content that is a product of the digital manipulation of data is considered intellectual property*. Technically speaking, even an email message can qualify for IP protection. Some of the factors that have contributed to the consolidation of a market-based, global IP regime include the following - shrinking profits in an era characterised by technological and product convergences, economic downturn in the telecommunications and dotcoms sectors, and the real and imagined threats to corporate profitability posed by piracy via subversive uses of technology such as MP3 and establishments such as, peer-to-peer, net-based music swapping services.

IPR has affected the public's access to knowledge in the public domain and to copyrighted works, limited legitimate opportunities for cultural appropriations, stifled learning, creativity, innovation thus placing curbs on the democratisation of knowledge. IPR has also infiltrated into the domain of food and medicine, threatening the sustainability of indigenous knowledge and biodiversity.

The TRIPS armoury

A key means by which IPR has been reinforced and extended is through the WTO-related, Trade Related Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), and the Copyright Treaty (1996) that was negotiated by the UN-related, World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). These agreements have been used 1) as a means to tie trade with IP, 2) as templates for national legislation on IPR and 3) for ensuring the harmonisation of global agreements such as TRIPS with local IP legislation. These global agreements have been backed by trade associations such as the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), groups like the US-based International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) and corporations such as AOL-Time Warner, Microsoft and IBM. These groups are jointly concerned with issues such as the impact of piracy on profits, and are keen to extend the life of copyrights and patents, thus profiting from royalties and licensing agreements by creating more or less permanent enclosures over cultural property.

The TRIPS Agreements cover 1) patents, 2) industrial design, 3) trademarks, 4) geographic indicators and appellations of origins, 5) layout design of integrated circuits, 6) undisclosed information on trade secrets, and 7) copyrights (literary, artistic, musical, photographic, and audiovisual).

TRIPS favours industrialised countries and transnational copyright industries, while limiting the freedom of countries, especially less-industrialised ones, to design IPR regimes to meet their economic, social, and cultural needs. Especially onerous are TRIPS provisions on the patenting of life forms and pharmaceuticals and the appropriation and commodification of indigenous knowledge by transnational corporations.

Copyright and patent mania

In the US, Congress has extended the terms of copyright eleven times during the last forty years. The 1998 digital copyright law extended copyright by 20 years; works copyrighted by individuals in the post-1978 period were granted a term of 70 years beyond the life of the author; works owned by corporations were protected for 95 years and extensions applied even to authors who were long deceased or to works that were out of print. These extensions have also effected other parts of the world. Moreover, there has been a massive

Additional Resources

Vandana Shiva's Protect or Plunder?: Understanding Intellectual Property Rights (Zed Books, 2001), and Chapter 7 on the World Intellectual Property Organization and Intellectual Property Rights in Global Media Governance, by Seán Ó Siochrú and Bruce Girard with Amy Mahan (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

For more substantive readings, see Ronald Betting's Copyrighting Culture: The Political Economy of Intellectual Property, (Westview Press, 1996), Rosemary's Coombe's The Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties: Authorship, Appropriation and the Law,(Duke University Press, (1998) and Lawrence Lessig's The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World (Random House, NY, 2001).

increase in patent applications – 7.1 million applications were filed in 1999 as against 1.8 million in 1990. WIPO received a record 104,000 international patent applications from information industries in 2001. 38.5 per cent of these applications came from the USA while the developing world hardly managed 5 per cent. In Europe, Philips filed for 2,010 patents in the year 2000, while British Telecommunications amassed 13,000 patents protecting 1,700 inventions in that same year. IBM remained the top filer of patents in the USA with 2,886 patents in the year 2000. It earned $1.7 billion from licening its patents – a fraction of the $38 billion that US companies earned from royalties in the year 2000. This has created a climate where all knowledge is commodified and sold on the market to the highest bidder, leaving the public good in a vulnerable state.

IPR and its implications for civil society

The key issue for civil society is that related to the democratisation of knowledge. Since creativity builds on itself, what does civil society need to do to protect traditions of creativity? Would Shakespeare's writings or for that matter Microsoft's Windows platform have been created if strict IPR laws had been enforced? What can be done to reward creators without allowing them to monopolise knowledge in perpetuity? What needs to be done to protect the global commons, and culture and life forms in the public domain that are the heritage of humankind? Are there possibilities for global civil society-governmental-inter-governmental collaborations in the matter of advocating for a "cultural exception" clause related to trade in cultural products? What needs to be done to ensure that the cultural environments that we inhabit also include copyright and patent-free zones? What support can civil society give to the copyleft and open-source movements? What pressure can civil society exert at local levels to ensure that IPR legislations respond to social and cultural needs rather to the needs of international capital? What can be done to keep the internet an open and innovative commons for all?

Media ownership: big deal?

It may seem as if only governments and the private sector have a stake in the media business, especially since their interests often overlap. However, media concentration also raises a number of issues for civil society.

Media ownership has undergone a radical shift during the last decade. A handful of international and regional media corporations –AOL-Time Warner, News Corporation, General Electric, Sony, Vivendi, Viacom, Televisa, O Globo and Clarín, along with a few others, now control vast sections of the media market. For example, close to 35% of newspaper circulation in the UK belongs to Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Silvio Berlusconi controls three of Italy's four private broadcasting stations and has recently appointed a personal friend to head the public broadcasting station, RAI. This trend towards media concentration is linked to the spread of neo-liberal economics, technological developments and the emergence of global and regional agreements on multilateral trade. In fact it mirrors the pattern of global economics in which 225 of the richest people have a combined wealth equal to the annual income of the world's 2.5 billion poorest people.

What happens when media ownership is concentrated to this extent within and across media sectors?

The emphasis on profit-oriented, advertising-fuelled content has already led to a decline in the range of options available and a loss of space for informed debate. Media content, media channels and distribution systems are in the hands of a handful of corpo-

rations. There are threats to the current system that oversees ownership and allocation of internet domain names. Even the audiovisual spectrum, which is public property, is under siege from commercial interests. As a result, ordinary people are denied access to independent media channels and alternative visions of economic, political and social futures.

Convergence and concentration

Technological developments, particularly convergence characterised by the coming-together of previously unrelated technologies, have led to a scramble for market leadership and to further media concentration. The buy-out of the "traditional" media conglomerate Time Warner by the upstart "new" media company America Online is one example of these new alliances. The intent was to unite Time Warner's "content" and cable systems with AOL's broadband distribution system. Hundreds of such mergers have taken place over the past ten years, though some have since fallen victim to the dotcom bust.

Some of these take-overs have come about under rather dubious circumstances. Take for instance the continuing saga over the ownership of the internet domain ".nu" that once belonged to Niue, an island in the Pacific. ".nu" was sold for a small fee to an entrepreneur from the USA in rather unclear circumstances. The entrepreneur went on to profit from this deal at the expense of the cash-strapped government of Niue. Such examples of prospecting for the world's information resources by fair means and foul are commonplace and characterise the global media economy.

Trade and intellectual property rights

These developments in media concentration need to be seen against the backdrop of global and regional trade negotiations, in particular the emergence of global trade forums such as the World Trade Organisation and the development of regional trade blocs such as NAFTA, Mercosur and ASEAN. With the decline of traditional industry, the global cultural and service industries have become a premier source for corporate

profits. The WTO has overseen the liberalisation of audiovisual trade, the privatisation of telecommunications and the opening up of media markets throughout the world. One of the key ways in which corporate media monopolies have extended their interests is by including intellectual property rights, in particular copyrights and patents.

It is common knowledge that the global power of the Windows operating system is maintained by Microsoft's assiduous protection of its software codes and its licencing system. And intellectual property has become the means by which Donald Duck is maintained as private property by the Disney empire. As IP is extended to cover products and practices related to traditional media, mass media and digital media, concerns have been raised about the impact on culture as the global heritage of humankind.

What are the issues for civil society

While it is true that in many countries people nowadays have access to a lot more alternative media sources than twenty years ago, mainstream media networks continue to account for a significant proportion of audiences throughout the world. In addition, alternative media sources themselves are coming under increasing pressure to bend to market-driven realities. This poses a number of questions for civil society.

- What needs to be done to achieve a more level playing-field in media ownership? How can civil society contribute to this?

- What does the media ownership map look like in your city?

- What role ought the state to play in regulating media ownership?

- What can be done at local levels to democratise IPR?

- What needs to be done to ensure that affordable access to information and communication becomes a reality locally, nationally and globally?

- What kind of media ownership leads to the development of people-friendly cultural environments?

Contesting the spectrum allocation giveaway

The "radio spectrum" is not a topic that people ordinarily get enthused about. Most people encounter the radio spectrum via the crackles and general interference noise while trawling through short-wave (SW) signals on their radio set, when they occasionally experience fuzziness on their television screen, or when their mobile phone conversation fades away into the ether. It is just as well that our experience of radio waves is rather limited for, some of it, like UV rays, can be quite harmful.

The electromagnetic spectrum is not visible to the human eye and yet we inhabit a world that is surfeit with spectrum. The spectrum is everywhere. Electromagnetic (light) waves move through the atmosphere at different frequencies and are measured in Hertz (Hz). The oscillation of radio waves can be compared to the intensity of a sharp sea wave and the languid ruffle of a slow wave. Lower and higher frequencies exhibit different qualities and are therefore harnessed for different purposes. The general rules are as follows: shorter wave-length, higher frequency; longer wavelength, lower frequency.

So what is special or unique about radio waves? It is the invisible network for all the major channels of mediated communication, wired and wireless technologies that operate on land, sea and in the air. Radio frequencies are used by a huge range of services –commercial, public, personal– that include aeronautical navigation systems, paging systems, Ham radios, broadcasting, mobile communication services in hospitals, the fire department and police, military systems, the postal service and increasingly via convergent technologies, mobile telephony that can carry voice, data and video. While frequencies between 3,000 Hz and 300 GHz are referred to as the radio spectrum, the most desirable range of spectrum -the penthouse range- lies between 300 MHz- 3GHz.

The defining characteristic of the spectrum is its scarcity, its existence as a finite resource. It is scarce because the use of a particular frequency for a specific purpose precludes others in the same region from using it. While digital compression technologies have managed to squeeze more out of frequencies, more is not infinite. Spectrum, in other words, is a common good, like the air we breathe. But unlike the air we breathe, spectrum is regulated as a public good. Public service broadcasting for instance, and its distribution is guaranteed by the State.

So how is this resource managed and by whom? The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has primary responsibility for the allocation of radio frequencies to individual countries. This task arguably remains ITU's most substantive exercise of power in a period that has witnessed the migration of power to non-UN bodies such as the WTO and individual governments like the USA. Administered by ITU's Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) and based on internationally agreed radio regulations, the allotment and use of radio frequencies is a key agenda item for the ITU. These allocations are in turn administered by one or multiple organisations at national levels.

Spectrum is licenced in different ways. It can be licenced for free, auctioned, allocated via beauty contests or on a first-come first-serve basis. Auctioning is increasingly becoming a favoured system of allocating spectrum. It has become a source of lucrative revenues for governments throughout the world. The auction of radio spectrum, for third-generation (3G) mobile communications services in the UK netted the government US$ 35 billion in revenues in 2000.[38]

So what are some of the key issues related to spectrum management and the ownership of the spectrum?

The digital age

Improved data compression and new transmission technologies have generally resulted in more digital channels being accommodated in the radio spectrum than was previously possible with analogue systems.

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38 Walko, J., Spectrum Auctions called Threat to 3G Rollout in U.K. (pp.1-2), EE Times, May 9, 2000, http://www.eetimes.com

These technical changes need to be seen against the background of a massive surge in demand for frequencies from the many new services offered by convergent technologies. The auction of licences for digital services has resulted in the re-allocation of spectrum. The sectors that are most under threat are public broadcasting and community broadcasting and other forms of non-commercial spectrum use. In a neo-liberal context, there is severe pressure to free publicly-held spectrum for private use and to invest all radio frequencies with monetary value. For example, in the USA in order to free spectrum for 3G services, the FCC (the US regulatory body) is considering the auction of the 2110-2150 MHz band which is currently used by school and health care centres.[39]

The battle ahead

The prospect of digital TV has pitted government and regulators on the one hand against the commercial broadcasting fraternity. Many governments have already announced dates for the withdrawal of analogue television services. They are well aware that this switch will free radio spectrum that can, in turn, be allocated for new broadcasting and mobile services. However, commercial broadcasters do not, as a rule, want to invest in upgrading their digital services for fear that the costs involved and eventual spectrum auctions would damage their financial and business prospects. Traditional networks also fear the emergence of competitors for digital services from the IT sector, such as Microsoft and AT&T.

In some countries, most notably the USA, spectrum had traditionally been given away free to the big broadcast networks and to cellular phone providers. In 1993, a cash-strapped Congress decided to auction some parts of the spectrum. In the context of digital services, relaxation of cross-media ownership rules and the blurring of distinctions between content and conduit providers, it has been suggested that the broadcast networks are levied a tax for their use of spectrum, and that the spectrum is de facto privatised and managed entirely on the basis of market rules.

Conservative estimates place the worth of the spectrum used by the networks in the region of $70 billion in the USA alone.[40] Spectrum auctions and market pricing are just the first steps, with privatised spectrum trading to follow.

The inclination of the FCC and suggestions from industry in the USA that the spectrum be entirely de-regulated and auctioned off to the highest bidders can lead to potentially disastrous consequences.[41] If corporations are allowed to manage, buy, sell, lease, use and abuse spectrum, this can only hasten the creation of enclosures around other natural resources, like water, that we take for granted. What is even more worrying is the prospect of the migration of such rules to the ITU, therefore becoming the touchstone for national spectrum allocation policies. There is a need for civil society to monitor and resist any moves by governments to turn the radio spectrum, a public good, into a private commodity to be bought and sold to the highest bidder.

The meaning for civil society

From a communication rights perspective, an issue of serious concern is the need for protracted engagements at the ITU and in regional and national forums to address the need for spectrum allocation for public service and civil society use including the community broadcasting sector. Currently a sizeable swathe of spectrum is reserved for the defence sector, and for governments' own use, with the private sector getting the best of what remains.[42] There is a

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39 Batista, E., Anybody got Some Spare Spectrum (pp1-4), Wired News, Jul 02, 2001, http://wwwwired.com/news/business

40 Your Master's Voice (pp.1-5), Wired Magazine, Issue 5.08., August 1997., Lo, Catharine, Get Wireless (pp.1-15), Wired Magazine, Issue 5.04, April 1997., Platt, C., The Great HDTV Swindle (pp.1-14), Wired Magazine, Issue 5.02, Feb. 1997. http://www.wired.com

41 The appointment of Michael K. Powell, the son of Colin Powell, to the chairmanship of the FCC, has led to the further de-regulation of broadcasting, the lifting of cross-media ownership curbs and to the deeper extension of market forces. "All consumers…deserve a new spectrum policy paradigm that is rooted in modern-day technologies and markets. We are living in a world where demand for spectrum is driven by an explosion of wireless technology and the ever-increasing popularity of wireless services. Nevertheless, we are still living under a spectrum "management" regime that is 90 years old. It needs a hard look, and in my opinion, a new direction." (Powell, M., Spectrum Policy Task Force, FCC, http://www.fcc.org. See also Rose, F., Big Media or Bust (pp.1-7), Wired Magazine, Issue 10.03, March 2002

42 How the Spectrum is Used, http://www.ntia.doc.org

need for a more democratic allocation of spectrum space to ensure that the public interest is given primacy and that public service and civil society use of the radio spectrum is adequately provided for in both the analogue and the digital environment. This should include reservation of spectrum for public and community broadcasting and for other civil society uses.

Conclusion

A way forward is to advocate for a "spectrum commons" model as an alternative to the market-based model. The spectrum commons would be administered by an independent organisation constituted of representatives from the government, the private sector and civil society. Such a model would be designed to produce a more democratic allocation of spectrum. It would start from the principle that the spectrum should be regulated in the public interest and for public benefit. Public service and civil society use of the spectrum would be guaranteed, ring-fenced and provided at no charge other than that needed to cover the costs of regulation. Commercial use of the spectrum would need to demonstrate social and economic benefit and would be considered a form of "leasehold" of a portion of the spectrum commons. Spectrum "rental" charges would be levied and applied to the public good with a proportion being re-invested in the improvement of the communications environment through support for civil society communications initiatives and other communications services for public benefit.

Universal Access to Telecoms

The digital divide and the credibility gap

The issues of affordable access to the internet, telephony and other telecom services is greatly exercising the minds of many at the World Summit in the Information Society and other arenas. There are many genuine efforts afoot to deploy ICTs more effectively for development, calling for us all to "think outside the box". The problem, however, is that mainstream-thinking is still trapped inside the smallest of a Russian doll-set. Several leaps are required before the current orthodoxy –liberalisation, privatisation and the regulatory and IPR toolkit that goes along with it– which has simply reached its limits can be shaken off. Those limits leave us stranded far short of addressing the requirements of those in most need of access; the world's majority in poor communities and countries. A brief history and current state of the sector offers compelling evidence of this. Finding the right solution(s) to move forward, however, is not easy and demands the concentrated effort, especially, of civil society.

It is hardly necessary to go over the extent of differential access to telecoms and the internet globally. It has been well-documented, and indeed there are indications it is growing. The ITU notes that the "growth rate in the number of new telephone subscribers plunged in 2001".[43] It seems likely that the lower-return rural lines are hit hardest. How has this come about?

Governance and the network

In the past few decades, governance of telecommunications infrastructure has seen a revolution, from national to global levels. The ITU traditionally was

43 World Telecoms Development Report 2002; Reinventing Telecom Services

the forum for telecommunication monopolies and governments to interact on matters of mutual interest: sharing tariffs between them from international traffic of a small range of telecommunication services (called the "accounting rate system"); allocating spectrum and satellite slots for their various uses and users; and agreeing standards for interconnection and compatibility.

The rate and direction of network infrastructure growth and the tariff strategies pursued were determined partly by costs and partly by policy priorities. Richer countries had extensive universal service policies and mechanisms to ensure that rural subscribers were provided a service at affordable levels. For poorer countries, the situation was more uneven. Confronted with competing demands for essential services like water and electricity, telecommunication was often neglected and international tariffs used as a means to generate hard currency to support other activities. On the whole, national telecommunication systems existed largely in isolation from each other. This changed greatly from the mid-1980s onwards.

The USA, the UK and then the EU aggressively pursued a policy of liberalisation and privatisation. Bolstered by World Bank and IMF interventions, global strategies were hatched in such forums as the OECD and G7. Before long, a momentum developed towards a market-driven, commercially-oriented dynamic, which came to fruition in the WTO's GATT agreement signed in 1997. This prompted a new regime in telecommunication in which national ownership, public or private, was to become a thing of the past replaced by a relatively small number of global telecoms and ICT corporations. The old ITU accounting rate system was all but swept away through unilateral actions by the US, to be replaced by a market-based mechanism that favoured the wealthier countries overall. The expansion of infrastructure and services beyond what was commercially attractive became the subject largely of universal service obligations administered (*or not*) by national regulators.

Pent-up demand and early profits

The early phase of privatisations and foreign investment in the 1990s saw quite rapid satisfaction of pent-up demand, built up over decades of underinvestment due in part to the refusal of international banks and institutions to fund publicly-owned networks. Hugely profitable markets in urban areas of the South were tapped and mobile phones, even beyond urban centres, became a quick and profitable means to supply the middle classes with a basic service. The accompanying move towards cost-based tariffs lowered the tariffs for international and long-distance calls but increased the tariffs for local calls and monthly line-rental charges.

Pent-up demand could offer national regulators or governments an opportunity to impose universal service obligations as part of the licence conditions on telecommunication operators. Effective universal service and access policies would both extend the network and reduce tariffs for targeted users. Yet, it was difficult for developing countries to formulate, implement and enforce such policies, lacking specialist expertise and facing powerful corporations and pressures from their corporate homelands. Furthermore in some poorer countries especially of Africa, demand even among businesses and middle classes was so low that national telecommunication operators were sold at knock-down prices with virtually no licence obligations attached. At the height of the telecommunications boom of the 1990s, the focus of some investors was simply to secure territory and licences as the global telecommunication sector was carved up among a handful of corporations.

Overall, the success in implementing universal service strategies at national level has been limited. Indeed, WTO rules which demand that these strategies be "*not more burdensome than necessary*" in terms of distorting market forces, have yet to be put to the test – if and when they are, the outcome may be a new set of hurdles to realising universal service.

Since the turn of the century, investment in telecommunication has slowed greatly, growth has

stalled, and evidence suggests the market-driven approach has reached its limits. Having satisfied highly profitable pent-up demand, there is little appetite for investment to reach lower-return users, at national or international levels. With half the world's telecom operators in private hands, the ITU notes that "… *most "easy" privatisations have already been carried out. Those that remain are, for the most part, beset with difficulties, for instance relating to an inflated workforce, indebtedness, political opposition or country risk. (…) [While] experience has shown that investing in an incumbent PTO [telecoms service provider] has generally provided a good return on investment, the timing is now no longer favourable… On top of this, the current stock market conditions are adverse.*" [44]

Innovative technologies are still emerging, but for similar reasons, enthusiasm for experimenting and implementing them has waned. A period of consolidation has set in, and those looking to the private sector, including the G8's DotForce and WSIS, to bridge the "digital-divide" are to be disappointed. The market-driven logic of provision, lacking firm international and national political will to implement effective universal access policies, and traumatised from the spending spree and subsequent hang-over, has stalled where huge profits tail off, far short of reaching areas of most need. Donor-led and sometimes successful attempts to reach these users outside the market, promoting community access, low cost technology, etc., can do little to compensate for such systemic failure. What is needed is a replacement of paradigm shift to one or more alternatives that do not put profit generation in the driving seat.

Dilemma and opportunities

The problem is that no emerging paradigm absolutely clearly fits this bill. And until one does, key government and international actors are unlikely to accept that an entirely new paradigm is needed, clinging to the hope that the corporate sector will rebound. This is the bind, and one where courageous governments, agencies and civil society can make a strong contribution. What is required now is a phase of vigorous experimentation and implementation of new ideas in technology, but also in how it is organised, regulated and funded. Opportunities abound.

In technologies, the WiFi (wireless) standard has seen independent community networks spring up in much of the wealthy world and even in the south – with virtually no external support. Peer-to-peer technologies, the bane of copyright holders, are growing in strength and capabilities. Open-source and free software has the potential to significantly reduce costs, yet still encounter concerted corporate resistance reflected in such arenas as the WSIS. "Spread spectrum" technologies may render redundant the idea of spectrum scarcity; and bearing in mind that spectrum is a public good, calls from various respected commissions and bodies for a tax on commercial spectrum-use, to be channelled to development needs, warrant revisiting.

For that matter the pariah status of public investment in monopoly network provision is largely undeserved, and was the driving force of early telecoms development everywhere. Community construction and ownership of networks has been shown to be successful but has never, for obvious reasons, had major political or corporate backing. Finally, there is still scope for robust universal service policy that can retain for network development some more of the profits currently being extracted by foreign corporations. Indeed, one might conceive of a global universal service policy where a small fraction of international telecom revenues are directed towards network development in the south, built into a revised tariff-sharing system.

The issue at this point is not lack of ideas and possibilities. It is a lack of political will and fear of incurring displeasure among the champions of liberalisation. Such fears can be overcome through developing in practice realistic alternatives that all can benefit from, and implementing a paradigm that puts people and development before markets and profits.

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44 World Telecoms Development Report 2002; Reinventing Telecom Services

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Conclusion and Moving Forward

Conclusion and Moving Forward

What happens after the first world summit?

The first phase of the WSIS process will culminate in a global summit in Geneva in December 2003 where governments will endorse a "Declaration of Principles and Action Plan for the Information Society".

Significant efforts have been made by some stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels to generate interest and develop inputs. However, it is unclear if WSIS will be more than a "talk shop" and concretely place the challenge of digital exclusion on the international agenda with agreed actions and mechanisms for implementation.

In addition, little is known of what will happen between the 2003 summit and the second summit that will take place in November 2005 in Tunisia. The ITU says little about the second summit, apart from that it will address development themes and assess progress made in implementing outcomes of the first WSIS.

What actions can be taken?

Regardless of the specific outcomes of WSIS it is an important opportunity for civil society to learn, and organise as a sector, to lobby governments to take action and ensure that civil society perspectives are included in ICT policy and implementation at national, regional and global levels.

Opportunities for civil society include:

- Engaging ICT policies at the national level[45]

- Engaging ICT policies at regional level

- Raising public awareness and working with the media in this process

- Monitoring progress against the implementation of the WSIS Action Plan

- Working with networks, such as CRIS, to mobilise efforts and awareness

- Lobbying for particular positions to be included in national and regional ICT policy

- Participating effectively in WSIS events

- Raising awareness of key issues and civil society positions at other international ICT decision-making forums (e.g. WTO, ICANN, WIPO)

APC and CRIS will continue to work with civil society to raise the issues and priorities identified in this book. We will continue to contribute towards developing better-informed, more confident civil society ICT policy advocates who can motivate and animate learning networks at the national level. This brings us full-circle connecting policy to practice, and global to local.

CRIS will celebrate communication rights at the WSIS in December 2003 through launching the first World Forum on Communication Rights with other civil society and governmental actors.

The most important aspect of our involvement in the WSIS, and the basis of our ongoing action, is that it demonstrates our commitment to be empowered actors in shaping the environment within which civil society organisations use ICTs to promote development and social and environmental justice.

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45 Refer to APC's "Frequently Asked Questions About Conducting a National WSIS Consultation Process" which accompanies this book and is online: www.apc.org/english/capacity/policy.

List of Useful Resources

Additional resources can be found in relevant sections of the book.

The Association For Progressive Communications (APC)

Website: www.apc.org
Members: www.apc.org/english/about/members/

General Resources:

Internet Rights Charter:
www.apc.org/english/rights/charter.shtml

A Civil Society Perspective on the "Information Revolution": www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x=6291

ICTs for Social Change:
www.apcwomen.org/gem/Gender_ICT/

Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS)

Website: www.crisinfo.org

General Resources:

The latest on WSIS: www.crisinfo.org/live/index.php?section=2&subsection=3

Whose Information Society?:
www.crisinfo.org/live/index.php?section=3

The CRIS Charter: www.crisinfo.org/live/index.php?section=3&subsection=2

UN Websites

Official ITU WSIS www.itu.int/wsis
Civil Society Secretariat Division:
www.geneva2003.org

UNESCO WSIS: portal.unesco.org/ci/ev.php?URL_ID=1543&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201

Civil Society Contributions to WSIS

Civil Society Content and Themes Group

Priorities Document :
www.worldsummit2003.de/download_en/WSIS-CS-CT-Paris-071203.rtf (12 July 2003)

Comments on the Draft Declaration:
www.worldsummit2003.de/download_de/comments-cs-on-draft-declaration-27-02-2003.doc (27 Feb 2003)

Comments on the Draft Action Plan:
www.worldsummit2003.de/download_de/CS-priorities-Action-Plan-28-02-2003.doc (28 Feb 2003)

Other working documents:
bscw.fit.fraunhofer.de/pub/bscw.cgi/0/42953798

Civil Society Organisations

Interventions at the Intersessional Meeting (July 2003): www.wsis-cs.org/intersessional

Submissions to the Intersessional (July 2003)
www.itu.int/wsis/documents/listingall.asp?lang=en&c_event=pcil1&c_type=alll

Submissions to PrepCom II (Feb 2003)
www.itu.int/wsis/documents/listing.asp?lang=en&c_event=pcl2&c_type=colngo

Submissions to PrepCom I (July 2002)
www.itu.int/wsis/documents/listing.asp?lang=en&c_event=pcl1&c_type=slct

APC

APC: Submission to the WSIS Intersessional (May 2003)
www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc3/c/S03-WSISPC3-C-0056!!MSW-E.doc

Gender and ICT Advocacy

Gender and ICT Advocacy: Submissions and background documents to WSIS

APC WNSP: Passage of the Document: Gender and ICT Advocacy through the WSIS process. www.genderit.org/wsis/wsis_process.shtml (July 2003)

APC WNSP: Submission to the WSIS Intersessional (May 2003)

www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc3/c/S03-WSISPC3-C-0093!!MSW-E.doc

NGO Gender Strategies Working Group Comments on the Declaration: www.genderit.org/resources/Call-to-governments.htm (July, 2003)

NGO Gender Strategies Working Group Comments on the Draft Action Plan: www.genderit.org/resources/GSWG-Action-Plan-Comments.doc (July 2003)

NGO Gender Strategies Working Group Submissions throughout the WSIS process: www.genderit.org/wsis/documents.htm

WSIS Gender Caucus: Submission to the WSIS Intersessional (May 2003)
www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc3/c/S03-WSISPC3-C-0125!!MSW-E.doc

Gender and ICT Advocacy:
About the WSIS process

REGENTIC: Senegalese Women's NGO commission to coordinate participation to the Geneva (December 2003) and Tunis (November 2005) Summit on Information Society:
www.famafrique.org/regentic/accueil.html

Women of Uganda Networks: WSIS preparations in Uganda:
www.wougnet.org/WSIS/ug/ugandawsis.html

Putting Gender on the Agenda - Overview of the WSIS process from a gender perspective: www.genderit.org/wsis/wsis-presentation-asw_files/frame.htm (Anne S Walker, International Women's Tribune Centre, www.iwtc.org)

IWTC Globalnets focusing on gender advocacies within the WSIS process: www.genderit.org/wsis/index_globalnets.shtml

Where are the Women in the WSIS Asian Regional Conference? Some Observations: (C. Cinco, APC WNSP) www.genderit.org/wsis/wsis_ap_cinco_1.shtml

ISIS International Manila on WSIS:
www.isiswomen.org/onsite/wsis/index.html

Regional Resources: Africa

Africa: Submissions and background documents

African Caucus Intersessional Interventions and Reports in Plenary
www.wsis-cs.org/africa/b_reports.shtml (July 2003)

Africa Civil Society Input to the Draft Declaration and Action Plan of 21st March 2003
www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc3/c/S03-WSISPC3-C-0120!!MSW- E.doc

African Declaration on ICT Access
www.icta.mu/

Our Side of the Divide: Africa Perspectives on Information and Communication Technologies
www.misa.org/broadcasting/wsis/resources.htm

South Africa: THETHA – Discussion on "World Summit on the Information Society" – SANGONeT africa.rights.apc.org/news-content.shtml?x=12825

Uganda: Women of Uganda Network - WSIS Preparations in Uganda: www.wougnet.org/WSIS/ug/ugandawsis.html

Africa: The WSIS process

Bamako 2002, Africa regional preparatory meeting for the WSIS www.geneva2003.org/bamako2002/

Civil society organizations consultation on their role in WSIS process and input during Bamako 2002 meeting. www.geneva2003.org/bamako2002/doc_html/prog_unesco_en.htm

Post Bamako 2002:www.uneca.org/aisi/bamako2002/index.htm

Africa: Other key documents

The African Charter on Broadcasting 2001 www.misanet.org/broadcasting/resources/

Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa www.article19.org/docimages/1600.pdf

Charter on African media and the Digital Divide www.highwayafrica.org.za/archive/2002/charter.html

The Peoples Communication Charter www.pccharter.net/charteren.html

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights www.hrcr.org/docs/Banjul/afrhr2.html

The African Charter on Women's Rights, African Union Summit, Maputo, 2003 www.hshr.org/africanwomenprotocol.htm

Regional Resources:
Latin America and the Caribbean

LAC Caucus Input to the Draft Declaration and Action Plan of 21st March 2003 www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc3/c/S03-WSISPC3-C-0118!!MSW-S.doc

Latin American and Caribbean civil society participation in the WSIS: A Spanish language resource developed by APC: lac.derechos.apc.org/wsis/

CRIS Colombia: Actions on the ground: Boletines

Developed by Planeta Paz: www.planetapaz.org/comunicacion/cumbre.htm

CRIS Bolivia: Infomación Libre: cris.enbolivia.org

Regional Resources:
Asia-Pacific

Statement of NGOs at "WSIS: The Asian Response" www.wsisasia.org/materials/finalversion.doc

Joint statement from Asia Civil Society Forum participants on WSIS Session www.wsisasia.org/wsis-acsf2002/wsis-acsfdec13f.doc

Civil Society Observations and Response to the Tokyo Declaration www.wsisasia.org/wsis-tokyo/tokyo-statement.html

Statement of Korean civil society Network for WSIS www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc3/c/S03-WSISPC3-C-0105!!MSW-E.doc

Contacting Civil Society @ WSIS

Contacting Civil Society @ WSIS: Websites and mailing lists

Civil Society Working groups contact point: Links to websites and online working spaces of regional and thematic caucuses and working groups and their working spaces. www.wsis-cs.org (English)

Civil Society Plenary mailing list: mailman.greennet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/plenary

Civil Society Content and Themes working group mailing list: mailman.greennet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/ct

Choike: a portal on Southern civil societies, focus on WSIS: www.choike.org/cgi-bin/choike/links/page.cgi?p=ver_indepth&id=703&cat=14 (Spanish and English)

"Civil Society News Centre for the WSIS": www.prepcom.net/wsis (English with some texts published in original language)

"Worldsummit2003.org"
Offering background information and news on the WSIS process, the issues and debates. Edited by members of the German WSIS Civil Society Coordinating Group. www.worldsummit2003.de (German and English)

Contacting Civil Society @ WSIS: Gender and ICT advocacy

APC WNSP: www.apcwomen.org

NGO Gender Strategies Working Group Website: www.genderit.org mailing list: mailman.greennet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/ngowomen

REGENTIC: www.famafrique.org/regentic/

Women of Uganda Network: www.wougnet.org

WSIS Gender Caucus website: www.genderwsis.org mailing list: lists.kabissa.org/mailman/listinfo/wsis-gendercaucus

Contacting Civil Society @ WSIS: Africa

African Caucus

Website: www.wsis-cs.org/africa/caucus.shtml

Online workspace: African Information Society Initiative - Discussion Forum. [aisi-l@lyris.bellanet.org] www.bellanet.org/lyris/helper/index.cfm?fuseaction=Visit&listname=aisi-l

Contacting Civil Society @ WSIS: Asia and the Pacific

Asia Civil Societies response to the WSIS' website: www.wsisasia.org Mailing list: www.wsisasia.org/Mailinglist.html

Contacting Civil Society @ WSIS: Latin America and the Caribbean

LAC Caucus Website: lac.derechos.apc.org/wsis/caucuslac.shtml Online workspace: mailman.greennet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/lac

Contacting Civil Society @ WSIS: Middle East, West and Central Asia

Iranian Civil Society Organizations Resource Center:
website www.irancsos.net
Contact details: wsis@irancsos.net

Civil Society Involvement: National Level WSIS and ICT Policy Preparations

German WSIS Coordinating Group:
www.worldsummit2003.de/en/nav/14.htm

Korean civil society Network for WSIS:
www.wsis.or.kr/

Uganda National WSIS Taskforce:
www.wougnet.org/WSIS/ug/ugandawsis.html

South Africa: www.sn.apc.org/corporate/news/news_frameset.html

Events

10th-12th December 2003:
Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society

PrepComs to prepare for the Tunis phase of the WSIS:
Number of PrepComs and dates yet to be determined

November 16th-18th 2005:
Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society

Official WSIS Preparatory Process Timetable (updated): www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/timetable.asp

World Forum on Communication Rights: 11th December 2003, Palexpo, Geneva, parallel to the World Summit on the Information Society

www.crisinfo.org/live/index.php?section=2&subsection=2&id=32
or act@crisinfo.org

Capacity-Building and Training Resources

Capacity-Building: Understanding ICT Policy

ICT Policy for Civil Society Training Curriculum (APC)

The ICT Policy for Civil Society training course builds the capacity of civil society organisations to understand policy and regulation related to ICT so that they can begin to engage and influence policy processes affecting ICT adoption and implementation at national, regional and global levels.

This is a five-day course with each session planned to last approximately 1.5 hours. The modules can be used stand-alone as training on a particular topic or used together as part of a longer course. www.apc.org/english/capacity/policy/curriculum.shtml

Guide to Organising a National Consultation on ICT Policy (APC)

The "FAQ about Conducting a National WSIS Process" outlines the steps to take and key components in organising a national consultation around ICT policy, in this case specifically the debates raised by the United Nations conference on the Information Society (WSIS). We chose the "frequently asked questions" (FAQ) question & answer format in order to home in on some of the key questions we have heard people ask. It is included together with this book. www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x=12828

GEM: Integrating a gender perspective into ICT programmes and policies (APC WNSP)

Developed by APC's Women's Programme, the Gender and ICT Evaluation Methodology (GEM) is a guide to integrating a gender analysis into evaluations of initiatives that use ICTs for social change. It helps determine whether ICTs are really improving women's lives and gender relations as well as promoting positive change at the individual, institutional, community and broader social levels.
www.apcwomen.org/gem/

Sharing Internet Knowledge and Multi-Media Training

ItrainOnline: Sharing Internet Knowledge
APC joined forces with five organisations working in related areas to develop ItrainOnline, a one-stop source of ICTs training materials for people who want to learn how to use the internet effectively for social justice and sustainable development. www.itrainonline.org

The MMTK aims to promote and support linkages between new and traditional media for development through a structured set of materials. The materials are based on a standard set of templates, and are intended to be used as building blocks from which trainers can build up training workshops appropriate for their own contexts. Eventually the MMTK will offer a comprehensive suite of training materials covering technical, content, organisational and ethical topics. www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/

WSIS Gender Caucus: WSIS Caucus Gender Caucus Source Book

A guide to creating a national gender programme in preparation for WSIS. The sourcebook provides a background on WSIS, and outlines strategies for organising effective national gender programmes. www.genderwsis.org/sourcebook/sourcebook.pdf

Frequently Asked Questions
About Conducting
a National WSIS Consultation Process

Version 1, June 2003

Calendar of key WSIS events

25 / 30	May 2002	**African Regional Conference** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/bamako.html	Bamako, Mali
17 / 18	June 2002	**UN General Assembly Meeting for ICT for Development**	New York, USA
01 / 0 5	July 2002	**Global Preparatory Committee 1** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/pc1/	Geneva, Switzerland
16 / 18	September 2002	**Content and Themes Informal Meeting**	Geneva, Switzerland
09 / 11 23 / 24	September 2002 October 2002	**Bishek- Moscow Conference on the Information Society** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/other/related/bishkek_moscow/	Bishek and Moscow
07 / 09	November 2002	**European Regional Conference** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/bucharest.html	Bucharest, Romania
13 / 15	January 2003	**Asian Regional Conference** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/tokyo.html	Tokyo, Japan
27 / 30	January 2003	**Latin America and Caribbean Regional Conference** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/bavaro.html	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
04 / 06	February 2003	**Western Asia Preparatory Conference** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/beirut.html	Beirut, Lebanon
17 / 28	February 2003	**Global Preparatory Committee 2** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/pc2/	
16 / 18	June 2003	**Pan-Arab Regional Meeting**	Cairo, Egypt
15 / 18	July 2003	**Intersessional Meeting** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/intersessional/	Paris, France
15 / 26	September 2003	**Global Preparatory Committee 3** www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/pc3/	
10 / 12	December 2003	**World Summit on the Information Society**	Geneva, Switzerland
2005		**World Summit on the Information Society**	Tunis, Tunisia

The official WSIS Event Calendar provides updates on the timeline. http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/index.html

For a downloadable document of key events and deadlines go to:
www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_single.asp?lang=en&id=639

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1. About this guide

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) hosted by the United Nations, will be held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2003. The Summit will bring together all of the world's nations in an attempt to develop a global framework to deal with the challenges posed by the information society, and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents.

Whether this goal will be attained remains to be seen. Nevertheless, it is an important opportunity to critically engage a range of issues related to media and information and communication technologies that are relevant to civil society.

The Summit also creates an opportunity for government, civil society and private sector actors to come together, at national as well as regional and international levels, to engage in debate and cooperation towards using ICTs to create a better world.

The overall World Summit on the Information Society process has two phases. After the event of December 2003, the process will continue at regional and national levels. The second Summit, to be held in Tunis in November 2005, will review the process and progress made, and identify a possible further plan of action. Therefore, it is important to remember that national efforts can and should continue beyond December 2003.

APC believes that civil society organisations (CSOs) need to engage with ICT policy issues at all levels. We see the WSIS as an opportunity for CSOs to collaborate and gain confidence and skill in ICT policy lobbying and advocacy. Ultimately, to effect change in their own environments, they need to apply these skills at national level.

National WSIS consultations serve several important purposes:

- influencing specific country level input into the WSIS process
- forging interaction between government, civil society and the private sector
- building skill, experience and confidence among CSOs to engage ICT policies
- creating demand at the national level for government to implement ICT policies they subscribe to at international level
- linking international lobbying to lobbying at the national level.

The goal of this document is to outline the steps and key aspects that might be considered when organizing or participating in a national WSIS consultation. We hope you find this tool useful.

2. General questions about WSIS?

Why participate in WSIS?

The WSIS provides a good opportunity to open spaces for debate and discussion, to create consensus and basic agreements between multiple stakeholders in relation to key information society issues, not only at global level, but also at national level. It is an excellent opportunity to lobby government to take action on ICT policy and raise awareness of the issues at national, regional and global levels.

The process is also a great learning opportunity for CSOs that are new to the ICT policy process. By engaging in the issues outlined at the WSIS, CSOs begin to articulate their positions and gain valuable experience in lobbying that can be taken back to their home countries. It will also help CSOs develop positions, lobby and develop the understanding that will enable them participate in some of the other international processes that relate to ICT policies, for example:

- The World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)
- Internet Corporation for Assigning Names and Numbers (ICANN)

What are the intended outputs of the WSIS?

At the end of the December 2003 Summit, governments are expected to have adopted:

- a declaration of principles that outlines their vision for the "information society"
- an action plan that outlines specific activities to be undertaken to realise the vision outlined in the declaration of principles.

From within the United Nations there has been quite a strong push to have the WSIS articulate its vision and action plan keeping in mind the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[1], adopted in September 2000. Some civil society groups have questioned this in the context of the many other social and development goals which have been agreed on by governments at previous UN summits (most which are still to be effectively realised).

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1   These goals focus on the following areas: poverty; education; gender equality; child mortality; maternal health; HIV/AIDS and other diseases; environment; global partnership).For detail on the MDGs see http://www.developmentgoals.org/

3. Convening a national WSIS consultation

Why is it necessary to have a national WSIS consultation?

A national WSIS consultation can be an important mechanism for broadening social participation, assuring national interests are being represented in global processes, and building consensus or basic agreement between all social actors on the most important information society issues.

The national consultation process is also important because it creates a general awareness of the WSIS and can begin to generate expectations of action and implementation after the Summit. Demand for action from civil society, the private sector, and the media as well as from those within the government sector is an essential part of the policy-implementation dynamic. Without demand from below and demand from within government is unlikely to deliver on promises made at the WSIS.

Few governments are organising national consultations, and local CSOs can thus play an important role by taking the initiative in convening such consultations. Remember that the national delegation to the WSIS consists of government representatives and, since the national delegations have much greater power to influence proceedings, it is important that CSOs lobby their governments at a national level to take on some of the issues that are important to them.

CHECKLIST: Why is it necessary to have a national WSIS consultation?

- ❏ It creates awareness
- ❏ It broadens social participation
- ❏ It builds consensus between social actors
- ❏ It creates demand and expectation for delivery
- ❏ It is an opportunity for CSOs to lead the process and thereby optimise their interests.

Are there different types of national consultation?

There can be various types of national consultation. For example:
- a civil society-only consultation
- thematic civil society consultations (e.g. gender, labour, media)
- civil society and government

- civil society and the private sector
- a multi-stakeholder consultation that brings together civil society organisations, the presidency, ministries, government officials, parliamentarians, academics and the private sector.

Irrespective of the type of consultation, the process should be participatory and inclusive.

Make sure you communicate to participants what type of consultation you are convening.

What do you expect from a national WSIS consultation?

It is important for you and your organisation to have clear ideas about what you want to achieve with a consultation process. Defining goals and objectives and measurable outputs are critical to planning your immediate and future steps. (See table on page 6)

What are the key elements of a national WSIS consultation?

These are also possible agenda items.

- Explanation of the process
- Overview of civil society, governments and private sector participation (main outcomes, opportunities, challenges)
- Discussing WSIS issues in the national context
- Discussion of key ICT policy issues relevant to stakeholders in the process, e.g. CSOs
- Identifying national WSIS priorities
- Sharing information about current WSIS involvements in your country
- Developing a contact list of people/organizations that are not at the consultation but who should be aware of the process
- Pointing people to resources about WSIS
- Gain commitments to participate from national CSOs and other relevant actors
- Engage in regional or global WSIS initiatives (regional/thematic caucuses)
- Identifying next steps.

TABLE: What do you expect from a national WSIS consultation?		
GOALS	OBJECTIVES	MEASURABLE OUTPUTS
Mobilising participation, and building networking	Forge closer links and stimulate networking between government and nongovernmental stakeholders	Establish a national WSIS organising group
	Develop and strengthen strategic partnerships and linkages with other CSOs and also other relevant stakeholders	Establish inclusive planning group for the national WSIS consultation process
	Open up a channel of communication between individuals interested in the process	A contact list of people who want to be part of the process
	Set up short, medium and long-term mechanisms to activate the debate and social participation in the ICT policy process	Online discussion forums
Raising awareness of ICT policy issues	Increase awareness of WSIS and of ICT issues	National WSIS web resources
	Opportunity for outreach to the media to create awareness of WSIS and the issues it is trying to address/not addressing	At least 3 articles in the media about WSIS and the consultation
		At least one incidence of coverage on radio and television on the issue
Building capacities	Build capacity in understanding ICT policies	National ICT policy workshops
	Build capacity to lobby and advocate	Advocacy-training workshops
Strategic engagement with the WSIS	Input into the formation of the national WSIS delegation	Ensure that there are at least 2 civil society representatives in the official national delegation convened by government
	Agreement on what the key issues are in your country	A WSIS national position paper
	Agreement on what the *minimum* common outcomes are you would like to see from WSIS	A national list of key desired outcomes from WSIS
	An understanding of which caucuses members of the national delegation are part of, or should be part of	Listing of all WSIS caucuses and their conveners to be made available at national level
	Strategy for next steps of the national WSIS campaign that outlines who will do what	Detailed workplan with timeline
	Planning participation and presence at WSIS and WSIS preparatory meetings	Listing of who is involved in what element of WSIS, which events they attend, and where they will stay when at the events

4. Planning a national consultation

a. Avoid duplicating efforts

Make sure no one else (from any social sector) is planning a similar initiative before planning your own. Find out if there is any existing initiative related to WSIS or other "information society" matters in your country. If the response is YES, consider collaborating with them; collective efforts can be more effective.

Tips on finding out about other initiatives

- Doing a "google" search on the keywords "WSIS and "name of country", e.g. "WSIS and Cameroon" could reveal some good starting points
- Contact the facilitator of the WSIS regional caucus for information on national contacts
- The WSIS Civil Society Bureau has created an alphabetical listing of countries, highlighting those with active WSIS national processes
- Information on country preparations, national committees for the Summit and lists and contacts of civil society entities active at the national level. www.geneva2003.org/wsis/index_c01_2_10.htm

b. Convene a planning or working group

- Identify a few individuals, preferably representing a variety of interested organisations, to form a small planning group. Get them together to start planning your national WSIS consultation
- You could also work with a small group (1 or 2 people) from your own organisation to start the process
- Having a motivated team will allow you to achieve your goals effectively and to build a network at the national level. It is also important here to build links between the national and the regional/global levels.

When forming your core team, you might consider:

- People with expertise in diverse information society issues who can provide key elements to the discussion and actions, and prepare background briefings
- People who have access to politicians, media workers, official representatives and community leaders
- People who are part of existing regional caucuses
- People who are part of existing thematic caucuses.

c. Set goals and develop a plan

At its first meeting, the planning group needs to develop a plan for the national WSIS consultation process. This can involve:

- brainstorming potential activities you hope to achieve together
- identifying goals and objectives
- discussing existing activities which should be linked to your initiative
- assigning roles and responsibilities to members of the planning group
- establishing what resources are required (e.g. funding, venues, electronic mailing lists)
- creation of a timeline for the national consultation process
- setting a date for the next meeting of the team.

d. Develop an invitation and contact list

The planning group should brainstorm who to involve in the national consultation. Begin to develop an e-mail address list of people to contact.

Make sure you cover a cross-section of CSOs, for example:

- women's organisations
- community media
- ICT organisations
- trade unions
- human rights organisations
- freedom of expression advocates
- activist organisations in different fields (environmentalists, health advocates, etc.)
- academic and research institutions, e.g. media journalism and communication schools.

Sources you can draw on to develop your contact list:

- Contact information of all the participants at WSIS Prepcom 2: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2
- A listing of National Commissions for UNESCO: www.unesco.org/ncp/natcom/pages/natcom.pdf
- Members of international NGOs such as the Association for Progressive Communications www.apc.org/english/about/members and www.apcwomen.org

e. Document your action plan

- Write up your national consultation process plan. A simple document consisting of bullet-point lists could be enough.
- Include all the activities, such face-to-face meetings, online outreach, follow up with government and other forms of networking in the plan.
- Assign responsibility to specific people wherever possible.

This document could form the base of funding proposals.

5. Implementing a national consultation

This section is not a comprehensive guide to implementation, but contains useful tips and suggestions.

How can we raise awareness?

Examples of useful awareness-raising activities include:

- Developing useful content and making it available via email and the web
- Let others know what you're doing: outreach
- Share what you know with others, and learn from what others know
- Hold face to face meetings and workshops.

a. Develop plain multilingual content (website strategy)

Create and link to relevant content on information society issues on your website. You might even create a webpage for your national WSIS consultation process. This page could be part of your own site, or of a national or regional civil society portal. These online resources are an important tool for raising awareness. You can make press briefings accessible on the website after you have sent them directly to your press list.

Include content and material about the WSIS as well as links to relevant WSIS sites, and sites of entities that are tracking the WSIS process, the CRIS Campaign and the APC.

b. Online outreach

Plan and have an online conference as a prelude to a face-to-face meeting. The outcomes of such discussions can provide very useful background for discussion at a face-to-face meeting. At the very least, send background information on WSIS by email to your contact list. Discuss the possibility of having local face-to-face meetings (e.g. in more than one major city in your country) to consult as widely as possible.

c. Multi-stakeholder meetings

Convene meetings, ideally after an online preparatory process, to discuss national priorities and needs in relation to the information society.

Tip on reducing time and cost of organising meetings

Add a session on WSIS to meetings that are already taking place. This can also increase the number of people you reach and help you to avoid "preaching to the converted".

Meetings are the best means of building consensus on core issues that you want to see included in the national agenda for WSIS.

d. Workshops

Workshops are the best mechanism to train different social actors in areas relevant to WSIS, such as:

- ICT policies
- Gender and ICT
- ICT as a tool for social change

- Internet rights/communication rights
- Privacy issues
- Secure online communications
- Community media and ICT
- E-governance
- And more

The workshops can also be a space in which consensus can be developed on specific issues. For example, a workshop with national women's organisations on gender and ICT policy can be used to build a consensus on the issues that women want to be included in the WSIS agenda.

APC and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (http://www.cto.int) have developed a curriculum on ICT policy for civil society.[2]

For general training resources, including on communicating securely online, refer to ItrainOnline: www.itrainonline.org

e. Connect local to regional and global processes

While your focus is national, it is useful to be aware of regional and international civil society perspectives on WSIS.

The United Nations is the host of the WSIS, however, it is national governments which make decisions. Being aware of perspectives in your region, or internationally, can be helpful if you are looking for support when lobbying your government.

Find out if any of your neighbouring countries are engaging in national consultation processes. Some governments have already submitted national documents as contributions to the WSIS. It may be useful to review submissions from neighbouring countries.

Tips on where to find information

Government submissions for the WSIS Intersessional period: www.itu.int/wsis/documents/listing.asp?lang= en&c_ event=pcil1&c_type=colgov

f. Develop a press list

This will include names and contact details of publications, broadcasters, journalists and communications offices that you

want to target to ensure they disseminate information about your national campaign. You might, for example, include:

- science and technology reporters from local newspapers
- media specialists
- communications officers from government departments and ministries
- communications officers from trade unions and large international NGOs
- communications officers from political parties
- community broadcasters
- public and private radio and television news editors
- magazines, electronic mailing lists that deal with development, ICTs, social justice, environmental issues, etc.
- journalism schools

g. Reaching out to the media

Use your press list. Identify interested journalists and encourage them to write about the processes. Interview different key social actors and cover the activities that will be taking place. Produce background material for the press and regular press briefings throughout your national consultation process. Encourage journalists to attend WSIS and WSIS prepcoms.

Increasing participation

How can we ensure active participation?

By making people realise that ICT policy decisions impact on their local realities.

For example, if in your country there is a telecommunications monopoly that charges very high fees for all its services, most people will resent this situation. By lobbying for different policies they can change this situation.

Other key tools for promoting active participation:

- keep people informed
- measure and celebrate progress (for example, if consensus is reached on an issue, or government includes a civil society representative in their delegation
- have different sectors take responsibility for their part in the consultation process, yet,

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2   www.apc.org/english/capacity/policy

- maintain effective coordination
- be inclusive and transparent
- create opportunities for different people to attend WSIS prepcoms and the Summit.

6. Connecting with different stake-holders

Tips on finding information about stakeholders involved in the WSIS

Go to: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2 and search by stakeholder "type" (government, civil society, private sector, agencies), region, or delegation (country).

Refer to the Civil Society Secretariat Country listing: www.geneva2003.org/wsis/index_c01_2_10.htm

Governments

Identify relevant people within government

Find out who is in charge of information society related programs, initiatives or activities in government departments. Important departments to target are:

- trade and industry
- science and technology
- communications
- education
- environment

Tips on finding information on government delegates

Consult the ITU Government delegates tables (updated as of PrepCom II): www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/cty_list.asp

Get to know who your delegates are. Make an appointment to see them and ask if they want to be involved in a national consultation.

It is quite common for governments to nominate representatives from their communications or trade ministries to be involved in WSIS. The WSIS agenda is about far more than infrastructure and trade. Are the departments which deal with education, women, youth, and development involved in your government's delegation?

If not, invite representatives of these departments to your multi-stakeholder meetings. You might succeed in facilitating diversifying your government's representation in WSIS.

What is your government's position on WSIS issues?

Find out what the national position is on ICT issues. If this is information is not readily available, try to gain insight by, for example, reading national policy documents on telecommunications, development, information, and e-commerce.

This webpage will tell you if your government has made any official submissions to WSIS: www.itu.int/wsis/documents

Civil Society

Is there civil society involvement in the official WSIS preparatory process in your country?

If yes, contact them and find out about their activities, experiences and lessons learned. That will help you to plan more effectively future steps and actions.

Information about NGO and civil society participants in WSIS can be found here: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/ogp_detail.asp?ID=WS-NGO

Private Sector

Is the private sector represented in the WSIS delegation?

If yes, consider making contact with them and including them in the consultation process.

Information about private sector participants (also referred to as "Business Sector Entities") involved in the WSIS can be found here: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/ogp_detail.asp?ID=PRIVATE

The United Nations and its Special Agencies

Are there any national offices of UN Agencies actively involved in WSIS in your country? For example, UNESCO has been very active in supporting national level WSIS consulta-

tions. The ILO (International Labour Organisation) can be helpful for those working with the labour movement.

UN agencies can often be useful allies and sources of support for civil society.

Tips on finding information about UN agencies

Full chart of UN Agencies:
http://www.un.org/aboutun/chart.html

Some of the UN Programmes and other entities active in WSIS:

UNCTAD
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
www.unctad.org/Templates/StartPage.asp?intItemID=2068

UNDP–United Nations Development Programme
Website: www.undp.org/

UNHCHR–Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights
Website: www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home

UNIFEM–UN Development Fund For Women (technically part of UNDP along with UNV United Nations Volunteers)
Website: www.unifem.org/

WTO–World Trade Organisation
Website: www.wto.org

Some of the Special Agencies active in WSIS:

FAO - the Food and Agricultural Organisation: www.fao.org/

WSIS info: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=5449

ILO - International Labour Organization: www.ilo.org/

WSIS info: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=5456

The World Bank: www.worldbank.org/

WSIS info: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2org_detail.asp?ID=5452

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: www.unesco.org

WSIS info: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=4183

WHO - World Health Organization: www.who.org

WSIS info: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=17343

WIPO - World Intellectual Property Organization: www.wipo.org

WSIS info: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=17344

Information about UN and special agency participants involved in the WSIS can be found here: www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/ogp_detail.asp?ID=UN

Lobbying to be part of your national government delegation

In many instances, *official* WSIS Delegations (i.e. governments) welcome the participation of civil society representatives. Being an official member of your government's WSIS delegation could be quite useful, considering the level of access you might have to the WSIS process. It can be a very effective strategy, but it can have disadvantages.

Before making a decision to pursue this as part of your strategy, consider the pros and cons.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being part of the official delegation?

Advantages:
- You can influence the development of a national position positively, lobby and help to ensure the inclusion and treatment of the key issues as well as the needs/interests of civil society
- You can guide the work of your sector and, at the same time, support your government representatives in effectively proposing and defending national positions
- You can be part of the governmental meetings and monitor and report on the process "in situ" (preparatory meetings and Summit itself)
- You can identify public sector allies from other countries.

Disadvantages:

- You will most likely have to support your government's position in official elements of the WSIS process. If you do not fully support your government's position, or are in fact concerned about it, your lobbying activities may be hampered
- You won't be as involved in discussions taking place within the external, independent civil society caucuses
- You won't be as aware of issues that CSOs have highlighted but which are being ignored by the official delegations
- You may be limited regarding raising contentious issues.

Who will be the leader of your national delegation at the Summit and its preparatory events?

Find out who will represent your government at the December Summit and the preparatory meetings. You could invite them to speak at a meeting you convene.

Lobby your government to get WSIS positions adopted at a national policy level.

7. Developing a national position and building consensus

How does one start building consensus?

- Work with smaller like-minded groups, if time allows. For example, you could ask women's organisations to discuss what their concerns are, and then what their 3 priorities for WSIS are
- By facilitating discussion in a way that encourages people to discuss common concerns, and again to prioritise
- By reviewing and discussing documents that have already been produced by the WSIS civil society working group on content and themes, and by the different regional or thematic caucuses.

Is consensus always the right way to go?

In most cases, yes, but in some cases it might be more transparent to have different inputs into the WSIS process that represents specific view points.

8. Conclusion

The most important aspect of starting a national WSIS consultation process is that it is a beginning, and not an end. Irrespective of the outcomes of WSIS 2003, this process can begin to get people and organisations and government talking to one another about ICT policies. Inclusive ICT policy processes lead to better ICT policies.

9. Online resources

Official WSIS web site: www.itu.int/wsis/

UNESCO WSIS web site:
www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/
org_detail.asp?ID=4183

UN Economic Commission for Africa site:
www.uneca. org/aisi/bamako2002/

APC and APC WNSP's submissions on WSIS Prepcom 2 documents: www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x =12235

APC Latin America and the Caribbean WSIS website: lac.derechos.apc.org/wsis

Choike WSIS page (developed by APC's member in Uruguay, the Third World Institute, ITeM):
www.choike.org/cgi-bin/choike/links/
page.cgi?p=ver_indepth&id=703

CRIS website: www.crisinfo.org

Online (and latest) version of the "FAQ about Conducting a National WSIS Consultation Process":
www.apc.org/english/capacity/policy