

Version

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THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY  

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**Creating Your Own National Gender Programme – A Practical Guide**

Creating Your Own

WSIS National Gender Programme

WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

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# National Gender Programmes: a Practical Guide

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## Introduction

*Welcome to the process of the World Summit on the Information Society. We hope this guide is useful in helping you to engage gender advocates in your country!*

The United Nations will host the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2003. The Summit aims to explore the major advances in information and communications technologies and how these are impacting the way we learn, work, govern and spend our leisure time. The Summit will bring together all of the world's nations to develop a global framework to deal with the challenges posed by the information society, and fully and equally take advantage of the opportunities it presents.

A new generation of ICT appears every three to four years. As a result, products are becoming cheaper and more accessible. Simultaneously, ICT is becoming more accessible and more dependable, and a growing number of people, communities, and societies are becoming increasingly reliant on information communication technology. For developing countries, ICT has become a moving target. As they try to catch up to technological standards of affluent countries, ICT evolves further, potentially widening the gap between the world's rich and poor.

However, even within societies, access to ICT is not equally available to everyone. Women, traditionally stereotyped as lacking the affinity and ability to work with technology, are often left on the sidelines of ICT advancement. This trend is not only disturbing from a human rights perspective, but threatens to seriously undermine efforts to maximize the potential of ICT to improve social, economic and environmental conditions.

In the field of ICT for development, where much of the community work is led by women, it is hard to imagine progress without their engagement and empowerment. From a business point of view, ignoring the potential of women to contribute to creation of wealth is absurd. Finally, governments have an obligation to provide all citizens with equal educational and work opportunities in the area of ICT, in addition to equal access to technology.

From community networkers and bearers of valuable traditional agricultural knowledge, to educators, professionals and policy makers, women can and must be an integral part of any Information Society.

The hope is that by the First World Summit on the Information Society in December of 2003, government representatives will sign a Declaration and an Action Plan with a series of commitments. The WSIS process is well underway, with two preparatory committee meetings and four regional conferences already completed.

Gender equality advocates have been actively organizing around the process in two groups: The WSIS Gender Caucus, a multistakeholder group, began its work on mainstreaming gender into the WSIS process at the African Regional Meeting held in Bamako, Mali, in May 2002. The founding group was expanded during the First Global Preparatory Committee Meeting held in Geneva, in July 2002. An NGO grouping, the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group, has also been active in educating women's NGOs about WSIS and related processes.

In addition to international and regional activities, the WSIS provides an incredible opportunity for national level action and government commitments to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into each "information society." However, in order to make the most of this process, it is very important that gender equality advocates are organized at the national level, and connected to global activities.

While the WSIS is an international process organized by the United Nations, all of the negotiations and decisions are made by national governments. Generally, decisions on what positions governments will take on different issues and what kind of commitments they are prepared to make are taken back home in the nations' capital, well before an official delegation departs for an international meeting. Therefore, the most important and powerful place to influence the process and include gender perspectives in a substantial way is in our own countries.

Moreover, national gender programmes are important because our success will not only be measured by our impact on the Summit's policy outcomes, but also by our ability to create concrete projects and new initiatives. We must use the holding of this Summit as an opportunity to bring everyone together in our countries to highlight existing projects, ensure they get the support they need, and develop new collaborative initiatives. In other words, we must empower women to use their passion, energy and expertise to create digital opportunities for all.

Running a national gender programme around WSIS can be exhausting as it may involve many elements: working with government departments, creating a national gender declaration, running a national consultation process or involving women leaders in ICT in the government delegation to the Summit. It might involve concrete projects, community service, and the creation of an ongoing national network of women and gender advocates to follow-up the Summit. There are many pieces in the puzzle to consider and plan, and it will entail creating a good team, raising funding, and a lot of communication and outreach to carry out a successful programme.

This guidebook is here to help. It provides a background on the World Summit on the Information Society, outlines the case for gender equality in the information society, and provides some background on UN processes. It then outlines the steps that might be involved in a national gender programme with tips, strategies and resources to help you get organized.

This framework has been pulled together based on a similar resource created by the Youth Caucus. It thus mirrors some of the work TakingITGlobal and the International Institute for Sustainable Development are coordinating for the World Summit on the Information Society.

While this document allows you to create what we think is a comprehensive national programme, you may wish to only implement part of it in your country. You might choose to commit to a smaller project due to resources or you might have other ideas that will work better for your own situation or culture. The framework should be adapted to create your very own national plans to be implemented by women and men in your country.

In summary, national gender programmes for WSIS serve two vital purposes: first to have a real impact in the policy, and second, to create a movement to help realize the potential of the information society nationally, with an equal number of women and men leading the way. We hope you find this guide useful and look forward to your feedback and stories of your efforts and successes in your country.

## Background

*WSIS is an opportunity to discuss a global action plan around information and communications technologies. There are many important reasons why gender perspectives need to be integrated into the WSIS process – and many individuals and organizations have already begun to step up to the challenge.*

**T**he 1st World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) will be held in Geneva, in December 2003, organised by the United Nations. It seeks to provide a framework for governments, non-government organisations and associations, companies and others to address the following question: What values and actions do we embrace to ensure that the Information Society becomes a vehicle for democracy, justice, equality, and respect for personal and social development?

 United Nations Events  
<http://www.un.org/events>

Previous United Nations World Summits have included the 1992 World Summit on Environment and Development (also known as the Rio Earth Summit), and the World Conference on Women in Beijing during 1995. In September 2002, the UN held a follow-up event to the Rio Earth Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Each Summit has had a major impact - generating new commitments, forging partnerships, and focusing the world's attention on its vital concerns. We can expect no less of the WSIS when it comes to issues such as the digital divide, education, the media, and the new economy.

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🔗 Official WSIS website  
<http://www.wsis.org>

In the lead-up to the Summit itself is a very significant process of “preparation”. In three global Preparatory Committee conferences (PrepComs), each involving more than 1000 people, the world community will set an agenda for the Summit and then prepare concrete projects, declarations, resolutions, and potentially international law, to be officially launched in December 2003. The WSIS PrepComs bring forward many of the best ideas being advocated at regional WSIS meetings (such as the Pan-European meeting, held in Bucharest, in November 2002) as well as through other ICT forums, working groups, and consultations (e.g. United Nations ICT Taskforce, G8 Digital Opportunities Taskforce, African Information Society Initiative).

Key topics are likely to be infrastructure, access, applications, cultural diversity, ethics, training, intellectual property, freedom of expression, and the role of ICTs in education and employment.

🔗 Draft Action Plan and Declaration of Principles  
<http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/>

It is expected that, at the Summit in 2003, countries will agree to accept two documents. First, they will agree to a “Declaration of Principles” a statement that describes their vision for the information society, the various roles of information communications technologies and reasonable international goals. Second, they will agree to an “Action Plan” that will spell out more specifics on how they will achieve their goals. This might include things such as:

- United Nations bi-lateral development agencies promising to increase their aid budgets to help developing countries gain access to information technology,
- Support for small and medium-sized businesses developing locally relevant content and technology,
- Concrete commitments to narrow the “gender digital divide” and integrate gender perspectives into national policies.

## Timeline of the WSIS Process

25-30 May 2002	<b>African Regional Conference</b> Bamako, Mali
17-18 June 2002	<b>UN General Assembly Meeting for ICT for Development</b> New York, USA
1-5 July 2002	<b>Global Preparatory Committee 1</b> Geneva, Switzerland
16-18 September 2002	<b>Content and Themes Informal Meeting</b> Geneva, Switzerland
9-11 September 2002 and 23-24 October 2002	<b>Bishek- Moscow Conference on the Information Society</b> Bishek and Moscow
7-9 November 2002	<b>European Regional Conference</b> Bucharest, Romania
13-15 January 2003	<b>Asian Regional Conference</b> Tokyo, Japan
27 – 30 January 2003	<b>Latin America and Caribbean Regional Conference</b> Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
17 – 28 February 2003	<b>Global Preparatory Committee 2</b>
16 – 18 June 2003	<b>Pan-Arab Regional Meeting</b> Cairo, Egypt

WSIS NATIONAL GENDER PROGRAMMES

15 – 18 July 2003	<b>Intersessional Meeting</b> Paris, France
15 – 26 September 2003	<b>Global Preparatory Committee 3</b>
10 – 12 December 2003	<b>World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva)</b>

 Official WSIS Event Calendar

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/index.html>

Consult the Official WSIS Event Calendar for the most recent updates in the event timeline.

## The Case for Integrating Gender Perspectives in ICT

***“Let us step up our efforts to create an environment where progress towards gender equality is not a daily struggle, but a natural part of all our actions. Let that resolve underpin all our work to translate the Millennium Declaration into reality.”***

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General

Each day, information and communication technologies are reaching more and more people, in even the most remote communities in the world, while evolving to new levels of functionality. They are becoming quicker, more reliable, more intuitive, more efficient and more affordable. Commercial transactions, data banks, knowledge sharing and education are becoming more reliant on ICT and the Internet. The trend of increasing interweaving of ICT and our daily activities is becoming more striking with each newly published statistic.

But this ICT “revolution” does not occur in a uniform way. Women do not have equal access to technology, nor are they being provided with the tools and knowledge to use them. In particular, women in developing countries, face obstructions to employment in the ICT sector, a lack of entrepreneurship opportunities provided by ICT, and a general repetition of usual gender inequalities, including lack of empowerment, opportunity and recognition for women.

“ICTs are tools that can enable the participation of poor women and men in economic and civic life and help them to move out of poverty. ICTs have an enormous potential for reaching rural populations to provide them with education and training, job opportunities, access to markets, information important for their economic activities, and participation in the political process.

Often, however, the poor -- especially poor women -- lack access to

ICTs. This reflects the lower levels of education of females than males in many poor countries, the tendency for males to receive technical education more often than females do, and the disproportionate representations of males in technology-intensive workplaces. To redress this "digital divide" between males and females, gender-sensitive policies and initiatives need to be combined with awareness-raising programmes to ensure that women are not left out of the new civic and economic opportunities that ICTs offer.<sup>1</sup>

If we are to bridge the so called "gap" or "divide" in the field of ICT, a vast-sweeping effort on the part of women, men, policy makers and educators is needed. Women and women's groups must work together with business partners and governments to create gender conscious policies and, more specifically, to promote gender equality in the ICT sector by providing support, opportunity and empowerment to women. Gender must become a universal consideration in policy-making related to ICT infrastructure, access, training, education and entrepreneurship incentives. If we are to see a global improvement on the gender balance in the field of ICT, national and international regulations and programmes must support these efforts.

In many countries, women are only beginning to gain access to many forms of ICTs and to experiment with their use in a variety of ways. If we take up the challenge of networking and engaging women innovators, trainers and educators, they will continue to act as development champions and focal points within their communities – leading to a more equitable, connected and inclusive world.

Furthermore, countries must capitalize on the potential of women to contribute to economic growth if they are to remain competitive in the emerging global Information Society.

The WSIS Provides an opportunity to raise awareness, locate funds, identify and recruit people and make significant commitments to enable women to contribute to, and benefit from information communication technologies. Creating programmes to coordinate gender efforts on the national level is a significant part of the international effort to mainstream gender into the WSIS process and ensure that policy makers can translate global policy recommendations into action at the local level, with the help of their own civil society.

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<sup>1</sup> Engendering ICT Study Program - <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/ict/>

## Global Level Gender Equality Advocacy in the WSIS Process

There are two main groups that bring together gender equality advocates in the effort to mainstream gender into the WSIS process. The first group, the WSIS Gender Caucus is a multi-stakeholder group consisting of women and men from national governments, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the United Nations system. The second entity, the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group, is a formation of women's information and communications organizations that have come together to develop strategies for gender advocacy within the WSIS context and other related issues. This group is distinct from, though aligned with, the WSIS Gender Caucus.

 WSIS Gender Caucus  
<http://www.genderwsis.org>

The strategic objective of the WSIS Gender Caucus is to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are integrated into WSIS and its outcome processes.

The WSIS Gender Caucus was formed during the African regional preparatory conference (Bamako 2002), which took place in Mali from 25-30th May 2002. The Caucus commits to work towards the goals of the WSIS by sharing information and ideas on strategies for including gender equality goals and ensuring women's participation in the WSIS process and follow-up programmes.

The WSIS-Gender Caucus affirms its support for the objectives of WSIS and reiterates its view that integrating gender equality issues is a critical means as well as a goal in creating a World Information Society that supports and promotes human development and improvement in quality of life. If there is appropriate attention paid to gender equality and women's perspectives, the World Information Society will benefit by facilitating the inclusion of women's leadership, communication styles and values. These perspectives will add richly to the concept of a World Information Society and enable the achievement of operational goals. Without a gender dimension, ICTs will not serve human development needs.

To ensure that gender perspectives and women's rights are taken seriously as core principles in the planning and preparation for the WSIS, the WSIS-Gender Caucus urges all stakeholders, in planning the preparatory processes, the Summit, and the follow-up programmes, to:

- Acknowledge gender equality and women's rights as a cross-cutting principle;
- Include women as leaders and decision-makers in all planning processes for the Summit and recognition that women's perspectives can make a significant contribution to aligning the Summit with the Millennium Development Goals;
- Facilitate and encourage women as members of national delegations and representatives of civil society and business by setting targets for delegations to include at least 30% women including gender and ICT experts;
- Include in the theme of applications –design of ICT projects which take women's needs into account, for example by developing technology solutions suited to rural women, women in conflict areas, and applications that assist with the HIV/AIDS pandemic;
- Develop projects that will collect and, analyze, appropriate gender specific data and reporting mechanisms to evaluate and monitor the impact of ICT developments on women and girls;
- Implement an information dissemination campaign that includes a wide range of media such as radio, drama and print and variety of languages.
- Commission a study on the interaction between gender equality and ICT, which should include development of a gender equality and ICT baseline indicators, conceptual tools and case studies on the impact of ICT on achieving gender equality, and use this to inform the dialogue of the Summit and its outcomes.

 NGO Gender Strategies Working Group  
<http://www.genderit.org>

The NGO Gender Strategies Working Group was formed at the first WSIS PrepCom Meeting in Geneva in July 2002 as one of the sub-committees of the Civil Society Coordinating Group (CSCG). The groups involved in this effort are: the African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), Agencia Latino Americana de Informacion, Association for Progressive Communication-Women's Networking Support Programme, International Women's Tribune Centre, and Isis International-Manila. The Working Group is open to all NGOs and individuals interested in gender issues and the information society.

**Mailing lists:**

The WSIS Gender Caucus coordinates its activities and discusses the key issues through a mailing list. To subscribe, visit <http://www.genderwsis.org/register>.

The WN-GSWG host the [NGOWomen@genderit.org](mailto:NGOWomen@genderit.org) discussion, an electronic mailing list that is one of the group's efforts in strategising and organising women's participation in the WSIS process. To self-subscribe, visit <http://mailman.greenet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/ngowomen> or write to [karenb@apcwomen.org](mailto:karenb@apcwomen.org).

## National Level Gender Equality Advocacy in the WSIS Process

In many countries round the world, there have been efforts to raise awareness of gender equality issues in the WSIS process, at the national level.


The Gender Caucus has been collecting information from various countries to assist national organizers in finding out about current activities and in connecting to gender equality advocates in their own countries. Summary reports on official national WSIS processes and programmes organized by gender advocates in a number of countries are available in the "Summaries of Individual National Programmes" (Appendix A to this document).

***"The organisations leading national preparations in Canada include the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, which is responsible for Civil Society involvement, Industry Canada, CIDA, DFAIT and other government agencies and bodies, including the government of Quebec.***

***The Canadian delegation's input to Prepcom 2 is indicative of the human rights approach advocated for by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and adopted by the official delegation.***

***The Commission undertook a series of consultations across Canada over the past 6-8 months, involving members of civil society and the private sector and ensuring representation of women, youth, aboriginal peoples and those with disabilities. The very informative summaries of the consultations can be found at <http://www.unesco.ca/english/Culture/culture-wsis.htm>.***

***- Excerpt from "Summaries of Individual National Programmes"***

 National Programmes Team  
nationalprogrammes@genderwsis.org

To submit information about your WSIS activities in your country, please email the National Programmes team of the Gender Caucus.

## Further Support

The Gender Caucus will assist national organizers by:

- **Identifying** partners and **providing assistance** for organizing training and capacity building on the regional and national level in preparation for the WSIS;
- **Providing** relevant materials and document templates (such as project proposal templates) to enable efficient and timely programme development in individual countries;
- **Presenting** the best proposals received to potential funders who may be able to provide support (overall, or for specific initiatives in specific countries);
- **Featuring** the most effective programme plans on the Gender Caucus website to provide a pool of examples and ideas for all national level organizers.



## Creating a National Gender Programme Step by Step

*This part will focus on guiding you through some of the activities that might be part of a national gender programme around the WSIS, including mobilizing women and men, running an event, developing a platform and communicating with governments.*

**C**ongratulations for getting this far! You understand the WSIS process, the need for women's participation, and the importance of organizing activities in our own countries. Now comes the big challenge – actually thinking about doing it yourself.

### **Is this really for you?**

It is very important to make sure you really are the 'person for the job'. The task is not very glamorous and certainly not easy – it will require a lot of work on your part, especially until you put together a team of capable people from your country to carry out the project.

Some of the skills and qualities of national programme leaders might include:

- ⇒ Fluency (written and oral) in English, French and/or other languages.
- ⇒ Sense of humor and diplomacy
- ⇒ Ability to work in collaborative teams – particularly in a virtual context

- ⇒ Interest and experience in ICTs and in working with women from a wide variety of cultures
- ⇒ Experience with use of ICTs (Internet, radio, television) for development
- ⇒ Experience managing content for Web sites and/or moderating online discussion boards
- ⇒ Experience with international conferences and policy processes
- ⇒ Educational background in political science, international development and/or sustainable development
- ⇒ Strong commitment, education and experience in gender issues and ICT for development.

### **Ensure you are not duplicating others' efforts!**

Before you begin developing a national strategy, you should make sure no one else is doing the same thing! Chances are some other women or organizations from your country are also involved in the WSIS Gender Caucus and are planning some activities of their own. Try and connect all the activities in your country and work together as you will likely be more effective if you form an alliance. You will find summaries of national activities, along with contact names and information (where available) in the Appendix to this document, entitled Summaries of Individual National Gender Programmes.

### **Putting Together a Team**

One of the first and most important steps you're likely to do is put together a team of gender equality advocates and women's rights allies in your country to work with you on the national gender programme. Forming a team is not only important to help achieve the significant amount of work that is likely required for an effective campaign but it is vital in allowing you to tap the experience, contacts and resources that come with the individuals you involve. As your group grows, the credibility, legitimacy and commitment of the gender programme will be reinforced.

There are at least four types of people to include in a national team:

- ⇒ Women and men who are leaders of, or very active within, organizations, projects or businesses related to information and communications technologies. For example, people who run telecenters in remote or underprivileged areas, people who have their own radio programs, or people who run popular national websites. These people will form the core of the team and provide the expertise on information society issues.
- ⇒ Women and men who understand information society issues and concerns, and who have access to politicians; For example people from women's wings of political partners, or who participate in government consultation or representation bodies, such as the leaders of National Women's Councils. These women and men will help ensure that government leaders listen to gender perspectives.
- ⇒ Women educators and leaders of gender (and other women-led) organizations who offer a perspective on the specific position of women in the information society, and are also likely able to mobilize many other women and gender experts around the campaign.
  - You might find it useful to do a Google search to find women's political organizations specific to your own country.
  - Check the Global List of Women's Organizations at <http://www.euronet.nl/%7Efullmoon/womlist/womlist.html>
  - Check the list of Women's Organizations on the University of Wisconsin website: <http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/orgs.htm>
- ⇒ Allies of women's participation in information society issues. These might include people from government agencies involved in the WSIS process such as Departments of Technology, Telecommunications, Foreign Affairs and International Development, National Commissions for UNESCO, UNDP field offices, and local and global for-profit companies and NGOs. These people may provide advice on how to operate the national programme, connections to governments to ensure that gender perspectives are heard, and perhaps financial and other support to help achieve your goals.
  - A large document listing the contact information of all the participants at Prepcom 2 – including those from your country is at <http://www.itu.int/wsisp/participation/prepcom2>.

- A listing of National Commissions for UNESCO is at <http://www.unesco.org/ncp/natcom/pages/natcom.pdf>. You might contact them to see whether they are involved and want to help out with your activities. Note that National Commissions are generally under-resourced.
- You can find listings of UNDP field offices at <http://www.undp.org/toppages/discover/index.html>
- Contact your local (or regional) branch of NGOs such as the Association for Progressive Communications (<http://www.apc.org/english/about/members/index.shtml> and <http://www.apcwomen.org>)

Once a team is formed, keep the communication lines open and active, via online discussions and face-to-face meetings. Certain team members may be able to provide office space to host a meeting or other support to make your work easier, manageable and focused.

## Setting Goals and Developing a Plan

At the first meeting, the main task is to develop a plan for the national gender WSIS process. You should go over the purpose of the meeting, provide some background on the WSIS process, and outline some of the options for a programme that are presented in this guide. The agenda might include:

- ⇒ brainstorming potential activities you hope to achieve together
- ⇒ discussing any projects people are already working on which could link with the WSIS national programme
- ⇒ selection of the best activities
- ⇒ commitments by individuals and groups to take the lead in organizing elements of the strategy
- ⇒ identification of needs (such as funding) and potential partners not represented at the meeting
- ⇒ creation of a timeline for the national programme, including a date for the next meeting of the team.

Once you have finished the meeting, you (or someone else from the meeting) should create a written plan for the national gender programme. The plan will include brief information about the Summit, a listing of the key goals for the programme, a summary of some of the activities planned, the timeline, the budget and a listing of all the main people and organizations involved. The plan should be between three and ten pages long and should contain a one- or two-page executive summary.

### **Fundraising**

It is likely that implementation of your plan will require additional resources, for example to employ a person to act as a part-time coordinator of the programme, to hire a venue for a national workshop, or for the travel for women from your region to participate in one of the regional meetings. You may be able to obtain some of these resources as in-kind donations of time or space through your network. In other cases, you may require a financial contribution from an outside source. As it is always the case with raising money, the crucial parts are: clearly describing the importance of obtaining funds, justifying why the funding is required and explaining (in as much detail as the funder requires) how it will be used.

You should seek a reasonable amount of funding and certainly enough to cover all your costs. The reality is that in some countries you will be able to raise more than within others. This depends both on the wealth of the country (and the cost of running activities) and its level of interest in the WSIS.

You might submit your plan with a cover letter requesting the funding (or part of it) to potential donors such as:

- ⇒ The government department in your country responsible for gender and women's issues, or the department that is responsible for the WSIS.
- ⇒ The embassies of some developed countries such as Switzerland, the Netherlands or Canada. Some of these governments have mentioned that some funding might be available for national-level processes for WSIS.

***However, the best source of ideas and contacts will come from within your country – especially your team and their networks.***

## Connecting with Your Government

Meeting and talking with your government is a vital part of any national gender programme, as it is the national governments that have the power to take decisions at the United Nations. They will be submitting regular input to the WSIS Secretariat on the different documents being created. At the preparatory meetings in Geneva, national governments will negotiate a text for the Declaration and the Action Plan that they can all agree upon.

It is likely that your government will share the perspective of your group on many issues – and you should promote the idea that you are their partner in building a rewarding information society. You may decide to use many of the arguments used in Chapter 2 of this guidebook as a starting point to highlight the very important role of women in an information society and the need for women to be actively involved in decision-making processes.

On a minority of issues, it is likely that you will want to convince your governments of a different stance than that they are already taking. Rather than be confrontational, provide yourself as an expert and make the suggestion in a well-argued manner. Your goal is simply to point out how they might do it differently and give your government the benefit of the doubt - after all, they may have just not been thinking of other options or did not have all the information they needed to understand the issues.

In fact, so far it seems that few governments have allocated the 'right' people to be responsible for the WSIS. While the WSIS involves a large range of important issues that cross many government departments (education, technology, telecommunications, employment, etc.) some governments still have very technical people at the Department of Communication responsible for the Summit because it is being hosted by the UN International Telecommunications Union. Therefore, your team of vibrant and knowledgeable women and men can in fact play a vital and necessary role for some governments by simply explaining to their delegates and focal-points exactly what the 'information society' is all about and familiarizing them with some of the key content and themes.

Particular areas you might like to focus on helping your government understand are:

- ⇒ The need for gender perspectives to thread through each and every point of the process, declaration and action plan, highlighting the particular potential for leadership of women in the information society

that has been untapped thus far, and outlining strategies to tap the potential of women as a resource for its continued development.

- ⇒ The particular concerns and issues of women in your country related to the Information Society as outlined in your national women's declaration(s). Preferably pick two or three "priority areas".
- ⇒ The concerns of women at an international level, with a particular focus on educating governments on some of the broader implications of the information society that might not be of particular importance to your own country but which are important to others.

To connect with your governments, refer to the contact list for participants at the second preparatory committee meeting on the official WSIS website.

If you are attending a meeting of the Summit process in Geneva, make sure your national embassy knows you are coming – you can find a list of Permanent Missions to the UN in Geneva at:

<http://www.unog.ch/genet/permis/misset.htm>

## Holding a National Workshop

One of the biggest activities you might like to organize is a national event for women about the Information Society. The event could be large or small; depending on the needs of women in your country and the resources and time you have available to organize it.

The event could:

- ⇒ Summarize and validate input received through national-level consultations and e-consultations
- ⇒ Develop concrete recommendations for refinements to your government's domestic policies influencing the emergence of an equitable and sustainable information society
- ⇒ Develop recommendations for your governments' positions on the international WSIS statement of principles and action plan
- ⇒ Provide an opportunity for women information society leaders to meet, share experiences, and explore potential future partnerships

- ⇒ Engage your countries' media in understanding/reporting on the WSIS process
- ⇒ Provide an opportunity for practical training or workshops on technology, media or education subjects.

Event organizing is a major project and you should not underestimate how complicated or time-consuming it will be. Begin planning well in advance. Things to consider include:

- ⇒ The timing of the event – how does this event fit within your wider timeline? Is it far away in advance for you to plan and organize it properly?
- ⇒ The location – where will the event be held? Is it important to have it in your nation's capitol so that politicians might attend and listen to gender perspectives? Or is there a more central city that would allow participants to travel there more easily? What kind of venue will it be held in – can you get a space donated?
- ⇒ The participants – how many will you invite? If you invite many, it will be more expensive, as well as more difficult to secure agreement if you are trying to create a declaration. If you invite few, you will have a smaller impact initially but it might be easier to organize and you will have a more 'focused' experience.
- ⇒ The agenda – what are the topics on the agenda to discuss? How will you determine them? How will you ensure the agenda is flexible in case some participants want to discuss other topics?
- ⇒ The activities – in addition to developing policy statements, are you planning to hold workshops to help participants have practical experiences, such as learning new skills, sharing knowledge, networking and training?

You should ensure that the participants are representative of the broader national population with respect to age, ethnicity, region, area of expertise within the information society, and, indeed, gender. In particular, encourage young women, ethnic minorities and indigenous people to participate because they have specific concerns about the information society. At the same time, you may need to make sure that your event caters to different languages, different cultural approaches, and different levels of technical literacy and understanding.

## Developing a National Gender Declaration

One of the important tools you will create through the national gender programme is a National Gender Declaration on the Information Society. This declaration will summarize all the thoughts and perspectives of the people involved in the programme related to the pressing issues, and key opportunities presented by the information revolution.

The declaration should be developed after a range of consultations. For example:

- ⇒ Create a postcard-sized questionnaire to distribute in local women's organizations asking them to write "their vision of the Information Society" or asking them to number their priority issues in order.
- ⇒ Organize an online consultation across an e-mail mailing list with two or three weeks of focused discussion. You could also create an online discussion group.
- ⇒ Go on the radio and invite people to call-in and discuss some of the key issues.

After consultations, you should discuss the Declaration at the National event (if you organize one) or within your team to collate and finalize all the writing.

Once the declaration is complete, ensure that it is translated into your countries' major official languages and:

- ⇒ Share it with others by uploading it to a web page.
- ⇒ Print it and distribute it to all the members of your team and women's organizations in your country. If you can, send a copy to everyone who participated in the consultation so they know that their thoughts are being represented and heard.
- ⇒ Send it to your governments with a cover letter, and preferably arrange to meet with some officials to present the document and discuss the issues it raises and how these might be included in their own positions.

## Participation on and Collaboration with Government Delegations

An important objective of any national level programme is to encourage governments to include women and gender representatives within their own official national delegations to the important preparatory meetings and the Summit itself.

Having a gender representative is important for women because it provides a direct link to the intergovernmental decision-making process. Members of government delegations are able to access parts of the meeting that others are not, they have more direct communication and access to ministers and senior people within their own governments and other governments, and they have easier access to logistics such as phones, faxes, and computers!

In the case of the WSIS, women have a lot to tangibly offer government delegations, such as unique perspectives that represent half of their country's civil society but may be heard and taken into account less often.

You should encourage your government to include a gender representative on their delegation. If they accept the idea, you should develop a transparent process that accepts nominations or applications and has a selection committee that conducts interviews and makes a final recommendation to the government. You should develop guidelines for the Gender Delegate with a list of responsibilities and duties and make sure the delegate sticks to their commitments.

At the same time, while being on the delegation is useful, the most important thing is ongoing good relationships with the key people from your government working on the WSIS. You should be able to communicate with them both in your own country and meet informally with them at any international meetings.

## Communicating Effectively

Considering this is the World Summit on the *Information Society*, it seems almost too obvious to note that communications technologies and the media are very powerful and empowering tools that can support your programme. Your two communications goals would be to:

- ⇒ Ensure that you effectively communicate the importance of the World Summit on the Information Society, and your activities to everyone that might be interested.
- ⇒ Ensure you create opportunities for dialogue and interactivity – it is important to allow many people to participate, including those who are not able to attend even national, let alone international events.

Some communications activities might include:

- ⇒ Creating an effective “brand”. You might like to come up with a more exciting name than “National Gender Programme for the Information Society”, something that has a better ‘ring’ to it. Your brand would also include a logo.
- ⇒ Develop a newsletter that highlights your latest activities, news from the WSIS process internationally, some of the key concerns you have, a spotlight on a concrete women-led ICT project in your country, a calendar of upcoming events, and a listing of opportunities to get involved.
- ⇒ Upload progress reports, pictures, documents, links and other information about your activities to a website and share with the global community through the WSIS Gender Caucus.
- ⇒ Use the media to publicize your involvement in the WSIS process. Send out a press release and inform the media of holding a national event, launching your declaration, or participating in an international meeting. Ensure that they focus on some of the concrete projects your team members are doing as well as the policy process.

## Connecting with the Global Process

Your participation at the national level is vital, but it is also important that you and your team are able to participate at the global level. You should try and raise funds to help at least one of your team members attend at least one of the meetings being held in Geneva. This way, you can share the perspectives of women from your country with women all over the world – and at the same time highlight the positive projects women in your country are leading with information and communications technologies.

- ⇒ You should keep tuned to the WSIS Gender Caucus and the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group mailing lists because many pieces of important information about the global process come through these lists. To subscribe, visit the following websites:

<http://www.genderwisis.org/register>, and

<http://mailman.greenet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/ngowomen>

- ⇒ Everyone who participates in a meeting at the global level needs to be a representative of an organization which is registered or “accredited” with the United Nations. The deadline for new organizations to register for accreditation for the Summit is on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2003. Unless your organization obtains accreditation prior

 **Participation – Accreditation**  
<http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/accreditation.html>

to this date, you must connect with an organization that has already been accredited and discuss with them how you might be able

to ensure your team’s participation in an international meeting. Participating in the official government delegation of your country is also an option.

- ⇒ You will most likely have to fundraise for your members’ participation in the international meetings and will also be responsible for visa applications.

## Using the Summit to Grow the National Information Society

Last, but certainly not least, a key part of your national gender programme will be to create a legacy from the WSIS process. In essence, you’ll use the WSIS process and the many opportunities it presents to support the development of concrete ICT projects led by women in your country.

The WSIS is a good opportunity for this because:

- ⇒ It will bring together women active in the areas of ICTs to work together around the policy process, so you will get to know each other – opening opportunities for practical collaboration in the future.
- ⇒ It will raise the profile of women as leaders of the information society in your country, and connect you with many senior people at relevant

government departments, UN agencies and NGOs. While this contact will also initially focus on the policy side, it will provide the opportunity for you to meet them and for them to understand the type of projects you do and the support you need.

As part of your national programme you might like to establish a couple of smaller scale projects (or large ones if you are ambitious) that you want to implement that have an information society theme. Here are some examples:

- ⇒ Establishing a mentor scheme for women with computer skills to teach computer classes at women's centres.
- ⇒ Creating a computer-recycling program whereby women donate older computers (either their own, or those they collect) to schools, other women, or community organizations.
- ⇒ Developing new software or websites for community organizations, governments or schools.
- ⇒ Setting up a telecenter for women in the region providing free or low-cost access to the Internet or computer technologies.
- ⇒ Establishing a printed newspaper or poster-paper for women (or the general population) in their town discussing current events.
- ⇒ Creating a local website or network in order to promote organizations or projects women can work with or contact.

You should also develop a follow-up strategy for WSIS that includes a larger scale vision of projects that women could implement on a nation-wide basis to help promote an information society in your country. With lobbying, you might be able to convince your own government to implement some of these ideas - and you might be able to attract funding and enthusiasm from major organizations participating in the WSIS.

Overall, our goal is to turn the WSIS away from being just words – and increasing the focus on ACTION – not just after the Summit, but NOW.

## Phase 2 – WSIS 2005

The World Summit on Information Society is a process in two phases. After the Summit in December of 2003, the process will continue on regional and certainly national levels. The second Summit, to be held in Tunis in November 2005 will review the process and progress to date and identify a possible further plan of action. Therefore, it is important to remember that national efforts must continue past December of 2003 in order to make the most of the opportunity the WSIS process provides.

## Thank You and Good Luck!

We hope that you have found this guidebook useful in thinking about the development of your own national programme around the World Summit on the Information Society. It is your dedication to the development of an inclusive and exciting information society that is at the heart of the Summit and what makes the participation of women so effective and hopeful. The important thing to remember is that your national programme needs to be YOUR OWN – responding to your own local needs and circumstances. We wish you a rewarding and fruitful experience.

## Appendix A

# SUMMARIES OF INDIVIDUAL NATIONAL PROGRAMMES

## Austria

Organizations leading the official national preparations are Bundeskanzleramt (Chancellery) for Inner Austrian Coordination, with the contact person Andreas Ulrich, email: andreas.ulrich@bka.gv.at, and Bundesministerium fuer auswaertige Angelegenheiten (BMfaA, Ministry for foreign affairs) for UNO affairs, with the contact person Christoph Weingartner, email: christoph.weingartner@bmaa.gv.at

The focus of official national efforts is unknown to the public. The kick-off event, organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, was held on November 5th, 2002. The event included persons from government and NGOs and has not been followed up with any other meetings to date.

As a feminist development organisation, Frauensolidaritaet has published an issue of their magazine in German on "Information is Empowerment for women in the south." The organisation also held a small conference for members of development organisations on ICT for development on 16 June 2003, in Vienna. Frauensolidaritaet is compiling a survey on ICTs in projects of the Austrian Development Partnership. A conference entitled "Empowerment of Women in the global South through Information and Communication: The significance of the modern information and communication technologies for the socio-economic development in countries of the South" will be organised by Frauensolidaritaet and held in Vienna, Austria, 27-28 October, 2003.

For future correspondence regarding gender advocacy in Austria, please contact Christina Buder, at c.buder@frauensolidaritaet.org.

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## Asia-Pacific Region

The organisation(s) leading regional women's preparations is ISIS-Manila. To date, ISIS-Manila has organised a number of consultations of women's media and information and communication organisations at different meetings and conferences, including AMARC, Asian Social Forum, the Global Community Networking Conference in Montreal in partnership with APC Women's Networking Support Programme, Asian Regional Conference for WSIS in Tokyo, and the 47th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In collaboration with the Gender Strategies Working Group, ISIS International Manila developed the "Seven Musts" of gender and ICT issues that need to be put forward in the WSIS process.

For future correspondence regarding gender advocacy in the Asia-Pacific region, contact Susanna George, at [susanna@isiswomen.org](mailto:susanna@isiswomen.org).

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## Canada

The organisations leading national preparations in Canada include the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, which is responsible for Civil Society involvement, Industry Canada, CIDA, DFAIT and other government agencies and bodies, including the government of Quebec.

The Government of Canada has established a website where more information of WSIS activities in Canada can be found: <http://www.wsis-smsi.gc.ca>.

The Canadian delegation's input to Prepcom 2 is indicative of the human rights approach advocated for by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and adopted by the official delegation.

The Commission undertook a series of consultations across Canada over the past 6-8 months, involving members of civil society and the private sector and ensuring representation of women, youth, aboriginal peoples

and those with disabilities. The very informative summaries of the consultations can be found at

<http://www.unesco.ca/english/Culture/culture-wsis.htm>.

For future correspondence regarding civil society involvement in Canada, please contact Pauline Dugré at [pauline.dugre@unesco.ca](mailto:pauline.dugre@unesco.ca)

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## Cameroon

Patience Eboumbou is a potential contact person for gender equality advocates, and she is a part of the official delegation of the Cameroon government. At the time Prepcom 2 was being held in Geneva, Cameroon planned to organise workshops in rural communities to raise interest and awareness of WSIS and Information Society.

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## Indonesia

In Indonesia, Utari Budihardjo may be a potential contact person for gender equality advocates, as an official of the Ministry of Research and Technology. There has been some involvement of the Ministry of Women's Development in WSIS preparations.

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## Kenya

The Kenyan government has agreed that two civil society reps will be included on the official delegation. There was a national workshop held in February 2003 where civil society organisations and government departments presented input for the national ICT policy. Another meeting was due to be scheduled to finalize the document.

WSIS Kenya Civil Society is a group of civil society organisations formed after a meeting held in Addis Ababa in 2002. With Abantu for Development acting as the secretariat for the group, WSIS Kenya Civil Society is the organisation leading civil society preparations in the country.

For future correspondence regarding civil society and gender advocacy, please contact Nish-Muthoni Matenjwa, at nish@abantu.org.

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## Nigeria

According to representatives of the Niger Delta Women for Justice, an organisation leading regional gender preparations, the government has not widely publicized its activities towards the WSIS in Nigeria.

For future correspondence, please contact Emem J. Okon, email: emem\_o@yahoo.com

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## South Africa

The organisation leading official national preparations is the Department of Communications, with active involvement from the Presidential National Commission on ICT and Development, chaired by Lyndall Shope Mafole.

The involvement of gender advocates in national preparations for WSIS is being coordinated by the Office on the Status of Women in the Presidency. Following an initiative from the OSW, a Reference Group on gender, media and ICTs has been formed and will organise opportunities for promoting gender advocacy on WSIS and related issues. The group identified the following as priority areas for action:

- expanding skills development opportunities for women;
- accelerating production and development of relevant content;
- increasing positive representation of women in the media;
- eliminating ICT and media based violence against women;
- increasing networking among women in the media and ICT sectors;
- increasing women's access to ICTs for economic empowerment;
- advocacy to place gender responsive human development at the centre of ICT policy and programmes;

Future events to take up these priority areas for action and to assist with development of national positions for WSIS will be organised by the Reference Group. Representatives from the gender reference group have also been invited to join the national preparatory committee for WSIS.

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For future correspondence regarding gender equality advocacy, please contact Sonja Boezak, at [sonja@anazi.co.za](mailto:sonja@anazi.co.za).

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## Southern Africa Region

AMARC, Panos Southern Africa and the WSIS Gender Caucus will be hosting a regional two-day workshop in Southern Africa with women on Women and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs). The workshop will bring together women in the media and information, Information Communication Technology (ICTs) and women's empowerment NGOs to integrate their concerns and inputs in the Declaration WSIS. This workshop forms part of the WSIS Gender Caucus activities in the run up to the World Summit of Information Society (WSIS) to ensure that the gender dimensions are adequately addressed. The event will take place in the fourth quarter of 2003.

For future correspondence on civil society and gender equality advocacy, please contact Vainola Makan, at [vainola@panos.org.zm](mailto:vainola@panos.org.zm) and Lettie Longwe, at [winafrica@global.co.za](mailto:winafrica@global.co.za)

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## Uganda

On January 27, 2003, a National WSIS Taskforce was created to coordinate Uganda's input to the World Summit on Information Society PrepCom II, Geneva. The taskforce will also continue through with preparations for the WSIS Summits in 2003 (Geneva) and 2005 (Tunis). Current members of the taskforce are representatives of Ministry of Works, Housing and Communications, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Uganda Communications Commission, MTN, Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), and WOUGNET. A public meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 4, 2003, to consult on Uganda's national position on WSIS. The output of this meeting would form the basis of Uganda's input to the Second PrepCom. *(For information about this public meeting, contact [ucc@ucc.co.ug](mailto:ucc@ucc.co.ug))*

WOUGNET, the Women of Uganda Network, has established a web page for information on WSIS preparations in Uganda with an emphasis on

the issues for women's preparation and participation in the WSIS process: <http://www.wougnet.org/WSIS/ug/ugandawsis.html>

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## Ukraine

Information Society of Ukraine leads an initiative focused on the attraction of various social segments' attention to the current problems and perspectives of Information Society development in the Ukraine. More information can be obtained at <http://www.isu.org.ua> and by writing to [isu@isu.org.ua](mailto:isu@isu.org.ua).

A potential contact person for gender equality advocates is Olga Lypka of WINROCK International. Her organisation is involved in facilitating Women's Business Support Centres, which provide business training to unemployed women. These centers could potentially be used as a springboard for national preparations and outreach for WSIS.

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## United Kingdom

Official national events in the UK included an all day conference organised by the British Council on 22 May 2003. The conference, dubbed the UK PrepCom, brought together UK based stakeholders with the objective of gathering input for the UK contribution to the WSIS PrepCom3. Information about the gathering can be found at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/infoexch/wsis/ukevent.htm>.

The participation of gender advocates in the UK has been made effective through the participation in the British Council event, collaboration with organisations such as the WSIS Gender Caucus and the NGO Gender Strategy Working Group.

These are some of the explicit points from gender representatives at the British Council event about the contribution that WSIS could make to create an equal Information Society:

- Gender representation at all stakeholder groups
  - Setting up a bridge between the old media and new media
  - Gender issues as a cross-cutting theme
-

- Languages, the importance of diversity and the role of information professionals as mediators and designers of the digital age were all considered key
- Bringing media to rural areas
- ICT as a means to give voice to the marginalized

There is not, however, a centralised coordination of the gender involvement in the process in the UK. The FCO (Foreign Office) established its interest to liaise with the Women Equality Unit at the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) to have a more clear gender approach in the country delegation.

For future correspondence regarding gender advocacy, please contact Diana Mercurios, at [vava63@yahoo.com](mailto:vava63@yahoo.com) and Rosario Gracia-Luque, at [rosariogl@atlas.co.uk](mailto:rosariogl@atlas.co.uk).