



ORIENTATION WORKSHOP of the WSIS Gender Caucus Skills for effective lobbying and advocacy with a focus on change and gender equality

Summary Report of the September 2003 Event in Geneva

Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (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 strategy of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Gender Caucus spans capacity building and direct advocacy. The goal of both is to contribute to mainstreaming of gender equality into the multi-lateral, inter-agency Summit process.

In September of 2003, just prior to the Preparatory Committee meeting 3 in Geneva, the WSIS Gender Caucus organized a one-day orientation workshop on advocacy. This session was part of the capacity building programme of the Caucus and had the goal of increasing effectiveness of structured interventions by gender advocates at national, regional and global levels. This report summarizes that workshop.

Programme

The agenda gives an overview of the scope of subject matter and sequence of coverage for the orientation workshop. Agenda is available at www.genderwsis.org/capacitybuilding/orientationAgenda

The agenda for the one-day event balanced presentations and consultation with experience sharing and participation. The workshop facilitator was Patricia Keays, a trainer with many years of experience in gender mainstreaming both in and out of the UN system.

Presentation highlights included the following:

- The keynote speaker was Susan Nkomo, the CEO on the Status of Women in the Office of the President, South Africa. Prior to taking on the role of Chief Executive Officer, Susan had been an activist. She not only delineated practical tips for effective advocacy with Governments, but also, how challenging the journey can be from activist to bureaucrat and back again.
- Lettie Longwe, one of the core members of the Interim Leadership Team of the WSIS Gender Caucus, set the context of the workshop with her opening presentation which gave an update on the Caucus and its work. This presentation is available at www.genderwsis.org/capacitybuilding/longwe
- The advocacy specialist of the WSIS Gender Caucus team, Sundra Flansburg, outlined the main elements of the working version of the advocacy strategy found online here www.genderwsis.org/advocacyandlobbying
- Dr. Gillian Goddard, a Gender Caucus Steering Committee Member, introduced some core concepts associated with *internalized oppression*, and emphasized the importance of understanding these concepts in order to make an effective and human relationship with those whom we engage and hope to influence. This presentation is available at www.genderwsis.org/capacitybuilding/goddard
- Patricia Keays reviewed the range of strategies available to change agents, and encouraged people to consider problem-solving for the person being advocated as a first entry point. Available www.genderwsis.org/capacitybuilding/referencematerial

- Cathy Mae Karelse, a UK based Ayurvedic practitioner, gave guidance to gender advocates on re-energising themselves and increasing productivity through her facilitation of several short focused group exercises.
- Conchita Poincini, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, summarized some key points related to gender advocacy in the WSIS process from her experience with CONGO and with CEDAW.

Workshop sessions

Consultation highlights occurred in reports from all groups, the work of which took most of the afternoon. In the first workshop session participants divided into three groups to discuss their own experience with advocacy and to recommend directions to the WSIS Gender Caucus. An experienced lead was asked to moderate and support a report from each group. The willingness of people to take on different roles in implementing the workshop process was a contributing factor to its success. So was the openness of participants to engaging in an orientation process that integrated different themes and accommodated diverse perspectives.

The ongoing interaction of participants and presenters after each presentation and throughout the closing session was an important sustained theme, one not immediately visible from reading the programme, the agenda or the presentations. The participants were resource people to each other, in an open exchange that was described in the closing by one of the participants this way.

When we look at the way sharing was done - sharing information here - this process allowed the quietest people to participate, and everyone here wants to find out more. I would like to believe each one has made some kind of commitment to follow up.

The sessions were recorded by organizers Berni Vigano and Deepali Schneider, the Gender Caucus Program Administrator and Program Assistant respectively. The audio material is available, as resources permit, for the continuing capacity development of the WSIS Gender Caucus and wider networks.

The outputs from the workshop include summary briefing notes with tips on advocacy from the main presentations as well as recommendations generated by the group through the consultative part of the orientation.

- Some of these recommendations relate to the WSIS Gender Caucus advocacy strategy, and have been taken into account in that continuing process and document revisions.
- Other recommendations relate to points of strategy about how gender equality and women's needs and concerns can be more effectively integrated into mainstream processes. These provide a source of direction and reference for decision-takers involved in wider advocacy campaigns and efforts.
- A third set of recommendations are broad and combine information about procedures in multilateral meetings in the wider UN system with updates on developments that compound challenges already faced by gender advocates. The points in the workshop records about these points are not so much recommendations as points of update with accompanying questions about strategy and approaches for response. The PrepCom meetings which immediately followed the workshop presented many and various opportunities for the people in the advocacy orientation to take action on the different fronts of concern identified - - in this way, the one-day event really was an *orientation*, helping a group of interested allies orient in alignment along lines of shared concern and interest.

Outputs also include a capacity development base line and themes of interest. These have been established through the orientation process, the representative group of WSIS Gender Caucus network members giving shape to a continuing theme of learning. Priority interests have been identified for a

similar workshop / orientation in December, going deeper on the subject of *internalized oppression* as well as concentrating on *lessons learned in the WSIS Gender Caucus advocacy process so far*.

The evaluations from the workshop testify to something more than these outputs having been generated and occurred through the workshop. Outcomes achieved include:

- successful / satisfactory meeting of expectations for every participant who completed an evaluation form at the end of the day. The evaluations were a tribute to the positive energy and environment that was established early and maintained throughout the different phases of the compressed one-day workshop;
- a foundation of team work leading to a stronger and more unified WSIS Gender Caucus network, with a core of 20 – 30 individuals feeling comfortable with each other and that the process if it continues to be consultative can also continue to make others who join feel comfortable too;
- a validation through consultative means of the core messages drawn up and reflected later in the advocacy strategy and position papers;
- an exploration with a cross-section of people able to be at the advocacy workshop of people's perspectives, interests, and experiences relating to shared interests, creating a "field of interest" for not only a successful workshop, as evaluated by both participants and the facilitation team, also for subsequent communications and actions.

The two main objectives of the workshop from the WSIS Gender Caucus were that on completion, participants would be equipped with:

1. practical and theoretical understanding of team work, advocacy and lobbying as ways to achieve development and social justice goals, particularly as these intersect with gender equality goals and a gender mainstreaming approach;
2. new strategies for integrating teamwork, participation, human rights and advocacy into development initiatives, considering concrete tools and basic practical approaches within the context of the WSIS process.

The participants and facilitation team members felt that the objectives and expectations were met.

The capacity development process did not end with the workshop nor did the networking process begun here. The objectives are large in scope in part because they lay the foundation for continuing skills and capacity development with members of the WSIS Gender Caucus and related networks.

The third objective for the orientation workshop relates to comprehensive documentation, of which this report is part. Other documentation outputs include advocacy tips and recommendations to the WSIS Gender Caucus.

Lessons learned and reinforced include a number of key ones:

- it is possible to accommodate interests of a diverse group of people, if the focus is clear and maintained, and the design / structure of the programme support a consultative, participatory and open, welcoming style;
- maintaining positive energy takes work, on everyone's part, even if the work is informal, on a Saturday, a little more relaxed than the normal professional environment, and in a physical environment designed for another kind of interaction. Full appreciation is due the ITU for making the facility available to the WSIS Gender Caucus;
- the use of a holistic approach, such as the one tested in the advocacy orientation workshop by the inclusion of a skilled Ayurvedic practitioner, reaps multiple benefits. Positive effects were noticed both by participants and facilitators in both focus and levels of energy able to be brought to bear in a concentrated way on the workshop tasks; participants and facilitation team

recommend this be retained. Future steps include consolidating the collected experience into an integrated model for WSIS Gender Caucus advocacy orientation workshops;

- gender advocates lack some key concepts in order to work effectively. When presented with these missing concepts they are able to rapidly make the links with their ongoing work
- a multi-sectoral meeting allows advocates from different sectors to strengthen their knowledge base and explore topics and perspectives that they would not otherwise address

Participation

Participants included the committed advocates living in the Geneva area willing to come out on a weekend along with those who had traveled to Geneva for the PrepCom meetings and who were able to join the advocacy orientation workshop. A stipend to offset increased accommodation costs was provided for PrepCom 3 attendees who arrived early to attend the Gender Caucus Session. Participant list is available online at www.genderwsis.org/capacitybuilding/participants

Resources and Materials

A cross-section of materials supporting capacity development on advocacy for gender equality were organized into a reference pack for the workshop. The pack is available on-line (on the WSIS Gender Caucus site, capacity development page) at www.genderwsis.org/capacitybuilding/referencematerial