



WSIS Gender Caucus ICTs for Empowerment and Development

The WSIS Gender Caucus takes as a starting point the importance of aligning the WSIS process and outcomes with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and urges governments to acknowledge gender equality and women's rights as a central and cross-cutting principle.

The Information Society that we envision is one that reflects widespread empowerment through creation, access, and use of information and through effective communication. It should also eliminate existing cultural, social, technological, political and economic disparities, promoting economic and social development grounded in respect for fundamental human rights, including equality and environmental sustainability. Specifically, the Gender Caucus urges the following:

Gender divides

The WSIS Plan of Action should acknowledge existing gender divides and include actions that work to eliminate them. In addition, proactive steps should be taken to help individuals and communities overcome the lingering social and cultural obstacles that limit their effective participation so that the emerging Information Society benefits from the contributions of girls and women of all ages.

Women as actors as well as users

To create a truly empowering Information Society in which all people contribute and benefit, envisioning currently excluded groups, such as women and youth, only as users is not enough. They must be actors, producers and contributors to policy and practice, and will bring innovation to these arenas through knowledge production.

Traditional and new ICTS

In the emerging Information Society, consideration of a broad range of ICTs—new and traditional—is a key ingredient in reaching and involving women and men in all settings. New technologies offer much promise, and equitable access, use, and benefits to them must be assured. However, the current availability of traditional ICTs—radio, video, telephone, and print—should be acknowledged and expanded upon. The successes and familiarity that some communities have with them should form a foundation to the new Information Society. To ensure an Information Society that reaches and benefits all, therefore, a combination of new and traditional technologies should be integral to technology expansion and use. In addition, encouragement and facilitation of local content development in a variety of languages is vital.

Targeted capacity building

Rather than considering ICTs as neutral tools or static products to which we must shape people and nations, we must envision and take action to evolve ICTs that better respond to the needs and interests of all of the world's population. Women and currently under-represented groups should be provided with targeted and high-quality education around effective ICT use. In addition, as an aid to in the ICT innovation process, formal and informal barriers for women in entry and retention in the technology sector must be eliminated so that they are equally represented as developers and shapers of the way that technology looks, the problems it addresses, and the manner in which it is implemented.

Evaluation and monitoring

Governments and other sectors should establish the appropriate gender-specific data and reporting mechanisms to monitor the impact of policy and actions adopted. In addition, these entities should collect data on women's participation in the Information

The WSIS Gender Caucus is a multi-stakeholder group of women and men from national governments, civil society organizations, NGOs, the private sector, and the United Nations system who are working together to integrate gender issues into the WSIS process and outcomes.