

**Proposals to Establish a Community of Expertise
under the UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UN GAID)¹**

This proposal comes under GAID's priority area
'Participation in policy debate and decision making (governance)' and
the cross cutting theme of 'gender', recognized as a key
theme by GAID

I. Scope of Community of Expertise

We propose a Community of Expertise on *Information Society (IS) policies, gender and development*.

¹ Please refer to document "Modalities for organizing the work of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID)" on the UN GAID website for more detailed description of Communities of Expertise.

1. Please describe shortly, the development problem(s) the proposed Community of Expertise intends to address within one of the four focus areas of the UN GAID (Education, Healthcare, entrepreneurship, governance)?

Gender based discrimination against women is deeply embedded in social structures and institutional arrangements, and constitutes a key development challenge. The Beijing Declaration affirmed that; “It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women.”

Information society (IS) developments offer great opportunities for women – in jobs, in education, in health, and in linking up to governance systems. While specific ‘project level’ efforts and engagements in all these areas are very important, the real opportunity for gender equality is in the structural and institutional transformation implied in the concept of the information society. This requires women at all levels, global, national and local, to engage in a sustained policy dialogue on wider IS issues, and also develop appropriate linkages for participating actively in policy making bodies. Engagement of gender equality advocates is thus critical in shaping both ground level programs and in defining the scope and nature of IS policies. This ‘participation’ aspect of the IS is most important for women to achieve real gains. As the GAID’s inaugural meeting rightly observed, “ICT4D must be placed within a comprehensive development strategy ...with a systematic transformation process of the socio-economic structure.....”. The meaningful realization of this vision requires strong policy level engagements of all stakeholders, including women.

It is with this imperative in mind that we plan a ‘Community of Expertise’ (CoE) on *IS policies, gender and development*. The term ‘IS policies’ is used to highlight the wider policy canvas implicated in the rapidly changing information society, which we believe is much larger than ICT policy. Gender connects with the IS at 3 levels – as a sector of production (implicating issues of jobs, entrepreneurship, education, capacity building etc), as media (for women’s voice and participation) and as a system builder for new institutional frameworks (in areas of health, governance, development delivery, social organizing and advocacy, community knowledge systems, etc). All these levels of the IS-gender intersection have important, and often cross-connecting, policy requirements. Such requirements are not only implied in new challenges like the use of online spaces for perpetuating violence against women, but also for designing proactive frameworks that will strengthen attempts of various actors to promote new opportunities for gender equality – for example, new ways to share experiences at grassroots level and give women a voice, more gender responsive services like telemedicine, e-learning, e-governance etc.

It is important to build strong platforms for women’s groups and gender equality advocates to have a sustained policy dialogue on all these issues, which can then work towards developing linkages to local, national and global level policy making

bodies and mechanisms. While carrying forward some very significant work done by the Gender Caucus and the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group of the WSIS, such a CoE on *IS policies, gender and development* will also be a good step forward in fulfilling the mission of GAID circulated in the UN's press statement announcing the launch of GAID; "The mission of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development will be to facilitate and promote such integration by providing a platform for an open, inclusive, multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral policy dialogue on the role of information and communication technology in development".

2. What are the objectives of the Community of Expertise in view of addressing the above problem?

The objectives of the CoE on *IS policies, gender and development* will be to;

- Build a network of women's organizations involved in IS issues.
- Provide online and face-to-face platforms for a sustained dialogue and debate on IS issues, building of concepts and new analytical frameworks, and articulation of policy recommendations with respect to gender and development among these organizations.
- Extend 'downward' linkages of this network to local and implementation levels of ICTD projects aiming at women's empowerment.
- Develop 'upward' linkages to policy making mechanisms/ bodies at national and global levels - and harness the network's international character and expertise for this purpose.
- Make a significant impact on shaping and developing IS policies at national and global levels that will help usher in a more gender equal information society.

3. Describe the envisaged outputs / deliverables of the Community of Expertise, including the timeframe within which each output / deliverable are expected to be ready.

The main deliverable will be an active policy dialogue platform for discussion and articulation of IS policy issues in relation to gender and development. This will be set up in the first six months of starting the CoE. Much of this effort is already underway and women's groups which are part of this proposal have held regional and global meetings to take the idea of a network forward. These meetings, for instance, have been held under the auspices of APWINC in South Korea (July 2006), the KnowHow Conference in Mexico (August 2006), etc.

The CoE will be an open network that will attempt to reach out, and invite more participants to join in. Occasional face-to-face forums are also planned. The CoE will give its policy inputs from time to time to various policy making bodies. For this

purpose, it will develop links with global IS policy fora like the Internet Governance Forum, WIPO, WTO and CSTD, as well as with national level policy related bodies.

All the organizations involved have committed programs for IS related policy activity, and the proposed CoE will enable such activities to be coordinated in a more purposeful and synergistic way. This, it is hoped, will help the CoE to develop into an important space for IS policy advice in relation to gender and development. National level policy bodies urgently need expert inputs in these fast evolving areas, and the proposed CoE will meet this need. The CoE will mobilize funding from the resources that organizations within the network bring in, and lobby actively to seek additional funding for specific face to face meetings and policy related research and activities.

A timeframe based outputs plan will be developed in consultation with all partners in the next 3 months.

4. Describe briefly how the envisaged deliverables will take into account the need for replicability and scaling-up.

One of the main purposes of the CoE is to develop expertise at various levels that can easily be contextualized and used appropriately at national and local levels. Active linkages with local levels and a critical knowledge-based approach, which will encourage reflection about existing programs, development of indicators for monitoring, creative financing mechanisms, gender sensitive community based strategies (on content, technology infrastructure, local ownership etc), will form the basis of the policy dialogues and recommendations. Another important value of the proposed community will be to link up efforts at various levels, avoiding duplication and improving synergies through documentation, sharing of knowledge, translation, etc. As it grows, the community will develop more linkages to policy spaces leading to a virtuous spiral. Emerging policy spaces in the IS will find in the proposed community legitimate and credible gender and development expertise that brings in local, regional and global perspectives.

II. Organization of the Community of Expertise

4. Please insert the lead organization of the Community of Expertise below.

Name of the lead organization: IT for Change

Website of the lead organization: www.ITforChange.net

Please note that the network proposes to have a core group of organizations, each of which will coordinate the functions in rotation. For the initial 6 months, the effort will be coordinated by IT for Change, and during this period, the activities, timelines and mechanisms for coordination will be firmed up.

5. Please insert below the names and other information of organizations/entities (minimum 2) that are committed to work within the proposed Community of Expertise.

Organizations

- **Agencia Latinoamericana de Información (ALAI), Ecuador**

The Latin American Information Agency -ALAI- is a communications organization, committed to the full respect of human rights, gender equality and people's participation in development and policy making in Latin America. Its actions are part of the struggle for the democratization of communication, as a basic prerequisite for democratic society and social justice. ALAI has had ECOSOC Special Consultative Status since 1998.

- **Association for Progressive Communications - Women's Networking Support Program (APC WNSP)**

The APC WNSP is a network with members from 36 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and Europe and is part of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). The organization believes that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are powerful tools - tools that can help build social networks and contribute towards progressive, social change. However, as access to these tools is not equal, social, ethnic and gender inequities exist. And these inequities are more pronounced for women in general, and particularly for women from the South. Through their program work areas - training, participatory research, policy and advocacy in the area of gender and information technology, information facilitation, regional program support, the APC WNSP aims to respond to these inequities and offer opportunities to women from many regions of the world.

The parent organization, APC, has had ECOSOC General Consultative status since 1995.

- **Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Centre (APWINC), South Korea**

Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center (APWINC) was established in November 1996 at Sookmyung Women's University to promote gender equality and empowerment for women through advancing women's potential and skills in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Asia Pacific region. APWINC has made various efforts to play a pioneer role for women's informatization by conducting researches and field surveys, education and training, as well as conferences, workshops, and seminars in Gender and ICT. It collaborates with various international agencies such as UNESCO, UNESCAP, UNDP, ITU, APEC Education Foundation, private sectors and other NGOs to develop ICT-related projects for women. APWINC has also been serving as the UNESCO Chair in communication technology for women in Asia Pacific region since 1999.

- **Centre for Feminist Research and Action, Dominican Republic**

Centro de Investigacion Para la Accion Femenina's (CIPAF) (Research Center for Feminist Action) main objectives are to contribute toward Dominican women's advancement by promoting their participation under equal circumstances in the social, economical and political aspects of the country; to ensure that women's problems and necessities become part of the public agenda; to contribute a higher level of awareness regarding women's status, rights and capabilities and toward the many forms of discrimination that women are subjected to; to help develop educational and group communication movements that will help empower women's participation in all aspects of their lives. They are committed to gender perspectives being incorporated in the economical, political and governmental reform process and in the formulation of social/public policies, and to enable women to play an active role in them. CIPAF develops its line of work on a national level, but is also part of a variety of networks on a regional and international level. CIPAF owns a monthly (international) newspaper called "Quehaceres", which means the daily chores or duties women have to carry out. They have ECOSOC Special Consultative Status from 2000.

- **Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR), Sri Lanka**

CENWOR, a non-governmental, non-profit organization, was founded in 1984 by a group of academics, researchers and activists who were involved for several years in research and action-oriented programs relating to women. CENWOR's policy and action oriented research includes assessments of the impact of macro economic policies on women. It studies the employment policies and women's work in the formal and informal sectors, agricultural settlements, industrial estates, free trade zones, and rural industrialization, overseas contractual employment and gender and ICT.

CENWOR's information program seeks to disseminate information on gender and related issues, provide email and Internet connectivity to women's groups and popularize tele-centres especially in rural areas to enable women to access information. CENWOR conducts training programs and is involved in advocacy and networking.

- **Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia – Commonwealth of Learning (CEMCA, COL)**

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) was established in New Delhi, India, in 1994 by the Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, in response to needs expressed by the Commonwealth countries of the Asian region for a more effective utilization of educational media resources for Distance Education. Currently, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi, promotes the meaningful, relevant, and appropriate use of information and communication technologies to serve the educational and training needs of Commonwealth Member States of Asia.

- **Division of Gender, Technology and Organization, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden**

The division of Gender & Technology at Luleå University of Technology is unique not only for Sweden but for the whole of the Nordic region, as it is located within a faculty of technology. Far more possibilities can be utilized when the research and education is integrated within technoscientific knowledge production. Gender research studies within technoscience is to study (techno) scientific production of knowledge and problem solving with a feminist perspective. This means to fundamentally problematize science in a complex and integrating way and to develop transformatory capacities for technoscience to be able to adopt the challenges of today and tomorrow - locally, nationally and globally. More complex understandings of knowledge processes creates necessary conditions for getting in close contact with possibilities for and obstacles against transformation in the modern research complex.

- **Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)**

DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES WITH WOMEN FOR A NEW ERA – DAWN - which began in 1984 is a network of women scholars and activists from the economic South who engage in feminist research and analysis of the global environment and are committed to working for economic justice, gender justice and democracy. DAWN works globally and regionally in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific on the themes of the Political Economy of Globalization; Political Restructuring and Social Transformation; Sustainable Livelihoods; and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, in partnership with other global NGOs and networks. DAWN's work at the regional level connects with the priorities of women's and civil society organizations in each region, and helps strengthen capacity to deal with issues arising from the impacts of globalization. Much of DAWN's global advocacy work involves working in partnership with other organizations and networks to reform international institutions, ensure that governments live up to the commitments they made in the conferences, and mainstream gender in NGO advocacy initiatives. They have had ECOSOC Special Consultative Status since 1995.

- **femLINK PACIFIC: Media Initiatives for Women, Fiji Islands**

femLINKpacific was established in September 2000 and its overarching program focus is the promotion of women in decision making through the development,

production and distribution of a range of community media initiatives. The organization has been a key regional advocate on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, titled "Women, Peace and Security" as well as in advocating for the use of appropriate and accessible ICTs for Development. In 2004, femLINKPACIFIC was granted a license to operate and manage a mobile women's community radio station - femTALK 89.2FM, "Women speaking to women for Peace." This innovative media initiative has assisted in furthering the lobby for the further democratization of information and communication channels, especially for rural women, young women, and persons with disabilities. Aside from community radio broadcasts, femLINKPACIFIC's media initiatives include a monthly ENews bulletin, national and regional publications, and community videos.

femLINKPACIFIC also assists and provides practical training for community partners in media advocacy via the mainstream media, media monitoring; as well as developing and undertaking communications and media strategies for strengthening women's participation in the current social, economic and political reconstruction of the Fiji Islands.

- **FEMNET Africa, The African Women's Development and Communication Network, Kenya**

FEMNET is a pan-African network of women's organization, based in Kenya, which believes in African women's collective leadership for equality, peace and sustainable development. FEMNET seeks to facilitate and coordinate the sharing of experiences, ideas, information, and strategies for human rights promotion among African women's organizations through networking, communication, capacity-building and advocacy at the regional and international levels. The organization is a member of ECOSOC and has had Special Consultative Status since 1996.

- **Hengasara Hakkina Sangha (HHS), India**

Hengasara Hakkina Sangha (HHS) translates from Kannada to English to mean 'women's rights organization' is a feminist, activist women's rights organization established in 1993. Based in Bangalore, India they see themselves as part of the broad current of the Indian Women's Movement. The organizational goal is to enable women to transform exploitative, oppressive and discriminatory power structures, through legal and social awareness towards violence free, just and equal society.

The organization has worked in most districts of Karnataka primarily with marginalized rural women who are part of Sanghas, civil society groups, NGOs, media and state institutions. Besides using training as a methodology they promote women's rights through research, documentation, creation and dissemination of resource material and mainstreaming women's rights in popular media. The organization is actively involved in campaigns to promote rights of women workers, struggle against acid attacks on women and in advocacy efforts to implement laws to protect women from all forms of violence.

- **Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS), Netherlands**

Hivos is a non-governmental organization, rooted in the Netherlands and guided by humanist values, that wants to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world where citizens, women and men, have equal access to resources, opportunities and markets and can participate actively and equally in decision-making processes that determine their lives, their society and their future. The organization is committed to the poor and marginalized - and to the organizations which promote their interests - in countries in the South and in South-East Europe. Sustainable improvement of their situation is the ultimate benchmark for Hivos's work. An important cornerstone here is strengthening of the position of women in society.

Hivos' most important activity consists in providing financial and political support for local NGO's. Besides offering finance and advice, Hivos is also active in networking, lobbying and in exchanging knowledge and expertise, not only at international level, but also in the Netherlands. Civil society building, economic activity and sustainable production are Hivos' central policy areas. Hivos' network embraces approximately 35 countries and over 780 partner organizations. In the course of 2005, Hivos disbursed nearly 75 million euro as grants or loans. These funds were provided by the Dutch government, the EU, donors and savers, and private institutions.

- **International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) – Asia**

The International Gender and Trade Network is a network of feminist gender specialists who provide technical information on gender and trade issues to women's groups, NGOs, social movements and governments. IGTN acts as a political catalyst to enlarge the space for a critical feminist perspective and global action on trade and globalization issues. It is a Southern-led network that builds South/North cooperation in the work of developing more just and democratic policy from a critical feminist perspective. IGTN is organized in eight regions: Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Central Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and Gulf, North America and the Pacific.

- **International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), USA**

The International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) is an international non-governmental organization established in 1976 following the United Nations International Women's Year World Conference in Mexico City. The organization works for connecting women globally and facilitating their participation in policy and decision-making to effect social change. With a commitment to empowering people and building communities, IWTC provides communication, information, education, and organizing support services to women's organizations and community groups working to improve the lives of women, particularly low-income women, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Western Asia. IWTC works on four program areas including human rights, human security and peace building; global policy and local action; ICTs and poverty alleviation with focus on women's economic empowerment; and knowledge sharing and local content development (Women, Ink.). IWTC has had ECOSOC Roster Consultative Status since 1983.

- **ISIS International Manila**

ISIS International, Manila, is a feminist NGO dedicated to women's information and communication needs which documents ideas and visions, creating channels to communicate by collecting and moving information and networking and building links. They focus on advancing women's rights, leadership and empowerment in Asia and the Pacific. With connections in over 150 countries, they also keep up with changing trends and analyses concerning women worldwide. They have had ECOSOC special Consultative Status since 1996.

- **Jagori – Women's Training, Documentation and Resource Center, India**

JAGORI ('AWAKEN, WOMEN') is a women's training, documentation, communication and resource centre, based in New Delhi, that was established in 1984 with the aim of carrying feminist consciousness to a wider audience using creative media. At the South Asian level, JAGORI is a founder-member of the South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers (SANGAT), and hosts the SANGAT secretariat. JAGORI is also a member of KARTINI, an Asian women's studies network.

- **Manushi, India**

Manushi A Journal About Women and Society was founded in 1978 with the aim of finding effective solutions for the economic, political and social problems confronting us in India today through patient study, a non-partisan approach, live interaction with the people concerned and culturally sensitive, informed activism. One of our consistent endeavors has been to bridge the divide between academia and activism, rather than pitch them against each other. A rich and live interaction between intellectual pursuits and activism is necessary for the healthy growth of both.

Manushi Sangathan shares the basic goals of Manushi journal. However, it endeavors to go beyond offering critiques and suggestions for reform to actually helping put in place worthwhile solutions to the various problems confronting us in India today by organizing citizen's groups for democratic reforms that will promote greater social justice and strengthen human rights for all, especially for women.

- **Radio Internacional Feminista (FIRE), Costa Rica**

Radio Internacional Feminista or FIRE, based in Costa Rica, is the first international Internet radio produced by women. Set up in 1991, it was originally created as a resource to amplify the voices of the women worldwide. In 1998, it merged its traditional radio service with the Internet. This has enabled diverse formats of communication, through re-broadcasts in local radios, international short wave radio, magazines, newspapers, electronic networks and web pages. Internet provides the possibility of converting the computer into a transmitter of high frequency, more economical than traditional radio. FIRE's main objectives include developing new forms of communication and contributing to change in the world order by disseminating women's voices (usually missing in mainstream media) in all their diversity. This allows their perspectives to be heard by men and women around the world, crossing barriers of nationality, culture, race, geography, language and gender.

FIRE's feminist perspective is in broadcasting women's voices and perspectives on all issues. This is especially important as women's voices, especially from the Global South, are often ignored in global media. While it is international in scope and reach, it is mainly produced by Latin American and Caribbean feminists who are FIRE's permanent producers and directors.

- **Shirkat Gah – Women's Resource Centre, Pakistan**

Shirkat Gah – Women's Resource Centre (literally meaning a place of participation) was formed in 1975, International Women's Year, as a non-hierarchical collective to integrate consciousness raising with a development perspective and to initiate projects translating advocacy into action. Today Shirkat Gah (SG) has expanded well beyond the Collective to an organization working in all four provinces of Pakistan with three offices and has ECOSOC status at the United Nations. Living up to its name, Shirkat Gah adopts a participatory approach in its internal functioning and all its activities.

- **Terres des Femmes, Germany**

TERRE DES FEMMES, based in Tübingen, is Germany's largest organization for the defense of human rights for women and was founded in 1981. TERRE DES FEMMES is a non-profit organization that works to fight all forms of discrimination against women and all infringements on women's human rights that are perpetrated on the grounds of sex/gender, irrespective of the religious, political, ethnic and national background of the women. The organization, furthermore, undertakes to inform and educate the larger public about discrimination against women and to engage in direct aid initiatives on behalf of women. TERRE DES FEMMES has actively participated in the UN World Summit on the Information Society. With respect to Internet Governance they are interested in building the capacity of women to understand the issues and thus to raise the number of women who involve themselves in them.

- **United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

The United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM, is the women's fund at the United Nations. It was created by the UN General Assembly resolution in 1976, following a call from women's organizations attending the 1975 UN First World Conference on Women in Mexico City. Set up to be an aid to and advocate for women of the developing world---it seeks to give them voice and visibility. Serving as a bridge between policy-makers and women in the developing world, it is a key institution for forming linkages. Creating spaces and providing platforms for them to articulate their needs, concerns and priorities to policy makers, UNIFEM has facilitated the creation of a key stakeholder accountability forum, to follow-up on the Beijing Platform for Action. Working for the dignity of women, it

promotes participatory development and growth, focusing on strengthening the capacity of rights-holders as well as the capacity of duty bearers.

Headquartered in New York, UNIFEM today works in over 100 countries and has 15 regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) and Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **Women's Net, South Africa**

Women'sNet is a vibrant and innovative networking support program designed to enable South African women to use the Internet to find the people, issues, resources and tools needed for women's social activism. Women'sNet aims to empower South African women to use information and communications technologies (ICTs) towards advancing women's equality. It is a dynamic source of locally generated information and discussion on gender issues.

Individuals

- **Magaly Pazello, member of the steering committee, of the erstwhile Gender Caucus of WSIS**
- **Florence Etta, member of the steering committee, of the erstwhile Gender Caucus of WSIS**
- **Gloria Bonder, UNESCO Chair for Latin America, Women, Science and Technology**