

Gender Caucus Position on Financing Mechanisms

DAWN, AMARC Africa, IT for Change

WSIS-II/PC-2

February 16-25, 2005

What we believe is NOT conducive to Gender Equal Outcomes in the Current Language /Discussion

- Complete faith / reliance on the market for delivering ICT for Development.
- The assumption that ICT for development is synonymous with economic growth.
- The sidelining / undermining of equity and social justice aspects of ICT for development interventions.
- The assumption that investment in telecom infrastructure is adequate for achieving development goals through the use of ICTs, as revealed in:
 - the focus only on regions "less attractive to the market" and an omission of the needs of disadvantaged populations,
 - a simplistic approach to ICT for Development that focuses only on quantitative indicators like tele-density,
 - the lopsided emphasis in capacity-building that ignores women- the focus on "regulators" to the exclusion of other social groups whose capacities need to be built.
- The absence of clearly stated commitment to gender equality in the implementation aspects.

What we believe are NON-NEGOTIABLE FOR GENDER-EQUAL OUTCOMES

- ICT for development must be framed as a development issue, encompassing market-led growth but fundamentally a public policy issue.
- Public policy for ICTs for development must set up a vision and a programmatic framework that endeavours to achieve equitable and gender just outcomes.
- Market investments in ICT for development need to be guided within a public policy framework.
- Market mechanisms cannot be expected to take the development benefits of ICT to disadvantaged populations including the large majority of women. The limits of the market are clearly evident in the many digital divides including the gender digital divide.
- Public finance - local, national and international - has a central role to ensure equitable and gender just outcomes in ICT for development.
- Allocation of finance towards ICTs for development needs to emphasize 3 interrelated but distinct aspects - infrastructure, systems to institutionalize ICTs at the community level (like the setting up of a specialized agency to coordinate technology and services networks, delivery of ICT services and mainstreaming of ICTs in development delivery), and social empowerment processes to enable communities to use ICTs for their well being and empowerment. Attention to women's needs and interests are imperative in the financing of each of these aspects.
- Creation of financial mechanisms and instruments that are accessible to women, especially poor women in both rural and urban areas, and responsive to their financial needs is necessary to help women get out of the "microfinance ghetto".
- Traditional and innovative financial mechanisms must take in account the particular needs of indigenous women specially in developing countries and LDCs.
- The coordination of economic policy among governments and multilateral institutions needs to be encouraged, and a gender perspective integrated into this process.
- Mechanisms within financial institutions for the participation and advancement of women, similar to those already established in some countries that address women's empowerment in their policies, need to be introduced.
- Implementation of ICT for development aspects needs to be guided by a clearly articulated commitment to gender equality. This includes:

- Appropriate technologies that account for women's roles and interests - not just telecom technologies, but also software and applications that are localized.
- Adoption of technology paradigms that serve the interests of poor women, such as open source and open content.
- Developing ICT-enabled services and mechanisms for delivering them, with a clear strategy to serve the needs and interests of women
- Local content production and dissemination that is especially relevant for poor and disadvantaged women.
- Building women's capacities to benefit from ICTs.
- The use of ICTs as a catalyst for better governance and to give women a stronger voice in democratic processes in society.