

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS
outcomes**

Submitted by

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UNSCD Questionnaire on WSIS Review – Submission from UN Women

1. To what extent, in your experience, has the “people centred, inclusive and development oriented Information Society”, envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed in the ten years since WSIS? How far do you consider the implementation of specific WSIS outcomes to have been achieved? How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a “people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society”?

ICTs have brought real gains to women over the last decade with the increase in mobile penetration, the development of beneficial applications and services, programmes around building digital literacy, and women themselves have been innovators in the use of ICTs to build networks, tell their stories, mobilize for change, generate economic opportunities, increase flows of information and knowledge, learn, and within many other spheres of productive and reproductive life.

Programming to address women’s needs have been developed by government, civil society, the UN system and the private sector targeted at the application of ICTs, infrastructure development, as well as attracting women to and promoting them in the ICT sector. Research has been undertaken to better understand women’s differentiated experiences, as well as around impact of ICTs on women’s rights and realities. In reflections from Action Line meetings, we have heard about the need to integrate gender perspectives into ICTD projects in order for them to be successful (e.g. around agriculture and education). We have also seen increasing attention to the data challenges around gender and ICT use. In particular, the Partnership on the Measurement of the Information Society Gender Working Group is examining a wide range of indicators to better understand where and how women engage with ICTs. The Broadband Commission Gender Working Group has also called for greater attention to, and investment in, gender issues and itself created a separate target on women’s access to broadband.

Yet, despite the recognized potential and areas of progress, it is not happening fast enough, to a transformative degree and investments are lacking. Women are not sufficiently engaged in and influencing the direction and content of the knowledge society.

2. What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a “people-centred.....”? How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?

What data is available on women and ICTs tells a clear picture, and one that calls for immediate action:

- According to the ITU, there is a global 16% gap in women’s access to ICTs with that reaching up to 40% for access to the Internet in some regions (Women and the Web report).

- As noted in *Doubling Digital Opportunities*, women and men use ICTs in different ways with quantifiable gaps increasing for more sophisticated use and content accessed.
- Only 8% of venture funded startups are led by women and women make up only between 10-15% of senior and decision making positions in the ICT sector.
- Only around 1/3 of national broadband strategies reference gender issues.
- A report on online media and women's portrayal showed that stereotypes are even more pronounced in online than traditional media, evidence that offline realities of discrimination are reproducing themselves online.

Various reviews, conferences, and consultations have all revealed a number of gaps and challenges. There are strong calls to:

- Meaningfully integrate women's needs, perspectives, and capabilities through proper gender analysis and effective learning environments.
- Position women as equal partners, active agents, content producers, innovators and decision-makers.
- Promote women's access to ICTs in all their forms. This should also include mechanisms to ensure that women do not fall behind with new and rapid technical advances, whether this be broadband, the internet of things, and the like.
- Better connect and heighten understanding of online and offline realities and surface underlying factors that hinder women's engagement in the information society. This also includes linking rights offline with enjoyment of rights online and ensuring that harmful practices online – such as violence against women – are prevented or addressed.
- Involve women to much greater degrees in global Internet governance discussions.
- Increase attention, dedicated resources, investments, more coherent approaches and accountability measures for women's empowerment within the information society.
- Effectively integrate the myriad of issues related to the knowledge society within the work and deliberations of the gender community and normative frameworks.
- Update the WSIS framework in line with standard international practice which treats gender as a mainstreamed issue, as well as one in its own right.¹

3. What do you consider the most important emerging trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?

The mobile revolution, broadband, wearable devices and the internet of things, convergence with other sectors, the generation and use of big data are all important trends. However, as with these and any other emerging technologies we can ask the same question – are women equal

¹ The MDGs, the SDGs, as well as the report of the HLP for post-2015 have acknowledged the need to mainstream, as well as have a discrete goal or section on gender.

players in the forefront of driving these developments, are the able to equally enjoy the benefits of ICTs in all their forms, are the challenges and risks they may also present, especially to women being addressed? Also, there are growing concerns over the internet as a public space, the trend toward commercialization, net neutrality, and privacy issues. Again, women are too absent from the questions of internet governance and must be more involved in this space.

4. What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?

At present, reference to promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the WSIS outcome documents is found in the declarative and preamble text and to varying degrees within texts of the Action Lines. The WSIS review discussions have strongly pointed to the need to introduce to the WSIS framework mechanisms to help operationalize commitments, support implementation, address some key gaps and enable more holistic treatment of gender issues. Happily, the 2014 outcome document of the WSIS+10 review does include provision of monitoring commitments around gender in the same fashion as other action lines. This is an improvement. Other areas that require increased focus include:

1. *Gender Analysis*: Promote the use of "gender analysis" and associated tools and methodologies in the development of national, regional and related global frameworks, strategies and policies and their implementation.
2. *Holistic Approaches and Structural Issues*: Address underlying issues in the information society, such as gender stereotypes and specific threats such as online violence against women and provide analysis and recommendations on gender issues that cut across action lines.
3. *Linking the Gender and ICT Communities*: Link ICT policy, capacity and programming issues with the work of gender advocates and national women's machineries and into Beijing+20 review in 2015, annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and CEDAW reviews and reporting.
4. *Support to Action Lines and Stakeholders*: Provide technical support to the Action Lines and specific stakeholder groups (e.g. private sector) to integrate gender equality into their work through identifying overarching issues, programmatic opportunities, requisite investments and policy interventions. The following are recommended areas for concrete and accelerated action and investment:
 - Establishing equality in women's access to ICTs, in all its forms, by taking into account the differences in levels of access, opportunity and participation of women and men and addressing the disadvantages and barriers that women and girls experience in the knowledge society.
 - Integrating gender analysis and principles in national digital and e-strategy frameworks and agendas and developing proactive policies and programmes across all sectors for women as active and primary agents of change in owning, designing, using and adapting ICT.

- Developing and collecting gender and sex-disaggregated data, and undertaking research and impact analysis on gender and ICT, including for evidence based policy making and programming.
 - Building capabilities of women and girls to use ICTs for agency, empowerment and citizenship. To empower girls and women throughout their life cycle, as shapers and leaders of society, gender responsive educational programs and appropriate learning environments need to be promoted.
 - Promote women content producers and the availability of content relevant to women's needs.
 - Ensuring that women's rights are taken into account in internet rights and principles and dialogue.
 - Ensuring parity in women's representation in high levels and decision-making in the ICT (public and private) sector and governance structures.
 - Building the skills and environments necessary for women to enter, remain and progress in ICT careers.
5. Equal participation of women: Equal participation of women in all WSIS related processes and women's voices or representation in panels, committees and bodies constituted for WSIS.
 6. *Data and Monitoring Progress*: Prepare scorecards on Action Line and National level reporting on women's empowerment. Support and promote the work of the Partnership on the Measurement of the Information Society Working Group on Gender.
5. What role should information and communications play in the implementation of post-2015 agenda?

UN Women fully endorses the Open Working Group Report of the SDGs inclusion of the implementation target (5.b) under the gender goal to “*enhance the use of enabling technologies, in particular ICT, to promote women's empowerment.*” It is essential that this is retained and that other references to ICTs and the knowledge society are retained or strengthened.

6. Please add any other comments that you wish to make on the subject of the review that you believe would be helpful.

Attach related documents.