

Strategy Planning Workshop of the Feminist Network on Gender, Development and Information Society Policies

Co-organised by

IT for Change
Isis International – Manila
Association for Progressive Communications
International Women's Tribune Centre



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Workshop Report

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Abbreviations

APC WNSP - The Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Program
BPO – Business Process Outsourcing
CoE – Community of Expertise
GDISP – Gender, Development and Information Society Policies
HIVOS – Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries
ICT – Information and Communication Technologies
ICTD/ICT4D – Information and Communication Technologies for Development
IDRC – International Development Research Centre
IS – Information Society
IT – Information Technology
ITfC – IT for Change
IWTC – International Women's Tribune Centre
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
RTI – Right to Information
WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society
UNGAID – United Nations Global Alliance on ICTs for Development
UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women

Report on the Strategy Planning Workshop of the Feminist Network on Gender, Development and Information Society Policies *

I. Background and Overview

A strategy planning workshop of the Feminist Network on Gender, Development and Information Society Policies (GDISP) was held on October 5-7 2007 in Bangalore, India, co-organised by IT for Change, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) and Isis International – Manila. The workshop served as the inaugural meeting of the network, which had come together in 2006 as a Community of Expertise under the United Nations Global Alliance on ICTs for Development (UNGAID), with the aim of studying the intersecting themes of Gender, Development and Information Society Policies, and channelling the emerging understanding into policy processes at local, national and global levels.

The GDISP network is comprised of organisations engaged in advocacy on gender, development and rights – with some specifically engaged in information society policy issues. The strategy planning workshop was convened with the hope of building this network into a meaningful platform and developing its fundamental character, mandate and mechanisms. The goals of the meeting were to:

- a) Conduct a gender analysis of the policy ecology of the information society and the approaches of critical institutional players
- b) Evolve an action plan for research and advocacy
- c) Develop the structure and processes that facilitate and strengthen the work of the network

The workshop brought together over 30 participants from around the world, seeking to harness the expertise and insights of gender equality advocates from two streams – those working with information society policy, and those with expertise in gender, development and global governance issues, who were not directly engaged with information society issues.

The presentations were organised into five thematic areas, each constituting a broad area of feminist enquiry and a site of information society change and policy concern:

- Education, Knowledge and Capacity Building – New Frameworks in the Information Society
- Media and Community Networks – The Information Society Context
- Globalisation and the Information Society Context
- Institutional Change and Citizenship in the Information Society
- Sexuality, Identity and Digital Spaces

These five theme-based panels were followed by the presentation of a tentative framework for policy analysis on gender and development in the information society; an open session in which participants reflected on research imperatives and advocacy strategies to be taken forward in global and sub-global arenas; and a final panel on global feminist collaboration for advocacy, with a vision for the future of the GDISP network.

This report will provide a synthesis of the key insights that emerged from the strategy planning workshop, as well as a summary of the presentations and discussions. It will then outline the network's next steps with regard to research and advocacy on gender and development in the information society, as these evolved over the course of the event.

* This workshop was supported by IDRC, HIVOS, UNIFEM, Bread for All and UNGAID.

II. Summary of Key Themes

During the three-day workshop, several key themes surfaced regarding the challenges and priorities facing the network as it positions itself within the information society policy arena. Participants identified the information society as an important site for feminist engagement. They debated the private and public dimensions of ICTs, the value of practice and policy interventions in this field, the contradictions involved in defining policy trajectories, and the imperative of building a feminist framework for understanding and engaging with the information society. What follows is a summary of the key discussions related to each theme, supported by inputs from the participants.

A Feminist Response to the Information Society

As it brought together gender advocates from two streams – those engaged in information society debates and those active in a range of development spheres – the first task of the workshop was to establish the intersections of gender, development and the information society, and the need for feminists in different sectors to work together to formulate a critical policy response. Participants recognised ICTs as not merely a technical innovation, but rather a social and political phenomenon with the power to effect deep structural change.

Challenging the conventional ambivalence of feminists with regard to technologies, Maria Uden of Luleå University reminded the group that they must not avoid engaging with policy spheres outside the feminist arena. “We refer to people interested in computers (with little knowledge of gender) as geeks,” she remarked. “Are we then gender geeks who refuse to relate to reality, other than as a burden?” Participants agreed that intellectual commitments to such sectors as education, environment or livelihoods should not deter, but rather compel gender advocates to engage with the structural changes before them and work to influence ICT and information society policies.

The discussions identified not only the transformative, but also the transgressive potential of ICTs. Sally Burch of the Agencia Latinoamericana de Información submitted that it is not technology which determines the development of a specific project, but the reverse, and that technology can in fact be used to subvert the very projects for which it was designed. The information society, then, does not belong to ICT specialists. Though they may have introduced the tools, it is very much the work of feminists to adapt these tools to build the society that they envision. The imperative of the moment is thus not simply to “engage women in ICTs” or to “promote technology as a tool” for development, but rather to engage feminists in a critical response to the information society.

ICTs: a Private or Public Paradigm?

The discussions revealed tensions between the private and public dimensions of the information society. Comments put forth at the outset of the meeting positioned ICTs as a private sector innovation – an assessment that would prompt those engaging with the issue to accept the logic of the private sector and to work within its systems. As it progressed, however, the workshop shed light on the public origins of the Internet as a product of the US military, and revealed that although governments have not stipulated the growth of the Internet, the largely open system that exists now could not have been fostered by the private sector alone.

Challenging the use of a private sector paradigm for defining information technology (IT), Parminder Jeet Singh of IT for Change argued that information is a public system – which applies to the tradition of the written word just as it does to new ICT tools. With this in mind, participants began to envisage a greater role for the public sector and public infrastructure in shaping the governance of ICTs, and the kinds of regulations that would work to address issues of equity and justice. In this context, project initiatives in the area of ICTs

would be driven not by technological developments, but rather by the situations and needs on the ground.

Participants evolved a new vision of ICTs – from a private good to a public resource. This idea was brought forth by feminists for whom the workshop was a first exposure to information society debates. Among these participants was Sumi Krishna, an environment development researcher and gender consultant with the Indian Association for Women's Studies. She suggested that conceiving of ICTs as a common property resource would compel development and information society actors to look at how this resource could be created, managed, conserved and sustained. These are critical questions in the information society context, and important considerations with regard to the issue of digital exclusion, which occurs along such axes as gender, region, class, race and age. In order to address the politics of the divide, some participants proposed a rights-based approach to ICTs, which would shift the discourse from "affordable access" to "free access," rooting ICTs firmly within a public sector paradigm.

Dilemmas, Bottom-lines and Strategies

The discussions explored the potential for women's empowerment through ICTs and digital spaces, and the ways in which these can facilitate the dissemination of information and the legitimisation of feminist discourse in the public domain. On one level, cyberspace was exalted as a "feminist space par excellence", wherein ICTs give rise to new opportunities for feminist networking, create freedom from gender dualism, and foster alternative expressions of sexuality. On another level, it was noted that the degree of control that one is able to exert over these tools determines how empowering they are. While women may be able to access the public space of the Internet with greater ease than they do other public spaces, they must also negotiate the contradictions within it. Participants acknowledged the Internet as a new forum for transnational feminist activism, but also as a site for the reproduction of patriarchal structures. Just as they provide women with new freedoms and avenues for sexual expression, digital spaces also give rise to new forms of gender violence. In this regard, there was little consensus among feminists on the need for, nature, and implications of Internet content regulation. As such, discussions on empowerment reflected the diversity of feminist viewpoints on sexuality, identity and digital spaces, and the complexity of defining policy directions on these issues.

Shalmali Guttal of Focus on the Global South set out the challenge for feminists on two fronts – against state control on one side, and corporate domination on the other. She observed that as much as individuals may use technology to empower themselves, governments also use it to seize power, and to control or disempower others. The corporate dimension of hegemony in the information society was elaborated by Sally Burch, who cautioned against equating participative and interactive digital spaces with democratic communication. "Although they create an illusion of freedom, most of the new communication flows taking place are firmly under corporate control," she said. "The greater part of cyberspace is colonised by this system." Participants assessed the empowerment and disempowerment potential of other dimensions of the information society, for instance, the influx of women into low-skilled positions in business process outsourcing (BPO) firms – and observed that women are creating a surplus for the information society, just as they have done for globalisation. They also questioned how the reverse might also be realised – as Anita Gurumurthy of IT for Change put it, "How can the information society create a surplus for women?"

In response came several calls for feminist movements to actively begin to strategise on multiple levels. "If we envision feminism as a proposal for humanity," said Sally Burch, "and not simply for women's equality with men in a grossly unequal social and economic system, then the fight against patriarchy cannot be dissociated from the fight to transform the economic model, since the present corporate-dominated model is one of patriarchy's mainstays." Remarking on the entrapment of the feminist agenda between state and corporate hegemony, Shalmali Guttal encouraged the network to "reclaim our imagination" and to ask "what are the different ways of being a state, society, economy or polity between these two poles?" She affirmed the need for global regulations and national governance, despite the inequitable structures that these have historically implied, and questioned the presumed coherence between government and the public sector. Encouraging

the vision of a new global polity, she asked, “What are the other democratic mechanisms?” With regard to feminist strategies within digital spaces, Jac sm Kee urged participants to “Take Back the Tech.”¹ She asserted that “to shape and realise a feminist imagination and potential of ICTs towards transformative power relations, we need to claim a material stake in its developments. We have to demand our right to freely move, create knowledge, self-represent our diversities, communicate, form networks with each other, and be safe from harm in this space.”

Engaging with the Information Society: Through Policy or Practice?

A central debate arose over the relevance of policy engagement, as opposed to a focus on practice, for feminist work on the information society. Chat Garcia Ramilo of the Association for Progressive Communications Women’s Support Networking Program (APC WNSP), reflected on the policy process and the gaps it holds, where verbal commitments to gender equality and global and national ICT policies frequently fall short when it comes to implementation. She asked how feminists can grapple with these gaps and create models for the realisation of policies. Other participants expressed a discomfort with the focus on policy discourse, arguing that policy spaces are restrictive, limiting both the content and the language of the discussion. “It’s a question of what practice you do,” said Namita Malhotra of the Alternative Law Forum, “not so much about how you intervene in policy.” On a similar note, Vimala Ramachandran of the Educational Resource Unit argued that “We need to challenge practice. If there is a groundswell of practice, that is what brings about policy change.”

The challenges of policy engagement were underscored by an example from Brazil – the attempt to create policy solutions to domestic violence. Cecilia Sardenberg of the Federal University of Bahia submitted that although it is vital for the protection of women and children, all legislation on domestic violence could be termed an invasion of the private space. The contradictions for feminists became apparent as she compared the context of domestic violence first to violence that occurs in a public space, where legislation is essential; then to the issue of abortion, where feminists stand against the state’s attempt to legislate a woman’s body; and finally to the violence that occurs in cyberspace, where state regulation may displace valuable feminist expression and organising. Policy options with regard to these issues thus present both gains and losses for women.

Despite the ambiguities of the process, many participants asserted the importance of engaging with policy. Describing the significant normative impact of policy, Jac sm Kee gave the example of Malaysia’s National Economic Policy of 1970, instituted in reaction to a racial rights bill of the previous year. The policy was to address the inequalities between three major groups, Malay, Chinese and Indian; yet even today, affirmative action for the Malay is accepted, and cleavages between identities are so embedded in the collective psyche that it is a challenge to even begin an alternative conversation about what it means to be a citizen. With regard to the information society, Jac stated that it is critical to engage with policies around content regulation that arise from debates on pornography or sexuality, because these shape normative understandings of “What kind of sex is okay for women? What kind of sex is okay for men?” and “What kind of sexual conversations are okay?”

As the discussion evolved, it became clear that if the network’s members were seeking to engage with global information society debates, they would have to develop policy responses to the issues raised during the forum. Anita Gurumurthy pointed out that at this time, the information society discourse is not mature, nor are the global governance, national governance and local governance processes that surround it. Noting the current fluidity of these processes, she observed that “just as water finds its own level, particular global policy processes and national policy processes are likely to go in the directions that they will, in a self-propelled way, because of the rapid transitions that are happening – unless of course we intervene.” She asserted, however, that “there is no privileging or valourising of policy over practice.” Practice is particularly significant in this area, because only when organisations begin to engage in the discourse of technology will progressive and radical dimensions for policy begin to emerge.

¹ <http://www.takebackthetech.net/>

Building a Feminist Framework for the Information Society

Building a feminist framework for engagement with the information society was featured as a key point of departure for the network. Participants observed the limits of the globalisation framework currently in use, with its singular focus on the changes brought by neoliberalism. While the integration of global markets is potentially reversible through a return to the state, the development of new technologies and the emergence of the information society constitute an irreversible phenomenon, one that demands a different form of political organisation. Adopting the lens of the information society would better capture the political and technological changes of our times.

In the context of a new network, and the new knowledge that it would begin to explore, participants expressed the need to re-invent, re-politicise and reclaim such concepts as gender, empowerment, participation and democracy – which are so often co-opted and diluted by governments. In defining the GDISP network as “feminist,” they committed to working towards a common understanding of the term – across certain contexts where the word is still too threatening, and others where it seems to have lost all meaning.

The politics of transnational feminist networking in the information society was a major site of enquiry during the workshop. As participants envisioned the future of the network, they discussed the dynamics of power, representation, leadership and transparency. The objective of evolving pro-South feminist perspectives in relation to the information society raised questions about who has the right to engage in this dialogue, in the context of the North-South divide. While some participants expressed the desire to abandon the categories, others argued that the term “South” was used not to indicate regions or exclude individuals, but rather to acknowledge socio-economic disparities that exist in every part of the world. Such categories are analytically essential to the struggle for social justice - engaging with this struggle is thus not a question of geography, but of perspective.

Though feminist networking was not born of the information society, the phenomenon of the network is changing, with transnationality as a new techno-social form. As it moves forward into technology-mediated societies, which facilitate but also complicate genuine and active participation, the network committed to returning to feminist principles and strategies for collaboration. Bringing together the critical perspectives of gender advocates located both in established development sectors and at the forefront of ICT debates would be vital in building a solid feminist framework for understanding and engagement in the information society. As Susanna George, of Isis International – Manila, put forth, the network’s greatest tools in this endeavour would be “our transgressive radical thoughts, our courage to live and act differently and our power as collectives.”

III. Presentations and Discussions by Thematic Session

Introductory Remarks

The first day opened with a welcome by Anita Gurumurthy and Chat Garcia Ramilo. Anita began by laying out the context for the workshop. She explained that although the pervasiveness of new technologies has created competing social, cultural, economic and political claims in the information society arena, policy-making itself – whether in the UNGAID, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, or the Internet Governance Forum – is perceived as a non-political process, wherein choices are seen as technical, to be based on expert perspectives and a set of ‘best practices’. The changes brought by the information society, however, are deeply structural, and in order to develop an appropriate policy response, feminists must seek to problematise information society issues with gender perspectives, similar to the ways in which they have approached economic globalisation. The task is perhaps more challenging with respect to IS discourse, but it also offers exciting new opportunities. It calls for involved and passionate conversations between feminists – those working in the area of ICTs and those working in other discursive spaces, including education,

governance, sexuality, institutional theory, grassroots processes etc. – to evolve pro-South feminist perspectives on the information society.

Chat Garcia Ramilo expressed the hope that the workshop would be a venue for a rich exchange of ideas and experiences related to gender advocacy, capturing learnings from Beijing to WSIS and beyond. “Most of the time,” she noted, “we are negotiating in policy spaces and have very little reflective time to analyse what we are doing.” She urged the participants to take advantage of the forum provided to share their varied perspectives and positions on feminist issues, to allow the network to map and build on the different organisational objectives of its members, and thus chart a future course.

Thematic Panels

The strategy planning workshop began with a series of five thematic panels that provided a broad mapping of the information society terrain. These themes had emerged at the conception of the GDISP network as areas of feminist scholarship and enquiry that closely aligned with the information society, and that would require clear feminist standpoints. An important objective of the workshop was thus to highlight key sites of information society changes, to evolve their gendered and policy dimensions, and to discuss challenges and insights for advocacy. The panels were structured to elicit a range of perspectives and opinions from academics and practitioners with expertise in different areas, both within and outside the current information society framework.

Panel 1: Education, Knowledge and Capacity Building – New Frameworks in the Information Society

This panel explored the new knowledge paradigms of the information age, which hold promise for democratising knowledge processes. It located questions of women’s capacities and skills within the emerging techno-social context and its attendant opportunities for women’s participation in the public sphere – in economic, social and political arenas.

Vimala Ramachandran of the Educational Resource Unit centred her discussion on women’s capacities, and their ability to participate in public spaces, institutions and markets. Drawing from her experience in women’s mobilisation in India, she explained that leadership consistently went into the hands of women who had control over the written word. The situation is changing, she noted, so that in order to run an effective women’s federation, the leadership must know not only how to read and write, but also how to negotiate technology. The ability of women to participate is thus inhibited by a lack of tools – literacy, education and technology, with a resultant stratification within the group.

Speaking of the loss of traditional knowledge systems in the context of social exclusion in the information society, she recalled an incident in a village in Uttar Pradesh, where children were suffering from scabies. Her colleague had taken advantage of the abundance of neem trees in the area to make a traditional cure for the family with whom they were staying. The villagers had not known this was an effective remedy. One woman explained that the community had forgotten much of its traditional knowledge, as its members had been living in poverty and migrating in search of work over the last five generations. This poverty had robbed the community of the indigenous knowledge that had once helped to sustain it. While development initiatives and new knowledge systems should seek to retrieve and rejuvenate local knowledge, Vimala observed that in ICT capacity building initiatives, the content of the curriculum is largely determined not by those who are working at the grassroots or in the education sector, but rather, those who are in control of the technologies. “How can these technologies be made available to organisations in a way that is empowering for women?” she asked. Rather than outsourcing content questions to technical experts, organisations involved in women’s empowerment, education or computer-aided learning must train leaders from within the community in the use of ICTs, in order to produce content that will increase women’s opportunities to participate in the new techno-social context.

Leelangi Wanasundera of the Centre for Women's Research in Sri Lanka put forth a critique of privately-run telecentres that have come up through government-initiated plans to take IT to the periphery. This model has handed control of these centres over to the private sector, with the result that very few women apply to serve as operators, and the content of training offered at these centres is not relevant to women. She explained that when these programmes are designed at the national level, there is no concept of gender, no gender analysis, and women are not part of the planning process. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is not involved in any of these initiatives, and has little vision with regard to using IT for women's empowerment. As control over technologies has been to a great extent vested with men, women have been further marginalised in these programmes. The question then is how to ensure the participation of women in the planning and implementation of ICT programmes, and how to wrest ICT policy from specific IT departments and draw the debate into the development arena.

Margaret Zunguze of E-knowledge for Women in Southern Africa proposed that ICTs be seen as a way to disseminate knowledge to meet basic needs. She cited the major problems for African countries in this endeavour, including infrastructural and connectivity issues, and flagged several policy issues within the Southern Africa context, including barriers to universal access, governmental control of media markets, monopoly in telephony, slow independent regulators, inhibitory media laws, and ministerial veto powers on regulatory activities in the region. In order to prevent ICTs from becoming a source of further marginalisation, she stressed that their introduction be relevant and useful to the daily lives and needs of women.

Panel 2: Media and Community Networks – The Information Society Context

This panel examined structural and discursive shifts in media, and the attendant complexities for feminist action. One of the most important changes has been the blurring of lines between 'public' and 'private' interactions in digital space. In this context, the session explored the redefinition of both 'public' and 'private', and its profound consequences for gender.

Jac sm Kee of APC WNSP opened the panel with a discussion of online publishing and its implications for women's rights. Previously, women's movements have tended to relate to ICTs as a depoliticised and deprioritised tool, a task to be outsourced. Jac asserted however that technology is deeply political – it is created by people rooted in socio-political contexts, and thus requires feminist engagement. She argued that power is abundant and regenerated through use and sharing, and the mere fact of engaging with ICTs assumes a sense of agency, ownership and creativity – though the question of who has access to, and power over, ICTs ultimately determines how empowering these are. She also drew attention to the use of ICTs as tools for harassment, which has an impact on women's comfort levels in accessing and using ICTs. "How can advocacies related to governance of content in ownership, dissemination and production in digital spaces negotiate with advocacies related to violence against women?" she asked. When women's rights groups advocate state intervention on the issue of domestic violence, inviting the state into the private sphere, "should control of data also be acceded to the State to ensure that women have adequate redress and protection from new figurations of violence against women? In other words, should personal digital data shift from the private realm to the public, and to what end?" Within this new terrain, notions of harm, privacy, public space and violence against women must be renegotiated, she argued, and this struggle is critical to gender rights.

Sejal Dand of Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI) shared insights from her efforts to organise rural poor women and indigenous women around livelihood issues. Her organisation has been using ICTs over the last 10 years, with the understanding that information exchange is key to organising and empowering women. In its networking efforts, ANANDI has used physical spaces, where women come together in larger numbers, as well as different technology options, initially in very rudimentary ways, as dissemination tools. Over the last decade, however, the organisation's political world has moved from the local to global, which has forced women to engage and to polylogue (an exchange where all participants have the ability to control the conversation). Sejal asserted that ICTs are useful for lateral networking, diffusion of information on key issues, and for gaining legitimacy. She concluded by returning to feminist principles and praxis, and asked how these tools can be used in ways that are democratic, transparent, collaborative, and

process oriented. "In feminist action, we acknowledge the individual but act in the collective. That is the key to challenging power," she said. "But in the information society, we have to act individually while working in a virtual community." Speaking of the sense of power that comes with having negotiated collectively, she asked, "How are we to bring that experience to the information society?"

Mira Ofreneo, a Research Associate with Isis International – Manila, presented the findings of an IDRC-supported study on grassroots women entitled: "Theorising from the Ground Up: Learning from Grassroots Women in 5 Asia-Pacific Countries". She located the concepts of gender, development and the information society within a Southern feminist analysis, which, she asserted, is neither an academic nor a theoretical framework, but one that comes from practice and activism. She also highlighted the contradictions of the information society, in which ICTs can be as empowering as they are exclusionary. Those in the position to control ICTs must be sensitive to power hierarchies, and seek to consciously include the marginalised. Ms. Ofreneo drew attention to three issues that any discussion of the information society must take into consideration: First, power relations – between genders, orientations, classes, and between the digitally included and excluded. Second, the environment – or the national political, economic and socio-cultural context within which the information society is embedded. And finally, the debate must include, and begin from, marginalised standpoints and subjectivities.

Sally Burch of the Agencia Latinoamericana de Información described the extent of corporate control over global communication structures. She asked to what extent the development drive to broaden connectivity is really empowering women, or whether it is simply incorporating them more effectively into the global market place. The gender policies of the ICT for development (ICTD) community emphasise the use of ICTs for education, health, micro-enterprise or technical training for women, often beginning from the technology available, rather than the needs on the ground. These measures may achieve gains for women within the existing communications environment, yet they fail to address the key policy issues of who develops and controls technology, and who makes decisions on what directions it takes. In the current system, women are being drawn into the information society either as consumers or as cheap labour.

Sally highlighted the link between communication and social organisation, which appears to be clearer in the South than in the North. She noted that in the effort to create a counter-hegemonic communications system, "a key policy issue is reclaiming communication as a universal common good; and media and information as public services. But we need to ask ourselves: can a feminist strategy in ICTD be effective if it only looks at specific issues of technology and information, and their relation to gender? Or do we need to frame it within a broader strategy, and look at structural causes of women's impoverishment, marginalisation and discrimination?" To this end, she put forth a vision of alternative communication "as a space of resistance, empowerment and creativity, linked to movements working for social change."

Panel 3: Globalisation and the Information Society Context

This session looked at the changing socio-political context, examining how the two phenomena – globalisation and the information society – shape and are shaped by each other. Drawing from their expertise in global policy advocacy, the speakers provided a critique of existing global governance frameworks – on trade, finance, work, intellectual property, and rights. They explored how forces of democracy and control coexist, and are in constant struggle, in the larger information society context, and traced the specific implications for gender.

Shalmali Guttal of Focus on the Global South discussed the links between globalisation, gender and work. She began from a critique of the market, asserting that globalisation is both a result and force of modernisation and capitalist expansion, whereby economies transcend geopolitical borders, beyond the scope of state regulation. The movement toward privatisation is giving way to global and national policy vacuums. She explained that while this has led to a set of dynamics in which women are playing a critical role, they are not always actors of choice, but rather shock absorbers in events over which they have little control. Across Asia, upper class women have been able to attain senior-level jobs in the IT sector, but for a majority of women concentrated in low-skilled and unskilled work, economic globalisation has resulted in precarious employment,

displacement from traditional occupations, and involuntary migration. Countries in Asia have been expanding their manufacturing capacity by drawing women into industrial waged employment under the banner of national development, yet at the same time, governments have not fulfilled their obligations to secure the rights of these new workers. Class, ethnicity, race, religion and culture largely determine the extent to which women are able to access the opportunities offered by globalisation. “Women are creating a surplus,” she said, “picking up the tab for globalisation.” In this light, she asked what national policies will ensure that women from economically vulnerable backgrounds receive appropriate and equal wages? “Can we be advocates for women’s empowerment without actually taking on this neoliberal regime?” she asked.

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, of the International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC), also focussed on the issue of employment in the IT industry, and specifically BPO, the IT service sector that encompasses customer service, call centres, email help providers, and medical transcribers, and which is currently the single largest employer of women in a largely male-dominated industry. Debates over the impact of BPO employment on the lives of women have centred on whether this work constitutes gender responsive participation of women in the information society. Off-shore ICT work is perceived by some scholars as a major economic empowerment opportunity for women in countries like India, Malaysia, and the Philippines, where salaries run higher than conventional jobs. Yet BPO firms are frequently set up with the goal of lowering costs for multinational operations, and salaries offered to women in BPO offices in India or Philippines are up to 80% lower than what women in the United States would earn. Home-based technology work is another form of BPO, and women comprise a majority in this emerging informal economy, where employment contracts are insecure and wages are low.

Mavic cited feminist Kalyani Menon Sen in describing this kind of employment as the “dumbing down of this generation” – because the work is mind numbing, kills traditional knowledge and skills fostered in schools and colleges, and centres on the adoption of technologies that are not internalised. She observed that patterns of gender-based discrimination are also being reproduced in the IT industry, where women are excluded from management or decision-making positions, and are concentrated in lower-level jobs, while men hold most of the high-skilled and high-valued jobs. Whatever their position in BPOs, she concluded, women must be ensured decent working conditions and a respectable share of employment.

Panel 4: Institutional Change and Citizenship in the Information Society

The structural changes that new technologies promise, and are beginning to usher in, have implications for far-reaching institutional transformation. New techno-social models for community development have pushed for greater institutional accountability through information flows and transparency, greater community participation in agenda setting and new bottom-up models of ‘public’ information. This session explored how these models could be directed for women’s empowerment, locating intersections between citizenship and information society discourses. It also used a feminist lens to look at the ways in which development policy needs to shape the assimilation of ICTs for equitable change.

Uajit Virojtrairatt of the Civil Media Development Institute in Thailand spoke from her experience of over 10 years in promoting community radio and media reforms in Thailand. She identified television and radio as the most powerful media in Thailand, with approximately 600 radio stations across the country, but regretted that these programmes largely promote passive consumerism over active citizenship, and that citizen-oriented channels did not have sufficient viewership. She explained that the government is supportive of the largely commercial media environment, as an overdose of advertisements is less threatening than a rise in civic consciousness. Uajit argued that whether ‘low tech’ or ‘high tech’, ICTs should serve the community, and should be a medium to empower the active citizen to participate in public policy. Community radio, she concluded, had to be more than just being on the air – it must be about a people’s movement to assert its rights over the airwaves.

Sumi Krishna, an independent environment development researcher and gender consultant, noted that it was important for the network to establish its perspective when speaking of a feminist approach to ICTs –

whether it sees technology only in terms of accessibility, or also in the manner in which it is socially constructed. She critiqued the assumption that technology is only a tool, and hence, neutral in its impact. She also pointed out that although there is a paradigm shift in discussions on the new ICTs, conventional media, including such folk media as puppetry and theatre and song, is completely ignored in these debates. Rather than examine one or the other, “what we need to look at is synergies,” she said.

Speaking about the link between development and citizenship, she argued that the framework of citizenship should be expanded from earlier conceptions of political and economic rights to include the right to livelihood resources and indeed the recognition of multiple ways of life. Sumi asserted that knowledge is a resource, and that traditional knowledge is not static but created over a period of time and in a particular habitat or context that is fluid and dynamic. In an effort to relate this framework to the concerns of the network, she proposed a theory of communication resources as a common property resource, which would compel feminists and development actors to look at how this resource could be created, managed, conserved and sustained. In her view, all of these issues were highly relevant to the context of ICTs and the information society.

Panel 5: Sexuality, Identity and Digital Spaces

This session examined the impact that information and communication technologies have had in reconfiguring identity on symbolic and material planes. Digital spaces afford new platforms for self-expression, new freedoms and new associations. They also reinforce and reconstitute patriarchies in multiple ways. Panellists examined the intersections of information technology, identity and sexuality and their significance for feminist policy in the area of pornography, sexual expression and freedoms, asking what new meanings of ‘public’ and ‘private’ have emerged in these changing times.

The first presentation by Namita Malhotra, a legal researcher at the Alternative Law Forum, examined the politics of pornography in the virtual space. She explained that pornography today signifies not only a certain kind of media, but also a certain kind of act, activity and behaviour, and that one must ask whether the Internet, being not only a broadcast medium but also a means of interaction, has in fact altered the nature of pornography. She traced the political legacy of pornography, which began as a mode of anti-authoritarian speech, and asserted that although its current form is highly commercial, it remains saturated with political meanings – about sexual practices, morality, pleasure, private liberties and individual rights.

On the regulation of sex, sexuality and pornography, Namita explored the Indian context, where pornography and the Internet have been collapsed into one category in public discourse, due to a rising moral and social panic. Similar to the way that other new media have been vilified for their potential for evil, the Internet is currently being portrayed as a “dark underbelly of the city where either illegal or queer or unacceptable sexual and other practices are taking place.” Noting that such moral, social and political discourses determine the nature and impact of censorship, she described the difficulty of drawing a line between right content and wrong content, erotica and pornography. As interpretations of appropriate content are currently left to patriarchal structures such as the judiciary, she questioned who should have the authority to control content, and whether this authority could be granted at all. Namita stated that we must examine the potential of pornography – whether it can be sanitised into something egalitarian, and if there are any kinds of sexual relation that can in fact be termed politically correct or egalitarian. She submitted that pornography is not a thing that can be identified and regulated, but rather an argument through which the boundary between what is acceptable and what is obscene continues to change over time. In this sense, she argued, the law is not merely a descriptive force, but a constitutive force. It “does not chance upon a pre-existing object called pornography, but creates it by describing it and defining what is obscene and what is not obscene.” Her paper sought to nuance the debate on harmful content, where the policy reaction has too often been to invite the paternalist state to offer its protection to women and children, rather than to explore “more difficult (both in terms of politics and implementation) models of content regulation on the Internet.”

Cecilia Sardenberg of the Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences of the Federal University of Bahia looked at sexuality, identity and the reproduction of patriarchy in the information society, and then at the question of

public policy for cyberspace. Addressing feminist thinking on cyberfeminism and expressions of sexuality in cyberspace, she remarked on the empowerment potential of the Internet, and the growth of the global feminist movement through social networking sites. For some, cyberspace can be considered a “feminist space par excellence,” yet this does not mean that it is a safe space. She noted that although the virtual space seems to transcend gender dualisms – in that the physical body does not exist in that realm – gender finds a way to attach itself to the discourses that circulate there.

Cecilia drew attention to the reproduction of patriarchy on the Internet. One aspect of this is gender violence, which is rampant on social networking sites. She cited two initiatives in Brazil that have attempted to curtail this violence and to combat negative representations of women, and described the difficulties of raising the issue of censorship in Brazil, where a 22 year-long dictatorship remains fresh in collective memory. Drawing a parallel with the debate on content regulation, she discussed efforts around the institution of a Domestic Violence Act in the country, and described the clash between the imperative to keep women safe within the private sphere, and the need to defend that same sphere against state interference. In such debates, she concluded, we cannot escape a feminist response to policy: “It is a difficult thing, but we need it.” She urged cyberfeminists, or feminists working in the digital realm, to engage more systematically in advocacy and policy level discussions, and to attempt to reconcile their positions on public vs. private debates within diverse contexts.

IV. Presentation of a Policy Analysis Framework for Gender and Development in the Information Society

Anita Gurumurthy presented a framework for policy analysis for gender and development in the information society. She began by elaborating the network’s *raison d’être*, which arises in the fact that current information society policies are almost completely untouched by gender considerations. Partly this is structural, wherein policy processes derive from technical interpretations of ICTs, rather than social interpretations. And partly, there is no cogency in theoretical frameworks that can offer leads for policy, let alone gendering policy processes. In the absence of women’s movements’ perspectives, feminist standpoints and language tend to get co-opted into policy through conservative positions or a protectionist approach.

The framework presentation moved through three stages: It first identified the intersecting sites of information society changes, then examined gender dimensions with regard to these sites, and finally deduced the areas of policy and influence to further gender equality. ICTs influence not only media structures, blurring the line between private and public communications, but also transform all social institutions, as information and communication processes are an architectural element of all structures and systems. ICTs are thus sites of power struggles and competing claims, and give rise to an information society arena that is deeply political in nature.

Anita argued that the information society framework should recast social change analysis such that it subsumes the economic globalisation framework, which is inadequate as a tool of analysis to problematise the irreversible nature of change processes that derive from technology. Economic globalisation goes as far as addressing the integration of markets, which may possibly be reversible through policy instruments. She pointed out that the way markets are integrated today is a function of ICTs, and while globalisation and the information society co-constitute each other, the information society framework is better able to capture how the complexity of social change in these times is both politically and also technologically determined.

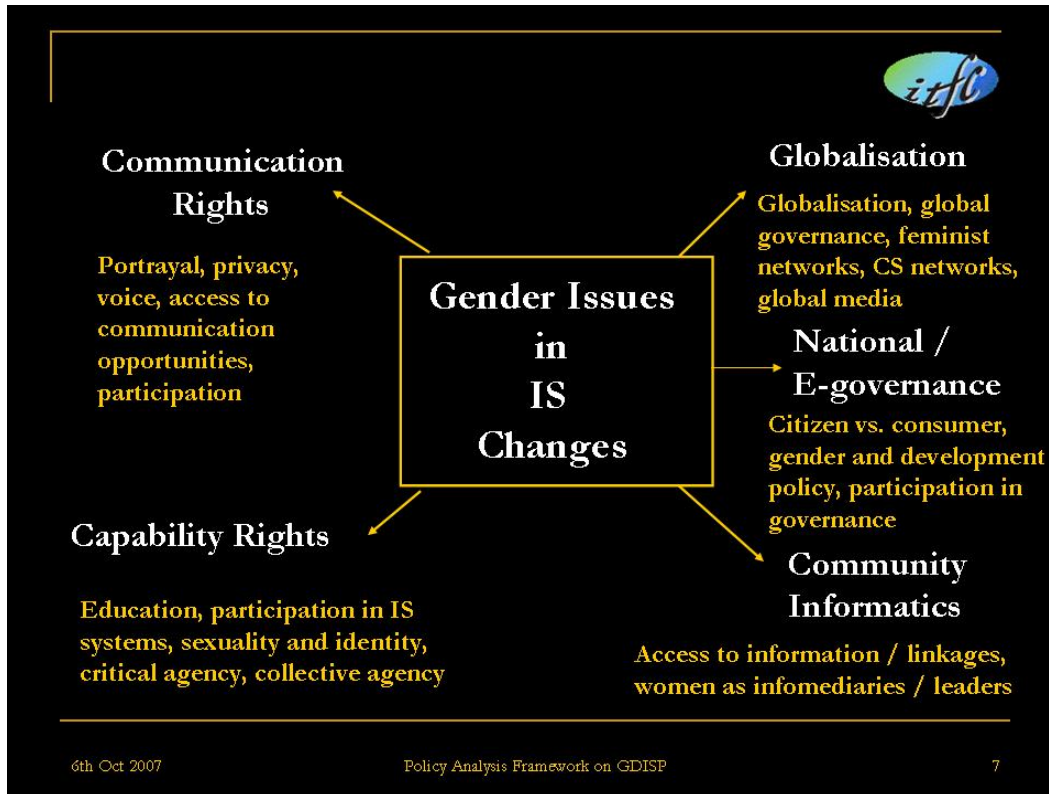
The framework proposed a capabilities approach to ICTs to address these sites of change, drawing on Amartya Sen’s notion of ‘development as freedom’. In Sen’s conception of capability rights, the aim of development is to expand freedoms for what he calls “valuable states of being and doing.” The use of ICTs allows individuals to expand their freedoms, choices and capabilities, and is thus central to development goals. Anita remarked that the workshop panels had laid out the entire range of valuable states of being and doing – whether in terms of new structural forms of identity or women’s connection to erotic content or

influence on local institutions. As systems become more and more ICT-enabled, not having skills in this area means not only being denied communication rights or being excluded from participation in governance – it also signifies a fundamental capability deprivation, which is the essence of the digital divide. Referring to new livelihoods spaces and new linkages beyond local markets, she asked, “How can women’s agency be enabled for certain valuable states of being and doing such that globalisation can create a surplus for women?” If ICT policies are essential for the realisation of rights at an individual level, then the right to appropriation of ICTs is in itself significant.

Whereas “affordable” access is a framework that even progressive ICT groups are guilty of using, Anita posited free access to basic ICTs as a key site for feminist policy advocacy. She compared the ICT context to education, where it would be anathema to advocate “affordable” rather than free access to basic education. The right to technology appropriation signifies not merely access to connectivity, but also to the means to fulfil rights – including appropriate software, and contextualised content. She noted that during the workshop discussions, references to public infrastructure or to ICTs as common property resources had come from feminists who were largely new to this specific policy arena.

Though thus far ignored, the structural aspects of change in terms of national systems are most significant for women and for gender, development and information society policies. Feminist analysis has evolved new ways of looking at citizenship in terms of participation and inclusion that are very relevant to the information society, where the principal identity of the individual has shifted from ‘citizen’ to ‘consumer.’ In this context, policies need to look at new forms of ICTs for transforming governance, for enabling the Right to Information of marginalised groups, and for decentralised governance. At the local level, ICTD must be seen not through individual based, demand-led, financial sustainability models, but rather as collective, planned and community appropriated. How to bring the ‘collective’ to the information society is a question that must be constantly posed, particularly in the context of the South.

Figure 1: A Policy Analysis Framework for Gender and Development in the Information Society *



* IT for Change 2007. Excerpt from a presentation entitled “A Policy Analysis Framework for Gender and Development in the Information Society.”

V. Open Space

The panel presentations served to create a solid foundation of knowledge on gender and development in the information society, an important task for a meeting of activists and academics, representing a range of interests and expertise. From this basis, the workshop was able to move into an open format, where discussion, exchange and debate served to clarify the goals and the methods that the network would adopt. For this session, participants were organised in groups rather than plenaries to process the different ideas presented by the panels and discussions, and to surface different concerns and areas for research, writing or advocacy. Thus, as the panels laid the groundwork for debate, the debate would lay the groundwork for collaboration.

The open space, facilitated by Chat Garcia Ramilo of APC WNSP, reflected on research imperatives for policy advocacy on gender, development and the information society, and on advocacy strategies and actions to be taken forward collaboratively in global and sub-global arenas. The exercise helped to define the beginning of the network, its character, and how it would move forward from this first meeting. Participants were invited to share the activities in which their organisations were engaged with regard to policy, at macro, meso and micro levels, to ensure that future collaboration would build on and add value to this.

In the next phase of the session, participants were requested to reflect on the different themes brought to light during the workshop, and to put forward specific issue areas for collaboration. The themes included the advocacy of gender sensitive ICT policies, content regulation of the Internet, feminist framework building and the information society, and engendering civic politics and ICTs. Participants divided themselves into four theme-based groups, and then reported back to the larger group on the content of their discussions.

The first group, focussing on gender sensitive ICT policies, proposed advocacy at the macro level through international ICTD organisations or multi-lateral organisations. Their concrete ideas for action included identifying key global, regional and local issues, and creating a network for comparing key issues across countries and regions; reviewing international and regional ICT declarations; adopting a framework for gender analysis of ICT policies that could help to generate funding for the network; and creating an international policy pressure group to support local and national initiatives.

The second group discussed engendering civic politics to foster direct participation in governance, highlighting areas where ICT policies might facilitate this process. They proposed increasing access to ICTs by creating IT as public infrastructure – through such models as community multimedia centres, community based radios, and telecentres. The group stressed the need to document the gaps in current approaches, to advocate specific ICT investments to increase access, and create the institutional mechanisms to enable people, particularly women, to engage more directly with the state. The group offered to explore specific policy recommendations at a later date.

The third group, working on feminist framework building, sought first to understand the information society from a feminist standpoint, interrogating terms such as 'public' and 'policy'. Discussing the principles of feminism in the context of information society, they agreed on the need to be practical but at the same time to relish the ambivalence and accept contradictions in feminist positioning. The group resolved to pursue action on several fronts; first to develop a fluid feminist framework appropriate to the information society, and to elaborate the principles for feminist practice in this context; second to sharpen feminist understanding and gender analysis of the information society and ensure that members are well-equipped to engage in the debate; and third, to introduce the issue to the larger feminist movement as critical to the feminist agenda.

The fourth group worked on content regulation with a focus on the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). They considered the meaning of a feminist intervention in this context, and agreed that the focus must be broadened from the issue of regulation to that of availability, access to knowledge and openness. The group indicated the need for a research outline on four key objectives to facilitate a better understanding of the implications of content regulation. The first, to map the different players both within and outside the IGF

space, their objectives and their reasoning. The second, to examine the various models of regulation applied to different kinds of media – cinema and radio, for instance – and their degree of success. The third, to research the methods used by women's groups to influence regulation. And fourth, to deconstruct assumptions and build a more nuanced understanding about how pornography and sex work function in the industry.

The open session concluded with the hope that the action ideas put forth had allowed the group to map the various interests and priorities of its members. It also established that in order to build a network that could serve as a key force for policy making at global, national and local levels, members would have to evolve not merely a set of common goals, but rather a shared framework of understanding and engagement with regard to gender and development in the information society.

VI. Panel: Global Feminist Collaboration for Advocacy – What Works and What Doesn't

In light of the current task of building the GDISP network, it was important for participants to reflect upon the nature and process of feminist networking, and to explore the dynamics of leadership, power and communication within traditional and emerging forms of collaboration. Though feminist collaborative movements have a long history, the information society context presents specific challenges and opportunities, not the least of which is transnational dialogue and interdisciplinary exchanges between those involved and those outside the ICT domain.

The panel on Global Feminist Collaboration for Advocacy was prefaced by a presentation by Tesa de Vela, Associate Director of Isis International – Manila, of the findings of a pre-workshop survey, where participants were asked to reflect on previous experiences and lessons in feminist collaboration work. The results revealed that successes in feminist collaboration relied on the definition of a common goal and a clear framework for the feminist process, as well as systematic guidelines, modalities, protocols, timelines, and division of labour among members. Basic values and feminist principles in collaboration included trust, openness, dedication of leaders and members, voluntarism, eagerness to collaborate and long term commitment. The importance of 'plurality of participation' was also highlighted as key to collaboration, in which a richness of perspectives sharpens analytical frames.

Following the survey presentation, speakers shared their reflections and experiences with regard to feminist networking and collaboration from their membership and leadership in different networks, including AMARC (the World Association for Radio Community Broadcasters), APC, Feminist Dialogues, the NGO Gender Strategies Group in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) 1, and the WSIS Gender Caucus – in addition to other associations. The panellists discussed what works and what does not work when advocacy objectives are pursued through feminist networking.

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza opened this session, speaking from her collaborative experiences in two varied spaces, the IWTC and AMARC. She commented on the process of feminist identification, and noted that at times it is strategic for a group not to identify itself as feminist, as in the case of the IWTC, where this serves to secure partnerships with a range of groups. She also observed that gender discrimination prevalent in corporate media tends to be reproduced even in progressive media organisations and networks. She stressed the need to advocate for gender perspectives within these spaces, just as feminist coalitions must advocate internally the significance of media and ICT issues.

On the politics of feminist collaboration, Mavic remarked that leadership, representation and visibility are closely linked, and must be carefully examined in the network's collaborative strategy. The questions of who leads, who determines the mandate, and who represents the network are of utmost importance, as they relate not only to visibility but also to claims over resources and funding for work on this issue.

Susanna George of Isis International – Manila spoke about feminist collaboration for advocacy in UN spaces, and the inner workings of civil society agencies formed in the name of gender. Reflecting on her experiences and frustrations with these processes, she began with a quote by Audrey Lourde: “you cannot dismantle the master’s house using the master’s tools”. Though asserting the vital importance of a feminist presence where international policies and legislation are negotiated, she critiqued the metamorphosis of the women’s movement in these spaces, which “could be defined very much as the ‘Master’s.’” Susanna described the depoliticised way in which the feminist agenda has been mainstreamed in UN arenas. She observed that feminist research and advocacy agenda are increasingly determined by donor and funding imperatives, and that interventions have been compelled to arrive at the “lowest common denominator” of agreement, delivering simplified statements on women’s needs. “Gender advocacy,” she argued, “although drawing from profoundly feminist analysis, has for the most part been de-linked from the movement which gave it meaning and the women who fought for its visibility.” She urged the network to reassert the feminist political agenda and to “continuously draw our advocacy positions from explicitly feminist analysis”. Though it is necessary to look for allies in the struggle, the bottom line of feminist principles must not be forgotten.

Susanna then raised the issue of transnational feminist networking, a new dimension to the feminist movement, which albeit facilitated by advanced means of communication, was not born of the information society phenomenon – as the women’s movement had been networking for decades prior to the emergence of ICTs. As the entities against which feminists must struggle are transnational in nature, the UN model of representation across national or regional boundaries is no longer effective. She stressed the need to go beyond nationality, citizenship, ethnicity and regions and to come together based on political, cultural and ideological positions.

Power dynamics within networks, such as exclusivity, lack of transparency, poor accountability, and hegemony of certain modes of thought, reveal the contradictions in feminist practices. Susanna encouraged the group to build on core principles of shared working and values, and to make a bold effort to subvert hegemonies when these become apparent in their own spaces.

Magaly Pazello of G2G Gender and Technology presented next, drawing on her experience with the WSIS Gender Caucus from 2002 to 2005. Discussing what worked and what did not work in this process, she highlighted the failure of the multistakeholder process within the Gender Caucus, where national governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, private sector interests and UN bodies were counted as members. She argued that bringing corporate and government players into the Gender Caucus was problematic, as the caucus was to be a feminist political space in which policy advocacy was the central aim. She made note of other obstacles for the Gender Caucus, including bureaucracy, lack of discussion on key issues and lack of solidarity and accountability among members. In the end, the only synergies that remained were between individuals who had previously worked together. Reflecting on the imperatives of advocacy work at global level, she emphasised the need for participation, solidarity, accountability and alliances among women’s organisations.

Chat Garcia Ramilo of APC WNSP centred her presentation on the process of alliance building, working through conflict and coming to terms with power. “In feminist grounds,” she said, “we need to practice and nurture the linking of the scattered resistances.” Highlighting the need to ground the debate not in abstract models but rather in concrete experience, she described the evolution of the women’s programme in APC, a mixed gender organisation of IT and NGO enthusiasts, in which the majority of “geeks” initially had no notion of gender at all. She also touched on her experience in the WSIS Gender Caucus, and the challenges that it had faced regarding representation, transparency and accountability. Her presentation offered lessons on dealing with conflict within organisations and networks, navigating interactions with other social movements, and engaging alternately in both feminist and information society constituencies. Chat noted that feminists must work with these communities separately, as the two areas have very little shared experience, and no shared advocacy spaces. With regard to engaging feminists in technology, she challenged the idea that ICTs are the “master’s tools,” and proposed that they be used to effectively challenge hierarchies.

VII. Vision of the Network

The closing session of the workshop sought to evolve a collective reflection on how the network could move forward. Participants reaffirmed the need to collaborate on gender and information society policy, and submitted concrete proposals for future action relating to the positioning of the network, the imperative of engaging non-information society focused gender activists in the debate, and the framework for understanding and engagement.

The group agreed to establish principles for collaborative networking and to outline the responsibilities of individual members. In order to frame its agenda, the network would also have to define its expected spheres of influence and set realistic goals. Its status as a Community of Expertise under UNGAID was approved in this regard, with the recognition that its advocacy would be positioned not only vis-à-vis this particular space, but other global and national spaces as well. In addressing the politics of the information society on these multiple levels, it was considered essential to begin from feminist praxis and analysis. Participants thus resolved to work together to identify feminist bottom lines and principles for engaging with information society policies, and to revive the feminist imagination in moving beyond the bipolarity of the state and the market to envision new forms of civic engagement in technologically-mediated societies.

With this in mind, the group stressed the need to engage non-information society gender advocates in the network, both to sensitise them to the paradigmatic shift represented by the information society, and to draw upon their expertise. In a practical sense, this could be achieved by introducing information society frameworks to women's groups in a way that would be relevant to different regional and sectoral contexts, organising basic orientations on key issues, and identifying spaces in which these individuals and groups could engage. Toward this end, network members also agreed to take up the task of writing short concept notes on key research and advocacy themes raised in the open session and throughout the workshop – such as gender sensitive ICT policies, Internet content regulation, gender violence in digital spaces, civic politics and ICTs, multistakeholderism in technology-aided governance, and private or public paradigms in the information society – as well as papers providing regional perspectives on thematic areas.

In coming together to formulate a feminist response to the information society, participants recognised that the issue at stake was not “women's use of technology and ICTs,” but rather the changing face of global governance and its implications for gender, development, citizenship, and rights. They emphasised the importance of building a pro-South discourse on the information society that would allow women's movements to engage with the structural changes occurring across different development spheres. They committed to the common project of building a feminist framework for understanding and engagement to address the gaps in research and advocacy in information society policy spaces. Above all, the network resolved to find more spaces like the strategy planning workshop to bring together the insights and perspectives of gender advocates from varied streams, with a view to evolving progressive policy approaches to gender and development in the information society – deriving from, and reshaping, the larger arena of feminist advocacy on development and rights.

VIII. Annexure

Annexure 1: List of Participants

| Sl. No. | Participant Details | Sl. No. | Participant Details |
|---------|---|---------|---|
| 1. | Ms. Anita Gurumurthy , IT for Change (ITfC), India | 2. | Ms. Avri Doria , Luleå University of Technology, USA |
| 3. | Ms. Berna Ngolobe , Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), Uganda | 4. | Ms. Cecilia Sardenberg , Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences, Federal University of Bahia, Brazil |
| 5. | Ms. Chaitali Sinha , International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada | 6. | Ms. Chat Garcia Ramilo , Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP), Philippines |
| 7. | Ms. Claudia Morrell , Center for Women and Information Technology at the University of Maryland, USA | 8. | Ms. Constantine Obuya , The African Centre for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT) Kenya |
| 9. | Mr. Gurumurthy Kasinathan , IT for Change (ITfC), India | 10. | Ms. Jac sm Kee , Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP), Malaysia |
| 11. | Ms. Jamuna Ramakrishna , HIVOS, India | 12. | Ms. Katerina Fialova , Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Czech Republic |
| 13. | Ms. Leelangi Wanasundera , Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR), Sri Lanka | 14. | Ms. Magaly Pazello , G2G Gender and Technology, Former Member of the WSIS Gender Caucus SC, Brazil |
| 15. | Ms. Margaret Zunguze , E-Knowledge for Women in Southern Africa (EKOWISA), Zimbabwe | 16. | Ms. Maria Udén , Luleå University of Technology, Sweden |
| 17. | Ms. Mavic Cabrera-Balleza , International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), USA | 18. | Ms. Mira Ofreneo , Isis International – Manila, Philippines |
| 19. | Ms. Namita Malhotra , Alternative Law Forum (ALF), India | 20. | Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh , IT for Change (ITfC), India |

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| 21. | Ms. Poornima Vyasulu, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, India | 22. | Ms. Sally Burch, Agencia Latinoamericana de Información (ALAI), Ecuador |
| 23. | Ms. Sejal Dand, Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI), India | 24. | Ms. Shalmali Guttal, Focus on the Global South, India |
| 25. | Ms. Shireen Huq, Naripokkho, Bangladesh | 26. | Ms. Simrita Gopal Singh, Aalochana Centre for Documentation and Research on Women, India |
| 27. | Ms. Sumi Krishna, Indian Association for Women's Studies, India | 28. | Ms. Susanna George, Isis International – Manila, Malaysia |
| 29. | Ms. Tesa de Vela, Isis International – Manila, Philippines | 30. | Ms. Therese Niyondiko, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Kenya |
| 31. | Ms. Uajit Virojtrairatt, Civil Media Development Institute, Thailand | 32. | Ms. Vimala Ramachandran, Educational Resource Unit, India |
| 33. | Ms. YongJa Kim, Asian Pacific Women's Information Network Center (APWINC), South Korea | | |

Annexure 2: Workshop Agenda

| DAY 1: 5th OCTOBER 2007 | |
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| 8:30-8:45 AM | Registration |
| 9:00-9:20 AM | <p>Introduction – Laying out the Context and Objectives of the Workshop</p> <p>Anita Gurumurthy, Executive Director, IT for Change, <i>India</i></p> <p>Chat Garcia Ramilo, Global Coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme, <i>Philippines</i></p> |
| <p>PANEL 1: Education, Knowledge and Capacity Building – New Frameworks in the Information Society</p> <p>This panel will explore the new knowledge paradigms of the information age, which have promise for democratising knowledge processes. It will locate questions of women's capacities and skills within the new/emerging techno-social context and its attendant opportunities for women's participation in the public sphere – in economic, social and political arenas. The session will also look at the assimilation of ICTs in education systems and critique existing models. What new frameworks and models are needed to understand the potential of new technologies as an enabler for women's empowerment? What parallels can be drawn between mass education and a similar massification of new technologies, for gender equality? What are the implications for policy?</p> | |
| 9:20-10:20 AM | <p>CHAIR: Claudia Morrell, Executive Director, Center for Women and Information Technology at the University of Maryland, <i>USA</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Vimala Ramachandran, Director, Educational Resource Unit, <i>India</i></p> <p>Leelangi Wanasundera, Information and Communication Program, Centre for Women's Research, <i>Sri Lanka</i></p> <p>Margaret Zunguze, Founder and Executive Director, E-Knowledge for Women in Southern Africa, <i>Zimbabwe</i></p> |
| 10:20-10:50 AM | DISCUSSION |
| 10:50-11:10 AM | TEA & COFFEE |

PANEL 2: Media and Community Networks – The Information Society Context

This panel will examine the structural and discursive shifts in media, and the attendant complexities for feminist action. It will look at how the information society is configuring media, recasting old questions on the portrayal of women at one end and opening up new spaces for individual expression, sexual freedom, collective solidarity, voice and agency at another. **One of the most important changes has been the blurring of the lines between ‘public’ and ‘private’ interactions in digital space, and thus a redefinition of both ‘public’ and ‘private’, with profound implications for gender.** The session will explore the structural changes characterising the entire gamut of new media constituted through multiple forms - FM radio to YouTube to online networks and websites – in terms of their implications for feminist action. How therefore should we interpret ‘old’ and ‘new’ media to construct our debates about media? What particular shapes and forms do new media take at the community level and what are the implications of these for the voice, agency and participation of women? What are the critical policy issues and imperatives in these areas?

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| <p>11:10 AM- 12:30 PM</p> | <p>CHAIR: Constantine Obuya, Executive Director, The African Centre for Women, Information and Communications Technology, <i>Kenya</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Jac sm Kee, Coordinator, Violence Against Women and ICT Project, Association for Progressive Communications, Women’s Networking Support Programme, <i>Malaysia</i></p> <p>Sejal Dand, Director, Area Networking and Development Initiatives, <i>India</i></p> <p>Mira Ofreneo, Research Associate, Isis International – Manila, <i>Philippines</i></p> <p>Sally Burch, Executive Director, Agencia Latinoamericana de Información, <i>Ecuador</i></p> |
| <p>12:30-1:00 PM</p> | <p>DISCUSSION</p> |
| <p>1:00-2:00 PM</p> | <p>LUNCH</p> |

PANEL 3: Globalisation and the Information Society Context

This panel will look at the changing socio-political context of our times, examining how the two phenomena - globalisation and information society – shape and are shaped by each other. The presentations will **provide a critique of existing global governance frameworks – on trade, finance, work, intellectual property, and rights; explore how forces of democracy and control coexist, and are in constant struggle, in the larger information society context; and trace the specific implications for gender.** The speakers will also bring to bear on this panel reflections drawing from their expertise on global policy advocacy. The challenges and opportunities for feminism in relation to post-capitalist globalisation (captured often in terms like ‘network society’ and ‘digital capitalism’) will be examined, along the intersecting policy issues and imperatives.

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| <p>2:00-2:40 PM</p> | <p>CHAIR: Susanna George, General Membership, Isis International – Manila, <i>Malaysia</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Shalmali Guttal, Senior Associate, Focus on the Global South, <i>India</i></p> <p>Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, Senior Programme Associate, International Women's Tribune Centre, <i>USA</i></p> |
| <p>2:40-3:10 PM</p> | <p>DISCUSSION</p> |
| <p>3:10-3:30 PM</p> | <p>TEA & COFFEE</p> |
| <p>PANEL 4: Institutional Change and Citizenship in the Information Society</p> <p>The structural changes that new technologies promise, and are beginning to usher in, have implications for far-reaching institutional transformation. We see that new techno-social models for community development, for instance, through e-governance, have pushed for greater institutional accountability through information flows and transparency, greater community participation in agenda setting and new bottom-up models of 'public' information. How can these models be directed for women's empowerment? What are the intersections between the citizenship and information society discourses? What insights do we have for reshaping institutional rules and practices through new ICTs for ensuring gains for gender equality? How do new information and communication processes change power structures? How can we shape ICTs to obtain information and communications systems that can lead to a power shift? This session will use a feminist lens to look at the ways in which development policy needs to shape the assimilation of ICTs for equitable change.</p> | |
| <p>3:30-4:10 PM</p> | <p>CHAIR: Maria Udén, Post-Doctoral Researcher, Luleå University of Technology, <i>Sweden</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Uajit Virojtrairatt, Chairwoman, Civil Media Development Institute, <i>Thailand</i></p> <p>Sumi Krishna, President, Indian Association for Women's Studies, <i>India</i></p> |
| <p>4:10-4:40 PM</p> | <p>DISCUSSION</p> |
| <p>7:30 PM</p> | <p>DINNER AT THE HOTEL</p> |

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| 12:30-1:00 PM | <p>Therese Niyondiko, Executive Director, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), <i>Kenya</i></p> <p>Parminder Jeet Singh, Executive Director, IT for Change, <i>India</i></p> <p>DISCUSSION</p> |
| 1:00-2:00 PM | LUNCH |
| 2:00-3:15 PM | <p>Open Session</p> <p>Reflecting on research imperatives for policy advocacy on gender, development and the information society and on advocacy strategies to be taken forward in global and sub-global arenas</p> <p>Facilitator: Chat Garcia Ramilo, Global Coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme, <i>Philippines</i></p> |
| 3:15-3:30 PM | TEA & COFFEE |
| 3:30-5:15 PM | Open Session Continued |
| 7:00 PM | DINNER AT A CITY RESTAURANT, HOSTED BY IT FOR CHANGE |
| DAY 3: 7th OCTOBER 2007 | |
| 8:30-9:00 AM | <p>Sharing of the Findings of the Pre-Workshop Survey by Isis International – Manila</p> <p>Presenter: Tesa de Vela, Associate Director, Isis International – Manila, <i>Philippines</i></p> |
| 9:00-9:20 AM | DISCUSSION |
| 9:20-10:40 AM | <p>PANEL: Global Feminist Collaboration for Advocacy – What Works and What Doesn't</p> <p>CHAIR: Tesa de Vela, Associate Director, Isis International – Manila, <i>Philippines</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, Senior Programme Associate, International Women's Tribune Centre, <i>USA</i></p> <p>Susanna George, General Membership, Isis International – Manila, <i>Malaysia</i></p> |

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| | <p>Magaly Pazello, Member, G2G Gender and Technology, Former Member of the WSIS Gender Caucus SC, <i>Brazil</i></p> <p>Chat Garcia Ramilo, Global Coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme, <i>Philippines</i></p> |
| 10:40-11:00 AM | TEA & COFFEE |
| 11:00-11:30 AM | DISCUSSION of the Panel Presentations |
| 11:30 AM- 1:30 PM | Closing Session: Vision of the Network |
| 1:30 PM | LUNCH AND THE WORKSHOP CLOSES |