

World Program of Action for Youth

Draft review of the ICT & Youth Chapter

Submitted by the
World Summit on the Information Society
Youth Caucus



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“We are committed to realizing our common vision of the Information Society for ourselves and for future generations. We recognize that young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICTs. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. We must focus especially on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICTs. We are also committed to ensuring that the development of ICT applications and operation of services respects the rights of children as well as their protection and well-being”¹

1. Introduction

Ten years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond (WPAY), the United Nations General Assembly, in 2005, will devote two plenary sessions on reviewing the situation of youth and achievements made in the implementation of the WPAY. In order to prepare for the special meetings of the General Assembly in 2005, the United Nations Secretariat has invited youth and youth organizations from around the world, to submit input for a successful and effective evaluation of the progress made in achieving the agreed upon actions in WPAY in the ten priority areas, as well as the additional five areas of concern, agreed on by the General Assembly in 2003. The Youth Caucus of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is following the invitation of the United Nations Secretariat by submitting this report on the situation of Youth and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

2. Background

2.1. The World Summit on the Information Society

The introduction and widespread use of new Information and communications technologies (ICT) in recent years has brought about revolutionary changes impacting every aspect of our society. ICT are connecting cultures, creating new opportunities for education, restructuring employment, generating new economies, and changing citizens' relation to government. Recognizing this digital revolution the United Nations has decided to hold a World Summit on the Information Society to develop a common understanding of this Information Society we are living in today and to ensure that the benefits of ICT are accessible to all.

The 1st phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held at Geneva from December 10th to 12th, 2003, organized by the International Telecommunication Union. It was the first UN Summit to involve civil society and the private sector in a multi-stakeholder process. Key topics discussed in this phase included infrastructure, access, applications, cultural diversity, ethics, training, intellectual property, freedom of expression, human rights, internet governance and the role of ICTs in education and employment. WSIS Phase I saw as its outcome the signing of two documents: The “Declaration of Principles” covering the basic principles that should guide the Information society and the “Plan of Action” which outlines how the goals and principles of the declaration will be achieved.

The 2nd Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society will be held in Tunisia from November 16th to 18th, 2005 and will mainly focus on two policy areas: Internet Governance and Financial Mechanisms.

2.2. The WSIS Youth Caucus

At the first Preparatory meeting of WSIS Phase I held in Geneva, in July 1-5, 2002, young people from different youth organisations around the world came together and formed the Youth Caucus in order to provide substantial policy input to areas that affect young people. Participation in the Youth Caucus was open to everyone interested in the thematic and membership of the group soon grew to more than 200 young people worldwide who facilitated their discussions through an internet mailing list provided by TakingITGlobal.

Members of the Youth Caucus participated in all the Preparatory meetings leading to WSIS Phase I as well as in all the sub-committees established by civil society and in the governmental process by speaking in plenary sessions and having representatives on official delegations. At the same time, National Information Society Youth Campaigns were developed by members of the Youth Caucus in more than 20 countries.

In Phase II the Youth Caucus keeps its focus on policy engagement while in addition to that extending its National Youth Campaigns to rural areas, by launching its Rural Youth National Campaigns on the Information Society. Also, a World Summit Youth Award will be awarded to outstanding youth projects during a gala at WSIS Phase II.

3. Youth and ICT

Since the adoption of Information and Communication Technologies as an additional area of concern for the World Program of Action for Youth in the year 2003, a lot of important aspects of this thematic have been outlined, policy recommendations have been made and especially in and around events of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Phase I, young people themselves had the chance to add their voices and highlight aspects that need to be taken into consideration when talking about Youth and ICT.

Outlining relevant policy recommendations that have already been made in the World Youth Report 2003, the World Youth Report 2005 and the official documents of WSIS Phase I (Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action) as well as highlighting aspects that still need to be emphasized by the international community is the purpose of this chapter. We will also show areas where national governments still lack the commitment to put in practice what they had agreed to in the World Program of Action for Youth followed by concrete policy recommendations.

3.1. Progress so far in policy making

The World Youth Report 2003 was the first World Youth Report to include a part dedicated to Youth and ICT. It covered areas as diverse as access to ICT, the Digital Divide, Education, civic engagement of young people and Youth Employment, though most of its emphasis was put on Youth Media Culture and the changing nature of social interaction through the use of ICT in daily life. In the World Youth Report 2005, the focus of the Youth and ICT part has shifted. Instead of analysing the cultural revolution ICT have brought especially to the life of young people, the report concentrates more on the emerging Information Society and the opportunities and risks it brings to youth around the world.

In terms of **access** the reports clearly state that the lack of access to ICT, especially for youth in rural areas, is one of the biggest challenges that have to be tackled if ICT are to improve the life of young people and not to deepen the already existing divisions in the world. Statements have also been made in regard to the **digital divide** which manifests itself not only at the international level, but also within countries, where access to ICT is highly unequal between urban and rural areas, youth and people of age, men and women (boys and girls). Addressing this digital divide has been outlined in the World Youth Report 2005 as a necessity and in fact, the international community has widely discussed the problem during Phase I of the World Summit on the Information Society. Nevertheless, national strategies how to overcome the digital divide within countries still have to follow and light needs to be shed on the question of how to finance those strategies.

Regarding **education**, emphasis so far has been put on the requirement to “replace the teaching of knowledge and skills central to agrarian and industrial societies with education in digital literacy”². While measures to increase IT literacy should be encouraged, it is also noted that the ability to use ICT is often preceded by the acquisition of traditional literacy. Increasing IT literacy must therefore be accompanied by measures to enhance the level of education in general.

The World Youth Report 2003 also mentions that rather than subjects, young people need to be taught competencies and skills. Language and IT skills that young people acquired through informal learning have made youth a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce and thus created job opportunities for many. Enhancing IT literacy and skills must therefore clearly be seen as keys to increase **youth employment** and provide entrepreneurial opportunities for youth.

The outcome documents of WSIS Phase I make some further statements in regard to education of IT skills, including the following:

“Develop domestic policies to ensure that ICTs are fully integrated in education and training at all levels, including in curriculum development, teacher training, institutional administration and management, and in support of the concept of lifelong learning.”

“...Ensure that young people are equipped with knowledge and skills to use ICTs, including the capacity to analyse and treat information in creative and innovative ways, share their expertise and participate fully in the Information Society.”

Moreover, among the benchmarks of the WSIS Plan of Action to be achieved by 2015, the following two refer directly to formal education: “b) to connect universities, colleges, secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs; [...] g) to adapt all primary and secondary school curricula to meet the challenges of the Information Society, taking into account national circumstances”.

Lastly, the positive effect of ICT for **youth engagement and participation** in society has been highlighted in the World Youth Reports: “Opportunities for children and youth to express their ideas and opinions about different issues in society have traditionally been very limited [...] The digital revolution is opening doors to increased communication and involvement.”³ The participation thesis as outlined in the World Youth Report 2003 sees a strengthening of civic engagement of youth who have already been active in this respect as well as a mobilization of young people who have previously not been interested in any form of political or social engagement.⁴

3.2. What is still lacking in policy making and realisation

While the World Youth Reports of 2003 and 2005 already highlight the most important areas of concern where governments are urged to take action, the recommendations given for policy changes are still not concrete enough and lack some substantial points.

As already mentioned, national strategies how to overcome the **digital divide** within countries still have to be developed and special efforts must be made to increase the number of young women and girls using ICT (for more details see 5.).

Another question that remains is how to finance ICT for development strategies. The World Youth Report 2003 suggests the use of freeware and the development of devices, which do not represent the newest and fastest technologies but which are sufficient enough for the needs of the users. Also, the Declaration of Principles adopted at Geneva during WSIS Phase I highlights that "Access to information and knowledge can be promoted by increasing awareness among all stakeholders of the possibilities offered by **different software models**, including proprietary, open-source and free software, in order to increase competition, access by users, diversity of choice, and to enable all users to develop solutions which best meet their requirements. Affordable access to software should be considered as an important component of a truly inclusive Information Society."⁵ The WSIS Youth Caucus supports this recommendation and urges governments to commit themselves to the agreed upon recommendation. Especially young people often lack the financial resources to afford the newest technologies and software models. In order to increase the access of young people to hardware and software, which best fits their needs and requirements, it is necessary to broaden the range of available products.

Youth-led initiatives to help bridge the digital divide, such as local youth-centres with technology access, telecentres and wireless ISPs should also be supported.

In a broader framework, young people's role as leading creators and developers of ICT must be acknowledged. "Supporting young entrepreneurs in the developing world with education, financing, mentorship and encouragement is a critical pathway to bridging the digital divide and fostering the creation of sustainable livelihoods." While the World Youth Report 2005 affirms that access to ICT as well as IT literacy and skills are important elements to provide young people with **employment and entrepreneurial opportunities**, it is as important to note that young people themselves can serve as providers of access to ICT and employment opportunities for other young people. However, besides having specialist IT skills, young people also need a profound knowledge of how to manage small businesses. Therefore, governments should not only encourage young people to start their own ICT related businesses but also provide them with assistance and training on how to sustain them.

Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure **fair labor standards** for young people working in the ICT industry, including areas such as hardware production, software development and call centers.

To guarantee that the benchmarks of the WSIS Plan of Action as mentioned before are being achieved by 2015, it is mandatory for governments to start reviewing their national educational strategies and to broadly incorporate ICT into **school curricula**. However, it is not appropriate simply to introduce a new subject, which teaches students how to use technical devices and software. What we need is a mainstreaming of ICT use in schools; integrating multimedia textbooks, online research, and student presentations with the assistance of ICT can make learning more interactive and

participatory and helps students to require the competencies and skills that are needed for today's labour market.

To make sure that the integration of technology into school curricula is done in a professional manner, we have to acknowledge the role students can play as teachers and trainers. Our formal education system is changing from being teacher to student driven. As teachers are often not as familiar with ICT as students are, **peer-to-peer education** between students and students training their teachers in ICT matters must be realized as an opportunity to enhance the quality of school education. It has similarly already been mentioned in the World Youth Report 2003: "In the present media culture, it is imperative for parents and teachers to perceive children's and young people's information skills in the use of ICT not as threats but as opportunities for personal growth and social change and as gateways to mutual respect."⁶

As Information and Communication Technologies have enormously increased the amount of information available, another key goal of the formal education system must be to help students turning this information into **knowledge**. Not all the information that we find written on the internet or broadcasted on TV is correct and respects the values of human rights – being able to research, assess and use information in efficient ways will become a core competence in the Information Society.

Another valuable part of education in the Information Society is the informal education sector which provides young people with the opportunity to learn through practical experience at voluntary non-governmental organizations, community services, and business activities. It has been outlined in the World Youth Reports that ICT increase the opportunities for young people to participate more actively in society and engage around political and social issues. However, there is still a need to support these activities more openly. Formal education systems need to be more flexible to allow students to undertake such activities and gain credits for them.

4. Youth involvement in international policy making

"Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision making" is one of the ten priority areas of the World Program of Action for Youth and paragraph 104 of the document clearly states: "The capacity of progress of our societies is based, among other elements, on their capacity to incorporate the contribution and responsibility of youth in the building and designing of the future. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account."⁷

The Program therefore recommends to engage young people in local, national and international decision making processes and to consider their inclusion in official government delegations to international forums. This recommendation should especially been followed when it comes to the development and implementation of ICT policy – an area where youth are clearly leaders not only of the future, but also of today. The voice of youth needs to be heard at all levels – national, regional and international and the participation of young people in the development and implementation of initiatives around youth employment and education, among others, is absolutely necessary if those programmes are to effect real change.

In the following we would like to briefly outline current youth involvement in two major international forums, where important decisions around ICT and the Information Society are being made: The World Summit on the Information Society and the UN ICT Task Force.

4.1. Youth and WSIS

As already mentioned before, the World Summit on the Information Society was the first UN Summit to involve civil society and the private sector in a multi-stakeholder process. Thus, also young people were given the chance to participate meaningfully in the preparatory process leading to the Summit and through the constant involvement and policy inputs channelled through the WSIS Youth Caucus a strong paragraph on the role of youth in the Information Society could be included in the final Declaration of Principles. This Youth Paragraph states:

“We are committed to realizing our common vision of the Information Society for ourselves and for future generations. We recognize that young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICTs. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. We must focus especially on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICTs. We are also committed to ensuring that the development of ICT applications and operation of services respects the rights of children as well as their protection and well-being”^B

Also in terms of youth participation in government delegations the Summit was a relative success as a couple of countries decided to include young people in their official delegations to either one of the preparatory meetings or to the Summit itself. Among those countries were: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ghana, Nepal, Philippines, Romania, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and the USA.

However, even though many other young people were very actively involved in activities around the WSIS in their countries and had met with government officials prior to the Summit, those governments did not include young people in their delegations.

Also, a lot of technical questions still remain on how those young people are integrated into the country delegations. As almost all youth participants reported, they weren't allowed to speak for their country and moreover, being part of their official government delegation hindered them from advocating for issues and positions of importance for young people.

Encouraging even more governments to include young people in their delegations to WSIS Phase II can therefore not be the only recommendation we would like to make. Another recommendation of equal importance is that governments need to make sure that the inclusion of a young person into their delegation doesn't deprive him or her from speaking out for issues of relevance to young people. On the contrary, young people should be included in a meaningful way, giving them the chance to broaden the scope of expertise of the delegation, especially in areas where young people are leading developers and have a first-hand experience to the thematic, such as in the field of education.

4.2. Youth and the UN ICT Task Force

4.2.1. Background

Established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan on request of the Economic and Social Council in March 2001 the UN ICT Task Force strives for providing overall leadership to extend ICT as

significant factor for development and foster its full integration in the approach to major issues of the development agenda, particularly those summarized under the term of the “digital divide”.

Beside its main focus on partnership building in the ICT field, the Task Force also guides advising on sustainable ICT policies and their implementation in the future. However, the Task Force is not designed to agree upon ICT policy and regulatory issues but to create a participatory enabling environment and advisory forum as ground for further negotiation.

The Task Force consists of a panel of experts from a wide range of expertise in the ICT area complemented by a panel of advisors and the general support of the Heads of State and Government of all UN Member States who endorsed the ECOSOC Ministerial declaration at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. In its structure and thematic focussing the Task Force forges a strategic partnership between the United Nations system, private industry and financing trusts and foundations, donors, program countries and other relevant stakeholders. Its official plan of action is structured in the analysis of short-term actions, medium-term objectives and long-term strategies. In this context the Task Force has been identifying ICT-related issues that are to a major part strongly relevant to youth.

4.2.2. Youth related policy of the UN ICT Task Force

The following is an outline of agenda items of the UN ICT Task Force Plan of Action with high emphasis on youth:

ICT-based and ICT-concentrated education

Education based on ICT is supposed to enable more people worldwide to benefit from the opportunities of the Information Society. From this perspective ICT has to be both subject and means of training and education from primary school to the stage of higher education. Undoubtedly, youth of today and tomorrow are highly concerned of the implementation and the development of ICT-based learning methods: ICT could help lay the foundation for future universal participation in the global Information Society and help by doing so to eradicate existing disparities particularly those between youth of developed countries and youth of developing countries.

Dissemination of ICT, digital literacy and e-school initiative

To change isolation into connectivity has remained a major issue for ICT policy and particularly for youth. Therefore the Plan of Action identifies to promote and support ICT dissemination among children in the developing world, with special attention paid to girls as key priority. ICT-Infrastructure has to be set up before training and education based on ICT can be provided and developed into forms that could support and even build up new educational systems based on ICT-served distance-learning particularly in remote and rural areas of the developing world. The Global e-schools initiative has been endorsed by the UN ICT Task Force on September 13th, 2003 aimed at bringing ICT solutions to secondary schools as well as communities in the developing world.

ICT and youth employment

ICT can create unknown opportunities for generating livelihood and employment for young women and men. The mainstreaming of ICT could create marketable skills among young men and women of the developing countries to the point of making a positive difference to their future lives and communities. Training and skill-building among youth has been identified as highly imperative today - if based and focussed on ICT it could bear fruit twofold in the developing world: youth could be equipped with all relevant marketable skills and thus have a share in the further development of the Information Society.

ICT and health care

The Task Force identifies ICT as reasonable tool in the fight against HIV/AIDS and in the promotion of health care in general. From this perspective ICT could be a key in the approach to improve health education and raise awareness on infectious diseases with special attention on youth. Knowledge could be disseminated; education and research networks could better be interconnected by using ICT.

4.2.3. Youth involvement in the UN ICT Task Force

While youth have been widely recognized as the “leading innovators in the use and spread of information and communication technologies”⁹ their voices have not been duly noted in the context of the UN ICT Task Force so far. For the first time an informal delegation of the Youth Caucus of the World Summit on Information Society attended a gathering of the Task Force at its seventh meeting from November 19th to 20th, 2004 in Berlin. Prior to this, no relevant youth participation can be noted. Neither speaking slots in the plenary of Task Force meetings have been granted to youth nor have written inputs been requested. Reasons for this can be found both in a lack of initiative undertaken by youth committees and youth organizations in the context of the Task Force as well as the fact that youth involvement has not been prioritized by its members so far.

4.2.4. Recommendations for youth involvement strategies

As the World Youth report 2005 states almost all parts of the UN system by now have youth engagement strategies and frameworks. It further suggests under item 50, concerning youth and participation in decision making, that youth involvement “could be further strengthened by a more widespread inclusion of youth representatives [...] to relevant UN meetings.”¹⁰

Efforts in this direction should be made leading towards the 8th meeting of the UN ICT Task Force in Dublin, 13th to 15th April 2005 that is supposed to focus on ICT for education. Strategies for introducing relevant proposals and ideas to include youth as respected contributors to global ICT policy in the Task Force context are being developed within the WSIS Youth Caucus. But youth can only participate meaningfully in programmes and activities that affect them as significantly as the above items might have shown, when their voices are not overheard in the Task Force context. To foster intergenerational dialogue and relationship should therefore be given high priority in all the efforts ahead both of youth and adults committed to the idea of putting ICT at service for all.

A first step to reduce mutual reservations must be, to establish the right contexts for mutual encounters between youth and adults. The ICT forum cannot make an exception from this basic principle. Youth have to gain the attention they deserve, particularly in the field of ICT for development. Youth and adults have to be defined as positively interdependent in this context. First, in their relation to each other as representatives of different sections of the same society, secondly as two societal parties which bear responsibilities for one another. When the UN ICT Task Force is going to prioritize Education as issue which could be envisaged and approached by ICT and their various opportunities, youth themselves cannot be ignored but have to be acknowledged in consultation and decision making as it is adequate to their natural capacities.

5. Young women/girls and ICT

Among the various digital divides of the Information era, the digital divide between males and females is one that can be found in each and every country. Young women and girls in poor countries often lack the basic levels of education that are prerequisites for acquiring IT skills, but boys are also in general more likely to receive a technical education than girls are. Gender-sensitive policies are therefore needed to ensure that young women and girls are not being left behind and some relevant policy recommendations have already been made in this regard.

However, young women are rarely asked to speak out and contribute to ICT and gender related policies. This chapter presents a summary of the final report of the e-consultation “Talk to her” sponsored by the Youth Creating Digital Opportunities Coalition in November 2003¹¹. The report can be seen as an analysis of what needs to be done to encourage young women’s participation in ICT4D policy-making and initiatives, rather than an analysis of what policy recommendations still need to be put in place. It underlines in this sense the argument, that women related policy shouldn’t be made without women – and youth policy not without youth.

5.1. Background

Young women, like young people in general, are among the earliest adopters and adapters of technology. Today, young people go online more than anyone else, they stay online longer, and they have more diverse online activities. For many young women, the Internet is becoming a major source of education, news, and entertainment, as well as a key new dimension of communication and community. At the same time, young women are often among the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the field of ICT.

The electronic consultation “Talk to Her: A Dialogue among young women on Information Communication Technologies” held in November 2003, presented a framework for young women to meet and discuss their specific needs, roles and potential in the emerging information societies. Over one hundred and sixty young women and twenty young men from over 60 countries participated in this online discussion. They recognized and examined the enormous value of young women’s use of ICTs for their own empowerment and development in general. They also recognized young women as ICT trainers and significant creators of technology.

5.2. Young Women in ICT4D policy-making

Policy making processes tend to be attended by individuals who are likely to have access to ICT, who are part of the right networks, and who, in general, contain extensive knowledge of the issues at hand and the interest and capability to work with that knowledge. The combination of these factors amounts to the **ability to access and interpret information about policy processes**, an ability that can easily remain out of reach of young women. Therefore, individuals with no prior experience with policy-making, and with unreliable access to the Internet are much less likely to obtain and comprehend relevant information. Often, young women who are interested in getting more involved in ICT policy-making are not aware of the opportunities or do not entirely understand what steps are necessary in order to contribute. Discussion participants called for dedicated programs and initiatives to address this predicament.

A related culprit of low involvement of young women in ICT policy is the lack of skills and education needed for effective participation. Knowledge of the process structure, language of ICT for development processes, experience with participation and the possession of related skill sets (including public speaking, writing, negotiations and advocacy skills) are seen to play a major role in young women's decision to participate in policy-making.

"Often, participants of policy processes need to present ideas to policy makers, people who are much older. Perhaps young women may be intimidated, or afraid of not being taken seriously, especially if the audience is one that isn't used to hearing young women in leadership roles."

--Nancy Odeh, young woman WSSD participant

Several participants indicated that these barriers are not necessarily real, but rather, perceived. It was said that acquiring such skills, while definitely beneficial, was not mandatory for efficient participation, and that young women should be encouraged to get involved regardless of their knowledge of language and process structure or advocacy experience.

The broader context of young women's societal and cultural roles was highlighted as an unavoidable topic in the discussion of barriers young women face in the field of ICT4D. Many felt that the basic issues such as illiteracy, poverty and poor health care, must be recognized as strong barriers to young women's involvement in ICT. Further, low levels of higher general education, were highlighted as an essential obstacle. It was said that, in many societies, young women are not seen as decision-makers and women as individuals suffer a low status and low visibility in the community. Therefore, young women are essentially prevented from taking an active role in policy work in ICT.

"It is true that times have changed and are still changing. The society is evolving day by day and opportunities are expanding but our socialization method relatively remains the same. Except for a few well-educated women, still see gender in equality and low status of women as normal. Therefore young women even after their university education still see decision-making as a matter for man."

-- Onyinye Ndubuisi, participant

5.3. Encouraging young women's involvement in ICT4D Policy

Young women are much less likely to get involved in ICT4D policy if they feel that their input will not make an impact, if they are not given the opportunity to make decisions and if the policy examines primarily the "hard issues" of ICT, such as security and intellectual property rights.

The discussants stressed that young women

- want to see follow-up and results.
- want to be decision-makers, and not only a source of information to be considered by others.
- are concerned about social issues and want to know the impact of ICT policy on human development. In other words, young women tend to be interested in ICT when it is clear that ICT is being discussed as a set of tools and not an end.

5.4. Participation of young women in ICT Initiatives and Grassroots Projects

The overarching gender issues in development flavored discussions about supporting young women's involvement in ICT initiatives and grassroots projects.

Participants talked of their own ICT initiatives, projects and grassroots programmes, focusing on the problematics of involving more young women in the field. An important challenge was felt to be connecting, or reaching out to, the “disconnected,” that is, the young women that do not have easy access to ICT. In response, several participants offered examples of successful ventures such as the Meena Initiative in Asia and the Sara Initiative in Africa, which concentrated precisely on those without access to new technology, utilizing radio and print materials as an effective means of communication.

Another common theme to emerge was the need to present ICT as a versatile tool and clearly outline applications of ICT relevant to young women. Forum postings indicated that the incorrect perceptions many young women had of technology in general was a barrier to their interest and education in ICT.

Mentorship and internship opportunities, as well as peer-training were named as effective means of providing vital ICT education and skills. Additionally, dedicated training programs, which would span a woman's lifetime, were proposed as a key ingredient in sustainable engagement of young women in ICT initiatives.

5.5. Summary

After a month of discussion, what started as an “email list” grew into a community of young women and men deeply concerned about gender issues and women's empowerment in ICT for development. Some participants are quite experienced in implementing and maintaining software, others are deeply involved in policy analysis and research and yet others continue to serve as trainers and mentors in the field of ICT. Some of them have barely used the term “ICT” before. But this group is uniformly aware, to quote participant Amira Sobeih, that “we need to challenge all circumstances.”

Talk to Her participants see value of young women's use of ICTs for their own empowerment and development in general. They recognize young women as significant creators of technology and ICT trainers and seek to bring the opportunity of ICT to all young women. They also point out that a joint effort between organizations and individuals is needed to enable more young women to receive appropriate education and to participate in ICT policy making and community initiatives. Finally, participants call for regional, national and international organizations to address young women's needs and potential in the Information Society.

6. Policy recommendations

The following is a list of concrete policy recommendations emerging from previous chapters:

- Raise awareness about different software models, including proprietary, open-source and free software to broaden the range of available products and thus increase the access of young people to ICT hardware and software
- Support youth-led initiatives to help bridge the digital divide, such as local youth-centres with technology access, telecentres and wireless ISPs
- Acknowledge young people's role as leading creators and developers of ICT as well as providers of access to ICT and employment opportunities for other young people
- Encourage young people to start their own ICT related business and provide them with assistance, incentives, business support, mentorship and training on how to sustain them
- Ensure fair labour standards for young people working in the ICT industry, including areas such as hardware production, software development and call centres
- Review national educational strategies and mainstream ICT use in school curricula
- Acknowledge young people's role as teachers and trainers and encourage peer-to-peer education in schools to enhance to quality of school education related to ICT
- Teach students the skills necessary to research, assess and use information in efficient ways and to turn information into knowledge
- Support non-formal activities of young people as ways to increase their practical learning experience
- Engage young people in local, national and international decision making processes, e.g through their inclusion in official government delegations to international forums, such as the World Summit on the Information Society and its preparatory meetings
- Ensure that young people who are part of official government delegations are integrated in a meaningful way and have the right to speak out on issues of relevance to them and where they have a special expertise in
- Invite youth and youth organisations to participate in the development and implementation of initiatives around youth employment and education
- Include youth as respected contributors to global ICT policy in gatherings of the UN ICT Task Force and give them speaking slots
- Invite youth groups to submit written input to gatherings of the UN ICT Task Force, especially in areas of high relevance for young people
- Develop gender-sensitive policies to bridge the digital-divide between young men and women
- Develop programs and initiatives to inform young people, especially women, about the opportunities they have to become involved in ICT policy-making
- Acknowledge young women as decision-makers and not only as source of information
- Encourage and support initiatives which are reaching out to young people, especially women, who don't have easy access to ICT
- Encourage and support mentorship and internship opportunities for young women to provide them with vital ICT education and skills
- Address young women's need and potential in the Information Society
- Provide spaces for young people to work with municipal governments in relation to the goals of the Digital Solidarity Fund

- Create national ICT or e-strategies that do not further marginalize youth sub-groups like the disabled youth and indigenous youth
- Establish ICT indicators that are gender disaggregated

Appendix I: Useful Links and Resources

UN documents related to Youth

United Nations: "World Program of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond" (A/RES/50/81): <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/RES/50/81&Lang=E>

United Nations: "World Youth Report 2003" (A/58/79 & E/CN.5/2003/4): <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=E/CN.5/2003/4&Lang=E>

United Nations: "World Youth Report 2005": <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/library/wyr05adv.pdf>

World Summit on the Information Society

Website of the World Summit on the Information Society: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>

ITU: "WSIS Declaration of Principles" WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/0004: http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0004!!MSW-E.doc

ITU: "WSIS Plan of Action" WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/0005: http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0005!!MSW-E.doc

ICT and Youth Employment

Curtain, Richard: "Generating youth employment through information and communication technologies: best practice examples and strategies" (produced for the Youth Employment Summit 2002) contains many best practice examples of ICT-generated employment opportunities for young people as well as a list of policy recommendations. Available here: <http://www.yesweb.org/gkr/res/bg.ict.ta.rtf>

Financing of ICT4D

UNESCAP: "Financing ICT for Development in Asia and the Pacific" (November 2004) provides an overview of funding mechanisms available for ICT4D in Asia and the Pacific region and was produced as contribution to the work of the WSIS Working Group on Financial Mechanisms. Available here: http://www.unescap.org/icstd/events/wsis_2nd_phase/docs/Financial/cases_financing.doc

Report of the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms for ICT for Development: http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=1372|1374|1377

Best practices

A list of best practices can be found on website of Global Knowledge Partnership (www.globalknowledge.org) listing the finalists and winners of the GKP Youth Awards 2003.

WSIS Youth Caucus

Website of the WSIS Youth Caucus: <http://www.wsisyouth.org>

Youth Caucus Input to WSIS Phase I PrepCom 2: http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc2/c/S03-WSISPC2-C-0058!!MSW-E.doc

Youth Speech by Alex Fielding (WSIS, Geneva, December 12, 2003):
<http://www.itu.int/wsis/geneva/coverage/statements/youth-day/s11.doc>

TakingITGlobal: "Local Voices, Global Visions" is the documentation of the National Information Society Youth Campaign conducted by young people during WSIS Phase I:
<http://www.ycdo.net/wsis/youthcampaignsbook.pdf>

The YCDO "Report on Youth Creating Digital Opportunities Activities 2002-2003" explains the history of the Youth Creating Digital Opportunities Coalition and gives a comprehensive overview of the formation, development and activities of the WSIS Youth Caucus. Available here:
<http://ycdo.takingitglobal.org/misc/YCDO%20Report%202002-2003%20Final.doc>

Youth Caucus Strategic Plan for WSIS Phase II:
http://wsisyouth.takingitglobal.org/Strategy_PhaseII.doc

Young women/girls and ICT:

E-Consultation "Talk to her: A Dialogue among young women on Information Communication Technologies". To download the full report go to: <http://files.tigggroups.org/1277/Report.doc> or view the discussion archives at <http://groups.takingitglobal.org/ycdogender>.

Other links and publications relevant to Youth and ICT

Website of Youth Creating Digital Opportunities: <http://www.ycdo.org>

Oxfam, International Youth Parliament: "Highly Affected, Rarely Considered". This Youth Commission into Globalisation Report includes a chapter about "young people's access to technology". It is available via: http://www.iyp.oxfam.org/campaign/youth_commission_report.asp

Thomas Biebl: "The Impact of Civil Society on the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society. A Case Study of Successful Engagement within UN Bodies". Thomas Biebl is member of the WSIS Youth Caucus and studies in his diploma thesis the impact of civil society on the World Summit on the Information Society based on an analysis of the Youth Caucus. The paper is available here: http://www.worldsummit2003.de/download_en/Diplomarbeit-Thomas-Biebl.pdf

Appendix II: biographies

Franziska Seel, 23 (lead author): Franziska has been a member of the WSIS Youth Caucus since PrepCom 2 in February 2003 and was Coordinator of the German National Information Society Youth Campaign. She recently moved to Canada where she started working as “Millennium Campaign Youth Editor and Communications Coordinator” with TakingITGlobal, coordinating youth involvement around the Millennium Development Goals in partnership with the United Nations Millennium Campaign. She can be reached at franziska@takingitglobal.org

Julia Fauth, 22 (author): Julia is chairperson of the Working Group on “Global ICT Policy and Youth” in the German Scholarship Foundation. She is a postgraduate student in Communications of the Muenster University, Germany. Julia became a member of WSIS Youth at the beginning of the second summit phase 2004 in Tunis during her work for the Lutheran World Federation as youth advisor for communication and gender equality initiatives among youth in developing countries and HIV/AIDS youth campaigns. Julia can be reached at jfauth@uni-muenster.de

Maja Andjelkovic, 26 (author): Maja is an associate with the Knowledge Communications program of the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Canada. She worked with the youth and gender caucuses to the World Summit on the Information Society to ensure stronger representation of young women and their interests in the Summit process. She can be reached at mandjelkovic@iisd.ca

Robert Sagun, 27 (adviser): Robert concurrently is the Executive Director of the Philippine Resources for Sustainable Development, Inc., formerly known as the Young Volunteers for Sustainable Development, and the Policy Coordinator of the WSIS Youth Caucus. His expertise is on ICT4D, youth participation, sustainable development, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. He can be reached at rsagun@takingitglobal.org

¹ WSIS Declaration of Principles, paragraph 11

² World Youth Report 2003, p. 313

³ World Youth Report 2003, p. 316

⁴ See World Youth Report 2003, p. 317

⁵ Declaration of Principles, paragraph 27

⁶ World Youth Report 2003, p. 328

⁷ World Program of Action for Youth, paragraph 104

⁸ WSIS Declaration of Principles, paragraph 11

⁹ See World Youth Report 2005, p. 25

¹⁰ See World Youth Report, p. 12

¹¹ The full report is available online, at: <http://files.tigggroups.org/1277/Report.doc>