ITU Task Force on Gender Issues

Four Years of Promoting Gender Equality in and through Telecommunications

1998 – WTDC and the beginning of TFGI

MANDATE

The World Telecommunication Development Conference held in Valletta, Malta, in March 1998 adopted Resolution 7 that established the Task Force on Gender Issues within the Telecommunication Development Sector of ITU. This resolution was unanimously supported and reaffirmed at the 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis. Its aim is to serve as a main organ to increase awareness of the developmental impact of telecommunications on women, to promote mainstreaming of gender issues into telecommunication policy and programmes, and to ensure that the benefits of telecommunication applications are made available to all women and men in developing countries on a fair and equitable basis.

OBJECTIVES

- Access to and benefits of telecommunications for women and men equally
- Integration of the gender perspective in government, commercial and community activities
- Gender balance in human resources development
- Sensitivity to women and men as distinct and overlapping consumers in developing countries
- Balanced treatment of women and men in all aspects of regulatory policy and telecommunication services
- Full participation of women in decision-making
- Gender balance in ITU

ACTIVITIES

- **Rural Access** projects include training women in the operation of telecentres, as well as proposals to establish women-run and -owned telecentres
- **Gender Workshops** teach ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau Centre of Excellence trainers about the importance of a gender perspective and how to integrate it into their training modules
- **Online Conference** disseminates the latest information on gender issues and ICTs to over 100 Task Force members
- **Gender Training Curriculum** offers specialized training to assist regulators and policy-makers to effectively integrate gender perspectives in telecommunication policy
- **Research** enables TFGI to remain current on the most timely and pressing issues related to gender and ICTs.

"Increase awareness of the developmental impact of telecommunications on women"

TFGI and its impact

In the four short years that TFGI has been in existence, it has managed to make a substantial and valuable impact on ITU and associated organizations.

ITU/BDT:

TFGI activities have served as a catalyst to bring awareness of gender equality issues and to link them to sustainable development. A gender perspective has been integrated into activities of VAP programmes as well as in BDT meetings such as TDAG and Study Groups.

ITU:

Plenipotentiary 1998 Resolution 70 and subsequent gender-awareness activities, creation of ITU internal Group on Gender Issues, initiation of in-service gender training in ITU.

ITU membership:

Increased awareness of gender issues in the telecommunication sector, gender focal points nominated by some Administrations, National Committees on Gender Issues established and ICT training for women initiated.

UN System:

Inclusion of ITU in the UN inter-agency work on women and gender equality, Geneva group of gender focal points.

TFGI: an information resource

In addition to its many other activities, TFGI strives to stay a step ahead on issues related to research and policy. Among its publications and educational materials are the following:

● TFGI Brochure "Promoting Gender Equality in and through Telecommunications";

● Gender Perspectives in Telecommunications Policy: A Curriculum Proposal;

● Gender-Aware Guidelines for Policy-Making and Regulatory Agencies;

● Feasibility Study on Pilot Tele-centres in Niger and Ethiopia;

● Report on Gender Training at the Higher Multinational School for Telecommunications [Ecole supérieure multinationale de télé-communication – ESMT], Dakar, under the Centres of Excellence project;

● "The Task Force on Gender Issues: A Catalyst for Women's Advancement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)";

● "Gender Briefing for ITU Delegates" bookmark;

● TFGI website

http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/

Fourth meeting of TFGI

Photo: De Ferron/ITU

The fourth meeting of TFGI which took place in September of 2001 was attended by delegates from over 40 countries. Issues such as telemedicine, telecentres and the upcoming WTDC were discussed.

Mainstreaming gender in ITU-D programmes

Among the many results of the fourth meeting of the Task Force on Gender Issues was the adoption of a draft resolution on mainstreaming gender in ITU-D programmes.

This resolution, which contains many important initiatives related to gender, is to be submitted to WTDC at its upcoming meeting in March 2002 in Istanbul. The key components of the resolution are as follows:

● that ITU-D should convert the Task Force on Gender Issues to a permanent structure of ITU-D open to all Member States, Sector Members and other partners concerned;

● that mainstreaming of gender in ITU as a whole must be institutionalized through the establishment of an ITU Gender Unit with full-time professional gender expertise;

● that the above gender unit will provide the following:
　– a comprehensive gender management structure to ensure that efforts are made to mainstream gender into ITU's strategic, operational and budgetary plans;

　– gender analysis, statistics and advice on policy and regulatory issues within ITU, Member States and Sector Members;

　– monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes to assess gender implications;

　– advice to ITU management on the role that ITU should take as a leader in gender and ICTs.

What are the numbers?

TFGI gender survey questionnaire

During the second meeting of TFGI, it was recommended that TFGI include in its work programme the need to identify barriers and problems in achieving an increase of women's participation as well as proactive strategies and policies on gender equality and equity in the telecommunication and ICT areas. As a response to this recommendation, a gender questionnaire was developed and disseminated with the annual survey to the ITU Member Regulators.

Through the use of analysis of the questionnaire, TFGI endeavours to:

- bring awareness to Member States of the importance of creating gender equality and equity policies;

- provide up-to-date information on planning and preparation of strategies on gender equality and equity within the organizations involved in telecommunications;

- promote wide dissemination of the purpose and mandate of TFGI;

- create a database for the basic indicators related to gender equality as a basis for evaluation of progress;

- identify possible areas where the expertise of the Task Force and ITU could be shared with other UN agencies.

Photo: De Ferron/ITU

The average Internet user is a college-educated high-income English-speaking male under 35 years old

This profile only fits one person in ten in the English-speaking world

77 responses, 3758 women managers, 49 requests for assistance

Survey Questionnaire 2001 – Results

Seventy-seven organizations responded to the second ITU gender questionnaire disseminated in the year 2001. Responses were well distributed geographically, with 19 responses from the Africa Region, 13 from the Americas, 16 from Asia-Pacific, 4 from Arab States and 25 from Europe.

Of the total number of 13,974 managerial posts indicated by respondents, 3758 or 27% were held by women, indicating an increase of 2.5% from the year before.

Forty-five organizations indicated that policies and practices are in place to ensure that recruitment, employment, training and advancement of men and women are taken on a fair and equitable basis.

Some 48 of the 77 respondents indicated that the difficulty in increasing the number of women within the telecommunication sector seemed to be due to the limited number of qualified women. Only 8 answered that the difficulty in increasing the number of women within the sector was due to a lack of commitment of senior management. Thirteen respondents indicated that limited access to information technologies was the reason for employing few women in their organizations.

Gender-Aware Guidelines for Policy-Making and Regulatory Agencies

Gender-Aware Guidelines for Policy-Making and Regulatory Agencies is a document intended to assist decision-makers to conduct their work in such a way that both women and men are taken into consideration in the process – both as part of the processes themselves as well as in considering the impact of decisions made.

The following guidelines should be used to ensure that gender analysis becomes an integral part of licensing and regulatory activities:

General

1. Facilitate and promote the establishment of a Gender Unit within the regulatory agency, the ministry and/or as an inter-agency effort.

2. Review, revise or develop new regulations, circulars, issuance and procedures to remove any gender bias.

3. Promote gender analysis as part of policy process.

4. Develop and establish systems to gather gender statistics.

5. Enter into dialogue with other national entities.

Human resources

1. Ensure equal hiring opportunities for all women and men, regardless of race, ethnicity, class and age.

2. Ensure that a certain percentage (targeting 50%) of all supervisory and management positions are occupied by women.

3. Develop campaigns to attract women professionals (particularly

for technical and decision-making positions).

4. Develop and ensure the existence of appropriate support systems for professional women and men.

5. Ensure that there are no wage disparities among the genders and establish a policy to eliminate such gaps.

Training

1. Ensure equal access to training opportunities.

2. Promote gender-awareness training opportunities for women and men.

3. Support technical and management programmes that train women professionals and create internship programmes with educational institutions.

Licensing activities

1. Award a certain percentage of licences to woman-owned companies and/or companies with women in top management positions.

2. Develop and market licensing procedures where potential women owners can have access to the information.

3. Promote the development of business assistance programmes and partnerships with expertise in assisting women entrepreneurs.

4. Develop licence award criteria based on social responsibility of the business as well as universal access objectives of the proposed venture.

5. Ensure that licences awarded contain certain conditions to promote gender analysis and mainstreaming for the particular companies.

> **"Develop and establish systems to gather gender statistics"**

To obtain a copy of the complete "Gender-Aware Guidelines for Policy-Making and Regulatory Agencies", please go to http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/pdf/GenderAwarenessGuidelines-E.pdf

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ITU-D Sector Member Gender Focal Points

Building the Bridge

Among the goals of the Task Force on Gender Issues is the development of a strong working relationship with ITU Members, including Sector Members. In this relationship lies the mutually beneficial possibility for individuals and institutions to voice their concerns, share their experiences and request assistance as pertains to gender issues in the telecommunication industry.

To facilitate this working relationship, TFGI proposes that institutions appoint a Gender Focal Point to TFGI.

These focal points will be kept aware of the ongoing activities of TFGI such as annual meetings, workshops and publications. In addition to expanding their knowledge on these matters, they will

be in a position to communicate this information, as well as other items of interest, to others in their organization.

For more information on how to designate a Gender Focal Point for your organization, please contact: patricia.faccin@itu.int

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Gender Briefing for ITU Delegates
Before, during and after the meeting

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) Task Force on Gender Issues (TFGI)

To encourage delegations to be aware of gender issues, TFGI has prepared these guidelines, which offer some suggestions for participating Administrations and Sector Members to assist them in becoming more familiar with questions on gender issues in ITU meetings and conferences.

Before the meeting
✔ Are you familiar with ITU resolutions on gender? Find out at **www.itu.int/gender/index.html**
✔ Do you have the knowledge about gender issues to participate fully in ITU meetings?
✔ Have you been briefed on the implementation of resolutions on gender in your Administration?
✔ Have you broken down socio-economic statistics by gender and age to better identify policy opportunities and constraints?
✔ Have you read background documentation with a gender perspective about the meeting's topic?
✔ Have you consulted women in preparation for ITU meetings?
✔ Have you promoted gender balance within your delegation?

During the meeting
✔ Advocate for gender perspective in all telecommunication projects and programmes
✔ Raise relevant gender issues in meetings
✔ Support other delegates when they raise gender issues in meetings
✔ Ensure gender balance in all committees, sub-committees and decision-making bodies
✔ Network actively with delegates to promote gender issues
✔ Nominate women to hold positions, i.e. chair, vice-chair, speaker, moderator, etc.

After the meeting
✔ Ensure that draft evaluation reports, briefs and summaries include gender linkages

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Task Force on Gender Issues

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TFGI Chairpersons:

Ms Iris Struiken-Wijdenbosch (1998-1999)

Ms Natasa Gospic
Current Chairperson (2000-   )

We're on the Web! http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/