world summit
on the information society
Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005

ICT for Development
Platform

Geneva, 9th-13th December 2003
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ICT4D Forum

---> Connecting people for a better life!

Report by Rinalia Abdul Rahim, Executive Director of the Global Knowledge
Partnership (GKP) to the Reporting Session of the World Summit on the
Information Society (WSIS)
12 December 2003

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen.

ICT4D Platform
The Global Knowledge Partnership is the world's first Multistakeholder Network in the area
of ICT for Development.

As a global network, we bring together governments, civil society organizations, donors,
private sector companies and inter-governmental organisations to share their knowledge
and experiences. We also bring them together to catalyze collaborations and mobilize
resources to address development challenges as well as to create new opportunities with
ICT.

The ICT4D Platform which we organized together with the Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation embodies the true multi-stakeholder nature, spirit and knowledge-action
orientation of the GKP. We are pleased to offer the Platform as a contribution to the
Summit to illustrate and emphasize the people-centred development dimension of ICTs.

It was extremely important for the overall success of this Summit that all stakeholders can
come together and have the opportunity to interact, exchange information and learn from
each other. This is precisely what the Platform has accomplished. More importantly, it has
validated the tremendous potential of ICTs in develoment.

Drawing from our deliberations, debates and showcases, I wish to highlight four key
issues.

First, the application of ICT for poverty reduction.
The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) give the world a clear focus for addressing
poverty reduction. But, if we do not change the paradigms of development intervention, we
will fail to meet the goals. In our experience, ICTs have proven that they can help reduce
poverty when used appropriately, with the full participation of all stakeholders, especially
the poor.

Beyond physical access, there are two major challenges in poverty reduction with ICTs:
The first is to empower communities to create, contextualize and use content and
applications that suit local situations and needs. The second is to upscale successful
small initiatives without losing the ability to adapt content and applications.

The second key issue is the need for adequate financial resources to spread digital
dividends and opportunities to more people.

The ICT for Development Platform is a major summit event
organised by the Swiss Agency for Development and
Cooperation (SDC) and the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP)

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A common characteristic of small ICT4D pilots is entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, most donor agencies do not fund business-type ventures with social agendas. At the same time, venture capitalists and corporate investors are not attracted to small pilot projects because they do not necessarily see the commercial viability. There is a great need for funds to support the expansion of successful ICT4D pilots to spread digital dividends and opportunities further. This requires all financing entities to engage in dialogue and to work together.

The third key issue is the value of multistakeholder partnerships.
Multistakeholder partnerships are about creating lasting and meaningful impact at all levels. While many laud their virtues, most are struggling to make them work. This is evident throughout the Summit Process.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships promote a more holistic approach to development and participatory governance. Such partnerships are effective instruments for achieving development goals, particularly when different stakeholders pool their resources and assets in solving problems. What is needed is better understanding among stakeholders about each other's strengths and weaknesses. Processes must be in place to facilitate negotiations and collaborations among stakeholders for optional outcome.

Excellencies, the world's development challenges are immense. To fully harness and benefit from multistakeholder assets, multistakeholder partnerships or networks must be considered as a new category of accreditation to inter-governmental processes such as this World Summit. Without this mechanism for expanded engagement of stakeholders, you will not be maximising the use of existing resources in creating a better world.

The last key issue is on gender equality and the role of ICTs.
We recognise that women and girls have very specific needs when it comes to the design and application of ICTs. Women need equality of access and opportunities to fully participate in the Information Society.

ICT initiatives for the realisation of women's rights need to take into account the ways in which women are different from men. We need to ensure that the differences, disparities and disadvantages are acknowledged and addressed by policy or legal interventions and programmes. Without a strong gender analysis, we will not be able to realise the true potential of ICTs for women and girls who are the majority of the world's poor.

These are the four key issues which I would like to bring to your attention.

I would like to end by saying that it has been a great privilege for the Global Knowledge Partnership to be an integral part of the Summit. We will continue our work in enhancing the role of ICTs in development and in bringing forward the true benefits of the multistakeholder partnership approach.

Thank you.