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**Submission by: UNWOMEN, International Organization**



Draft WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015

Other issues not covered by Action Lines above [, if any]

**Proposal: Creation of an Action Line on “Women’s Empowerment and Full Engagement in the Information Society”**

Justification

At present the issue of gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights is situated in declarative and chapeaux text in the WSIS outcome documents and is intended to interject a gender perspective throughout the Action Lines. In addition, there are specific references to gender and women within some action lines. However, after ten years of implementation, it has become clear that there are serious shortcomings to this approach as we have not seen evidence of the gender lens being consistently – if at all – pro-actively informing thinking and actions around WSIS implementation. This is witnessed in lack of monitoring and reporting on these issues as well as the very real and practical on the ground reality that women – representing half the world’s population, talent and needs - are still far behind when it comes to participation in the information society, not just in terms of access but also with regard to their positions as producers and decision-makers in the ICT sector, as well as the availability of content, applications, and services that meet their needs. There are concerns that women will fall even further behind with the move to broadband and that gender inequality offline will be further reproduced online and we are witnessing this already in portrayal of women in online media (WACC report) and in the new forms of online (gender-related) violence.

Moreover, the convention of loosely mainstreaming gender issues and only mentioning gender equality explicitly in declarative and contextual texts is not in line with international practice. Within the MDGs and in the recommendations of the High Level Panel in the post-2015 process there are both elements of gender mainstreaming as well as treating gender equality and women’s empowerment in their own right as a stand alone goal. It has been widely acknowledged that mainstreaming alone does not work as gender issues get too diffused and underlying and cross-cutting issues not adequately addressed. Nor does creating an isolated goal on gender without integration in other goals as it dilutes responsibility and creates a gender silo. Even in looking at the “gender architecture” of the UN system, there is a both a dedicated organization to these issues – UN Women - as well as a System Wide Action Plan for mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout the United Nations bodies and areas of work.

In the context of WSIS, the February and March 2013 WSIS four Gender Equality Panels and multi-stakeholder conversations pointed to the need for a separate action line (organized by UN Women, UNESCO, ITU, APC and WICTAD). This was a strong and explicit recommendation of the May Roundtable on Women, ICT and Development. In addition, the Broadband Commission Gender Working Group has also called for greater attention to and investment in gender issues and itself created a separate target on women’s access to broadband.

Therefore a dual approach is needed with identified leadership and established accountability mechanisms. This is what is proposed with the creation of an Action Line on “Women’s Empowerment and Full Participation in the Information Society”.

Facilitator

UN Women will be willing to serve as lead facilitator for this action line and work with other organizations interested in co-facilitating (UNESCO has expressed an interest in doing so). The Action Line will be implemented in a multi-stakeholder format with active solicitation of participation from women on the ground. As this is a mainstreamed issue, and in accordance with the pillars below, it will also work closely with other Action Line organization leads. It is envisaged to utilize existing networks – e.g. an expanded WICTAD Coalition – to promote the advocacy, discussions, sharing and support needed to fully realize the goals of this Action Line. In addition, gender units within Action Line lead agencies will also be mobilized to support the work of this Action Line.

Vision

“*We affirm that development of ICTs provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool to that end.”* *para 12 from the WSIS Geneva Declaration*

The work of the proposed Action Line will seek greater progress in implementing this and other related commitments enshrined in the WSIS outcome documents and forward looking recommendations by providing practical measures to:

* Integrate women’s needs, perspectives, and capabilities, in addressing the disadvantages and barriers that women and girls experience and in promoting their equal participation within the WSIS process and broader information society in order to realize their empowerment and socio, economic, political and cultural rights.
* Position women, as equal partners, active agents, innovators and decision-makers, to contribute to and benefit from rapid developments in this sphere and to end the cycle of falling behind with new advances.
* Better connect and heighten understanding of online and offline realities and surface underlying factors that hinder women’s engagement in the information society.
* Increase dedicated resources, investments and attention to, and develop more coherent approaches and accountability measures for, women’s empowerment within the information society.
* Help realize the full potential of the information/knowledge society which cannot happen without women.

Pillars

1. *Gender Analysis:* Promote the use of “gender analysis” and associated tools and methodologies in the development of national, regional and related global frameworks, strategies and policies and their implementation.
2. *Holistic Approaches and Structural Issues:* Address underlying issues in the information society, such as gender stereotypes and specific threats such as online violence against women and provide analysis and recommendations on gender issues that cut across action lines.
3. *Linking the Gender and ICT Communities:* Link ICT policy, capacity and programming issues with the work of gender advocates and national women’s machineries and into Beijing+20 review in 2015, annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and CEDAW reviews and reporting.
4. *Support to Action Lines and Stakeholders:* Provide technical support to the Action Lines and specific stakeholder groups (e.g. private sector) to integrate gender equality into their work through identifying overarching issues, programmatic opportunities, requisite investments and policy interventions. The following are recommended areas for concrete and accelerated action and investment:

* Establishing equality in women’s access to ICTs, in all its forms, by taking into account the differences in levels of access, opportunity and participation of women and men and addressing the disadvantages and barriers that women and girls experience in the knowledge society.
* Integrating gender analysis and principles in national digital and e-strategy frameworks and agendas and developing proactive policies and programmes across all sectors for women as active and primary agents of change in owning, designing, using and adapting ICT.
* Developing and collecting gender and sex-disaggregated data, and undertaking research and impact analysis on gender and ICT, including for evidence based policy making and programming.
* Building capabilities of women and girls to use ICTs for agency, empowerment and citizenship. To empower girls and women throughout their life cycle, as shapers and leaders of society, gender responsive educational programs and appropriate learning environments need to be promoted.
* Promote women content producers and the availability of content relevant to women’s needs.
* Ensuring that women's rights are taken into account in internet rights and principles and dialogue.
* Ensuring parity in women’s representation in high levels and decision-making in the ICT (public and private) sector and governance structures.
* Building the skills and environments necessary for women to enter, remain and progress in ICT careers.

1. Equal participation of women: Equal participation of women in all WSIS related processes and women's voices or representation in panels, committees and bodies constituted for WSIS.
2. *Data and Monitoring Progress:* Prepare scorecards on Action Line and National level reporting on women’s empowerment. Support and promote the work of the Partnership on the Measurement of the Information Society Working Group on Gender.

Targets[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Higher level outcomes: Increase in access of women to internet and broadband and increase in gender equality targets established by Partnership on the Measurement of the Information Society (% increase amounts TBD).
2. % Increase in the number of national ICT, Broadband or ICT dimensions of sectoral strategies and frameworks that reflect gender equality.
3. % Increase in reflection on gender issues in monitoring and reporting, and highlighted at annual events within Action Lines.
4. % Positive increases in gender equality targets within Action Lines (in line with pillar 4 above)
5. Increase in availability of data on gender equality and ICTs (produced by the Measurement Partnership Working Group).

1. These would have to be refined and more precise targets set depending on the timeframe for the next phase of WSIS. Also depend on availability of or ability to collect baseline data. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)