Draft WGIG Issue paper on Social Dimensions and inclusion

> This paper is a 'draft working paper' reflecting the preliminary findings of the drafting team. It has been subject to review by all WGIG members, but it does not necessarily present a consensus position nor does it contain agreed language accepted by every member. The purpose of this draft is to provide a basis for the ongoing work of the group. It is therefore not to be seen as a chapter of the final WGIG report, but rather as raw material that will be used when drafting the report. This draft working paper has been published on the WGIG website for public comment, so it will evolve, taking into account input from governments and stakeholders.

1. Issue (what?)

Social dimensions and inclusion with respect the 'information society' lie at the heart of the WSIS Declaration of Principles reflected in it's opening paragraph where delegates:

> "..declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life…"

Paras 10 to 16 address several aspects of social inclusion:

- the benefits of the information technology revolution are today unevenly distributed between the developed and developing countries and within societies;

- we must focus especially on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICTs;

- we ensure 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;

- we pay particular attention to the special needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups of society, including migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, unemployed and underprivileged people, minorities and nomadic people;

- we shall also recognize the special needs of older persons and persons with disabilities;

- particular attention must be given to the special situation of indigenous peoples, as well as to the preservation of their heritage and their cultural legacy.

- we are resolute to empower the poor, particularly those living in remote, rural and marginalized urban areas, to access information and to use ICTs as a tool to support their efforts to lift themselves out of poverty.

Social inclusion is is related to several issues including Affordable and Universal Access; Multilingualism; Competition policy, liberalization, privatization and regulations; Cultural and Linguistic diversity; Education and Human Capacity amongst others.

To fully realize the benefits of ICTs, social inclusion requires affordable, accessible and reliable access; the skills and capacity to effectively utilize ICTs; education and ICT literacy; appropriate content in accessible languages and the means to participate in decision-making and policy processes amongst others.

The end goal is not ICT access per se, but that access to ICTs improves the quality of life for those who are excluded from the enormous potential benefits of ICTs.

2. Attribution to category / ies

- Access for all
- Multilingualism and Content

3. SWOT Analysis

- Although the 'digital divide' (a phrase which could be said to represent the landscape of communities and peoples who are excluded or potentially excluded from the benefits of ICTs) is on the agenda of many international processes, intergovernmental bodies, national governments, private sector and civil society organizations there is
  - limited coordination amongst the various efforts that are in progress,
  - there are few examples of government level initiative in terms of integrating these concerns into national level policy and strategy with the possible exception of 'Universal Access and Service Delivery' initiatives – in short, there is much wanting on the road from words to action.

- Universal Access and Service Delivery are key components of addressing social inclusion issues and although measures are undertaken by several governments (for example tele-centres or multi-purpose ICT centers) they do not in all cases include the participation of the communities that could benefit most from their implementation. This sometimes results in unsustainable initiatives due to a lack of a sense of local ownership by the community.

- Increased financing is required for the development of basic ICT infrastructure and application development; ICT literacy and basic education; generation of appropriate local content in local languages amongst others. The challenge is one which will require innovative vision, creative thinking and partnerships between all stake-holders at national, regional and international levels. This is an issue which links closely with the work of the WGIG Task Force on Financing Mechanisms (TFFM).

- One weakness of present systems is that people who are excluded today may be in that situation partly because their involvement is structurally hindered in more or less all "normal" partnerships for development within their country. This can often be the case for minorities and women. These groups will have additional problems when compared to other local groups, in developing Internet use and in benefiting from the ICT potentials to improve their quality of life. As long as they must turn to local, regional, national institutions for access,

their access is likely to be blocked. Today the most commonly used models (norms) for partnership building, funding packages etc require that the "nearest" authority at the relevant level be included in the process; this is the case for models such as "Triple Helix", "Clusters", and "innovation systems". Even if other paths may be open, e.g. access to technical expertise, generating the resources needed for implementing change can be dependant on relations with the same authorities that in other instances do not acknowledge the disadvantaged group as legitimate partners. As long as they are confined to only turning to such local, regional or national institutions for gaining access, their access may to be blocked.

- When talking about inclusion, ethnicity is often a point of departure, as indigenous peoples and minorities are communities that are frequently denied access to decision-making processes that affect their access to ICTs. Often the solution that is proposed includes finding organs that represent each of the more specific groups and investing in them the authority or government position that is required. But dividing a geographic area into smaller and smaller sections, or a population into smaller and smaller groups, can be counter productive to the goal of increasing overall access. Increasing nationalism and acceptance of ethnicity as a legitimate base for claims on "national" rights creates its own issues. As the units of identity are increasingly refined, more rather than fewer people will find themselves in the position of falling out of the norms, of failing to fill the norms for access to resources and participation. For example, it is known that women's rights are seldom prioritized but quite often disregarded on the grounds of being "inauthentic for our people", or as ideas associated with the dominant population one is differentiating from. This same effect is found in asserting the rights of the disabled or of people whose sexual preference or gender expression differs from the local norm; these rights may often be less respected in such smaller units than in the larger, "majority" societies.

- On the other hand, in some parts of the present system there is the possibility to reach beyond local, regional, national levels when the problems described above are located, directly to international co-operation.

4. Actors (who, with whom?)

- International: UN Agencies including the UNICT Task Force, ITU-D, UNESCO, World Bank, UNDP, UNIFEM, UNDAW.
- Regional: EU Information Society Programmes, UN regional commissions
- National:
  - Government Donors e.g. SIDA in Sweden, DFID (UK), SDC (Switzerland), DGIS/Hivos (Netherlands), CIDA (Canada), USAID (USA), several
  - Foundations (eg MacArthur, Ford)
  - Governments: 'Social Exclusion/inclusion' policy units; national machineries (gender),etc.

- Local/Civil society:
  - In many cases the initiatives to make Internet use a matter of the people they "represent". E.g. educational organizations that initiate Internet Portals for educational purposes, but which often are also used by business as well as private users.

- Media and ICT policy advocacy, 'cyber-rights' and civil liberties groups are important actors who raise awareness, mobilize and lobby for more socially inclusive policies at national, regional and international levels
- Locally based rural development organizations or 'front line' community support services, which are often active in demanding, developing and delivering health care services, micro-credit schemes, capacity building, skills training and education and services for increased personal security.
- Organisations who provide technical support, ICT skills training and capacity building, delivery of refurbished computers
- Other actors can be individuals who takes initiatives to develop internet use and/or Internet services for business purposes (example: a person who knows a 'little used' language develops a business for teaching this language to the young who do not live in the core area where the language is spoken, using the Internet)

5. Forums (where?)
    (a) who participates
    (b) nature of forum

Considering the complex and mutiplicitous nature of issues involved in addressing social inclusion issues, it is difficult to list all of the fora which address social inclusion issues. Some of the key and current processes are outlined below:

Forums

International:
- WSIS
- UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity (with respect the protection of national 'cultural industries and products'
- WIPO (with respect the intersection of Intellectual Property Rights and social inclusion)
- WTO (with respect the intersection of Trade in Telecoms and Trade of multi-media 'products' and social inclusion)
- Beijing Plus 10 review (Media and ICTs, Chapter J), specifically addressing gender equality and women's empowerment
- The Millennium Development Goal review will also address some aspects of social inclusion with respect the role of ICTs in achieving the MDGs
- UNICT Task Force
- ITU-D Instambul Action Plan

Regional:
- European Union
- UN Economic regional Commissions
- NEPAD (Africa)
- others …

National:
- Government ICT policy processes

(a) Who participates

WSIS: governments, private sector, CSOs, intergovernmental organisations
WTO: governments, observers
ITU: governments, ITU sector members including sector members from the private sector
UNESCO: governments, observers, accredited CSOs
WIPO: governments, observers
Beijing+10: (Commission on the Status of women): governments, ECOSOC accredited CSOs)
MDG+5: governments, ECOSOC accredited CSOs
UNICT TF: governments, private sector, CSOs, intergovernmental organisations, observers

European Union: governments,
UN Economic regional Commissions: governments, accredited CSOs
NEPAD (Africa): governments

National Government ICT policy processes: depends on situation in each country. Some countries have quite transparent and accessible policy processes, some are completely inaccessible to non-government participation. In general, the barriers to participation in national policy processes are bureaucratic, resources, skills in lobbying and advocacy, sufficient knowledge of issues and confidence to advocate.

(b) Nature of forum

Primarily intergovernmental with some observer participation
WTO, ITU[1], UNESCO, WIPO, Beijing+10: (Commission on the Status of women),
MDG+5

Intergovernmental with Multi-stakeholder participation
WSIS

Multi-stakeholder
UNICT TF

National Government ICT policy processes: depends on situation in each country. Some countries have quite transparent and accessible policy processes, some are completely inaccessible to non-government participation. In general,

6. Governance mechanisms (how?)
    (a) objectives of the rules system
    (b) content of principles, norms and rules

It is unclear to what extent Internet governance can contribute to resolving the challenges of social inclusion. The Internet offers possibilities that are often realized in improbable ways, for example gaining an education through Internet cafés.

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[1]ITU differs in that Sector Members have formal status and are not merely observers.

Many proclamations are made, and much research is funded. There is, however, a gap between the words and the actions that often creates a wall between research/critique on the one hand and policymaking/implementation on the other.

Gender, disability and indigenous studies worldwide can provide much background material and have produced a plethora of analysis on discrepancies between words and action.

7. Adequacy measured against criteria / benchmarks set out in Declaration of Principles:
      (a) multilateral
      (b) transparent
      (c) democratic
      (d) capacity to address Internet governance in a coordinated manner
      (e) multi-stakeholder approach
      (f) other

- While the efforts to increase social inclusion are inadequate, it is difficult to ascribe this deficiency to current Internet governance.

- For wider inclusion of people, services that are not text based, are needed. Equipment needs to be developed for use based on pictures, symbols, and sound. It is important to include equipment that does require literacy and the ability to handle a keypad. While many efforts for education are underway, they often require literacy as a base condition.

- While there are many policies regarding the inclusion of the disabled, little is actually done with policies for inclusion often ignored.
    - There is a need for the disabled to be enabled to take part in the development of content and services that are genuinely useful for those with disabilities.

8. Additional comments

It must be noted that in many cases the efforts by people who are "not included" for inclusion show as activities that fall under one of the other issues, e.g. in "Multilingualism and content". One way to deal with this is making this item a "horizontal" one, meaning that it should be acknowledged as being developed and expressed in a "distributed" manner in and through a number of other issues