



world summit
on the information society
gender caucus



CRDI



Mapping Gender in the Information Society: From Reality to Discourse

WSIS Gender Caucus, UNDP and IT for Change

In partnership with IDRC and UNIFEM, South Asia

Date: 31 October 2005

Venue: Yontara Room, Menam Riverside Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

About the Speakers

Session 1: Assessing Women's Empowerment in the Information Society – presentation of research

Prof. Deborah L Wheeler

Prof. Deborah L. Wheeler teaches in the department of Political Science at the United States Naval Academy. She holds a PhD in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Chicago. She has published widely on the impact of the information revolution in Western Asia and North Africa. A portion of her research specifically addresses the gendered nature of IT diffusion and use in the region. She has also written about the political importance of Internet cafes as locations for mobilizing civic culture; and as well upon the emerging knowledge economy and information society in the region. Her research has taken her to the region many times including extend field work in Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Syria, Israel/Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. She is fluent in Modern Standard Arabic.

Dr. Wheeler's most recent publications include a book entitled "The Internet in the Middle East: Global Expectations/Local Imaginations in Kuwait" which is due out from State University of New York Press in November of 2005.

Dr. Wheeler has held a number of important research fellowships including awards from the United States Fulbright Commission, the University of Washington Center for Internet Studies, the Berglund Center for Internet Studies at Pacific University, and most recently from the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford, England.

In addition to her academic work, Dr. Wheeler is also an international consultant. She has worked most recently for the United Nations Development Program in Jordan, the Zein al-Sharaf Institute for Development, Amman, and the Digital Opportunity Trust of Canada. Her work with these organizations has focused mostly on the uses of information technology in promoting human development, with a special focus on the lives of women.

Angela M. Kuga Thas

Angela M. Kuga Thas, a Malaysian, is an actively engaged advocate for women's empowerment and non-discrimination. Her current interests lie in the areas of gender and information and communication technology (ICT), gender and sexuality, social entrepreneurship, and young people's, particularly young women's, empowerment.

Angela has been particularly active in supporting the work of the Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) in its gender and ICT policy advocacy during the processes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and played a key role in the successful Malaysian replication of the Women's Electronic Network



Training (WENT), a regional ICT training workshop which was jointly managed annually by the APC WNSP and APWINC on behalf of AWORC from 1999 to 2004. She played a lead role in designing the Seed Grant and Small Innovative Projects (SGSIP) Fund of the GKP. Through these, and various other projects Angela has actively advocated the integration of a gender analysis and focus for all collaborative or supported projects, as well as the wider use of APC WNSP's Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) (www.apcwomen.org/gem).

A keen advocate for sexual rights, Angela is part of a small informal group of concerned Malaysian citizens who have continued to monitor the media on sexual discrimination. Her qualitative research (undertaken in 2004) entitled "Silent Runs around the Sapphic Bush: Exploring the Sexuality of Young Women who Love Women in Malaysia" focuses on lesbianism in Malaysia and is expected to "provoke" the sexual rights agenda forward.

She is currently a Board member of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), a global network of people and organisations dedicated to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's rights around the world that reaches 80 countries worldwide.

- Mridula Swamy, IT for Change, (on the South Asia perspective)
- Vanessa Griffin (on behalf of Sharon Bhagwan Rolls on the Pacific perspective)

Session 2: Response to the Research Findings presented in Session 1

Cecilia Ng

Cecilia Ng is an independent feminist researcher and advocate from Malaysia. She was previously an Associate Professor at Universiti Putra Malaysia before she opted for early retirement in 2000. From 1994 till 1999 she was a Research Fellow at the United Nations University Institute for New Technologies (Maastricht, The Netherlands). She was Visiting Associate Professor (2000 – 2005) at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, where she is also an editor of the AIT-based *Journal of Gender, Development and Technology*.

Cecilia has conducted research and published widely on gender, development and work, with a focus on globalisation, technological change and women's employment. Her latest publications include *Teleworking and Development in Malaysia* (ed.) (2001), and *Gender and the Digital Economy: Perspectives from the Developing World* (2005, edited with Swasti Mitter), Sage.

She is active in women's groups in Malaysia and is the founder member of the Women's Development Collective (WDC) and the All Women's Action Society (AWAM), where she is involved in their research, training and advocacy. Together with two other feminist activists, she has just completed writing a book on the experiences of the women's movement in Malaysia to be published by Routledge in 2006.

Kalyani Menon Sen

Kalyani Menon-Sen is a feminist activist and researcher who is currently with JAGORI, a Delhi-based women's resource centre. She has been working for the last 18 years on issues of women's rights, and has engaged with a range of constituencies from grassroots women's groups to UNDP. Her focus in recent years has been on making visible the impacts of macro-economic policies on marginalised groups of women. She is the author of "Women in India: How Free? How Equal?"



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- Yvonne Underhill-Sem (DAWN, Pacific Islands);

Session 3: From Alternate to New paradigms : What do voices from the grassroots say?

Dr. Shoba Arun

Dr Shoba Arun is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. After completing her M.Phil in Applied Economics from India, she obtained her Ph.D in Sociology, in 1999, from the University of Manchester, UK. She has eight years of teaching experience in the field of sociology and development studies and her research interests are in the field of globalisation, gender, information and communication technology, poverty studies and employment. She has published widely on gender issues in various journals such as the Feminist Economist, Journal of International Development etc. She has served on Boards such as the Women's Commission, One World, Northern Ireland and the Indian Community Association, Belfast

She is currently engaged with two research projects, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, UK (**Chronic Poverty among tribal women in India** awarded under the Social Sciences grants scheme). The other is based on '**Developing ICT based enterprises for Poor Women**' funded by the Department for International Development, UK along with the University of Manchester. This project draws on the successful experience of 'Kudumbashree, a State Poverty Eradication Scheme in Kerala, India that helps poor women set up ICT based enterprises, thus illustrating initiatives to overcome the gender digital divide in the Information Society.

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Presenters:

- Raijeli Nicole, ISIS International, Philippines, on Media Initiatives From Asia-Pacific
- Aruna Sundararajan, Global E-schools and Communities Initiative, on How the community and the state have combined synergies for new paradigms in the information society.

Session 4: Mapping the Information Society Discourse – What does WSIS mean for gender?

L. Muthoni Wanyeki

L. Muthoni Wanyeki is a political scientist who works on development communications, gender and human rights and has published in these fields. She is currently the Executive Director of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), a pan-African membership organisation set up in 1988 and based in Nairobi, Kenya. FEMNET works towards African women's development, equality and other human rights through advocacy at the regional and international levels, training on gender analysis and mainstreaming as well as communications.

With respect to the media, she writes a weekly column for the East African. She is a member of the Media Council of Kenya and serves as the Deputy President for the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC)-International. She is also a regional advisor for Article 19 and a board member of the Communication for Social Change Consortium (CFSC).



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Presenters:

- Gigi Francesco, DAWN,
- Karen Banks, APC,

Session 5: Articulating gender concerns in the information society

This session will be a reflection by two commentators of the day's proceedings and what the discussions signal for women's empowerment in the Information Society, flagging key mandates for different actors, with a focus on the shape that the information society is taking in the Asia Pacific region, and the challenges and opportunities it contains for gender equality.

Commentators:

- Anita Gurumurthy, WSIS-GC and IT for Change
- Vivienne Wee, Associate Director Southeast Asia Research Center (SEARC)