PRESS STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Report calls for safer internet for women's and girls' rights

BALI, 23 October 2013 – A new report released today by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos) explores women’s rights and gender through the lens of information and communications technologies (ICTs).

This year’s edition of GISWatch shows that gains in women’s rights made online are not always certain or stable. While access to the internet for women has increased their participation in the social, economic and governance spheres, there is another side to these opportunities: online harassment, cyberstalking and violence against women online, all of which are on the rise globally. This GISWatch edition is a call to action to increase participation of women in all forms of technological governance and development, and to reaffirm and strengthen their rights online.

The report was launched at the eighth Internet Governance Forum in Bali, Indonesia, a global policy dialogue where activists, academics, business and government representatives exchange their views on the present and the future of the internet.

Reports from around the globe

GISWatch 2013 features reports from 45 countries that span the globe on topics like the rights of domestic workers, trafficking in women, participation in governance, child brides and the right to abortion. A series of expert thematic reports address issues such as access to infrastructure, participation, online disobedience, and sexuality online.

"There are many important issues that these reports raise, but the one thing, as editor, that struck me was how invasive and threatening the online space for women can be -- if they exercise and insist on their sexual and human rights," said GISWatch Editor Alan Finlay.

“According to the ITU in 2013 globally, 37% of all women are online, compared with 41% of all men. Despite this significant number, there is very little conversation and focus on how the internet and other technologies impact women's realities. This edition of GISWatch responds to this gap and shows why including a gender perspective and surfacing women's rights in discussions about the internet and technology are a prerequisite for good governance and the full realisation of rights,” stated Jan Moolman, APC Women's Rights Programme project coordinator.

Women's empowerment and ICTs

“The power of women's organising combined with the power of the internet offers exponential opportunities for expanding social justice and equality. Seizing those opportunities -- and preventing the co-optation of both -- requires the kind of thoughtful analysis and "finger-on-the-pulse" insights that GISWatch offers. It provides a much-needed bridge between internet rights and women's human rights and raises issues that should be on all agendas as discussions on the post-2015 development agenda move forward,” said contributor Joanne Sandler, Senior Associate of Gender at Work.

“Empowered women, defending and claiming their rights, are change agents that
make equality and social justice for women a reality. ICT and internet are offering tools to reach a broad audience. Hivos facilitates alternative information streams by making online content of local bloggers and citizen journalists— including media productions from women activists and women groups— accessible for the broader public and traditional media. This stimulus creates more diversity in the media landscape and offers citizens— men and women— spaces where their voices can be heard,” stated Loe Schout, Head of Bureau Culture, ICT & Media at Hivos.

About GISWatch

Since its first edition in 2007, GISWatch has been growing as a space for critical reflection around issues that are relevant for the development of inclusive and open information societies. In a collaborative way, civil society offers its perspectives of advancements and challenges related to the implementation of commitments made by governments at national and global levels to set conditions for accessing and using ICTs in a way that contributes to development goals, to strengthen democracy and achieve social justice.

GISWatch is published annually and is a joint initiative by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos).