

Association for Progressive Communications

APC's Strategic Action Plan - 2009-2012

Short Version

About this document

This is a shortened version of APC's Strategic Action Plan for 2009-2012. It presents APC's strategic priorities, strategies, APC-wide activities and the organisations and groups we hope to engage with during the four-year period. It also includes a brief overview of the strategic planning process, and information about APC.

About APC¹

Founded in 1990, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) is an international social justice network and non-profit organisation that wants everyone to have easy, affordable and equal access to information and communications technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and mobile phones, to improve their lives.

APC's strength lies in our membership – a mix of organisations from developing and developed countries – and our professional activist staff, and their combined knowledge and experience of promoting and using ICTs at local, national and regional levels. Through both our members and staff, APC gains local perspectives and contact with grassroots organisations that we integrate into our global work. In January 2009, APC had 52 members in 37 countries.

Given our longstanding alliances with human rights, environmental justice and women's rights networks, as well as with other social movements, we are especially interested in ensuring that the people who are actively trying to make the world a more just and equitable place are able to use the internet as effectively as possible to do their important work.

APC's strategic priorities for 2009-2012

Advocate for affordable internet access for all	Make technology work to sustain the environment	Use emerging technologies for social change
Build the "information commons"	Secure and defend internet rights	Improve governance, especially internet governance

In a two-year long process starting in 2006, APC members and staff assessed the context faced by APC and civil society organisations using internet and other ICTs for social change.² We considered trends in how people are accessing the internet; in internet and information policy and regulation; and in social networking and media. We also looked at factors like climate change which will have a huge impact on lives and livelihoods in the coming years.

As a result of these deliberations, members identified six strategic priorities that APC must tackle in the next four years towards achieving APC's enduring vision, that *"all people have easy and affordable access to a free and open internet to improve their lives and create a more just world."*

¹For more information about APC, visit www.apc.org

²For an outline of the context and its challenges and opportunities for networking for social justice, see: www.apc.org/en/news/apc-strategic-priorities-2009-12-challenges-and-op



Representatives from Colombia, UK, Cameroon, Canada, Nigeria and South Africa discuss the future APC priorities. Photo: Mihaly Bako

1 Advocating for affordable internet access for all

APC believes the internet is a global public good that has become essential to meeting most people's daily information and communication needs. Millions of people still do not have affordable, reliable and sufficient internet access.

APC will continue to campaign to lower the price of internet connectivity, especially broadband, with a specific emphasis on Africa and Latin America. We will also respond to the immense opportunity presented by mobile telephony as a means of accessing the internet. We will advocate for policies that ensure openness, from open standards to open content and freedom from censorship and surveillance. APC has traditionally worked with social change organisations, and we will continue to open policy spaces for these groups, ensuring their voices and concerns are taken into account by policy makers.

2 Using emerging technologies for social change

APC has assisted civil society groups to work online since 1990 and we adopted a pro-free software policy in 1998. APC has always had a hands-on and *critical* approach to technologies.

As new tools emerge, we will evaluate them from the point of view of their effectiveness for strengthening networking for social justice, and compare them to the old tools for efficiency and appropriateness for users, especially those in developing contexts. Internet is APC's primary area however, and with more people connecting to the internet via mobile devices, we will engage areas of convergence.

3 Making technology work to sustain the environment

APC will raise significant awareness of the environmental cost of the production, use and disposal of ICTs and promote policies and projects that use sustainable consumption models. In a world increasingly affected by climate change, we will support the use of ICTs to help people whose lives and livelihoods are under threat to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. As an ICT-focused network, we will reduce our own carbon footprint.

4 Building the “information commons”³

Access to information and knowledge is essential for development and change. The internet presents a unique opportunity for maximising access to information, and for building and sharing in an information commons. APC will raise awareness of the value and importance of an information commons – including the adoption of open licences and free and open source software – particularly with policy makers, civil society and the ICT industry, and will work towards expanding it.

5 Securing and defending internet rights

APC has a vision of a world where “all people have easy and affordable access to a free and open internet to improve their lives and create a more just world.” Inspired by this, APC wrote a groundbreaking Internet Rights Charter⁴ back in 2001, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It categorises the rights needed to keep the internet open and accessible to all into key areas including access for all, freedom of expression and association, access to knowledge, shared learning and creation, privacy and good governance. We will encourage policy makers, civil society groups and the technical communities we work with to defend the internet as a global public good and include internet rights as an integral part of any policy discussion.

6 Improving governance, especially governance of the internet

The internet can be used by civil society, communities and individuals as a powerful and effective tool for more transparent and participatory governance and for holding government accountable. APC will investigate good practices and apply them to further improve and maintain new models of governance, particularly of the internet.

Crosscutting goals

Our success in each of the strategic priorities will also be measured by looking at how our results contribute to two goals that are essential to real social change and internet freedoms:

Gender equality and women’s empowerment

To integrate gender equality in information society policy and practice and to build leadership and capacity within the women's movement to use ICTs effectively to eliminate discrimination against women and promote empowerment.

“Openness”

To promote open content and alternative licensing of content, freedom of expression and information, open access to infrastructure, information and policy processes, and free and open source software.

APC's detailed 2009-2012 Strategic Action Plan is available to APC's members and partners and people interested in supporting our work and can be obtained by writing to info@apc.org.

³The “information commons” can be roughly defined as an open online space which is collectively built and where information and knowledge are freely shared. The term “commons” comes from the Middle Ages and referred to the land or common grounds that villagers shared for collective needs such as grazing their animals.

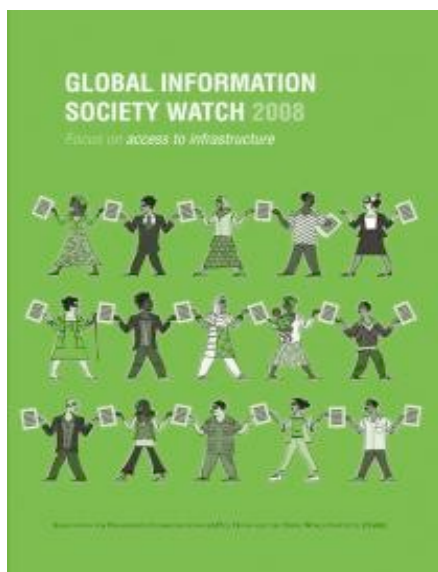
⁴ The charter was updated in 2006 and has been translated into twenty languages. It is available at: www.apc.org/en/pubs/briefs/apc-internet-rights-charter

APC-wide activities and campaigns for 2009-2012

APC is a network as well as an organisation with a programme structure. APC's strongest activities are often those taking place at the local or national level, where the real impact can be seen, yet learning from and implemented worldwide. We work best when programme and member staff work together to conceptualise projects and campaigns and then implement them together.

The strategic plan proposes a number of APC-wide initiatives, some of which have already started, and we expect that new ones will emerge. Here are a selection:

Global Information Society Watch



This annual watchdog report⁵ which started in 2007 looks at a different area of internet development and freedoms each year and reports on the state of the information society across the globe. By 2012, we aim to have country reports from 100 nations. The theme for 2009 is access to knowledge and information.

APC's action research network

The APC network of activists, researchers and activist researchers will focus on the information commons, ICTs and climate change/sustainability, and mobile phones and the internet. APC's research is always aimed at informing on-the-ground advocacy, so for example we may link our mobile and internet research to a campaign to open up standards in the mobile telephone industry to make it easier to produce content and applications for mobile phones and bring down the costs of mobile connectivity.

The Rapid Response Network



To fight online censorship, APC is re-forming and growing a network of people and computers first established in 2000 to help human rights, environmental and other activist groups publish and preserve content online in repressive contexts, and to resist censorship and cyber-vandalism and attacks. Experiences will be catalogued to raise awareness about the importance of freedom of expression and working securely online. We will also inject the learning into national, regional and international policy arenas.

Take Back The Tech!⁶

This global campaign on ICTs and violence against women is part of a broader campaign around using technology most effectively to meet the Millennium Development Goals that focus on gender equality.

Campaigns are already taking place in countries as diverse as Cambodia and Brazil and we expect dozens more countries to join the campaign to stop violence against women perpetrated online or using technology (for example, the harassment of women cell phone owners in Pakistan), and to use technology to promote women's equality instead.



⁵www.giswatch.org

⁶www.takebackthetech.net

Groups and institutions we plan to engage with during 2009-2012⁷

APC will engage with a variety of groups, individuals, and organisations in each of the strategic priority areas. They include partners we collaborate with, and people we hope to influence:

- Technology service providers, developers and trainers
- Information and content creators/workers (including artists, library networks and indigenous knowledge groups)
- Private sector and private sector associations
- Media
- Civil society groups and NGOs
- Policy makers, governments, regulators, intergovernmental agencies
- Internet technical community
- Community-based organisations (including local multi-stakeholder groups or networks)
- Academics and researchers
- Development community (including donors, NGOs, ministries of development, international development agencies)
- Consumer groups
- APC network and APC WNSP (Women's Networking Support Programme) members

How do we hope to influence these groups? In relation to the first group, for example, APC's aim is to work with technology developers to encourage their involvement in social movements and to increase their understanding of policy and rights issues such as privacy, internet rights, environmental justice, gender equality and freedom of expression. In relation to the media, APC aims to reach a broader, offline audience by fostering partnerships with mainstream media which reach millions regionally and in national print media where we have projects based. We will continue to include the media as a key stakeholder in our initiatives and not view the media exclusively as a conduit for our message (a typical mistake of NGOs).

How APC developed the 2009-2012 strategic plan

APC worked in phases to develop this strategic action plan. During 2006 and 2007 members and staff met regionally to assess progress in implementing the 2004-2008 action plan and identify priorities for the 2009-2012 cycle.⁸ From late 2007 to early 2008, members developed strategic priorities and a broad vision for 2009-2012 and identified the primary groups APC should influence. Later staff and the board of directors developed the detailed strategic plan.

APC used a logical framework approach in its 2004-2008 strategic plan and found that using this as a basis for evaluating the organisation's effectiveness was difficult, in part because of the difficulty of pre-defining meaningful indicators. For this new cycle, we have chosen to draw on the Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change methodologies.⁹ "Outcome mapping works on the principle that development is essentially about people... [It] recognises that development efforts will more likely be successful when they devolve continuing responsibility to local people and to local institutions."¹⁰ The Most Significant Change methodology is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation which involves the collection of significant change stories as told by the people involved and affected; in APC's case, the stories will come from local stakeholders, partners, members and staff.¹¹

⁷The detailed strategic plan establishes specific goals for each group.

⁸Debbie Budlender *Mid Term Assessment, August 2007* www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/all/all/mid-term-assessment-apcs-2004-8-action-plan

⁹Sarah Earl, Fred Carden and Terry Smutylo *Outcome Mapping: The Challenges of Assessing Development Impacts* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001)

¹⁰Debbie Budlender in an internal report on monitoring and evaluation in APC, July 2008.

¹¹Rick Davies and Jess Dart *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use* (April 2005)