



Frequently Asked Questions About Conducting a National WSIS Consultation Process

Version 1, June 2003

**Developed by the
ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE
COMMUNICATIONS (APC)**

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**This is a work in progress.
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ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS (APC)

Frequently Asked Questions about conducting a national WSIS consultation process, June 2003

1. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) hosted by the United Nations, will be held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2003. The Summit will bring together all of the world's nations in an attempt to develop a global framework to deal with the challenges posed by the information society, and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents.

Whether this goal will be attained remains to be seen. Nevertheless, it is an important opportunity to critically engage a range of issues related to media and information and communication technologies that are relevant to civil society.

The Summit also creates an opportunity for government, civil society and private sector actors to come together, at national as well as regional and international levels, to engage in debate and cooperation towards using ICTs to create a better world.

The overall World Summit on Information Society process has two phases. After the event of December of 2003, the process will continue at regional and national levels. The second Summit, to be held in Tunis in November 2005, will review the process and progress made, and identify a possible further plan of action. Therefore, it is important to remember that national efforts can and should continue beyond December 2003.

APC believes that CSOs need to engage with ICT policy issues at all levels. We see the WSIS as an opportunity for CSOs to collaborate and gain confidence and skill in ICT policy lobbying and advocacy. Ultimately, to effect change in their own environments, they need to apply these skills at national level.

National WSIS consultations serve several important purposes:

- ~~✍~~ influencing specific country level input into the WSIS process
- ~~✍~~ forging interaction between government, civil society and the private sector
- ~~✍~~ building skill, experience and confidence among CSOs to engage ICT policies
- ~~✍~~ creating demand at the national level for government to implement ICT policies they subscribe to at international level
- ~~✍~~ linking international lobbying to lobbying at the national level

The goal of this document is to outline the steps and key aspects that might be considered when organizing or participating in a national WSIS consultation. We hope you find this tool useful.

2. GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT WSIS?

Why participate in WSIS?

The WSIS provides a good opportunity to open spaces for debate and discussion, to create consensus and basic agreements between multiple stakeholders in relation to key information society issues, not only at global level, but also at national level. It is an excellent opportunity to lobby government to take action on ICT policy and raise awareness of the issues at national, regional and global levels.

The process is also a great learning opportunity for CSOs that are new to the ICT policy process. By engaging in the issues outlined at the WSIS, CSOs begin to articulate their positions and gain valuable experience in lobbying that can be taken back to their home countries. It will also help CSOs develop positions, lobby and develop the understanding that will enable them participate in some of the other international processes that are relate to ICT policies, for example:

- ✍ The World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- ✍ The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)
- ✍ Internet Company for Assigning Names and Numbers (ICANN)

What are the intended outputs of the WSIS?

At the end of the December 2003 Summit, governments are expected to have adopted:

- ✍ a declaration of principles that outlines their vision for 'the information society'
- ✍ an action plan that outlines specific activities to be undertaken to realize the vision outlined in the declaration of principles

From within the United Nations there has been quite a strong push to have the WSIS articulate its vision and action plan keeping mind the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in September 2000 (these goals focus on the following areas: poverty; education; gender equality; child mortality; maternal health; HIV/AIDS and other diseases; environment; global partnership). For detail on the MDGs see <http://www.developmentgoals.org/>. Some civil society groups have questioned this in the context of the many other social and development goals which have been agreed on by governments at previous UN summits (most which are still to be effectively realised).

What is the WSIS timeline?

Below is a general WSIS timeline. Refer to the online version of this document for specific deadlines, for example, dates by which applications for travel fellowships need to be submitted.

Key Events

25 - 30 May 2002	African Regional Conference , Bamako, Mali http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/bamako.html
17 - 18 June 2002	UN General Assembly Meeting for ICT for Development , New York, USA

1 - 5 July 2002	Global Preparatory Committee 1 , Geneva, Switzerland http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/pc1/index.html
16 - 18 September 2002	Content and Themes Informal Meeting , Geneva, Switzerland
9 - 11 September 2002 and 23 - 24 October 2002	Bishek- Moscow Conference on the Information Society , Bishek and Moscow http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/other/related/bishkek_moscow/index.html
7 - 9 November 2002	European Regional Conference , Bucharest, Romania http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/bucharest.html
13 - 15 January 2003	Asian Regional Conference , Tokyo, Japan http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/tokyo.html
27 – 30 January 2003	Latin America and Caribbean Regional Conference , Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/bavaro.html
4 - 6 February 2003	Western Asia Preparatory Conference , Beirut, Lebanon http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/regional/beirut.html
17 – 28 February 2003	Global Preparatory Committee 2 http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/pc2/index.html
16 – 18 June 2003	Pan-Arab Regional Meeting , Cairo, Egypt
15 – 18 July 2003	Intersessional Meeting , Paris, France http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/intersessional/index.html
15 – 26 September 2003	Global Preparatory Committee 3 http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/prepcom/pc3/index.html
10 – 12 December 2003	World Summit on the Information Society , Geneva
2005	World Summit on the Information Society , Tunis

The official WSIS Event Calendar provides updates on the timeline.

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/index.html>

Important deadlines for Prepcom 3

1 August 2003: Deadline for requesting accreditation for prepCom-3 and Geneva Phase of the Summit. <http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/accreditation.html>

For a downloadable document of key events and deadlines go to:

http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_single.asp?lang=en&id=639

3. CONVENING A NATIONAL WSIS CONSULTATION

Why is it necessary to have a national WSIS consultation?

A national WSIS consultation can be an important mechanism for broadening social participation, assuring national interests are being represented in global processes, and building consensus or basic agreement between all social actors on the most important information society issues.

The national consultation process is also important because it creates a general awareness of the WSIS and can begin to generate expectations of action and implementation after the Summit. Demand for action from civil society, the private sector, and the media as well as from those within the government sector is an essential part of the policy-implementation dynamic. Without demand from below and demand from within government is unlikely to deliver on promises made at the WSIS.

Few governments are organizing national consultations, and local CSOs can thus play an important role by taking the initiative in convening such consultations. Remember that the national delegation to the WSIS consists of government representatives and, since the national delegations have much greater power to influence proceedings, it is important that CSOs lobby their governments at a national level to take on some of the issues that are important to them.

Checklist: Why is it necessary to have a national WSIS consultation?

It creates awareness
It broadens social participation
It builds consensus between social actors
It creates demand and expectation for delivery
It is an opportunity for CSOs to lead the process and thereby optimise its interests

Are there different types of national consultation?

There can be various types of national consultation. For example:

- a civil society only consultation
- thematic civil society consultations (e.g. gender, labour, media)
- civil society and government
- civil society and the private sector
- a multi-stakeholder consultation that bring together civil society organisations, the presidency, ministries, government officials, parliamentarians, academics and the private sector

Irrespective of the type of consultation, the process should be participatory and inclusive.

Checklist: Different types of national consultation

Make sure you communicate to participants what type of consultation you are convening.

What do you expect from a national WSIS consultation?

It is important for you and your organization to have clear ideas about what you want to achieve with a consultation process. Defining goals and objectives and measurable outputs are critical to planning your immediate and future steps.

Goals	Objectives	Measurable outputs
Mobilizing participation, and building networking	Forge closer links and stimulate networking between government and nongovernmental stakeholders	Establish a national WSIS organizing group
	Develop and strengthen strategic partnerships and linkages with other CSOs and also other relevant stakeholders	Establish inclusive planning group for the national WSIS consultation process
	Open up a channel of communication between individuals interested in the process	A contact list of people who want to be part of the process
	Set up short, medium and long term mechanisms to activate the debate and social participation in the ICT policy process.	Online discussion forums
Raising awareness of ICT policy issues	Increase awareness of WSIS and of ICT issues	National WSIS web resources
	Opportunity for outreach to the media to create awareness of WSIS and the issues it is trying to address/not addressing	At least 3 articles in the media about WSIS and the consultation
		At least one incidence of coverage on radio and television on the issue
Building capacities	Build capacity in understanding ICT policies	National ICT policy workshops
	Build capacity to lobby and advocate	Advocacy training workshops
Strategic engagement with the WSIS	Input into the formation of the national WSIS delegation	Ensure that there are at least 2 civil society representatives in the official national delegation convened by government
	Agreement on what the key issues are in your country	A WSIS national position paper
	Agreement on what the 'minimum' common outcomes are you would like to see from WSIS	A national list of key desired outcomes from WSIS
	An understanding of which caucuses members of the national delegation are part of, or should be part of	Listing of all WSIS caucuses and their conveners to be made available at national level
	Strategy for next steps of the national WSIS campaign that outlines who will do what	Detailed workplan with timeline
	Planning participation and presence at WSIS and WSIS preparatory meetings	Listing of who is involved in what element of WSIS, which events they attend, and where they will stay when at the events

What are the key elements of a national WSIS consultation?

These are also possible agenda items.

- ✍ Explanation of the process
- ✍ Overview of civil society, governments and private sector participation (main outcomes, opportunities, challenges)
- ✍ Discussing WSIS issues in the national context
- ✍ Discussion of key ICT policy issues relevant to stakeholders in the process, e.g. CSOs
- ✍ Identifying national WSIS priorities
- ✍ Sharing information about current WSIS involvements in your country
- ✍ Developing a contact list of people/organizations that are not at the consultation but who should be aware of the process
- ✍ Pointing people to resources about WSIS
- ✍ Gain commitments to participate from national CSOs and other relevant actors
- ✍ Engage in regional or global WSIS initiatives (regional/thematic caucuses)
- ✍ Identifying next steps

4. PLANNING A NATIONAL CONSULTATION

How does one start to plan a national consultation?

Avoid duplicating efforts

Make sure no one else (from any social sector) is planning a similar initiative before planning your own. Find out if there is any existing initiative related to WSIS or other 'Information Society' matters in your country. If the response is YES, consider collaborating with them; collective efforts can be more effective.

Tips on finding out about other initiatives

- ?? Doing a 'google' search on the keywords 'WSIS and 'name of country', e.g. 'WSIS and Cameroon' could reveal some good starting points.
- ?? Contact the facilitator of the WSIS regional caucus for information on national contacts.
- ?? The WSIS Civil Society Bureau has created an alphabetical listing of countries, highlighting those with active WSIS national processes.
- ?? Information on country preparations, national committees for the Summit and lists and contacts of civil society entities active at the national level.
http://www.geneva2003.org/wsis/index_c01_2_10.htm

Convene a planning or working group

Identify a few individuals, preferably representing a variety of interested organizations, to form a small planning group. Get them together to start planning your national WSIS consultation.

You could also work with a small group (1 or 2 people) from your own organization to start the process.

Having a motivated team will allow you to achieve your goals effectively and to build a network at the national level. It is also important here to build links between the national and the regional/global levels.

When forming your core team, you might consider:

- ✍ people with expertise in diverse information society issues who can provide key elements to the discussion and actions, and prepare background briefings
- ✍ people who have access to politicians, media workers, official representatives, and community leaders
- ✍ people who are part of existing regional caucuses
- ✍ people who are part of existing thematic caucuses

Set goals and develop a plan

At its first meeting, the planning group needs to develop a plan for the national WSIS consultation process. This can involve:

- ✍ brainstorming potential activities you hope to achieve together
- ✍ identifying goals and objectives
- ✍ discussing existing activities which should be linked to your initiative
- ✍ assigning roles and responsibilities to members of the planning group
- ✍ establishing what resources are required (e.g. funding; venues; electronic mailing lists)
- ✍ creation of a timeline for the national consultation process
- ✍ setting a date for the next meeting of the team.

Develop an invitation and contact list

The planning group should brainstorm who to involve in the national consultation. Begin to develop an e-mail address list of people to contact.

Make sure you cover a cross section of CSOs, for example:

- ✍ women's organizations
- ✍ community media
- ✍ ICT organizations
- ✍ trade unions
- ✍ human rights organizations
- ✍ freedom of expression advocates
- ✍ activist organizations in different fields (environmentalists, health advocates, etc.)
- ✍ academic and research institutions, e.g. media journalism and communication schools

Sources you can draw on to develop your contact list:

- ✍ Contact information of all the participants at WSIS Prepcor 2:
<http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcor2>
- ✍ A listing of National Commissions for UNESCO:
<http://www.unesco.org/ncp/natcom/pages/natcom.pdf>.
- ✍ Members of international NGOs such as the Association for Progressive Communications <http://www.apc.org/english/about/members/index.shtml> and <http://www.apcwomen.org>

Document your action plan

Write up your national consultation process plan. A simple document consisting of bullet point lists could be enough. Include all the activities, such as face to face meetings, online outreach, follow up with government and other forms of networking in the plan. Assign responsibility to specific people wherever possible.

This document could form the base of funding proposals.

5. IMPLEMENTING A NATIONAL CONSULTATION

This section is not a comprehensive guide to implementation, but contains useful tips and suggestions.

5.1 How can we raise awareness?

Examples of useful awareness raising activities include:

- ✍ Developing useful content and making it available via email and the web
- ✍ Let others know what you're doing: outreach
- ✍ Share what you know with others, and learn from what others know
- ✍ Hold face to face meetings and workshops

Developing content

Develop plain multilingual content (website strategy)

Create and link to relevant content on information society issues on your website. You might even create a webpage for your national WSIS consultation process. This page could be part of your own site, or of a national or regional civil society portal. These online resources are an important tool for raising awareness. You can make press briefings accessible on the website after you have sent them directly to your press list.

Include content and material about the WSIS as well as links to relevant WSIS sites, and sites of entities that are tracking the WSIS process, such as Communications Rights in the Information Society: CRIS (CRIS) and the APC.

Useful resources to link to:

The Official WSIS FAQ: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/basic/faqs.asp>

Communications Rights in the Information Society:

<http://www.crisinfo.org/live/index.php>

APC: <http://www.apc.org>. Africa and Latin America sites have special WSIS sections.

See the list at the end of this document for more useful online resources.

Online outreach

Plan and have an online conference as a prelude to a face to face meeting. The outcomes of such discussions can provide very useful background for discussion at a face to face meeting. At the very least, send background information on WSIS by email to your contact list. Discuss the possibility of having local face to face meetings (e.g. in more than one major city in your country) to consult as widely as possible.

Multi-stakeholder meetings

Convene meetings, ideally after an online preparatory process, to discuss national priorities and needs in relation to the Information Society.

Tip on reducing time and cost of organizing meetings

Add a session on WSIS to meetings that are already taking place. This can also increase the number of people you reach and help you to avoid 'preaching to the converted'.

Meetings are the best means of building consensus on core issues that you want to see included in the national agenda for WSIS.

Workshops

Workshops are the best mechanism to train different social actors in areas relevant to WSIS, such as:

- ✍ ICT policies
- ✍ Gender and ICT
- ✍ ICT as a tool for social change
- ✍ Internet rights/communication rights
- ✍ Privacy issues
- ✍ Secure online communications
- ✍ Community media and ICT
- ✍ E-governance
- ✍ And more

The workshops can also be a space in which consensus can be developed on specific issues. For example, a workshop with national women's organizations on gender and ICT policy can be used to build a consensus on the issues that women want to be included in the WSIS agenda.

APC and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (<http://www.cto.int>) have developed a curriculum on ICT policy for civil society. For information on gaining access to the curriculum write to internet.rights@apc.org
For information related to the Latin American and the Caribbean region write to derechos.lac@apc.org and, on the African region, to africa.rights@apc.org.

For general training resources, including on communicating securely online, refer to ITrainOnline: <http://www.itrainonline.org>

Connect local to regional and global processes

While your focus is national, it is useful to be aware of regional and international civil society perspectives on WSIS.

The United Nations is the host of the WSIS, however, it is national governments which make decisions. Being aware of perspectives in your region, or internationally, can be helpful if you are looking for support when lobbying your government.

Find out if any of your neighbouring countries are engaging in national consultation processes. Some governments have already submitted national

documents as contributions for the Intersessional WSIS Period. It may be useful to review submissions from neighbouring countries.

Tips on where to find information

Government submissions for the Intersessional period:

http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/listing.asp?lang=en&c_event=pci|1&c_type=c|gov

Working with the press/media

Develop a press list

This will include names and contact details of publications, broadcasters, journalists and communications offices that you want to target to ensure they disseminate information about your national campaign. You might, for example, include:

- ~~///~~ science and technology reporters from local newspapers
- ~~///~~ media specialists
- ~~///~~ communications officers from government departments and ministries
- ~~///~~ communications officers from trade unions and large international NGOs
- ~~///~~ communications officers from political parties
- ~~///~~ community broadcasters
- ~~///~~ public and private radio and television news editors
- ~~///~~ magazines, electronic mailing lists that deal with development, ICTs, social justice, environmental issues, etc.
- ~~///~~ journalism schools

Reaching out to the media

Use your press list. Identify interested journalists and encourage them to write about the processes. Interview different key social actors and cover the activities that will be taking place. Produce background material for the press and regular press briefings throughout your national consultation process. Encourage journalists to attend WSIS and WSIS prepcoms.

5.2 Increasing participation

How can we ensure active participation?

By making people realize that ICT policy decisions impact on their local realities.

For example, if in your country there is a telecommunications monopoly that charges very high fees for all its services, most people will resent this situation. By lobbying for different policies they can change this situation.

Other key tools for promoting active participation:

- ~~///~~ keep people informed
- ~~///~~ measure and celebrate progress (for example, if consensus is reached on an issue, or government includes a civil society representative in their delegation)
- ~~///~~ have different sectors take responsibility for their part in the consultation process, yet,
- ~~///~~ maintain effective coordination
- ~~///~~ be inclusive and transparent
- ~~///~~ create opportunities for different people to attend WSIS prepcoms and the Summit

6. CONNECTING WITH DIFFERENT STAKE-HOLDERS

Tips on finding information about stake-holders involved in the WSIS

Go to: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/index.asp> and search by stake-holder 'type' (government, civil society, private sector, agencies), region, or delegation (country).

Refer the Civil Society Secretariat Country listing:

http://www.geneva2003.org/wsis/index_c01_2_10.htm

6.1 Governments

Identify relevant people within government

Find out who is in charge of information society related programs, initiatives or activities in government departments. Important departments to target are:

- /// trade and industry
- /// science and technology
- /// communications
- /// education
- /// environment

Tips on finding information on government delegates

Consult the ITU Government delegates tables (updated as of PrepCom II):

http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/cty_list.asp

Get to know who your delegates are. Make an appointment to see them and ask if they want to be involved in a national consultation.

It is quite common for governments to nominate representatives from their communications or trade ministries to be involved in WSIS . The WSIS agenda is about far more than infrastructure and trade. Are the departments which deal with education, women, youth, and development involved in your government's delegation?

If not, invite representatives of these departments to your multi-stakeholder meetings. You might succeed in facilitating diversifying your government's representation in WSIS.

What is your government's position on WSIS issues?

Find out what the national position is on ICT issues. If this information is not readily available, try to gain insight by, for example, reading national policy documents on telecommunications, development, information, and e-commerce.

This webpage will tell you if your government has made any official submissions to WSIS:

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/index.asp>

6.2 Civil Society

Is there civil society involvement in the official WSIS preparatory process in your country?

If yes, contact them and find out about their activities, experiences and lessons learned. That will help you to plan more effectively future steps and actions.

Information about NGO and civil society participants in WSIS can be found here:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/ogp_detail.asp?ID=WS-NGO

6.3 Private Sector

Is the private sector represented in the WSIS delegation?

If yes, consider making contact with them and including them in the consultation process

Information about private sector participants (also referred to as 'Business Sector Entities') involved in the WSIS can be found here:

http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/ogp_detail.asp?ID=PRIVATE

6.4 The United Nations and its Special Agencies

Are there any national offices of UN Agencies actively involved in WSIS in your country?. For example, UNESCO has been very active in supporting national level WSIS. The ILO (International Labour Organisation) can be helpful for those working with the labour movement.

UN agencies can often be useful allies and sources of support for civil society.

Tips on finding information about UN agencies

Full chart of UN Agencies: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/chart.html>

Some of the UN Programmes and other entities active in WSIS:

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<http://www.unctad.org/Templates/StartPage.asp?intItemID=2068>

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
Website: <http://www.undp.org/>

UNHCHR - Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights
Website: <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/teXis/vtx/home>

UNIFEM – UN Development Fund For Women (technically part of UNDP along with UNV United Nations Volunteers)
Website: <http://www.unifem.org/>

WTO – World Trade Organisation
Website: <http://www.wto.org>

Some of the Special Agencies active in WSIS:

FAO – the Food and Agricultural Organisation: <http://www.fao.org/>
WSIS info:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=5449

ILO - International Labour Organization: <http://www.ilo.org/>
WSIS info:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=5456

The World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org/>
WSIS info:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=5452

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:
<http://www.unesco.org>
WSIS info:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=4183

WHO - World Health Organization: <http://www.who.org>
WSIS info:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=17343

WIPO - World Intellectual Property Organization: <http://www.wipo.org>
WSIS info:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=17344

Information about UN and special agency participants involved in the WSIS can be found here:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/ogp_detail.asp?ID=UN

6.5 Lobbying for being part of your national government delegation

In many instances, 'official' WSIS Delegations (i.e. governments) welcome the participation of civil society representatives. Being an official member of your government's WSIS delegation could be quite useful, considering the level of access you might have to the WSIS process. It can be a very effective strategy, but it can have disadvantages.

Before making a decision to pursue this as part of your strategy, consider the pros and cons.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being part of the official delegation?

Advantages:

- You can influence the development of a national position positively, lobby and help to ensure the inclusion and treatment of the key issues as well as the needs/interests of civil society
- You can guide the work of your sector and, at the same time, support your government representatives in effectively proposing and defending national positions.
- You can be part of the governmental meetings and monitor and report on the process "in situ" (preparatory meetings and Summit itself)
- You can identify public sector allies from other countries

Disadvantages:

- You will most likely have to support your government's position in official elements of the WSIS process. If you do not fully support your government's position, or are in fact concerned about it, your lobbying activities may be hampered.
- You won't be as involved in discussions taking place within the external, independent civil society caucuses
- You won't be as aware of issues that CSOs have highlighted but which are being ignored by the official delegations
- You may be limited regarding raising contentious issues

Who will be the leader of your national delegation at the Summit and its preparatory events?

Find out who will represent your government at the December Summit and the preparatory meetings. You could invite them to speak at a meeting you convene.

Lobby your government to get WSIS positions adopted at a national policy level

7. DEVELOPING A NATIONAL POSITION AND BUILDING CONSENSUS

How does one start building consensus?

- ?? Work with smaller like-minded groups, if time allows. For example, you could ask women's organizations to discuss what their concerns are, and then what their 3 priorities for WSIS are.
- ?? By facilitating discussion in a way that encourages people to discuss common concerns, and again to prioritise.
- ?? By reviewing and discussing documents that have already been produced by the WSIS civil society working group on content and themes, and by the different regional or thematic caucuses.

Is consensus always the right way to go?

In most cases yes, but in some cases it might be more transparent to have different inputs into the WSIS process that represents specific view points.

8. USEFUL REFERENCES

(This section will be available in the online version of this document.)

National gender strategies document

Sample online discussion agenda

Sample meeting agenda

Sample invitation (SANGONeT's Theta)

Sample gender caucus consensus on WSIS

Sample national consensus on WSIS

9. CONCLUSION

The most important aspect of starting a national WSIS consultation process is that it is a beginning, and not an end. Irrespective of the outcomes of WSIS 2003, this process can begin to get people and organisations and government talking to one another about ICT policies. Inclusive ICT policy processes lead to better ICT policies.

10. ONLINE RESOURCES

Official WSIS web site: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>

UNESCO WSIS web site:

http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/prepcom2/org_detail.asp?ID=4183

UN Economic Commission for Africa site:

<http://www.uneca.org/aisi/bamako2002/>

APC and APC WNSP's submissions on WSIS Prepcom 2 documents:

<http://www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x=12235>

APC Latin America and the Caribbean WSIS web site:

<http://lac.derechos.apc.org/wsis>

Choike WSIS page (developed by APC's member in Uruguay, the Third World Institute, ITeM): http://www.choike.org/cgi-bin/choike/links/page.cgi?p=ver_indepth&id=703

CRIS website: <http://www.crisinfo.org>