

Don't translate, create!

WSIS Survey 2005: results of Hivos' second partner survey

In the Spring of 2005, Hivos conducted an in-depth survey amongst a number of its (ICT) partner organisations in the South. The survey provides input for Hivos' contribution to the second World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which will take place in November 2005 in Tunisia. This survey was a follow up to a more general introductory survey among all Hivos partners in 2004 to which over 200 partners replied (25%).



In 2003 Hivos participated in the World Summit on the Information Society. During the summit, Hivos emphasised the development angle of the issues at stake by advising the Dutch government and by participating in the Dutch delegation. In the months before the summit in Geneva, Hivos, IICD and OneWorld, organised several expert debates and compiled a list of recommendations

Recommendations included:

- Develop a people-centred information society
- Create local content, not just multilingual content
- Maintain focus on human rights
- Governments should protect freedom of expression
- Ensure fair use of information
- Stimulate open source software
- Provide community access points
- Acknowledge that access to information is access to power
- Develop national e-strategies
- Stimulate transparency in international trade
- Create an environment of trust
- Use ICTs as a tool towards poverty eradication

In the survey our partners were asked to select which 3 recommendations are most relevant to their organisation, and which are most relevant for their country.

The second part of the survey comprised a list of central themes. These outcomes were derived from the WSIS 2003 in Geneva (the Declaration

of Principles and Plan of Action: <http://www.wsis.org>). Respondents again selected the 3 most relevant themes for their organisation and for their country:

Central themes of the Geneva 2003 WSIS outcome

- The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICT4D
- Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive Information Society
- Access to information and knowledge
- Capacity building
- Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- Enabling environment
- ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life
- Cultural diversity & identity, linguistic diversity & local content
- Media
- Ethical dimensions of the Information Society
- International and regional cooperation
- Achieving the WSIS targets
- Digital solidarity agenda



WSIS, Geneva, 2003

45 organisations were invited to participate in the survey, and 22 responded (almost 50 %). These 45 were involved in the first phase of the WSIS, or are part of Hivos' Information, Media & Knowledge Sharing portfolio. Therefore they are relevant partners in terms of discussion on the themes of the WSIS and an inclusive information society.

The number of organisations involved, as well as the wide geographic spread and the diversity of activities and objectives of these organisations make it difficult to draw general conclusions. The survey does however give Hivos a Southern reflection on the recommendations and the outcome - critical notes and valuable insights - and input for Hivos' WSIS activities in 2005.

Alex Ruhunda, KRC (SED) Uganda

As much as ICT as a tool towards poverty eradication is important, the recommendation is written as a sentence which has no actual action attached, therefore it's hard to track its results, and as with other recommendations, this point is left hanging.

The organisations that were invited to participate in the survey are all in some way or another familiar with ICTs. Most of them indicated that they see ICT as the primary sector they work in; others combine or use ICTs to support their primary work and objectives. The respondents came from all over the world; although Asia was poorly represented in this survey.

The relevance of the Hivos recommendations

Organisational priorities

Equally in all regions, the organisations prioritised *local content*, not just *multilingual content* above all other Hivos recommendations. A *people-centred Information Society* is marked as important by African and international organisations, and to a lesser extent by Latin American organisations. They gave more importance to *Human rights central*, which is shared by most international organizations, but only mentioned by 2 out of the 10 African organisations. Another striking difference between Africa and Latin America is the high relevance given to *community access points* by African organisations, while only 1 of the Latin

American organisations shared this view. Connectivity is still a significant problem in the African context. The international organisations were the only ones that agreed to the statement that *governments should protect freedom of expression* (worth mentioning is that this was indicated by the only 2 Human Rights organizations that responded to the survey).

Anne-Laurence Lacriox OMCT (HR), international

As human rights NGO, the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) considers that human rights should be mainstreamed in all aspects of the issues addressed during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). In that respect, freedom of expression remains at the core of the debates: as a right that should be protected from coercion/restrictions and whose enjoyment should not be limited by lack of financial means. Participation of multi-stakeholders in that debate is therefore crucial.

Country priorities

African organisations indicated that in a country context, a *people-centred Information Society* and *governments should protect freedom of expression* are important recommendations as is, to a lesser extent, *curriculum integration*. This last one is not at all mentioned by Latin American organisations. For their region, priority is given to the recommendations *ICTs as tool towards poverty eradication*; *fair use of information* and *human rights central*. This last recommendation is mentioned by a lot of African organisations as well.

Ravi Gupta, CSDMS, Asia, ICT

India has realized the potential of ICT in poverty reduction and development and is trying to build its ICT driven information infrastructure, defining the role of governments and all stakeholders is of critical importance. The country, through its various programmes, is trying to build a workable partnership between itself and all stakeholders involved to mainstream ICT for poverty reduction, infrastructure development and also policy planning. The country has recognized the importance of developing an inclusive information society and is geared towards developing ICT infrastructure to enhance accessibility.

The relevance of the central themes of the Geneva 2003 WSIS outcome

Organisational priorities

Almost all of the organisations see access to information and knowledge as a relevant theme, but for Latin American and African organisations cultural diversity & identity, linguistic diversity & local content is given even more importance.

Additionally information and communication infrastructure is stressed by African organisations, and media by Latin American organisations. All international organisations underline the significance of the ethical dimensions of the Information Society while the other organisations don't mention this theme.

Sally Burch, ALAI (ICT), Ecuador

While insufficient access and infrastructure may be drawbacks, they will only contribute to development if the human capacity to take advantage of them exists. Especially important is building capacity to produce, manage and use information, not just technology.



WSIS 2003, Geneva

María Luisa Angulo, CLIC (ICT & Culture), El Salvador

The efforts of the civil society in creating information, promoting democratic values, human rights and equality will be more efficient and of more impact if infrastructure and access to ICTs improve.

Country priorities

Almost all organisations underline the importance of information and communication infrastructure as an essential foundation for an inclusive Information Society. For African countries access to information and knowledge is seen as an important theme, as is the role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development. This last one is not at all mentioned by Latin American countries; media and the

ethical dimension of the Information Society are given priority in Latin America.

Susan Alexander, IPS (ICT), international:

Information, and communication are essential elements of development and of effective development cooperation. Realising the right to be heard is a concrete way to empower the poor and to promote accountability. Independent professional journalism provides a very important source of information and analysis that helps shape people's perspectives and views on issues. By providing for voices coming directly from the South and from marginalised individuals and groups the views of the public in the South and the North with perspectives that reflect the reality of experiences and challenges faced in developing countries, above all by the poor or "voiceless".

Towards WSIS 2005

The lessons we can draw from this survey are that 3 of the recommendations Hivos gave to the Dutch government at the WSIS in 2003 should be emphasised even more at WSIS 2005, where Hivos will be part of the Dutch delegation. The partners that participated in the survey feel that these recommendations are not recognised for the potential they have:

- Local content, not just multilingual content
- A people-centred Information Society
- ICTs as a tool towards poverty eradication

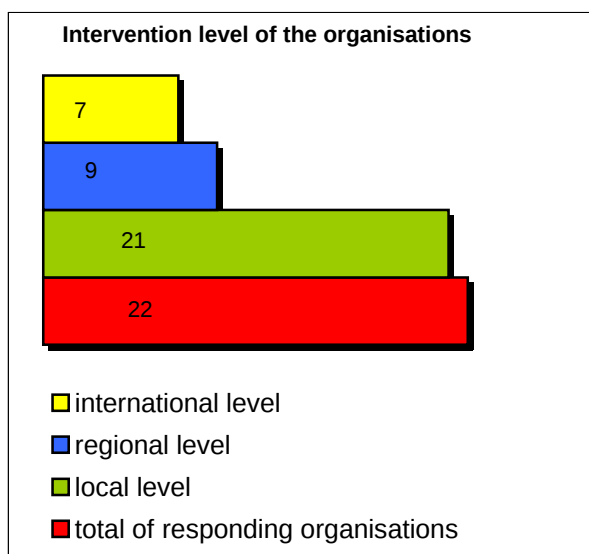
Of the central themes of the outcome of the WSIS 2003 Hivos will call attention to the importance of 3 themes as many partners indicated that these themes are important to their organisation and or country:

- Access to information and knowledge
Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive Information Society
- Capacity building

Within the Information Society, there is too much focus on technology instead of on the people using it, and a lack of local content. A lot has to be done to change this. A declaration and a plan of action will derive from the summit, but that alone will not suffice. The effectiveness of the summit might even be questioned. However, the summit is a chance to raise awareness on the opportunities and possibilities that an inclusive Information Society can offer.

Background information

The majority of the respondents are member of a national or international networks or coalitions. Most organisations work at several levels.



Of the 22 respondents, all have indicated that they are interested in participating in Hivos activities at WSIS in Tunis. 11 have already planned to participate at the WSIS in Tunis, and 9 would like to go but do not have funding possibilities. A few of the organisations are member of their country's delegation at WSIS, most will participate in symposia and other side events, or network and lobby with delegations.

Hivos will support Southern organisations to attend the summit by organising - and partaking in several - side events during the WSIS at Tunis and by lobbying with the Dutch delegation.

More information:

About Hivos: www.hivos.nl

About the WSIS activities: Hivos, Sector IMK, Programme Manager Mr. Paul Maassen (p.maassen@hivos.nl)

Survey Uganda

One of the survey respondents, WOUGNET Uganda, took the initiative to distribute the second part of the survey, concerning the outcomes of WSIS 2003, during the World Telecommunications Day Symposium in May 2005. This symposium was held under the theme "*Creating an equitable Information Society: Time for Action*".

There were a total of 84 respondents. Of these, 3 indicated that all themes were relevant to their organisation. Most of the respondents agreed that the themes *access to information and knowledge* and *capacity building* are most relevant to their organisations, followed by *information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society*.

The participants in the survey agreed that the themes *role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development* and *information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society* are most relevant to Uganda. But *achieving the WSIS targets (Plan of Action, Section B)* was seen as an important theme as well.

Of the 84 respondents of the survey, 52 respondents (62%) indicated they are working on activities related to the WSIS themes. The majority of the participants said their organizations are currently working on capacity building.

These Ugandan results, largely coincide with the results for the African region, except that *cultural diversity & identity, linguistic diversity & local content* is prioritised by organisations in the region as is *access to Information and knowledge* for their countries.

About Hivos

Hivos is a Dutch non-governmental organisation which aims to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world where citizens, women and men, have equal access to resources, opportunities and markets and can participate actively and equally in decision-making processes that determine their lives, their society and their future.

Hivos' most important activity consists of providing financial and political support for local NGOs. Hivos' network embraces more than 30 countries and over 800 partner organisations. In the course of 2004 Hivos disbursed nearly 66 million euro as grants and loans.