



HIGHLIGHTS FROM GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE 97 24 JUNE 1997

Many working sessions were held throughout the day. Delegates convened in a breakfast meeting on Global Knowledge: A Partnership for Women and Men, a Plenary lunch on Knowledge for Good Governance, and a Plenary dinner on Global Knowledge and Local Culture.

WORKING SESSIONS

Following are summaries from some of the working sessions held throughout the day.

Empowering Information Tools for Grassroots Women: Panelists highlighted the importance of: women's involvement in shaping ICT as it evolves; building bridges between women and men in government and media; training in technical skills and strategic use of ICT; using multiple channels for disseminating information; women's time constraints and the need for efficiency in ICTs; and finding ways to connect with e-mail-only users. Participants called for new search engines catered to women's needs and stressed that Internet communication not eclipse human interaction.

Use of Communication Technology by Grassroots Women: Best Practices: Panelists outlined initiatives that: make market, price and labor information available to women; provide training for marginalized people to master technology and information; teach computer literacy; explore social and economic impacts of ICT on women's lives; and examine how trade can expand opportunities for women. Discussion highlighted: the primacy of economic problems and information needs; demand for new skills from ICT technology development; differential impacts of ICT on different types of women; and documentation of women's indigenous knowledge.

Broadcast Radio for Development: This session heard presentations on: radio and distance education; portable broadcasting stations and low-tech radios; a network of NGOs that provides radio scripts on agricultural issues based on grassroots knowledge in developing countries; interactive radio in India; and educational broadcasting by the BBC. It was suggested that radio is superior to ICT because: it remains the best means of mass communication; it can reach the illiterate; and it can be provided at reasonable cost. However, it was emphasized that technologies should be produced in developing countries rather than imported and that government regulations can hinder free media and creation of community broadcasters.

Using Information Technology to Improve Natural Resource Management: Panelists described USAID's initiatives using information technology tools for assessing and sharing natural resource information for sustainable development, and sought feedback and advice on developing partnerships to apply these tools. Participants expressed particular interest in training modules for international waters and discussed technology transfer, distance learning and remote sensing.

New Approaches to Rural Energy and Sustainable Development: Participants explored approaches to improving access to energy for people dependent on traditional fuels and with limited access to modern fuels. Discussion revolved around: the real costs of bio-mass

fuel due to time spent on fuel-wood collection; the importance of local control over bio-fuel resources and increased energy efficiency; the need to move to modern fuels; the underestimation of available wind resources and adverse policies on import duties on alternative technologies; and micro-finance for energy in rural areas. Examples included: local forest management in Niger; a micro-hydro project in Nepal; wind power in China, Russia and Brazil; and photo voltaic systems in Kenya. Challenges identified included: inequalities in access to energy; and difficulties in financing energy access.

Role of the State: Policy and Regulatory Frameworks for the Information Economy: This session centered on: telecommunications liberalization and investment needs; the residual role of the state, including universal access and the role of international organizations; and both the domains (education, medicine, government) and channels (Internet, telephony, software) of the information economy. Participants explored questions relating to capacity-building, the importance of legal frameworks and the regulation of content.

The Importance of Intellectual Property Rights: Panelists: stressed the need to protect industry's intellectual property rights (IPR) while sharing knowledge and information for education and scientific development; described work to assist developing countries in developing their own intellectual property and in utilizing "free" information to this end; emphasized cost implications of IPR for developing countries; called for transparency from corporations; and suggested industry invest in legal infrastructure for enforcement of IPR. Participants highlighted the implications of biotechnology patenting and the high costs of enforcing IPR.

Learning Organizations and Knowledge Management: Participants explored how private and public sector organizations create contexts for continuous learning and build shared knowledge resources. Discussions included: the World Bank's management of its knowledge resources; the social dimension of learning and the social management of knowledge; augmenting intellectual capital to sustain competitive advantage; connecting NGOs to exchange knowledge and experience; and networks created by African women.

Knowledge for Development: Learning and Using Policy Lessons: In this session, participants discussed the means by which policy advice is given, made credible, internalized and implemented. They also considered the roles of policy providers, intermediaries and users, and noted problems with the transmission, reception and credibility of policy advice.

Designing Partnerships for Learning: This session considered two partnerships for teaching and learning: the Korean Development Institute and the Joint Vienna Institute, a regional institution serving economies in transition. Participants discussed: advantages of partnership-based training in comparison with more traditional training models; the concern that both models emphasized economic development to the exclusion of social and cultural progress; and how to establish similar ventures elsewhere.

Scientific Knowledge: Making the Most Out of the Best: Participants heard presentations on: genetic information; industry; access to and dissemination of scientific knowledge; and policies to foster

science and technology in developing countries. It was noted that research skills are not immediately created nor always transferable. Others suggested that science and technology practitioners have not accounted for the knowledge of ancient cultures and that the possession of knowledge is not the prerogative of rich societies. Developing countries have little access to existing knowledge and, while there may be wind-up radio, there is no wind-up computer. Participants highlighted the potential of virtual universities and the importance of UNESCO and the private sector in the development process.

Role of Foundations in Science and Technology for Development: Participants discussed foundations' experience with international cooperation and schemes for mobilizing the scientific, technological and policy communities to focus on development problems. Presentations were made on the experiences of French, British and Chilean foundations and on the International Science Foundation and University Internet Centers in Russia. It was noted that foundations can be more flexible than governments or international organizations and thus there should be scope for cooperation between them.

Putting Scientific Knowledge to Use in Participatory Formulation of Development Policies: Participants discussed the use of computer-based tools for sustainable policy development. There was a presentation on development policy assessment using a live computer simulation of future population, energy, water and agriculture management policies in Nile River basin countries. The need to build bridges between the science and policy cultures was stressed. Challenges for the future were identified: globalization; the magnitude and rate of global change; and the need to employ long-term perspectives.

The Informed Citizen: Setting the Agenda: Participants explored the notion that the information revolution will not only enhance the supply of information but will substantially alter the structures in which public problems are addressed. Informed citizenship entails not only providing information to citizens, but also receiving information from and exchanging information between citizens. Discussions of case studies considered: social impacts of the information revolution; the interaction between the Internet and other communication technologies; spontaneous successes involving access to high technology; the representative role of citizen-groups; and the reluctance of politicians to cede control as ICT use spreads.

Electronic Media: Reflecting Diversity: Participants heard presentations on: WETV, a satellite broadcaster that acts as a platform for global issues; the Canadian Heritage Information Network and their work with "virtual" exhibits; the Canadian Museum of Civilization's virtual museum on New France; and the idea of cultural repatriation through electronic means. Some participants stressed that this is an unprecedented moment in history when all cultures are in contact and that cultural diversity was as important as biodiversity. It was recommended that ways in which new technologies can create art and new forms of expression be considered.

Knowledge for Development: A Consultation: The World Bank sought feedback on a draft outline of its 1998 World Development Report, which focuses on Information and Knowledge for Development. The draft outlines the emerging economic information environment and considers its significance for developing countries. Participants suggested that: education be more strongly emphasized; the politics of information be considered more fully; and market failures and government roles be examined in greater detail.

No Real Change Without Women: Networking for Development: Participants provided examples of: community access strategies; a partnership of women in academia, business and policy who formulated a women's declaration at APEC; and a workshop parallel to the World Food Summit where women strategized to develop a more people-centered notion of security. Participants stressed the need to: create models for partnerships for the underprivileged; use technology to package, convey and share the valuable knowledge that women possess; focus more on people and less on technology; use information to assist those disempowered by the consequences of the information age; use distance learning to increase girls' education; and question the

underlying assumption that access to knowledge will eliminate poverty. Participants were reminded that women are employing numerous strategies to foster their development without the Internet.

PLENARY SESSIONS

GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE: A PARTNERSHIP FOR WOMEN AND MEN

The Independent Committee on Women and Global Knowledge hosted a breakfast to honor women's contributions to ICTs and to advocate strengthening partnerships between women and men at all levels of development. Speaking at the breakfast were: Shirley Malcom, Director, Education Program, American Association for the Advancement of Science; James Wolfensohn, President, World Bank; Kathryn White, President, Canadian Committee for UNIFEM; and Huguette Labelle, President, CIDA.

KNOWLEDGE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Katherine Hagen, Deputy Director General, International Labor Organization (ILO), stated that social justice and development require good governance, which can be supported by widespread access to knowledge. She highlighted ILO's role in facilitating the dissemination of human rights information via ICT. She noted the rise of democratic regimes due to the creation of informed citizens. She called for reducing the gap between the information poor and rich and for universal access to ICT.

Pepi Patron, Professor of Philosophy, Catholic University of Peru, discussed the relationships between knowledge, women and good governance. She said women are changing the traditional conception of knowledge, even when they are not in contact with formal information networks. She suggested that the Internet and computers can provide a public space for women's voices but cautioned that the number of women with access to this technology is limited. She also noted that women must learn to speak with all segments of society.

Lloyd Axworthy, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke of the need for information technology to work for people. He anticipated that the day is coming when "the mouse will be mightier than the sword." Democratization is crucial and requires not simply elections, but the fortification of civil society and the empowerment of citizens. Information can aid this powersharing, becoming "the Colt 45 for the grassroots." He spoke also of the need to beware of the dark sides of the information revolution, such as pornography, monopoly or elite control of information and hate propaganda. To avoid such problems, there is an urgent need to create policy frameworks to shape technology and balance privacy issues, freedom of speech and human rights. Canada is working to promote an international information strategy which would guarantee equality of access and the shaping of technology to human needs.

GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL CULTURE

Delegates attended a dinner Plenary on Global Knowledge and Local Culture and heard statements from Huguette Labelle, CIDA President, Federico Mayor, UNESCO Director General, and Jennifer Makunike-Sibanda, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING SESSIONS: Working sessions will meet from 9:00-10:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in the Sheraton Centre, Hilton and Colony Hotels.

PLENARY: There will two Plenary sessions, on The Challenges Ahead, from 1:30-2:30 p.m., and on Partners for the Future, from 3:00-4:00 p.m. The keynote address will be delivered from 2:30-3:00 p.m., and the conference conclusion will begin 4:00 p.m. All Plenaries will take place in the Sheraton Centre Grand Ballroom.