Workshop on ICT and persons with disabilities

Tunis, Tunisia
16 November 2005 9 a.m. to 1 a.m.

Organized on the occasion of the Second Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
Tunis, Tunisia, 16-18 November 2005

Summary Report

Paris, December 2005
A. Introduction
1. The workshop “ICT and persons with disabilities” was organized by UNESCO in cooperation with the WSIS Civil Society Bureau Disability Focal Point and DAISY Consortium Representative for WSIS, and with the logistic local support from the NGO BASMA – Association for the Promotion of Employment for the Disabled Persons. The workshop took place on 16 November 2005, in Tunis, Tunisia, as one of UNESCO’s parallel events during the second phase of World Summit on the Information Society (16-18 November 2005). The event was attended by more than 70 participants and broadcast live on the Internet with over 200 live connections.

B. Objectives
2. The workshop “ICT and Persons with Disabilities” provided a platform for discussing policies in regard to ICT and persons with disabilities (PWD). It focused on “how to guarantee the social participation of person with disabilities in inclusive knowledge societies?” in connection to Chapters C3 and C4 of the Geneva Plan of Action.

C. Structure of work
3. The event was made up of an Opening Session and two specific sessions within the framework of the theme, “Investing in inclusive knowledge societies for persons with disabilities: Worldwide Policies, Standards and Indicators”. The first session aimed at discussing the status of policies concerning ICT applications for PWD worldwide. The second session focused on the various solutions that enable PWD to access information.

D. Overview
4. With regard to the central question of the workshop, “how to guarantee the social participation of persons with disabilities in inclusive knowledge societies?”, the speakers pointed out that PWD had been isolated from society and excluded from development issues, as a result of systematic discrimination. The participants, therefore, acclaimed the output document of PrepCom3, which integrates, for the first time, PWD in the development process. There was also some hope among the participants that ICTs would facilitate the integration of PWDs into society.

E. Summary of Presentations

Opening Session

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2 http://www.unesco.org/en/wwsis/tunis
3 Video-on-Demand at http://www.unesco.org/en/wwsis/tunis
Khadija Ghariani, State Secretary for Information Technology, Ministry of Technologies of Communication of Tunisia
6. As a background, the State Secretary underlined that for a long time PWDs have been marginalized within society and considered as a minority. Ms. Ghariani, therefore, stressed that it would be time to use ICTs in order to facilitate the integration of PWDs within society in an equal and inclusive way.

Hiroshi Kawamura, WSIS CS Bureau Disability Focal Point and DAISY Consortium Representative for WSIS
7. Mr. Kawamura pointed out that one of the most important facts of the outcome documents of PrepCom3, which addresses, among others, the issue of ICTs for PWDs, is the importance given to the development of ICTs based on a special design concept. He, thus, recommended that one should focus on the individual requirements as a result of disabilities and that answers for these needs should be accommodated favourably.

Opening Remarks
Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director-General for the Communication and Information, UNESCO
8. Mr Khan outlined the overall concept of UNESCO’s particular role in the field of ICTs and PWD. UNESCO, said Mr Khan, has been created to promote the free flow of ideas and knowledge so as to further peace. UNESCO has, therefore, been advocating the promotion of “knowledge societies”, based on four key principles: freedom of expression, universal access to information and knowledge, cultural and linguistic diversity and quality education for all. Mr Khan also emphasized that ICTs have an enormous potential to improve the lives of persons with disabilities and promote their social inclusion.

Keynote Address
Luis Gallegos, Ambassador of Equator to the United States, former Chairman of the “Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities”
9. The keynote speech focused on the international normative framework on the right of persons with disabilities. Ambassador Gallegos stressed that we should link disability to human rights and to development issues in order to create a fully inclusive society. He underlined that accessibility to ICTs is a fundamental element when trying to ensure the implementation of the “International Convention on Rights and Dignity of PWD”, which is stipulating the human rights of PWD. Furthermore, he stressed that one must protect human dignity of PWD. It is, he said, also our own dignity.

Theme – Investing in inclusive knowledge societies for persons with disabilities: worldwide policies, standards and indicators
Session 1: Status of “ICT & disabilities” policies worldwide (Geneva Plan of Action: Chapter C3, para. 10-c\(^4\) and Chapter C4, para. 11-c\(^5\))

**Moderators**

*Elizabeth Longworth, UNESCO*
*Claudio Menezes, UNESCO*

**Speakers**

**Asia:** Anuradha Mohit (India)

**Africa:** Tamru E. Belay (Ethiopia)

**Latin America:** Windyz Ferreira (Project Coordinator, Brazil)

**Arab States:** Bellelahom Lotfi (Diretor, National Institute for Promotion of Persons with Disabilities, Tunisia)

**Europe:** Gerry Ellis (European Disability Forum, EDF, Ireland)

10. This session aimed at offering a worldwide overview on policies to address the situation of PWD. For each of the five regional areas (Asia, Africa, Arab States, Europe and Latin America), one speaker presented his/her perspective on policies concerning ICTs with PWD of the different types of the disabilities (visual and/or hearing impairments, mobile, speech and cognitive disabilities). Every presentation showed the high interest of governments in policies concerning ICTs with PWD.

11. Several African countries have recently launched initiatives on policies for persons with impairments. For example, the Ethiopian government has declared its intention to install 500 plasma screens in schools for persons with disabilities. The African representative expressed his hope that African governments and citizens will jointly support the initiative to integrate PWD within the society and recognize that this is a human right.

12. Mr Lotfi presented an overview of the situation in the Arab States. It show-cased some concrete projects related to ICTs with PWD taking place in the Arab region.

13. An impressive presentation was delivered by Windyz Ferreira on the situation in Latin American countries. As an example of “best policies” it was underlined that the Brazilian government is pushing for the development of inclusive education. In fact, a special education system was established in Brazil, which allows deaf persons to participate in the mainstream education system without being isolated because of their

\(^4\) C3 Access to Information and Knowledge
  c) Promote research and development to facilitate accessibility of ICTs for all, including disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable groups.

\(^5\) C4 Capacity Building
  c) Promote e-literacy skills for all, for example by designing and offering courses for public administration, taking advantage of existing facilities such as libraries, multipurpose community centres, public access points and by establishing local ICT training centres with the cooperation of all stakeholders. Special attention should be paid to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.
disability. The speaker concluded by saying that this initiative could be considered for implementation in other countries within Latin America.

**Session 2: ICT Showcase-Solution for Persons with Disabilities (Geneva Plan of Action; Chapter C3, para.10-c and g\(^6\) and Chapter C4, para. 11-c\(^7\))**

**Moderators**

*Mohammed H.S. Al-Turaki, MERCH*

*Claudio Menezes, UNESCO*

**Speakers**

Misako Nomura (IFLA Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons Section and Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of PWD, Japan)

Faouzi Kardous (International Solidarity Network “Handicap and New Technologies”, France)

Pablo Lecuona (Executive Director of Tiflolibros, Argentina)

Stephane Shore (Autism Serving Association of Massachusetts-MAAP, USA)

Hatsue Suda (National Rehabilitation Center for PWD-NRCD Research Institute, Japan)

14. In this session, the speakers presented case studies on the implementation of various projects aiming at the inclusion of PWD in the social and economical life through the use of ICTs.

15. An international standard for making multimedia accessible, developed under DAISY consortium, was presented by the speaker from IFLA. She said that the standard would help to bridge the digital divide in developing regions of the world and to ensure access to information for the disadvantaged. Indeed, as a result of the DAISY implementation, 2580 titles of print material were produced for the visually impaired in Japan. Furthermore, DAISY books have been disseminated to promote library service for PWD.

16. To further the integration of PWD to better integrate in the job market, the Center of Telecommuting has established a network called “International Solidarity Network: Telecommuting, Handicapped and ICT”. It aims at fighting the exclusion of PWD from the job market and to create telework opportunities for them. Currently, a project trying

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\(^6\) g) Encourage research on the Information Society, including on innovative forms of networking, adaptation of ICT infrastructure, tools and applications that facilitate accessibility of ICTs for all, and disadvantaged groups in particular.

\(^7\) c) Promote e-literacy skills for all, for example by designing and offering courses for public administration, taking advantage of existing facilities such as libraries, multipurpose community centres, public access points and by establishing local ICT training centres with the cooperation of all stakeholders. Special attention should be paid to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.
to establish such a centre is being conducted in several French speaking countries in Africa under the coordination of Senegal, as the focal point for all stakeholders involved in the process.

17. The session was terminated by an interesting presentation on “Autism and Information and Communication Support” by Stephane Shore, affected himself by autism. He is currently researching how to maximize the potential of people with autism through the use of ICTs. Mr Shore presented a variety of technical innovations conceived for persons with autism: e.g. a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) which is based on a graphic data base with over 3,000 pictures communication system to help individuals quickly acquire a functional means of communication; and a “Hidden Curriculum” which is a solution to help a person affected by autism to better understand “Unstated Rules”. This experience shows a practical case to facilitate the introduction of persons with autism in the social and professional life. Mr Shore stressed that in the years to come current document formats should be changed according to the guidelines set forward by formats like DAISY. The presentation was concluded by the projection of a documentary on a factory in Japan that employed persons with autism. This success story made clear that PWD are able to adapt to a new environment by working with others.

Conclusion
18. Mr Mohammed H. S. Al-Turaiki, co-moderator of Session 2, thanked UNESCO for the initiative of organizing the workshop.
19. Mr Claudio Menezes thanked all speakers and participants for their contribution to the event.
20. The presentations are available for consultation on UNESCO webpage\(^8\). A summary of the message from this workshop was included in the intervention of UNESCO’s representative in the plenary of the WSIS.

\(^8\) [http://www.unesco.org/wnis](http://www.unesco.org/wnis)