The World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva December 2003

What was it like?

What happened on gender?

Two WSISs

- The Summit
  - Declaration of Principles
  - Plan of Action
  - Participants: governments, private sector, civil society
  - High-level folks reading prepared speeches
- The ICT4D platform/trade show
  - Events, presentations, exhibitions, awards
  - Open participation
- 13,000 total participants

Various disconnects

- Developed vs. developing countries perspectives
- Dystopian vs. utopian dimensions
- What happened officially vs. what happened unofficially

Developed vs. developing

- High-level developing country representation vs. low-level developed country
- What the differences mean
  - In US, almost everybody has access
  - In Africa, almost nobody does

Different realities

- In the U.S. a household with $42K annual income works 4 days to buy a new computer
- In Ethiopia, a household with $100 ANNUAL income works 12 years to buy a new computer
- 20 hours of connectivity a month on a 56K connection costs 8.4 times the net per capita income
- Private cybercafes are illegal; government monopoly announced plans to establish cybercafes in 1998. None established as yet.
- No public libraries for 65M people.

Issues that divided

- Far right of IS
  - Governments should control Internet
  - Surveillance and privacy invasion may be necessary for security
  - Internet has nothing to do with human rights
  - Keep NGOs out of discussions and decision making
  - Women belong in marginalized, vulnerable groups category

Bridging the digital divide: who will pay?

- Developed countries: no mention of financial support
  - Africa should deregulate, establish an enabling environment for the private sector to go in
- Poor nations: We need a Fund, with commitments to cover some of the costs from rich countries
- Outcome: acceptance of Digital Solidarity Agenda, with study of Digital Solidarity Fund until Tunis

Open Source vs. Microsoft

- Developing countries pro
  - India, Peru, Brazil, South African governments switching to open source
- Developed contra
- Outcome: unresolved. Principles went from support of open source software to development world to “awareness” of “different software models”

Freedom and security: different perspectives

- Issues: media freedom and independence vs. responsibility
- US: network security to prevent terrorism
- China and Russia: information security and military security are the concerns (legitimizing censorship and surveillance?)
- Outcome: No guarantees. free and independent media “in accordance with the legal system of the country.”
- Hardliners: China, Tunisia.

Internet governance

- Legitimacy of ICANN questioned
  - Accountable only to its board and US Dept of Commerce
  - Developing countries see it as too American and corporate-controlled
  - Prefer that ICANN follows guidance of ITU
  - Dispute presence of Taiwan on advisory board
- Outcome:
  - study it until Tunis
  - Countries invited to manage or supervise TLDs

Gender involvement at WSIS

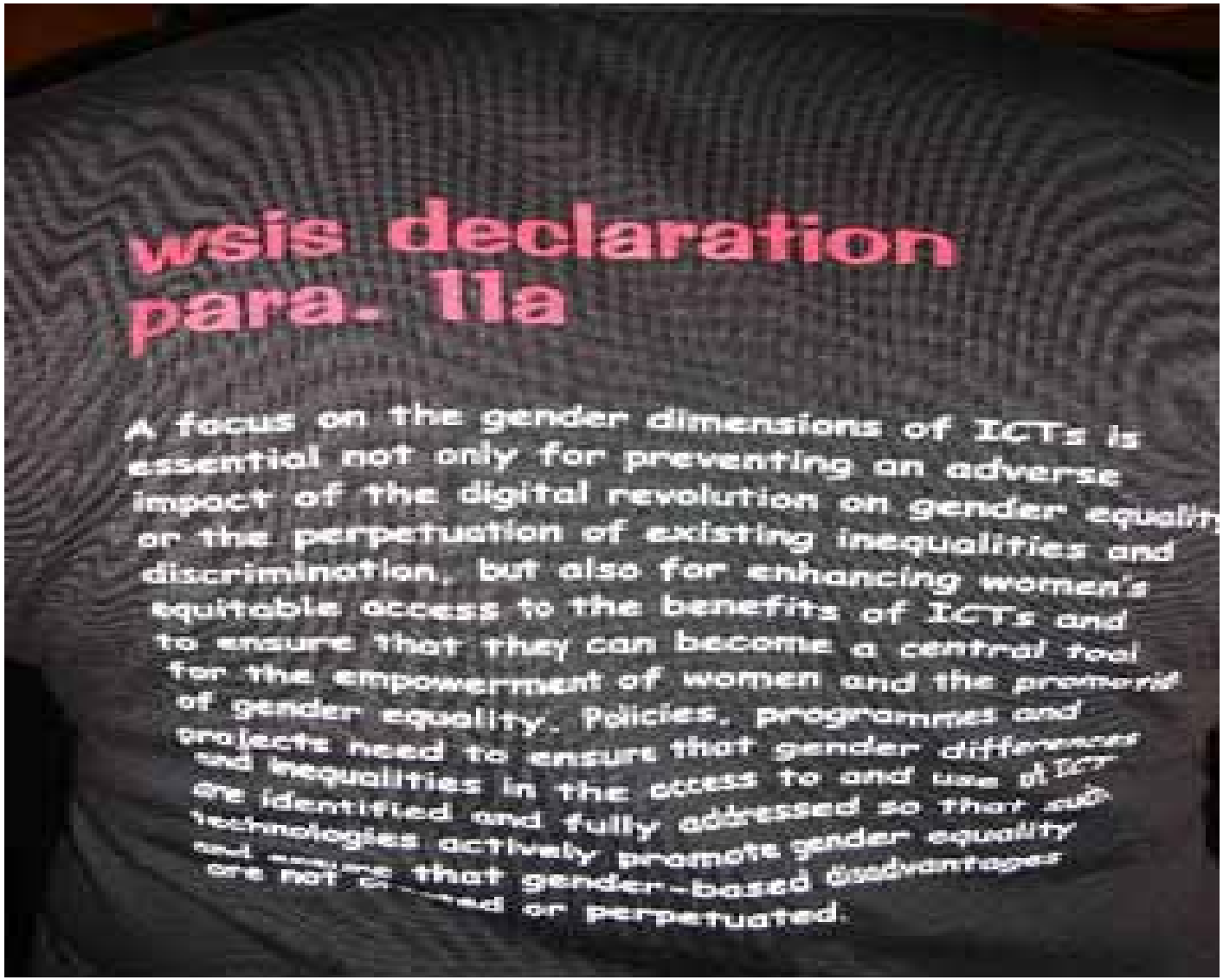
- Two groups promoting gender awareness
  - WSIS Gender Caucus
  - NGO Strategies Working Group

What happened on women, gender-official side

- Major fights, intensive lobbying at six preparatory meetings for 3 paras
- The T-shirt incident . . .

wsis declaration
para. 11a
DRAFT WSIS DECLARATION
HAS A
MISSING PARAGRAPH

The missing text . . .



Declaration of principles on gender

- A people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where *everyone* can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge
- Challenge is to harness potential of ICT to promote Millennium Development Goals that include promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women

Other gender happenings

- Extensive, excellent programs on women and gender at ICT4D
- Gender awards at GK-P Awards night

Other gender achievements-official

- Gender issues recommended in all major sections included
  - Fundamental principle for action
  - Equitable participation in decisions
  - New and old ICTs in a multimodal approach

Gender achievement-official (cont'd.)

- Designing ICTs to serve people
- Empowerment for full participation
- Research analysis and evaluation to guide action

Overall on gender

- Inclusion gender issues in Declaration of Principles and Action Plan sine qua non for going forward at national and local levels
- Women need to fight for their empowerment in order to increase opportunities for women in the information society
- Main ideas of panels: women should get more involved to get gender rights into ICT policy at international and national level
- Need to sensitize policy makers to gender issues and sensitize gender advocates as well