



International Taskforce on Women and ICTs

The International Taskforce on Women and ICTs (the Taskforce) created a Declaration of Agreement (www.umbc.edu/cwit/Declaration.html) with Guiding Principles that serve as the foundation for the organization. The Taskforce promotes communication and information exchange; the increased sharing of research, knowledge, and resources; the development of collaborative activities; and the promotion of policies and programming that support women's participation and leadership in all areas of ICT for development. The goal is to ensure that the participation of women in engineering, education, and employment in ICT globally is measurably and significantly increased within five years.

The Taskforce was created to re-invigorate current efforts and support the initiation of new efforts that will recognize and remedy women's severe under-representation in the development of ICTs and ICT policy, from basic access through leadership. Failing to do so limits our ability to advance our global society. ICT allows women increased participation in political, social, and economic arenas and supports empowerment for themselves, their families, their communities, and their nations.

The United Nations Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development (UNGAID), which was launched to address in a global forum cross-cutting issues related to ICT in development, has recognized the ITF as a community of expertise and is working collaboratively to establish a stakeholder group for gender and ICTs to support the work of the UNGAID. (<http://www.un-gaid.org/en/node/171>)

The ITF strategy for implementation is as follows:

- ◇ Identify the critical issues that remain to be addressed and develop strategies for research and active implementation processes.
- ◇ Identify models that are most appropriate for multi-stakeholder collaboration and action to achieve shared goals.
- ◇ Formalize a process and pilot site (s) to create research-based centers empowering women and ICT efforts on a national or state/city level.
- ◇ Identify a host and begin planning a summit as a midpoint to the International Taskforce's efforts, which will assess progress and plan next steps.

The following organizations make up the steering committee:

- ◇ UNESCO Women, Science and Technology in Latin America, Argentina
- ◇ Education Development Center, USA
- ◇ European Women in Net (WINNET Europe), Sweden
- ◇ APEC Women's e-Biz Center, Asian Pacific Women's Information Network Center (APWINC), Korea
- ◇ European Association for Women in Science, Engineering & Technology (WiTEC), UK
- ◇ Texas Instruments, USA
- ◇ Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP), Philippines
- ◇ Hewlett-Packard Company, USA
- ◇ Women in Global Science and Technology, Canada
- ◇ The Center for Women and IT at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, USA





There are 46 organizations that make up the advisory board. These members were selected based on their demonstrated commitment to the Guiding Principles at the national and international level. Finally, there are 63 member organizations from six continents and 39 countries that support the mission of the Taskforce by virtue of their signature of the Declaration.

The Taskforce is currently working to achieve the following goals through support and amplification of the important work of members in the network:

- (1) Develop indicators and monitoring processes to enable the global community to understand what is working and should be supported, what is not working, and what gaps in services, support, or resources are missing;
- (2) Create an international community that will support effective practices around the globe to ensure dissemination and success; and
- (3) Formalize a stakeholder organization representing millions of people that monitors gender in ICT development to provide thought leadership, resources, and partnerships for successful achievement of all goals.

The Taskforce is committed to supporting initiatives around the globe. To date, documented efforts that have developed as a result of our combined efforts include the following:

1. The investigation into the creation of a European Centre for Women and ICTs.
2. The creation of programs for girls in science and technology in Georgia.
3. The development of a *Women in Technology* program in Fiji.
4. The development of interest in research initiatives for women and ICTs at JNU in New Delhi, India.
5. With the support and forward thinking of President Kamel Ayadi, the mainstreaming of women in engineering and technology in the World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO) at a conference in Tunisia in June 2007.
6. A renewed interest by the World Bank in gender mainstreaming in their ICT programs.
7. Cooperation through one of its members with the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC).
8. The innovative development of a new strategy for mainstreaming gender across mainstream ICT-focused conferences.



The Taskforce sees UNGAID as a critical platform for building partnerships with mainstream organizations and businesses and as a critical success partner for creating synergy and achieving shared goals.

The Center for Women and Information Technology (CWIT) at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), acting as the secretariat, provides leadership and support for implementation. Women in Global Science and Technology (WIGSAT) provides evaluation and research support.

