

## African women to benefit from ICT research centres

Global Knowledge Partnership 3, Kuala Lumpur

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14:57:36 12/12/2007

Article blurbThe International Task Force on women and ICTs will strive to empower women in the use of ICTs through the establishment of research centres.

North, South and Central Africa will benefit from a global plan to establish research centres to empower women in the use of Information Communication Technologies, said Secretariat Chair, International Task Force (ITF) on Women and ICTs, Claudia Morrell.

Morrell said the ITF hopes to establish these and other centres around the world within the next three years. Speaking at the GK3 during a session on empowering women in ICTs, Morrell said it was important to ensure that women are fully included in the Knowledge Society in order to benefit from the economic and technological opportunities presented by the use of ICTs in every day life.

She said that a network of global regional centres for women and ICTs with a hub centre would provide a focused and strategic plan to mitigate the risk of growing national, regional and global disparities in access to ICTs.

Morrell said that although it is a major challenge to identify and implement tailor-made strategies to address the ICT needs of different regions, the ITF on Women and ICTs had identified five key areas for action. These are: Policy and Action; Research and Impact metrics; Dissemination and communication; Resource and service development and Culture and context.

In an interview with Hana, the European Affairs Manager of ITF on Women and ICTs, Eva Fabry, said that one of the main differences between Africa and the West was the commitment to invest in ICTs.

Fabry said Africa was stuck in the days of investing in traditional infrastructure such as roads while giving little attention to the development of ICTs.

She said another challenge was building multi-stakeholder platforms comprising governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations to forge common national goals in the achievement of ICT4D agenda. She said that funders and development partners prefer to work with consolidated national and regional institutions rather than individual NGOs.

"Money is not the issue. The issue is coming up with multi-stakeholder institutions that have sustainable programmes to be funded by the businesses" said Fabry adding that it matters how intensively a nation engages the ICT tools available to it. Africa, she said, can leap-frog in the ICT 4D agenda by adopting best practices from around the world.

"The proposed regional research centres would leverage financial resources, research,, best practices and focus areas as well as the interaction between continents," said Fabry.