



THE ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS' MISSION IS TO EMPOWER AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND INDIVIDUALS IN AND THROUGH THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES TO BUILD STRATEGIC COMMUNITIES AND INITIATIVES FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO EQUITABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE, PARTICIPATORY POLITICAL PROCESSES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

APC ANNUAL REPORT 2000

1990 LOOKING BACK ON APC'S FIRST DECADE 2000





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Anriette Esterhuysen, Executive Director of the APC



NOT QUITE AN 'ANNUAL REPORT'

APC celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2000. This document, while bearing the title 'Annual Report', is actually the first step in a process of APC documenting its history and experience. Recalling our past, our achievements, and the challenges we faced, will enable us to continue to make a meaningful contribution through our work.

The articles included here provide insights into the history of the organisation and its pioneering role in using electronic communications for social justice and development. This is not a complete history of the APC, however, nor can it possibly give sufficient recognition to all the contributions made by the many individuals and organisations that have been part of the broader APC community over the years.

This document forms the basis for an online collection¹ that will be developed by people who have taken part in the APC process. Our goal is to contribute to knowledge management within the organisation, and enable us to engage the future while drawing on the lessons of the past and the present².

TEN YEARS OF CHALLENGE AND INNOVATION

In many ways, the year 2000 was a turning point for the APC. The communications revolution of the previous ten years had been both a great challenge and an opportunity. By the mid 1990s, our members were forced to make the transition from being pioneers in the use of online communication, to facing intense competition. APC itself needed to broaden its focus from primarily facilitating technical interconnection, to embracing the emerging 'ICT (information and communication technologies) for justice and development' movement in a holistic way.

¹ <http://www.apc.org/english/about/history/index.htm>

² Knowledge management has been usefully defined by Steve Song in a way that cuts through the jargon that surrounds the concept. He refers to it as "a body of practices and approaches that assist organisations (especially large organisations) in dealing with the increasing pace of change." In "Knowledge Management for Development Organisations", Norrag News, Number 28, July 2001

Remarkably APC and our members have continued to respond in an innovative way to the changing needs of our user communities. Almost 10 years after creating a path-breaking platform for more than 3,000 civil society discussion forums across the world, APC released the APC ActionApps, one of the most user-friendly open source Web publishing toolkits available.

In 2000 we opened our ranks to a more diverse range of organisations, by revising our membership criteria. The 'one member per country' rule was scrapped, membership fees were lowered, and the application process was simplified.

Perhaps of greater significance in that year was the adoption of the APC Action Areas: Internet Rights; Mobilising Civil Society; Participation and Building Information Communities. These priorities made a clear statement: APC has moved from being a member services organisation, to one that operates within the broader context of ICT and civil society, from building online content to securing an enabling policy and regulatory environment.

CONTRIBUTORS

Roberto Bissio, a long-time associate and champion of APC's work, provides an overview of the social context within which the APC's work emerged and developed. Roberto Elissalde provides a brief history of three APC members that emerged in response to particular historical circumstances in the countries where they are based. Brian Murphy's articles tell stories of the people and situations that led to the founding of the APC and the building of its innovative pre-Internet communications platform.

Karen Banks recalls the early days of email networking in Africa before the "Internet" arrived, and Fatma Alloo provides an African activist's perspective on this remarkable process.

Some of APC's noteworthy early work focused on providing electronic communications services for NGOs before and during United Nations' World Summits. Rory O'Brien takes us through the UN conferences from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 to Beijing +5 in 2000. He illustrates how APC's involvement contributed to democratising both the technology and UN processes.

Mark Surman looks at the changes APC and APC members had to make to survive economically after the Internet explosion, and Kate Wild looks at donor funding of ICT in Africa, a region where APC has done some of its most significant work.

Members of the APC Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP), which celebrated its eighth anniversary in 2000, describe some of their achievements and the challenges they have faced.

As part of this initiative to write our own history, APC has compiled a chronology of moments that stand out for APC and its members. The innovative role of APC members in enabling social

movements to benefit from ICTs can be traced back to at least five years before the formation of the network, and the chronology covers 1985 to 2000.

THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THE APC

We would like to recognise the many people that have made a contribution to the APC over the last 10 years. Most of them are not mentioned here by name. We hope that as we continue the process of documenting our history and experience that they will appear in this space. Without them, none of the organisation's achievements would have been possible.

In particular we want to note the commitment of two people: Edie Farwell, APC's first Executive Director, and, Carlos Afonso, director of one of APC's founding institutions and the Chairperson of APC's inaugural Executive Board (established in 1997). Without their energy and effort APC would not have flourished and become a dynamic network that also developed sufficient institutional capacity to tackle new projects and challenges.

Finally we wish to thank our funding partners, some of whom began to support our work at a time when most donor agencies were sceptical about the relevance of ICTs. Audited financial statements for January to December 2000 are available at the end of the report.

Pete Cranston, Network and Communications Director of One World International, recently attended an APC Council Meeting. In a post meeting report³ he summed up APC particularly well:

"They [APC] have been in existence since the late '80s and many of the member organisations have been in existence for over 10 years, and a few for much longer. Accordingly they have a history, a great deal of experience individually and collectively, and the very fact of having survived for that long gives them a robustness and depth that strengthens their whole network. In surviving, many members have also learned how to become wholly or partly self-sufficient, in the sense of not being reliant on general grants. I think APC has also matured as an organisation in the sense that they have evolved decision-making structures that are truly democratic and relatively effective."

We look forward to your comments, additions and corrections. APC started off its existence by creating spaces for discussion, and our commitment to providing democratic and interactive spaces continue. To become part of this process of documenting our experiences collectively, please visit the history section of our Website⁴.

APC operates in a demanding context. ICTs change constantly. On the other hand, inequality and carelessness towards people and the environment from many of the world's powerful

³ Internal report by Pete Cranston, One World International, December 2001

⁴ <http://www.apc.org/english/about/history>

governments and institutions continue to flourish. APC will no doubt undergo change in the next 10 years. But, we will not let go of our commitment to our fundamental belief that ICT need to be secured as a force for social and environmental good.

Looking back on APC's First Decade (1990 – 2000)

Message from the APC Chair: Ten years after its founding, APC continues to promote the Internet as a tool for social change

From Stefan Hackenthal, APC Chair



What we call "the Internet" did not exist when the APC was founded ten years ago. Most non-government organisations (NGOs) were still amazed by the fax machine. However there were (as there still are today) many groups, organisations and activists tackling environmental, social and democracy issues, who had an urgent need to work regionally, nationally and internationally. The African National Congress headquarters in London needed to organise with their anti-apartheid counterparts back home in South Africa. Thousands of environmentalists planning lobbying tactics converged on the Rio Earth Summit while others could take part staying back home using email and electronic conferences¹.

APC was a pioneer for the use of the Internet among NGOs and can take credit for being one of the forces that popularised the Internet with progressive groups. APC members believed that new technologies could and should be used by NGOs and activists because they offered a very low-cost solution to the old problem of information dissemination and - most importantly - contact weaving between local and regional groups on worldwide problems. 'Dial locally - think globally' was the slogan that is still valid for part of our work today.

APC's members are firmly rooted within the movements for social change in their countries. They play an important role in connecting people. Over the last years, APC's members have turned into something much more than access providers: they help NGOs and social groups, with their limited resources, select and use affordable and easy-to-use information and communication technology (ICT) solutions to meet their missions.

¹ APC conferences – online discussion groups based on the Usenet model developed by APC. The principal difference was the fact that APC conferences allow discussion moderators to control who has access to reading, writing, and accessing the online space. This makes them an ideal venue for online meetings. APC conferences are text-based, which facilitates message distribution and participation by members in nations with poorer telecommunications infrastructures. Conferences are still used today by many groups around the world, including the APC Council.

Nowadays, in the age of the World Wide Web, point-and-click interfaces, and online databases, I still believe strongly that the Internet needs the APC as much as ever. At the same time as technical developments in the computer and Internet industry move rapidly, the majority of people living in our world have no Internet access; many have never made a phone call. And the need to cooperate online is still great for activists working for social change all over the world.

The growth of the Internet has astonished many but has also led to problems regarding privacy, security and politics. We in the APC believe in the Internet as a medium for the free expression of opinions; we work against censorship and the filtering of content, at the same time as we strive to facilitate a wider and strategic use of the Internet for social justice by providing information on technical possibilities and tools.

Nobody knows how the Internet will develop over the next years, but what is clear is that it will further establish itself as the crucial point of reference for the acquiring of and for the exchange of information for connected activist groups. For that reason, more than ever, APC and its members will continue to promote the Internet as a tool of social change, as well as continue to investigate and promote solutions for those not yet connected. APC has proven in the past that we are capable of finding solutions. Our aim is not to promote the best technology but the best *use* of the technology for human beings all over the world.



APC's First Decade: A chronological look at APC's history

APC celebrated its 10th anniversary during the 6th APC Council meeting, held in Visegrád, Hungary in May 2000. But the history of the APC's pioneering role in enabling social movements to benefit from the potential of ICT (information and communication technology) can be traced back to 1985. These chronological notes include only a small selection of the events and achievements that stand out as milestones for APC and its members.

1985

- PeaceNet, a network of peace activists, was established in the USA as a project of the Foundation for the Arts of Peace, through the cooperation of four organisations: Community Data Processing, Center for Innovative Diplomacy, Ark Foundation, and Foundation for the Arts of Peace.
- GreenNet was founded in the UK to develop electronic networking for environmental and civil society organisations.

1986

- EcoNet, a US-based environmental network created by the Farralones Institute, was acquired by PeaceNet. EcoNet/PeaceNet later became the Institute for Global Communications (IGC).
- The idea of linking progressive networks for email and information sharing was formulated by Mark Graham and Mitra, founding members of PeaceNet/IGC and GreenNet. Working with emerging national networks, rather than expanding into other countries, was defined as a guiding principle from the outset.

1987

- WorkNet (which later became SANGONeT) was founded as an email network and bulletin board for the labour movement in South Africa. International connectivity was initially secured through GeoNet in London and soon after through GreenNet.¹
- IGC in the US and GreenNet in the UK created a transatlantic computer link-up, to connect their separate electronic mail and computer conferencing networks.²

¹ Also see: Roberto Elissalde, "Need and Chance: APC in the Global South and the rise of some strong Southern members", APC Annual Report 2000

- Web Network's earliest incarnation started up in Canada. Called NIRV Center, it was conceived at the 1986 Fate of the Earth Conference by a group of Toronto environmentalists, and was Canada's first non-profit computer network serving non-profit and social change organisations.³
- The name Association for Progressive Communications (APC) was invented in the New York hotel-room of rock-star Peter Gabriel, by Mark Graham, Mitra and media activists.
- The basis for an APC constitution was outlined at a meeting in IGC's office in San Francisco.

1989

- Collaboration between APC and the United Nations began⁴, in preparation for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), more popularly known as the Earth Summit. As APC had the only international, civil society communications network in existence at that time, the UNCED secretariat published their information in APC conferences. They had no other way of distributing information so economically and so effectively. (The UN itself began distributing information by electronic means many years later).
- WorkNet from South Africa, IGC, GreenNet and Alternex (the communications branch of IBASE, the Portuguese acronym of the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis) met at an Interdoc meeting in the Netherlands in 1989.

1990

- APC was founded by IGC (USA), GreenNet (UK), NordNet (Sweden), Web Networks (Canada), Alternex/IBASE (Brazil), Nicarao/CRIES (Nicaragua), and Pegasus (Australia).⁵
- The GnFido (GreenNet Fidonet) gateway at GreenNet provided the first means of exchanging email between email hosts in Africa and the rest of the world. By 1994, GnFido provided Internet gateway services to over 50 email hosts in Africa, Asia and Central and Eastern Europe.⁶
- Members of IGC visited Moscow and returned the following year to help Russian activists get GlasNet running, to facilitate the emerging civil society's communication during the fall of communism in Russia.

² Also see: Brian Murphy "The Founding of APC: Coincidences and Logical Steps in Global Civil Society Networking", APC Annual Report 2000

³ Also see: Brian Murphy "Mike Jensen and the Code that stitched together the APC: The Pre-Internet Days and Early Efforts at Linking APC Nodes", APC Annual Report 2000

⁴ Also see: Rory O'Brien "Enabling Civil Society Participation in Global Policy-Making: APC and the United Nations", APC Annual Report 2000

⁵ Also see: Brian Murphy "The Founding of APC: Coincidences and Logical Steps in Global Civil Society Networking", APC Annual Report 2000

⁶ Also see: Karen Banks "Fidonet: The 'Critical Mass' technology", APC Annual Report 2000

1991

- Southern and Northern NGOs meeting in Nairobi identified email and the APC conferences as a tool for distance-lobbying the Earth Summit. Chasque, a network created by the Third World Institute (ITeM) in Uruguay, and IGC set up the first email and conference system running from the UN itself in New York, during a preparatory meeting for the Earth Summit.
- A Fidonet gateway was set up by roving technician, Mike Jensen, at WorkNet/SANGONeT in South Africa, providing Internet mail connections to Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana.
- The first meeting of APC partners in southern Africa was hosted by WorkNet/SANGONeT in Johannesburg, supported through a project with Web Networks and Alternatives (then CIDMAA) in Canada.
- Chasque in Uruguay, GlasNet in Russia and ComLink in Germany joined the APC.

1992

- APC provided the first online communications centre for NGOs and UN delegates at a UN conference - the Rio Earth Summit.
- In September, over 17,000 users in 94 countries were using APC networks.
- INTERCOM in Ecuador became the eleventh APC member.
- IGC hosted the first APC Council meeting in San Francisco.

1993

- APC facilitated electronic communications for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.
- ComLink provided connectivity at the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.
- The APC Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) was established and began preparations for the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995).⁷
- GreenNet and Dutch group, Antenna, encouraged by Jagdish Parikh, established 'Asialink', a project providing start-up funding and technical support to small hosts in Asia working with social movements in their countries.
- The Green Spider telecommunications network started up to link environmental civil society organisations in Hungary.
- SANGONeT is the first African organisation to join APC.

⁷ Also see: APC WNSP "Women's Networking and ICTs: The character, achievements and challenges past and present of the APC Women's Networking Support Programme", APC Annual Report 2000

1994

- APC and Uruguayan member Chasque provided APC services at the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.
- An APC cost-sharing project was launched, with the objective of reducing the expense to people in Africa and Asia of receiving and sending email.
- Several APC members attend the Internet Society's workshop for developing countries held in Prague. APC member staff acted as trainers and APC partner in the Czech Republic, Econnect provided logistical support for the workshop.
- Web Networks hosted an APC Council meeting just outside Toronto.
- The StrawberryNet Network was established in Romania, with the assistance of Green Spider.

1995

- APC received consultative (Category 1) status to the UN, in June.
- NordNet from Sweden lead a group of local Danish communications activists in setting up electronic communications at the UN World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) in Copenhagen. For the first time Web browsers were available and the public were able to access an APC WSSD site.
- A 40-woman team of APC communications experts provided connectivity and training to NGO participants at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and - as part of Media Caucus - ensured that the issue of women and ICTs was placed on the UN Agenda.⁸
- APC technicians and training activists provided skills training at an informatics symposium hosted by Economic Commission for Africa in Ethiopia.
- Alternex/IBASE hosted an APC Council Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

1996

- SANGONeT hosted an APC-Africa-Women's technical training in Johannesburg for women system operators. Now that Internet access was becoming more widely available in some parts of the continent, Fidonet systems operators were given skills to make the transition to Internet.
- The first APC European Meeting was held in Slovenia. Other regional APC meetings were held in preparation for the 1997 APC Council meeting.

⁸ Also see: Rory O'Brien "Enabling Civil Society Participation in Global Policy-Making: APC and the United Nations", APC Annual Report 2000

1997

- APC partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international organisations to organise the Global Knowledge conference in Toronto. Web Networks, APC's Canadian member, brought together the hundreds of NGOs using ICTs for international development participating physically and virtually using a Website and email.
- Web Networks and APC publishes the influential *Working Together Online*⁹, which documents the lessons and techniques gained through APC experience in online networking.
- An APC Africa Strategy Development Meeting was held in Johannesburg with more than 35 participants from APC member and partner networks from all over Africa. A powerful statement from the meeting - the "Holy Family Communiqué"¹⁰ - outlined the position of development-oriented networks and information providers towards trends in private sector and donor investment in networking in Africa.
- The APC mission¹¹ was formalised at APC Council's meeting in South Africa, hosted at Itala by SANGONeT.

1998

- APC's Mexican network, LaNeta, hosted an APC Council meeting in Oaxaca, Mexico and an APC Europe Meeting was held in Nijmegen, Netherlands.
- BlueLink, the information network of Bulgarian environmental organisations, was founded, inspired by Hungary's Green Spider network.

1999

- The first "World APC Techie Conference" brought together technical directors from all over the APC community in Prague.
- An APC – Central Europe meeting was held in Kwacany, Slovakia.

2000

- APC facilitated and provided consultation and research services for the "Access" track of the Action Summit at the second Global Knowledge conference in Kuala Lumpur. The Action Summit created a plan of action for the Global Knowledge partner organisations, which included various government-related development agencies, companies, and NGOs involved in the development and ICT field.
- The APC WNSP co-coordinated a women's network (WomenAction 2000) to bring an NGO perspective to the UN Beijing +5 review.

⁹ http://www.idrc.ca/books/848/index_e.html

¹⁰ <http://www.apc.org/english/about/apcafrica/holy.htm>

¹¹ <http://www.apc.org/english/about/mission/>

- The first ever APC Betinho Communications Prize to recognise the socially meaningful use of ICTs was awarded to the Max Foundation, a life-saving online support network for the families of children suffering from leukaemia in Latin America, and host of the region's first online bone marrow tissue registry.
- The APC Action Areas for 2000-2001¹² emerged at the APC Council meeting in Visegrád, Hungary, hosted by Green Spider.
- BlueLink from Bulgaria and Strawberry Net from Romania joined the APC.



APC's First Decade: Some of the people behind our work

We would like to recognise the many people that have made a contribution to the APC over the last 10 years. Many of them are not mentioned here by name. We hope that as we continue the process of documenting our history and experience that they will appear in this space. Without them, none of the organisation's achievements would have been possible.

Early APC visionaries

Carlos Afonso (Brazil)

Carlos was actively involved in the founding of APC. He was the Chairperson of APC's inaugural Executive Board (established 1997).

Roberto Bissio (Uruguay)

Roberto was APC's voice in United Nations processes in the early days and continues to be involved in APC's work at an advisory level.

Key technicians in APC's development

The APC software developed by technicians (known affectionately in APC as "techies") in the late 1980s and early 1990s allowed APC members' servers to communicate with one and other electronically regardless of physical distance from one and other, and hundreds of thousands of activists worldwide to work together online.

¹² Also see: "The APC Action Areas: The Strategic Mapping of Our Work for 2000-2001", APC Annual Report 2000

ALTERNEX/IBASE (BRAZIL)

Saliel Figueira Filho worked for Alternex, APC member in Brazil. Together with two other Brazilians, *Ricardo Campos* and *Marcos Villas*, Saliel played a key role in the technical set up for e-communications for NGOs at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

CHASQUE/ITEM (URUGUAY)

In the early nineties, *Miguel Peirano* was one of the lead technicians in the APC and instrumental in organising the first APC technical meeting in San Francisco.

GLASNET (EX-USSR)

Alexander Zaytsev was the founding "techie" at GlasNet. Together with IGC's Scott Weikart, he set up the first host for civil society in the then-USSR. *Pasha Prokopenko* is remembered by ex-Pegasus technicians for when he visited Australia and assisted in a major upgrade they were carrying out.

GREENNET (UK)

Cesare Dieni was one of the first systems operators of Fidonet in Italy, before he went to work at GreenNet. He provided general face-to-face support and training to African sysops in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Uganda, and Senegal during the mid to late 1990s.

Jeremy Mortimer was the lead technician at GreenNet in the early years, and became the first staff member when APC was formed.

Karen Banks maintained the early e-mail connections between many of the small networks in Africa, Asia and Central and East European Europe and the rest of the world, via GreenNet in London. She still works at GreenNet today.¹

Mitra was the founder of GreenNet in the UK and key figure in the founding of APC and the first transatlantic connections between IGC, GreenNet and Web Networks. Mitra wrote software which automated the management of controlling the different APC news conferences that were fed to different computer hosts. In the very early days, he was responsible for writing the programming code (gateways) to link previously incompatible email systems².

As well as a technician, *Viv Kendon* was active in APC decision-making in the first half of the decade. She was also a lead figure in APC's involvement in climate control discussions.

¹ See: Karen Banks "Fidonet: The 'Critical Mass' technology", APC Annual Report 2000

² See Brian Murphy "The Founding of APC: Coincidences and Logical Steps in Global Civil Society Networking", APC Annual Report 2000

IGC (USA)

Art McGee was a facilitator of many APC conferences.

Brian Coan did extensive remote support for Latin American members, and volunteered on-site at various member offices (including several months in Nicaragua helping install their first communications system). In addition, he administered the APC news conferences for a long time and did a lot of programming to improve the APC tools.

Ed Simpson developed the mailing list software at IGC, and developed database tools. He managed the IGC UUCP connections, which allowed IGC's server to 'talk' to other APC members' servers in the early days of APC connectivity. He spent a number of weeks at Nicaragua to help them upgrade their servers.

Jeff Dean wrote the software used by activists and others to access APC sites running on Unix platforms (at a time when most people connected online via 300 baud modems, today it is common for people to use 56,000 baud modems).

Scott Weikart was the key "techie" in the development of the APC software used prior to the popularisation of the Internet. At IGC, he chose and installed the software needed to develop a robust, durable architecture for the management of the APC communication system. Scott was key in ensuring that APC followed open standards in its software development, illustrated by the fact that in the middle 1980s he chose Unix as the platform for the IGC (later IGC/APC) tools, and UUCP and X.25³ as the networking standards.

Steve Fram made the IGC communications tools work on inexpensive PC hardware (primarily 386 computers), and later moved IGC into the age of Internet services. He spent a number of months at Alternex in Brazil helping them install their first system. The Alternex system would provide connectivity in many different Latin American nations.

LANETA (MEXICO)

Adolfo Dunayevich was involved in early APC technical development of applications for Fidonet networks, and provided support to other Latin American APC networks, principally, Nicaragua in Nicaragua and Chasque in Uruguay. He still works at LaNeta part-time.

³ Before the Internet, the only widely available national networks (that enabled users to call local modem numbers), and international networks (to enable servers to talk to each other), were based on X.25. UUCP replaced X.25 for international networks (for server to server communication). The Internet eventually replaced both X.25 and UUCP, for both national and international networks.

NICARAO (NICARAGUA)

Cristina Vasconi was technical director at Nicarao. Notably, she was the Technical Coordinator for the APC WNSP Fourth World Conference on Women Project, which organised the on-site communications set-up for attendees at the United Nations World Conference on Women (UNWCW) in Beijing, China in 1995⁴. She led a team of ten women technicians on-site during the conference, negotiated the installation of the leased line (connecting conference attendees with the Internet) with the Chinese authorities (which was no mean feat!) and seconded to the NGO Forum organisers for the event as technical director for the NGO Forum.



Cristina Vasconi (sitting), the technical director at Nicarao, APC member in Nicaragua, around 1993

Photo courtesy: GreenNet

With the memorable email address, *ecoli@nicarao.apc.org*, *Edmundo Coliani*, was the Nicaraguan technician present at the first meeting of the APC, in San Francisco, USA in 1990.

PEGASUS (AUSTRALIA)

Paul Wilson was involved in both the technical direction of APC as well as in strategic leadership. He was technical director of Pegasus from 1990 to 1993, and later chief executive officer.

SANGONET (SOUTH AFRICA)

Fatima Bhyat is the technical director at SANGONeT. In 1995, at the UNWCW, after the principal APC technician (*Cristina Vasconi* of Nicarao) was seconded to the NGO Forum, *Fatima* took on direct responsibility for managing the technical team on a day to day basis and liaising with the rest of the 40 APC women team present.

Fatima took over the main technical role at SANGONeT from *Simone Shall*, first ever “techie” at SANGONeT (when it was known as WorkNet) in the early 1990s. *Simone* continues to play a key role in SANGONeT’s technical development and maintenance.

WEB NETWORKS/NIRV CENTER (CANADA)

Arni Mikelsons helped with setting up our partner Mango in Zimbabwe, and in general on supporting APC partner email networks in Africa.

⁴ Also see: APC WNSP “Women’s Networking and ICTs: The character, achievements and challenges past and present of the APC Women’s Networking Support Programme”, APC Annual Report 2000 and Rory O’Brien “Enabling Civil Society Participation in Global Policy-Making: APC and the United Nations”, APC Annual Report 2000

Kirk Roberts was a key technician and executive director of Web Networks.

Mike Jensen, a South African exile in the 1980s, was the co-founder and principal technician at Web Networks, Canada. He developed its initial networking platform, before moving it over to APC software. He helped get Pegasus in Australia started and was the driving force behind APC-supported Fidonet connectivity in Africa.⁵

As well, as being a technician at Web Networks, *Rob Ellis* has also moved around the APC community, working at SANGONeT, South Africa, and GreenNet in London. He is currently back at Web Networks.

Walter Roberson provided extensive technical assistance to Web Network's first technicians and provided support at several other APC members, especially GreenNet in the UK, Pegasus in Australia, and NordNet in Sweden.

APC Executive Board Members⁶

FEBRUARY 1997 - OCTOBER 1998

Carlos Afonso, Brazil (Chair)
Paul Wilson, Australia
Anriette Esterhuysen, South Africa
Mark Surman, Canada
Txcema Laullon, Spanish State
Stefan Hackenthal, Germany
Karen Banks, UK

NOVEMBER 1998 - MAY 2000

Roberto Roggiero, Ecuador (Chair)
Anriette Esterhuysen, South Africa
Marci Lockwood, USA
Stefan Hackenthal, Germany
Vasek Klinkera, Czech Republic
Eric Bachman, Croatia (to February 2000)
Moussa Fall, Senegal (March - May 2000)

⁵ Also see: Brian Murphy "Mike Jensen and the Code that stitched together the APC: The Pre-Internet Days and Early Efforts at Linking APC Nodes", APC Annual Report 2000

⁶ The APC Executive Board was first established in 1997. Also see: "APC Governance: How this international network operates", APC Annual Report 2000

MAY 2000 - NOVEMBER 2001

Stefan Hackenthal, Germany (Chair)

Karen Banks, UK

Magela Sigillito, Uruguay

Julian Casasbuenas, Colombia

APC Women's Programme (APC WNSP) coordinators⁷

Chat Garcia Ramilo (Philippines)

Dafne Plou, PARM AL -WNSP Latin America (Argentina)

Karen Banks (UK)

Mercy Wambui, APC Africa Women (Kenya)

Marie Helen Mottin Sylla, APC Africa Women (Senegal)

Sally Burch (Ecuador)

The first coordinating team of the Women's Programme (1993-1995) was comprised of: Edie Farwell (overall liaison), Sally Burch (coordinator), Karen Banks (training), and Cristina Vasconi (technical).

Former APC staff

Amalia Souza (Brazil)

Amalia was the first APC staff person to focus on members and partners, and travelled to most in the course of her time with the APC.

Cilla Lundstrom (Sweden)

Cilla shared overall coordination responsibilities of APC while the General Manager was on leave, and coordinated APC's Communications Policy Awareness programme (now Internet Rights).

Don Anderson (New Zealand)

A lawyer by profession, Don produced APC's current bylaws and articles of incorporation and was later APC's Member and Partner Services coordinator.

⁷ Also see: APC WNSP "Women's Networking and ICTs: The character, achievements and challenges past and present of the APC Women's Networking Support Programme", APC Annual Report 2000

Edie Farwell (USA)

The first coordinator, general manager and Executive Director, Edie was the focal point of APC for most of the 10 years covered in the 2000 APC Annual Report.

Gina Kuta (USA)

Gina was APC's first finance staff member and worked during the period of APC's transition from being incorporated under the Tides Foundation to being incorporated independently.

Jeremy Mortimer (UK)

The first APC staff person, Jeremy was APC's technical director.

Karin Delgadillo (Ecuador)

Karin was in charge of APC's Strategic Uses Programme. She was instrumental in APC developing a broader content and capacity building orientation.

The Network Society, 1990 – 2000: Electronic conferences, global summits, getting together for good purposes

By Roberto Bissio

The Internet is a child and a catalyst of significant changes that take place in the world's post-modern political, economic and social existence. Civil society organisations recognised its potential and used it long before it became attractive to the commercial, financial and political institutions that now seemingly dominate the global network. The Internet was conceived as a tool to facilitate the sharing of information and to allow "many to many" communication (as opposed to "one to one", like phone or fax, and "one to many", like radio and TV); characteristics that clearly address the needs of civil society. However, how the Internet will evolve in the near future is still unclear.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) -- the Internet in particular -- are rapidly changing the ways we communicate. The end of long distance (meaning that there is no reason why a call across the globe should cost more than one around the corner) is not far away. Yet, the Internet is not responsible for creating a global civil society. The need for citizens to organise and act together internationally is anything but new. Citizens have been dealing with "global agendas" for at least two centuries. The anti-slavery society was in essence a global NGO.

Although initially financed by the Pentagon, the existence of the Internet led to a result which was the very antithesis of traditional military approaches: open architecture, shared public protocols and decentralization. "To some extent, it was the electronic equivalent of the Maoist tactics of dispersal of guerrilla forces around a vast territory to counter an enemy's might with versatility and knowledge of terrain. The outcome was a network architecture that, as its inventors wanted, cannot be controlled from any centre, and is made up of thousands of autonomous computer networks that have innumerable ways to link up..." says Manuel Castells in *The Rise of the Network Society*.¹

The steps of creating the existing global network of information exchange were often accidental. The "telnet" protocol was designed precisely to enable a user to communicate through telephone lines from a terminal to a distant computer. The first electronic message was a file "telnetted" directly into a computer in order to wake the owner!² In a similar way, electronic

¹ Manuel Castells, "The Rise of the Network Society", Oxford, Blackwell, 1996 pp. 6-7

² Katie Hafner, Matthew Lyon, "When Wizards stay up late: The origins of the Internet", New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996, pp. 320.

bulletin boards and internationally distributed electronic “conferences” were invented years later by activist “hackers” wanting to enable citizens from around to world to participate in global discussions at the cost of a local call.³ A creative and ingenious way of looking into the potential of the available resources led to the development of new options which we now, a few years later, simply take for granted.

PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS AT THE COST OF A LOCAL CALL

In 1987, two networks - GreenNet in the United Kingdom and the Institute for Global Communications (IGC) (then known as PeaceNet/EcoNet) in the United States - started sharing electronic conference material and demonstrated that transnational electronic communications could serve international as well as domestic communities working for peace, human rights and the environment. By late 1989, networks in Sweden, Canada, Brazil, Nicaragua and Australia were



APC networkers, Sarah Masters and Ashley Drees, at GreenNet, UK in 1997 Photo courtesy: GreenNet

exchanging information. In 1990, the Association for Progressive Communication (APC) was founded⁴, initially aiming to allow non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and concerned individuals around the world to participate in international discussions at the cost of a local call. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1992 provided an excellent testing ground for the idea. It was the first major international political process in which ICTs were widely used to share information among NGOs, to disseminate documentation, and to discuss and reach decisions among participants not physically present at the same place. It was not just a coincidence.

During the first UNCED Preparatory Committee meeting in Nairobi in 1991, a group of NGOs gathered in a small parallel meeting to explore the ways by which the new technologies could be used, addressing how Southern NGOs and those in remote locations could take advantage of the opportunities. As early as December 1990, an electronic conference <en.unced.infox> was created by the APC member networks to find out “how to get information related to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) from one corner of the planet to the other most efficiently using the APC networks as a long-haul communications tool”. By the end of the UNCED, hundreds (if not thousands) of individuals and NGOs had participated in the

³ Francois Fortier, “Civil Society Computer Networks: The Perilous Road of Cyber-politics”, (Ph.D. Dissertation), Graduate Programme in Political Science, York University, Toronto, November, 1996.

⁴ APC Handbook/Version 1 – 10/98, Mimeo.

electronic discussions, sometimes as their only link to the summit process itself, but frequently as a complement to their attendance at face-to-face meetings at different levels (see box).

A whole new information service (NGONET) was created to support the information and communication needs of NGOs and the Rio conference itself had computer rooms at the official site, the press centre and the parallel "Global Forum", linked among themselves and with the Internet. The electronic conferencing helped to inform, by distributing official documents, to organise, to network and to debate, by circulating drafts, proposals, leaflets, position papers and research results. Despite this significant advance, the commercial "explosion" of the Internet only happened two years later.

The "Agenda 21", adopted by the Earth Summit states that "in sustainable development, everyone is a user and provider of information considered in the broad sense".

Such a concept, developed in consultation with NGOs, would have been meaning-less before the Internet.

RECOGNISING THE NEW NETWORKING STYLE OF NGOS

As one of the results of the Rio Summit, the Global Environment Fund (GEF) was created to implement environmental projects with global benefits. NGOs were invited to participate in the shaping of this Fund and, after a long and difficult negotiating process, to participate on an ongoing basis with five observers on the Council of the Fund. Recognising the new networking styles of NGOs, the decision about how to designate five members from among a constituency of thousands of NGOs was left to the NGOs themselves. The three executive agencies (the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] and the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]) who were not yet using email or electronic conferences themselves recognised this was the main tool NGOs were using to get informed and organised. At the request of the NGOs, the World Bank, as the leading agency of the GEF, started posting the official documentation in a special discussion area of the APC, the not-for-profit electronic network that the NGOs were using as their information backbone. Thus, not only was the efficiency of the technologies used by NGOs recognised, but also the validity of the NGO mechanism to network and build consensus among them was endorsed, even if those informal mechanisms would never meet the conventional criteria of "representation."

Hopes were high, as the Internet developed. Its low cost use, instantaneous dissemination and its radical decentralization seemed to imply more democracy. But before heralding this claim, one should examine the Internet carefully. "Are there new kinds of relations occurring within [the Internet] which suggest new forms of power configuration between communicating individuals?" asks David Porter in "Internet Culture", "In other words, is there a new politics on the Internet?"²

² David Porter, ed. , *Internet Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1997. p.205

SOUTH TO NORTH

Contrary to "common sense" belief, the spread of electronic mail and conferences in the NGO communities and the international institutions they deal with was the result of pressure from the South to the North and not the other way around. "The end of long distance will benefit those who are the most far away," said 'The Economist' in a special edition on ICT³. The Southern NGOs had realised this sometime before. However, it took quite an effort to convince donors that computers were indeed an appropriate technology for grassroots organisations in the South and to convince their Northern NGO partners to use email and not fax to reach them. The cost of reading email was much cheaper than paying for the thermal paper needed to receive the faxes.

Human rights organisations were among the first to realise the potential of these technologies. During the failed 1991 coup attempt against Gorbachev that triggered the end of the Soviet Union, the use of electronic mail overcame the attempt to blockade international communications.

NGOs were already using the Internet extensively during the 1994 preparatory work for the UN World Summit on Social Development (WSSD)⁴ at a time when Bill Gates has been quoted as saying "we have nothing to win from the Internet."

OPENING UP INSTITUTIONS

The unprecedented capacity of those at a distance to access information and react to it is behind many organisational and institutional changes.

Access to information is fundamental to citizens' participation in any decision-making process, but it can't be reduced to having access to computers and phone lines: the information itself has to be public. In recent years, particularly after active campaigning by environmental groups against the World Bank, many of the major multilateral development institutions have changed their policies regarding the disclosure of their documentation.

If the enormous potential of the Internet can only be tapped by an elite, isn't it *de facto* contributing to increasing the gap between the rich and the poor? This is a very valid question with no easy answer. On the one hand it can be argued that, contrary to other gaps that are widening⁵, the Internet access gap seems to be narrowing: The Internet Society estimated that

³ Survey "The Death of Distance", *The Economist*, 9/21/1997

⁴ UN World Summit on Social Development (WSSD), Copenhagen, 1995

⁵ "The gap between the richest 20 per cent of humanity and the poorest 20 per cent doubled between 1940 and 1990. In 1976, Switzerland was 52 times richer than Mozambique, while in 1997 it was 508 times richer," according to United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson during her July 1, 1999 Seventeenth Presidential Lecture, delivered at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, Switzerland.

in 1994 there were 0.002 Internet users per 1000 inhabitants in India, compared to 48.9 in Sweden. Yet, in June 1999, the number of Internet users in India had grown to one million (roughly one per thousand inhabitants) and by 2001 they are expected to be five million.⁶ Similar fast growth is registered in many other developing countries.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The investment required to provide phone services even in remote areas has fallen dramatically in the last years. Yet the availability of the means to bridge the gap doesn't mean that it will inevitably be bridged. Communications have been massively privatised in most of the world. The principle of universal access and the practice of letting the affluent urban users subsidise the distant poor risks being abandoned.

While the democratising potential of ICT is widely recognised, the corporate forces in the ICT industry press for decision-making on information in bodies that are non-transparent, like the World Trade Organisation, or not accountable to the international community, like the US government.

If this trend is not reversed, Agenda 21 will have to be rewritten very early in the 21st century to say that "in sustainable development, everyone is a user and provider of information but only a few are its owners."

Technologies are not in themselves a solution to any of the inequity gaps. But the availability of technologies of potential alongside continuing gaps raises ethical and political imperatives as to whether and how the application of the technologies may reduce inequities. In a similar way, there being on the planet enough resources to adequately nourish all of its population challenges a system that keeps a billion people in poverty. Printing machines did not produce modern democracy. The writers and journalists using them did. The potential of the Internet is just that of a powerful tool.

About the Author



Roberto Bissio is an Uruguayan journalist with working experience as foreign correspondent in Peru, Mexico and Brazil. He has been the director of Instituto del Tercer Mundo (ITeM) since its creation in 1989. ITeM is a non-profit organization based in Uruguay that promotes South-South information exchange and public access to information. In 1989 ITeM started

⁶ Mark Nicholson, "Big push to get on line, en masse", in *Financial Times*, June 2 1999.

Chasque, the first non-university Internet Service Provider in Uruguay and member of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC).

In 1991, ITeM launched NGONET, a programme designed to use electronic information and communication technologies to connect local communities to international decision-making. NGONET provided information services during the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) and the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Roberto has been heavily involved in the follow-up to WSSD and the Fourth World Congress on Women (WCW) as coordinator of Social Watch. He also serves on the international committee of Third World Network.

The Founding of APC: Coincidences and logical steps in global civil society networking

By Brian Martin Murphy

Geographically disconnected but similar NGO networking experiments serendipitously came together to form the APC.

APC was officially founded in 1990, but the link-up of computers and software to connect remote civil society organisations working for common causes on an international basis started much earlier.

The international demonstration of what NGOs could do with computer networking was established in a series of experiments funded by the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) under the umbrella of Interdoc. Interdoc grew out of the 1984 'Vallettri'¹ agreement in which NGOs from four continents agreed to use international telephone lines to link their computers. The Vallettri signatories were mostly large NGOs who could afford to use computers for their work at a time when PCs were still huge, expensive and relatively complex to use.

COMPUTING IN THE EIGHTIES

NGOs had been thinking about and networking computers in different countries around the world since the early eighties.

At that time, the Internet was used exclusively for academic and military purposes. A small number of business oriented commercial email services did exist but it was difficult or impossible to send email from one network to another. So the few NGOs that were using PCs did so for documentation purposes, rather than communication or action.

At the outset, many Interdoc members used the e-mail service of a European-based commercial email network called GeoNet. A group of peace and environmentalist activists in London had formed an arrangement with GeoNet to operate a non-profit sub-net on GeoNet called GreenNet and pushed to get other users to share the same system in order to communicate fluidly. By 1987, GreenNet acquired its own equipment and moved its operations away from GeoNet. GreenNet was founded by progressive environmentalist, Mitra, with Jeremy Mortimer as technical director. Although not part of the original Interdoc initiative, Mitra was familiar with it.

¹ Signatories to the 'Vallettri Agreement' included the International Documentation Centre (IDOC) alongside Instituto Brasileiro de Analises Sociais e Economicas (IBASE - Brazil), the International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA - Belgium), CODESRIA (Senegal), Asia Monitor Research Centre (AMRC - Hong Kong), Antenna (The Netherlands), SATIS (Netherlands, based NGO database development organisation servicing 100 grassroots technology groups), Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems (HURIDOCs - Norway), Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales (ILET Chile), DESCO, (Peru), and the International Development Education Research Agency (IDERA - Canada).

By pure coincidence, and without knowledge of what was going on in the UK and unaware of the Interdoc initiative, in 1985 PeaceNet² was set up as a network of US peace activists. A year later PeaceNet and environmentalist network, EcoNet, were merged to form the Institute for Global Communications (IGC).

Mitra and Mark Graham (one of PeaceNet's founders) had been discussing working together. During 1988, Scott Weikart, heading PeaceNet's technical side, discovered by accident that GreenNet was running the exact same kind of computer that PeaceNet and EcoNet were run on - a Plexus mini-computer. "Scott (PeaceNet's technical director) packed a 300 megabyte disk³ with all the software," said former PeaceNet director, Geoff Sears, "and hauled that off to London to start a transatlantic digital communications network running." This is how one of the first NGO-owned communications systems between continents was created.

Mitra, GreenNet's founder, played a crucial if subversive role in opening up and connecting nascent computer networks. He operated gateways between all the distinct email networks he could, even when the commercial operators didn't want him to.

He would buy one email account on each, and write a script to log in, download and upload email and deliver it to GreenNet users. In fact, following GreenNet's later link up with IGC in the US, GreenNet transferred all the information from GeoNet bulletin boards to APC conferences.

The power of linking progressive networks for email and information sharing internationally was obvious to the visionaries at GreenNet and IGC. "Both Mark Graham and Scott Weikart at PeaceNet and GreenNet's Mitra had the Internet vision of global communications unfettered by commercial barriers," remembers Dr. Viv Kendon, a GreenNet pioneer. "All were involved with Internet standards and policy committees even then, while it was (sic) still exclusively academic. This vision they bequeathed to APC, and is probably the single most important thing that APC had, that the Interdoc initiative did not emphasise or try to implement in the same way".

The services on IGC networks and GreenNet were a little cheaper than commercial providers, which opened the doors to smaller NGOs and individuals. Viv Kendon joined GreenNet at the end of 1989 to build the credibility and user base of GreenNet in the UK and Europe. "Widening the user base to grassroots activists, in contrast to the larger NGO documentation centres dominating Interdoc/GeoNet: this was the priority of the newly formed international network of GreenNet and IGC," she explains. "We wanted to show what you could do with email -- crisis

² PeaceNet was a project of the Foundation for the Arts of Peace, through the cooperation of four organisations: Community Data Processing, the Center for Innovative Diplomacy, the Ark Foundation and the Foundation for the Arts of Peace.

³ The 300 MB disk was about the size of a large file cabinet drawer.

response to rainforest logging is the most-quoted early success. And we ran mailing lists to enable those with other email services to receive information from the online conferences (electronic notice boards). We didn't try to insist everybody joined us if they already had email."

Everyone involved in the IGC-GreenNet connection wanted to extend the system. In the USA, IGC took their example to foundation donors, and the MacArthur Foundation of Chicago became interested, providing \$25,000. Part of the money was used to fund the setting-up of a network of grass-root non-profit email providers over the next two years which would go throughout the Americas, into the former Soviet Union, to Asia and into Amsterdam in time for an Interdoc conference in 1990.

The Interdoc conference in 1990 was organised by Antenna, later an APC member for part of the 1990s. Antenna's founder, Michael Polman, was keen to facilitate networking but, in the same vein as Mitra and Graham, did not want to run or control the networks.

That the time was right for NGO email networks to link up formally was clear from the fact that there were already seven founders by the time APC officially came into being, as well as other small service providers that were working with Interdoc. It was also clear that non-profits creating networks for non-profits was a better option at that time than relying on commercial network providers with their competitive ethos, especially outside of developed countries.

The seven organisations - IGC (USA), GreenNet (UK), NordNet (Sweden), Web Networks (Canada), IBASE (Brazil), Nicarao/CRIES (Nicaragua), and Pegasus (Australia)- that would create APC⁴, used the Interdoc event to plan the creation of an association of non-profits organisations called the APC. The APC saw the value of creating networks to facilitate social justice work, and of forming an association to help them help each other to serve civil society better.

About the Author

Brian Martin Murphy is an academic from Canada who has followed the development of APC closely since the mid 1990s. He was based in Zimbabwe and South Africa for several years.

⁴ The name APC was devised in the hotel-room of rock-star Peter Gabriel in New York, between Mark Graham, Mitra, Steven Van Zandt, Danny Schechter, Hart Perry and Barry Roberts, according to common lore.

Mike Jensen and the Code that stitched together the APC: The pre-Internet days and early efforts at linking APC nodes

By Brian Murphy

When APC decided to bring existing and new members together in a tightly linked global virtual network the Internet as we know it didn't exist. Most hosts¹ used by activist networks were stand-alone systems and there were no commonly used protocols for automating the sharing of data and the delivery of email between users. Many hosts even had 'human gateways' - people who would actually cut and paste messages between their own network and the remote network in another country. In the late 1980s, technicians (often self-taught) had to physically travel from one part of the world to another, installing the software and writing programming code to allow disparate NGO computer systems to "talk" to each other and so send email and share information.

The Cross-Over between Technology and Activism

In the late 1980s, technicians (often self-taught) had to physically travel from one part of the world to another, installing the software and writing programming code to allow disparate NGO computer systems to "talk" to each other and so send email and share information.

The stories of technicians like Mike Jensen illustrate the crossover between technology and activism that is the hallmark of APC.

Mike Jensen had never expected to become a computer networking expert. A native South African, he studied ecology and, as a post-graduate at the University of Guelph in Canada, specialised in acid-rain pollution research. However in the early 1980s in the United States, the primary producer nation of environmental pollution, President Reagan was continuing to deny the linkage between pollution and acid rain, Jensen began to seriously question the value of putting effort into writing scientific papers that seemed to have little impact on policy making. He moved into journalism, writing about pollution and its effects for student newspapers and a local radio station.

Jensen returned to South Africa to work as a reporter at the Rand Daily Mail in Johannesburg. However, the paper was closed down, a victim of Apartheid-era demographics - a paper read by both blacks and whites could not get advertising. With the political situation in South Africa deteriorating rapidly, Jensen decided to emigrate to Canada in 1985.

¹ *Host* – a computer that offers services to networked users

While he waited for his Canadian immigration clearance, Jensen, who had learned computer programming as a tool for his post-graduate research, opened a computer account at the University of Toronto. The academic community and outsiders had recently started using USENET newsgroups for online discussions and information sharing and there was a lot of excitement about the future of computer networking. Jensen, still passionate about ecology, had started volunteering with the activist Ontario Environmental Network (OEN) almost as soon as he had arrived in Toronto, and, looking at the USENET model, wondered if a similar computer network could be put together for environmental groups. It was easy to convince OEN members, who were attracted by the idea of environmental activists nationally exchanging information and communicating quickly and comparatively cheaply, and their associated funders, who had already been considering supporting the use of commercial networking systems to facilitate communication between Canadian environmental organisations were interested in providing some financial support, despite the fact that these commercial enterprises were relatively expensive and primarily business-oriented.

Fortunately, documented on the USENET itself were the experiences of those who were building low-cost bulletin-board services on the emerging Intel personal computer (PC) based architecture. So, supported by a grant from the Ontario government and the United Nations World Food Program, in 1986, Jensen set up a multi-user network for the OEN using a cheap personal computer (a 286-AT IBM clone) and a PC-based version of Unix produced by Santa Cruz Operation.

Calling itself "The Web" (prior to Tim Berners-Lee's adoption of the name for the World Wide Web), the system set up by Jensen provided much cheaper access for NGOs than any of the commercial systems available at the time and its user base expanded quickly. Seeing the network was clearly a successful start, the OEN created the Non-profit Innovations and Resources for the Voluntary sector (NIRV) Centre to run and expand The Web and to focus on activities in the emerging ICT sector for NGOs, including training, desktop publishing and hardware supply.

The Web was very clear about its mission. "We were immersed in a social movement," explained Jensen in a series of interviews with the author in the mid 1990s. "The political ambition was to make use of these new tools to further the general goals, which were initially focused on the environment. We were using it (The Web) as a way of connecting all the OEN member organisations, and supporting them in whatever they were doing."

With similar movements emerging in California at EcoNet/PeaceNet, and in London at GreenNet, it was only a matter of time before discussions began which would lead to the formation and expansion of an international NGO computer network – the Association for Progressive Communications. Jensen became one of several technicians who travelled around the world installing software and working with local technicians to link up emerging NGO networks.

The preparation for the link-up of an existing computer network 'node' (or host) to APC's international NGO network went something like this. In the link-up of the Pegasus network in Australia in 1990, Jensen spent a few weeks setting up a duplicate copy on hard disk of the 'mother system' running at EcoNet/PeaceNet. The 'mother system' was the master APC software, on which the communications networks by that time also operating at the Web and GreenNet were based. Then he flew the disk and all the other pieces of computer hardware that were difficult or more costly to obtain, to Byron Bay, a small surfing town on the east coast of Australia. He then spent the next four months setting up the networking system and connecting Pegasus to the APC network.

"It (the link-up of Pegasus)² was the best working holiday of my life," he claimed, jokingly. "It wasn't all play though, there were some pretty stressful times too." An earthquake hit California (home to IGC) whilst Mike was in Australia, cutting off all the other APC hosts access to the central hub at EcoNet/PeaceNet. "We were all scurrying around making plans to call London and Toronto," remembered Mike. Fortunately, the problems in California didn't last long enough to cause a major communications breakdown of the APC network.

Pegasus, before the APC link-up

Pegasus Networks was the first organisation to offer public access to the Internet on an Australia wide basis. While some small local services existed before then, Pegasus achieved national coverage by offering services at local call cost from anywhere in Australia by providing dialup access via Telecom X.25 links to the developing Internet backbone.

Pegasus was formally launched in September 1989 at a time when Internet usage in Australia was restricted to academic circles.

By late 1990, Jensen was back in Africa with support of a North American NGO called Tecnica, which was broadening its initial operation from Nicaragua. In his free time he upgraded a local bulletin-board system to be able to network with other remote hosts. Called Micro-computing for Non-Governmental Organisations (MANGO), MANGO had been created a year earlier by a coalition of NGOs headed by the southern African regional news agency Africa Information Afrique (AIA), the Southern African Research and Development Centre (SARDC) and the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA). In Harare, Jensen, working in an apartment specially rented by AIA for MANGO, moved the bulletin board over to the Fidonet³ system, which allowed low cost 'store-and-forward' communications between individual computers and network 'post offices'. This technology operated well even over very poor phone lines, making it ideal for use in Africa. It was cheap to use because the store and forward technique required very little online time.

² Thanks to Ian Peter for information regarding the early Pegasus days.

³ For more information about Fidonet, see: Karen Banks, "Fidonet: The 'critical mass' technology", APC Annual Report, 2000.

1991 found Jensen based at GreenNet in London upgrading APC's networking software to allow the smaller Fidonet based systems that were now emerging in developing countries, and such as he had set up on Zimbabwe, to "gateway" with the APC hosts. "Gatewaying" allowed the smaller hosts to tap directly into the email services and information newsgroups (known as conferences) offered by APC members.

With grant money raised by GreenNet and its then partner Soft Solution, Jensen returned to South Africa to install a gateway at WorkNet, the South Africa APC partner that was set up in 1987. It took six months to enable WorkNet to gateway with Fidonet and to use another computer protocol, UUCP, to connect with GreenNet in London. But it was worth it. The connection with GreenNet was more cost effective than with the previous international connection through commercial provider GeoNet.

By the end of 1991, Jensen with assistance from colleagues in the APC network had helped knit together seven nations into the APC network, including Senegal, Nigeria and Kenya. Each node of the network linked activists and NGOs in each country nationally and internationally. This was a feat in itself and even more so considering that most of the newly linked-up groups were in Africa where the Internet would be long in coming and expensive when it arrived.

"Coming from a journalist background, I'm actually more interested in bringing content from one place to another," reflected Jensen in a 1997 interview with the author. "But what motivated me to spend the last ten years in spreading access to the (APC) network is that I've always felt that there was not much point in having the content there if a lot of people can't use it. We are slowly getting there. The Internet is beginning to pervade, and capital cities of Africa now at least have some degree of access, but that's not good enough yet. We still have to bring it further out so that people in rural areas have access."

About the Author

Brian Martin Murphy is an academic from Canada who has followed the development of APC closely since the mid 1990s. He was based in Zimbabwe and South Africa for several years.



APC would like to thank Mike Jensen (pictured left) for his contributions to the article. Mike continues to be based in South Africa, is a well-known networking and Internet advisor to governments and civil society in developing countries around the world, and remains a close counterpart of the APC community. (Photo courtesy of Mike Jensen, 2001)

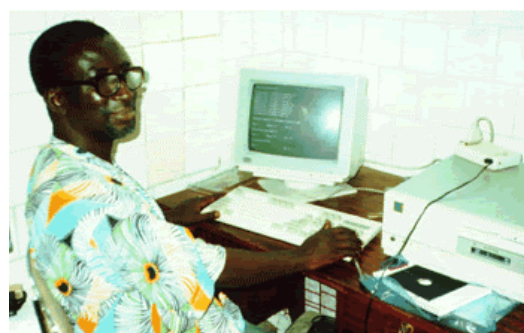
Fidonet: The 'critical mass' technology for networking with and in developing countries

By Karen Banks, GreenNet, UK

Network gateways at many APC member networks in the early nineties provided one of the only means of affordable electronic communication between NGOs in developed and developing countries. Fidonet software was used extensively by APC members and partners, and connected over 50 email hosts in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe.

Between 1990 and 1997, Internet 'gateways' to local networks based on basic 'store-and-forward' Fidonet technology, provided cheap, efficient, and in many cases the only means of electronic communications to thousands of individuals, NGOs, academics, researchers and quasi-governmental institutions in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe.

The Fidonet protocol was a particularly robust software, which made it very appropriate for use in situations where phone line quality was poor, electricity supply was unreliable, costs of communications were expensive, and where people had access to low specification hardware.



It was also very cost effective. Fidonet provided very high data compression, which reduced file size and therefore reduced transmission costs.

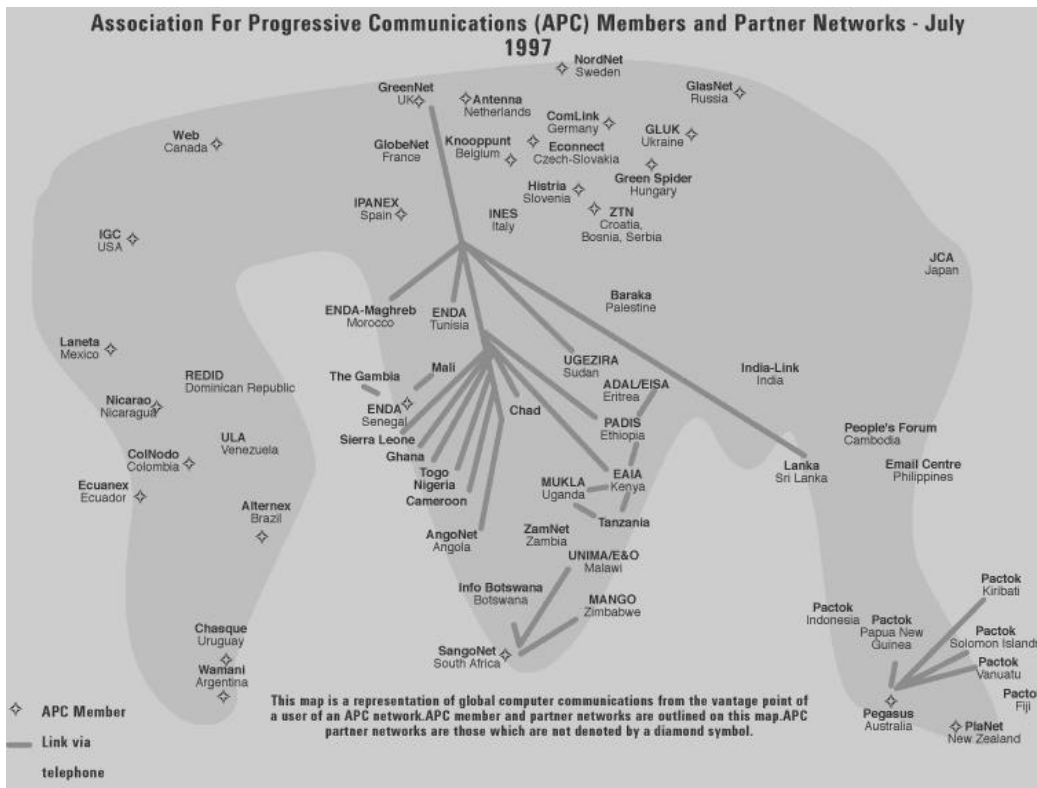
Moussa Fall, the Fidonet gateway and system operator at the APC member network in Dakar, Senegal, ENDA. Photo courtesy: GreenNet

It incorporated sophisticated error correction (which minimised the costs of human error), it was a 'store-and-forward' technology (meaning people could compose and read their email offline, also reducing costs), and it was designed for use on relatively cheap DOS-based personal computers (mainly 286s and 386s).

For all these reasons, Fidonet technology provided the basis for the first use of email and electronic conferencing for many developing countries.

However, in the late eighties and early nineties, most of the networks that provided email and electronic conferencing services to NGOs in the North used a protocol called UUCP (UNIX to UNIX Copy Protocol) as the basis of communication. The Fidonet and UUCP protocols were incompatible, so people who sent email from systems using UUCP-based protocols, were unable to read email sent from systems using the Fidonet protocol (and vice versa).

The solution to this problem was to build 'gateways' (also known as 'hubs') which would convert information coming from UUCP-based systems to a format understood by Fidonet-based systems (and vice versa). These gateways were developed and installed at many APC member networks in the early nineties and between them provided some of the only means of affordable electronic communication between NGOs in developed and developing countries. International phone calls were made on a daily basis from the gateways, to over 50 small hosts in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe, delivering mail to, and collecting mail from, their respective user communities.



Above: APC Member and Partner Network in 1997.

Members are designated with a diamond symbol. Other organisations are partners. The line indicates a Fidonet connection from GreenNet in London – the hosts which do not have lines connecting them have full Internet connectivity.

Diagram courtesy: GreenNet

Somewhere between two and five million messages are estimated to have been sent across the Fidonet gateways between 1990 and 1997, at a cost of about \$0.30 USD per message. This compared very favourably with the cost of an international or even STD phone call or fax which often cost between five and ten dollars per minute.

"Since 1987, low cost electronic communication networks have increased in importance and appropriateness as tools for development and social change in Africa. The poor telecommunications infrastructure and the cost of long distance interactive calls to remote hosts prevented active participation and were beyond economic means of those residing in Africa.

... Fido[net] and low cost communication systems was suggested to be the tool for developing countries. ... One of the significant impacts of APC was the provision of Fido gateway for African networks. The GnFido (GreenNet Fidonet) gateway connects African countries which cannot be connected via the main 'Zone' gateway in South Africa".

Lishan Adam, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1997

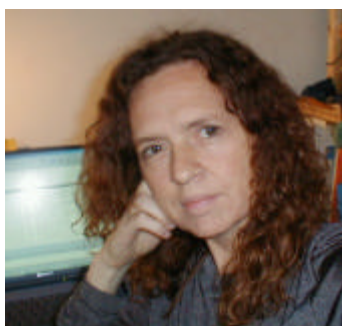
(see www.ethiopians.com/lishan2.html)

Fidonet gateways were installed at Web Networks (Canada), IGC (USA), GreenNet (UK), ComLink (Germany), NordNet (Sweden), Pegasus (Australia) and WorkNet/SANGONeT¹ (South Africa).

The ComLink gateway in Germany was critical as a hub for communications from and between email hosts in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia during the war in the Balkans in the early nineties. The Pegasus gateway provided the earliest means of communication to members of the PACTOK network in the Pacific Islands. The gateway at GreenNet in London provided connectivity to almost 50 small hosts in Africa, South and South East Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. Econnect in Prague became a pivotal connection point for NGOs working locally in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Poland.

The use of Fidonet technology provided the basis for developing a 'critical mass' of pioneering email users, technicians and decision-makers in the field of ICTs from both North and South. Many of those involved with the early Fidonet based systems are today recognised as pioneers in promoting Internet connectivity in their countries.

About the Author



Karen Banks is a networking pioneer who has worked with ICTs and their application as a tool for social change since 1990. She is currently a Director of GreenNet (the APC Member in the UK), Coordinator of APC's Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) and Manager of APC's Global Internet Rights Initiative.

¹ Also see: Brian Murphy "Mike Jensen and the Code that stitched together the APC: The Pre-Internet Days and Early Efforts at Linking APC Nodes", APC Annual Report 2000

Enabling Civil Society Participation in Global Policy-making: The APC and the United Nations

By Rory O'Brien

Policy formulation is no longer solely a prerogative of national governments and intergovernmental organisations – the new information and communications technologies (ICTs) allow grassroots groups from around the world to contribute to the policy processes. Since its founding in 1990, the APC has worked closely with the United Nations to assist civil society organisations to participate in global policy-making through the use of ICTs.

In 1990, after the World Summit for Children in New York, the United Nations (UN) Children's Fund created the <child.summit> online discussion forum carried by APC networks to solicit follow-up commentary from non governmental organisations (NGOs). That same year the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) began to use APC networks to electronically disseminate their quarterly publication *NGLS News*¹.

1990 was also important as the start of the UN-APC collaboration leading up to the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, but more popularly known as the "Earth Summit") to be held in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. The summit was a seminal occasion, being the first time that NGOs were invited to officially address the multinational assembly. It was also one of the largest gatherings of NGOs in history, with 20,000 people taking part in the NGO Forum, an alternative summit to the UN meeting, taking place at the same time in another part of Rio. APC's involvement in the Earth Summit created a model of facilitation that was used enthusiastically by huge numbers of NGOs in subsequent summits.

Prior to UN summits, the UN used APC computer 'conferences' (a term used to refer to online APC discussion forums) to post and disseminate online official documents concerning national policies, as well as information on the logistics and agenda of the summit. NGOs used conferencing as a way to keep each other informed on related issues, and to discuss strategy for promoting their own policy platforms. Following each summit, the conferences were used as a repository of the final policy documents. APC also provided computer communications facilities and user support at several summit Preparatory Committee meetings, held in various places around the globe. The UN system uses these "PrepComs" (pre-summit meetings held on a regional basis) to enable consultative preparation for the main event.

¹ Later NGLS would continue helping NGOs around the world get online by co-publishing the influential "@t Ease with Email", with input from staff from APC members - GreenNet, SANGONeT, and Pegasus - and partners - Pactok, Indialink, and Email Centre in the Philippines.

During the Earth Summit, a great deal of work was done by Alternex, APC's Brazilian member, to create on-site technical facilities at both the UN Summit and NGO Forum. After securing funding, Alternex set up local area networks in each locale that were connected not only to other APC systems but also to the dozens of public and private email networks then in existence, allowing seamless and low-cost transmission of messages by the summit attendees. Dozens of computers and printers were set up for purposes of document preparation as well as communications, with a large team of APC staff and volunteers providing training and support services. All of this was provided free of charge to anyone wishing to use the equipment.

"In Rio, each day two or three features in English and Spanish were sent out on APC via email and fax to 47 NGOs and media outlets in 19 countries," recalled Patrick McCully, editor of NGOnet and co-editor at Ecologist Magazine. "The press releases and other news items posted onto the APC conferences allowed the NGOnet editorial team to keep up to date with the reaction of NGOs and the media around the world to the events taking place at UNCED. Without APC the logistics of this would have been almost impossible and the cost certainly unaffordable"². The features posted onto APC conferences were accessed to APC users around the world and were picked up and reprinted in NGO newsletters and magazines in the US, UK, Netherlands, Mexico, Uruguay, Australia and Malaysia to mention several.

"The Tibetan delegation used the APC networks to rush messages, appeals, and press releases around the world on behalf of the Dalai Lama.

Their efforts paid off and the Dalai Lama did attend the conference (UNCHR, 1993), and through this process, many Tibetans have recognised the efficiency and importance of electronic communications, and continue to use computer networks."

- Susan Sallin, 'The Association for Progressive Communications: A Cooperative Effort to Meet the Information Needs of Non-Governmental Organisations', 1994

In 1993, in the aftermath of the Earth Summit, APC assisted the meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. At that time, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) undertook to build a number of local online systems as part of the Sustainable Development Network (SDN). With significant input from APC in the planning stages of the deployment, SDN eventually located some sites under the auspices of APC members and partners, including Colnodo in Colombia and AngoNet in Angola.

² APC Secretariat, 'APC at the Earth Summit: Statements from the Users', 1997. Available: <http://www.sovereignty.net/p/ngo/igc/summit.html> (Accessed 31/7/2001)

The United Nations Conference on Human Rights (UNCHR) was held in 1993 in Vienna, Austria. As with the Earth Summit, APC continued to work closely with the UN and NGO communities to ensure optimal collaboration. ComLink, Germany's APC network, took charge of the technical service provision at the conference. Ibrahim Fall, the Secretary-General of the World Conference on Human Rights personally expressed his appreciation³ for the outstanding contribution the APC made towards the success of the World Conference on Human Rights. The electronic distribution of documentation during the preparatory process and the Conference itself enabled the widest possible access to information for the benefit of all participants and especially for grass-roots NGO's, Fall said. He added that he had found the workshops and briefings organised by the APC on information technology to be extremely useful for all NGOs.

In 1994, Chasque in Uruguay assumed the responsibility for APC service provision at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt. The 1995 World Summit on Social Development (WSSD), which took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, saw the APC member in Sweden, NordNet, take the lead on this initiative, working together with local communications activists. In Denmark, for the first time, a Web browser with access to the APC's WSSD Website was available to users. Graphical interfaces had arrived and they were well received by users.

Later that year, the APC member in Ecuador, INTERCOM, acquired funding to support the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The APC presence in Beijing was noteworthy for more than the unique services it provided. APC provided a forty-member team comprised of APC representatives from 25 countries, all women, many of them from the South. This was purposely done to send a powerful message to the world – there was no innate barrier to women using computer technology.

APC did not provide on-site services at the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul. However, it did provide online forums for information exchange among NGOs preparing to attend, and conducted workshops. This basic facilitation level support was also provided by APC at other less well-attended UN conferences, such as the International Conference on Water and the Environment (1992), the International Sustainable Agriculture Conference (1993), the World Conference on Small Island Developing States (1994), and the first Conference of the Parties (COP1) of the UN Climate Change Convention in 1995.

³ Letter archived in the <apc.documents> newsgroup, 05 Jan 94 14:30 EST

In 1997, the APC partnered with the UNDP and other international organisations to organise the Global Knowledge (GK) conference in Toronto. A Website and email lists were set up and facilitated by Web Networks in Canada, bringing together hundreds of NGOs using ICTs for international development. In 2000, APC was involved in facilitating the Access Track at GKII in Kuala Lumpur, again working with UN agencies on ICT issues.

More recently, in June 2000, the APC and its partners in the Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) were effective in bringing the NGO perspective to the Beijing+5 forum. Beijing+5 was the first five-year review of the progress made by governments who signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the 1995 UN World Conference on Women. Out of the process emerged WomenAction 2000, a world-wide network of members, led by the APC WNSP and the International Women's Tribune Centre. With funding from WomenWatch, a joint initiative of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, WomenAction sent a team to the UN's 44th Commission on the Status of Women, setting up an Internet café, posting information on a daily basis, and lobbying UN delegates and other NGOs on the Women and Media section of the Beijing Platform for Action.

WomenAction and WomenWatch jointly conducted an online consultation with the 1000 members of the Women and Media Working Group, resulting in a strongly worded NGO declaration presented at the Beijing+5 forum in New York in June 2000. Such lobbying has always been an important adjunct to APC's service provision. In part as a result of APC advocacy, many of the official summit declarations included sections promoting ICT as a means of enhancing NGO participation in global policy-making.

Though leadership of many of the activities mentioned above has been attributed to specific APC networks, it must be stressed that in all these endeavours, APC has acted as a team, with contributions of time, energy and funding from not only APC members, but its partner networks as well. The efforts of the generally less-resourced partners, most of whom were located in poorer countries, were invaluable in connecting grassroots organisations in developing nations to the UN-driven policy process. Until the recent expansion of the commercial Internet, many of these networks provided the only means to involve local NGO communities.

In closing we might ask just how effective has the collaboration between APC and the UN been in helping NGOs to use online communications? According to Janos Pasztor, the Information Systems Coordinator at the UNCED Secretariat, "Without this communication channel [of APC networks], the involvement of non-governmental organisations in the official UNCED process, as well as in the various parallel processes simply could not have been as effective as it was."⁴ And

⁴ APC Secretariat, 'APC at the Earth Summit: Statements from the Users', 1997. Available: <http://www.sovereignty.net/p/ngo/igc/summit.html> (Accessed 31/7/2001)

if we look at the global campaigns waged by civil society today on behalf of the Zapatistas in Mexico, or by the anti-globalisation opponents of the World Bank and World Trade Organisation, or by the activists spearheading the Landmine Ban Treaty, the collaboration first sparked by APC seems to have been very effective indeed.

About the Author



Rory O'Brien was a founding member of Web Networks, itself a founding member network of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). He and other Web Networks' staff were primarily involved in the Earth Summit in 1992, the World Summit on Social Development in 1995, and the World Conference on Women, also in 1995. He is currently doing Ph.D. research on the relationships among key facilitators of online communications for the United Nations Summits in the early 1990s.

Doing Progressive Work Online before the Existence of the Public Internet: A personal account from a Tanzanian communications activist

By Fatma Alloo

Initially the women of Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) were apprehensive about email and Internet but after making contact with an APC member, they became the first NGO to work online in Dar es Salaam. Through the Internet, TAMWA has been able to be a part of a global movement opposing violence against women and focusing on issues of women's reproductive and economic rights. TAMWA founder, Fatma Alloo, tells us the story in a personal account.

In 1987, some women journalists, together with myself established the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA). TAMWA's mission is to use media to create awareness on gender issues, and to advocate and lobby for policy to secure women's rights.

As a founder of TAMWA¹ my biggest challenge was how to use media as a mobilizing force, to organise locally and link globally. At that, time women's issues were being given prominence at global level, partly through U.N. Conferences. I had read in one of the newsletters of the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) based in New York about the work of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and I wrote to them to express our desire to try electronic communication in our work.

The APC responded promptly! They put us in touch with a William Sangiwa who was then based in our local hospital and operating an international electronic mail link through GreenNet, APC's member organisation in London. So I paid him a visit just to see for myself what this was all about, taking along my twelve-year-old son. To be honest, initially, I myself was a little scared of electronic communication technology, but my son's excitement secured my involvement.

Eventually, I became the catalyst in TAMWA to get women enthusiastic about this technology and I invited Karen Banks of GreenNet to come and train us on the use of electronic communication. I still chuckle when I think of the size of the modem that Karen carried to Dar es Salaam for us from the APC.

¹ TAMWA Website: <http://sn.apc.org/sangonet/class99/famw/tamwa.htm>

Initially the other women at TAMWA, like myself, were also a bit apprehensive about this technology. It took some time before they became comfortable with using email. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Tanzania's infrastructure in terms of viable telephone lines was poorly developed. This is why we decided to begin working by email alone. Internet access was expensive and the telephone lines could not maintain a constant connection. Surfing the net was a rare occasion in our office. This is not the case any more today in Tanzania.

Understanding information and communication technology (ICT) and its potential empowered us. It formed the basis of our discussions with the donor community.² I remember arguing with our donors to give us "the means of production": desktop publishing tools rather than funds to produce our magazine SAUTI YA SITI (Voice of Women).

There was a little company across the street from our office called "Computer Centre". I walked in one day and convinced the young man working there that we would buy a computer from him if he would train seven TAMWA members on the production of the magazine. He agreed! Years later he admitted to me that he had just returned from studies abroad. I was his first customer and the prospect of meeting women thrilled him. Little did he realise that this encounter would not only play a significant role in his personal and commercial growth, but would be a small revolution in the development of women's networking in Tanzania.

TAMWA was the first NGO to have computers and to be on the net in Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania. Our first campaign through the net and locally was on violence against women. We received an email from the International Women's Tribune Centre in 1990, saying that the Center for Women's Global Leadership would organise a Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights at the World Conference on Human Rights (1993) in Vienna. Testimonies were to be given on crimes against humanity and uncover violence against women.

At that time at the University of Dar es Salaam we had had a case of death of a female student called Levina who had killed herself. For six months she had been the subject of sexual harassment by a male students' group through the so-called "punch" culture – a tradition of writing on walls. TAMWA led the campaign to wipe out the punch culture on campus and joined our sisters in a global campaign, weaving our stories together. This culminated in the passing of the clause "women's rights are human rights" in Vienna, 1993, and later in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995.

It is through the Internet, I believe, that TAMWA has been able to be a part of a global movement opposing violence against women and focusing on issues of women's reproductive and economic rights. We have been able to receive information through emails or the Web, download it, translate it into our national language – Kiswahili – and feed it to the local media.

² See also: Kate Wild "The Internet in Africa: Donors' Mystical Belief in the Potential of IT", APC Annual Report 2000

For a two-year period we used the Internet to mobilise Tanzanian society on these issues, and this mobilization allowed us to take those issues, in a concerted manner, to the International Conference on Population and Development (UNCPD) in Cairo, Egypt (1994), the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark (1995) and Beijing (1995).

To give a concrete example, from the summit in Copenhagen on Social Development we were able to transmit stories home every day, using the Internet. This effort paved the way for raising awareness and established the fertile ground that led to the launch of the Human Rights Centre in Tanzania, of which TAMWA is a member.

More recently, my encounters with APC have been around empowering women through access to information. Some women's groups produce information about their concerns and perspectives. Through ICT activities, women's groups develop dynamics of their own. And a movement starts, based on the use of ICTs in a network of peer organisations - the APC. In that sense APC remains crucial in helping women organisations develop confidence and experience in expressing their viewpoints. Through ICT linkages, alliances across communities, nations and regions take place.

TAMWA became the catalyst for raising awareness about the use of technology for women's empowerment. Women who have gotten involved with us have become producers of television programs, camera women, programme designers, computer dealers, or expanded into the print business. The network's concept has strengthened and given rise to strong coalitions in Tanzania today, such as Feminist Activism (FemAct). Many NGOs are now using the 'net very comfortably and groups such as the Tanzania Gender Network Project (TGNP); the Human Rights Centre, the Mwanza-based Kuleana which takes care for and is run by street children, and ZAWON (Zanzibar Women on the Net) have Websites of their own.

As a network of members and partners with similar goals and ideas, APC remains an important vehicle for women to organise, because sharing and learning from each other's different experiences with ICTs is essential to many organisations dealing with women's issues.

About the Author



Fatma Alloo was born in Zanzibar. In the early eighties, she worked as a journalist in Dar es Salaam and as a radio producer in Uganda during the war years. In 1987, she established Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) together with other women journalists. TAMWA uses the media to advocate and mobilise society around women's issues.

Alloo is presently a coordinating resident faculty of International Honors Program at Harvard University, a founder member of

ZaWoN-Zanzibar Women on the Net, the East African coordinator for Development of Alternative Women's Network (DAWN), a board member of the Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF), and a development and media consultant.

Where do we go from here? APC after the Internet Explosion

By Mark Surman, The Commons Group

APC's members were often the first providers of electronic communication technologies in their countries. The explosion of the Web was a watershed for APC and its members: there was at once tremendous competition and huge new opportunities to strengthen civil society using the Internet. The result was a multitude of new services offered by APC members, including training, Website development, web publishing software, portal sites and content, and APC strengthening its roles as a pioneer of practical and relevant uses of ICTs for civil society, and as an international facilitator of civil society's engagement with ICTs and related concerns, in both policy and practice.

In the mid 1990s, the World Wide Web exploded onto the scene in many parts of the world and changed everything. With low cost Internet spreading and non governmental organisation (NGO) Websites popping up all over, APC's global network of discussion forums (known as 'conferences') was no longer at the cutting edge. There was suddenly a need for something more – something that would ensure the increasingly commercial Internet would remain a powerful tool for NGOs and activists.

"The emergence of the Web was a real watershed for APC and its members," said APC Executive Director, Anriette Esterhuysen. "There was at once tremendous competition and huge new opportunities to strengthen civil society using the Internet. The Web shattered any illusions about the Internet being an 'equal' space - Northern content and the English language was so obviously dominant."¹

However, the opportunity for organisations in the South to be publishers in their own right had already been firmly established. In South Africa, SANGONeT embraced the World Wide Web and drew heavily on their old text-based services such as gopher to create South Africa's first content Website in 1994². The Third World Institute (ITeM) in Uruguay, as part of their joint NGONET initiative, also collected together analysis of international events that they had been posting in APC conferences since 1991 to create a Web-based information portal.

But the truth was that, as a network of Internet service providers (ISPs) and email providers, APC was initially thrown for a loop by the explosion of commercial Internet providers that took place in most parts of the world. Commercial providers were able to quickly undercut the prices

¹ Telephone interview with Anriette Esterhuysen, 1999.

² Many so-called Websites of the time were little more than a homepage.

of APC members, turning Internet access into a low cost, generic service. In addition, many APC members had a tough time convincing users that they could be more than ISPs. "It was very hard initially to get people to move beyond the idea that we were not just an Internet access provider," remembers Vasek Klinkera, founder of Econnect, a Czech APC member organisation.³

In response to these changes, APC members shifted their attention away from the nuts and bolts of connectivity and towards helping NGOs make better use of rapidly emerging new Internet tools. "We needed to move from providing technology to helping NGOs make strategic use of the Internet," said Klinkera.⁴

The result was a multitude of new services offered by APC members – training, Website development, web publishing software, portal sites. One example amongst many is APC's member in Ecuador, INTERCOM's Infodesarrollo⁵ portal site. "By developing services like Infodesarrollo, we make it easy for NGOs and grassroots groups working in Spanish to find and share information about development," explained INTERCOM coordinator, Johana Beltran.⁶

All APC members use the Internet extensively but they are also more than familiar with its constraints for NGO users who grapple with the relative difficulty and cost of keeping sites updated with new information, or, who, once they have their Internet connection and email account, don't actually know how to use them most effectively for their organisation.

"APC members work with grassroots organisations and they saw the need to create software and services that would promote strategic civil society use of the Internet,"⁷ said Maureen James, APC Projects and Programs Manager. "Together with our members, we created the APC ActionApps⁸ – a content sharing software that is available for free and allows no-skills-necessary updating of Website content. We are also researching quality training resources that focus on progressive use of the Internet and are available online. The materials will be collected together or linked to in a multi-language Online Resource Centre to be launched in 2001. These are practical and powerful tools that our members can use to help NGOs around the world," James said.⁹

APC has also focused on the question of how NGO networks could sustain themselves in a Web-based world. "Finding new sources of income became really important once our ISP services

³ Telephone interview with Vasek Klinkera, 1999.

⁴ Telephone interview with Vasek Klinkera, 1999.

⁵ Infodesarrollo Website: <http://www.infodesarrollo.org> - in Spanish

⁶ APC ActionApps survey response, 2001.

⁷ Interview with Maureen James, 2001.

⁸ <http://www.apc.org/actionapps>

⁹ Interview with Maureen James, 2001.

started to disappear," said Klinkera. "It has been a big challenge."¹⁰ In 1998, APC began to offer mission-driven business planning workshops, handbooks and advice to help members to face this challenge

Through initiatives like these, APC has helped its members to develop new services and continue in their efforts to ensure that the Internet is a platform for grassroots development. In an effort to offer this kind of support to others, APC opened up its membership in late 2000 to include any organisation with a commitment to empowering civil society through the use of the Internet. "We are now ready to move to the next stage of supporting civil society online," said Esterhuysen. "We are ready to use what we've learned over the past ten years to create a powerful movement that promotes the civic use of the Internet in all parts of the globe."¹¹

About the Author



Mark Surman is the president of The Commons Group, a company that develops business and technical plans for online communities. His many projects have included building Canada's most popular progressive news web site (rabble.ca), leading the development open source software for non-profits (APC ActionApps) and running a national ISP for non-profits (Web Networks). He has recently released a book entitled "Commonspace: Beyond Virtual Community".

¹⁰ Telephone interview with Vasek Klinkera, 1999.

¹¹ Telephone interview with Anriette Esterhuysen, 1999.

Need and Chance: APC in the Global South and the rise of some strong Southern members

By Roberto Elissalde

The emergence and growth of three APC member organizations in the countries of the Global South¹, – in South Africa, the Czech Republic and Colombia – are compared and contrasted in this study by Roberto Elissalde.

At the end of the eighties, the hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) fighting for human rights in the wider sense multiplied until they formed a diaspora of small stars. Due to the constraints imposed by time and space, the stars could only be seen one by one and the reader could be forgiven for thinking that in time each star in its isolation would burn out and disappear. However, the beginning of the new decade brought with it the creation of groups, associations, networks, and eventually, networks of networks, which were able to strengthen civil society and give a voice to new social agents, both on a regional and a world level. This process crystallised gradually in the rise of the constellation of networks that form APC. When we assess the impact of the previous decade, it is important to remember how some of those pioneering groups arose.

A TIME FOR PIONEERS

It could be said that the need to work in networks preceded several of the present APC nodes, and it was a combination of chance and will which brought them together.

Julián Casasbuenas remembers that while working as a consultant to various NGOs in Bogotá, Colombia in 1985, he was invited to participate in a meeting of electronic communication networks in Lima, Peru. As he prepared his presentation, he discovered that three Colombian universities (The Andes, Eafit, and the Del Valle) had set up a communications network exclusively for postgraduate teachers and students. Another group, this time of amateur radio enthusiasts, had set up a network using radio-modems, which they used privately to exchange email. The novelty of the use of modems, which could be used to send messages between people in different countries, was causing a sensation.

To get an idea of the distance between then and now, we need to realise that those modems had an adaptor that was placed over the handset of the telephone and which connected it to the

¹ The term "Global South" is used to refer to all developing countries and countries in economic transition, not countries physically located in the Southern hemisphere.

computer. Communications were at 300 bauds (10 bauds are approximately one text character per second, meaning 300 bauds transmitted 30 characters per second), whereas today's modems transmit data at 57,600 bauds or higher.

Michael Polman, a Dutch computer specialist who was director of the Antenna Foundation in Holland, explained to those present at the Peru meeting the possibilities of email for NGOs and for their work, emphasising the importance that they could have in the democratisation of information. His intervention lit the fuse, and within five years Casasbuenas had managed to bring together some thirty NGOs with international links that were interested in using electronic communications. The first group connected via Interdoc, a network which used the X-25 protocol and the services of the European-based commercial email network GeoNet (later Poptel).²

Whilst it was a great leap forward, it was still paradoxical that two Colombian organisations should have to connect via London to communicate with each other. Aldato, a local network had managed to set up a system of email, conferences and forums, and was able to make internal connections, but by 1991, this set-up was totally insufficient. Besides, in addition to exchanging information and coordinating activities, the Colombian NGOs, in the middle of the "Viva la Ciudadanía" (Long live citizenship) campaign, needed their own space. As a result of these experiences, in 1992 the creation of a node on the model of Antenna was proposed. "I began technical tests to see if it could be done using a personal computer with no hard disk and only 3.5 and 5.5 inch diskette capacity," recalls Casasbuenas. "The first Colnodo³ prototype began on that computer with a 3.5 inch diskette and a 1,200 baud external modem!"⁴

It was also the need to get organised in an efficient way that led the antinuclear activists in the former Czechoslovakia to form a network. During the final years of the Communist regime, the government was immersed in a programme of building nuclear power stations on the Soviet model. Following the "Velvet Revolution", citizens' protests found a more receptive ear, and the new government demanded higher security standards for the power stations. Organisations such as DUHA (which later became Friends of the Earth, Czechoslovakia), Greenpeace, and other local groups, such as Mothers of South Bohemia, considered that the new government's demands were insufficient, and that the citizens did not know of the real dangers of nuclear energy. In 1989, Econnect began to provide an email service based on Fidonet technology⁵, and quickly became *the* medium of exchange and coordination amongst those organisations that were trying to provide elements of analysis for civil society.

² Also see: Brian Murphy "The Founding of APC: Coincidences and Logical Steps in Global Civil Society Networking", APC Annual Report 2000

³ Colnodo Website: <http://www.colnodo.apc.org>

⁴ Julián Casasbuenas, "El Internet Colombiano; Mi experiencia". Available <http://www.colnodo.apc.org/historia.html>

⁵ Also see: Karen Banks "Fidonet: The 'Critical Mass' technology", APC Annual Report 2000

Email became the main tool for publicising campaigns directed at the United States and Europe, and the Econnect site still hosts the main sources of information about the nuclear threat in the Czech Republic⁶.

Just as turbulent was the beginning of the South African node, originally called WorkNet (today SANGONeT). In 1987, Michael Polman reappears in Zimbabwe to talk about the use of modems and email as a way of organising civil society groups. WorkNet was an NGO founded earlier in 1987 to facilitate

labour unions fighting against the apartheid system of those days. Taffy Adler, one of the activists who had strong links with the British union movement, was in contact with groups in Manchester in the United Kingdom that used email to strengthen their work in social action networks.

With the personal and technical contribution of Simone Shall, who worked for the Workplace Information Group (WIG), the group began to gel. In 1988, steps were taken to widen the network of people and organisations linked to WorkNet, bringing in the librarians Noel Stott, of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, Lydia Levin, from the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Anriette Esterhuysen, from the South African Council of Churches and who had met Michael Polman in 1987, and Sibongele Ngubane, from the Durban Ecumenical Centre (and the only one in the team with any actual knowledge of computers). Paul Boule, a pioneer in the use of computers among NGOs, joined the group and played a supportive role in upgrading the technology used by WorkNet.

Trade unions and churches were some of the few South African organisations that could express their views publicly without suffering instant repression in the late eighties, which explains the composition of the initial group and its social importance during those years. WorkNet became *the* network of activists in a period when big-name Internet Service Providers (ISPs) did not exist.



Czech environmentalists used the Internet to organise more effectively after the Velvet Revolution
Photo courtesy: Econnect

⁶ <http://www.temelin.cz> amongst others

AGENDA

From different perspectives and in different social realities, the three nodes – Econnect, Colnodo and WorkNet (SANGONeT) - continued to go about their work, guided by the same mission: to offer organisations the possibility of bringing together their knowledge and efforts, and to offer society the chance to get informed and take action.

Czechoslovakia abandoned Communism (1989) and shortly after divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia (1992). The extreme political violence in Colombia at the end of the decade of the eighties and at the beginning of the nineties gave way to certain forms of dialogue, which allowed civil society to make its voice heard. The South African people's struggles against apartheid reached a climax in the first few years of the nineties, and in 1994 finally opened the way to the first free, multi-ethnic elections. The forms acquired by the movements in each of these societies were various, but in every one the nodes provided support for communication, organisation and the coordination of efforts. These transformations not only modified society, but also occurred at the same time as technological changes that in turn changed the APC nodes.

In 1991 WorkNet began to use UNIX on its server and soon installed a Fidonet service. This change allowed WorkNet to give connectivity to users in neighbouring countries, following the example of GreenNet, the APC node in London, and becoming a real gateway for the entry and output of information in the deep south of Africa⁷. In 1992, WorkNet became SANGONeT and joined APC in 1993. Its main objective was to serve as a bridge between social organisations and assist a large mass of users with very little computing knowledge. In 1994, the year of the elections, SANGONeT⁸ became the first Internet service provider (ISP) in South Africa. Within minutes of Nelson Mandela making his inaugural speech to South Africa's first democratically elected parliament SANGONeT distributed the full text of the speech online.

Although the node provided full advisory services to both the public and private sector, helping civil society organisations, fighting poverty and underdevelopment continued to be the main focus of its work.

At the beginning of the nineties, in the midst of digitising their databases, many Colombian NGOs listened to Colnodo's voice, urging them to work cooperatively to prevent duplication of efforts and resources. The result was the creation in 1993 of an impressive resource collection, which can still be consulted today⁹. That same year, Colnodo joined APC and opened the doors to the world of Internet. In a conference for technical network coordinators, organised by the

⁷ Also see: Brian Murphy "Mike Jensen and the Code that stitched together the APC: The Pre-Internet Days and Early Efforts at Linking APC Nodes", APC Annual Report 2000

⁸ SANGONeT Website: <http://www.sn.apc.org>

⁹ <http://bases.colnodo.org.co>

UN's Sustainable Development Network, Colnodo discovered the possibilities of the Linux operating system, which they decided to adopt for the Colnodo server. By 1996, the node was fully integrated into the Internet.

The growth and development of Econnect¹⁰ was also stimulated by the organisational needs of civil society. With the first Fidonet email service in Central Europe, Econnect became a pivotal focal point for NGOs working locally in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Poland. The campaigns in favour of democratisation and public participation in the region used the services of Econnect. With the passing of time and the popularisation of Internet, Econnect's tasks also underwent changes. From being an Internet access provider it moved on to become a consultant for the strategic development of computing communication tools.

CHANGING TIMES

Throughout the world, organisations that were pioneers in providing access to the Internet, when political activism was the rule and changing society the objective, had to adapt to a new era following the Internet explosion of the late 1990s. Competitive commercial packages and free Internet access (in exchange for accepting publicity or other methods) as well as the popularisation of public telecentres, took users away from nodes, which had to reorient their activities and rethink their financial bases.¹¹

The main objectives of SANGONeT continue to be facilitating access to information, strengthening human and material links, and helping networks of people and organisations that use Internet to carry out their activities. Encouraging and training activists to use these means of communication is another of the tasks carried out by the node. Two projects are the organisation's flagships: Africa Pulse¹² is an information portal on the social and economic development of the southern African region, oriented especially towards social workers and local communities. The other is Women'sNet¹³, a programme designed to help South African women find the gender tools necessary for social action. In the near future, SANGONeT plans to move from being a provider of access and information to becoming a facilitator of information. This will imply the development of tools that give power to social agents through the use of information and communication technologies.

The model chosen by Colnodo involves advising organisations and companies interested in having or improving their presence online, as well as offering connectivity, the creation of original web content (including database development), and a focus on fair e-commerce.

¹⁰ Econnect Website: <http://www.econnect.cz>

¹¹ Also see: Mark Surman "Where do we go from here? APC after the Internet Explosion", APC Annual Report 2000

¹² http://sn.apc.org/corporate/projects/ap_info.html

¹³ <http://www.womensnet.org.za>

Colnodo designs, adapts and develops software – always using free and open source programming options which remain in the public domain – including ground-breaking evaluation software for public telecentres. Amongst the work of note in recent years, are the Websites for Save the Children, the Luis Carlos Galán Institute, the Federation of National Popular Housing Organisations, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Econnect, the lead developer of the APC ActionApps¹⁴, has chosen a similar path, offering technical solutions to other organisations, including connectivity and Local Area Networks (LANs), besides web design. Another of the main activities of the organisation is hosting and creating secure Website services for other organisations and companies that trust Econnect as a reliable service provider. On the social aspect of their work in their work for the NGO sector – the primary target of their work- Econnect offers press summary services, a fund-raising database for NGOs, and NGO sector job listings. At the same time, this widening of activities has resulted in a widening of the audience that comes into contact with the environmental and social themes which have characterised Econnect's interest since its beginnings and which are highlighted on the pages of its vibrant Website.

After ten years of APC, its members are still contributing to changing the world, and still adapting to it. The technological and commercial changes of the last five years have altered the old balances, but the goals of members such as SANGONeT, Colnodo and Econnect are still the same today as they were at the beginning of the last decade, which speaks well for them and is a good thing for the societies in which they work.

About the Author



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¹⁴ <http://www.apc.org/actionapps>

Women's Networks and ICTs: The character, achievements and challenges past and present of the APC Women's Networking Support Programme

APC Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP)

The APC WNSP began in the early 1990's and is one of the strongest women's Internet-based networks in the world. This article is based on texts from the Women in Sync Kit - a three-part publication on women's electronic networking¹.

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT²

'.. go and find out more about this 'email' thing'!

So rang the words of my director in June, 1991. Having just returned from a conference in the north of England, he was terribly excited about an experimental means of communicating via computer and telephone. A way of communicating that was more durable than fax, cheaper than the telephone, able to transmit information in a format that could be re-produced over, and over again.

To discover more about this technology I talked to Graham Lane, the Information Technology officer of Amnesty International and author of "Communications For Progress" - at the time, a ground-breaking exploration of NGO (non-governmental organisation) and activist use of computer-based communications. Graham introduced me to Mike Jensen³, a technician at GreenNet.

Mike was experimenting with Fidonet to exchange of information between two computers using a telephone line as conduit. Messages were composed using special 'DOS'-based software. They were then packed up in a bundle, which was compressed to about 1/20th of its original size. A telephone call was made from one computer to another via a modem. The bundle was then sent

¹ Abstracts taken from "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000

² A personal account from APC WNSP coordinator, Karen Banks, of how she became involved in computer networking taken from "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000 p.p. 1-2

³ Also see: Brian Murphy "Mike Jensen and the Code that stitched together the APC: The Pre-Internet Days and Early Efforts at Linking APC Nodes", APC Annual Report 2000

down the telephone line - much as logs might flow along a river - to a destination, many thousands of miles away.

Soon after, a communications 'hub' was established at GreenNet, which exchanged email, via daily telephone connections, to over 40 communications hubs in Africa, South East Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe. The communications hub in London was called 'GnFido' (GreenNet Fidonet).⁴

The heady combination of communication and computer-based technology intrigued me completely, and within six months, I had become the 'system operator' of the GreenNet-Fido gateway. I was a 'techie' and I was hooked.

THE EARTH SUMMIT AND THE WOMEN'S NETWORKING BUREAU (1992)⁵

In 1991, GreenNet was working with over 800 NGOs in the UK and Europe. These NGOs worked mainly in the area of environment, development and human rights, and many were preparing for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or - as it was more popularly referred to - The Earth Summit.

Research carried out in 1996 raised women's concerns around technology

"Although more positive examples of online experiences were cited than negative ones, the latter reinforce the many challenges women face in the adoption of communication technologies and help to clarify some of the pitfalls associated with its use."

"Women from the South, in particular, shared many negative experiences such as those associated with the limitations of an email only account (not having access to remote databases or Internet tools), limited infrastructure (difficulty in getting a phone line), and the high costs of data transmission (networks in the South often charge their users for all messages, both sent and received)."

APC Women's Networking Survey, 1997
<http://community.web.net/apcwomen>

In June 1992, staff of APC members formed a team to provide, for the first time, on-site computer-based communication services to the 17,500 NGO delegates who attended the parallel NGO forum during the Earth Summit.⁶ The impact of the service was notable in many respects. Today, these services are often provided by the United Nations directly, often in partnership with NGO networks such as APC. We have come to expect such services at important regional and international events. But at the time, the Earth Summit's NGO Communication Centre felt like an innovation from the future.

⁴ Also see: Karen Banks "Fidonet: The 'Critical Mass' technology", APC Annual Report 2000

⁵ "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000, pp. 3-4

⁶ Also see: Rory O'Brien "Enabling Civil Society Participation in Global Policy-Making: APC and the United Nations", APC Annual Report 2000

Inspired by this experience, a group of women who were based at various APC member organisations identified the need to serve the international women's environment and development movement in a similar, but more coordinated manner.

Alas, the path was not so smooth. The obstacles to women's appropriation of this powerful technology were many. Even some of our colleagues failed to grasp that women would be marginalised further if denied access to fully exploring and appropriating this technology. We had difficulty explaining to donors how critical it was for them to support this area of work. We had difficulty gaining permission from management to allocate time to this work. We had difficulty explaining to people just what it was we actually did! These barriers still exist for many women today.

THE WOMEN WHO BUILT THE NETWORK⁷

APC WNSP Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) was officially started in 1992. By 1993, APC's membership had expanded and relationships had been built with partners in South East Asia, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe. Over twenty women staff and colleagues of APC member and partner networks worked continually to raise awareness and gather support for an international women's networking support programme. The work was not always prioritised or considered core to the work of the APC member. Some women had a very supportive APC member network base. Others were not as fortunate. In either case, predictably, women worked overtime or in their 'spare' time. These women were technicians, information workers, project managers, financial workers, coordinators, and executive directors from over fifteen countries. Collectively, they had all the skills and expertise needed to begin working towards a shared vision of a strong Internet-based women's network.

All of the women who are drawn to the programme from inside and outside of the APC are activists. Both on a personal and political level, these women work, through actions (be it awareness raising, training, lobbying, campaigning, organising workshops, or writing) to highlight the injustices people (and in most cases, women specifically) face and the struggles they wage towards redressing these injustices. Many members work in areas such as human rights, women's health and reproductive rights, violence against women, women and armed conflict, and women's economic empowerment.

They are more often than not working with women's groups in their local communities and therefore provide an important function as 'bridges' or 'brokers' between local and national, local and regional, local and international support networks and fora.

In general, they are engaged with information and technology as tools for their work.

⁷ "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000, pp. 5-10

WHO DO THE MEMBERS REPRESENT?⁸

One of the major strengths of the programme has been its open approach to diverse types of membership. Members of the programme may represent a women's organisation; a women's media network; or be staff of an Internet based network; staff at APC or at APC member organisations. Some are members in an individual capacity.

A SAFE AND SECURE SPACE⁹

In a world where micro-seconds measure human accomplishments, where micro-chips store unbelievable amounts of highly complex technical information, where computer processors perform calculations at speeds that rise daily and geometrically, one of the factors which contributes to strong network building is time: careful attention to time.

The two years in the run-up to Beijing¹⁰ – the APC WNSP's first major project - was spent strengthening and linking existing women's networks through a long, slow, solid process of trust and relationship building.

What is interesting about the APC WNSP is that it has survived, and thrived during times when there has been little or no funding. The reasons for this are very much related to the less visible aspects of the programme, those concerned with the 'human' side of the work; the mentoring, the support, the solidarity and the fact that the programme tries to be relevant and therefore, a part of women's lives. Another of the less visible aspects of the programme, and more difficult to 'quantify' is the way women build networks.

'WOMEN LED' AND 'WOMEN ONLY' SPACE¹¹

An important aspect of this supportive environment has been the practice of providing a 'women only' work space and insisting that women take up all leadership positions. We call this practice being 'women-led'.

The electronic planning spaces of the programme are almost without exception, women only. There are exceptions to this practice at national and regional level, but in these situations, the men who participate are allies who understand the importance of - on the one hand, providing support and sharing knowledge and skills - whilst on the other, respecting the 'women-led' philosophy of the programme, the unique ways women work and the spaces that they provide for one another.

⁸ "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000, pp. 11

⁹ "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000, pp. 11

¹⁰ The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995.

¹¹ "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000, pp. 12-14

In the early nineties, many male colleagues provided technical, moral and other types of support. In some cases, male colleagues were identified as focal points in places where relationships had not been developed with women or women's groups. Most of our experience of men joining the programme work spaces have been positive. The fact that they have taken the time and effort to become involved was often the outward expression of their recognition and acceptance of the way we work. When the motivation for joining the space was an expression of men's 'right' to be involved, tensions and suspicion often surfaced and the impact of their involvement was felt in a less than constructive way.

CONSOLIDATION AND ACTIVITY¹²

During the two years prior to the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995¹³, women's groups began tentative encounters with the new technology. Many of the electronic networking projects and initiatives responded to the emergent issues at that time. These issues invariably concerned access to training, credit, equipment, and 'know-how'; impact of the new technologies on women's already overburdened lives; appropriateness of a technology that is strongly male-centric, expensive, and frequently produced in the North; and questions about security and privacy. There was also the issue of language, and in an Internet dominated by English-language content, this remains a seemingly insurmountable barrier.

Issues and barriers, notwithstanding, women of APC and their colleagues from other organisations began linking up and preparing for the Beijing Conference. Seizing the opportunity, the coordinating committee of the APC WNSP implemented a set of activities that provided a kind of 'kick-start' to the programme.

The initial activities implemented by the coordinating committee of WNSP included:

- documenting the names and numbers of women and women's groups using email at the time (40 when we started)
- organising content (on issues such as health, violence, labour, environment and development) into electronic newsgroups
- making this content available to all women's groups using email that we were aware of (APC's policy at the time was to provide access to the APC Newsgroup series only to users of APC networks. The APC WNSP lobbied to change this policy in relation to the content that was relevant and critical for women.)
- encouraging every APC member and partner to identify a 'focal point' for the WNSP
- establishing connections and building relationships with the focal points
- fundraising to subsidise the cost of women receiving this content, particularly if they were based in the South. This was really a critical aspect of our work at the time. The

¹² "Networking for Change: The APC WNSP's First Eight Years", APC WNSP, 2000, pp. 14-16

¹³ Also see: Rory O'Brien "Enabling Civil Society Participation in Global Policy-Making: APC and the United Nations", APC Annual Report 2000

cost of accessing email was really prohibitive for most women, even those who did have a computer and telephone line. These subsidies often made the difference between participating or not.

- encouraging women to establish their own electronic newsgroups, particularly at a regional level. In 1993, there were no more than half a dozen electronic newsgroups focussing on women's issues available via APC networks. By the end of 1997, there were over 50.

In addition to this, the 'Gender and Information Technology Project ' which ran from 1993 to 1996 and which was funded by the IDRC (International Development Research Council) provided the opportunity for technical and policy training workshops to be held in Africa, Asia and Latin America, women technicians to attend the Internet Society's Developing Countries technical workshop, women-to-women training workshops, and, groundbreaking research on women's use of ICT¹⁴.

THE FUTURE

Five years ago, the APCWNSP was concerned with raising general awareness about the importance of women engaging with ICTs. Addressing questions of basic access and connectivity, providing training opportunities and materials, and engaging in discourse regarding the so-called benefits of joining the "Information Superhighway" filled our waking days.

Far greater numbers of women are now using new ICT in their work, but the issues identified five years ago still remain critical for most women in the world. The majority of the world's women still do not have access to a telephone line, let alone a computer or the skills and knowledge to exploit the new technologies. In addition, in 2000, we now have to contend with new issues and challenges such as:

- the rapid commercialisation of the Internet, where women are seen as an important 'target market';
- the increasing convergence of transnational mainstream media with the power of the Internet, such as the corporate merger between Ted Turner's media empire and America OnLine (AOL), which threatens to pipe homogenised content into everyone's living room by the year 2005;
- intensifying attempts by governments to restrict free and democratic access to the Internet by developing legislation attempting to regulate its use; and
- the ascendancy of international trade bodies working to encompass the terms of exchange of 'information products' and 'knowledge'.

In this environment, the APC WNSP's priorities for the coming years will focus on training, policy and advocacy and building the capacity of the network.

¹⁴ <http://community.web.net/apcwomen>

The Internet in Africa: Donors' mystical belief in the potential of IT

By Kate Wild

In its pioneering work in Africa the collaboration between APC and its members and partners, together with a small group of visionary donors produced significant impact by enabling NGOs to communicate electronically. Can donors and African institutions continue to work together to ensure that the Internet revolution works to the benefit of Africans? An African Internet community exists. To expand it will require donors to be less messianic, less competitive, and less needful of identifying their own one-and-only, true Internet silver bullet says author Kate Wild. Donors must follow their own 'knowledge' rhetoric and learn more effectively from their partners on the ground.

Eritrea's connection to the Internet in 2000 brought all African countries online. But the region's presence is still small. Up to 75% of the approximately 3 million users¹ are concentrated in the North African region and South Africa.

Reasons for low levels of Internet use in sub-Saharan Africa are multiple with poverty being the biggest barrier. Poverty translates into small markets and limited investment to develop the infrastructure and applications needed to tackle Africa's problems and to reduce access costs.

Nevertheless, there has been a strong push from Africa's leaders – notably Presidents Konare of Mali and Mbeki of South Africa – to exploit the Internet to link Africa firmly into the global information economy. The number of African Websites has grown from 290 in 1995 to over 10,700 in 1999². The African Development Forum in 1999 demonstrated many innovative African-led projects designed to reform telecommunications policy and address problems in the areas of health, education and business³. A vibrant African Internet community is crossing geographic and linguistic borders to seek African solutions to the continent's problems – some of the poorest countries (Mozambique, for example) have led the way to defining home-grown Internet philosophies. The major challenge today is for Africa to shape Internet initiatives in the face of emerging global programs led by Northern institutions.

¹ Estimates vary widely – see for example <http://www3.sn.apc.org/africa/index.html> and <http://usic.wslogic.com/intro.html>

² <http://usic.wslogic.com/intro.html>

³ <http://www.un.org/depts/eca/adf>

THE CHANGING DONOR LANDSCAPE

Donor interest in exploiting ICTs for development is growing exponentially. Some of the reasons are the rapid expansion of Internet use in the North, the emergence of telecommunications as an important global market, the promise of partnerships with the private sector as a new motor for development, and an almost mystical belief in the potential of the new technologies to leapfrog stages of development and expand human capacity.

The Economic Commission for Africa and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) had worked together almost in the wilderness since the late 1970s to support the growth of African skills to access and apply information. It was only in 1996 that they were joined by major donor institutions (the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and US AID, among others) and multi-laterals (with the International Telecommunications Union and UNESCO in the lead) in a partnership to launch the African Information Society Initiative (AISI).

AISI initially focussed on national information and communication infrastructure planning but by the end of the decade was advocating support in areas like education, health and e-commerce.

In response to the largely Anglophone nature of the World Wide Web, la Francophonie⁴ mounted a major effort to create Internet access points in partner organisations in West Africa, and to build networks and content.

The most significant feature on the donor landscape, however, has been the emergence of the information and communication technology issue (dubbed "the digital divide") at the highest political level within the United Nations and the G8 – and the vastly increased funding flowing from the World Bank through such programs as the Development Gateway. The dynamic that develops between these initiatives and African actors – within the context of the limited capacity of sub-Saharan Africa to negotiate its own future in the global information society – will shape the next round of Internet developments.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Donor programs have clustered in three areas. One includes infrastructure and policy projects designed to create an enabling environment in which competition is introduced into the telecommunications sector. The aim is to reduce costs and thereby extend access, particularly to the rural communities where 70% of Africans reside. Community access projects form the second area – primarily telecentres or school connectivity – designed to demonstrate demand at the local level. The third cluster addresses applications and content in traditional development sectors: education, health, small business support (e-commerce), governance and agriculture.

⁴ <http://www.francophonie.org>

Much has been accomplished but it is too early to paint a comprehensive picture of development impact. Can locally based initiatives now avoid being submerged in the new global programs led by the big G8 and World Bank players? This question is particularly relevant to APC members who, while linking globally, have always been rooted in local initiative and ownership.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Can donors and African institutions, including the APC community in Africa, work together to ensure that the Internet revolution works to the benefit of Africans?

The experience of the last five years suggests that there are certain areas that donors find important. One is nurturing local initiatives and learning from them – using knowledge management techniques to build networks among projects. Establishing realistic project objectives and time frames seems to be essential too - some interesting programs have floundered because of unrealistic expectations on the part of donors. Donors value the developing of credible frameworks for the application of market principles in poor countries in Africa. It is also important to use all possible offline or online means to engage partners in the South prior to – and not after - project formulation.

An African Internet community exists. To expand it will require donors to be less messianic, less competitive, less needful of identifying their own one-and-only, true Internet silver bullet. They must follow their own 'knowledge' rhetoric and learn more effectively from their partners on the ground. Both 'bottom up' and 'top down' approaches are necessary – but 'bottom up' must inform 'top down' when development is the goal.

About the Author

Kate Wild has extensive experience in the management of information and information technology and the development of ICT programmes and projects in all developing regions. After long association with the UN International Labour Office and the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC), she is presently an independent consultant based in Toronto.

About APC Membership: Mobilizing the power of ICTs for development and social justice

From the very beginning, APC was conceived of as a network of independent members from different countries. As early as 1986, the idea of working with emerging networks, rather than expanding into other countries, was defined as a guiding principle, remembers Mark Graham, who was involved in the founding of APC. "The thing we didn't see in the early days," said Graham in an interview for IGC NetNews in 1990, "was just how many committed talented people would end up becoming involved and contributing."

Major changes in APC membership criteria in 2000

- APC is open to multiple members in any one country. Previously a one country, one member rule was applied.
- APC membership is open to any organisation actively promoting the use of Internet for strategic social justice work. Formerly only Internet or email service providers could join APC. Applications were especially welcomed from online content providers, ICT training and research organisations, and multimedia institutions.
- APC membership is no longer only open to non-profit organisations, but ethical for-profits whose work supports the APC mission can become part of the APC.
- Membership fees were substantially reduced in response to requests from small organisations in developing countries.
- Applying for membership became much simpler: A membership information pack is now online and applications accepted directly from the APC Website.

Traditionally APC members were organisations that focused principally on providing connectivity with an aim to supporting civil society networking. However, 2000 saw some of our longest-standing members, such as IGC in the USA and Web Networks in Canada, sell their connectivity services and shift to Internet applications development, consultancy services, and the provision of content. New APC members, StrawberryNet (Romania) and BlueLink (Bulgaria), focus mostly on facilitating information exchange in the civil society, particularly in the environmental sector. BlueLink does not offer Internet connectivity directly.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP POLICY IN 2000

It is critical for people and organisations in civil society mobilizing the power of information and communication technologies for development and social justice, to join forces, learn from one another, and

together advocate for policies and practice that will extend Internet access to the many people that are being left along the wayside of the so-called 'Information Highway'.

At APC we believe that the stronger and more diverse our membership, the stronger our voice and the more meaningful will be our interaction to the communities and organisations that we interact with locally, regionally and internationally.

For these reasons, in October 2000, APC Council ratified important revisions to the APC membership criteria and fees that will have major consequences for the size and diversity of APC membership in the coming years.

WHY DO ORGANISATIONS JOIN APC?

APC membership is open to organisations anywhere in the world that share the same mission as APC: to empower and support civil society organisations (CSOs) through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Many of us support this mission, but why do groups take the step to becoming a full APC member?

Impact: Many of APC's members have been creating and using computer networks to fight for social justice since the 1980s, and APC members were the first in the world to provide transatlantic communications electronically to civil society. At a time when computer communications technology was only just beginning to be used internationally, APC members enabled thousands of NGOs interested in United Nations summits in the early nineties to participate virtually and exposed those present at the summits to the power of ICT.

- APC has been promoting working online for social equality for over ten years
- APC has had general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1995

Solidarity: APC members all support the use of ICTs for development, social justice and the protection of the environment. When organisations join APC they add their voice to an international network of like-minded organisations promoting the strategic use of ICTs to fight social injustice all over the world.

- APC is an active participant in high level ICT policy discussions and represents our members' collective voice
- APC members support one and other in campaigns
- APC and our members work to protect the right to use the Internet for social justice work through our Internet Rights research and activism

Community: APC is an international community of members based in over twenty countries in five regions. We are a truly membership-based organisation where each member designates a representative to Council. Members decide the direction of the association and set priorities for action.

APC in turn works hard to actively promote our members' work. Our bilingual Website and our monthly newsletter - APCNews/APCNoticias - reaches broad English and Spanish language audiences, is widely circulated among development specialists, the social justice community and its financial supporters. APC members represent APC at public events internationally.

South-South Networking: The majority of APC's members are located in the developing world (including countries in transition) and have shared experiences in striving for effective access to the Internet. APC facilitates Southern-initiated ICT activities and is a place where Southern-initiated activities take place. Over 60% of APC members are from the "global South" and most of our face-to-face encounters take place in countries with emerging economies .

Peer Support and Information Exchange: Many of APC members have been offering ICT services to the NGO community since the early 1990s and even the 1980s. Members learn from each other's experiences online and at face-to-face meetings.

Collaboration: APC offers its members the chance to work collectively with other members and partners on joint projects. We facilitate networking and assist in matching and developing project implementation partnerships.

Capacity-Building Opportunities: APC organises online and face-to-face workshops designed to enhance members' professional development. In 2000, we facilitated face-to-face training opportunities for technicians and women, and business planning.

How to become a member of APC

If your organisation is actively involved in facilitating the use of ICTs for civil society work, you may want to think about becoming a member of APC. In 2000, the membership process was simplified, however candidates are still rigorously assessed by a team of APC representatives.

The APC Membership Information Pack and application form is on the APC Website:
http://www.apc.org/english/about/members/member_pack.htm

APC Members in 2000

North and Central America

Institute for Global
Communications (IGC),
United States of America
www.igc.org

LaNeta, Mexico
www.laneta.apc.org

Nicarao/CRIES, Nicaragua
www.cries.org

Web Networks, Canada
www.web.net &
community.web.net

South America

Colnodo, Colombia
www.colnodo.apc.org

Instituto del Tercer
Mundo/Chasque, Uruguay
www.chasque.apc.org

INTERCOM Nodo EcuaneX,
Ecuador
www.ecuanex.net.ec

Wamani, Argentina
www.wamani.apc.org

Europe

BlueLink Information Network,
Bulgaria
www.bluelink.net

ComLink, Germany
www.comlink.org

Econnect, Czech Republic
www.ecn.cz

GLUK (GlasNet Ukraine),
Ukraine
www.gluk.apc.org

GreenNet, United Kingdom
www.gn.apc.org

Green Spider, Hungary
www.zpok.hu

Pangea, Spain
www.pangea.org

StrawberryNet, Romania
www.sbnnet.ro

Africa

Enda-Tiers Monde, Senegal
www.enda.sn

SANGONeT, South Africa
sn.apc.org

Asia

JCA-NET, Japan
www.jca.apc.org

Australia & Oceania

Community Communication
Online (c2o), Australia
www.c2o.org



The APC Action Areas: The strategic mapping of our work for 2000-2001

In the early nineties, APC networks provided access, tools and training that allowed democratic and liberation movements in the South and in countries undergoing political transition to communicate with counterparts, journalists, and other supporters in the North. To remain a powerful and efficient tool for civil social networking APC is well aware that we need to comply with the changes in the global landscape of access to communication technologies on the turn of the twenty first century.

In Hungary, May 2000, the APC Council defined three action areas in which to concentrate APC's efforts to mobilise the potential of information and communication technologies for development and social justice:

- **Internet rights for civil society,**
- **Building information communities,** and
- **Mobilizing participation.**

"The newly defined action areas reflect a careful analysis of the needs and priorities of the constituencies that APC work with, particularly those in the South," says APC's Executive Director, Anriette Esterhuysen. The action areas have become the basis of APC's work plan for the period from June 2000 until at least the end of 2001¹.

The APC action areas were not intended to replace the thematic programmes developed in 1997 to enhance communication and co-operation between people and groups working in the social justice community. The APC programmes - Strategic uses of ICTs, Information, content and tools, Network development, Building capacity (business planning, technical and regional co-operation), Communications policy awareness, and the Women's Networking Support and Africa programmes - together with the action areas function as two dimensions for organizing and assessing the scale, scope and impact of APC's work.

Action Area: Internet Rights for Civil Society



The Internet is a space that is increasingly subject to the same concentration of ownership and control that has already occurred in other mass media. Freedom of

¹ To find out in more detail about APC's strategy for 2000, see the APC Action Plan for 2000-2001 http://www.apc.org/english/press/primers/apcactionplan2001-2_A4.doc

expression and the right to access for all people are not the primary concerns of the new generation of companies that are attempting to define the medium, and the mechanisms that manage it. By prioritising Internet rights for civil society as an action area, the APC will defend the right of people to use the global network to freely exchange information and opinions, and we will advocate for regulatory and policy environments that extend effective and affordable access to poor and oppressed communities throughout the world.

The activities of APC within this action area in 2000-1 include:

- Gathering and disseminating information about telecommunications, Internet, and freedom of information policies (current and planned projects in Europe, Latin America and Asia)
- Creating awareness in civil society of communications policy issues through campaigns, education, and by creating plain language resource materials that enable people to understand and assert their Internet rights
- Ensuring that information content that is censored for political purposes in the many parts of the world where governments or corporations have the right to do this, remains in circulation on the Internet
- Advocating for the active involvement of civil society and developing countries in Internet governance through ensuring their voices are heard at the US-based ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigning Names and Numbers)
- Promoting Internet access for marginalised communities in developing countries
- Promoting women's access to and use of the Internet (including co-leadership in Beijing+5)

Action Area: Building Information Communities



Knowledge is only powerful if it is linked to practice and action, and if it is locally generated. The APC aims to build new information communities, and to link and support the many that already exist and are successfully using and promoting new technologies.

To achieve this, in 2000-1 the APC and members plan to:

- Create regional information gateway sites (portals) in Central Europe and Africa covering topics such as development, social and environmental justice
- Facilitate an environment and development Internet-based news service in Central Europe
- Build the capacity of young journalists in developing countries to use new technologies
- Build interaction and understanding between civil society organisations and the media, through skills development and Web-based information clearing houses to increase locally generated content about social issues in both the alternative and mainstream media
- Link APC member and partner portal Websites (currently in Uruguay, Colombia, Ecuador, Southern Africa, Slovakia, Czech Republic, United States, with more under development)

and supporting the development of these portals to create a strong flow of civil society driven information content on the Internet, particularly content from the South

- Release the APC ActionApps (user-friendly tools that enable different organisations to collaborate in publishing information on the Internet) to the open source software development community. This will provide civil society with free or low-cost tools, and enable programmers all over the world to voluntarily collaborate in extending the tools' capabilities. APC's commitment to open source software is part of our commitment to protecting the Internet as a space for working towards equal opportunities in all social realities and contexts.
- Support issue-based discussions among our user and member communities to build international solidarity for social and environmental justice
- Issue annual awards (APC Africa Hafkin Prize and the APC Betinho Communications Prize) to recognise innovative and meaningful use of the Internet for development and social justice, in Africa and globally

Action area: Mobilizing Participation



APC wants to build the number and capacity of its membership. We believe that it is important for people and organisations in civil society mobilising the power of information and communication technologies for development and democracy, to join forces, learn from one another, and together advocate for policies and practice that will extend Internet access to the many people that are being left along the wayside of the so-called 'Information Highway'.

The stronger our membership, the more meaningful will be our support to the local communities and organisations that we interact with locally, regionally and internationally.

Proposed and Current Activities in 2000-1 include:

- Build members' participation in the APC through strengthening the support and information services APC provides to its members
- Facilitate the sharing of the extensive information and training resources that exist in the APC community. By creating a Web-based clearing house, and enabling translation, the experiences and lessons learned in one part of the world can become accessible to the entire APC community
- Build an internal clearing house with material about the APC and its members to enable better collaborative problem-solving and peer support
- Recruit more members, particularly in regions that are under-represented at present such as the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East
- Engage in capacity-building activities for members and partners, including skills exchange programmes, internships, business planning support, and training of trainers

- Support members in project development and fundraising for APC Action Area activities
- Build stronger Internet-based women's networks through and learning and evaluation

The three action areas will be used in the regional, international and local work of staff, members and partners to plan, prioritise and evaluate APC activities. Measuring progress and impact is one of the greatest challenges for a membership organisation like the APC where the work is distributed widely, thematically and geographically. To make it possible to monitor and understand thoroughly the results and impacts of APC's work, key result areas for each action area were also defined.



The APC Action Areas: Highlights of APC and APC member work in 2000

APC is too well-endowed with excellent technicians to have succumbed to y2k crisis hype. However, the year 2000 was an important and challenging year for us for different reasons. During 2000, APC lost a few of its members, but also gained two new ones. There were a number of staff changes, including the appointment of a new executive director.

Perhaps one of the most significant crises APC has faced as a membership organisation came to a head in 2000. This revolved around a grant of \$50,000 received from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in support of our Internet Rights work. The decision to approach NED initially for funding had been approved by the Executive Board, and there had been some discussion on the issue within Council. However, as is often the case with online decision-making, participation in the process was not engaged at a sufficient level at the necessary time. After the grant had been received, several member organisations remained deeply concerned that APC's association with NED, an agency previously connected to particular US-based political interest groups acting in Central America, would be perceived as an indirect endorsement. In 2000, at the face-to-face Council meeting in Hungary, APC Council decided almost unanimously to return the grant to NED. It was a trying case, but APC has emerged from it internally with a more consensual, engaged membership.

The three major themes of APC's work

Internet rights for civil society,
Building information communities, and
Mobilizing participation.

Internet rights for civil society highlights in 2000

APC'S INTERNET RIGHTS WORK STARTED IN EARNEST: THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY INTERNET RIGHTS INITIATIVE AND THE ICT POLICY MONITOR PROJECTS

APC made Internet Rights for Civil Society one of its three main Action Areas for work in 2001 at our Hungary 2000 meeting. We had been involved in protecting Websites and online content as one of our central activities as an international network but on a rather ad hoc basis. Some of our members, particularly in the UK and Japan, had been influential in mobilising public opinion around government attempts at regulation of the Internet.

The APC Civil Society Internet Rights Initiative¹ debuted in London at the "Scrambling for Safety 2000" conference co-organised by our UK member, GreenNet, at the London School of Economics, in March². Awareness-raising, within and beyond our own community, began, as well as partnership-building, particularly in Europe. Notably, in Asia, a region where APC has not been significantly active for several years, the APC Civil Society Internet Rights Initiative held meetings with Diet members in Japan in July³, and figured prominently in the Media section of the ASEM 2000 Peoples Forum in Korea in October⁴.

In November, APC announced that we were continuing our effort to facilitate increased awareness, critical thinking and informed engagement regarding the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by civil society, with a new project to develop tools for the active monitoring of ICT technology policy and regulatory developments around the world – the APC Civil Society ICT Policy Monitor⁵. The monitor will initially cover Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe, and the real fruits will be seen in 2001.

GETTING INVOLVED IN INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Who Controls the Internet? ICANN wants to!

This was the slogan of a large-scale campaign⁶ involving APC's members and partners around the world from June till November 2000. Almost half of APC member organisations actively joined the APC awareness-raising campaign and encouraged their partners and users to register

¹ <http://rights.apc.org>

² http://www.apc.org/english/news/archive/gn_003.htm

³ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=b7aa6be46f14f9159c3f05b360a02f48

⁴ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=ad71bc3c668c2e47d3666aa61c755176

⁵ <http://rights.apc.org/monitor.htm>

⁶ http://rights.apc.org/governance/icann_election2000/index.shtml

to vote in the elections for the Board of ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers)⁷, a body which controls Internet domain names and numbers. APC's work was not in vain - three out of the five candidates elected were pro-civil society and/or pro-development candidates that APC had recommended. Though we were critical of the process, APC felt that it was important to take advantage of the opportunity the elections presented to introduce a civil society perspective into the future of Internet governance.

A noteworthy coalition around the elections was also forged in 2000. In Yokohama, Japan in July, members of civil society organisations from different parts of the world, including APC, launched the framework for the creation of a global Internet community addressing Internet governance issues and the ICANN in particular⁸. Calling itself the Civil Society Internet Forum, the loose coalition pledged to work for the democratisation of the Internet and Internet governance, and for the first time, a civil society coalition asserted its right to be represented on the ICANN Board at an official ICANN meeting. One concrete outcome of this alliance was a new link between APC and progressive Korean groups.

In 2000, significant work in Internet Rights was carried out by our members and included the following stories featured in more detail on our Website⁹ and in our newsletter, APCNews¹⁰. Here are some excerpts:

GreenNet campaigned against email surveillance laws in the UK

In 2000, the British government made highly controversial changes to the Interception of Communications Act 1985 (IOCA), extending police and intelligence service phone tapping powers to other forms of communications, including particularly email. A new bill, Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIP) replaced IOCA and included new legislation requiring the surrender of encryption keys.

"GreenNet are considering the implications for our users' privacy of information and our legal position in defending that privacy if the RIP Bill becomes law," announced the non-profit cooperative in a statement in July widely quoted in the national press¹¹. "[...]Of particular concern to us is that the definition of "serious crime" warranting an interception of communication order will continue to include "offences involving a large number of persons in pursuit of a common purpose."

⁷ ICANN Website: <http://www.icann.org>

⁸ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=8d2644b3f7971037d9d3329ec4785547

⁹ APC Website: <http://www.apc.org>

¹⁰ APCNews archives: <http://www.apc.org/english/news/apcnews>

¹¹ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=76b70c38a1f01e1f796f9d8015f0ed36

The bill was made law later in the year, however GreenNet continues its work¹², leading the European arm of the Internet Rights initiative, and lobbying for the preservation of the Internet as a secure place for social justice work, at national and now European level.

APC and JCA-NET organized public seminars in Tokyo proclaiming Internet Rights are at risk in Japan

Around 200 people attended a public seminar on July 18 organised by APC and JCA-Net as part of APC's nascent Civil Society Internet Rights Initiative and a continuation of the Japanese APC member's protest against wiretapping by the Japanese government. A meeting and press conference were earlier held at the Japanese Diet (Parliament) attracting about 60 Diet members and media reporters. The central theme was "surveillance" and Japan's Wiretapping Act¹³, which gives the Japanese police powers to intercept email and other forms of digital communication. Following the highly successful public seminars and press conference on Internet surveillance and the APC Internet Rights Initiative, APC representatives from Europe, and JCA-Net, were invited to conduct a further seminar, specifically for lawyers, at the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA).

PROMOTING ACCESS FOR ALL

In most parts of the world people still struggle to make a phone call, so access to the Internet is even lower on the list of priorities. In Africa and Latin America, our members still continue to provide basic access for local communities. Colnodo in Colombia¹⁴ and ENDA in Senegal¹⁵ set up and trained local communities (in Colnodo's case, all-women teams) to run local telecentres.

APC AND MANY MEMBERS CONSOLIDATED THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE COMMUNITY

APC supports the development of open source (or 'free') software because we believe that software is so vital in this day and age that it can be considered a utility and must be affordable and when necessary free of cost. It is part of our commitment to ensuring equal opportunities (of which access to ICT is a part) in all social realities and contexts.

APC and many of our members work within the open source community¹⁶ of computer programmers. These programmers collaboratively work together, often on a voluntary basis and motivated by the desire to create software that will benefit users who cannot afford to pay the

¹² <http://www.gn.apc.org/activities/ir/>

¹³ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=926cc8dad60b2230dece0fcf2585bb89

¹⁴ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=239b03a31c55d12d863da7b67c4962db

¹⁵ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=a65182095cfe5115ac431f94e2c232de

¹⁶ http://www.apc.org/english/news/os_index.shtml

inflated rates of proprietary software, to create, develop and improve computer programs that anyone can download and use on their computer.

In 2000, APC decided to formally support the Free Software movement by releasing the collaborative Web publishing software we have been developing as a team since 1999 - APC ActionApps¹⁷ - into the public domain in 2001 under the GNU GPL licence¹⁸.

There is strong support for free software in Latin America because of its social and cost implications. More accurately translated into Spanish as "software libre" ('freedom' software, which is the true meaning of 'free software', as opposed to software without cost. Although free software does often come for free!), actions by our members were significant in that region. In Colombia, the Sustainable Development Network of Colombia Proexport, and Colnodo, APC member in Colombia developed ECOMERZ¹⁹, a virtual handcraft store to promote Colombian exports overseas. Together the two organisations designed the site to promote the online commercialisation of handcrafted Colombian products and kept costs low by choosing free software and non-proprietary programming languages for development. INTERCOM in Ecuador and Nicarao in Nicaragua²⁰ both hosted LINUX clubs, with INTERCOM also developing a public Website of LINUX resources²¹ in Spanish.

Building information communities highlights in 2000

Knowledge is only powerful if it is linked to practice and action, and if it is locally generated. In 2000 and into 2001, APC aims to build new information communities, to link and support the many that already exist and are successfully using and promoting new technologies, and promote successful examples that can be replicated.

APC LAUNCHED ITS NEW WEBSITE

In January, APC launched its new Website www.apc.org as a primary destination for NGOs and other social justice groups interested in using the Internet and other communications technologies to promote development and change. New sections include: a complete news section featuring international stories on strategic use of the Internet for social justice and development²², multilingual training materials²³, and a very popular, practical section called

¹⁷ <http://www.apc.org/actionapps>

¹⁸ <http://www.gnu.org>

¹⁹ www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=1a44d8ef1f99525672c33e14a2801574

²⁰ www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=c12e62a14bd442acfbacc8aac0cec5f5

²¹ www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=e13d9772e0bd172b9596816f4823a426

²² <http://www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml>

²³ <http://www.apc.org/english/ngos/training/index.htm>

"Managing your NGO"²⁴. Visitors come regularly from around 120 countries and one-third access the Spanish-language Website²⁵.

AWARDING THE FIRST BETINHO PRIZE TO RECOGNISE THE MEANINGFUL USE OF ICTS

The APC Betinho Communications Prize²⁶ was launched to mark APC's tenth anniversary in 2000, and to recognise and document outstanding examples of how the Internet can make a real difference for the world's communities today. The prize is designed to highlight the socially meaningful use of ICTs and bring to the public eye initiatives that might otherwise go unrecognised.

From a Website recruiting and orienting volunteers to participate in the reconstruction of ex-Yugoslavia, to information networks between indigenous communities in Mexico, to a child's rights data gathering initiative in Mozambique, over 160 inspiring projects were nominated for the \$7,500 USD prize, which commemorates the inspirational life and work of Herbet de Souza (Betinho), a visionary Brazilian social activist. The inaugural winner, the Max Foundation²⁷, is a life-saving online support network in Spanish and Portuguese for the families of children suffering from leukaemia and host of Latin America's first online bone marrow tissue registry.

THE APC FORUM DAY: CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF BUILDING A GLOBAL INTERNET COMMUNITY FOR ENVIRONMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

APC opened real-life doors to the public establishing a Council meeting tradition for the otherwise virtual organisation on May 2²⁸. Above the medieval castle of Visegrád, Hungary, APC celebrated a decade of groundbreaking work by its members, looked to the future of Internet and social justice, and awarded the first APC Betinho Communications Prize. APC members and partners from across the globe attended APC Forum Day, as well as representatives from Hungarian and international civil society organisations.

CREATING RELEVANT CONTENT TO INFORM LOCAL COMMUNITIES

There is a lot of enthusiasm for building "knowledge communities", however, unless the knowledge is really linked to local experience, the community may never really gel and the impact of the knowledge collected for the benefit of the community may be negligible. The strength of APC members is that they are directly involved with, indeed they are part of, the

²⁴ <http://www.apc.org/english/ngos/business/index.htm>

²⁵ <http://www.apc.org/espanol/>

²⁶ <http://www.apc.org/english/betinho>

²⁷ <http://www.themaxfoundation.org/>

²⁸ http://www.apc.org/english/about/org/forum_day2000.htm

communities for whom they create or collect information. Content in local languages is also vitally significant.

Successful initiatives by APC members included:

*SANGONeT promoted women's participation in local elections in South Africa*²⁹

South Africans went to the polls four times in 2000. In the final ballot, at the end of the year, South Africans voted for local government representatives for the second time. This election marked the final stage in a process of change that was started in the democratic negotiations of 1993. Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people, and has control over services – such as the provision of clean water and sanitation services - and makes decisions that affect women's lives directly.

Women'sNet (a joint project of APC South African member, SANGONeT, and the Commission on Gender Equality) is a platform for South African women's voices and issues. Women'sNet launched a project focusing on women and elections. The project was a huge success. Post-election research made by the Commission on Gender Equality showed that the information campaign focusing on women and issues affecting them meant that more women voted independently and not on the advice (or insistence!) of their husbands.

*Lessons learned by poor Senegalese neighbourhoods promote social development*³⁰

The Cyberpop Website of ENDA, APC member in Senegal, took a prize for social use in the "Internet: Bridges to Development" awards at an international conference organised by the ANAIS Network in February 2000. The conference discussed the uses of information and communications technology (ICTs) for local development. The international jury called the content of the Cyberpop Website "particularly relevant for the promotion of social development". Cyberpop is a French language Website demonstrating the ways in which a group of marginal Senegalese neighbourhoods have been able to directly appropriate ICTs for their own use and empowerment. It is the result of a joint initiative by ENDA-Tiers Monde, APC member in Senegal, and the International Development Centre (IDRC - Acacia).

²⁹ www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=48a771a234de1f0677f6deef4f5e552c

³⁰ www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=a65182095cfe5115ac431f94e2c232de

*Gender-sensitive African community radio exchange*³¹

The Community Radio Exchange Website was launched in Johannesburg, South Africa, on March 29. This was the culmination of a pilot project from Women'sNet, initiative of SANGONeT, APC member in South Africa, aimed at improving gender-sensitive radio content.

*Czech civil society is well-informed at World Bank/IMF protests in Prague*³²

Before and during the demonstrations outside the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) meeting in Prague in September, Econnect's main goal was not just to provide technical support to the related NGOs (INPEG, one of the most quoted Websites in the international media was created by Econnect), though they did that too. Econnect was the major carrier of on-line information in Czech about the protests and strived to supplement and provide a different perspective to the information available to the Czech public from the traditional Czech media on the events. In fact, since June, in preparation, Econnect had launched a Czech-language awareness-building portal focusing on the IMF, the World Bank and the impact of their activities.

USING THE INTERNET TO INFLUENCE SOCIAL POLICY AND REGULATIONS

APC has been supporting civil society use of ICTs to influence social policy since the early 1990s, starting with our lobbying facilitation of the United Nations at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. In 2000, the APC women's programme lobbied at global level around the Beijing +5 initiative, and APC made recommendations to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) held a high-level ministerial meeting in New York on the 'Development of information technology in a knowledge-based global economy'.

*Influencing ICT policy at international level: APC at ECOSOC*³³

From July 5-7, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) held a high-level ministerial meeting in New York on the 'Development of information technology in a knowledge-based global economy'. The UN Secretary-General had prepared a report on the theme of this high-level segment, and an Expert Panel was convened in April 2000 to review the report and make recommendations.

APC strongly endorsed the recommendations of the Expert Panel and articulated a commitment to proactively support the implementation of the proposed "International ICT Action Plan".

³¹ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=2d9ff46d54aa50dcd97a15f2d8fbeb5b

³² www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=da651bb47d7ac10feff430e64e7305e0

³³ http://www.apc.org/english/about/work/ecosoc_0700.htm

A Ministerial Declaration that emerged from the ECOSOC high-level round appeared to demonstrate that the Expert Panel recommendations were taken seriously and were to be reconsidered at the UN Millennium Assembly in September. Continuing to monitor the evolution of the commitment, especially with respect to emphasising civil society concerns of gender equality, freedom of expression, access and capacity-building, and South-South co-operation became the task at hand.

APC's Women's Programme spread the news during the United Nations World Conference on Women (Beijing +5)

WomenAction 2000, a global network of women's information and media organisations co-ordinated by the APC WNSP³⁴, received praise from around the world for providing coverage of the United Nations (UN) Women 2000 meeting held in New York from June 5-9.

WomenAction 2000³⁵ provided listeners and readers throughout the world with a daily flow of information; particularly relevant given the mainstream media largely ignored the event. Two daily newspapers, one global, the other specifically on African issues, were produced as tabloids and disseminated via email lists and the WomenAction 2000 Website. A daily Internet TV programme (predominantly French) and daily (Internet-based) radio broadcasts (predominantly Spanish) brought the conference to many viewers and listeners. The WomenAction 2000 Internet cafe, situated near the UN building, provided access to women to send thousands of messages to their constituencies and to receive recommendations and input from home. One WomenAction 2000 partner trained a group of NGOs in journalism skills and the 40 ensuing articles were sent home and in many cases published or broadcast.

WomenAction 2000 was instrumental in making it possible for women's organisations to become involved in preparations for the meeting, and together with WomenWatch, conducted an online consultation of the 1,000 members of the Women and Media Working Group, resulting in a strongly worded NGO declaration presented at the Beijing+5 forum. WomenAction's reports brought to light the difficulties many women's organisations and governments face in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action.

³⁴ <http://www.apcwomen.org>

³⁵ <http://www.womenaction.org>

APC members continued to work globally to pressure their own governments, local and national.

More than 1,000,000 voters said yes to cancelling developing countries' debt to Spain in Pangea's referendum

A national poll on the foreign debt owed by developing countries to Spain was taken by over a thousand grassroots groups in Spain on March 12. The action coincided with the general elections for the Spanish parliament. Citizens could drop by and vote on a proposal to forgive the debt poor countries owe to Spain. The results – 97% in favour of forgiving the debt - could be seen online³⁶.

Pangea, APC's member in Barcelona, provided complex online support, namely the database which collated results sent from local focal points around Spain, and the verification of the voters' national identity numbers (to prevent multiple voting). Contact and collaboration between all the groups was close at all times, and continues to be so. The voting was accompanied by debates and discussions, to bring the theme of the debt to the public's attention.

Young environmentalists used the Internet to give local farmers and indigenous communities a voice on Nicaragua's national forestry legislation

Nicarao, APC member in Nicaragua, donated technical expertise to mount a nation-wide online poll³⁷ regarding a law passed in this Central American country, which will control the development and management of Nicaraguan forests. The aim of the poll, which took place until September 14, 2000 was to collect the opinions and concerns of small-scale farmers and foresters, as well as indigenous communities who will be affected by the law. The poll organisers, Young Environmentalists (Ja!), with the support of local and national media, used the results to lobby parliamentary representatives and raise public awareness of the Forestry Law and its implications.

*Online campaign to save the Pirin mountain in Bulgaria from tourist development*³⁸

BlueLink, APC's member organisation in Bulgaria, created a Website to facilitate an international campaign to save Pirin Mountain, a Bulgarian national park on the World Natural Heritage list, which is under threat from ski resort construction. Campaign organisers, Balkani Wildlife Society and other Bulgarian nature protection organisations working on biodiversity conservation launched the campaign to inform the international community about alarming developments in

³⁶ <http://www.consultadeuda.org>

³⁷ http://www.apc.org/english/ngos/calendar/00_09.htm

³⁸ www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=fae32cd70d20b6976c40d83d7c5c5f83

the Pirin National Park. A ski zone had already been illegally constructed in the Park above the town of Bansko in the 1980s. In recent years, under the pressure of private investors, a campaign for enlargement of the ski zone was started, and in August 2000 year the Ministry of the Environment and Waters said yes to the construction project, despite the protests of Bulgarian NGOs.

Romanian and Bulgarian APC members seek to influence environmental policy through courses for journalists and government representatives

In 2000, both BlueLink and StrawberryNet, APC's member organisation in Romania, organised seminars³⁹ on how to use the Internet to gather information on the environment. Participants included representatives from active environmental NGOs, members of the Ministry of the Environment, and mainstream journalists interested in learning how to use the Internet in their work.

SUPPORTING GROUPS WITH SPECIAL INTERESTS: PORTAL CREATION AND FORA

Portals are large-scale Websites that collect together related lists of links and resources in one Website. A good portal will collect together all the information you want or provide you with a direct hyperlink to that information on any given topic. Portals developed by APC members reflect progressive social values, even if the portal appeals to a general audience.

APC member in Uruguay, Chasque/ITeM gives their popular national portal, UruguayTotal⁴⁰, a slick, professional appearance and have consequently, despite fierce well-funded commercial competition, made it the most visited portal in Uruguay. However the portal's editorial values are inherently progressive: the 'women' section mainstreams 'feminism' and the portal does not include links to pornographic sites.

Some portals developed by APC members in 2000 included:

IGC's AntiRacismNet was chosen as the online home for US NGO participation in the UN World Conference Against Racism

AntiRacismNet.org, a Website jointly developed by Project Change and the Institute for Global Communications (IGC), APC's member in the United States, will play an important communications role for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001. AntiRacismNet.org will be the home base for information for U.S. NGO participants in the conference for everything from background information to how to get involved.

³⁹ BlueLink www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=b1621a3df6510c9c84295e14fa5e797d and StrawberryNet www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=a612edc7eb5a5e0b5cd3acf7c3d7eea0

⁴⁰ <http://www.uruguaytotal.com>

Mexican portal brings together over eighty pro-human rights organisations to work together under one virtual roof⁴¹

For the first time a human rights portal focusing on human rights in Mexico was launched by APC member LaNeta in October. The portal - LaNeta Derechos Humanos (LaNeta Human Rights) - has a double function: to directly provide services to human rights organisations; and to serve as a vital communications bridge between these specialist groups and wider networks of concerned Mexican citizens. LaNeta Derechos Humanos offers a wide variety of online services to human rights organisations to assist them in their day-to-day activities (e.g. broadening the circulation of calls for urgent action and ensuring alerts get out almost immediately) as well as collecting together otherwise hard-to-find or unorganised information. The portal also provides an arena to groups who up till now have not published online. In the month of November alone, twelve calls for urgent action to protect serious violations of human rights and threats to lives were posted, some from established human rights groups and others from the victims of human rights violations themselves.

Internet and cultural arts: Pacific Arts forum online

In late October to early November, c2o, APC's Australian member organisation, and their partner group, Toy Satellite, provided regional networking and Web media expertise to "arTok"⁴², a Pacific cultural arts initiative. The initiative provided support to the 8th Festival of Pacific Arts held in Nouméa, the capital of New Caledonia, a group of islands in the south-west Pacific Ocean. The "arTok" Website was updated daily with stories and reports from the festival in English, French and Tok Pisin (a pidgin language from Papua New Guinea). arTok provides a rich archive of information focusing on traditional and contemporary art trends in the Pacific and reflects the region's cultural diversity and vibrancy, as well as documenting the concerns and challenges faced by Pacific artists and performers.

Mobilising civil society participation highlights in 2000

APC believes that it is important for people and organisations in civil society mobilising the power of information and communication technologies for development and social justice, to join forces, learn from one another, and together advocate for policies and practice that will extend Internet access to the many people that are being left along the wayside of the so-called 'Information Highway'. The stronger the membership, the more meaningful will be the support

⁴¹ www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=5625abe93535fc914d97d839e726067b

⁴² <http://www2c.abc.net.au/arts/artok/>

to the communities and organisations that interact with APC locally, regionally and internationally.

In 2000, APC Council ratified important revisions to the membership criteria and fees that will have major consequences for the size and diversity of APC membership in the future⁴³. APC membership is now open to civil society organisations anywhere in the world that share the same mission as APC: to empower and support civil society organisations through the use of information and communication technologies.

APC CO-FACILITATED THE ACCESS TRACK AT GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE II⁴⁴

In March 2000, APC co-led (with Kerry McNamara of the World Bank) the 'Access' track of the Second Global Knowledge (GK II) conference held in Malaysia. The conference brought together government-related development agencies, companies, and NGOs involved in the development and ICT field.

The GK Action Summit looked at three themes (Access, Empowerment, and Governance), and four 'cross-cutting' issues (Youth, Media, Women, and Local Knowledge). APC co-organized a caucus for NGO representatives who were attending the conference, 30 of whom met at the outset to create a prioritised list of stances to promote while attending GK II.

Prior to the event, APC facilitated a world-wide online forum on Access. This discussion group developed the core proposals that were then discussed at GK II. It was generally recognised that the Access track of GK II was the most inclusive and effective in its use of ICTs to bring the concerns of people working on the ground to the event.

Specialist researchers from APC member organizations developed a database of Access-related resources and best practices in the areas of gender, Spanish-language resources, and general access issues. The researchers developed a system for categorizing their data. This has been set up on the GK-AIMS database⁴⁵. The APC's Women's Networking Support Program had a strong international team of representatives at GK II.

NEW MEMBERS FROM EASTERN EUROPE

APC welcomed two new members in 2000. Romania's StrawberryNet⁴⁶, founded in 1995, was previously a partner network. It has participated in Central European region activities. StrawberryNet is based in Sfantu Gheorghe, Romania.

⁴³ For more information see: "APC Membership: Mobilising the Power of ICTs for Development and Social Justice", APC Annual Report 2000.

⁴⁴ <http://www.apc.org/english/about/alliances/strategic/gk/gk2.htm>

⁴⁵ <http://gkaims.globalknowledge.org>

⁴⁶ <http://www.sbn.ro>

The second new member, BlueLink⁴⁷, was founded in 1998 as a network of Bulgarian environmental non-governmental organisations. Based in Sofia, BlueLink electronically connects Bulgarian NGOs, educational and academic centres and the media. Its aim is to provide access to accurate information about the Bulgarian environment, and assist the consolidation and strengthening of the Bulgarian environmental movement through networking, information sharing and practical co-operation.

In order to begin to build membership in other areas where we currently have little or no representation, APC began to build working partnerships with organisations through our project work (such as in the area of Internet Rights) whom we hope will consider becoming a closer part of the APC in 2001.

CASE STUDIES ON BUILDING SUSTAINABLE ONLINE CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKS

How have many APC members built largely self-sustaining electronic networks for use by civil society? The path they have taken has not been easy. Following a mission while making money to survive is a complex business. In 2000, APC commissioned a report⁴⁸ compiling the business strategies of eight current and former APC member organisations during the late 1980s and 1990s based on interviews with key players in the development of APC networks. Case studies include Econnect (Czech Republic), ENDA (Senegal), Green Spider (Hungary), INTERCOM (Ecuador), SANGONeT (South Africa) and Web Networks (Canada).

APC MEMBERS CONTINUED BUILDING CAPACITY AND MOBILIZING PARTICIPATION REGIONALLY AND LOCALLY

In South Africa, SANGONeT, APC member in South Africa, which specialises in training development workers to use ICTs, co-developed an ICT strategy to train 35 researchers based in Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya on how to use the Internet to locate information⁴⁹. The researchers were contracted by the Rockefeller Foundation to carry out an exploratory research project on the acquisition of basic learning skills, and to study how girls are affected differently to boys in relation to their bodily changes and development.

Econnect, APC member in the Czech Republic, trained NGOs to make their online campaigns really achieve results. The training sessions examined successful online campaigns⁵⁰. 'Coke Spotlight' was an online campaign that successfully pressured the makers of Coca-Cola to adopt a new refrigeration policy to reduce its impact on global climate change before the world's first Green Games in Sydney, Australia in June. Another replicable online campaign studied was

⁴⁷ <http://www.bluelink.org>

⁴⁸ <http://www.apc.org/english/ngos/business/buscase/index.htm>

⁴⁹ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=8b8b8875823de18ca0ad2957fd86686f

⁵⁰ http://www.apc.org/english/news/fulltext.shtml?sh_itm=cd5f229cf17dcae3a67bc9924080c0fb

'Balkan Sunflowers' - a project very close to Econnect, whose staff regularly volunteer their time to this organisation that works with war-traumatised people in the region.



APC Governance: How this international network operates

APC has been operating as an international, membership-based organisation since 1990. Our strong mixture of Southern and Northern organisations, and their combined knowledge and experience of promoting and using ICTs at local, national and regional levels, differentiates our network and our work from many others.

GOVERNED BY OUR MEMBERS

APC members define APC direction, policies and agendas. APC Council is the governing body that establishes APC's policy and work area priorities. Each APC member organisation appoints a representative to Council. Council meets regularly online, and periodically, APC Council members meet for a face-to-face conference in one of the member countries. Most of Council's formal decision-making takes place during these meetings.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Council elects an Executive Board that provides financial and operational oversight, and works with the Executive Director and staff to implement APC action plans. The Chairperson of the Executive Board also acts as the Chairperson of Council.

Board members in 2000

May 2000 - November 2001 (incoming)

Stefan Hackenthal (Chair)

Karen Banks

Magela Sigillito

Julian Casasbuenas

November 1998 - May 2000 (outgoing)

Roberto Roggiero (Chair)

Anriette Esterhuysen

Stefan Hackenthal

Vasek Klinkera

Marci Lockwood

Eric Bachman

EMPOWERED WORKING GROUPS

Working groups of people from the APC community who share an active interest or expertise in a particular issue or project, are set up as needed and have the power to make recommendations to APC council. Working groups set up following the Hungary Council meeting in September included: the Membership Working Group (which discusses new membership applications); APC Workspaces; Building Information Communities (Content); Internet Rights; Technical Support; Betinho Prize 2001; and E-commerce.

A VIRTUAL OFFICE

APC has a small core staff and project team who develop APC programs and projects and run the organisation from day-to-day. Each team member lives in a different country and communicates daily via email.

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR APC IN 2000

Anriette Esterhuysen joined APC as Executive Director in May. Prior to her post with APC, Anriette was the Executive Director of SANGONeT, APC member in South Africa.

Anriette has a background in information and communications in the social justice and development sectors and she has served on the African Technical Advisory Committee of the UN's Africa Information Society Initiative.

Before SANGONeT, Anriette worked as the chief information and documentation officer at the SACC (South African Council of Churches) from 1987 to 1991 and was the Director of Information at the South African Development Resource Centre from 1992 to 1993.

The APC staff lead by South African-based Executive Director, Anriette Esterhuysen, carries out the operational work of APC. APC also employs project coordinators who run projects. Posts in 2000 were:

- Executive Director: Anriette Esterhuysen (South Africa)
- Programmes and Projects Manager: Maureen James (Canada)
- Communications Manager: Karen Higgs (Wales/Uruguay)
- Finance Manager: Maya Sooka (South Africa) current / Gina Kuta (USA) previous
- Member and Partner Director: Don Anderson, (New Zealand) previous
- APC WNSP Coordinator: Karen Banks (Australia/UK)
- APC WNSP Lessons Learned Coordinator: Chat Ramilo Garcia (Philippines)

APC is an independent 501c3 corporation registered in the State of California.



Supporting APC's Work: Funding partners

Beyond the support and contributions of our member organisations and their communities, APC's programs and projects receive valuable financial support from our funding partners and donor agencies, and in-kind contributions from other institutions that believe in APC's work.

OUR SUPPORTERS

We especially wish to recognise those funders that were early supporters of our work – IDRC, The Ford Foundation, OSI, CIDA and The MacArthur Foundation - and who have continued to advise and engage with us as strategic partners. We value their commitment and the risks they took in supporting the growth and diversification of our fledgling network.

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Our earliest supporter, IDRC, provided the funds needed to launch APC Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP)¹ activities around the world during the lead-up to the 1995 UN World Conference on Women (UNWCW). IDRC has continued to support initiatives of the APC WNSP, as well as the development of our 'Mission-Driven Business Planning Toolkit'². IDRC has also provided start-up support to our Internet Rights work through the Global ICT Policy Monitor project³, with a focus on activities in Latin America and Africa. In addition, APC's Betinho Communications Prize⁴ to recognise socially meaningful uses of the Internet has been funded by IDRC for the first two years. IDRC also provided partial support for the APC Africa Hafkin Prize⁵ (to be awarded in 2001) and, in 1995, for the APC Council Meeting in Brazil.

¹ <http://www.apcwomen.org> and <http://www.womenaction.org>

² <http://www.apc.org/english/ngos/business/busplan/index.htm>

³ <http://rights.apc.org/monitor.htm>

⁴ <http://www.apc.org/english/betinho>

⁵ <http://www.apc.org/english/hafkin>

The Ford Foundation

With trends in donor funding shifting overwhelmingly towards project support and away from institutional support, APC is particularly appreciative of the programme support that the Ford Foundation has provided us since 1997. The Ford Foundation also supported the APC Council Meeting in South Africa in 1997.

Open Society Institute (OSI)/Soros Foundation

OSI's initial support for APC's work was focused in Central and Eastern Europe with an emphasis on strengthening the capacity of APC members and partners in the region. OSI provided substantial support to the APC Toolkit project, which has produced the APC ActionApps⁶. More recently OSI provided support for APC's Internet Rights work in Europe. Throughout our relationship, OSI has played a key networking role by linking APC to related initiatives, and providing us with valuable critical input.

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

CIDA has supported APC's work since the early days through a diversity of partnership projects with Web Networks, APC member in Canada – including cost-recovery systems for e-mail management for emerging African networks; support of APC WNSP's preparatory work for the 1995 UNWCW⁷; and facilitation of NGO participation in the 1997 Global Knowledge conference in Toronto, Canada. More recently CIDA has supported the development of community radio exchange tools using APC's ActionApps and Beijing+5 Section J activities to advocate for support of women's use of ICTs.

The MacArthur Foundation

Like CIDA, the MacArthur Foundation supported APC's early network development through a grant to IGC Networks in the United States, which enabled the set-up of grass-roots non-profit email providers throughout the Americas, the former Soviet Union, and Asia. MacArthur also made a substantial contribution to the development of APC's ActionApps.

The World Bank

The *World Bank Institute* facilitated APC's participation in the Global Knowledge II conference in 2000⁸. The *infoDev* program of the World Bank is supporting APC's Online

⁶ <http://www.apc.org/actionapps>

⁷ Also see: Rory O'Brien "Enabling Civil Society Participation in Global Policy-Making: APC and the United Nations", APC Annual Report 2000

⁸ <http://www.apc.org/english/about/alliances/strategic/gk/gk2.htm>

Resource Centre⁹, which is building an interactive, multilingual Web clearinghouse of Internet training-related materials to support and promote strategic use of ICTs for development and social justice.

HIVOS (Humanist Institute for Development Co-operation)

HIVOS first provided support towards the activities of APC's Africa Women's Programme in preparing for Beijing+5¹⁰, and are now supporting our Internet Rights work through the Global ICT Policy Monitor project, with a focus on activities in Latin America and Africa.

Rockefeller Foundation and Novib (Oxfam Netherlands)

Both foundations have contributed towards the activities of APC's Africa Women's Programme in preparing for Beijing+5.

EMW (Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, now EED)

EMW provided the funding to train English and French-speaking African women in how to run Internet-based solidarity campaigns.

NON-FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Both *Carnegie Mellon University* and *Global X Change* provided APC with strategic planning consultants to work with us in the development of our Mission-Driven Business Planning Toolkit, funded by IDRC.

Lundeen & Associates provided us with multiple free copies of their "WebCrossing" software in the early stages of our APC ActionApps software development.

The *Internet Society* facilitated the participation of many APC member staff in ISOC Developing Country technical training workshops.

⁹ A sub-project is <http://www.itrainonline.org>

¹⁰ <http://www.apc.org/english/about/apcafrica/apcwomen.htm>

APC's Financial Performance in 2000: Report from the independent auditors

TO THE MEMBERS

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

We have audited the financial statements of Association for Progressive Communications set out on the following pages for the year ended 31 December 2000. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Executive Board, while our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

SCOPE

We conducted our audit in accordance with statements of International Auditing Standards, which require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

AUDIT OPINION

In our opinion, the financial statements fairly present, in all material respects, the financial position of the association at 31 December 2000 and the results of its operations for the year then ended in accordance with International Accounting Standards.

Douglas & Velcich
Chartered Accountants (S.A.)
Registered Accountants and Auditors

Johannesburg
11 April 2001

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2000

General

The principal object of the association is to empower and support organisations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies to build strategic communities and initiatives for the purpose of making meaningful contributions to equitable human development, social justice, participatory political processes and environmental sustainability.

Statements of responsibility

The executive board are responsible for the maintenance of adequate accounting records, the preparation and integrity of the financial statements and related information. The auditors are responsible to report on the fair presentation of the financial statements. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice.

The executive board are also responsible for the association's systems of internal control. These are designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute assurance as to the reliability of the financial statements, and to adequately safeguard, verify and maintain accountability of assets, and to prevent and detect misstatement and loss. Nothing has come to the attention of the executive board to indicate that any material breakdown in the functioning of these controls, procedures and systems has occurred during the year under review.

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis, since the executive board have every reason to believe that the association has adequate resources in place to continue in operation for the foreseeable future.

Results for the year

The results of operations for the year are fully disclosed in the attached financial statements.

Equipment

During the period under review, the association acquired equipment to the value of USD 8,439.

Post balance sheet events

No material fact or circumstance has occurred between the balance sheet date and the date of this report.

Executive board of the association

The following served on the board during the year under review :-

R Roggiero
K Banks (current)
A Esterhuysen
M Fall
S Hackenthal (Chairperson – current)
M Lockwood
E Bachmann
V Klinkera
J Casasbuenas (current)
M Sigillito (current)

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2000

	Notes	31/12/2000 US\$
ASSETS		403,574
Non-current assets		6,195
Equipment	2	6,195
Current assets		397,379
Accounts receivable		31,076
Accrued grant income		24,854
Cash and cash equivalents	3	341,449
TOTAL ASSETS		403,574

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES

403,574

Equity and reserves

33,211

Accumulated surplus

33,211

Current liabilities

370,363

Accounts payable

15,882

Deferred grant income

4

354,481

TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES

403,481

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2000

	Notes	2000 US\$
Income		667,838
Grants received	5	494,431
Administration fees		80,310
Membership fees		51,897
Project income		24,287
Sundry income		1,387
Interest		15,526
Expenditure		673,266
Accounting fees		156
Annual report		2,366
Auditors' remuneration	6	4,500
Bank charges		123
Bad debts written off	7	11,404
Charitable contributions and memberships		205
Conference registration fees		35
Depreciation	2	7,020

General expenses	1,500
Insurance	100
Meetings	68,081
Office expenses	7,067
Rental	1,200
Promotional materials and printing	565
Programme and project expenses	395,566
Africa programme	839
Strategic uses programme - Betinho award	13,075
Network development programme - business training	
- business training for NGO ISPS in central and eastern Europe project	7,286
Communication awareness policy programme	
- global knowledge access track facilitation project	44,414
Communication awareness policy programme - internet rights project	101,130
Information content and tools programme - APC community	
and collaboration toolkit project	36,374
Women's programme	192,448
Postage	803
Repairs and maintenance	299
Salaries and contributions	166,251
Software expenses	894
Staff training	97
Telephone and fax	1,298
Translation services	3,366
Travel, accommodation and per diems	372

DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR

(5,430)

BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF THE YEAR

38,641

BALANCE AT END OF THE YEAR

33,211

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2000

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The financial statements are prepared on the historical cost basis, and incorporate the following principal accounting policies:

1.1 Equipment

Equipment is stated at cost less provision for depreciation. Depreciation is calculated to write off the cost of the equipment on the straight line method at the following rates:-

Computer equipment - 33.3% per annum
Furniture and fittings - 20% per annum

1.2 Income recognition

Income from grants is generally recognised and brought to account in the period to which it relates. All other income is brought to account as and when received.

Accrued income comprises grants designated for the current year, but received in the period between the financial year end and the date of the audit report, is included in income, and is accounted for as a current asset.

Deferred income comprises grants received in advance of the period to which they relate, Is excluded from income, and is accounted for as a current liability.

2. EQUIPMENT

	Computer equipment US\$	Furniture and fittings US\$	Total US\$
Net book value - 31/12/1999	6,625	57	6,682
At cost	19,860	378	20,238
Accumulated depreciation	(13,235)	(321)	(13,556)
Additions during the year	8,439	-	8,439
Depreciation for the year	(6,963)	(57)	(7,020)
Disposal during the year	(1,906)	-	(1,906)
At cost	(14,001)	-	(14,001)
Accumulated depreciation	12,095	-	12,095
Net book value - 31/12/2000	6,195	-	6,195
At cost	14,298	378	14,676
Accumulated depreciation	(8,103)	(378)	(8,481)

**2000
US\$**

3. ACCRUED GRANT INCOME

International Development Research Centre

24,854

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2000 (Continued)**

	2000
	US\$
4. DEFERRED GRANT INCOME	
Canadian International Development Agency	9,400
Hivos	56,094
International Development Research Centre	47,028
Open Society Institute	105,633
The Ford Foundation	70,039
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation	60,701
World Bank Institute	5,586
	<u>354,481</u>
5. GRANTS	
Canadian International Development Agency	35,036
Received	44,436
Deferred to 2001	(9,400)

Hivos	2,764
Received	58,858
Deferred to 2001	(56,094)
International Development Research Centre	168,532
Received	72,503
Accrued in 2000	24,855
Deferred in 1999	118,202
Deferred to 2001	(47,028)
Open Society Institute	116,683
Deferred in 1999	222,316
Deferred to 2001	(105,633)
The Ford Foundation	106,703
Deferred in 1999	176,742
Deferred to 2001	-70,039
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation	20,299
Received	54,000
Deferred in 1999	27,000
Deferred to 2001	-60,701
World Bank Institute	44,414
Received	50,000
Deferred to 2001	-5,586
	<hr/>
	494,431
	<hr/> <hr/>

6. AUDITOR'S REMUNERATION

Current year	2,500
Prior year	<u>2,000</u>
	<u>4,500</u>

7. BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

These are membership dues written off as per Council decision.

Acknowledgments

The 2000 Annual Report records some of the APC's contributions to activist networking in the 1980s and 1990s. We recognise that recent history is inevitably partially told, and that there may also be some unintentional inaccuracies in some articles. If you have a comment or suggestion please contact webeditor@apc.org.

The material of historical value will be added to the APC Website in a new archive where we will collect the history of APC and APC members.

The archive will be located at <http://www.apc.org/english/about/history/>

*Editor: Karen Higgs, APC
Communications Manager,
khiggs@apc.org*

*Editorial Board: Anriette
Esterhuysen, Maureen James*

*Editorial Assistance: BlueLink
Information Network, Bulgaria*

Special thanks for their contributions to this report to:

Adolfo Dunayevich
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