

# GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2008

*Focus on access to infrastructure*



# Global Information Society Watch

## 2008



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### Steering committee

Karen Banks (APC)  
Roberto Bissio (ITeM)  
Anriette Esterhuysen (APC)  
Paul Maassen (Hivos)  
Loe Schout (Hivos)  
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### Coordination committee

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Monique Doppert (Hivos)  
Karen Higgs (APC)  
Natasha Primo (APC)

### Editor

Alan Finlay

### Assistant editor

Lori Nordstrom

### Publication production

Karen Higgs

### Graphic design

MONOCROMO  
Myriam Bustos, Leticia da Fonte, Pablo Uribe  
info@monocromo.com.uy  
Phone: +598 (2) 400 1685

### Cover illustration

Matias Bervejillo

### Proofreading

Lori Nordstrom  
Lisa Cyr

### Website

www.GISWatch.org  
Andrea Antelo  
Ximena Pucciarelli  
Monocromo

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## Preface

*This year's thematic focus for Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) is "access to infrastructure". The Geneva Plan of Action that emerged from the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) declared information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure an "essential foundation for the Information Society" and identified it as one of six main action lines.*

*In spite of this attention, it is beginning to be considered of less importance by some development funders and practitioners, including civil society and communication and information activists.*

*One of the consequences of this is the development of a conventional wisdom that leaves the domain of infrastructure development to the market; to operators and investors who do not always see the broader social value of communications in society; to governments that lack capacity and often clear strategy; and to international institutions that tend to approach it in a limited and "technocratic" way.*

*Access to infrastructure is important in its own right. It constitutes the layer that enables communication, and is interlinked with other access challenges such as the capacity to use ICTs, access to content and knowledge, as well as access to public participation and citizenship. In this sense, the overall theme of access to infrastructure links to GISWatch 2007's focus on access to participation, and is a bridge to GISWatch 2009's theme of access to knowledge.*

*GISWatch is both a publication and a process. While producing an annual report which is published in print and online, it also aims to build networking and advocacy capacity among civil society organisations*

*who work for a just and inclusive information society. The number of participating organisations is growing: 38 country reports are published here – 16 more than in our previous edition – analysing the status of access in countries as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mexico, Switzerland and Kazakhstan.*

*Besides thematic reports dealing with key issues affecting access, such as net neutrality, open standards, spectrum management, trends in technology and access to content, for the first time GISWatch includes regional overviews for North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, the countries of the former Soviet Union, South-East Asia, and the Pacific.*

*While focusing on ICTs, GISWatch aims to make a critical contribution to building a people-centred information society. Its purpose is to stimulate a collaborative approach to policy advocacy, and to create a common platform where disparate experiences can be shared, and progress – or lack of progress – assessed. Ultimately, it hopes to impact on policy development processes in countries, regions, and at a global level.*

*We hope you find GISWatch 2008 thought-provoking and challenging. ■*

**Roberto Bissio**  
Third World Institute (ITeM)

**Anriette Esterhuysen**  
Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

**Loe Schout**  
Humanist Institute for Cooperation  
with Developing Countries (Hivos)

## C2. Information and communication infrastructure: An essential foundation for the Information Society

9. Infrastructure is central in achieving the goal of digital inclusion, enabling universal, sustainable, ubiquitous and affordable access to ICTs by all, taking into account relevant solutions already in place in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to provide sustainable connectivity and access to remote and marginalized areas at national and regional levels.
- a. Governments should take action, in the framework of national development policies, in order to support an enabling and competitive environment for the necessary investment in ICT infrastructure and for the development of new services.
  - b. In the context of national e-strategies, devise appropriate universal access policies and strategies, and their means of implementation, in line with the indicative targets, and develop ICT connectivity indicators.
  - c. In the context of national e-strategies, provide and improve ICT connectivity for all schools, universities, health institutions, libraries, post offices, community centres, museums and other institutions accessible to the public, in line with the indicative targets.
  - d. Develop and strengthen national, regional and international broadband network infrastructure, including delivery by satellite and other systems, to help in providing the capacity to match the needs of countries and their citizens and for the delivery of new ICT-based services. Support technical, regulatory and operational studies by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and, as appropriate, other relevant international organizations in order to:
    - i. broaden access to orbital resources, global frequency harmonization and global systems standardization;
    - ii. encourage public/private partnership;
    - iii. promote the provision of global high-speed satellite services for underserved areas such as remote and sparsely populated areas;
    - iv. explore other systems that can provide high-speed connectivity.
  - e. In the context of national e-strategies, address the special requirements of older people, persons with disabilities, children, especially marginalized children and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including by appropriate educational administrative and legislative measures to ensure their full inclusion in the Information Society.
  - f. Encourage the design and production of ICT equipment and services so that everyone, has easy and affordable access to them including older people, persons with disabilities, children, especially marginalized children, and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and promote the development of technologies, applications, and content suited to their needs, guided by the Universal Design Principle and further enhanced by the use of assistive technologies.
  - g. In order to alleviate the challenges of illiteracy, develop affordable technologies and non-text based computer interfaces to facilitate people's access to ICT.
  - h. Undertake international research and development efforts aimed at making available adequate and affordable ICT equipment for end users.
  - i. Encourage the use of unused wireless capacity, including satellite, in developed countries and in particular in developing countries, to provide access in remote areas, especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and to improve low-cost connectivity in developing countries. Special concern should be given to the Least Developed Countries in their efforts in establishing telecommunication infrastructure.
  - j. Optimize connectivity among major information networks by encouraging the creation and development of regional ICT backbones and Internet exchange points, to reduce interconnection costs and broaden network access.
  - k. Develop strategies for increasing affordable global connectivity, thereby facilitating improved access. Commercially negotiated Internet transit and interconnection costs should be oriented towards objective, transparent and non-discriminatory parameters, taking into account ongoing work on this subject.
  - l. Encourage and promote joint use of traditional media and new technologies.

**GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2008** is the second in a series of yearly reports critically covering the state of the information society from the perspectives of civil society organisations across the world.

**GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH** or **GISWatch** has three interrelated goals:

- **Surveying** the state of information and communication technology (ICT) policy at the local and global levels
- **Encouraging** critical debate
- **Strengthening** networking and advocacy for a just, inclusive information society.

Each year the report focuses on a particular theme. **GISWatch 2008** *focuses on access to infrastructure* and includes several thematic reports dealing with key access issues, an analysis of where global institutions stand on the access debate, a report looking at the state of indicators and access, six regional reports and 38 country reports.

**GISWatch 2008** is a joint initiative of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos) and the Third World Institute (ITeM).

**GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH**

2008 Report

[www.GISWatch.org](http://www.GISWatch.org)

