



Response of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to the WSIS - SDG Matrix Linking WSIS Action Lines with the Sustainable Development Goals

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) welcomes the report mapping of the WSIS Action Lines to the proposed United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Over the past ten years, IFLA has been actively involved in all levels of WSIS and worked hard to highlight the essential role libraries play in utilizing ICT for development. In particular, we have represented librarians and information professionals within WSIS to ensure recognition for the importance of public access to ICTs, access to and preservation of, digital information and digital cultural heritage, promotion of local content, as well as providing people with Media and Information Literacy (MIL) skills to support development and further inclusive societies.

Yet we believe that further progress needs to be made to connect WSIS to the SDGs. IFLA, as an international NGO working in Geneva on WSIS and New York on Post-2015 over the past three years, can testify that the majority of stakeholders, including Member States, working on post-2015 seem to have little to no knowledge of WSIS and the role it could play in supporting the new global development framework. Likewise, we have felt that the WSIS community has been slow to understand what is going on in New York. Despite the progress of WSIS, this has to be seen as a missed opportunity and does detract somewhat from the overall impact of WSIS-related activities. It seems inconceivable that WSIS has hardly been mentioned at all in plenary in New York during either the Open Working Group meetings in 2014, or the Inter-Governmental Negotiations in 2015 – yet that is our experience.

In this context, IFLA has long acknowledged the relevance of the WSIS Action Lines to the SDGs. We think it is essential that the WSIS action lines are more closely interlinked to the implementation of the post-2015 development framework. This will ensure consistency as well as knowledge transfer between work already accomplished and the new process.

Therefore IFLA welcomes and strongly agrees with the analysis done by ITU to produce the WSIS-SDG Matrix. We would offer the following observations on the document:

- We strongly agree that Action Line C3, Access to Information, has a major role to play across all of the SDGs. Citizens can indeed only be agents of their own development if they have access to the information they need. IFLA formally recognised this in 2014 when we launched the through *The Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development*¹ which explicitly outlines the connection between access to information and development, and highlights the important role of

¹ <http://www.lyondeclaration.org/>

as ICTs supporting tools. The Declaration has since been signed by over 560 organisations and institutions working across the library, development and technology sectors, and calls upon the UN and its Member States to:

- Acknowledge the public's right to access information and data, while respecting the right to individual privacy.
 - Recognise the important role of local authorities, information intermediaries and infrastructure such as ICTs and an open Internet as a means of implementation.
 - Adopt policy, standards and legislation to ensure the continued funding, integrity, preservation and provision of information by governments, and access by people.
 - Develop targets and indicators that enable measurement of the impact of access to information and data and reporting on progress during each year of the goals in a Development and Access to Information (DA2I) report.
- Throughout the Matrix there are many references to the importance of intermediaries. IFLA wishes to emphasise the fundamental role that libraries play as information intermediaries, and consequently as partners for development in the SDG context. We are encouraged to see a handful of references to libraries across the Matrix, but note a significant number of areas where libraries play a role but are not mentioned. These areas include, but are not limited to:
 - Providers of public access to ICTs; [Targets 1.4, 2a, 9c, 17.6, 17.8]
 - Supporters of agriculture and ICT projects; [2a, all of Goal 2]
 - Supporters of health projects, particularly maternal health; [3.7, 5.6]
 - Supporters of literacy and education projects, from school library provision to lifelong learning and MOOCs; [3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7, 4a, 8.6]
 - Safe spaces for women and girls to access ICTs, and benefit from them; [4a, 8.8, 11.7]
 - Safe spaces for children to gain access to ICTs and training in a safe and structured environment; [4a, 11.7]
 - Spaces for all community members to participate in digital activities and conversations, including those with government functions and services; [16.7, 16.10]
 - Fundamental institutions for the accessing and sharing of knowledge, particularly through research papers and journals, and e-depositories; [7a, 9.5, 14a]
 - Champions and implementers of open access, at international, regional, national and local levels; [7a, 9.5, 14a]
 - Supporters of SMEs and business enterprise, and providers of training in financial skills for individuals; [8.3, 9.1, 9.3]
 - Mechanisms to connect the community with open government plans, including those of the Open Government Partnership [16.7, 16.10];

- Providers and preservers of culture in all forms, but particularly digital cultural heritage and born-digital material, including local content; [11.4]
 - Providers of media and information literacy training, and digital skills training to better equip people for the knowledge society; [4.4, 4.7]
 - Providing access to government services online, and the training to use them; [16.7, 16.10]
 - Key partners in national sustainable development plans to implement the SDGs.
- In light of this, we wish to emphasise the scale of the library network at the disposal of the ITU and Member States – over 320,000 public libraries worldwide, with 230,000 in developing countries, tens of thousands of academic, research and special libraries, powerful national libraries at the heart of governments, and hundreds of thousands of school libraries. When implementing the SDGs we are adamant that UN member States and agencies should utilise existing infrastructure to deliver ICT access and support development projects that use ICTs. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.
 - IFLA agrees with the WSIS statements on target 16:10 in relation to Action Line C1 and C6. Yet, we wish to stress that we see Target 16.10 as having a broad focus on public access to all types of information. At present the reference to 16.10 for Action Line C3 in the Matrix (page 21/22) emphasises crime too heavily. We recognise that the ITU likely understands our position, but we mention it as the indicators for many targets, particularly 16.10, are currently quite narrow in focus, and we do not wish to see 16.10 restricted to just e.g. crime statistics or financial information statistics.
 - We also agree with the statements on Action Line C8 in relation to Target 11.4 (Page 54) and wish to reiterate that the protection, preservation, conservation of documentary cultural heritage, in all forms, is one of the core missions of IFLA’s members. We are very keen to see WSIS Action Line C8 continue to stress the need to safeguard cultural and natural heritage further, and feel it complements Target 11.4 strongly.
 - On page 23 we would recommend a reference to the Data Development Hub produced by Development Initiatives (<http://devinit.org/#!/data>)
 - With regards to the document ‘Advancing Sustainable Development Through Information and Communications Technologies: WSIS Action Lines Enabling SDGs’, we also appreciate the work the ITU is doing to highlight best practice across the action lines and the relationship with the SDGs. We are pleased to see some instances of library projects included.

Overall, we would like to see the ITU explore further who will be the partners and actors needed to connect the action lines with the SDGs – at present the Matrix document is necessarily broad, but we believe it is time to become more concrete about who can do what. We are also keen to understand how the ITU sees the role of the Matrix document, and what happens next. As mentioned above, we have regrettably not seen enough visibility for WSIS in the New York negotiations, and would be happy to partner with the ITU and all



stakeholders in any possible to raise the profile of the action lines, and the role that ICTs have in supporting development.