Information for All Programme

Preamble

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers

Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. Information and knowledge are global commons. They are essential to the advancement of education, science, culture and communication, to empowerment, to the promotion of cultural diversity and to fostering of open governance. UNESCO's mandate "to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image" clearly indicates the part that the Organization is called upon to play in making information and knowledge freely accessible to all, with the production, collection and dissemination of information by all, with the ultimate objective of bridging the gap between the information rich and the information poor.

2. To achieve this end and according to its constitutional mandate, UNESCO shall "maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge" by ensuring the "conservation and protection" of the world's recorded knowledge. Furthermore, the Organization shall encourage "cooperation among nations … [in] the exchange of publications" and other information materials and initiate "methods of international cooperation calculated to give the people of all countries access to the printed and published materials produced by any of them".

3. International intellectual cooperation is of the utmost importance in a global environment, which is led by rapid developments of information and communication technology (ICT) and increased convergence in all its applications. The consequences of these developments, particularly in education, science, culture and communication, are affecting, either directly or indirectly, all Member States, groups and individuals, in very different ways.

4. Increasing technological convergence of information and informatics is neither necessarily conducive to globally shared ethical, cultural and societal values nor to the development of equitable access to information for all. People in developing countries in particular must, at all costs, be empowered to participate fully in the global society and to gain maximum benefit from effective and efficient access to information.

5. New methods for accessing, processing and preserving information raise problems of an ethical nature, which in turn create moral responsibilities, to which the international community must respond. Among the issues here are the quality, reliability and diversity of information, the balance between free access to information, fair use thereof and protection of intellectual property rights, the privatization of information, the preservation of the world's information heritage and the privacy and security of personal data.

6. In this context UNESCO with its mandate to promote the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" is uniquely well placed to provide a forum for international debate, and to contribute to policy-making, especially at international and regional levels. Policy-making must focus on preservation of and access to information, with particular emphasis on information in the public domain, on capacity-building, and on networking among key institutions, such as archives, libraries and other information centres.

Mandate

7. The Information for All Programme shall be a key participant in the fulfilment of UNESCO's mandate to contribute to "education for all", to the "free exchange of ideas and knowledge" and to "increase the means of communication between … peoples".

8. The programme shall contribute to narrowing the gap between the information rich and the information poor.

9. The programme shall take direct initiatives, commission studies, facilitate cooperation, analyse and report on all aspects of access to and management of information.

10. Because of its transdisciplinary nature, the programme shall give priority to working with all UNESCO sectors in the adaptation of ICT to their activities.

11. The programme shall cooperate closely with other bodies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, and with the private sector in order to fulfil this mandate.

Programme objectives

12. The Information for All Programme shall provide a platform for international policy discussions and guidelines for action on the preservation of information and universal access to it, on the participation of all in the emerging global information society and on the ethical, legal and societal consequences of ICT developments.

13. As a transverse UNESCO programme, the Information for All Programme shall provide a framework for international cooperation and international and regional partnerships. In order to implement the above-mentioned policies, the programme shall support the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society.

14. In particular, the Information for All Programme shall aim to:
   (a) promote and widen access through the organization, digitization and preservation of information;
   (b) support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training;
   (c) promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the information society;
   (d) support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics;
   (e) promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competence;
   (f) promote information and knowledge networking at local, national, regional and international levels.

Programme implementation principles

Partnerships and collaboration

15. In order to achieve its objectives the Information for All Programme requires effective collaboration and liaison with a diverse and increasing number of interested parties. Therefore, the programme shall emphasize and enhance the role of external collaboration and partnering in its work within UNESCO and in its support of external programmes. It shall actively seek cooperation with other international programmes within and outside the United Nations family in order to harmonize positions and policies. Collaboration with stakeholder NGOs and the private sector shall be established in order to create a multiplier effect from improved communication and collaboration to contribute to achieving the objectives of the programme. Internal cooperation shall be enhanced so that the programme becomes a close partner of UNESCO sectors. The programme shall use ICT in implementing its activities and to establish permanent dialogue with interested communities.

Evaluation

16. Specific programme activities shall be monitored regularly and evaluated when they are accomplished in order to permit regular adjustments of the programme. An overall evaluation of the programme and its expected results shall be carried out in the seventh year of its existence (corresponding to the last year of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007).

Project principles

17. On the activity level, the projects carried out within the framework of the Information for All Programme shall be catalytic, have a pilot character, include the sunset rule, contain an evaluation component and apply the subsidiarity principle (appropriate sharing of responsibilities at the international and national levels).

Main programme areas

18. The Information for All Programme is at present composed of five areas. The results within each area are offered as indications of what the programme seeks to attain by the end of 2007.

Area 1 Development of international, regional and national information policies

- International consensus on the concept of universal and equitable access to information as a basic human right established;
- International consensus on a framework of ethical and legal principles related to cyberspace established;
- International observatory on international, regional and national information policies established;
- Clearing house on best practices on ICT-based governance established;
- International framework on the safeguarding of the world's information heritage established;
- International agreement on policies governing the exchange of information required for global environment and climate monitoring.

Area 2 Development of human resources and capabilities for the information age

- International framework for ensuring basic literacy and ICT literacy established;
- ICT-based training networks for information specialists in all regions established;
- Framework for cooperation and information exchange about the content and quality of training in the information area established;
- Introduction of e-publishing and e-commerce training activities for publishers and producers.

Area 3 Strengthening institutions as gateways for information access

- UNESCO portal to information institutions worldwide established;
- National public gateways to information in several countries of all regions established;
- National digitization policies established in four countries per region;
- Standards for the management and preservation of recorded knowledge established.

Area 4 Development of information processing and management tools and systems

- Regional needs analysis and policy planning in the creation of information management tools established;
- Multilingual corpus of freely accessible information management tools created;
- Collections of best practices and standards in information management prepared and tested.

Area 5 Information technology for education, science, culture and communication

- Multi- and trans-sectoral information intelligence platform to assist all UNESCO's programmes in formulating and taking informed decisions established;
- Monitoring system on needs and trends in the use of ICT to favour lifelong learning for all established;
- Education portal including the involvement of links to various virtual universities established (following a feasibility study);
- International best practices in the area of electronic publication in science established;
- International guidelines for ensuring networked access to scientific information established;
- Environmental data and information exchange networks and data centres in developing countries expanded, particularly in Africa;
- Substantial progress made in networking cultural and media workers and institutions worldwide in the service of peace, understanding and development;
- International framework on multilingualism and multiculturalism in cyberspace established;
- World Observatory on the development of the media in the information society established.

19. The delivery of these results will depend on the allocation of the appropriate resources by the General Conference and of extrabudgetary resources.

Information for All Programme

Building an Information Society for All

Access to information and knowledge constitutes a global public good and is essential to the advancement of education, science, culture and communication, to empowerment, to the promotion of cultural diversity and to fostering open governance. As stated in its Constitution, UNESCO is dedicated to "promoting the free flow of ideas by word and image". UNESCO has the mandate to "maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge" by ensuring the "conservation and protection" of the world's recorded knowledge. Furthermore, the Organization shall encourage "co-operation among nations… in the exchange of publications" and other information materials and initiate "methods of international cooperation calculated to give the people of all countries access to printed and published material produced by any of them".

In order to grasp the opportunities offered by ICTs to fulfill this mandate, UNESCO has established the Information for All Programme. It seeks to narrow the gap between the information rich and the information poor and thus to build an information society for all. It is a platform for international policy discussions and programme development aiming at the:
- better understanding of the ethical, legal and societal consequences of ICTs;
- improvement of access to information in the public domain;
- preservation of information.

Objectives

The Information for All Programme provides a framework for international co-operation and partnerships. It supports the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building an information society for all.

In particular, the objectives of the Information for All Programme are to:
- promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the information society;
- promote and widen access to information in the public domain through the organization, digitization and preservation of information;
- support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics;
- support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training;
- promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competence;
- promote information and knowledge networking at local, national, regional and international levels.

Five Areas of Activities

Area 1: Development of international, regional and national information policies

- Establishment of an international consensus on the concept of universal and equitable access to information as a basic human right
- Promotion of an international consensus on a framework of ethical and legal principles related to cyberspace
- Creation of an international observatory on international, regional and national information policies
- Building a Clearing House on best practices on ICT-based governance
- Establishment of an international framework on the safeguarding of the world's information heritage
- Establishment of an international agreement on policies governing the exchange of information required for global environment and climate monitoring

Area 2: Development of human resources and capabilities for the information age

- Promotion of an international framework to ensure basic and ICT literacy
- Creation of ICT-based training networks for information specialists
- Promotion of a framework for cooperation and information exchange on the content and quality of training in the information area
- Introduction of e-publishing and e-commerce training activities for publishers and producers

<u>Area 3: Strengthening institutions as gateways for information access</u>

- Development of a UNESCO portal to information institutions worldwide
- Establishment of national public gateways to information
- Establishment of national digitization policies
- Promotion of standards for the management and preservation of recorded knowledge

<u>Area 4: Development of information processing and management tools and systems</u>

- Establishment of regional needs analysis and policy planning in the creation of information management tools
- Creation of a multilingual corpus of freely accessible information management tools
- Publication of collections of best practices and standards in information management development

<u>Area 5: Information technology for education, science, culture and communication</u>

- Establishment of multi-and trans-sectorial information intelligence platforms to assist all UNESCO's programmes in formulating and taking informed decisions
- Creation of a monitoring system on needs and trends in the use of ICTs to promote lifelong learning for all
- Creation of an education portal including links to various virtual universities
- Establishment of international best practices in the area of electronic publication in science
- Adoption of international guidelines to ensure networked access to scientific information
- Expansion of environmental data and information exchange networks and data centers in developing countries
- World-wide promotion of networks of cultural and media experts and institutions in the service of peace, understanding and development
- Creation of an international framework on multilingualism and multiculturalism in cyberspace
- Creation of a world observatory on the development of media in the information society

Partnerships and collaborations

The success of the Information for All Programme is dependant on effective collaboration and liaison with a diverse and increasing number of parties. Therefore, it seeks partnerships within UNESCO and cooperation with other international programmes within and outside the UN family in order to harmonize positions and policies. It will collaborate with stakeholder NGOs and the private sector to create a multiplier effect from improved communication and collaboration.

Evaluation

The activities of the Information for All Programme will be monitored regularly and evaluated on completion in order to permit adjustments of the programme. An overall evaluation of the Programme and its expected results will be carried out in the seventh year (corresponding to the last year of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 2002-2007).

Project Principles

At the activity level, projects carried out within the framework of the Information for All Programme are catalytic, have a pilot character, include the sunset rule, contain an evaluation component and apply the subsidiarity principle (appropriate sharing of responsibilities at the international and national levels).

Intergovernmental structure

The Information for All Programme is guided in its planning and implementation by an Intergovernmental Council composed of twenty-six Member States of UNESCO. The members of the Council are elected by the General Conference taking into account the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and appropriate rotation.