



Organization Description:

The Global Women's Network (GWN) wiki is a collaborative web-based member driven website which seeks to be the largest information source on women's organizations around the world. While women's global activism is evident in the multitude of organizations that exist, the Global Women's Network wiki is meant to showcase this activism through its comprehensive directory. This directory will be developed through an ongoing collaborative process and will display the wide range of work being done around the world—from the local women's advocacy group working on domestic violence in rural Nebraska, to the regional network of women working on women's political participation in Africa. Using a large network of online volunteers, the wiki will grow through a collaborative process as volunteers input the current data available on women's organizations into one central location: the Global Women's Network wiki. Simultaneously, the Global Women's Network will form an email database which will allow GWN to inform each organization of their page's existence along with a basic tutorial on how to use a wiki. The Global Women's Network will foster dialogue and exchange between organizations, as well as coordinate advocacy opportunities. The Global Women's Network will work to help women advocate for policies that positively impact their lives, including helping women outside of the U.S. better advocate for women-friendly U.S. policy and targeted development assistance. The Global Women's Network wiki will link the work women are doing in both the Global North and South, uniting their diverse voices on a range of issues as they work to ensure that women's rights are human rights.

Survey of the Problem:

Technology, specifically web 2.0 applications, allows for new opportunities to collaborate, communicate and advocate. Despite this opportunity, girls and women continue to experience a gender digital divide with unequal access to and expertise in using Information & Communications Technology (ICT). For women's organizations, this digital divide limits their ability to advocate, communicate, share tools, fundraise, and expand business markets. More specifically, the complicated foreign assistance application process often overlooks quality local civil society organizations without a web presence. This complex application process is often limited to large international organizations due to its complexities and built in bureaucracies. These large organizations often have a very short time period to scramble and compete for local NGOs to include in their proposals as local partners that are responsible for helping to implement their projects on the ground. A web presence may be the only way an organization is approached to become a local partner. Despite how great a grassroots organization may be, without a web presence they will have limited opportunities. While the Global Women's Network wiki is a limited web presence for the organization, it will provide vital information in order to initiate communication and allow for partnership. Additionally, while U.S. based organizations have worked hard to advocate for U.S. policies that empower women around the world, technology has not been utilized to allow a multitude of non-U.S. based organizations to participate in the process. The creative use of technology will allow women directly affected by U.S. policy to advocate on behalf of themselves.

Importance of the wiki to the Global Women's Network:

Unlike normal websites, a wiki is software that allows users to create, edit, and link web pages easily. For this reason, Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites and to power community websites. Due to their collaborative nature, a wiki may be the best online representation of woman's leadership style. (Wikipedia is one of the best known wikis). Women's organizations are currently listed on a variety of traditional websites. All of these listings differ in how current and thorough they are as well as their geographic concentration. As these websites are **owner controlled** it can be time consuming and difficult to frequently update pages as they are contingent on organizations contacting the web-owner and requesting a change to be made. A **wiki** allows the changes to be made immediately by **any user**, making it a useful tool for any organization that wishes to expand its communication and networking capabilities. As a measure of security and protection against vandalism, the wiki tracks all edits made to each page, these edits are reversible, ensuring the quality and integrity of the entries. If needed additional, varying degrees of protection can be added.

The Global Women's Network wiki's goals are to:

- connect
- communicate
- collaborate
- advocate
- increase ICT literacy
- expand business markets

The Global Women's Network is a forward thinking multi-phase initiative. GWN is currently concentrating all off its efforts on Phase One.

First Phase: Building the World's Largest Directory of Women's Organizations

There are a myriad of women's organizations described on numerous websites, databases and publications. Volunteers will begin by facilitating the input of this information into one central location, the Global Women's Network wiki, creating a different page for each organization. Additionally, volunteers will input every organization's email into a central database. After this is complete, the Global Women's Network will be formally launched through an introductory email. Organizations will then be able to update their pages, include media and links as they wish, and other organizations not already in the network will have the opportunity to add themselves to the wiki. There will be tutorials (www.wikieducator.org) available online to teach volunteers, women's organizations, and activists how to use and edit wikis. Besides serving as an online directory, collaboration and communication between organizations will be stimulated and cultivated. Additionally, the Global Women's Network aims to secure funding in future stages to provide IT training to women's organizations in need of technical skills training.

Second Phase: Connect for Advocacy

Once the network has established itself, it will use its size and reach to advocate for change. The GWN will use accessible technology (e.g. skype, internet, mobile phones) to lobby policy makers. The Global Women's Network will make a concerted effort to impact U.S. policy. Women affected by U.S. policies will be able to advocate on behalf of themselves (e.g.. International Violence against Women's Act). It is not impossible to think that GWN could facilitate a text lobby day in which over 100,000 members around the world texted/sms Congress in one day. While these members are not voting constituents, the volume of their collective voice speaking out on how policies impact their lives will be difficult to ignore. Advocacy would not be limited to the U.S. Government, but would extend to any country of the world where GWN members are located both at the national and at the local levels. In order to facilitate this for future use, GWN has reserved the URL: www.hear-my-voice.com. *Hear my voice* has the potential to be a global women's version of moveon.org, making sure women's voices are heard throughout the legislative process.. With future funding, GWN will train women's organizations in a wide array of web 2.0 advocacy tools including utilizing social networking, online events, e-mail and sms campaigns, and video advocacy.

Third Phase: Business Model

The large database of individual women and women's organizations around the world through the establishment of the Global Women's Network wiki has the potential to expand business markets for women. The Global Women's Network or a separate business affiliated to GWN could utilize this network through a direct *women to women* fair-trade business model. This would be a version of Avon/Mary Kay/Tastefully Simple strategy. The products would be made by women and sold by women, creating an opportunity for women to support themselves and their families.

Fourth Phase: Creating Social Spaces

Once GWN is established and self sufficient it would eventually be housed above/attached to a GWN created coffee house called NEELA, (*Neela is an inspirational Sri Lankan girl who exemplifies strength, resilience, and a passion for learning*). There is a potential to have a training program within the coffeehouse and then employ women in transition that would work in the café, where they would also develop I.T. skills. The coffeehouse will not only provide income to the organization but it will be a subtle platform to educate a wide range of people on not only the organization, but the issues that women face in their respective countries. Additionally, the coffee house would serve as a meeting place and marketplace for GWN supported goods.

For more information, please contact Angie Peltzer: angie@global-womens-network.org.