

## **The Inter-American Institute on Disability (IID) and Sidar Foundation comments to WSIS**

The Inter-American Institute on Disability (IID) is a non-profit entity, founded and managed by disabled people and their allies to promote the inclusion and the empowerment of people with all kinds of disabilities and their families in the Inter-American region, and also in Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries of Europe and Africa. ([www.iidisability.org](http://www.iidisability.org))

The origin of the Sidar Foundation dates back to the creation of the SIDAR Seminar in 1997. SIDAR is the acronym of "Seminario de Iniciativas sobre Discapacidad y Accesibilidad en la Red" in Spanish, which translates to "Seminar of Initiatives on Disability and Accessibility on the Net". Originally, the SIDAR seminar was dependent on the Royal Board on Disabilities ("Real Patronato sobre Discapacidad").

The work of the SIDAR seminar has focused on three main activities:

- A web site ([www.sidar.org](http://www.sidar.org)) gathering up-to-date information about making the Information Society accessible and inclusive.
- Several mailing lists, organised around groups of interest, which have resulted in the creation of a Spanish-speaking virtual community of people interested in the accessibility of new technologies.
- An annual conference, which has been the physical meeting place of the virtual community, to share experiences and plan the activities for the next year.

In 2002 SIDAR became independent from the Royal Board on Disabilities. This led to the creation of the Sidar Foundation, last September. The Foundation is now the legal entity backing the activities of the SIDAR seminar.

The main goal of the Sidar Foundation is to conduct research and activities leading to the development of an accessible and inclusive Information Society. This goal is pursued through several kinds of activities:

- Information and awareness, including our website.
- Education on accessible web design.
- Research and development of technologies and methodologies.
- Information exchange, mainly through mailing lists.
- Consulting on web accessibility, either directly or through the mailing lists.

The Inter-American Institute on Disability and the Sidar Foundation wishes to provide some input to the WSIS Draft declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan.

### ***Draft declaration of Principles***

#### Section I

Item 11 states:

11) The Information Society must respond to the additional development challenges posed by the digital divide and help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of combating poverty and hunger, eliminating illiteracy, reducing infant mortality, improving the status of women, improving maternal health, combating disease and promoting environmental sustainability.

We believe it should be:

11) The Information Society must respond to the additional development challenges posed by the digital divide and help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of combating poverty and hunger, eliminating illiteracy, reducing infant mortality, improving the status of women, improving maternal health, **promoting the independent living of people with disabilities**, combating disease and promoting environmental sustainability.

Item 50 states:

50) Content: The creation of local content must be accorded high priority. Creativity and the creation, processing, dissemination and conservation of local content can best be stimulated through an adequate balance between intellectual property rights and the needs of the users of information.

We believe it should be:

50) Content: The creation of local content must be accorded high priority. Creativity and the creation, processing, dissemination and conservation of local content can best be stimulated through an adequate balance between intellectual property rights and the needs of the users of information, **including the development of tools that facilitate the creation of accessible content, the tools themselves being accessible, i.e., usable by the elderly and people with disabilities as well as websites should follow the accessibility criteria developed by W3Consortium.**

#### Section II

##### B Common Vision of the Information Society

Regarding item 10, we would add:

**- a recognition, as a fundamental right, that all content should be created following “design-for-all” guidelines and that the tools for creation of such content should themselves be accessible, thus including the elderly, the people with disabilities, and those with scarce economical resources or poor infrastructure. The content should be offered in accessible websites.**

Item 14 states:

[14] The Information Society is one where every citizen has the opportunity not only to access information but also to produce it and exercise their creativity.

We believe it should be:

[14] The Information Society is one where every citizen has the opportunity not only to access information but also to produce it and exercise their creativity. For this reason, governments, organizations and businesses must all take measures to ensure the accessibility of both the content and the authoring tools through which citizens are able to create content for the Information Society. We recommend that websites that offer content that is of public interest should follow the accessibility guidelines provided by W3C and WAI.

Item 17 states:

[17] Universal access to information and communication technologies, including radio and television, shall be an objective of all the stakeholders involved in building the information society, in accordance with the legal framework in force in each country.

We would add:

. taking action to render its contents accessible to citizens with special needs.

## ***DRAFT ACTION PLAN***

Regarding the Action Plan:

### 3. Universal Access

We would change the second paragraph to read: "To develop connectivity for institutions accessible to the public such as schools, libraries, post offices, etc. and to the main NGO focusing on people with disabilities."

We would add:

(i) – to adopt technologies, services and content designed for all, including people with disabilities.

(ii) – to support the awareness, development and supply of special products and services, which enable access by people with disabilities.

(iii) – to embed the concepts of public/universal services of television, radio, telecommunications, and Internet, with measures for people with disabilities.

(iv) – to promote services, automatic or through human intermediation, for conversion between text, speech, Braille, and sign language.

(v) – to promote the participation of representatives from NGO involved with people with disabilities, and of accessibility experts, in consultative bodies at telecommunication and media national authorities.

(vi) – to promote the inclusion of text-to-speech engines in ITC solutions for people with disabilities.

#### 14. Open standards and open-source software:

We would add:

(i) – Software must be designed applying the norms and guidelines (W3C-WAI) of computer and Web accessibility, in such a way as to be usable by people with disabilities, employing assistive technology, as well as by elderly people and persons not very much familiar with computers (that is, their use should be as intuitive as possible)

#### 21 ICTs in education:

We would add:

- (i) There should be a dissemination of free software for enabling computer-access, Internet-access, augmentative communication and special needs education.
- (ii) The software used with an educational purpose should be designed applying the norms and guidelines (W3C-WAI) of computer and Web accessibility.

#### 23 Training ICT specialists

We would add:

(i) - The formation in the principles of the Design for All or Universal Design, and in the application of the norms and guidelines (W3C-WAI) of computer and Web accessibility, it is fundamental to guarantee that they are not continued generating barriers in the Society of the Information and of the Knowledge.

#### 34 Intellectual property rights

We would add:

(i) – The adaptation of all content to formats accessible to people with disabilities, must be assured.

#### 39 E-health:

We would add:

(i) – ICTs should be part of the diagnosis and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. Computers, computer-access technologies, and computer applications for augmentative communication must be part of the lists for prescription of technical aids.

(ii) – The access to computers and the Internet should be facilitated to patients with long-term hospitalization, particularly on pediatrics, oncology and orthopedics.

#### 42 Cultural and linguistic diversity

We would add:

(i) – ICTs should be used to promote sign language, particularly television, Internet, computer applications, DVDs, and sign language video books.

(ii) – ICTs should be used to promote augmentative communication based on pictograms, particularly through the use of computer applications and multimedia telecommunications.

43 Content: Creation of local content should be supported:

We would add:

(i) – Content-creation policies must avoid, whenever possible, introduction of new barriers to the access of people with disabilities. Following this point of view, all content should be created following “design-for-all” guidelines and that the tools for creation of such content should themselves be accessible.

(ii) – Digital media and broadcasting channels must be created, for audio content aimed to print-disabled people.