

## **Maren Landschulze**

**Abstract ihres Vortrags während der Konferenz "feminist\_spaces im Netz. Diskurse, Communities, Visionen", 16./17. November 2001 in Berlin organisiert durch das Feministische Institut in der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung:**

### **"Networking for development and gender equality: coming to practical solutions for virtual communities"**

1. What is the gendered digital divide? The first part of the presentation addresses its geographical and infrastructural dimension, the impact of income and education, access to ICT training, the culture of technology and the relevance and accessibility of content in the Internet.

2. What can be done to overcome the gendered digital divide? The second part of the presentation deals with suggested solutions addressing the above-mentioned reasons for the gender gap in ICT access and use. These include influencing ICT policies in order to ensure low costs and an evenly distributed infrastructure, access to new ICTs through public facilities like telecentres, linking new ICTs with traditional media like radio, and alternative sources of power and connectivity. Women only trainings and female trainers as well as women-friendly opening hours at telecentres are well-known ways in order to provide effective training for a female target group. However, in many - but not only commercially run - telecentres they are still not available. Distance learning and online mentoring are possibilities to support users in remote areas. The content of web sites and discussion forums must cater for the needs of their female target groups and should be provided in the local languages. Literacy programmes and dictation services for illiterate women are possible ways to overcome access problems due to illiteracy. (This part of the presentation is based on a synthesis paper by Susanne Johansson, UN-INSTRAW).

3. How to build a virtual international network for development and gender equality?: The third part of the presentation addresses practical questions with developing an ICT-based networking environment at UN-INSTRAW-GAINS. They are based on a needs assessment of a community of more than 250 network member organisations from 92 countries. The tools used for connecting a virtual international network should reflect the technical possibilities of the network members – and they should also take cross-cultural issues into account. In the case of the GAINS network, the emphasis lay on simple technology, ensuring accessibility also for users with e-mail only. A new web site that is easy to navigate, quick to download, and designed towards an international, culturally diverse audience with less than the latest hardware is currently under construction. The main criteria for designing the web site and the online forums are presented.