



Addressing the bottom of the pyramid of broader IG community in developing countries and role of civil society in IGF

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has opened a new era in the field of ICT for development (ICT4D), and involves stakeholders & actors in diversified nature, including govt., civil society, and many others. The purpose of WSIS is to develop a “common vision and understanding of the information society and the adoption of a declaration and plan of action for implementation by Governments, international institutions and all sectors of civil society”.

During last few years, Internet Governance (IG) has experienced some major developments in terms of inclusion of social-ethical-developmental aspects rather than focusing only the technical perspectives. Now, IG approach turned to a much broader than the narrow aspects of earlier regime, mainly addressing issues like DNS, IP, ICANN, IETF etc. Finally the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis resulted in the decision to establish an Internet Governance Forum. The critical part of the forum issue is now - who should do and who should be involved. Also the questions will raise on issues like how the forum will be organized and implemented. The Tunis Summit has set in motion long-term processes that will change the role of national governments in Internet policy broadly, and ICANN specifically.

The main characteristics of the Forum will be - Responsible for facilitating coordination (and discussion) of Internet-related public policy issues and participation on equal footing by Governments, the private sector and civil society. The role of civil society at this standpoint of IGF formation is crucial, specially to ensure the voice of developing countries on IG issues. And it is evident that if the CS communities and development partners can work together to address the priority issues of IG. The new Forum discussion creates an opportunity to the CS members to contribute more significantly in developing countries. To align the civil societies of developing country in the present IGF process, an integrated approach is required bring the benefits of the Forum to the broader Internet communities in developing countries, and CS can play the role of vehicle in this journey. The broader internet community positioned in the bottom of the IG Pyramid and it is essential to address this groups living in the developing countries. And civil society has enormous scope to contribute in a significant manner to serve these communities on IG perspective.

Recommendations



Based on the outcome of WSIS summits on the possible roles of civil society, internet governance and developing countries, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Role, vision, strategy, and possible areas of intervention by civil society in the formation and implementation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) should be identified and advocated;
2. IGF should place more emphasis on broader IG issues related to addressing the “bottom of the pyramid” of the IG community, i.e., the users in rural areas in developing countries and public policy related discussions, rather than focusing on policy and regulatory solutions;
3. In the IGF process, effective participation of civil society from the developing countries should be ensured, especially in the international forums and consultation processes;
4. An efficient global network of civil society actors on IG issues may be established with strong participation from the developing countries to raise their voice in international forums;
5. Initiatives should be taken to build the capacity of the civil society components on IG issues in developing countries, in terms of knowledge and human capacity building, financial and technical resources;
6. Country level initiatives on awareness, understanding, and implementation, need to be taken to focus on the public policy issues of IG at the national level to make the IGF a force;
7. Broader and workable partnerships between the stakeholders are required at all levels of the IGF process, especially scopes of civil society in the IGF, including formation and implementation;
8. Promote formation of various forums by CS on different perspectives of IG issues, such as addressing concerns over the preservation of cultural diversity and ensuring an effective voice for all cultures in the forum.

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