GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2017

Internet governance from the edges:
National and regional IGFs in their own words

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS (APC)

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Global Information Society Watch 2017 Special edition
Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words

Global Information Society Watch 2017 special edition web and e-book

Global Information Society Watch 2017 special edition:
Internet governance from the edges: NRIs in their own words

This report is a special companion edition to Global Information Society Watch 2017: National and Regional
Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs), which can be downloaded from https://www.giswatch.
org/2017-local-and-regional-internet-governance-forums-igfs

ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL IGF (APRIGF)

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NRI founding stories and development

What is the story of the founding of your NRI? What were its inspiration, its objectives?

Today, Asia has the strongest growing demand for internet addresses. There are more and more people in Asia who are using the internet. In contrast to North America and Europe, demand for the internet in Asia is not only growing, but also growing at an accelerating rate. The Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) serves as a platform for discussion, exchange and collaboration at a regional level, and also where possible to aggregate national IGF discussions, ultimately to advance the internet governance development in the Asia Pacific region.

In 2010, while the global IGF was already in the fifth and final year of its initial charter, and regional IGFs had been established in many other regions, including Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia had seen no parallel forum for discussing internet governance issues at a regional level. For the first time in 2010, the APrIGF was convened with the objective of raising awareness and encouraging participation from relevant stakeholders around the region on internet governance issues, as well as to foster multilateral, multistakeholder discussion about issues pertinent to the internet in Asia. The multistakeholder approach is a core principle of the APrIGF and emphasis is placed on the diversity of participants and on the openness of the discussion. As we consider youth as an important stakeholder and as the future generations of the internet, a Youth IGF also became an integral part of the APrIGF. It is held in parallel annually, featuring a simulation of the multistakeholder discussion model among young people on various internet governance issues.

How did it develop and what difficulties did you experience along the way?

See response to the question above.

How do you imagine your NRI and its activities in the future?

In the coming year 2018, the APrIGF will be holding its 9th edition, and will take place for the first time in the Pacific, in Vanuatu. One innovation that developed organically is the APrIGF Synthesis Document. This, alongside the annual conference report, serves to encapsulate the issues and discussions in the forum each year. The APrIGF Synthesis Document was first raised and discussed at the APrIGF New Delhi 2014 Multistakeholder Steering Group (MSG) meetings and piloted as an experiment the subsequent year at the APrIGF Macao 2015 meeting. This year its third iteration, the APrIGF Bangkok 2017 Synthesis Document, is due to be published in late September this year. The Synthesis Document aims to document the contributions and outputs of participants at the APrIGF meeting (as well as the broader APrIGF community through remote participation and dissemination on the mailing list and online platform) and is not intended to be representative of the diverse Asia Pacific region. Nevertheless, it is anticipated by the APrIGF Multistakeholder Steering Group[3] and the Drafting Committee[4] that the development of this Synthesis Document can help drive active participation in the IGF process and demonstrate the value of the annual APrIGF meeting as a platform for voices, views and thoughts in the Asia Pacific region as a contribution to relevant global, national, local and international forums on internet governance.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

Who are the people involved in your NRI and how do they contribute to it?

The Multistakeholder Steering Group (MSG) of the APrIGF is a self-organised committee with members from around the AP internet community, and has the following objectives:

- To support and ensure the proper conduct of the organisational work of the annual Asia Pacific Regional IGF

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3   https://aprigf.asia/msg.html
4   https://aprigf.asia/drafting-committee.html

- To promote and encourage dialogue among all stakeholders involved with internet governance related issues in the Asia Pacific region
- To act as an interface between the Asia Pacific IGF community and the global IGF community.

The membership emphasises the inclusion of multistakeholder actors and is therefore open to any interested individuals within the AP region who are committed to:

- The organisational principles of openness, transparency and multistakeholder cooperation
- Devoting some time and effort in support of the APrIGF
- Maintaining and demonstrating respect for all other members.

The operating principles, the election procedures, the meeting archives, and the full list of MSG members are available on our website.[5] All the committees are open to all volunteers in the APrIGF community. There is no requirement to be a MSG member before joining any of the committees. The Programme Committee has the task of reviewing and selecting the workshops for each annual meeting. The Fellowship Committee has the task of selecting the class of fellows for each annual meeting. The Drafting Committee has the task of channelling and synthesising the Synthesis Document for each annual meeting.

The discuss@aprigf.asia mailing list is an open mailing list intended for the APrIGF community to discuss internet governance issues and topics, to disseminate information, and also serves as a continuation of the annual meetings, and fellows. asia is a platform for the alumni from the various internet governance-related meetings in the Asia Pacific region. The fellows from APrIGF are part of this network and contribute towards the IG discourse regionally and globally.

Have you experienced difficulties in ensuring all stakeholder groups participate fully and more or less equally?

The meeting participant breakdown for each stakeholder group is available in the conference reports.[6] In addition to in-person participation, the APrIGF supports webcasting and remote participation for all workshops. The plenary sessions are also livescribed with simultaneous translation into local languages. Archives for all these recordings can be found on the website of each meeting. Care was taken to ensure that facilities are accessible, and during the 2017 Bangkok meeting a visually-impaired participant reported that he found the event website as well as the online commenting platform for the Synthesis Document fully accessible. The Youth IGF which was being run concurrently with the APrIGF also had youth delegates integrated into the main programme, workshops and sessions throughout the forum.

Do you measure gender balance in your NRI? Did you undertake measures to encourage gender balance?

Starting from 2015, following the recommendations of the workshop discussions of the Macao meeting as well as those of the previous year, and of discussion on the mailing lists both within the APrIGF community as well as the global IGF Gender Best Practices Forum, a gender report card was introduced for each workshop to tally the gender diversity in the panels as well as amongst the attendees. These statistics are available as part of the conference reports and in the archives from each meeting website.[7] Workshop proposal guidelines encourage gender and stakeholder diversity for all submissions, and the Programme Committee assesses submissions with this as one of the criteria in mind. The Fellowship Committee also has gender balance as one of the many criteria for the selection of each fellowship class.

How was your last forum organised, what were the topics chosen and the outcomes of discussion? How was it financed?

APrIGF Bangkok 2017[8] was co-hosted by Chulalongkorn University and the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission of Thailand. The sponsors are listed on the event website. The overarching theme for the meeting was "Ensuring an inclusive and sustainable development in Asia Pacific: a regional agenda for internet governance". The conference report and Synthesis Document will be published in late September.

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5   https://aprigf.asia/msg.html and https://aprigf.asia/committees. html
6   https://aprigf.asia/events.html

7   https://aprigf.asia/events.html
8   https://2017.aprigf.asia

> *Are there controversial topics that have been difficult in your NRI and if so, why?*

*Response provided to this question was "*n/a*".*

Perspectives on the role of NRIs in internet governance

> *What is your take about the role of your NRI in internet governance processes, at the level of your country, region and globally?*

The APrIGF serves as a platform for discussion, exchange and collaboration at a regional level, and also where possible to aggregate national IGF discussions, ultimately advancing the development of internet governance in the Asia Pacific region

> *How do you perceive your role and position towards other NRIs, the IGF and the IGF Secretariat?*

The APrIGF is a regional annual internet governance meeting in the Asia Pacific region. It is part of the larger collective of bottom-up, multistakeholder NRI initiatives that have sprung up organically around the world. The APrIGF sends its annual conference report to the IGF Secretariat as a record, and has for the past two years also been submitting its Synthesis Document as an input to the IGF intersessional work: Connecting and Enabling the Next Billions (Phases I and II).

Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words

National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) emerged in response to the success of the first two global Internet Governance Forums (IGFs). The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, the outcome document of the final phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), alongside the call for the creation of the IGF, served as the foundations for the model of bottom-up, multistakeholder internet governance. The first NRIs were set up in 2007 and 2008, and there are now close to a hundred initiatives, comprising national, sub-national, regional and youth initiatives, which organise autonomously and cooperate with the global IGF Secretariat. The importance of NRIs has increased throughout the years, as they have grown in number and their work has expanded in scope. They have acquired such relevance within the IGF that an NRI session was included in the IGF 2016 and 2017 main sessions agendas.

This year, APC has taken the initiative to compile two editions of Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) focused on the work of NRIs. While the main 2017 GISWatch annual report provides independent and analytical perspectives on the role of NRIs in internet governance broadly, the present companion edition, *Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words*, aims to give voice and visibility to the stories of each NRI, share their experiences and achievements, and highlight their perspectives on internet governance.

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