The Internet Governance Forum: Open Call for Input on Inter-sessional Work Response from the Digital Empowerment Foundation

2 February 2015

1.   Which themes should be addressed in the inter-sessional work of IGF 2015?

Access Issue should be taken through inter-sessional work. In terms of access, affordability, mobile technology is inclusive in terms of existing infrastructure, affordability, wide-range of communication medium, etc. On the same line, wireless plays an important role in providing the last mile connectivity. DEF recommends toinclude "Mobile as a Tool for Social and Behavioural Development"

Health is a matter of huge concern for most developing countries – the issues of providing access to health care, health related information and monitoring and tracking are among the major factors impacting health care needs of populations. Internet-enabling healthcare, mHealth, Women's empowerment, Sustainable development are all extremely important themes which should be addressed in the inter-sessional work of IGF 2015.

Internet & Human Rights issue should be taken up together through inter-session work and that too be seen through the perspective from Internet. Despite the centrality of human rights to the creation of the UN, the World Summit on the Information Society, the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles and Dynamic Coalition on Internet Rights & Principles at the IGF discussions about the internet and human-rights; human rights violations in relation to the internet are increasing.

While it is not a theme, we think it would be useful for stakeholder groups to work on their own intersessionally to build their understanding and develop their views on particular issues so as to enable more mature debate during the IGF.

2.   In the past, Dynamic Coalitions have constituted the major inter-sessional activity. However, the MAG felt that Dynamic Coalitions would benefit from a better integration into the main IGF workstream. What should be done to achieve this objective?

There should be more synthesis of discussions, with description of recommendations or alternative options. The exchange of information and best practices should be documented in a better way to ensure their sustainability and durability and enable more purposeful use by different policy actors and other stakeholders. There should be provision for more equitable participation and representation of stakeholders, especially from developing countries.

3.   Last year saw the revival of Best Practice Forums. They provided reports of their activities, available on the IGF website:http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/best-practice-forums. Which themes should be continued? Should there be new themes developed through Best Practice Forums (e.g. ICT and Gender, Infrastructure Developments/IXPs)?

Developing meaningful multi-stakeholder participation mechanisms, online child protection and creating an enabling environment for the development of local content should be continued. Yes, best practice forum should be continued but it should cover wide range of best practice that should not only talk about internet governance related practices but also include new themes such as ICT and Health, Women's Empowerment, m-Health, Sustainable Development should also be included.

Suggestions for themes: ICT and Gender; Human Rights Best Practices (in various contexts); Public access to the internet; Viable Access Models, Using the internet to enable participation in political and public life by people that are generally excluded; Access to learning; Viable open access business models that do not rely on traditional rigid intellectual property control for access to online content and information

4.   What is the most effective way to liaise with the regional and national IGF initiatives and to involve them in the IGF's inter-sessional work?

DEF strongly recommends the following action points:

- Regional and national IGF initiatives should be strengthened and that their link with the global space should be flexible rather than formal.
- Multistakeholder meetings and discussions should be developed at national, regional and international levels in order to support further economic and social developments.
- Making Internet Governance more relevant for developing country participants with respect to have local themes, participants and more participation of academia, grassroots organizations
- Creating and sustaining communication channels between the regional IGF initiatives
- Involve regional IGFs in agenda building
- Encourage regional and national IGFs participation and where possible provide financial resources to make this a possibility
- Encourage regional and national IGFs to respond to calls for submissions are the preparatory phase of the IGF
- Appoint some MAG members to liaise directly with regional and national IGFs
- Invite regional IGFs to identify intersessional topics, to work on them, and to report on this work at the global IGF.
- We feel these spaces have an important role to play in linking national, regional and global dimensions of internet governance within the IGF as a complex policy system. The IGF should find ways to reflect regional inputs in the global IGF agenda in a more systematic way. In addition the regional and national processes have to be strengthened in their own right and the nature and character of those processes should be defined by the regional, national and local actors.

5.   What types of formats are best suited for the IGF's inter-sessional activities to provide outputs: Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Forums, policy messages, a combination of all, other?

- Workshops would result in more involved participation from stakeholders sharing common interests.

- Online Meetings
- Participative workshops
- Group Discussions

6.   What is the best way to organize the inter-sessional work towards the IGF event: virtual webinars, physical working groups on the side of MAG meetings with remote participation, year-long collaboration through wiki-type tools, other suggestions?

Where suitable and possible, inter-sessional thematic meetings or thematic IGFs may be held on the policy issues identified for the IGF's consideration in order to encourage dialogue dialogues and civil society participation.A template for the presentation would be helpful and should include input from regional IGFs, as well as a section that makes recommendations on what should be discussed/explored at the global IGF. Inter-sessional work could build a common understanding/point of reference for main sessions; Inter-sessional work could be built on in workshops, which could serve as working sessions.

7.   What is the best way to present the outputs of IGF inter-sessional activities at the IGF event: main sessions, forums, workshops, other?

Documenting the outcomes and conclusions of workshops and main sessions in the form of ―IGF messages can benefit participants who are not physically present and could lead to more straight forward collaborative action of stakeholders that attend the event. The output documents should be developed to evolve processes suited to developing these. Capacity building outputs, such as offline and online training and toolkits aiming at greater awareness and better understanding of issues related to Internet Governance should be created. Building on the positive aspects of NETmundial, use online platforms, with written contributions, and allow for the opportunity for people to comment on working drafts of outcome documents.

About Digital Empowerment Foundation: Headquartered in New Delhi, India, Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) is a non-profit organization, registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 that works to find solutions to bridge the digital divide. DEF's mission is to empower the under-served communities and create information-empowered societies. Using ICT and digital tools DEF works with a multi-stakeholder approach to have inclusive and equitable communities where access to information, knowledge and services is for all at all times across all geographic locations. Please visit www.defindia.org