**Internet Governance Forum 2013, Workshop 38 - Report**

**Workshop name:**

Accessible Inclusion For All Abilities and All Ages, Access for Persons who fall between the cracks

**Time and Place:**

This workshop was on **25th October 2013**, Day 4 of IGF from 11:00 till 12:30 in **Room Uluwatu 5.**

**Panelists:**

Andrea Saks - DCAD Coordinator, USA

Arun Mehta - BAPSI President, India

Shadi Abou-Zhara, W3C,Austria

Irmgarda Kasinskaite , UNESCO

Gunela Astbrink - Internet Society of Australia

Tomas Lamanauskas, ITU

**Remote Panelists:**

Gerry Ellis - Feel The Benefit, Ireland (due to technical difficulties was unable to present)

Dipendra Manocha - DAISY Consortium, India (due to technical difficulties was unable to present)

**Moderator:**

Peter Major, DCAD Co-coordinator

**Remote Moderator**

Deirdre Williams, Diplo Foundation

**Absentees:**

Fernando Botelho, F123 Brazil : ‘Low cost accessible distance education for the blind’

Jorge Plano, ISOC Argentina: ‘Importance for older persons to be able to access to Internet. Are they being left behind?’

Replaced by Gunela Astbrink Internet Society of Australia and Irmgarda Kasinskaite UNESCO France

**Background**

The Dynamic Coalition for Accessibility and Disability (DCAD) and the Bidirectional Access Promotion Society (BAPSI) organized this workshop to address the progress and problems in achieving access in the areas of telecommunications and ICTs, including the development of skills, education and training, inclusion in digital television/IPTV, taking into account multilingual diversity, as well as ensuring access to services which require increased broadband.

This workshop raises awareness amongst IGF stakeholders and well beyond on how the next potential customers for the market of ICTs are those presently excluded from it.

The Workshop clarified how greater participation in society would be achieved through ICTs and could dramatically reduce the cost of delivery of information to all users, including the Persons with Disabilities and older persons with age related disabilities, women and girls, youth, Indigenous People, rural inhabitants and people with illiteracy who do not read or write.

**Summary:**

As indicated in the agenda, all participants - except two remote participants from India and Ireland due to technical difficulties - were able to informatively present on the latest development of accessibility in their area of expertise. Below is an overview of each of those presentations in a timely order.

**UNESCO’s presentation: “Promoting accessible information and knowledge for all”**

Irmgarda Kasinskaite explained and clarified the goals and requirements of the UNCRPD Article 9 (Accessibility), Article 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information) and Article 24 (Education) from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2013 they released two reports.

The first is a world report that maps policies in relation to ICTs and identifies the gap between those

policies and the level of bottom-up activities occurring around them in different regions. This document

has produced 18 recommendations for action in capacity-building infrastructure. The second report

The ICT Opportunity for a disability-inclusive development framework’ is a global consultation that

measures the extent to which ICTs can enable and accelerate the social and economic inclusion of

Persons with Disabilities. To further these reports, their objective is to come up with model policies for inclusive ICTs in education.

**BAPSI’s presentation: “Closing the gaps, one at a time”:**

Arun Mehta discussed the significant progress being made to break into the silence of people who are deaf and blind through mobile phones and haptic (touch) communication. This solution comes with a mobile system of vibration replicating the Morse code. Arun Mehta has managed to implement this software into mobile phones in India. The objective is to give the community these persons with disabilities enough ICT tools not only to facilitate their daily lives but to be able to enter the education system and independently self-advocate. In addition implementation of this technique into mobile phones underlines need for industry to supply this niche market under article 9 of the CRPD.

Arun Mehta, president of BAPSI has identified one of the problems being the absence of data and research in this subject of access for persons who are deaf and blind. He has stated that creating appropriate standards with international standard bodies like the International Telecommunication Union help industry to convert any mobile phone into accessible instrument for persons who are deaf blind and presently isolated.

**W3C’s presentation: “Referencing and Applying W3C”**

Shadi Abou-Zhara of W3C, the well-known international standards body for web accessibility, discussed their Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG) recently adapted by International Organization for Standardization (ISO - IEC 40500). He explained that they also have video tutorials clarifying the direct implementation of these guidelines that renders the tools themselves accessible. He also emphasized that since the landscape of technology is evolving very fast, there is an increasing need for guidance and evaluation/assessment of mobile and digital accessibility software and support in emerging technologies. That’s why W3C had various projects and workshops.

The need is to educate how to streamline the basic requisite for unique set of standards to simplify synchronization so as not to confuse developers. These technology independent and neutral guidelines are also very valuable for governments and organizations that can't reference consortia standards but need to use and reference internationally recognized standards that W3C provides.

**Internet Society of Australia’s presentation: “The Internet Governance Forum Australia”**

Gunela Astbrink announced that the Australian government will have completely moved moving to a level of AAA which is the highest grade accorded by W3C for web accessibility by the end of 2014. In 2013, they conducted research on benchmarking and the use of criteria by studying 6 case studies from OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. This study has shown that governments can influence the market by setting accessibility criteria when purchasing their IT systems, meaning better availability and affordability of ICTs for persons with disabilities.

The United States was found to have done the model case study due to the passage of the Section 508, amendment of the Rehabilitation Act to enable U.S. public servants with disabilities to use office equipment on an equitable basis to their able-bodied peers. Implementation of Section 508 is mandatory for the all government agencies except for the department of defense and a few other documented exceptions. The equivalent, European accessibility legislation is in the process of being enacted. It is called Mandate 376 and requires the three European bodies to develop accessibility guidelines using the USA guidelines Section 508 as a model. It is expected that Mandate 376 will be finalized early in 2014. Mandate 376 will require European Governments procurement of goods and services to be accessible to and for Persons with Disabilities. Gunela Astbrink stressed that the main issue is lack of awareness when it comes to the importance of strictly incorporating accessibility criteria and public procurement policies in tender documents.

Tomas Lamanauskas, from the **International Telecommunication Union** introduced the accessibility work of ITU including the creation of the Accessibility Task Force and explained the origins of the ITU support of the Dynamic Coalitions including DCAD and ITU’s support of the IGF activities in general

Due to technical difficulties with the remote participation, the following presentations: ‘Where are the gaps and how can we plug these for persons who cannot read normal print?’ by Dipendra Manocha from the DAISY Consortium and ‘Mobile Accessibility drives Agile Social and Economic Benefits’ by Gerry Ellis from Feel The Benefit – Ireland could not take place.

**DCAD Remote participation - Not as easy as it sounds or seen by Persons with Disabilities:**

DCAD coordinator Andrea Saks spoke on some of the difficulties often encountered with remote participation from technical and financial aspect. And poor inaccessible design of remote participation tools. There is no standardization for the presentation and the use of these tools for persons with disabilities.

To begin with, it’s critical to simplify the use of remote participation tools because at present a person who is blind can’t access the web remote participation tool page and listen to the meeting at the same time. It is not possible to access and listen to both audio streams at the same time at the present time due to the restrictions of the current design of all remote tools. Switching web page screens back and forth takes time and information is difficult to find as the web pages are often not accessible. A remote participant who is blind has to turn his/her screen reader on and listen to navigate the webpage thus missing the audio of the meeting. Because of this, the blind person can’t use the “raise hand tool” in time to make a comment because he can’t find it and can’t use the chat box either because there is no indication when the remote moderator is typing to him or to her. He can’t do it anyway without turning off the sound of the meeting and thus risks not being able to comment in time.

A person who is deaf has to employ on average three devices with screens to use remote participation tools to attend a meeting remotely. One is for the screen of the remote participation tool, one for sign language interpretation and the third for the captioning of the proceedings. This demands expertise and exorbitant costs. Even with three devices, the service is not fully accessible. If you do not have three devices and screens there are problems. An example is when captioning is available, a person would have to choose and switch screens between viewing the captions, the presentation documents or the chat box of the remote participation tool. The captioning pod if it exists on the tool’s page is often misplaced and uses print with a difficult font, color and size to read that is not adjustable by the user. If it provides line-by-line and not word-for-word which is real time text captioning, timing issues come up when a remote participant requests to comment.

In order to avoid such difficulties, persons with disabilities should participate in the design of conference tools. Another suggestion is to create good and best practices for chairmen and moderators on how to conduct a remote participation meeting with, for, and including persons with disabilities.

To ensure that standards do not take precedence and create new barriers and isolation, the industry has to take responsibility to cooperate and deliver interoperability. As a result, what we require is one-size-fits-all strategy meaning easy and transparent remote participation programs necessitating no tutorials or assistance from experts. There should be standards for remote participation tools for persons with disabilities to access and participate in meetings remote with equivalence to a person who does not have a disability.

**Conclusion:**

Despite remote participation complications causing time loss at the beginning and throughout the session, and two remote participants who were unable to present, all presenters were happy with the content of the material of the others and there was good participation from the floor. The IT person from IGF assigned to the session was not available often enough and it was up to the DCAD coordinator to trouble shoot the whole process which was fraught with difficulties. The two technical people from Bali did everything in their power to correct all the errors present regarding remote participation but they did not have the advance training that was needed to trouble shoot the technical problems

There were many errors and problems and even a strange moment where the wrong captioning from another meeting was placed on the screen for the DCAD workshop webcast... Another reason for the delay in the beginning was IGF IT person did not load the presentations in advance and could not load them from the IGF website at the last minute. They eventually given to the Bali technical team on a memory stick by the DCAD coordinator.

DCAD members recommended that Internet Governance Forum delivers training at least a month before the start of the forum to the local technical team and train new IGF staff adequately in their responsibility to prepare the session in advance and for all to be able to work with and involve the captioning technical support in this process as many had never seen or worked with live real time captioning before. They also believed IGF Secretariat should have the vendor of the actual tools for remote participation re-evaluate its design to make it accessible for persons with disabilities.

During this workshop, some points were underlined recurrently. The first is the absence of formal data which should reinforce more research and development in regards to the above mentioned areas. The second is the lack of awareness which slowly being amended through podiums similar to the likes of IGF. There is still work to do for DCAD in awareness raising in presenting forums that are accessible for Persons with disabilities especially remotely. DCAD will re updating the accessibility guidelines for the next meeting.