



WSIS FORUM | 19-23 MARCH 2018

Geneva | Switzerland

WSIS Forum 2018 OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Template for Submission of Executive Summaries for

Thematic/Country Workshop/ Action Line Facilitation Meetings/ Interactive Sessions/ High Level Dialogues/Publication Releases/Briefings

Deadline: Thursday 22 March, 2018

Exception: For sessions on Friday 23 March, please send at the latest 2 hours after the session

*Please note that the WSIS Forum 2018 Outcome Document will be released on the **23rd of March** (the last day of the Forum)*

1) Title of your session

Connecting communities by building digital skills – a way towards the SDGs

2) Name of Organization/s organizing the session

International Chamber of Commerce Business Action to Support the Information Society (ICC BASIS)

3) Relevance with the WSIS Action Lines – please specify the Action lines C1 to C11

C2 - Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society

C3 - Access to information and knowledge

C4 - Capacity building

C5 - Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

C6 - Enabling environment

C11 - International and regional cooperation

4) Key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments (these will be reflected in the press release and Outcomes Document of the WSIS Forum 2018)

N/A



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5) Main outcomes highlighting the following:

I. Debated Issues

- Please capture highlights of the main issues debated and interactions with audience

The workshop explored through robust and interactive dialogue with business and government experts from all parts of the world challenges and opportunities both developed and developing countries face when seeking to provide meaningful connectivity to their populations and empower local communities with the necessary skills to reap the benefits of ICT and the digital economy.

Participants shared best practices and lessons learned from implementing public-private projects and perspectives on issues such as the array and different facets of digital skills, their impact on the socio-cultural and economic development of a community and key elements of comprehensive policies to facilitate digital skills development

The workshop explored digital literacy as a holistic set of knowledge and skills that allows users and organisations to fully capture the potential of digital technology. Participants highlighted how this ranges from basic computing skills like typing, and using applications, through full awareness of user of issues such as cybersecurity and privacy, to mastering online tools for jobs in online journalism and marketing or knowledge in engineering and coding.

Discussions highlighted that not only education programs need to be adapted to factor future needs and digital skills prerequisites for employment, but digital literacy must also be ensured across the population so that all are equipped with the competencies for facing the challenges and fully take advantage of the opportunities of digital transformation in their everyday life such as communicating, navigating online systems for basic financial and healthcare services or interacting with their local public administration.

Speakers emphasized how digital literacy is related to social factors, and interventions need to be developed with a community-oriented mind-set, tailored to the needs of the local context and local languages. They also raised the need to focus on growth-mindset and adaptability and soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity and reasoning, planning and organization.



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Participants agreed that governments are able to take the lead and set goals for skills development programmes, and best results can be achieved when the private sector, civil society and the technical community are involved in implementation. Working together with all stakeholders, the most effective solutions can be created, tailored to particular need, and with the combined expertise from their respective angles.

- Please highlight key achievements and challenges shared by the audience and/ or panelists

The discussion was organized around two broad themes:

1. Case studies and examples of implemented projects, best practices to service the growing demand for digital skills and bridging the existing gaps within and between countries;
2. Enabling policy approaches and private-public partnerships required for the implementation of projects.

In the first segment participants introduced and shared lessons learned from their projects aimed at developing digital skills which took many shapes and forms: raising awareness of the potential of the Internet and ICTs, guiding young and old through their first virtual steps, helping communities connect, getting businesses launched, training and re-training to develop new technologies and innovate.

Examples included:

- GSMA's mobile internet skills training toolkit aimed to close the coverage gap and the skills gap and designed for mobile network operators, NGOs and governments that reached 250 000 users in India and Rwanda
- Initiatives in Japan by the National Center for Incident Readiness to fill the skills gap for ICT through cybersecurity awareness-raising for both everyday end users and skilled professionals of all ages, which has been shared in local languages throughout the ASEAN region.
- Initiatives by Microsoft using existing data to understand how technology changes the nature of work and the nature of jobs as well as how to bridge skills demand and supply at local levels.
- The ILO's Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth campaign aiming to connect stakeholders to work together to build the future of work they want and



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connect the demand of the labour market with the supply of skills and develop programmes for upskilling and reskilling to achieve higher productivity and employability.

- The work of CodePhil, a student-run nonprofit founded by Columbia, Dartmouth and MIT undergraduates, aiming to teach, empower, and connect the youth in rural Philippines through digital literacy skills.
- Initiatives by the government of Bangladesh to reform public services, education and address different socio-cultural challenges through digital skills training.

In the second part of the workshop panelists were invited to offer recommendations of key policy actions to support the development of digital skills to further the SDGs. Participants highlighted the need for an enabling policy environment that builds on a comprehensive ecosystem composed of an accessible and affordable infrastructure that enables connectivity, coupled with appropriate applications and services that promote local content in local languages and script, as well as initiatives to equip the users with the ability and skills necessary to actively and independently use and contribute to locally relevant content, applications and services.

Participants emphasized how from an ICT perspective creating an enabling environment for fulfilling the SDGs both demand and supply side questions need to be taken into account. This can be done through four main considerations:

- Economic consideration: how to promote sustainable investment and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship that can lead to overall national economic growth. How to enable MSMEs - the growth engine for sustainable economic development - with the necessary skills.
- Social and cultural considerations: how to foster ICT and digital literacy skills as well as the creation of relevant content and services, which is the end goal to strive for when thinking of meaningful connectivity.
- Technical considerations: how to make sure the necessary infrastructure is in place for the deployment of relevant services and projects.
- Governance approaches: how to encourage public-private partnerships that can leverage the unique contributions of each stakeholder group as well as answer their concerns so that such partnerships are sustainable.



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II. Quotes

- Please provide two important quotes from the session and the names & organization of the person you are quoting

Lauren Dawes, GSMA: We view connectivity holistically. Access, relevant content, digital skills and affordability all play a significant role. You can't have one without the other. Having a good mobile connection is not enough without having a device. Having a device without knowing how to use it, practically means being unconnected.

Carolyn Nguyen, Microsoft: The question about the impact of technology and digital skills comes down to how to create a human-centric policy framework that is also sustainable as it goes forward. This needs to be a multistakeholder and multidisciplinary conversation between business and governments working together with academics and civil society.

Anir, Bangladesh: Digital skills should not be developed for the sake of digital skills. They are a road to getting somewhere. Governments can set the end goal towards which digital skills can provide the means.

III. Overall outcomes of the session highlighting

- main conclusions reached during the discussion
 - Digital literacy must be considered as a comprehensive set of knowledge and skills that allows users and organisations to fully capture the potential of digital technology.
 - Digital literacy is related to social factors, and interventions need to be developed with a community-oriented mind-set, tailored to the needs of the local context and local languages.
 - Solutions are most effective when they tailored to particular need, and created with the combined expertise of governments, the private sector, civil society academia and the technical community.
 - Successful and sustainable ICT investment, projects and partnerships can only be implemented if an enabling policy framework is in place. Different policy issues (economic, technical, social/cultural, governance) arise when conceptualizing and implementing such a policy environment. These policy issues can be overlapping and need the experience and expertise of relevant stakeholders to be addressed effectively.



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- the vision for implementation of WSIS Action lines beyond 2015
The Geneva Plan of Action and the WSIS Action lines aim to create and sustain an open and inclusive Information Society where governments, civil society, businesses, the technical community and international organizations could work together to achieve the full potential of ICTs for development, to bridge digital divides and leave no one behind.

The role of the WSIS Forum is to highlight the important activities and contributions the pursuit of the WSIS action lines can make. By highlighting the efforts made across the many UN agencies involved as well as the work of governments, business, civil society and others in making progress – WSIS Forum is an annual opportunity to benchmark progress, share success stories and learning experiences and incentivize further action.

IV. Main linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals

The workshop was directly related to the sustainable development process as it provided an important discussion on the increasing impact of technology and innovation on skills and how ICTs themselves can be a vehicle for training and retraining.

The use of ICT can support development and highlight the ways in which stakeholders can work together to advance progress on action lines to expand connectivity, provide meaningful access and further adoption of digital technologies.

The discussion outlined creative and collaborative solutions to education, training and bridging existing skills gaps within and between countries to foster inclusive growth, decent jobs and build inclusive societies.

Discussions at the workshop mainly linked to the following SDGs:

- Goal 4: Quality Education
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

V. Emerging Trends related to WSIS Action Lines identified during the meeting

The workshop highlighted that appropriate policies are at the center of the implementation of WSIS Action Lines for development and pointed to the growing need for partnership



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among all stakeholders to identify the timely, scalable, and innovation enabling policies that enable the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines.

Stakeholders play key roles in ensuring well-informed and targeted policy approaches. For example, engaging relevant stakeholders in policymaking can help drive meaningful connectivity and empower local communities with the necessary skills to reap the benefits of ICT and the digital economy.

VI. Suggestions for Thematic Aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2019

WSIS Forum 2018 should seek in-depth discussions on connectivity and meaningful access to Internet and ICTs and how this contributes to bridging divides and closing gaps.

The WSIS Forum mandate refers to taking stock of the progress made on the WSIS Action Lines. Thus discussions should also include presentations of collaborative initiatives and partnerships showcasing the lessons learned from local and regional projects aimed at advancing the Action Lines by enhancing connectivity, adopting digital technologies, and encouraging multistakeholder cooperation and public-private partnerships and investments.

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