

GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2017

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



GISWatch 2017
SPECIAL EDITION

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

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

Disclaimer: The views expressed in survey responses are not necessarily the views of APC or of its members.

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>

BARBADOS IGF

Barbados

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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?

In 2015 and 2016 I, Ashell Forde, had the opportunity to attend global IGF. I was also able to attend Caribbean IGF in 2016 where I learned that while Caribbean IGF was the oldest IGF in the world, there were no national IGFs in the English-speaking Caribbean. This encouraged my colleagues and I to work towards organising Barbados' first IGF. The main objectives were to introduce Barbadians to internet governance issues; increase the participation of Barbadians in regional and global internet governance fora; and bring the concerns of the local Barbadian community to regional and global IGF meetings.

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

We leveraged the newly formed Internet Society chapter in order to organise the IGF. Members representing all stakeholder groups volunteered to work on the organising committee. We experienced challenges including:

- Being unable to cover all relevant issues
- Lack of an adequate number of volunteers
- Not being able to accommodate a large number of attendees.

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

A comprehensive report¹⁵ was produced after our first IGF. It included 12 recommendations. I imagine that we will focus our activities throughout the year on working on the recommendations and reporting on these activities in subsequent IGF meetings. We also hope to develop a youth IGF initiative.

¹⁵ https://www.giswatch.org/sites/default/files/images/bigf2017_report.pdf

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

The Barbados IGF steering committee currently comprises about 15 volunteers from government, private sector, civil society, technical community and academia. The committee meets as necessary to organise the annual meeting and to produce reports. The committee members divide administrative and other tasks between them. They also use their professional and personal contacts to solicit donations and volunteers to handle work of the IGF.

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

Yes. The technical community is by far the most engaged and active group. We are working with the ISOC chapter to encourage more non-technical persons to get involved.

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

Not at this time. We did not feel it was necessary for the inaugural meeting as interest and attendance was not heavily skewed toward either gender.

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

The organising committee did the work of determining the topics, format and administration of the forum. The broad topics discussed were:

- Barbadian Participation in Internet Governance
- Internet Law
- Cybercrime and Cybersecurity
- The Internet and Activism
- The Internet Economy.

The outcome was a detailed report¹⁶ including recommendations in the following areas:

- Education and Awareness Building Programme
- Increasing Participation in Global IG Fora
- National Cyber Security
- Internet Legislation
- Internet Activism
- Digital Economy
- Barbados Internet Governance Forum.

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

The discussions of the adequacy of the Computer Misuse Act and the effectiveness and relevance of internet activism were the most engaging but stopped short of being truly controversial. We did not have significant difficulty with any particular topic.

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?

We believe NRIs play an important role in facilitating local discussion to develop solutions to local issues and educate the community. The NRIs also play a role in communicating the challenges of local communities to regional and global initiatives.

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

We think that we can assist newly formed NRIs by sharing our experiences. We also believe that producing and sharing our reports can assist the work of IGF and the IGF Secretariat so that it is truly global and inclusive.

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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