

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>

NAMIBIA IGF

Namibia

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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?*

Namibia is one of the few South African Development Community (SADC) countries that had not joined the international internet governance community, which was unacceptable. Also, we recognised that there are several benefits attached to being part of formalised internet governance structures. These include capacity building and networking opportunities. The main objectives of the Namibia IGF (NamIGF) are to:

- Raise awareness, promote improved understanding and build capacity on internet governance issues amongst Namibian stakeholders and their respective communities.
- Organise and host an annual multistakeholder and democratic platform for engagement and knowledge building on internet governance-related issues in Namibia, and beyond.
- Influence the development and implementation of national policies related to the internet, and broadly, information and communication technology (ICT).
- Facilitate multistakeholder participation by Namibian representatives at continental and global internet governance platforms.
- Contribute to the strengthening of multistakeholder engagement on internet governance in the SADC and African Union (AU).

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

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) approached the ACTION Coalition (a group of civil society organisations engaged in issues related to freedom of expression and access to information), indicating its intention of establishing a national IGF. They noted however that they did not want to lead it, just to participate as a stakeholder. Thus, the MICT initiated the NRI and called the first meeting of

relevant internet governance stakeholders. Frederico was elected chairperson of the Working Group. There are no notable difficulties, except maybe that only a few of the Working Group members did all the work required for organising and hosting the inaugural NamIGF.

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

We aim to make a definitive impact on internet governance-related fields in Namibia and beyond, and this includes:

- Discussing public policy issues related to key elements of internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the internet in Namibia.
- Facilitating the exchange of information and best practices, and making full use of the expertise of the academic, media, human rights and free expression, legal, public and ICT sectors.
- Making recommendations on how to accelerate the availability and affordability of the internet in Namibia
- Identifying, highlighting and discussing emerging internet governance issues with stakeholders and the general public, and where appropriate, making recommendations.
- Building the capacity of stakeholders on internet governance, fully drawing on local, continental and international sources of knowledge and expertise.
- Facilitating solution and consensus building on internet governance issues that are of particular concern to end-users.
- Publishing its proceedings.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

We have a diverse group of people engaged in the Working Group, which includes:

- Government representation in the form of MICT staff
- Civil society organisations representation, in the form of Internet Society (ISOC) and ACTION members
- Academia, in the form of lecturers from the Namibia University of Science and Technology
- The private sector, in the form technical experts from Telecom Namibia and ICT companies.

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

Yes, there was very little active participation by most of the Working Group members. Most of the work was left to a small group of members. However, we ensured that all members were updated on developments through a mailing list.

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

Since the Working Group criteria was mainly focused on the area of work, there was no gender balance requirement. We did however achieve gender balance as institutions and organisations assigned women and men to represent them on the Working Group. At the moment, gender representation is more or less equal.

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

Our inaugural forum was organised by the Working Group, which was also responsible for fundraising. We had a basket-funding model, i.e. there were a number of funders, such as fesmedia Africa, Namibia Media Trust, MICT and UNESCO, the Internet

Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA) and AFRINIC. We decided that our first forum would mainly focus on information sharing regarding the internet in Namibia, thus we had a diverse range of speakers on issue-based panels, i.e. infrastructure, access, women and girls, digital economy, etc.

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

No controversial issues.

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?

It is important that we understand all the factors that impact on the internet in Namibia and beyond, and through that find ways of influencing policy and implementation. We also want to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure that internet governance knowledge is not limited to a select group of people and institutions. The youth is a critical stakeholder and we will most certainly ensure that they partake and that we build their capacity in internet governance.

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

The NamIGF story is unique to the African context. We are proof that government, civil society and the private sector can work together for a better internet. We hope to share our story to motivate other countries to apply the multistakeholder approach. We also want to foreground our commitment to free expression.

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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