GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2017

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

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS (APC)

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Global Information Society Watch 2017 Special edition
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Global Information Society Watch 2017 special edition web and e-book

Global Information Society Watch 2017 special edition:
Internet governance from the edges: NRIs in their own words
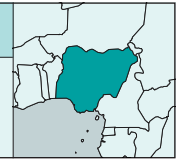
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This report is a special companion edition to Global Information Society Watch 2017: National and Regional
Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs), which can be downloaded from https://www.giswatch.
org/2017-local-and-regional-internet-governance-forums-igfs

NIGERIA IGF

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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?

The Nigeria IGF (NIGF) was established as a true multistakeholder forum in 2012 by the catalyst Mary Uduma who was then president of Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NIRA), which manages the .ng ccTLD [country code top-level domain]. She invited stakeholders who participated in the WSIS process in 2005, the Steering Committee members who in 2008 organised the first ever government-led debate on the outcomes of the WSIS, and had been active in the ICT industry, as well as the Nigerian internet community. Mrs. Uduma invited the government and its agencies, the private sector, civil society, academia as well as the technical community to form an Organising Committee in 2012. The invitation was responded to by the stakeholders, including funding of the forum. The inspiration was to develop and consolidate Nigeria's position in the global internet governance process and to debate from a local perspective. The main objective of NIGF was to mirror it with the IGF and to create a platform for stakeholders to debate on burning issues of internet governance and on the internet ecosystem in Nigeria. The NIGF is aimed at providing a sustainable national forum and structure that engages industry, government, lawmakers, academia, civil society and all stakeholders in a strategic national debate on internet governance. It is a platform for national dialogue on internet governance.

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

Since we started with a collaborative effort of the government, civil society, the country code top level domain name managers and other stakeholder groups, the NIGF received the endorsement of those groups and a NIGF-MAG (Multistakeholder Advisory Group) was formed for the annual organisation of the forum. Of particular mention is the endorsement of the Honourable Minister of Communication Technology and the Agencies under the Ministry. The Youth Track was introduced in 2013 and was allotted a full day as a pre-event to the NIGF. In 2017, we introduced pre-event training for law enforcement agents. We were faced with legitimacy questions by government officials since it organically evolved without initiation from the government. At one point, one of our major funders withdrew funding, questioning the legitimacy of the forum.

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

We have 20 people in the NIGF-MAG that prepares and organises the annual forum. We invite high-level government officials and high network individuals to chair the forum and deliver keynote speeches with official pronouncements. A report of the forum with tangible recommendations is submitted to the stakeholders for policy implementation. We are currently putting the structures in place and developing MOU with the funders. We hope to run a school of internet governance for Nigeria.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

Stakeholders from traditional multistakeholder groups of the IGF are involved in NIGF (the government, the technical community, civil society, academia and the private sector group). They contribute both in cash and kind to the organisation of the forum. The Secretariat of NIGF is hosted by NIRA.

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

The private sector stakeholder group has not been participating fully. We have more government and civil society participation than from the private sector. We have a near absence of academia.

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

Yes, we do.

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

The NIGF 2017 had the theme. "Internet: Connecting, Shaping and Empowering the People". The report and communiqué are posted at www.nigf.org.ng.

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

We do as much as possible not to raise controversial topics during the forum. The only one was about the hosting of the Secretariat of NIGF. This was due to the fact that two government agencies were disagreeing with each other as to who should host the Secretariat. The stakeholders resolved to have the Secretariat hosted by a neutral body, in this NIRA.

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?

The NIGF process plays the role of bringing together stakeholder groups to dialogue on IG issues and to gather input to contribute to the IG process globally, and at sub-regional and regional levels.

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

My role as the convener and coordinator of NIGF is to ensure that the NIGF is sustainable, to share local views with other NRIs, the IGF and IGF Secretariat.

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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