Disability Leadership Training in Digital Rights and Internet Governance

Report on Phase 1 (Dhaka Workshop)

APSIG and ISOC Standing Group on Accessibility

July 2022

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1. Executive Summary

Persons with disabilities constitute a 1-billion-strong community worldwide, of which over 650 million are in the Asia-Pacific region. Many of these are social and economic outliers, facing diminished opportunities and unable to exercise their rights to the fullest extent.

The last two years of the global pandemic have seen a significant transition to online or digital spaces for education, work and socializing. For persons with disabilities, the shift to digital technologies has been without significant preparation. The emergence of the Internet as a global space has, in some ways, left persons with disabilities without a strong voice in the governance of the Internet as well in accessing their digital rights.

APSIG, which has a broad mandate in building capacity in Internet Governance and related domains, had organized a session on Accessibility and Disability in its annual event in Dec 2021, which provided the impetus to explore further work around capacity building in Internet Governance and Digital Rights for Persons with Disabilities. Jointly with the ISOC Standing Group on Accessibility, APSIG conceived an initiative towards this in two parts: a pilot phase consisting of a brainstorming workshop which would examine the challenges associated with this objective, and a second phase that would involve roll-outs of capacity-building programmes in selected countries in South Asia.

The pilot phase was organized in Dhaka, Bangladesh, during 25-27 June 2022, bringing together eleven participants from five countries in South Asia and the primary resource person, Gunela Astbrink, from Australia. Of the eleven, seven had visual impairment and two had physical disabilities. There were six men and five women in the group.

The Workshop was organized in a hotel with specific requirements for accessibility. The hotel staff were given a special orientation before the workshop for assisting persons with disability.

The Workshop Program emphasized the principle of 'learning-by-doing' and covered a number of topics including introductions, warm-up exercises, designing of an interactive course on accessibility, writing funding proposals, advocacy and leadership skills, and the drafting of the Dhaka Declaration.

Special guests at the workshop included local Article 19 representatives and ISOC Bangladesh Chapter leaders. Remote presenters included Klaus Hoeckner, CEO of the Austrian Association for Blind and Visually Impaired Persons and Kim Kwang-hee, Disability Inclusion Specialist of UNHCR.

Based on the participant feedback--both informal and written--and based on the feedback of the resource persons, the Dhaka Workshop was a success. It was the first time that capacity building for Persons with Disabilities in Internet Governance and Digital Rights was being formally discussed and a strategy built around it.

The Dhaka Declaration (available here) summarizes the expectations from the community of persons with disabilities from Governments, INGOs & Donors, and Internet Governance organizations, citing, in particular, the need to be inclusive and welcoming, provision of accessibility technologies in IG processes, adherence to global standards and guidelines, and implementation of relevant treaties.

APSIG and the ISOC Standing Group on Accessibility will continue the momentum generated by the Dhaka Workshop to work towards an inclusive Internet that encourages and welcomes disability voices in the formulation of policy.

2. Introduction

There are over one billion persons with disability globally with 650 million in the Asia Pacific region. This is equivalent to 15% of a country's population[1].

Less than ten persons with an identified disability have participated in the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) over the past 10 years. Two persons with disability in total have participated in the Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance (APSIG).

There is an obvious need for more persons with lived experience of disability to become active leaders in the Internet community. This program will build the capacity of emerging leaders with a disability to become strong voices and engage in policy and technical development. Over the long term, it can make a difference so that accessibility is more recognised in the Internet community.

3. Background

The Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance (APSIG), chaired by Satish Babu, was founded to build capacity on Internet Governance among the Asia Pacific IG practitioners.

One of the goals of the ISOC Accessibility Standing Group, chaired by Gunela Astbrink, is to create new leaders who are strong advocates for improving accessibility in the Internet ecosystem.

The 2021 APSIG held in Sri Lanka included a session on Inclusion. This session chaired by Gayatri Khandhadai featuring presentations by Manique Gunaratne and Gunela Astbrink made an impact. Following suggestions from Gunela Astbrink, APSIG resolved to take action to develop a pilot project on capacity-building for persons with disability in South Asia on Internet governance.

A request to Article 19 to use carry-over funds from the 2021 APSIG event was approved. This together with funding from the APNIC Foundation and support from the Internet Society Bangladesh Chapter made it possible to plan for a disability leadership workshop on digital rights and Internet governance in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The workshop needed to be held before 30th June 2022 thus leaving just over two months to plan the event.

An informal partnership between APSIG and the Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group was established and the work commenced.

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[1] https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Disability%20The%20Facts.pdf

4. Discussion

Planning commenced in April 2022 for the pilot face-to-face disability leadership workshop on digital rights and Internet Governance to be held in Dhaka on 24-27 June 2022. Part of the workshop would help inform the building of a curriculum for an online interactive course for persons with disability, specifically directed at Disability, Digital Rights and Internet Governance. It would be professionally developed by Diplo and delivered by Learning@Internet Society. The other key part of the workshop was to build knowledge and advocacy skills in Internet Governance and accessibility for use in participants' own countries and for regional impact.

a. Participants

It was agreed that the workshop in Dhaka would include one to two participants from India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka together with five from Bangladesh.

Suggestions for participants were provided by members of the Executive Committees of APSIG and the ISOC Accessibility Standing Group with the final decision made by Gunela Astbrink. Three of the selected participants were experienced accessibility advocates in the digital space: Dr Muhammad Shabbir, a current ISOC Board of Trustees member, Manique Gunaratne who manages an ICT training centre for persons with disability and Vashkar Bhattacharjee, a consultant to the Bangladesh government on accessibility. Vashkar compiled a list of recommended candidates based on interviews and knowledge of disability advocates in Bangladesh. The main criteria for selection were participants' advocacy activities in their own country and the participants' potential to lead capacity-building in their own country and to participate in Internet governance fora in future.

Overall, the following participants were selected:

Bangladesh:	Mr Vashkar Bhattacharjee
	Mr Eshaq Shahin Bhuyan
	Mr Faisal Mohammad Ibrahim
	Ms Shirmin Akther Dolon
	Mr Rifat Pasha
India:	Ms Vidhya Y (with her assistant, Murali Srinivasa)
Nepal:	Mr Madhav Chamlagain
	Ms Sarita Lamichhane
Pakistan:	Dr Muhammad Shabbir
Sri Lanka:	Ms Manique Gunaratne (with assistant and resource person, Sagarika Wickramasekera)

Unfortunately, Sarita Lamichhane was unable to travel due to flight cancellations.

The diversity of the participants proved to be a challenge. There were three women and six men. However, two resource persons (Gunela Astbrink and Sagarika Wickramasekera) were female.

Seven of the nine participants had a vision impairment and two had a physical disability. Due to budgetary restraints, the workshop could not accommodate Deaf participants requiring sign language interpreters.

b. Accessible venue

The hotel venue was chosen based on its accessibility for persons with disability, its proximity to the airport and its meeting facilities. For example, the lifts had Braille markings and speech messages for each floor. The ramp at the entrance of the hotel was ridged but too steep for a wheelchair user. However, it did have a railing for persons with mobility impairments. The hotel staff were given an orientation of ways to best assist persons with vision impairment. Participants all stayed in the same hotel as the workshop venue.

c. Other accessibility considerations

The workshop completion certificates could not be Braille embossed but instead, each had a QR code.

d. Visas and travel

Applications for visas to Bangladesh slowed down the process of booking flights for some participants. It also increased the costs of flights. Members of APSIG and the ISOC Bangladesh Chapter provided invaluable assistance with visa applications and travel arrangements.

e. Logistics

The necessary logistics support was ensured by APSIG focal person Shah Rahman and with the help of ISOC Bangladesh chapter. Hotel reservation and visa invitation letters were issued and sent to all participants. The airport protocol for their pick-up and drop from the venue was ensured. The venue selection considered participants' needs. The conference hall was fully accessible including an LED display monitor, sound systems, moveable chairs and roving and stationary microphoness. Two dedicated hotel staff and one IT staff were assigned for the workshop. Care was taken to ensure sufficient staff during the serving of food–continental as well as vegetarian–was done smoothly. All communications were done over the Mailing group as well as a Whatsapp group. After the workshop, the participants' travel reimbursement was made through wire transfer. The hotel bills were also settled through wire transfer based on their invoice.

The event backdrop, banner, photography and event management were done through professional services. In addition, the workshop was documented through professional photos (stored in a shared drive), and videos, which are currently preserved in a hard drive and will be soon shared on APSIG's customized YouTube channel.

f. Workshop program

The workshop was held over four days commencing on Friday evening with an introduction to the sessions of the workshop and finishing at noon on Monday.

The workshop program, designed and delivered by Gunela Astbrink, a woman with the lived experience of disability, aimed to keep participants stimulated through active involvement in the following:

- Introductions
- Warm-up exercise on their dreams of accessibility best practice
- Designing the interactive online course on accessibility, digital rights and Internet governance
- Elevator pitch
- Writing the funding proposal
- Advocacy skills and leadership techniques
- Drafting the Dhaka Declaration
- Plans for running workshops in participants' own countries
- Future commitments of participants

A key mechanism of the workshop was 'learning by doing'.

The workshop deliberately was designed with a mix of sessions and facilitators to vary the topics and presentation styles thus keeping participants interested and alert:

- The two sessions on designing the online course were held on the first half of Saturday and Sunday to encourage maximum input.

- Videos were shown of preparing a speech and an example of an elevator pitch

- Remote presenters: Klaus Hoeckner on AI and accessibility, Kim Kwang-Hee on refugees with disability and Babu Ram Aryal, Vice-Chair of APSIG

- Presentations were kept relatively short and interspersed with exercises and discussion

- A summary of each day and a plan for the next day's exercises was given

g. Special guests

Representatives from Article 19, Faruq Faisel and Rumky Farhana were invited to the dinners on Friday and Sunday. They presented the certificates of workshop completion to all the participants on Sunday evening. Furthermore, representatives from the Board of Trustees and members of the Internet Society Bangladesh Chapter were in attendance at the Friday dinner.

5. Findings

The participants were disability advocates and passionate in their own interest areas. These ranged from accessible STEM education for children with vision impairment to the adoption of the Marrakesh Treaty by governments. Anytime that the sessions covered advocacy skills, the participants were engaged and participated with ideas. This was also the case when practical topics were presented such as the possibilities of artificial intelligence applications for persons with disability.

a. Linking disability advocacy with Internet Governance

Participants were required to take the ISOC Internet Governance online course as a prerequisite to the workshop. Participants found the course impenetrable in some instances. This was both due to the format and content. The format was not entirely accessible to persons with vision impairment despite using the text version. The content was considered too divorced from participants' disability advocacy actions. Some participants found the content either too esoteric or too technical.

Therefore, preliminary learning of the functions of Internet organisations such as the Internet Society and IGF NRIs was limited. Understanding the reason to connect with such organisations and the whole concept of Internet governance needed further work. It was necessary to highlight the rationale of bringing well-established accessibility advocacy practices to the wider perspective of Internet organisations. Giving more examples of what a disability advocate can achieve and how to connect with Schools of Internet governance and NRIs was beneficial.

This is why a dedicated online interactive course linking disability international instruments, policy, legislation and regulation with Internet governance will make a big difference. The workshop gave us guidance on the content and intent of the interactive online course on digital rights and Internet Governance for persons with disability. The debate centred around whether the online course should or should not include advocacy and leadership techniques. Some felt that other general advocacy courses would serve the purpose. The argument was that the online course could be aimed at two audiences:

1. Persons with disabilities learning about Internet governance in the context of accessibility advocacy.

2. Representatives from mainstream organisations who wish to learn about the intersection of disability digital rights and the Internet community.

The content of the planned online course will continue to be discussed after the workshop.

b. Participants' experiences

An illuminating comment from one of the participants was about being shown respect in the workshop and not being interrupted. This is a point that needs to be carried through in the in-country workshops. A participant included the following quote in his report indicating increased learning through sharing experiences, doing exercises and having discussions: "Tell me and I forget,

Teach me and I may remember, Involve me and I learn." As the workshop was designed with the key mechanism of 'learning-by-doing', this was a positive reinforcement of the methodology.

Participants need to continue working on their presentation skills. This became evident in sessions covering the 30-second 'elevator pitch'. However, in the last session, participants improved considerably when giving their future commitments and knowing they had to do this in under two minutes,

Some of the participants' reports highlighted the exercises of particular benefit were learning about and trying out the elevator pitch as well as writing a funding proposal. Reminders and examples of the elevator pitch were given in several sessions.

It is challenging to move out of the comfort zone of advocacy for digital accessibility into the broader area of digital rights and Internet governance. It will take time for participants to grasp the wider world of Internet governance and their place in this environment. It is obvious that a three-day workshop is just the starting point on the journey to nurture new disability leaders. Much mentoring and further training, both face-to-face with online courses will help people who wish to take that further step.

c. Role of Internet organisations

A comment made by a participant about previous experiences of being questioned about the relevance of a person with disabilities attendance in a mainstream conference (not an I* meeting) highlights the importance of setting a good example by I* organisations by being welcoming to persons with disability. This includes building a culture of accessibility within I* organisations in a number of ways: attitudinal and structural in terms of accessible venues and online services.

It would have been beneficial if the participants had been given time to introduce themselves publicly at the Friday dinner in the presence of the special guests. This would have enabled the guests to hear directly from the participants and paved the way for further interaction.

d. Additional findings

Working with the senior participants ie Dr Muhammad Shabbir, Vashkar Bhattacharjee and Manique Gunaratne was positive. They facilitated two sessions each. This meant that participants were exposed to different voices, different presentation techniques and different orientations of the content. At the same time, we all had the same emphasis on the purpose of the workshop. While having an international workshop coordinator from outside South Asia brings another level of credence to the workshop, the prominence of South Asian disability leaders sets an example to participants of what is possible in participants' own countries.

Flexibility by the training coordinator was essential in recognising when some sessions were working well thus needing more time thus impacting other sessions that were shortened. Some sessions needed to be adjusted to meet the level of understanding of Internet governance. A lot was covered in the time allowed but workshop participants would have benefited from another half day to do one or two more exercises and to cement all the learnings.

e. Immense support and goodwill

Many people helped to make the workshop a success. The partnership between APSIG and the ISOC Accessibility Standing Group in this pilot phase has worked very well. The support of the local host, the ISOC Bangladesh Chapter was vital for a successful event. The immense work by Shah Rahman in handling logistics was appreciated by everyone. The complexity of visa applications for some participants was handled expertly by Kawsar Uddin. Excellent communication between all stakeholders, especially the training coordinator, Gunela Astbrink and Shah Rahman, made the sessions run smoothly. Abdullah Mamun handling all the technical requirements was invaluable. He also gave a presentation on his involvement in a Google Maps accessibility project that was well-received by participants.

From Sri Lanka, Sagarika Wickrasekara was an assistant to Manique Gunaratne as well as a key resource person who organised and conducted the video interviews with participants and developed the feedback survey. Murali Srinivasa, Vidhya's assistant labelled selected photographs of the workshop.

The sense of goodwill, collaboration and cooperation among all parties made for a smooth and positive event. This is an excellent foundation to build on for future phases of this program.

6. Phase 2 and beyond

The Dhaka workshop was Phase 1 of a multi-phase program.

Phase 2 of the disability leadership training program will be to support the graduates of the Dhaka workshop to organise and facilitate a face-to-face workshop in their own country. This will be done in tandem with an interactive online course on digital rights and Internet Governance for persons with disability.

The design and implementation of the program will be in two parts:

1. Provision of content, accessibility and technical components in both the development and delivery of the interactive online course on disability leadership training in digital rights and Internet Governance.

The project team will contribute content on policy and technology related to accessibility. Most importantly the interactive online course will be designed as a model of accessibility. Consultation between the experience of the project team with key disability organisations and technology companies will help to achieve this.

The Internet Society has agreed to fund the development and delivery of the interactive online course. Discussions are being held with the Diplo Foundation, an expert in Internet governance training, for curriculum development. Learning@Internet Society will deliver the course on its platform. It is envisaged that the first course will be delivered in the early part of 2023.

2. Mentoring and support in the organization, facilitation and running of face-to-face workshops in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The workshop to be organised in each designated country in South Asia will take the learnings from the pilot workshop in Dhaka. Muhammad Shabbir Awan, Manique Gunaratne and Vashkar Bhattacharjee (all with vision impairment) who participated in the Dhaka workshop will organise and run a workshop in their own countries and also mentor Dhaka graduates from India and Nepal in the running of their workshops as well as supporting a workshop in Afghanistan.

The training will build capacity in digital rights and Internet Governance through a range of experiential exercises and advocacy skill development based on the pilot workshop program. Mentoring and support before, during and after each of the workshops will be offered. The underlying principle is 'learning-by-doing'.

A submission for funding for these workshops has been made to ISIF Asia and we expect to hear about the outcome of the submission by late September 2022.

Beyond Phase 2

Phase 2 (if totally funded) will be assessed and adjusted based on the outcomes in each country where the workshops are run. This, together with the experiences of participants in the interactive online course will inform the wider implementation in other parts of the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

Funding opportunities will be sought to achieve this medium-term goal.

7. Conclusion

Phase 1 of the disability leadership training was completed successfully. The key learning is to build further understanding with disability advocates about Internet governance in advocacy work. Connecting and linking between key accessibility instruments, policy and guidelines with digital rights and Internet governance is vital. This is where an online interactive course specifically linking these elements will be beneficial. When this prerequisite online course is combined with face-to-face learning and information sharing in-country workshops and ongoing mentoring, it can be powerful in building disability leadership in digital rights and Internet governance.

We must also reinforce the need for Internet organisations to learn more about accessibility and embrace diversity in the disability community. This will facilitate the welcoming of persons with disability in debates by ensuring that communications and programs meet participants' accessibility needs.

8. Recommendations

1. Increased lead time with planning each in-country workshop. This has a range of benefits including a reduction in travel costs.
2. Adequate budget to ensure all accessibility measures are provided for full participation despite the person's disability

3. Volunteers for logistics, technical requirements and backup support needed for workshops
4. Experienced advocates to mentor workshop organisers in Afghanistan, India and Nepal for Phase 2 and to support in person during the workshops.
5. Representatives from Internet organisations be invited to dinners at in-country workshops and introductions made with workshop participants to build early connections
6. Ongoing online mentoring of workshop participants for people to reach full potential
7. Reach out to relevant organisations to discuss funding and in-kind support and partnerships in the next phases of the program.
8. Fellowship places are reserved in Internet organisations for persons with disability.
9. Increasing awareness by Internet organisations of welcoming the disability voice in debates by ensuring communications and programs are accessible.

9. Acknowledgements

We wish to sincerely thank the following:

- Members of the Internet Society Bangladesh Chapter, especially Shah Rahman, Kawsar Uddin and Abdullah Mamun

- Article 19

- APNIC Foundation

- Empyrean Hotel

- All the participants who contributed during the workshop

- All who helped to make this a successful workshop

Appendices

A. Program Schedule

Disability leadership training in digital rights and Internet Governance

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 24-27 June 2022

The underlying principle of the workshop will be collegial and sharing of ideas about accessibility, digital rights and Internet Governance.

The goal of the workshop is two-fold:

- To co-design an IG and accessibility course
- To build knowledge and advocacy skills in IG and accessibility for use in participants' own countries and for regional impact

The workshop will be highly interactive. 'Learning by doing' is a key mechanism.

Sessions led by Gunela Astbrink unless otherwise stated.

Friday, 24th June - Day 0

18.30   Welcome by Board of Bangladesh Chapter and APSIG

18.45   Introduction to workshop

18.50   Participants' introductions

19.15   Preparation for, and overview of Day 1

19.30   Dinner

Saturday, 25th June - Day 1

9.00 am   Welcome, housekeeping and roll call

9.15   Warm-up exercise - Participants share their dreams of accessibility best practice

                    Discussion

10.00   Update on key accessibility policy, legislation and guidelines with focus on Internet governance and relevant countries (led by Vashkar Bhattacharjee)

10.30   Coffee break

10.45   General discussion of ISOC Internet Governance course - format & content

11.00   Overview of main Internet organisations and relevance to accessibility
             (led by Muhammad Shabbir)

11.15   Co-designing a new online course on disability leadership in digital rights
             and Internet Governance

11.20   Two groups of five people each discuss modules 1, 2 & 3 of IG course,
             the key learnings and what to be included in disability leadership course.

11.45   Report back

12.00   Advocacy skills and techniques - use of stories, 'elevator pitch' etc

12.30   Lunch

             Practice of elevator pitch

13.15   Participants share experiences of advocating for accessibility and consider
             how to present to Internet community (led by Manique Gunaratne)

14.30   Coffee break

15.00   Writing funding or workshop proposals (led by Vashkar Bhattacharjee)

             Group exercise

             Discussion

16.30   Remote presentation by Kim Kwang-hee, Disability
             Inclusion Specialist (UNHCR) on refugees with disability

             Questions & discussion

16.50   Practice of elevator pitch

17.15   Summary of Day 1 and plan for Day 2 exercises

17.30   Finish Day 1

19.30   Dinner

Day 2   Sunday, 26th June

9.00   Roll call

9.05   Feedback from Day 1

9.15   Further discussion of ISOC Internet Governance course

9.45   Two groups of five people each discuss modules 4, 5 & 6 of the IG course, the key learnings and what to be included in the disability leadership course.

10.30   Coffee break

10.45   Report back

11.15   Leadership techniques, persuasion skills & exercise

12.30   Lunch

13.15   Remote presentation on AI and accessibility by Klaus Hoeckner, CEO of Austrian Association for Blind and Visually Impaired Persons & Associate Leadership Member of ISOC Accessibility Standing Group

13.30   Questions and discussion

13.45   Leadership techniques & exercise (led by Muhammad Shabbir Awan)

           Building personal networks and trust

           Discussion and exercise

14.30   Coffee break

14.45   Bringing together ideas on online course modules including advocacy and leadership skills (led by Manique Gunaratne)

           Two groups of five people each

15.30   Report back

15.45   Drafting of Dhaka Declaration

16.30   Outline of Phase 2 (if funded) and role of participants

16.45   Summary of Day 2 and plan for Day 3

17.00   Finish Day 2

19.30   Celebratory dinner and distribution of certificates

Day 3, Monday 27th June

9.00   Roll call

9.05   Feedback from Day 2

9.15   Planning on how to connect with relevant organisations in participants'
            countries. Joining Internet Society Chapters, ISOC Accessibility
            Standing Group, connecting with Schools of Internet Governance and NRIs.

 9.30   Two groups of five people each share ideas on running capacity-building
            workshops in their countries

10.30   Coffee break

10.15   Report back

10.45   Online workshop feedback form completion

11.00   Adoption and ratification of Dhaka Declaration

11.30   Future commitments of participants

12.00   Lunch with guest speaker

End of workshop

Please note:

Each participant is expected to write a report on their experiences during the workshop as well as their learnings - to be completed by 5th July 2022 (Please see below for individual reports).

A video interview of 3-4 minutes will be done with each participant

B. Participant reports

Name: **Vashkar Bhattacharjee**

Gender: Male

Disability: Visual disability

Organization: Aspire to innovate , a2i programme , Government of Bangladesh and Vice-Chair of the Internet Society (ISOC) Accessibility Standing Group

Country: Bangladesh

Experiences of the workshop: It's indeed a colourful experience to attend an international training on leadership in internet governance which is designed only by and for persons with disabilities. It is the best example of the model of effective participation by persons with disability in relevant decision-making processes based on the recognition of the disability movement's mission: Nothing about us without us.

One of the early outcomes of this workshop is the Dhaka Declaration, which envisions a society without any discrimination. Where inclusive internet and digital accessibility are treated as a human right for the 1 billion persons with disability who are the world's largest minority.

Learnings from the workshop: Diverse group of persons with disabilities is required to be involved in Internet Governance as leaders with their knowledge and experience. When Digital services are not designed with empathy for the people with disabilities who use them, they are useless stated in the workshop.

Commitments made: I have committed to work to promote inclusive internet governance and accessible digital service to ensure equitable access for all, where everyone can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others despite their disabilities.

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Name: **Eshaq Shahin Bhuyan**

Gender: Male

Disability: Visual disability

Organisation: Capacity Building Officer, Visually Impaired People's Society (VIPS)

Country: Bangladesh

I would like to express my gratitude over again in the strongest possible terms for selecting me for the APSIG Disability Leadership Training in Digital leadership and Internet Governance held on June 25-27 at Dhaka, Bangladesh.

As a man with visual disability, more importantly, as a disability rights activist, disability advocate as well as disability ICT trainer, I should say the golden opportunity of participating this enlightening program is a new beginning in my career. It has not only made me aware of digital rights and Internet Governance, but also has educated me a lot about how to play a strong leadership role in this field.

I am a Capacity Building Officer of Visually Impaired People's Society (VIPS), a national-level right-based organization for persons with visual disabilities in Bangladesh. Besides, I am the General Secretary of Pratibandhi Shikkha o Seba Sangstha (PSSS), a Dhaka-based organization of persons with various types of disabilities. On the other hand, I am a member of Asia and the Pacific Youth with disabilities solidarity (APYDS), a cross-border voluntary platform of persons with disabilities.

As a member of the most marginalized community in Bangladesh, I want to say that in recent times, Bangladesh has made amazing progress in digitalization. But as a matter of fact, people with disabilities, in most cases, are left out of the development gains. So, it is very high time we raise our voice to promote our digital rights and internet governance.

The learnings and insights of the leadership training in digital rights and internet governance arranged by APSIG will always support my ability to catalyze and embrace the gradual and meaningful process of change and create a lasting impact in implementing digital rights and internet governance within my community.

Likewise, the lessons of the training program provided the space and security for me to practice self-reflection, broaden my perspectives and identify areas for personal development.

The privileges and experiences offered by the training program like self-exploration, leadership development, interaction and friendship between the trainers and co-participants, collaboration, youth strengthening, commitment for a better future etc. will constantly guide and enable me to be more and more equipped to articulate a hopeful vision, speak across lines of difference and move others to action.

The training provided me with frameworks to better understand larger systemic problems and design more effective interventions. Thus it developed my irresistible high spirits to more positively fight for an equal society.

In short, this training program successfully made me realize how to become a Leader with strong personal integrity, unrelenting perseverance and moral imagination.

I enjoyed the whole training program and I learned a lot. I look forward to having support and benefits from APSIG in future.

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Name: **Faisal Mohammad Ibrahim.**

Gender: Male

Disability: Visually impaired.

Organisation: Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)

Country: Bangladesh.

Experiences of the workshop.

The workshop has been full of wonderful experiences. I made some friends from around the world, and we have exchanged a lot of information related to accessibility and internet governance as well.

We had some amazing discussions while taking our meals, as well as we discussed improving the accessibility infrastructure and new opportunities for people with disabilities too.

Learnings from the workshop.

"Tell me and I forget, Teach me and I may remember, Involve me and I learn."

From June 24th to 27th, it has been an experience of learning through involvement.

I came to know about key accessibility policies, legislation, and guidelines with a focus on Internet governance and relevant countries.

Writing funding or workshop proposals was another relatively new skill I learned. In addition to that, leadership techniques and advocacy skills were very impactful for me in building knowledge.

I got information about I-star organizations, Internet Society chapters, and most importantly, the Accessibility Standing Group, and valuable information about internet governance and digital rights for persons with disabilities.

Commitments made

My commitment after the workshop is to share the valuable information and experiences that I have learned with my community members to make them more capable and to prepare them for future leadership.

My other commitment is to uphold the advocacy of making products and services accessible for people with disabilities.

Furthermore, I want to join the Bangladesh chapter of the Internet Society and learn more about internet governance.

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Name: **Shirmin Akther Dolon**

Gender: Female

Disability: Physical Disability.

Organisation: Women With Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF).

Country: Bangladesh.

Experiences of the workshop:

The first thing I will say about the workshop experience is that I have gained a whole new experience from this workshop. Because I am a human rights activist. That is why I have to participate in many workshops a lot of the time and through these workshops, I have gained knowledge about digital rights and internet governance. Through this workshop, I have learned about the importance of digital rights and internet governance in the lives of people with disabilities. I have even learned about the ongoing situation in their society from the participants from different countries in this workshop. Learned about their activities. And I think gaining knowledge about different societies will make my work easier.

Learnings from the workshop:

The lessons I learned from the Disability Leadership Workshop on Digital Rights and Internet Governance are:

1. I have learned about what digital rights are.

2. Learned about the different stages of digital rights.

3. Gained knowledge about internet governance.

4. We have learned about the importance of digital rights and internet governance in our lives.

5. Though it is an international workshop and participants from different countries have participated in it and shared their experiences, I have gained knowledge about different laws and regulations of other countries.

Commitments made:

1. We want to work for the implementation of an accessible internet for all types of disabled people living in our society.
2. We want to work more for the inclusion of women with disabilities in the internet society.

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Name: **Rifat Pasha**

Gender: Male

Disability: Visually/blind person

Organization: Assistant Policy Officer, Institute of Wellbeing Bangladesh

Country: Bangladesh

The idea of internet governance is very new in Bangladesh. I consider myself lucky that I got the opportunity to learn about internet governance. Three-day training workshop gave me a unique opportunity to meet with different cultures and countries. Apart from that, I have been able to learn some important skills on leadership and advocacy.

I have been working in the development sector for a long time, but this is the first time I have learned about elevator speech from this training. The elevator speech session was very exciting and interactive. Detailed explanation about the elevator speech as well as practice made the session lively and understandable. Now I am quite confident that I can use the elevator speech whenever I require it.

Another significant learning was how to develop a project proposal for grants. As a development worker, I believe that the knowledge on project proposals will help immensely in my career. Because at some point of time I want to organize workshops and training programs for the people with disability. To do so I may require help from the donors. This project proposal writing knowledge will be very useful.

Lastly, For the first time, I have been able to learn about various internet-based organizations such as Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Internet Society. Before this workshop, I never knew about those organizations and their activities.

For the first time, I have attended an international workshop. I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop. In contrast to local workshops and seminars, here I got enough opportunities to express my view. The session moderators never stopped me in between my speech, and I got enough time to explain my points. Apart from that, the food and accommodation facilities were simply amazing. Volunteers and facilitators' roles were very commendable. They were very kind and generous.

Commitments

At the end of the workshop I made some commitments in front of the participants, and those were:

- I shall do advocacy with my organization so that they make their website accessible for the people with disabilities,
- I shall increase my knowledge on digital inclusion of peoples with disabilities,
- I shall continue to speak-out to ratifying the Marrakesh treaty in Bangladesh.

- From the bottom of my heart I want to say that I shall live with my words, and I shall give the best of my ability to keep the promises.

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Name: **Vidhya Y**

Gender: Female

Disability: Blind

Organization: Vision Empower (http://visionempowertrust.in/)

Country: India

Experiences of the Workshop

- Due to the interactive nature of the workshop, I was able to open up and freely express my views.
- Staff and volunteers at the venue were fully co-operative which made the workshop logistics seamless.
- Having my cousin around significantly reduced my worries on managing the logistics and helped me to fully participate in the workshop.
- Interactions that I had before and after the workshop sessions with participants, organizations such as Article19, Gunela and others has surely enriched my perspectives and they may also lead to further collaborations.
- Trying to answer even when I am uncertain helped me to break my inhibitions and become friendly with all the participants and organizers.
- I had a great experience taking up the responsibility of a group leader during the writing of funding proposal session. I would often delegate this responsibility to a sighted person during team meetings, but this time, I learnt to co-ordinate with the team, come to a common consensus and quickly paraphrase and type the sentences. Though it was challenging to listen to the screen reader talk(listening to the points I had typed on my computer) at the same time as I was presenting, completing the presentation gave me great joy.
- Elevator pitch was something new for me and talking on the fly was very enjoyable.

Learnings from the Workshop

- Technical challenges during online sessions helped me to better understand about conducting a hybrid session.
- Meeting people from different countries and hearing their views helped me broaden my horizon and understand the disability scenario in their countries.
- Session on accessibility policy and legislation and I* organizations and their relevance to disability were very informative and comprehensive.

- Learnings from sessions on Advocacy skills and leadership sessions are something I will implement throughout my career.
- Being a part of co-designing a new internet governance course specific to disability and sharing my views has really helped in understanding how to structure a new course and how important it is to involve the community of users right from brainstorming the ideas and designing the course.
- Session on Adoption and ratification of Dhaka Declaration was very insightful. Practically learning to document the learnings and having a tangible output from the workshop was very rewarding.

Commitments Made

- Joining international organizations working for accessibility such as The Internet Society's accessibility standing group.
- Advocating for disability rights on national and international forums.
- Joining India chapters of Internet Society.
- Taking part in the annual edition of the India School on Internet Governance .
- If funded, conducting a workshop in India on disability, Internet governance and digital rights, similar to the workshop at Dhaka.

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Name: Madhav Prasad Chamlagain

Gender: Male

Organisation: EICT Nepal

Country: Nepal

Experiences of the workshop: After taking some internet governance classes, some questions came to my mind. Are all participants from the field of information and technology? Also, is this Workshop completely technical? Such questions were arising. After the ticket was cancelled, my participation was almost uncertain. Of the two participants from Nepal, I got the ticket again, but another participant, Sarita Lamichhane, cancelled the ticket first and did not get the ticket later. I was sad when I had to participate alone. But I was very excited to get a new experience and reached Dhaka.

I was going to Dhaka to learn something and share my past experiences. I have never been in doubt that the new development of information and technology should be equally accessible to all. While constructing physical infrastructure, laws are being made for the construction of accessible infrastructure and the work is also comparatively more than before. It has certainly brought some relief in the lives of people with disabilities, but they are still out of reach of information, communication and technology due to legal hurdles and neglect by stakeholders. It has brought about a positive change in my approach to building accessible infrastructure for persons with disabilities and enacting legislation to ensure equal access to information technology. I was also inspired to engage in this work. Moreover, I myself have raised the hustle and bustle of doing something to create an accessible environment. The topics raised there were also very informative.

Overall, the workshop was very informative and motivational for us. This workshop has played an important role in increasing my knowledge base.

Learning from the workshop: Undoubtedly, I have learned a lot from the Dhaka workshop, especially on digital rights and internet governance as well as sharing experiences with other participants from different countries.

During the workshop, I learned how digital accessibility can change the life of a disabled person. As I mention earlier information communication and technology should be made accessible for people with disabilities. For this, I will work with the Nepal government and other non-government organizations to make disable friendly software and public websites as well as digital payment models. I will closely work with concerned bodies like politicians and assemblies, especially in policy-making level and constitutional level.

In addition, I will work with different INGO, NGO, Private and Public sectors to provide accessible digital resources for the disabled person as well as provide job opportunities.

For the awareness of disability rights, I will closely work with the media to raise awareness of their rights in Nepal. This will definitely help disabled persons to live their lives independently.

Commitments Made: New technology is entering. Recent changes in the field of information and technology have made everything easier. Making the use of information, communication and technology easier for all can bring great changes in the lives of people with disabilities.

I understood that information communication and technology should be made accessible for people with disabilities, but there was little knowledge on how to make things accessible. At the international level, we got to hear about the laws that have been enacted to provide access to information and technology to persons with disabilities.

On the basis of this, knowledge was gained on what kind of laws should be made in Nepal in the future. This was the biggest achievement for me. I will further study the existing laws and find out what is lacking and lobby in the concerned bodies and forums.

I will share my knowledge with people in Nepal to raise awareness and to make impactful laws and policies for people living with disabilities.

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Name: **Dr Muhammad Shabbir**

Gender: Male

Disability: Blindness

Country: Pakistan

Experiences of the workshop

It was a wonderful experience attending the Dhaka workshop in person as a participant as well as facilitating and co-facilitating a number of sessions. In the three-days workshop, the role changing

between facilitator, co-facilitator and participant allowed me to see and think about the digital accessibility issues from different perspectives. During 3-days, I facilitated or co-facilitated about 5 sessions including: two sessions on Co-designing a new online course on disability leadership in digital rights and Internet Governance with Gunela Astbrink; besides facilitating sessions on Overview of main Internet organisations and relevance to accessibility; Leadership techniques; & an exercise on elevator pitch. The design of the workshop program was so well intertwined that different sessions spread over 3-days complemented each other, I.E. session on Advocacy Skills on day-1 helped participants practice the Elevator Pitch etc. Out of the other sessions, Refugees With Disability; and AI and Accessibility were of particular interest to me.

Observing that there was a drastic difference of knowledge of IG domain amongst the participants, I suggested changing the sessions dedicated for online IG course modules to designing a new course on accessibility, and thanks to Gunela who accepted the suggestion. In summary, my overall impression of the workshop is that the discussion during the 3-days was fruitful and everyone was able to contribute to the discussion. This was only possible because of well planning, excellent organization and less participants (where everyone got the opportunity to share their views).

Learnings from the workshop

The learnings from the workshop include:

1. The need to bridge the gap between the two streams Internet Governance (IG) and Disability Rights in Digital Accessibility (DRDA) is reinforced.
2. To bridge the gap, a high-level course on digital accessibility, disability rights and internet governance with 4 or 5 modules is required. This course would aim at leaders in either streams IG and DRDA to prepare them about the other stream, particularly the leaders in DRDA stream about IG stream. It would help bring more people with disabilities to participate in IG discussions.
3. For those people with disabilities who are not leaders in either field, a more focused series of courses in IG and DRDA can be developed.
4. Such workshops that bring leaders in IG and DRDA domains together should also be organized in other regions too.

Commitments made

My general commitment is to keep learning and updating myself about IG, digital accessibility and disability rights to identify the issues and find solutions for people with disabilities. Whereas, the specific commitment is to participate in the phase two of the plan if implemented.

Acknowledgements

There are many individuals and groups that deserve my thanks for without their contribution my participation in the workshop would not have been as successful as it was. I am thankful first of all, to the co-organizers APSIG, ISOC-SG on Accessibility and ISOC Dhaka Chapter, teams particularly, Gunela Astbrink, Muhammad Kausar Ud Deen and Shah Zahid Ur Rehman for making my trip possible, enlightening and making it comfortable. Thanks are also due to all the organizing team and the administration and staff of Enperium hotel for making the event excellently accessible.

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Name: **Manique Gunaratne**

Gender: Female

Disability: Vision impaired

Organization: The Employers' Federation of Ceylon

Country: Sri Lanka

Experiences of the workshop,

The above programme was organised by the Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance and the Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group was a new experience in internet governance. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to each and everyone who put in their effort to select me. All arrangements prior to the programme were handled efficiently to ensure a smooth travel to Dhaka, Bangladesh, especially for persons with disability. Pick up and drop off to the airport, were arranged efficiently. The logistic arrangements at the hotel were excellent so that all participants felt that it is their second home. The hotel staff was sensitized on disability etiquette to give good service.

It was a good team effort by the Resource Persons and the participants to make sure that no one is left behind during the sessions. I would like to suggest that the next time to include hearing-impaired persons who are sign language users and lip readers so that their voices also can be heard.

Learnings from the workshop

The content of the programme was very good and there was a lot of new knowledge to take. Sharing experiences had a good impact.

Commitments made

My commitments will be focused in 3 areas.

1 Organize a similar programme for persons with diverse disabilities together with Sri Lanka SIG.

2 Make awareness among persons with disability of their digital rights.

3 Sensitize all relevant stakeholders with non-disability on the importance of digital accessibility

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