GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2017

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

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

APC

Global Information Society Watch 2017 Special edition
Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words

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

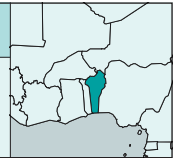This report is a special companion edition to Global Information Society Watch 2017: National and Regional
Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs), which can be downloaded from https://www.giswatch.
org/2017-local-and-regional-internet-governance-forums-igfs

BENIN IGF

Benin
Kossi Amessinou • bureau@fgi.bj • fgi.bj

NRI founding stories and development

What is the story of the founding of your NRI? What were its inspiration, its objectives?

It all started with the participation of Mr. Kossi Amessinou in the West African Internet Governance Forum in 2011 in Nigeria. As he came back from the forum, he set up the initiative to hold a national forum on the governance of the internet during the internet week in Benin. At the end of this forum, he set up a committee, presided by Yaovi Atohoun and Nelly Kwende. In the next forum the staff chair will be moved to Jacques Houngbo and Karine Gbaguidi. In 2014, the forum selected a committee presided by Karine Gbaguidi and Franck Kouyami. Then in 2015, the informal team became a legally recognised association presided by the same team for two years. In 2017, the board was renewed and presided by Franck Kouyami and Kossi Amessinou with a mandate of two years. The objective of the creation of the association is to facilitate the exchanges with the actors, and the government in particular. The forum is recognised and considered by public authorities at all levels.

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

The informal status of the team was hard to manage. Governments do not take informal teams under consideration. Informal life was overcome by the creation of an association. During its informal life, the IGF did not have a bank account and relied on intermediaries for the covering of the expenses of activities. The association currently has a bank account and the activities are carried out without difficulties.

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

We will continue the plea to maintain the contacts between the actors of the national internet ecosystem in Benin. We will open the national debate annually to the problems that are tackled at global level. The idea is to observe world issues locally. More and more, we are confronted with the challenge of opening the association to activities to raise awareness about the use and security of the internet beyond the forum, which has become statutory.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

All the target groups are implicated in the national IGF in Benin. There are students, unemployed people, ICT professionals, academics, civil servants, the national private sector, the government, official and national associations for the promotion of ICT. The groups of actors participate collectively and individually in activities of the association. It is all volunteer-based.

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

No difficulty in the cohabitation and the exchanges between actors was noted since 2012. It is true that debates are often passionate, but without break-ups.

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

We do not discriminate on gender but encourage massive participation.

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

Details about the activities of the Benin Internet Governance Forum can be found in the 2017 report[1] and communique.[2]

---

1 https://www.giswatch.org/sites/default/files/images/rapport_fgi_2017.doc

2 https://www.giswatch.org/sites/default/files/images/communique_final-2017.pdf

Managing the BJ exchange point was a difficult subject. Some believe it should be a more accessible national resource through the annual cost of its provision. But others believe that we must work towards the profitability of the sale of the BJ exchange point. There is often a difficult limit to draw between the protection of personal data and of national security, which brings to the filtering of the users.

Perspectives on the role of NRIs in internet governance

Proposals are dynamic. At national level, we have contributed to the drastic reduction of internet access cost in Benin. At regional level, we contributed to the provision of shared-rent infrastructure to reduce the cost of internet access. At global level, the debate is still too oriented in favour of the profit of rich countries.

The IGF Secretariat allows the world to know what is done in Benin. We are grateful for that. We live in a world of mutual learning. We learn from others and are certain to bring new elements to others as well.

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.

APC