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
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

DRC 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?

In 2007, CAFEC (Centre Africain d'Echange Culturel) organised the first Internet Governance Forum for Civil Society with financial support from UNDP. Since 2008, CAFEC has taken steps to ensure that the government, through the Ministry in charge of ICT, is involved in enabling the private sector to participate and provide the necessary financial resources for the organisation of a national forum on governance of the internet. It was only in 2016 that this multistakeholder consultation framework was officially recognised by this Ministry in charge of ICT. Currently in 2017, we are working closely with the firm's experts to materialise the first edition of this national forum on internet governance (DRC IGF). The objective is to create a multistakeholder exchange space for harmonious development of the internet in the DRC. In 2013, CAFEC and SJS (Si Jeunesse Savait) organised the Central Africa Internet Governance Forum.

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

The difficulties encountered were multiple:

- The repeated change of the ministries with their cabinet
- The lack of political will and incompetence of executives in the ministerial cabinet
- Greed and the positioning struggle to drive and derive the advantages associated with this platform
- Lack of collaboration between institutions
- The disinterestedness of the private sector and universities
- The lack of a coherent policy on ICT, etc.

Nevertheless, all these difficulties allowed us to evaluate the journey in order to resume the steps that ultimately led, in 2017, to an involvement of the Ministry in charge of ICT and mobilisation of the private sector.

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

We have a three-year mandate: from 2017 to 2020 and we have decided to re-establish our collaboration with universities, start-ups and local communities that need our expertise. We have taken the option of setting up local incubators according to the interests of each community and working in synergy with international partners who respond to the concerns identified for the benefit of these communities. This is the case with the University of Syracuse in the USA.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

At the present stage, we have as actors involved:

- The government through its Ministry of ICT
- The private sector, represented by the Federation of DRC Companies
- The universities
- Civil society
- The Youth DRC IGF.

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

With regard to the multistakeholder approach, we decided to set up a DRC Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) coordinated by the Executive Secretariat. The DRC MAG is made up of members from government, public and private companies, universities and NGOs, including youth. In total for 2017, we have 65 members. The Executive Secretariat is made up of six people from civil society, public companies, universities and ISOC DRC.

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

Within the Executive Secretariat there are three women: one is responsible for communication; another of finance and administration; and a third for gender and ICT. We have planned a specific programme for the involvement of women in the dynamics of internet governance, notably by creating WOMEN DRC IGF.

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

We are still working on organising our first edition of the IGF. The date will be launched at the right time.

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

Indeed, we had problems such as:

- What institution would accept to become the leader of the DRC IGF?
- The participation of the private sector was conditioned by the involvement of the government
- Inadequacy of basic texts such as the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda
- The disinterestedness of public sector actors
- Lack of motivation from the private sector and universities
- Political cleavages within political decision makers.

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?

At the national level, from 2007 until today, with modesty, I have always played the leading role for the national forum on internet governance to become a reality. However, during the course of this, I also organised training in some universities, some schools on different topics according to the concerns raised by users. I am often consulted by the Ministry in charge of ICT and some civil society organisations. At the African level, I had to organise the sub-regional Central Africa IGF in 2013. I participated in several seminars organised by the ITU and the ECA. At the global level, I am a member of ICANN/AFRALO, a member of the Civil Society Caucus on Internet Governance and I regularly participate in the global IGF.

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

I work closely with the IGF Secretariat in Geneva while working with other regional and international NRIs.

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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