



Internet Society

Accessibility Standing Group

Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group 2022 Activity Report

Introduction

The Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group (ASG) was formed in 2022. Elections were held for the leadership team in February 2022 and work started in March. The leadership team held its first zoom meeting on 22nd March 2022 and has continued to meet monthly to plan and organise activities. An action plan was developed through consultation with the membership and was supported by the Internet Society.

This report outlines the ASG's activities in 2022.

Vision

Our vision is digital inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Goals

Long-term goals

To change perceptions of stakeholders so that accessibility is addressed right from the start, eliminate barriers and create new advocates for continuous improvement of accessibility in the internet ecosystem.

Goals in 2022-23

- Build understanding on accessibility through:
 - partnerships with ISOC chapters and other key organisations
 - training and mentoring
 - promotion and communications
- Implementation of a pilot program aimed at training emerging leaders with disabilities
- Improve digital inclusion for persons with disabilities in the Internet Society.

Planned activities as defined in the action plan

1. Ongoing liaison and cooperation with ISOC staff on ensuring the accessibility of ISOC content, policy and practice.
2. Build partnerships with ISOC staff, Chapters, SIGs/SGs, disability and non-profit organizations, NRIs, and Schools of Internet Governance.

3. Develop an interactive online course for training emerging leaders with disabilities about Internet governance.
4. Launch a communication campaign targeting different stakeholders each year such as businesses, web/app designers, developers, project managers, education community and policy makers.

Summary of Standing Group activities

- Preparation and submission of ASG activity plan and budget
- Information sharing with ASG membership
- Planning, in partnership with Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance (APSIG), for a South Asian workshop on disability leadership training including 6 meetings with APSIG Executive Committee.
- Negotiation with potential providers on online course development and delivery
- Funding submission to ISIF Asia in partnership with APSIG on Phase 2 of disability leadership training (unsuccessful)
- Project managed content development of online course
- Set up online course sub-committee
- Organised community consultation webinar on content for online course (with model for accessible recording and transcription)
- Organised and delivered three ASG webinars
- Organised and delivered session for ISOC Community Week
- Annual members meeting to be held 8th February 2023
- Monthly meetings of ASG leadership team
- Four meetings on privacy and accessibility with ISOC staff member
- Four meetings with ISOC internal accessibility working group
- Three workshop proposals to APriGF, two of which were successful
- One workshop proposal to IGF which was unsuccessful
- Invited as speaker by Nepal Internet Foundation at Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) session, May 2022
- Invited as speaker by Employers Federation of Ceylon for webinar on digital inclusion, 30th December 2022
- Invited as speaker for IGF session organised by the App Association
- Invited as panelist for APSIG session
- Invited as speaker at NetMission training
- Blog for International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Australian Domain Administration (auDA) website

Projects:

I. Disability leadership training in Internet Governance and digital rights

Description:

The aim is to create new leaders who are strong advocates for improving Internet accessibility. We partnered with the Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance to develop and deliver a face-to-face pilot workshop for South Asian disability leaders in Dhaka, Bangladesh in June 2022. When funding is available, training will be expanded to other countries and regions. The content development for an online training course is being completed early in 2023 with the support of the Internet

Society. The next stages in 2023 are the design, development and delivery of the online course.

The Dhaka workshop was Phase 1 of a planned 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 (based on funding availability). This will be done in tandem with the interactive online course.

II. Development of Internet Society Accessibility Framework

Description:

The ASG initiated the development of a draft Internet Society Accessibility Framework and works together with key Internet Society staff to build a culture of accessibility and to ensure minimal barriers to participation and engagement with ISOC processes and practices. This is in line with the Internet Society's vision: 'The Internet is for everyone'. The draft Accessibility Framework is currently in version 1.3. The ASG looks forward to the implementation of the Framework by the Internet Society.

III. Communications campaign on accessibility targeting different stakeholders

Description:

Businesses were targeted focusing on the benefits of developing accessible websites and apps including:

- increasing reach of customer base
- complying with digital accessibility standards
- meeting government's purchasing requirements

Two webinars were held based on this campaign. Firstly, a webinar in French organised by ASG in conjunction with the Niger Chapter. The second webinar organised by ASG highlighted the potential impact to business globally of the European Union's Web Accessibility Directive and the European Accessibility Act.

Events

I. June 2022: Disability leadership training workshop in digital rights and Internet governance (joint project with Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance) - Gunela Astbrink and Vashkar Bhattacharjee (in person)

Description:

A three-day face to face workshop on disability leadership training in digital rights and Internet governance was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in June 2022 bringing together disability advocates from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. This joint project was initiated by ASG with the workshop content developed by Gunela Astbrink. The methodology was based on 'learning by doing'.

Outcomes:

- The Dhaka Declaration - a document developed by workshop participants outlining key advocacy goals
- Empowered trainees keen to continue learning and increasing their participation in Internet governance processes
- Demonstration of an excellent informal partnership between ASG, APSIG, Bangladesh Chapter of the Internet Society and with the support of Article 19 and the APNIC Foundation.

II. September APriGF 2022: Strengthening the disability voice in Internet Governance by Gunela Astbrink and Satish Babu (in person)

Description:

Workshop session organised by ASG for the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum held in Singapore. There are far too few persons with disability with the broad skill set required to influence Internet policy formulation. By actively presenting the disability voice in Internet governance, increased awareness of accessibility should follow. Capacity-building is a key factor to making change. The workshop discussed how to strengthen the disability voice through capacity-building.

Discussion points:

- How can a combination of online training and face-to-face interactive sharing of skills build such a disability voice?
- How can these capacity-building skills be transferred to a wider group to stimulate more advocacy and achieve a more accessible online community?
- How successful is such an approach? How will it be sustainable?
- How can such a model be used in other regions? What adjustments should be made?
- What role do other stakeholder groups have in supporting and mentoring persons with disability to be heard in Internet Governance?

III. September APriGF 2022: Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the ICT job sector by Swaran Ravindra (in person)

Description:

Workshop session organised by ASG for the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum held in Singapore. The workshop discussed how the tech community can work together to create an accessible environment to train and employ more people with disabilities. With more people actively participating in the digital economy, it is vital to acknowledge that persons with disabilities still face disparities in digital spaces. This situation limits their ability to practise their digital rights. A people-centric Internet is one in which people from all parts of the community, including persons with disability, can be actively engaged.

Conclusions:

- Measuring the gap,
- The cost of inclusion is far less than exclusion

- Participative decision-making process provides a voice for the underrepresented
- More than one digital divide impacting participation
- Real participation is essential

Communications

I. September 2022 -

Internet Society Community Week webinar

Vashkar Bhattacharjee, Muhammad Shabbir and Gunela Astbrink

Topic: Demonstration of Accessible and Inaccessible Web and E-Services through Screen Reading Software

Objective: To create awareness regarding persons with disabilities' use of assistive technologies towards accessing web and e-services. This will help inform the need for designing websites to meet international accessibility guidelines.

Goal: A generic awareness will be created regarding digital accessibility which will eventually contribute towards building a barrier free internet service for all.

Participants: 70 live participants (including 20 ISOC staff)

II. November 2022 -

Webinar ASG : Accessibility guidelines for developers by Zakari Yama

Description:

Following the multiple challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, digitalization is accelerating and digital accessibility is becoming an issue. For businesses, providing accessible services is a competitive advantage and a demonstration of social equity. For states, ensuring accessibility to digital content and services for the entire population is a matter of eliminating barriers to learning, employment, civic activity, etc., but also a matter of social justice. This is why more and more countries are adopting regulations to ensure that digital content and services are accessible for people with disabilities. Therefore, it's in the best interest of web and app developers to learn and apply the accessibility guidelines and meet the requirements for a better user experience. Through this webinar organised by the ISOC ASG in collaboration with ISOC Niger Chapter, Zakari Yama and Kawtar Choubari explained to developers from different countries the web accessibility guidelines and how to implement them.

Conclusions:

- Highlight the challenges faced by persons with disabilities when using a website or an app.
- Raise awareness on the importance of inclusive and accessible web content and services.
- Learn the web accessibility guidelines and related standards.
- Provide participants with some resource materials (doc links) to continue learning about best practices in accessibility and user experience.
- Highlight the ISOC ASG activities, goals and vision.

III. December 2022 -

Webinar ASG : The Regulatory Framework for Accessibility in the EU by Klaus Hoeckner

Description:

This webinar by the Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group (ASG), marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2022, gave participants an overview about the conventions and directives enacted or in the offing in the EU, especially by the European Commission, in the field of ICT-Accessibility. Presenter Klaus Hoeckner covered the main directives like the Web Accessibility Directive, but also others such as the EN 301 549 and the European Accessibility Act.

IV. December 2022

Webinar ASG: Digital Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities to Achieve the Global Goals by Vashkar Bhattacharjee.

Objective: Promoting Digital Inclusion to ensure that no one is left behind in accessing digital services.

Mr. NM Zeaul Alam PAA, honourable Senior Secretary, Department of Information and Communication Technology, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was present as Chief Guest; Mr. Dr. Dewan Muhammad Humayun Kabir, Project Director (Joint Secretary), a2i was present as Session Chair in this webinar.

Mr. Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor (a2i), moderated and co-hosted the session. Mr. Vashkar Bhattacharjee, National Consultant Accessibility, a2i & Ms. Gunela Astbrink, Chair of the Accessibility Standing Group, Internet Society, was Keynote Speaker and other experts in this field shared their thoughts in this webinar.

Key Outcome:

The early outcome of this webinar is that the Bangladesh Government is going to adopt a national Web and e-Service Accessibility Guideline which is already in a final stage. The disability community has been advocating for this over the past year. This webinar has given a boost to the spirit of the disability community through the adoption of this guideline.

V. December 2022 -

auDA Blog : Making online content accessible to all by Gunela Astbrink

Description:

Saturday 3 December 2022 was International Day of People with Disability. auDA invited Gunela Astbrink, Chair of the Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group, to share with readers the importance of accessible online services to persons with disability.

Her post highlights :

- How persons with disabilities deal with online contents and services
- The importance of making a website or an app accessible for persons with disabilities
- How vital it is to manually test the accessibility of websites by trained staff with disability
- How to improve the accessibility of your website or app

VI. January 2023 -

ASG Community consultation on content development of disability leadership training course in Internet governance and digital rights

Description:

The Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group recognises the need for more disability leaders in Internet governance (IG) and digital rights. With the support of the Internet Society, the Accessibility Standing Group is developing content for an online course designed for disability advocates but also targeting trainers who wish to know more about Internet accessibility for persons with disability.

This webinar of 90 minutes was an opportunity for community consultation on the content development of the course. Speakers and facilitators include persons with disability and IG practitioners and trainers from the Internet Society, IGF and ICANN communities.

Leadership Team

- Gunela Astbrink - Chair
- Vashkar Bhattacharjee - Vice-Chair
- Kindy Vereus Montreuil (from March 2022) - Secretary
- Zakari Yama and Swaran Ravindra - Planning and Reporting Officer
- Klaus Hoeckner - Proxy ChAC Representative
- Judith Hellerstein - Treasurer
- Joly MacFie - AMS Admin

Conclusion

The Accessibility Standing Group achieved much in its first year of operation. It takes time to get processes in place, working relationships organised, planning for activities fine-tuned and to start delivering. That is why the majority of actions were held in the last quarter of 2022. It is encouraging that the ASG membership has grown significantly over that time.

The Leadership Team feel confident that we will further connect with our members, Internet Society staff, Chapters, SIGs and Standing Groups as well as the broader Internet community to make a difference on accessibility for persons with disability in 2023.

2nd February, 2023