Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group
2023 Activity Report

Introduction

The Internet Society Accessibility Standing Group (ASG) was formed in 2022 and has completed its second year of operation. The leadership team has held monthly zoom meetings to plan and organise activities.

A key milestone was the Board of Trustees Resolution on a Policy on Accessibility for Persons with Disability in April 2023. This was initiated by Dr Muhammad Shabbir, a BoT and ASG member. This dovetailed very well with the ASG's work on the ISOC Accessibility Framework in collaboration with the ISOC internal working group on accessibility.

Below is the annual report that outlines the ASG's activities in 2023.

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:
  o partnerships with ISOC chapters and other key organisations
  o training and mentoring
  o 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. Communications campaign targeting different stakeholders such as businesses, web/app designers, developers, project managers, education community and policy makers.

Projects

I. **Disability Leadership Training in Internet governance and digital rights**

    Community Consultation on Content Development of Disability Leadership Training in Internet Governance and Digital Rights (January)
    Recognizing the need for more disability leaders in Internet governance (IG) and digital rights, the ASG decided to develop content for an online course on disability advocacy and targeting IG practitioners and trainers who wish to know more about Internet accessibility for persons with disability. For this purpose the ASG organized a community consultation on the content development of the course. Speakers and facilitators included persons with disability, IG practitioners and trainers from the Internet Society, IGF and ICANN communities.

    Course Syllabus (February):
    Based on the input from the community consultation and the expertise of Nirmita Narasimhan with advice on content and structure from the ASG Chair, Gunela Astbrink, a course syllabus was developed for the promised ISOC e-learning course.
    https://a11ysig.org/wiki/Disability_Leadership_Training_Project

    Mentorship of 2023 IGF DCAD Fellows (October):
    As the basis for an informal partnership between the ISOC Accessibility Standing Group and the IGF Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability, Gunela Astbrink offered to mentor DCAD Fellows traveling to participate at the IGF in Kyoto, Japan. Gunela self-funded her travel. Vidhya Y (India), Grace Salanje (Malawi) and Nicodemus Nyakundi (Kenya) were the initial DCAD Fellows from outside Japan. Unfortunately, Grace Salanje was unable to obtain a visa in time and therefore could not travel. Lidia Best (UK) was able to take up the Fellowship at short notice.
    Outcomes:
    Both Vidhya and Nicodemus were encouraged to take on leadership roles in the ISOC Accessibility Standing Group.
    https://a11ysig.org/accessibility_sg/2023-10-18_DCAD_Fellows_mentoring-report.pdf

Online course development (November onwards)
ISOC agreed to fund the online course in November 2023 with meetings held by Gunela Astbrink with ISOC e-learning staff and the online course development contractor. The online course will be a model of e-learning accessibility. This development is being carried through to 2024.

Pakistan disability leadership training workshop (26-28 December)
Based on the model of the Dhaka workshop and with ISOC ASG funding, a Pakistan disability leadership training workshop was organised and supported by Pathfinder Solutions and the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA). The Chairman of PTA was a special guest in the closing ceremony and is interested in recommended accessibility measures for potential implementation.
Report: https://www.a11ysig.org/pk-ig-a11y-training/

Sri Lanka disability leadership training workshop (30-31 December)
Based on the model of the Dhaka workshop and with ISOC ASG funding, a Sri Lanka disability leadership training workshop was organised and supported by the Lanka School of Internet Governance.
Report:
https://a11ysig.org/accessibility_sg/2024-02-02_Final_Report_-_TRAINING_ON_INTERNET_GOVERNANCE_2023_-_Sri_Lanka.pdf

Key outcome: Both the Pakistan and the Sri Lanka workshop organisers identified potential leaders in Internet governance and digital rights. The organisers will encourage them to continue their learning, apply for Fellowships and participate actively in Internet fora.

ISOC e-learning tutor guidelines (November 2023-January 2024)
Recognising that ISOC e-learning tutors need increased understanding of the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities when undertaking ISOC courses, ISOC ASG funded Pathfinder Solutions in Pakistan to develop tutor guidelines. The project contractors participated in a meeting of ISOC tutors explaining the project and following up with a key tutor as well as consulting with Vidhya Y and Vashkar Bhattacharjee who have done ISOC courses. The tutor guidelines are in draft form.

II. **ISOC Disability Inclusion Action Plan**
In 2022, the ASG drafted the ISOC Accessibility Framework to outline in broad terms suggested areas that the Internet Society may improve its

policy, programs and activities to meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. The two main objectives were to:

- build a culture of accessibility
- minimise barriers to participation

The Accessibility Framework was developed in collaboration with the ISOC internal working group on accessibility.

After the Board of Trustees Resolution on Accessibility for Persons with Disability was passed unanimously in April 2023, the ASG developed a Disability Inclusion Action Plan based on the two main objectives outlined in the Framework. It specifies in more detail each of the recommended actions, the responsible section, timelines and reviews. This Action Plan will continue to be discussed with the internal working group in 2024.

https://a11ysig.org/accessibility_sg/2024-02-02_Disability_Inclusion_Action_Plan_1.2.pdf

Events

Accessibility Standing Group Members Annual meetings (February and April):
In February and April 2023, the ASG Leadership Team organized the annual members online meetings to outline what has been done towards the standing group's vision of digital inclusion for persons with disability and to hear feedback and suggestions from the members. ISOC Board of Trustees members, Dr Muhammad Shabbir, Charles Mok and Sagarika Wickramasekara were present.
https://share.descript.com/view/xQ61YWMhgjO
https://a11ysig.org/accessibility_sg/2023-04-03_Accessibility_SG_Members.pdf

Regulatory Framework for Accessibility in Europe (March):
https://a11ysig.org/misc/2023-03-15_Regulatory_framework_EU_CSUN.pdf
CSUN presentation by Klaus Hoeckner.

Webinar / Taking accessible technology to the next level (May)
Inclusive Africa Conference
https://hopin.com/events/inclusive-africa-2023/
Klaus Hoeckner speaks on 'Assistive Technologies and Funding' panel

Online Expert Forum: The Importance of Digital Inclusion for People with Disability (May):
The 60-minute forum arranged by Vashkar Bhattacharjee was targeted specifically to Bangladesh but open to participants worldwide. It raised awareness of the importance of digital technology adoption and addressed the skills and capacities needed to increase the use of digital services and foster digital inclusion.
https://isoc.live/16587/

National Conference on Information Technology, Fiji (August)

Gunela Astbrink held a face to face session in Nadi, Fiji on the invitation of Fiji National University. Topic: Accessibility for persons with disability and marginalised communities - Adding humanity to automation.
https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7098248976977559552

Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF), Australia (August)
Gunela Astbrink and Vashkar Bhattacharjee were members of the APrIGF Multistakeholder Group.
Dr Muhammad Shabbir was an excellent plenary speaker
Gunela moderated the workshop Disability and Digital Self-Determination: What's the Missing Link?' submitted by Point of View.
Gunela also co-moderated with Wayne Hawkins the workshop The role for government purchasing of accessible Information and Communications Technology (ICT). This workshop was co-organised by the Australian Communications and Consumer Action Network and the ASG.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF), Japan (October)
Gunela Astbrink moderated the session: IGF 2023 WS #350 Accessible e-learning experience for PWDs-Best Practices | Internet Governance Forum
This session was submitted by Swaran Ravindra and Zakari Yama with speakers including Vashkar Bhattacharjee and Vidhya Y.
The session focused on how we as the Accessibility Standing Group together with the global Internet governance community can work together to create an accessible learning environment to train and employ more people with disabilities worldwide.

Gunela also moderated the session organised by the Dynamic Coalition on Gender entitled Disability, Gender and Digital Self-Determination: What's the missing link?
https://intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2023-dc-gender-disability-gender-and-digital-self-determination

Gunela was an impromptu speaker on session: #481 Barriers to inclusion strategies for people with disability.
https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2023-ws-481-barriers-to-inclusionstrategies-for-people-with-disability

Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance (APSIG), Philippines (November)
Gunela Astbrink was a member of the APSIG Fellowship Committee. Two fellowships are reserved for persons with disability.
An integral part of the annual APSIG program is accessibility and disability inclusion. Gunela Astbrink, Manique Gunaratne, Vidhya Y and Eshaq Buyhan presented in the 1.5 hour session.
In the feedback session, at least six Fellows stated this was their favourite session or referred specifically to it. In addition, several people spoke to Gunela directly afterwards that they will follow up with their organisations to:
- alert developers to WCAG

- use Universal Service Obligations through the telecom regulator to provide services/support for persons with disability
- make sure that persons with disability are included in workshops on misinformation/disinformation
- include digital literacy training for persons with disability in remote areas
- reach out and include persons with disability in a gender-based program prioritise studies in disability policy

Communications
Articles by Vashkar Bhattacharjee:
- **Banking is for every person (Dhaka Tribune) (April)**
  [Banking is for every person](#)

- **Vashkar's drive for disability-inclusive banking services (April)**
  https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/5h65umuoo8

- **Impacts of GAAD on promoting smart accessible digital service (May)**
  https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/311499/impacts-of-gaad-on-promoting-smart-accessible

- **Digitization must be for all (May)**
  https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/editorial/311586/digitization-must-be-for-all

ASG LinkedIn page (December - ongoing)
The LinkedIn page will be a primary way of sharing information about ASG activities and about digital accessibility. It has been set up by Joly MacFie and content will be posted by Nicodemus Nyakundi. https://www.linkedin.com/company/isoc-asg/
[An ASG content strategy](#) has been written.

Governance, outreach and consultation

Governance of Accessibility Standing Group 2023 onwards (June)
In order to plan for possible changes to the Accessibility Standing Group governance structure and operations from 2023 onwards, the Chair, Gunela Astbrink held one on one discussions with each member of the current leadership team. This helped to prepare for elections later in 2023 and set a course for a tailor-made approach for the ASG based on the leadership team's experiences of the first 20 months of operation.
Outcomes:

- o Ideas for activities
- o Ideas for governance (extended LT, sub-committees)
- o Creation of sub-committees:
  - ▪ Training sub-committee
  - ▪ Nominations sub-committee
  - ▪ Africa Awareness campaign sub-committee
- o Preparation for elections
- o Useful and insightful comments

Link to the governance document:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xlwaOpSBv3ODwsWOcxjfAnvfHxTEm8bi/

Ongoing liaison and collaboration with ISOC

Ongoing conversations with ISOC and Foundation staff.
Cooperation on implementing BoT Resolution on Accessibility Policy.
Development of a draft Disability inclusion plan based on the draft Framework
https://a11ysig.org/accessibility_sg/2024-02-02_Disability_Inclusion_Action_Plan_1.2.pdf

Accessibility Standing Group's Code of Conduct (July)

The Code of Conduct is created to strengthen the Accessibility Standing Group and to create a fair and transparent environment where everyone can thrive. The rules and regulations governing ASG membership are set out in this Code of Conduct:
http://a11ysig.org/accessibility_sg/ASG-Code-Of-Conduct.pdf

2023 Nominations Committee (July 2023 - January 2024)

In order to prepare for the 2023 elections, the ASG Leadership Team set up a Nominations Committee. Its mission is to:

- o Decide on the roles/positions and which will be elected or selected
- o Provide a description of the roles
- o Define the criteria for nominations and identify candidates/possibly interview candidates
- o Develop a nomination form and define the election process

Members: Gunela Astbrink, Vashkar Bhattacharjee, Judith Hellerstein with assistance from Joly MacFie
https://a11ysig.org/wiki/Election_Committee_2023

ISOC Chapters needs assessment (July-September)

The Accessibility Standing Group in collaboration with ISOC Foundation conducted a survey to assess ISOC Chapters' needs for promoting digital accessibility and their knowledge and readiness in terms of digital inclusion.
This survey aimed to bridge the information gap concerning the ISOC Chapters' priorities as well as human and institutional capacity needs with regard to accessibility for persons with disabilities. It also aimed to determine whether there are

needs/interest in offering specific grant funding to the Chapters in order to promote and improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- ● The survey found that Chapters were keen to do more on accessibility but needed resources for training and other support.
- ● The ISOC Foundation can have a role to play in Chapter funding to incorporate accessibility. This will be investigated further with the Foundation in 2024.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CYsT5TzjwA7Q4gdiGCNijioloJnFgEES/view

ISOC ASG Members' Survey (October-November)
The distinction between 'accessibility' and 'access' is not readily understood. To remove that confusion, the ASG brainstormed two solutions: changing the name or adding a slogan that highlights the group's mission. The goal of the survey was to gather member's opinions about these proposals, as well as collect their suggestions. The survey also aimed to learn more about members' particular area of accessibility interest or expertise.
Outcome: The survey results show a preference for keeping the name and adding a slogan. The ASG resolved to add 'Promoting inclusion for persons with disabilities' to the name.
https://a11ysig.org/accessibility_sg/2023-11-16_ASG_Members_survey_report.pdf

Leadership Team

● Gunela Astbrink - Chair

● Vashkar Bhattacharjee - Vice-Chair

● Zakari Yama and Swaran Ravindra - Planning and Reporting Officer

● Klaus Hoeckner - Proxy ChAC Representative

● Judith Hellerstein - Treasurer

● Joly MacFie - AMS Admin (resigned Marc 2023)

Plans for 2024

- ● Continuation of implementation discussions on ISOC Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- ● Continuation of Disability Leadership Training Project
- ● Completion of ISOC online course on Disability leadership in Internet governance and digital rights
- ● Africa Accessibility Awareness Campaign

Conclusion

The Accessibility Standing Group achieved much in its second year of operation. It is encouraging that the ASG membership has grown significantly over that time and much has been accomplished.

The Leadership Team feel confident that we will connect more 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 coming years.

January, 2024