

IGF 2017 Reporting Template

Session Title:

Equipping populations with the skills to shape and secure their digital future (WS141)

Date:

20 December 2017

Time:

10:15-11:45

Session Organizers:

International Chamber of Commerce Business Action to Support the Information Society (ICC BASIS)
Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry
Government, Government of Mexico
Centre for European Policy Studies

Chair/Moderator:

Thomas Whitehead, Director of US Government Affairs, BT

Rapporteur/Notetaker:

Barbara Rosen Jacobson, DiploFoundation

List of Speakers and their institutional affiliations:

- Jon Chippindall, Learning Resource Developer at Barefoot Computing Project
- Virat Bhatia, Chair of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
- Elizabeth Maya, Deputy General Director , General Coordination, Government of Mexico
- Edward Choi, Youth Representative from NetMission Asia
- Kenta Mochizuki, Public Policy, Corporate Intelligence, Yahoo Japan
- Samar Baba, President of the Tunisian section of IEEE's Special Interest Group on Humanitarian Technology
- Sharada Srinivasan, Research Fellow at 1 World Connected

Key Issues raised (1 sentence per issue):

- In order to have meaningful access to the Internet, digital literacy is key
- Digital literacy is not only about basic skills, it is also about the knowledge of languages, awareness about the possibilities of digital technology, and expert knowledge about engineering or computing
- Governments are able to enhance digital literacy by implementing digital literacy programmes, for example by providing training in rural areas or integrating it into school curricula
- Public-private partnerships and the collaboration with civil society and technical communities can further enhance these programmes
- Ultimately, digital literacy is related to social factors, and interventions need to be developed with a community-oriented mind-set, tailored to the needs of the local context

If there were presentations during the session, please provide a 1-paragraph summary for each presentation:

Mr Jon Chippindall connected remotely from his classroom along with two students, and demonstrated the way in which local projects in primary schools attempt to advance digital skills among young children. He showcased the games, animations, tools, and computing languages used by the schoolchildren. Chippindall explained that the project has proven useful for the children, who are engaged and challenged, as it ignites their creativity.

Mr Virat Bhatia highlighted the challenge of improving digital literacy in a country as populous as India. The government is working on this issue through a large digital literacy programme, complete with multistakeholder engagement. With the basic platform in place, the programme will attempt to bring digital literacy to 60 million families by March 2019, through teaching adoption of new skills and methods. Bhatia argued that programmes such as this could empower rural and remote communities and better integrate them in society. The increased possibility to use videos in digital skills programmes provides new opportunities to cross the literacy barrier.

Ms Elizabeth Maya emphasised that technologies are changing how communities are interacting, and there are ongoing digitalisation programmes to capture the benefits of such technologies for the Mexican society. The development of digital skills is part of the new learning curriculum, adding programming and robotics, with practical guidance for teachers. Collaborations have been established with civil society and private companies to set up this platform, with cooperation from several areas of the Mexican government.

Mr Edward Choi suggested that while many young people use ICTs, most of them are unaware of the importance of Internet governance. It is important to change the curriculum of the education system, as it is not yet adequately integrated into secondary education. He also presented NetMission.Asia and its work in promoting Internet governance and digital inclusion, through the Youth IGF and by having youth teaching other youth. Choi described it as a multistakeholder, youth-led initiative, which addresses how youth can be involved in Internet governance, and building the capacity of young people on this topic.

Mr Kenta Mochizuki explained that Japan is particularly challenged by labour productivity issues, while the country's strengths are in education and IT human resources. Mochizuki also talked about the work that Yahoo is doing together with the Japanese government to help with specific digital literacy issues, such as providing coding classes, e-commerce platforms, and helping with teaching. This is in line with the idea that each stakeholder should have different roles in promoting digital literacy.

Ms Samar Baba argued that investing in new technologies, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is important in connecting people, in addition to providing Internet access, building a process to foster interaction between communities, and developing a community-oriented mind set. Baba maintained that social connection remains a key component of digital literacy. Only 40% of schools are connected to the Internet in Tunisia. With the support of the government, IEEE is providing workshops for children. In addition, Baba stressed that providing content that contains locally relevant information is important to meaningfully empower youth.

Ms Sharada Srinivasan talked about her work on improving digital literacy to enhance connectivity, which needs to be tackled on both the supply and demand side. Srinivasan

explained that skills training takes two key forms, one being basic literacy training on how to use computers and creating basic apps for the Internet, while the other form is teaching specific skills, in local communities, adapted to the local context. Local engagement is important, as localised digital skills training for creates more impact. She gave an example of how a remote island, which recently connected to the Internet, was able to decrease mortality significantly, since it connected them to doctors they couldn't have otherwise reached.

Please describe the Discussions that took place during the workshop session (3 paragraphs):

The session devoted half an hour to break-out group discussions. The groups discussed how to promote careers in engineering and computing among youth, the need for digitally-skilled employees for companies' digital transformation plans, advancing digital literacy among women, and how to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries through digital literacy, especially considering the great benefits that developing countries may have through digitalisation.

The discussions highlighted that the specific digital skills that are required depend from context to context, and might be different between companies, countries, and communities. Properly managing this challenge requires the cooperation between stakeholders. For example, digital transformation needs and skills differ among organisations, and the challenges for women in their use of digital technologies depends on the context they live in, such as in developing or developed societies.

Yet, mitigating this challenge can have important benefits. Internet access is only meaningful when people know how to use it, and with digital skills, previously marginalised communities can be integrated into society and the labour market. The discussions also pointed out that education is not only for children, and should be perceived as lifelong. In addition, that the different needs in different communities, digital skills and awareness need to be promoted everywhere, both in developed and developing countries.

Please describe any Participant suggestions regarding the way forward/ potential next steps /key takeaways (3 paragraphs):

There are three important takeaways of the session. First, before any digital literacy programme takes place, it is important to analyse the context in which digital skills are needed. Needs differ across actors and communities, and the outcome of a digital literacy project is highly dependent on whether these particular needs are addressed.

Second, digital literacy is a broad concept, encompassing many facets. It is important to understand digital literacy as a holistic set of knowledge and skills that allows users and organisations to fully capture the potential of digital technology. This ranges from basic computing skills to knowledge of engineering, and from literacy in languages to awareness of the potential of technology.

Third, by working together with all stakeholders, the most effective solutions can be created, tailored to particular need, and with the combined expertise from their respective angles.

Gender Reporting

- Estimate the overall number of the participants present at the session: 40

- Estimate the overall number of women present at the session: 20

- To what extent did the session discuss gender equality and/or women's empowerment?

The session included a specific discussion group to tackle the question of how to advance digital literacy among women worldwide, and some speakers included a gender dimension in their presentations.

- If the session addressed issues related to gender equality and/or women's empowerment, please provide a brief summary of the discussion:

There are often barriers to access for digital technologies for women, and some of these barriers relate to digital literacy. There are various ongoing initiatives to break these barriers, such as through government-led digital literacy programmes, for example in Mexico and India. Women in different contexts have different needs for digital skills, and it is important to take into account and navigate cultural constraints. This challenge could be mitigated by appointing local champions in communities, so that interventions can be created with the cultural specificities in mind.