

Report on Workshop Number 14: Digital Divide: Lessons from South East Asia and the Pacific, APRIIGF, New Delhi

Date: 6th August 2014

Time: 10:00am – 12:30pm

Workshop Resources :

- Pre Workshop Paper to initiate dialogue on the Digital Divide called: [“A Snapshot of the Digital Divide in the South East Asia and the Pacific”](#)
- Video Resource on Snapshots on the Digital Divide in Asia Pacific via Video <http://youtu.be/wnCNIH2MpgU>

Moderators:

- Chaitanya Dhareshwar Head Technologist and Adviser at Doctor on Call and Pasifika Nexus Think Tank Membe
- [Salanieta Tamanikaiwaimaro](#) –President of South Pacific Computer Society, Member of SEARCC ExComm, Manager ICT Center, University of the South Pacific, Founder of Pasifika Nexus (*Remote*)Ms. [Noelle de Guzman](#), Regional Programme Coordinator, APAC, ISOC
- Mr. [Satish Babu](#), Director, ICFOSS, India
- Mr. [Edmon Chung](#), CEO of DotAsia Organisation
- Mr. [Benjamin Matthews](#), Business Consultancy (*Remote*)
- Mr. Sakaio Manoa, USP ICT Outreach Coordinator (*Remote*)

Countries That Participated in the Panel Discussion via Video, Live and Remote Participation

Pacific Region	Professor Rajesh Chandra	CROP WG on ICT Chair President, University of the South Pacific
	Salanieta Tamanikaiwaimaro	President, South Pacific Computer Society Director Pasifika Nexus Manager, Japan Pacific ICT Centre
	Sakaio Manoa	ICT Outreach Coordinator, University of the South Pacific
Australia	Cheryl Langdon-Orr	Director auDA and ISOC AU Director auDA and ISOC AU
	Nick Tate	Immediate Past President Australia Computer Society
Kiribati	Mere	Student, University of the South Pacific
Solomon Islands	Samson	Student, University of the South Pacific
Tuvalu	The Right Hon. Mr. Monise Lafai	Ministry of Communications and

		Transportation
	Tenaolia Simone	Manager IT,
Vanuatu	Francis Simelum	Graduate, University of the South Pacific
	Dalsie Baniala	Manager Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator, Vanuatu
Indonesia	Dwi Elfrida	Manager Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator, Vanuatu
Hong Kong, China	Edmon Chung	CEO Dot Asia Secretariat APPrIGF ISOC HK
Cambodia	Eric Chuk	Editor, Open Development Mekong
Philippines	Noelle de Guzman	Regional Program Manager, Asia Pacific ISOC
India	Satish Babu	Director IFCOSS
	HR Mohan	President, Computer Society, India
New Zealand	Benjamin Mathews	Director, Pasifika Nexus Services Delivery Manager, Alcatel-Lucent
Malaysia	Professor Dr. Ahmad Zaki Bin A Bahar	President Malaysian National Computer Confederation Member, National ICT Human Resource Task Force Secretary of ICT Cluster, National Council of Professors Chairman, National E-Commerce Standards Committee, SIRIM

Summary

The Workshop focused on sharing diverse perspectives on the Digital Divide and canvassed the expansion of how traditionally Digital Divide has been perceived and as a result measured. The dialogue enabled participants to learn about the challenges on the ground. What was clear was that for the Asia Pacific, there is no one size fits all model. The region faces acute challenges and each context is diverse as some of these are related to lack of access to energy, high costs of transportation, minimum wage and issues of affordability. The digital divide as was shared by participants highlighted those that existed in densely populated cities as well as various other levels of the Divide.

The forum was organized in a manner that ensured that all participants both panelists and attendees felt that they were all equals and that it was in the true spirit of the IGF forum, a place where generous discussion could take place.

Levels of the Digital Divide

Digital Divide levels exist at different levels:

- **Urban and Rural**
- **Old and Young**

- **Men and Women**
- **Rich and Poor**
- **Persons with Disabilities and Those without Disabilities**
- **The Literate and the Illiterate**
- **Those who participate in policy development processes and those that do not participate in policy development processes**

Asia Pacific has 4.2 billion people within its region which is 60% of the world population and the countries are all diverse with languages, size, etc.

Panelists touched on various levels of the digital divide and it was interesting to hear the diverse snapshots from across South East Asia and the Pacific. There were common threads in terms of access challenges. What was resoundingly clear was that there was no one size fits all as each country and territory is unique. There was discussion on the important of access in preserving languages, culture and enabling economic development and a better quality of life. There was discussion on challenges to stimulating investment rollout in underserved region and in some countries like Indonesia where provinces have different levels of minimum wage rates but that the high costs of the internet was consistent throughout the country. Dwi Elfrida the E Application Services officer with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology shared about the challenges with rolling out infrastructure in the rural areas.

Mr HR Mohan, President of Computer Society of India shared about how ICT proliferation in a country of 1.2 billion people was a challenge especially when there was diverse cultures and languages. Mr. Mohan shared that whilst India has been known to provide ICT services to the entire world but that they acknowledge the Digital Divide and economic divide that exists within India. He suggested that this could be attributed to low literacy levels, high cost of access devices, high cost of internet devices and low internet penetration rate. He says that there are about 15% of internet penetration rate. Mr Mohan suggests that solutions in India include transparency in E Governance initiatives and the Right to Education Act, National Skilled Cooperation Initiative, National Optic Fibre Network are all part of solutions in addressing the Digital Divide.

Amit Singh, Vice President of the South Pacific Computer Society shared how countries like Nauru that do not have a Bank and as such they have challenges in importing goods and growing businesses. Amit Singh also shared about Tahiti (French Polynesia) has strict laws about bringing electronic goods into the country where people are expected to show receipts of purchases or be penalized. Similarly Professor Dr. Ahmad Zaki Bin A Bakar, President Malaysian National Computer Federation, Member of the National ICT Human Resource Task Force, Secretary of the ICT Cluster, National Council of Professors, Chairman of National E-Commerce Standards Committee, SRIM shared that socio economic status was also a factor in terms of access and how access to ICT and banking services have the ability to transform communities.

Lisa Garcia of the Philippines emphasized the need to address the gender disparity in terms of Access issues.

Samson, a student from the Solomon Islands shared about the challenges to accessing ICT and the Internet in his country with students having to come to the urban centers to access ICT and educational material as this was not accessible in rural and remote areas.

Edmon Chung of Dot Asia shared that affordability and access in Hong Kong was also an issue for students in a system where homework or assignments through E Learning initiatives have to be submitted electronically. These students have to visit the Public Library or stand in the queue to access internet services to do their homework. This is typically a problem for students in bigger cities in Asia and the Pacific. The levels of divide that exist for developing countries are also true for developed countries in certain instances.

Mere, a student from Kiribati shared about how people have to connect from Telecom Service Centers to access efficient and fast internet as it is really fast but that connecting from home is a challenge due to high costs. She said that they pay 2AUD for 30 minutes and 4AUD for an hour.

Cheryl Langdon – Orr Director of auDA and ISOC AU and Nick Tate the immediate Past President of the Australian Computer Society shared how people's socio economic status affects affordability in Australia affects access in Australia. They each emphasized the various levels of Digital Divide that exist in Australia in terms of Digital literacy.

Tenanoia Simona, Manager IT and Telecom Tuvalu shared about the challenges in rolling out infrastructure in Tuvalu. They rely on satellite for rolling out services and have to repeatedly deploy the same infrastructure for other islands. The high cost of internet bandwidth limits is an issue in Tuvalu that affects the Digital Divide. The Minister of Telecommunications in Tuvalu also shared about the challenges with finance and infrastructure in Tuvalu.

Benjamin Mathews, Services Delivery Manager of Alcatel Lucent and Pasifika Nexus Director of New Zealand shared how the divide between rich and poor was also a factor in how people are able to access ICT in New Zealand. He shared that whilst they had contributed to the rollout of 70% of the infrastructure in New Zealand, it was clear that no one single stakeholder can resolve the Digital Divide but that it has to be a coordinated, collaborative engagement of all stakeholders to commit to bridging the gap.

There was also extensive discussion on the important role that access to ICT plays in preserving languages whether this was almost extinct languages through online translators (Noelle De Guzman, Philippines) and using Internationalized domain names (Edmon Chung) to enable access to communities who do not normally use the ASCII script. Satish Babu Director, ICFOSS, India spoke about the important role that access plays in relation to culture, protection of languages and the enhancement of Internet of Things in climate change adaptation and monitoring and disaster reduction.

Professor Dr. Ahmad Zaki Bin A Bakar, President Malaysian National Computer Federation, Member of the National ICT Human Resource Task Force, Secretary of the ICT Cluster, National Council of Professors, Chairman of National E-Commerce Standards Committee, SRIM shared that socio economic status was also a factor.

Noelle De Guzman of Philippines Regional Programme Coordinator, APAC, ISOC shared about some excellent initiatives that ISOC Asia Pacific has been rolling out in the Asia Pacific region. She advocated for activating community projects as a means to bridge the Digital Divide.