

Regional On-line Forum

Participants from civil society and the public and private sector of 27 countries in the Asia-Pacific region engaged in a very lively, on-line ORDIG dialogue during January – February 2005 that clearly indicated that Internet governance is neither abstract, nor the exclusive domain of industrialized countries or ICT engineers.

The issues raised mirrored the patterns of the global discussion on Internet governance, with the root servers, IP address management and ICANN, garnering a great deal of interest. In addition, issues of local language development and content for the Internet, and cultural preservation and diversity were highlighted in the discussions. Differing views on bandwidth markets and the price of international connectivity also highlighted that priorities in Internet governance vary significantly across sub-regions and countries, and that both international and domestic factors impact the efficacy of Internet policies.

Research and the Asia-Pacific Input Paper on Internet Governance

Based on the priorities that were identified from the regional and sub-regional consultations, survey, and online forum, ORDIG commissioned regional experts from the public and private sectors, and civil society to undertake research on a variety of topics. These topics include cultural diversity and preservation, e-commerce, emerging technologies, leveraging participation, and spam and network security. The research also included special consideration for landlocked and small island countries' situations.

Putting forward the Asia-Pacific perspective on the Internet governance priorities, an "Input Paper" on Internet Governance, which is a cohesive summary and synthesis of the findings under the ORDIG initiative, will be submitted to WGIG and WSIS.

Primer on Internet Governance

ORDIG is also producing a primer on Internet Governance. The primer explains the main public policy concepts and technical principles that are frequently used in the Internet governance debate. It is intended to help all stakeholders (government, private sector and civil society) to gain quick access to basic facts, concepts, and priority issues, in order to lay the foundations for a broader and more grounded understanding of Internet governance issues from a distinctively Asia-Pacific perspective. It also provides examples of Internet governance practices as guidance for policy-makers and other interested stakeholders.

On-line Knowledge Portal (www.igov.apdip.net)

To further disseminate information and contribute towards the dialogue on Internet governance, ORDIG has established an Internet Governance Portal with participatory features for news and background information on Internet governance, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

Learn More about the Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance

We welcome and encourage feedback from any interested constituency in the Asia-Pacific region. For more information on ORDIG, please go to: <http://www.igov.apdip.net> or contact us at: info@igov.apdip.net

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Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance

Towards an
Asia-Pacific Perspective on
Internet Governance
for Sustainable Human Development

An initiative of

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Internet Governance for Development: Why Bother?

Broadly speaking, "Internet Governance" refers to all the policies and rules that influence the structure, operation and use of the Internet. Many of these rules are linked to development objectives in important ways. The choice of technical Internet standards determines how easy it is to adapt Internet technologies to local needs, such as multi-lingual capabilities.

Likewise, the rules for the global Internet naming and addressing system determine who has access to critical infrastructure components that ensure global connectivity. The reach of Internet governance encompasses many other fields, ranging from competition and intellectual property issues to consumer protection, e-commerce regulation and even to the management of radio spectrum for wireless access technologies.

Policy decisions in all these areas ultimately influence a wide array of the Internet's practical characteristics, such as costs for access and content, the speed, availability, reliability and privacy of network services. In a nutshell, Internet governance critically determines how widely and how fairly the opportunities of the information society can be spread and thus what benefits the Internet holds in store for all users.

Making Internet Governance Work for Global Human Development: A Timely and Demanding Challenge

Making the Internet work for human development requires rules and policies that are responsive to the specific needs of all countries. This in turn requires a strong voice for all stakeholders and their constructive engagement in all policy-making processes related to Internet governance.

This is a formidable challenge, especially for developing countries, since presently, Internet governance comprises many different rule-making bodies and systems that vary dramatically in their structures and operating models, in their degree of openness and transparency and thus ultimately in their accountability, inclusiveness, democratic legitimacy and responsiveness to developmental concerns.

Developing countries are further challenged by the global nature of the Internet that puts many areas of Internet governance beyond the direct control of any individual country and into the realm of global co-operation. Furthermore, participation in far-away fora is often costly and complicated for stakeholders from developing countries.

Timing also poses a problem. The most fundamental rules for Internet governance are already well established or under long-term active negotiation and newcomers to the Internet have had little opportunity to generate awareness across all stakeholder groups, mobilize the required policy expertise and co-ordinate strategies for effective engagement.

In sum, the march of Internet governance continues and threatens to leave behind developing countries that are forfeiting opportunities for an inclusive information society. These concerns have taken centre stage at the first phase (2003) of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and sparked the creation of the United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG).

WGIG has the mandate to consult on viable steps for reform, and develop recommendations for the second phase of the Summit (WSIS II) to be held in Tunis in November 2005.

Taking Action: The Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance (ORDIG)

ORDIG is a timely response to these concerns. Initiated in October 2004 by UNDP's Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP) and supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), it aims to strengthen the voices from the Asia-Pacific region in Internet governance by focussing on:

Awareness

ORDIG is raising awareness about Internet governance issues and opportunities for engagement across the Asia-Pacific region and facilitating an open regional dialogue that engages the widest range of stakeholders possible, including regulators, civil society, and the private sector;

Research

ORDIG is helping to identify knowledge priorities for stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region and mobilizing targeted research to ensure evidence-based policy demands on Internet governance;

Synergy

ORDIG is facilitating the identification of common interests and policy priorities, helping to create interest alliances across different stakeholder groups and countries in the region and supporting the development of an Asia-Pacific perspective on Internet governance;

Sustained Impact

ORDIG promotes the effective communication of Asia-Pacific perspectives to the UN Working Group on Internet Governance,

WSIS, and other fora concerned with Internet governance issues. It also helps build the institutional foundations for a sustained policy dialogue at national and regional levels.

Activities

ORDIG is advancing its strategic goals through a mix of activities, which are developed in close consultation with a high-level advisory panel that represents a broad range of stakeholders from the Asia-Pacific. ORDIG activities include:

Regional and Sub-regional Consultations

In collaboration with UNESCAP, one regional conference (Bangkok) and four sub-regional conferences (Bishkek, Suva, Bali, and Kathmandu) were held involving several hundred participants from 50 countries and 35 regional and international organizations. Furthermore, in an effort to gather views from civil society and others, ORDIG organized Internet governance consultations with the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), the Association of Progressive Communications (APC), and the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Conference on Operational Technologies (APRICOT).

In essence, the participants broke the relevant public policy issues down into two categories: first, how the Internet is deployed, including setting standards, the domain name system, IP address allocation, and Internet traffic charges; and second, how the Internet is used, including network security, fraud, cyber-squatting and other cyber-crime activities, spam, content, intellectual property rights protection, consumer safeguards, and privacy. Participants also stressed the need for partnerships involving all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector and civil society, in making Internet governance more transparent, democratic and multilateral.

Multi-lingual Regional Survey

In identifying the priority areas for the Asia-Pacific, ORDIG conducted a region-wide, issue-based, online survey on Internet governance.

Over 1200 completed questionnaires were received from 37 countries of the region and from all major stakeholder groups, in 12 major languages.

The survey solicited views on 22 potential issues in Internet governance. The survey clearly points out a number of priority concerns in Internet governance that require urgent attention. Concerns about virus attacks, online fraud/cyber-crime and spam, illegal content, privacy, and policies for the wireless Internet were identified as priorities for a wide array of countries and stakeholder groups.