

DCAD Substantive Paper for IGF 2016 DCs Main Session

1. Introduction

Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD) was formed during the second Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 2007. Since then, DCAD works to facilitate interaction between relevant bodies and to ensure that ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and those with specific needs is included in the discussions around the Internet Governance. DCAD aims to help create a future where all individuals have equal access to the opportunities through ICT. DCAD has now around 50 members made up of representatives from organizations for persons with disabilities, UN agencies, international organizations, policy makers, industry, academia, civil society and experts on accessibility.

As one of the outputs from DCAD, it has been developing and updating the DCAD Accessibility Guidelines (version 2015¹) which were submitted to the IGF Secretariat to improve the accessibility of the IGF meetings. The guidelines cover the accessibility considerations, including but not limited to, venue, technologies, provision of information, remote participation facility, registration, transport, accommodation and staff training. The guidelines will continue to be updated to cover other issues and to meet the rapidly changing environment.

In addition, DCAD addresses a number of areas of general ICT accessibility issues to raise awareness of the importance of inclusion of persons with disabilities and those with specific needs, taking into considerations views from accessibility experts and directly from Persons with disabilities and those with specific needs. The following paragraphs will describe background of such areas to better understand what the issues are around the ICT accessibility, and will be detailed at the DCAD/G3iCT workshop.

2. Some ICT Accessibility issues

2.1. Internet, Digital Accessibility and SDGs: 2016 Global Scorecard (developed by Francesca Cesa Bianchi, G3iCT)

In the Spring of 2016, the Global Initiative for Inclusive Technologies (G3iCT) and Disabled People's International (DPI) surveyed the degree to which States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) comply with its dispositions on Internet and ICT Accessibility and how prepared they are to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to persons with disabilities.

The fourth edition of the "CRPD 2016 ICT Accessibility Progress Report" covers 104 countries including at least 99 ratifying countries, and the United States as a benchmark country. Those 104 countries represent a numerical majority of the world population. More than 250 panelists participated in the survey. 57 data points were collected in each country covering the following three areas of concern:

- Countries enactment of laws, regulations and policies on ICT and Internet accessibility
- Countries capacity to implement those
- Actual availability of accessible Internet and ICTs for persons with disabilities

Findings reveal that persons with disabilities still lack digital access in a majority of countries surveyed and that many countries do not have yet ICT accessibility related policies, e.g.,

¹ <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/documents/dynamic-coalitions/dynamic-coalition-on-accessibility-and-disability/545-igf-2015-dcad-accessibility-guidelines/file>

- Low levels of public sector web accessibility (60% of countries surveyed do not have accessibility policy; 21% have policy with minimum implementation)
- Lower levels of private sector web accessibility (82% of countries surveyed do not have any accessible website among the top 10 commercial websites)
- Low levels of language localization of AT and accessible technology

Among those countries that have ICT policies, many struggle to implement and enforce them. This includes in key areas like public procurement of accessible ICT, web accessibility, standards adoption, inclusive education, and Smart Cities.

Some real red flags about country capacity to implement include lack of mandatory training programs for future accessibility professionals and engagement of and support for Disabled Persons Organizations.

Furthermore, in a study based on the analysis of key data points from the main “CRPD 2016 ICT Accessibility Progress Report,” the current status of 84 Global South countries – representing a total population of 3.2 billion people – was presented with respect to their capacity to collect disability data and statistics.² In regard to the ability of countries to monitor the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Development or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), over 78 percent of Global South countries (or 64 of 84 countries) participating in the survey among the total 104 countries surveyed, have demonstrated that they do not collect disability data and statistics related to specific SDGs, targets and indicators.

The 2030 Agenda for Development includes 17 goals, 169 targets, and 230 indicators. There are seven explicit references to disability in the SDGs, targets, and indicators – in Goal 1 on Poverty, Goal 8 on Employment, Goal 10 on Reducing Inequalities, Goal 16 on Inclusive Societies and Institutions, and Goal 17 on Means of Implementation.

It is clear that the SDGs will not be a success unless ownership by persons with disabilities takes place at the country level. Global South countries have to immediately develop the means to monitor and report on the SDGs implementation using disability data and statistics.

2.2. The Goal of Accessibility as a sustainable criteria for Public Procurement (developed by Gerry Ellis, Feel The Benefit)

The European Commission’s Public Procurement Strategy³ states “With public expenditure on goods, works, and services representing approximately 14% of EU GDP, public procurement is critical to the European economic recovery.” The inclusion of the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons in public procurement criteria, particularly in the area of ICTs, can be a major driver to their inclusion into society in general.

Efforts are already in progress to harmonise various national and international initiatives aimed at codifying and enforcing such criteria. Chief amongst these are the European Standard on accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services (EN 301549)⁴ and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act⁵ in the USA.

² Note: This study is part of the fourth edition of the CRPD 2016 ICT Accessibility Progress Report - which includes, but is not limited to 84 Global South Countries.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/strategy_en

⁴ <http://www.etsi.org/news-events/news/754-new-european-standard-on-accessibility-requirements-for-public-procurement-of-ict-products-and-services>

⁵ [Http://www.section508.gov](http://www.section508.gov)

EN 301549 is already achieving widespread acceptance within Europe. It is also being adopted by The Australian government⁶. It covers a wide variety of aspects of public procurement. However, organisations representing persons with disabilities including the European Disability Forum⁷ have pointed out significant flaws in it.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act covers federal public procurement in the US. Its effects are also wide-reaching, but it is 18 years old and many new technologies which were not envisaged when it was written now exist. Section 508 is being revised, with an expected publication date of October, 2016.

Although EN301549 and Section 508 on their own are better than no standards at all, a hybrid that combines the best of both and harmonises requirements would be a far better outcome than either individually. The question remains whether this hybrid should become an international standard or not and, if so, under the auspices of what standardisation body.

2.3. Use and non-use of ICT by people with disability in small island developing states (developed by Gunela Astbrink, Women With Disabilities Australia)

Small island developing states are often distinguished by small populations together with limited and expensive infrastructure due to remoteness and costs of service delivery. This is especially the case in the Pacific region where there are 22 countries and territories some with a total population of less than 10,000 people. The remoteness of most of these Pacific Island countries has resulted in a slow uptake of mobile and Internet services principally due to the high cost of submarine cables and satellite services. In many Pacific Island countries, over 50% of the population may be subsistence farmers. The situation is slowly changing. Pacific Island governments have developed policies and strategies to build Internet reach to their populations.

Vanuatu is one of the Pacific Island countries at the forefront with an Internet access policy aiming for 98% of the population of 270,000 to have access to broadband by 2018. This is to be achieved through access at schools and health centres. However, people with disability are doubly disadvantaged as cultural attitudes to disability as well as transport and financial restrictions mean low attendance at school (many having only attended kindergarten or lower primary school) and thus low employment opportunities.

An International Telecommunications Union pilot project aimed to learn more about the use and non-use of ICT by people with disability in Vanuatu. The research included a ground-breaking survey of nearly 200 people with disability in both urban and rural areas on several different islands. Selected people with disability were trained as survey interviewers and identified survey candidates and conducted the face-to-face interviews.

The results of the survey indicate that many people with disability do not have a mobile phone and it is rarely a smart phone. Many people had never heard of the Internet even when asked if they knew about email and websites. This may not only be the case for people with disability. Often in the remote parts of small island developing states, there is limited knowledge about the existence of technology, let alone the costs, ability to use it and the availability of electricity and Internet connectivity. This is frequently forgotten in developed countries – there is a ‘knowledge gap’. Questions:

⁶ <http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2016/09/20/australia-to-adopt-ict-accessibility-standard/>

⁷ <http://www.edf-feqh.org>

- How will governments in small island developing states best build awareness of the potential relevance and usefulness of mobile and Internet technologies to people living a traditional subsistence farming life in remote villages?
- What are the most appropriate ways to build an available, accessible and affordable mobile and Internet service for people with disability in small island developing states so they may have more opportunities to participate in the community?

2.4. Relay Services for Persons with Disabilities using the telephone and the Internet (developed by Andrea Saks, DCAD Coordinator)

Text, Voice, and Sign Language Relays Services for Real Time conversation for the communities of persons who are deaf, hard of hearing have been around since the early 1970's. What was a relay service in the early days of Deaf Telecommunications? Relay Services primarily in the beginning allowed communication in real time over the telephone with devices that allow people to type to a third party who then spoke to a person who could hear using the telephone. The user of the relay could be a person with a different disability. Now Relays have migrated to the internet and to include sign language, and there are relays with new devices enabling hands free, that include people with motor disabilities as well as those who can speak but can't hear and are not able for other reasons to type back responses. Older persons who lose their hearing later in life who may not be keyboard literate could fall into this category.

Relay Services are not always recognized as standard services and are not inter country linked as yet. Relays for persons with disabilities are not used in many countries. Even internet based relay services for sign language are not open internationally for use inter country. Part of the problem of not having internationally operating relay services are the tariffs and the cost involved in manning such services and paying the providers. Who pays is the question.

The telephone is global and the internet is global. The tariffs for using the telephone both mobile and fixed are globally set by trade agreements and internationally negotiated tariffs. NO one has set about doing this for relay services as yet. This needs to be done. The growth of relay services needs to be encouraged and implemented. Relays need to be sustainable on not only a country level but on an international level and be interoperable.

Relay services impact the civil rights of many individuals with many kinds of disabilities. It is not only for social interaction but for emergency service access, and for the ability to do a job with functional equivalence.

2.5. Accessibility for persons with disabilities in the 21st century (developed by Judy Okite, Free Software and Open Source Foundation in Africa <FOSSFA>)

Over the years we have seen evolution and changes that have happened all around us and have been whole-heartedly embraced by everyone. For example, computers that began with the Mainframe computer way back in the late 1950's. Today, we have small tablets and smart phones that are more powerful and reliable than even modern day computers. These devices have actually become an integral part of our lives. However, ICT accessibility isn't always integral part of these devices yet.

The ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector now has a Study Group on the Internet of Things (IoT). The ITU defines IoT as "a global infrastructure for the information society, enabling advanced services by interconnecting (physical and virtual) things based on existing and evolving interoperable information and communication technologies." With this definition only, of course none of us can truly

imagine how big and influential IoT will be upon our lives, but, what does this mean for persons with disabilities? This technology also could include assistance to not only information technology but independent living in a physically accessible way.

Some of the things that are being discussed in are the emergence of smart homes, self-driving vehicles, personal data sharing. There are crucial questions that need to be asked, including but not limited to;

- Will the application of IoT to smart homes be accessible to the person who is blind or deaf or a person who has mobility issues?
- Will developers be more accommodative to the needs of persons with disabilities and not just business minded?
- Will self-driving cars or services like Uber taxis have ramps for wheelchair users?
- Will there be an extra cost to the user for accessibility?
- Will there be security protection to prevent exposure of personal data of persons with disabilities?

The potential of implementation of IoT in the developing countries is not clearly directed to help persons with disabilities. In developing countries persons living with disabilities fall under the percentage of the poorest populations. For IoT applications to work, they need to be mainstreamed with accessibility features included.

The penetration of the Internet beyond the urban areas is still very low and very expensive in developing countries. The real and biggest question is: Is the development of technology in the 21st century further widening the gap for persons with disabilities and hindering inclusion?

There are surveys that have tried to track the take up of technology among persons with disabilities and specific needs. However, we still need to consider whether these surveys are totally comprehensively enough and inclusive to give an accurate credible global overview of persons with disabilities' ability to their uptake of technology of both ICTs and its application. This really needs to be done with regard to the needs of persons with disabilities in developing countries. This would be the right time for scholars, policy makers, standard writers and implementers of new technology etc., to increase their efforts to gather this information more completely. Accessibility would greatly influence the uptake of IoT technology if it was designed to benefit persons with disabilities particularly in the developing countries.

Accessibility is about equality, justice, dignity and inclusion. Will we sit back and watch the gap grow wider or will we come together to close this gap?

We have and will continue to have persons with different challenges/disabilities in our community, so how best can we integrate them in our development agenda with regard to technology so that they can be included in modern life.
