

Access Now: Defending and extending the digital rights of users at risk around the world. IGF 2016 Open Forum Background Paper

Who is Access Now?

Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining innovative policy, global advocacy, and direct technical support, we fight for open and secure communications for all.

We are a team of 40, with local staff in more than 10 locations around the world - Berlin, Brussels, Cordoba, Delhi, London, Manila, Nairobi, New York, San Jose, Tunis, and Washington DC. We maintain four legally incorporated entities - Belgium, Costa Rica, Tunisia, and the United States - with our tech, advocacy, policy, granting, and operations teams distributed across all regions.

Access Now was [recommended](#) for UN ECOSOC special consultative status at the most recent NGO Committee session in New York. We expect ECOSOC to approve the recommendation in its July 2016 meeting.

Our Work and Approach

What we do:

Our overall work in digital rights fall under five main areas:

- **Business and Human Rights** - We work with companies to make their practices more transparent, accountable, and rights-respecting.
- **Digital Security** - We work to ensure that your online activities are private, safe, and secure.
- **Freedom of Expression** - We fight for your right to speak freely, which is critical for demonstrating dissent, guaranteeing a free press, and defending human rights.
- **Net Discrimination** - We fight for a free and open internet, advocating for the Net Neutrality principle that internet access should be offered to everyone on a nondiscriminatory basis, without favoring certain websites, applications, or services.
- **Privacy** - We defend your right to privacy, the cornerstone for human rights in the digital age.

Our Approach:

To achieve these goals, Access has organized itself into three main programmatic arms:

- **Policy:** We provide principled, pragmatic, and tech-driven policy guidance to governments, corporations, and civil society organizations.
- **Advocacy:** By drawing on our collective technological, policy, and campaign expertise, we engage the global community in the fight to defend and extend the digital rights of users at risk around the world.
- **Technology:** We provide technology solutions and real-time advice for activists and civil society in circumstances where communications are not open, free, and secure.

| Open Forum Agenda

- **Introducing Access Now:** An overview of our global operations in internet governance - Brett Solomon (Executive Director) **(5 min)**
- **Questions from the Audience (5 min)**
- **Meet the Helpline:** Showcasing our 24/7 Digital Security Helpline for global civil society activists, and Digital Security Clinic for IGF 2016 participants – Daniel Bedoya Arroyo (Incident Response Manager) **(10 min):**
- **Our Policy and Advocacy Work:** A discussion of a sample of Access Now’s major policy work around the world, including: net neutrality, connectivity, OTT regulation, and government hacking: Estelle Masse (Policy Analyst, Europe), Javier Pallero (Policy Analyst, Latin America), Ephraim Kenyanito (Policy Analyst, Sub-Saharan Africa, and IGF MAG Member), Drew Mitnick (Policy Counsel, USA). **(10 min):**
- **#KeepItOn:** Highlighting our global campaign and work fighting intentional internet shutdowns – Deji Olukotun (Senior Global Advocacy Manager), Peter Micek (Global Policy and Legal Counsel) **(10 min):**
- **RightsCon Brussels 2017:** Presenting Access Now’s 6th installment of the RightsCon Summit Series: the largest civil society organized event on internet governance, and human rights. Presentation will highlight open call for proposals, timeline for the event, and outcomes from past RightsCons. – Nick Dagostino (RightsCon Coordinator) **(5 min)**
- **Celebrating Access Now Grants:** Empowering internet governance stakeholders through the launch of our three-year subgranting project to more directly support the critical work of civil society actors working on digital rights around the world. This section will highlight our grantees and a sample of their work around the world. – Brett Solomon **(5 min)**
- **Questions from the Audience (10 min)**

Remote Moderator: Nick Dagostino, Strategic Engagement Manager

| Further Background Material



**DIGITAL
SECURITY
HELPLINE**
 **accessnow**

Through our **24/7 Digital Security Helpline**, we offer direct

For more information on our Helpline, visit our site at accessnow.org/help



We've urged U.N. experts to take swift action in **condemning internet shutdowns** and have convinced the U.N. to issue a historic statement declaring that internet kill switches are impermissible under international human rights law, even in times of conflict. We also released an Implementation Guide for the 13 Principles on the Application of Human Rights to Communications Surveillance, which governments across the globe can use to **implement surveillance law and policy that accords with human rights**.

For more information on our #KeepItOn campaign, including partner organizations, visit our site at accessnow.org/keepiton



The mission of Access Now Grants is to defend and extend the digital rights of users around the world, especially those most at risk. This program works closely with Access Now's programmatic staff in Policy, Advocacy, and Tech to cultivate partnerships with digital activists and civil society groups working at the intersection of human rights and technology.

Visit our page at accessnow.org/grants

Grants Guiding Principles

Dictating our programmatic decisions is a set of Operational Guiding Principles, a set of criteria that informs all of our choices as we implement and refine the Access Now Grants program — from the type of grants we distribute, to the internal controls we put into place, to the grantmaking timelines we envision.

In this program, we strive for:

- **Transparency:** Be transparent about criteria, internal processes, and decisions
- **Simplicity:** Employ clear and simple procedures that can be understood by applicants and the broader community
- **Context:** Allow local actors and communities to define priorities and successful outcomes
- **Flexibility:** Grant flexibly to respond to emerging opportunities and external needs
- **Limited Bureaucracy:** Require limited paperwork, reporting and bureaucracy, wherever possible
- **Engagement:** Continuously self-evaluate and engage within the sector to identify how Access can most effectively operate, fund, and contribute

We understand that the development of the Access Now Grants program is iterative, and we hope these principles will guide us through that evolution. As this program matures, we will make adjustments to structure and processes to ensure that we implement an effective and dynamic initiative that keeps the needs and priorities of at-risk users at the fore.

Grantee Stories

Globe International Center

Location: Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Globe International Center is a Mongolia-based NGO whose mission is to sustain democracy and civil society in Mongolia, and to spread the power of information and knowledge. Globe International works on issues at the intersection of freedom of expression, information and media, and has collaborated with thousands of individuals and civil society groups through workshops, seminars, round tables, festivals, forums, competitions and other public meetings. Globe International also runs campaigns that cooperate with media outlets throughout Mongolia to raise public awareness on human rights and crucial social issues.

Mongolia was the site of the Freedom Online Coalition meeting in 2015. Globe International, wishing to capitalize on the momentum, hosted a Joint International Experts Mission and Multi-stakeholder Consultation roundtable which significantly built internal domestic capacity to implement international standards on freedom of expression and the internet. Attendees drafted a list of recommendations on how the government could improve human rights issues online; created an Action Plan for implementation of Universal Periodic Review recommendations; educated youth consortium attendees on media techniques; and translated into Mongolian and distributed to attendees the “Universal Implementation Guide for the International Principles on the Application of Human Rights to Communications Surveillance.”

Fundación Acceso

Location: San Jose, Costa Rica

Fundación Acceso’s mission is to help mitigate the ever increasing violations of rights related to the physical, technological and psychosocial safety of vulnerable populations in Central America. Fundación Acceso accomplishes this mission by increasing the capacity of organizations and direct populations to defend their rights in the digital sphere through technical assistance, seminars, and providing access to high quality assistance, awareness processes, knowledge and ICT resources to defend rights including privacy and to prevent surveillance. Since its founding in 1992, Fundación Acceso has provided support to approximately 1400 human rights defenders, journalists and social communicators and women leaders, in addition to 80 human rights organizations and networks in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras.

In 2015, Fundación Acceso conducted a regional study called “Digital privacy for human rights defenders?: A study on how legal frameworks of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua can be used to protect or induce to surveillance, censorship and digital criminalization.” For the promotion and dissemination of the study, Fundación Acceso organized a two day seminar to present the results. The seminar took place at the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (Costa Rica) in December 2015, and the invitees included human rights organizations of the countries where the study was conducted as well as other strategic actors present in South and North America. These organizations will use the inputs of the study in their daily work on human rights, and the study will also be helpful to regional and international actors who are doing advocacy or strategic litigation on digital privacy rights issues.

IBIDEM

Location: Brasilia, Brazil

The Beta Institute for Internet and Democracy (IBIDEM) is a Brazilian based nonprofit organization engaged in defending and promoting human rights in the digital environment. IBIDEM creates and implements innovative digital advocacy campaigns within Brazil and on a global scale to promote freedom of expression and equality on the internet and other information and communication technologies.

Access Now provided funding for a digital advocacy campaign to inform the public of a proposed law nicknamed “PLespião” (or “Spy Bill), which would have greatly decreased freedom of expression online by modifying the landmark Marco Civil legislation. Amongst other things, the legislation would have: dramatically increased the ability for authorities to circumvent courts for personal data; instituted an almost limitless (for the right price) “Right to be Forgotten”; and attempted to police behavior through “civility” legislation. With the help of Access Now, IBIDEM, along with independent journalist and writer Breno Castro Alves, was able to quickly design and launch a multimedia campaign just in time for the Internet Governance Forum, which was being held in Brazil, and will again be leveraged when the bill is called for a vote.

Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Location: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Association for Progressive Communications’ (APC) mission is to empower and support organizations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). APC builds strategic communities and initiatives for the purpose of making meaningful contributions to equitable human development, social justice, participatory political processes and environmental sustainability. Access Now provided support for APC’s third annual African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG) in September 2015, hosting 35 participants out of over 700 applications received. The goal of AfriSIG is to give Africans from multiple sectors and stakeholder groups the opportunity to gain knowledge and confidence to enable them to participate effectively in internet governance processes and debates at the national, regional and global levels. AfriSIG also builds the capacity of people with existing expertise in internet governance by including them as faculty and resource persons. AfriSIG increases the diversity, extent, quality and effectiveness of African participation in internet governance at the national, regional and global levels. AfriSIG’s broader goals are to strengthen African perspectives and voices in global internet governance and to achieve more inclusive and transparent internet governance on the continent.



Additional literature on our policy work, including:

- [Network Neutrality](#)
- [Connectivity](#)
- [Government hacking](#)
- [RightsCon Brussels 2017](#)



RightsCon
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For More Information

Please visit www.accessnow.org

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