

WSIS Forum 2020

High-Level Policy Session 8: WSIS Action Lines and 2030 Agenda/Enabling Environment

(24 July 2020, 14:00 CEST)

Input from IGF MAG Chair, Anriette Esterhuysen in response to question about the impact of NRIs on addressing the digital divide.

An enabling environment requires a holistic approach – it requires enabling policy and regulation, resources, and, most important of all, people and institutions working collaboratively on implementation. In my view, it is the key WSIS action line contained in the Geneva Plan of Action.

What are NRIs – The National, Sub-Regional, Regional and Youth IGF initiatives (NRIs) emerged not long after the first global IGF in Athens, 2006. First in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and East Africa, and now they are everywhere. At present, in 2020, there are 131 NRIs that have a relationship with the global IGF. They vary in size. Some are led by government, some by multistakeholder organising committees, others by civil society. They continue to evolve in response to local dynamics and needs. Youth IGF initiatives have brought 1000s of younger people into the process and help drive their involvement in Internet policy beyond the IGF process itself.

What has their impact been?

The NRIs have created an opportunity for **local ownership and initiatives in finding solutions**. In fact, even before moving to solutions, they build a deeper, more nuanced understanding of local digital divide issues.

Most importantly they've helped to **build relationships** between stakeholders and even within stakeholder groups. For example, they have the ability to create a platform where different government departments can come together to talk about Internet-related public policy.

By bringing diverse people together to talk about local and national Internet-related challenges, the NRIs provide an opportunity for, for example, government stakeholders to better understand the concerns of other stakeholders, such as businesses or civil society.

These **relationships lead to more informed, sustainable policy**. Why? Because if policy solutions have been discussed broadly, involving the actors who have to implement and abide by the policy, it is more likely that the policy and regulation will be complied with, and achieve its objectives.

NRIs also **contribute to implementation partnerships**, and to collaborative evaluation and learning, which **helps to build the capacity of different institutions** and the people inside them. For example, by bringing together communities, regulators, and technical organisations, they have helped to build awareness of the potential of community networks to connect the unconnected. NRIs also create opportunities for technical training and other learning events.

Why are they so important? Because good Internet governance begins at home.

An Internet governance ecosystem that provides spaces for all voices, from the north and the south, and of all stakeholders, needs strong and inclusive processes at global **and** at national levels. It also needs people of all generations. NRIs are helping to build this ecosystem – nationally, regionally and globally.

In closing, I invite you all to the global IGF which will be held online later this year. Dates are to be announced early next week. The event will include input from NRIs from all over the world. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the WSIS Forum this year.