

**Report of the ITU Workshop on:  
"Best practices for an Accessible Web"  
Workshop no. 540**

IGF, Internet Governance Forum, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 17 November 2009

## **Introduction**

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in collaboration with the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD) organized a workshop at the 4<sup>th</sup> Internet Governance Forum (IGF) meeting on "Best practices for an Accessible Web" on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2009, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

The workshop was organized as an activity of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD) and highlighted the necessity to make the Internet accessible to all, regardless of individual capabilities of different users.

The program of the workshop focused on the different aspects of web accessibility for persons with disabilities. Most of the panelists were persons with disabilities themselves. The DCAD promotes working directly with persons with disabilities in order to benefit from their real-life experiences.

Organizations that are members of DCAD include, among others: the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), SKID, Council of Europe, Digital Accessible Information System Consortium (DAISY Consortium), Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ict), the Indian Centre for Internet & Society, International Center for Disability Resources on the Internet (ICDRI), Internet Society (ISOC), Internet Society Argentina (ISOC-AR), UNESCO, Web Accessibility Initiative (W3C).

## **Goal of the workshop**

The Web is fundamentally designed to work for all people, whatever their hardware, software, language, culture, location, or physical or mental ability. When the Web meets this goal, it is accessible to people with a diverse range of hearing, movement, sight, and cognitive ability, and provides unprecedented opportunities for people with disabilities to equally participate in the information society. In practice, what does web accessibility mean practically? Web sites should, for example, enable and not block blind users from using screen readers.

This workshop explored best practices in Web accessibility including in standardization, implementation, and business case development. The goal is to promote one Web that is accessible for all users including people with disabilities.

## **Programme**

The keynote address was given by **Sami Al-Basheer**, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU. The BDT Director underlined the mandate of Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) which is to ensure that all people participate fully in the Information Society. For persons with disabilities, the BDT efforts extend beyond simply ensuring that users are online or connected to networks. It is essential that persons with disabilities are able to access the content of a website and that websites do not pose barriers to use by persons with disabilities.

The panel consisted of 4 speakers as follows:

- **Shadi Abou-Zahra**, Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI):  
"International Standards for Web Accessibility"

- **Dipendra Manocha**, Daisy Consortium:  
"Digital Accessible Information on the Web"
- **Jorge Plano**<sup>1</sup>, ISOC Argentina:  
"Common Mistakes in Web Development and Avoiding Them"
- **Peter Major**:  
"A Survey of Accessibility Errors on Homepages of Official Government Websites"

The moderator of the workshop was Jonathan Charles, from BBC World.

The panelists presented the different issues related to the web accessibility and the most current problems and errors that persons with different abilities encounter in the daily activities. Most of the websites are developed without taking care of accessibility hence they tend to include many barriers. One presentation has shown some of the most common mistakes that provoke barriers.

A panellist from W3C shared information about some of the standards for web accessibility their industry group has already developed. A representative from the Daisy Consortium talked about how digital talking books can enable users to hear and navigate written materials presented in audible form for use. Finally, the last speaker shared his analysis on how official government websites respond to the need for accessible websites.

### **Conclusions**

Ensuring web accessibility benefits persons with and persons without disabilities. Promoting web accessibility provides social, technical and financial benefits. Web accessibility ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities just as it offers benefits for the families of persons with disabilities and the increasingly growing number of elderly web users. Accessible website can have unexpected beneficiaries, for example those who are illiterate. Promoting web accessibility at the early stages of web design can save money later when private companies and governments seek to ensure their websites are accessible.

The workshop was captioned.

All the material and the presentations are available on the ITU-T website at the following address: <http://www.itu.int/ITU-T/worksem/accessibility/20091117/index.html>

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Plano was unable to attend and his work was presented by Ms. Waddell.