Ghana IGF 2022-1: Keynote: Fostering digital inclusion and safeguarding Internet rights : digital inclusion landscape and challenges in Ghana (planning 7 minutes)

20 May 09:00-09:45

Ladies and gentlemen,
It is a pleasure for me to participate in Ghana IGF 2022

Having been a member of IGF MAG during founding years of IGF, it's pleasing to see IGF and NRIs growing. At the time we sought to practice at home what we experienced at IGF in order to have a meaningful connection. It's time to ponder how well NRIs are doing and how well the multi stakeholder approach is practiced.

The Internet and its benefits to society are well known and the discussion ought to shift from the Internet to communities. For that reason the theme is appropriate and as a steward of the Internet I'll share what we can do even if uncomfortable. I'll comment on the NRIs and MS approach

The techno liberation struggle waged by pioneers was to ensure Africa's inclusion in global Internet buildout and would be incomplete, if we at the edge are not deliberately inclusive. We wanted access to technical know how. We had feared that lack of internet technical know how can result in capture of Africa's economy and erode freedoms and self determination. IGF had been concerned about access and we should now be concerned about community

We should move from the excitement about the idea of "multi stakeholder approach" for community decisions and develop the real practice

The gains we have made in numerous applications on the Internet would not grow unless communities are developed behind them

The Internet enables social and economic benefits but must own it, ie be a stakeholder

What makes the Internet work so well is the open participation by engineers, businesses, civil-society organizations, and governments in how it is governed.

Hence, I'll dwell on bottom up decision making processes practiced in the technical internet community, IETF and RIRs and

used in IG policy deliberations at ICANN and IGF

Even though MS is mentioned a lot, one continue to feel it's not yet well understood or practiced well in our country and generally in Africa

This MS approach has been successful in holding the internet together and leads to better policies. We advocate it's widespread application in community decision processes, locally

The concept or theory is well known and documented

My interest is what a community must do well in order to evolve a functional bottom up decision process

For starters, how are members of MAG for Ghana IGF formed? What composition? How does community chose its representatives? How open is process? Who are stakeholders? What level of participation? What inter-sessional community work? These questions may be equally relevant for WA IGF as well as Af IGF. The representation needs to be inclusive and show how we value our differences, to earn legitimacy

The bottom up decision process is not same as an adviser or consultant with a policy or a decision in hand and asking for feedback from interested parties. That would top down.

This is about a community addressing issues together and making rules, standards, decisions or policies in a bottom up way

The origins of bottom up processes was with those working with a network of networks, internetworks, Internet. Each network is owned by a different organization/person who has his own providers and for different purposes and working with different rules or policies

It is evident that for the whole internet to work as one, each network must surrender to follow community agreed standards, protocols and policies, that we create together. That is bottom up and we were compelled from structure of system

There are several situations where this occurs but some vivid examples in Ghana are:
- In an NREN has campuses
- A campus has different departments

- An e-government network is made of network of department and agencies of government;
- An inter banking community or regulated entities engaging self regulation

If stretch our imagination we discover numerous other areas with similar problems where the bottom up approach would apply especially as decentralize

Quite often in practice, we do not have all skills in one institution or discipline to address complex issues. Therefore multi stakeholder bottom up process enables access to needed skills and expertise across the community for decisions

We shall be open and documents are published to a community who participate in

developing the document or interested parties

We cannot over emphasize roles and responsibilities in multi stakeholder process. Typically, one looks to find a rich community including participation by engineers, businesses, civil-society organizations, and governments. Each has a different role with clear and focused responsibilities and each actor needs to remain in their roles for quality results. What is your stake? We also need a good balance of multi stakeholder diversity. In IG or technology governance in general, the participation of technologists/engineers would be critical for sane policies in much same as if approach is practiced in health sector role of medical professionals would be critical

The community in question, the group, must have a scope of work so that moderators can readily call contributions out of scope and prevent digression or spinning

For any discussion, we need a proposal with a clear problem statement defining what to fix and a proposed solution in a document that is openly accessible to the group concerned. Meetings are open to all of group and if working in public interest to anyone who shows up

Once the draft proposal has been accepted by the group for consideration it becomes a community document and discussions commence. Discussions are guided by neutral moderators who are usually known community personalities with track record of who are determined by merit and experience.

These moderators work by independently determining the sentiments of the group on any issue by determining if group can live with something under discussion. This is what normally called consensus or strictly speaking rough consensus. Don't vote, develop the consensus. The reason for not supporting a decision is more important than reason for supporting

Discussions are driven by a list of unresolved issues raised on the proposal by participants. Editors modify proposal as each issue is resolved. When there are no more issues the proposal has received consensus

The moderators guide the process and give reports to group on progress of a proposal and outstanding issues to build consensus on. If an issue has been discussed and

closed it cannot be repeated unless have new evidence

The moderation must be thorough and based on substance. The moderators need to have enough trust and respect in group for a good call of consensus

The benefits are numerous but includes:
- leaves a document history
- Accepting wider and diverse views
- Engaging the community in consensus
- Knowledge of community

The process takes time, can be noisy as issues are passionately debated in public.

Notice that much of activities in the process are by merit of issue not by support. Africa is engrossed in democracy, voting and power making adoption of this approach of merit and consensus challenging

Africans, are very top down by default and often authoritative. We also don't share as much information as we should and tend to see things from personal interests and less from the community interests. We have to change these ways that interfere with community development.

Participation is necessary in multi stakeholder bottom up processes. The level of participation is the biggest challenge of the multi stakeholder decision process. process. If participation is weak the quality of output becomes suspect and process degenerate to top down approach to decision making. With weak participation the process can thus be easily captured

Let's adopt multi stakeholder bottom up decision process in other domains beyond Internet governance .

It makes sense to talk to people we don't normally talk to, to expand knowledge and grow community

I thank you very much for your attention