CWG - Internet: Open Consultation

Bridging the Digital Gender Divide

CWG-Internet invites all stakeholders to submit contributions on achieving gender equality for Internet users, focusing on the following questions:

1. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?

2. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?

3. Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?

4. What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?

5. What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?

ICANN Contribution

Executive Summary

ICANN is honoured to have the opportunity to take part in this important Open Consultation. It is also a timely consultation in the wake of an ever-increasing awareness of the economic and social costs of maintaining a gender divide. The approach taken in the consultation rightly moves on from just the participation of women and girls in the ICT labour market (though this of course is important) to explore their participation in the decision-making processes, whether in the private or public sectors, that affect all of our lives. In terms of Internet governance, we hope this consultation on bridging the gender divide, will enhance the role of women and girls in policy making processes at the UN, in IGOs, in governments, in the technical Community, in civil society and in businesses. There is a lot of work to be done.

ICANN, within the Internet eco-system, has an important but limited role to play. We do though, in our policy decision making process with respect to Internet identifiers and the DNS, recognise the need to do more to encourage and foster the role of women and girls. The Survey (and Report) on Gender Diversity and Participation elaborated on below is a first, but significant, step in this process.

We look forward to discussion these important issues during the physical consultation in Geneva later in January.

Detail

1. Introduction

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is essentially made up of three distinct parts. The ICANN Board (which oversees the work of ICANN), the Organisation (led by the CEO) and the Community where all the policy development work takes place.

ICANN follows a multistakeholder model in which individuals, non-commercial stakeholder groups, industry, and governments play important roles in its community-based, consensus-driven, policy-making approach. See https://www.icann.org/community

ICANN's mission is to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems. Part of living up to this Mission is a commitment to improve diversity of participation at ICANN, in line with the core values in the new Bylaw. In order to ensure that anyone can engage with ICANN's work, ICANN continues to work to lower barriers to participation, promote greater diversity, and support broad, inclusive participation.

2. Background to Survey on Gender Diversity and Participation

The Gender Diversity and Participation Survey was launched by the ICANN organization in order to gather data to gain insight into current perceptions
of gender diversity within the ICANN Community and to identify potential barriers to participation. The survey was open to the public from 9 June to 8 July 2017 and was widely advertised across the ICANN Community. All responses were anonymous.

The survey was developed as a pilot project in response to community calls for data to inform diversity discussions and will support the Community's broader work on diversity.

Diversity is a vital part of current discussions at ICANN, particularly in the Accountability Subgroup on Diversity (https://www.icann.org/news/announcement-2-2017-10-26-en)

Although gender is only one aspect of diversity, it was identified as a Community priority, following a request at ICANN 54 in Dublin, Ireland, during the "Women in ICANN, Internet, and ICTs" public session.

3. Survey Results

The full Survey Results and an Executive Summary are at:

https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/gender-survey-complete-11oct17-en.pdf

The survey was published in seven languages and widely publicised to encourage community-wide participation. 584 people participated in the survey. Of these, 49% identified themselves as Female, 48% as Male, 1% identified their gender in some other way and 3% preferred not to say.

A snapshot of the main results are as follows:

- Overall, most survey participants agree that all genders are treated fairly and equally in the ICANN Community; though significantly more Males than Females agree with this notion, indicating a difference in perception;

- 86% of Females felt they were excluded from events or discussions because of their gender as opposed to only 13% Males;

- Additionally, 66% of Females perceive that ICANN's Community culture is male-dominated;

- Most Female and Male participants agree that opportunities for volunteers to advance in the ICANN Community are equal across all genders;

- 69% of respondents agree that the ICANN Community should do more to increase gender diversity;

- Over 70% support voluntary targets to increase gender diversity; with significantly less support for mandatory quotas, particularly from Male respondents;

- Over 68% of respondents believe ICANN should do more to enhance gender diversity among the Community leadership;

- In terms of barriers; significantly more Females than Males indicate they face both gender related barriers and also language barriers;

- The length of meetings was also mentioned by both Male and Female respondents as a diversity issue; with several Females noting the difficult (and sometimes) costly decisions on childcare they had to take.

4. Survey Recommendations

A full overview is found on page 39; while a brief summary of those steps which ICANN should consider taking, are:

- Publish diversity data on the ICANN Community.
- Consider approaches to better inform Community members on how to report perceived sexism or gender bias.
- Provide further capacity development activities for the ICANN Community, as well as increased mentorship and leadership programs.
- Adopt a non-binary approach to gender in all ICANN documents and materials.
- Consider suitable and reasonable voluntary targets to increase gender diversity at ICANN.

It will now be for the ICANN Community to determine the priority of such next steps.

GE, ICANN; January 2018