Accessible ICT – Access for People with Disability

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Overview

- Significant part of population
- Cultural and socio-economic issues
- Technology and its positive impact
- Inclusive design
- Role of policy, legislation and regulation
- Role of user and advocacy groups
- Ways forward
Significant part of population

- Estimated – One billion people with disabilities worldwide with large proportion in developing countries (WHO)
- At least 800,000 people with disabilities in the Pacific
- United Nations - People with disabilities form the world's largest minority
- Marginalised in many countries
Cultural and socio-economic issues

- People with disabilities are hidden away in some countries based on tradition
- Society places cultural and economic barriers to active participation
  - Limited educational opportunities
  - Limited employment

Need to respect culture but challenge traditional perspectives of disability
Accessibility to technology and the Internet for people with disabilities can break down barriers and open up opportunities.
Technology and its positive impact

- Blind people – better chance of education and employment – using screen reading programs to access the Internet

Rakesh Chand at PacINET 2009
Technology and its positive impact

- People with hearing impairments can communicate by:
  - Skype chat
  - Real time text using Text over IP
  - Mobile phones with inductive coupling for hearing aids
Technology and its positive impacts

- People with physical disabilities can communicate using phones and computers and “travel” on the Internet

- Can be helped by:
  - Interfaces with larger keys
  - Ramps/no steps at telecentres and Internet cafes
But there are new barriers

- Cost
- Design of inaccessible products and services
- Complex interfaces
Inclusive design

- Designing products and services to meet the needs of a larger part of the community – this includes many people with disabilities

- Examples of “online ramps”:
  - Apple iPhone – built-in screen-reading program and many other other applications
Inclusive design

• Another example:
  – Real-time captioning at meetings

• Need for awareness-raising AND legislation

• Public procurement includes accessibility criteria in USA and some European countries
  – Encourages more inclusive design
Role of policy, legislation and regulation

- Inclusion of accessibility for people with disabilities should be in:
  - All Pacific ICT strategies
  - Pacific Island country telecommunications legislation
  - Universal Service Obligations in regulatory environment
Role of policy, legislation and regulation

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
  - Includes accessibility to the Internet at an affordable cost
  - Signed and/or ratified by several Pacific countries

Needs to be followed by action in these countries!
Role of policy, legislation and regulation

- IGF's role in supporting accessibility
- Dynamic Coalition on Disability
- Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet includes Rights of People with Disabilities
  - http://internetrightsandprinciples.org/
Role of user and advocacy groups

- Strong and informed user groups
  - Important role in lobbying governments to make change
- Pacific Disability Forum
  - Coordinates advocacy across Pacific
  - Capacity-building for Pacific disability groups
  - Working with families to create change
Role of Internet Society

- **Accessibility Policy Issues Paper**

- Internet Society Community Grants
  - Capacity-building for accessible Internet policy development
  - Awareness-raising workshop for ISOC Chapters
Ways forward

• Practical measures
  • Actions from ISOC Accessibility Paper
    – Accessible websites, facilities, products and services
    – Subsidised costs
    – Staff training
    – Including people with disabilities
Ways forward

- Multi-faceted approach
  - Support for gradual cultural change
  - Awareness-raising
  - Stronger advocacy
  - Implementation of policy, legislative and regulatory mechanisms

- Much work to be done!
Internet Society motto: “The Internet is for everyone”

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