

Concept paper for 2017

Best Practice Forum on Local Content

Introduction

Local content is a returning topic at the IGF. In 2014 there was a Best Practice Forum on creating an enabling environment for the development of local content. The BPF undertook an attempt to define 'local content' and discussed the creation of an enabling environment alongside three dimensions: users, infrastructure and law. In its conclusions and recommendations for future work the BPF among other suggested to 'encourage regional cooperation and collaboration by organizing and sharing existing case studies of local content and capacity building'.

A new BPF on local content could build on work done in 2014 and follow up on its suggestions for future work by among other collecting best practices on creating enabling environments.

Creation of and access to relevant local online content in developing countries is an important driver for the adoption and growth of the Internet in those regions. Well-functioning local connectivity, government support of content development and training, and a clear legal regulatory environment are critical for the growth of local content. (quote from ISOC Local Content Policy brief: <http://www.internetsociety.org/policybriefs/localcontent>).

Alternatively, but not excluding following up on the 2014 BPF, a new BPF could approach best practice from the benefits and impact local content creation could have for the local internet development and its users. The following dimensions could be defined:

- 1) Local content as a driver for development of the local Internet
 - Local infrastructure / local hosting
 - IXPs / Local Traffic
 - Limitation of filtering and blocking
 - Mobile access growth
 - Etc.
- 2) Local content to improve access
 - Relevant and affordable content¹
 - Multilingualism / access to content in the own language and script
 - Gender and access
 - Content for people with special needs / disabilities

¹ The Broadband Commission 2016

- Quality of content (fake content)
- Etc.

3) Local content as an opportunity for economic development

- Digital Literacy
- Digital Skills
- innovation
- The opportunity of local content in the Digital Economy
 - Local platforms
 - Local content on foreign platforms (content distribution)
 - Local e-services / e-commerce
 - Etc.

The topic of local content is very broad. During the first meetings, the BPF will have to discuss its approach and narrow its priorities for collecting best practice examples.

Problem Statement:

2014's BPF on Local Content left some conclusions that could be included in 2017's in addition of other relevant issues as:

Local Internet development

The Cost has been identified as an important issue in developing countries. Local content providers typically host their content abroad because the hosting cost is lower. However, content hosted abroad must be delivered back to the country over international Internet transit links that, in spite of significant infrastructure investments in recent years, are still expensive. This also affects Latency (delay), negatively impacting the user experience by making content and services slower to download, and can render some services, such as interactive content and games, nearly unusable. This difficulty in Usage, can take them to a result that the full potential and benefits of the Internet are not realised. Depressed usage has a direct impact on content developers, as reduced user engagement with content translates to a lower potential for content and service providers to earn revenue from advertising and sales.

Improving Access

As we are increasingly seeing, the ability to access the Internet is necessary, but not sufficient, to increase Internet adoption in a country; it is a means to an end, which is the content and services that people use when they are online. Much of the international content and services is relevant in many countries worldwide - this is true of social networking services, educational access, and, of course, entertainment. However, we also note the importance of locally created content given the relevance of the content in the local context.

Content must be in familiar languages. While one might assume this mainly impacts international content, it is also true for local content, including e-government services, as not everyone speaks the government language.

At the same time, payment mechanisms are critical for both international and locally developed content. With a lack of a payment mechanisms users may not be able to purchase content, and even if they could, the developer may not be able to receive the payments. Such restrictions extend further to an ability to receive payments for advertising and for local entrepreneurs to raise funds to develop new innovations.

Economic development

Developing content requires Internet access and some level of technical knowledge and skill, which are not always available. Further, entrepreneurs often need the ability to both fund and sell their services, which can be ensured through various means including an appropriate copyright regime. This is particularly complicated in countries where there are few or no options for online payments (e.g., PayPal) and where mobile app stores are not allowed to sell apps or deliver payments do not enable users to buy and/or sell apps.

In order to promote local content, as Internet Society recommends on its 2015 ISOC report, the Internet community should “...Conduct multi-stakeholder local content forums to raise awareness on local hosting benefits, discuss issues, and identify market solutions...”. That is why it is the main objective of this Best Practice Forum proposal to become one of these forums for this year.

Possible participants/key actors:

- Previous leaders and participants from BPF 2014 Local Content
- Internet Service Providers
- Hosting Providers
- Governments
- incubators
- International Organizations, NGOs
- Netflix, Amazon, etc (CDNs, content distributors)

Timetable:

- Secretariat and MAG approval
- Mailing List
- Volunteers reach out
- Reach out actively to key actors
- Leadership definition
- Scope definition
- Action plan definition
- Regular calls (1 or 2 per month)
- IGF 2017 Workshop / Main Session

- Outputs Publishing

Possible actions:

- Illustrate from existing research linkages between local content and local internet development;
- Collect existing data and statistics to map and better understand the availability local content (geographical regions, types of local content, etc);
- Identify where there is a lack or need of local content;
- Identify drivers and hindrances to the creation of local content;
- Collect best practice examples of projects that helped to create local content;
- Collect best practice examples of government policies that helped to create local content;
- Bring perspectives from developing countries

Links with IGF intersessional activities

- 2014 BPF on creating an enabling environment for the development of local content ([link](#)):

The report of the 2014 BPF contains three suggestions for further work:

- *Many participants noted that it was difficult to obtain the rights to use works under copyright because local rights management organizations were not always easy to find or responsive. To address this problem, it would be useful to establish a single global resource page with an authoritative list of Collective Management Organizations (CMOs). Such a resource would also clearly identify states lacking a CMO. Solutions to enable users in these places need to be formulated.*
- ***It was suggested that regional cooperation and collaboration would be encouraged by organizing and sharing existing case studies of local content production and capacity building. A repository of such content would be a useful resource for Internet users.***
- *Participants suggested developing a generic action template for enhancing local content and applying it on a country level basis. Stakeholders using a multi-stakeholder mechanism could develop a template for analyzing the technological, legal, and user environment and provide insight into the local ecosystem. At the same time, stakeholders working together would have the opportunity to develop greater trust leading to a healthier ecosystem and helping facilitate an enabling environment for local content.*
- CENB I :
*‘The need to ensure that people are able to use the Internet according to their needs was reflected in many of the contributions. Providing access to the Internet is only the first step – once in place people must be able to use it. Ensuring availability and the ability to use applications, **to stimulate the development of local content and services in all languages**, and to implement strategies for safeguarding access to people with disabilities were some of the issues identified by the community. ‘*
- CENB II:

- “Contributors to Phase II respectively stress that meaningful access requires ensuring that people, for example: (...) **Can both consume and produce content** . (p.18)
- Access inequalities and barriers like content availability not only affect those in developing countries more profoundly, but also those in rural areas as well as cultural minorities, women, refugees, and disadvantaged groups. (p.21)
- The CENB II identified several linkages between the SDGs and the availability of content, among other with SDG 4 (Quality of education), SDG 16 (Peace and Justice).
- BPF on IXPs 2016/2017:

The BPF on IXPs identified a two-way relation between locally stored local content and the development of the IXPs and the local infrastructure and a more affordable internet.
- 2016 BPF on overcoming barriers to enable women’s meaningful internet access:

The BPF identified the availability of relevant content and applications as a barrier for meaningful access. Some of the testimonials in the report refer to the lack of available content in the local language.

Reference documents

'Key Issues for Digital Transformation in the G20', OECD, January 2017,

<https://www.oecd.org/g20/key-issues-for-digital-transformation-in-the-g20.pdf>

"However, despite the rapid spread of the Internet and the increasing agreement on the opportunities it brings, nearly 60% of the world's population, or four billion people, remain offline. These gaps in the availability and penetration of the Internet persist and a large portion of the population is still unable to directly reap digital dividends. Enhancing access to infrastructure, as discussed throughout this report, is therefore a major task for developing economies. The task of closing the access and usage gaps is a multifaceted one. It involves major 'supply-side' challenges, notably of encouraging investment and competition, extending broadband infrastructure outside of urban areas into rural and remote areas, and upgrading networks to match rising demand. **Additionally, demand-side issues such as low levels of income, education and local content production add new challenges to improving affordability and relevance of services to users.**" (p.19)

'The relationship between local content, Internet development and access prices', 2011, OECD, ISOC, UNESCO, <https://www.oecd.org/internet/ieconomy/50305352.pdf>

"Promoting Local Content Hosting to Develop the Internet Ecosystem", 2015, Kende and Rose,

<https://www.internetsociety.org/sites/default/files/Promoting%20Local%20Content%20Hosting%20to%20Develop%20the%20Internet%20Ecosystem.pdf>

"IGF 2014 Best Practice Forum on Creating an Enabling Environment for the Development of Local Content",

<http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/documents/best-practice-forums/creating-an-enabling-environment-for-the-development-of-local-content/412-bpf-2014-outcome-document-creating-an-enabling-environment-for-the-development-of-local-content/file>

Multilingualism and the End of the Global Internet?

<https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/asia-pacific-bureau/2014/12/multilingualism-and-end-global-internet>

Promoting Content In Africa

<https://www.internetsociety.org/doc/promoting-content-africa>

Local Content in Local Languages Matters

<https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/africa-bureau/2016/08/local-content-local-languages-matters>

Promoting Local Content Hosting to Develop the Internet Ecosystem

<https://www.internetsociety.org/sites/default/files/Promoting%20Local%20Content%20Hosting%20to%20Develop%20the%20Internet%20Ecosystem.pdf>

Local Content: An Internet Society Public Policy Briefing

http://www.internetsociety.org/sites/default/files/ISOC-PolicyBrief-LocalContent-20151030_nb.pdf