

# **ISOC Community Grants Programme**

**Interim Report – June 2011**

**ISOC Australia Project**

**Disability Training for Chapters**

## **Background**

The Internet Society of Australia is grateful for the funding received under ISOC's Community Grants Programme to implement disability training for Chapters. The project has developed an awareness-raising tool for ISOC Chapters in the Asia-Pacific region to use to inform their membership and the broader Internet community of the benefit in assisting people with disabilities to use the Internet. The disability awareness module has been developed as part of a "train the trainer" workshop. This module can then be used by Chapters to organise their own workshops on disability awareness.

The key aim of the project is to encourage Chapters to include disability and accessibility in their activities.

The outcomes expected are:

- To improve awareness among Chapter members and the broader Internet community of the advantages for people with disabilities in using the Internet and the current barriers that make accessibility difficult.
- To encourage Chapters through an online mentoring program to consider incorporating disability and accessibility in policy development.

## **Description of activities**

The key project activities are:

- Development and collection of content for disability training module
- Delivery of disability training module as a train the trainer workshop at the Chapters workshop in Sri Lanka in May 2011
- Online mentoring using Webex to assist Chapter members to use the disability training module effectively

The first two activities have been completed with the online mentoring under way with several sessions still to be done.

The development of the workshop materials was assisted by the previous Community Grant project on capacity-building for Internet accessibility policy development. Feedback from participants in that project ensured that the current material was honed for suitability to Chapter representatives in the Asia Pacific region. This resulted in information about statistics and characteristics of disability and barriers to the use of the Internet. The workshop materials include experiential sessions as well as role-playing.

The first e-meeting on disability was held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2011. While attendance was lower than the 18 people nominated, there was active and positive discussion about Chapter activities and ways forward. Rudi Vansnick of the Belgium Chapter volunteered to do a web accessibility audit of Chapter websites. This has not yet been done.

As part of the Chapters workshop in Sri Lanka during the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011, a disability awareness workshop was run on Sunday morning, 22<sup>nd</sup> May by Gunela Astbrink, Director of the Australian Chapter. The workshop was in the form of a “train the trainer” module encouraging Chapters to conduct disability awareness workshops in their own countries.

All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire before the start of the workshop about their knowledge of disability and the Internet. The same questionnaire was filled out at the end of the workshop. This meant that people became aware of what they did not know about disability, it helped them to focus during the workshop and then to recognise their acquired knowledge at the end of the workshop.

Gunela informed the group about international statistics on disability and the high proportion of people with disabilities from developing countries. She emphasised the importance of involving disability organisations and set an example by introducing the Secretary of the Sri Lanka Federation of the Visually Handicapped, Ms Manique Gunaratne who demonstrated screen reading software. This together with the glasses simulating various types of vision impairment were important tools in building understanding of the barriers experienced by people with disabilities in using the Internet. While there was a focus on vision impairment in the workshop, Gunela emphasised that people with many different types of disability could benefit from the opportunities of the Internet if barriers were removed.

Naveed ul Haq from the Pakistan Chapter presented on his survey of usage of the Internet and mobile phones by people with disabilities in Pakistan together with any services offered by service providers. This is a good example of first learning about the situation in a country before working towards improvements.

Gunela informed the workshop participants about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, its relevance to accessibility to the Internet and which countries had signed and/or ratified it. Gunela concluded the workshop by outlining the processes of running a disability awareness workshop.

### **Performance to date against the goals of the Project**

Evaluation of the workshop yielded excellent feedback. All participants who returned the feedback form (n=14) stated that they learned a lot and that it had helped them a lot. The majority (n=12) felt that there was enough balance between discussion and presentation and 13 stated that they would consider running a disability awareness workshop in their own country. Many people felt that the demonstration of screen reading software by a blind person and the simulation glasses were the most useful parts of the workshop.

Specifically, after direct discussion with representatives, it is possible that Chapters from Kolkata, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Nepal will plan to run their own disability workshops in future. The Pacific Islands Chapter will be checking with the Cook Islands government on accessibility in e-government and both Pacific Islands and Cambodia are

planning a survey on Internet accessibility activities. Gunela also has had follow-up from Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and Taiwan about existing activities in their economies.

A quote from Bani Lara from the Philippines exemplified the building of disability awareness: *“If ever (God forbid) I fall off a tower, or come into an accident, I would really be upset if nobody in my country even thought about how disabled people would be able to use the internet. They are like me, who had the misfortune of being born blind, or having an accident, or something. Point is, that can be me someday, and I should not wait for something like that to happen to me, or a loved one, before I’m compelled to do anything about it.”*

Another participant stated that: *“This is such an eye-opener! I have been talking about ‘Internet for all’ but now I really know what it means – Excellent job!”*

So far, the goals have been met.

### **Outcomes & Achievements**

Feedback from the Chapter workshop in Sri Lanka in May 2011 indicated that these sessions created an “ah ha” experience, changing the way that Chapter leaders think leading to Chapter representatives planning their own disability awareness workshops. This was a very good outcome.

Many people approached Gunela after the workshop, partly to ask questions, to react to various parts of the workshop and to discuss what could be done in their own countries.

The online mentoring will be an important avenue to assist Chapters from a distance and to ensure that the enthusiasm is sustained amongst their many other priorities.

### **Lessons learned and disappointments**

Key lessons learned are to ensure that the workshop materials are relevant and meaningful to Chapter representatives.

Disappointments are that much of the time for the project is through the enthusiasm of the project coordinator who has given much of her voluntary time to the project especially as the project budget was reduced from the original proposal. This has been exacerbated by the fall in the value of the US dollar against the Australian dollar.

### **Changes in the design of the Project and implications for future work**

There have been no significant changes in the design of the project. The only minor change was to concentrate the online mentoring meetings after the disability awareness workshop. One e-meeting was held in April and further e-meetings will be held in June to follow up after the workshop and then as required later in the year.

It is clear that the disability awareness “train the trainer” model has great potential for other regions in the world as well as for ISOC staff. It is necessary to hold face-to-face “train the trainer” workshops in each region as they are experiential and interactive. It is proposed

that ISOC consider funding further “train the trainer” workshops using this model.

### **Additional information**

At the conclusion of the Project, all workshop materials will be made available under a creative commons license on the ISOC website.

For further information, please contact:

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