



Increasing ICT accessibility to information for people with disability

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People with disability

- One billion people with disabilities worldwide with 80% in developing countries
- Marginalised in many countries
- Many cultural and economic barriers to active participation
 - Limited educational opportunities
 - Limited employment



ICT accessibility

Accessibility to information and the Internet for people with disabilities can break down barriers and open up opportunities



Key policy driver

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- Signed and ratified by over 100 countries
- Obligations include implementing measures to design, develop, produce and distribute accessible ICT at an early stage, so these become accessible at minimum cost for people with disabilities. (Article 9 on Accessibility)
- **Needs to be followed by action!**



Accessible books

- Only 1-7% of the world's books are in accessible format
- Marrakesh Treaty (WIPO)
 - For countries that have ratified the Treaty
 - Allows creation of books in accessible formats (for people with visual impairment) by blindness organisations without requesting copyright permission of owner of published work (exception to domestic copyright law).
 - Permission by authorised entities to import and export books in accessible formats between countries without needing permission from copyright owner.
- DAISY is international standard for delivery of accessible online books for blind people
 - Vashkar Bhattacharjee works with Bangladesh government to deliver accessible school text books using DAISY



Web accessibility and usability

- Underpins accessible online service delivery
- Many governments have adopted W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0
- Design and testing with users important



Pacific region

- Extremely large area with small landmass
- Relatively small populations
- Majority are small island developing states
- 22 countries or territories
- Transport and infrastructure costs are high





Status of ICT in the Pacific

- Growing ICT usage in the Pacific
 - Satellite services and submarine cables are increasingly bringing faster and more reliable broadband services
- Widely varying usage in different countries
 - Costs – computers are expensive
 - Internet usage mainly through smart phones
 - Remoteness
 - Some countries such as Vanuatu – over 75% of population use mobile phones
- But people with disability are doubly disadvantaged
 - Cultural and socio-economic factors



Vanuatu pilot project – ICT usage survey

- ITU pilot project in Vanuatu with Pacific Disability Forum and the Government of Vanuatu
- Baseline data – first of its kind in the Pacific
 - Building evidence base for improving ICT accessibility
- Interviews with over 200 people with disability in towns and villages
- Preliminary findings:
 - Many have not heard of the Internet
 - Many do not have a mobile phone and if they do, it is not a smart phone
 - Mobiles with long battery life are important because of limited access to electricity



Extending survey in the Pacific

- Usage of ICT survey by people with disability in 4 countries (Pacific Disability Forum)
 - Papua New Guinea
 - Fiji
 - Cook Islands
 - Marshall Islands
- Mainly reflects Vanuatu findings
- People in USA and New Zealand give basic phones to relatives in Pacific for receiving calls only – phone shared by family



Vanuatu pilot project – web accessibility audit

- Web accessibility audit of 28 Government websites
- Important as Vanuatu has strong e-government focus
- Findings indicate that web sites do not meet W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0
- Move to improve web accessibility as new Government websites are developed



Vanuatu policies

- Right to Information (RTI) Policy
- ICT Policy and Universal Access Policy
- Commits the Government to provide better access to information and to make ICTs accessible and affordable for the majority of the population
- RTI Web Accessibility Guidelines for web developers and content managers
 - Reflects WCAG 2.0 but places it in local context with relevant recommendations
 - Launched at National Library in September 2016



Ways forward – relevant in many parts of the Asia Pacific region

- Multi-faceted approach
 - Support for gradual cultural change
 - Disability awareness-raising for government and developers
 - Disability inclusive development
 - Implementation of policy, legislative and regulatory mechanisms
- Practical measures
 - Accessible websites, facilities, products and services
 - Subsidised costs
 - Training in ICT usage for people with disability
 - Inclusion of people with disability in planning



Thank you!

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