

Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD) Annual report - 2025

DCAD works to (a) promote the participation of persons with disabilities in the IGF and other Internet governance processes, and (b) to ensure that ICT accessibility is included in the key debates around Internet governance and digital policy to build a future where all sectors of the global community have equal access to the information society. The coalition plays a key and ongoing role in the IGF by advising and collaborating with the IGF Secretariat and various national and regional IGF initiatives to ensure that their processes and meetings, both onsite and virtual, are accessible.

This year DCAD was very active contributing with the IGF. Our activities fall into eleven (11) main areas:

- Revising the DCAD Accessibility Guidelines and having them translated into six languages with 3 more coming.
- Participating in the monthly NRI Calls and reporting on accessibility issues.
- Participating in the monthly Policy Network on Meaningful Access as DCAD is now part of the Organizing group
- Work with the IGF Secretariat on Accessibility issues relating to the website, the Venue and other accessibility issues.
- Active participation in the monthly Dynamic Coalitions Coordinating Group Calls and parallel work on organizing and participating in DCCG presentations and Main Sessions and the DCCG's submissions to the MAG.
- Participating in the 4 webinars that the DCCG held this year
- Participation and assistance with organizing the 4 DC Sessions at the IGF and also presenting in the DC Main Session
- Active Participation and presentations during MAG Consultation Sessions
- Presentations of DCAD at other IGF Sessions
- DCAD Travel Fellowship Program to the IGF
- WSIS +20 Resolution at the UN.

DCAD Work Projects-Governance and Accessibility Guidelines

In 2024, DCAD made several updates to the DCAD Governance documents. DCAD also updated the Accessibility Guidelines based on changes and revisions needed from our fellows in the 2024, and 2025 IGFs. These can be found here, <https://igf-dcad.org/accessibility-guidelines/>

The main project in this area was to have the guidelines translated into multiple languages. Currently the guidelines are translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Dutch, Serbian and planned translations in Arabic, Hindi, Chinese, and Russian.

DCAD collaboration with the Secretariat and with other IGF Intersessional Activities.

In 2025, DCAD collaborated with the NRIs on accessibility issues and also worked closely with the Policy Networks on Artificial Networks (PNAI) and with the Policy Networks on

Meaningful access. DCAD contributed to both reports and provided advisory assistance to the NRIs to ensure that other NRIs are made friendly and accessible for people with disabilities. We worked with many of the NRIs to ensure accessibility was taken into account.

In 2025, DCAD Coordinators continued assisting the IGF Secretariat on accessibility improvements to the IGF Website and also we sent out our annual accessibility guide and tips to the Secretariat. DCAD also was active in the NRI and DC network

DCAD also was included this year as one of the members of the Multisector advisory body for the Policy Network on Meaningful Access. Dr. Muhammad Shabbir submitted a case study on Digital Financial Inclusion in Pakistan for their repository of best practices. Judith Hellerstein helped organized the main session and was the Online Moderator for this session.

Other work this year for DCAD relates to our accessibility work connected to the MAG meeting, WSIS, the Global Digital Compact, IGF Leadership Comments, and other related comments that the Secretariat was hosting. DCAD submitted extensive comments to all these groups and these comments can be found on the IGF website. DCAD also presented on the MAG Consultations on Digital Inclusion held this past year.

DCAD involvement with the DC Coordinating Group

DCAD Coordinators also were very active participants on the monthly DCCG calls and helped organize and participated in several organized sessions organized by DCCG members. During 2025 there were several webinars and DCAD contributed to helping organize these webinars and also participated in them.

- **May 22 2025 – [DC Global Webinar – Capacity Building for the Digital Age](#)**
Dr. Muhammad Shabbir – represented DCAD
Entire Session [YOUTUBE](#) | **DOWNLOAD** [VIDEO](#) | [AUDIO](#) | **TRANSCRIPT**
[AR](#) / [EN](#) / [ES](#) / [FR](#) / [RU](#) / [ZH](#)
| **SUMMARY** [AR](#) / [EN](#) / [ES](#) / [FR](#) / [RU](#) / [ZH](#)
- **June 12 2025 – [DC Global Webinar – The Future of Multi-stakeholder Governance](#)**
Dr. Muhammad Shabbir – represented DCAD
- **July 24 2025 – [DC Global Webinar 4 – Gaming & Gamification – Cross-Sector Applications & Impact](#)**
Jakeel D. Abdullah – Board Member, U.S. International Council on Disabilities, represented DCAD
Entire Session ([YOUTUBE](#) | [AUDIO](#) | **TRANSCRIPT** [EN](#) / [ES](#) / [FR](#) | **SUMMARY** [EN](#) / [ES](#) / [FR](#))

The DCCG meets on a monthly basis, and this year help revise and/or draft some new governance documents, which included a new charter, organized separate sessions at the MAG Meetings and also organized the Main session of the IGF.

Several of the DCCG members hosted several presentations in an effort to raise the profile of

Dynamic Coalitions in the IGF and DCAD helped organize and participated in these sessions. The Coordinators also participated and contributed to the surveys created to help the team provided the primary data necessary to write the reports and/or comments.

DCAD also worked with several other DCs within the DCCG on a Joint proposal to the IGF MAG for more prominence within the IGF and to have a liaison within the MAG. At the IGF we met with MAG chair Carol Roach on this issue and wrote up a letter and sent it to the current MAG chair.

The DCCG Organizers also drafted joint comments to the IGF in response to the WSIS+ 20 review process, IGF MAG Consultations, the DCCG Report, and other reports that the DCCG issued. In addition to a joint report, the DCAD also published its own comments to these reports. DCAD worked with the DCCG on its presentation to the MAG meeting in the June/July time frame.

The DCCG decided to have a booth within the IGF village at this year's IGF and DCAD members and the DCAD fellows help staff the booth and also promoted DCAD and our work to other participants who came by.

DC IGF Main Session and other Dynamic Coalition session

DCAD was also on the organizing team to plan the DC main session at the IGF and DCAD. This year the Main session was organized around DCs in service of Internet Governance: Success stories from the past and for the future of the IGF

This session spoke about how Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) have played a vital role within the IGF process, serving as engines of innovation, dialogue, and community-driven research on some of the most pressing issues in Internet governance. Their intersessional work, from accessibility to cybersecurity, online safety and digital financial inclusion, reflects the spirit of the IGF's bottom-up, multistakeholder model. This session celebrates the achievements of DCs while asking: what's next? It invited a forward-looking conversation on how the broader Internet governance community can benefit from the outreach and visibility, relevance, influence, and outcomes of DCs in alignment with the priorities of the Global Digital Compact. As "living labs" for multistakeholder collaboration, DCs are uniquely positioned to show how open, bottom-up governance can translate values into action.

Work of all the DC, DCAD Included has relevance and meaning for their community and beyond in the whole IGF ecosystem. This is evidenced by four webinars held by the DCs' community each with a high number of participants from the IGF community (between 50 - 100 each) which have resulted in four workshops to be held at the IGF 2025 in Norway.

The session demonstrated the interrelatedness of the diverse Dynamic Coalitions' work and their engagement with and contributions to the GDC, the WSIS +20 themes and objectives and the SDGs by providing a coherent topical flow along the following four themes as addressed beforehand:

- 1.AI and rapidly advancing and evolving technologies, like the Metaverse, and Web 4.0
- 2.Safety and Security? Learning the hard way. Cybersecurity and Safety lessons for the 21st century
- 3.Capacity Building as a fundamental human right and requirement
- 4.Future of Multistakeholder Governance

June 25, 2025 – [DC Main Session – Dynamic Coalitions in service of Internet Governance: Success stories from the past and for the future of the IGF](#)

Entire Session ([YOUTUBE](#) | [DIGWATCH](#)) | Dr. Muhammad Shabbir intervention ([YOUTUBE](#) | [mp4](#) | [mp3](#) | [pdf](#))

DCAD was particularly active on the Capacity Building as a fundamental human right and requirement session and the Future of Multistakeholder Governance

The focus of the Capacity building session was to highlight that the right to engage on an equal basis along with shaping our society is a fundamental human right. The ability to acquire the needed skills and understanding must therefore be recognized as part of this right. Digital literacy is key for seizing opportunities and managing challenges. Importantly, there is a near-universal recognition of the need for capacity building in every new digital governance framework. Each of the DCs within the IGF ecosystem produce output that helps build capacity within the IGF ecosystem as well as within their own community. In some cases, this is a direct goal, and in others, it is a valuable by-product of their work. These contributions, while sometimes under-recognized, play a significant role in shaping inclusive governance and digital empowerment, also counteracting potential discrimination that results from a lack of digital literacy. Recognizing these contributions is central to fulfilling the principles outlined in the Global Digital Compact, particularly in advancing human centric digital cooperation. This workshop highlighted the crucial role of DCs in supporting and delivering capacity building initiatives. It explored how these contributions can be better structured, improved, and brought into sharper focus within both their individual communities and the broader IGF ecosystem.

The Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD) has consistently emphasized that true digital inclusion cannot be achieved without ensuring that persons with disabilities are fully equipped to participate in and shape the digital environment. DCAD proposes that accessibility be recognized as a foundational principle across all IGF capacity-building programs, and calls for establishing accessible-by-design principles in the permanent hub for capacity sharing.

DCAD's contributions focus on building capacity among persons with disabilities, policymakers, developers, and digital platform providers, to recognize, design, and implement accessibility as a core component of digital rights and human rights. Through its outputs—such as Fellowship Program, accessibility guidelines, training sessions on accessible virtual meetings, and best practices for inclusive online participation—DCAD directly supports the objectives of the Global Digital Compact by ensuring that no one is left behind. Importantly, DCAD also advocates for the integration of accessibility training into all broader digital capacity-building initiatives. Capacity building, from DCAD's perspective, must be intersectional: digital literacy programs must incorporate accessibility from the outset to avoid creating new digital divides.

- **June 26, 2025 – [WS5 Dynamic Coalition Session: Capacity Building as a fundamental human right and requirement](#)**
Entire Session ([YOUTUBE](#) | [DIGWATCH](#)) | Dr. Muhammad Shabbir interventions ([YOUTUBE](#) | [mp4](#) | [mp3](#) | [pdf](#))

Multistakeholder Governance

The other DC session titled the Future of Multistakeholder Governance was also both organized and had the DCAD Coordinators speaking at it. This panel focused on exploring the evolving landscape of multistakeholder governance in this digital age, with a focus on the outcomes of WSIS+20 and ensuring that all communities including marginalized communities, persons with disabilities and young adults and children as active participants in shaping the future of IGF. It considered the application of multistakeholder governance principles to different networks like, for instance, the delay and fault tolerant networks like the Interplanetary networks. With the speed at which the digital transformation advances and the IGF serving as a global platform for inclusive dialogue, the session will examine how current multistakeholder models can adapt to better reflect the perspectives and rights of younger generations.

June 27, 2025 – [Dynamic Coalition Session: Future of multistakeholder governance](#) – Co-organizer / Moderator: Judith Hellerstein

Entire Session ([YOUTUBE](#) | Dr. Muhammad Shabbir interventions ([YOUTUBE](#) | [mp4](#) | [mp3](#) | [pdf](#)) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLckuBhSXqE>

The Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD) emphasized that the future of multistakeholder governance must be genuinely inclusive—not only in principle but in practice. As technologies evolve, ensuring the active participation of persons with disabilities at every stage of policy development, decision-making, and implementation is critical to the legitimacy and sustainability of governance processes.

DCAD’s ongoing initiatives, such as the DCAD Fellowship Program for Persons with Disabilities, provide a tangible model for promoting inclusive participation. By supporting fellows to engage meaningfully in the IGF process, DCAD demonstrates that providing targeted capacity-building opportunities leads to stronger, more diverse multistakeholder dialogues. Looking ahead, DCAD advocated for embedding accessibility and disability inclusion systematically into the IGF and broader Internet governance ecosystem. Future governance models must move beyond tokenism to ensure that persons with disabilities are recognized as active contributors in decision-making processes, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) and the vision of a people-centered, inclusive, and sustainable information society outlined in the WSIS and Global Digital Compact frameworks.

By institutionalizing accessibility standards and ensuring that persons with disabilities participate not just as observers but as decision-makers, the IGF can set a global benchmark for inclusive, equitable, and effective multistakeholder governance

Lastly, DCAD was also featured in another IGF sessions-- Beyond Tokenism: Disability-Inclusive Leadership in IGF

This session focused on global digital governance. This session, Beyond Tokenism: Ensuring Disability-Inclusive Leadership in Internet Governance, explored how digital cooperation frameworks can better integrate persons with disabilities into Internet governance processes. The discussion focused on strengthening cross-stakeholder engagement, ensuring that governance structures, from the IGF's Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) to national and regional Internet governance initiatives, prioritize accessibility and inclusive decision-making. By leveraging insights from disability leadership programs and real-world examples, this session will highlight strategies to bridge existing gaps, such as setting diversity targets, creating mentorship pathways, and embedding accessibility requirements into digital governance mechanisms. The workshop featured experts from global policy organizations, IGF leadership, and disability rights advocates, some with the lived experience of disability, to debate different perspectives on how cooperation among governance bodies can be enhanced to serve all stakeholders equitably. It contributed to ongoing discussions on making governance structures more representative, particularly in the lead-up to major global initiatives like the WSIS+20 review and the Global Digital Compact.

Please see these links below for a description of the session.

June 25, 2025 – [WS #69 Beyond Tokenism: Disability-Inclusive Leadership in IGF](#)

Speakers: Vinton Cerf | Dr. Muhammad Shabbir | Gunela Astbrink | Derrick Cogburn | Nirmita Narasimhan | Sarah Armstrong ([YOUTUBE](#) | [Transcript](#) | [DIGWATCH](#))

DCAD Annual Meeting

At the IGF, DCAD also had its annual meeting and while originally Dr. Vint Cert could not attend the meeting in the end, he was able to attend the meeting virtually but also had sent a video greeting to all, which is listed here. <https://share.descript.com/view/5XtkDkAS653>

The DCAD Annual General Meeting included the successful translation of accessibility guidelines into multiple languages and participation in webinars on capacity building and multi-stakeholder governance. Fellows highlighted the need for an alumni network and better integration of fellows into IGF activities. Accessibility issues at the IGF 2025 were discussed, such as long distances between sessions and the need for better captioning and translation services. Suggestions for improvement included creating a formal review process for accessibility feedback and improving the accessibility of event apps and online forms.

DR. Muhammad Shabbir introduced himself and Judith Hellerstein, highlighting their roles in coordinating the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD).

Discussion on Fellowship Program and Accessibility Issues

- Muhammad Shabbir and Judith Hellerstein discuss the fellowship program, including the selection process and the need for an alumni network.
- Jolenta Rose raises concerns about the sustainability of the fellowship program and the need for an alumni network to maintain connections and support fellows.

- Emmanuel Oruk shares his positive experience attending IGF online, highlighting the importance of captioning and the need for more accessible digital packages for persons with disabilities.
- Participants discuss the need for better accessibility in the IGF scheduling app and the importance of having a dedicated space for DCAD sessions in the plenary hall.

Feedback and Suggestions for Improvement

- Participants provided feedback on the IGF 2025, including issues with the scheduling app and the need for better accessibility in the online forms for visa applications.
- Dr. Vinton Cerf emphasized the importance of concrete feedback to improve future IGF events.
- Gunela Astbrink mentioned the positive experience of mentoring fellows and the potential for future collaboration with the Internet Society Foundation.

Below is a link to the annual meeting held on June 26, 2026. **DCAD Annual General Meeting 2025** ([docx](#) / [pdf](#))

DCAD IGF Fellowship

In 2024, DCAD continued with our DCAD Travel to the IGF Fellowship. This fellowship funded by Vint Cerf allowed for two fellows and a mentor to travel to the IGF and we also had one online fellow. The whole process had to be completed in less than four months since the IGF in 2025 was held in June 2025 instead of December. We had over 100 applications and it was a tough selection, but we selected two fellows Jolenta Rose and Sarah Kekeli and Emmanuel Oruk as an online fellow along with their Mentor Gunela Astbrink. This year, all fellows had to take several online classes to learn about Internet Governance and this helped them get more out of their engagement at the IGF.

The fellows attended many sessions at the IGF and met many stakeholders. Here are some pictures of the fellows at the IGF



The fellows also met with ISOC HQ, the ISOC Foundation and also with Facebook and other stakeholders. Below is a photo of the entire DCAD team present along with Dr. Vint Cerf and other DCAD Members.



June 26, 2025 – DCAD Annual General Meeting 2025 ([docx](#) / [pdf](#))

The fellows also were very active at the IGF Feedback session. Below is some pictures of the Fellows providing their comments and suggestions to main sessions and to the IGF Taking Stock Session





We gratefully thank all Committee members, Judith Hellerstein, Dr. Muhammad Shabbir, Deidre Williams, Cato Lie, and Gunela Astbrink for their efforts and countless hours of dedication to help us select our fellows.

As a follow up to the fellowship, DCAD will contribute a list of items and issues to improve for next years IGF.

Another large component of the work of DCAD for 2025 was our engagement with the WSIS +20 review and their implementation over the past 20 years. In December 2025, the UN General Assembly renewed their mandate and also gave permanent status to the Internet Governance Forum. Previously it had to be renewed every 5 years. The process began in April 2025 with the UN appointing H.E. Mr. Ekitela Lokaale, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations, and H.E. Ms. Suela Janina, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations, as co-facilitators to lead the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Information Society. These leaders then proceeded to lay out a roadmap of the process until completion in December 2025 at the UN General Assembly. In May 2025, the two Co-Facilitators presented the roadmap of key steps leading up to the draft outcome document of the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Information Society. The roadmap can be found below, <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/wsisis20/PreparatoryProcessRoadmap>

UN DESA worked closely with the two Co-Facilitators on this process and released numerous drafts which DCAD and other stakeholders submitted comments and also presented these comments on online consultations. There were more than four opportunities for the community to comment on these drafts and DCAD availed ourselves of these opportunities.

DCAD submitted comments on the Elements Paper and also presented and summarized our comments in an online consultation.

- [Margins to Mainstream: Comments on the WSIS+20 Elements Paper](#)
- [Judith Hellerstein remarks at Follow-up WSIS+20 Informal Stakeholder Consultation Session – 29 July 2025](#)

In June 2025, UN DESA worked with the two Co-Facs to create an informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) — an informal stakeholder mechanism designed to serve as a channel for diverse multistakeholder perspectives, not a formal advisory group. The group was composed of non-governmental members of the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and Leadership Panel (LP). This group also held several consultations and DCAD presented our comments and views to this group.

DCAD also met with the Co-Facilitators on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2025 at a meeting that UNDESA organized.

After taking in all these comments the Co-Facilitators produced a later draft called the Zero Draft. Again, DCAD submitted detailed comments on this draft and also provided comments online in the stakeholder consultations. Below are the links to DCAD's comments on the Zero Draft.

- [IGF DCAD Response to the WSIS+20 Zero Draft](#) (28 September 2025)

The Co-Facilitators also met with many stakeholders at different venues including the IGF in June 2025 and also at the October ICANN meeting. DCAD was present at all these meetings and provided our comments and feedback.

In November, DCAD again submitted comments to the Co-Facilitators and also wrote this blog post.

- [Overlooked Again? Why 1.5 Billion People Can't Be an Afterthought in Digital Policy](#) (Dr. Shabbir comments – Nov 2025)

DCAD submitted Comments on Rev 1 of the WSIS Resolution, and these can be found here <https://igf-dcad.org/igf-dcad-wsis20-rev1/>

With the release of Version 2 of the WSIS resolutions DCAD submitted our comments to the Co-Facilitators and to UN DESA and these can be found here <https://igf-dcad.org/igf-dcad-response-to-the-wsis20-outcome-document-rev-2/>

DCAD also joined the IMSB when it held its consultations with stakeholders and made comments which can be found below

- [DCAD comments at IMSB Stakeholder Consultation](#) (Judith Hellerstein comments – Dec 2025)

Finally, on the margins of the WSIS +20 High Level Meeting at the UN, on December 15, 2025, DCAD joined other members of the DCCG at this side event. DCAD Coordinator Judith

Hellerstein highlighting the work being done by DCAD and the broader Internet Governance Forum community. Her remarks are listed below along with the video of the event can be seen. <https://igf-dcad.org/judith-hellerstein-wsis20/>

- [Judith Hellerstein remarks on IGF Dynamic Coalitions at WSIS+20 High-Level Meeting in NYC](#) (Dec 2025)

IGF Dynamic Coalitions at the Forefront of WSIS+20 and Beyond WSIS+20' ([Listen](#) / [Read](#) / [Watch entire session](#)).



On 17 December, after more than a year of negotiations, the WSIS+20 process was finalized with adoption of the Review Outcome Document—a landmark achievement for global digital governance. For the first time, the Internet Governance Forum has been granted permanent mandate as a UN forum, reaffirming the value of multistakeholder cooperation. [Event details](#).

After the event UNDESA asked for feedback on the process and the roadmap and DCAD provided this feedback to the UN

DCAD Website and Mailing list

DCAD's website and mailing list is ably managed by Joly MacFie, the Administrator of the Internet Society's Accessibility Special Interest Group. Joly also created the fellowship form and administered it on our Website. He then provided us with the results of the website gives DCAD the flexibility to host a number of surveys and the DCAD Fellowship application form, for example. Joly MacFie also maintains the membership list that is made available on the website. Further information is at: <https://igf-dcad.org>