
WSIS + 20 Zero Draft:

Youth IGF India

Official Statement 2025

Dear Committee

We are pleased to share this draft submission of inputs on behalf of the Youth IGF India towards the WSIS+20 consultation on the zero draft. As a forum dedicated towards bringing the voice of the youth in the internet governance space we are keen to share insights into what the youth would like to see in this revision of the WSIS.

As the future of the IGF also is under consideration with this review, we would like to reiterate our support towards the forum and the significance it holds in the Internet Governance landscape thus supporting paragraph 115 of the Zero draft to make the IGF a permanent UN forum. At this crucial juncture of reviewing the past 20 years we are also bestowed with the responsibility of carving out the path for the next two decades of the internet. That makes this consultation not only significant for our own lifetimes but also for the future generations seeing it would make the basis of the internet they inherit from the current generation.

As the youth we feel that it is pertinent that we reiterate our role and voice here in the processes to future proof this endeavour.

We hope our suggestions make it to the final draft along with all other important voices to make this a truly multistakeholder endeavour.

This submission was made possible with the contribution of Ihita Gangavarapu (Founder, Youth IGF India) and Preeksha Malhotra (YouthIGF India Fellow 2025).

Warm regards

On Behalf of the YIGF India

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The World Summit on Information Society was a turning point which created a commitment to a global and equitable internet. The internet had become a major contributor to our everyday way of life as well as the gateway to opportunities. This aspect which has now become a lived reality could be foreseen by the then forces behind the WSIS and forums such as the Internet Governance Forum.

In 2025, we see ourselves at major cross roads reviewing the 20 years gone by. While so much has changed, not much has changed in many spheres such as inequalities in access, abuse of power and not enough dedicated spaces for a bottom-up approach to governing the internet.

Reiterating the significance of the multistakeholder internet, we are representing the voice of the youth in this dialogue. A voice which is known as the ‘digital native’ but often unrepresented in policy circles.

The Youth Internet Governance Forum India, in the past 8 years, has been trying to plug this gap by becoming a forum to give direction to the voice of this important stakeholder.

For this review of the zero draft, we would like to emphasize on the need for a more sustainable approach to including youth in the information society, and how it is governed. A systemic level change to this end is needed which is possible only through the direction of the right monetary and non-monetary resources. Our list of suggestions to this end includes:

1. **Emphasis on Youth IGFs Officially within WSIS Proceedings:** We would like to reiterate the role that these youth forums play in making the youth involved and aware about the internet governance landscape in addition to providing them opportunity to influence policy discourse. Recognition of them as official initiatives of the IGF within the WSIS proceedings would make the mandate of the forum hyperlocal in nature. Each Youth IGF initiative could act as the country specific arm of the forum and help collate collaborations and connections with youth from across the country. This would enable a more informed approach to future consultations on the theme, especially seeing the need for immediate action through involvement to ensure the WSIS agenda is aligned with the SGDs. This suggestion is informed by the positive outcomes and participation that 8 years of Youth IGF India has noted.
2. **Introduce Concrete Measures Towards Inclusion of Youth into the Policy Space:** We recommend that the WSIS+20 outcome explicitly

recognizes that young people are not a homogenous group, but instead represent diverse social, cultural, economic, and regional realities. Digital inclusion strategies must therefore reflect these internal diversities, ensuring that youth participation and empowerment are accessible to all young people, regardless of their background. Reiterating the commitment in paragraph 117 and 118 of the zero draft and emphasising the need of more concrete measures to that end.

This requires policies and programmes that:

- Account for different levels of digital literacy and access to infrastructure;
- Address socio-economic barriers that prevent equitable participation;
- Provide multilingual and culturally sensitive approaches to engagement;
- Prioritize the needs of marginalized youth, including those in rural and underserved communities, youth with disabilities, and those from minority groups.

3. Emphasis on Media and Information Literacy: A stronger mandate needs to be placed on the themes of media and information literacy to ensure the effective use of the internet. In the day and age where the use of the internet can be a make and break difference in someone's education, career growth to enabling access to life saving health care facilities through tele medicine, knowing how to navigate the digital world is pertinent. Efforts towards school level literacy would only address the problem for future generations, making us catch-up rather than walk hand in hand with technology. Adult literacy should be equally given consideration and emphasis to ensure that the educational literacy gap that we see prevalent worldwide does not creep into the digital space as well, enabling a traditional inequality to overpower the digital world. To this end, implementing strategic training programs bridging the inter-generational gap between the youth and adults and using it to our advantage would be pertinent. (Referring to Para 66 to 70 of the zero draft)

4. Urging Stakeholders to Address Mis/disinformation without Affecting Freedom of Speech and Expression: Mis/disinformation which refers to false or misleading information in the public realm needs to be addressed strategically and without curtailing freedom of

speech and expression. Reiterating the commitment displayed in paragraph 64 and para 91 of the zero draft we suggest a strategic focus at the intersection of mis/disinformation and freedom of speech and expression. Governments across the world need to be made party to a mandate where they pledge their allegiance to the Article 19 of the UN declaration of Human Rights in the digital space. Frameworks for effectively addressing mis/disinformation through multi-stakeholder consultations need to be worked towards to ensure that the internet can remain the free space that it was envisioned to be.