**APrIGF Seoul 2013**

**Workshop Summary Reports**

**Date:** 5th September 2013

**Time:** 9am

**Track:** Multi-stakeholder Enhanced Cooperation/Openess/Security/Access

**Workshop Title: TOWARDS A BETTER INTERNET IN THE PACIFIC**

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**Panelists:** Maureen Hilyard (Cook Islands), Anonga Tisam (Cook Islands), Gunela Astbrink (Australia), Dan McGarry (Vanuatu)

**A brief summary of presentations**

1. Maureen Hilyard – Depopulation and its impact on development on small outer islands.

A view of environmental impacts of depopulation and how the internet is helping to bridge the divide between the remaining population which is of the extremes of aged and young, and the diaspora.

1. Anonga Tisam – The Importance of the Internet to maintain language and culture in the Pacific

Depopulation in the Pacific also impacts on the diminishing of traditions, language and culture. Anonga provided some data on these impacts and how the internet can be used to maintain the language and culture among the diaspora wherever they may be.

1. Gunela Astbrink – People with disabilities and IT

As the internet develops, it is important that people with disabilities as users of this valuable tool are also considered in the development of websites and other internet application. In the Pacific where there is always the risk of natural disasters, there is also a need to ensure that PWD are included in disaster risk management policies.

1. Dan McGarry – Focus on the landscape, not the architecture

Although internet development is a focus for organisations such as PICISOC, it is important that the needs of users and important governance issues are considered as a prerequisite to infrastructure development and hardware. It is important that governments buy into the importance of internet development but this still requires awareness, understanding and education before we can actually achieve their commitment to development. Those countries who have engaged with IT development across all sectors of society show the most progress within the region.

**A substantive summary and the main issues that were raised:**

Although this was a much smaller group than originally planned, the purpose of the panel was to demonstrate the effect of environmental influences on development, and the important role that government decision makers have on how effectively the internet can be used to enhance connections and opportunities for people on isolated island communities in the Pacific. There are twenty two countries and territories in the Pacific region so that it is difficult to generalize, but a key factor in the development of the internet in the region is the decision-making that is made at a high level. Pacific governments sometimes lack understanding of the potential of the internet to advance social, educational, economic and other benefits. One of the roles of PICISOC is to raise awareness and contribute towards understanding of the infrastructure and governance issues that are attached to the difficulties of development in a region where large expanses of ocean lie between its twenty-two developing countries and their thousands of sparsely populated outer islands.

**Conclusion & Further Comments:**

It was a shame that there was not more funding to enable more representation from the Pacific at the APrIGF event. It was also a shame that there were not more people at the session to ask questions of the panel but I hope that those who attended got a flavor of the difficulties surrounding the development of the internet in the Pacific region.