IGF SRI LANKA

REPORT ON IGF SRI LANKA 2024

12th – 13th December 2024

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary 3

2. Introduction 4

2.1. Background 4

2.2. Objectives 4

2.3 Preliminary Session Series 5

2.3.1 Preliminary 01 5

2.3.2 Preliminary 02 7

2.3.3 Preliminary 03 8

2.4 Structure of the Forum 10

3. Logistics 11

3.1 Accessible venue 11

3.2 Logistics 11

4. Programme Schedule 12

5. Discussion 13

Day 1 - December 12, 2024 13

Day 2 - December 13, 2024 14

5.1 Main Forum 15

5.1.1 Introduction 15

5.1.2 Objectives 15

5.1.3 Key Highlights 15

Panel 01: Internet Governance and Digital Economy 17

Panel 02: Safer Internet, Privacy, and Regulations 19

5.1.4 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Main Forum Panels 22

5.2 Women Internet Governance Forum (Women IGF) 23

5.2.1 Introduction 23

5.2.2 Objectives 23

5.2.3 Key Highlights 23

5.3 Youth Internet Governance Forum (Youth IGF) 26

5.3.1 Introduction 26

5.3.2 Objectives 27

5.3.3 Key Highlights 27

5.3.4 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Youth IGF Panels 31
5.4 Digital Inclusion and Accessibility in Internet Governance Forum 34
5.4.1 Introduction 34
5.4.2 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Digital Inclusion and Accessibility Panels 38
5.5 Technical Internet Governance Forum (Tech IGF) 40
5.5.1 Introduction 40
5.5.2 Objectives 40
5.5.3 Key Highlights 41
5.5.4 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Tech IGF Panels 45
6. Participation Analysis 47
7. Key Team 48
8. Acknowledgement 48

1. Executive Summary

The Internet Governance Forum Sri Lanka (IGF Sri Lanka) 2024 was successfully held on December 12th and 13th, 2024, in Colombo**,** under the theme "Empowering the Internet Through Multistakeholderism", marking another milestone in Sri Lanka's commitment to inclusive, multi-stakeholder discussions on internet governance. Since its inception in 2016, IGF Sri Lanka has served as a national platform mirroring the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF)**,** fostering dialogue on critical internet-related policies and challenges. IGF Sri Lanka continues to serve as a premier platform for multi-stakeholder discussions on Internet governance, policy, and digital development.

Organized for the third time by the Lanka School on Internet Governance (LkSIG), a recognized body under the IGF Secretariat (UN), IGF Sri Lanka 2024 featured five thematic tracks, ten high-level panels, and over 50 expert panelists, offering diverse insights into critical areas of internet governance. The event brought together policymakers, civil society, industry leaders, academia, the technical community, and decision-makers, facilitating meaningful dialogue on topics such as digital rights, cybersecurity, AI governance, digital inclusion, and emerging technologies.

The forum concluded with five dedicated sessions, each addressing a critical dimension of Internet governance:

- Main Forum – Addressing overarching policy discussions.
- Women Internet Governance Forum (Women IGF) – Focusing on gender inclusion in internet governance.
- Youth Internet Governance Forum (Youth IGF) – Engaging young leaders in shaping the digital future.
- Digital Inclusion and Accessibility in Internet Governance Forum – Promoting equitable access and participation.
- Technical Internet Governance Forum (Tech IGF) – Exploring technical and infrastructural aspects of internet governance.

Through these discussions, IGF Sri Lanka 2024 reaffirmed its commitment to an open, inclusive, and collaborative approach to internet governance. By fostering stakeholder engagement and policy recommendations, the forum plays a crucial role in shaping Sri Lanka's digital ecosystem and governance framework while contributing to regional and global internet governance discourse.

2. Introduction

2.1. Background

The Internet Governance Forum Sri Lanka (IGF Sri Lanka) is a national-level initiative that mirrors the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in its mission to provide an open and inclusive platform for discussions on Internet governance. Since its inception in 2016, IGF Sri Lanka has facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue on critical internet policy issues, digital rights, cybersecurity, and the responsible development of emerging technologies. Over the years, the forum has strengthened Sri Lanka's engagement in global Internet governance discussions while addressing local and regional challenges in the digital landscape.

The first IGF Sri Lanka was successfully conducted on March 8, 2016, followed by subsequent forums, including the 2017 IGF Sri Lanka, which featured the world's first-ever Women Internet Governance Forum (Women IGF). Despite global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, IGF Sri Lanka continued its mission by adapting to virtual formats, ensuring continuous engagement and inclusivity in governance discussions.

For the third time, the Lanka School on Internet Governance (LKSIG), the official local representative of the Asia Pacific School on Internet Governance (APSIG) in Sri Lanka, has hosted the IGF Sri Lanka 2024 on 12th and 13th December 2024 and it was a forum where policymakers, civil society, industry, the technical community, the academic community, and decision-makers discuss key aspects of Internet governance issues and key areas on an equal footing and through an open and inclusive process.

2.2. Objectives

The primary objectives of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 were:

- To foster inclusive, transparent, and solutions-driven discussions on internet governance and digital policy.
- To facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement, ensuring equal participation from government, private sector, academia, civil society, and technical experts.
- To explore critical themes, including digital rights, cybersecurity, AI governance, internet access, and emerging technologies.
- To provide a platform for youth, women, and marginalized communities to voice their perspectives on internet governance.
- To contribute national insights to regional and global internet governance discourse.

2.3 Preliminary Session Series

In preparation for the IGF Sri Lanka 2024, a series of preliminary sessions was initiated by the Lanka School on Internet Governance (LKSIG) to explore and address key areas of the IGF Sri Lanka 2024 forum. These sessions provided background knowledge, expert insights, and stakeholder engagement on critical Internet governance topics, laying the foundation for in-depth discussions during the main event. The preliminary sessions played a crucial role in identifying pressing challenges, gathering stakeholder perspectives, and ensuring an informed and inclusive dialogue at IGF Sri Lanka 2024.

2.3.1 Preliminary 01

The first preliminary session for Women IGF 2024 in line with IGF Sri Lanka 2024 organized by the Lanka School on Internet Governance (LKSIG) was held on the 10th of August 2024.

The LKSIG has successfully conducted the first preliminary session for the IGF 2024, focusing on the crucial role women play in shaping and leading social media. This event, brought together a diverse group of experts and participants to explore the challenges and opportunities women face in the digital landscape.

The session featured a distinguished panel of speakers, including:

- Dr. Dilrukshi Gamage - Senior Lecturer at the University of Colombo School of Computing
- Ms. Umali Thilakarathna - Renowned artist and celebrity in Sri Lanka
- Mrs. Samantha de Soysa – Attorney at Law and policymaker

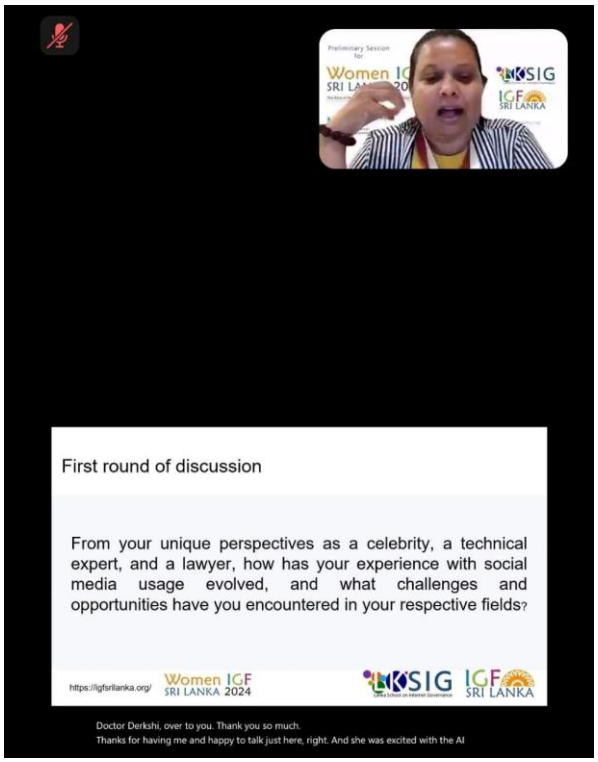
The discussion was skilfully moderated by Mr. Prishantha Welatanthrige from Women In Need, an organization dedicated to supporting women in Sri Lanka.

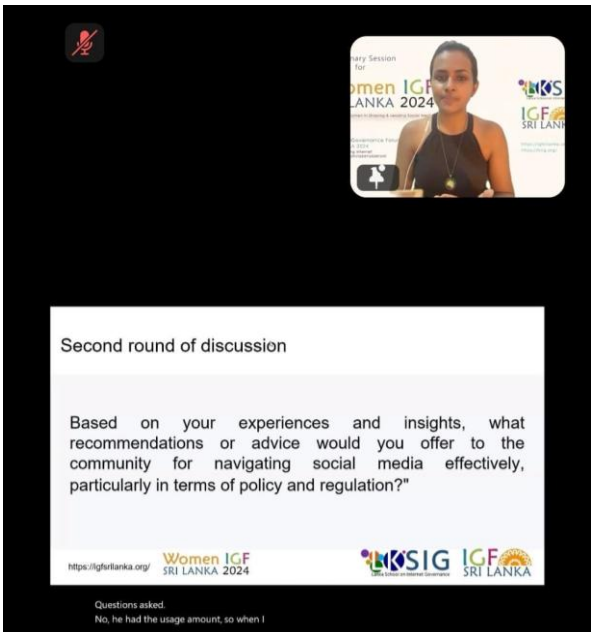
The panel discussion attracted over 35 participants, who engaged in thought-provoking conversations about the role of women in social media. The session was particularly enlightening, as many attendees raised questions about social media, internet policies, and related laws, indicating a gap in public awareness on these topics.

The Women IGF 2024 preliminary session was a resounding success, providing a platform for meaningful dialogue on the role of women in social media. The event underscored the importance of awareness, education, and empowerment in navigating the complexities of the digital world. The contributions of the panelists were invaluable in highlighting both the challenges and opportunities faced by women in this space.

Internet Governance Forum
SRI LANKA 2024
'Empowering Internet through Multistakeholderism'
Preliminary Session
for
Women IGF
SRI LANKA 2024
The Role of Women in Shaping & Leading Social Media
PRISHANTHA Welathanthry
Prof. DILRUKSHI Gamage
UMALI Thilakarathna
SAMANTHA de Soysa
Attorney-at-Law
Join the Virtual Event on
AUG 10
Saturday
At 3.00 PM
https://zoom.us/j/99524621722
Meeting ID: 995 2462 1722
Organized By
LKSIG
Lanka School on Internet Governance
IGF SRI LANKA
https://igfsrilanka.org/
https://lksig.org/

REC
The Role of Women in Shaping and Leading Social Media
Dr. Dilrukshi Gamage
Ms. Umali Thilakarathne
A Sri Lankan Cinema, Teledrama and Stage Actress
Ms. SAMANTHA DE SOYSA (Attorney-at-Law)
Prishantha Welathanthry
https://igfsrilanka.org/
University of Colombo. She's the she's a PhD holder specialized in exploring, designing and developing learning behavior


First round of discussion
From your unique perspectives as a celebrity, a technical expert, and a lawyer, how has your experience with social media usage evolved, and what challenges and opportunities have you encountered in your respective fields?
https://igfsrilanka.org/
Women IGF SRI LANKA 2024
Doctor Derkshi, over to you. Thank you so much.
Thanks for having me and happy to talk just here, right. And she was excited with the AI


Second round of discussion
Based on your experiences and insights, what recommendations or advice would you offer to the community for navigating social media effectively, particularly in terms of policy and regulation?"
https://igfsrilanka.org/
Women IGF SRI LANKA 2024
Questions asked.
No, he had the usage amount, so when I

2.3.2 Preliminary 02

The second preliminary session for the Tech IGF Sri Lanka 2024, organized by the Lanka School on Internet Governance (LkSIG), was successfully held on September 12, 2024, as a virtual event. The session, titled "AI for Workplace Productivity," featured Chathura Dilan Perera, Founder and CEO of Dilexus, as the resource person of the programme. With the participation of over 30 attendees from diverse sectors—including policymakers, technologists, students, young professionals, entrepreneurs, SMEs, government representatives, civil society members, and advocates—the discussion emphasized the transformative role of artificial intelligence (AI) in enhancing workplace productivity. Furthermore, the session explored the relevance of AI advancements to internet governance, fostering an engaging and inclusive dialogue on aligning technological innovation with ethical and governance frameworks.

2.3.3 Preliminary 03

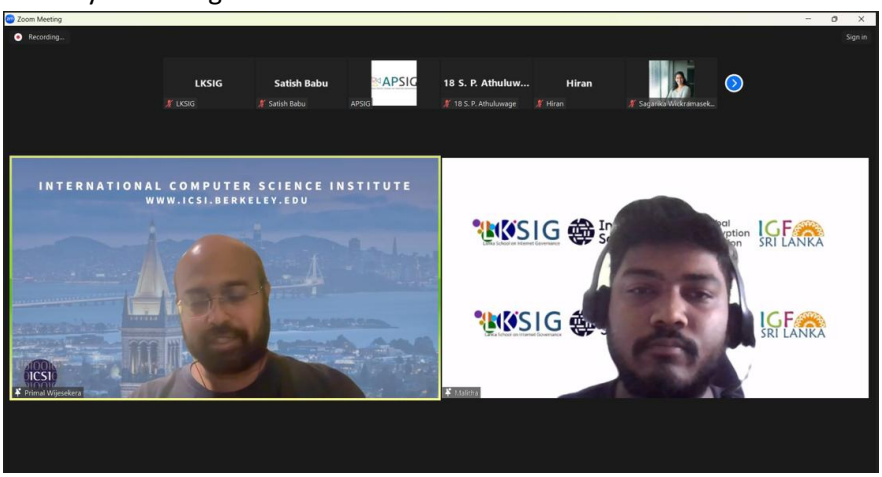
The second preliminary session for Tech IGF 2024, the third preliminary session for IGF Sri Lanka 2024, organized by the Lanka School on Internet Governance (LkSIG) in alignment with IGF Sri Lanka 2024, was successfully held on October 4, 2024**.** Additionally, this session was strategically aligned with Global Encryption Day 2024**,** which took place in Sri Lanka on October 12, 2024**,** reinforcing the importance of encryption and secure digital communications within the broader framework of Internet governance discussions. Further, it has focused on the theme, *"Building Trust in a Secured Digital Age,"* emphasizing the critical role of encryption in safeguarding privacy and data integrity amid growing cybersecurity threats.

The whole program aimed to foster a comprehensive understanding among stakeholders of the critical role encryption plays in securing digital environments while promoting policies and practices that protect digital rights and privacy in Sri Lanka. The session focused on making the Sri Lankan community aware of the importance of encryption in protecting data and ensuring privacy in the digital age. The programme is also expected to engage a broad range of stakeholders on the importance of encryption, privacy, and security, and make Sri Lankan communities aware of the importance of Encryption, related policies, and governance frameworks.

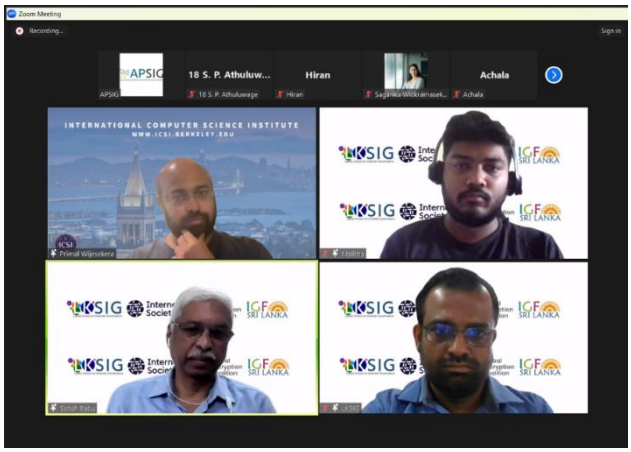
The session has addressed the Global Perspectives on encryption, Global Standards on Encryption and best practices on using encryption in the digital era. The two experts from the Internet and digital industry

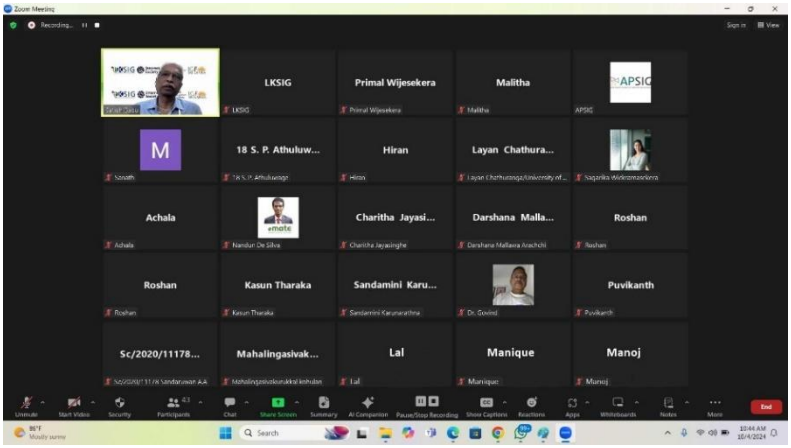
- Dr. Primal Wijesekera - Research Scientist at ICSI - International Computer Science Institute and University of Berkely
- Mr. Satish Babu - Former Chair - APRALO and APSIG

has participated for the discussion. The session was moderated by Mr. Malitha Manawaduge - An experienced Professional Freelancer working in the telecommunications industry. The session focused on digital freelancers, government officials, technical communities, and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, students, and journalists. It brought together over 40 participants from diverse backgrounds, including policymakers, technologists, entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), government representatives, civil society members, and advocates, fostering an inclusive and dynamic discussion on key internet governance issues.



https://lksig.org/
https://igfsrilanka.org/
Preliminary Session
for
IGF Sri Lanka & Global Encryption Day 2024
Building Trust in a Secured Digital Age
Satish Babu
Former Chair
APRALO & APSIG
Dr. Primal Wijesekera
Research Scientist
International Computer Science Institute & UC Berkeley
Join the Virtual Event on
OCT 4
Friday
At 10.00 AM
https://zoom.us/j/92564859381
Meeting ID: 925 6485 9381
Organized By
Internet Society
Global Encryption Coalition
IGF SRI LANKA


INTERNATIONAL COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTITUTE
WWW.ICSI.BERKELEY.EDU


LKSIG
Primal Wijesekera
Malitha
18 S. P. Athuluw...
Hiran
Layan Chathura...
Achala
Charitha Jayasi...
Darshana Malla...
Roshan
Kasun Tharaka
Sandamini Karu...
Puvikanth
Mahalingasivak...
Lal
Manique
Manoj

LKSIG
Malitha
Satish Babu
Kasun Tharaka
INTERNATIONAL COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTITUTE
WWW.ICSI.BERKELEY.EDU

2.4 Structure of the Forum

The IGF Sri Lanka 2024 featured:

- Five thematic tracks addressing key areas of internet governance.
- Ten high-level panel discussions with over 50 expert panelists from diverse backgrounds.
- Five dedicated forums focused on specialized aspects of Internet governance:
  - Main Forum – High-level policy discussions.
  - Women Internet Governance Forum (Women IGF) – Promoting gender inclusion.
  - Youth Internet Governance Forum (Youth IGF) – Encouraging youth participation.
  - Digital Inclusion and Accessibility in Internet Governance Forum – Advocating for equitable digital access.
  - Technical Internet Governance Forum (Tech IGF) – Addressing technical aspects of Internet governance.

Through its multi-stakeholder approach, IGF Sri Lanka 2024 successfully facilitated dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative policy recommendations, reinforcing Sri Lanka's role in shaping the future of Internet governance at both national and regional levels.

3. Logistics

3.1 Accessible venue

The hotel venue was carefully selected for its excellent accessibility, ensuring it catered well to individuals with disabilities. Its strategic location near public transportation and key areas in Colombo added convenience for all participants.

In line with ensuring reasonable accommodation, the venue boasted several accessible features. Notably, the lifts were equipped with Braille markings and verbal announcements for each floor, enhancing accessibility for those with visual impairments. Nearby the program venue, accessible washrooms were readily available. The main entrance had a ramp, facilitating easy access for wheelchair users. The reception staff and concierge were well-informed about reasonable accommodation requirements and readily assisted participants as needed.

3.2 Logistics

The necessary logistics support was ensured by the Lanka School on Internet Governance (LKSIG) and with the help of Internet Society (ISOC) Global, Internet Society Foundation, Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC), Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), British Computer Society (BCS), Ossec.Inc, TV Derana, Flare Global, Dialog Enterprise, and Lanka Education And Research Network (LEARN).

The venue selection considered the participants' needs. The conference halls were fully accessible including LED display monitors, LED Walls, sound systems, extension cables, moveable chairs and roving and stationary microphones.

Dedicated hotel staff were assigned to the forum on both days. Care was taken to ensure sufficient staff during the forum activities and serving of food–continental as well as vegetarian–was done smoothly via the hotel.

The event backdrops, banners, photography, videography, live sessions, content creation, interpretation, compeering, sound management, decorations and event management were done through professional services. In addition, the forum was documented through professional photos, and videos, which are currently preserved in a hard drive.

4. Programme Schedule

The forum was held over three days commencing on Thursday 12 December 2024 and finishing on the evening on Friday 13 December 2024.

Summary of the Programme Schedule:

	Time	Panel Name
12.12.2024	8.45 - 9.00	Registration
12.12.2024	9.00 - 9.15	Welcome and Inauguration
12.12.2024	9.15 - 9.45	Keynote Speech
12.12.2024	9.45 - 11.00	Internet Governance and Digital Economy - Multistakeholderism, Policies, Rules and Regulations, Opportunities, Digital Payments, Gig Economy
12.12.2024	11.15 - 12.30	Safer Internet, Privacy and Regulations - Internet child safety, Internet security, Privacy, GDPR, Data Protection Regulations and Acts
12.12.2024	12.30 - 13.30	Lunch
12.12.2024	13.30 - 13.45	Briefing Session - Session 02
12.12.2024	13.45 - 14.45	Women in Tech Opportunities, Mentoring and Supporting
12.12.2024	15.00 - 16.00	Is the internet a feminist issue?, Regulations and Governance
12.12.2024	13.30 - 13.45	Briefing Session - Session 03
12.12.2024	13.45 - 14.45	Digital Freelancing, Entrepreneurship and Youth Empowerment in the Online Sphere
12.12.2024	15.00 - 16.00	Internet Addiction and Preventing Online Scams
12.12.2024	16.00 - 16.15	End of Day 01
13.12.2024	8.45 - 9.00	Registration
13.12.2024	9.00 - 9.15	Briefing Session - Session 04
13.12.2024	9.15 - 10.30	Assistive Technologies and Universal Design Principles
13.12.2024	10.45 - 12.00	Digital Inclusion, Accessibility and Digital Rights
13.12.2024	9.00 - 9.15	Briefing Session - Session 05
13.12.2024	9.15 - 10.30	Multilingual Internet, Internet Localization, and Universal Acceptance
13.12.2024	10.45 - 12.00	Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), Data Governance and Trust
13.12.2024	12.00 - 12.15	Closing Remarks - Vote of Thanks
13.12.2024	12.15	Networking and Lunch

5. Discussion

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Sri Lanka 2024 was successfully conducted as a two-day event and the forum provided a multi-stakeholder platform for discussing key topics related to Internet governance, digital economy, privacy, cybersecurity, inclusion, and emerging technologies. The event featured five sessions comprising expert panel discussions addressing critical areas of national and global importance. The forum emphasized multi-stakeholder collaboration, policy development, digital rights, online safety, and emerging technologies, paving the way for a more inclusive and secure digital future for Sri Lanka and beyond.

Day 1 - December 12, 2024

Session 01: Main Forum

The first session included two-panel discussions with expert panelists from diverse domains.

- Panel 01: Internet Governance and Digital Economy
  This discussion covered multistakeholderism, policies, rules, regulations, opportunities, digital payments, and the gig economy**.** The panel also explored Sri Lanka's efforts in Internet governance and related areas, emphasizing the need for collaborative policymaking and regulatory frameworks.

- Panel 02: Safer Internet, Privacy, and Regulations
  This session focused on Internet child safety, cybersecurity, privacy, GDPR compliance, and data protection regulations**.** Panelists discussed the importance of safeguarding user data, enhancing public awareness, and ensuring regulatory enforcement in the digital space.

Session 02: Women Internet Governance Forum (Women IGF)

The second session was dedicated to empowering women in technology and Internet governance. Under the theme "Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges: Women in Internet Governance," policymakers, industry leaders, academia, civil society, and youth convened to discuss challenges and opportunities for women in the digital space. The discussions focused on mentoring, support mechanisms, and policy interventions to foster greater inclusivity in the tech industry. Further, the participants engaged in an activity to envision the future of women's involvement in Internet governance by 2030

Session 03: Youth Internet Governance Forum (Youth IGF)

This session was specially focused on youth participants, aiming to enhance their engagement in Internet governance discussions.

- Panel 01: Digital Freelancing, Entrepreneurship and Youth Empowerment in the Online Sphere
  Experts discussed online freelancing, digital entrepreneurship, online transactions, and opportunities for youth**.** They highlighted ways to avoid online scams, build trust in e-commerce, and leverage digital platforms for sustainable income generation**.**

- Panel 02: Internet Addiction and Preventing Scams

This panel addressed the growing concern of Internet addiction, its psychological effects, and strategies to foster digital well-being. It also included guidance on identifying and avoiding online fraud, scams, and misinformation.

Day 2 - December 13, 2024

Session 04: Digital Inclusion and Internet Governance

- Panel 01: Assistive Technologies and Universal Design Principles
  This discussion emphasized the role of assistive technologies and universal design in promoting digital accessibility**.** Experts shared insights into inclusive digital services and the need for accessible digital solutions for persons with disabilities.

- Panel 02: Digital Inclusion, Accessibility, and Digital Rights
  This panel focused on ensuring equitable access to digital resources, promoting digital literacy, and addressing barriers to digital inclusion**.** The discussion underscored the importance of protecting digital rights and fostering an inclusive online environment**.**

Session 05: Technical IGF – Internet Governance and Emerging Technologies

This session was especially focused on technical aspects related to Internet Governance.

- Panel 01: Multilingual Internet and Internet Localization, Universal Acceptance
  This discussion covered universal acceptance, localization, and the importance of multilingual content on the Internet. Panelists explored how localization can foster digital inclusivity and bridge linguistic barriers in Internet governance.

- Panel 02: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, and Data Governance and Trust
  The final panel explored Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), data governance, and trust**.** Experts discussed the intersection of AI and Internet governance, ethical AI development, and the role of responsible data management in shaping the future of digital ecosystems.

5.1 Main Forum

5.1.1 Introduction

The Main Forum of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 was held on December 12, 2024**,** immediately following the forum's inauguration, serving as the cornerstone session of the two-day event. Featuring two dynamic panel discussions, the forum brought together expert panelists from diverse domains to address critical aspects of Internet governance and foster meaningful dialogue on emerging issues.

5.1.2 Objectives

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Sri Lanka for 2024 aims to promote multi-stakeholder participation by engaging various stakeholders, including government, private sector, civil society, and academia, to discuss and address Internet governance issues. It seeks to facilitate discussions that contribute to developing effective internet policies that are inclusive, sustainable, and promote human rights. Additionally, the forum focuses on enhancing the understanding of Internet governance issues among stakeholders through workshops, training, and knowledge-sharing sessions. It will address both local and global challenges, such as cybersecurity, digital inclusion, and data protection, while encouraging the use of the Internet as a tool for economic development and innovation, ensuring accessibility for all citizens. Ultimately, the IGF aims to foster collaboration among different sectors and communities to create a more inclusive and equitable internet environment, establishing a platform for dialogue and promoting best practices in internet governance within Sri Lanka and beyond.

5.1.3 Key Highlights

The main forum of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 featured two high-level panel discussions with expert panelists representing diverse domains, focusing on crucial aspects of Internet governance and digital policies.

The Chief Guest, Hon. Deputy Minister of the Digital Economy, Engineer Eranga Weerathna, addressed the forum, sharing the government's vision for the future of the digital economy. In his speech, he outlined the government's plans for advancing the digital economy in the future, emphasizing that forums like the IGF serve as valuable eye-openers for policymakers and government officials, showcasing best practices in the policy-making process.

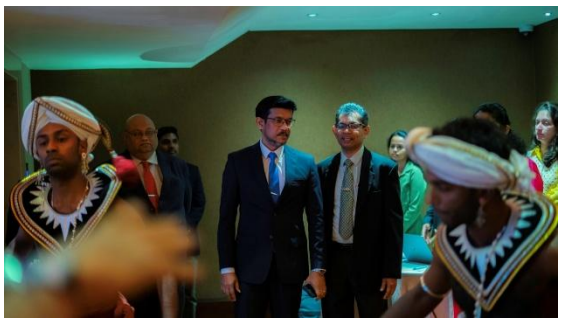
Policy Insights: The Deputy Minister emphasized the importance of forums like IGF in providing policymakers with valuable insights and best practices for effective policy-making.

Diverse Stakeholder Engagement: The forum successfully brought together stakeholders from government, the private sector, civil society, and academia, fostering rich discussions and collaboration.

Focus on Digital Inclusion: Discussions highlighted the need for digital inclusion and accessibility, ensuring that all citizens can benefit from the digital economy. Cybersecurity and Data Protection: Key issues related to cybersecurity and data protection were addressed, reflecting the growing importance of these areas in Internet governance.

Future of Digital Policies: The forum explored emerging trends and challenges in digital policies, preparing stakeholders for the evolving digital landscape.

Networking Opportunities: Attendees had opportunities to network and share experiences, strengthening collaborations across sectors.



Panel 01: Internet Governance and Digital Economy

The first panel discussion, titled "Internet Governance and Digital Economy**,"** delved into key topics such as multistakeholderism, policies, regulations, digital payments, and the gig economy. Moderated by Mr. Sachindra Samararathne, Associate Chief Digital Economy Officer of the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka. The following experts and key figures from different domains representing local and international entities participated as distinguished panelists.

- Mr. Waruna Sri Dhanapala – Acting Secretary to the Ministry of Digital Economy
- Mr. Sandun Hapugoda – Country Manager, Sri Lanka and Maldives at Mastercard
- Mr. Yash Agrawal – Manager, Global Stakeholder Engagement at ICANN
- Dr. Upendra Pieris – Chief Executive Officer at OREL IT

The session explored the government's perspective on Internet governance and the importance of regulatory frameworks in supporting the digital economy. The discussion also featured insights from multinational fintech entities like Mastercard**,** shedding light on the intersection of Internet governance and digital payment ecosystems.

The panel highlighted multistakeholderism as a pivotal approach to collaborative policymaking, emphasizing its role in building inclusive and effective governance frameworks. Opportunities for the private sector in the gig economy and emerging trends in digital transformation were also explored. The session underscored Sri Lanka's ongoing efforts to advance Internet governance, stressing the importance of creating policies that align with global standards while addressing local needs.

Mr. Sachindra
Samararatne

Internet Governance and Digital Economy
IGF
SRI LANKA
2024

Mr. Yash

Internet Governance and Digital Economy
IGF
SRI LANKA
2024

Panel 02: Safer Internet, Privacy, and Regulations

The second panel, titled "Safer Internet, Privacy, and Regulations," addressed critical issues surrounding cybersecurity, data protection, privacy, and Internet child safety**.** Panelists provided a comprehensive overview of regulatory frameworks, such as GDPR compliance**,** and discussed the challenges of implementing robust data protection laws in Sri Lanka.

The experts from different entities representing multiple sectors have participated in the panel discussion. Mr. Mahesh Atapattu, Chief Information Officer and the Chief Information Security Officer at the OREL IT has moderated the session and the following prominent experts have participated in the panel discussion.

- Mrs. Samantha De Soyza – Attorney at Law
- Mr. Indika Rajakaruna – Senior Manager Information Security at National Development Bank PLC (NDB)
- Mr. Asela Waidyalankara – Cyber Security Expert and Managing Director at Talos Consulting (Pvt) Ltd
- Mr. Senalika Dewalawatte – Manager Information Security at Sri Lanka CERT | CC

The discussion emphasized the importance of safeguarding user data through encryption, awareness campaigns, and public engagement. Key focus areas included legal perspectives on Internet safety, government approaches to enhancing privacy, and the role of technology in ensuring a safer digital environment. Panelists also examined challenges associated with data protection and information security**,** urging the need for robust enforcement mechanisms and capacity building among stakeholders.

By addressing these crucial themes, the Main Forum of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 set the stage for inclusive, multistakeholder dialogue, advancing the country's Internet governance initiatives while fostering collaboration among policymakers, private sector representatives, civil society, and the technical community.

Mr. Asela

SRI LANKA
2024

Safer Internet, Privacy and Regulations
IGF
SRI LANKA
2024

Mr. Asela

5.1.4 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Main Forum Panels

Panel 01: Internet Governance and Digital Economy

Outcomes:

1. Increased Awareness of Multistakeholderism: The session emphasized the value of multistakeholderism in creating inclusive and balanced policies, and fostering collaboration among government, private sector, civil society, and technical communities.
2. Policy Prioritization for Digital Economy and Internet Governance: Panelists underscored the importance of prioritizing policies that support the gig economy, and internet governance, enhance digital payment adoption, and facilitate cross-border trade for SMEs.
3. Insights into Global Practices: Contributions from entities like Mastercard highlighted global best practices in digital payments and their relevance to Sri Lanka's digital economy.
4. Role of Private Sector: The discussion identified significant opportunities for private sector players to innovate and contribute to the gig economy, internet governance, and broader digital transformation initiatives in the country.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a Comprehensive Digital Economy Framework: Establish clear policies and regulatory frameworks to support digital transformation, attract foreign investments, and foster innovation.
2. Promote Financial Inclusion: Expand digital payment infrastructure and create public awareness programs to encourage adoption among marginalized communities and rural areas.
3. Strengthen Multistakeholder Collaboration: Facilitate regular dialogue among stakeholders to ensure policies are inclusive and aligned with the needs of all sectors.

Panel 02: Safer Internet, Privacy, and Regulations

Outcomes:

1. Focus on User Awareness: The session highlighted the need for widespread public awareness campaigns on Internet safety, privacy, and data protection.
2. Gaps in Regulatory Enforcement: Panelists identified gaps in current data protection regulations and the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms.
3. Importance of Encryption: Data encryption was recognized as a critical tool for safeguarding sensitive user data and ensuring privacy in online interactions.
4. Need for Child Safety Measures: The discussion emphasized the importance of creating specific regulations and technical safeguards to protect children online.

Recommendations:

1. Enact Robust Data Protection Laws: Accelerate the implementation of comprehensive data protection legislation aligned with international standards, such as GDPR.
2. Enhance Cybersecurity Measures: Invest in advanced cybersecurity technologies and establish dedicated teams to monitor and mitigate online threats.
3. Promote Digital Literacy: Develop targeted programs to educate users, including children, parents, and educators, about safe online practices.

4. Encourage Public-Private Partnerships: Leverage collaborations between governments, private entities, and civil society to implement child safety programs and privacy safeguards effectively.
5. Build Capacity for Regulators: Provide training and resources for regulatory bodies to effectively enforce data protection and cybersecurity regulations.

The Main Forum's discussions provided actionable insights and recommendations that will contribute to shaping Sri Lanka's Internet governance landscape, fostering a secure, inclusive, and digitally empowered society.

5.2 Women Internet Governance Forum (Women IGF)

5.2.1 Introduction

The Women Internet Governance Forum (Women IGF) of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 was successfully held on 12th December 2024 at Hotel Mandarina, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Organized by the Lanka School of Internet Governance (LkSIG) under the theme *"Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges: Women in Internet Governance"*, the event convened policymakers, industry leaders, academia, civil society, and youth to discuss critical issues related to women's empowerment in the digital space.

A preliminary virtual session was conducted on 10th August 2024, with over 35 participants, focusing on the theme *"Role of Women in Social Media Platforms."*

Women IGF of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 provided a dynamic platform for dialogue, collaboration, and the advancement of gender-inclusive internet governance. The event underscored the need for continued efforts to empower women in the digital landscape. The recommendations from the forum will be compiled and presented to relevant stakeholders to drive meaningful policy changes.

5.2.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of Women IGF Sri Lanka 2024 were to:

- Promote gender-inclusive policies in internet governance.
- Address challenges faced by women in digital spaces.
- Provide a platform for networking and collaboration.
- Encourage women's participation in decision-making processes related to Internet governance.

5.2.3 Key Highlights

Welcome and Stage Setting

Ms. Sagarika Wickramasekera, Board of Trustees at ISOC and Secretary of the Asia Pacific School of Internet Governance, delivered the welcome speech. To foster engagement, the session began with an interactive word cloud activity where participants shared their perceptions of internet governance

in one word. This set the stage for discussions on global and local women's participation in Internet governance.

A video message from ISOC CEO Sally Wentworth further emphasized the significance of women's involvement in the digital governance space.

Storytelling and Personal Journeys

Three distinguished panelists shared their experiences and insights:

- Dr. Dilrukshi Gamage (Senior Lecturer, University of Colombo School of Computing) discussed her academic journey and engagement in Internet governance.
- Ms. Bani Chandrasena (Chairman, of Diversity Collective Lanka, and renowned HR Director) highlighted opportunities for women in digital rights and empowerment.
- Ms. Menaka Pathirana (Director, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka) elaborated on policy-making responsibilities in Internet governance.
- Ms. Janaki Kathri Arachchi, an award-winning entrepreneur and the Founder & Managing Director of Ranbath Organic Food Pvt Ltd and Three Star Organic Farm Pvt Ltd, shared insights into her entrepreneurial journey, highlighting the transformative role of the internet in modern business. Additionally, her daughter, Ms. Randima, provided perspectives on managing business operations online, addressing both the challenges and advantages of digital integration in enterprise management.

Internet Governance Simulation: "Voice of Influence"

A hands-on simulation was conducted where participants were divided into stakeholder groups (government, civil society, private sector, academia, and the technical community) to discuss how collaborative efforts can foster an inclusive and equitable internet governance ecosystem for women. Each group tackled scenarios such as balancing privacy and national security, guided by facilitators, and presented their recommendations.

Vision Mapping for Women in Internet Governance

Participants engaged in an activity to envision the future of women's involvement in Internet governance by 2030. Large sheets and virtual canvases were provided for brainstorming and visualizing key aspirations and strategies.

Speakers and Participants

The forum featured distinguished speakers from organizations such as the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL), Diversity Collective Lanka (DCLK) , University of Colombo, Ranbath Private Limited and diverse participation from entities like Lanka Education and Research Network (LEARN), Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), Ministry of Digital Economy, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka Telecom, and The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). The event welcomed a diverse audience, including young women leaders, professionals, students, and women with disabilities, ensuring an inclusive discourse.

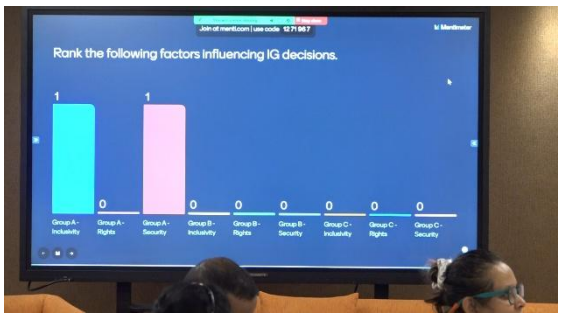
Outcomes and Recommendations

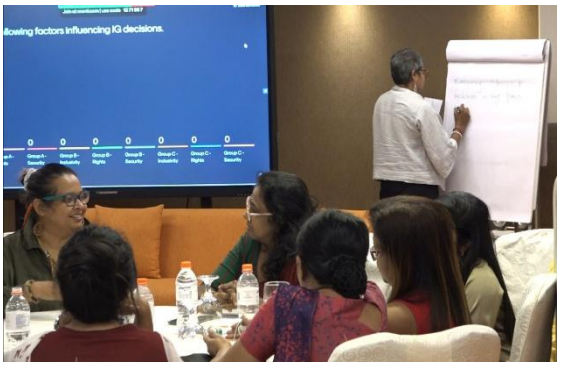
Key takeaways from the discussions included:

- Strengthening policies that ensure online safety and security for women.
- Encouraging digital literacy programs targeting women and marginalized communities.
- Promoting women's representation in internet governance bodies and policy-making platforms.
- Establishing mentorship programs for women in technology and governance sectors.

Acknowledgments

The success of Women IGF Sri Lanka 2024 was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the organizing committee, sponsors, partners, and participants. Their commitment and engagement ensured that the forum met its objectives and laid the foundation for future initiatives in gender-inclusive internet governance.





5.3 Youth Internet Governance Forum (Youth IGF)

5.3.1 Introduction

The Youth IGF session at IGF Sri Lanka 2024 was a pivotal initiative designed to engage and empower the youth by addressing the intersection of technology, policies, and governance. The Youth IGF session at IGF Sri Lanka 2024 served as a dynamic platform to empower young minds with knowledge and insights at the intersection of technology, policy, and entrepreneurship. The session focused on equipping youth with the tools and understanding needed to engage in informed policymaking and innovative technology development while fostering their active participation in regional and international Internet governance discussions.

This session created an inclusive platform for young individuals to exchange ideas, share experiences, and discuss key topics in Internet governance with experts from diverse domains. The goal was to inspire informed decision-making and proactive participation in shaping the future of technology, internet governance and policy development at both regional and international levels.

This session emphasized the importance of youth involvement in shaping the future of technology and the digital landscape. By facilitating meaningful exchanges between young participants and experts from various domains, the Youth IGF session encouraged cross-generational learning and collaboration. It provided an inclusive environment where participants could share experiences, express ideas, and learn about emerging trends in Internet governance and digital technologies. Participants were encouraged to delve into key aspects of Internet governance, gaining insights into how technology can be leveraged responsibly and effectively to drive positive societal change.

5.3.2 Objectives

The Youth IGF session at IGF Sri Lanka 2024 was designed to empower young individuals by fostering awareness, knowledge, and engagement in Internet governance, technology policy, and digital entrepreneurship. The session provided a platform for youth to actively participate in shaping the future of technology and governance while ensuring responsible and inclusive digital development. The key objectives of the session were:

1. Enhancing Youth Engagement in Internet Governance
    - Equip young individuals with knowledge on Internet governance frameworks, digital rights, and policymaking.
    - Encourage participation in regional and global Internet governance discussions, fostering a new generation of informed digital leaders.
2. Bridging the Gap Between Youth, Experts, and Policymakers
    - Facilitate cross-generational learning by enabling direct engagement between youth and experts from government, private sector, technical community, and civil society.
    - Promote meaningful discussions on key Internet governance challenges, emerging trends, and digital policy advancements.
3. Fostering Digital Inclusion and Responsible Technology Use
    - Raise awareness on online safety, digital literacy, data privacy, and the risks of Internet addiction and scams.
    - Promote responsible use of technology and ethical digital practices.
4. Empowering Youth in Digital Entrepreneurship and Freelancing
    - Provide insights into digital freelancing, online business, and startup opportunities, encouraging youth to leverage technology for self-employment.
    - Offer mentorship and guidance on transforming innovative ideas into successful ventures in the digital economy.
5. Encouraging Innovation and Technology-Driven Solutions
    - Inspire youth to explore technology-driven solutions for societal challenges, fostering innovation and creativity.
    - Discuss the role of AI, blockchain, and emerging technologies in shaping the future digital landscape.
6. Building a Collaborative and Inclusive Digital Future
    - Strengthen the role of youth as key stakeholders in digital transformation and governance.
    - Promote inclusive policies that ensure equal opportunities for youth participation in the digital economy and governance processes.

By achieving these objectives, the Youth IGF at IGF Sri Lanka 2024 aimed to equip the next generation with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to become proactive contributors in shaping the future of Internet governance and the digital economy.

5.3.3 Key Highlights

A key focus of the session was supporting youth by offering guidance to turn their innovative ideas into successful ventures in the digital sphere and their contributions to Internet Governance. Participants gained access to mentorship opportunities, educational resources, and critical insights into overcoming challenges in online entrepreneurship. The forum also explored ways to unlock the potential of digital freelancing and online business**,** providing youth with the skills and confidence to thrive in the evolving digital economy. Additionally, the session highlighted the significance of avoiding

online scams and internet addiction, and digital freelancing as a pathway for youth empowerment and self-employment in the online sphere.

The session was structured around two engaging panel discussions:

Panel 01: Digital Freelancing, Entrepreneurship, and Youth Empowerment in the Online Sphere

The experts from different entities representing multiple sectors have participated in the panel discussion. Mr. Udara Dharmasena, Secretary of the Digital Marketing Association of Sri Lanka (DMASL) has moderated the session and the following prominent experts have participated in the panel discussion.

- Mr. Sandun Shanaka – Community Leader at FIVERR
- Mr. Sachindra Samararathne – Associate Chief Digital Economy Officer at the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA)
- Mr. Dinesh Jebamani – Vice President and Head of Digital Marketing at DFCC Banka PLC
- Mr. Dilanka Sanjaya – Managing Director at FONIX Software Solutions

This panel explored the transformative potential of the Internet for youth, focusing on opportunities in digital freelancing**,** digital entrepreneurship, and online transactions**.** Experts discussed strategies to leverage online platforms for business growth, navigate the digital economy, and build sustainable careers in the online space. Further it has highlighted the potential for youth to harness the Internet as a platform for innovation, self-employment, and economic empowerment. The panel also shed light on emerging trends and the role of Internet governance in fostering a supportive environment for young entrepreneurs. Participants were inspired by success stories and practical advice on harnessing the Internet's potential for innovation and economic empowerment. Experts Participants learned about the importance of adopting digital payment systems, leveraging online platforms to grow businesses, and navigating the challenges of the digital economy and online entrepreneurship.

IGF
SRI LANKA

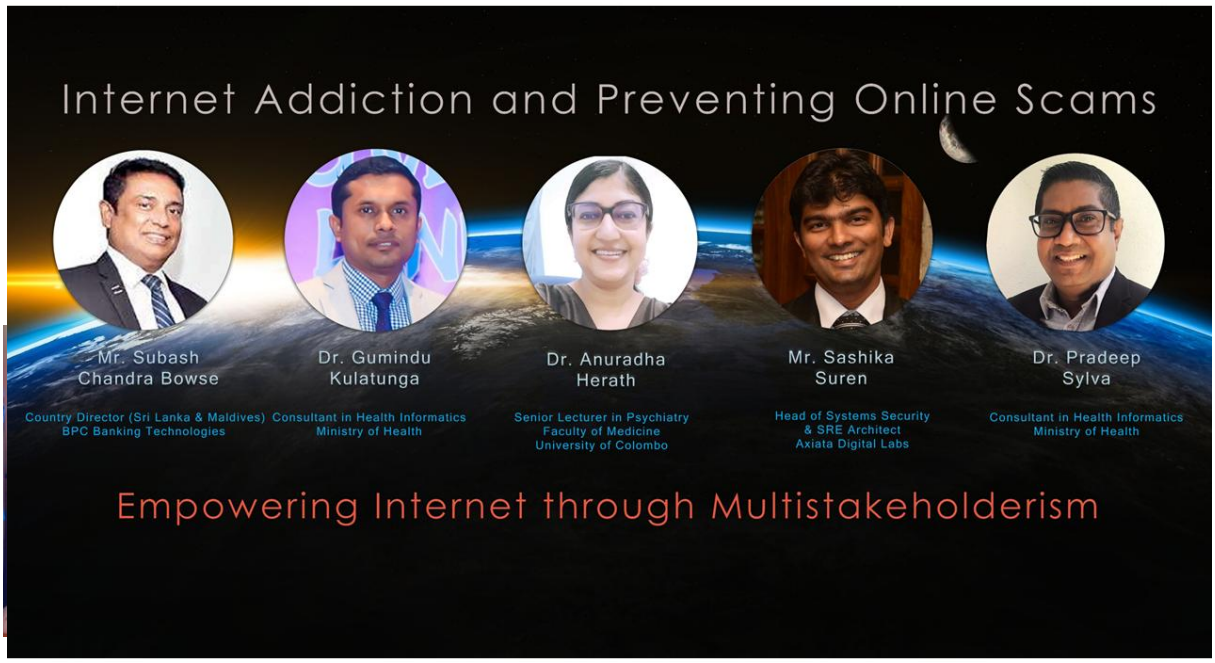
Digital Freelancing, Entrepreneurship,
and Youth Empowerment in the Online Sphere

and Youth Empowerment in the Online

Panel 02: Internet Addiction and Preventing Online Scams

The session was moderated by Mr. Subash Chandra Bowse, Country Director (Sri Lanka and Maldives) at BPC Banking Technologies and the following experts from respective domains attended the panel discussion.

- Dr. Gumidu Kulatunga – Consultant in Health Informatics at the Ministry of Health
- Dr. Anuradha Herath – Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
- Mr. Sashika Suren – Head of Systems Security and SRE Architect at Axiata Digital Labs
- Dr. Pradeep Sylva – Consultant in Health Informatics at the Ministry of Health



The second panel of the session addressed the pressing issues of Internet addiction, challenges associated with excessive Internet use, the risks of falling victim to online scams and the growing prevalence of online scams. Experts shared insights into promoting healthy digital habits, recognizing the signs of Internet addiction, and ensuring personal safety in online spaces. And strategies to recognize and mitigate the risks of excessive Internet use. The panel also emphasized the importance of cybersecurity awareness, providing participants with practical guidance on safeguarding themselves against online fraud and scams. By focusing on digital literacy and resilience, this session empowered youth to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

5.3.4 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Youth IGF Panels

The Youth IGF session at IGF Sri Lanka 2024 resulted in actionable insights and recommendations aimed at empowering young individuals to navigate the digital ecosystem effectively and responsibly. The outcomes and recommendations from the panel discussions are as follows:

Outcomes

1. Increased Youth Awareness and Participation in Internet Governance
    - Participants gained a better understanding of Internet governance, digital rights, and policies influencing the digital landscape.
    - The session encouraged youth engagement in regional and global Internet governance initiatives, fostering a new generation of informed digital leaders.

2. Enhanced Awareness and Opportunities:
    - Participants gained a deeper understanding of the potential of digital freelancing and entrepreneurship to drive youth empowerment and self-sustainability.
    - The discussions highlighted key opportunities for youth in the gig economy, online transactions, challenges in the online sphere, and digital entrepreneurship, encouraging greater participation in the digital economy.
3. Focus on Digital Safety and Well-being:
    - Participants were equipped with practical knowledge about recognizing and preventing Internet addiction, fostering healthier digital habits, and mitigating online risks.
    - The session emphasized the importance of cybersecurity and digital literacy in building resilience against scams and fraud.
4. Networking and Resource Sharing:
    - The forum facilitated meaningful connections among participants, experts, and mentors, enabling ongoing collaboration and support for youth
5. Bridging the Gap Between Youth and Policymakers
    - The session emphasized the importance of youth-driven policy discussions and encouraged inclusive policymaking.
    - Feedback from youth participants was noted as valuable input for future digital policies and Internet governance frameworks.
6. Enhanced Digital Literacy and Online Safety Awareness
    - The forum addressed risks related to Internet addiction, online scams, and cybersecurity threats.
    - Participants learned about responsible digital practices and strategies to enhance online safety and data protection.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Youth Involvement in Internet Governance

    - Establish youth-led Internet governance initiatives and integrate youth perspectives into national and regional policy discussions.
    - Encourage participation in global forums such as IGF, APrIGF, and national IGFs.
2. Enhance Digital Skills Development and Capacity Building
    - Introduce structured training programs on digital literacy, cybersecurity, and ethical AI usage for youth.
    - Promote hands-on learning experiences through hackathons, mentorship programs, and innovation labs.
3. Capacity Building and Digital Literacy:
    - Develop targeted training programs and workshops to enhance the digital freelancing and entrepreneurial skills of youth, particularly in underserved communities.
    - Promote digital literacy initiatives to improve awareness of online risks, scams, and cybersecurity practices.
4. Supportive Ecosystem for Entrepreneurs:
    - Establish mentorship networks and incubator programs to support youth in turning innovative ideas into successful businesses.
    - Simplify access to resources, including funding opportunities, tools, and platforms, to facilitate entry into digital entrepreneurship.
5. Policy and Governance Inclusion:
    - Encourage youth participation in Internet governance forums and policymaking processes at the regional and international levels.

- Advocate for multistakeholder collaboration to create policies that address the unique challenges faced by young entrepreneurs and freelancers.

6. Promoting Healthy Digital Practices:
   - Launch awareness campaigns to educate youth on managing screen time, avoiding Internet addiction, and fostering a balanced digital lifestyle.
   - Develop interactive tools and apps that help monitor and regulate online activity among young individuals.
7. Strengthening Digital Safety Measures:
   - Collaborate with stakeholders to implement robust cybersecurity policies and initiatives that ensure online safety, particularly for young users.
   - Provide resources and tools to educate youth on identifying and avoiding online scams, phishing attempts, and other digital threats.
8. Promote Responsible Digital Behavior and Online Safety
   - Develop awareness campaigns on digital ethics, privacy, and data security.
   - Implement stronger policies to protect youth from cyber threats, misinformation, and online exploitation.
9. Foster Inclusive and Accessible Digital Spaces
   - Ensure that Internet governance discussions and digital development strategies prioritize accessibility and inclusivity for all youth, including marginalized groups.
   - Advocate for affordable and equitable Internet access, reducing the digital divide.
10. Institutionalize the Youth IGF as an Annual Forum
    - Establish the Youth IGF as a continuous initiative within IGF Sri Lanka to engage youth year-round.
    - Collaborate with educational institutions, industry leaders, and policymakers to create long-term programs for youth capacity building.

The session inspired the youth to take proactive steps in shaping the digital future while empowering them to become leaders and changemakers in the global Internet governance landscape. By implementing these outcomes and recommendations, the Youth IGF at IGF Sri Lanka 2024 can serve as a foundation for empowering young individuals, ensuring their active participation in shaping Sri Lanka's digital future and contributing to global Internet governance efforts.

5.4 Digital Inclusion and Accessibility in Internet Governance Forum

5.4.1 Introduction

The session facilitated dialogues on citizens with disabilities and the internet, with inclusiveness and accessibility as the main themes. Digital inclusion and accessibility in internet governance refer to the idea that everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, should have equal access to and be able to participate in the digital world. This included access to and use of digital technologies such as the internet, mobile phones, and computers, as well as the ability to understand and utilize the information and services available online.

The session featured two-panel discussions, each addressing critical aspects of digital inclusion and accessibility.

Panel 01: Assistive Technologies and Universal Design Principles

This panel focused on the role of assistive technologies in enhancing digital accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Discussions covered innovations in adaptive tools, software solutions, and the implementation of universal design principles to create inclusive digital environments. Panelists emphasized the importance of designing technology that accommodates diverse user needs, ensuring equitable access to information and digital services.

The session was moderated by Professor. Anuradha Jayakody, Head, of Computer Systems and Engineering at the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, and the following experts from respective domains attended the panel discussion.

- Mr. Thareendra Kalpage – Co – Founder at Digital Zindicate Co
- Ms. Manique Gunaratne – Manager, Special Training and Disability Resource Centre at Employers' Federation of Ceylon
- Mr. Isuru Samaratunge – Research Manager at LIRNEasia
- Mr. Michael Lu – User Experience Architect at SyscoLABS

The panel discussion focused on the principles of universal design and the role of assistive technologies in enhancing digital accessibility. Experts showcased innovative solutions, discussed global best practices, and addressed challenges in making assistive technologies affordable and widely available in Sri Lanka. The session also highlighted the importance of industry partnerships and policy interventions to drive sustainable accessibility initiatives

Panel 02: Digital Inclusion, Accessibility, and Digital Rights

This discussion explored the broader aspects of digital inclusion, accessibility, and the protection of digital rights. Panelists highlighted the challenges faced by marginalized communities in accessing the internet and digital resources, as well as the policies and frameworks needed to bridge the digital divide. The session underscored the significance of promoting equal opportunities in the digital space

This session facilitated bridging the gap between different communities and fostered greater social interaction.

The session was moderated by Manager, Special Training and Disability Resource Centre at Employers' Federation of Ceylon and facilitated by Ms. Sagarika Wickramasekera Board of Trustee Internet Society Global and the following experts from respective domains attended the panel discussion.

- Mr. Prasanna Kuruppu – Consultant, Disability Inclusion
- Dr. Thusitha Abeysekara – Head of Legal Studies Unit, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce at University of Sri Jayawardenepura
- Mr. Ishan Jalill – Founder/President at Ability for Action

The Accessibility and Digital Rights session explored the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing digital platforms and services, emphasizing the need for policy reforms, inclusive design practices, and stakeholder collaboration to bridge the digital divide. Panelists included disability rights advocates, policymakers, and technology experts who discussed strategies to ensure equal digital participation and protection of online rights for persons with disabilities.

Both sessions were well-attended, fostering insightful discussions and actionable recommendations for advancing digital accessibility in Sri Lanka. The most important fact is the persons with diverse disabilities which included vision impaired persons, persons with low vision, deaf and hard of hearing persons, persons with physical disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities and representatives

of persons with intellectual disabilities participated and contributed in their own field to make "nothing without us and internet for all" concepts a reality.

5.4.2 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Digital Inclusion and Accessibility Panels

Building on the insights and recommendations from the Digital Inclusion, Accessibility and Digital Rights and Assistive Technologies and Universal Design Principles sessions at IGF Sri Lanka 2024, the following key steps are proposed to enhance digital inclusion for persons with diverse disabilities:

1. Strengthen Policy and Legal Frameworks
    - Advocate for the integration of digital accessibility standards into Sri Lanka's ICT policies and disability rights legislation.
    - Work with policymakers to ensure inclusive regulations that mandate accessibility compliance in digital platforms, government websites, and e-services.
    - Align national policies with international standards such as the UNCRPD and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
2. Enhance Digital Accessibility in Public and Private Sectors
    - Develop and promote inclusive design practices for websites, mobile applications, and digital services to be accessible for persons with vision, hearing, physical, and cognitive disabilities.
    - Encourage telecom providers and tech companies to adopt universal design in their products and services.
    - Partner with financial institutions and e-commerce platforms to ensure accessibility in digital banking, online payments, and e-commerce platforms.
3. Promote the Development and Affordability of Assistive Technologies
    - Advocate for subsidies and funding support to make assistive technologies more affordable and widely available.
    - Encourage local innovation and development of cost-effective assistive devices tailored to the needs of Sri Lankans with disabilities.
    - Strengthen collaborations between the government, private sector, and disability organizations to scale up the production and distribution of assistive technologies.
4. Capacity Building and Awareness
    - Conduct training programs for government officers, developers, educators, and service providers on digital accessibility and inclusive design.
    - Develop digital literacy programs for persons with disabilities to enhance their online participation, cybersecurity awareness, and independent use of assistive technologies.
    - Promote awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of digital inclusion and accessibility rights.
5. Foster Collaboration and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement
    - Strengthen partnerships between disability organizations, technology companies, academia, and policymakers to drive inclusive digital development.
    - Establish a National Digital Accessibility Task Force to monitor progress and ensure accountability in implementing digital accessibility initiatives.
    - Engage the private sector to invest in accessibility solutions and provide employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the digital economy.
6. Ensure Representation and Participation of Persons with Disabilities
    - Promote the active involvement of persons with disabilities in ICT policy discussions and digital governance decision-making processes.
    - Ensure that all digital accessibility initiatives follow the "Nothing Without Us" principle by including persons with disabilities in the design, testing, and implementation of digital solutions.

- Encourage media and tech industry players to showcase success stories of persons with disabilities using digital technologies to inspire further innovation.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement
    - Develop a national accessibility audit system to evaluate the digital inclusivity of government and private sector services.
    - Establish feedback mechanisms where persons with disabilities can report accessibility barriers in digital services and platforms.
    - Continuously update and adapt accessibility guidelines based on technological advancements and feedback from the disability community.
    - Have further discussions to improve accessibility and safety of Uber and PickMe taxie services in Sri Lanka for persons with disabilities.

As a result of the forum, we are pleased to announce the formation of a volunteer group dedicated to supporting the government in advising and shaping the policy framework and parliamentary bill on accessibility and digital rights for persons with disabilities. This group comprises stakeholders from government, academia, technical community, civil society and the private sector, ensuring a comprehensive approach to these critical issues.

5.5 Technical Internet Governance Forum (Tech IGF)

5.5.1 Introduction

The Tech IGF is a specific track within the broader IGF framework that focuses on technical aspects of Internet governance. It recognizes the crucial role played by technical experts, researchers, engineers, and operators in shaping and maintaining the infrastructure and protocols that underpin the Internet.

The Technical Internet Governance Forum (Tech IGF) of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 featured two insightful panel discussions, bringing together expert panelists from diverse domains to address critical issues in internet governance and technological advancements.

This session created an inclusive platform to exchange ideas, share experiences, and discuss key topics in technical aspects of the Internet governance with experts from diverse domains. This session emphasized the importance of community involvement in shaping the future of technology and the digital landscape. It provided an inclusive environment where participants could share experiences, express ideas, and learn about emerging trends in Internet governance and digital technologies. Participants were encouraged to delve into key aspects of Internet governance, gaining insights into how technology can be leveraged responsibly and effectively to drive positive societal change.

5.5.2 Objectives

- Promote Internet Localization and Multilingualism
    - Advocate for the adoption of Universal Acceptance (UA), Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), and localized country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs).
    - Encourage the development of Sinhala and Tamil content online to ensure equitable digital access for all linguistic communities in Sri Lanka.
- Enhance AI and Machine Learning Governance
    - Explore the ethical, regulatory, and technical challenges of AI and ML, focusing on transparency, trust, and compliance.
    - Identify solutions for AI-related risks such as adversarial attacks, biased decision-making, and the lack of annotated data.
    - Discuss industry applications of AI, including Generative AI (GenAI) and automated AI-driven systems.
- Strengthen Cybersecurity and Data Protection
    - Raise awareness about data governance, cybersecurity threats, and the importance of encryption in protecting user privacy.
    - Discuss strategies to align Sri Lanka’s data protection policies with international frameworks like GDPR.

- Encourage Collaborative Policymaking and Technical Standards

    - Facilitate multi-stakeholder discussions involving policymakers, industry leaders, and academia to drive regulatory advancements in Internet governance.
    - Highlight the need for national strategies on digital security, AI ethics, and multilingual Internet governance.

- Bridge the Gap Between Technology and Policy

    - Provide a platform for dialogue between technologists and policymakers to ensure that technical innovations align with legal and regulatory frameworks.
    - Encourage knowledge sharing on best practices for implementing responsible and inclusive digital policies.

- Support Capacity Building and Innovation

    - Equip Sri Lankan professionals, researchers, and students with knowledge on cutting-edge internet technologies and governance frameworks.
    - Foster discussions on emerging trends, including AI trust, digital inclusivity, and sustainable internet development.

5.5.3 Key Highlights

The Tech IGF of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 aimed to foster an inclusive and informed dialogue on the evolving technical dimensions of Internet governance. The forum sought to bring together experts, policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers to explore key technological challenges and advancements shaping the digital landscape. Further the Tech IGF provided a platform for discussions on issues related to internet infrastructure, multilingual internet, universal acceptance, internet localization, emerging technologies, domain name systems (DNS), internet protocols, standards development, network security, internet architecture, and other technical aspects. It enabled technical communities to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and collaborate on addressing technical challenges and promoting the stable, secure, and inclusive development of the Internet.

Specifically, the Tech IGF 2024 focused on:

- Promoting internet localization and multilingualism by addressing the importance of Universal Acceptance, IDNs, and localized ccTLDs to enhance digital inclusivity in Sri Lanka.
- Strengthening discussions on AI, machine learning, and data governance, emphasizing ethical AI development, trust, transparency, regulatory compliance, and operational challenges in AI implementation.
- Identifying best practices for cybersecurity, data protection, and privacy, ensuring that Sri Lanka aligns with international frameworks while addressing local challenges.
- Encouraging collaborative policymaking and technical innovations that support a secure, inclusive, and resilient digital ecosystem.

By facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement, the Tech IGF 2024 aimed to drive forward technical discussions that contribute to sustainable and responsible digital development in Sri Lanka.

The session was structured around two engaging panel discussions.

Panel 01: Multilingual Internet and Internet Localization, Universal Acceptance

The panel was moderated by Mr. Chamila Liyanage, Research Assistant at the Language Technology Research Laboratory, University of Colombo School of Computing and the following experts from respective domains attended the panel discussion.

- Prof. Sandagomi Coperahewa – Head, Department of Sinhala at the University of Colombo
- Mr. H R Mahindasiri – Chief Executive Officer at Procons Infotech
- Mr. Harsha Wijayawardhana – Chief Operating Officer at the Theekshana R and D

The panel discussion focused on the importance of internet localization and Universal Acceptance, highlighting the role of government and policy-level support in fostering digital inclusivity. Discussions covered the necessity of promoting Sinhala and Tamil content on the internet, the adoption of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), and the significance of localized country code top-level domains (ccTLDs). The session also examined Sri Lanka's ongoing efforts in internet localization, the challenges associated with implementing a multilingual internet, and the importance of collaborative policymaking and regulatory frameworks.

Panel 02: Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Data Governance, and Trust

The experts from different entities representing multiple sectors have participated in the panel discussion. The panel was moderated by Mr. Hiran Wijesinghe, Deputy Director IT at Sri Lanka Tea Board and the following prominent experts have participated in the panel discussion.

- Dr. Kaneeka Vidanage – Head of the Department – Computer Science at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University
- Ms. Sachini Herath – Head of AI Solutions at Dialog Axiata PLC
- Dr. Kasun Gunawardana – Senior Lecturer at the University of Colombo School of Computing
- Mr. Chamil Jeewantha – Software Engineering Manager at Mad Mobile

The second panel discussion explored the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in digital governance and industry applications. Key topics included transparency in AI systems, the enforcement of computerized processes, goal modeling methodologies (BPMN, BMM, KAOS), and challenges such as the lack of annotated data in ML and DL. Panelists also examined concerns surrounding AI as a "black box," adversarial attacks on AI systems, and the associated risks.

The discussion further delved into the operationalization of AI systems in production environments, trust issues in AI deployments, and ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines. Panelists addressed the use of AI and ML for solving industry-specific challenges, the integration of generative AI (GenAI) in business operations, and the end-to-end automation of AI-driven systems. Additionally, myths in AI, AI trust, and the financial impacts of AI on organizations' top and bottom lines were discussed. The session also covered emerging trends in the internet, data governance, big data challenges, and regulatory frameworks necessary for responsible AI adoption.

5.5.4 Outcomes and Recommendations from the Tech IGF Panels

Panel 01: Multilingual Internet and Internet Localization

Outcomes:

- Recognized the critical need for Universal Acceptance (UA) to ensure Sri Lankan users can access services in their native languages (Sinhala and Tamil).
- Identified challenges in local language content development, including technical limitations, lack of government incentives, and low awareness among businesses and content creators.
- Highlighted Sri Lanka's ongoing efforts in internet localization, including IDN implementation and localized ccTLDs, but noted gaps in adoption and awareness.

Recommendations:

- Policy and Regulatory Support: Advocate for government policies that promote digital content creation in Sinhala and Tamil, ensuring regulatory frameworks support localized digital services.
- Technical and Infrastructure Development: Encourage tech industry collaboration to improve language processing technologies such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), speech recognition, and machine translation.

- Awareness and Adoption: Conduct public awareness campaigns and capacity-building programs for businesses, developers, and policymakers on the importance of localization and the adoption of UA-compliant systems.

Panel 02: Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Data Governance, and Trust

Outcomes:

- Identified key concerns regarding AI governance, including transparency, fairness, data privacy, and the ethical use of AI systems**.**
- Discussed the operational challenges of AI deployment**,** including the lack of annotated data, adversarial attacks on AI models, and AI systems being perceived as "black boxes"**.**
- Emphasized the growing role of Generative AI (GenAI) in industry, while also recognizing risks such as misinformation, bias, and regulatory compliance gaps.
- Explored data governance frameworks to ensure responsible AI usage and mitigate risks related to data privacy, compliance, and security**.**

Recommendations:

- Enhancing AI Transparency and Accountability: Establish clear AI governance policies that enforce explainability, bias mitigation, and fairness in AI-driven decision-making**.**
- Developing AI Trust and Ethical Guidelines: Encourage organizations to implement AI ethics guidelines and responsible AI frameworks**,** ensuring compliance with global best practices.
- Strengthening Data Protection Regulations: Align Sri Lanka's data protection policies with international standards (such as GDPR) to safeguard user data and enhance public trust in AI and ML systems**.**
- Fostering AI Research and Innovation: Support local AI research and development (R&D) initiatives, particularly in addressing language processing challenges in Sinhala and Tamil**.**
- Capacity Building and Industry Collaboration: Promote AI and ML education programs for professionals, researchers, and policymakers to ensure ethical and responsible AI adoption across all segments
- Investment in Digital Infrastructure – Encourage investments in localized internet services, NLP technologies, and digital accessibility solutions.

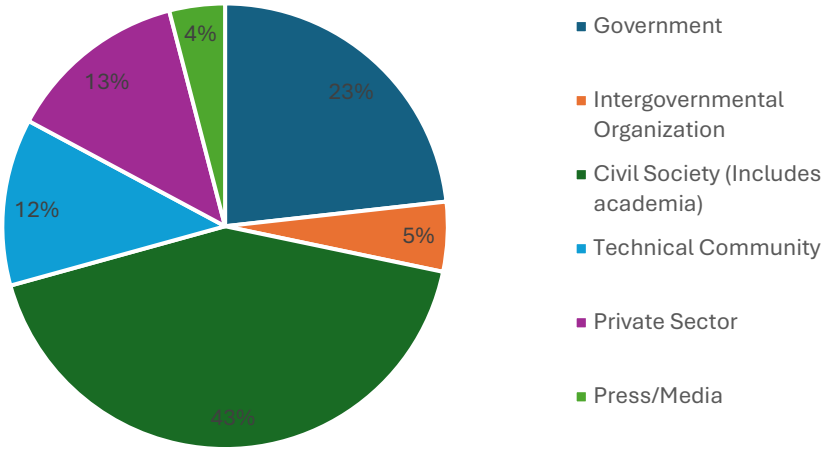
These outcomes and recommendations from the Tech IGF 2024 serve as a roadmap for strengthening Sri Lanka's technical internet governance ecosystem**,** ensuring a more inclusive, ethical, and resilient digital future.

6. Participation Analysis

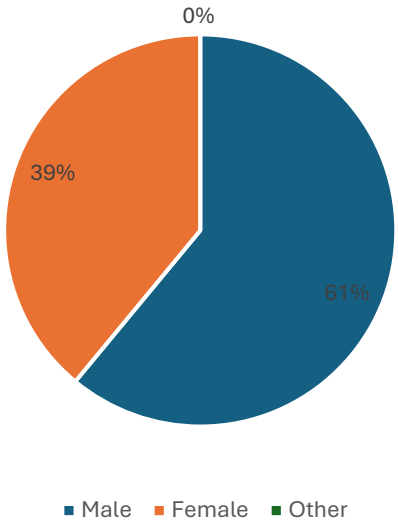
The IGF Sri Lanka 2024 successfully brought together 52 high-profile speakers representing various stakeholder groups. Among them, 44 participated in the main event held on December 12th and 13th, 2024, while eight contributed to the three preliminary sessions conducted on August 10th, September 12th, and October 4th, 2024.

The main event saw a total of 178 participants, representing key sectors, including Government, Intergovernmental Organizations, Civil Society (including academia), the Technical Community, the Private Sector, and the Press/Media. This level of engagement met the anticipated participation targets, reflecting the event's success in fostering a diverse and inclusive dialogue on Internet governance.

Participation Analysis – Sector Based



Participation Analysis – Gender Based



7. Key Team

1. Mr. Harsha Wijayawardhana
2. Mr. Kasun Tharaka Wickramasuriya
3. Mr. Waruna Sri Dhanapala
4. Mr. Kajan Subhash
5. Ms. Sagarika Wickramasekera
6. Mr. Prishantha Welathanthry
7. Ms. Manique Gunarathne
8. Mr. Sameera Wijeratne
9. Mr. Mahesh Perera
10. Mr. Thilina Dissanayake
11. Ms. Samantha De Soysa
12. Mr. Sameera Kodituwakku
13. Mr. Hiran Wijesinghe

8. Acknowledgement

The success of IGF Sri Lanka 2024 would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions and support of esteemed partners, sponsors, stakeholders, volunteers, speakers, and participants.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the IGF Secretariat, Internet Society (ISOC) Global, Internet Society Foundation, APNIC Foundation, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), OSSEC.Inc, British Computer Society, Lanka Education and Research Network (LEARN), Asia Pacific School on Internet Governance (APSIG), TV Derana, Dialog Enterprise, and Lanka School on Internet Governance (LKSIG) for their instrumental role in organizing and facilitating IGF Sri Lanka 2024.

A special thank you goes out to the organizing team and our dedicated volunteers whose passion and commitment have been instrumental in driving our initiatives forward. We also express our appreciation to the exceptional team at Mandarina Colombo for their outstanding hospitality and support throughout our endeavours.

Finally, we express our heartfelt appreciation to all speakers, panelists, and participants who joined us and contributed their insights and expertise to make this forum a platform for inclusive and productive dialogue. Their contributions have been invaluable in strengthening Sri Lanka's role in the global Internet governance ecosystem.

Kasun Tharaka Wickramasuriya
National Coordinator for the Sri Lanka IGF
E-mail: kasuntw@gmail.com
Mobile: +94714407685

Sagarika Wickramasekera
National Coordinator for the Sri Lanka IGF
E-mail: shywic@gmail.com
Mobile: +94714415065