

Report of Youth Consultation Project

on Internet Governance

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Executive Summary

The United Nations Development Program's Asia Pacific Development Information Program (UNDP-APDIP) aims to increase stakeholder awareness on the issues of Internet Governance within the Asia-Pacific region. As a part of this objective, this project was undertaken, to consult with students from 13 Asia-Pacific countries via online discussions. The goal was to find their priority concerns and issues in information technology policy-making and Internet governance.

The study was conducted in three stages: a questionnaire, qualitative online discussions, and a follow-up survey. The target audience was Asian-Pacific youth drawn from various educational institutions, aged between 18-35, and in their undergraduate, graduate or doctoral. We had a sample of 102 for our quantitative exercise, from which 83 participants were drawn for the qualitative exercise. Approximately 40 of the students responded to the follow-up survey.

Our questionnaire revealed a high level of computer skills among all the applicants. All had been using the Internet for at least three years, and most were accessing it several times a day. In the popularity of the various services, email ranked first with almost universal usage, followed by news and academic research. Among the features of the Internet that the respondents liked, the availability and access to various resources, speed of communication and open access were the most cited. Dislikes included the menace of Spam, pop ups and various security threats. Other significant negatives included privacy violations, information overload, the unreliability of information, pornography and the problems of addiction with the concomitant damage to socialization of youth. Speed, access, and cost problems were not frequently mentioned.

In the qualitative survey, information was collected about various relevant issues and concerns – like Internet governance, digital divide, censorship, security and copyright – through free flowing

discussions conducted via email and chat sessions.

Internet Governance : According to the majority of the participants, “Internet governance” means regulating to ensure that the Internet is a place where people can share information freely and openly, without having to worry about possible negatives. Many felt that governance should ensure two main things: the safety and security of users and the expansion of the Internet to developing countries. On the implementation question, the respondents preferred one of two differing, though not always mutually exclusive, options: a more decentralized approach and a more formal governing body. The first group felt that the Internet is a naturally emerging system and should be left to regulate itself, while the second group felt that direct governance by responsible bodies like national governments or an international body is needed.

Digital Divide: The majority of the respondents felt that the Internet can help marginalised societies break the vicious circle of poverty by helping them communicate, receive information and improve productivity. But they also raised concerns about the undue importance given to information technology when many communities still lack basic survival necessities. Some respondents felt that the government’s role should focus on helping marginalised people tap the power of the Internet. A second set of opinion favoured private sector involvement as a means to bridge the divide, as they felt that businesses would build infrastructure and help bring down the costs of access through market competition.

Pornography: As expected, the regulation of pornography was a divisive issue with responses ranging across the whole spectrum. Most users agreed that the sticking point in regulation would be that different cultures have different attitudes towards pornography, and hence action should be nationally driven. There was universal agreement that the child pornography industry was immoral

and should be ruthlessly stomped out. One of the other solutions heavily discussed was the idea of rating websites.

Security: The general consensus of the respondents was that there needed to be greater government cooperation in tackling issues of Internet security. Additionally, the participants overwhelmingly agreed that the tools to tackle viruses and other cyber crimes needed to be made more accessible to users in developing countries. Finally, there was large agreement that education and awareness raising would play a vital part in the fight against online security threats.

Multi-lingual content: Initially, the respondents felt that it is vital to have multilingual Internet content because English is alien to most people of the developing world. However, some responses were more ambivalent. The main conclusion was that English would probably remain the main language, but it should coexist with many other languages; and that content providers would naturally expand multi-lingual content as demand increased.

Censorship: Respondents were aware of the various restrictions on Internet access and content under different forms of government. They acknowledged the trade-off between lowering the risk of harm to minors or instability in society and over-control of content. Respondents in favour of censorship called for accountable and transparent implementation of such a regime, but, in general, there was no clear consensus on whether content controls were necessary or even viable.

Copyright: An overwhelming majority of our respondents seemed to be in favour of curtailing the illicit download of digital content despite the fact that over 50% of our applicant pool said they use peer-to-peer downloading services at least a couple of times a week. There were a few developing country participants who did feel that there should be some alternative to strict enforcement of copyrights, though they were definitely in the minority. Their feeling was that while the goal should

be to move towards Western-style protection of intellectual property, strict enforcement of copyrights was not the appropriate way forward.

Junk mail: Though many of the respondents regard junk mail as the main menace of the Internet, we received less response and interest in this area compared to many other topics. The reason may lie in the fact that although Spam is a universal problem on the Internet, it generally is not very serious because the junk can simply be deleted when a user opens her Inbox. As for the solution to the problem of Spam, education and technology itself were regarded as the best interventions.

Other issues: Technical issues such as IP address allocation and name server management are not high priority concerns for the young user base of the Internet. With a few exceptions, the participants stayed away from addressing such technical issues, focusing on the broad, directional issues in Internet governance.

Despite junk mail, virus attacks, and fraud being important issues, they were not considered the areas of most urgent need for governance reform. The students almost unanimously agreed that educating users on safety might be the most effective intervention to handle security threats. The government's role in enforcement was also discussed, with proposals made for greater international cooperation, but this was viewed as secondary. While bridging the digital divide and the role of the Internet in developing countries was discussed, the same sentiment was at the forefront, where broad solutions like education were given more importance than other interventions.

Most of the discussions focused on managing content of some form or another, but there was little consensus on who should be doing the managing and how it should be accomplished. The clearest judgment is that the participants in our group had very eclectic views, as there were deep concerns about the kind of content that is available and how it may harm certain segments of society.

Concerns about pornographic material and hate groups were the most paramount, with a surprising number of respondents in favour of national-level censorship on this kind of content.

The realization that cultural differences seriously affect content management issues led to the conclusion that no single organisation could or should have the power to control content. Only through cooperation from the very bottom level to the very top would any kind of workable, though perhaps complex, regime emerge. Whichever institution might be empowered to handle these issues, accountability and transparency were emphasized as fundamental requirements in handling such sensitive issues as censorship. To ensure accountability there should be a system of shared responsibility and interaction between many levels of institutions: international bodies, national governments, local organisations, civil society, and even directly democratic participation.

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1 Introduction

The United Nations Development Program's Asia Pacific Development Information Program (UNDP-APDIP) aims to increase stakeholder awareness on the issues of Internet Governance within the Asia-Pacific region. As a part of this objective, UNDP-APDIP regularly conducts studies to gather the opinions of various stakeholders. This project was undertaken by graduate students at the London School of Economics, acting as volunteer experts to UNDP-APDIP, to bring student and youth voices into the debate on Internet governance.

Based on a survey, which included 3 email forums and 3 online chats, of about 100 young students from 13 Asia-Pacific countries, this project sought to find the students' priority issues and concerns in information technology policy-making. In general, we found that the students were well-informed about the myriad of issues facing a potential regulator of the Internet, and hence were well positioned to exchange ideas. At the same time, the comments and opinions we received ranged across the whole spectrum of potential responses to the challenges posed by Internet governance. The debates that occurred via our consultation provided us with one key insight – no one level of government or one mechanism of control can effectively manage the resources of the Internet. In the end, nearly everyone agreed that a responsive, equitable, and just governance regime would involve bodies at the international, national and local level working with individual users, yet still not hampering the freedom and growth of the Internet.

The following two sections of this report introduce the background and methodology used in the survey. Then the fourth and fifth sections give a detailed analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the study. Based on this analysis, policy implications and our specific recommendations are given in the sixth section before some concluding remarks.

2 Background

With the founding of the first network of computers in the United States in the 1970s a revolution in information technology was born. The new technologies, which quickly grew beyond the imagination of even the inventors and developers of the technology, have mushroomed with new applications that have fundamentally changed the way humanity views and thinks about information. One of the concepts at the core of this change has been the Internet, an international network of computers that hold publicly available information and transmit communications almost instantaneously across the globe.

However, this glorious new technology that brings humanity closer together also has some rather inglorious politics behind it. The management of this new resource has been fraught with difficulties, not the least of which is that its globally distributed nature has meant that no authority has unified control over how the system functions. The current alphabet soup of governance bodies testifies to this chaos: ICANN through the IANA manages distribution of IP numbers as well as the top-level DNS servers; W3C sets software protocol and programming language standards; IETF handles hardware protocols and architecture; RIRs handle regional level IP address distribution; and a host of ccTLDs handle country-level domain name management. (Peake 2004) Clearly this is a system with fragmented management, which can sometimes impede the “proper” regulation and administration of the network and its content.

In recognition of the need for somehow improving and clarifying this chaotic management structure, the UN general assembly along with various specialized organizations of the United Nations sponsored the World Summit on Information Society. This summit’s goal was to leverage the enormous power of the Internet and information communication technologies “to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can

create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” (WSIS 2003: 1)

The WSIS is essentially a multilateral, multi-stakeholder effort to bring some level of management over the Internet so that its benefits can be extended to all of humanity. As part of that effort, input has been solicited from all levels of civil society and the private sector to inform the debate and proposals for better managing the Internet. UNDP-APDIP, a step in this direction, is aimed to help increase stakeholder – meaning governments, users and non-governmental organizations – awareness in the Asia-Pacific region on issues of Internet governance. UNDP-APDIP also aims to use the insights from the various stakeholders to convey proposals and ideas to the WSIS and national governments in the region.

However, this aim poses one of the biggest challenges since truly involving stakeholders at all levels is a difficult task, as some groups tend to be marginalized within the consultation process. In fact, almost all of the debates and discussions on governance involve technology experts, business lobbies, and government representatives; but outside of ICANN’s representative structure, there is little evidence of any broad-based consultation on these issues with actual end-users. In particular, the voices of the students and youth, despite being the most avid users of information technology, are rarely considered in policy making, specifically on how to manage the Internet. These groups are most likely to be affected by governance changes, but are rarely consulted. Thus, this project sought to bring student and youth voices into the debate on Internet governance not through merely conjecturing what they might have to say, as some consumer advocates may do, but through

actually listening to their concerns.

By identifying students' priority issues and concerns in Information Technology policy-making, this project sought to provide input into the UNDP-APDIP's Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance (ORDIG). Through this consultation with a cross-section of youth from a wide variety of countries in the region, we sought to bring both quantitative and qualitative information about youth concerns into the public sphere for discussing and formulating ideas about the effective management of information and communication technologies.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

Since this project was about bringing youth voices into the debate about information technology policy and Internet governance, the study demanded an in depth look into the issues and concerns of the participants. Hence a quantitative exercise followed by a qualitative research methodology was adopted. Since the participants were to be selected out of a pool of applications from 13 countries, direct interviews were practically impossible. However, since the study itself revolved around the Internet, various options available in this media were used for data collection.

The target audience for the study was selected based on 2 criteria. First, we looked for participants between the ages of 18-35. Secondly, we looked for students in their undergraduate, graduate or doctoral studies. The study was conducted from February through April 2005. Basic data collection through a questionnaire occurred from February 28 to March 27, 2005, the email discussion groups took place from March 28 until April 11, 2005 and the chat discussions happened on three occasions between April 5 and April 10, 2005.

3.2 Sample design and selection

After the countries where the study would be conducted were delineated based on the remit of the UNDP-APDIP, the sample selection was done through a three stage process.

1. **University selection:** A list of universities and colleges were generated from the respective countries through the Internet and other data sources available. The universities were short listed based on the quality of students and the Internet facilities available. Email was then sent out to these Universities inviting

applications to the Youth Consultation Project. Applicants were to go directly to the APDIP I-Government website and fill up a questionnaire which included basic demographic and psychographic details.

2. **Snow Balling:** A second method used for generating applications was the snow balling technique, where the researchers directly generated contact from the selected countries.
3. **Final Participants Selection:** Once the list of interested participants signed up through the APDIP I-Government website, they were short listed to draw up a list of final participants based on two criteria:
 - i. Demographics: Age, gender, country of origin, level of education.
 - ii. Psychographics: Knowledge, awareness and usage of the Internet.

Care was taken in all cases to ensure that the list of final participants had a fair mix from different age bands, gender, levels of education, and knowledge and use of the Internet. The number of final participants for the forums and chats was 83.

3.3 Data collection

The final data collection was done in three phases:

- 1) **Basic Data collection through questionnaire:** The basic data from all the interested participants were collected through a questionnaire. The application, divided in to two sections, was a structured one with a mix of close-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed in such a way as to elicit all the basic information required for

the short listing of the final list of participants. The first section included questions on demographic information like age, country of origin, university of study, course of study, as well as psychographic and usage information like knowledge of computers, duration of Internet usage, place of Internet access, and usage of applications. The second part of the questionnaire, an open-ended section, included questions on the likes, dislikes, concerns and suggestions about the Internet.

- 2) **Email Discussion Groups:** Three email discussion groups were conducted, each with twenty participants drawn from various countries. Each group was moderated by one of the researchers, assisted by another researcher who primarily acted as an observer. The first two groups were conducted in English, while the last one was conducted in Chinese, exclusively for twenty Chinese speaking participants. Once the lists of final participants were drawn, a mail was sent to each of them informing them about their selection and briefing them about the research process. A broad question about their issues and concerns about Internet governance was posed at first, which the respondents were asked to discuss and debate. The discussion was intended to be a free flowing one, with the researcher stepping in only to guide the groups or to raise important questions and issues.

- 3) **Chat Discussion Groups:** Three chat discussion groups were conducted, each with about 8 participants, drawn from various countries. Each group was moderated by one of the researchers, along with another researcher who primarily helped in the transcription and recording of the conversations. All the groups were conducted in English, through an IRC-based chat room. Once the list of final participants was drawn, they were asked to select a suitable time for participation from a list of three sessions. Based on this, two chat sessions were finalized. Once the participants met in the chat room, they were given the basic

instructions and were guided in to a free flowing discussion of ideas. The researcher provided the overall direction and guidance for the discussion.

3.4 Limitations

Though the initial plan was to have a representation from thirty countries weighted broadly by population, this had to be limited to 13 countries, since there was no response from some of the countries. The sample was skewed towards China, India and Pakistan, since the rate of response from these countries was much higher than the rest. The researchers suspect this largely is due to the language bias of the researchers themselves since outreach could only be conducted in English and Chinese.

4 Quantitative Data Analysis

4.1 Demographics and Usage Patterns

During the first phase of the study, data was collected using a structured questionnaire from various respondents, which was later used for short listing the respondents for the qualitative study. The analysis from this questionnaire which contains demographic, psychographic and usage information is given below.

4.1.1 Country of Origin

Country	Nos.
Bangladesh	4
China	18
East Timor	1
Hong Kong	3
India	28
Indonesia	1
Japan	1
Pakistan	36
Singapore	4
South Korea	2
Sri Lanka	1
Taiwan	2
Vietnam	1
Total	102

4.1.2 Gender

	Nos.
Female	38
Male	64
Total	102

4.1.3 Frequency of Internet Usage

	%
2-4 days a week	1
Daily	13
Several times a day	86

4.1.4 Computer Skills

How would you describe your computer ability?	%
Basic knowledge (Starting the computer, typing, opening applications)	1
Intermediate knowledge (Work on MS office, mailing, chatting, surfing, information searching, downloading)	51
Advanced knowledge (System administration and maintenance, network set-up and design, computer programming, and web design, database design and maintenance)	48

Almost all the respondents either had an intermediary or an advanced knowledge about the Internet and computers.

4.1.5 Learning Profile

Where did you first learn to use the Internet?	%
Friends	12
Parents/Family	7
School/College	30
Self-taught	48
Training institute	3

About half of the respondents were self taught, while another one-third had learnt formally from school/college.

4.1.6 Years Using the Internet

	%
More than 3 years	100

All respondents had been using the Internet for more than 3 years. For the study it meant advanced familiarity with the Internet usage.

4.1.7 Primary Place of Internet Access

	%
Home	41
Other	5
School/College	54

More than half accessed the Internet from their School/College; while another half accessed it from their homes.

4.1.8 Usage of Specific Internet Services

	News	Research	Email	Chat	Games	Entertainment
% Use these services	89	87	100	70	21	51

All respondents used the Internet for accessing email services, followed by news search, information research and chat in popularity. Interestingly, gaming seemed to be less popular compared to all other applications even though our sample was primarily young adults.

4.1.9 Frequency of Usage of Specific Internet Services

Frequency (%)	Email	Chatting	Web Browsing	Gaming	Research	Downloading
Several times a day	76	32	78	0	45	14
Daily	24	28	19	7	29	15
2-4 days a week	1	18	4	7	19	24
Once a week	0	9	0	11	6	17
Rarely	0	14	0	76	1	31

More than three fourths of the respondents used the Internet for accessing their email accounts and for web browsing several times a day. About half of the sample used it for their academic research work, while about a third used it for chatting with their friends and relatives. As seen earlier, gaming was the least popular, where a majority used it rarely.

4.2 Pre-consultation – Issues and Concerns

4.2.1 *Positives reactions about the Internet*

When probed with an open ended question about their likes about the Internet and the services associated with it, more than half liked the fact that the Internet offers them resources of many kinds for communication, information search and entertainment. About half liked the speed at which they could contact their friends and relatives through various means which the Internet offers them. Other prominent positive attributes mentioned included enhancement of communication, open access with out discrimination and ease of usability. Tying in with the earlier finding, just about five percent were really enthusiastic that it offered them a means of entertainment.

Positive Response	%	Positive Response	%
Access to many resources	58	Education	15
Speed of spreading information	48	Empowerment	13
Open access/ No discrimination	34	Convenient	11
Enhancing communication, network	32	Entertainment	5
Easy to use	30	Efficient	4
Fast	19	Always on	2

4.2.2 *Negative reactions about the Internet*

Interestingly the respondents raised a very broad range of dislikes about the Internet when probed

with an open ended question. The main dislikes included junk mail, pop-up advertisements and virus attacks. On a more interesting note, the participants, being students and often researchers, pointed to the difficulty of finding reliable information on the Internet because of both information overload and the unreliability of many sources. A number of respondents indicated they were worried about the social problems stemming from Internet usage including the harm to minors, pornography, the problems of addiction with the concomitant damage to socialization of youth, and the distractive nature of the entertainment opportunities. The speed, access, and cost issues were not ranked highly despite our sample being heavily based in developing countries, probably due to the demographic of the student population which generally enjoys good access on their university campuses.

Negative Response	%	Negative Response	%
SPAM/Junk Mail	23	Desocialization	6
Advertisements/Pop-ups	22	Too Slow	5
Fraud/Security	22	Harms Children	5
Virus	19	Cost/Paid Sites	4
Reliability of Data Unknown	17	Digital Divide	4
General Privacy Violations	15	Distraction - too much entertainment	3
Information Overload	14	Plagiarism	2
Pornography / Unethical Content	13	No Mobile Access	2
Spyware	6	Software Glitches	2
Addiction	6		

4.3 Post-consultation – Follow-up Survey

A follow up survey was conducted through a structured online questionnaire to validate the results of the qualitative study. A battery of 10 statements, covering most of the issues discussed earlier was given, and the respondents were asked to respond to it through a 5 point scale ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’. The table along with the percentage of responses are

Please rank how you would describe your opinion of the following statements	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Governments should have the right to censor content on the Internet.	15%	35%	10%	15%	25%
There should be stronger policing/enforcement against people who illegally share copyrighted material on the Internet.	46%	31%	13%	5%	3%
The current technologies are sufficient for solving the problem of SPAM and Junk Mail.	5%	15%	8%	42%	28%
Education is more important than government regulation in preventing children from accessing pornography.	62%	18%	0%	15%	5%
The Internet will naturally grow to provide multi-lingual content whenever the need arises.	52%	28%	8%	2%	2%
Users of the Internet should be willing to sacrifice some of their privacy in exchange for better security.	15%	28%	18%	26%	10%
Developing countries should subsidize the cost of high-speed Internet in rural areas.	38%	33%	13%	15%	0%
Access to the Internet could help marginal communities as much as access to basic necessities like water and sanitation.	23%	18%	15%	33%	8%
Governments should not spend their resources bringing Internet to marginal areas, and should leave it to private businesses.	8%	13%	10%	36%	33%
An international (multilateral) agency should be empowered to regulate the Internet.	31%	33%	13%	8%	15%

presented below.

One conclusion, through responses like ‘education is more important than regulation’ and ‘Internet

will naturally grow to accommodate multilingual content,' is that people expect the Internet to have its own growth path with minimal external interference. This reinforced the results of our qualitative study, the analysis of which is presented in detail in the next section. At the same time the respondents realised that the threats on security are real and would need some intervention from the government to be controlled. They also perceived the importance of government involvement in the case of provision of services to the marginalised areas, instead of depending on market forces.

5 Qualitative Data Analysis

5.1 Issue Areas

While the consultations were open-ended, meaning that we gave the participants the freedom to discuss any subject which they related to Internet governance, we expected the conversations to address certain specific topics that are of general concern to Internet users. Indeed, the students did address these topics on their own and through guidance provided by the moderators. Discussion on each topic lasted on an average of three days in the forums and for 15-20 minutes in the chat sessions. The consolidated conclusions for each issue area are discussed below.

5.1.1 *Internet Governance*

According to the respondents, the user base of the Internet is exploding, helping it to replace or at least complement the older media like newspaper, television and radio. The Internet is becoming a way of life – used for communication, information, entertainment and shopping. Never has any media been so powerful in history. “Even though Internet is not a basic necessity in China at present, I have no doubt that it would become a necessity in the near future,” noted Jinji Zeng from China. But the respondents agreed that this unprecedented growth of the Internet, with no one to monitor it, brings many concerns for the average user such as safety, security, and privacy. At the same time governments are faced with dilemmas about content control, fraud prevention and more. While the rules of political governance vary from country to country – relating to their specific culture, political system, and economy – the rules for the Internet cut across all this because of the global nature of the technology, leading to confusion and non-uniformity. In the final analysis, the users agreed that a multi-level, multi-pronged approach would probably be the only way to ever hope to govern the Internet effectively.

According to majority of the participants, the term “Internet governance” means regulating the Internet to ensure that it is a place where people can share information freely, communicate with one another and connect with the rest of the world, preferably without having to worry about negative issues. They felt that governance should be almost invisible to the average user of the Internet. Many of them felt that governance should ensure at least two main things: the safety and security of the users and the reach of Internet to developing countries so that its power can be harnessed for their growth.

The respondents raised concerns about the design and implementation of any system of governance because they felt that a rigid, control-oriented model could hamper the freedom and privacy of the average user. They felt that the dynamism of the Internet might be endangered by the establishment of some sort of fixed rule book, which might be central to traditional notions of Internet governance. Care should be taken to ensure that any governance regime avoids becoming just a way of controlling the freedom of information, and avoids squashing innovation and growth on the Internet.

The respondents had two main differing, though not always mutually exclusive, opinions as to how this governance should be implemented: a more decentralized approach and a more formal governing body. The first set of opinion was summed up by Siva Charan from India, “We should leave the Internet to its own to emerge and to EVOLVE”. They felt that the Internet is an excellent example of a naturally emerging system, which could regulate itself, have its own feedback mechanism and grow in its own way. They felt that a framework for governing the Internet is like trying to control nature. According to some, there is an “Internet mind” in operation, which is invisible and is like the free market mechanism, automatically responding to and taking care of all the significant issues. They felt that government regulation could disturb this natural response,

meaning that there is no need for any new Internet regulatory agency, but all that is needed is making the users more aware through information for better decision making. This could happen through a greater level of cooperation from the technology companies, nations and national agencies.

At the same time, they also felt that as the next growth phase of the Internet takes off there should be a greater level of collaboration between the users, firms and governments. They also felt that a governance regime should leverage the power of Internet itself – its pervasiveness and openness. There was a strong current of opinion in favour of a decentralized model of direct participatory democracy on the Internet, as suggested by Kanita Ahmed from Pakistan, “What we need is decentralized, participatory decision making which arrives at a consensus and is implemented from the bottom up rather than arbitrary top-down solutions.” A suggestion was decision making through open electronic message board discussions among users rather than just governments. Others included more direct participation in the bodies that might regulate the Internet. In general, this group felt that the users of the Internet should have a very strong voice in the management of the resource.

A second group felt that there is a requirement for direct governance by responsible bodies like national governments or an international body. Initial opinions favoured an international organisation since this could best serve to manage the international character of the Internet. But participants soon worried that this could mean the monopolisation of the Internet by the United States, or that the rules promulgated by the international body would not be acceptable to all nations. That led many respondents to propose country-level control of Internet resources. They felt that this could help preserve the unique identity, culture and decision making mechanisms of different countries. To deal with the problem of the global nature of the Internet, many of the

students suggested some sort of international coordinating body, which would set guidelines, but leave actual decisions, implementation and monitoring up to the member states. Fair representation of all countries was considered a main requirement by the participants if the international body was to be perceived as legitimate. “I think action has to be taken on all three levels, and not just any one level,” explained Soon Hui Tan from Singapore referring to international, national and local level institutions.

Such international and national cooperation could be useful to eliminate fraud and combat cyber crimes to a certain degree, even within a specific country. The main thrust was that governance needed to happen at multiple levels. “The value of the Internet would be lost if it were governed as if we ‘govern’ a country for example. A policy framework would be just a set of guidelines which are obligatory to follow, so that it would not kill the worth of the Internet,” suggested Gayashini Nanayakkara from Sri Lanka. But whatever system is designed, they felt that the policies which will govern the Internet should be flexible enough to accommodate the real character of the media – free flow of unbiased information. Ideal governance, according to them is one which is unnoticeable to the average user, but still securing and protecting her from all the dangers. Gayashini Nanayakkara concluded, “Maybe Internet governance should start by doing the simple things right.”

5.1.2 Bridging the Digital Divide

The majority of the respondents felt that the Internet has the ability to help marginalised societies to break the vicious circle of poverty by helping them communicate, receive information and improve productivity. According to them the Internet can help the poor to find a way towards the basic necessities. But they also raised concerns about the over importance given to the Internet phenomenon. They felt that poor people need food, clothing and shelter first, then education, and after this a computer and Internet education; not the other way around. Though, one dissenting

participant, who felt that Internet access was equally important as other basic services, commented, “Internet can be used to change lives...and that includes income status.”

When the issue of the mechanism for bridging the divide was discussed, the students remained divided. Opinions included the pivotal role being played by the government, private sector, and a collaborative effort. Some respondents felt that a responsible government is the only body which can ensure that the Internet benefits everybody from the urban youth to the rural poor. It has the ability to drive large scale infrastructure projects and give subsidies to bridge the divide. Respondents discussed several state initiated projects in support of this argument. Projects discussed included the e-Sri Lanka project promoting ICT in rural communities; the Vishwa Gnana Kendra project; the Kotmale Community Radio Project which is set in a rural community and promotes interest in computers; and e-governance in Andhra Pradesh. Participants noted the benefits of these project for farmers and especially women.

Some respondents felt that government should focus mainly on two issues to bridge the divide: free elementary education, which can open up a world of opportunity for the poor; and development of local content, helping people from all strata of society access the Internet. The concerns raised regarding government taking the lead included the fear of politicizing the issue and a lack of administrative and technical skills. “Youth like us should support in taking the power of the Internet to the masses,” said Siva Charan from India. Also they felt that people could be cynical about this as they expect immediate results, which can put pressure on politicians.

A second set of opinion favoured privatisation as a means to bridge the divide. They felt that privatisation could increase the infrastructure and can help bring down costs through competition. Private firms could also invest in marketing efforts to remove the fear of technology amongst the

general public. Of the several cases quoted, notable was the Indian firm ITC's e-Choupal effort, which helped farmers break the vicious cycle of inefficient markets and middle men. "Companies like ITC and HLL with projects like e-Choupal and Shakti, believe that once the farmers get good education and have money, they will start using their products. So they put large money in to these initiatives, that they can reap the benefits later in future," said S. Nighedhana from India.

But respondents also felt that private players would not be willing to operate in low demand, low profit areas. Some of them felt that there should be universal service obligation funds similar to those in telephony, to ensure equitable availability of bandwidth. Another opinion which emerged was the utility of public-private partnership, which many respondents felt could be more sustainable since it incorporates wider base of stakeholders and checks and balances. In general the students felt that government has a responsibility to encourage corporations to be socially responsible.

5.1.3 *Pornography*

For some of the discussion groups, an area of most pressing concern was pornography and its repercussions. The respondents worried that minors have access to pornography which may harm them psychologically. This could happen accidentally or when they are without supervision in Internet cafes. As expected the regulation of pornography was a divisive issue with responses ranging across the whole spectrum from it being someone's right, to call for a total ban on this "unethical" business. Obviously with such starkly differing opinions, the ability to reach consensus was difficult, but most users agreed that the sticking point would be that different cultures have different attitudes towards pornography, and hence action should be nationally driven. While there was universal agreement that the child pornography industry was immoral and should be ruthlessly stomped out, one of the other solutions heavily discussed was the idea of ranking websites.

Except for a few dissenters on each extreme, the majority of the participants saw that different cultural attitudes towards pornography would be the main obstacle to any sort of regulation which would be needed to protect young and impressionable users. Kanita Ahmed from Pakistan commented, “It is clear that some value judgments will have to be made about what is and is not acceptable Internet material. Whose values? We all agree that child pornography is wrong and should not be on the Internet but is there a similar consensus on regular pornography? ... Is the consensus the same in say, Brazil and Saudi Arabia?” This lack of universal values led to the recommendation for some sort of international body for setting voluntary standards which could be accepted or rejected by each country as they saw fit. “There has to be something on a global level (UN perhaps) supplemented by national bodies that are sensitive to local cultures”, commented Beenish Akbar from Pakistan.

It was suggested that some standards could be used to rate websites according to their content. While there was no agreement on whether the rankings should be voluntary or imposed by some board or government body, the idea was to make it easier for child-safe filters to work more effectively. Dhawal Jadhav from India suggested, “We can have a governing body which certifies various websites for this purpose, for example the .kid domain extension can be used for sites suitable for kids only. There can be restrictions on the accessibility of sites through a particular computer ... thus we are restricting the users at the last point of access.” Of course in this ranking or certifying process, many stressed that accountability and transparency would be vital.

Finally, all users agreed on the immorality of child pornography, and the need for it to be stopped completely. Soon Hui Tan from Singapore expressed it by saying, “In certain cases of pornography that involve child abuse ... I don’t think any country or culture can argue to have the right to do something as abhorrent as this” The participants unanimously agreed that governments should take

firm action on this issue and should cooperate to the utmost extent to eliminate this practice.

The pornography issue largely came down to values of different people in different societies. Kanita Ahmed from Pakistan noted, “I don’t understand how these differences, which are so deeply rooted in the psyche of nations are to be resolved.” Indeed, resolution or even coherent proposals for dealing with this were difficult, but almost everyone agreed, that something should be done in the way of regulation and legislation, at least at the national level, to prevent pornography from harming adolescents. And again some level of education was recommended as a solution to the demand problem. In the end, however, given the global difference over the issue, most participants seemed resigned to the idea that all regulation and enforcement must be, in the end, a national issue.

5.1.4 Security – Viruses and Fraud

As the Internet becomes more popular, the fraud associated with it is also increasing, which puts greater costs onto the users and administrators of computer networks. The problem is particularly acute with new users of the Internet who may not be aware of traps that are waiting to catch unaware customers. This is seriously impacting both people personally and their ability to conduct business safely on the Internet. The participants in our consultation seemed well aware of the different issues in security and the kinds of risks that lurk on the Internet. The general consensus was that there needed to be greater government cooperation in tackling issues of Internet security. Additionally, the participants overwhelmingly agreed that the tools to tackle viruses and other cyber crimes needed to be made more accessible to users in developing countries. Finally, there was large agreement that education and awareness raising would play a vital part in the fight against online security threats.

In looking at how to tackle the problem of hacking, viruses and other damaging criminal activity

online, generally people felt that there needed to be more intergovernmental cooperation in this arena. While a few thought that the current tools, such as antivirus programs and firewalls, were sufficient for preventing crime, most thought that more aggressive action needed to be taken. Miraj Khaled from Bangladesh commented, “Issues of security, copyrights, SPAMs need urgent attention in regard to the governance of Internet. ... To tackle all these issues we need more co-operation between the various governments, businesses and civil society.” There were a few people who recommended a global authority to handle all these issues, but by and large, the feeling was that law should be strengthened at the national level, perhaps even harmonized, and governments should cooperate in fighting criminal activity. As part of the fight, a recommendation was made to have stiffer punishments meted out in order to deter future online criminals.

A particular concern was the cost of tackling the various security problems and how these costs were burdensome on developing country users. While there was a recognition that the tools for tackling viruses and the like were not alone sufficient to handle the problem, the participants definitely felt that they were necessary as part of the solution. However, there was widespread agreement across the different consultation groups that the software license fees and hardware costs were too large for poor countries. Comments like, “there should be central action punishing the offenders instead of indirectly punishing the consumer,” and, “I mean the whole virus thing is becoming a money spinner for software companies, which is not exactly fair to consumers,” were received from Feng Qian Ang of Singapore. Devesh Varma from India excellently summarised the feeling, “The companies coming up with such products do need to come up for a different business model for the Asian and African continents as the people in these countries cannot pay the license and subscription fees like those in the US. This gives rise to people going for pirated software which in turn affects the security and protection provided by these pirated versions.”

Finally, one method of attacking the problem, particularly for the fraud associated with online commerce and shopping, is that of user education. A key concern of the participants was that people who go online for the first time are often not aware of the kind of scams and fraud that are committed, and some were particularly concerned about auction sites and the reliability of the sellers. While it was recognised that these problems have not yet burdened developing countries as much because of the lower penetration of e-commerce, it was also noted that this will increase in importance in places like South Asia as e-commerce takes off. Dhawal Jadhav from India said, “One of the major problems regarding the same is the lack of user awareness ... many users are not aware of the safety measures or they don’t follow the same even if they know them... I think that there should be compulsory training for users who have to perform online banking and any other financial transaction.” At the very least, there was broad agreement that education, perhaps not compulsory, should be made available, perhaps even through primary schooling.

The consultation definitely brought forward the idea that security issues are cramping the growth of the Internet. Trust in e-commerce was still thought to be low and viruses and other security issues gave the impression that the Internet was not safe. A balance of demand- and supply-side interventions seemed to be supported, from greater policing and enforcement to more education of users so that fraud could be prevented.

5.1.5 Multi-lingual content

Initially, as the discussions started, respondents felt that multilingual content was vital to the growth of the Internet. They felt that English is alien to most people of the developing world and hence multiple languages could help in bridging the digital divide and in the proliferation of the Internet to the marginalised communities. “Even the government web sites are in English, and do not provide for a Sinhala translation. So, it could be seen, that we as a country have acknowledged that English

is the language of the Internet,” said Gayashini Nanayakkara of Sri Lanka.

However, as the discussions progressed responses were more resigned to the dominance of a single language on the Internet. They felt that the Internet would profit a great deal if it were to remain largely in English. Reasons given in support included English being spoken and understood by a large proportion of the world’s population, and it being the medium of instruction in a majority of educational institutions. They felt that if a language other than English was used on a massive scale as the language of the web, it would not be as effective or useful to the majority of the people who access the Internet today. “I believe that regardless of the rate of proliferation of the Internet, in India and China (which are two very large countries in terms of population), English will still prevail as the language of the Internet. Simply because it is the language of the Western world, and they pioneer innovations faster than the rest of the world,” commented Gayashini Nanayakkara. Other reasons in support of English included the ease with which monitoring would be possible.

The second main opinion was that English will remain the main language, but it should coexist with many other languages. The necessity of translation or multilingual content should be evaluated according to the context. For example, it would be good for academic content to be in English but content targeted at the local community, like the daily weather forecasts or information regarding crops and seeds, should be in the local language. “It is useful for academia, but we are talking here about rural folk who are yet to know the alphabet ‘A’ which exists in English,” noted Siva Charan from India. One suggestion that emerged was a need for a pervasive translation tool on the Internet which could translate any content into any language. They also felt that user communities themselves could play a role in making sure that the right content is available for members of their communities in the language of their choice.

5.1.6 Content controls and censorship

Respondents were aware of the various restrictions on the Internet access and content under different forms of government. They knew that in some countries censors target not only sexually explicit material and hate speech but also pro-democracy discussions and human rights education. Because of these restrictions, they felt, individuals face the danger of the erosion of their rights to free expression. They acknowledged that there is a trade-off between lowering the risk of harm to minors or instability in society and over-control of content. But in general, there was no clear consensus with a surprising number of the participants being in favour of some form of censorship.

There was a set of respondents with a strong opinion that we must have some censorship of the Internet, even though some of them were cautious when talking about this. “Given the life dependency on the Internet of an average citizen I personally feel it is an absolute necessity to censor information flows, which can best be done through an effective institutional mechanism, education, policy and an effective legal system in place,” said Kiran Rajashekariah from India. The general reasons for concern were improper content and security concerns. Some also pointed to hate groups, saying they should not be allowed to flourish on the Internet. “Would we tolerate the KKK or Al Qaeda in the building next door - why must we do so here? If anything, their content should be regulated,” noted Arif Shah from Pakistan. Notably, the Chinese students were reticent to discuss issues of censorship in the context of political speech online, perhaps because of fear about the record of the conversation being publicly available. Thus, there were no comments about political censorship from any of the Chinese participants.

However, another group of our respondents were adamant that censorship is unnecessary and may do harm to the freedom of information on the Internet. First off, they noted that it is impractical to censor the Internet because of the volume of data and secondly the right to free expression and

information was a particular concern for the students. “It is quite difficult for an Internet agency or a government to control Internet content. Censorship may do harm to the freedom of Web access. Under this consideration, it is better to have a policy guide but not an Internet controller,” commented Dong Xinyin from China, hitting both of the main points. Some participants expressed concerns about the political nature of the task of censorship and the possibility of the job falling into the wrong hands. And, of course, there were a few ardent libertarian opinions about how people should be allowed to do what they want on the Internet. “I think we should leave it to the Internet users. All we need is sufficient information to make decisions,” opined Jung Hyun Park from Korea.

In querying our participants about how to reach some sort of balance between control and freedom some creative proposals were elicited. As Beenish Akbar from Pakistan clarified, “Not censoring at all is not an option - the question is who censors and to what extent?” Some felt it was better to block on the supply side than on the demand side, “The key here is not governing the people who read the info on the net but the people who publish such information ... Can’t there be rules framed for the same rather than blocking certain websites,” stated Gayatri Ganesh from India.

On the other hand, some favoured more demand-reduction-oriented interventions, such as Ni Huang from China, who was more sympathetic to a decentralized solution. She said, “The protection should not count only on the government. We can let the parents and private businesses be involved in this, because the parents have the incentive to censor out harmful websites to protect their children.” One of the common themes was that no system could be operated on the global level unless it was sensitive to different cultures and concerns. Unilateral action was definitely opposed as Soon Hui Tan from Singapore succinctly expressed, “It definitely should not be by any single nation ... but perhaps a coalition of people... maybe something like the IAEA?” In the end the

diversity of opinion makes a conclusion on this issue difficult, but the fact that the participants were not uniformly against censorship is telling in its own right.

5.1.7 Copyright and digital media

A hot topic of concern on the Internet is the illicit use of digital media, particularly the piracy of music and movies online. The question comes down to whether copyright has achieved the appropriate balance between incentives to engage in creative activities and the social benefits that arise from the wide spread use of creative work. An overwhelming majority of our respondents seemed to be in favour of curtailing the illicit download of digital content despite the fact that over 50% of our applicant pool said that they use peer-to-peer downloading services at least a couple of times a week. The reason for the disconnect between their behaviour and the opinions expressed in the forums and chats may be a desire to appear to be respecting the law when discussing this issues with the other participants. The other possibility is that the users of peer-to-peer downloading software do not feel that their activity is illegal or infringing on copyright, as was commented by Beenish Akbar from Pakistan, “The one who downloads may not be ‘aware’ of the theft.”

The preponderance of our respondents felt that sharing of digital content online is theft and that it needs to be dealt with more stringently. “It is a question of fairness. Piracy is not giving the appropriate credit to people’s work and effort ... White collar crime should not get away lighter cause there is no physical object stolen,” said Feng Qian Ang from Singapore. Some were even morally opposed to the sharing of digital content, “Downloading/using material without the writer’s/creator’s consent is a sin” explained Beenish Akbar from Pakistan. And Soon Hui Tan from Singapore replied, “All such actions should be punished as normal theft.”

There were a few developing country participants who did feel that there should be some alternative

to strict enforcement of copyrights, though they were definitely in the minority. The feeling was that there was a cultural difference across regions and that, while the goal should be to move towards Western-style protection of intellectual property, instant strict enforcement of copyrights was not the appropriate way forward. Song Gang from China noted, “We should pay attention to the current digital gap between developed countries and developing countries … International agencies should try to lower the royalty costs for the developing countries if they hope these countries will take concrete measures to protect copyright.” Chang Lei from China added, “Chinese people may think that if they do not use the downloaded software for business purposes, their behaviour must be acceptable. Sure, with the entrance into WTO, it’s the time for us to change our mind to some extent. But should the developed countries do something to change too?”

In the end it seems that with so much free content available on the Internet it will be hard to control and enforce copyrights. The problem may lie in the control of the providers of illegal content and not the users. Additionally, the students thought some technological solutions might be appropriate such as CDs that do not allow copying. The participants were generally in favour of punishment against offenders in order to deter future copyright violations.

5.1.8 Junk Mail

Spam is flooding the Internet with many copies of the same message, in an attempt to force the message on people who would not otherwise choose to receive it. Most junk mail is commercial advertising, often for dubious products, get-rich-quick schemes, or quasi-legal services. There are estimates that over 80% of all email is junk mail (MessageLabs 2005) with some estimates that it could rise to 95% by 2006. (Spamhaus 2005) It is estimated that Spam costs businesses over \$20 billion a year in lost employee productivity according to Radicati Group, a market research firm.

(Hansell 2003)

Though many of the respondents regard Spam as the menace of the Internet, we received less response and interest in this topic compared to many other topics. The reason may lie in the fact that although Spam is a universal problem on the Internet, it generally is not very serious because the junk messages can simply be deleted when a user opens her Inbox. “At first, it’s really irritating to get Spam ... but now we are accustomed to it,” explained Ho Young Yoon from Korea. As for the solution to the problem of Spam, technology itself was regarded as the best method to solve this problem. “Technology may be more effective than institutions in controlling junk mail,” explained Zhao Lina from China. Particularly, the effective Spam filters of the major commercial email services of Yahoo and Hotmail mean that most users are not particularly bothered by Spam any more.

More policing was not generally accepted, “I think most people would agree that you should not interfere with the privacy of Internet users at the sake of Spam,” explained Chris Yeoh from Hong Kong. And Qudsiah Khan from Pakistan seemed resigned to the Spam problem, “Some sort of Spam is always going to be there.” Most of the respondents did not seem concerned about the issue, though they felt that it may be of importance to network operators and service providers.

5.2 Consultation Variance

Because of the free flowing and open-ended nature of the qualitative data that was recorded, not all groups prioritised or discussed the same issues. Across the three different forums, each section picked up different topics that seemed to interest them most. While one group focused almost immediately on pornography and the harm to minors from access to inappropriate materials, another was most concerned about online fraud and the security implication of doing business online. The

Chinese-language group seemed to be most interested by the role of the government in making content controls, despite side-stepping the issues of political speech online.

There was also a very different dynamic to the discussions between those conducted via the email forums and those conducted in the chat setting. The forum participants tended to dwell on topics longer, have more in depth debates about them and make more detailed proposals for solving the problems associated with a topic. They also brought up more questions and concerns with the proposals of other participants. Alternatively the chat participants tended to just give their immediate opinions once and not hash out all the details of a topic area. The upshot was that the chat sessions covered a lot more ground in terms of the breadth of discussion, but the forums, while covering only a few topic areas each, went much more deeply into the issues involved.

6 Implications and Recommendations

Comparing the results of the youth consultations with other forums recently conducted by the UNDP-APDIP provides a useful insight into the results. While the quantitative study of stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region showed some very clear results in terms of which areas users are most dissatisfied with, it was not able to bring forward suggestions or ideas for reform. (UNDP-APDIP 2005a) At the same time the qualitative data from the forums on Internet governance priorities had a very technical focus, with stakeholders drawn from private, public and civil society sectors. (UNDP-APDIP 2005b) The first inference from our analysis is that technical issues such as IP address allocation and name server management are not high priority concerns for the young user base of the Internet. With a few exceptions, the participants stayed away from addressing such technical issues, focusing on the broad, directional issues in Internet governance. Qasim Nauman from Pakistan expressed this sentiment well, “While protocols, machinery, software and other robotolicious stuff is extremely important, governance has more to do with privacy and content management.”

While the general APDIP survey clearly showed a tripartite set of security concerns as the top area of dissatisfaction (UNDP-APDIP 2005a), in probing our participants a lot of sentiment indicated that despite junk mail, virus attacks, and fraud being important issues, they were perhaps not the areas of most urgent need for governance reform. The respondents felt that, while the current technologies are not sufficient for combating these problems, education should be at the forefront, and promoted as an effective way to tackle these issues. The respondents almost unanimously agreed that educating users on safety would be the most effective method of intervention to reduce risks and security threats. The government’s role in enforcement and policing was discussed, with proposals on greater international cooperation, but those were viewed as secondary interventions.

While the role of the Internet in bridging the digital divide in developing countries was discussed, the same sentiment was present, where broad solutions like education were given importance over other interventions. Our follow-up survey showed fairly strong support for subsidization of Internet infrastructure in marginal areas, with around 70% agreeing that the government should be involved in measures to bridge the digital divide. That said, many participants questioned the primacy given to such projects in developing countries when more basic government services were not being provided. The majority felt that governments should be involved, but that developmental interventions should focus first on survival necessities and primary education.

Overall, the youth involved in our project were much more engaged with discussions on how to manage content on the Internet, those discussions following the tracks of regulating pornography, developing systems to handle censorship, and mechanisms for ensuring trust in e-commerce. While the trust of conducting business may seem to be unrelated, the respondents felt that trust management mechanisms, which might involve some form of content regulation, were an integral part of solving the e-commerce dilemma. While most of our discussions focused on managing content of some form or another, there was little consensus on who should be doing the managing and how it should be accomplished. The clearest story is that while consumer advocates for privacy and freedom of information are very vocal, the participants in our group had much more eclectic views, as there were deep concerns about the kind of content that is available and how it may harm certain segments of society. Concerns about pornographic material and hate groups were the most paramount, with a surprising number of respondents in favour of national-level controls on this kind of content.

The type of controls and who implements them was indeed a sticking point in the discussions. The two currents of thought, one for individual user responsibility and the other for governmental

intervention, came to a head in debating how to go about bringing some control over content. The realization that cultural differences play a key role in managing content led to the conclusion that no single organisation could or should have the power to censor. Only through cooperation from the very bottom level to the very top would any kind of workable, though perhaps complex, regime emerge. Whichever institution might be empowered to handle these issues, accountability and transparency were emphasized as fundamental requirements in handling such sensitive issues as censorship. The best way to ensure accountability seemed to be a system that encompassed responsibility and interaction between many levels of institutions: international bodies, national governments, local organisations, civil society, and even directly democratic participation.

Given such diverse viewpoints as expressed by our participants, direct recommendations become very difficult. A broader consultation may be in order, one that has a better multi-lingual capability to involve more youth from nations that were poorly represented in our study. In terms of governance, the focus was generally on making whatever governance does happen as invisible as possible, so that the basic and most important function of the Internet, namely fast, open and relatively free sharing of information, is not impeded. The most important demand by the participants was that governments need to cooperate, not bicker, and that the Internet as a global phenomenon should not be controlled by any one nation, company, or organization – it needs accountable governance that genuinely involves the global user base.

7 Conclusion

Anarchy no longer seems to be an acceptable model for the management of the Internet, as it has become too important for the functioning of society, business and even government. Information communication technologies have revolutionized the way the world works, and the Internet has forever changed the field of communications by creating new levels of interconnectedness. This new technology is being adopted in an unbalanced way, more heavily in the rich world and, in terms of age group, most heavily by youth. Yet the governance of the Internet largely falls out of the hands of youth and students. Additionally, the potential of the Internet to affect the lives of billions of impoverished people currently caught on the wrong side of the digital divide is unquestioned.

Students and youth from the Asia-Pacific region are not ignorant of the issues involved in Internet governance. On the contrary, they are well-informed and have strong opinions on the direction management of the Internet is taking. Future discussion with stakeholders would be advised to ensure adequate participation by this user group as they tend to have the broadest and most long-term outlook, focusing on the big questions instead of the nitty-gritty issues. Their call for greater cooperation, a more inclusive international approach, and the need to respect different cultures even in a cross-border world should be heeded by researchers and policy makers alike.

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