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Connecting Diverse and Inclusive Voices for Internet Freedom

The Internet Freedom Festival (IFF) is one of the largest, most diverse, and most inclusive unconferences in the Internet Freedom community. The goal of the IFF is to cultivate an inclusive space and trusting atmosphere for collectively improving the services, strategies, and tools available for protecting and promoting Internet Freedom by mapping censorship, surveillance, and access obstacles globally. The IFF brings together journalists, media organizations, activists, software developers, information security professionals, digital security trainers, designers, and many other Internet freedom professionals. Diversity and inclusion among these voices are key to the principles, purpose, and outcomes of the Festival.

In 2017 the IFF launched the first edition of the Diversity & Inclusion Fund (DIF), a pioneer initiative to give voice to underrepresented groups and increase their presence within the larger
Internet Freedom community. Through DIF, the IFF supported more than 60 professionals from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia to present at and participate in the IFF.

The Diversity and Inclusion Fund does not just aim to meet numerical diversity targets, but, more importantly, to foster an inclusive culture to empower those diverse perspectives in the Internet Freedom community. The 2017 DIF engaged inclusivity experts Gabriela Rodriguez and Valerie Aurora to integrate best practices into the IFF and provide individual support at the event. Gabriela and Valerie facilitated updating the IFF Code of Conduct, provided mentorship to IFF Fellows on how to ensure session themes were more inclusive, researched and shared tools for the community to avoid common pitfalls, and created a safe space for conflict resolution. All of these factors helped to create a more inclusive atmosphere in practice at the festival--from tools to constructively mediate disagreements to providing the opportunity for participants to identify their preferred gender pronoun.

Moses Karanja, Research Fellow at Strathmore University (Kenya) and 2016 IFF Diversity Track Lead reflected on the outcomes of the 2017 DIF, “The Internet Freedom Festival is doing a great job in bringing together Internet freedom warriors from the South to meet, share experiences and forge working alliances and work closely with the global North to scale solutions that make the Internet more open and secure for all. This regional diversity is key in enriching our understanding of what works for Internet freedom – one byte at a time – and importantly, to create trust in this sensitive community.”

The Internet Freedom Festival fosters an inclusive knowledge exchange across Internet Freedom communities year-round through an online forum and a weekly newsletter featuring practical inclusion tips. The IFF is incorporating feedback from last year’s DIF participants to adapt and expand programming and participation at the 2018 Festival.

*The IFF is co-hosted by IREX and the Open Technology Fund. The 2017 Diversity and Inclusion Fund was supported by the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Internews, Generalitat, Unió de Periodistes Valencians, Facebook, Twitter, Mozilla, International Media Support, Media Democracy Fund, ISC Project and CPJ. Register and submit session proposals for the 2018 Internet Freedom Festival now! The deadline for submission is October 31st.*

Welcoming MIUSA as a TAAP Inclusion Partner
The TAAP Initiative is pleased to announce that Mobility International USA (MIUSA) has joined the TAAP Inclusive Initiative. MIUSA is a disability-led non-profit organization working to empower people with disabilities to achieve their human rights through international exchange and international development.

For over 35 years, MIUSA has worked passionately with its partners and allies to ensure that international development and humanitarian services and policies are inclusive of people with disabilities - including girls and women with disabilities - in all actions and initiatives. Susan Sygall, CEO and Co-Founder of MIUSA adds: “We envision that people with disabilities are not only productive citizens, but also leaders in their countries.”

MIUSA will share insights and expertise on framing the inclusion of people with disabilities in international development as a human rights issue. The MIUSA team looks forward to sharing its experience with the TAAP Toolkit on gender equality and social inclusion with World Learning and the impressive group of resource partners it has assembled.

Photo: MIUSA organizational logo. Courtesy of Mobility International USA.

Smart Risks: Highlighting How Grassroots Organizations are Reaching Those on the "Edge"
Grassroots-led organizations are part of the social fabric of any community. This makes them well-suited to find, mobilize, and be led by people that face discrimination or that may be less visible to the rest of society. Grassroots groups are uniquely positioned because of their key strengths in inclusion - contextual expertise, connectedness with the people, and continuity.

We are pleased to share a new book of 30 essays called Smart Risks: How small grants are
helping to solve some of the world's biggest problems. Edited by Jennifer Lentfer and Tanya Cothran, it explores how responsive grantmaking, focused on grassroots wisdom and close connections, can make a lasting impact in the Global South. Despite their competencies, grassroots groups face a formidable challenge; they must continually seek out and compete for new resources in a funding environment that is often led by global trends rather than persistent, ongoing challenges, as well as one that favors short-term grants to larger, higher-profile groups.

The book’s 22 authors have collectively made over 12,000 grants totaling $130 million to over 5,000 grassroots organizations in over 130 countries. They range from donors to program managers to community leaders in their own right – all united by why they take “smart risks” on grassroots groups. The book charts a bold, new way forward for our sector by sharing stories, lessons learned, practical frameworks, and questions for personal and organizational reflection - all demonstrating how funding to grassroots organizations can start small and grow with the groups as they (and the donors themselves!) develop. To learn more (including links to purchase the book), see: www.smartrisks.org.

Photo: Smart Risks book cover. Courtesy of Smart Risks.

This Week’s TAAP Staff Picks:

People first.
Diverse & inclusive.
1. **The Bakery Café**: This chain of bakeries in Nepal is a great example of inclusion being implemented in the private sector. In 1997 the chairman of the bakeries’ parent company recognized a need for employment opportunities for those in the deaf community and began training and offering jobs to those many considered ineligible to work. The bakery now employs 45 persons who are deaf, which is over 15% of the entire staff at the company.

2. **Practicing the Four R’s of Indigenous Philanthropy**: This blog post, by Yumi Sera of Disability Rights Fund, outlines the “Four R’s” of Indigenous Philanthropy: respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships. The author encourages donors to respect diverse perspectives, promote reciprocity by building cross movement collaboration, practice responsibility by encouraging diverse voices from indigenous populations to speak for themselves, and build relationships by encouraging mutual learning and respect.

3. **The Myth of Women’s Empowerment**: This New York Times op-ed challenges the existing idea of women’s empowerment, asserting that it been stripped of its original substance. Rather than trying to empower women in the Global South through small-scale economic programs, we need to work towards “transforming gender subordination and the breakdown of ‘other oppressive structures’ and collective ‘political mobilization.’”

*Photo: YouTube cover “#LEADMongolia Fellows honor International Week of the Deaf 2017”, World Learning Mongolia, Published on September 21, 2017.*

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**Got Inclusion?**

We want to hear from you! Please share your inclusion activities, success stories, upcoming events, and intriguing resources. Send to TAAP@worldlearning.org.

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Click [here](#) to subscribe to the TAAP Tuesday Newsletter.

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