8th COMMUNITY NETWORK XCHANGE AsiaPacific 2024

Voices of CNX 2024

15th & 16th Nov, 2024

Building Communities For ACCESS TO RIGHTS

RIGHTS TO & ACCESS

Every Right is Behind Digital Access



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APNIC Foundation · APC Association for Progressive Communications · Global Digital Inclusion Partnership

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CC Commons Collective · International Institute of Information Technology Hyderabad · TASK · Internet Society India Hyderabad Chapter

Shri Jayesh Ranjan

Chief Secretary, ITE&C & Industries & Commerce Departments of Government of Telangana



Mr. Jayesh Ranjan is a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) of the 1992 batch and working in the state of Telangana. He holds a Masters Degree in Psychology from Delhi University, a degree in Business Management from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, and a Masters in Public Management from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

Jayesh Ranjan is the Special Chief Secretary of the Industries & Commerce (I&C) and Information Technology (IT) Departments of the Telangana government. His assignment involves developing policy frameworks, attracting new investments, identifying opportunities for utilising IT in various government processes, and promoting the digital empowerment of the citizens. His last few assignments have been in the Industrial Promotion sector as Commissioner and MD of the Industries Department, Secretary in the Tourism Promotion Department, and Vice-Chairman of the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HUDA), all for 2-3 years each, and various rural assignments in different parts of the state for over 12 years, working in diverse sectors like Tribal Development, Natural Resources Management, Poverty Alleviation and other related Social Development Sectors.

Jayesh Ranjan supports many social, cultural and charitable causes and is on the Boards / Advisory committees of United Way (Hyderabad), Save A Child's Heart (SACH) Foundation, Young Lives India, Save the Children, Sparsh Hospice, APMAS, ML Jaisimha Sports Foundation, Hyderabad 10 K Foundation, Vijaya Foundation Trust, Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation, LSN Foundation, Tejas Foundation, Magic Bus Hyderabad, World Wildlife Fund (Hyderabad chapter), Hyderabad Literary Festival. Spic-Macay. Heal a Child Foundation, Moving Images, Society to Aid the Hearing Impaired (SAHI), and Institute of Public Enterprises (IPE).

Sujit Jagirdar
CEO, T-Hub



Sujit Jagirdar is the Chief Executive Officer of the world's largest and pioneering Startup Innovation ecosystem - T-Hub, located in Hyderabad. His role involves driving 'open innovation-led business transformation' with corporates & government entities, driving International programs with Global firms & building partnerships with Innovation hubs to deliver impact. Key focus areas include enabling market access for startups, POCs, and Pilots and collaborating with corporates for co-innovation & co-creation.

He is a frequent speaker at CII, TiE as well as international Tech Fests on topics such as Digital Transformation, Mobility, Energy Transition, Startups & Innovation. He has delivered sessions at IIM Calcutta, IIM Lucknow, BITS Pilani etc. He is on the Advisory Council of CII's Green Entrepreneurship Council and on the Advisory Committee of the T-Hub Board.

With more than 2 decades of experience, Sujit has worked with large global organisations like Wipro Technologies, Oracle India and Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co. Ltd. He is a Global Consulting & IT Delivery leader helping clients in their Innovation and Transformation journeys. His experience included managing CXOs / stakeholders' global IT Program delivery across sectors like Consumer Goods, Manufacturing, Travel, Transportation & Hospitality. He has extensive experience in scaling IT Consulting Practices like o9 SCM & Ecommerce, specialised practices like Cyber Security Consulting and Packaged Testing practices.

Osama Manzar

Founder-Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation



Osama Manzar works at the cusp of Rights, Access and Meaningful Content. Is a Senior Ashoka Fellow, British Chevening Scholar, International Visitors Leadership Program Fellow of US State Department and an Advisor to Women in Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF).

After half a decade of stint in tech journalism, he founded Digital Empowerment Foundation in 2002 working on "access to rights and rights to access" ending up digitally empowering more than 35 million people till date.

He was instrumental in several policies and impact activities like India's National Digital Literacy Mission, banning FreeBasics in india, liberalising ISP licensing through PM-WANI in India, and initiated fight to misinformation with WhatsApp and institutionalised the same.

He has been on the boards and advisories of Women in Digital Economy Fund, APC, World Summit Awards, GNI, Barefoot College, Protsahan, MISSING, etc. and profiled by The Hindu as "the man who travelled more than 10,000 villages".

He writes regular column in Mint at Livemint.com and has authored several books including Internet Economy of India.

Rajnesh Singh

CEO, APNIC Foundation



Rajnesh Singh joined the APNIC Foundation in December 2023. He is a technology industry thought leader and former serial entrepreneur with extensive experience in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. He has played founding and leading roles in several technology and private equity investment firms with significant experience in business management and strategy development, spanning diverse industries such as telecommunications, power infrastructure, agriculture, and real estate. Raj has an intimate understanding of the nuances of the Asia-Pacific with lived experiences in the region. He has worked extensively with governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector and has served on several Advisory Boards. He has been part of Expert Working Groups for regional and international organisations on infrastructure, policy, regulatory reform, and development issues.

His Internet community leadership roles include Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF), Founding Chair of ICANN's Asia Pacific Regional At-Large Organisation (APRALO), and he was the Regional Vice President for Asia-Pacific at the Internet Society (ISOC) and established its Singapore-based subsidiary.

At the APNIC Foundation, he builds partnerships and advocates for the technologies, policies and best practices that contribute to a global, open, stable and secure Internet that is affordable and accessible to the entire Asia Pacific community.

Sonia Jorge

Founder and Executive Director, Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP)



Sonia Jorge is the Founder and Executive Director of the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP). Sonia is an experienced leader and international digital policy expert. She had successfully led global coalitions, bringing together the private sector, governments, and civil society actors from across the globe to deliver the policies needed to reduce the cost to connect and make universal meaningful connectivity a reality for everyone in global majority countries. As a policy advisor and gender equality advocate with experience in over 45 countries, she has led numerous digital policy and development projects in several regions and with international organisations, such as the World Bank, UNDP, UN Women, ITU, and for private sector companies and associations.

Sonia was recognised by apolitical as one of the World's 100 Most Influential People in Digital Government in 2019. She serves or has served as a member and expert in a number of Committees, including CGAP's Data Project, DFID's Digital Access Panel for Africa, the ITU-UN Women EQUALS Partnership, The World Economic Forum's Future of the Internet Initiative, the Broadband Commission Working Group on the Gender Digital Divide, the Advisory Committee on International Communications and Information Policy (ACICIP) Subcommittee of the U.S. State Department on ICT4D, and the EU-AU Digital Economy Task Force. She is an Independent Board Director with KaiOS Technologies, an Advisory Board member of UNESCO's Cetic.br Regional Center and a frequent speaker at international, regional and national forums.

Sonia was the co-founder and Executive Director of the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) until September 2022. She has a Masters in Public Policy from Tufts University and degrees in Economics and Business Finance from the University of Massachusetts.

Sowmya Kidambi

Director & CEO, The Barefoot College, Tilonia



Sowmya Kidambi joined as Director and CEO of the Barefoot College, Tilonia in June 2023 after 25 years of working in the area of social accountability, transparency, monitoring and evaluation and governance with a specific emphasis on social audits.

She holds a Master's Degree in Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay with a specialisation in Urban and Rural Community Development and a Diploma in Human Rights from the ISHR, Columbia University, New York. Sowmya began working with a grassroots movement, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, Rajasthan in 1998 and was part of the movement for the Right to Information and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

After 7 years of working with MKSS, she joined the Government of Andhra Pradesh to set up the first independent social audit society. She worked with the GoAP and Telangana for 18 years and for 13 years and headed the Social Audit Society. She has also worked internationally as a Technical Assistance Provider in Social Audits.

Pankaj Pachauri

Founder & Editor-in-Chief, GoNews



Pankaj Pachauri is a senior print and broadcast journalist with more than three decades of editorial and management experience in print and electronic media across three continents. He has worked in Delhi, London, Boston and Hong Kong with leading news organisations such as NDTV, BBC World Service (UK), Public Radio International (US), India Today magazine, The Sunday Observer and The Patriot newspapers.

In 2017 he launched India's first app based TV News Channel, GoNews, and turned into an entrepreneur.

His espousal of free, secular and progressive journalism as a reporter, TV anchor and editor based in South-East Asia, Europe, the United States and India has won him several national and international journalism awards.
For over two years, he worked as the Communications Adviser to the Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, assisting his office in managing national and international media. During his tenure with the Prime Minister's Office, he has designed and executed media strategy across various platforms for international events like the G20 Summits, NAM, ASEAN Summit, BRICS Summits and United Nations General Assembly.

Rakshita Swamy

Founder and Director, Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research (SAFAR)



Rakshita Swamy is the Founder and Director of SAFAR. She has worked towards advocating and institutionalising transparency, accountability and citizen participation in governance through her collaborations with Central and State Governments and Civil Society Organizations.

Her work focuses on conceptualising, demonstrating and institutionalising mechanisms that enable disclosure of information, time-bound grievance redress and social audits in the delivery of schemes and functioning of public institutions. She worked with the Ministry of Rural Development with a mandate to support State Governments in implementing social audits under the MGNREGA, and drawing institutional synergies on social audits with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. She is associated with the Right to Information and Right to Work campaigns.

She has a Masters in Social Policy and Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Bachelors in Economics from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi.

Dr. Aakansha Natani

Assistant Professor in Political Science, Human Science Research Group (HSRG), IIIT Hyderabad



Dr. Aakansha Natani is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the Human Sciences Research Centre, IIIT Hyderabad, India, where she offers courses on ‘Internet and Democracy’ and ‘AI and Human Rights’ for undergraduate engineering students. In 2023, she was a D C Pavate Visiting Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge, UK. Recently, she was awarded the Jean Monnet Module Grant by the European Commission for her project on "Digital Democracy and Data Governance in the European Union”

David Dawson

Senior Communications Coordinator, APNIC Foundation



David Dawson joined the APNIC Foundation full time in January 2022, after a part-time secondment from APNIC in 2021. David previously spent a decade in China, most of that time working as a journalist in Beijing with a particular focus on the development of China's technology sector and nascent startup culture. In addition to freelancing for a range of international publications, he served as Deputy Managing editor of a magazine and authored book chapters for one of the economy's largest publishing houses. He also advised the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on communications outreach.

In Australia, he worked for the strategic insights team at the national science agency, helping craft key reports including the national artificial intelligence ethics framework, before joining APNIC early in 2020.

David holds a BA in Communications from the University of the Sunshine Coast, and a Masters in Governance and Public Policy from the University of Queensland.

Shrikant Sinha

CEO, Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK)



Shrikant Sinha is the CEO of the Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK), where he focuses on enhancing youth employability across Telangana. Under his leadership, TASK has partnered with over 700 government degree colleges, polytechnics, and industry partners, creating more than 700,000 job opportunities for aspiring job seekers. TASK also prioritises rural skilling and job placement for girls and underserved communities. Previously, Shrikant served as CEO of NASSCOM Foundation, where he led the 'tech for good' initiative for over four years. With 34+ years of diverse experience, he has driven impactful change in the skill development and social impact sectors.

Roshan Nair

Digital Development Advisor, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



Roshan Nair serves as Digital Development Advisor in the Indo-Pacific Office of the USAID India Mission. Roshan has over 15 years of experience setting up tech-for-development projects across South Asia, building three award-winning social enterprises along the way.

Many technology projects he and his teams designed were focused on bringing information into disconnected communities in accessible ways.

Prior to joining USAID, Roshan served as a Chief Minister's Fellow with the Government of Delhi, where he advised on various aspects of tech policy, including privacy and access. Before the development sector, Roshan was a financial auditor with KPMG in Texas. He has a Bachelors and Masters in Accounting from the University of Texas at Austin.

Siddhartha Melampati

Directing Council- General, Commons Collective



Siddhartha Malempati, Directing Councilor-General of Commons Collective, is a seasoned professional with 17 years of diverse experience across Computer Science, Patent Law, and Economics. As the Directing Councilor-General of the Commons Collective, Siddhartha leads a global network of activists, researchers, and practitioners advocating for the commons as a force for social progress. An accomplished entrepreneur, he co-founded Helico Consulting, Octacomm Technologies, and Radius EduTech, pioneering solutions in cloud computing, video conferencing, and learning management.

Rajashree Joshi

Program Director, BAIF Development Research Foundation



Dr. Rajashree Joshi is the Program Director at BAIF Development Research Foundation, combining over 30 years of experience as a social scientist and development professional. With a Master's from TISS Mumbai and a PhD in Economics from the University of Pune, she has led impactful, field-focused programs in natural resource management, agro-biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and livelihood development in tribal and rural areas.

Dr. Joshi is passionate about empowering women through skill-building and enterprise development and is actively involved in transforming food systems to meet livelihoods and nutrition goals. Her expertise spans collaborations with CSR partners and renowned national and international organisations.

Mike Jensen

Internet Access Specialist



Mike Jensen is a South African ICT expert currently working as APC's internet access specialist. Mike has assisted in the establishment of internet-based communication systems in more than 40 developing countries over the last 20 years, mainly in Africa. He provides advice to international development agencies, the private sector, NGOs and governments in the formulation, management and evaluation of their Internet and telecommunication projects, ranging from national ICT policy development to international fibre and rural wireless telecommunication feasibility studies.

Ashhar Farhan

Founding Vice-President, LARC



Licensed at the age of 15 as VU2FAX and "fascinated with electronics as a child," Ashhar Farhan became interested in amateur radio after being "hooked" following a local club's demonstration at his school. Active in the amateur radio community, Farhan is the founding Vice President of the Lamakaan Amateur Radio Club (LARC). Throughout his career, Farhan has worked in the fields of internet telephony, free software, and voice codecs. An entrepreneur, Farhan has founded HF Signals, co-founded Lamakaan (a cultural centre in Hyderabad), and co-founded Exseed Space (now Satellize), which specialises in building satellites. To date, they have launched two amateur radio-carrying satellites into space. In addition to founding these companies, Farhan is an angel investor in various technology startups.

Gomer Padong

Supervising Program and Development Cooperation Specialist, ISEA



Gomer Padong serves as Supervising Programs and Development Cooperation Specialist at the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia (ISEA). He also coordinates Policy and Regulations for the Local Networks initiative with the Association for Progressive Communications and Rhizomatica. His work focuses on bridging the digital divide through sustainable, community-led solutions while advocating for inclusive Internet governance policies across Asia. Gomer brings valuable insights on community networks, digital rights, and social entrepreneurship to regional discussions.

Nitesh Bhardwaj

Founder, Aadiwasi Janjagruti



Nitesh is the Founder of Aadiwasi Janjagruti, an initiative under the Ulgulan Foundation, creating hyperlocal social awareness in the Nandurbar District of Maharashtra. It is bridging the gap between the government and its people and highlighting local issues using informational videos in local languages on government schemes. Prior to Aadiwasi Janjagruti, Nitesh worked as Project Officer, District administration, and an Associate to Member of Parliament. He is a former SBI Youth for India fellow and holds a master's degree in Communications.

Vie Reyes

Philippines Coffee Alliance



Vie Reyes is the CEO of Bote Central, leading efforts to support coffee-producing communities through technology, education, and inclusive opportunities. Bote Central produces local coffee brands, including Coffee Alamid and Basilio Coffee. As Acting President of the Philippine Coffee Alliance—a network of smallholder coffee farmers across the Philippines—she promotes a “soil to cup” business model that empowers farmers, women, and youth. Through partnerships, like the one with Forest Foundation Philippines, Vie advances sustainable coffee entrepreneurship, fostering innovation in the Philippine coffee industry with a commitment to social enterprise and community-driven development.

Ken Streutker

CEO, The MakerBox



Ken Streutker is a marketing professional with a diverse background in satellite and telecommunications. He previously worked with Thai satellite company Thaicom before taking up a role with Lao Telecommunications Public Company, where he currently serves as Marketing Manager. In addition to his full-time position, Ken is the CEO of The Makerbox Lao, the first community-driven innovation, incubation, and makerspace in Laos, dedicated to fostering creativity and entrepreneurship in the region.

Talant Sultanov

Public Advocacy Advisor, Global Digital Inlusion Partnership (GDIP)



Talant is the Policy Advocacy Advisor at the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP) and supports the Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF). He is the Chair and Co-founder of the Internet Society Kyrgyz Chapter (ISOC.KG) and a member of the UN Secretary General's Multistakeholder Advisory Group for Internet Governance.

With experience across international organisations like the World Bank and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Talant has also served in the Kyrgyz Government as Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister and Director of the Government Think Tank NISI. His career spans academia, finance, and board roles, reflecting a deep commitment to digital inclusion and governance.

Dr. Sarbani Banerjee Belur

Senior Project Executive Officer, Secretariat Head, IIT Bombay



Dr. Sarbani holds a PhD in Demography from the University of Groningen, along with a Master's in Population Studies from IIPS, Mumbai, and an MA in Sociology from the University of Hyderabad. Currently a Senior Project Research Scientist at IIT Bombay's Gram Marg project, she focuses on expanding digital access in rural India through innovative connectivity solutions like the TV White Space project. Previously a Visiting Research Fellow at IGIDR, she has also guest-lectured at IIT Bombay and TISS. Her work includes publications, book chapters, and a book on demography and social issues, with a commitment to sustainable Public-Private-Panchayat Partnerships (4-P model).

Ritu Srivastava

Program Manager, IEEE and Director



Ritu Srivastava, Director, Jadeite Solutions has over 16 years of experience specifically focusing on the ICT domain, using digital technology towards sustainable development of underprivileged communities/marginalised sections of society. She has extensively worked in areas of digital literacy, digital inclusion, and community networks and supported rural communities to build resilient and scalable bottom-up connectivity models in India.

Her research interest lies in areas of rural technologies, broadband policies, gender and access, gender and internet governance, open spectrum policies, digital literacy, and digital health and community development. She has represented India at the United Nations Human Rights Council, and United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel for Digital Cooperation, as well as an organisational representative at the Global Network Initiative.

She holds a Master's degree in Electronics & Telecommunication and an MBA degree in. IT. She is a certified digital security trainer and UN Human Rights Mechanism.

Carlos Rey-Moreno

Co-Manager, Strategy and Policy, APC



Carlos Rey-Moreno, after working in providing connectivity to remote health care centres in Latin America, has devoted the last eight years to studying, developing and supporting community networks around the world. As part of his PhD he co-founded Zenzeleni Networks, and studied the main drivers that could make a community network in rural South Africa sustainable and scalable. After obtaining his doctorate in 2015, he went and studied the common denominators across community networks in Africa, producing a seminal report on the topic, and co-organised the first five editions of the Summit on Community Networks in Africa. For the last four years, he has been with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), where he co-leads its community networks initiative, overseeing projects in Latin America, Africa and Asia. He also coordinates its policy and regulatory work to create a more enabling regulatory framework for local operators and community networks. As part of that, he has provided training to regional regulatory associations and policy makers in Africa, authored reports and written submissions to public consultations on the topic, and participated frequently as speaker and convener in internet governance and similar telecommunications policy forums.

Shivam

Uttarakhand Wireless Aid Community Network



Shivam Kutiyal, from Dharchula, Uttarakhand, holds a Mechanical Engineering degree since 2017. He has two years of experience as a Quality Engineer at DVS (MMF) and later worked as an Assistant Mechanical Engineer at BRO (GREF) for 2.5 years. Currently, Shivam serves as a District Coordinator at DEF.

Rishi Kishore

Fellow-Energy Transition and Climate Policy, Swaniti Global



Rishi Kishore is a Fellow in Energy Transition and Climate Policy at Swaniti Initiative in New Delhi and holds a master's degree in Development Studies from IIT Guwahati. With a decade of experience in policy research, he has led significant projects on Just Transition, labour markets, and the political economy of development. Rishi has been part of prominent research organisations in India, including the International Growth Center (IGC), Centre for Policy Research, and J-PAL South Asia. His expertise lies in the political economy of development and the energy economy, with a strong focus on the dynamics of India's coal sector and its potential for economic diversification. An avid writer on policy and coal sector issues, Rishi's articles have appeared on platforms like Scroll and Down to Earth.

Chinmayi Arakali

IT for Change (CSO)



Chinmayi is a seasoned communications professional with a multidisciplinary approach to her work. She has a deep-rooted passion for community engagement, having worked alongside rural women, adolescent girls, and tribal communities among others. This hands-on experience in the field shaped her understanding of social change and
storytelling. An educator and a trained filmmaker with extensive experience in community media and short documentaries, she combines her visual storytelling skills
with a strong foundation in design. Chinmayi is an alumnus of the National Institute of Design. She's a birdwatcher, loves being outdoors and is a serious film buff.

Dr. Sripath Roy Koganti

SwechaAP



Sripath Roy Koganti began as a Free Software Activist with Swecha in 2007. During college, he promoted Free Software with the EERF GLUG and later founded KLU GLUG at KL University, fostering a student community dedicated to open-source contributions. His activism with Swecha includes campaigns like Say No to Free Basics, Protect Data Privacy, and Resist Aadhaar. At KL University, he served in roles such as Associate Dean and NSS Coordinator. As General Secretary of Swecha Andhra Pradesh, he led impactful projects including computer education in government schools, community networks, digital libraries, and learning centres.

K. Mohan Raidu

CEO, Informatics India



K. Mohan Raidu is the CEO of Informatics India, a Software Development Company at Hyderabad, India. He is a Member of ICC Digital Economy Commission and its ExecComm. Mr.Raidu is the President of InternetSociety Hyderabad Chapter and Chapter Advisory Council Representative. This has enabled him to be active on ICANN WGs on ALAC, CPWG, GNSO, UASG, & be a member of APRALO, IGF, APrIGF & IIGF etc., His is the APRALO's only nomination for ChAd Council Steering Group now. He has made his Chapter join the Global Encryption Collision.Future of Internet, Workshop-Universal Acceptance for Globally Connected Internet, APrIGF 2021-HyderabadLocal Hub and Virtual Workshop on Internet Measurement are a few of events, he organized from ISoc India Hyderabad Chapter. Remote Hub of IGF and A Webinar on Community Networks are being planned. He is EXec Comm Member of CCICI (Cloud Computing Innovation Council of India) and he is handling the eGov WG there. Mr. Mohan is a Past Chair of CSI Hyderabad Chapter (Computer Society of India) and a Past RVP there. He is Member of HYSEA- Hyderabad Software Enterprises Association.

Deeksha Pande

Associate Fellow-Global Climate and Development Institute, Swaniti Global



Deeksha Pande is an Associate Fellow at the Global Climate and Development Institute, Swaniti Global. A skilled professional in Development Economics research, she brings expertise in energy transition with a focus on quantitative and qualitative data analysis, applied research methodologies, project management, stakeholder engagement, and public policy analysis. Deeksha is passionate about using data-driven insights to drive impactful decision-making in climate policy and energy transition initiatives.

Jenny Sulfath

Manager, Digital Empowerment Foundation



Jenny Sulfath, with her five years of dedication to research and advocacy in social exclusion, has made impactful strides in both academic and development sectors. Her academic grounding in Women's Studies equips her with an essential intersectional perspective for analysing and tackling social exclusion issues. Her career is marked by a focus on scrutinising policy frameworks and initiating projects that illuminate the lived experiences of those facing exclusion. During her Master's studies, Jenny conducted significant research on informal workers in the service sector, earning recognition in local publications and influencing discourse on women workers' rights in Kerala. Her time as a senior researcher at the Centre for Equity Studies led to a published book by Yoda Press, shedding light on the lives of circular migrants in Delhi. Currently, Sulfath is managing the communication team at the Digital Empowerment Foundation, Jenny ensures that research findings are accessible to a broader audience. She specialises in narrative writing, contributing to books, chapters, and online articles, and is continually seeking opportunities to advocate against social exclusion and injustice.

Narangarav Adiyasure

Cloud Academy, Ulen Tyekhnologi, Mongolia



Narangarav Adiyasure is an advocate for gender equality and empowerment in the tech industry, currently in his fourth year at Cloud Academy, Ulen Tyekhnologi, Mongolia. Her journey in advocacy began in 2021, inspired by a pivotal meeting with Jay, sparking her dedication to promoting inclusivity. Narangarav is passionate about dismantling barriers in tech, creating opportunities for underrepresented groups, and championing a diverse, equitable environment across the industry.

Akanksha Ahluwalia

Manager, Digital Empowerment Foundation



Akanksha Ahluwalia, Deputy Manager in the Comms and Media Department at Digital Empowerment Foundation, holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in English Literature from Delhi University. Her expertise spans gender studies, analysing misinformation and hate speech online, and understanding new media platforms through an intersectional lens, with a focus on development sector communication. Akanksha expertise lies in developing strategic communication approaches that leverage digital ingenuity while addressing paradoxes and nuances within new media platforms. She also leads efforts in crafting narratives and conducting workshops that empower marginalised voices and advance social causes within the digital sphere.

Prof. Vinod Pavarala

University of Hyderabad



Prof. Vinod Pavarala is the chairholder for the UNESCO Chair on Community Media at the University of Hyderabad. For over a decade, he has been one of the leading campaigners for the democratisation of airwaves in India and has played a significant role in drafting the national policy permitting community radio a space on the radio dial in the country.

As founder-President of the Community Radio Forum of India, he plays an active role in civil society's engagements with forging alternative media spaces for the marginalised, mostly rural, communities in India. His much reviewed book, co-authored with Kanchan K. Malik, Other Voices: the struggle for community radio in India (Sage, 2007) documents community-based efforts across India to carve out an alternative public sphere.

Amitabh Kumar

Co-Founder, Social & Media Matters



Amitabh Kumar is at the forefront of global expansion as the Go-to-Market leader at Contrails.ai, a startup dedicated to AI-powered trust and safety solutions. At Contrails.ai, Amitabh is scaling his vision for enhancing online safety across international borders, leveraging cutting-edge AI to safeguard digital interactions.

Amitabh spearheaded the initial Go-to-Market strategies for acclaimed online safety programs like Social Surfing and TweeSurfing. These initiatives have reached over 100,000 individuals in person across India, Nepal, and Bhutan, with workshops conducted in more than 150 cities globally. His advocacy efforts have facilitated significant partnerships with tech leaders, including engagements with Mark Zuckerberg's Meta, Jack Dorsey's Twitter and Reed Hastings Netflix, cementing his status as a leader in online safety and digital citizenship.

Dr. Saleema Razvi

Senior Research Economist,
Copenhagen Consensus Center



Dr. Saleema Razvi is a Senior Research Economist at the Copenhagen Consensus Center, where she focuses on prioritisation of policy options based on economic, social and environmental cost-benefit analyses. She has worked across the developing world in several African, Central Asian and Pacific countries. Saleema has written extensively on public health issues, non-communicable diseases, digital health, health sector regulation and growth, and the impact of liberalisation on healthcare service delivery. She has written for mainstream newspapers, including a series of columns on Health policy for LiveMint. She has earlier worked with the National Council for Applied Economic Research, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Population Foundation of India and UNICEF.

Aindrila Chatterjee

Assistant Professor, IMT
Hyderabad



Aindrila Chatterjee is an Assistant Professor at IMT Hyderabad with a research focus on the intersection of strategy and social enterprises. She explores strategies for poverty reduction in emerging economies, particularly through the deployment of indigenous enablers. Aindrila is pursuing an FPM at the Indian School of Business (ISB) and holds a Ph.D. from Jadavpur University, where her research centred on knowledge creation and transfer as social processes, the impact of organisational culture on these processes, and their influence on organisational efficiency. With 22 years of experience in the consumer electronics, information technology, and education industries, she teaches Strategic Management, Business Ethics, and Business Research Methodology to first- and second-year MBA students.

Shruti Narula

Assistant Program Manager, Digital Empowerment Foundation



Shruti Narula holds a Masters degree in Philosophy from University of Delhi.She is passionate about community development and has about 8 years of experience of working in the development sector and educational institutions. Some of the thematic areas in the social sector that she has contributed and made an impact include youth empowerment, gender equity and digital literacy. Her skillsets include project management, Networking and Collaborating with various stakeholders. Prior to DEF, she has worked with Centre for Youth, Ennovate Global, Amity University and implemented pan India programs.

Mira Swaminathan

Director, Policy Adbocacy and Communication, Broadband India Forum



Mira Swaminathan is the Director - Policy Advocacy and Communications at Broadband India Forum. Prior to this, she has worked in DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas and Centre for Internet and Society on issues pertaining to privacy, intermediary liability, AI, Digital Competition and other policy and regulatory matters. At BIF, Mira focuses on shaping technology and telecom related policies through strategic advocacy with all stakeholders - government, industry and civil society organisations.

Sooraj Kumar

Founder & Director,
Prajaahita Foundation



Sooraj Santhosh Kumar is an entrepreneur, researcher, and social worker committed to empowering people with disabilities. With a foundation in Physics and a postgraduate degree in Social Work from Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, he has dedicated his career to building sustainable solutions for marginalised communities. As the founder of Prajaahita Foundation and Voice for Inclusion Enterprise LLP, Sooraj is passionate about leading initiatives that foster inclusivity and independence.

He has been recognised as an India Inclusion Fellow in 2020, an Enable India Urban Entrepreneur in 2021, a Digital Impact Square Incubatee in 2022, an Entrepreneur in Residence at Circle Incubation 2024 and an incubatee at impact orbit 5 NSRCEL in IIM Bangalore.

Prof. Kanchan K.Malik

University of Hyderabad



Prof. Kanchan K. Malik is a Professor at the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, with over two decades of expertise in Community Media. She began her career as a journalist with The Economic Times in New Delhi before moving into academia. A Faculty Fellow with the UNESCO Chair on Community Media, Prof. Malik has contributed to research and policy advocacy for democratising airwaves in India. She teaches courses in Print Journalism, Communication Research Methods, Community Media, and Media Ethics. She has published research articles in community media, environmental communication, and women in community communication. Prof. Malik has co-authored the much-cited 'Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India' with Prof. Vinod Pavarala, with whom she has also co-edited 'Community Radio in South Asia: Reclaiming the Airwaves'. Her other co-authored books include 'Environmental Communication and Water Management in India' and the UNESCO manual 'Strengthening Gender Sensitive Practices and Programming in Community Radio'. A Fulbright-Nehru Scholar, her research focuses on empowering marginalised communities, especially women in rural areas, through innovative community media initiatives.

Bikash Khatri

Program Director, Nepal Internet Foundation



Bikash Khatri is the Program Director at the Nepal Internet Foundation, with over five years of experience managing community network projects in remote areas of Nepal. He has been instrumental in initiatives such as the Uttargaya Community Network, the Everest Community Network (Phases I and II), and the Rural Community Access to Information Society (RUCCESS) Project. His work focuses on enhancing internet connectivity and digital access for underserved communities, fostering economic development, and improving access to education and healthcare. Under his leadership, these projects have significantly advanced digital inclusion and local capacity building in Nepal's rural regions.

Avinash Kuduvalli

Online Capacity Building and Technical Specialist



Specialist at the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), where he leads online capacity-building efforts and provides technical support to APC staff. With over a decade of experience spanning digital strategy, web development, and communications consulting, he has worked in publishing, nonprofits, and community advocacy. Since 2016, Avinash has also taught at Mount Carmel College, Bangalore where he emphasises collaborative and self-directed learning. combined his practical expertise with a commitment to fostering a more inclusive, open internet.

Suruchi Kumari

Assistant Manager, Digital Empowerment Foundation



Suruchi Kumari is a researcher at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), where she focuses on digital rights, meaningful connectivity, and advocacy through multi-stakeholder engagement. With an academic background in social exclusion, inclusive policy, and geography, Suruchi's research explores urban governance and politics. At DEF, she leads research design and coordinates the creation of impact reports for projects on digital access, education, empowerment, and entrepreneurship. She holds an MPhil and PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Melina Shyaula

Team Lead, Hello World Nepal



Melina, Team Lead Nepal is a fresh graduate from the Department of Conflict, Peace and Development Studies of Tribhuvan University, Nepal. She has been involved in the development sector for the past 5 years through a number of NGOs and INGOs in Nepal. Her passion for doing something for the community and giving back to the community made her shift from her engineering background into the development sector. She aims to make society a better place for everyone.

Dave Mugerwa

Director, International Technology and Engineering, Hello World



David is a technology enthusiast with a keen interest in product and systems design, innovation and technical implementation. He has worked in education, agriculture, micro finance, micro insurance and social enterprises, principally focusing on ways in which technology can be used to improve efficiency in these fields and how data can inform operational decisions. He is always keen to devise new ways of solving problems.

Rabiraj Khadka

Tech Lead, Hello World
Nepal



Rabiraj Khadka, a professional bridging Computer Engineering and Psychology, serves as the Technology Lead for Nepal at Hello World. Facilitating Hello Hub setups in Nepal, he employs the Break-Make-Innovate approach, delivering innovative solutions to community needs. With eight years in education-technology, Rabiraj has nationally influenced curriculums and mentored Nepal's youth in advanced technologies.

Radhika Sarin

Director, GSMA



Radhika Sarin is the Director–Accelerator for the Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF) and is based in New Delhi, India. Radhika leads the WiDEF Accelerator in India, that aims to identify, fund and accelerate investment in solutions to close the gender digital divide, thereby improving women's livelihoods, economic security and resilience. Prior to this, Radhika was a Senior Manager at the GSMA Innovation Fund, engaging with startups driving digital innovation and socio-economic impact in Asia and Africa. Radhika joined the GSMA's Mobile for Development team in 2018 as a Market Engagement Manager in the Digital Utilities team, managing grants and enabling partnerships between mobile network operators and startups.

Radhika has over 11 years of experience in working across telecom, development sector consulting and driving digital innovation. Prior to the GSMA, Radhika worked at IPE Global and Vodafone UK. Radhika holds an MSc in Economics from the University of Warwick in the UK and a BA in Economics from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.

Lauren Grubbs

Lead, Gender Digital Divide Portfolio



Lauren Grubbs has been with USAID for four years in the Technology Division of the Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub. She is on the Digital Inclusion team and leads the gender digital divide portfolio. She is currently the AOR for the Women in the Digital Economy Fund and has been the Activity Manager for the WomenConnect Challenge and the Microsoft Airband Digital Inclusion project. Previously, she has worked at the US State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues to cover their technology-facilitated gender-based violence portfolio, Mercy Corps' Gender Equality and Social Inclusion team, and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine.

Upasana Hembram

Associate Program Officer, ISOC Foundation



Upasana Hembram began working with the Internet Society Foundation in April 2023 as an Associate Program Officer. In this role, I support the Research, Building Opportunities/ Leveraging Technologies (BOLT) and the Peering and Interconnection (IXP) grant programs. Hembram comes with a diverse professional background, having worked across public policy, social impact consulting, civic technology and technology policy. Most recently Hembram was endowed with the Young Leaders in Technology Policy Fellowship by Omidyar Network and University of Chicago Trust in India, where I worked with a civic tech organisation and a think tank to advocate for responsible use of public interest technologies. Prior to that she was a social impact consultant providing strategic advisory and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) support to social enterprises. Hembram undergraduate background is in Electrical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. She is passionate about building a digital future where digital and information technologies are accessible, sustainable, trustworthy, safe and inclusive to all.

Arpita Kanjilal

Senior Consultant, Digital Empowerment Foundation



Arpita's doctoral research and professional background in the Human Rights and Development Sector spans diverse areas, including linguistics, gender and sexuality, digital rights advocacy, human rights advocacy, constitutional morality, and legal reforms, informed by an understanding of marginalised position(s) within society. Her work strives for a meaningful impact across all indicators of socio-economic development, with a focus on research and policy making that account for ground realities and lived experiences of diverse communities in India. She has authored various publications, including books, policy briefs, academic papers, articles, and fact-finding reports, all aimed at advocacy-oriented dissemination. At Digital Empowerment Foundation, Arpita leads projects and programs that focus on last-mile connectivity, digital rights, and development in India.

Bharat Toto

Totopara Internet Connectivity



Bharat Toto belongs to the 'TOTO' community, an Indigenous group with only 1,648 members, residing on the fringes of Alipurduar district near the Bhutan border. Recognised by UNESCO as an endangered tribe, the Toto community remains largely unknown. Born in 1998 in Totopara, Bharat began his education at a government-aided primary school in his village. He later attended Eklavya Model School in Nagrakata, Jalpaiguri, and went on to complete both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in History from Jadavpur University.

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