



This report summarised my experience, lessons learnt, at the recently ended ICANN 49, Singapore Meeting. It also gives the way forward on my journey with ICANN and recommendations for future meetings

Mercy Moyo
ICANN Mentor Program
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ICANN REPORT

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1. Introduction

The invitation to be part of the ICANN pilot mentorship program got to me on the on the 5th of March 2014. The terms of agreement were that the program was going to be run over a 3 month period starting with attending of the Singapore meeting (22-27 March 2014) and ending with the London meeting (21 – 26 June 2014). The purpose of the Mentor program as listed in the Terms of Reference are:

- Further develop the capacity of the ICANN Civil Society community through hands on experience and a better understanding of ICANN's mandate and the Multi-stakeholder Internet Governance model;
- Utilize the proven method of fast track immersion into ICANN that the Fellowship Program already provides;
- Strengthen the future effective engagement of these representatives within ICANN by increasing their knowledge and understanding of the key issues confronting ICANN;

After agreeing to participate in the program I had a conference call with four ALAC Representatives, Mr Olivier Crépin-Leblond the ALAC Chair, Ms Heidi Heidi Ullrich, Ms Janice Douma Lange and Ms Gusella Gruber where they explained fully the expectations of the program from both parties. Mentors were to be allocated to me from ALAC Representatives who were going to guide me in the program. The next meeting was on Adobe Connect where I was introduced to my mentors Mr Tijani Ben Jemaa, Mr Philip Fomba Johnson and Mr Aziz Hilali before the ICANN 49 Meeting.

2. ICANN 49 Meeting Singapore

2.1 Face to Face Meeting with ALAC Chair

My first face to face meeting on Saturday the 22nd was with the ALAC Chair Mr Olivier Crépin-Leblond. During that meeting I also got to meet another member of the mentorship program Mr Anthony Niiganii. During the meeting Olivier gave us a brief overview of ICANN as an Organisation and how it promotes the multi stakeholder approach which intends to bring every user of the internet on board with regard to formulation of Internet policies. He advised us there was a lot to learn on ICANN and during the meeting he advised that since there will be multiple meetings happening all at once during ICANN 49 conference, he therefore advised that we choose meetings according to our interests, i.e. the areas we intended to be mainly involved in depending on where we were coming from but he indicated to us that we attend the morning and evening fellowship meetings as they were the first point of call for those people who were entering ICANN as newcomers. During this meeting we also got a chance to meet Mr Patrik Faltstrom the chair of ICANN Security and Stability Advisory Committee who gave us an overview about what they

do as the SSAC for ICANN. He encouraged us to come to the fellowship meetings to hear more about the roles of the different stakeholders in ICANN.

2.2 Other Meetings attended and highlights

Besides the main events such as the Opening Event, Public Forum, IANA Transition meeting etc., in Singapore I attended mainly the morning and afternoon fellowship meetings and the ALAC meetings as per the recommendations of the mentorship program organizers. Coming from a non for profit organization, I felt ALAC was the best place for me to be. Since this was my second ICANN meeting and the fact that I had also done some research on ICANN and mastered some of the Acronyms I understood some of the discussions without much difficulty and had to refer to the Internet for further reading when I failed to understand anything that was being discussed during the meetings.

The notable moments were mainly the Newcomer fellowship meetings managed and coordinated by Ms Janice Douma Lange, where we got a chance to meet the leaders of the various ICANN groups e.g. ALAC, NRO, ccNSO, GAC, GNSO, SSAC etc. What I liked most with the Newcomers fellowship meetings was that these meetings were a bit open and flexible. I felt I was more at the same level with the other participants who were at these meetings. Aspects on the different groups were explained in simpler terms and everyone was free to ask questions without a feeling of intimidation that is sometimes experienced during the actual committee meetings where you are surrounded by a group of individuals who are mainly experts in the various fields. The photo below shows the fellows who attended the fellowship meeting in Singapore and the photo was taken on the last fellowship meeting.

I also took interest in the ALAC meetings though I was still not clear with some aspects discussed during some of the meetings, my level of understanding had significantly developed from the time I attended my first ICANN meeting in Durban. In the ALAC meetings that I attended I developed a special interest in the Internet Accessibility Taskforce meeting. Coming from Africa and with my experience as a Trainer in Sub-Saharan Africa, I have seen that internet access is still a major challenge in many developing nations. During the meeting the taskforce presented 3 main objectives that were aimed at addressing the access barriers. The 3 main objectives discussed were:

- a) Building a culture of accessibility
- b) Increasing web accessibility; and
- c) Ensuring minimal barriers to participation and engagement with ICANN processes and practices

All three objectives touched on the issue of increasing internet accessibility to people with disabilities, an issue that is being neglected by many organizations worldwide. I guess this is so because when you don't have an inability of any nature, you sometimes develop a perfect world scenario in your mind whilst overlooking

some factors that need special attention by those who are not as quite privileged as you are.

Beside the disabled, the developing nations are also lagging behind on internet access due to a lot of barriers such as poor infrastructure, power outages, cost of internet access, low bandwidth, lack of basic ICT skills etc. The information gap between the Developed and Developing nations continue to widen. In his speech at the during the opening ceremony of the ICANN 49 Singapore meeting, the Singapore Minister of Communications and Information Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, reported that about “84% of Singapore’s households have access to broadband, mobile penetration rates stand at 156 percent. A majority of these mobile subscribers have at least a 3G connection, and 24 percent are already on to a 4G connection. In terms of business use of the Internet, 80 percent of enterprises in Singapore have broadband connectivity, with about 46 percent having a web presence”. Whilst this is the state for developed countries, for the developing countries it is quite the opposite.

I also took special interest in the ALAC meeting with the ICANN Board. The agenda Item that captured my attention most was the question on the globalization or should I say IANA transition. The At Large community wanted to know the next steps in the transition process. The body's answer to this question was that it was going to create working groups to study this function.

I also took part in the ALAC capacity building group. Coming from a developed nation and being an ICT capacity building trainer myself, I have really seen the benefits of capacity building. A lot of people have got resources such as the internet, computers, databases, mobile phones etc. at their disposal but for them to realize the value of these resources they need to have the capacity to use them, hence the importance of capacity building. I was quite thrilled with the fact that the ALAC Capacity Building working group was going to launch training webinars to train people on the various aspects on ICANN.

I also took special interest in the AFRALO/AfrICANN joint meeting. During the meeting a strategy to support the new initiatives taken by ICANN to involve all stakeholders was presented by the African community. The strategy presented involved two main initiatives namely

a) Support for ICANN outreach

This will be done through publicizing the MyICANN (<http://www.myicann.org>) page and ICANN labs and also the pledge by the AFRALO/AfrICANN to participate in debates centered on Internet Governance and in shaping the institutions that will manage Global communications in future

b) Support the ICANN’s Africa strategy

This was going to be done through four main ways i.e. flagship projects, communication, outreach activities and sponsoring of events. The Singapore meeting ended on the 28th of March but still my ICANN Journey continues.

3. Recommendations for next meeting for Newcomers

Having attended 2 ICANN meetings I recommend the following for the ICANN fellowship and mentorship programs

- ICANN newcomers get the Newcomers Guide at least a month before attending an ICANN meeting for them to be able to familiarize themselves with ICANN before the meeting
- Funds allowing ICANN Newcomers come at least 2 days before the main meeting so they can get acquainted with ICANN before the ICANN main meetings as the morning and afternoon fellowship meetings sometimes clash with the other meetings that one may be interested in attending
- The ICANN learn platform should be updated constantly
- Promote The ICANN learn platform through various ways e.g. ICANN website, ICANN Blog, ICANN twitter account
- Get the other Committees in ICANN to start mentorship programs for newcomers who are interested in the different committees

4. Next steps

Having extended my knowledge on ICANN through the Singapore meeting, I feel this is just the beginning. My learning experience needs to be further developed for me to fully immerse into ICANN therefore I propose to do engage in the following activities.

- a) Engage in more learning through the ICANN Learn platform, Newcomer's guide and ICANN Quizlet, AFRALO and through my mentors. I also intend to take part in the ICANN learning webinars that are going to be run by the ALAC Capacity Building Working Group
- b) Following the developments happening in ICANN and Internet governance through the ICANN website, www.africanncommunity.org, the ICANN Blog, ICANN twitter handle amongst many other sites
- c) Engage more people from my community in ICANN (Sub Saharan Africa). Whenever I attend a training workshop I am going to make a point that I inform people I meet on ICANN so as to get more people involved
- d) Continue updating my blog on my experience and encounters on ICANN and Internet Governance Issues

Continue watching my blog <http://mercysthoughts.blogspot.com/2014/04/my-icann-journey.html> for future actions.