



Youth IGF Nepal 2025

yIGF Nepal 2025 Report

7th October

Kathmandu, Nepal



HOSTED BY:



Open Internet
Nepal

01 PROGRAM AGENDA

Time	Session
9:30 - 10:00	Welcome & Warm-up <i>Registration, Tea-Coffee & Cookies</i>
10:00 - 11:00	Opening Ceremony: Setting the Tone for Youth-Led Digital Transformation
11:00 - 11:30	Group Photo and Tea Break
11:30 - 12:45	Opening Plenary: Banned and Beyond: Youth, Democracy, and the Future of Social Media Regulation in Nepal
12:45 – 2:00	Lunch Break and Networking
2:00 – 2:30	Spotlight Session: Youth IGF Nepal – From Grassroots to Global A look into the journey, impact, and vision of Youth IGF Nepal
2:30 – 3:30	Role Play Session: The Social Media Ban: Balancing Regulation, Freedom, and Responsibility
3:30 – 4:30	Panel Discussion: Youth Power in Internet Policymaking Exploring opportunities, challenges, and success stories
4:30- 5:00	Lighting Talk 1: “Breaking the Chain of Falsehoods” Lighting Talk 2: “Understanding the Rising Landscape of Cybercrime” Experience and Feedback Sharing:
5:00 – 5:30	Closing (and chair handovers)
Onwards	Tea/Coffee & Networking Celebrate, connect, and collaborate

02

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Internet Governance Forum (Youth IGF) Nepal 2025 was successfully convened on October 7, 2025, at Vivanta, Kathmandu, under the theme “Empowering Youth for an Open, Inclusive and Secure Internet.” Now in its fourth edition, the forum brought together over 120 participants, including youth leaders, policymakers, civil society actors, and technical experts, for a full day of dialogue, debate, and collaboration.

This year’s forum addressed pressing issues such as social media regulation, AI ethics, digital rights, cybersecurity, and the role of youth in shaping Internet policies. It also served as a strategic pre-event to major regional gatherings like APSIG, APriGF, and Youth IGF Asia Pacific, helping prepare Nepal’s youth for meaningful engagement in global digital governance.

The event featured remarks from prominent figures in the Internet governance community, including Anja Genjo (UN IGF Secretariat), Amrita Choudhury (APriGF Chair), Babu Ram Aryal (APSIG Chair), Sagarika Wickramasekara (Internet Society), and Gunela Astbrink (IGF MAG Member).

The forum was hosted by Open Internet Nepal (Internet Society Nepal Chapter) and supported by Internet Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA), UNESCO Office in Kathmandu, Internet Society Youth Standing Group, APNIC, ICANN, Internet Governance Institute, Worldlink, Nepal Internet Exchange (NPIX), Imperial Law Associates, Insight Technology, Byte Code Developers, and Digital Rights Nepal.



03

OPENING CEREMONY: SETTING THE TONE FOR YOUTH-LED DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



The Opening Ceremony, chaired by Ananda Gautam, set a powerful tone for the day, celebrating youth leadership in digital governance. The session featured inspiring remarks from national and international leaders, emphasizing the importance of youth participation, ethical digital transformation, and multistakeholder collaboration.

- Ashirwad Tripathy reaffirmed Open Internet Nepal's commitment and called for youth engagement across all layers of the internet ecosystem.
- Jaco du Toit introduced the ROAM-X principles (Rights, Openness, Accessibility, Multistakeholderism, Cross-barrier inclusivity), framing the internet as a human right and youth as co-creators of its future.
- Deepa Bhattarai reflected on the origins of Youth IGF Nepal and encouraged youth to lead the movement forward.
- Sagarika Wickramasekara shared her journey from youth advocacy to leadership, highlighting opportunities within the Internet Society.
- Baburam Aryal likened the internet to water, provided a historical overview of internet governance, and announced fellowships for APSIG 2025.



Video messages from:

- Anja Genjo (UN IGF Secretariat) praised Nepal's youth leadership and encouraged global engagement ahead of WSIS+20.
- Amrita Choudhury (Chair, APrIGF) commended the organizing team and emphasized youth voices in shaping the future of internet governance.

Together, these voices underscored the global relevance of Nepal's youth-led digital governance efforts and inspired participants to actively shape a fair, inclusive, and rights-based digital future.

04

OPENING PLENARY: THE SOCIAL MEDIA BAN - BALANCING REGULATION, FREEDOM, AND RESPONSIBILITY

Moderated by Sadichchha Silwal, the Opening Plenary brought together diverse voices to critically examine Nepal's evolving approach to social media regulation. Panelists included:

- Hon. Padam Pariyar (MP, National Assembly)
- Nirjana Sharma (UNESCO)
- Santosh Sigdel (Digital Rights Nepal)

The discussion centered on the Directive for Managing the Use of Social Media, 2023, the TikTok ban, and the September 4 shutdown of 26 platforms including Facebook and Twitter—actions that sparked youth-led protests and raised serious concerns about democratic accountability.



Key Insights:

- Padam Pariyar acknowledged governmental overreach and the lack of youth and civil society engagement. He called for bridging generational gaps in policymaking and empowering youth as informed advocates.
- Nirjana Sharma criticized the absence of multistakeholder consultation, urging alignment with UNESCO's ROAM-X principles and highlighting Nepal's participation in ROAM-X assessments.
- Santosh Sigdel warned against tokenistic engagement and emphasized that bans should be a last resort. He advocated for transparent regulation, independent oversight, and meaningful civil society involvement.

Shared Concerns:

- Lack of accountability, transparency, and appeal mechanisms in both government and platform actions.
- The need for proportionality in regulatory responses to avoid undermining democratic values.
- Urgent call to institutionalize youth voices in policymaking—not just as consultants but as structural participants.
- Emphasis on data protection, non-discriminatory policies, and user safety as foundational principles for future digital governance in Nepal.



05



SPOTLIGHT SESSION: YOUTH IGF NEPAL – FROM GRASSROOTS TO GLOBAL

This spotlight session, delivered by Ananda Gautam, Chair of Youth IGF Nepal, offered a reflective and forward-looking narrative on the journey, impact, and vision of the Youth IGF movement in Nepal.

Mr. Gautam began by tracing the evolution of the Internet and its governance, highlighting key milestones such as the WSIS process, the IANA transition, and the emergence of ICANN as the largest multistakeholder body in the Internet governance ecosystem. He emphasized how these developments laid the foundation for the multistakeholder model, which now underpins global digital policy frameworks.

He also contextualized the session within the WSIS+20 review process and the upcoming Global Digital Compact (GDC), encouraging participants to explore these global initiatives as part of their digital advocacy journey.

The session then shifted to the Nepali context, where Mr. Gautam shared the story of how Youth IGF Nepal was founded, its recognition by the UN IGF Secretariat, and its evolution into a nationally significant platform for youth engagement in digital governance. He highlighted the forum's role in building capacity, fostering dialogue, and connecting Nepali youth to regional and global Internet governance spaces.

Concluding the session, Mr. Gautam outlined various opportunities available for youth in the Internet governance community, including fellowships, regional forums, policy schools, and leadership programs. He encouraged participants to stay engaged, build networks, and contribute meaningfully to shaping the future of the Internet.

06

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ROLE PLAY SESSION

Facilitated by Nimesh Balami, this interactive session engaged participants in a dynamic role-play exercise simulating real-world digital policy debates. Participants were divided into stakeholder groups—government, law enforcement, private sector, civil society, and citizens (end users)—to deliberate on the rationale, implications, and challenges of social media regulation in Nepal.

Key Themes Explored:

- Cybercrime and online safety
- Freedom of expression
- Regulatory motivations and consequences

The simulation encouraged participants to step into the perspectives of different actors, fostering empathy and deeper understanding of the tensions between protecting users and preserving digital rights.

Insights & Outcomes:

- Effective regulation must be inclusive, transparent, and rights-based.
- Blanket bans risk undermining fundamental freedoms and democratic values.
- Real-world parallels such as the recent social media ban, the proposed Social Media Bill, and public protests made the exercise timely and impactful.
- Participants agreed that collaborative governance is essential for sustainable digital policy frameworks.

This session helped youth connect policy theory to practice, reinforcing the importance of multi-stakeholder dialogue in shaping Nepal's digital future.



07

PANEL DISCUSSION: YOUTH POWER IN INTERNET POLICYMAKING

Moderated by Suvechchha Chapagain, this session featured Nhasala Joshi, Pawan Acharya, and Kabita Rai, who explored the structural barriers and opportunities for youth engagement in shaping Nepal's digital future.

Key Insights:

- Nhasala Joshi questioned the depth of youth involvement in digital policymaking, especially in rural areas. She advocated for:
 - Early-stage multistakeholder engagement.
 - Advisory mechanisms to structurally include youth.
 - Transparent policymaking with clear communication of intent behind bills.
- Pawan Acharya highlighted the demographic imbalance:
 - Youth make up 56% of Nepal's population but hold only 3.2% of decision-making roles.
 - He called for institutional access, civic tools like petitions, and youth involvement at both federal and local levels.
 - Encouraged youth to become watchdogs and understand political processes.
- Kabita Rai brought an intersectional perspective:
 - Challenged the assumption that youth are a homogeneous group.
 - Raised concerns about representation of marginalized identities (Madhesi, Dalit, gender-diverse youth).
 - Emphasized the need for safe civic spaces, inclusive policymaking, and platforms for ideological development.

Collective Takeaways:

- Youth participation must be structural, not symbolic.
- Education on internet governance is essential.
- Inclusive representation and collaborative frameworks are key to meaningful youth engagement.
- Civic empowerment should begin early and be sustained through practical, action-oriented platforms.



08

LIGHTNING TALKS

The Lightning Talks session featured two engaging presentations that addressed critical aspects of digital safety and governance.

1. "Breaking the Chain of Falsehoods", was delivered by Pravin Bhatta
2. "Understanding the Rising Landscape of Cybercrime", was presented by Suraj Ray

The first talk, titled "Breaking the Chain of Falsehoods", was delivered by Pravin Bhatta from NepalFactCheck.org. He introduced participants to the concepts of misinformation, disinformation, and misinformation, explaining their differences and why false narratives continue to thrive on social media despite fact-checking efforts. Pravin emphasized the importance of digital hygiene and user responsibility in curbing the spread of harmful content. He shared practical verification techniques such as lateral reading, reverse image search, and advanced Google search methods, reinforcing the message: "Check the post before you share it." This talk aligned with the broader theme of digital well-being and highlighted how informed online behavior can build collective resilience against misinformation.



“BREAKING THE CHAIN OF FALSEHOODS”, DELIVERED BY PRAVIN BHATTA

The second talk, “Understanding the Rising Landscape of Cybercrime”, was presented by Suraj Ray. He explored the increasing prevalence of cybercrime in Nepal, driven by rapid digital adoption and expanding online activity. Using recent data and case examples, Suraj illustrated how social media and digital platforms have become avenues for fraud, exploitation, and other cyber threats. He introduced Professor Jack M. Balkin’s Internet Regulation Framework, which outlines the roles of the state, private platforms, and the public in maintaining a safe digital ecosystem. Suraj also discussed the challenges faced by law enforcement, including the use of VPNs, encrypted communications, and legal ambiguities in prosecuting minor offenses. He concluded by stressing that cybercrime prevention begins with awareness and that users must take an active role in safeguarding themselves through media literacy and responsible online practices.



“UNDERSTANDING THE RISING LANDSCAPE OF CYBERCRIME”, PRESENTED BY SURAJ RAY



“EXPERIENCE AND FEEDBACK SHARING” – SAMEER GAHLOT

Mr. Sameer Gahlot delivered an engaging lightning talk reflecting on his extensive involvement in Internet Governance, with a strong focus on empowering young people to participate in digital policy discussions. He highlighted the importance of utilizing regional platforms and community spaces to encourage meaningful youth engagement in Internet governance processes. Mr. Gahlot shared practical insights on how regional forums, local initiatives, and youth-led dialogues can serve as effective entry points for young individuals to contribute to global digital policy debates. He also emphasized the need for an inclusive, responsible, and rights-respecting digital future, inspiring participants to actively explore opportunities within regional and international Internet governance ecosystems.

09

CLOSING (AND CHAIR HANDOVERS)

In the program's closing remarks, outgoing Chair Ananda Gautam reflected on the remarkable journey of Youth IGF Nepal, emphasizing the collective efforts made toward empowering young voices in Internet governance. He highlighted that the Internet continues to be a driving force of innovation, inclusion, and lifelong learning in today's digital era.

As part of the organizational transition, Ananda Gautam officially passed the chairmanship to Surendra Tiwari, who was elected as the new Chair of Youth IGF Nepal. Nimesh Balami was elected as the new Vice Chair, joining Sanjina Kshetri, who continues in her role as Vice Chair. The newly formed leadership team expressed their commitment to strengthening youth participation in Internet governance, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering meaningful youth engagement at both national and global levels.

With a renewed vision and continued enthusiasm, Youth IGF Nepal will move forward in its mission to ensure inclusive access, capacity building, and youth involvement in shaping Internet policy discussions.



Newly Elected Chair :
Surendra Tiwari



Newly Elected Vice Chair :
Nimesh Balami

HOST



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Youth IGF Nepal 2026

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

