Event Report

Youth IGF
Nepal
2024

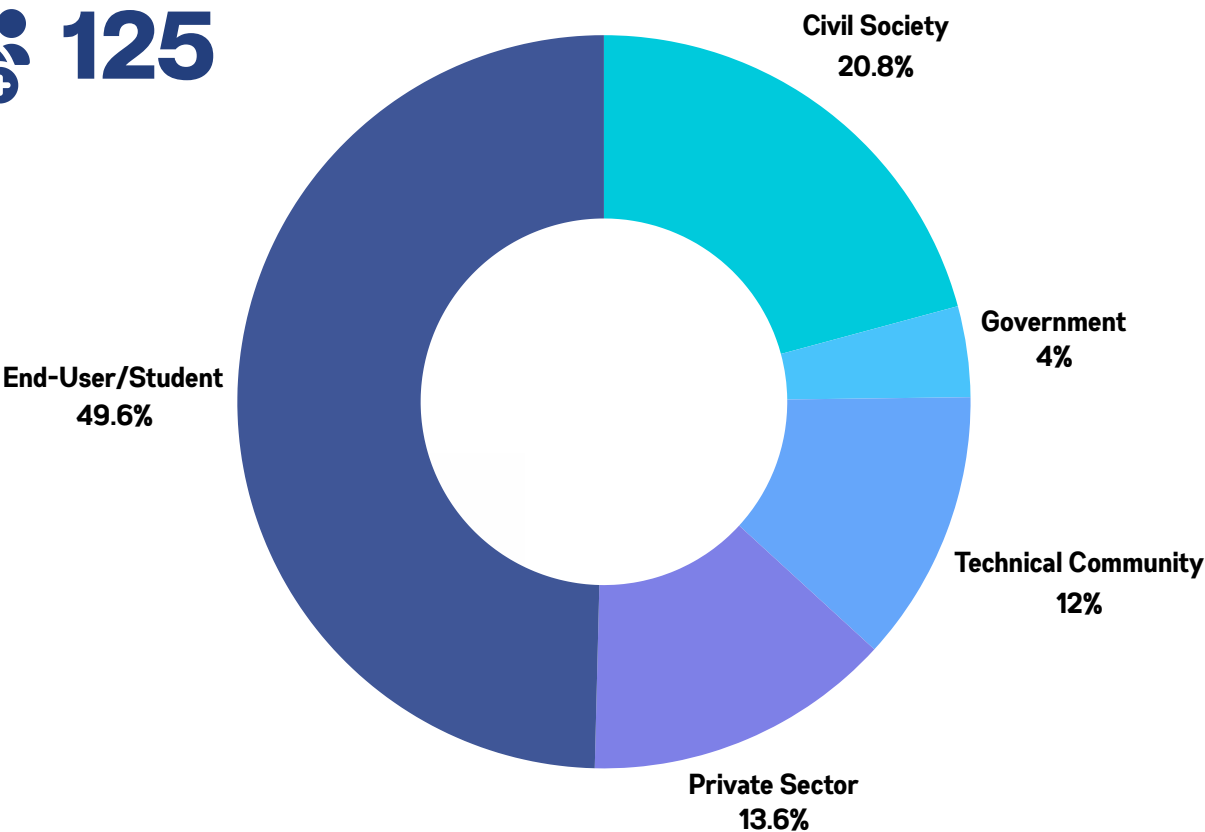# HIGHLIGHTS 2024

Total Participants

125

Stakeholders

- Civil Society 20.8%
- Government 4%
- Technical Community 12%
- Private Sector 13.6%
- End-User/Student 49.6%

Gender

69   51

05

Male	51
Female	69
Non-Binary	05

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INTRODUCTION

The Youth Internet Governance Forum (youth IGF) Nepal is a youth initiative that was formally recognised by the United Nations Internet Governance Forum Secretariat in December 2021. Its primary goal is to encourage and engage young people in substantive discussions about Internet governance.

youth IGF Nepal organises annual multi-stakeholder open forums to allow young people to exchange experiences, learn about Internet governance issues, and amplify their voices in national and international policy discussions.

This platform also helps to develop the capacity of youth from various stakeholder groups in emerging Internet governance issues such as the Digital Divide, Universal Access, AI Governance, Online Freedom of Expression, and others.

YOUTH IGF 2024

The Youth IGF Nepal 2024 event was organised in Kathmandu, Nepal, at Hotel Himalaya on September 14. The event was scheduled in 14 sessions, from registration to the closing ceremony.

The Internet Society Nepal chapter hosted the event, while the National Youth Council was a policy partner and collaborator for this event. Key supporters included the Internet Society Foundation, Internet Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA), Internet Society Youth Standing Group, and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

Fellowships were supported by the Asia Pacific Network Information Center (APNIC), while Ai4Justice and the Internet Society Nepal Chapter hosted the reception. Additional community partners included Nepal Internet Exchange, Asian E-Learning, Imperial Law Associates, Tekkon Technologies, Insight Technology, Educating Nepal, Digital Rights Nepal, and Nepal Internet Foundation.

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PROGRAM AGENDA

08:30 - 09:30 - Registration and Networking

09:30 - 11:30 - Opening Plenary

11:30 - 11:45 - Coffee Break

11:45 - 12:30 - Youth and Multistakeholderism: Opportunities for Youth in the Internet Governance Landscape

12:30 - 12:45 - Flash Talk: AI Governance

12:45 - 13:30 - Lunch

13:30 - 14:30 - Role Play: Platform Governance (Organized by the Team)

14:30 - 14:45 - Flash Talk: Misinformation vs. Disinformation

14:45 - 16:00 - Round Table Discussion: Promoting the Role of Youth in ICT Policy Discourses with MPs and Policy Makers

16:00 - 16:15 - Break

16:15 - 16:45 - Experience Sharing by Fellows and Other Participants in the IG Space

16:45 - 17:00 - Flash Talk: Data Protection and Privacy Laws in Nepal

17:00 - 18:00 - Closing Plenary: The Digital Landscape of Nepal – Challenges and Way Forward

18:00 - 18:30 - Closing Remarks

18:30 Onwards - Reception

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OPENING PLENARY

In the first plenary discussion on Background about Internet Governance and Youth IGF Nepal, the stage was set by Hempal Shrestha. It was followed by the panel discussion, which was moderated by Mr. Ashirwad Tripathy. It included guests such as Mr. Surendra Basnet, Vice Chair, National Youth Council; Hon. Nim Giri, MP, Lumbini Provincial Assembly; Whip, Nepali Congress; Mr. Birendra Kumar Mishra, Nepal IGF Chair; Mr. Pradip Khatiwada, Founder Youth Innovation Lab; and Ms. Deepa Bhattarai, Immediate Past Chair, Youth IGF Nepal.

The session was filled with enriching discussion on the internet and its use. The participants posed pressing questions, which were answered by the panellists.

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> " *"it is essential that we address the current looming threats on the internet, including fragmentation, security concerns, privacy, gender-based violence and cybercrime, to enjoy the internet as the transformative good in our lives"* "
>
> **- AMRITA CHOUDHARY**

> " *"It is very critical that we make it accessible, affordable, safe, secure and resilient for all, regardless of wherever we are, regardless of geographic location and any other criteria,"* "
>
> **- ANJA GENGO**

> " *"We are a little slow to catch up with the rapid growth of the internet, but there is plenty of potential for Nepali youth to take advantage of in the future,"* "
>
> **- PRADIP KHATIWADA**

The first plenary discussion on Internet Governance and Youth IGF Nepal was initiated by Hempal Shrestha and moderated by Ashirwad Tripathy, featuring a panel of notable guests including Surendra Basnet, Vice Chair of the National Youth Council, and Nima Giri, MP of Lumbini Provincial Assembly. The session focused on the importance of youth participation in internet governance, with Basnet emphasizing its necessity in a rapidly changing technological landscape. Giri highlighted the need for youth to understand both digital tools and geography for effective governance.

Armita Choudhary, Chair of the Asia Pacific Regional IGF, and Anja Genjo from the UN IGF Secretariat also addressed the audience, underscoring the theme "Empowering Youths for an Open, Inclusive, and Secure Internet." Choudhary pointed out the critical issues facing the internet today, such as security, privacy, and cybercrime, while advocating for multistakeholder collaboration in policy-making.

The panelists discussed various topics relevant to both Nepal and globally, including the digital divide and AI governance. They encouraged youth engagement in upcoming discussions at the IGF in Riyadh and emphasized the importance of including diverse voices in shaping internet policies. Overall, the session reinforced the vital role of youth in navigating and influencing internet governance.

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YOUTH AND MULTISTAKEHOLDERISM: OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE LANDSCAPE

The session was moderated by Mr. Samik Kharel, and the guests included Mr. Samiran Gupta (Vice President, Managing Director APAC, ICANN), Mr. Dibya Khatiwada (Community Trainer, APNIC) and Ms. Upasana Hembram (Associate Program Officer, ISOC Foundation).

The panel discussed the impact of internet governance and the growing development of artificial intelligence. According to Upasana, Internet governance is an uphill task.

Samiran Gupta highlighted that the multistakeholder model could be used to its full potential if young people came in and accelerated the process by merging knowledge and skills. He stated that multistakeholderism allows young people to be innovative and find better solutions.

Similarly, Upasana emphasised that youth bring a fresh perspective, which could aid in reaching consensus among the various stakeholders for a brighter future. What would a multistakeholder model look like? We do not know. But it for sure can bring some structure for better execution, added Samiran. However, to thrive, it is critical to understand how to use it more effectively and prepare for it.

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> "One of the most exciting aspects of today's youth is their active participation in the international community through a variety of means available on the internet"
> **- UPASANA HEMBRAM**

> "Before you get to grab opportunities , You have to have at least basic understanding and the uniqueness of internet governance model"
> **- SAMIRAN GUPTA**

Dibya Khatiwada, a community trainer, presenting his slides, said that it is crucial that everyone understands the technologies. He also said that it is very crucial that we have knowledge of segregating wrongs and rights on the internet, for which we need to devote our time to gain knowledge or participate in training like yIGF to enhance technological skills.

He also shared his experience and knowledge on global IP allocation. He also talked about IPv6 end users by region and in the context of Nepal. He also introduced the APNIC fellowship programs. He concluded with his remarks, saying everyone talks about policies, but it's very essential that we understand the technological side as we are dealing with it. "So as users of the internet, all of us should understand the technologies. We need not go into details; we just need to understand the basic things to be safe from hacking, malware, and fishing, he said.

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FLASH TALK: AI AND GOVERNANCE

Pranjal Timalsina, co-founder of Synapse Technologies, delivered a flash talk on AI and governance, discussing the dual nature of AI's impact on employment and efficiency. He emphasized that while some individuals effectively leverage AI to enhance productivity, others remain AI-illiterate and require significant support. Timalsina posed critical questions about trust in AI and humans, highlighting that past fatalities were primarily caused by human error rather than AI.He stressed the need for robust internet governance to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies, such as ChatGPT. Timalsina advocated for ongoing dialogue through conferences and debates to bridge the gap between technological experts and policymakers. Participants raised concerns about AI's efficiency and sustainability, noting that while AI can be energy-intensive, countries like Nepal could benefit from their unique energy resources. He concluded by underscoring the importance of data security and compliance with agreements before using AI applications.

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ROLE PLAY: PLATFORM GOVERNANCE (BY ORGANIZING TEAM)

The "Role Play: Platform Governance" session, led by the organizing team, engaged participants in a simulated discussion about governance issues related to the JHAMAJHAM app. Participants were divided into four groups: business, civil society, technical community, and government. Each group had ten minutes to discuss their assigned topics, focusing on aspects such as business ideas, social issues, technological challenges, and government agendas.During the presentations, the technical community highlighted data storage and multilingual support, while the government group raised privacy concerns regarding data deletion and the need for companies to register in Nepal for tax transparency. Civil society emphasized the importance of citizen safety and proposed solutions to combat misinformation. The session concluded with further discussions on content moderation and privacy policies, showcasing a collaborative effort to address key governance challenges in the digital landscape.

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FLASH TALK: MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

The discussion focused on misinformation and disinformation. It was presented by Rastra Bimochan Timals. He also described malinformation and helped the participants in distinguishing among the misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. He briefed the participants on how to combat misinformation while maintaining free speech. He also emphasised the importance of being aware of legal codes governing technologies and information when dealing with them, such as the Electronic Transaction Act.

He also clarified the participants, referring to global trends like X (formerly Twitter) and Telegram. He emphasised the importance of enacting legislation to penalise those who spread misinformation.

PROMOTING YOUTH'S ROLE IN ICT POLICY DISCOURSE ROUND TABLE WITH MPS AND POLICYMAKERS:

The session on the Internet Governance Landscape in Nepal featured presentations by: **Aananda Gautam, Babu Ram Aryal, and Lawmaker Hon. Pratima Gautam.**

They discussed the challenges and opportunities arising from increasing technology use. Gautam emphasized the importance of understanding the broader internet ecosystem and highlighted principles such as openness, security, and net neutrality. He also addressed key topics including access, privacy, freedom of expression, and the Social Media (Usage and Regulation) Bill. Aryal and Gautam pointed out that young people, despite being the largest internet users, are often excluded from policy development. They called for more inclusive multi-stakeholder discussions and emphasized the need for lawmakers to consult with youth and experts before passing legislation. The discussion underscored the importance of youth entrepreneurship in technology sectors and the necessity of addressing both opportunities and challenges presented by emerging technologies like AI. Lawmaker Gautam committed to organizing a roundtable with young people to ensure their voices are heard in future policy-making processes.

DIGITAL LANDSCAPE OF NEPAL: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

The final session of the Youth IGF Nepal 2024, titled "Digital Landscape of Nepal: Challenges and Way Forward," was moderated by Usha Pandey, Head of Legal and Corporate Affairs at Daraz Nepal. The panel featured prominent speakers including MP Padam Giri, Dr. Dila Sangroula, Dipesh Bista, Tara Nath Dahal, and Nagesh Badu. Together, they explored the complexities of Nepal's digital landscape and emphasized that digitization encompasses much more than just the internet and social media.

The panelists collectively argued that the internet serves as a conduit for various sectors such as banking, agriculture, and education, with the overarching goal being the creation of a "Digital Nepal." However, they noted that the sector is expanding at an unsustainable rate, hindered by outdated laws and a lack of political prioritization. Padam Giri highlighted that while there are over 123 networks in Nepal, many legislative acts remain only drafted and not implemented. He pointed out that this stagnation is largely due to outdated mindsets among policymakers and ongoing political instability.

Dr. Dila Sangroula stressed that Nepal is falling behind in leveraging technology effectively. She called for increased focus on artificial intelligence and measures to combat corruption. Sangroula advocated for the integration of technology into various sectors, emphasizing the need for advancements in telemedicine and agriculture. She also highlighted the importance of open government practices and state transparency, particularly regarding budget information.

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Nagesh Badu, an IT and e-governance specialist at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, discussed his work on the Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP). He emphasized that e-governance is crucial for strengthening intergovernmental connections and improving service delivery across local bodies. Badu pointed out that while significant progress has been made in appointing IT officers to assist with digitalization efforts, challenges remain regarding infrastructure quality and sustainability.

The discussion also touched on critical issues such as poor internet connectivity and electricity supply. Badu argued that integrating services rather than having them scattered could significantly improve both speed and quality. He noted a lack of awareness at the policy level regarding digital issues, which hampers effective governance.

Dipesh Bista, Chief Executive Officer of the e-governance commission, shared insights about recent restructuring efforts within the commission. He explained that the commission aims to connect various government systems to improve overall service delivery. Bista highlighted a blueprint focused on ecosystem development rather than just application-based solutions. He referenced successful models from other countries, such as Estonia's X-road data exchange platform, which has significantly improved efficiency in public services.

Tara Nath Dahal discussed the historical context of internet development in Nepal and emphasized the importance of open government in maximizing technological benefits for citizens. He pointed out that while there is progress in digital identity initiatives, a comprehensive data exchange layer is still lacking.

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The session concluded with an interactive Q&A segment where participants raised questions about various topics related to agriculture, IT, and digitalization. The panelists responded thoughtfully to these inquiries, reinforcing the need for inclusive policymaking processes that prioritize youth engagement.

Overall, this session underscored the critical challenges facing Nepal's digital landscape while also highlighting opportunities for growth through collaboration among stakeholders. The emphasis on open government practices, technological integration across sectors, and active youth participation in policymaking emerged as key themes for moving forward in Nepal's digital transformation journey.

CLOSING CEREMONY

In the program's closing remarks, Ananda Gautam, chair of the youth IGF Nepal, stated that the Internet has become an inevitable part of our lives, and in this digital era where the Internet is the medium of all our activities, Internet governance and related subjects of lifelong learning. With the rapid development of information technology and the Internet, to ensure the access and participation of the youth in addressing the challenges and opportunities it creates and for the access and capacity development of the youth at the policy-making level of Internet governance, youth IGF Nepal will continue and call on all stakeholders to join the campaign to achieve this objective.

Similarly, **Sanjina Kshetri, the newly elected vice president, was presented with her position. She was unanimously elected.**

Congratulations

**ELECTED VICE CHAIR –
SANJINA KSHETRI**

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FELLOWS EXPERIENCES

Rahul Mahato: "Participating in the yIGF was a transformative experience for me, both personally and professionally. The forum brought together diverse young leaders from across the globe, allowing us to exchange ideas on pressing issues related to internet governance, digital inclusion, and safety. One of the most important takeaways was learning about online safety and its impact on mental health for vulnerable populations. This experience greatly aligned with my work in adolescent advocacy in Nepal and equipped me with practical strategies to implement in my community initiatives."

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FELLOWS EXPERIENCES

Dev Raj Pariyar: "My name is Dev Raj Pariyar, and I currently serve as a Human Rights Officer at the National Human Rights Commission, Nepal. Participating in the one-day workshop as a YIGF Nepal fellow was an enriching experience. The event featured industry experts who shared insights on Internet governance and the role of youth in shaping ICT policy. Engaging in discussions with MPs and policymakers about promoting youth involvement in ICT policy was particularly inspiring. This fellowship has enhanced my understanding of digital rights and sharpened my skills in multi-stakeholder negotiation. I aim to apply what I've learned to promote inclusive ICT policies and inspire others to engage in the dialogue on digital rights."

Mangita Nepali: "Participating as a Fellow in the Youth Internet Governance Forum (yIGF) Nepal was transformative. The energy and passion of my fellow participants struck me from the start, as we discussed pressing issues like the Digital Divide and AI Governance. The capacity-building workshops equipped me with knowledge on policy frameworks and advocacy, deepening my understanding of internet governance. One key takeaway was the emphasis on amplifying youth voices in discussions, which empowered me to articulate my views meaningfully. Networking with peers and mentors has been invaluable for my advocacy work, and I left with a renewed commitment to championing digital equity."

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FELLOWS EXPERIENCES

Namuna Sharma: "Becoming a Youth IGF Nepal 2024 Fellow was unforgettable. The event at Hotel Himalaya was well-organized, featuring insightful sessions on internet governance and combating misinformation. Engaging with experts and policymakers provided invaluable knowledge on how youth can shape Nepal's digital future. The role-play session, where our team represented civil society, allowed us to apply what we learned practically. I left with a deeper appreciation for the complexities of ICT policies and a motivation to contribute to creating a secure and inclusive digital environment for all." These reflections capture the fellows' experiences and insights gained from their participation in yIGF Nepal.

Yadav Singh Dhami: "The fellowship at Youth IGF Nepal 2024 significantly enhanced my understanding of internet governance through immersive learning experiences and engagement with diverse stakeholders. I actively participated in discussions on internet governance, digital rights, cybersecurity, AI, and freedom of expression. Key takeaways included in-depth learning opportunities through various sessions that explored critical topics, emphasizing a multistakeholder approach that brought together individuals from civil society, government, academia, and the private sector. This diversity fostered rich discussions and helped me understand the complexities of decision-making processes shaping internet policies. The fellowship empowered me to voice my opinions on matters affecting youth in Nepal and provided practical insights into current trends in internet governance. Overall, this transformative experience prepared me to actively participate and advocate for shaping Nepal's digital future."

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FELLOWS EXPERIENCES

Samir Pokhrel: "Attending the Youth Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Nepal **2024** was transformative for me as a young policy enthusiast and computing systems engineering student. The event provided a dynamic platform to engage with key stakeholders, including parliamentarians and policymakers. Sessions on multistakeholderism and the role of youth in internet governance deepened my understanding of how diverse perspectives shape policy decisions. The role-play on platform governance was particularly insightful, offering a hands-on approach to tackling real-world challenges in digital policymaking. This experience solidified my passion for public policy at the intersection of technology and governance and inspired me to continue contributing to ICT policy discourse in Nepal." These reflections capture the fellows' insights and experiences gained from their participation in yIGF Nepal **2024**.

Gurmeet Kaur: "As an active explorer and learner, I embrace opportunities that enrich my life with knowledge. The yIGF platform surrounded me with incredible personalities dedicated to bringing change through small initiatives. I became aware of how the internet impacts our lives and the importance of using it responsibly. This experience has made me more conscious of my online activities and motivated me to share knowledge about being smart and safe users."

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Internet governance is a reality and is rapidly expanding.
2. It is critical for developing countries like Nepal to adapt to it.
3. Multistakeholderism requires more discussion and attention for implementation.
4. Legislation is required to moderate and regulate the technological community and its development for the benefit of citizens.
5. Both illiterate and literate people continue to face misinformation and disinformation challenges.
6. Open government is essential for making effective use of technology and incorporating it into all of the services provided by the government to its citizens.
7. Media literacy and digital literacy must be emphasised.
8. Youth engagement is critical in policymaking.
9. Conferences and seminars such as youth IGF to address the challenges posed by technology in all sectors of society.

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SEE YOU NEXT YEAR