A Multi-Stakeholder Model in ICT Policymaking:

Case Study from the Philippines

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Internet Society

The multistakeholder model, an established approach for Internet governance, lends itself to ideal use in policymaking for the digital era--an environment that is increasingly made up of various actors that have a direct stake in how ICTs develop.

As policymakers and regulators cope with the breakneck speed of technological advancement, the approach is viewed by a growing number of governments as an innovative means of ensuring that public policies remain forward-thinking, inclusive, and suited to the needs of a steadily interconnected world.

Over the last two decades, multistakeholder principles have been adopted in global and regional governance fora, including the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the African Union and the Group of 20, and are now reflected in almost every institutional agreement on ICTs. But while it is more widely espoused, the practice of multistakeholder governance, especially by national governments, has yet to be fully documented.

In this case study, we detail how the Philippines, a populous and emerging economy in the Asia Pacific Region, has localised the approach to reach both important and difficult decisions as it developed its National ICT Ecosystem Framework, a roadmap that sets out the future direction of ICT development in the country.

About NICTEF

The Philippines' Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), with support from the Internet Society, developed the National ICT Ecosystem Framework (NICTEF) – a successor to the Philippine Digital Strategy 2011-2016.

A multi-stakeholder approach was adopted, and over a one-year period, DICT engaged with an array of stakeholders throughout the country, encouraging them to set the goals and agenda for the nation's new digital strategy.

The NICTEF is now an authoritative reference that will guide the development of the Philippines' digital ecosystem to enable all sectors to benefit from the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs). The NICTEF also serves as a roadmap for the harmonization and coordination of national ICT plans, programmes and projects. It is designed as a living document that will be periodically reviewed and updated together with multiple stakeholders.

Find out more about the NICTEF at ictecosystem.org.ph

What is a Multi-Stakeholder Approach?

There is no single model for the multi-stakeholder process. Instead, the approach can be considered a [toolbox of practices](#) that individuals and organizations from different sectors can use to share ideas and develop consensus-based strategies and policies.[1]

> "Through NICTEF… we are showing the Asia-Pacific region how vital participatory governance is in this part of the world. The strong sense of collaboration focused on bridging the digital gap makes NICTEF a truly living document."
> ~ Eliseo Rio Jr., Acting Secretary, DICT

How was NICTEF developed?

The development of NICTEF can be divided into four stages:

1. Preliminary activities
2. Focused group discussions
3. Regional consultations
4. Online public survey

Government agencies in the Philippines are mandated by law to hold open consultations as a means of improving transparency and encouraging public involvement in the policymaking process. This includes issuing a public notice for comments on the draft policy--announced through government websites and social media pages--and conducting consultations to gather input from interested and affected groups.

In developing NICTEF, the Department of ICT[2] took the consultation process further in several ways. Recognising the broad scope of the Framework, the DICT sought to solicit

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[1] Internet Society, "Internet Governance – Why the Multistakeholder Approach Works," April 26, 2016, https://www.internetsociety.org/resources/doc/2016/internet-governance-why-the-multistakeholder-approach-works/.

[2] The DICT worked with the Internet Society to carry out multistakeholder activities for NICTEF. The partnership was formalised through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in March 2018

About DICT

The DICT was established through Republic Act No. 10844 in 2016, and is the primary policymaking, planning, coordinating and implementing body for ICT use and development in the Philippines. Find out more about the DICT at dict.gov.ph/.

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10 Key Takeaways

1. Ensure that the team responsible for adopting the multi-stakeholder approach has a common understanding of what it is, and commitment to stand by its key attributes.
2. Make a concerted effort to be inclusive.
3. Conduct face-to-face public consultations at regional levels to hear from rural and harder-to-reach stakeholders.
4. Focus on the entire ICT ecosystem, not just what the government or the ICT sector is doing.
5. Engage a facilitator with experience in adopting the multi-stakeholder approach, as well as knowledge of national ICT policymaking.
6. Tailor the multi-stakeholder process to the culture of the country.
7. Develop and clearly present a value proposition to ensure that the multi-stakeholder process is productive, and outcome driven.
8. Factor in additional costs for implementing a multi-stakeholder approach in budget plans.
9. Build strategic and sustainable partnerships for the implementation of the collaborative, multi-stakeholder model.
10. Engage a documenter to capture in writing all inputs from stakeholders.

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input from different stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, civil society and the technical community; and across age groups and levels of expertise--from senior executives, middle-management staff to students and young people.

DICT organized a series of thematic focus group discussions and regional consultations in each of the country's major island groups to bring their needs, and perspectives to the fore.

In between formal discussions and consultations, DICT opened its doors to input from those who could not make it to the consultations. Following its launch, DICT is holding a series of advocacy events and "sandbox sessions" to publicise the Framework and continue the dialogue with stakeholders (see section on "What's Next for NICTEF?" for more details).

Preliminary Activities

A series of activities was organized in preparation for developing the Framework, including a "footprinting"[3] event, two awareness-raising workshops, and a training course for civil servants to broaden their understanding of the principles that underpin the architecture and continued evolution of the Internet.

The footprinting event held on December 17, 2017 in Cebu City brought together a small but diverse group of stakeholders from the public and private sectors to brainstorm on the scope and direction of NICTEF, and the process for developing it. This included the exploration of global best practices in ICT policymaking.

Next, academia and the youth were gathered at workshops meant to broaden awareness of DICT's activities in educational institutions. These involved electronics engineering and computer engineering students and faculty members of ICCT Colleges (in March 2018, in Rizal, Luzon) and electronics engineering students of the University of Cebu (in September 2018, in Cebu, Visayas).

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[3] "Footprinting," done through site visits and interviewsaims to gather primary data on the ICT ecosystem of an economic area.

Focus Group Discussions

Six focus group discussions were conducted in participatory e-governance; industry and countryside development; resource sharing and capacity building through ICT; improved public links and connectivity; ICT user protection and information security; and enabling and sustainable ICT environment.—the Framework's proposed thematic areas.

These were held in the capital, Metro Manila between May and July 2018, and were attended by national government agencies, the private sector and academia. Each began with a series of presentations on pertinent concerns, on the current state of ICT development in the Philippines, and on good practices that could be adopted under NICTEF. Participants identified actions and projects to address key issues, providing

substance to the Framework's strategic thrusts. A short online survey was conducted to solicit views from citizens on what the priorities of NICTEF should be. Survey responses were used to initiate and facilitate detailed discussions among the focus groups.

A three-day writeshop was subsequently organized in October to bring together staff from relevant departments within the DICT, along with external consultants, to draft the NICTEF. The initial content included NICTEF's values, vision and mission statement, and priorities for each strategic thrust based on consensus-driven outcomes from the focus group discussions.

Regional Consultations

Regional public consultations were organised in the three major island groups of the Philippines as well as in Metro Manila to gain a better understanding of the needs and concerns of constituencies across the archipelago.

These were held between October and December 2018 in Iloilo City for the Visayas; Cagayan de Oro City for Mindanao; Malolos City for Luzon; and Manila for the National Capital Region. Participants were from national and local government agencies, the private sector, academia, civil society, and the technical community.

Regional consultations in the three major island groups, and the country's capital, Manila

An overview of the Framework's objectives was presented, followed by an interactive discussion on each section during which participants, divided into small groups, offered feedback and proposed revisions.

Online Public Survey

An online public survey was conducted for a month, from October to November, both in the national language, Filipino, and in English to further solicit input from citizens on the ICT issues that affect their day-to-day lives. About 200 respondents completed the survey, which was publicised through social media platforms.

Timeline for the NICTEF's development:

DEC 14, 2017		Digital Footprinting Cebu City
MAR 24, 2018		Awareness Building in ICCT Colleges Rizal
MAY-JULY 2018		Six Focus Group Discussions Quezon City
JUL 5, 2018		DICT and Internet Society Signs MoU Quezon City
SEP 19, 2018		Awareness Building in University of Cebu Cebu
OCT 2-4, 2018		Writeshop DICT, Quezon City
OCT-NOV 2018		Online Public Survey
OCT-DEC 2018		Four Regional Consultations Iloilo City (Visayas), Malolos City (Luzon), Cagayan de Oro City (Mindanao) and Manila
FEB 21, 2019		Launch of NICTEF Manila

Good Practices and Lessons Learned

Good Practice #1: Ensure that the team responsible for adopting the multi-stakeholder approach has a common understanding of what it is, and a commitment to stand by its key attributes.

In developing NICTEF, the Plans and Policy Development Division of DICT (hereafter, the DICT team) received guidance from the Internet Society on the key attributes of the multi-stakeholder approach. The team responsible for driving the policy development process, and any partners and consultants involved, must be committed to ensuring that these attributes are adhered to from the start and throughout the policymaking process. This is critical in ensuring that NICTEF is relevant to the different needs of Filipinos, and is not captured by the interests of partners or any single sector.

Good Practice #2: Make a concerted effort to be inclusive.

NICTEF begins with a statement acknowledging that ICT growth has not been inclusive:
"ICTs have brought tremendous developmental benefits to the Philippine society. Yet, the
nation is painfully aware that these benefits are unevenly distributed, and may in fact have
led to growth that has not been inclusive to a certain extent."

The DICT team indicated that it was indeed a challenge to incorporate all voices in NICTEF.
Nevertheless, it is important to allocate ample time and opportunity to process the diverse
inputs received and discuss the best ways to incorporate varying needs and concerns in
the policy document.

Good Practice #3: Conduct face-to-face consultations at the regional level to hear from the countryside and harder-to-reach stakeholders.

Working with its regional and provincial offices, DICT conducted public consultations
across the country to reach out to each island group and accommodate different levels of
development, priorities and perspectives. The DICT team also made considerable effort to
reach out to communities in the countryside and to young people, and found this
opportunity to gain first-hand information from them to be extremely essential for policy
planning.

Good Practice #4: Focus on the entire ICT ecosystem, not just what the government or the ICT sector is doing.

To develop the NICTEF it was crucial to identify existing gaps in different sectors that
would benefit from policy-driven guidance. To reach individual companies and
organisations, DICT engaged with industry and professional bodies, such as the Philippine
Chamber of Telecommunications Operators (PCTO) and the Information Technology and
Business Process Association of the Philippines (ITBPAP). Discussions and consultations
were open to all and were announced online on government websites and social media
sites.

Previous ICT policymaking exercises focused on governmental efforts in the ICT sector.
NICTEF, however, is a national framework for the entire ecosystem of stakeholders to work
collaboratively. It represents what the people of the Philippines collectively want for the
country, and within this framework, the role that government can play.

Good Practice #5: Engage a facilitator with experience in adopting the multi-stakeholder approach, as well as knowledge of national ICT policymaking.

Having a facilitator that could operationalize the multi-stakeholder model to develop
NICTEF contributed to its success. The DICT team contracted a consultant that not only
skilfully facilitated focus group discussions and regional consultations, but having extensive
experience in developing the past two national ICT frameworks, also expertly coordinated
the drafting of NICTEF.

Good Practice #6: Tailor the multi-stakeholder process to the culture of the country.

In many Asian cultures, individuals tend to be reluctant to speak up when senior or governmental personnel are in the room. There is therefore a need to offer multiple ways for individuals to voice their concerns, even anonymously through surveys. As part of the NICTEF development process, the facilitator for regional consultations divided participants into small groups that were less intimidating, allowing even young and shy participants to share their thoughts and ideas, which were subsequently reported in a plenary.

Lessons Learned #1: Develop and clearly present a value proposition to ensure that the multi-stakeholder process is productive and outcome driven.

In invitations and announcements, it is helpful to clearly specify to stakeholders why they should participate and what they would gain from their involvement in the policymaking process. This would help organizations identify appropriate representatives to take part in consultations and enable them to prepare their inputs.

NICTEF was formulated with the country's development plan in mind, and was submitted to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), responsible for putting together the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 (PDP).[4] The consultations for NICTEF took place at a time when other government departments had already started implementing their sectoral plans in line with the priorities of the PDP. In hindsight, the consultations were timely as stakeholders from many sectors had begun to recognize the role that ICTs can play in their programmes. As a result, these stakeholders were more willing to participate in shaping NICTEF and to allocate resources to ICT-related projects.

Lessons Learned #2: Factor in additional costs for implementing a multi-stakeholder approach in budget plans.

The lack of fiscal support for implementing a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach in ICT policymaking was a major challenge. Although a budget has now been allocated for the review and update of NICTEF, it still requires an industry counterpart, according to the DICT team. If more funds are available, the team would like to carry out more advocacy campaigns, conduct more regional consultations to fully reflect the needs and concerns of the whole archipelago, monitor trends and advance the implementation of NICTEF, and build more partnerships with the private sector, including identifying champions to lead the development of the Framework's strategic thrusts.

Lessons Learned #3: Build strategic and sustainable partnerships for the implementation of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder model.

The multi-stakeholder model needs to be a continuous and sustainable process rather than a one-time initiative. Partners to provide technical assistance, guidance, sectoral expertise and if necessary, financial support, may be tapped to ensure the successful adoption of the multi-stakeholder process. A key challenge that the DICT team faced was finding the common ground needed to create these partnerships. It is worth noting that a multi-stakeholder approach involves building trust, enagement and collaboration over time.

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[4] National Economic and Development Authority, Philippines, Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Abridged-PDP-2017-2022_Final.pdf.

The DICT team found it effective to initiate discussions with the policy and planning division of other government departments and offices. This division is most likely to be familiar with the overall direction, as well as the deliverables of each ministry, and would be able to provide guidance on possible collaboration and relevant divisions that may be tapped to contribute to the initiative.

Lessons Learned #4: Engage a documenter to capture in writing all the inputs from stakeholders.

One challenge the DICT team faced in developing the Framework was to capture discussions during the consultations. To do this, a rapporteur was hired to note in writing the deliberations and consensus reached at all NICTEF-related events, which were shared with the participants. This was also a good way to acknowledge and recognize the contributions of stakeholders.

What's Next for NICTEF?

NICTEF is designed as a living document. How will DICT go about operationalizing NICTEF and fostering multi-stakeholder participation in the process?

Advocacy Campaigns

After NICTEF was launched, DICT began rolling out a communications plan to make sure that people are aware of the new Framework. DICT has a number of advocacy campaigns in the three island groups of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, comprising of events, radio, television, print media and social media publicity. These are meant to encourage stakeholders to collaborate in its implementation. Moreover, the DICT team intends to co-locate with other events to promote NICTEF. For example, NICTEF was presented at the Internet Governance Roadshow in 2019,[5] and was highlighted on the industry lecture track of the National ICT Month in June 2019

Sandbox Sessions

DICT is planning a series of sandbox sessions to continue the dialogue with stakeholders. Each session will discuss one of the fourteen strategic trends specified in NICTEF. The sessions will be multi-stakeholder, engaging with government agencies, industries and civil society groups, particularly those who were not able to participate in previous events. One expected output are white papers for each strategic trend that will contribute to the next iteration of NICTEF. The DICT hopes that these sessions will increase the sense of ownership and commitment to the implementation of NICTEF, and lead to partnerships among stakeholders to carry out agreed-upon decisions and strategies.

Periodic Update of NICTEF

Periodically, NICTEF will be open for review and updates, and inputs from all sectors of society will be considered. These will be coordinated by the Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council and sectoral and industry task forces, as set out in the Republic Act No. 10844. Additionally, sub-committees will be created at the regional level to more effectively

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[5] Foundation for Media Alternatives, "Luzon leg Internet Governance Symposium," December 17, 2018, https://www.fma.ph/2018/12/17/luzon-leg-internet-governance-symposium/.

respond and cater to the needs of rural areas. The DICT team is developing a system to monitor the implementation of NICTEF, and to capture, screen and assess projects and updates.

NICTEF Website

The [NICTEF website](#)[6] has been set up as a platform for stakeholders to communicate with DICT .Information and updates on the framework, including profiles of projects relevant to NICTEF are posted on the website to promote partnerships and avoid duplications. In addition, reports of focused group discussions and consultations, white papers, updates on strategic indicators and results, and other related documents will be made available online. Online polls will also be conducted to gather insights and comments from the public on matters relevant to the implementation of NICTEF.

Capacity Building and Support for Multi-Stakeholder Engagements

DICT will be building the capacity of stakeholders as needed for them to participate actively and effectively in the continuous development of NICTEF and in its implementation.

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[6] NICTEF Website, https://www.ictecosystem.org.ph/.