Internet Inclusion: Advancing Solutions
Working Group Outcome Document
24 April 2018

Working Group Name: Gender Digital Divide

Working Group Chair(s): Ursula Wynhoven & Peter Micek

Individual Participants (including name and affiliation):

- Marilyn Cade   mCADE
- Bozenna Pasik-Duncan   IEEE WIE, Univ. of Kansas
- Lauran Potter   Web Foundation
- Soledad Roybal   Consultant, former ITU
- Jack Spilsbury   State Dept
- Revi Sterling   USAID WCC
- James Wendorf   IEEE
- Thomas Koutsky   USAID
- Timothy Lee   IEEE
- Deepak Maheshwari   Symantec

Achievements to date including launches, agreements, and commitments:

After being reconstituted recently, the group has identified its goals:

- To provide opportunities for information exchange and shared learning in support of bridging the gender digital divide
- To support IEEE members to be more inclusive in their daily interactions in their workplaces and raise awareness of the role of individuals as a complement to the role of organizations in enhancing inclusion

Key Discussion Points:

- Gender gaps persist despite many well-meaning efforts. For example, IEEE has 11% women members. Advocacy and outreach to girls are necessary to grow the next generation of women engineers.
- The group continues to find the working group to be a useful source of sharing and learning about recent developments. We received a briefing on UNESCO's draft Guidelines for Digital Inclusion that are currently open for consultation and on the Web Foundation's Universal Service and Access Funds and Gender research and call to action. Most in the group were not aware of either development prior to the meeting.
- Integrated in the meeting was a workshop with Revi Sterling on addressing social and cultural issues in gender and tech projects with critical thinking. It was very well received and there was interest to see how such ideas and skills could be more widely promoted among IEEE membership.

Outcome of Discussion including Key Messaging points:

- There was significant interest in seeing how to institutionalize within IEEE policies and practices relating to addressing gender digital divides and the connection points that could be useful in this area. A connection was made with IEEE's Women in Engineering and the group received a briefing from Bozenna Pasik-Duncan on the work of that group. That group was not previously aware of the existence of the Gender Digital Divide Working Group. The IEEE Diversity and Inclusion group was also mentioned as another group that we should connect with to explore synergies. The co-chairs have reached out and are awaiting a reply from them.
- The group will explore resources produced by Women in Engineering and existing surveys and see if there is need for additional awareness raising and information gathering from the Women in Engineering members relevant to closing the gender digital divide via a new survey. Peter Micek and Soledad Roybal will follow up with Bozenna on this.
- We are exploring what it means to be an inclusive engineer and will have a brainstorming conference call in the coming weeks and a side event on this theme next month in Toronto at Rights Con on 16 May with a view to preparing an aspirational document that could inspire and guide IEEE members. Ursula Wynhoven and Peter Micek will follow up with Tim and Bozenna on possible content.
- Peter M and Peter W have also been looking at language in IEEE's existing Code of Conduct to better incorporate commitments to close the gender digital divide.
- There was continued interest in the idea of a platform building on the EQUALS action map (www.equals.org/actionmap) to better support organizations with activity on bridging the gender digital divide in access, skills, leadership and research to connect with each other. This will be explored further. It was noted though that this would take resources that the group members currently do not have access to. Soledad offered to follow up with some contacts.

KEY MESSAGING:

- Through ally trainings and other forums, target Men, saying how these gender equalities in tech can be useful for them.
- Combat stereotypes and myths, including that women are inherently incompatible with technology; that women will take men's jobs or opportunities if they become skilled; and that tech in the hands of women leads to insecurity and immorality.
- Use counter messages, for instance: show how security for women can improve if they have a phone, including through ride-sharing applications; highlight how entire families would benefit when women gain skills, and how women can improve the family's economic prospects.
- Targeting Women, show all the good things women can do with tech. Show religious women using technology, and target elders; encourage women to support and mentor one another.

Notable Projects and Upcoming Events:

- At the RightsCon event on May 16, the co-chairs will lead a session on building a "how-to" manifesto for individual engineers to promote inclusion and gender equality.
- Tim Lee committed to explore opportunities to integrate ideas on gender equity into curriculum and modules for IEEE members, such as for volunteers and at related IEEE events, and report back.
- The IEEE Women in Engineering (WIE) group agreed to explore issuing a survey to their membership on the gender digital divide and relevant issues.
- Led by Ursula and Peter M., participants will continue to produce a "how to" guide for individual engineers to support inclusion.
- At Global Humanitarian Technology Conference (GHTC) where IEEE members report on what they're doing on development, Tim Lee can incorporate topics of gender equality. Also, IEEE Women in Engineering Conference in Silicon Valley.
- Several gender-focused resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly in summer and fall will present opportunities for engagement and norm-building.

Next Steps:

- We will create a Google Docs folder for the working group to facilitate sharing relevant resources. Members have already actively shared resources on email threads.
- Next (virtual) meeting date to be set most likely in June/July. In addition, there are regular (monthly/bimonthly) calls as part of EQUALS on gender equality and ICT access, skills, leadership and research should members be interested to join any of these. Members are also invited to share with the group other relevant new developments.
- After 2 May follow-up call with Bozenna, Peter and Ursula, all agreed to explore IEEE WIE resources to develop new survey questions to members.