A short guide to

Association for Progressive Communications
Strategic Action Plan
2013 – 2016

APC presents a shortened version of our current strategic action plan for the benefit of our members, partners and funders. At the heart of this guide are our priorities and goals for the next four years. We also provide context to our work by summarising APC as a network and the network-wide, inclusive processes that lead to our 2013 – 2016 strategic plan of action.

Who is the APC and its network?

APC is an international social justice network and non-profit organisation that envisions easy, affordable and equal access to information and communiations technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and mobile phones, to improve lives.

APC's strength lies in our network, a mix of organisations from developing and developed countries and our professional activist staff, and its combined knowledge and experience of promoting and using ICTs at local, national and regional levels. Through both our members and staff, APC gains local perspectives and contact with grassroots organisations that we integrate into our global work. In January 2013, APC had 45 members in 31 countries.

Given our longstanding alliances with women's rights, human rights and environmental justice networks, we are especially interested in ensuring that the people who are actively trying to make the world a more just and equitable place are able to use the internet as effectively as possible to do their important work.

How did we develop our strategic plan?

APC used multiple methods to develop this strategic plan. In 2012, the APC board decided that the six strategic priorities that led the organisation during 2009 – 2012 were likely to continue to be relevant for the future. Project evaluations and monitoring reports show that APC made significant progress in each of these areas and so our task for 2013 – 2016 planning became to strengthen the impact of its work through a review of implementation to date and assessment of current and emerging priorities.

An online survey was conducted across the APC network, including members, partners and staff. In-depth interviews were also held to deepen responses. This initial knowledge gathering phase assessed past achievements, reflected on the relevance and importance of previous priorities and identified challenges for civil society in 2013 – 2016.

Online, regional meetings were then held to reflect on the results of the knowledge gathering phase and build consensus. Members in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America met to discuss regional issues related to the new set of priorities and to provide feedback to the process.

Finally, an intial draft was presented to the network in October 2012 to reach alignment within the network. After extensive discussion and revision among members and staff, this plan was formally presented to and adopted by the APC Council in November 2012.

What problems does APC's strategic plan address?

When APC members, partners and staff assessed its strategic priorities, it did so against the current political

contexts facing civil society organisations using the internet and other ICTs for social change. We considered the erosion of freedom online, including access to information; emerging issues such as violence against women online and the link between human values and technology; and developing internet governance structures in the public interest.

We also identified problems related to the internet. APC exists to address these problems proactively through integrated actions at global, regional and national levels:

- Insufficient access to infrastructure
- Threats to the open and fair character of the internet
- Risks to victims of gender-based violence
- Insufficient capacity among civil society
- Difficulty of influencing internet and related policy processes

What are APC's strategic priorities for 2013 – 2016?

As a result of our deliberations, we identified five areas of work that APC must prioritise in the next four years in order to achieve our mission "... to empower and support organisations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to build strategic communities and initiatives for the purpose of making meaningful contributions to equitable human development, social justice, participatory political processes and environmental sustainability."

1. Securing and defending internet access and rights

Internet access and human rights can no longer be separated. The distinctions between affordable, quality access, and the expression and realisation of human rights on the internet as well as through the use of the internet are increasingly blurred.

Overall impact objectives	Intended outcomes
Universal affordable access to the internet	- Free public access is more widely available in public libraries and other public spaces - Use, management and regulation of radio frequency as well as digital migration strategies contribute to providing affordable access to the internet - Local and community wireless internet services are more available to people currently (2012) lacking quality affordable access
Human rights on the internet are understood, recognised and defended.	- Greater understanding of what "human rights on the internet" means among human rights organisations, other human rights defenders, the media, broader civil society, service providers, national human rights institutions, the judiciary and governments - There is visible uptake of the position that internet rights are human rights and people use rights frameworks as leverage for actions on internet freedoms

2. Fostering good internet governance

Good governance is a prerequisite for sustainable social justice and development. This priority focuses, in particular, on good governance of the internet, whether at national, regional or global level. As in other areas, good governance of the internet requires governance processes and institutions to be inclusive, transparent, accessible, participative and accountable. The intended and actual outcomes of good internet governance should be an accessible, fair and open internet that is developed and governed in the public interest, rather than in the interest of individual companies or governments.

Overall impact objectives	Intended outcomes
Institutions and processes of internet governance are transparent, inclusive, diverse and accountable and enable effective civil society participation	• APC agrees on a definition of good multi-stakeholder internet governance working definition from the APC, CoE and UN ECE Code of Good Practice for IG
Civil society stakeholders are actively engaged in shaping IG issues, processes and outcomes	• The APC community develops strategies to engage diverse civil society group in internet governance processes
Multi-stakeholder internet governance processes are improved from the bottom up, e.g. from national level into regional and global	• The global internet governance agenda and related processes consistently includes civil society voices and concerns and prioritises human rights and the public interest • The APC community strategically influences the IGF agenda and increases participation of civil society, particularly from the South

3. Strengthening use and development of transformative technology

The idea of transformative technology promotes mindful and critical development and use of information technology that contributes to sustainable development, political awareness, and self-empowerment i.e. to meaningful change in society. By linking technology use and development directly to human values, the relationship between individuals and technology is transformed from a utilitarian interaction into a meaningful component of human development.

Overall impact objectives	Intended outcomes
Technology development emphasises openness, open standards, interoperability, and user ownership and control	• APC engages technology manufacturers, service providers, the internet technical community and software developers, draw them into policy processes and include them in the network. • Technology manufacturers and software developers are held to account for sustainable practices and services
Civil society organisations and social and political activists are critical, mindful and political in their technology choices	• APC members and partners, and the civil society groups they collaborate with are empowered and aware in their choices of technologies information sharing platforms • Sustainable practices are defined and understood as grounded in human rights and appropriate for diverse users

Increased public demand for use for open and sustainable technology	• Individuals and organisations within APC community are motivated to migrate to free/libre/open source software (FLOSS)

4. Ending technology-based violence against women

The key elements of this priority focuses on expanding visibility and understanding of violence against women online, evidence-based advocacy towards prevention of online abuses directed at women and girls, and promotion of an online culture that affirms the rights to safety, security and privacy.

Overall impact objectives	Intended outcomes
Society recognises VAW online and rejects it	• More users, especially women's rights organisations, actively promote anti-VAW culture and practice online • Social networking platform providers, mobile companies and other internet intermediaries develop user policies and best practice standards that ensure women and girls safety and respect for their rights.
Technology is used effectively to combat VAW	• More women confidently and safely use online public spaces • Technical people and technical communities are engaged in activities to combat violence against women and girls • Women's rights organisations' capacity to use technology in ending VAW is strengthened

5. Strengthening APC community networks

APC is a network that needs to be nurtured but "network building" is also a strategic activity that forms part of APC's approach to achieving positive social change. The networked community envisioned in this priority extends beyond APC members and staff to include partners and others who share APC's vision and goals.

Our overall impact objectives and intended outcomes are:

Overall impact objectives	Intended outcomes
APC members lead in mobilising communities around ICTs for social change	• APC positions are informed, supported and amplified by members, partners, allies and their networks • Civil society organisations, women's rights organisations and activists actively use technology in combating VAW
APC has an engaged, active and empowered membership	• Knowledge, experience and resources are shared within APC • New individuals and organisational members join APC • Member collaboration that strengthens the APC community is enhanced

What are the main goals that cut across APC's work?

The success of our outcomes for each of the strategic priorities will depend on how we contribute towards three goals that are essential to real social change and freedom online. These cross-cutting goals will be taken into account and integrated into all our work:

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

Women's views, interests and needs shape the development agenda as much as men's, and that this agenda supports progress toward more equal power relations between women and men. APC will strive to engage with technology developers, policy makers and users so as to counter sexism and exclusion in technology design, policy and use. The external focus will extend beyond countering explicit sexism to expose how often the apparently gender-neutral framing of the ICT discourse, practice, and policy is implicitly sexist and can be exclusionary and discriminatory for women.

Building the "information commons"

APC's rights-oriented approach to the internet is rooted in our belief that the internet is a global public good. Thus over the years the APC community has sought to provide access to and defend a global commons for the provision of information. We do this to counter the predominantly closed and proprietary nature of policy, practice and culture that currently governs the production and dissemination of information.

Fostering linguistic diversity

In line with its commitment to internet rights and access, APC will endeavour to find ways to promote linguistic diversity in the digital world. It will try to reduce exclusion using the same technology which gave rise to it. Examples of such actions include localisation of free and open source software, building the capacity of non-English speakers to generate their own content, and encouraging solutions such as translation software.