



ISOC India Mumbai *Women in Technology Leadership(WITL)* Webinar on Role of Women in Internet Governance

Date: 7th September 2019

Time: 4.30 pm-6.00 pm IST

Presenter: Ms Jane Coffin, Senior Advisor to the ISOC CEO, Connectivity and Infrastructure

Internet Society India Mumbai recognizes the importance of the tenets of inclusivity and diversity in the Internet Governance ecosystem. Keeping in line with the ISOC vision of making Internet relevant for everyone, and ISOC India Mumbai's vision of promoting women leadership in technology sector, ISOC India Mumbai chapter invited Ms. Jane Coffin, Senior Advisor to the ISOC CEO, Connectivity and Infrastructure to deliver a talk on the Role of Women in Internet Governance (IG).

Interacting with the volunteers of ISOC India Mumbai, Jane began her WITL webinar by sharing her professional journey in the realm of IG. She narrated her professional journey from US Department of Commerce to ICANN and ISOC; from the field of classical studies to telecommunication to the domain of IT; and finally to the world of Internet Connectivity and Infrastructure. According to her, success in the realm of IG requires not only domain knowledge and analytical skills but also human network and people skills.

Jane then talked about the structural impediments that women face in IG. She somberly reflected that leadership in IG organizations is still dominated by men but women have started playing an important role now. The change may not be extremely visible but it is happening. In the same vein, she also underlined the importance of relevant skillset and merit for the professional growth of women in this particular domain.

Jane also apprised about the approach that volunteers, especially those from the non-engineering background, should follow when confronted with difficult engineering terms. She highlighted the importance of self-learning. She advised that one should read up existing technology literature, interact with more people, learn from the experts, read up material online, and reach out to human networks to understand various perspectives on a topic.

The floor was then thrown open for participants to engage with Jane. Responding to a question by Nandita Koshal, ISOC India Mumbai Treasurer, about the change that Jane has observed in women participation in IG throughout her professional career, Jane remarked that there has been good progress but much remains to be desired. Historically, there has always been a need for more representation based on gender and race. A lot of barriers are still present but now more women are participating at C-suite levels especially in South East

Asia. Citing an interesting recent development, Jane informed that Doreen Bogdan-Martin became the first woman in 2018 to be elected at a leadership position in the 153-year history of ITU.

Shveta Kokash, ISOC India Mumbai Vice President, then asked Jane about the process of setting up-regulation and determining its fairness. Responding to this question, Jane emphasized that setting up-regulation is similar to the process of setting up a company. It requires the right group of people and has its fair share of trials and errors. She further stressed that it requires a lot of stakeholder training, choice and adoption of the right technology, soft skills, research, and a conducive environment of rules, laws and processes. She also emphasized on the role of a more impact-driven evaluation through primary research, data analytics, and cultural immersion.

On the question of what are the major roadblocks that ISOC and other organizations face while developing a strategy for setting up critical Internet infrastructure especially in developing countries, Jane lamented that the major roadblocks are disparate state regulations and crony business interests. She reflected that there is a need for glocal regulatory frameworks to allow medium and small players to enter the market and thrive.

On being asked by Sneha Tambe, ISOC India Mumbai Secretary - "Would you have still been successful-ceteris paribus- if you weren't a woman?", Jane reflected that being a woman definitely has helped her professional growth. But the right skill sets and attitude are more important.

The webinar concluded with a vote of thanks by Prateek, an ISOC India Mumbai Volunteer, to Jane.