Annual Report | 2016

CIPESA

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About **CIPESA**

The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) is one of two centres established under the Catalysing Access to Information and Communications Technologies in Africa (CATIA) initiative, which was funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID). CIPESA focuses on decision-making that facilitates the use of ICT in support of development and poverty reduction.

CIPESA's establishment was in response to the findings of the Louder Voices Report prepared for DfID and the G8 Dot Force Implementation Team, which cited the lack of easy, affordable and timely access to information about ICT-related issues and processes as key a barrier to effective and inclusive ICT policy making in Africa.

While based in Kampala, Uganda, CIPESA works across East and Southern Africa, informing policy-making, and stirring debate and convening productive gatherings. We work with networks, individuals and organisations (private sector, governmental, academic, civil society) across the region, and we are key members of several African and international initiatives that aim to improve the inclusiveness of the Information Society. CIPESA is a member of the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC).

Since inception, CIPESA has positioned itself as a leading centre for research and analysis of information aimed to enable policy makers in the region to understand ICT policy issues, and for various multi-stakeholders to use ICT to improve livelihoods. We produce and publish commentaries, briefing papers and newsletters that are widely circulated. Our commentaries – short and informative pieces aimed at sparking thinking and dialogue – provide an overview of selected international ICT policy and Information Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) issues relevant to African stakeholders.

Introduction

This year, we have witnessed various shifts in the perceptions of internet access and use by Africans due to external forces including the state, regulators and other internet users. A common theme we have found is an increased need to access digital information, and extract meaning and use from it. For the increasing internet users in the continent, it is no longer enough to simply be online, thus the growing shift towards more participatory Information and Communications Technology (ICT) including through open data platforms and social media.

However, these trends have been met by pushback from some states. Coupled with the increasing internet access, there is growing civic demand for state transparency, accountability and good governance. Meanwhile, alongside these is the need for more dedicated efforts towards improving infrastructure and access in addition to addressing the gender digital divide. These are some of the issues we tackled in our work over the year.

We also focussed on continued concerns on issues such as data privacy, digital security and shifting forms of censorship including through media intimidation and arrests. Repeated internet shutdowns became a common feature during times of protest and elections and were carried out in Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zimbabwe as well as in countries like Turkey and India. Further, while the digital divide is growing smaller, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) reported that in 2016, the regional gender gap was largest in Africa at 23% compared to the global 2% meaning that more men in Africa are part of the digital society than women.

In 2016, we experienced two social media shutdowns in Uganda where we are based. The state argued the need to maintain public order during the electioneering period. The communications regulator confirmed that it directed Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block access to social media sites over "national security" concerns related to the "sensitive" elections period. However, tech-savvy Ugandans keen to keep information on the electioneering process flowing turned to sharing information via proxies and apps that enable circumventing the blockage through Virtual Private Networks (VPN).

Indeed, many users gained new levels of appreciation for the right of access to information and freedom of expression. This contributed to our programming including in the areas of digital security, press freedom and policy advocacy.

In June, CIPESA Board Chairperson Vincent Bagiire was elected as the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on ICT. He has been instrumental in the growth and history of CIPESA since its budding years as a small team and organisation.

This has been a year of learning, knowledge exchange leading to our expanding contributions towards effective and inclusive ICT policy in Africa. In the following pages we share some of work and highlights and welcome your continued support for our work.

The CIPESA Team

What We **Do**

Key to the work that CIPESA does is the consistent production of indepth reports based upon a range of research methods including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, in-depth desk research, and quantitative surveys. Some reports have also relied on the use of network measurement tools to test the performance of the internet for speed upon suspicion of intentional disruption to communications such as through throttling (slowing down download speeds), while others have analysed social media sentiments online. The insights gathered have helped to shape our interventions on policy advocacy and training in the different countries we have had interventions.

During the year, our research work included qualitative and quantitative insight gathering into areas such as radio listening habits in Northern Uganda and how these relate to sustainable community radio stations amidst ever present competition from commercial radio stations. We also expanded our research methods to include social media analysis during election periods and conducted multi-country research with a focus on how states are stifling digital rights.

Collectively, this has expanded our open library of research into the trends shaping access, use and perceptions of the internet in a variety of Sub-Saharan African countries.

Understanding Listener Habits of Community Radio in Uganda

The UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), partnered with CIPESA to undertake research into the listening habits of the audiences of four community radio stations in Uganda. The stations studied were Mama FM 101.7 FM (located in Kampala, Central Region), Radio Apac 92.9 FM (located in Apac, Northern Uganda), Nakaseke 102.9 FM (located in Nakaseke, Central Region) and Speak FM 89.5 (located in Gulu, Northern Uganda).

The research served as a precursor to a UNESCO three-year project entitled "Empowering local radios with ICTs" targeting the four community radio stations in Uganda. The study found that although radio was a popular ICT in Uganda, it still largely targets the interest of the male listeners including through the type of content and radio guests on topical issues. Although some content was aimed at women, there is a need to dramatically increase such content as well as have more female voices on air.

The research also established ICT benchmarks aimed at improving listenership of community radio stations. These included the utilisation of interactive platforms such as the toll free SMS poll service Trac FM. Further, online social media engagement was still underutilised as a means of engaging with listeners who are increasing online. This would still have to be complemented with physical interactions such as going into the community to collect pre-recorded content while also utilising the opportunity to build awareness of the station and the type of content it airs.

Reflecting back on two years of the ICT4Democracy in East Africa Network

The ICT4Democracy in East Africa network (ICT4Dem) was established in 2011 with seed funding from the Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions (Spider), and works on human rights, public service delivery monitoring (health, education and water), and civic participation through a mix of ICT including mobile (voice & SMS), interactive mapping, social media, radio and television.

The project is implemented by CIPESA and partners in the focus countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The partners include the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), Transparency International Uganda, iHub Research (Kenya), the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG, Tanzania) and Toro Development Network (ToroDev).

Leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the project aims to enable more East African citizens, particularly marginalised women, youth and the rural poor, to participate in governance processes, towards improved realisation of human rights and greater government transparency and accountability. Working with civic groups, media, human rights defenders, ICT innovators and duty bearers through skills building, awareness raising, advocacy, research, and facilitation of ICT access and dialogue, the project promotes freedom of expression, the right to information, effective public services delivery, and equality through ICT. These are complemented with continuous network building, mentoring and skills transfer.

This year, an evaluation was conducted to establish the achievements, outcomes and challenges registered by the network during the period between 2013 and 2015. The evaluation was mostly positive and included recommendations for improvement, including attaining more commitment from duty bearers at community levels through continuous sensitisation, engagement and capacity building exercises.

However, highlights which reinforced the necessity of the project included that the use of multiple platforms strategically used in a coherent and coordinated way have greater potential and impact as compared to standalone ICT platforms (traditional or modern). This indeed has been a key ingredient in the work of the network partners. Additionally, increased physical engagements and follow-up with duty bearers would be the most effective approach to realising impact. These recommendations have been noted and integrated into the project's current planning and implementation.

Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda face numerous challenges to improving democratisation and human rights. These challenges include shrinking space for civil society, lack of openness in government, a spate of new laws that negate free expression, media freedom and the right to privacy, low participation by citizens in governance, a shortage of trusted spaces for citizens to voice their concerns to duty bearers, low responsiveness of duty bearers to issues raised by citizens, and poor access to information for citizens. Moreover, many citizens still lack access to ICT or the skills to use it effectively to claim their rights or to improve their livelihoods.
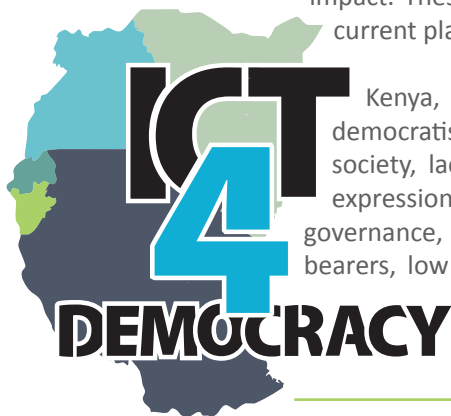
*See more in our ICT4Democracy in East Africa 2016 Annual Report*

Social Media Coverage of the Uganda Elections

The 2015/2016 electioneering season in Uganda set a precedent in the use of social media as a means for politicians to reach out and engage with citizens. It was the first time in Uganda that a candidate announced they would run for President via YouTube and also saw candidate Yoweri Museveni (the incumbent) seek out a more tech-savvy media team to keep abreast with the widening channels of civic engagement. While some of the candidates maintained personal Twitter accounts and actively engaged in the online conversations, others remained dormant, although they had Twitter accounts. In a bid to understand the sentiments online, we partnered with Outbox Uganda, a tech innovation hub, and analysed thousands of tweets shared during the first-ever live televised Presidential debate (January 15) as well as tweets shared on Election Eve (February 17) and on Election Day (February 18).
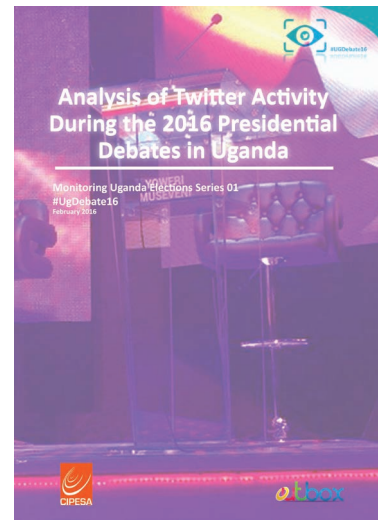
We focussed our efforts on understanding the online engagements taking place on Twitter where over the course of six hours during the first presidential debate, the hashtag #UGDebate16 registered over 100,000 tweets. In only four hours the second debate, under the same hashtag, registered over 120,000 tweets.

Among the findings was that the top tweeps were what appeared to be Twitter bots (auto-generated accounts built to mimic human users of the social networking service through the use of online sourced images and local names). During the Uganda presidential debates, bots gave competition to tweets posted by media houses and candidates whose teams did not employ bots. However, the second debate had more legitimate Twitter accounts dominating the conversation, with some being the originators of more than 200 tweets during the course of the debate.
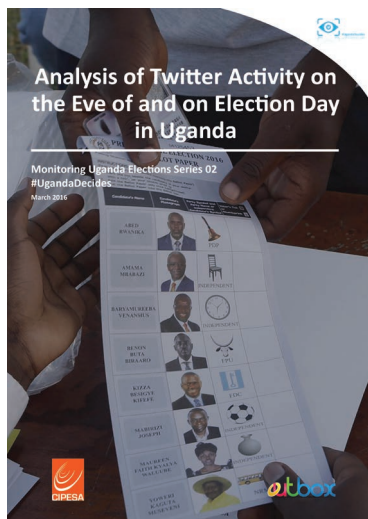
"Our location in Kampala, Uganda means that we got a first-hand experience of the social media and mobile money shutdown witnessed during the elections day and the three days that followed. This shutdown went on to spur a new-found realisation among Ugandan social media users of the value of freely accessing the internet and freedom of expression. It also spurred popularity of the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPN) as users sought alternative ways to maintain online communication."

See more from the Analysis of Twitter Activity During the 2016 Presidential Debates in Uganda and the Analysis of Twitter Activity on Election Eve and Election Day in Uganda.

Expanding In-depth Research on Internet Freedom in Africa

Since 2014, we have conducted mixed method research into what shapes and influences internet freedom in select countries in Africa. In 2014 and 2015 we covered Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda. In 2016, we added more countries of research focus including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The reports give thematic insights on internet freedom in Africa, analysing the legal and policy environment, as well as practices in the countries under focus. Legal and policy analysis is complemented with interviews with a range of key informants drawn from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, on the prevailing national trends and cases.

Themed "Case Studies from Select Countries on Strategies African Governments Use to Stifle Citizens' Digital Rights", the 2016 State of Internet Freedom in Africa report explored what governments are doing to inhibit citizens' access to ICT, for example content blocks, censorship, filtering, infrastructure control, law-making, court cases; how governments are using ICT activity and data to monitor citizens; and how government bodies and functionaries are using propaganda, impersonation, threats, cloning, and other tactics to shape online content in their favour.

In order to promote internet freedom in Africa, there is a need to understand what the state of internet freedom is, what the obstacles are, which stakeholders are most at risk, and what tactics governments have used to curtail internet freedom over the years. The report noted that it is clear that governments in Africa are employing different means and strategies to curtail peoples' rights in the digital sphere coupled with the rising clampdown on the internet through retrogressive provisions in laws, which have facilitated arrests of users against whom various offences are brought in the different countries. There is also a marked increase in the number of arrests, and the charging of journalists, media houses and human rights activists for online related offences. Majority of the legal provisions used are less than 10 years old, although there are also instances of laws dating back more than four decades being used, especially in countries with no specific laws or policies governing online communication.

The report further noted that internet shutdowns appear to be becoming the most preferred control mechanism that African governments are using to curtail the right to freedom of expression and access to information online. The shutdowns are effected through orders to ISPs to block access to either selected services (such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and mobile money services), or a total obstruction of access to the entire internet.
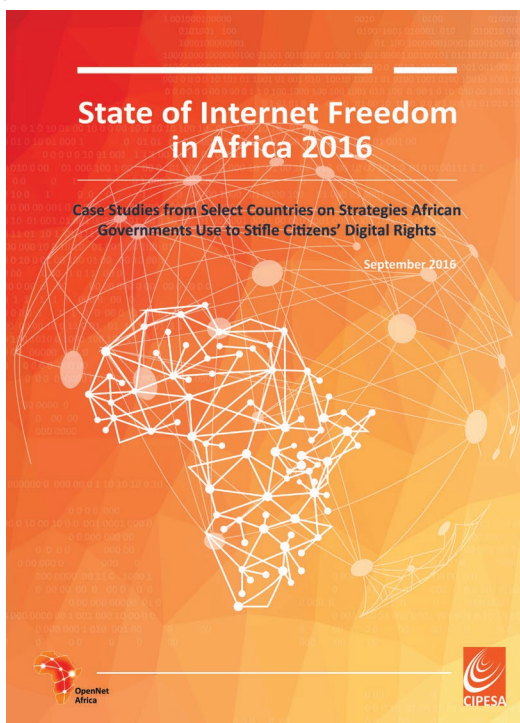
The State of Internet Freedom in Africa report has since 2014 been launched at our landmark event, the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica). See more about it on page 10

LGBTI and Digital Security in Uganda

In Uganda, as in many parts of the continent, the way in which the LGBT community uses the internet and other communication channels remains largely understudied. We contributed to research alongside SecondMuse, an innovation and collaboration agency which "co-creates prosperity by applying the art and science of collaboration to solve complex problems", to understand the gaps and security risks – both physical and digital – faced by the LGBT community in Uganda. The project involved desk research leading up to a need-finding workshop which hosted 14 members of the LGBT community in Uganda. This was followed by the publication of a report which showcased insights from the workshop, including the digital security risks faced by the community and how these could be mitigated.

Women's Rights and the Internet in Uganda

In partnership with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), CIPESA submitted a civil society Stakeholder Report on 'Women's Rights and the internet in Uganda' for the 26th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR is a unique mechanism of the Human Rights Council (HRC) aimed at improving the human rights situation in each of the 193 United Nations (UN) Member States.

Among some of the recommendations made to the Uganda Government in the submission were calls to take measures to ensure that women are able to fully exercise their human rights online as well as offline, to provide spaces for greater involvement of women in decision-making organs and to reinforce the national ICT policy framework in pursuit of the goal of "lifelong education for all". It also called for the promotion of traditional literacy with ICT components in schools and educational/learning centres. A repeated call for more gender aware policy was also made in addition to the involvement of more women in ICT policy-making processes.

The Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica)

The third edition of our growing Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica) saw an increase in the number of participants, as well as topics covered. We continue to encourage our network to diarise the dates September 27–29 for FIFAfrica, which is always scheduled to coincide with the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI).

FIFAfrica serves as a convening of internet freedom advocates, technologists, academics, tech enthusiasts and thought leaders from across the continent and beyond to discuss and debate what is shaping internet access, use and perceptions in Africa. During the Forum the various trends in tech related policy, social media, data privacy among other topics are discussed in relationship to the role they play in the path that internet freedom is taking in Africa. At the heart of these discussions is debate on the ways in which gaps in this path can be addressed through policy and implementation.

In 2016, we expanded on the topics of discussion following contributions received through an online call. In partnership with Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOCHR) in Uganda, we hosted a training workshop on human rights and internet policy while DefendDefenders hosted digital security clinics for the entirety of the Forum. The FIFAfrica audience included 240 participants representing 24 countries.

Since inception, FIFAfrica has served to create meaningful relationships within the continent with the goal of realising progressive policy development guided by global best practice and frameworks such as the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms, the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The Forum also serves to contribute to national, regional and global discussions on internet governance and human rights including Internet Governance Forums, RightsCon and the Stockholm Internet Forum, among others.

Coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), I became aware of the work I have to do as an Internet freedom fighter and web activist once back home. I also realized the high level of the danger faced by internet users when their privacy or personal data are not protected by themselves and by intermediaries (Telecoms). We need to fight at all levels, including against practices of telecoms who are ready to respond to government requests to release information of their customers, and to call upon policy makers to enact laws that will reinforce the rights of citizens to privacy and freedom of expression. Finally, having attended two Forums (2015 and 2016), I am proud to have connected to influencers and internet freedom activists in Africa and beyond. Thanks to the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) and to all the artners for facilitating my attendance.
Blaise Ndola, Rudi International/Blogger/DR Congo

The Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa
2016 in Numbers

3 Days

13 Themes

Transparency and accountability of intermediaries, Internet Shutdowns, Connectivity, Creative social commentary, Clickbait in media, Technology for defending human rights defenders, African frame works on internet freedom, Open data and tracking rights, Access To Information, Cyber Violence Against Women, Researching Internet Freedom, Costs of internet shutdowns, Cyber security strategies

240 Participants

3 Continents

52 Panelists

50 Travel support recipents

24 Countries

Zimbabwe, Zambia, USA, UK, Uganda, Tunisia, Tanzania, South Sudan, South Africa, Somalia, Senegal, Rwanda, Nigeria, Namibia, Liberia, Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, Egypt, DRC, Cameroon, Burundi, Botswana

Representing **51** including civil society, communications regulators, law enforcement, academia and private sector

Researching Internet Freedom

400 respondents

Across **9** countries
Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

4 Research Methods used
- informant interviews
- desk research
- policy analysis
- website tracking

State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2016 report launched

Growth

2014
- 80 participants
- 6 countries
- 1 day

2015
- 200 participants
- 19 countries
- 2 days

2016
- 240 participants
- 24 countries
- 3 days

10 Forum Partners

FORD FOUNDATION · SMALL MEDIA · OPEN TECHNOLOGY FUND · facebook · Google · UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER · PARADIGM INITIATIVE NIGERIA

> " *FIFAfrica16 made me realise that Africa is facing a host of challenges in so far as freedom of expression, access to and dissemination of information, freedom of the media, civic space and voice are concerned. The conversations at the Forum were strategic, rich and deep with regards to the subject at hand. The networking itself was, just like the space itself, very empowering!* "
> **Thomas Sithole, Plumtree Development Trust, Zimbabwe**

Human Rights and ICT Policy Workshop at FIFAfrica16

As a pre-event to FIFAfrica16, we held a three day collaborative workshop with Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which included retracing the origins of human rights through to understanding the relationship between offline and online rights and how laws aimed at addressing the online sphere trample upon the rights of citizens both online and offline.

"The **freedom** of the press, including **online media**, is part of a wider fundamental **freedom of speech** and expression which underpins all other **human rights** and democratic freedoms."

Uchenna EMELONYE, LL.D
Country Representative
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Uganda)
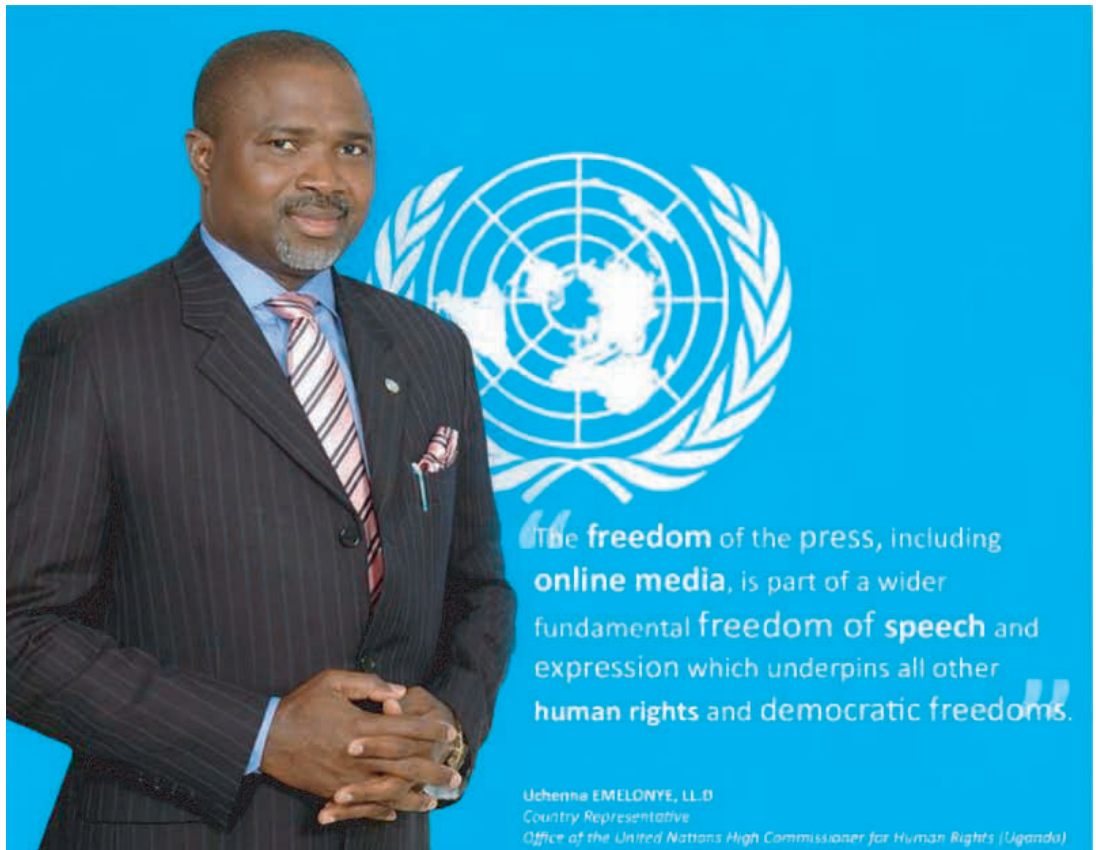
Africans Want Cross-Border Data Access Reform, But They Might Get Left Out

Cross-border data access should not be extended without qualification. Still, current reform plans seem likely to place African countries in a difficult position on a policy area that is increasingly important to them. If the United States really seeks to limit the proliferation of damaging data-access workarounds, it should think about what will happen to those who are left out of cross-border data access reform.

Mailyn Fidler, a fellow at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, attended FIFAfrica

Living Collaborations

Core to our work is the continued commitment towards building existing, and forging new collaborative relationships, between individuals and organisations which can strengthen ICT policy advocacy. These relationships are often driven by a shared vision of the future of the internet in Africa and the path it should take.

Campaigning to Keep The Internet On: The internet remains one of the most powerful resources contemporary society relies on and uses in a multitude of ways. It is also one of the few places where shared social concerns can be elevated to regional, national and global levels – sometimes simultaneously. In the absence of the internet, communication is interrupted leading to a direct assault on various freedoms including freedom of expression, access to information, civic participation and even the right to assembly through online organising Globally there is a growing trend towards such information controls, which has concerned not only CIPESA but like-minded individuals and organisations advocating for internet freedom globally.

Initiated by Access Now, the #KeepItOn campaign was launched in March 2016. We immediately joined the campaign and have since integrated its messaging against internet shutdowns in our online activities, ICT policy advocacy and digital security workshops. The campaign has grown as awareness of the pushback against internet shutdowns gains momentum.

Internet shutdowns pose a threat to human rights around the world. They harm everyone: businesses, emergency services, journalism, human rights defenders, and demonstrators. They don't help victims or restore order. Even worse, they're increasing — in 2016, we recorded more than 50 shutdowns, more than double what we recorded in 2015. **Access Now**

Further, as part of the campaign we have given our support to various civil society-led statements calling for an end to internet shutdowns.

Advocating for a #FASTAfrica: We joined the Web Foundation in advocating for a Fast/Affordable/Safe/Transparent internet in Africa during the action week which ran from May 1-6, 2016. Our efforts were mostly online encouraging discourse around what is required for the realisation of a #FASTAfrica. We shared information and held online chats as part of our OpenNet Africa project which monitors and protects internet freedom in Africa.

Afri-queen
@chenaichair
Following

@cipesaug need to raise more awareness on alternative connectivity such as Wi-Fi in rural areas #fastafrica #OnAfrica #broadband4all

2:00 PM - 6 May 2016

OpenNetAfrica
@OpenNetAfrica
Following

Describing the current state of #internetAccess in Africa in six words | #FASTAfrica #ONAfrica

Maxence M. Melo @macdemelo
1. Affordable 2. Accessible. 3. FastGrowing 4. Fast 5. Surveilled 6. Regulated #FASTAfrica #ONAfrica twitter.com/cipesaug/statu...

1:28 PM - 6 May 2016

Sonia Jorge
@SoniaA4AI
Following

Expensive, unreliable, unequal, limited relevant content @A4A_Internet

CIPESA @cipesaug
A: In 6 words, describe the current state of #internetAccess in #Africa | #FASTAfrica #ONAfrica

7:46 PM - 6 May 2016

OpenNetAfrica
@OpenNetAfrica
Following

@sumrando @APC_News @pinigeria @avilarenata @RIAnetwork @TheMFWA @macdemelo @wougnet Thanks for supporting the #FASTAfrica #ONAfrica chat

2:16 PM - 6 May 2016

Research ICT Africa
@RIAnetwork
Following

#SA has a Connected broadband plan but issues around implementation #Fastafrica #onAfrica-wiki.lib.sun.ac.za/images/c/c7/Do ...

CIPESA @cipesaug
Q5: What national policy stands out for you which encapsulates a free/open #internet in your country? #FASTAfrica #ONAfrica

1:43 PM - 6 May 2016

Participation in Regional and Global Meetings:

Taking a stand for Human Rights: We participated in a two-day workshop on freedom of expression and the Internet in Africa held in Banjul, The Gambia. The outcomes fed into the 58th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) which ran from April 6–20, 2016. The meeting resulted in a communiqué which highlighted that 2016 marked the 29th anniversary of the Commission's operationalisation since 1987 and was declared the "African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women."

Gender Equity: The continued absence of gender sensitive policy, gender disaggregated information and indeed the limited number of women online continues to affect gender equality, access to information and social participation online. The Online Digital Gender Gap Audit conducted by the World Wide Web Foundation noted that, "without a major escalation of policy effort and investment, most technological change in all 10 countries would be captured by men - making gender inequality worse, not better." This is a shared concern particularly for developing countries. As such, we joined the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) in a series of discussions over the course of the year on a range of topics including gender responsive ICT policies in Uganda. The engagements brought together a diversity of stakeholders in the country to discuss the ways in which ICT-related policies and frameworks can advance the rights and interests of women and girls.

Further, we shared insights on agency and autonomy as fundamentals of participation of women both online and offline at the Gender and Internet Governance eXchange (GigX). This was in the lead up to the African School on Internet Governance and the Africa IGF which were both held in Durban, South Africa. Women's Net and WOUGNET co-hosted the GigX on October 10, 2016 during which the Feminist Principles on the Internet were discussed at length with women involved in African internet governanceinitiatives, which formed part of the Africa IGF.

FEM INIS T
PRINCIPLES
OF THE
IN TER NE T

Internet Freedom and Governance: On April 26-27, we attended the Internet Freedom Forum hosted by Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN), which serves to discuss topical issues and Internet rights in Africa including issues around surveillance, data privacy, freedom of expression online, internet and democratic governance. Participants were drawn from multiple stakeholder groups including government, civil society, media, academia and the private sector.

In December we joined the global community at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) hosted in Guadalajara, Mexico. Among a series of discussions that took place at the IGF was a convening of African stakeholders that discussed pertinent internet governance issues specific to the region. The event was supported by Facebook and co-organized by CIPESA, Research ICT Africa, KICTANet, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and Strathmore University.

Other meetings we attended included RightsCon in San Francisco (USA), Open Technology Fund (OTF) Summit in Boston (USA), Women in Technology Summit in Accra (Ghana), as well as the Stockholm Internet Forum in Sweden.

Our participation in these meetings sees us share insights generated from our ongoing research and activities while also broadening the network of collaborators and advocates for similar goals on internet freedom, access to information, ICT and service delivery as well as equitable internet access.

The robust nature of many of the discussions at these meetings further enables us to feed into regional and global discussions where the knowledge exchange serves to validate the necessity of the work we do but also present gaps that need to be addressed through evidence-based policy interventions and practical skills development.

Right to Information: The right of access to information is based on the fundamental premise that a government is supposed to serve and be accountable to the people. Access to information is essential for the functioning of a democracy and is a pre-requisite for transparency and accountability, as well as for citizens' participation in governance. Unfettered access to information can also contribute crucially to economic, social and political development. The enactment of a legal framework that guarantees citizens' access to government information is a critical step in the attainment of this right and the quest for more accountable governments. This is because, unlike primarily promotional instruments that focus on promoting proactive disclosure by the state, the establishment of Right to Information (RTI) law shifts the balance on information control from a presumption of secrecy to a presumption of disclosure, with citizens now having a formal and enforceable right enshrined in law to access a range of government information.

It is widely recognised, however, that enacting an access to information law is only the beginning and therefore an insufficient step in the process to improve citizens' access to information in Africa. Proactive disclosures of information by public agencies and an overall change in the transparency and accountability stance of governments is equally needed, as is actual implementation of the laws that are passed.

In January 2016, we conducted a scoping study in Uganda on behalf of the civic entity Twaweza, which revealed five key findings:

1. Public knowledge about access to information is low.
2. There are high levels of dissatisfaction with the extent of government openness, despite the existence of open data-related initiatives both by civil society and by government, which have not been sufficiently popularised or made relevant to many citizens.
3. The Uganda Access to Information Act in its current form, coupled with the shortcomings and the perceived high level of government opaqueness, has not been adequately tested.
4. There are few actors in the access to information area in Uganda. Those who are working on enabling citizens to request for information and growing government openness are even fewer.
5. The media, especially newspapers, radio, television are important sources of public information for citizens. However, the messaging in mainstream media to promote access to information and open data, needs to be well packaged and innovative.

Indeed, the ways in which technology enables access to information and accountability was the topic of discussion in a workshop hosted by the Johannesburg-based South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) in November. CIPESA hosted a similar discussion on November 23, during which 12 Ugandan journalists were equipped with skills to advance the right to Information using various forms of ICT. Part of the discussion included the use of the online public information access portal, www.askyourgov.ug as well as the use of digital security tools which support privacy, circumvent shutdowns and allow for the safe transfer of sensitive communication.

This discussion fed into engagements we pursed on access to information in Northern Uganda.
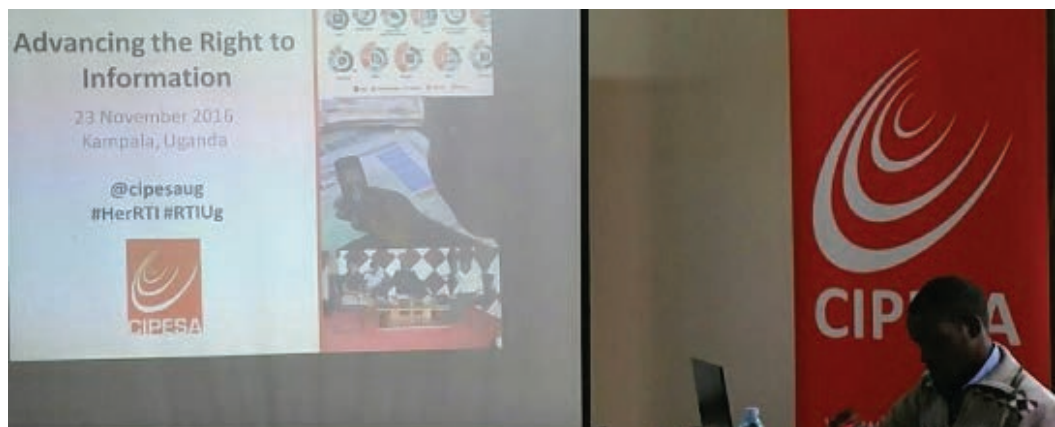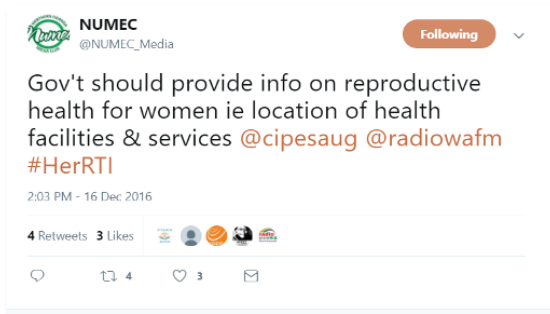

In the context of northern Uganda, transparency and accountability by public authorities and the involvement of the public in the scrutiny of public organs is particularly important. In the last decade, the region has seen several post-conflict recovery projects funded by both the government of Uganda and donors aimed at restoring public social services destroyed by war. Most of these projects have been implemented under the framework of the Peace, Recovery, and Development Programme (PRDP).

Due to a lack of public scrutiny and inadequacy of information to the public about projects under the PRDP, substandard work and corruption have impeded recovery efforts as was the case in 2012 when the Auditor General uncovered the swindling of over 50 billion shillings meant for rehabilitation of the war-torn region.

We linked the need for access to information law to the rehabilitation efforts in the region, including through talk shows linked to toll-free polls, media training, and the eventual production of content related to transparency and accountability.

Meanwhile, the 2016 United Nations theme for Human Rights Day was "Stand up for someone's rights!" As part of our efforts to create awareness and knowledge on Ugandan citizens' right to information, we utilised a series of online chats and six radio talk shows on Speak FM and Mega FM- both located in Gulu, Northern Uganda - to generate further awareness of access to information. Insights from the radio talk shows were shared on blogs and through tweets.

NUMEC @NUMEC_Media · Following

Gov't should provide info on reproductive health for women ie location of health facilities & services @cipesaug @radiowafm #HerRTI

2:03 PM - 16 Dec 2016

4 Retweets 3 Likes

4   3

CIPESA @cipesaug · Following

Illiteracy, cost, language, #CyberVAW are some of the threats to women's enjoyment of #RightToInformation | #HerRTI via @CarterCenter

Access to information is a fundamental right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and critical for the exercise of basic socio-economic and political rights. More than 90 countries around the world claim a statutory right to information, yet in many of these countries, one-half of the population is limited in their full enjoyment of the right to information and the myriad benefits that it may provide. In the rare instances when requests for information are disaggregated by gender, statistics demonstrate that women do not access information at the

10:52 AM - 10 Dec 2016

2 Retweets 4 Likes

Isis-WICCE, AfricaMediaNetwork, Chapter Four Uganda and 5 others

2   4

Chapter Four Uganda @chapter4uganda · Following

Download the Official Secrets Act, 1964 here: An example of a law that is inconsistent with right to infor bit.ly/2hF2Us9 #HerRTI

2:46 PM - 16 Dec 2016

4 Retweets 1 Like

4   1

In addition to the above, we pursued various interventions to advance RTI, including holding training events and round table discussions for civil society, the media and government officials.

Right to Information: The Case of Uganda: Uganda's 2005 right to information law remains little known and largely unimplemented. Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) hardly release information voluntarily and tend to be unresponsive to information requests from citizens, due to a culture of secrecy and government bureaucracy that conflict with the law. Conversely, few citizens demand for information as a result of low awareness of their rights and the belief that public officials routinely ignore citizens' information requests.

At a December 15, 2016 dialogue involving public officials, including information officers from various MDAs, journalists and civil society representatives, it emerged that the government and citizens have not prioritised RTI. "The role of information has been undervalued and sometimes it gets a zero release in [MDA] budgets," said a public official. Another noted that 11 years after the law was enacted, no MDA has submitted an annual report to parliament on its information disclosure record, including requests received from citizens, as required by the law.

Other challenges prominently cited included under-staffing in MDAs, employing information officers that are unqualified and who often lack mandate to speak on behalf of the public entity, and conflicting laws that make implementing the RTI law difficult.

Journalists shared their experiences of regularly being denied information, often with no reason provided. One journalist note that informal approaches are the primary means of attaining public information held by the state.

Despite these obstacles, there are some indications that things could get better. Each government department is now required to have an information officer, and a few public bodies are beginning to implement the government's 2013 Communications Strategy, although they have been unable to make any significant increase to budget allocations for the information function.

Civil society representatives pointed out additional concerns including the lack of deliberate action to promote RTI particularity for women and people with disabilities. A representative from the National Union of Women with Disabilities noted that when information is disseminated to the public via television and radios, people with visual and hearing impairments miss out.

> *Despite the directive from the Uganda Communications Commission that all TV stations should have a sign language interpretation during some news broadcasts, none of the more than 10 local TV stations have done so, further co tributing to the exclusion and limited participation by PWDs in governance processes.*

Advancing Digital Security Skills

Trainers: May 25–28

Under the OpenNet Africa initiative, CIPESA in partnership with Kampala-based DefendDefenders (formerly East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) hosted a three-day training of trainers (ToT) workshop for human rights activists (May 25–28, 2016).
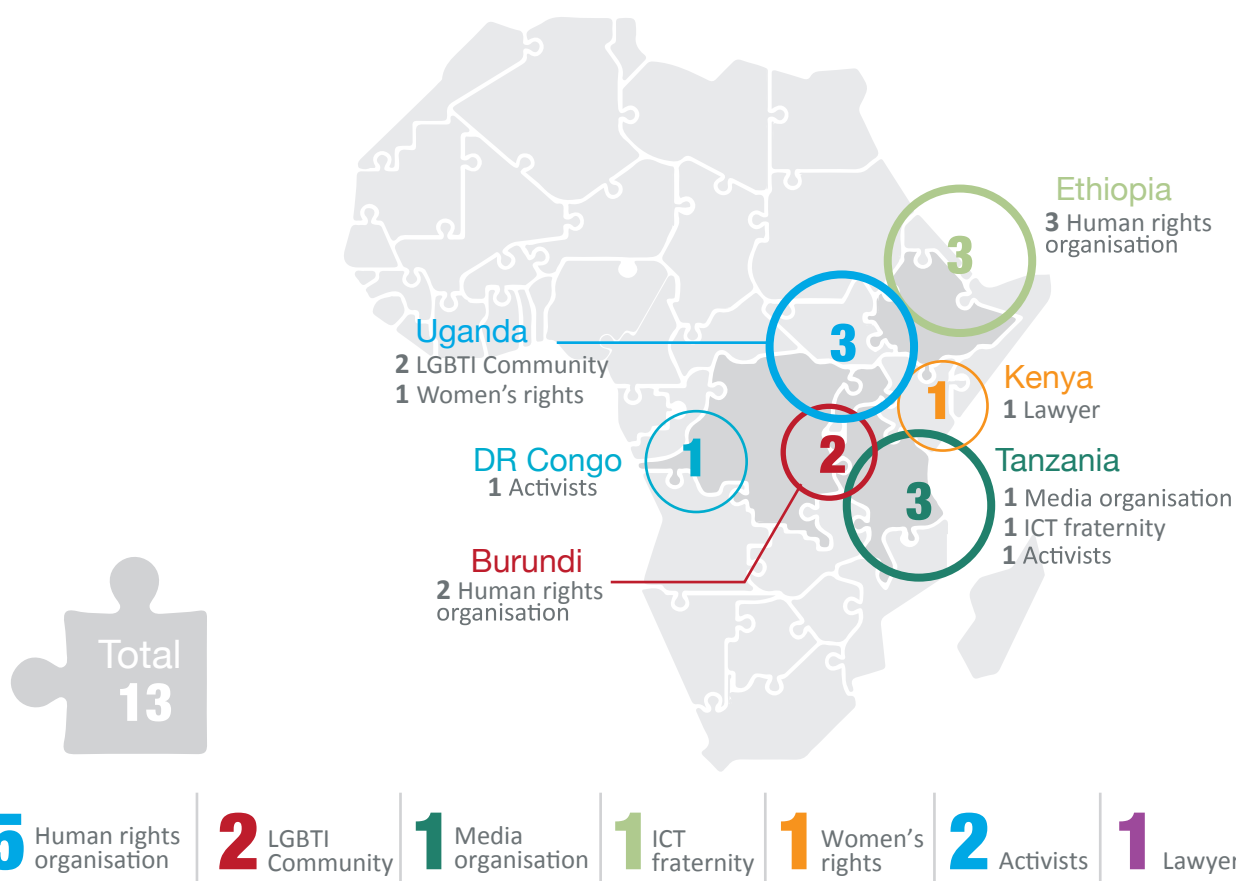
The ToT brought together 13 specially selected individuals from organisations based in six countries namely Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The workshop was aimed at enabling civic actors to work securely and effectively to promote human rights and to become infomediaries and multipliers of digital security knowledge and skills.

Arsene Tungali
@arsenebaguma

Following

Certified Digital Security trainer by @cipesaug & @OpenNetAfrica. Now let's use this knowledge to help ppl out

10:00 AM - 8 Sep 2016

6 Retweets 9 Likes

This work fed into the OpenNet Africa goal of raising awareness on the need to uphold online rights including freedom of expression, assembly, privacy and access to information through research and dialogue on the nature of threats to access, privacy and security online in the focus countries and the need for progressive policy and practice.

The need for expertise in digital security remains large in many countries in Africa – these skills are of particular importance amidst growing affronts to data privacy, access to information and freedom of expression. Topics covered at the training included email encryption, circumvention techniques, and two-factor authentication, among other key skills.

Participants at ToT

Ethiopia
3 Human rights organisation

Uganda
2 LGBTI Community
1 Women's rights

Kenya
1 Lawyer

DR Congo
1 Activists

Tanzania
1 Media organisation
1 ICT fraternity
1 Activists

Burundi
2 Human rights organisation

Total
13

5 Human rights organisation

2 LGBTI Community

1 Media organisation

1 ICT fraternity

1 Women's rights

2 Activists

1 Lawyer

Over June 2016, beneficiaries went on to upskill at least 25 individuals in their respective countries to complete their certification process.

Further, the OpenNet Africa project aims at empowering tech innovators (mobile and web app developers, programmers and engineers) to appreciate internet freedom tools design, and to turn them into advocates of secure tools through understanding usability and vulnerabilities in technology for human rights. As such, we participated in a Digital tools localization sprint hosted by the Localisation Lab in Uganda. The aim of the Lab is to promote the diversity of languages available for digital security tools.

Localization Lab
@L10nLab · Following

This week we completed @Peerio + @whispersystems's Signal App in Luganda language, and hope to have them available soon! #L10NsprintKampala

4:18 PM - 19 Nov 2016

7 Retweets 11 Likes

1   7   11

The Localisation Lab led a digital tools localisation exercise alongside Defend Defenders, iFreedom Uganda, and Digital Society Zimbabwe. We were invited to participate in the event which saw the tools Peerio and Signal translated into Luganda.

Notable Publications from the Year

- State of Internet Freedom in Zambia 2016
- State of Internet Freedom in Somalia 2016"
- Etat des Lieux des Liberte: République démocratique du Congo Position
- Paper: The State Of Access To Information In Uganda Uganda Journalists and the Right To Information
- State Of Internet Freedom In Uganda 2016
- State of Internet Freedom in Democratic Republic of the Congo 2016
- Public Dialogue On Promoting The Right To Information In Uganda
- State Of Internet Freedom In Kenya 2016
- State of Internet Freedom in Zimbabwe 2016
- State of Internet Freedom in Burundi 2016
- State of Internet Freedom in Tanzania 2016
- Workshop Report: Right To Information Training for Women's Rights Organisations
- Project Evaluation - Open Data and Right to Information August 2016
- State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2016

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Patricia Litho, PhD - Board Member
Peter Mwesige, PhD - Board Member
Vincent Bagiire – Board Chair

Supporters
Our work is supported by a wide, globally-distributed network of organisations that have a shared vision that access to ICT can be an enabler of social inclusion, equality, and development.

We extend our gratitude to our supporters for their continued commitment to our work, and by extension, to the work of our network of collaborators.

During the course of 2016, CIPESA had a budget of US$ 734,682. Our books of accounts are independently audited annually in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards.

CIPESA