

# 2019 | Annual Report

# Table of Contents

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Overview	3
Digital Access Disruptions: Internet Shutdowns and Increased Affordability Burdens	5
Despots and Network Disruptions in Africa	6
Documentary: Citizens Offline- The State, the Companies & Internet Shutdowns	7
Growing Surveillance Trends and Information Controls	8
Promoting Digital Inclusion for Refugee Women	10
Policy Interventions	11
ICT Policy Workshops	13
Promoting Access To Information through ICT	14
Press Freedom, Inclusion: A Continental Balancing Act	15
Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica)	17
Advancing Digital Rights At re:publica	18
Upholding A Culture Of Collaborations	19
Consumer Protection	20
CIPESA in the Media	21

# Overview

Within a few weeks of 2019, the continent witnessed various, mostly negative, internet freedom developments. These included the disruption to online communications that Zimbabwe experienced during public protests, uncertainty over possible disruptions to online communications during elections in Nigeria, and the dramatic impact that the social media taxes had on internet penetration in Uganda. Meanwhile, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon also experienced network disruptions, and by the end of the year, Ethiopia, Sudan and Liberia, among others, had joined the tally.

In a positive development, the Zimbabwe high court ruled that the January 2019 shutdown was illegal, finding that the minister of state in charge of national security did not have the authority to issue any shutdown directives. Yet this bright spot was only a drop in the ocean amidst the network disruptions pandemic. Our research this year showed that up to 22 African governments have ordered network disruptions in the last four years. Countries with the worst democracy deficit, media freedom records, and leaders who had stayed in power for the longest periods, were more likely to order network disruptions.

Network disruptions impede economic development, as shown in our Framework for Calculating the Economic Impact of Internet Disruptions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, while states implement their digital transformation agendas, and the African Union Commission (AUC) in partnership with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) are finalising a Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa, internet disruptions continue to undermine efforts to increase financial inclusion and to grow the digital economy on the continent.

This year also marked 30 years of the World Wide Web - but it also was a stark reminder of the persisting digital divide which leaves millions unconnected, particularly in Africa. Further, the rate at which new users are coming online has reportedly slowed dramatically in recent years and the affronts to those online remain on the rise. This scenario, coupled with growing threats to democracy and human rights in the digital sphere, prompted a concerned group of stakeholders to work on building the Contract for the Web as a road map for a web that works for everyone, everywhere - where we can collectively define our responsibilities towards ensuring a free, open and fair web. CIPESA is part of a core group of these stakeholders who are led by the Web Foundation, and include AnchorFree, Google, The New Now, change.org, and the governments of France and Germany.

In early March, we joined numerous organisations in an online campaign calling for the signing into law of the Digital Rights and Freedom Bill in Nigeria, which would be Africa's first law dedicated to protecting digital rights and online freedom. However, on March 20, President Muhammadu Buhari declined to assent to the bill, much to the dismay of the African digital rights community. Had it been assented, it would have been a landmark in the advancing of digital rights.

While many countries are still not yet ready for a truly inclusive and open internet, we remain steadfast in the pursuit of this through the promotion of inclusive and effective ICT policy in Africa. Over the next few pages, we share some of the work we conducted that supports the growth of a community committed towards the inclusion of more Africans in the digital society.

During the year, we continued to work for the inclusion of marginalised and unconnected groups. In pursuit of a more inclusive digital society, the provision of accessible information to persons with disabilities is essential to enable them to exercise their fundamental freedoms and human rights. In this regard, one of the pillars of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is the pledge to leave no one behind, including in the use of ICT. We thus urged governments and donors to do more to advance ICT access for persons with disabilities and identified the key barriers to access for persons with disabilities in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Refugees are another group that is largely unconnected and we supported building their digital literacy and digital security capacity. Our work also supported the use of digital technologies to enable the feminist voice to become more visible in the push back against deep-seated patriarchal social mores and advocating progressive socio-political causes.

Our work has always aimed to build networks and collaborations across the continent and beyond in order to address the pressing digital society and internet freedom concerns on the continent. We continued to pursue this, including by hosting our annual Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa which in September 2019, was hosted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Further to this was the launch of the Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF) as a means to broaden the work being done on digital rights concerns across the continent.

research capacity building and collaborations training, FIFAfrica, and launching the Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF) in April 2019. The ADRF and FIFAfrica 2019 were pivotal to our work and key highlights too.

At institutional level, we are glad to see various partners continuing to support us, which has enabled us to hire more staff (including in Kenya and Cameroon) and fellows, to expand our network of partners and our programmes. We are grateful to our many supporters but this year we profoundly appreciate the Ford Foundation and the Sigrid Rausing Trust who provided us core grants that greatly lifted our programmatic work and institutional strength. The confidence of such funders, and the numerous implementing partners and networks we work with across the continent were invaluable to us in 2019 and will continue to propel our work to great heights in 2020.

# Digital Access Disruptions: Internet shutdowns and Increased Affordability Burdens

In February 2019, as Nigeria and Senegal went to the polls, CIPESA joined the #KeepItOn community of civil society organisations from across the world in urging the respective state authorities to ensure that online communications remained open and accessible during this critical political period. With internet shutdowns have become a trend around elections across the continent, and the mixed governance record of these two countries, the fear of network disruptions was not far-fetched. Thankfully, Nigeria and Senegal did not disrupt communications during their elections.

Meanwhile, the Over-The-Top (OTT) tax which the Uganda government introduced in July 2018 on the use of social media slashed the number of internet users in the country by five million in three months, according to figures from the industry regulator, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC). The numbers illustrated that revenue from the tax was far from the windfall which the government had predicted the tax would add to the national treasury. Despite this, the tax remained enforced all through the year - to the utter inconvenience of social media users.

Earlier studies forecast the negative impact of the OTT tax. The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) said the tax would likely push basic connectivity further out of reach for millions, as it would disproportionately and negatively impact low-income Ugandans and their ability to affordably access the internet. It explained that, where the richest Ugandan would experience an increase of 1% in their cost to connect, the cost to connect for Uganda's poorest would jump by 10%, resulting in just 1GB of data costing them nearly 40% of their average monthly income.

During FIFAfrica, financial inclusion was further highlighted, and it was stressed that internet shutdowns impeded efforts towards financial inclusion and economic development. Ghana's proactive financial inclusion strategy which has a digital finance policy that places emphasis on driving digital inclusion, was noted as an example to other countries.



*“ FIFAfrica19 provided a valuable platform to bring to the fore the conflict between regressive digital rights practices such as internet shutdowns and the quest for financial inclusion in Africa. Governments across Africa must therefore pursue and implement internet and digital rights policies that guarantee uninterrupted access and usage of the internet alongside financial inclusion strategies. ”*

Selassie Tay works with the Financial Inclusion Forum Africa and was among the travel support beneficiaries for the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica) 2019. He went on to write about Financial Inclusion in Africa in an Era of Internet Shutdowns.

# Despots and Network Disruptions in Africa

Following the start to the year which saw network disruptions in at least five African countries, we embarked upon the documentation of the predictors of network disruptions in Africa. These were captured in our report, *Despots and Disruptions: Five Dimensions of Internet Shutdowns in Africa* (English | French). We sketched the link between the level of authoritarianism in a country and how long a president has been in power, and the likelihood of experiencing a network shutdown.

The report indicated that countries whose leaders have been in power for several years are more likely to order internet shutdowns. As of January 2019, of the 14 African leaders who had been in power for 13 years or more, 79% had ordered shutdowns, mostly during election periods and public protests against government policies, as depicted in the image below.

## Mur de la honte

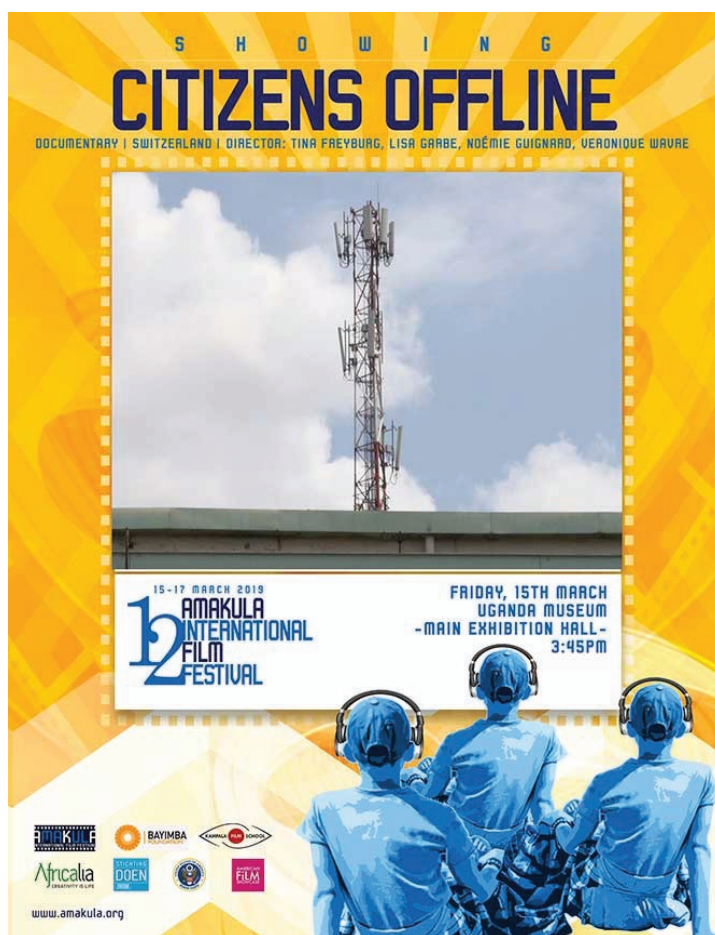


Over the year, we went on to track, and call out, the network disruptions experienced around the continent. One of the longest-lasting of these disruptions was in Chad. March 28, 2019 marked a year without access to social media platforms for citizens in Chad. The disruption, which left internet users in the country unable to utilise platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter, was initiated after an initial complete internet shutdown in January 2018, which lasted 48 hours. Alongside 78 organisations from across the world, CIPESA and our OpenNet Africa initiative joined in petitioning freedom of expression Special Rapporteurs Lawrence Mute of the African Commission and David Kaye of the United Nations, urging them to help restore social media access in Chad.

In July 2019 the Chadian government lifted the 16-month blockage on digital communications. However, various concerns remained, including the cost of access which is prohibitively high and the continued muzzling of the media, while the country remains under the grip of President Idriss Déby's autocracy. The prospects of enjoying a greater range of digital rights are low, the likelihood of another internet disruption high.

### **Documentary: Citizens Offline - The State, the Companies & Internet Shutdowns:**

We contributed to a short form documentary which was screened at the Amakula International Film Festival 2019 in Uganda. The documentary, which was also nominated for a Golden Impala Award, examined the recurring internet shutdowns in Africa and was produced by Tina Freyburg, Veronique Wavre, and Lisa Garbe, with support from the Swiss National Fund for International Studies and the Basic Research fund (GFF) from the University of St. Gallen.





# Growing Surveillance Trends and Information Controls

In our 2019 State of Internet Freedom in Africa (SIFA) report, we noted that governments have over time embraced the integration of technology into government functions and operations. This has enhanced service delivery by promoting government efficiency. Yet as several governments went on to rapidly introduce digitalisation, e-government and digital identity programmes that require citizens to provide detailed personal information, including through biometrics for voters' cards, identity cards, and drivers' licences, African states enhanced their surveillance capacity, which in turn affects citizens' digital rights such as to privacy, expression and access to information.

Since 2014, CIPESA has produced the annual State of Internet Freedom in Africa report, the definitive interrogative record on the perils and prospects of digital rights and digital inclusion on the continent. The 2019 edition examined the various measures which African countries had employed to control the digital space over the preceding two decades and how they had affected internet freedom. For the last 20 years, African countries have been broadening and enhancing control measures that govern the use of digital communications including the internet. According to the Sifa 2019 report, these controls when viewed collectively, continue to undermine democracy and cement authoritarians hold on political power.

## Evolution of Information Controls in Africa since 1999 *(Extracted from the SIFA 2019 report)*

Each successive period since 1999 has come with some notable developments in internet controls, including establishment of regulatory agencies. By **2005**, a few regional countries were beginning to realise the need to intercept communications, including digital communications.

Ethiopia was probably the first sub-Saharan African country to begin blocking internet sites, with the first reports of blocked websites appearing in May 2006 when opposition blogs were unavailable. During this period, laws governing media and journalism were the main way to control freedom of expression, including of voices that questioned government actions.

Between **2006** and **2010**, several governments started to take dedicated moves to regulate the digital sphere, including proscribing various actions related to the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). There was a flurry of legislation to enable the interception of communications, or to criminalise the use of certain services (as was the case with Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Proclamation- No 652/2009, under which it is estimated that over 900 individuals were indicted over their online activity).



This period also witnessed numerous cases of blockage of critical websites in countries such as Burundi and Uganda. Distinctly, this period saw the start of systematic disruption of communications and other internet freedom infringements during election periods, although the target was critical websites (such as in Ethiopia and Uganda) and short messaging services, for instance in Ethiopia and Kenya).

The 2011-2015 period saw an increase in the government internet control measures with dedicated efforts to regulate and control citizens' online actions. Many more citizens were arrested and prosecuted over alleged offences and crimes committed through online mediums. More governments ordered disruptions to communications.

Cybercrime laws enacted in this period (for example in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda) became the main pieces of legislation used to undermine internet freedom through arrests and prosecution of ICT users. These laws provide vague definitions of cyber offenses and have been used to arrest and intimidate voices of dissent.

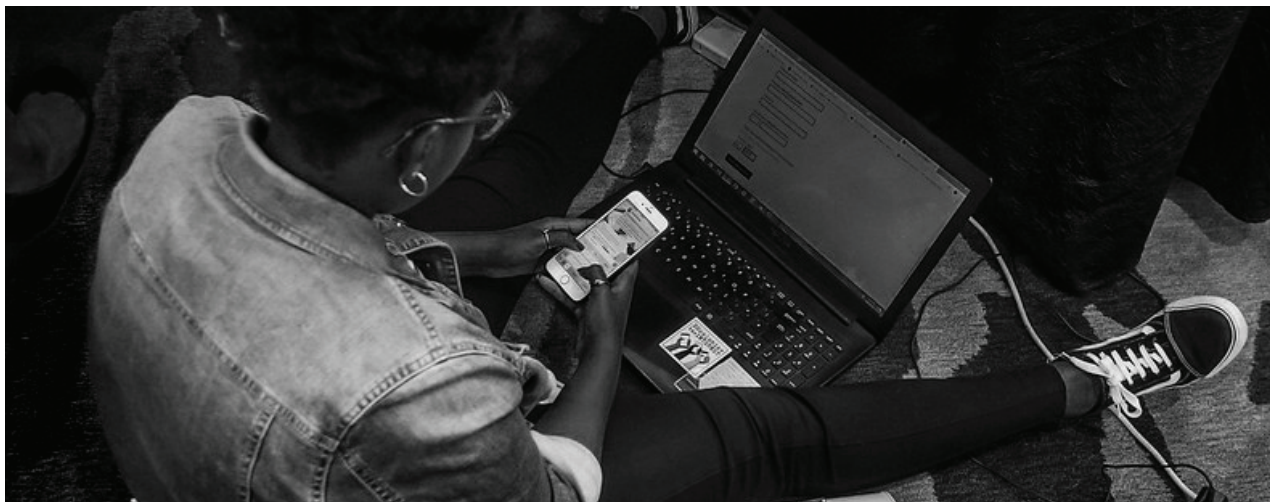
The 2016-2019 period was the "golden era" of network disruptions (commonly known as internet shutdowns). During this period, nearly half the countries in Africa, at least 22 countries experienced a government-ordered network disruption, with popular social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter being the main target. Some countries also ordered blockage of SMS, or of the entire internet, and in Uganda, Chad and DRC, mobile money services were disrupted. In 2019 alone, five countries registered network disruptions to include – Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Sudan and Zimbabwe).

The report recommends several remedies for governments, companies, media, academia, technical community and civil society.

*Find the full report [here](#).*

Currently, a range of spyware vendors including Italian Hacking Team, the Anglo-German Gamma Group, and Israeli's NSO Group, have found a ready market in authoritarian and repressive governments in Africa and elsewhere. Similarly, systematic propaganda campaigns designed by meddlesome actors - including government agents and ambitious data analytics companies such as Cambridge Analytica working on behalf of state and non-state actors - are becoming conspicuous in Africa, especially during electoral periods. These moves have effectively put Africa in the crosshairs of new disinformation and surveillance schemes that undermine democracy. The tools and tactics of these operators, who are mostly non-African, are increasingly undermining democracy and respect for human rights in Africa, as they enable mass surveillance and disinformation that manipulates and undermines political discourse.

# Promoting Digital Inclusion for Refugee Women



Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face inequalities which reflect the disparities present in basic access to education and finance, among other rights for girls and women. These are compounded by the over sexualisation of girls and women in media and popular culture, the exclusion of women from positions of power in numerous fields including politics and business through to policy making and technology development. These characteristics of gendered inequalities are present in the continued digital access gap with men more likely to access and utilise the internet.

Statistics on the prevalence of cyber harassment of women in Africa remain scanty. Where some reports of cyber harassment of women in the region are available, the extent to which it affects women in marginalised communities is also not well known. Indeed, the growing proliferation of technology is reported to be facilitating online harassment of women by enabling the anonymity of the perpetrators who could be located anywhere and without physical contact with the victim. In many instances, cases of cyber harassment go unreported and victims have limited legal recourse or resources to seek justice.

With a grant from our Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF), grantee Access for All carried out bi-lingual (English and Arabic) interviews and hosted a training workshop, which explored prevailing digital security/protection concerns among urban refugees in Uganda and mechanisms to address them. It was recognised that urban refugees faced heightened gender-based violence risks due to unmet multiple and complex social, economic and medical needs as well as intersecting oppressions based on race, ethnicity, nationality, language, sexual orientation and gender identity. Moreover, humanitarian programmes were found to focus less on serving refugees in urban areas and even less so on sexual minority refugees.

These sentiments echoed those at engagements with policy makers, digital security experts and law enforcement officers, which were carried out as part of the Women At Web project that CIPESA is conducting as part of a broader regional initiative campaign spanning Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

# Policy Interventions

## Improving Access to Tech for Persons With Disabilities:

In 2018, Uganda's communications regulator commissioned a study to establish the status of access and usage of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) by Persons With Disabilities (PWDs). CIPESA made submissions to the commission, which could help various government agencies to devise strategies that meaningfully improve usage of digital technologies by PWDs. Find more on our submission [here](#).

Furthering to this work, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) we called upon governments and communication services providers in East Africa to take decisive steps to enable meaningful usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for persons with disabilities in a policy brief. The brief highlighted Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda's obligations on enabling digital accessibility for persons with disabilities and challenges the three countries to live up to their commitments, as contained in national laws and policies, as well as international instruments they are party to.

*This workshop is one of its kind because it is not only about issues of physical accessibility but also informational and technological accessibility for persons with disabilities. This is a good initiative by CIPESA and I want to applaud them for this. It is a journey that has started and I look forward to us going on with this journey until we achieve our goal of persons with disabilities being included in technology."*

**George Shimanyula, Cheshire Disability Services Kenya.**

1. In May 2019, we discussed a presentation at the Stockholm Internet Forum (SIF), on how social media taxes in Uganda had affected ICT usage for persons with disabilities. We presented suggestions on what the Uganda government and private telecom operators need to do to improve access and affordability for persons with disabilities.
2. In October 2019, the Oslo Metropolitan University, Eduardo Mondlane University, the Instituto Nacional do Governo Electrónico (INAGE), and the Italian Development Cooperation Agency, invited us to make a presentation on the disability indicators, at the Conference on Universal Design and Assistive ICT for the inclusion of persons with disability in Mozambique.
3. In January 2019, we submitted to the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), the telecoms industry regulator, suggestions on improving ICT access and use and enhancing compliance by licensed operators and government departments and agencies; and participated at a workshop organised by the regulator to discuss these issues.
4. The Disability Inclusion Helpdesk of UK and GSMA invited us to a webinar on mobile phone technology for disability-inclusive agricultural development. The webinar gathered experts in inclusive mobile technology, inclusive agriculture and from DPOs for a structured discussion on emerging practice in the field. We shared insights from our work on digital accessibility in Africa.
5. joined the Internet Society (ISOC) Accessibility Special Interest Group (which replaced the Internet Society's long-standing Disability & Special Needs Chapter).

## CIPESA Makes submissions to the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC):

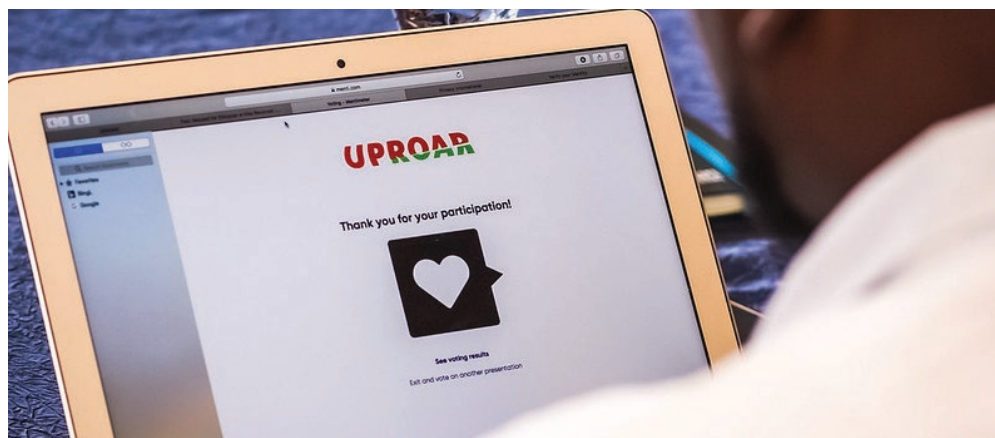
In May 2019, we joined the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Rhizomatica, AfChix Uganda chapter, BOSCO Uganda, and the Internet Society to submit comments to the then ongoing review of the licensing framework for the telecommunications sector in Uganda. The submissions were in response to a call by UCC and addressed key issues such as national roaming, effective spectrum allocation, infrastructure sharing, affordability, and the gender digital divide.

## Universal Periodic Review:

Shining a Light on Countries' Digital Rights Records Human rights review mechanisms such as the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Africa Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) provide a unique opportunity to address human rights concerns in African countries. As such, CIPESA is increasingly working on bringing digital rights issues to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR is a one of a kind process of the United Nations (UN) Member States which involves a review of their human rights records. As a state-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, the UPR provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations.

The ultimate aim of this mechanism is to improve the human - and digital rights - situation in all countries and address rights violations. As member state, Nigeria underwent the third cycle human rights assessment under the UPR mechanism during the 31st session of the Human Rights Council in November 2018. We reported that the country failed to guarantee human rights for marginalised populations and increasingly, in the online sphere. Read more about our UPR contributions on internet Freedom in Nigeria under cycle one and two as well as the recommendations we submitted in partnership with Small Media, and Paradigm Initiative

Further to this, as part of the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa, in partnership with Small Media, an intensive two-day workshop on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was held as part of the Forum which brought together writers, activists and lawyers from across the continent.

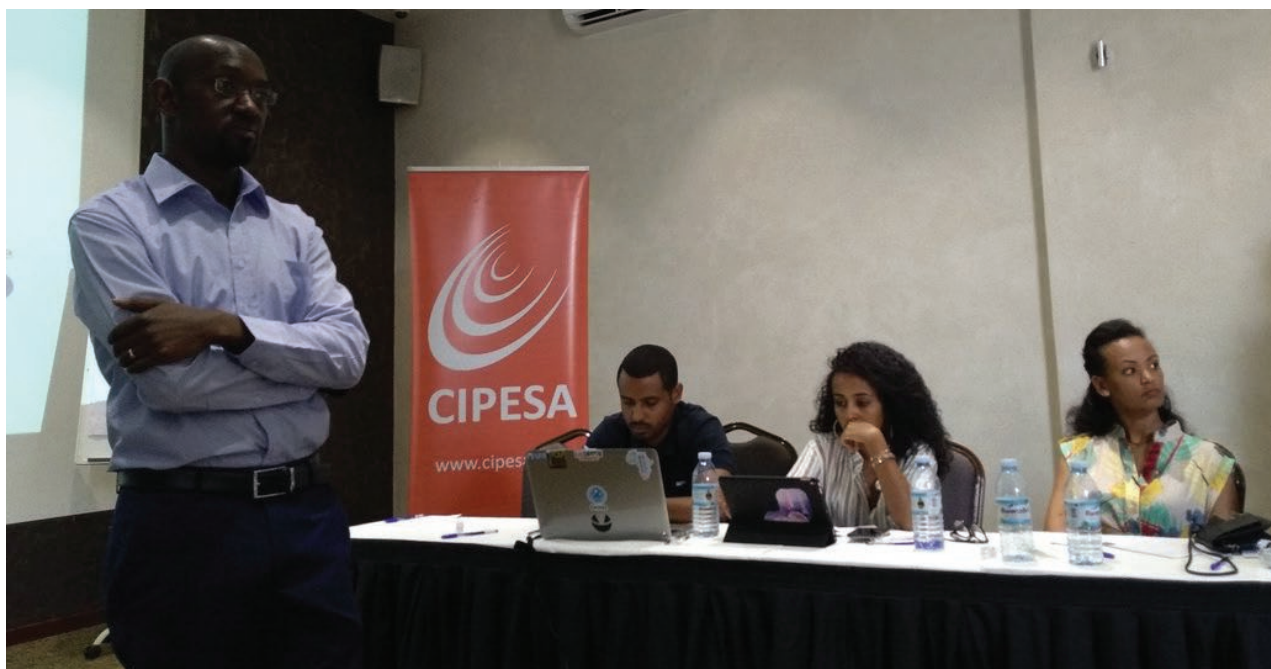




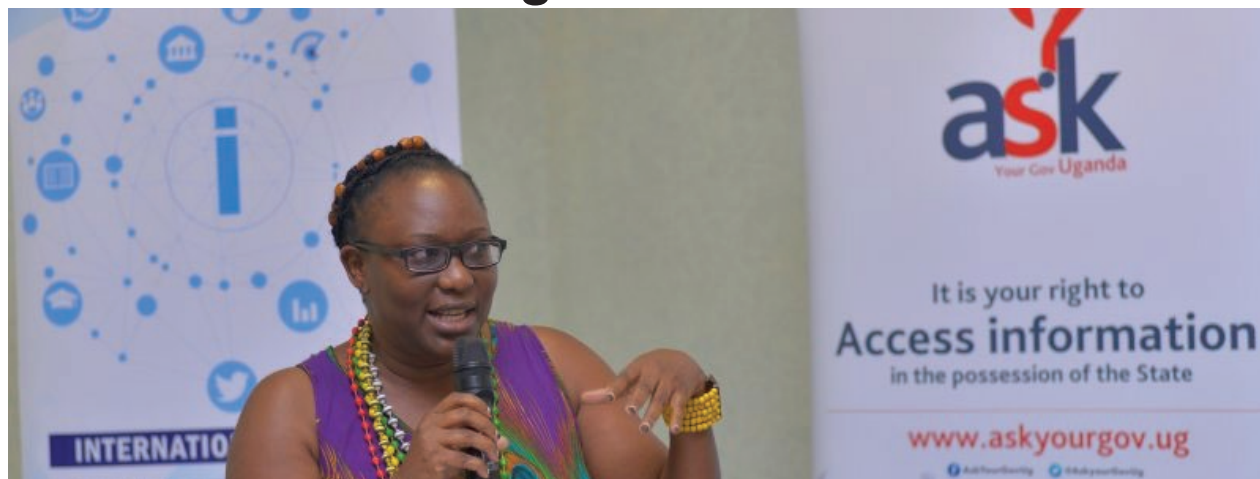
# ICT Policy Workshops

In Malawi, we hosted a two-day (July 30 - 31 2019) ICT Policy workshop which brought together 14 participants drawn from traditional human rights organisations, academia and tech organisations. The workshop introduced human rights actors to the various concepts of digital rights, and included a digital security training component to equip participants with the skills to ensure their safe use of the internet given the nature of their work. Among the key concerns at the workshop was that, in the wake of mass personal data collection, the protection of citizens' data remains under-prioritised. In the last three years, the Malawi government has passed various legislation, including the National Registration and Identification System (NRIS), which calls for compulsory national identification documents. As of October 2019, nine million Malawians had registered on the NRIS despite the absence of a data protection framework, leading one commentator to question whether Malawians are sleep-walking into a surveillance state. Watch this video with highlights from the meeting.

On September 16-17, 2019, we hosted 24 civil society delegates from Ethiopia and Uganda, to strengthen their capacity in advocacy for progressive cyber laws. They were introduced to domestic, regional, and international instruments and laws governing human rights including freedom of expression and the right to information, and their application to internet freedom. The trainers emphasised practical and actionable policy and advocacy strategies for promoting internet freedom, including awareness campaigns and engagements with policy makers and other stakeholders, strategic litigation to challenge problematic legislation, and through the Universal Periodic Review, a country-level human rights mechanism overseen by the United Nations.



# Promoting Access to Information through ICT



Despite the existence of legal and regulatory frameworks that promote the right to information, access to public information remains a big challenge in Uganda. The potential of ICT to promote citizens' access to information is widely acknowledged and in 2014, the government and civil society partners launched the Ask Your Government (AYG) web platform that allows citizens to make online information requests to government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). As part of our work on promoting access to information in various countries, we assessed the performance of the platform and four years since the portal's launch, it was evident that whereas the number of information requests and registered entities had increased, responsiveness by public officials was low.

Despite the existence of legal and regulatory frameworks that promote the right to information, access to public information remains a big challenge in Uganda. The potential of ICT to promote citizens' access to information is widely acknowledged and in 2014, the government and civil society partners launched the Ask Your Government (AYG) web platform that allows citizens to make online information requests to government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

However, four years on, it is evident that most citizens might not be aware of their right to information let alone the procedures for accessing information and data that is held by public bodies. Meanwhile, public officials continue to ignore citizens' information requests despite efforts to equip both the duty bearers and rights holders, including information officers, journalists as well as women's rights organisations, with knowledge and skills on rights and responsibilities.

The limited levels of government responsiveness to information requests and uptake of AYG by both citizens and public officials impact upon initiatives working to promote access to public information for social accountability and civic engagement. This calls for more capacity enhancement, sensitisation and awareness raising among public officials of their duties and responsibilities as laid down in the Access to Information Act. Likewise, MDAs ought to utilise the different ICT platforms and tools to proactively release public information as prescribed in the Act and make efforts to ensure that citizens are aware of such information and where to find it.

See more about Access to Information and the Ask Your Gov Uganda platform [here](#).



# Press Freedom, Inclusion: A Continental Balancing Act

As part of the World Press Freedom Day (WPDF) celebration CIPESA participated at the global celebration in Ethiopia and at a national event in Uganda where we made contributions on the relationship between network disruptions (such as internet shutdowns and social media blockages), freedom of expression and the role of the media.

At the main WPDF event, CIPESA participated in a panel hosted by The Global Network Initiative (GNI) which mapped the different ways that digital technology impacts election-relevant information flows, as well as the inter-relationships between these impacts with the goal of developing a systems and data flowchart that can help policy makers, companies, elections administrators, elections observers, media, and other stakeholders identify and mitigate risks, improve planning and coordination, and enhance transparency around their efforts to support elections.

We went on to host a session titled “Keeping It On at Election Times: Navigating the Dilemma, Mapping Good Practices,” during which panelists from the Access Now, the GNI and the Web Foundation discussed trends and implications of network disruptions on journalists, activists, and civil society organisations.

Meanwhile in Uganda, we also spoke at a session titled “The impact of internet shutdowns on freedom of expression and the right to information during elections”. The Ugandan event was organised by the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) and various partners including CIPESA, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the American Embassy in Uganda, the Human Rights Network of Journalists, and Freedom House.



## **Which way for a free press in Guinea?**

Guinea's press law reflects the political will to ensure a free, independent and pluralistic media in the country. Further, growing internet penetration has facilitated media diversity. However, persisting acts of repression and intimidation of journalists and bloggers are in total disregard of the Freedom of the Press Act which decriminalises press crimes, and online critics remain exposed to harsh penalties emanating from the cyber security law. In addition, the current inadequacy of the supporting legal framework, and stagnation of the bill on public access to information, limit media's contribution to democratic governance. For a conducive freedom of expression environment to thrive in Guinea, it is imperative for the government to adopt an adequate legal framework and ensure its enforcement at all levels.

A number of laws and policies undermine the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution and this leave online and offline freedom of the press hanging in the balance (French).

## **Guaranteeing an Inclusive Digital Space in Cameroon:**

Cameroon's government has professed its intention to leverage the digital economy for sustainable development and to establish an enabling legal and regulatory framework. However, developments such as taxation of application downloads, internet disruptions, and limited efforts to bridge the digital gender divide, indicate a shrinking digital space and are likely obstacles to the uptake of ICT. In this analysis we noted why more efforts are necessary to ensure a digital environment that is both open and accessible to all, upholds users' safety and security, and guarantees constitutional rights.

# Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica)



The 2019 FIFAfrica edition was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on September 23-26, 2019. It brought together over 300 participants from 47 countries to deliberate on gaps, concerns and opportunities for advancing privacy, access to information, free expression, non-discrimination and the free flow of information online on the continent. This sixth edition of Forum was hosted alongside the Ethiopian Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MINT), and various other partners.

  
**300**  
participants



  
**47**  
countries

In keeping the stride of expanding the conversation, as well as knowledge and skills development to different parts of the continent. In its inaugural years, the Forum took place in Kampala, Uganda. Since then, FIFAfrica's expanding footprint has seen it being hosted in Johannesburg, South Africa in partnership with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) in 2017 and in Accra, Ghana in partnership with the Media Foundation West Africa (MFWA) in 2018.

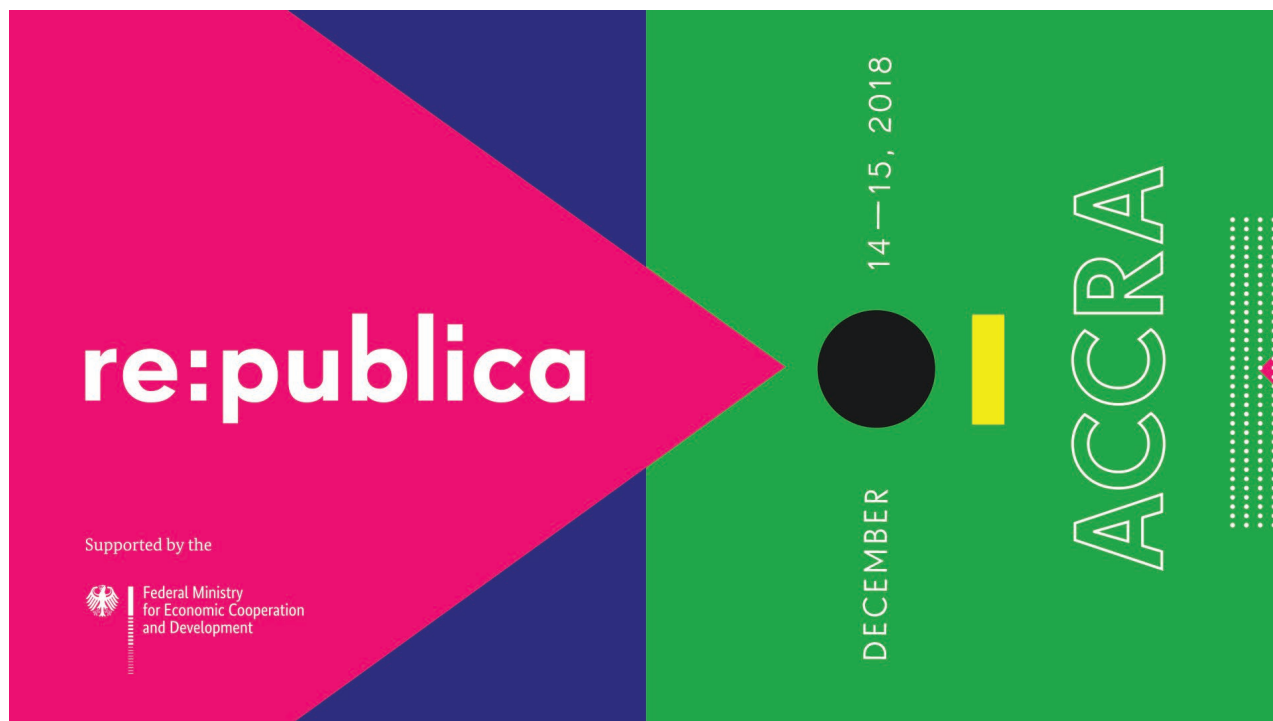
Over the years, through panel discussions, workshops, exhibitions and lightning talks, the proceedings of FIFAfrica19 explored common strategies for impactful work in promoting internet freedom in the face of persistent affronts to the rights of African online users.

The Forum responds to rising challenges to the enjoyment of internet freedom in various countries, including arrests and intimidation of online users, internet disruptions, and a proliferation of laws and regulations that undermine the potential of digital technology to drive socio-economic and political development on the continent. FIFAfrica therefore puts internet freedom on the agenda of key actors including African policy makers, regulators, human rights defenders, law enforcement representatives, and the media, paving the way for broader work on advancing online rights in Africa and promoting the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance.

See more about the proceedings of the Forum which included the launch of the 2019 edition of the State of Internet Freedom in Africa, the launch of the Ethiopia Bloggers Association through to an assortment of skills workshops and a Digital Exhibition

See the report from the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa 2019

## Advancing Digital Rights at re:publica



The need to guarantee access to the internet was among the key discussions at the first African edition of re:publica that took place in Accra, Ghana in December 2018. We showcased our work and contributed to debates on advancing digital rights in Africa including on the role of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in politics, the arts and innovation. Regrettably, many actions and decisions pertaining to internet governance on the continent continue to raise the question of whether Africa's internet future is fractured.

With support from BMZ and the German Society for International Cooperation agency (GIZ), CIPESA hosted a Digital Rights Lounge throughout the duration of re:publica, organised workshops on civic participation and online content regulation, and participated in sessions on the work of investigative journalists and activists, among others.

Through CIPESA and the support of partner organisations, 13 individuals from 10 African countries were enabled to participate at re:publica.

# Upholding A Culture Of Collaborations



In Uganda, we joined Unwanted Witness and Article 19 in a workshop on Internet Access and Telecommunications, the Right to Expression, Access to Information, and the Right to Privacy which emphasized the need for cross-sectoral collaboration in digital rights advocacy in the region. This was followed by a regional strategic meeting of the Women At Web initiative which is focused on interventions to raise public awareness about cyber violence against women and protect women online more effectively. The meeting included representation from Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda - for which CIPESA is coordinating the efforts in Uganda. As part of

the commemoration of International Women's Day we participated in the global online campaign for equality, linking it to other online campaigns including the celebration of 30 years of the web (#Web30) and the contract for the web (#ForTheWeb). We also featured in the #WomenInHumanRightsUg campaign.

In Zambia, we continue to liaise with stakeholders on recent media freedom developments and avenues for advocacy following a December 2018 dialogue and capacity building engagement with media, law enforcement, legal fraternity and technologists, among others.

In partnership with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), we co-hosted the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms coalition strategy retreat held on February 18-20 in Entebbe, Uganda. The meeting aimed to kick-start the process of developing a strategic plan to sharpen the coalition's advocacy and impact.

In partnership with the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) towards the end of February, we co-hosted in Nairobi, Kenya, a workshop themed "Digital Space and the Protection of Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly in Africa".. The workshop also served as a consultative meeting with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, Clément Voule. Lessons from this discussion also contributed to content we shared in a March 22 training workshop for journalists and advocates hosted by the Legal Aid Service Provider Network (LASPNET) in Kampala, Uganda on freedom of expression and access to information.

As a member of the Digital Security Alliance (DSA), CIPESA shared some insights as part of the online campaign of the Human Rights Defenders Forum which took place in Kampala, Uganda. The meeting was hosted by the Human Rights Centre and served to highlight the environment in which human rights defenders operate in Uganda. The Defenders Protection Initiative, a member of the alliance, led a digital security clinic at the Forum.



# Consumer Protection

We participated at the Consumers International Summit 2019 which brought together diverse perspectives on both the digital world and consumer needs with the goal of putting consumers at the heart of digital innovation. Issues such as the absence of data protection laws in some African countries emerged including how these could potentially affect consumer trust in digital services and solutions in the long run. In cases where such laws are present, they have remained poorly implemented and this leading to similar issues on consumer trust and affinity.



Meanwhile, CIPESA fellow Tomiwa Ilori conducted an assessment of consumer rights protection in Nigeria and Uganda which noted that while Nigeria had over 103 million internet users (July 2018) and an internet penetration just over 50%, it had just provided a conducive legal environment for its digital economy landscape. For its part,

Uganda, with 18 million users (June 2018) and internet penetration of 35%, was fast catching up with consumer protection laws even though enforcement was slow. Both countries have growing digital economies which call for stronger frameworks that address the gaps and concerns that consumers have in addition to promoting consumer rights protection as pivotal pillars in their digital economy landscape.





# CIPESA in the Media



- **Quartz Africa:** African strongmen are the biggest stumbling blocks to internet access on the continent
- **Pulse Nigeria:** 3 important things you should know about internet shutdowns in Africa
- **IFEX:** The link between authoritarianism, power retention and internet shutdowns
- **Quartz Africa:** The cost of internet access dropped everywhere in the world last year—except in Africa
- **IFEX:** Déclaration commune appelant le Sénégal à maintenir Internet pendant les élections
- **All Africa and Sierra Leone Times:** Chad must end its year-long blackout of social media
- **Pulse Nigeria:** These 27 African countries have never experienced internet shutdown
- **Global Voices:** Uganda's social media tax is leaving people disconnected — and failing to meet revenue targets
- **African Center for Media Excellence (ACME):** Museveni signs Uganda's first data protection and privacy law
- **Diari ARA:** La subtil censura i el control d'internet als països de l'Àfrica
- **IFEX:** Death, shutdowns, crackdown and a glimmer of hope as Angola reviews penal code clauses in favour of LGBTQI rights
- **Advox:** Has Russia influenced the general elections in Mozambique?
- **Advox:** Writing toward freedom: Politics and digital rights in Africa
- **Africa News:** [Sci Tech] Governments, citizens battle over access to the internet
- **CIO Mag:** L'Éthiopie accueille le FIFAfrica 2019
- **Common Dreams:** Contract for the Web: Internet Inventor Tim Berners-Lee Unveils Global Plan to Battle 'Digital Dystopia'
- **Computer Weekly:** Tim Berners-Lee launches nine principles for the web
- **Click Lancashire:** Internet creator outlines plan to protect the web
- **CNN:** Chadians feel 'anger, revolt' as they struggle without internet for one year
- **Daily Monitor:** Ugandans paying highest for mobile data in E. Africa - survey
- **Daily Monitor:** Women activists want cyber stalkers arrested
- **Ethio News:** Ethiopia to host Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa
- **Face 2 Face Africa:** 2 African nations among world's top 10 most censored countries cracking down on press freedom
- **FANABC:** Ethiopia to co-host 2019 Edition of Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa
- **Fairplanet:** African economies bleed under growing internet censorship
- **Globalvoices:** How Ethiopia's ruling coalition created a playbook for disinformation
- **Globalvoices:** Will Uganda shut down the internet as opposition heats up for 2021 elections?
- **Globalvoices:** Taxing dissent: Uganda's social media dilemma
- **Globalvoices:** Ahead of Tunisia elections, social media was flooded with mis- and disinformation
- **Globalvoices:** In Ethiopia's disinformation epidemic, the crumbling ruling coalition is the elephant in the room
- **IFEX:** Assault on media freedom in Cameroon needs to stop  
Cameroon | Censorship

- **IFEX:** *From dictatorship to democracy: All eyes on The Gambia's upcoming Universal Periodic Review*
- **IFEX:** *Disrupting state surveillance, banning red berets, and suppressing dissension*
- **IT Web:** *Ethiopia losing US\$4.5 million daily due to internet shut down*
- **IJNet:** *Conference focuses on internet freedom [Africa]*
- **Just Security:** *Contesting the Legality of Internet Shutdowns*
- **Mail and Guardian:** *MTN contributed to human rights violations in Sudan, say 23 civil society groups*
- **Ministry of Innovation and Technology in Ethiopia – L** (Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa)
- **Prensa Latina:** *Ethiopia to host Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa*
- **Techpoint Africa:** *How digital taxes are hurting connectivity rates across Africa*
- **The Independent:** *Misusing computer misuse law*
- **The Monrovia Times:** *Liberian government blocks social media to suppress anti-corruption protest*
- **The Week:** *Man who invented the web unveils principles to save it*
- **Techpoint:** *How digital taxes are hurting connectivity rates across Africa*
- **Tandaa Biashara:** *Benin Internet taxes would have cut active mobile broadband subscribers by 20%- Study*
- **The Observer:** *Fighting for the plight of persons with disabilities*
- **The Observer:** *Police, stop harassing women over leaked nudes - Judith Heard*







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