

2018

Annual Report




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Landscape

 **4,000,000,000**
Internet Users

 **725 million**
smartphone users by 2020

By the start of 2018, more than four billion people around the world were using the internet, with Africa having the fastest growth rates, and the number of internet users across the continent consistently increasing every year. Meanwhile, according to the GSMA, the continent is expected to have 725 million smartphone users by 2020, up from 557 million at the end of 2015. It is also here where continued affronts to digital rights are taking place. Indeed, among the countries we studied over the course of the year, internet penetration figures ranged for low to moderate. Despite these adoption trends, it is in Africa that some of the lowest internet penetration rates are found – also where the fastest growth in internet adoption is taking place.

An increasing number of African countries are taking measures to restrict rather than promote the use of the internet. A lot of CIPESA's work has entailed responding to these shifts in policy and regulation in the various countries while also promoting a proactive approach to digital rights through multi-stakeholder convening for open deliberation, policy recommendations and submissions, knowledge and skills building in policy advocacy through to digital security, and research and documentation of trends in internet freedom in various countries.

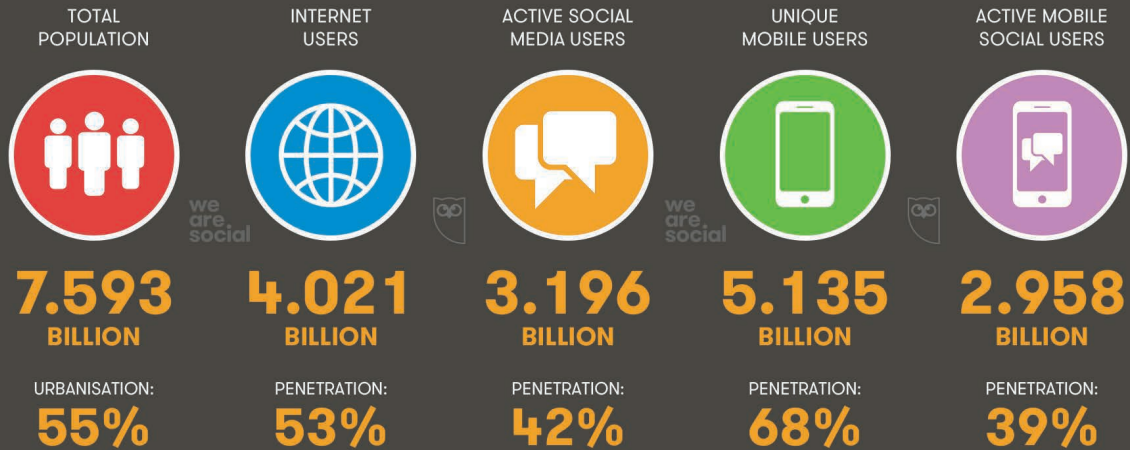
The concerning changes in the digital landscape including increasing stringent regulations on internet access and use were denounced by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) at a July meeting in Nairobi, Kenya that we participated in. During this meeting, the commission's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, Lawrence Mute, and the Country Rapporteur responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in Kenya and Tanzania, Solomon Dersso, released a statement in which they reminded states of their obligations under continent-wide human rights instruments.

Internet Penetration rates: January 2018

JAN 2018

DIGITAL AROUND THE WORLD IN 2018

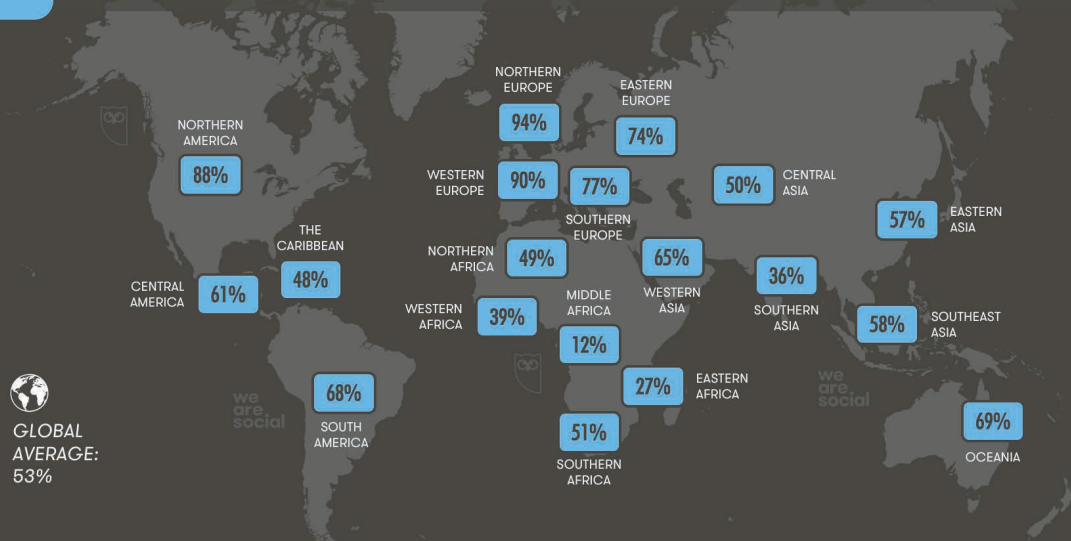
KEY STATISTICAL INDICATORS FOR THE WORLD'S INTERNET, MOBILE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA USERS



JAN 2018

INTERNET PENETRATION BY REGION

REGIONAL PENETRATION FIGURES, COMPARING INTERNET USERS TO TOTAL POPULATION



29

SOURCES: INTERNETWORLDSTATS; ITU; EUROSTAT; INTERNETLIVESTATS; CIA WORLD FACTBOOK; MIDEASTMEDIA.ORG; FACEBOOK; GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS; REGULATORY AUTHORITIES; REPUTABLE MEDIA. NOTE: PENETRATION FIGURES ARE FOR TOTAL POPULATION, REGARDLESS OF AGE.

Hootsuite™ we are social

Source: We are Social Digital Report 2018

Among the spectrum of affronts to internet freedom we covered were the following:

- Tanzania issued online content regulations that oblige bloggers, owners of discussion forums, as well as radio and television streaming services to register with the communications regulator and to pay hefty licensing and annual fees. The Electronic and Postal Communications (EPOCA) (Online Content) Regulations, 2018, which were issued on March 13, 2018, joined legislation related to online content in Tanzania that threaten citizens' constitutionally guaranteed rights to privacy and freedom of expression. The regulations further presented a negative impact on an already fragile intermediary liability landscape in a country fraught with increasing media repression and persecution of government critics.
- In July, Egypt introduced a law to regulate social media which will see social media accounts with more than 5,000 followers treated as media outlets and thus open Twitter and Facebook users open to state prosecution for content posted.
- Meanwhile, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a June 2018 decree gave all media houses (both online and offline) one month to comply with new rules which included registering with the authorities, complying with a 1996 law on freedom of the press, and having advertisements approved by relevant authorities. The new law, which was introduced on April 28 and passed within two weeks, is deemed to be in contravention of the constitution.
- In early July, Zambia's government announced plans to introduce a levy on internet voice calls. The proposed taxes come after the Zambian cabinet had also approved the introduction of the Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Bill that would repeal and amend provisions of the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 21 of 2009. The bill would purportedly "promote an increased cybersecurity posture, facilitate intelligence gathering, investigation, prosecution and judicial processes in respect of preventing and addressing cybercrimes, cyber terrorism and cyber warfare."
- On May 11, 2018 Burundi's president assented to Law No 1/09 of May 11 2018, which amends the Code of Criminal Procedure of 2013. Under Article 47 of the new law, government agencies carrying out investigations can effectively intercept electronic communications and seize computer data. Further, Articles 69, 70 and 71, permit the public prosecutor to issue a written order to start interception of electronic communication of a person under investigation. Moreover, the public prosecutor was given the right to instruct service providers and "any qualified agent" from a department or agency under the authority or supervision of the telecoms minister to install any device to facilitate interception.

- In Kenya, after the May 2018 presidential assent of the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018, a High Court judge issued a conservatory order suspending the entry into force of 26 sections of the Act following a petition filed by the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE), which challenged the law for contravening constitutional provisions on freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of the media, freedom and security of the person, right to privacy, right to property and the right to a fair hearing. Human rights defenders contend that the act contravenes constitutional provisions on freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and the right to privacy. Meanwhile, Kenya's Film and Classification Board (KFCB) issued a directive requiring licenses for anyone interested in distributing or sharing video content on social media irrespective of whether captured using a professional camera or basic phone camera.

As organisations committed to maintaining the use of the internet for human rights, social justice and sustainable development, we are concerned about the increase in threats to freedom of expression online. Attacks on freedom of expression online are taking many forms, including internet shutdowns, regressive cybercrime laws, and privatisation of censorship, among others.

Further, in June, CIPESA alongside the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Derechos Digitales, and the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), delivered an oral statement at the United Nations Human Rights Council calling for the body to condemn and call for the end to restrictions on online expression, and to adopt human rights-based approaches to internet access and regulation.

The Case of Uganda: Online Content Regulation and Social Media Taxes: _____

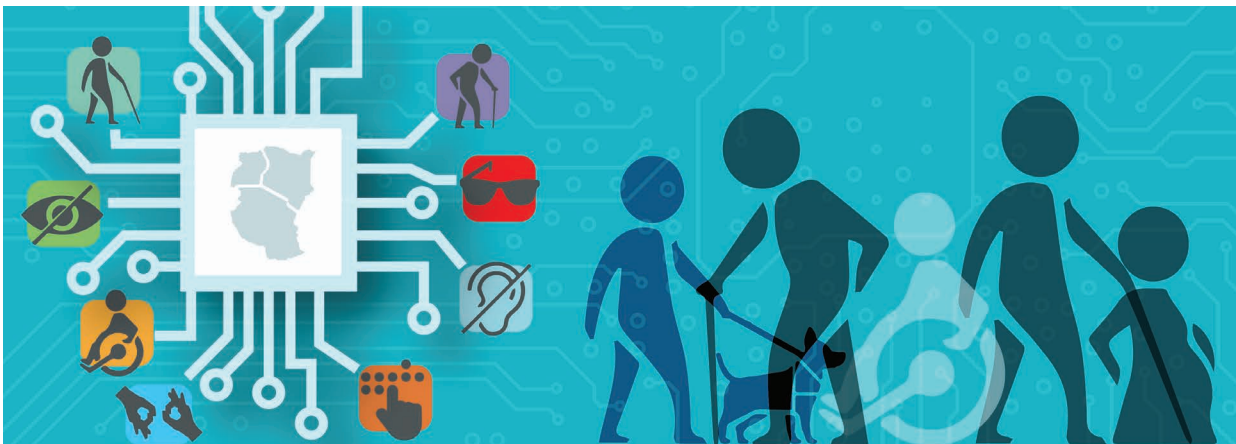
In March 2018, Uganda's communications regulator issued a directive requiring online content providers to register and pay an annual fee of USD 20. Shortly thereafter, on May 30, 2018, Uganda's parliament passed the Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill 2018, and by July 1 2018 following the enactment of the bill, users were required to pay a daily levy of Uganda Shillings (UGX) 200 (USD 0.05) before gaining access to social media platforms which were blocked following the introduction of social media taxes.

The amendment also introduced a half a percent fee on each mobile money transaction and came into effect on July 1, 2018. The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) estimated that the social media tax would cost Uganda's poorest up to 40% of their average monthly income to buy a basket of 1GB of data. Despite data from the 2017/18 National IT Survey, which showed that cost was already a barrier to internet access, the state pursued the introduction of the taxes.

Alongside the Internet Society Uganda Chapter, in July we held a convening of various stakeholders to deliberate on the economic, social and human rights impact arising from the new taxes. The meeting discussed how policy making processes can advance inclusive and equitable access to the internet, promote innovation and consumer rights protection. The meeting resulted in a statement urging the government to reassess its position on the taxes without inhibiting growth in ICT usage and innovation.

Technology and Persons with Disabilities

The promise of inclusivity through technology is yet to be realized by millions of users globally, in particular vulnerable communities such as persons with disabilities. In many African countries, uptake of ICT for persons with disabilities is often hampered by the high cost of assistive technology; low levels of ICT and disabilities literacy among policy makers, academia, civil society and other stakeholders; non-implementation of policies related to ICT access for persons with disabilities; and unavailability of relevant software in local languages. In a new facet to our work, we engaged on promoting accessible ICT in Uganda as a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This work has served to inform some of the programming undertaken thus far.



Source: CIPESA

Data Privacy

The right to privacy is central to the protection of human dignity, forms the basis of any democratic society, and supports other rights, such as freedom of expression, information and association. It is essential therefore for states to have policy, administrative and legal frameworks that robustly protect the individual from invasion of their privacy and abuse of their personal data. However, in Africa the weak or missing legal protections for personal data, abuse of existing laws by state agencies in service of often partisan interests, and poor digital security practices by citizens, are tremendously undermining citizens' privacy and personal data. These gaps in data privacy and protection remain present in the face of growth in mobile subscriptions, increased use of smartphones, mandatory SIM card registration in the majority of African countries, enhanced collection of biometric data, access to new fintech products and digitisation of more sectors of the economy and public services, making personal data increasingly prone to abuse by both state and non-state actors.

As such, our annual State of Internet Freedom in Africa report was themed, "Privacy and Data Protection in the Digital Era: Challenges and Trends in Africa" and served to document the state of privacy and personal data protection in select African countries, tracking key trends in recent years, analysing the key risk factors, and mapping notable developments on data protection and privacy legislation and violations, and users' understanding of protecting their privacy online. Among the countries the study covered were Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The study found that many states are legitimising and increasing their surveillance capacity, including by requiring mandatory registration of personal details and increasingly compelling service providers to hand over users' data. However, the surveillance activity is often not guided by judicial or other independent oversight, and in some instances there is no clarity as to which individuals and government departments have the authority to order surveillance or demand customers' meta data from telecom companies.

This means that many government departments make such orders to the operators, who do not have the latitude to reject such requests. Telecom companies and ISPs are required by law to comply with information requests or requests for surveillance assistance, including the common requirement to install software with the technical capacity to conduct surveillance and to enable active communications monitoring, and to hand over data when asked.

Ultimately, there remains the need to reconcile state interests with citizens' personal data and privacy rights. African governments need to learn from other jurisdictions such as Europe with regards to processing of personal data.

Africa Data Protection Policies and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

In June 2018, the global discussion on data protection and privacy took on a new form with the introduction of the European Union's (EU) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) with likely impact on data protection and privacy policies and practices in Africa. It is crucial to situate the data protection debate on the continent in the wider context of internet freedom, by establishing how weak or non-existent data protection policies and practices lead to wider abuses of individuals' and entities' digital rights.

The GDPR is likely to force African countries, especially those with strong trade ties to the EU, to prioritise data privacy and to more decisively meet their duties and obligations to ensure compliance.

We produced a brief on the Challenges and Prospects of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Africa, where we explored the consequences of GDPR for African states and business entities.



Source: CIPESA

Pushing Back Against Gender-Based Cyber Violence Online

The Women At Web project initiated by Deutsche Welle Akademie is aimed at improving digital literacy among more African women, with a focus on Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. In Uganda, the alliance comprised of Chapter Four, the Defenders Protection Initiative (DPI), Not your Body and Unwanted Witness, and CIPESA as project coordinator.

At the practical level, the alliance sought to strengthen the digital security capacity of women online and supported this with engagement on digital rights and the current online landscape in regard to access to information and freedom of expression. Participants in these knowledge and skills sessions included women's rights activists and human rights defenders, journalists, students and other at-risk groups such as women and the LGBTI community.

The initiative fed into ongoing online campaigns promoting digital rights, access to information and freedom of expression such as the #InternetFreedomAfrica, the Open Internet for Democracy Principles campaign titled #NetDemocracy, the #SocialMediaTax campaign against Uganda's controversial Over The Top (OTT) tax the Africa Summit for Women and Girls in Tech, #TechWomenAfrica, and was also referred to through the #HakiConf2018 campaign during the first digital rights convention in DR Congo which took place in November.

Among the initial endeavours of the alliance was the participation of Women At Web Uganda partners - Unwanted Witness (UW) and the Defenders Protection Initiative (DPI) - at our annual Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica). This included the participation of UW in a two-day Internet Freedom and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) workshop hosted by Small Media and CIPESA, thus gaining vital skills in engagement with the UPR process through research, capacity development and developing tools to support internet freedom advocacy. Further, linkages were made between UPR, gender and data privacy during a session on Trends and Challenges on Data Privacy in Africa in a taped discussion on media and the internet which was then aired in Uganda on the Perspective with Josephine Karunji (PWJK) show on the popular NTV channel. The Forum also provided an avenue for connections to be made on efforts against cyber violence against women in other parts of Africa including digital security tips being provided by DPI in the event's Digital Security Clinic.



Photo by: Zahara Abdul / CIPESA

Women at Web Uganda project highlights

- 3 intensive digital security and digital literacy workshops reaching 54 participants
- Data collection: 27 key informant interviews complemented with 6 group discussions with a total of 82 participants. Research report to be launched in 2019.
- Early designs of an online database and digital security handbook also to be launched in the next phase of the project

Building the community of internet policy advocacy actors

Policy Workshops

As part of our efforts to increase the capacity and diversity of actors involved in the internet freedom and internet governance landscape in Africa, we continually host and participate in workshops and engagements that address this goal. Among them was the co-hosting of a two-day workshop alongside the Goma-based Rudi International ahead of the first-ever digital rights conference in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). The workshop drew 29 participants including civil society representatives, lawyers, and journalists from Burundi, Kenya, DR Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

Facing similar reprisals for freedom of expression in their countries, the workshop participants explored the state of internet freedom including policy gaps at national levels in Africa, the use of technology as a tool for civic participation and democracy using the Open Internet for Democracy Principles playbook, as well as strategies to advance various civic participation causes. The workshop resulted in a statement calling upon governments to develop policies that protect citizens' digital rights and promote the use of the internet for free expression and for pursuing economic and education opportunities.

As the need for internet policy advocacy that is informed by research grows, it is essential to increase the amount and depth of research originating from Africa. It is equally necessary to expand the methods used beyond the traditional to more contemporary ones such as network measurements, social network analysis and data mining. This has led to the need to train, connect, and build collaboration between researchers, policy makers and internet freedom advocates across the region and formed the basis of an intensive training on internet policy research methods.

As such, we hosted 40 participants from 17 countries who attended a six days' intensive training in Kampala, Uganda in early March. They included journalists, lawyers, technologists, academics, telecom regulators, government officials, and digital rights advocates. The training was organised by the Annenberg School for Communication's Internet Policy Observatory and CIPESA alongside several partners from across Africa.

Countries represented at the Internet Policy Research Methods training:

Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. UK, USA



Photo by: Gilbert Bwette / CIPESA

The workshop emphasised the need to embrace more collaborative push-back efforts such as strategic litigation, the deployment of tools such as the Ooni probe that monitor internet speed and performance, accompanied by social network analysis, data visualisation and data scraping which can reflect patterns of online narratives. The workshop alumni have gone on to join a cohort of others from the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America equipped with the skills needed to collaborate across disciplinary and professional silos for progressive internet policy and practice at national, regional and global levels.

Meanwhile, a December 2018 dialogue and capacity building engagement with media, law enforcement, legal fraternity and technologists, among others, also explored collaborative strategies for pushing back against affronts to digital rights.

Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa 2018 (FIFAfrica):

Since 2014, we have convened the annual Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica) to provide a pan-African space where discussion at the global level can be consolidated at Africa-wide level, drawing a large multi-stakeholder audience of actors from within and beyond the continent.

The Forum is a response to the rising awareness among Africa's growing online community about the use of the internet to defend human rights, complement independent local media, strengthen democratisation, and demand accountable and transparent governance. However, there are limited avenues for Africans to participate in discussions that shape internet governance. While global convenings such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Stockholm Internet Forum (SIF), the Internet Freedom Festival (IFF) and RightsCon discuss the internet freedom landscape – including in Africa – attendance by African stakeholders is often limited.

The 2018 edition of FIFAfrica was held in Accra, Ghana on September 26-28, 2018 and brought together 280 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. Hosted in partnership with the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), FIFAfrica18 was the first to be held in West Africa. Previous Forums have been hosted in East Africa and Southern Africa.



Photo by: Gilbert Bwette / CIPESA



Photo by: Gilbert Bwette / CIPESA

Veteran journalist, publisher and curator of Africapedia, Charles Onyango-Obbo, delivered a keynote titled, “Many African Governments Hate the Free Internet – And That Is A Very Good Thing” during which he noted that the Internet in Africa “had finally seized from the state narrative-making power”, making political control difficult. According to Obbo, governments across the continent appreciate the power of the internet hence their efforts to suppress its use. Calling for the internet’s liberation, he urged stakeholders to “get on their keyboards and fight” against the growing trend of censorship, surveillance and regulation.

This call to action resonated throughout sessions on addressing gender-based violence online; the potential of the internet for civic agency and eGovernance; the role of community networks in bridging the digital divide; safety and security for critical internet users; pushing back against internet shutdowns; local content development; curbing cybercrime; promoting online consumer rights; privacy and data protection; advocacy at global level; and fighting misinformation, among others.

The particularly poignant state of internet freedom in some African countries was illustrated by frontline experiences shared from Ethiopia and Cameroon. The Zone 9 bloggers collective shared their plight of repression, surveillance, censorship and incarceration under Ethiopia’s repressive regime. The recent release of their members and their continued commitment to human rights advocacy in the context of Ethiopia’s ongoing reforms were perhaps the strongest indication that the spirit to fight should live on. A special edition of the Blacked Out YouTube video on the devastating internet shutdowns in Cameroon was screened at FIFAfrica and exemplified the internet’s potential to challenge and expose authoritarian rule.

The Forum also serves to commemorate the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI), UNESCO hosted a session on access to information through the lens of the Internet Universality Indicators. The indicators are a tool designed to enrich stakeholders' capacity for assessing internet freedom and development, broaden international consensus, and foster access to information, online democracy and human rights.

Additionally, the 2018 edition of the annual State of Internet Freedom in Africa research report was launched at the Forum. The report focused on data protection and privacy in select African countries. Previous editions have entailed research on intermediaries' role in advancing internet freedom, the economic cost of shutdowns, government strategies to stifle citizens' digital rights, and citizens' perceptions on privacy, access and security. The reports are fundamental for a keener understanding of the issues affecting internet freedom in the respective countries, and form a strong basis for action plans on promoting internet freedoms in these countries.

Beyond raising awareness of the need to advance internet freedom, FIFAfrica also focuses on skills building. Practical workshops held as pre-events to the Forum included one on strategic litigation led by the Media Legal Defence Initiative (MLDI), which aimed to build the capacity of internet activists to collaborate across disciplines to more effectively push back against regressive legal frameworks that are not conducive to access and use of the internet in Africa.

Meanwhile, CIPESA and Small Media hosted a workshop on internet freedom and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) aimed at supporting civil society organisations across Africa to engage with the UPR process through research, capacity development and developing tools to support internet freedom advocacy. Further, the Localization Lab also hosted a localisation sprint to translate digital security tools and resources into Amharic, Fante, Igbo, Swahili, Tswana, Twi, and Yoruba to support the education, training, and adaptation of digital security and circumvention tools in the region.

The outcomes of the Forum are expected to support the development of substantive inputs to inform recommendations and subsequent follow up on human rights online happening at national level, at the African Union and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), and the Human Rights Council. Moreover, it is anticipated that participants will use the skills, knowledge, and networks from FIFAfrica to advance internet freedom research and advocacy in their respective countries and regions.

Re:Publica:



Photo by: Olamide Egbayelo / CIPESA

In December, the first African edition of Europe's largest internet and digital society festival – re:publica - was held in Accra, Ghana drawing in hundreds of participants to showcase and discuss how politics, the arts, innovation, and digital rights have been affected by an increasingly digitised society.

Co-organised by Impact Hub Accra, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and with the support of several partners including CIPESA, re:publica

Accra aimed to strengthen Afro-German dialogue about digital issues, and to explore the intersection between digitalisation and collaborative developmental efforts. With the support of the German Society for International Cooperation agency GIZ, CIPESA enabled the participation at the event of 13 individuals from 10 African countries.

CIPESA hosted a Digital Rights Lounge throughout the duration of re:publica, organised workshops on civic participation and online content regulation, and also participated in sessions on the work of investigative journalists and activists, among others. The festival as served as an opportunity to present some of the key action areas that emerged from FIFAfrica. *See more about our experience at re:publica.*

African School on Internet Governance:



Source: Twitter, AfriSIG class of 2018

The African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG) is an annual five-day residential course which has run since 2013. Organised by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), AfriSIG strives to expand the internet governance community and capacity in Africa. Dr. Wairagala Wakabi was part of the faculty and presented on digital rights trends in Africa, while CIPESA Project Officer Daniel Mwesigwa was selected as one of the 2018 fellows (*see his insights following the school on the cohesion of the future of internet in Africa*).

Communication Policy Research (CPR) South conference: _____

The CPRsouth Young Scholar Academy introduces young researchers in the global south to communication policy and the research to policy process. This year, Daniel Mwesigwa participated in the conference in Mozambique, Maputo. The program aims to prepare Asia-Pacific or Africa-based experts capable of contributing to ICT-related policy and regulatory reform in their regions.

Internet Governance Forum: _____



Photo by: Juliet Nafuka / CIPESA

In December, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was held in Paris, France and brought together 2,000 delegates from 143 countries. Our participation at the event included through a session which reflected on the alarming trend of government-ordered network disruptions hosted by the Global Network Initiative (GNI) and the Open Internet for Democracy Initiative.

The Open Internet for Democracy Leaders Program is a collaboration between the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA). In its inaugural year, Juliet Nafuka participated in the program which saw her sharing on the changing online content regulation to the Senate in Washington DC. Further, contribution was made to the initial draft of the Open Internet for Democracy Playbook which includes, “ideas and recommendations for the advocates of digital freedoms, focusing on tailored approaches to advocacy that apply across diverse local contexts.” Further, a guide titled Democratic Principles for an Open Internet was shared at various opportunities including policy workshops, digital security training and the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa. The program culminated in the publication of a report titled, “How Social Media Taxes Can Burden News Outlets”

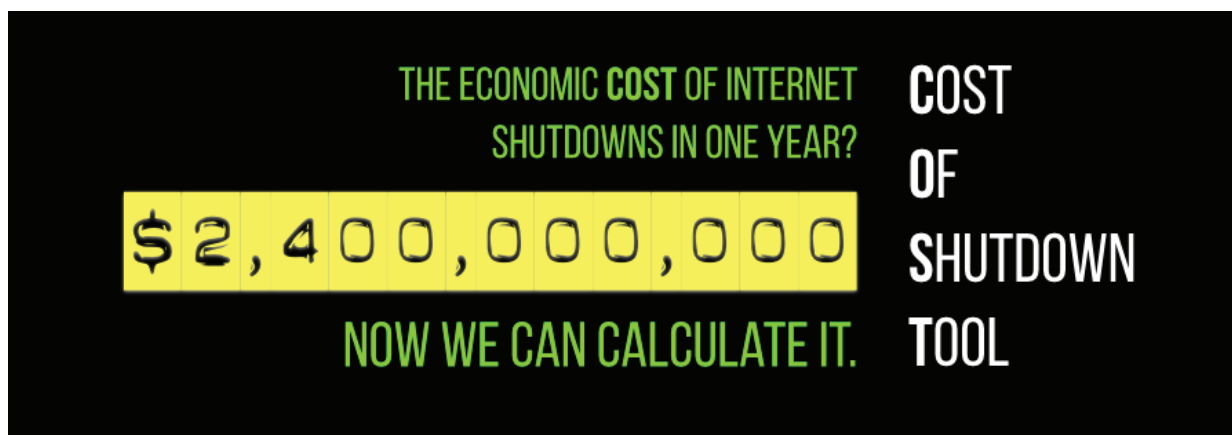
Converting research data into real-time information online

While it is clear how internet shutdowns affect users' fundamental human rights, such as the right of access to information and freedom of expression, the impact of disruptions on a country's economy as well as individuals' livelihoods is often less precisely known. This could partly explain the continued incidences of government-ordered shutdowns due to the limited information on the full magnitude and consequences of these actions on their economies and citizens especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2017, we produced a Framework for Calculating the Economic Impact of Internet Disruptions in Sub-Saharan Africa which took into account indirect economic factors and informal economies that play a major role in the region.

A year later, Netblocks developed the Cost of Shutdown Tool (COST) which is a data-driven advocacy tool that automates the task of assessing the economic impact of internet shutdowns, mobile data blackouts and social media restrictions including throttling. The tool utilised our framework, as well as a model developed by the Brookings Institution and integrated economic indicators from open data sources including the World Bank, ITU and Eurostat.

COST was showcased at FIFAfrica and went on to be launched on December 10 to mark the 70th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations on December 10, 1948.

“This tool will empower the next stage of data-driven advocacy. By calculating numbers in real time, COST will allow us to communicate to governments and technology companies on how much revenue they're losing when they disrupt the internet. We hope by the tool will make governments think twice before threatening internet freedom.”
Hannah Machlin, Global Advocacy Manager for the NetBlocks Group



Source: www.netblocks.org

ICT4Democracy in East Africa



Photo by: Fiona Graham / WorldRemit, Source (Flickr)

The focus countries of the ICT4Democracy in East Africa initiative¹ (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) have seen digital technologies become pivotal to the livelihoods of citizens. Mobile money use has proliferated in all countries. Increasingly too, there are initiatives driven by citizens and by the state to enhance the use of ICT in governance. However, all three countries have also taken steps that could undermine internet access and affordability, and weaken the potential for ICT to catalyse free expression and civic participation. These steps mirror the overall shrinking civic space in the three countries, where governments are becoming more hostile to the political opposition as well as to activists, critical media reporting and to criticism by social media users.

Against this context, the network worked to promote social accountability and civic agency through ICT, including addressing the shortage of skills necessary to use technologies meaningfully in order to engage in democratic Processes.

The technological platforms run by network members have enabled efficient and affordable reporting of human rights violations and service delivery failures to watchdog organisations, state and non-state, with many reports followed up and resolved. The platforms are complemented by technical and logistics support to 56 rural advocacy and accountability forums which have remained critical to citizen mobilisation and leader-citizen engagements at grassroots level.

¹ The ICT for Democracy in East Africa project works in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda towards achieving two top-line objectives: 1) Increased citizen participation in governance and the realisation of human rights through Information and Communications Technology (ICT); and 2) Improved transparency and accountability of governments through ICT. Coordinated by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East & Southern Africa (CIPESA), the project's principal partners are the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), Transparency International Uganda, iHub Research (Kenya), Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG, Tanzania), Toro Development Network (ToroDev), and CIPESA.

Women's empowerment in governance and human rights: _____

The initiative also tackled inequitable gender access, both to ICT and to decision-making, issues which remain key concerns in the focus countries. Youth and rural women are among the target groups for whom capacity has been built to monitor services delivery and to engage with duty bearers. This has raised their participation in community affairs in ways that bode well for their continued participation in wider matters of good governance.



Photo by: Zahara Abdul / CIPESA

Social accountability and Responsiveness: _____

The unequal access to ICT – particularly in rural and peri-urban areas - and the low levels of ICT use by some government departments – particularly at local level – mean that offline methods remain indispensable to the work of the ICT4Democracy in East Africa network. A supported network of grassroots-based actors has continued to consistently take action on service delivery failures and speak out on other issues of community concern as well as organise monthly engagements towards building consensus for strategies to address challenges. This is seeing more grass-root entities contribute to budget planning and thus supporting the development of more responsive service delivery solutions.

Further, outside of the network's organized activities, community leaders (duty bearers) have also worked to initiate platforms for engagements and facilitation of their work.

Media as infomediaries for human rights and democratisation

Outcomes from the training of journalists have included improved engagement in advancing citizen-centred issues through interactive debates with duty bearers during live radio discussions particularly in western Uganda. For instance, equipped with research skills, the Rwenzori Journalists Forum (RFJ), together with journalists from across the Rwenzori region have remained active in improved service delivery advocacy and information dissemination through well-researched stories, which are mostly shared on radio. “With all the knowledge acquired from the training we are doing things differently now. For example there is improved information flow amongst the journalists, there is evidence-based reporting and improved communication. As chairperson of RJF, I formed a WhatsApp group with 32 members and each day over 20 stories are shared from different districts and this has improved communication, networking and advocacy,” said RFJ’s chairperson. The RFJ journalists also went on to form five reporting clusters – health, education, water, infrastructure and economic development to facilitate information sharing and story follow ups and are now able to track district work plans and effectively engage duty bearers during radio talk shows or interviews.



Photo by: Zahara Abdul / CIPESA

Learning, knowledge sharing and advocacy:

Knowledge generation through research, knowledge transfer through documenting and disseminating learning, and advocacy through engagement with national and regional efforts that seek to positively influence democratic policy and practice, have also been a central concern of the project. We participated in various fora that discuss policy - in Uganda for instance, we gave views on the draft Open Data Policy, the ICT and Disability Policy, and engaged government information officers on the right to access information. In Tanzania, we had a meeting on the access to information law and the challenge of lack of transparency in public offices. The Tanzanian and Ugandan engagements benefitted from an analysis we conducted comparing the access to information laws in five east African countries. Information availability on how best to leverage ICT for public good remains a challenge both to awareness creation and advocacy efforts, hence continuous research on key issues remains critical, as is research communications and the documenting of results from our work.

Human rights review mechanisms at regional level also provided an opportunity to elevate human rights concerns in Kenya. At the 60th Ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and People's rights (ACHPR), a statement and recommendations were presented in Niamey, Niger on shrinking civic space, corruption, electoral processes, security, citizen and minority rights.

The network partners remain alive to developments on ICT and governance, and have continued to be part of democracy and free expression advocacy campaigns. These have tackled a range of issues, including elections, law making, speaking out about national campaigns like shrinking civic space, advocating for citizenship rights (such as for the Makonde community in Kenya), anti-corruption campaigns, and ICT affordability. Increasingly, this work has meant working with traditional networks that promote free expression and democratic participation, and it is the network's mission to have these organisations also embrace technology more in their work.

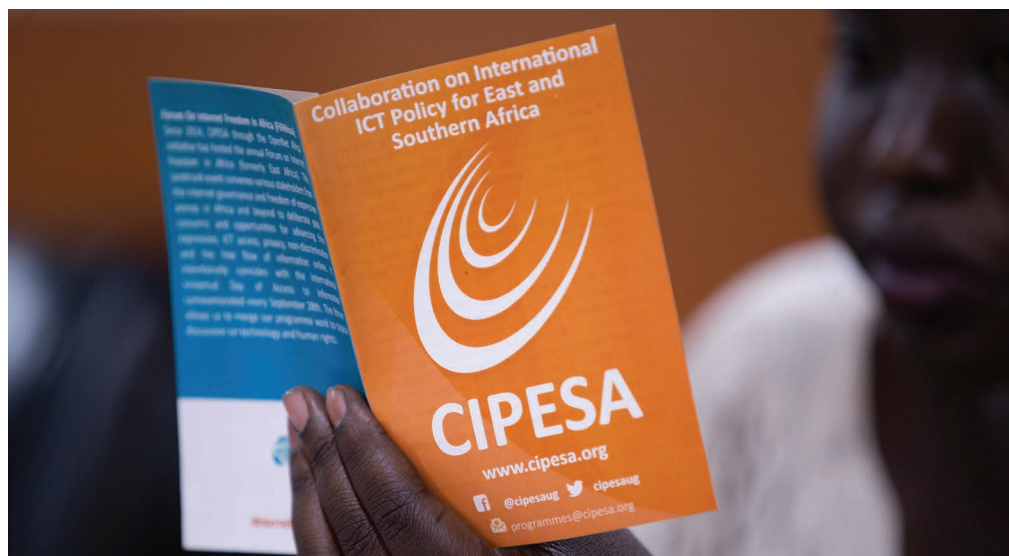


Photo by: Zahara Abdul / CIPESA

CIPESA Supporters 2018





Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa
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