



DRIF 21

Digital Rights & Inclusion Forum 2021

REPORT SUMMARY

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DIGITAL RIGHTS & INCLUSION FORUM 2021
Strengthening Human Rights in a Digital Age.



DRIF in 2021

For 8 years, Paradigm Initiative (PIN) has hosted diverse members of civil society, the technical community, academia, government, the private sector and other stakeholders for shared engagements on a platform where conversations on digital policy are shaped, policy directions debated and partnerships forged for action - Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF). This year, for the 8th edition, [DRIF21](#) hosted 32 sessions with 445 registered attendees in a hybrid event from 12 April to 30 April.

As a Paradigm Initiative (PIN) flagship platform for communities of practice around privacy, affordable Internet, increasing women's access to digital tools, Internet shutdowns, and similar themes, DRIF continues to set the tone as the arena for interrogating the digital environment in Africa, discussing global trends and presenting solutions for tackling the challenges faceHere are highlights and outcomes from DRIF21.

Total number of sessions:

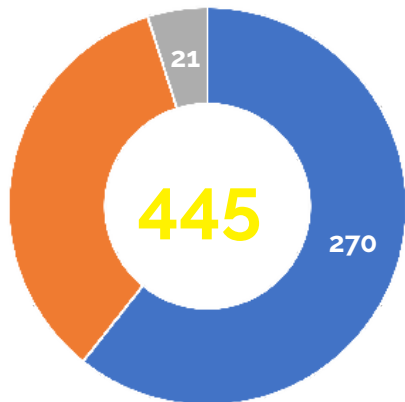
31 Sessions

Number of in-person sessions:

16

Number of in-person host countries:

10



Gender Representation

Male Female Other

The number of countries represented: 42

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1. Algeria
 2. Australia
 3. Benin
 4. Bolivia
 5. Botswana
 6. Brazil
 7. Burkina Faso
 8. Côte d'Ivoire
 9. Cameroon
 10. Cape Verde
 11. South Sudan
 12. Chad
 13. Chile
 14. DRC
 15. Egypt
 16. Ethiopia
 17. France
 18. Gambia
 19. Germany
 20. Ghana
 21. Kenya
 22. Lesotho
 23. Malawi
 24. Mozambique
 25. Namibia
 26. Niger
 27. Nigeria
 28. Rwanda
 29. Senegal
 30. Sierra Leone
 31. Somalia
 32. South Africa
 33. Spain
 34. Switzerland
 35. Tanzania
 36. Chad
 37. Togo
 38. Uganda
 39. United Kingdom
 40. United States of America
 41. Zambia
 42. Zimbabwe

Highlights and Outcomes

Cameroon's session, "Digital rights and Internet freedoms in times of crisis: the case of Cameroon" made it possible to present the situation of digital rights and freedoms on the Internet in Cameroon. With the Boko Haram crisis in 2014, the Anglophone crisis in 2016, the post-election crisis in 2018 and the health crisis (COVID-19) in 2020, the discussions also made it possible to assess and reflect on the current state of digital rights and how best to work towards making sure human rights are respected in times of crisis. Some of the recommendations included; sensitising citizens with the principles of the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms, and enacting laws that are inclusive with a fair application for all citizens.

Zaina Foundation's session was contextualised under the topic; "Promoting Digital Rights in Challenging Environments: Cases from **Tanzania**." Among the recommendations were; increasing the state's role in respecting digital rights (civic space and Freedom of Expression) for its citizens, and creating more platforms and forums which will offer digital literacy and awareness to Tanzanians with more emphasis on rural areas and government officials (policy and lawmakers).

After the launch of the Digital Foundation of **Namibia** (DFN), the session; "Unpacking Internet Access in Namibia" sought to highlight synergies between access and inclusion, democracy, digital rights and inclusion within the country's context. The session concluded with all panelists calling for the speedy implementation of the Access to Information bill, Cybersecurity Bill and the Data Protection Bill. COVID-19 and access to the internet steered most of the discussion, including education, business, broadband cost and infrastructure.

From **Zambia's** session, the following were the takeaways: the need for service providers, schools and other stakeholders to discuss how to make the internet affordable for all in light of increased demands for e-learning; ahead of elections, online platforms are the best platforms for civic-voter education, safely campaigning in light of COVID-19, and advocacy by frontline human rights defenders; and thirdly, that misinformation has undermined the credibility of media houses in the country which has the potential to clamp down on online free speech.

The main points discussed during **Digital Grassroots's** session included the centralisation of electronic communications services around a few platforms creating new barriers for LGBT people to exercise their digital rights. Speakers also discussed how powerful platforms' practices result in many LGBT accounts, posts and themed ads being taken down on, while homophobic, transphobic and sexist content often remains untouched. The session sought to empower members of civil society as well as the LGBT community to take their rights to privacy and security into their own hands wherever possible by explaining means and ways to push companies to engage with affected communities in order to develop tools that are privacy-friendly and inclusive-by-design, incentivise profit-driven companies to change their services according to specific needs while maintaining them free and accessible for all, encourage users to become familiar with apps' privacy policies (data retention periods, third party data sharing) before providing personal information, promote the use of VPN's to increase security, and to evade state supported surveillance.

Paradigm Initiative's **Nigeria** sessions held over two days and had interesting conversations centred around understanding and discussing strategies on prioritising gender and human rights, digital identity and data protection in a digital age; improving vulnerable children's access to tech devices; the threats faced by Journalists as it pertains to press freedom; consumer rights protection in Nigeria; and the prerequisite for implementing digital safety education in schools curriculum.

In **South Sudan**, the objective was to address the gaps and challenges being faced especially by women in accessing technology skills/education and interactively coming up with plausible solutions while also exploring the opportunities in the technology industry. The four sessions were able to unravel and discuss this objective and the agreed way forward was creating tech centers for women and girls, introducing tech education at lower levels of education, tailoring STEAM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) towards women, and carrying out gender-sensitive, grass roots research on challenges women face in technology education.

Takeaways

Three main takeaways from DRIF21 were



The need for collaboration in solving the challenges faced in Africa



Translating the strategies discussed at DRIF21 into practice.



Engaging governments to develop rights-respecting digital policies.

Launches



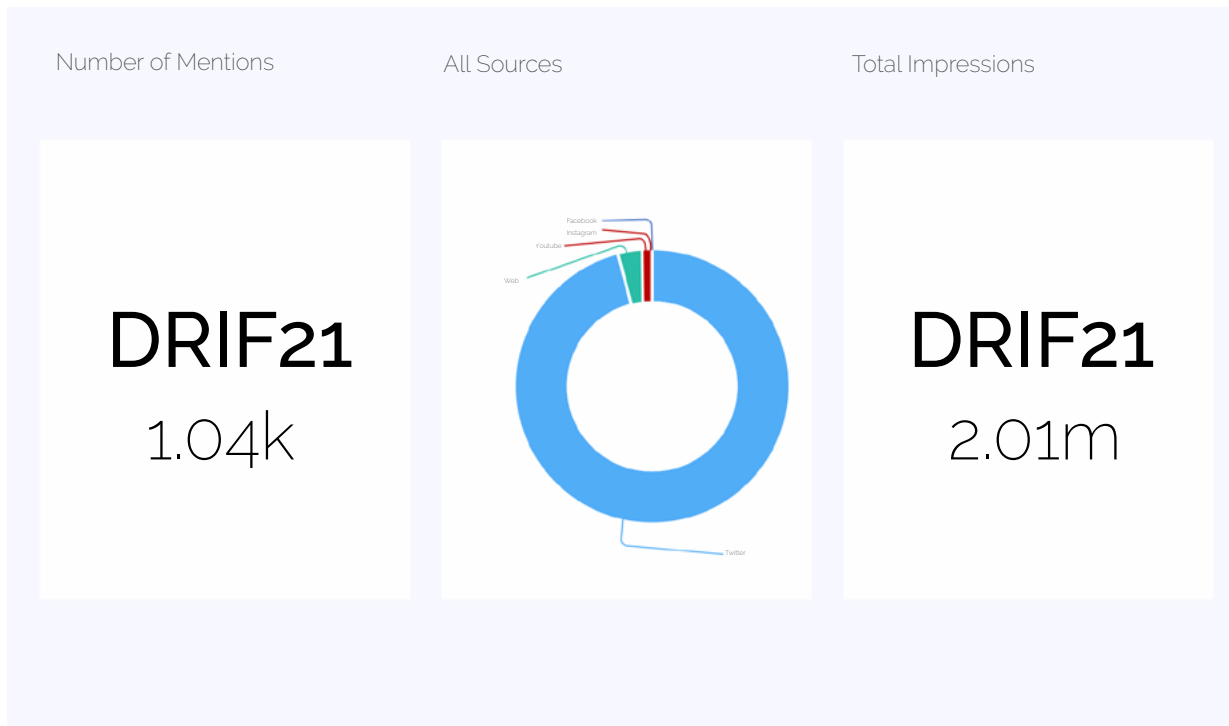
Under the moderation of Ruth Babette Ngene, Senior Director, Digital Rights and Digital Safety Programs at Internews, Paradigm Initiative's Executive Director, 'Gbenga Sesan set the ball rolling in a keynote opening remark pointing out the need to question the 'new normal' which covers a range of activities like internet shutdowns, network disruptions, and the data protection rights that affect most countries in Africa.

There were several launches at DRIF21 - Paradigm Initiative launched [Londa](#) on 12 April 2021, Digital Rights Foundation of Namibia was launched on 22 April 2021, [Ayeta: A digital rights toolkit](#) was launched on 27 April 2021, and [Ripoti](#), a platform for reporting digital rights violations launched on 30 April 2021.

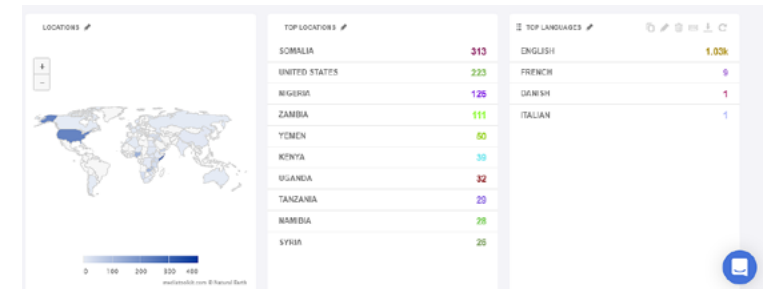
The objectives of the projects are to develop action plans for enhancing digital rights and inclusion in Africa while increasing networks within the African continent on digital rights and inclusion.

Media Analytics

1,042 mentions from Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and the Web with over 2 million impressions (likes, comments and shares).



DRIF21 Reach in Location and Languages



Top Organizations by Reach

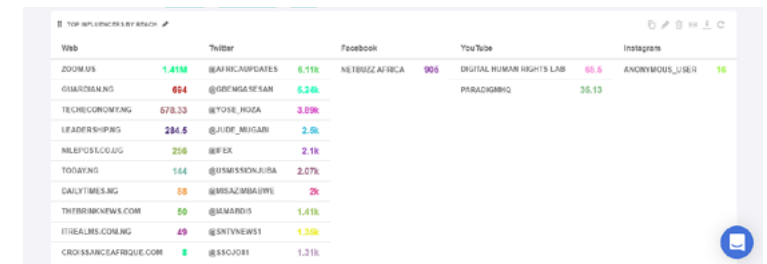


Photo Collage

Some photos from our Namibia, South Sudan, Nigeria, Zambia, Cameroon, Uganda and Somalia in-person sessions.

Namibia



South Sudan



Nigeria



Somalia



Zambia



Cameroon



Uganda

