



Theme:
Building A Sustainable Internet for All



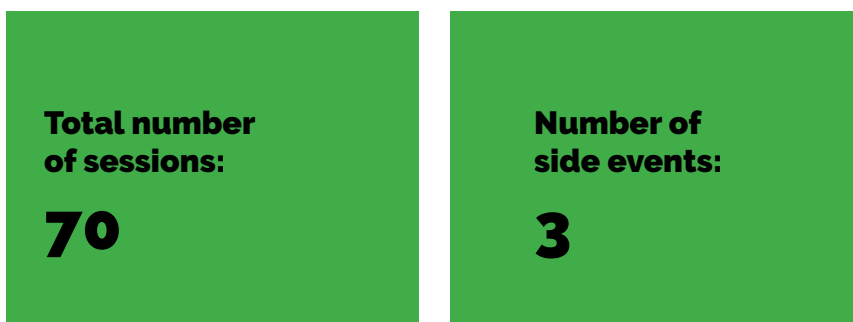
Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF23) Summary Report

Acknowledgements

This summary report acknowledges the tremendous support of the collaborating country partners, Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet) and Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) and session hosts who made DRIF23 a success. The story of impact is told through the unwavering support of our funding partners. We value the great community that continues to contribute meaningfully to the state of digital rights and inclusion in Africa. We thank our funding partners from the Open Technology Fund, Ford Foundation, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Google, Wikimedia and Global Network Initiative who helped us deliver an impactful Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum.

Background

The Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) is Paradigm Initiative's signature event hosted in collaboration with partners across Africa. It's an important platform where conversations on African digital policy are shaped, policy directions debated and partnerships forged for action. The 10th edition of DRIF was hosted in person under the theme - *Building a Sustainable Internet for All* from **12 - 14 April 2023** at Sarova Stanley Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.

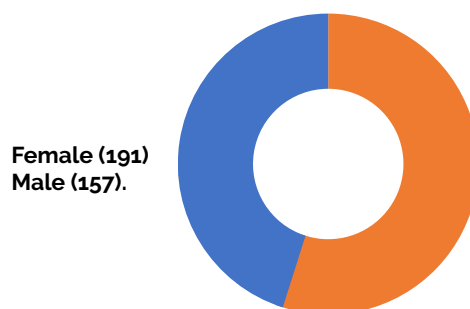


Attendance

DRIF23 had a diverse group of **348 in-person attendees**.



Gender Representation



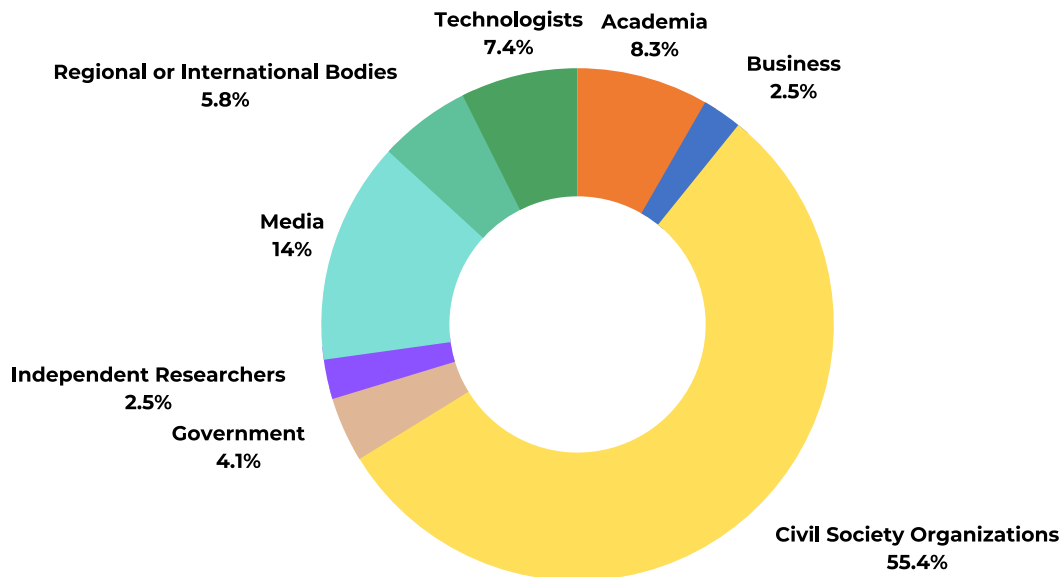
DRIF23 convened **348 in-person attendees**: Media representatives, civil society members, academia, government actors, and more; **253 participants registered for DRIF23 and followed sessions virtually**.

Geographical Representation



- 54 countries were represented at DRIF23.
- 35 African countries and 19 from other countries

Sector Representation



Academia (8.3%), Business (2.5%), Civil Society Organizations (55.4%), Government (4.1%), Independent Researchers (2.5%), Media (14.0%), Regional or International Bodies (5.8%), and Technologists (7.4%).

Summary of Proceedings



Paradigm Initiative hosted the 10th edition of DRIF in collaboration with the Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet) and the Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT). The event was sponsored by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Ford Foundation, Wikimedia Foundation, Google, Open Technology Fund and the Global Network Initiative (GNI).

The three-day event kicked off on 12th April 2023 with opening remarks from Thobekile Matimbe, Senior Manager, Partnerships and Engagements at PIN, who welcomed the DRIF23 community and invited stakeholders to contribute to building a sustainable Internet for all. She appreciated the community as a critical force towards an enabling digital rights environment. She highlighted the forum's objectives, mainly for stakeholders to highlight challenges, glean trends, map essential strategies and foster collaborations through networking. Grace Githaiga, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) & Convenor of KICTANet, welcomed the DRIF23 community to Nairobi and, among other things, emphasised the importance of the forum's theme - Building A Sustainable Internet For All, which reflected a critical need and aspiration for the continent and the world at large.

The opening remarks were then followed by a panel discussion moderated by Mr. 'Gbenga Sésán, the Executive Director at PIN. The panel consisted of Hon. Emma Inamutilla, Deputy Minister Of ICT Republic Of Namibia, Vladimir Garay, Advocacy and Communications Director from Derechos Digitales and Grace Githaiga, Chief Executive Officer at KICTANet. Drawing from their experiences, the discussants shared insights on building a sustainable internet for all, citing digital justice and multistakeholderism as critical to the inclusion of everyone. From a government perspective, having policies addressing digital inclusion is a critical element of the sustainability of an Internet future.

Other panel discussions and side conversations that took place on the first day of DRIF23 include Promoting digital safety for communities at risk, Analyzing Online Gender-Based Violence, Expounding on Challenges, Realities, and Opportunities on Big Tech & Content Moderation, Analyzing the Digital Gender Gap, Looking at tips to manoeuvre misinformation and disinformation, Empowerment of Female Journalists against Online Abuse, Protecting Digital Rights during Elections, Dissecting Open Data Challenges, and Supporting the fight against internet shutdowns.

On the 13th of April 2023, insightful sessions were held, the key being a closed Digital Security Training (DST) targeting journalists, human rights defenders and civil society actors at risk of facing digital-security threats. The DST was one activity out of three under the Digital Security Clinic hosted from 12 -14 April 2023. A Digital Security Help Desk was hosted throughout DRIF23.. Other panel discussions hosted focused on Addressing Data Privacy Gaps, Eliminating digital barriers among persons with disabilities, Measuring the impact of Internet Freedom projects, Examining Government Responses to Disinformation, Creating a Fair Data Future for all, Understanding Human Rights Due Diligence Across the Tech Stack, ICT and Education in the Post COVID-19 recovery era, Creating jobs in the gig economy for women and girls, Building Digitally Resilient Social Justice Organisations in Africa, Rural Digitalization to combat Rural-Urban migration, and Expert Consultations on meaningful engagement of regional stakeholders in AI.

A training workshop coordinated by Small Media and Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) in collaboration with the African Parliament Network On Internet Governance (APNIG) was held during the DRIF23 period focusing on Members of Parliament, policymakers and

civil society representatives on the future of digital rights in Africa. On the 14th of April 2023, PIN hosted a funders panel that brought together funders to shed light on the funding landscape in the digital rights and inclusion sector. Partners from Open Technology Fund (OTF) , Luminare and Open Society Foundation (OSF) presented their expectations and the support their organisations offer towards digital rights work. The community posed questions and learnt how to submit winning proposals. More discussions throughout the final day ranged from sessions on Advocacy Strategies to Fight Online Censorship During Elections, Media strategies to counter digital authoritarianism, Strengthening Digital Rights Through Creative Advocacy and Using Litigation to Combat Spyware.



DRIF23 closed with a panel discussion moderated by Nnenna Paul-Ugochukwu, PIN's Chief Operating Officer. The speakers were Birgit Kainz-Labbe, Coordinator, Civic Space, OHCHR, Bruno Bioni, Founder of Data Privacy Brasil and 'Gbenga Sesan, who shared insights and key takeaways. Bruno Bioni stressed the need for digital inclusion, adding that the development and deployment of technology ought to be human-centred. Birgit Kainz-Labbe emphasised the need for more inclusive conversations and coalition building in the sector. PIN launched its 2022 annual State of Digital Rights and Inclusion in Africa report, Londa, during the closing ceremony and exposed the findings from 24 African countries. The DRIF23 community was urged to use the report to engage with their governments, making relevant recommendations as provided in the report. PIN's Digital Rights and Inclusion report covers 24 African countries. 'Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director (PIN), closed the ceremony with an official announcement that **DRIF24 will occur in Accra, Ghana, from 23 to 25 April 2024.**

An Ideal Internet Future for All

The DRIF23 community presented that an ideal Internet future for all would involve freedom of expression, responsible regulation that benefits all, digital inclusion, accessibility, safety, and affordability. The DRIF23 community, through engagements and responses to a survey, echoed the need for an internet that respects privacy and human rights, free from censorship and information controls. The internet should be a safe and secure place to browse, communicate, and transact.

The community expressed the need for an Internet that is accessible to everyone, fast and reliable, with minimal downtime and digital infrastructure capable of handling high traffic volumes. An ideal internet should be inclusive and safe for everyone. Digital literacy skills ensure that everyone is included in accessing the Internet. The internet should be a place where people can express themselves freely, engage in civil discourse and collaborate on meaningful projects without fear of harassment or discrimination.

Voices from the DRIF23 Community

<p>“An ideal internet should be safe, free, and empowering for all.”</p>	<p>“An internet where there is freedom and equality.”</p>	<p>“Where everyone from all gender identity, all social class, ethnicity and language can enjoy internet free from fear and equally.”</p>
<p>“An open but secure internet where people are at the centre of all attention and digital rights are respected and protected.”</p>	<p>“It looks like bringing a bright future for many people in economic and social development.”</p>	

Recommendations



The DRIF23 community made the following recommendations in response to a survey dispatched ahead of the event.

Recommendations to Governments

- Enacting pro-human rights legislation and policies that enhance meaningful access to the Internet.
- Implementing policies and regulations that promote digital inclusion, privacy, security, and environmental sustainability.
- Providing digital connectivity through broadband access in remote areas and lowering taxes that result in high cost of data.
- Ensuring access to reliable internet for all.
- Enabling the creation and deployment of accessible e-services and understandable ICT content.
- Funding research and development of sustainable Internet solutions.
- Incentivising and fairly regulating the private sector to prioritise environmental sustainability in their internet infrastructure and services.

Recommendations to the Private Sector

- Implementing programs that help people and children navigate their daily struggles through the Internet.
- Collaborating with other stakeholders and governments to enhance digital inclusion.
- Supporting digital rights policies by contributing to affordable internet and investing in renewable energy sources.
- Adopting eco-friendly practices and prioritising data privacy and security.
- Supporting digital literacy and skills development programs, particularly for marginalised and underrepresented communities.
- Being transparent with their data governance practices and acting responsibly with data they collect from users.
- Promoting online ethical standards, prioritising human rights.

Recommendations to the Media and CSOs

- Promoting digital literacy and raising awareness of digital rights.
- Advocating for policies and regulations that promote digital resilience and holding stakeholders accountable for their actions.
- Engaging policymakers, creating partnerships and joining coalitions for

coordinated advocacy work.

- Promote the responsible use of the internet and fact-check information.
- Participating in the development of policies and monitoring the engagement of citizens on those policies.
- Advocating for human rights due diligence processes and promoting accountability.

Recommendations to the Academia

- Conducting research, developing innovative solutions, and promoting awareness of the environmental, social, and economic impacts of internet use.
- Updating their curriculum and teaching techniques mainstreaming digital literacy and digital rights courses.



and experiences in Africa, emphasising the importance of digital security and privacy in building a sustainable Internet accessible to all. The event underscored the human-centric nature of technology and the continuous need for discussions on safeguarding digital rights and promoting inclusion.

Conclusion

The Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF23) successfully achieved its primary goal of promoting digital rights and inclusion in Africa. The key recommendations called for stakeholders to play their part in building a sustainable Internet for all. The forum served as a platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas, share experiences, and showcase best practices in the field. It facilitated networking and collaboration among diverse participants, highlighting the collective commitment to advancing digital rights and inclusion across the continent.



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