PARADIGM INITIATIVE

DRIF 23

Digital Rights & Inclusion Forum 2023

Community Recommendations

Background

The Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) is an important platform where conversations on digital policy in Africa are shaped, policy directions debated, and partnerships. It hosts diverse skills and capacities for enhancing digital rights and inclusion on the African continent and beyond. It is a Paradigm Initiative (PIN) flagship platform for communities of practice around privacy, affordable Internet, increasing women's access to digital tools, health surveillance during COVID-19 times, Internet shutdowns and similar themes. The 10th edition was hosted from 12 - 14 April 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme - Building a sustainable Internet for all, canvassing a multi-stakeholder approach to universal, equitable, affordable and meaningful access to the Internet.

DRIF has set its tone as the arena for challenging topical global issues around Internet rights, especially in Africa and consolidating views from civil society, technology companies, government, academia, and other stakeholders. Following the 9th edition of DRIF, which highlighted how States could move towards a digitally inclusive and rights-respecting Africa, the 10th edition built on those engagements and key stakeholders laid the building blocks to ensure a sustainable Internet future that leaves no one behind. A survey was conducted and the DRIF Community highlighted critical issues on the African continent and proffered recommendations.

An Ideal Internet Future for All

The DRIF23 Community (the community) affirmed that an ideal Internet future for all would involve freedom of expression, responsible regulation that benefits all, digital inclusion, accessibility, safety, and affordability. Through engagements and responses to a survey, the community 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.
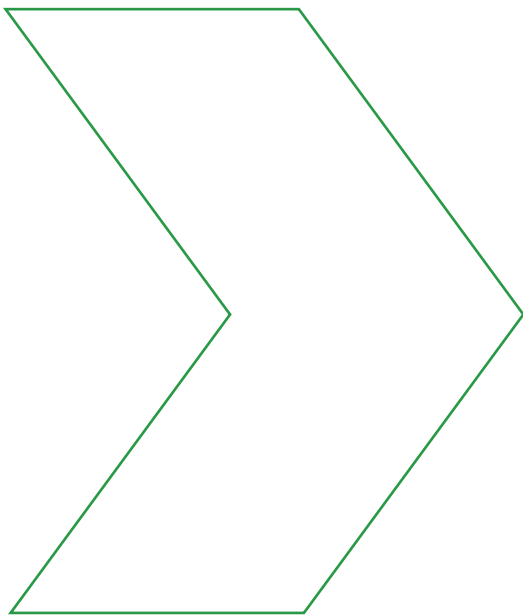
Recommendations to the Private Sector

- 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.
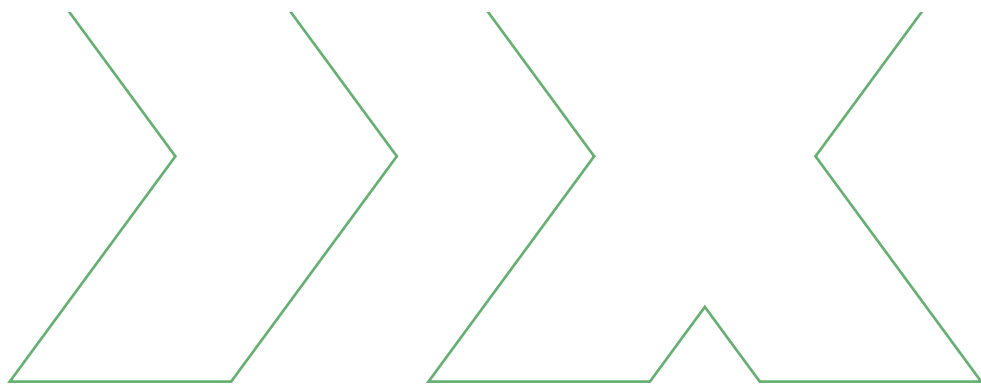
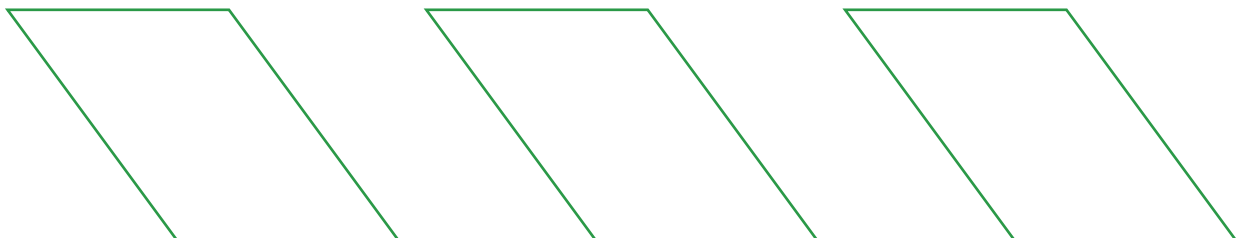# Recommendations to the Media and Civil Society Organisations

- 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.

Voices from the DRIF23 Community

> "An ideal internet should be safe, free, and empowering for all."

> "An internet where there is freedom and equality."

> "Where everyone from all gender identity, all social class, ethnicity and language can enjoy internet free from fear and equally."
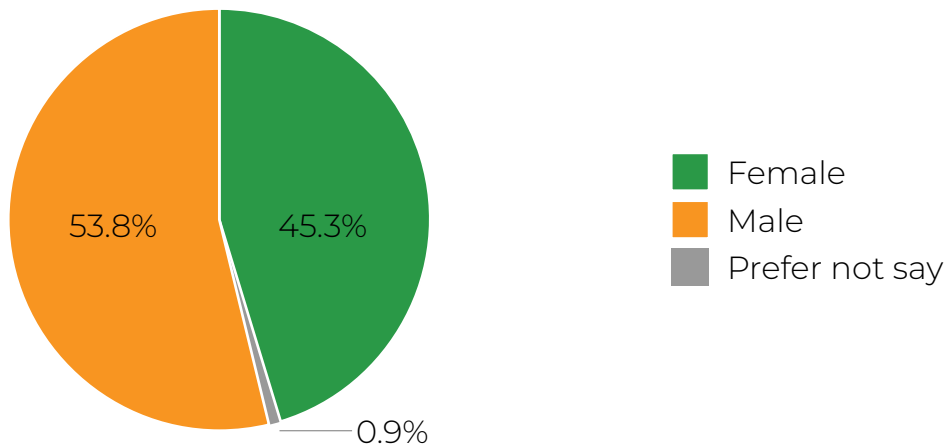
> "An open but secure internet where people are at the centre of all attention and digital rights are respected and protected."
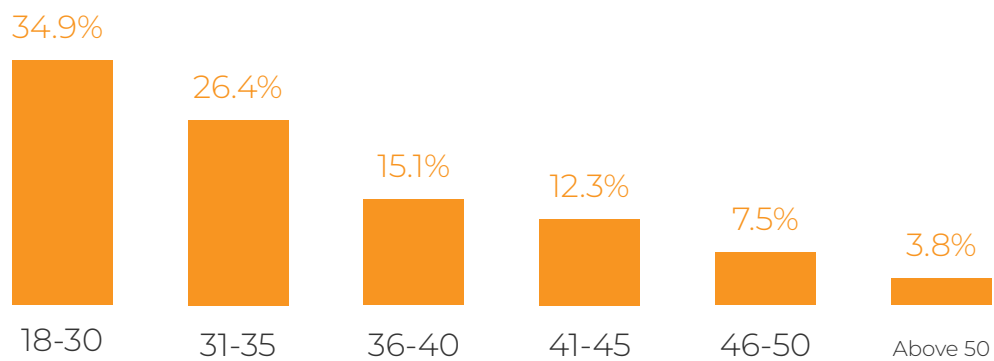
> "It looks like bringing a bright future for many people in economic and social development."
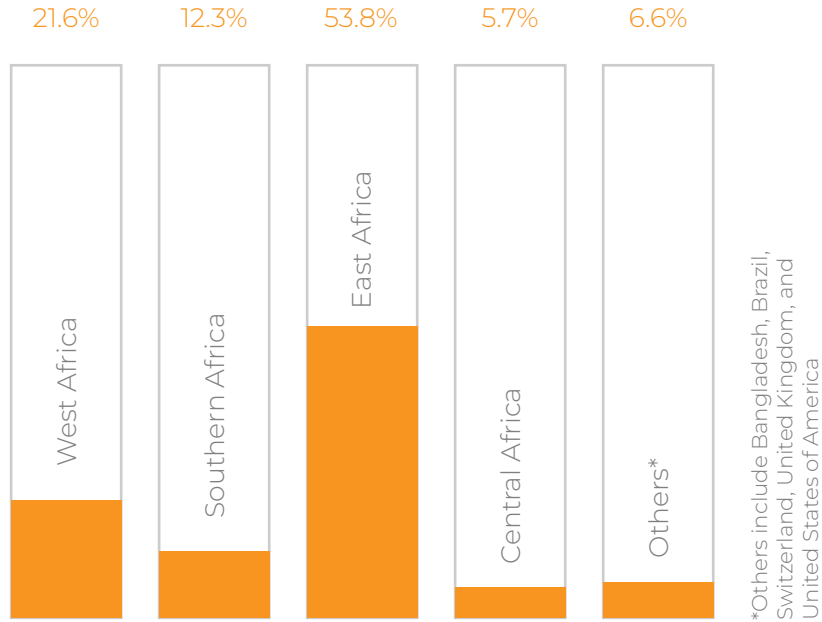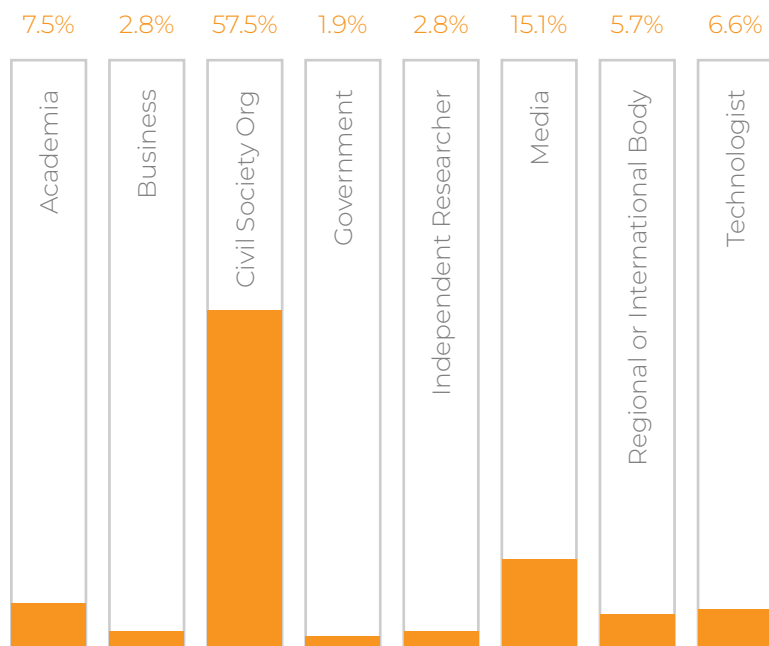
Survey Demographics

Female
Male
Prefer not say

53.8%   45.3%

0.9%

Age

18-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	Above 50
34.9%	26.4%	15.1%	12.3%	7.5%	3.8%

Regional Representation

West Africa	Southern Africa	East Africa	Central Africa	Others*
21.6%	12.3%	53.8%	5.7%	6.6%

*Others include Bangladesh, Brazil, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States of America

Sector Representation

Academia	Business	Civil Society Org	Government	Independent Researcher	Media	Regional or International Body	Technologist
7.5%	2.8%	57.5%	1.9%	2.8%	15.1%	5.7%	6.6%