DRIF 24

Event Report

01.
Background

The Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) is an annual convening that brings together policymakers, civil society actors, technology companies, government, academia and Global South communities to discuss digital rights issues. The forum has traditionally been a space where conversations on African digital policies are shaped, policy directions debated, and partnerships forged for action. In accordance with PIN's Strategic Management Plan, DRIF has transitioned to a Global South convening where digital rights actors share learning and exchange strategies aimed at an improved digital rights environment for the greater majority. The Forum is convened by Paradigm Initiative and provides a platform for communities of practice to discuss privacy, affordable Internet, equal access to digital tools, surveillance, internet shutdowns and similar themes. The forum provides an opportunity to dissect topical global issues around Internet rights, especially in Africa, proffering solutions. PIN hosted the 11th edition of DRIF from April 23- 25 April, 2024 at the Alisa Hotel, North Ridge in Accra, Ghana under the theme **"Fostering Rights and Inclusion in the Digital Age"** and held under the following sub-themes:

- Trust and Accountability
- Data Protection, Privacy and Surveillance
- Artificial Intelligence and
- Emerging Technologies
- Digital Inclusion and Marginalised Groups
- Human Rights and Freedoms
- Digital Security

02.
Objectives ☆

The event aimed at achieving the following objectives:

1. Creating a platform for digital rights practitioners and stakeholders from the Global Majority to interrogate critical digital rights and inclusion issues, trends and developments and to formulate solutions.
2. Providing digital security to at-risk vulnerable groups.
3. Increasing networks and collaborations on digital rights and inclusion.

03.
Overview ✪

DRIF24 was attended by 560 in person attendees surpassing the total number of delegates who participated at DRIF23 which comprised 348 in-person attendees. DRIF24 welcomed attendees from 40 countries while delegates from an additional 21 countries registered to follow the event online. A total of 96 sessions were hosted cutting across panel sessions, workshops, launches, exhibitions, Day 0 events and lightning talks. DRIF24 attendees included civil society organisations, policymakers, government representatives, legal and policy experts, academia and technologists. The Forum was conducted in English, French, Sign Language and Portuguese. Virtual participation for select speakers was availed to session hosts.

✪ DRIF provides a platform where digital rights actors and other stakeholders share learning and exchange strategies aimed at an improved digital rights environment for the greater majority.

DRIF24 Statistics

Number of registered attendees on Whova:
1044

Total number of in-person attendees:
560

Gender Representation: **278 Females, 282 Males**

Number of sessions:
96

Number of Exhibitors:**15**

Travel Support Beneficiaries: **104**

Regional representation: 31 African countries were represented at DRIF, 3 countries in the Americas, 1 in Latin America, 4 in Europe and 1 in Asia.

Sponsors: Wikimedia, African Digital Rights Network, Ford Foundation, Google, Open Technology Fund (OTF), Luminate, Kingdom of The Netherlands, Mott Foundation and Internet Society (ISOC) Foundation.

04. ✪
Summary of DRIF24

Opening Ceremony

To kick-start DRIF24, Dr. Opoku-Mensah welcomed attendees to the 11th edition of DRIF highlighting that the forum provides a platform to hold policy conversations on digital rights and inclusion. Dr. Opoku-Mensah highlighted that the platform would allow attendees to deepen collaboration and knowledge sharing. She added that the platform would aid attendees in understanding the challenges, opportunities and threats in the digital landscape and spark renewed commitments to advancing digital rights and inclusion. She also highlighted the event formats and what delegates could expect to experience during the forum. She highlighted that annually DRIF provides a platform for experts in the technology industry to share ideas and build capacity towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the declaration for the future of the internet. She echoed 'Akwaaba,' a Ghanaian word used to extend a warm welcome to delegates.

Dr. Albert Antwi-Boasiako, the Director General of the Cyber Security Authority in Ghana gave his official remarks highlighting the increase in internet users in Ghana between January 2023 to January 2024, representing a significant leap towards closing the digital divide. He called on policymakers to remain vigilant in addressing the digital divide for unserved and underserved communities. He presented that in February 2024, the Ghanaian government's Ministry for Communications and Digitalisation had been expanding digital infrastructure and connectivity in rural areas across the country to expand network coverage and internet access.

Commissioner Ourveena Geereesha Topsy the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa joined the opening medley highlighting that the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) had recently adopted special soft law instruments on digital rights and inclusion which include the Resolution on Internet Shutdowns and Elections in Africa - ACHPR.Res.580 (LXXVIII)2024 and convened the inaugural Joint Forum of the Special Mechanisms of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) to assess the level of implementation of the soft laws. The Special Rapporteur highlighted that the ACHPR is committed to working with civil society to protect and promote digital rights and inclusion in Africa.

Making his opening remarks at the event, PIN's Executive Director 'Gbenga Sesan explained the DRIF journey outlining how it started as the Internet Freedom Forum (IFF) and in 2019 transitioned to the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) which is now being conducted in various countries across Africa on a rotational basis. While welcoming delegates to DRIF24, he highlighted that for the forum, PIN had extended invitations to digital actors in the global majority who face similar challenges.

Thereafter, an opening panel comprising Aapti Institute's Programmes Manager Vinay Narayan, highlighted how countries in the Global South tend to replicate Western frameworks without adapting to their contexts. Inclusive Tech Groups' Executive Director Dr. Millicent Agangiba pointed out the need for access to affordable internet and infrastructure across Africa. Meta's Oversight Board Member Afia Asantewaa Asare-Kyei highlighted Meta's focus on improving electoral integrity citing concerns over the rise of electoral disinformation, voter manipulation, and Artificial Intelligence deep fakes in 2024 amidst numerous elections in the year. The opening panel called for relevant and rights-respecting digital policies, inclusion of marginalised groups and meaningful content moderation to ensure an enabling digital rights environment.

Digital Security

Throughout the event, Digital Security Help Desks were on display and seven organisations and individual experts directly participated at the Help Desks namely Paradigm Initiative, Pollicy, Open Observatory Network Interference (OONI), Zambian Cybersecurity Initiative Foundation (ZCSIF), Ghana Cybersecurity Authority, Resilience Tech, and Andrew Gole from Uganda. Through the help desk, at least 65 direct cases were attended to across three days. Eleven tools were showcased which include Ripoti, Ayeta, Zscan, Digital Safetea, Choose

Your Own news, OONI's Probe, Zambia incident response system, Windscribe, Feed shield, Ghana Incident response platform and matrix. At least 15 Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) were disbursed to DRIF24 participants who expressed interest. At least 21 VPN installations were undertaken. Digital security experts interacted with at least 250 attendees throughout the event, including during the open display session in the plenary.

Discussions provided practical lessons on circumventing schemes that malicious individuals and organisations use to endanger users of digital spaces and how to avoid them. Attendees received information on cyber security threats such as spyware and how to address these threats using anti-virus tools like VirusTotal, F secure, en-
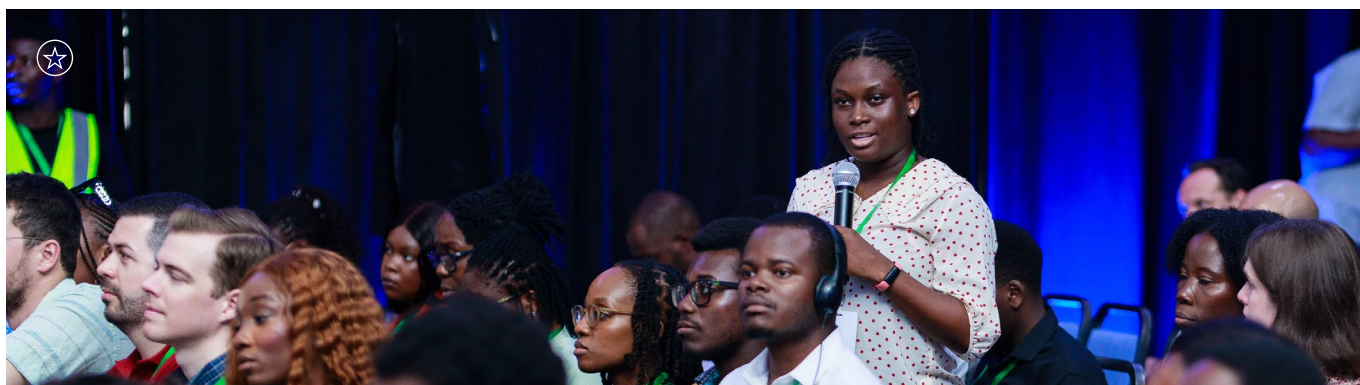
cryption of data and information, frequent update of operating system software and usage of VPN and Two-factor authentication. It was highlighted that governments are often at the forefront of acquiring spyware software to hack the devices of media personnel to prevent them from revealing some reports. Attendees were encouraged to electronically shred deleted files to prevent recovery by unauthorised persons, avoid opening contaminated emails from unknown senders and avoid downloading suspicious links.

DRIF attendees participated in sessions where women leaders in politics discussed violence against women, the cultural roles of women as impediments to their participation in politics and online discourse. The session highlighted that physical and online attacks against women are creating an unsafe space for women to thrive in the political arena. During the meeting attendees underlined the need for increased awareness of the dangers of misinformation online especially during electoral pe-

riods as it often results in women's limited participation in online discussions. Discussions also highlighted the need for technology companies to conduct effective content moderation and develop effective policies that safeguard women against online harassment and reduce gendered targeted online-based violence against women. Attendees recommended that there is a need for governments to put in place systems that enable women in politics to report online violence against them and enactment of laws to criminalise online violence against women in politics.

Trust and Accountability

Under this theme, attendees discussed how content moderation in African languages has been undermined and made recommendations to private sector actors on the need to promote inclusive online platforms. It was highlighted that there is less representation of the Portuguese language in digital spaces and a bias in how underserved communities are represented. Attendees noted that to ensure account-

ability, big tech companies should promote fairness and transparency around automated content moderation, especially for under-represented languages and improve training of content moderators. Day one of DRIF24 included discussions on the growing threat of digital forensics technology to press freedom, highlighting the need for legal, technological, and media awareness interventions. Attendees discussed the importance of privacy legislation, credible investigation tools, and media responsibility in device usage to ensure a trusted digital environment. Attendees emphasised the need for accountability in deploying digital surveillance tools in the confines of global laws and standards to avoid unchecked use of digital forensics.

Throughout DRIF, discussions highlighted the need for private companies to facilitate digital trust and inclusion of women in the creation and decision-making of digital technologies and systems. Integration of trust by design into the development of technologies is essential to ensure that the technology developed is inclusive, human rights compliant and safe for use by women. The discussion sought to ensure that technology products prevent online harassment, hate speech, bias and discrimination, in an attempt to close the digital gender gap that exists.

Data Protection, Privacy and Surveillance

This theme included a digital security stream and focused on addressing privacy through data protection and being secure from malicious surveillance schemes deployed by State actors. The attendees participated in a session that focused on digital risk management and safe browsing, which was part of the digital security track at DRIF24. Participants were briefed on spyware and virtual private networks (VPNs). Internet users were encouraged to utilise security features like VPNs and protect their International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) security number to avoid and deter hackers from unauthorised access to their devices. Day one of DRIF24 also set the tone for policy discussions, allowing attendees to influence regional policy design and implementation. The Malabo Convention was discussed and a big debate on whether to supplement or amend the convention ensued. Concerns were raised about the Convention's adaptation to emerging technologies, its lack of focus on data quality and algorithms, and the under-utilisation of cybercrime laws for prosecuting cybercrime perpetrators.

Other sessions focused on the exponential growth in digital identity initiatives across the continent, driven by governments' aims to enhance service delivery and efficiency. Concerns were raised regarding the risks of mass biometric registration, including pri-

vacy infringements and potential discrimination. Government intrusion into data privacy, lack of legal frameworks for data protection, and the absence of official ID systems in certain countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo were raised. During the sessions, there was consensus on the need for independent data protection agencies and legal guidelines to govern data sharing and combat cybercrime.

Discussions on the integration and interoperability of national identification data systems were conducted giving case studies on countries such as Ghana that use biometric technology in identity verification. Conversations emphasised the importance of ensuring that regulatory frameworks align with continental standards set by the Afri-

can Union (AU). Harmonisation and collaboration among AU member states to facilitate seamless data exchange and enhance regional integration were discussed. Other sessions focused on physical and online attacks against women and how the attacks are creating an unsafe space for women to thrive in the political arena. It was discussed that systems should be put in place to enable women in politics to report targeted online gender-based violence.

Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies

The role of AI in shaping a just and sustainable environmental future was discussed and throughout DRIF, conversations on increased disinformation in African elections were spotlighted. On day two, ses-

sions highlighted the prevalence of malicious AI usage noting that AI is being used to produce false information, deepfakes, and manipulative strategies to influence elections. It was concluded that balancing AI innovation and regulation is crucial. A stringent approach to regulating AI content could impede digital advancements and negatively affect the digital economy. Various AI use cases were discussed and it was highlighted that governments should innovate and use Machine Learning algorithms to facilitate the distribution of electricity or energy in African countries to understand the consumption levels of every city, disperse the proportionate energy according to the data gathered to prevent constant power outages in the continent that limit digital accessibility.
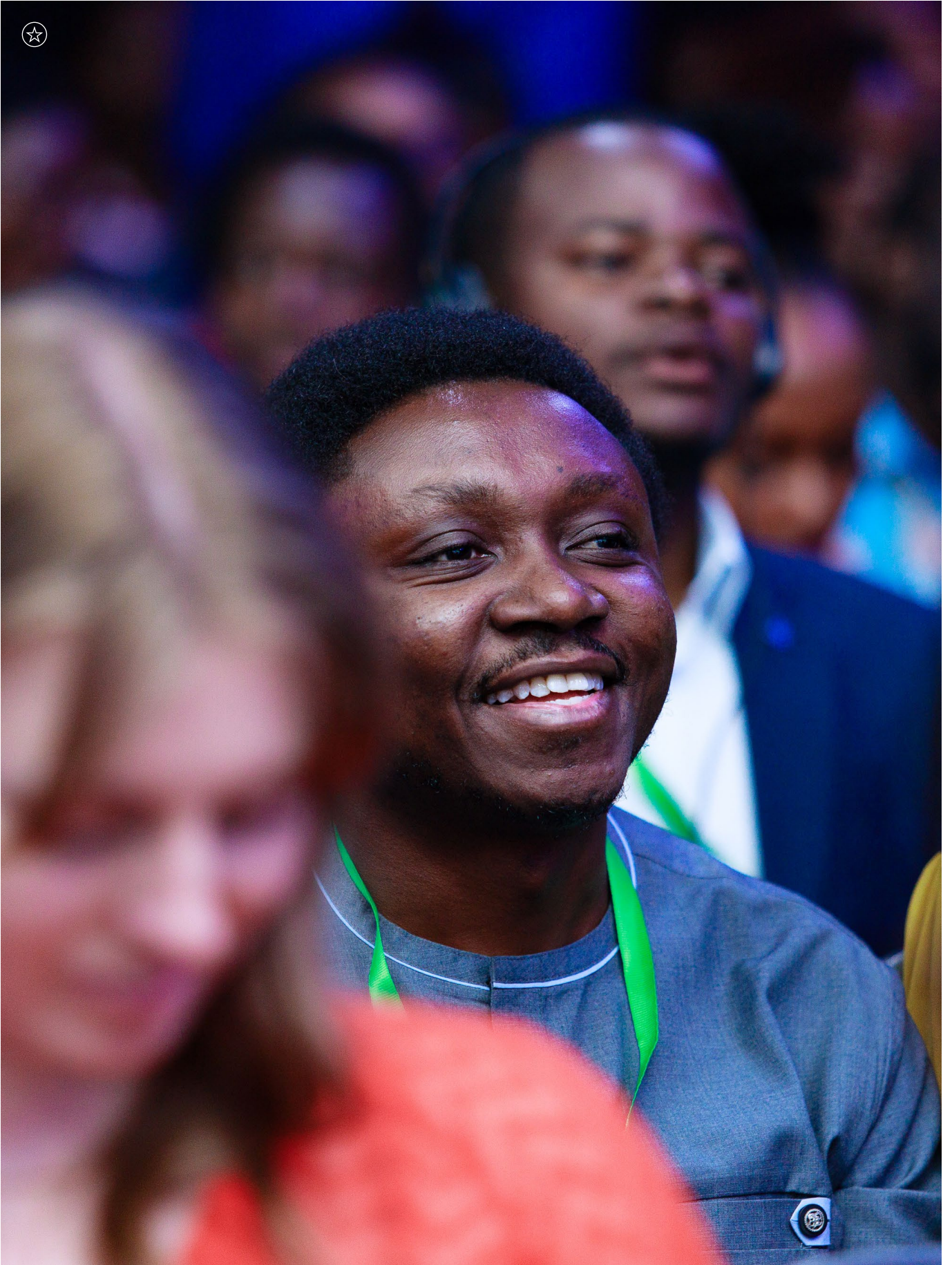
Conversations focused on responsible development and use of Artificial Intelligence. The United Nations Artificial Intelligence Advisory Body hosted a session to gather feedback and perspectives on the body's interim report released in December 2023. Attendees shared their insights on the challenges and opportunities of AI regulation in Africa, emphasising the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to ensure that the voices and concerns of African communities are represented in the development of global AI governance frameworks. Attendees contributed to the ongoing consultations on the AI Advisory

Body's Interim Report and helped shape the development of comprehensive and responsible AI regulatory frameworks. Sessions also unpacked that public participation is essential for formulating human rights-respecting policies that reflect the interests of the general populace and not merely those of special interest groups. Attendees highlighted that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence provides a framework governments can adopt to promote human rights in developing AI regulatory frameworks.

Digital Inclusion and Marginalised Groups.
The significance of inclusivity in internet governance policy-making processes was

highlighted. Representatives from standard-setting organisations shared insights into efforts to promote inclusivity and discussed the importance of diverse voices in shaping internet policies. Initiatives such as the African Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and regional projects in under-served communities were discussed as examples of efforts to promote inclusivity. Challenges such as financial barriers and geographical limitations were acknowledged and the importance of accessible platforms and resources was emphasised. Other sessions on digital inclusion focused on the digital obstacles faced by persons with disability within community networks.

The intersection of Digital Rights and Climate Change was explored highlighting the challenges and opportunities in addressing these interconnected issues. Discussions highlighted the role of ICT in contributing to climate change, emphasising the need for sustainable practices such as reducing energy consumption and minimising digital waste.

DRIF convened platforms that discussed combating hate speech in digital spaces. The sessions discussed the multifaceted challenges posed by the proliferation of discriminatory rhetoric online. The session underscored the detrimental effects of online hate speech on individuals' rights. It was noted that hate speech online infring-

es on the rights of marginalised communities and creates a hostile environment that impedes their participation and engagement online.

Other sessions focused on the pivotal role of the judiciary in safeguarding digital rights highlighting the interconnectedness of digital rights, freedom of expression, association, assembly, privacy, and data protection, in advancing human rights, democracy, and sustainable development. Sessions sought to address the challenges posed by government restrictions on these rights, spotlighting African countries that restrict these rights. A key concern raised was the judiciary's limited understanding of the internet revolution and its reluctance to adapt to digital realities, particularly in the context of national security considerations. Emphasis was placed on the need for the judiciary to interpret laws in light of digital advancements and to uphold fundamental rights in the digital sphere.

The need to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities in global conversations on digital access was emphasised in several sessions with highlights on how most persons with disabilities (PWDs) are unable to access public information on government websites because they are not disability friendly. The discussion highlighted how PWDs' freedom of expression is limited by a lack of inclusivity in the official govern-

ment's information platforms.

Human Rights and Freedoms

Government officials and other stakeholders discussed key themes and priorities related to the governance of digital technologies in 2024. Sessions gathered insights on critical global processes such as the Summit of the Future, the Global Digital Compact (GDC), and the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) review, and how coalitions such as the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) can contribute to shaping these global conversations.

Other sessions focused on fostering rights and inclusion in the digital age through a shared vision of an open, free, and accessible internet in Africa, highlighting the importance of open internet connectivity as a driver of sustainable development and human rights. Sessions that took place acknowledged challenges posed by competing approaches to internet governance that threaten the global and open nature of the internet like internet shutdowns, mass surveillance, and targeting of activists and journalists. Sessions delved into how internet shutdowns impact elections and emphasised raising awareness and addressing the concerning trend. It was discussed that governments should not resort to internet shutdowns to quell dissent and internet service providers should protect and respect fundamental human rights by keeping the internet on.

DRIF provided an opportunity for the presentation of case studies on the weaponisation of technology for human rights abuses against marginalised and criminalised communities worldwide. Presentations pointed to similarities in state enforcement and technology misuse across various countries in the Global South including Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Latin America. Conversations provided new methodologies for protecting the rights of marginalised communities.

DRIF fostered dialogue and collaboration among organisations working to protect journalists in sub-Saharan Africa and provided a platform for discussing the role of legal protection for journalists, particularly in the online sphere, amidst increasing threats and legal challenges in the 2024 election year. Representatives from civil society organisations in Liberia, South Africa, Togo, and Uganda shared their insights on the legal mechanisms and support structures available to journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa. They discussed the challenges and opportunities these organisations encounter in providing legal protection for journalists facing threats and legal action aimed at suppressing critical speech.

Discussions highlighted the need for technologists to create safe online spaces for human rights defenders (HRDs), women and journalists. Discussions highlighted how technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women is becoming a recurring threat to free expression online especially against women in politics who have political opinions. Women journalists who attended DRIF shared their experiences highlighting how female journalists are often targeted resulting in a growing threat to democracy and shrinking of civic space. Participants discussed online censorship challenges faced by women, journalists and HRDs on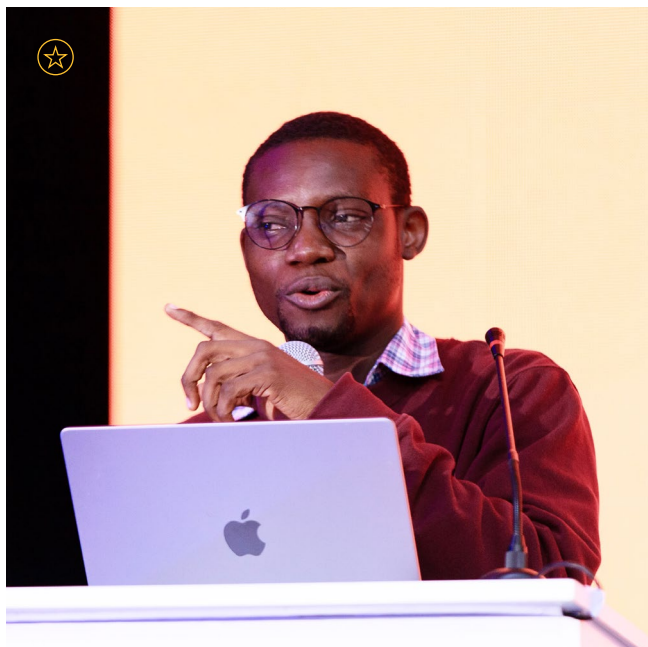 social media platforms, where their posts are often removed or suppressed. DRIF included platforms where digital rights actors discussed how AI initiatives can transform education in Africa for all learners.

PIN's Tools of Impact

As part of the Digital Security Stream, PIN provided a platform for unveiling digital security tools and sharing information on digital security. Discussions provided insights into the innovative features and functionalities of Ripoti and Ayeta, showcasing how these tools leverage technological advancements to address pressing issues in the digital realm and foster a safer and more rights-respecting digital environment. PIN launched the Ripoti platform which empowers individuals in Africa to report digital rights violations and Ayeta, a formidable digital security toolkit, equipping users with tools to safeguard their digital presence. Throughout the session, the panel delved into the background and motivations driving the development of Ripoti and Ayeta. Facilitators highlighted that Ripoti was developed to provide individuals with a means to report digital rights violations promptly and efficiently. Facilitators also highlighted that Ayeta enables individuals to mitigate risks and protect their online privacy and integrity. PIN highlighted the impact of innovative products such as Ripoti and Ayeta, in addressing digital rights violations and enhancing digital security.

PIN shared other digital security toolkits which include toolkits from Zambian Cyber Security Initiative Foundation (ZCSIF), Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), TOR Project, Internews, Code for

Africa-Feedshield, Accessibility Lab, Derechos Digitales and Frontline Defenders.

Launching the Digital Rights and Inclusion in Africa Report - Londa 2023 and Short Film

PIN launched the 2023 report on the state of digital rights and inclusion in Africa, Londa which documented the digital rights and inclusion landscape in 26 African countries. The report provides an in-depth analysis of three critical thematic areas in each African country by examining the extent of the violations and gaps, investigating the use and application of policy and legislation,

and making recommendations. The report promotes the accessibility of quality information on the strides being taken in Africa to ensure meaningful connectivity and a rights-respecting digital landscape. The research alerts governments on the impending digital rights violations that occur within the region. The report highlights the following themes: Internet access and disruptions, Privacy and Surveillance, the Universal Service Fund, Developments in ICT and Emerging Technologies. During the event, PIN launched a fourth film — Undersight, which exposes the digital rights violations that citizens face. The film is extracted from the Londa report and amplifies cross-cutting digital rights challenges that affect the African Community.

05. ✪
Voices from DRIF24 Community

🎤 "Conversations on digital security and digital rights are not just about policy but about people", said a representative from the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe.

🎤 "When it comes to disability, I learnt a lot that when we are creating software we should make sure that persons with disabilities are involved in the software design and testing stages," said a representative from Internet Society (ISOC) Ghana.

🎤 "I had an exceptional experience at the conference. Coming here, I did not know what to expect. My key takeaway from the conference is that AI and new technologies are something we cannot do without and we should make up our mind that it is either we are going with it or it is going without us. We should be inclusive, get more involved and be cautious about what we put out on the internet" said a representative from the United States Agency for Global Media.

🎤 "Many connections have been built at DRIF and the fruits of these connections are yet to be realised. We also need to ensure the gender perspective is applied to the conversations," said a representative from the Women of Uganda Network.

🎙️ "I am happy that there are many people who are concerned about their online privacy as this is something we have been working on for many years," said a representative from Accessibility Lab.

🎙️ "The digital security workshop provided a lot of learning and now I know how to identify if my device has been infected" said a representative from ISOC Ghana.

🎙️ "DRIF provided a platform for learning from other civil society organisations and interacting with funders," said a representative from Human Rights Journalists' Network.

During DRIF, attendees were asked to highlight in one word what the future of digital rights and inclusion looks like. Attendees' responses pointed out key demands for the digital environment and showed hope for a trusted digital environment. Here is what attendees said:
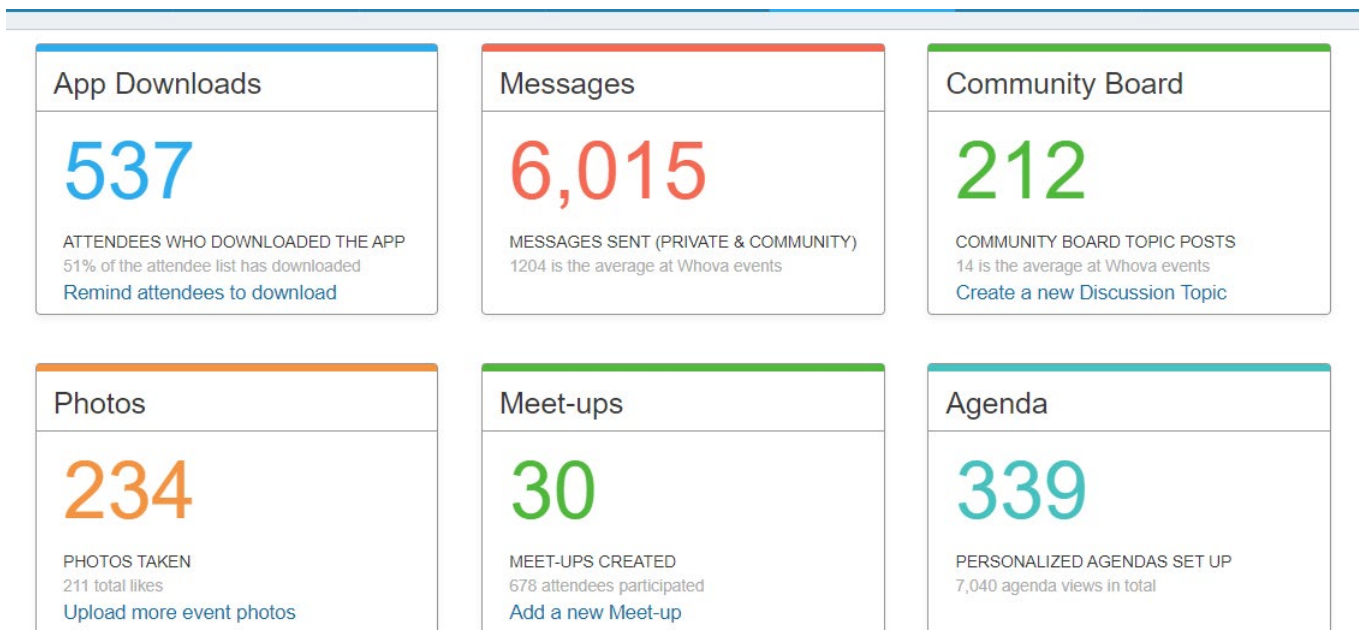
Communications Updates

- DRIF24 received media coverage in platforms with consolidated reach of **1,420,779,064.**
- The two hashtags used at the event #DRIF24 and #PromotingRightsAndInclusion secured a social media reach of **8,800,000.**
- This brings the total media coverage and social media reach to **1,429,579,064.**
- Key messages focused on PIN hosting the 11th Edition of DRIF, this year's theme, type of delegates expected to attend the event, key themes as well as key takeaways from the event.
- DRIF24's target audience covered **13** different stakeholder groups.

DRIF24 Whova performance snapshot

App Downloads	Messages	Community Board
537	**6,015**	**212**
ATTENDEES WHO DOWNLOADED THE APP	MESSAGES SENT (PRIVATE & COMMUNITY)	COMMUNITY BOARD TOPIC POSTS
51% of the attendee list has downloaded	1204 is the average at Whova events	14 is the average at Whova events
Remind attendees to download		Create a new Discussion Topic

Photos	Meet-ups	Agenda
234	**30**	**339**
PHOTOS TAKEN	MEET-UPS CREATED	PERSONALIZED AGENDAS SET UP
211 total likes	678 attendees participated	7,040 agenda views in total
Upload more event photos	Add a new Meet-up	

06. ✪
Community Recommendations

Recommendations to Governments ✪

1. Attend and participate in global conversations on AI governance frameworks to ensure that the voices and concerns of African communities are represented.
2. Promote collaborative in-country multi-stakeholder engagements in internet governance.
3. Invest in digital skills development to empower citizens
4. Promote the development of open and accessible technical infrastructure to promote innovation and access.
5. Enact policy and regulatory frameworks that support an open and inclusive internet in under-served regions.
6. Develop robust legal frameworks that safeguard the online safety of journalists and human rights defenders enshrining privacy protections in legislation.
7. Support initiatives aimed at improving connectivity and capacity building
8. Provide assistive technologies and tools for persons with disabilities to improve their use of technology.
9. Develop disability-friendly websites to ensure access to information for persons with disabilities.
10. Enact laws that support access to technology by persons with disabilities
11. Promote digital literacy in high schools and rural communities, ensuring everyone has access to information and resources for a sustainable digital future.

12. Collaborate with stakeholders in the digital rights ecosystem to strengthen effective reporting mechanisms and address digital rights violations.
13. Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among the judiciary across the region to promote a consistent and rights-based approach to digital governance
14. Develop and enforce robust legal frameworks for data protection and cybercrime.
15. Ensure transparency and accountability in government-led digital initiatives.
16. Foster collaboration with civil society organisations to address concerns regarding privacy and discrimination.
17. Promote interoperability and standards among national identification data systems.
18. Collaborate with AU member states to facilitate cross-border data flow and regional integration.
19. Allocate adequate resources to address cybercrime and implementation of regional framewovrks.
20. Strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms to prosecute cybercriminals effectively.
21. Establish clear guidelines for the use of digital forensic tools in journalistic investigations.
22. Strengthen internet infrastructure and ensure affordable access to improve digital connectivity.
23. Address the digital divide for unserved and under-served communities.

Recommendations to the Private Sector

1. Adopt sustainable practices to reduce carbon emissions and minimise environmental impact.
2. Adopt ethical data collection and usage practices, adhering to local and regional legal frameworks.
3. Enhance transparency on data-sharing agreements and partnerships with governments.
4. Invest in cybersecurity measures to safeguard sensitive data from unauthorised access or misuse.

5. Engage in meaningful cooperation with governments and civil society to address digital governance challenges.
6. Demonstrate commitment to human rights principles in business operations and partnerships.
7. Proactively request for judicial orders when faced with orders for internet shutdown from governments and be transparent with regards to responses.
8. Translate community standards in all languages to ensure inclusion.
9. Invest in biometric technology and infrastructure to enhance identity verification capabilities embedding human rights considerations.
10. Partner with the government through Public Private Partnerships to improve digital infrastructure and promote inclusion of marginalised groups.
11. Develop rights-respecting digital policies and standards.
12. Adopt meaningful content moderation to ensure an enabling digital rights environment.

Recommendations to the Media

1. Amplify the voices of marginalised communities.
2. Advocate for press freedom and access to information to facilitate informed public discourse.
3. Raise awareness on digital rights violations.
4. Provide platforms for public debate on digital rights issues.

Recommendations to CSOs

1. Create safe and secure online platforms where human rights defenders can engage in dialogue, share resources, and mobilise support for their work.

2. Build the capacity of communities at risk of online violence or attacks and those at risk of digital exclusion.
3. Collaborate with government and private sector stakeholders to promote responsible data governance practices.
4. Provide legal support to safeguard journalists' safety and press freedom.
5. Litigate to protect independent journalism and digital rights in different contexts where there are digital rights violations.
6. Advocate for the development of regulatory frameworks compliant with regional and international standards.
7. Collaborate with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to protect and promote digital rights and inclusion in Africa.

Recommendations to the academia

1. Research the impact of internet governance policies on marginalised communities.
2. Integrate digital rights and inclusion topics into educational curricula.
3. Research less discussed topics such as the intersection between digital technologies and environmental sustainability.
4. Develop relevant curriculum, provide educational resources and training programs on data protection and cybersecurity for policymakers and the public.
5. Collaborate with stakeholders to develop evidence-based policies and interventions.

Recommendations to the DRIF Convenor

1. Invite participation of more government actors, in particular Ministers of ICTs, Regulatory Authorities and African Union representatives to engage with the DRIF community.
2. Consider hosting future DRIF events in Lusophone and Francophone countries.

07.
Conclusion ✪

In wrapping up DRIF24, The closing ceremony was a consolidation of great discussions and sessions which unpacked the individual roles of different actors towards a rights respecting digital rights and digitally secure ecosystem. The DRIF community evaluated the event and were drawn into an exciting exercise to guess the next DRIF location. The Global South delegates were encouraged to do more collaborative action to improve digital rights and inclusion and called for collective action in global processes. A poem highlighted the need for digital inclusion echoing that many people in remote areas and persons with disabilities are left behind due to poor internet infrastructure and connectivity and lack of assistive technologies. The call was for more inclusion in the digital age. At the end of DRIF, a call was made for African countries to improve their VISA policies to remove VISA restrictions saddled on African travellers within the continent.

The closing ended with an announcement of Zambia as host country for DRIF 2025. DRIF24 effectively provided a platform for communities of practice on digital rights and inclusion issues to convene, share ideas and actively advocate for a rights-respecting digital environment. The platform effectively brought together various stakeholders from the Global South to share strategies for tackling similar challenges relating to digital security, human rights online, digital access, affordability and skills. DRIF24 created a platform for building mutually beneficial partnerships that promote positive action on solving digital rights and inclusion challenges.

Paradigm Initiative (PIN) is a non-profit pan-African organisation that connects under-served young Africans with digital opportunities and ensures the protection of their rights. In addition to being a convenor of the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF), we have directly impacted more than 150,000 youth with improved livelihoods through our digital inclusion and digital rights programs and also built online platforms that educate and serve as safe spaces for reporting digital rights violations. These mediums, in the form of reports, short films, and educational online platforms, include Ayeta, Londa, and Ripoti.