PARADIGM INITIATIVE

Tanzania
Session:
Promoting Digital Rights in Challenging Environments: Cases from Tanzania.

19 April, 2021.

DRIF 21
Digital Rights & Inclusion Forum 2021

Speakers

Peter Mbwambo   Irene George   Hon. Ummy Hamis Nderiananga   Zaituni Njovu   Maria Matui   Geline Fuko   Tungi Kenneth Mwanjala   James Laurent

ZAINA FOUNDATION

DIGITAL RIGHT AND INCLUSION FORUM REPORT

Country: Tanzania
Host Organization: Zaina Foundation
Location: Hyatt Regency hotel – Dar es salaam

19th April 2021

Key recommendations | DRIF21 Tanzania

- Establishment of a national coalition which will advocate for the review and amendment of the laws which restricts digital rights and civic space in Tanzania. These laws including Electronic and Postal Communication (Online Content Regulations of 2020, Media Service Act, Cyber Crime Act etc. This coalition should necessitate the interest of citizens in terms of decision making and accountability
- Development of strategic plan on how to advocate for digital rights and civic space in Tanzania
- Create more platforms and forums s which will offer more digital literacy and awareness to the Tanzanians. With more emphasis being rural areas and government officials (policy and law makers)
- Using various methods like petitions and campaigns to advocate for digital rights
- Using legal fraternity to challenge draconian laws which infringes freedom of expression and particularly the digital rights in Tanzania.
- Advocating for the enactment of Data Protection Law.
- Parents should be aware of digital rights in order to protect their children
- Forge campaigns that promote the access of data or internet packages (affordable prices)
- Organize various events like digital rights marathons to promote for digital rights in Tanzania
- Normalizations of punishments to violations of digital rights and users
- Promoting and strengthening of policies and regulations that safeguards online participation with freedom.
- Promotion and implementation of digital inclusion such as providing interpreters of sign languages in such spaces.
- Engaging the media to advocate for digital rights and equally amplyfying DRIF conversation to wider diverse audience.
- Increase citizen's role in promoting digital rights.
- Increase State's role in respecting digital rights (Civic space and Freedom of expression) for its citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) is an important platform where conversations on digital policy in Africa are shaped, policy directions debated and partnerships forged for action. 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, Internet shutdowns and digital empowerment. This year DRIF 2021 focused on 12 countries in Africa including Tanzania.

In Tanzania DRIF 21 was hosted by Zaina Foundation under a theme of "Promoting Digital Rights in a Challenging Environment". The event was held on 19th April 2021 at Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dar es Salaam. As result of challenges possed by Covid-19 the event was a hybrid of both online and offline activities. The 28 offline participants were youth, men, women and people with special needs selected from major towns in Tanzania which includes Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Dar es Salaam, and Zanzibar. As result of being streamed online we had participants around the world who joined through zoom and Youtube.

Opening Remarks: DRIF 21 was officiated by a welcoming remarks from Zaina Foundation's board member Aydah from Uganda. In order to have a meaningful and productive sessions during DRIF 21, she advised and emphasized participants to exercise Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Association and Freedom to access information during DRIF 21. Lastly she thanked the organizers and welcomed all the participants both online and offline.

PANEL DISCUSION

The first session under the theme of "Promoting Digital Rights in a Challenging Environment" was facilitated by Zaituni Njovu – Executive director of Zaina Foundation.

"Digital rights is a right which is closely linked to freedom of expression, access to information and right to privacy. However, in Tanzania the freedom of expression and civic space is limited." Remarks from Ms. Zaituni. Further in session, it was pointed out that Tanzanians are experiencing challenges in accessing Twitter without VPN, various media houses have been fined, banned from working and controlled due to strict EPOCA regulations which is deterrence of media autonomy and independence.

Ms. Aydah who is working with an NGO that advocates for digital rights in Uganda took the participants through the trends of digital rights in East Africa. In her presentation she said digital rights is an essential in development. In digital space, citizens are allowed to express their views and exercise their rights of course with stipulated limitation. However, in expressing these rights there should be inclusiveness of women, children and people with special needs. Nonetheless, How safe are these groups ? A question for everyone.

"Digital rights in Countries in East Africa are the same. There is an outright increase in limitation of freedom of expression and civic space." remarks. She gave an example of internet crackdown during the general election in both Tanzania and Uganda.

Mr. James Laurent from THRDC highlighted on how EPOCA regulations of 2020 affected negatively digital rights in Tanzania. In his discussion he mentioned some shortcomings of the EPOCA regulations. Specifically the regulations required YouTube users and online TV to have registered their channels to TCRA. Further, one needs a TIN and a Tax clearance certificate from TRA which which is offered at fee. Another impact of this regulations it restricts the any tool that can assist citizens from accessing restricted content (in case of internet disruption) so the implication is that it restricts the use of VPN.

It is surprising and equally demoralizing to see the law makers legislating draconian laws preventing citizens from accessing internet while it is the top leaders who are tweeting every here and then. This implies that even top leaders are using VPN to tweet. Now the question is digital rights a privilege or what? Is digital rights for all or some select few ?

Mr. Ibrahim Samatha who work with Action for Rural Women Empowerment (ARUWE) spoke about the challenges facing digital rights in Tanzania. One of the challenges Mr. Ibrahim spoke about was that digital rights is a new concept in Tanzania with no proper policies. Even in constitution there is no a particular provision which provide for digital rights just as in African Charter, only that we use provisions of freedom of expression since they closely linked to each other. It has to be noted that digital rights are like any other rights and need to be protected and respected. Due to this absence of policy and good law digital efficacy is low. Digital rights

it's a crosscutting issue, therefore, the delay we make in promoting and respecting the digital freedoms we are equally delaying in technological advancement. A good example is what is happening in some African countries like Zimbabwe, Uganda and Chad.

Despite the fact that Tanzania has signed various international treaties, it went ahead and drafted EPOCA regulation which contravenes international standards Therefore, there is a need to review our laws and regulations on digital security to meet the international standards.

Digital Security and Inclusion

In this session Ms. Maria Matui, was the lead expert on the issues around digital security and inclusion. She started by explaining the issue of security and said security started long time and that's why we have doors, lockers etc to keep us and our properties safe. She went further elaborating how ICT plays a significant role in political and civil rights. Therefore, rights of people online should be equally protected in all manners. In regard to inclusion she asked do we have proper inclusion of people with disabilities? Are the voices of marginalized group heard enough? Do the digital devices incorporate the needs of people with disabilities and children? If the answer to the above questions is No, then it is time to come together and plan about these things to avoid lagging behind.

Circumventing Widespread Internet Shutdown during Elections

The session was presented by Mr. James Laurent which aimed to explain to the participants what to do when the government imposed internet shutdown. In discussing this topic, the presenters highlighted the history of internet shutdown in African countries and how to beat it.

Skill to share around Digital Rights: In this session participants divided in three groups and each group had a presenter who share the with them various skills with the participant.

- Using Digital Technology to Amplify Voices in Tanzania – Adv. Geline Fuko: In this group the presenter elaborated to the participants that digital technologies can be used to amplify voices of citizens in a country. The presenter gave an example of a bunge forum application which used to connect members of parliament with their constituencies.
- Gender, Health and Technology – Ayda: In this group the presenter asked the participants questions. What makes women behind in technology? What are the health challenges that makes people fear to participate online? Among the answers that were given includes cultural practice and patriarch system for the first questions while digital illiteracy, internet behaviors and online GBV been mentioned for the second questions.
- Misinformation and Women's Rights – Maria Matui: This group had a slogan of leave no one behind. The presenter highlighted predisposed challenges of women on ICT issues. She also asked the participants why women are left behind in technology and what can be done to improve the situation. It was alluded that some women had less information on issues around digital /ICT. For quite some time some women have been silenced by culture, but now things have changed women are engaged in development issues.

Questions and Comment from Online Participants

The online participants had the following questions for the presenters

Question: Is there any hope for digital rights in Tanzania as result of having a new regime?

Answer: In responding to this questions presenters and participants from the floor had different views on this questions. Others said things are the same because it's the same political party (CCM) which is leading and the president will be using the same CCM manifesto to rule. On the other side other presenters had an opposite view that the current president had a background of working with human rights civil society organization before joining politics so she will rule in adherence of the rule of law and human rights. But the final view said it's too early to predict since these are politicians.

AREA OF IMPROVEMENT FOR FUTURE DRIF EVENTS

It was recommended there should be an initial engagement of PIN media and the communication officers of the host organisation to leverage the power of both institutions on enhansing the vizibility of DRIF. For example including a logo of the host institution on every multimedia designs and streaming the sessions on social media of both partners

SNAP SHOT FOR DRIF21