THE GAMBIA, NATIONAL INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM – REPORT 2023

Theme: Building Economic Resilience and Digital Sovereignty in the Gambia
Venue: (FORMAT: HYBRID (IN PERSON AND ONLINE)
(Venue Onsite: Sir D. K Jawara Conference Centre, Dates: 10^t and 11^t May 2023)
Main Theme: Building Economic Reliance and Digital Sovereignty in the Gambia Context
Sub Themes:

1. **Cybersecurity and Trust**
2. **Digital Governance**
3. **Emerging Technologies and Innovation**
4. **Rights and Freedoms**
5. **Universal Access and Meaningful Connectivity**

Panelist

1. **Dr. Jorjoh Ndure Tambaedou PHD**
2. **Fatim Badjie**
3. **Amadou Nyang**

Organized by: The Gambia National Internet Governance Forum Steering Committee
Rapporteur Name: Therese Keita, Paul Abdul, Madeline Ileleji

Date:10th May 2023
Abstract
1. Presentations by the panelists on the Main Theme
Dr. Jorjoh Ndure Tambedou-
- Covid has taught us that we need technology to survive during a crisis.
- The ministry needs to make sure that they have the right policies in place to support digital transformation.
- Digital acceleration can contribute to our development and wellbeing, but there is always a risk of being left behind.
- We must pay attention to digital technologies and cyber security.
- It is important to ensure proper guidelines are in place.

Fatim Badjie - (asked about her thoughts on Gambia's preparedness when it comes to the main theme of this forum)

- We, as individuals, need to ensure we have an understanding of the policies in place and how to avoid violating them. Further, it is important to have a plan in place for the protection of our digital infrastructure like a disaster management or recovery plan.
- Digital sovereignty Is really about how we store, share, and use data, as well as having proper guidelines to protect this data.
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- When discussing digital sovereignty, it's really about what ethically can we do to enable our country to act as our eyes and protect and have better control over our digitalization, data, hardware, software, and in general the supply chain of utilization in terms of economic resilience. We need to continue to be more creative and continue coming up with software developments that identify solutions and ways to help make our lives easier.
- We need to raise our capacity to be able to maintain the level of security we desire.

Amadou Nyang - ICT Director, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy (MOCDE)

- We now have a Minister of Communications and Digital Economy that is both technically skilled and well versed in technology.
- We can harness *NOT SURE WHAT IS SUPPOSED TO GO HERE*
- Example: In Nigeria, the revenue brought in by Data has surpassed even the oil industry. The digital economy is contributing way more than the oil and gas economy.
- We need to review our policies to fit the updated context we have now.
- The infrastructure needs to be addressed and updated to the current standard.
- We are trying to engage the ministry of interior.
- The Cabinet has directed that every ministry rolling out tech projects will need to go through the ministry.
- The payment gateway - we need to collaborate to be able to harness the digital economy.

Infrastructure and digital identity - local content - most projects are still outsourced to foreign companies. Views:

- Data protection, privacy legislation, and new communications law will highlight that, but we still need to have the right infrastructure.
- They need to properly address and implement the alleys existing policies.
- The ministry of trade is responsible for local content. They must create policies that ensure that local content is being supported.
- Firms need to come together and collaborate to ensure that they fill gaps when they exist to ensure tenders remain local.
- Most grants end up going out because we don't have the capacity and the right laws.

Fatim Badjie (CEO, ACE Communications Ltd)

- The immigration department stores their own data.
- The majority of people working in the IT sector are ethical people.
- Training- We currently focus most of individual training efforts on teaching people technical skills or hard skills, however we must increase focus on fostering communication, policy, and having people in the industry who possess creativity and other soft skills we need.

Jorjoh Ndure Tambedou PHD - CEO Insist Global Ltd
SMEs are often overlooked, but they contribute billions to our economy

- We need to ensure that, when creating solutions, we are creating them to fit our own local context, especially for people with low literacy.
- We need to drive meaningful access.
- By increasing digital literacy, we increase the likelihood of individuals buying tech devices.
- We need to find ways to actively and deliberately make an effort when it comes to inclusion
- We need to protect our vulnerable populations, especially when it comes to misinformation. It is our responsibility to find a way to protect people from misinformation.

We need cheaper rates for internet access if we are truly going to prosper.
Dr. Jorjoh - Further, we must identify the challenges that the ISPs are facing once the electricity costs go down and become more stable the costs will be lower

- Fatim-- There is a need for other research and studies to be conducted.

Fatim as a strategist - 3 recommendations to byte ministry in regards to the main theme

- It is critical to have a data center up and running. Further, all the data we collect needs to be saved. It is important to note that we cannot depend on paper trails forever.
- It is important to begin efforts to digitalize our mail, instead of sharing written letters, as it is not secure.
- Research is extremely important, and should be supported.

Fatim
- Pura needs to regulate the way GSM operators charge

2. Questions, Comments & Responses by Participants

Ismaila Jawara - The government does not have a data governance framework. How do we ensure that even though international companies work here, our data does not leave the country?

Ponce- Is the data center going to be in the GBA or upcountry? Will it use renewable energy?

- Feasibility center will determine the location and might be around the LRR. It will be a green data session.

THEME: CYBER SECURITY AND TRUST

Moderator: AMADOU A BAH – PRESIDENT, GCSA

PANELIST:

    I.   MAMADOU ALIEU JALLOW - MOCDE

    II.   MALICK SALLAH - GmCSIRT

    III.   ANNA ANET SAMBOU - SHAOW Gambia

    IV.   NDEY TOURAY - Gambia Police Force

The panel was moderated by Mr. Amadou A Bah and featured three experts in the field of cybersecurity: Mr. Malick Sallah from GmSIRT, Ms. Anna Annet Sambou from SHAOW Gambia and Ms. Ndey Fatou Touray from The Gambia Police Force.

Main Topic and Arguments

The panel discussion looked into several key themes related to cyber security and trust in the Gambia, including:

The importance of trust in cyber security: Addressing this topic, Mr. Sallah stated that GmCSIRT, an institution established by PURA and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy (MOCDE) through recommendations given by ITU, is the focal point of contact in terms of incident response. But since its establishment, GmCSIRT has been faced with numerous issues relating to trust and proper awareness of its existence and mandate. For instance, incidents where an alert concerning the Cyber Security of a company is received by GmCSIRT, advice given to the company will not be taken seriously due to the lack of policy and awareness of the institution's existence and mandate.

Furthermore, in question of the GmSIRTS establishment and its existence as an institution under Government, Mr. Amadou Nyang, Director of ICT from the ministry of Communication and Digital Economy (MOCDE), clarified that GmCSIRT was established through the proper channels under PURA through MOCDE specifically because the ICT department under the ministry was not yet fully established.

In addition, Mr. Sallah further stated that policies are drafted and being sent to cabinet for approval, discussing that awareness is being worked towards.

Digital safety and internet safety-

The role of the police in cybersecurity: Ms. Touray, in response to her institution's role in cybersecurity, highlighted that the police are very prepared and concerned about these issues, explaining that they take cybersecurity very seriously and because of that, they plan to go digital.

She also stated that as a digital institution and profession, the Gambia Police force follows a strict chain of custody procedure to maintain integrity and make sure that digital information, which often serves as evidence in court of law, is admissible. Due to security reasons, Ms. Touray decided not to give out examples or insights of her institutions operation but did offer a key example of the previous military coup in which The Gambia Police Force did their investigation, traced evidence through audio devices, and submitted a report to the office of the IGP and SIS making sure that their operation was in line with the chain of custody.

She also stated that when it comes to cyber security and digital investigation, the GPF is fully ready and follows due processes. However, the issue is that at times laws are not in place to prosecute those found wanting.

She also highlighted that, before the establishment of the cybercrime unit, it used to be a challenge but since its creation they have now managed to tackle some issues relating to cybercrime by going digital and establishing a safe and private software that aims to make sure that people's data is well kept and protected. She explained that the cybercrime unit carries out our investigations and reports to the prosecution's office to make sure that evidence is provided and justice is served in court.

The issues of trust in cybersecurity at a public level: As an advocate addressing issues of online harassment, Ms. Ann Annet Sambou of SHAOW Gambia stated that one of the problems we have as a society is a lack of awareness held by individuals within our communities. As an organization trying to address issues on cyber harassment and bullying, SHAOW Gambia, through its training conducted, has realized that a lot of young ones (especially young girls) are bullied online, but why? This is a direct result of the lack of awareness on what cyber bullying and harassment is all about.

She also highlighted the need for more pressure to be placed on the government, stating that protection starts with you the individual. However, the problem remains in identifying how much longer we should be waiting on the government and Parliament to ensure that people are being held accountable for their cybercrimes. According to Ms. Sambou, case studies in the rural areas reveal that 75% of girls are either victims or seen in pictures in cyber-attacks but unfortunately the lack of awareness makes it difficult for them to realize the level of threat they are facing so the solution remains: AWARENESS.

 NDEY TOURAY from Gambia Police Force was asked:

IS THE POLICE PREPARED?

The police are very much prepared when it comes to data security, and the Gambia force takes cybersecurity very seriously and because of that they plan to go digital.

QUESTION: Can you give examples of evidence submitted in court digitally if there's any?

(*Undisclosable for security reasons) Key example: the coup in which we did our investigation.

QUESTION: The criminal code does not currently address 20% of issues relating to cybercrime, what is the force doing regarding those?

In terms of trust, is the police really responsive to cybercrimes?

Before the establishment of the cybercrime unit, it remained a challenge. However, since its creation, we have now managed to tackle some issues relating to cybercrime by going digital and establishing a safe and private software that aims to make sure that people's data is well kept and protected. We as unit carry out our investigation and report back to the prosecution's office to make sure that evidence is provided and justice is served in court.

QUESTION: At what level can records be accessed?

In the force, we employ people after extensive screening …

The Malabo convention brought great joy to the force due to the fact that it made crimes against cyber security punishable. For example, in the issue of the attack on central bank, the police force should have been the first point of contact but due to the lack of trust in the police we were not.

Q&A

JOSEPH GOMEZ WEB Way ASKED: How many activities have you carried out on awareness and who is the person to focal contact for GMSIRT or GPF?

GPF organizes radio talk shows where we discuss ways to protect oneself. Working together with NGOs and other stakeholders, releasing documentaries, and conducting ground activities are all ways in which GPF tackles issues relating to cybercrimes.

GmSIRT is a focal point of contact in cybercrimes that works with the police, who are mandated to arrest and prosecute.

Dawda Jatta for GmSIRT, with respect to our contact, we have a free toll line on 148 which connects people and reports issues to GmSIRT, who then conducts investigations and send reports and recommendations to police for action to be taken.

The issues regarding cyber security and a lack of trust regarding the privacy of our data often makes authorities easily questionable.

QUESTION: Talking about the amounts of funds spent on the internet (trust and regulatory): For example, Gamcel increasing their tariff and also PURA pushing radio stations, where does our data go?

QUESTION: Essentially, anything that PURA is regulating is crumbling so what's your take as director of MoCDE on this?

- PURA is not crumbling, but without them everything would be chaotic. Concerning Gamtel, PURA took to its stands and stopped the provider from increasing the tariffs because they didn't follow due process. For NAWEC, PURA intervened but due to the intensity of the situation, it became a do or die scenario so the increment eventually had to pass through. A lot has to be done given the fact that we are very vulnerable and also are currently rated 17 in all of Africa, this clearly calls for more to be done.

Mr. Alagie Mbowe clarified that the parliament has yet to receive any bill on cyber security and crimes. The ratification is a cabinet paper that is currently under review.

Dr Jorjoh Ndure added that:

We need to increase the capacity of people working, and focus on standards and quality. Given that there are no existing laws, how does PURA's helpline offer help to people in need of their services and assistance?

- In response to this Malick Sallah replied: You can use the ICT act to prosecute people but not many judiciary officials are aware of this.

Question: Who regulates cyber security in the Gambia?

PURA is the regulator, naturally it is the expectation that they should be the ones to regulate it, but due to low capacity in the sector it is not yet fully established properly and therefore cannot yet perform this task.

Ismaila Gaye added that we have to appreciate the government's effort for their tremendous work. But even with all the efforts, there should definitely be cyber security degrees and courses available in the university of the Gambia.

The questions still continue with a few more taken from participants.

HOW FAST IS THE MINISTRY WORKING WITH REGARDS TO AI?

AMADOU: responded that improving technology, be it AI or data, is part of the agenda but without policies relating to cybersecurity, the progress is still quite slow.

DAWDA one of the participants contributed that:

As someone passionate in education and innovation, I believe as a nation, given the fact that our innovation is at the embryo stage, we should take things slow when it comes to AI and its activities, making sure that its regulations are in line with available policies, giving the fact that there are various existing risks and threats posed against data and privacy.

KIJERA asked a question on,

What is the stance of the Internet Governance Forum on issues relating to cybercrime?

 EBRIMA added that:

Recently cyberbullying and grooming has been a major issue in crimes against children. How can we protect children online?

SHOAW: Prevention is the best form of protection, and educating children on how to use, access, and behave online is the key to   protecting children on the Internet.

MUSTAPHA asked: How best can the ministry assure us that they are working to protect our data?

- Amadou responded that the establishment of a cybercrime policy and forensic base is in the works, which will greatly help with addressing these issues.

Conclusion:

Overall, the panel was a well moderated, interactive, and educative session in which panelists agreed that trust is a critical component of effective cyber security and that building and maintaining trust requires a set of technological, policy, and cultural approaches and awareness. They also highlighted existing, as well as the need for further, cooperation between government, local societies, industries, and academic groups to address and tackle issues of cyber security and mistrust.

PANEL on Emerging Technologies and Innovation and Data Governance

MODERATOR: BERAN DONDEH GILLEN – PRESIDENT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION OF THE GAMBIA (ITAG)

PANELISTS:

Alieu Badara Sowe

Mohamed Sowe

Joseph Gomez

Amadou Nyang

Enforcement for data protection bill:

Amadou - How is the new information bill taking unsolicited messages into account?
- There is a regulation that is enforcing that, however the ministry has faced many challenges enforcing and regulating this industry.

In the Gambia we should consider merging the two entities as learned from the study in Ghana. Access to information compels government to share data and further assist with data protection.
- There will be a full-fledged entity to handle data protection and access to information.
- Their concern is where the data is stored. As the government, they must work to ensure that these areas are covered in detail in policies moving forward.
- The data protection - The whole process went through a multi stakeholder process with working groups and committees.

Badara - Share how data governance operates. Is the data being collected being managed in a personal capacity? (Google plus codes?)

- they are trying to get (*not sure what goes here????)
- If your data is leaking to the government, this should be shared with you.
- We need to engage more people in data security.
- We need to push for data regulations.
- The youth population is now very skeptical about what happens to their data- they didn't get the biometric birth certificate.
- The Gambia needs to fast track the data privacy bill.

Joseph - the web way
- The web way is trying to develop solutions that local farmers can use with no internet, especially since there is a large mobile penetration. It connects the farmers to hotels and restaurants. (*****Doesn't sound right but not sure what was trying to be said so edit as you see fit?)
- The farmers call the short code and (*not sure what goes here????)
- They also have a chatbot with (*not sure what goes here????)

Amadou - Is there legislation regarding AI and chatbots?

- They are going to start with a feasibility study and come with a policy direction

BADARA - There is an embargo on the advancement of AI.
- We are very behind when it comes to developing nations, AI is a serious national development enabler.

AMADOU- what comes to ICT interns of budget is peanuts, but they are the largest revenue paying sector. (*****Doesn't sound right but not sure what was trying to be said so edit as you see fit?)
- Most of the work that the ministry is doing Is donor funded
- It is very difficult to explain how the digital economy brings in more to the gap and economy. Especially when it comes to things like health.
- Maybe the ministry can (*not sure what goes here????)

BERAN FOR COMMUNIQUE -How does the ministry feel about working with a multi-stakeholder working group to create a platform where these conversations are being held more often than once a year to help mitigate?
- We have the capacity in the Gambia to train our policy makers, to be able to put them in a position to understand what laws need to be made in regards to IT.

Mohamaed Sowe - JOGPU trained the national assembly members when it came to the access to information bill. That is why it was so quickly passed. We should try to emulate that practice and strategy moving forward.

Joseph - We need to come with innovative solutions.

Kebbeh - In general, what is the biggest challenge the government faces when it comes to data governance?

- Amadou - Infrastructure and awareness.

Mustapha
FOR COMMUNIQUE - Start from 5th grassroots and build up to the national IGF to be more inclusive.

For the benefit of the entire population, giving trainings to NA members and major stakeholders involved in decision making as well other stakeholders in terms of capacity and awareness will be a key boost to the economy and also provide more information and understanding.

 AMADOU NYANG

The residency of data has become a major concern and because of this the government wants to make a major change in regards to how data is handled in the country.

In terms of budget and investment, one would realize a minimal investment in the ICT sector would also result in a maximal outcome, as it is the largest tax paying sector in terms of GDP. The

reality is that the Gambia as a country is a tax-based economy and most of the funds coming in for ICT and its development are being given out by donors with the government allocating less and less funds to the ministry for ICT development.

Emerging technologies need money to put into regulation and policy.

JOSEPH GOMEZ

Tell us about Jokalanteh and the web way:

- Jokalanteh is a platform that is part of an African complex…
- It is a platform that connects farmers and buyers. The problem it addresses is to connect … the problem faced in using the app is low digital literacy and a lack of awareness and internet connectivity.
- Given the problems and knowing how challenging they could be, we decided to make the platform a telecom base which they could use to sell their harvest with buyers elsewhere and on a larger scale. The platform has been incorporated with the Qcell network which offers instructions in the local language for a better understanding and easy transactions or trade dealing between farmers and buyers.

Tell us about Awa:

- Awa is similar to Chat GPT. We have had developing interest in AI for a long time but what holds us back is funding. Working with AI is very expensive and requires a lot of funds. Basically, Awa is a localized form of AI just like the globally active AI known as ChatGPT. Awa, however, has its contents on a more localized base, for example providing information on people and things in the Gambian context and territory.

MODERATOR: In terms of data governance, how is data managed?

Badara

One of our concerns is the data subjects … if one's data is taken out of the country then we must let the individual know. An issue we have been facing is the problem of people giving out their data with little understanding of its use and storage. The issue of trust surrounding data collection and storage in the Gambia has been a major issue especially with the youth population, a group that fears that their data might be sold and slow their progress in the future.

The ICT sector is a serious national development manifesto that the government needs to speed up and set laws and policies for in order to keep up with technology and its advancements.

Day 2- 11ᵗʰ May 2023

Theme : Building Economic Resilience and Digital Sovereignty in the Gambia
Panelists
Demba Kandeh – Freedom House
Alieu Sowe - Give1 project
Mohamed B Sowe -

We have an access to information law:

- The information commission that will enforce the law is not yet set up but the law has been in effect since 2021.
- Public institutions and private bodies are encouraged to share information; but it is not happening properly and to the extent we want.
- In terms of the digital rights framework: there has been a significant improvement since Jammeh's time.
- There are issues around (*not sure what goes here????)

Mohamed B Sowe - what rights does the law offer to Gambia?

- The law reconciles that everyone living in the Gambia has a right to access public information. (*Unless the information is sensitive and cannot be shared)
- The law favours public interest and even If the information is classified as long as   (*not sure what goes here????)
- The law ensures that the government is held accountable.
- The information commission is responsible for the implementation of the laws but has not yet been established.

Alieu Sowe
The Give 1 Project has been advising on these issues for some time now.

- Net neutrality; (nobody shooed prevent anyone from using their internet based on their locations)
- ISPs need to provide equal internet services to everyone.
- We need to ensure that the government puts all necessary information online.
- We still have some laws that (*not sure what goes here????)
- It is extremely important and beneficial that we have the access to information law in place.

Demba - "Compare the difference in internet freedom now versus then?"

- Access to the internet has increased, but the Gambia still has the highest cost of internet in this subregion.
- The quality of the internet service is very bad, and devices remain highly expensive.
- The laws against freedom of expression were and have still not been repealed from the law.
- Some websites used to be blocked before, but now everything is open, unlike before where we often had to use VPNs to access certain platforms.
- We need to be more vigilant and demanding when it comes to having a safe and secure internet and internet freedoms.

Lawyer

- The supreme court is the only entity mandated to cancel laws and they already have; the law is still in the law books but it is not enforceable.
- The mode should go to the national assembly to ask that that law be repealed.
- The constitution needs a provision regarding access to information and freedom of expression.
- The Gambia's access to information law is among the top 10 in the world.
- Environmental challenges have been an issue in the Gambia, even is required to assess and have an (*not sure what goes here????)
- We already have a lot of laws in this industry but enforcing them has always been issue.
- The access to information law makes it so that we can access all information unless it is legally classified information.
- Gambia has had problems with keeping records, but this law makes it mandatory of public institutions to keep digital records or be liable to a fine of 50,000.

Alieu - Cost of access to the internet, why isn't it important that internet is a fair deal?

- ICT is a serious enabler in development.
- When the cost is high: people struggle to stay online.
- The purchasing power of the average Fabian is very low.
- Everyone in the Gambia even in the most remote villages rely on the Internet
- During the pandemic, only private schools that had access to internet could still attend their lessons.
- We rely too much on the ACE cable. We need to try to get a second internet cable to reduce the costs of internet and increase overall access.
- There are endless opportunities online and Gambians are missing out.

Q&A

Khadijatou Jobe

The Gambia has a high cost of internet access. What are they trying to do to reduce costs? (*Students have to spend most of their lunch money on purchasing data to be able to study!)

Demba- Each revive provider builds and maintains their own infrastructure. What they can do instead, is cost sharing to be able to reduce costs. Further, they are also taxed very highly, PURA needs to properly regulate these costs.

- As users we need to demand for quality services, and we must put a lot of pressure on them.
- We need more internet cables, and we cannot just depend on the ace cable anymore.

Awa Kebbeh - Ministry of gender

Children should be restricted heavily when using the internet.

- The internet is a fundamental public right that you cannot stop children from using , so it is up to the parents to regulate what their children do on the internet.
- There is currently a need to introduce earlier access to the internet to children as students.

Q- There is a need to make people understand the access to information act and demand for the protection of their rights, especially in local languages.

- There are caravans.
- Access to information helps reduce the amount of fake news. If information is open and accessible it reduces the (*not sure what goes here????)

How can access to information reduce misinformation and disinformation

Barrister:

- ACCESS TO INFORMATION gives members of the community the ability to hold the government accountable.
- It is a way to curb corruption and increase accountability and transparency.

Alieu.

- We should include digital rights education in our school curriculums.
- Digital literacy is very low in the country currently.

- Aji Oley Samba, - Since we don't have the laws yet regarding AI what do we do regarding the Civil society? We need to make policies and be proactive and draft the law especially when it comes to technology.

- GRTS is now restricted from covering industrial action.
    - That was under an old management but that management that is bad since GRTS is publicly funded and it violates so many laws.

Q - Is there a provision for: (*not sure what goes here????)

- The access to information law is very progressive and provides various accessibility options for disabled individuals. For example, when requesting information, you are allowed to request in the exact medium/way that you need it (the law provides that).

Conclusion-

This year's National IGF was a great success with 75% youth participation showing young people's great interest in internet governance. The hybrid format also enabled online participation thereby ensuring inclusive access to the various topics of discussion.