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Civil Society: Social Media Code of Conduct



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CIVIL SOCIETY: SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What is cyber-bullying?

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Why is civil society action & education important?



#DEFYHATENOW SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

Please be aware that in most cases what you write, link and refer to online is public and can be shared with anyone. Distinctions are generally not made between 'private' and 'professional' opinions. Statements, tagging or other actions, including 'Liking' comments etc. on Facebook can be interpreted as a direct reflection of your opinion regardless of the context. These actions, even if not your intention, can be taken out of context and be used against you, your colleagues, your work etc.

Agreeing on, and adhering to a common set of guidelines will strengthen your own work in hate speech and online incitement mitigation by helping to identify irregularities, hoaxes or the ways in which rumours spread!

While it is neither possible - nor desirable - to 'police' social media usage, awareness and strict application of these guidelines is in your own personal and professional best interest! These guidelines are based on the "Journal of Mass Media Ethics" by Shannon A. Bowen (School of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of South Carolina, USA).

Values, Mission and Goals

It is important to talk openly about “why” we are doing this. A social media campaign starts with understanding our values and goals and having it in mind as we prepare to share online. This can help us avoid sharing posts that do not reflect these values, and selecting what and when to share for the most positive impact on social media.

GOALS.

1. Community Engagement.
2. Outreach to new community circles and Cameroonian diasporas in different countries.
3. #HateFreeCameroon Brand Building (social media engage people online and offline)

BE TRANSPARENT.

Acting in a transparent manner can prevent audiences from being misled about your organisation’s intentions or meanings when it contributes on social media. Communication should be identified as individual speech or speech on behalf of an organisation. All individuals that contribute social media content for your organisation should be required to identify any personal social media interactions as such. Be upfront if the views being expressed are personal. If you have your own blog or other public website, it’s wise to use a disclaimer like this: “The views expressed on this website/blog are my own and do not reflect those of my institution or its clients.”

BE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT.

Post clear messages. Take responsibility for the content you post. Be consistent in how and when you post, because this allows to build trust and understanding with the audience that is a key component of strong relationships.

VERIFY SOURCES AND DATA.

Be consistently credible; do NOT use misinformation, share or forward rumours or repeat speculation.

CHECK YOUR FACTS.

Check facts on the information you post. You should first verify information and rumours, then consider the content of your posts rationally before posting. Try to examine messages from all possible perspectives to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

BE ACCURATE.

Posts should be accurate and fact-checked and capable of substantiation. If you make a mistake, ensure you correct it promptly. It is important to reference the earlier comment because even if the erroneous comment has been deleted, someone may have saved it as an image.

BE FAIR AND RESPECTFUL.

Never post malicious, misleading or unfair content about your organisation, colleagues, competitors or other stakeholders. Do not post content that is obscene, defamatory, threatening or discriminatory to any person, individual, brand or tribe. Do not post comments that you would not say directly to another person and consider how other people might react before you post. If you do respond to published comments that you may consider unfair, always be accurate and professional. Remember to be authentic, constructive and respectful.

BE PROFESSIONAL.

Always act in a professional and constructive manner and use sound judgement before posting. Stay polite in tone and respectful of individuals’ opinions, especially when discussions become heated. Show proper consideration for other people’s privacy.

BE GOOD.

Encourage the good, helping to build connectedness, engagement, and community. Following this logic, with every post, consider your intention, which should reflect the organisation’s philosophy and social media goals as well as simple consistent peaceful & good intentions.

BE SMART.

Respect other people's intellectual property, including trademarked names, slogans and copyrighted material. Assume that all content online is protected by copyright. Make sure you have permission to post copyright items, properly attribute the work to the copyright owner where required, and never use someone else's work as if it were your own. Respect all laws and regulations re: copyright, IP, privacy and spam when publishing on social media.

#defyhatenow Social Media Channels

twitter: @defyhatenow

fb: defyhatenow

Defyhatenow.org

Social Media Responsible Use Guidelines

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT GUIDE

Every tweet, post, comment, or reply should be:

- Positive and courteous to the online community
- Simple and easy to understand
- Engage and encourage participation through questions or calls to action.
- Non-political / politically neutral
- Proper language, grammar, and format (slang is ok, but may not be understood)
- Visually stimulating (photo, quote, or video)
- Use hashtags (#), handles (@name), and tags to highlight sources and trends



GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ONLINE

By Pedmia Shatu Tita

Gender-based violence can be seen as a life-threatening, global health and human rights issue that violates international human rights law and principles of gender equality. It is also a threat to lasting peace.

Gender-based violence (GBV) online takes many forms including hacking, impersonation, surveillance/tracking, harassment/spamming, recruiting victims into violent situations, and malicious distribution of intimate photos and messages. It is a neglected form of GBV which is pervasive as women are harassed online every minute around the world. This exacerbates women's digital exclusion and self-censorship. "Violence against women online" report by Amnesty International in 2018 shows the statistics on violence of women online and most specifically twitter.

International Policy & Gender Inclusion

The Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Helpdesk offers specialist advice to provide social development expertise and management in order to ensure that social inclusion, gender, equality and human rights are central to the development process and address violence against women and girls worldwide. They report limited data on the extent of online GBV and particularly on what works to prevent it. The dynamism of the technological environment and contextual differences in platforms used in different countries makes it challenging to design and evaluate responses that are appropriate to multiple regions and platforms. However, more governments are starting to make laws to fight cyberbullying. "In October 2019, South Africa passed an updated version of its cyber law that include provisions that specifically criminalise non-consensual pornography (commonly known as revenge porn).

In the same month, it was announced that Zimbabwe's cabinet had approved a bill that would also, among other things, criminalise cyberbullying. Ghana also announced that it would enact a law that would

have the same effect. African countries are taking action against the growing menace of cyberbullying and other related cyber crimes.”

Half the world on mute: online harassment

For women journalists, online harassment and abuse aren't just questions of workplace safety but also of censorship, writes Canadian DW editor Michaela Cavanagh. DW Freedom 2019

<https://www.dw.com/en/half-the-world-on-mute-the-fight-against-online-harassment/a-51013693>

As the work of journalists increasingly takes place online, we spend more of our lives inhabiting this digital world – and for some, it's a hostile environment. A 2018 Amnesty International study analyzed 14 million tweets received by 778 women journalists and politicians and found that in 2017, a woman was abused on Twitter every 30 seconds – with Black women and women of color respectively 84% and 34% more likely to be harassed than white women.

Amnesty International, Toxic Twitter: Women's Experiences of Violence and Abuse on Twitter,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-3/>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-3/>

Tanya O'Carroll, the director of Amnesty Tech, calls online abuse what it is: a form of censorship. “Especially given that Facebook, Twitter and others talk about the fact that they're mainly there to promote freedom of expression, they're very reluctant to take down content,” she says. “These platforms are talking about the censorship consequences of removing content, but what about the censorship consequences of this kind of targeted harassment? What are the net consequences of silencing women in this very orchestrated way? Women turning off their accounts or turning away from sharing specific kinds of content, for example sharing political views – those are also censorship consequences,” says O'Carroll.

Women Journalists and safety online

UNESCO is making a stand against the online harassment of women journalists, who face ever-increasing amounts of gender-based threats and attacks. Insults, public shaming, intimidation, hacking and cyber-stalking are behaviors that women journalists are systematically confronted with on the Internet.

Attacks against female journalists pose a clear threat not only to their safety and well-being, but also to the diversity of the press and freedom of expression. In addition to disproportionately affecting women, online harassment often follows other multi-layered and intersecting patterns of discrimination, including racism, homophobia, and xenophobia. UNESCO organised conference “Standing up against online harassment of women journalists – What works?” aims to tackle the online harassment of women journalists, with prominent women journalists from Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark and Nigeria, experts from Twitter, The Guardian and Libération, prosecutors and lawyers dealing with cases of online harassment.

Cameroon Online Dating & Intimacy

The cases of online GBV are glaringly typical in the Cameroon context where women who surf the internet suffer harassment either by stalking, sex chats and video calls, demands for nudes, hacking and threats for extortion. The most common of these is online sexual harassment.

People visit the internet for diverse reasons, one of which is for love either hoping to meet someone they could flirt with or someone they can spend eternity. In Cameroon, the most popular platform for chatting and dating is Facebook. The number of Facebook users in Cameroon in November 2019 accounts for 13.8% of its entire population. The majority are men - 57.8%. People aged 25 to 34 are the largest user group (1,370,000). The highest difference between men and women occurs within people aged 25 to 34, where men lead by 170,000.

The trend in Cameroon is scouting the internet for beautiful and attractive looking women/girls and sending them a friend request on Facebook. If the lady finds the man attractive too, they get to chatting and exchange of contacts which leads them to whatsapp chats, calling and texting. Some of these relationships get intimate and because of distance when the urge to have sex may arise and cannot be

fully attained, many online couples decide to have online sex on video calls or share their nude pictures with their partners to attain their sexual desire.

Should the relationship turn sour, the men having these images begin threatening the girl for money or to stay in the relationship. We have had cases in Cameroon where girls have been threatened and leaked nude videos have circulated online which has caused many girls and women to retreat from the internet. The idea of sharing nudes with one's partner because of distance, has led to a debate on whether it is advisable or not to share nude pictures.

Risks of Sexual Harassment Online

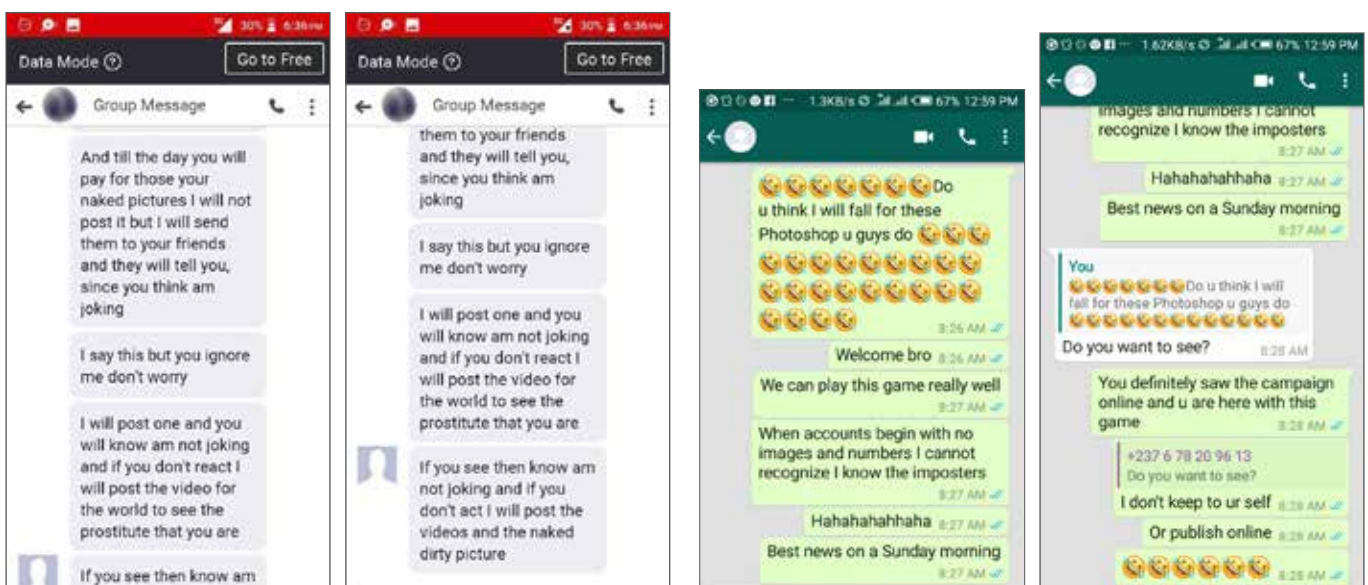
In an interview with Rosaline Obah Akah, Peace and Conflict Transformation trainer, she holds that the idea of sexual satisfaction through videos or nudes is not taboo, particularly for couples with some legal binding but living in different places.

She says "I don't think any married man will want to expose his wife's nudes, so I am more comfortable and see nothing wrong with them doing that. I strongly discourage the practice where girls who meet boys online and get carried away emotionally (to the point where) the girls become trigger happy to share nudes with them. This is what has put a rise on the spread of nudes because they have no marital engagement and should they expose the nudes of the said girl, it really doesn't matter to the boy. Unlike a married man who knows if my wife's nudes are out there, it also touches on his person".

The last quarter of 2019 in Cameroon witnessed a rise in sexual harassment online particularly of women, as many more women were willing to share their stories to educate other women and expose the perpetrators of violent attacks online.

The trend in the past months has been guys contacting girls claiming they have their nude pictures and requesting they negotiate for the girl to send money otherwise her nudes will be exposed. Glaringly, the images they send are manipulated in Photoshop. But to most girls who don't understand image verification, they panic and send money to the guys and apparently they become their number 1 client since there is no surety that they will discard of the images after paying them money. Once they discover you are smart, they block you and get on to the next.

I am a survivor of their scam and below are screenshots of the chats in one of their attempts. Just in a month, I have had two of such failed scamming trials.



Adeline Ogwe is a survivor of gender based violence online. She explains that "I have been violated online so many times. My account has been hacked and used to spread pornographic images, men harass me sexually online but the most shocking one which made me deactivate my account for over 3 weeks now

is the one of a guy threatening me about sharing my nudes if I do not give him 150,000 FCFA. I became worried because he sent me a couple of nudes with my face on them. I am not too digitally literate, so I couldn't even tell whether it was fake or Photoshop or what. I thought out for days. Yes I know I do nudes with my husband because he lives in Douala and we live in Bamenda. He is an okada rider and due to the crisis his job raised him very little income so he moved. That's the only way we can satisfy our emotional urge. I thought about whether when sending the nudes, I sent it to someone else, but that wasn't even possible.

I was so worried that at one moment I felt like sending him the money because I didn't want my image to be tarnished. I decided to complain to a friend who laughed and told me it was a scam. I didn't believe it. So I explained to my pastor who called him and warned him of the implications. The perpetrator insisted on spreading the nudes and the pastor told him to go ahead if it will give him the money. After that, I decided to deactivate my Facebook account and I answer no more calls or reply to messages from strange numbers."

It should be noted that many girls have silently gone through such trauma in the hands of these actors who inflict mental pain and torture on them. The girls end up not seeing any reason to be online and the next thing they will do will be to either deactivate their accounts like Ogwe Adeline did.

Legal Implications of GBV in Cameroon

Cameroon has no specific law to address Gender based violence online, but in its Law No 2010/0 12 of 21st December 2010 relating to cyber security and cyber criminality in Cameroon, Section 75{1} holds that whoever for financial gain, records or publishes images that undermines the bodily integrity of another person through electronic communications or an information system without the consent of the person concerned shall be punished with imprisonment from two to five years or a fine of from 1,000,000 to 5,000,000 CFA francs or both fine and imprisonment. Unfortunately such culprits are yet to be known as it seems almost impossible to lay hands on the actual face behind the crime, since some hack people's accounts and the named account owner may be innocent. It is therefore very important for the Government of Cameroon to work in collaboration with telecommunication companies to bring out these culprits.



AFRICAN GOVERNMENT LAWS TO FIGHT CYBER BULLYING

November 16th, 2019

By Cyril Zenda

Both Nigeria and Tanzania passed laws to deal with cyber bullying in 2015, followed by Botswana and Uganda in 2017 and then Kenya in 2018. For Zambia and Rwanda and many other countries, the laws are still a work in progress.

With many African cultures placing a lot of emphasis on female chastity, cyber bullying – which is now seen as growing form of gender-based violence – has been identified as a serious threat to women, including their potential to be leaders.

Koliwe Majama, an African media, internet and communications expert says the sharp rise in technology-related violence against women and its normalisation has made the use of the Internet a gendered issue. "It has, of necessity, become imperative that women get to the fore of the debate on cyber-security instead of leaving it solely to governments and the financial/business sector as is the case in national and regional governance forums," said Majama.

Source: <https://www.fairplanet.org/story/hope-for-african-women-as-more-governments-make-laws-to-fight-cyber-bullying/>



HOW 'LOVE SAVVY' ARE YOU?



DW #mediadev online exercise: quiz & sextortion video

<https://www.dw.com/en/take-the-media-literacy-quiz/a-46019272>



CASE STUDY: FEMALE LEADERSHIP & EFFECTS OF ONLINE BULLYING

By **Boitshepo Balozwi**

Women in leadership positions specifically in politics, including those aspiring to be politicians have been unduly targeted by online violence and have experienced the wrath of online abuse, threats and bullying. Compared to that of men, female online harassment is considered to be more racial, religious and sexual in nature. International and local female politicians such as Angela Merkel (Germany), Theresa May (UK), Hillary Clinton (US) and our very own Hon. Makgato have all experienced the wrath of this form of attack. Clinton was dubbed a “Grandmother-in-chief”, a picture showing a bit of Merkel’s cleavage was the focus of an online attack, Makgato was vilified for donning sport shoes during a parliamentary session, “I had hurt my ankle and decided to wear comfortable shoes,” says Makgato. In Zimbabwe during the previous and now disputed elections, female contestants running for positions in parliament were ruthlessly slut-shamed, degraded and crowned as “Hure” a Shona language word meaning prostitute. The argument at the symposium was that this same outlandish treatment is not accorded to male politicians.

Rhoda Sekgororoane, from Emang Basadi and the Botswana Movement of Democracy (BMD) political party explained how she can relate to the online harassment of Clinton, particularly the focus on her age, “For some reason the perception is that it is us women who seem to be getting older quickly, and not male politicians.” Sekgororoane recalled how she was taunted by some men during a What’s App group conversation, “Go home or else we will eat you,” they warned her.

The politician shared how she almost quit politics because of the negativity that emanated from social media, and was directed at her, “Re lapile bageaetsho! We have already lost two women, who were contesting for the upcoming 2019 elections. I don’t know how we will ever increase women representation

in parliament,” says Sekgororoane. Theresa Mmolawa another member of the opposition here in Botswana also supported the overall sentiment that this online harassment serves to deter female politicians and to allow their male colleagues to dominate the stage:

“We are socialized to believe men are the only capable leaders. We need to be educated, and women should not be intimidated or scarred from running.”

Sekgororoane. Theresa Mmolawa

Adding her voice was Gomolemo Rasesigo, from Gender Links Botswana who agrees that online bullying is a different way of intimidating women, “But we cannot run away from social media,” says the gender activist. For one, female candidates cannot avoid the use of social media in their campaigns as online media is an asset which helps reach out to potential voters and increases awareness of the different politicians. Rasesigo added that therefore women need to be empowered with the skills to navigate social media, and that it remains critical for civil society advocates and institutions to be supported to empower women of all political parties.

Other female parliamentarians from the region commented on their experiences with social media. A representative from Lesotho who has served as an MP since 2001, and whose husband is also an MP explained how social media almost broke up her family, “Online bullying is a major threat to democracy, and it is also a major threat to family. My husband and I suffered the wrath of this bullying. It is thanks to my belief in God that we are still standing.” The Lesotho representative explained that it is the hordes of people who have the responsibility to tarnish anything that opposes their political views who spend time bullying the other side, “My question is what kind of community are we becoming? Our children are also humiliated. We need to go back to the basics of humility.”

A female representative from the Free State in South Africa observes that supporting party lines at the expense of common goals is another factor fueling the flames. She also reminded women that if they do not support each other, nobody else will, “And it is even sadder when the cyberbullying happens women to women or from other sisters who are sometimes hell bent on supporting their husbands over other female politicians.”

From Kwazulu Natal, the representative shared how she has observed this online abuse targeted at women in institutions of higher learning, women who she says continue to suffer in silence and end up taking their lives.

“We have a great responsibility as women in parliament to give these educators a platform to dialogue.”

Kwazulu Natal

In the region countries such as Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya and Botswana have enacted, revised or a working on legislation to target technology related violence including cyber espionage, revenge pornography, pornography, and false information.

Stella Moroka, from the Attorney General’s Chambers in Botswana explained that new provisions are being

introduced to curb cyber bullying and relating harassment. Moroka also added that there are other victims of online abuse such as women who are being trafficked on social media, and young people who are being radicalized and recruited into organized crime.

Recommendations from the meeting include:

- Policy and legislation to criminalise cyber bullying
- Implementation and enforcement of such laws
- Increase female parliamentarians so that communities understand that politics is not a male domain.
- Programs to support, sensitize, educate and rehabilitate those affected by online crimes,
- United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights applied to social media.
- Educating communities, particularly those in patriarchal societies.

<https://genderlinks.org.za/news/cyber-bullying-an-emerging-threat-to-female-leadership/>



SAFE SISTERS TOOLKIT



<https://safesisters.net/>

Safe Sisters is a fellowship program for women human rights defenders, journalists or media workers, and activists that trains them to be able to understand and respond to the digital security challenges they face in their work and daily life. Through a combination of self-study, tool practice, mentorship, workshops, peer sharing, and small grants, these cohorts of women will join forces to take on the most pressing digital challenges that keep women from being able to live and be online safely.

It's hard enough being a human rights defender without having to worry about our technology betraying us. It's not possible to expect everybody to keep up with the steps necessary to avoid viruses, loss of important files, spying, hacking, blackmail, account hijacking, and other unfun digital emergencies. On top of that, women human rights defenders especially face cyber-harassment and bullying online. East Africa needs a league of women technologists working within civil society who can dispense appropriate advice and support for people facing these high-tech challenges. And that's exactly what we hope to create with Safe Sister!

Download Safe Sisters Toolkit:

<https://safesisters.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Safe-Sister-Guide-revised.pdf>

Safe Sisters content: Internews.

Safe Sister images by Pollicy
Thank you Haley Slafer



ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

Civil society plays a critical role in advancing the protection and promotion of human rights – even where this may not be a central part of their mandate. Their activities can be central in responding to ‘hate speech’ as they can provide the space for formal and informal interactions between people of similar or diverse backgrounds, and platforms from which individuals can exercise freedom of expression and tackle inequality and discrimination.

At the local, national, regional and international levels, civil society initiatives are among the most innovative and effective for monitoring and responding to incidents of intolerance and violence, as well as for countering “hate speech.”

Civil society initiatives are often designed and implemented by the individuals and communities most affected by discrimination and violence, and provide unique possibilities for communicating positive messages to and educating the public, as well as monitoring the nature and impact of discrimination. Ensuring a safe and enabling environment for civil society to operate is therefore also crucial.

Role Of Civil Society Organisations & International Ngos

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and International organisations (INGOs) are strong partners of the government as far as preventing and countering hate speech and violent extremism are concerned.

Organisations and institutions include the Cameroon Digital Coalition, Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC), Network for Solidarity, Empowerment and Transformation for All (NEWSETA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Network for Community Development (NECOD), STRAWACADEMY, ADEV, Big Steps Outreach Cameroon (BONET), The PCC Peace Office, the Cameroon Communication Council, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education (MINJEC), etc.

- Introduce or reinforce cross-cultural exchanges between people from different regions of the country and people from other countries that have experienced the effect of hate speech to share their different experiences with lessons learned.
- NGOs can monitor the media for instances of hate speech, while also using the media to respond to particular cases of hate speech and to advance the fight against discrimination and hate crime.
- A significant barrier to forces of law and order in investigating hate speech that appear to violate laws is the lack of training on the technical issues involved in identifying who is responsible and where those sites originate and proving who is responsible for the content. CSOs, NGOs and INGOs may be able to supplement investigations by providing technical expertise to train police officers and other government peace building stakeholders on these issues. These organisations can also play a major role in providing training and other educational materials against hate speech online and through social media.
- NGOs have been responsible for the closure of websites dedicated to hate speech. They have done so through direct intervention with service providers and government agencies and bringing legal action. NGOs have been successful in persuading online authors, owners or Internet service providers to remove hate sites and discriminatory expressions from the Internet, particularly in states with hate-speech laws. In the case of Cameroon where there exists no legislation on hate speech, NGOs can work with government agencies and internet service providers (Camtel, MTN, etc.) and social networks (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) to delimit or prohibit the use of certain language terms in the context of Cameroon.

- Organisations could work with government and intergovernmental agencies to develop and implement deliberate policies through sports, cultural competitions and educational activities like quiz and essay competitions among different regions of the country to promote cohesion among the different cultural groups in Cameroon.
- Organize a rigorous nationwide education campaign targeted at various groups ranging from students, traders and market women, public sector employees, traditional and religious organizations as well security institutions. The education campaign must include messages that promote harmony among different groups within the country. This campaign should make use of all communication mediums online and offline as well as enable the creation of contents through music, comedy, poetry, films, art work, etc.

Recommendations from Hate Speech and Violent Conflict in Cameroon Report by Local Youth Corner Cameroon, 2019



PANAFRITIVISM

By James Wamathai

There are more people accessing the Internet in Africa than in North America, South America and in the Middle East. There are 525 million internet users in Africa, 447 million in South America, 328 million in North America, and 174 million in the Middle East.

With an internet penetration of around 40%, this means that a significant number of Africans are able to access some form of Internet. Most of these Internet users access the Internet via mobile. According to a study by Pew Research, Africans use the Internet to stay in touch with family and friends, access news on politics, and information about Government services and health. They also use it to access entertainment content, apply for jobs and for online shopping.

As with other parts of the world, the Internet has enabled the fast access and sharing of information on the continent. The Internet has democratized the flow of information on a continent where access to such content was limited due to either underdeveloped infrastructure or just cost. Through this medium, Africans have been able not just to receive information but also to comment on it and share their point of view. This has led to the expansion of freedom of expression.

Why Is Expansion Of Freedom Of Expression Important?

In the past, it was hard for African citizens to access a platform to be able to share their thoughts and opinions publicly. This is because the conduits that existed were limited and were not accessible to everyone.

Now, through access to the Internet Africans are able to share unfiltered ideas and conversations about their lives, politics and other things that they care about. It has created a safe space for expression for not only ordinary citizens but also creatives, and activists.

These conversations are shared on various platforms that include; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and also on blogs. The content shared includes mundane, every day social content but it's the social commentary that touches on governance issues that is of note. Thanks to these platforms, ordinary citizens are able to voice their opinions on various governance issues. This brought about the rise of online thought leaders who were either bloggers or influencers. This digital activism has been critical in keeping the government in check.

African Governments had not anticipated that the Internet would aid their citizens in expressing themselves and so had not prepared for the onslaught of free thought from its citizens. They also discovered that they could not control it in the same way they had been using policies and regulations

to muzzle mainstream media. In essence, digital activism made them uneasy. This is against the right to freedom of expression which is guaranteed in most African constitutions. Most constitutions predate the Internet, but it has been argued that the same rights that we enjoy offline should be enjoyed online. To control the digital space and to intimidate citizens from publishing critiques of the state, African Governments started using obscure laws to silence their online critics.

Those that have gotten into trouble this way include Mauritanian blogger Mohamed Ali Abdel Aziz, Kenyan blogger Anthony Njoroge, Nigerian blogger Emenike Iroegbu and the founder of Tanzania's Jamii Forum, Maxence Melo. Their cases are similar in that they stepped on powerful toes within government and had to be promptly intimidated. The idea is to deter others who may be interested in doing the same.

African Governments have quickly adapted to the new reality of dealing with dissent online by enacting new laws that are specifically designed to target online content creators. Uganda passed a law in 2010 dubbed the Computer Misuse Act which has offenses that include cyber harassment and offensive communication. The Ugandan Government has charged various online activists with these offenses. Most recently, Makerere University lecturer and human rights activist Stella Nyanzi was convicted for cyber harassment after writing a Facebook post in which she called the president "a pair of buttocks" and the first lady "empty-brained". She later wrote a poem bemoaning the fact that the president's deceased mother had not aborted him. She was awarded the PEN Freedom of Expression prize in January 2020, however she is still in prison and currently appealing her conviction.

Litigation has come in handy to counter some of these laws that threaten freedom of expression and other rights online. In May 2016, three civil society organizations in Nigeria, namely the Media Rights Agenda, Paradigm Initiative and Enough Is Enough Nigeria went to court to challenge the constitutionality of Sections 24 and 38 of the Cybercrimes Act 2015. According to Tope Ogundipe, Paradigm Initiative's Director of Programs, "It bears repeating here that Section 24 of the Cybercrimes Act deals with Cyberstalking and that section has been repeatedly used to harass and persecute journalists and critics. It's arguably the most dangerous provision against freedom of speech, opinion, and inquiry. Sections 38 provides for the duties of a service provider vis-a-vis data retention and contains provisions that we believe are too vague and borderline unconstitutional."

Governments are not only using laws to quell dissent. Another increasingly common tactic used is shutting down the internet or blocking certain websites and social media platforms. In 2018, Chad blocked access to Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, among others. They were blocked after the conclusion of a national conference which recommended changes to the constitution, to allow President Idriss Deby to remain in power until 2033. Critics of the President had successfully mobilized using Social Media platforms and the government viewed them as a threat, which is why the restrictions were imposed. Internet Without Borders, an organization that works on digital rights in Africa and elsewhere, launched a campaign against the Internet restriction in Chad in January 2019. The Social Media ban was finally lifted in July 2019.

African content creators were also caught unawares by the wave of Government aggression and something had to be done. Organizations such as CIPESA have stepped up to monitor and promote freedoms in a number of African countries. The organization has worked to promote policies and legislation that enhance freedom of expression, human rights and access to information online including the publication of the annual State of The Internet in Africa report. They also host the annual Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa conference, which brings together different actors in the digital rights space in Africa.

In 2017, a South Sudanese Facebook page called "Aweil Eye" shared a post that linked to an article that claimed that President Salva Kiir had been shot dead. It was a fake story, but some people believed that there was a possibility of a military coup and this led to widespread panic. The President had to appear in public to counteract the fake story. This trend was famously given the name fake news following the 2016 US elections. **Fake news** is defined as "*false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views.*"

Historically fake news has been exacerbated by elections, even when before we used that word to refer to it. In the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, it emerged that the data mining company played a role in elections in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. In Nigeria, a billionaire paid Cambridge Analytica \$2.8 million to dig up damaging information about then Presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari as part of

an attack campaign. The emails included information about Buhari's health and medical records.

The fake news issue has brought about the need for public education on consumption of media. This is key so that the public is able to acquire skills that will help them consume media with skepticism which will protect them from being manipulated into believing fake stories. On the online media side, there has emerged an opportunity to introduce fact checking and verification to the craft. This is a tactic that has existed in traditional media for some time, but it was crucial to adapt it to the age of the Internet. Organizations such as Pesa Check from Kenya and Stop Intox from Cameroon have been involved in helping debunk fake news and conspiracy theories on the Internet. Others, like UNESCO, Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE), Bloggers of Zambia and #defyhatenow are involved in training online content creators in fact checking and verification. This has had the net effect of helping reduce the spread of fake news since the online content creators now have the skills to quickly verify news. However, all citizens engaging online need to consume and share media content with the same level of critical reading.



WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?

There's a running joke in human rights circles that African Governments and leaders are in the same WhatsApp group and that's why they tend to implement similar policies and laws.

There's an opportunity for actors in the digital rights space operating in different countries on the continent to do the same thing as their Governments. This would mean that they would pick digital activism tactics that work in one country and then implement them in another country that has similar challenges.

This is important because different actors can be able to share their skills and experiences so that others can learn from them and hopefully employ key learnings from the interaction in their own countries.



THE BLOGGERS ASSOCIATION OF KENYA - BAKE

The Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) is a community association of Kenyan bloggers and content creators that promotes online content creation & free expression in Kenya.

BAKE connects blogs in Kenya from all areas of interest and expertise. It was formed in 2011 after a series of discussions concerning content creation and consumption of online content in Kenya. BAKE is at the forefront of everything digital in Kenya. BAKE is a pioneer in the digital rights space in Africa, they have carry out several activities including BAKE Awards which recognizes the exceptional efforts of various content creators, Digital Trainings where they training new content creators and offer refresher courses to seasoned content creators, Kenya Monitor Site and the iFreedoms Kenya a program that promotes human rights and media rights online in Kenya. It does so through documentation of important occurrences (threats, events, legislation, important cases) online and on our annual report, public interest litigation, policy intervention, advocacy and training. iFreedoms Kenya amplifies the voices of citizen journalists on freedom of expression and engagement, utilize art and culture to promote internet rights (artivism) and continue to document threats to access, privacy and security online in East Africa.

THE EVOLUTION OF BLOGGING

By Lolyne

Blogging has come a long way from when the first post was uploaded online. Today, they have become such an integral part of our lives, both personally and in business. Almost everything you read online today comes from blogs. This is from how to repair a phone, to writing a professional CV, cooking spaghetti and even how to kiss. The blogging we know now is not as it was ten, fifteen years ago. Just like human

beings, blogging is also evolving. The art of writing, the styles and even uses of blogs are changing. Here is a timeline of how blogging started and the changes that have made it possible for us to enjoy them today. <https://www.blog.bake.co.ke/2019/12/04/the-evolution-of-blogging/>

BAKE SUBMITS MEMORANDUM TO HAVE BLOGGERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA REGISTRATION BILL SHELVED

By Lolyne

The Public Participation forum on the proposed provisions on blogging and social media in the Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Bill KICA was held on Monday at the County hall, where the public had the opportunity to submit their representations to the Kenya National Assembly Information, Communication and Innovation Committee.

The bill in contention, sponsored by Malva MP, Moses Injendi, seeks to amend the KICA act to provide for stringent measures in social media regulation. The bill requires all Facebook and WhatsApp group administrators to be registered with the Communication Authority (CA) before setting up any Social media groups. The Bill also proposes that users and group administrators who allow offending content on their social media platforms to be jailed for a term not exceeding one year or face a ksh200,000 fine.

Chairman of the committee William Kisang's opinion on the proposed KICA bill was that it goes against the freedom of speech, privacy, and freedom of belief and opinion as enshrined in the constitution. Nominated MP Godfrey Osofi also added that the bill was unconstitutional because it violated the right to expression and privacy. "The committee would be headed in the wrong direction discussing something that is already unconstitutional," he said.

Organisations, which include Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE), Kenya union of journalists (KUJ), Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANET), Amnesty International (AI-Kenya) and Lawyers hub Kenya, jointly called for the rejection of the bill in its totality.

BAKE And KUJ jointly submitted a memorandum on the KICA Amendment Bill 2019 terming it "unconstitutional and untenable." In our submission, we reiterated that Article 19 (3) of the Constitution recognizes that the Rights and Fundamental Freedoms are not granted by the state. The state does not have the right to interfere with or issue a prescription as to how a right should be enjoyed.

“ It is evident from the provisions of the Bill that the intended regulation is to introduce registration and licensing regime for social media platforms and blogs. ”

Further, the state seeks to collect and remit data from the users of the platforms to the state whenever so required by the state. Social media platforms and blogs are civilian public debate forums within cyberspace. They are interactive and access to them is voluntary and only available only on request/demand.

As such in the 21st Century, any attempt at interference with social media goes to the heart of freedom of expression. Any regulation of the social media and the blogosphere, therefore, must comply with the Constitution, and consideration must be borne that freedom of expression goes to the heart of Democracy, good governance and Human Rights," said the memorandum.

KICTANET in their submission also termed the bill unconstitutional and emphasized its withdrawal as it "Has devastating ramifications on the sovereignty of the people, the supremacy of the constitution and democracy as a whole."

"KICA is not supposed to deal with content, it's supposed to deal with systems. This is a retrogressive bill that undermines freedom of speech and thought," said Demas Kiprono, Constitutional & Human Rights Lawyer at Amnesty International Kenya.

Mr Kisang concluded that they would do a report to the national assembly, urging them to throw the Bill out. He, however, cautioned the public on the use of social media and urged them to be responsible in their undertakings.

<https://www.blog.bake.co.ke/2019/11/14/bake-submits-memorandum-to-have-bloggers-and-social-media-registration-bill-shelved/>

Documents:

**KICA Amendment Bill – KUJ & BAKE Memorandum
Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Bill, 2019**

YOUR DATA IS AN ADVERTISERS PRECIOUS STONE

By Vallary Lukhanyu

Applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook and the mushrooming money lending applications among others have made it compulsory to access the users' data. This includes users personal photos, contacts, location, messages and background data.

In the case of these applications, where do users' information go? Distressed users have on various occasions re-counted on social media pages about incidences that have occurred to them after sharing their data to application developers who might have colluded with fraudsters. The scammers end up siphoning them off their valuables, especially money. Other users narrated that, their contacts were often reached out because they did not meet their loan deadlines as agreed by the lenders.

Recently, in a social media survey in one of the notorious Facebook groups in Kenya, several users narrated their experiences with a loan application that called their friends, colleagues and relatives once they failed to repay their loans on time an indication of a data breach. When installing these applications, customers are assured of secure data. Once access is given, some companies breach this agreement and then subject customers to hackers and other insecurity threats.

Studying from an article by medium.com on data privacy. Strangely, there are legitimate reasons why these applications compulsorily ask for access to data. Most of this data is sold to advertisement companies to entice us with their products. Yet as they never disclose it to the religiously honest users.

Apparently, location data is a gem for advertisers. It provides a full context of our habits on and offline. For instance, if you love online shopping, or food bars the advertisers are able to understand your trends and then in future, they will use this data to market coffee to you. Unbelievably, we have been sponsoring tons of advertising agencies with our data. The same data we ignorantly let access to application manufacturers without a second thought.

Research from Money.com and Facebook

<https://www.blog.bake.co.ke/2019/08/20/do-you-know-your-data-is-an-advertisers-precious-stone/>

ABC Cameroon

Association of Bloggers Cameroon

L'Association des Blogueurs du Cameroun, en abrégé « ABC », est née de la volonté des blogueurs camerounais de se réunir en une seule et même communauté. C'est ainsi qu'une assemblée générale constitutive s'est tenue à Yaoundé, les 12 et 13 août 2017. A l'issue des travaux, les statuts et règlement intérieur de l'association ont été adoptés et le premier bureau exécutif a été élu. <http://blogueurs.cm/> L'ABC et #defyhatenow Cameroon forment sur la vérification des faits en ligne

<http://blogueurs.cm/labc-et-defyhatenow-cameroon-forment-sur-la-verification-des-faits-en-ligne/>



NEXT STEPS: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

The media when properly used can help in promoting human rights, combat violence, building trust and reconciliation of conflicting groups but when wrongly used, it can also inflame tension, intolerance and hatred. The Cameroon media have great impact on the current crises in the country and can still greatly contribute in pushing back against the dissemination of hate messages online and offline.

- The media should create an environment where persuasion could be developed. That is operating not as an actor that reports stories of hate but addresses them critically, and raises awareness and advocates for diversity. In doing this, it is important for the media to be kept independent from the Government.
- Journalists should leverage on the availability of television and TV programs to produce content on alternative and new narratives to be broadcast along national and international Medias.
- Establish Monitoring and Evaluation platforms in newsrooms to monitor hate speech trends, compile reports and bring to the attention of key institutions and Civil Society.
- Train journalists on conflict sensitive reporting.
- Organize a rigorous nationwide education campaign targeted at various groups ranging from students, traders and market women, public sector employees, traditional and religious organizations as well security institutions. The education campaign must include messages that promote harmony among different groups within the country. This campaign should make use of all communication mediums online and offline as well as enable the creation of contents through music, comedy, poetry, films, art work, etc.
- The media can also be a venue for public debate, which is necessary in a democratic society. Such debates can have a positive effect for relieving tension and create a balance between the interests of the majority and minority groups in society.
- The media should engage in the battle against prejudice and its consequences; opposing prejudice instead of spreading it.
- Encourage the media to publicise positive stories of religious and secular actors who have countered violent extremist narratives, as well as news and information about initiatives aimed at enhancing respect and peaceful coexistence.

Recommendations from Hate Speech and Violent Conflict in Cameroon Report by Local Youth Corner Cameroon, 2019