Zambia Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

Theme:

Internet Governance as a building block for a Robust, Open, Secure and Stable Internet in Zambia

2019 Report

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THE FIRST ZAMBIA IGF

The first Zambia Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was held for 2 days from 7th – 8th November 2019 at Cresta Golf View in Lusaka. It was held under the theme: **Internet Governance as a building block for a Robust, Open, Secure and Stable Internet in Zambia.** Majority of those who participated were from Lusaka with a few coming from outside Lusaka. A total of more than 87 particpants attended the event.

The meeting was organized by the Zambia IGF Organising team with the help of Bloggers of Zambia.

ANNUAL MULTISTAKEHOLDERS CONVENING

The need for the forum was realized as many issues pertaining Internet governance ini the country needed to be discussed and possibly have resolutions pushed for consideration in the policy making process. The National Coordinator, Michael Ilishebo, during his welcoming remarks highlighted the importance of the forum and the need for its continuity. He briefly explained to the attendants of the forum on what the IGF is about and why its important in the Internet ecosystem.

OPENING REMARKS BY GUEST OF HONOUR

The first Zambia IGF invited Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority (ZICTA) Director General as guest of honor who was represented by Mr. Elliot Kabalo, Manager Standards and Networks

The ZICTA Director noted the life without the Internet in this era is rather difficult to complete most tasks if not impossible. He observed that the coming of the Internet space has not only made life easy but also hard as cybercrimes have in the recent years increased gradually.

"As we make strides towards achieving a safe digital ecosystem, questions such as how do we harness the benefits of digital technologies while limiting the potential harms to citizens, enterprises, and also governments arise. How do we ensure digital inclusion of all people in this dynamic environment and how to we mitigate the risks associated with bringing large numbers of people online?" Mr. Kabalo observed.

The ZICTA director general noted that platform such as the national IGF are key in addressing challenges and risks that might come with the dawn of the new age. The time is now ripe for such a forum in Zambia, and am glad that key stakeholders from government, intergovernmental organisations, the private sector, technical community, civil society organisations as well as the academia are all part of this forum. The multi-stakeholder approach to the IGF helps address issues pertaining the Internet space from all walks of life.

The director general however challenged the attendants and Internet users to consider working on content that embraces local languages including having web and mobile platforms that incorporate local language.

"Of relevant importance also is the development of appropriate Zambian content and applications in all the seven (7) local languages. This, no doubt, will contribute to the enhancement of citizens' digital literacy skills which is critical not only in fostering digital inclusion but promote local participation in content generation," Mr. Kabalo noted in his opening remarks

ZAMBIAN INTERNET GOVERNANCE

- Every voice on the Internet counts as it contributes to bringing people together.

Participants share the challenges that come with Internet and good practices of the Internet:

- Hostile places such as Chad and Sudan they have given respect to the Internet because it's a place of trade and what keeps the economies survive besides now trading has now moved from the physical place to the Internet.
- Zambia was a pioneer of the Internet but it has been beaten by the rest of the world. There has been no environment to promote proper usage as well as exploitation of the Internet space in Zambia. Further, there has been reluctance till now to develop solution for the locals as well as local content. On another end, regulations around the Internet have stood as a hindrance to exploiting the Internet usage to translate into development for the majority Zambians.

Youth IGF

- The youth IGF meets the voices of young people through this forum. This year, the Youth IGF couldn't hold due to limited funding, but will hold next year before the Zambia IGF

- ISOC is also pushing through its existence in Zambia also to do with Internet issues and of course involving young people. It was approved in September and is currently working on local registration and other documentation before their launch. Hopefully, by January 2020 the Internet Society (ISOC) Zambia Chapter will be launched.

- Zambia IGF is a nonprofit making organization but it is a place where people meet to interact, exchange Ideas and find the common group on how best we can use the Internet to our best advantages.

- Zambia's IGF sustainability is dependent on the resources available. This year, the funds were released a bit late due to the delay in finalizing the documentation to facilitate the early release of the funds. We hope to have other partners come on board so that we can sponsor people from other towns to attend the IGF

The Zambian Internet Space

- Internet governance involves content creation and the Internet now is the market place for everyone dealing with different things. However, there is need for us to promote local language usage on the Internet. This means starting from social media, we must encourage others to use local language so that participation on the Internet should not exclude those who do not use the English language. This will help even in strides to have increased Internet access under the Internet Society's Internet for everyone.

- One of the reasons why Zambians don't use the Internet is because language has been a barrier as most of the content online is in English which leads to English being a barrier to increased Internet access.

ccTLDs: HAVING A .ZM DOMAIN

By Christina Chibesakunda – ZICTA Engineer

Zambia has over 5, 000 registered .zm domains of which the ZICTA does not register rather regulates the use of the ccTLD. At the moment, there are no individual developers that offer the .zm domain. Considering ZICTA does not manage the .zm domain, it gave room for telecoms to offer the domains to those who wish to use the .zm domain.

Among the .zm domains that can be obtained include; .edu.zm, .com.zm, .co.zm, .biz.zm, .ac.zm and .org.zm among others. As it stands, telecoms like Airtel, Zamtel, ZAMNET, Liquid Telecom, Paratus among others have been given the mandate by ZICTA to register the .zm domain.

Challenges the .zm domain currently faces include;

> ➢ Cost of having a .zm domain is expensive compared to a .com domain.
> ➢ The authority (ZICTA) hasn't been able to market the .zm domain despite the enormous benefits that could come with having a localised domain.
> ➢ At the moment there is no law that allows individuals to be able to offer the .zm domain.
> ➢ The .zm domain have been observed to be slow and sometimes lag on updates and performance thus many people/companies opting for .com domains due to their efficiency compared to the .zm websites.

PANEL DISCUSSION: CYBER LAWS IN ZAMBIA

- It was noted that Cyber Laws are indeed needed, with these laws we are not saying **no** but what we are saying is government should consult the right people, organizations, committees and any other important key people.
- Instead our laws as a country are reactive to our current situation; after which they will be of no value; we need laws that will stand taste of time when we make them.
- Cyber laws are required, although they do not have to fight the outsiders with apps or content, rather we need to harmonies our cyber law with international laws.
- What the government needs to do is to sensitize the people about social media and should never get tired of doing that considering life revolves around the digital world.

- We need responsible people to take responsibility on using social media which largely depends on the sensitization that government and other players in the Internet space should start doing on what being responsible online entails.

OPEN SESSION: COMMENTS ON CYBER LAWS IN ZAMBIA

- The problem is that we look at the state being the enemy. The laws will not always be on our side, in protecting others, sometimes they infringe other people's freedom. Laws are necessary to protect individuals who maybe potential victims online considering the space is new for many. The laws will keep changing to accommodate
- We need to find a better way to charge tax on these social apps rather taxing because the other industries in the country are losing out or not making profit. There's need for the industry to come up with the creative content and initiative how best or alternatively can make profit.
- What we need is to be regulated and not taxed. We cannot do away with laws, laws are prone to changes because the world is changing so they cannot be weakened but only strengthened. Laws are only introduced after an innovation, mostly laws are catching up with technological trends.

PANEL DISCUSSION: SOCIAL MEDIA TAX

- The Internet is a place where freedom of expression is upheld. In Zambia, there are a lot of laws that regulate and somewhat limit this freedom of expression even online. Following the Zambia IGF, it was observed that government should consult widely on from relevant stakeholders in the Internet space on what laws to change of consider before rushing to state what laws surrounding Internet governance are to be implemented.
- Currently the government wants to impose TAX on social media. The argument is that social media has reduced revenue for telecoms as calls are being done online which is less costly and telecoms are losing money through those call.
- From the panelists during the sessions, it was observed that the TAX will limit the amplification of voices and from accessing the Internet. Social media tax is seems to be a way of taxing citizens for using platforms that were development for communication and

interaction. Panelists argued that creative works on the Internet do not need qualifications but just a creative mind. What government should instead do is create laws or policies that encourage citizens to be creative so that they can use the Internet to foster development through such platforms.

"Young people are isolated from a platform where they can create content online. We are closing the space for young people to express their innovativeness by introducing more tax on platforms that have to be free….. What we need is to come up with laws that bring positivity rather than the ones that stops people to express the creativity."

- Women are certainly trying to catch up with IT the gender gap is wide. Taxing social media platforms will let women not fully participate fully. Taxing will lead pushing women backwards with technology. Social media is no longer social media but it's an exchange place, place of business and other important activities.
Introducing social media tax is introducing another tax on a same service. We taxed upon purchasing airtime and now government wants to introduce another tax… why double tax?

- This will block people from interacting with the world because of taxes that are being introduced every day. Having access to social media is a necessity, as a country (government), let's find a way improve our infrastructures and these telecommunication providers they are in it for business. Adding barriers to social media that's a way of allowing our economy to go down. Social media usage is likely to close down or shrink because of tax restrictions.

- It's important to engage young people to be innovative that way these young people will be coming up with their own competitive apps that the government can tax.

- Social media is a platform that updates the trends around the world and if that is blocked from the citizen how then we will know what's going on around the world?

- Government should not focus on fighting the fourth industrial revolution looking at how far we are in terms of catching up, pleasing. Instead government and the people should unite in fighting to reduce the cost of data and data having an expiry date.

- **Has the state been properly accounting for the other tax that it has imposed on its people? Or is it going to be another tax that is collected and disappears in thin air without proper explanation? What is the motive to TAX the sites that we did not**

create? Social media tax raises questions; where will the tax go and how does it improve people's lives as well as who is benefiting from the tax at the expense of Internet users?

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN DIGITAL ERA

- Digital rights are rights that we enjoy online such as freedom of expression, information and so forth. The laws that we enjoy offline are the same laws that should be on online spaces. What are the perimeters of freedom of expression online? Government should not jump to online space and govern when they haven't fixed the physical space.
- The proposed cyber security bill has its clauses that seem to invade the right to privacy such as confiscating of gadgets if government suspects you of something.

CONCERNS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

- Most women are left behind with technology and yet the Internet has a lot of opportunity but at the same time government want to restrict that opportunity for instance by the introduction of social media tax. The Internet has a lot of positive things that can build the nation to greater highest with less effort by the click of a button.
- How can we use the Internet to enhance human rights?
- There's a lot of things that we can access on the Internet if we used it with due diligence bearing in mind that we need to use the Internet with care.
- We need to look at targetable solutions to regulate the Internet other than focusing much on the consequences. We are Internet natives which is a new normal so government should get with the program.

INTERNET HEALTH IN ZAMBIA

Of course the Internet has helped a business man/ woman to boost their business and circulate information through digital marketing. Today in Zambia and across the globe, the Internet is something that one cannot do without. It is used for school work and research for students.

In Zambia, using the Internet is expressive for almost any use from working towards improving skills as well as socialization. The cost of accessing Internet; data is expensive hence it limits

people to be on social media following social media packages. This in a way has skewed the Internet in Zambia to having over 70% Internet users using the Internet for social media.

It was also observed that Government should take advantage with these millennial that are digital data powered age to improve the economy. This is through deliberate measures to encourage telecoms to avoid skewing Internet usage to social media but promote other platforms as well.

SENSITISATION ON INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

- Few people are equipped on how to use social media which showed the need to increase awareness on social media usage as well as responsible usage of social media. If there are people working to raise awareness, then it hasn't given us the impact needed. We should have so many key player is raising awareness or sensitizing the people about the Internet. If this is properly done will surely minimize the damage on the Internet.
- In the digital world everything that goes up does not come down so let us be wise about using the Internet. What goes online is rarely deleted even when a delete button is pressed.

The last day of the IGF ended on the note with calls to have preparations for the next IGF early enough to allow for participants to prepare including those outside the location of the event.

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