

COMMUNIQUE

ISSUED AT THE END OF THE

VIRTUAL NIGERIA INTERNET GOVERNANCE

FORUM (vNIGF) 2021 EVENTS



**NIGERIA INTERNET
GOVERNANCE FORUM**
N I G F 2 0 2 1

HELD

ON

SEPTEMBER 29 – 30, 2021

Introduction

The annual Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (NIGF) facilitates fruitful partnerships and dialogue between various stakeholders, aimed at redefining the position of Nigeria at regional and global IGF meetings. The tenth NIGF was held as a hybrid event tagged Virtual Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (vNIGF) 2021, with some stakeholders in the Nigerian Internet Community physically present the Communication and Digital Economy Complex Mborara, Abuja, Nigeria, while other participants joined virtually.

The vNIGF 2021 was organized by the Nigeria Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (NIGF-MAG) which is a collaborative effort of the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy (FMCDE), the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), the Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA), Internet Society (ISOC) Nigeria Chapter, DigitalSense Africa, with other Internet Stakeholders. The main event, which held on 30th September 2021, focused on discussing how the importance of an all-inclusive Internet that works for all. The vNIGF 2021 was preceded by the Nigeria Youth Internet Governance Forum (NYIGF) and Women Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (WNIGF) which held in parallel on 29th September, 2021.

Nigeria Youth Internet Governance Forum (NYIGF): September 29, 2021

Observations:

The theme for the 2021 NYIGF event “Internet for All: Rights, Responsibilities, and Opportunities for the Youth” addressed the need to encourage the integration and inclusion of Nigerian youth in national Internet-related public policy meetings and events, and also to maximize Internet opportunities as well as address risks and challenges that arise. It also addressed the need to learn about the principles of Internet Governance and contribute to developing infrastructure, policy, and standards in Nigeria, with the following objectives:

1. To provide a platform for Nigerian youth to assess the state of Internet technology in Nigeria and communicate challenges and opportunities to the appropriate stakeholders.
2. To enable Nigerian youth to learn about the principles of Internet Governance and how they can contribute to developing infrastructure, policy, and standards for telecommunications in Nigeria.
3. To encourage the integration and inclusion of Nigerian youth in national Internet-related public policy meetings and events.

Key Considerations and Recommendations from High Level Panel:

- The Internet a world and planet itself, which is made up of artifacts that serve as representation of humans. People who are globally connected online are today considered to be more than even a society, which could be referred to as a robotic society.
- According to internetworldstats.com, Nigeria contributes about 26 – 27% of the Africa penetration statistics of 40%, which means Nigeria has the highest market shares in the digital economy.
- Equality of rights over the Internet is not a government alone affair, it calls for the responsibilities of the Internet users - born free and equal, in dignity and rights, which must be respected and fulfilled in the online environment.
- The network equality rights enable the citizens of Nigeria access to the Internet, but also should not invalidate the constitution of the nation.
- Information shared should always be verified and should always refrain from fake news and misinformation.
- Government should set up effective policy frameworks that regulate responsible access and use of the Internet which will equally improve the growth of internet penetration in the country.
- The Internet remains as a platform for all, so the Nigerian government should do more to make the Internet available for all.
- The discrimination on gender should be discouraged by government and private sector
- Internet of today should be void of gender bias.

From the different breakout sessions of the NYIGF 2021, the following key observations and recommendations were made:

Session 1: The Role of the Internet in empowering the Nigerian Youth - Challenges and Opportunities

Key Considerations

- The Internet has a lot of profit to offer to the developing nations.
- Nigerian youth need to focus on innovation vis-a-vis emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things etc.
- Nigerian youth need to join community groups, professional networks, technological hubs to take advantage of several opportunities that abound on the Internet.

Internet for All - Challenges

- Overregulation and under-regulation of the Internet causes setbacks to opportunities.
- Lack of Internet access has prevented people from the underserved communities from accessing opportunities on the Internet.
 - Inadequate service infrastructure hinders people from accessing opportunities on the Internet.
- Data cost is not affordable for most youth, hence they are denied opportunities.
- There are concerns around cyber security for young people online.

Internet for All - Opportunities

- The Internet is an enabler of opportunities for youth that have requisite skills to solve people's problems.
- The Internet being a repository of knowledge is useful in education for all.
- The Internet is a powerful channel for communication for people to access over 4 billion people in the world who use the Internet.
- 80 percent of those that apply for opportunities online get them.

Recommendations

- Government should make policies that promote inclusion, for all to access opportunities on the Internet.

- Stakeholders should work towards making mobile data more affordable for all.
- Government should provide service infrastructures in order to facilitate Internet access for the underserved communities.
- Youth should consult statistics to recognize high paying skill sets they can learn to carry out business online.
- Youth should position themselves online and engage meaningfully on social media such as LinkedIn to attract opportunities.
- Nigerian youth should leverage on social media marketing and actively engage in professional communities.

Session 2: The Impact of Enhancing Internet Rights and Inclusion

Key Considerations

- Internet rights in Nigeria is a bit complicated at the moment, especially as regards data privacy and freedom of expression.
- According to the definition of Freedom House on Internet rights, these rights in Nigeria could be described as “on progression”, as the country still has issues on violations and restrictions of users’ rights while using the Internet, like the Twitter ban which delimited citizen’s freedom of expression.
- Government must do more to take the youth where the need to be - the youth need to consistently engage with the government to ensure that their rights are protected. The good way this can be achieved is by showing the economic impact of their digital rights to national development.
- Internet rights brings about a fine blend of the legal, awareness part and the technology youth are building on.
- In ensuring that peoples’ rights are protected online, there must be proper enforcement of these rights - users should be able to report any form of infringement acts.
- To ensure that enforcers are actually doing what they’re expected to - as an advocate raise awareness, and as a user be aware of what to do when rights are infringed.
- People should be cybersecurity aware and be sensitive/careful with their personal data while using Internet platforms.

- Legal parts of our Internet rights can only fight to a certain extent. So, we shouldn't leave ourselves vulnerable to online abuse.
- The growth of the Internet can be measured by how we make use of the Internet.
- Advocacy is important towards ensuring that we have responsible use of the Internet.

Recommendations

- We have access to the Internet and we have opportunity to use the Internet, whatever we do with the Internet should be for good.
- The Internet should be used to explore youth careers as students, and as professionals for research and advancement.
- The social media platforms should be used to add positive values to careers.
- Youth should do their part by encouraging Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Public Public–private partnership (PPPs) to reach out to communities or individuals with no access
- Internet rights and inclusion starts with you and I, now and the future, as well as the government and policy makers.

Session 3: Data (Governance, Privacy, Data localization, Big data)

Key Considerations

- Where data is stored territorially has no effect on its security. Therefore, data localization shouldn't be of great concern, rather data globalization.
- Data governance covers all aspects around data, how it is acquired and how it is used.
- Data privacy basically revolves around the safety and security of data.
- Despite the need for data globalization, data is at great risk when it crosses borders without proper regulatory or control measures.
- Exploring cloud services beyond territorial management and control makes data vulnerable to certain risks.

Recommendations

- Adoption of Internet exchange approach in hosting data at certain places without an overhead cost.
- Financial regulatory institutions should work in synergy with relevant stakeholders to protect users' data even beyond territorial borders.
- In achieving data governance, establishment and adoption of regulatory models should be universally accepted.
- The government should own and manage data within its territorial space, through transparent regulatory models that assures security and safety.

Women Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (WNIGF): September 29, 2021

The virtual WNIGF 2021 themed “Women, Patriarchy and Digital Inequality: A Look at Global Efforts to Bridge the Gender Digital Divide”, discussed the following topics:

- Challenges of Mainstreaming Women in the Digital World
- Challenges to Women Participation in the Digital Economy/Mainstreaming Women in the Digital Economy
- Do Women Suffer Misinformation on the Net?
- Combatting Online Gender Violence as Key to Enhancing Women Participation in the Digital World.
- Fostering Creativity and Innovation for Mainstreaming Women Participation in the Digital Economy
- How do We Get More Women in the Digital Profession for Better Representation of Women in the Digital Economy?

In order to ensure more involvement of women in the Information Technology sector, government, individuals and private companies must create equal opportunities for both men and women; focus on research and development; have a system that rewards female teachers in the area of technology; create strong collaboration between the entertainment industry, technology sector and policy makers; have more STEM

programs that focus on girls and boys in order to co-create and collaborate; and put more effort to support people (women) who are already working in the area.

Observations:

The following observations were raised:

- Women are being underrepresented in the tech jobs
- There is negative stereotype of females in the society
- Women are the major victims of terrorism and other forms of violence
- Technology is biased against women
- Women suffer a lot on the net
- Computer science is seen as a domain for men according to cultural beliefs
- Women and girls are being chased away by men from the field
- Online violence keeps women away from major sectors of the public sphere
- Public only take physical violence seriously, ignoring or believing that online violence does not exist
- Some women leave the online platform after being harassed
- Online violence is a public health issue and the effects are very detrimental.

Recommendations:

- There is need to create equal opportunities for both men and women
- There is need to focus on research and development
- There is need to have a system that reward female teachers in the area of technology
- There is need to create strong collaboration between the entertainment industry, technology sector and policy makers
- There is need for more Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM) programs that focus on the girl-child in order to encourage women participation in Technology.
- More efforts to support women who are already working in the area.

- Need to create platforms to name and shame perpetrators of misinformation, and at the same time name and praise those working to combat it
- Create platforms for women working in the tech areas to share their experience and successes to encourage the upcoming generations
- Creation of safe and transformative schools for young girls
- There is need for the creation of mentorship club for young girls
- Creation of safer environment for women to thrive
- There is need for women in tech to be going to the secondary schools to teach young girls' and boys' technological courses.

vNIGF 2021 Event – September 30, 2021

The theme for the vNIGF 2021 was “Internet that Works for All”. The vNIGF addressed the following subthemes:

- (i) Accessibility – making the Internet accessible for all;
- (ii) Infrastructure – the required infrastructure to encourage Internet that works for all;
- (iii) Policy & Regulation – implementation of required regulation, guidelines and frameworks to foster an Internet that works for all;
- (iv) Capacity Building & Development – required skills for efficient use of the Internet.

The Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Professor Umar Garba Danbatta gave the opening remarks, stating that the outcome of the forum will be shared with academia, civil society and all stakeholders for adoption and implementation as applicable. He reminded everyone that the NIGF platform encourages various opinions and views on best practices which will change and influence Nigeria’s Internet policy and decisions.

Mrs. Mary Uduma, West Africa IGF Coordinator stated that the West Africa IGF looks forward to receiving reports from the deliberation of the day’s event, including the actionable recommendations to Nigerian Internet stakeholders, and stated that West

African IGF will report the recommendations at the forth coming African Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF).

Dr. Margeret Nyambura, EU Consultant, AU-PRIDA stated that the existing international digital partnership will encourage compliance or convergence with the EU standard on issues such as data protection, privacy protections, ethical use of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and trust, fight against misinformation and illegal content online, as well as support for the development of digital finance and online administration.

Dr Vincent Olatunji delivered the goodwill message on behalf of the Director General of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), re-iterating the efforts of honourable Minister of Communication and Digital Economy and the parastatals under the ministry. He noted that NITDA expects the report of the outcome of the forum this year and will look at specific actions which can be taken to enhance Internet that works for the country and for all citizens of Nigeria.

Anriette Esterhuyen, Chairman Internet Governance Forum Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IGF-MAG) stated the importance for all stakeholders to keep on coming together at national level to tackle to achieve inclusive multi-stakeholder Internet related policies, by collaborating in the drafting of policies and the implementation processes, such that the theme of the forum can be achieved.

Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami) FNCS, FBCS, FIIM – Hon. Minister, Federal Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy (FMCDE) gave the keynote address, highlighting the fact that the Internet is no more a luxury but a prerequisite to economic development, making the Internet a key ingredient for all global economic activities. In addition, the Minister highlighted efforts at the federal level to address issues relating to cost of broadband, and protection of critical ICT infrastructure all over the country.

Mr. Mohammed Rudman - President, Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA) thanked the Internet community for making themselves available to attend this year's forum and encouraged fruitful deliberations.

In all, there were about 190 participants (online and onsite) who attended the vNIGF 2021, including participants from public/state institutions, private sector groups, civil societies, professional bodies, students and youths, media and the public.

Observations from the High-level panel session:

The following were observed during the Plenary of the 10th Nigeria Internet Governance Forum:

- Colonization is not the main issue, accountability by government is important to the citizens
- Internet is the right of citizens so it must be used to improve their livelihood
- Every stakeholder keeps looking up to government alone, multistakeholder engagements with stakeholders at the state level should be fully considered too – state actors also have their part to play for an Internet working for all.
- Covid-19 has made the use of the Internet a necessity
- Open data is a subset of "Freedom of Information" and "Open Government/ Open Governance Culture"
- Having the right skill is key – in the digital world we say "Content is king"; the issue is how we move from consumers to producers of content, and how we create content that is most meaningful to Nigerians.
- Telecommunications should be on the exclusive list at state and local governments, incentives to operators to go to underserved and unserved areas.
- Development at grass roots need to be looked at.
- Grass-root development needs to be taken seriously
- Local development issues, connectivity owned by communities work better in some instances.
- There is responsibility of Government, industry and individuals as regards Internet that works efficiently for all
- Reliability of internet in Nigeria will encourage more opportunities for all
- Solve local problems of the region, think locally when providing access, think job creation, skill development

- For an internet that works for all, it is not just about cables, it's all encompassing the required internet infrastructure, hence stakeholders must Find out ways to broaden the scope for everyone
- The Domain Name System (DNS) is crucial for the internet to work effectively; likewise, the management of DNS is vital.
- DNS doesn't work properly in Africa and Nigeria, which means countries in the region are not really visible.
- IP consumption is quite key for reliable internet, hence IPv6 adoption is key for accessibility to ensure an internet that works for all in the region.
- Capacity building required so that the DNS can be managed efficiently.
- There are 13 DNS root servers, there is the opportunity of replicating in Africa
- As a country we must move from consumers to producers
- Nigerian internet does not exist as a silo, we are part of the African and global internet, hence digital cooperation must be put in our agenda (global digital common).
- In encouraging an internet that work for all, there is the need to ensure local languages are available (internalization of domain name, universal acceptance, and data localization)
- Open data encourages transparency and ensures public has access to data
- Efficient legislation – frameworks exist on ground, check their efficiency to ensure internet penetration to underserved and unserved areas
- Internet inclusiveness, privacy of data, security and content on the internet are key for efficient internet for all
- Internet and platform shut downs must stop as it makes the economy of the country worse than it already is – not reinstating Twitter hurts Nigerians and not the company.

Recommendations from the High-level Panel Session:

- The Government must make regulations that would help its citizens benefit from the positive economic effects of the internet.
- Stakeholders must work together to build the Internet that all Nigerians will have access to, which in turn builds the economy.

- Multistakeholder engagements with stakeholders at the state level should be fully considered
- Decentralization may need to be considered so that different strata of government are given the opportunity to engage directly with telecom operators with incentives to go to rural areas.
- IP consumption is quite key for reliable internet, hence IPv6 adoption is key for accessibility to ensure an internet that works for all in the region
- Internet users in the country must move from consumers to producers of content
- Bridge gap between what government should do and what other stakeholders must do to ensure an Internet that works for all
- Digital cooperation should be put in the African agenda
- Local languages should be accessible on the Internet
- Think more local, solve local problems
- Avoid market saturation by big companies
- Pursue data localization
- Job creation, skills development and universal acceptance are important
- Encourage local businesses not to rely on content from overseas
- Enforcement strategies must exist and cascaded down to all levels of operators
- Stop internet and platform shutdowns, as it makes economy worse than it is.
- Look at possibility of private sector to act as financiers of local problems
- Minimize the use of paper in public sector and encourage the use of Internet for document dissemination, which will save the country billions of naira.
- Ensure local languages are available (internalization of domain name, universal acceptance, and data localization)
- Check efficiency of existing data protection and security regulations to encourage more usage of the internet and its resources
- Internet must be looked at as a digital economy.

From the different breakout sessions, the following key observations and recommendations were made:

Session 1: Accessibility

Observations:

- COVID-19 has highlighted the need for Internet access across the globe and Nigeria in particular.
- There is need for Nigeria to have Internet resources and content available in local languages.
- Capacity building for citizens is very important to explore the opportunities that are available on the Internet.
- It is not possible to connect the entire country with wired infrastructure such as fiber, thus, ubiquitous platforms in the form of communications satellite technology should be used for better and wider connectivity.
- Internet accessibility is important, but affordability is very critical.
- Issues of affordable devices is of utmost important.
- Community networks and government financial incentives such tax breaks, license fee exemption, access to universal service funds etc. can facilitate accessibility in under-served communities.
- Policy making in government lack innovation and is somewhat slow.
- There is need to address the issue of inequality in access to Internet - we need to be intentional in closing the gap, and government needs to put in place strategies and policies to address the issue.
- We need to start collecting and analyzing data on gender accessibility to understand the gap in digital equity.
- Strong presence of Nigeria's arts and culture online is very important.

Recommendations from Session 1:

- Stakeholders should come together to put in place the appropriate policies and frameworks for better connectivity
- Government and key stakeholders should encourage infrastructure sharing for cost reduction to end users.

- Internet resources and content should be made available in local languages.
- Community network and financial incentives such as tax breaks, license fee exemption, and access to universal service funds etc. should be encouraged to facilitate accessibility in underserved and unserved communities.
- Government should review existing right-of-way schemes to be more simple and affordable.
- Specific actions should be targeted at people that have been excluded from connectivity, such as women, rural dwellers, differently abled people etc.

Session 2: Infrastructure

Observations:

- Creating a framework to connect the unconnected.
- Affordability, availability, and accessibility are very key areas for the country in terms in terms of Internet infrastructure.
- Nigerian infrastructure is being made a key area of focus in the NBP 2020 – 2021 and should be maintained.
- While 50% of telecommunications infrastructure depends on power, the national power grid is unreliable.
- Security concerns in the country impede improvement/ repair of infrastructure.
- Some government officials are involved in extortion of legitimate businesses.
- Difficulty in protecting equipment due to high rate of unemployment and insecurity.
- Infrastructure shutdown in some part of the country.
- Right of way (ROW) and multiple taxation issues.
- Ban of social media platform (Twitter) which is affecting Nigerian business on the Internet.
- Massive supply chain issue concerning 5G.
- The whole telecom ecosystem needs to be addressed.
- Infrastructure is capital intensive.
- Lack of coordination in getting things done.

Recommendations from Session 2:

- Ensure the effective implementation of the National Broadband Plan (NBP) 2020 – 2025 especially areas that focus on infrastructure.
- Putting in a place the Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) Bill in order to improve infrastructure by getting the fundamentals right.
- Having a plan in place and getting the funding to implement the plan.
- Access to stable power supply throughout the country.
- Uniform implementation of permits (including the right of way) because it is difficult for a single entity to talk to 36 different states as the case is in Nigeria.
- The policy making process should be transparent.
- Effectively management of spectrum resources.
- Leverage innovative technologies and architecture.
- Adopt appropriate tax measures (uniform permit in cases of federal and states right of ways)
- A true wholesale fiber network is needed to take internet to unserved and underserved communities.
- Continuation of rolling out of broadband infrastructure to cover the whole country.
- Need for regulatory and legal cover for infrastructure - there should be uniform implementation across the country.
- Nigeria should promote itself as an IT hub to attract more investment in infrastructure.
- More funding required to aid in improving infrastructure.
- There should be more collaboration amongst stakeholders.
- Need for review of spectrum clause.
- Need for better bandwidth to carry huge amounts of data.
- Improvement in the Power sector is required to help businesses spend less money on power generation and more on infrastructure. The need for sensitization of social media rules
- Technology must work for the people and not against the people.
- Need for connecting institutions such as hospitals, universities, and tertiary institutions to high-speed internet.
- Need for adequate fiber rollout to harness the 5G technology.

Session 3: Policy and Regulation

Observations:

- Independence of Institutions in Nigeria.
- Restricting and shutting down access to internet platforms such as Twitter.
- Regulating the Internet through Social Media.
- Access to information due to shutdown of telecom infrastructures in certain states in Nigeria.
- Data Protection - managing citizen's data and digital rights framework.
- Network Disruption as a result of Twitter ban by the government was strongly condemned.
- Government not engaging relevant stakeholders in policy making.
- Taking security side by side with the economy and not in isolation.
- Multistakeholder synergy that aligns policies was emphasized.

Recommendations from Session 3:

- There is the need for independence of institutions in Nigeria. Policies should be created in the best interest of all concerned stakeholders.
- Government should be proactive in the disclosure of information and also follow international standards while creating policies.
- Policies that enable collaboration, capacity building, and operational excellence are encouraged. This will improve and facilitate investment into the country.
- Engagement of private sector and the youth in making rules and policies in the Internet ecosystem.
- Policy oriented interventions that are inclusive should be adopted.

Session 4: Capacity Building and Development

Observations:

- As Nigeria advances further in its digital transformation plan, we must make efforts towards building capacity for sustainable development in the digital space.
- The role of stake holders in capacity building and development must be clear.
- Need to breach the gap between the private and government sectors to enable cooperation.
- The access to government isn't accessible except through acquaintances.
- The government system is not effective as everyone is their own government.
- The right things are being said but not done.
- A balance must be created between cyber-crimes and an internet for all.
- An average law enforcer does not have the basic skill of intrusion detection and prevention.
- Hard work isn't celebrated enough as much as people making the money are celebrated regardless of how the money is made.
- Need to strategize ways to develop and build capacity for young Nigerians to leverage digital economy.

Recommendations from Session 4:

- Relevant government agencies should get more active in education and awareness on the responsible use of the Internet and its resources.
- The private and government sectors need to reach out to each other and learn to trust each other for cooperation to be achieved.
- Government should work closely with the private sector and other stakeholders before passing some policies into law.
- The government needs to re-evaluate a lot of policies made to build a digital economy because they are restrictive and block innovation of individuals.
- Parents and other guardians need to get educated and understand technology so they can properly guide the young ones instead of restricting them from using it.

- Hard work should be celebrated and encouraged more often by the government and tech system.
- The average individual should be educated to protect his/herself from cyber-crime.
- A system should be made where fraudsters can be investigated and punished.
- It should be easy for average person to have access to the internet.

For further information, please contact Program Manager, NIGF Secretariat via pm@nigf.org.ng.