Decolonizing the Internet

East Africa

Summary Report

In September 2022, the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) in collaboration with Whose Knowledge?, convened nearly 40 feminists, activists, technologists, artists, scholars, knowledge professionals and digital curators from across the East-African region in Lusaka, Zambia. We held authentic and deeply thoughtful conversations and reflections on decolonizing the internet, leveraging critical feminist scholarship, human rights activism, and knowledge of internet technologies, community organizing, and partnerships ahead of the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica 2022). This report recaps the shared experiences and collective strategies from this gathering.

CONTENTS

Why this gathering?

With [60% of the world population online](#), the internet has become a powerful tool and platform for organizing, influencing, connecting, and reclaiming social, economic, and political rights and freedoms. [75% of those people online are from the Global South](#), and [48% are women](#). Yet, despite its enormous possibilities, the internet remains heavily skewed towards the Global North, leaving out most of the breadth and depth of human knowledge.

The most important decisions on internet governance and tech development are made by men in the Global North. For instance, only [5% of leadership positions in the technology sector are held by women](#), and [the vast majority of documents published by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)](#) originate in North America and Europe.

The internet also remains heavily monolingual — and therefore largely monoculture —, as there are more than 7000 spoken and signed languages in the world, but nearly [60% of online content is available in English](#).

When we look at knowledge production, most scholarly (including digital) publications are available only in English. On Wikipedia — the largest free knowledge project in history — only [10% of editors are women or non-binary](#), and [only around 20% of public knowledge on the platform](#) is produced on or by people from the Global South. If we turn our eyes towards Africa, we see that the continent contributes [1-2% to global knowledge production](#). Meanwhile, [85% of research on Africa is conducted outside the continent](#), and [of the 6200 mostly highly cited scholars in 2019](#), 17 of them were African.

These biases, or knowledge injustices, are not accidental. They are consequences of structures of power and privilege that have deliberately erased and appropriated the knowledges from marginalized communities — the majority of the world — through historical and ongoing dynamics of colonialism and oppression.

Knowledge (and tech) injustice renders a need for continuous deep analysis and interrogation of whose voices, faces, and stories are missing from the internet, and whose knowledge is represented online. Decolonizing the internet is the process by which we dismantle these structures and build a feminist internet of joy and liberation.

There is a centuries-long practice of resistance and decolonization in African history. Decolonizing the Internet East Africa (DTI-EA) was yet another opportunity to center these practices and acknowledge their legacies. An example is the rise of the #FeesMustFall protests in South Africa, where students protested against the rising university fees and the lack of loans and stipends. The #FeesMustFall movement inspired and activated change using decolonial thinking in a variety of different spaces in South Africa and the continent at large. The first Decolonizing the Internet 2018 convening, in South Africa, drew on this to honor, affirm and acknowledge those histories and the ways structures of power work within Southern Africa.

Centering Black African history and feminism is how resistance and liberation begin. DTI-EA brought together nearly 40 Black feminists working in various fields in tech — including digital rights and knowledge justice — to reflect together about why and how to decolonize the internet. These conversations were an embodied and historically grounded experience that reminded us of that strong sense of joy, courage, and freedom that comes with being in community. It also brought up the urgency to transform oppressive structures of power, and build together a more fair, just, equitable, and safe internet.

DTI-EA as a pre-convening to FIFAfrica 2022

We hosted DTI-EA in advance of a large digital rights and internet freedom conference in Africa, with the aim of taking our strategies and partnerships to the larger conference, and occupying spaces where feminist and Global South voices, ideas, and work are not centred.

The [Forum for Internet Freedom in Africa 2022](#) was hosted in Lusaka, Zambia, on 26-29 September, and provided a space for the feminist energies from DTI-EA to occupy. The methodology proved productive, with most participants saying that DTI-EA positively impacted or influenced their engagements at FIFAfrica 2022.

Reflections from participants showed that the gathering was key in forming feminist alliances going into sessions at FIFAfrica 2022 — a conference where majority of attendants and speakers were men.

I WENT INTO FIFAFRICA 2022 WITH A BETTER VOICE AS A FEMINIST AND AS A DEVELOPMENT ENTHUSIAST WHO IS TRYING TO USE DIGITAL FOR DEVELOPMENT. I WAS ABLE TO FRAME BETTER MY EFFORTS AT CONNECTING LAST MILE COMMUNITIES WITH DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION. HAVING ATTENDED DTI–EA, I WAS BETTER ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISCUSSIONS ON OGBV (ONLINE GENDER–BASED VIOLENCE). I MET A LOT OF NEW CONNECTIONS, SOME OF WHOM ARE OPENING DOORS TO EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES.

— MARGARET SADRAKE (MUKWENHA)

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

DTI-EA also helped some participants to "be bold", and more confident in sharing their work and experiences with others.

[DTI–EA HELPED ME] TO BE BOLD AND OPEN MYSELF UP TO COLLABORATION AND NETWORKS. AT FIFAFRICA, I PARTNERED WITH NATASHA SIMMA TO SHOWCASE MY BOOK, GOT A SHOUT–OUT FROM ROSEBELL KAGUMIRE, AND I CONNECTED WITH MANY OTHER ARTISTS IN THE DIGITAL SPACE TOO.

— LENA ANYUOLO

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

How did we do it?

At DTI-EA, we came together as co-conspirators and co-organizers under feminist principles, frames, and practices. As such, we knew that how we do things matters just as much as what we do. We laid the groundwork for the conversations that would take place in Zambia, with a Twitter Space under the theme "What does it mean to decolonize the internet?" Over 800 users joined the live discussion from different parts of the continent, reflecting on the challenges they face, how it affects communities online and offline, and about what it would mean to have an internet of joy and liberation.

At the outset, our facilitators Rachel Kagoiya and Sunshine Fionah Komusana set the tone of conversations guided by principles of love, respect, and solidarity. We wanted participants to be their full, multiple selves in the space and create room for more reflections and concrete actions. In order to guarantee people's privacy and safety, we put clear practices in place around consent. Attendees had the option of using two colored stickers (green and red), based on whether they consented to have their picture taken and shared publicly, or taken but not publicly shared. Consent cannot simply be assumed, but rather affirmed and made as a fully informed decision about oneself and, in this case, one's image.

Sessions had multiple formats: some included more practical activities (e.g. learning how to edit content online), while others dove into the politics and practices of decolonizing the internet. Some also embodied a creative spirit, prompting and allowing participants to imagine their own location, digital bodies, and expectations for the gathering through the materials at hand — coloring pencils, glitter, old magazines, and newspapers for images that collage the complexities of their lives, work and activism.

Nyimine Empowerment CBO -NYECBO
@nyecbo

#Decolonizingtheinternet
There are only 500 languages that are online that we can access with English being the main language. This limits access to SRHR information by women in different spaces.
@FemnetProg
@WhoseKnowledge

@nyecbo on Twitter, Sep 19, 2022

Shi
@Shikoohz

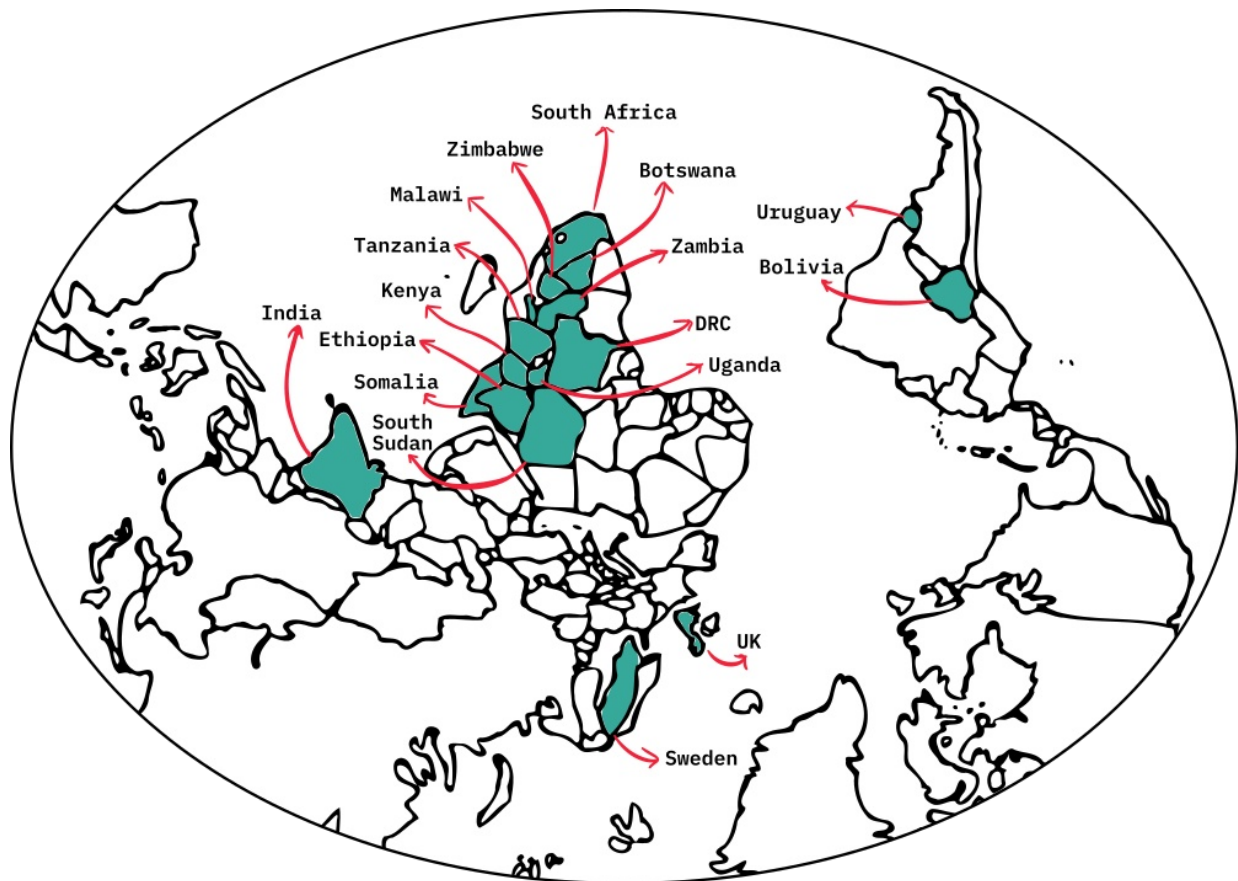When I attend a conference I end up observing key things.

During the Decolonizing The Internet convening, I was impressed when the @WhoseKnowledge photographer took us thru photography consent stickers.

For those who take photos of people without consent try asking first 😏

@Shikoohz on Twitter, Oct 8, 2022

8

Who was there?

DTI-EA participants arrived from 17 different countries, and everyone was from the Global South or from diasporic marginalized groups in the Global North. In the room, there were powerful activists, technologists, scholars, knowledge professionals, digital curators, coders, librarians, wikipedians, teachers and academics, feminist publishers, artists, and people from feminist NGOs that work with women and girls in East Africa.

What did we do?

Day 1

On our first day together, we focused on getting to know each other, setting expectations, and mapping our contexts of knowledge and tech justice.

Intimate conversations in small groups set the scene for individual reflections and thoughts on who we are, what we wanted to do together, and what we wanted to leave DTI-EA with.
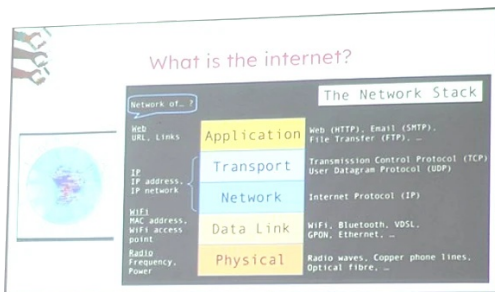
As a way to transition from our individual selves to the collective, we had a group presentation and conversation that grounded us in the politics and history around knowledge and tech justice in the African context.

We moved to think through the challenges knowledge and tech justice represent for us, and reflected on what we see as the spaces for opportunity and resistance. With these reflections on the table, we moved to curate emerging themes and clustering key aspects from the conversations.

The first step in practicing resistance is to understand how to contribute our knowledge to the internet and how to make ourselves and our work more visible online. To wrap up the first day of our gathering, we engaged in three parallel workshop sessions, which provided hands-on experience in editing Wikipedia with a decolonial lens, exploring the #VisibleWikiWomen campaign and Wikimedia Commons, and learning how to write basic code.

11

Editing Wikipedia with a Decolonial Lens

The session on Editing Wikipedia with a Decolonial Lens was facilitated by Kelly Foster, who shared insights on the politics of citation, legitimate resources, and prompted a conversation on the challenges African women and authors faced on English-language Wikipedia. Kelly shared her personal experience and best practices for

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

editing Wikipedia articles, emphasizing privacy, access, "politics of citation", and how Eurocentric knowledge systems are incorporated into the encyclopedia and its concepts of neutrality. She then supported each group member to set up Wikipedia accounts, and practiced editing a Wikipedia article on Sub-Saharan Africa, citing criticisms of the term and its etymology found in reliable sources. This session prompted participants to think about how articles are written, who creates the encyclopedia, and how they could contribute to different types of content.

The workshop enabled me to learn about Wikimedia. Now, this is great as we are currently leading a training and mentorship program for community networks in Kenya and one of our priority areas is local content. I see Wikimedia as a great resource for documenting local content. Big shout out to Kelly and Alice who have supplied me with Wikimedia resources as well as Wikimedia contacts in Kenya who we are exploring with a potential partnership.

— Risper Arose

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

#VisibleWikiWomen: Celebrating #womenofcolors and non-binary people online

In the #VisibleWikiWomen session, [Mariana Fossatti](#) inspired participants to celebrate and amplify structurally invisibilized people online. To illustrate the problem, Mariana asked the group to search on Google Images for images of lawyers, doctors and other professionals in different languages. In all the searches, images of white men were at the top of the results, with people of other identities much further down. When adjusting the search preferences for open license images, the disparities were clearer — there were only images of white men.

The #VisibleWikiWomen team supported participants in setting up accounts on their mobile phones, taking photos of each other, as well as selfies to upload onto Wikimedia Commons under the [#VisibleWikiWomen category](#).

I feel excited about the future in relation to telling women's stories and contributing my voice to these conversations. I just updated an image of an amazing woman. If they won't write about us, we'll write about ourselves.
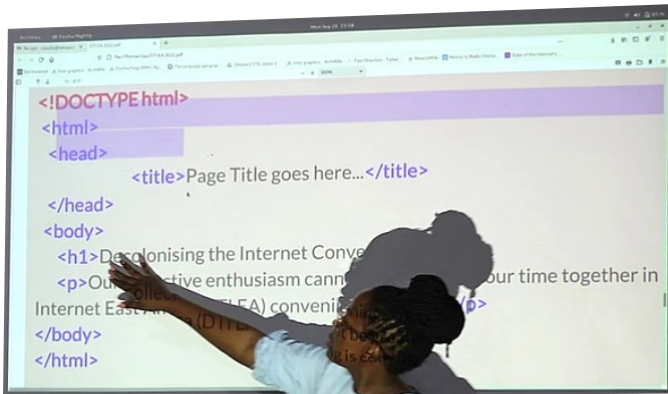
— Chipasha Mwansa.

By Sunshine Fionah Komusana, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

13
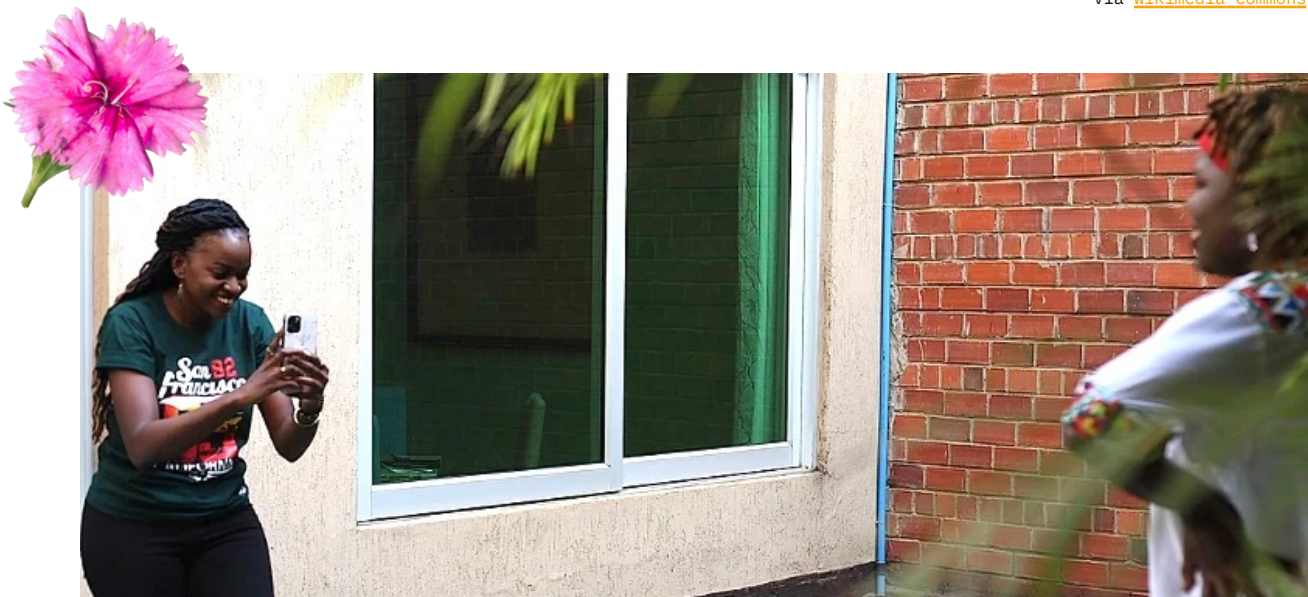
Demystifying (and decolonizing) code

In the third session, Carolyne Ekyarisiima; Apps and Girls co-founder, led a conversation on how coding can be used in feminist activism work, sharing case studies of how coding has been used to propel girls rights to menstrual education and sexual health services, such as through the OKY App co-created by UNICEF and girls in Indonesia and Mongolia. Carolyne highlighted two projects about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual and reproductive rights done by Apps and Girls, where girls were trained to build platforms to report SGBV and access legal and psychosocial support. Participants were then guided through learning the basics of code using Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) to build a basic webpage.

I FEEL EMPOWERED. I THOUGHT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DO WHAT SHE (CAROLYNE) HAS TAUGHT US IN 30 MINUTES!

— DOREEN CHILUMBU

I ALSO REALLY LIKED CAROLYNE'S PROJECT BECAUSE WE CAN NOW BUILD WEBSITES WHERE THE USER EXPERIENCE IS INCLUSIVE TO ALL DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE — PEOPLE WHO ARE NEURODIVERGENT, PEOPLE WHO ARE DISABLED.

— LENA ANYUOLO

By the end of these sessions, participants shared a deep sense of empowerment through learning practical skills, and shared hope for their contributing roles to decolonizing the internet.

At the end of our first day together, participants shared an intimate conversation with Timnit Gebru — calling in from the heart of Silicon Valley — to share her personal experience in the space of knowledge and tech justice, neocolonialism, and burn-out.

Day 2

Building on the conversations of the previous day, we did a creative exercise about the imagined internet(s) we want to create and enjoy. Participants gathered in groups to have deeper conversations, and then we created a collective agenda, which included a myriad of strategies, partnerships, and actions towards that internet we all want to build.

This exercise set the stage for closing our time together, asking what comes next. Participants committed to taking different actions and steps, ranging from working towards legitimizing oral citation on Wikimedia platforms to creating more visibility for African feminists online.

You can learn more about what came up in these conversations in the next section of this report.
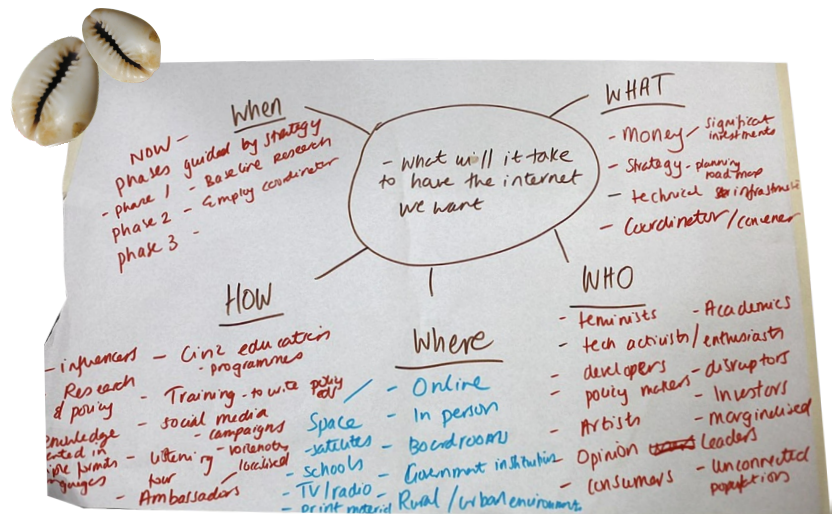
Day 3 / Day 4

After days of sharing and collective magic, DTI-EA participants joined FIFAfrica 2022. We brought feminist and decolonial frames to this international conference through two main activities: Whose Knowledge? set up a #VisibleWikiWomen photobooth to visually document the presence of Black women in tech spaces, and three participants of our convening participated in the "Resistance & Connection: An African Feminist Perspective for Decolonizing the Internet" panel.

A feminist #VisibleWikiWomen photobooth

By NamukoloS, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

The #VisibleWikiWomen photobooth was about taking pictures of women in tech present at FIFAfrica 2022. It was conceptualized as a space for documenting feminists and allies in the digital rights fields in Africa, and it became a little feminist corner for rest, conversation, and breaks during the conference.

Namukolo Siyumbwa, a fantastic feminist Zambian photographer, worked with Whose Knowledge? to take pictures of women and non-binary participants who were willing to be photographed.

The #VisibleWikiWomen photobooth was also an opportunity to share our radical practices of consent, which balance security, collective care, and visibility. We explained to each participant at the photobooth what it means to have their pictures shared on Wikimedia Commons

and the larger internet, and they expressed their consent before their picture was taken. Afterwards, we emailed every one of them their pictures as a way of accountability and gratitude. In total, 72 individual portraits were taken, with multiple group shots and selfies too. Many of the photobooth participants have since shared their images on Twitter, further amplifying this experience and the #VisibleWikiWomen campaign.

Check out the photobooth photos! 🔗

Rosebell Kagumire ✔
@RosebellK

We live in a world where women and gender-diverse persons, their lives and contributions to our societies have been historically erased, their work co-opted and stolen.

Had to show up for this needed campaign #VisibleWikiWomen. Thank you @komusana and @WhoseKnowledge.

@RosebellK on Twitter, Oct 25, 2022

Tsema
@nubianhottie

As an African woman, I am not ashamed to identify as a feminist who is working hard at ensuring women feel protected online, and that the world sees us and acknowledges us.
#VisibleWikiWomen
#DecolonizingTheInternetEastAfrica #DTIEastAfrica
#DecolonizingTheInternet #FIFAfrica22

@nubianhottie on Twitter, Oct 27, 2022

Gladys Mbuyah
@FriLuku

Imagine a world where there is freedom of internet. It is possible
#VisibleWiKiWomen photobooth
#DecolonisingTheinternet
#internetFreedomAfrica2022

@FriLuku on Twitter, Oct 20, 2022

Resistance & Connection: An African Feminist Perspective for Decolonizing the Internet

WE ARE STUCK BETWEEN COLONIAL LEGACIES AND GOVERNANCE AND THE APPROACH TO 'CONTROL', AND BIG CORPORATIONS AFTER PROFIT DICTATING HOW WE SHOULD USE THE INTERNET.

— ROSEBELL KAGUMIRE

By NamukoloS, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

At FIFAfrica 2022, four panelists — Helen Nyinakiiza, Ann Holland, Carolyne Ekyarisma and Sandra Kwikiriza (three of whom were from the DTI-EA convening) — spoke about African feminisms on and offline.

The context was set by an introduction from Kelly Foster and Anasuya Sengupta, which described DTI-EA, addressed the underrepresentation and devaluation of African knowledge production, and the role of African feminists in challenging and transforming the online space.

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Panelists interrogated, from an African feminist anti-colonial perspective, what it means when what has become a core space for feminist activism and organizing is owned by corporations from the Global North. This conversation was built on the feminist work of reimagining, dreaming, and creating alternatives of our online existence in ways that are safe, affirming, and community-building.

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

These were some of the reflections on what a decolonized internet looks like for panelists:

I IMAGINE A SPACE THAT IS SAFE BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE FOR WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN CREATING SOLUTIONS AND PRODUCTS THAT MEET THEIR NEEDS AND REALITIES, AND TAKES THEIR CHALLENGES INTO CONSIDERATION.

— CAROLYNE EKYARISMA

I IMAGINE THE FUTURE OF A DECOLONIZED INTERNET TO BE WHERE WOMEN FEEL FREE, WHERE ACCESSIBILITY IS IMPORTANT, AND ONE WHERE WE ARE REPRESENTED FAIRLY.

— HELEN NYINAKIIZA

I IMAGINE A DECOLONIZED INTERNET THAT INCLUDES MOVEMENT BUILDING IN SOLIDARITY, THAT IS FEMINIST CENTERED TO PUSH AGAINST THESE SYSTEMS, AND HAVE TEACHINGS AROUND OUR AFRICAN HISTORY.

— SANDRA KWIKIRIZA

आर्य āryā Jeipea
@AryaKarijo

My kind of panel hosted by @RosebellK

Topic: Resistance & Connection: An African Feminist Perspective for Decolonising the Internet

Awesome Panel
@sand_riza and @HerInternet
@ekyarisiimac
@SistahSistahFo1

With @WhoseKnowledge
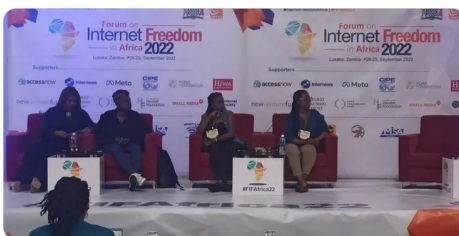
#DecolonizingTheInternet
#FIFAfrica22

I IMAGINE AN INTERNET THAT FEELS SAFE. DECOLONIZING THE INTERNET FOR ME MEANS CREATING OUR OWN SPACES. I WANT TO DECOLONIZE THE INTERNET BY MAKING IT BLACK, MAKING IT FEMINIST, AND BY MAKING IT AFRICAN.

— ANN HOLLAND

Watch the panel and read reflections about it on our blog.

What came up?

Collective mapping and thinking

By Tinaral, CC BY-SA 4.0, via

In this session, participants discussed the challenges they face in decolonizing the internet and shared their individual reflections in smaller groups. They also identified opportunities for resistance towards knowledge and tech justice.

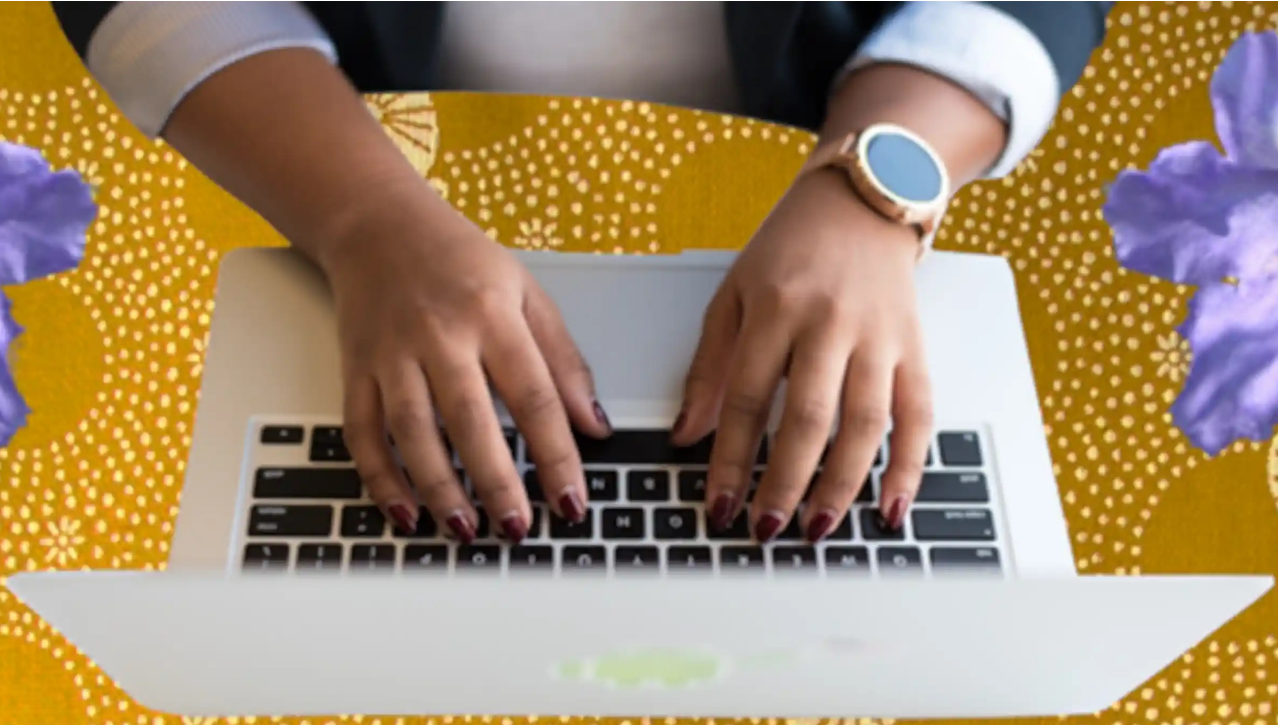When sharing with the entire group, participants pointed out issues that had to do with very core components of the web: the lack or limited infrastructure, affordable devices, and internet connectivity and access, as well as economic disparities and limited availability of funding that affect one's access to these elements. Other components included people's attitudes and prejudices towards technology, such as the resistance to change and the need for digital literacy. Other problems that permeated their online spaces were cyber harassment, online gender-based violence, contexts with hostile legislation, and language barriers.

There were a number of conversations about the impact of conflict and displacement on African women, their families and communities, and the realities of physical consequences of online gender-based violence. A recurring theme of discussions, both on and off the record, was how the digital realm influences and determines the safety of African women.

These reflections allowed participants to map out obstacles, while also coming together to think of tactics and strategies to resist them.

Sites of Resistance

In this part of the gathering, we asked: what do we see as the spaces and sites for opportunity and resistance? How can we occupy them and build them to decolonize the internet and seek out knowledge and tech justice? Our participants offered these actions and key insights:

1. Language

◇ Create more content in local languages (beyond text, in different modes like voice, image, and touch)

◇ Translate existing content in colonial languages into spoken, local ones

◇ Encourage and provide the means for communities to be more active in their languages online

◇ Enrich databases, build and perfect translation tools for African languages that are community-led and stewarded

2. Knowledge justice and production

◇ Create opportunities for knowledge sharing in marginalized communities, centered on embodied knowledges

◇ Generate awareness about the internet and its role beyond access issues

◇ Bring more oral knowledges and expertise online through platforms like Wikipedia

◇ Create campaigns and tell our stories online, creating more radical noise

3. Decentring Silicon Valley

◇ Create safe spaces for different communities across the internet

◇ Organize more spaces for feminists across Africa to connect and make technology more accessible and applicable to their experiences

◇ Building databases and lexicons

◇ Take the initiative to create pilot projects

4. Movement building and resources

◇ Create opportunities for shared experiences and re-imagination of the internet

◇ Challenge funders and donors to go beyond funding as usual, centering a feminist agenda and reparations in their allocation of resources

◇ Foster spaces for active knowledge sharing between networks

◇ Invest in content creation, especially in alternative networks and media

◇ Think about resources as more than just money (e.g., people, ideas, spaces)

Risper Arose
@risper_arose

I am honored to have occupied a space at the just concluded #DecolonizingTheInternetEastAfrica convening in Lusaka where we collectively question how power and privilege manifest in public knowledge online and how we contribute to the ways the internet is designed and experienced

@risper_arose on Twitter, Sep 29, 2022

Strategies and actions

In this session, participants re-grouped and were prompted to think about the type of internet they wanted to create and enjoy, and consider what actions and resources would take to create it.

WHAT RESOURCES WILL WE NEED TO BUILD THIS INTERNET?

- Reparations
- Money; FRIDA fund for young feminists, FEMNET
- Funding available at ISOC, governments
- Strategy and planning
- Tech infrastructure
- Coordinator s and convenors
- Have creative resources beyond the money: skills, people

WHO WILL WE BUILD THIS INTERNET WITH?

- Developers
- Policy makers
- Investors
- Feminists/ feminist movements
- Tech activists
- Opinion leaders
- Consumers
- Artists
- Academics
- Unconnected populations
- Disruptors
- Marginalized

HOW ARE WE BUILDING THE INTERNET(S) OF OUR DREAMS?

- Civic education
- Localized content
- Social media campaigns
- Influencers
- Research and policy disrupting "funding as usual" models

WHERE ARE WE BUILDING THIS INTERNET?

- Online
- Rural and urban areas
- Boardroom meetings in person

WHEN ARE WE DOING THE WORK TO BUILD AN INTERNET FOR US ALL?

- Now
- Conduct a baseline research and decide on timelines and milestones

WHAT ACTIONS CAN WE TAKE TO BUILD OUR IMAGINED INTERNET?

- Connecting people and issues
- Capacity building and strengthening
- Infiltrate and occupy spaces
- Movement building
- Develop open source toolkits situated in our contexts
- Intergenerational mentoring
- Influenc ing FIFA, IGF (Internet Governance Forum)
- Open up spaces to LGBTQI+ and offer support
- Center and take back self care while organizing
- Solidarity within networks
- Have community gatherings - make tech accessible

Looking to the future: What's next?

These are some of the actions and steps participants and organizers committed to taking after our time spent together:

Contribute to **African research** Create more visibility for African feminists online Tweet more about DTI-EA and talk about it in different speaking platforms

Connect participants to **organizations** working in their areas of interest

Support African feminist communities online

Work towards legitimizing oral citation on Wikimedia platforms, focusing on Wikipedia and Wikidata

Include more content about oral knowledge and Indigenous knowledge on Wikipedia

Keep in touch

Think around a Decolonizing the Internet convening in 2023

Identify and organize around similar internet governance forums

Spread the word about #VisibleWikiWomen

Facilitate cross-learning from other regions

Think and do – including African women's pleasure and sensuality

Create space for youth to reimagine anti-colonial ways

Learn more about digital infrastructures

Collaborate with and support the work of feminists in the room

Create more women-centered content on digital platforms

Document this space and all the conversations through a report to serve as an awareness and conscious raising tool; and respecting participants' right to privacy and anonymity

Decolonizing the internet is an on-going process and a work-in progress. While some of these actions have already been completed, others will continue to sprout. We hope to keep strengthening and amplifying the communities and networks brought together at DTI-EA, and sharing the magic of being in community with such trailblazer feminists.

One way of keeping the conversation going is through the DTI-EA podcast series, where FEMNET and Whose Knowledge? interviewed eight convening participants about digital infrastructures and colonialism, queer African utopias online, digital safety and sex worker advocacy, and so much more!

Reflections and learnings from participants

Specifically for the FEMNET and Whose Knowledge section, we got a chance to understand the knowledge points and who provides knowledge. The knowledge available on the internet and who is really the owner and who provides the knowledge sets. African women and girls continue to be marginalized. But at the same time, we also got to understand that it's not, therefore, that they are marginalized, it's by design.

– Sandra Kwikiriza

First of all, thank you so much Femnet and Whose Knowledge? for affording an opportunity to share space with incredible women. Since our shared space, I have been pondering a lot on what exactly we mean by decolonizing the internet. More especially with my work in Community Networks that promote connecting the unconnected, the conference helped me to look at how in our efforts to bridge the digital divide we can encourage the community to reimagine the online space. The community is part of contributing knowledge that is of them by them and for them.

– Risper Arose

[J]ust being able to reach out and start unpacking these conversations, these deep reflections of saying, 'local knowledge is important; yes, it's important for us to tell our stories; yes, it's important for us to appear on digital platforms'. But let's go back and foster the foundation and be reminded of this famous quote, of the master's tools never dismantling the master's house. And start even reimagining and saying, 'does that mean that we really need to even get rid of it and start thinking alternatives? And what even alternatives would look like?'. For me, the last couple of days, it's what I'm sitting with, and I'm processing, and it excites me, and it makes me feel ready to start saying, 'there's a way we can collectively take hold and challenge'. But then again, still have our eye on that reimagination of an alternative, because isn't that what we always do as feminists — keep thinking about alternatives, about challenging the systems that are not working for us, even when we're told they're made to be working for us?
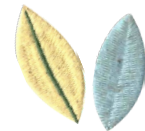
– Rachel Kagoiya

Just being here and meeting… I didn't know, I mean, I know there are African feminists, but I didn't know there were this many African feminists into tech. So that part was the coolest part, I think, meeting many strong African feminists in one place, I think that's the biggest takeaway of this event.

— Meron Estefanos

Coming out of this conference, I'm just thinking, 'this is what we need'. We just don't need it as an isolation, but we need it in all our spaces, all of our social justice struggles. We must be alert to say, 'what sort of knowledge is there?', the issue around knowledge justice did not exist before as evidently as we've seen it [...]. The internet is not neutral as we're made to think it is; it's not neutral at all [...]. We need to watch, we need to do our research, we need to start really thinking, 'what are we consuming? Why are we being fed what we're being fed? Where are the women? Where are the African women, where are the women of color? Where are the voices, who are they?'. Why is it that we never hear, we never see? So I feel that having that sort of realization, but building a movement around that, is so powerful, it's so timely. And I think more than anything we need to put more of our ideas and to start making the intersections with other movements because our future is digital. But we have no space to be thinking about what we want it to be, there are people who are shaping that for us. They are not in the continent, they're not feminists, and they're not human rights conscious.

— Memory Kachambwa

It was a great eye-opener. Decolonizing the Internet East Africa empowered me with knowledge and more understanding of how the internet works and how the infrastructure is set, and more importantly where I stand not just as a development worker but as a female — in the scheme of things. The biggest takeaway for me was the capacity building on the tools that are within my reach/control/ownership through which I can use to make women more visible. I absolutely appreciated content creation via Wikimedia and the sessions that helped us define strategies of how we want to move on.

— Margaret Sadrake (Mukwenha)

The biggest learning is that work is being done, and we may not always see it, but there are people who are putting their mind and their body on the line and working to create solutions... And just to see that solidarity in one room was very enriching and also gives strength to continue on this journey, because honestly dismantling systems is lifelong work, and it's easy to get discouraged. But just being in the room [with people] who are doing the same work and other people saying 'I see you, you're not alone', I think that has been a really, really comforting thing from this convening.

— Esther Mwema

Extremely an eye-opening event. I am in the process of looking out for people to partner with and start up a campaign to introduce coding in schools.

— Doreen Chilumbu

I think it's nice, post–pandemic, to just meet human beings. Covid is not over, but literally for two years of pandemic–induced non–mobility and lockdown and all those kinds of things...this has been my second large meeting, and it's really been beautiful meeting other feminists from different movements and see how we believe the world should be – the world being the world online, being the planet in terms of climate change. [...] Being in a feminist space doesn't get narrowed down to one topic – it covers all topics around our existance [...] about being human. This conference felt like a breath of fresh air with the conversations, the people, and it didn't feel like work – although there is a lot of work going on. I don't think there should be a separation between work and being, but if there was, this would fall more into being than work.

– Arya Jeipea Karijo

The conversations that we've already been listening to, and that we will listen to from all the feminists that came to DTI, it basically says to me that, if we have this kind of connective tissue that brings us together, a connected understanding about the ways that the internet is produced, and the structures of power that produce it in this way, we can also start constructing these alternatives that you're talking about. And at the same time, and this is where I hope ancestor Lorde will forgive me, [...] in tech, we do have to understand the master's tools in order to dismantle the master's house. It's not sufficient, but it's necessary. We need both to understand the master's tools, be in the master's spaces, challenge the master's spaces, change the tools, and then bring that house down to create the extraordinary jungle of joy that we want the world and the digital world to be.

– Anasuya Sengupta

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