ACTION STEPS: A DECADE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

A baseline review of the Global Information Society Watch country reports (2007-2017)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this review was to look back over the past decade of country reports published in Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) and attempt to identify trends in civil society perspectives on what needed to be done to create a people-centred information society. The period for analysis was, more accurately, just over a decade: 2007-2017, during which a GISWatch report was produced each year – a total of 11 reports. Over this period, 510 country reports covering 97 countries were published, a substantial record of civil society activism on information and communications technology (ICT) and internet rights. Over 1,900 advocacy recommendations – what were called "action steps" – were proposed by authors.

The first edition of GISWatch was published by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and Third World Institute (ITeM) in 2007 on the theme of "Participation"[1] – two years after the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, and just after the first Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Athens in late 2006. With the WSIS action agenda then firmly in mind, it was conceived as a "space for collaborative monitoring of implementation of international (and national) commitments made by governments towards the creation of an inclusive information society."[2] The first edition reflected this priority – it offered a "WSIS review" in three reports by David Souter and Willie Currie, institutional overviews of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), as well as a section on "indicators for advocacy" by Amy Mahan, which framed the 22 country reports that followed.

Over the years, GISWatch often responded to rapidly emerging advocacy needs – for example, the edition on ICTs and the environment in 2010 sought to help build knowledge and capacity among internet rights activists on the burgeoning challenge of e-waste, while also considering the pressing problem of climate change, mitigation and adaptation. In 2014, the theme of surveillance followed Edward Snowden's revelations of global surveillance networks and growing suspicions at the country level that many governments were engaged in unsupervised or even illegal surveillance activities. In other years, themes coincided with global events, or responded to the need to capture and understand emerging experiences. In 2011, an edition on democratisation, freedom of expression and association followed the so-called Arab Spring, while, most recently, the focus on national IGFs – or National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) – captured country-level experiences of creating collaborative internet governance spaces for deliberation just over a decade after the first IGF in Athens.

Some noticeable shifts in the information society occur over the period of this review. Firstly, the pace of change in infrastructure roll-out and the increase in the number of internet users are at times staggering. The "information society" – a term which begins to feel somewhat anachronistic – written about in 2007 is not the same one internet rights activists confront in 2017. As the reports show, in 2007 terms such as "universal access" and "universal service" still had widespread currency, and teledensity was still a useful indicator for assessing connectedness. Some countries needed to be convinced that ICT policy was necessary, and that, at the very least, ICTs should be made an integral part of development strategies.

In 2007, 20.4% of the world's population was online[3] – a percentage that rises to 45.7% in 2016, with a world population growth of nearly a billion people. Countries are dramatically affected by these changes: in 2007, there is 0.37% internet penetration in Ethiopia, a figure which

1 GISWatch was initially a collaboration between APC and the Third World Institute (ITeM). The report was then published by APC in partnership with the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos). APC finally became the sole publisher of the report, or published it in partnership with specific project donors.

2 https://giswatch.org/about

3 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/it.net.user.zs

effectively skyrockets to 15.3% over 10 years. In middle-income countries like Argentina, a 25.9% internet penetration nearly trebles in reaching 70.9% in 2016. In highly developed countries such as Japan, a 74.3% penetration in 2007 grows to 93.1% by 2016. While some countries like the Republic of Congo still face fundamental problems such as building roads and stable electricity grids, by 2017 many internet rights activists are turning to face new advocacy terrain, one shaped by algorithms, biotechnology and artificial intelligence.

A second shift is the popularisation of social media platforms such as Facebook,[4] Twitter[5] and YouTube,[6] which over time civil society comes to see both as useful advocacy tools and areas that need advocacy intervention, for example, to address violence against women (VAW) online. In April 2007, Facebook had 20 million active users – a figure which exploded to two billion monthly users in 2017.[7] Yet it is almost difficult to believe that while blogs[8] had been used in advocacy for some time already, and social media played such a prominent part in the Arab Spring, in 2007 the words "social media" or "social networks" are not used in the GISWatch edition on the theme of participation at all.

Thirdly, the spectre of global surveillance – and what activists call corporate surveillance, the result of an insatiable thirst for "big" market data – has had multiple impacts on the internet as we knew it. The revelations by Snowden of global surveillance programmes involving the key industrialised nations[9] came in June 2013, exposing the use of the internet and other technologies to surveil citizens, often illegally and in collaboration with telecommunications companies. The ability to conduct mass surveillance programmes tracks the penetration of mobile telephony and the rise of social media as an everyday tool – and casts a chilling shadow over the belief in the internet as a free space for open and democratic exchange.

All three of these shifts have influenced the trends observed in the reports analysed for this review – and in this respect GISWatch stands as a grassroots record of these changes and their impact on the information society at the local level.

This is not an analysis of the content of specific "action steps". As discussed in the methodology section below, the sheer volume and diversity of the specific changes called for makes direct comparison difficult, and requires a different kind of study. Rather, this review tries to answer the question: What are the broad levers for change? In doing this it offers a reflection on the kinds of mobilisation tools, mechanisms and methodologies preferred by civil society in specific contexts to bring about or catalyse change. Content is used to illustrate the grouping of these tools and mechanisms.

While not all of these are actions that civil society can take – some reports say what governments or business should do – most of them are. The action steps discussed here can, in this regard, be taken as an indicator of civil society capabilities, suggesting civil society's impression of its own strengths and abilities.

This report is also an index – it serves as a way to access the 510 country reports published over the past decade in a more fruitful way. While each GISWatch has an umbrella theme – such as "Access to infrastructure" or "Women's rights, gender and ICTs" – country report authors were encouraged to write on topics that they felt were important within that theme. For example, the umbrella topic "Economic, social and cultural rights and the internet" might produce reports highlighting quite different topics such as "education", "health", "language", "voice", "workers' rights" and even "memory". As a result, while many authors address cross-cutting themes in different years, there is no way for a researcher, journalist, strategist, activist, donor or student to know this without combing each report. It is hoped that this publication is a practical and useful entry point to the richness of the GISWatch archive.

The diversity of the country contexts written about over the 10 years is remarkable – countries as different as the Republic of Congo, Iceland, Cook Islands, Brazil, Japan and Kyrgyzstan have been "reported on". Over the years, consistent contributions have come from authors writing in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, India, Kenya, Peru, and, except for 2007, the Republic of Korea – an invaluable record of country-level internet rights advocacy over the period. Among

4 Launched in February 2004.
5 Created in March 2006.
6 Created in February 2005.
7 Titcomb, J. (2017, 27 June). Facebook now has 2 billion users, Mark Zuckerberg announces. The Telegraph. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/06/27/facebook-now-has-2-billion-users-mark-zuckerberg-announces
8 For example, in 2009, Bytes for All (Pakistan) wrote: "More than any formal platform or organisation, the blogosphere [had] probably amounted to the strongest form of global activism." Blogs provide a relatively stable reference source for information for authors over the period.
9 Many were coordinated by the National Security Agency (NSA) in the United States and the so-called "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the US.

the authors are civil society organisations, "hacktivists" and software developers, journalists, researchers and academics – all of these can be considered internet rights activists. For some contributors it was the first opportunity they had had to develop an overview of the ICT environment in their country and to articulate ways in which civil society could engage this environment.

Most regions have been represented in one way or another: North and Central America, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Balkan states, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Russia and China, Southeast Asia, Oceania, the Middle East and North Africa, Southern and Eastern Africa, and French-speaking Africa. While most of the countries are so-called "developing countries" – the aim of GISWatch is to be a voice of the global South – country reports have also been written about Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, Iceland, Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, among other industrialised nations.

Although what gets "watched" or monitored has shifted over time, what has not changed is the original spirit of the publication: of it serving as a tool for global accountability on progress in creating an open, democratic and inclusive information society. In 2007, TIC.pe in Peru posed several questions for civil society actors, and asked: "How can we move from reflection to direct action?"

This review is a starting point for action – and we hope that activists can use it as a tool for building future strategies. It can be read in conjunction with a similar review on the issue of internet rights and democratisation conducted in 2011 by APC.[10] While it can shed light on gaps in advocacy approaches when addressing new advocacy frontiers, it also suggests that there are advocacy needs from the past that may require renewed attention.

10 See Global Information Society Watch 2011 – Update I and II. https://www.giswatch.org/2011-update-i-internet-rights-and-democratisation and https://www.giswatch.org/2011-update-ii-internet-rights-and-democratisation

2. KEY OBSERVATIONS

- The country reports show that internet rights activists have a broad interest in a diverse number of topics to do with the information society, and are not confined to specific areas of advocacy and intervention. They also show the many different areas where internet rights are applicable. Advocacy concerns range across sector, class, gender, sexual orientation, age and activity, among others.
- Policy development, awareness raising and capacity building are consistently seen by internet rights activists as key levers for change over the period analysed. These often have a symbiotic relationship: 55% of the 510 reports included in this analysis identified a need for some level of policy, legislative or regulatory change, while nearly half (48%) focused on awareness-raising actions, and 35% of the reports identified the need for capacity to be built in different contexts.
- The extent to which policy development predominates as an advocacy priority suggests the extent to which global internet policy is not in line with human rights standards.
- The need to build trust and confidence among internet users grows over the period analysed, as does the overall vulnerability of users, such as women and girls, LGBTIQ people, teenagers, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers. The period shows an increase in state surveillance, and the more effective use of the internet by reactionary groups for campaigning and other hate activities. All of these impact negatively on the vulnerability of users.
- Overall, internet rights activists seek inclusion in policy-making processes. Collaboration between stakeholders is also a prominent advocacy need. Not all contexts require collaboration, however, and it is highest in certain contexts, such as access to infrastructure, ICTs and environmental sustainability, and setting up national internet governance forums, where a shared responsibility between different stakeholders is easily identified.
- Access to information is consistently seen as important by activists. The right to information is crucial for transparency and accountability, to monitor and hold governments accountable, and for realising a range of both civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights. In line with this, a strong advocacy interest in both censorship and intellectual property rights as they apply to content is evident.
- Access itself is also a consistent advocacy focus, despite the rapid growth of internet access worldwide over the period reviewed. However, interest in the concepts of "universal access" and "universal service" appears to decline sharply over the period.
- Both e-government and education were frequent concerns and could be further explored by internet rights advocates for their potential as key advocacy focus areas.
- The period also shows a sharp decline in an interest in open source software, and little overall interest in open standards. At the same time, only 4% of the reports consider the need for programmers to develop technical tools, such as apps for security or privacy. The low interest in open source software is a distinct break from civil society advocacy prior to 2007. The apparent disinterest in developing advocacy tools is most evident in the context of surveillance and sexual rights online, where anonymising, privacy-enhancing and other online safety tools would be beneficial for activists and communities.
- While issues impacting on women's rights and indigenous communities receive some measure of cross-cutting attention – for example, 11% of the actions proposed in the country reports had implications for gender and women's rights – overall, internet rights activists do not give as much attention to the rights of marginalised groups such as LGBTIQ people and people with disabilities. In particular, attention on the latter is low.

- Despite an early engagement with environmental activism by non-profit internet service providers (ISPs), there are suggestions of a delinking between internet rights and environmental concerns overall. Environment issues are only focused on intermittently, despite their cross-cutting implications in areas such as migration, entrepreneurship, workers' rights, gender and health.

- Both workers' rights and rights in the workplace receive some attention over the period. It is likely that internet rights activists will need to define this terrain more clearly as new technologies impact on workers' roles and rights, new kinds of businesses emerge, and the idea of the "workplace" evolves.

- Overall, the "information society" in this context is focused on the internet, and delinked from other forms of information dissemination such as print or broadcast. However, blogs, citizen media and alternative online news outlets are seen as key tools for democracy and securing transparency and accountability. Journalist capacity needed to be built for these to be effective.

3. NOTES ON THE METHODOLOGY

3.1. Focus of analysis

This analysis is a review of the country reports published in GISWatch from 2007 to 2017. It does not refer to thematic reports (including edition introductions), regional reports, institutional reviews and mapping exercises, among other reports or content items that were also published in GISWatch over the period.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used. While the topics and action steps are quantified according to categories, a narrative overview of the topic focus of the country reports and the action steps proposed by authors is also provided.

3.2. Analysis of topics

For the topic analysis I allowed the content to determine the categories in an intuitive way – I did not approach each new edition with structured expectations. In part this meant responding afresh to the nuances of each topic as much as possible, and in part it was to create a useful topic index.

In the case of the topic analysis, there are several areas of easily comparable topic categorisations, such as "e-government" or "privacy" or "education", and many that are unique to reports, such as "terrorism" or "household workers" or "hacktivists".

While responding to my reading of the key topics or focus areas of each report, I was also guided by the author's summary of a report's key concerns, whether included in the headline or stated in the introduction. In all instances, the author's own perceptions of the key issues dealt with in the report are captured.

The topic analysis does not capture the standard template requirement of a "political, policy and legislative context" for each report. Authors were required to write about this each year, and they dealt with this in different ways, some briefly, some comprehensively. It can be assumed that each GISWatch report contains some account of the policy and legislative context in that country relating to that specific topic. However, a topic was categorised as focusing on "policy, legislation and regulation" only if the author offered further analysis of the legislative or policy context outside of the standard GISWatch requirement, as a number over the years have done.

In cases where the author has not focused on any particular topic, but "dipped into" several issues and concerns relevant to that year's theme to provide an overview of the country situation, the report is categorised as "general".

In the main, authors have selected anywhere from one to three key focus areas for their country reports.

3.2.1. Challenges in categorising a "story approach" to country reports

Although the country reports published each year can be grouped under a particular umbrella theme, within that annual theme authors were encouraged to focus on the issue that they most wanted to write about. Over time the project started to refer to this as the "story" focus of GISWatch reports, not so much in an effort to dispense with technical, legal or other research and analytical details common in reports of this nature, but to emphasise and encourage authors to write a story: to tell readers something rich in detail and engagement. We wanted country reports that were close to the ground. The story approach was also a way to encourage the authors to focus on a single issue rather than dispersed issues with little narrative connection.

Even though authors were provided with a template (which included a suggested word count and some kick-off thoughts for each section in the template), except for the action steps and the requirement to provide some sort of policy and legislative context to their discussion, they were not restricted to the template. So although most authors followed the basics of the template, many adjusted the template to suit the needs of their specific topic.

While the stories for each report could be quite different, there was also a lot of variety in the temperament of the reports – the approach in style, perspective, knowledge and orientation. The authors for GISWatch are varied, and civil society here is a broad church: grassroots activists, researchers, journalists, writers, academics,

film-makers, as well as NGOs and community organisations, are published side-by-side. Although reports had to be written in English, many authors were not English first-language speakers.

Taken together, this means that the country reports are difficult to compare easily. Even if there is some conformity between two reports, the temperament, interest and experience of authors shine through. For example, one author might state in detail the legislative changes that need to take place, while another might make a sweeping statement that "policy change needs to happen". While one might be able to comment on the detailed technical or legal requirements impacting on an intermediary, another might be more able to talk more freely about the communication needs of his or her constituency.

The analysis of the country reports should be read with this limitation in mind.

3.3. Analysis of action steps

The reports were also used to develop the categories for the analysis of the action steps (see Table 1) and these categories can already be considered a finding of this review. However, here there was an attempt to restrict the number of action steps categories – creating fewer categories and broader groupings – in order to try to create a meaningful analysis (as opposed to a nuanced and meaningful index). At times there was some measure of reductiveness, but this was the sacrifice necessary for coherency and comparability.

The action steps record what the author feels needs to be done in a particular context in order to improve the situation. They mostly reflect a role for civil society action – such as building capacity among women, or raising awareness about X issue, or lobbying for Y policy change – but not always. For example, the author may identify a need for policy to be implemented properly by government, in which case, the unstated civil society role here would be to encourage government to implement policy better.

Similar to the topics, the action steps are varied. They shift in perspective from one report to the other, and also in the granularity of the advocacy steps necessary: some are broad statements of need, others simply encourage readers to join a specific email list. Occasionally authors have not offered very clear action steps at all, or have offered advice on building an effective communications campaign, for example. In these cases, no categorisation was made.[11]

In some cases, a topic-specific advocacy step or need arose, which was not found in other reports across the years. For example, the need for credible, professional and objective journalism was felt in three or so reports when discussing surveillance. Given the relatively low number of reports recommending this, and that these advocacy steps are confined to a single topic, I have mentioned these when they occurred, but not categorised them overall.

The advocacy categories are necessarily broad. For example, they are less about a specific legislative, regulatory or policy change that needs to occur – which would forfeit any means of comparability between the topics and the years – but about the fact that legislative change needs to occur in a specific context. They capture the general levers necessary for bringing about that change.

3.4. Keyword search

Several key terms and phrases were used to conduct a "keyword search" of the country reports over the period. These included terms such as "universal access", "social media", "open source" and "multistakeholder". The purpose was to see if any trends or noticeable changes in usage of these terms could be seen over time. The results of this are included in the Appendix and referred to intermittently in the course of this analysis (see, in particular, the section dealing with cross-cutting observations on topics).

3.5. Limitations

There are several limitations to this analysis which speak to further work that could be done to deepen an understanding of historical trends in internet rights advocacy over the past decade.

For reasons of limitation of time, this report offers neither a regional nor a stakeholder analysis, both of which would shed more detailed light on trends over time (including the interesting issue of shifting perceptions of stakeholders among activists).

It may also have been useful to offer a detailed breakdown of the policy and legislative changes called for over the years, and even to track if they had been achieved or not. Clearly this is another project, which would be most fruitfully conducted with the participation of the authors themselves in the review.

11 In the case of GISWatch 2007, no action steps are proposed. However, the report conclusions were read for their advocacy recommendations.

Table 1: Description of action step categories

Category	Description
Access	Refers to the need for internet infrastructure to be rolled out, as well as related infrastructure, such as electricity grids. Also refers to the need for last-mile technology to be installed, and for excluded communities to benefit from increased access (e.g. prisons need access to the internet).
Access to information	Refers to the need for more information on a specific topic or generally to be readily and easily available for the public, individuals or communities. Typically this is information that will inform or empower, or create the necessary conditions for transparency or accountability. Can refer to state-held information to be made available in line with the right to information, businesses making information available in line with the principles of good governance, the sharing of data to help with monitoring the implementation of legislation, or to groups being able to access information on health, curricula for distance learning, or the realisation of other rights. Does not refer to the creation of content. Note: Access to information in the context of GISWatch 2009, which took the theme of access to information, refers to information being available on a specific topic rather than the general need for information to be accessible in progressive societies.
Building confidence and trust	Refers to a range of needs, from the need to create "a society based not on distrust and fear but on trust and cooperation"[12] where state and private sector actors are transparent and accountable, to helping internet users access the internet in a safe way, building their trust and confidence in an online experience free from abuse or harassment, including from the state. It also refers to the need to create dedicated spaces of support for communities or groups, such as women or the LGBTIQ community.
Capacity building	Refers to the need for any form of capacity building in groups, communities or institutions, including government departments. Capacity building usually takes the form of skills development, including e-literacy and other skills necessary to navigate the internet and use digital tools. E-literacy in schools is also captured under capacity building.
Content development	As opposed to accessing information, content development refers to the need to create new content for various purposes, mostly for awareness raising and capacity development (for example, content for a new school curriculum on online safety, reproductive rights, or sexuality). Content development includes the need for locally relevant content, and content developed in appropriate languages.
Collaboration	This refers to the need for different actors – for example, the state, private sector and civil society – to work together through multistakeholder or similar partnerships, processes and events. Also refers to collaboration with international institutions and groups, such as UN agencies, other international agencies or institutions such as donors.
Coordination	Different to collaboration between stakeholders from different sectors, this refers to the need for increased coordination between government departments, or government-run entities to address a problem. Sometimes it refers to the need to set up an agency or authority of some kind to oversee that coordination.
Fostering dialogue	Refers to the need to participate in, to encourage, or to help to create the conditions necessary for public debate and dialogue on a particular issue.
Funding	Refers to the need for funding to be made available from stakeholders such as the state or donors for various actions and outcomes, such as the roll-out of internet infrastructure, capacity building, the organisation of forums or meetings, or public awareness campaigns, among others. Also refers to crowdfunding, and in at least one instance to the need for donors to stop funding sectors where the mismanagement of resources is taking place.[13]
Gender, women	Used to categorise any action step that refers to gender or women's rights, such as the capacity building of indigenous women, women entrepreneurs, or the safety of women from violence and harassment online. At times such a reference is only made in passing, but is nevertheless categorised as referencing gender or women's rights.

12 As Japan Computer Access for Empowerment put it in their country report on Japan for GISWatch 2014.
13 See the Uganda country report in GISWatch 2012.

Inclusion and participation	Refers to the inclusion of otherwise excluded stakeholders, communities or groups in a process or event, among others. For example, this could be the need for civil society actors to participate in policy development processes, or in the public monitoring of state functions such as surveillance, or for indigenous communities or the youth to take active part in national Internet Governance Forums.
Monitoring	Refers to the need to create processes or mechanisms for the ongoing monitoring of state or private sector actions, typically to improve accountability and transparency. Also refers to setting up tools or methodologies to monitor violations of rights, a good example being the use of the Ushahidi tool for monitoring election violence, harms against women, or other violations across the globe.
Network and alliance building	Unlike collaboration, which relates to actors who may not share the same point of view working together, network and alliance building refers to like-minded actors standing together in order to strengthen their actions, whether a concerted campaign to bring about change, or through sharing resources and capacity, or other forms of support. Networks and alliances are built locally as well as globally, and cut across sectors to find common cause.
Policy development	Refers to the need for policies, laws or regulations relevant to the topic under discussion to be developed, reviewed or challenged. Typically refers to state policies or laws, but can refer to policies of corporate governance, or, for example, the policies of intermediaries to manage data retention.
Policy implementation	Refers to the need for already existing policies, laws or regulations to be implemented better. While mostly referring to the role of the state, including in setting up institutions so that policies can be implemented better, this can refer to other actors including the private sector implementation of its own policies, the role of courts in prosecution, or, for example, a press council enforcing a press code when it is contravened.
Research	Refers to the need for different forms of research to inform actions and policies among others. Can refer to the need for pilot projects or, for example, supporting and documenting a particular experience in an innovation hub in order to establish a model for scaling up.
Developing services	Refers to the need to develop various services for citizens, groups and communities. Often refers to the need for e-government services to be created, but can refer to creating support services, for example for women who have been harmed, or for the LGBTIQ community.
Developing tools	Refers to the need to develop technical tools such as apps to serve a particular function and objective, such as online security. Can refer to the tailored use of tools such as Ushahidi to map, track or monitor violations.
Raising voices	Refers broadly to the felt need for a community or group or stakeholder such as civil society to amplify their concerns in the public domain, or in various forums, among other venues or spaces.

Finally, I have been editor of GISWatch since 2008, and edited the country reports in 2007. While this has given me insight into the production and content development processes over the years, allowed me to draw on the country report summaries I wrote each year for GISWatch, and assisted in the intuitive grouping and categorisation of the reports, embedded research has obvious limitations. The reading of the country reports is inevitably one possible reading, and others might find different issues important and necessary to highlight. I nevertheless hope that I have done justice to the work discussed.

4. GISWATCH THEMES (2007-2017)

The first edition of GISWatch was published in 2007. Since then, an edition has been published each year on a different theme. Table 2 lists the themes for each year, as well as the number of country reports that appeared in that edition. Not included here are thematic reports, reports on institutions or indicators, visual mapping exercises, or other content that was included in different editions alongside the country reports.

Table 2: GISWatch annual themes and number of country reports

Year	Report title	No. of country reports
2007	Participation	22
2008	Access to infrastructure	38
2009	Access to information and knowledge: Advancing human rights and democracy	48
2010	ICTs and environmental sustainability	53
2011	Internet rights and democratisation: Freedom of expression and association online	55
2012	The internet and corruption: Transparency and accountability online	48 *
2013	Women's rights, gender and ICTs	47
2014	Communications surveillance in the digital age	56 **
2015	Sexual rights and the internet	57
2016	Economic, social and cultural rights and the internet	45
2017	National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs)	41 ***
		510

* The report on the Western Balkans included with the country reports is a regional report and not counted here.

** The report on "Burundi" is a regional report on East Africa, and therefore is excluded from the country report count.

*** The single report on Mozambique and Malawi is counted as two country reports.

5. FINDINGS

The sections below summarise the key topics focused on in the country reports for each year, as well as the action steps proposed according to the monitoring categories in Table 1.

5.1. Participation (2007)

5.1.1. Summary of topics

The countries written about in the 22 reports published in 2007 were diverse – geographically, demographically and in terms of their infrastructural base, all key factors impacting on internet access. For example, Brazil's gargantuan 8.5 million square km dwarfed Bosnia and Herzegovina's 51,000 square km, as did Pakistan's population then of 160 million compared to South Africa's 47 million. While countries like India boasted a rapidly developing ICT infrastructure, post-war countries such as the DRC or Bosnia and Herzegovina were beginning from a very low infrastructural base. OneWorld South East Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina) put it plainly, this "[affected] ordinary life." Four regions were represented: Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, with one report from a Western European country (Spain). Only six had English as an official language – five of the reports were translated from Spanish, and one from Portuguese.

As was the case with all GISWatch reports, authors were encouraged to develop their country reports in line with their own advocacy work. While they were given guidelines, their approaches were often different. Bytes for All, Bangladesh, for example, created a "living and collaborative document", even publishing it as a wiki. IT for Change in India interviewed key civil society stakeholders in order to offer a civil society "voice". Pangea (Spain) elected to interrogate the WSIS stocktaking database to ask: Does it say anything useful? The report by Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA) in the Philippines reflected the perspective of "advocates-in-action".

Despite the differences, there were some striking similarities between the reports published in 2007.

A number the countries lacked a clear ICT vision for their future. This made it difficult to forge a cogent approach to infrastructure development (such as building a broadband backbone in a country) or developing a coherent regulatory framework to govern markets effectively. The absence of a clear vision also impacted on ICT issues that were often perceived as the "soft" issues – such as language, gender, local content, citizens' rights, and support for differently abled people. Although some of these issues were, as Pangea suggested, "difficult to measure," they nevertheless should form an integral part of any long-term ICT strategy in a country right from the start. For Rede de Informações para o Terceiro Sector (RITS) in Brazil, this did not happen by accident, but began with accepting that "public policy expenditures in leveraging ICTs for human development [were] not costs, but essential investments."

Some authors noted a lack of institutional capacity in their countries (whether in civil society, the government or even the private sector). While Nodo TAU (Argentina) found that civil society organisations had far greater awareness and know-how and a more sophisticated perspective on ICTs than the government, they lacked the coordination necessary to have a meaningful impact on policy development. For Bytes for All, Pakistan, the country showed a "serious lack of capacity" in a range of fields that needed to be attended to in order to impact on inequalities in access to ICTs. Alternatives found that a (mis)management of ICANN requirements in the DRC showed a clear lack of capacity in the government and the national operator to cope effectively with important national ICT resources. For some countries, such as South Africa, civil society participation in the WSIS was erratic, attributed to a lack of awareness among social advocates of the importance of ICTs, and the ICT policy environment, to their work. The Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) found that although the political will existed in Uganda, there was a lack of awareness of the advantages of ICTs, coupled with a low level of skills.

In the absence of a clear ICT vision, the reports suggested that the development of a

legislative and policy environment could be steadied by regional agreements. While the WSIS acted as a catalyst for a fresh interest in ICT policy development at the national level (and spurred new interest from civil society), other regional agreements, such as the Regional Action Plan for an Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2007), also had a positive impact on policy development. While WOUGNET offers an analysis of the country's WSIS commitments, Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria suggest that EU accession requirements have been significantly more important than any commitments made at the WSIS.

A policy vacuum meant fragmented implementation. In Colombia there was little cooperation between the ICT programmes in government departments, despite attempts by the government to synergise its implementation efforts. The Kenyan government had lacked political will and leadership in the past, a status quo reflected in the absence of a national ICT policy and in the ineffective coordination between government departments. In India, only parts of the country were benefiting from the perhaps unprecedented growth in the country's ICT sector. The country had no independent agency to address all areas of ICT policy, and according to IT for Change, the poor distribution of ICT resources across different social and linguistic groups, geographic regions and classes had not improved. The failure to develop policy which responded to these concerns had resulted in a situation where some enjoyed "first-world" ICT services, while most "subsist[ed]" with little or no ICT access to speak of. Access for women and differently abled people remained a problem.

When a policy framework was developed, it often lacked a developmental perspective. Colombia, for instance, lacked a telecommunications law that ensured access to the information society for all citizens. Ecuador's White Paper on the Information Society held great hope for civil society activists in that country. It had been, according to APC's LAC Policy Monitor, developed in an inclusive, democratic and transparent way, reflecting the perspectives of the different sectors in that country. Despite this, a "common strategic development perspective" was still lacking, as were mechanisms to ensure that engagement happened under "equal conditions". As RITS put it, the absence of a people-orientated policy framework in Brazil ran the risk of "condemn[ing]" the vast majority of people to "eternal disconnection".

For LaNeta, ICT policies in Mexico offered a leg up for business – and even helped to strengthen monopolies – at the expense of the needs of the country's citizens. Instead of a people-centred approach, the state "auctioned off the nation's wealth without taking communities into account." In Brazil, ICTs directly related to national security were dependent on commercial satellite connections operated by multinationals. The privatisation process had not taken into account global shifts in the ICT landscape, and may have increased monopolistic practices in the country. Notably in contrast to this scepticism of liberalisation found in Latin America, authors in Africa embraced a competition model for universal access. As Alternatives (DRC) showed, even war-ravaged countries were potential markets for multinational corporations.

The reports showed that a change in government, while providing an advocacy opportunity for some, could often contribute to a fragmented policy space. ZaMirNET (Croatia) put it bluntly: "National strategies are not well coordinated and strategic documents often get tossed in the garbage bin with a change of government." Colnodo (Colombia) suggested that a fragmented vision for ICTs, which led to a "disconnect" between government departments, made civil society engagement with the state difficult. Transparency was lacking in a post-conflict country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although it had participated in the WSIS, the outcomes remained "invisible" to the general population.

Developing and sustaining a clear people-focused vision was not easy. While South Africa had a history of vibrant civil society engagement in politics and social development, this engagement had faded. In 2007, the closest it came to an overall national ICT policy framework was then a 10-year-old document, the 1996 White Paper on Telecommunications Policy.

Pangea noted that a necessary condition for citizens to feel a part of the "construction" of the information society was their "participation as subjects" and not "merely as objects of development measures." While KICTANet (Kenya) showed that an active and constructive relationship between government, civil society and the private sector was possible, in many instances the relationship was imbalanced. Civil society and private sector participation was absent in Pakistan's participation in the WSIS. Instead, the country was described as a "graveyard of many failed and unsuccessful projects" which the government "[seemed] committed to implementing ... on its own." While "important spaces" had been

opened up in Peru, these had yet to become inclusive, and continued to relegate citizens to the role of "spectators and not protagonists." Nigeria was described as "deprived ... of much-needed robust consultation and discussions." Only recently had civil society begun to make its presence felt.

In both Romania and India, the lack of civil society participation meant that a technocratic or industry-driven policy perspective prevailed. This came at a price. StrawberryNet (Romania) found that issues such as gender rights and free/libre and open source software (FLOSS) were absent from public discourse on ICTs. And as ZaMirNET observed: "Most citizens [were] reduced to mere consumers of telecommunication services."

Alternative civil society spaces were being formed out of necessity. In Bangladesh, "CSOs [were] networking and re-grouping among themselves to project a single voice to the decision-makers." In Brazil it was rare for civil society to be invited to participate in policy processes. However, its National Digital Inclusion Workshop, held annually since 2002, was a forum where "human-centred" ICT policy could be articulated.

Most reports offered a summary of access statistics and indicators in their country, and an indication of the policy and strategy context for access, before elaborating on a specific area of concern or topic. While the majority of reports offered a scan of stakeholders and institutions involved in access (6), and some listed access initiatives (3), a number chose to focus on policy, legislative and regulatory concerns impacting on access (5).

The reports showed that areas of concern for civil society also included FLOSS and open standards (4), e-government (3), community radio (3) and education (2). The role of the ICT economy and industry (2) also received some attention. Both e-government and education proved to be perennial concerns. Community radio, which receives some attention here as an access technology, all but disappears from the advocacy agenda in subsequent years.

Table 3: Summary of topics – Participation

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
Stakeholder, institution analysis (access)	6	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Philippines, Romania, South Africa	27
Policy, legislation, regulation (access)	5	Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, Pakistan, Philippines	23
FLOSS	4	Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Pakistan	18
E-government	3	Argentina, Bulgaria, Mexico	14
Community radio	3	Bangladesh, India, Pakistan	14
Scan of access initiatives	3	Brazil, Nigeria, Romania	14
Education	2	Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina	9
IT economy, industry	2	Croatia, India	9
Participation in WSIS	2	DRC, South Africa	9
Regional-international context, participation (in processes and institutions)	2	Peru, Philippines	9
Localisation, open content, history of access to infrastructure, intellectual property, lack of access (funding, institutional roles, capacity), gender, telecentres, open standards, role of multistakeholder network in policy development, right to access information, access to information, rights-based approach to policy, indicators (for access), WSIS stocktaking database, citizen empowerment, WSIS targets, policy implementation and impact (for access)		Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa, Spain, Uganda	

5.1.2. Overview of action steps

"Participation" was understood broadly in the report to include the participation of stakeholders in the information society generally. On the one hand, this involved access to ICTs and the skills and capacity needed to use these tools, and on the other, the participation of stakeholders in governance processes, including policy processes.

The majority of reports (15) called for policy development interventions to achieve equitable access – as FMA put it, the promotion of "public interest discourse" in ICT policy development. These included broadband targets that address gender imbalances (Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the eSEE Agenda+);[14] the drafting of a communications law in Colombia that allowed "access to the information society for all citizens"; the inclusion of ICTs in developmental strategies in the DRC; policies on open source software and open content (in Bulgaria) that included supporting the use of FLOSS in public administrations and "stimulating" the use of open standards; the legalisation of VoIP and de-licensing of spectrum among other considerations in India; and legislation on the protection of personal data in Peru. In Brazil, conflicting legislation that impeded public investment in the sector needed to be attended to – one example given was how the country's universal access fund, FUST, was "hamstrung by the General Telecommunications Law and other regulations."

A number of authors felt that inclusive and participative policy making needed to be formalised. In Ecuador, civil society needed to push for the "formalisation of inclusive and participatory [policy-making] mechanisms." In Spain it was necessary to "firmly develop citizen participation through specific legislation":

> We need to deepen the democratic tracks necessary for the information society to carve out a people-centred vision; but also to move towards a more just and equal globalisation that considers not only economic, technological or administrative factors, but also social, cultural, and legal dimensions, or any others that shape the context of people's lives.

While civil society organisations needed to be the beneficiaries of capacity building (9) interventions in the DRC, in Pakistan the authors called for an "immediate review" of the country's IT Policy and IT Action Plan, writing that when it came to ICT for development (ICT4D), "There [was] a serious lack of capacity in a whole range of different fields." In South Africa, capacity was "less than optimal". In contrast to countries such as the Philippines, there was a lack of "concrete impact" by civil society on the policy process, including influence at forums such as the WSIS. In Brazil there was a need to establish a "national empowerment strategy": "It is essential that there be a dissemination of skills to make better use of ... access," wrote the authors. Capacity was needed in areas such as training teachers for e-schools initiatives in Bulgaria.

Overall, authors favoured a collaborative, multistakeholder approach (9) to achieve change. In the DRC it was important to "[e]ncourage multi-stakeholder platforms" to "improve communication and knowledge-sharing among sectors, and to increase the level of trust between these sectors"; in Croatia there was a need to "search for allies in the business sector and opposition parliamentary parties." Civil society also needed networks and alliances (4), referred to as "like-minded policy actors" in the Philippines. In Argentina, "civil society organisations that came together around clear goals and with specific strategies have managed to have impact."

Authors also identified a need for awareness raising (7). For example, there was a need to raise awareness of ICT policy among citizens and civil society (Croatia), including those that "work in sectors other than ICTs" (Kenya). While participation meant increasing access (9), some authors also emphasised the attention needed to address gender disparities in participation and development (4). In Ethiopia, an increase in "women operators" of telecentres, attributed to the liberalisation of public call services, was expected to result in "improved women's access to ICTs more generally"; in Romania, "gender and open source issues [were] totally invisible in official public discourse." The link between participation, access to information (2) and local content (3) was also made. In Colombia, the "production of local content that reflect[ed] the country's cultural diversity should be strengthened"; in Croatia, participation needed to be "supported by training and educative content that [was] adjusted to the level of knowledge of 'non-techie' citizens."

14 A regional strategy in South Eastern Europe, launched in 2001, focusing on ICT development, including content, e-government and affordable broadband. It also aims to "stimulate an active public-private sector dialogue." www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/library/democratic_governance/best-practice-compendium-in-implementing-the-esee-agenda--2011.html

Table 4: Summary of action steps – Participation

Action step	No.	Country	%
Policy development	15	Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, DRC, Ecuador, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Spain	68
Capacity building	9	Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, DRC, Croatia, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Spain	45
Access	9	Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda	41
Collaboration	9	Brazil, Bulgaria, DRC, Ecuador, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, Uganda	41
Awareness raising	7	DRC, Croatia, Ecuador, Kenya, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania	41
Policy implementation	4	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Croatia, Uganda	32
Network and alliance building	4	Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Philippines	18
Gender, women	4	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Pakistan, Romania	18
Content development	3	Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia	18
Funding	3	Brazil, Bulgaria, Pakistan	14
Coordination	3	Colombia, Croatia, Nigeria	14
Access to information	2	Nigeria, Romania	14
Monitoring	2	Ecuador, Pakistan	9
Research	2	Bulgaria, Croatia	9
Services	1	Colombia	9
Building confidence and trust	1	DRC	5
Developing tools	1	Bulgaria	5
Fostering dialogue	1	Peru	5
Inclusion and participation	0		0
Raising voices	0		0

5.2. Access to infrastructure (2008)

5.2.1. Summary of topics

The 38 country reports published in the 2008 GISWatch were loosely structured around the "Real Access/Real Impact" framework[15] – in part accounting for some of the topic categories, such as "political will" or "trust in technology" (see Table 5). The framework looks holistically at the drivers or factors that impact on access to ICTs. These factors go beyond physical access to technology, or the legal and regulatory framework that shapes roll-out and take-up, to affordability, human capacities, and local content, as well as less tangible and harder-to-measure issues such as political will, the integration of technology into daily routines, and trust in technology. The country reports did not apply the framework, but simply used some of the factors as starting points for discussion on access to infrastructure.

Like the previous year, 2008 showcased country contexts at times radically different in their characteristics – and several "divides" were evident. For example, while a report by comunica-ch (Switzerland) referred to concern over the lack of access to the internet by adults over 50 (so-called "silver surfers"), which the Swiss Council of Seniors described as a "ticking time bomb", in Paraguay (Radio Viva) "a family from the indigenous Totobiegosode forest tribe... had [in 2004] come out of the wilderness to establish contact with the modern world for the first time." While discussions on cloud computing, piping fibre directly to homes, or using the electricity grid for access were current, these were a long way from countries like the Republic of Congo, where the installation of ATMs was being welcomed, and Ethiopia, where internet users totalled 164,000.[16]

For many, mobile phones (4) were becoming the "miracle" access technology, and the 2008 reports captured something of a hesitant optimism towards mobile telephony in regions such as Africa. SANGONeT (South Africa) noted that the challenge around mobile telephony in the region lay in how to convert the ubiquity of the technology into direct development benefits. A similar challenge was identified by the Civil Initiative on Internet Policy (Kyrgyzstan), while the Caribbean Programme in Telecommunications Policy and Management at the University of the West Indies (Jamaica) observed that mobile phones were starting to be seen more as tools for economic survival, rather than simply being used for "useless chatter". Meanwhile, Southeast Asian countries showed a very different pace of take-up of mobile phones – for example, at the time, Thailand's five million users accessing the internet through their mobile phones accounted for 40% of the country's internet user base.[17] (By 2018, the number of internet users accessing the internet on their mobile phones had grown to more than 27 million).[18]

Comparable to this divide was the scale of capacity-building initiatives in some Asian countries. While many people in least developed countries lacked basic skills to participate and compete effectively in the information society, a country like the Republic of Korea had trained some 27 million people in classrooms set up in social work institutions, educational facilities, agricultural agencies, at home and online. According to the Korean Progressive Network Jinbonet, this included basic computer literacy courses, as well as training in daily life skills, and online banking and shopping.

Reports noted the rural/urban divide that existed in countries, with three reports dedicating some space to a discussion of the digital divide. Some asked whether the divide was growing rather than narrowing, despite the proliferation of grassroots technologies like cellphones. Communautique noted in the edition's North American regional report that even there a digital divide was becoming apparent, and "[in Canada] one adult out of two [did] not have the necessary skills to access online information." At the very least, the rapid pace of technological change was an ambivalent force when it came to narrowing the access gap. The Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN) in Peru wrote:

> [D]eveloping countries [are pushed] towards the adoption of new technologies in urban areas even when there is no service readily available for "older technologies" in underserved areas. This presents a risk as well as an opportunity: the risk of widening the gap between those who do and those who do not have access to these services, and the opportunity for the excluded populations to "leapfrog" stages of development.

15 The framework was developed by bridges.org and published in 2005. See: https://pasdbp.files.wordpress.com/2008/04/bridgesorg_real_access_real_impact1.pdf

16 By 2018 this figure would be over 15.7 million. See: https://www.indexmundi.com/ethiopia/internet_users.html

17 See the Southeast Asia regional report by Madanmohan Rao.

18 https://www.statista.com/statistics/558884/number-of-mobile-internet-user-in-thailand

Most authors felt that governments by 2008 had appeared to have recognised the importance of ICTs for socioeconomic development. As the Fantsuam Foundation (Nigeria) noted:

> The level of awareness within the Nigerian government of the role ICTs can play in national development has gone past the stage of debating ICTs versus other development challenges, such as combating disease and poverty or ensuring food security and potable water. There is now an appreciation that connectivity is essential for development.

However, this appreciation did not necessarily translate into action on the ground. Reports pointed to a "policy divide" that existed between regions, hampering the efficient roll-out of access infrastructure and technology. The 2007 reports had already suggested the impact that regional agreements had on national-level policy and development. The European Union here showed how regional consensus at a regulatory and policy level had the power and authority to rapidly scale up ICT take-up – see, for instance, the reports from Pangea (Spain) or ZaMirNET (Croatia). However, similar consensuses had not matured in a number of other regions.

A number of reports noted the less than efficient spending of universal access funds, and questioned whether the funds were effective in achieving universal access targets. By most accounts the coffers were swelling. Yet while India had "liberalised" its rules on spending, and focused on boosting innovations to improve rural connectivity, in Brazil conflicting legislation had effectively frozen access funds since 2002. Similarly, despite taxing operators for five years in Peru, only one pilot project was actually funded between 2001 and 2006. (In Argentina, meanwhile, operators owed the government some USD 750 million.) When good government policy did exist, reports also showed challenges in implementing the policy – a recurring obstacle faced by civil society. For example, in countries such as Uruguay, e-education programmes were rolled out without adequate teacher training, or curricula buy-in.

Some of the issues highlighted by the real access framework found carry-through in subsequent years, such as capacity building (7) and local content (4), or even political will (4), which is implied in the negative when dealing with topics like government surveillance or censorship, or suggested in others such as the lack of engagement in internet governance in countries such as Serbia when discussing National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs). As suggested, e-government (3) and education (3) are recurring concerns over the period analysed, while participation and inclusion (2), privacy and security (1), copyright (1), and culture (1) flagged here also find consistent albeit sometimes low-level mention throughout the years. The threat of terrorism is mentioned by one author (Kenya), and, with some foresight, the pending cloud of global surveillance hinted at that will come to predominate many advocacy initiatives in the future. Only a few country reports (4) offer a detailed policy and legislative analysis compared to the relative number of reports in later editions.

Notably, while e-accessibility is emphasised by one report in this edition (Switzerland), only a handful of reports over the 10 years consider the challenges faced by the differently abled in accessing technology – a clear lacuna in civil society internet rights advocacy work.

Table 5: Summary of topics – Access to infrastructure

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
General overview	10	Brazil, Croatia, DRC, Ethiopia, Paraguay, Romania, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Zambia	26
Capacity, capacity building	7	Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Korea, Pakistan	18
Affordability	5	Bulgaria, Cameroon, Ecuador, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan	13
Universal access, fund, tax	5	Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Senegal, Uganda	13
Local content	4	Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Spain	11
Policy, legislation and regulation	4	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico	11
Political will	4	DRC, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Senegal	11
Mobile phones, telephony	4	India, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa	11
E-government	3	Colombia, India, Kazakhstan	8
Digital divide	3	Colombia, Korea, Mexico	8
Education	3	India, Pakistan, Uruguay	8
Trust in technology	2	Egypt, Kenya	5
Participation and inclusion	2	Nigeria, Senegal	5
Use	2	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland	5
Community radio, terrorism, privacy, security, local languages, appropriate technology, culture, e-commerce, copyright, e-accessibility		Argentina, Costa Rica, India, Kenya, Mexico Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland, Korea	

5.2.2. Overview of action steps

As the summary of action steps in Table 6 suggests, well over half (23) of the authors saw the need for policy and legislative development in the context of improving access to infrastructure in their countries.

While in Argentina, universal access needed to be promoted for inclusion, in Brazil specific interventions were needed regarding digital content and spectrum allocation ("open spectrum citizen networks" were envisaged). The "very poorest Brazilian citizens" needed to benefit from the country's universal access fund (FUST), which needed to be used to "drastically improve the reach of public access policies." In Kyrgyzstan, concrete proposals as opposed to "political declarations" on universal access were needed; in Jamaica, it was necessary to funnel some of its universal access fund towards "youth entrepreneurship in ICTs, through micro, small and medium-size cyber enterprises and through

research and innovation"; in Nigeria, the country's Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) had USD 800 million of unspent funds that needed to be used, including in stimulating competition in rural telephony.

In Africa in particular, the discourse concerned increasing competition in the telecommunications sector as a way to stimulate access. For example, in South Africa, to support growth in the mobile sector, the regulator had recognised the need to promote competition. In Cameroon, the legal and regulatory framework needed to "create a competitive environment", and in Ethiopia, the government needed to "open up the ICT market and create an enabling environment."

Cost of access was also a key concern. In Uganda the regulator needed to "cut taxes on mobile phone services", in Mexico it was "essential to reduce mobile telephony and broadband costs", while in Zambia liberalisation would "[pass] the benefits of reduced costs of services on to the customers."

Countries such as Zambia and the Republic of Congo showed the extent to which developing ICT policy needed to go hand-in-hand with other development imperatives. In the Republic of Congo a policy framework was needed to achieve access to "gender-sensitive", affordable ICTs, but the government simultaneously needed to attend to essential services such as the lack of electricity and roads in the country, and the need for skills development. In Zambia it was critical to "scale up rural ICT infrastructural support programmes, including electrification, building accessible roads, and rolling out communication equipment, in order to enhance the presence of ICTs in rural communities."

While multistakeholder collaboration (11) was necessary to achieve access targets and needs (including the private sector, civil society, universities and research institutions working together to develop "appropriate and affordable content and applications" in Uganda), authors emphasised the need to build an inclusive (10) information society. In Uruguay, an e-schools programme was an opportunity for inclusion and participation by different interest groups, including "citizens and social organisations". In Spain, participation meant citizen autonomy: open citizen networks needed to be created ("networks created by citizens for self-service such as wireless community networks").

Capacity building (12) imperatives included developing the capacity of civil society organisations to engage on policy and regulatory issues in Bangladesh, and developing programmes to keep young skilled IT professionals from leaving the country in Bulgaria, a country whose ICT sector has "a chronic shortage of qualified employees". In Croatia it was necessary to develop the capacity of the public administration to improve the planning and implementation of policy.

Content development (10) imperatives in this context included encouraging "creators of cultural content" to use the opportunity of broadband to "[upload] local content", incentivising citizen journalism in Pakistan, and including the development of appropriate content on issues such as education, health, manufacturing and trade in universal access policy in Peru.

Authors felt the need to raise awareness (10) around issues such as the use of social networks for "participation, strengthen[ing] identity and build[ing] transparency" in Mexico or, in Croatia, awareness of "data storage and privacy issues" in collaboration with stakeholders from the private sector and state agencies. In Paraguay it was important to increase media coverage of ICTs and young people (68% of the population was under 30 years old).

Several authors (9) saw the bottleneck to better access lying in the need to improve the implementation of policy. While "trust"[19] does not feature as a prominent concern in the topic analysis of country reports in subsequent years, the analysis of action steps shows that "building trust and confidence" (3) was a key advocacy goal and need identified by activists, and can be considered a primary capacity that organisations have. As KICTANet wrote in 2008:

> Embracing new technologies will involve much more than organisational and technical issues or regulatory frameworks. It will include ethical dimensions of state-citizen interaction, in which trust, consent and democracy are crucial. And the absence of clear attention to these in the current policy-making processes is a cause for action.

19 Such as the reliability and safety of technology and security of personal information. See the Kenya country report.

Table 6: Summary of action steps – Access to infrastructure

Action step	No.	Country	%
Policy development	23	Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Rep. of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia	61
Capacity building	12	Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Croatia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Korea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Rwanda	32
Collaboration	11	Bulgaria, Croatia, Ethiopia, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Uganda, Uruguay, Zambia	29
Inclusion and participation	10	Argentina, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Nigeria, Romania, Spain, Uruguay, Senegal	26
Content development	10	Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Jamaica, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, Tanzania, Uganda, Uruguay	26
Awareness raising	10	Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Paraguay, Romania, Spain, Tanzania	26
Policy implementation	9	Argentina, Bangladesh, India, Jamaica, Korea, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Uganda	24
Funding	8	Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Croatia, Ethiopia, India, Korea, Nigeria, Pakistan	21
Monitoring	7	Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, DRC, India, Switzerland, Uruguay	18
Research	6	Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Korea, Spain, Tajikistan	16
Gender, women	5	Rep. of Congo, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Uganda	13
Coordination	5	Argentina, Cameroon, Peru, Rwanda, Switzerland	13
Services	4	Bangladesh, Korea, Tanzania, Uruguay	11
Network and alliance building	3	Rep. of Congo, India, Spain	8
Building confidence and trust	3	Bulgaria, Kenya, Mexico	8
Fostering dialogue	2	Paraguay, Spain	5
Raising voices	2	Mexico, Bangladesh	5
Access to information	1	Paraguay	3
Developing tools	0		0
Access	0		0

5.3. Access to information and knowledge (2009)

5.3.1. Summary of topics

A common thread in the 48 country reports published in 2009, from countries as different as Mexico, Cameroon, Iraq, Japan and the Netherlands, was that the "information society" – conceived of as a democratic space of engagement and open exchange of information and knowledge – was shrinking. The assault on a free internet was coming from two fronts. Firstly, while governments were increasingly interested in controlling the political and social freedoms seen online – the Foundation for Media Alternatives (Philippines) described this as a "continuing tug-of-war between the forces of authoritarianism and democratisation" – governments also had legitimate concerns with growing threats such as cybercrime and online safeties generally. Pangea (Spain), for example, describes a moral panic setting in: "[There was a] growing perception among several social sectors that while the internet revolution was initially positive ... the online world [was] becoming a wild territory that [needed] to be drastically limited to protect everyone." However, as pointed out by the Institute for InfoSocionomics at Tama University (Japan), concerns such as the safety of children online, while important to address, could through overly restrictive legislation, impact negatively on content freedoms generally. As the Korean Progressive Network Jinbonet (Republic of Korea) observed, state control of the internet could have "a seriously chilling effect on the general public." Secondly, the openness of the internet was being threatened by the use of online platforms by destructive and hate-filled individuals and groups with political and other agendas. For example, KICTANet pointed out how the internet was used in Kenya's elections to "spread messages of ethnic hatred, intimidation and calls to violence." This warning signalled what many activists would identify later as an increasingly sophisticated use of the internet by xenophobic and right-wing groups and covert state agents.

Legislative discussions received strong attention in the context of access to information and knowledge, and in particular, the "right to access information" and policy impacting on "open knowledge" are key focuses of reports.[20] For example, CONDESAN discussed information access rights in Peru, as well as exceptions to legislation and difficulty in implementation (there was a "general ignorance of the laws, lack of infrastructure, lack of suitable personnel and a failure to meet deadlines"). Derechos Digitales and the Diego Portales University/Women in Connection Work Group (Chile) offered an overview discussion on intellectual property ("what to protect, piracy and illegal distribution, how to protect copyright holders") and new access to information legislation in Chile, where there are "some grey areas, especially in how information is being made accessible, the process of requesting the information, and how it is provided." In Kenya, while a lack of restrictions means that the online sphere is an exercise of political and other freedoms, the absence of legislation on accessing information electronically needed to be treated cautiously:

> While the constitution protects freedom of expression as well as freedom to communicate ideas and information, it also provides the government with the power to place restrictions on "privileged" information, and act against defamation in the interests of public order, safety, morality, health and defence.

Open knowledge (6) topics included a discussion on open content, copyright and distribution in Spain; open standards and the Protection and Utilisation of Publicly Funded Intellectual Property Bill in India; and an analysis of intellectual property rights in Uzbekistan. In the case of Uzbekistan, a country where "religious influence is growing year by year," the link between censorship and open knowledge is made. According to GIPI Uzbekistan, "Uzbek officials pay serious attention to the moral aspects of the information accessible to the public":

> A special department dealing with intelligence is known to monitor the content produced domestically. The fear of such prosecution results in heavy self-censorship, not only by those who prepare the information for publishing (including independent journalists and even bloggers) but also by internet service providers (ISPs), who are compelled to control (as much as they can) the information circulated by their clients.

20 "Policy, legislation and regulation", the "right to access information" and "open knowledge" are categorised separately here, but all of them involved some level of detailed discussion on legislation. These categories should as a result be read together.

21 E-government emerges again as a particularly significant theme when considering corruption, transparency and accountability (GISWatch 2012) and economic, social and cultural rights (GISWatch 2016).

A quarter (12) of the authors framed the issue of accessing information in the context of e-government and access to public information.[21] But they showed that an e-government programme did not automatically mean that a country was committed to a healthy democracy. An e-government programme might entail accountability, transparency and citizen voice; however, it might also mask the absence of these. As reports such as those by DiploFoundation (Morocco) and Colnodo (Colombia) suggested, some e-government initiatives were primarily about "doing business" with the "citizen-as-client". This to the extent that the Swiss government portal www.ch.ch was described as the country's "electronic business card".

The potential of access to information and knowledge enabling economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs) online was also felt in this edition, with several reports dealing with rights such as education (7), culture (4), science (3) and local content (2). Open knowledge, an important framing of ESCRs, is addressed by six authors. While Ahmad El Sharif (Syria) described a thirst for self-expression, social networking, and accessing information online – discussion forums in Syria "cover topics as diverse as society, religion, science, politics, and health and beauty" – Bytes for All (Pakistan) stressed the need for reliable local and relevant content. This also applied to the use of mobile phones for accessing information and knowledge. Although over 90% of Colombians owned a mobile phone, Colnodo argued they had not been used to spread useful public information such as crop prices and weather warnings. Instead, what was then called a "disruptive technology" had already been "colonised" by advertisers and other commercial interests.

Access (6) was a relatively stable preoccupation of civil society activists, receiving sporadic but constant attention over the 10 years (see, for example, GISWatch 2011, 2013 and 2016). The Institute for InfoSocionomics informed us that Japan's policy on the "advanced use of ICTs" aimed to get "80% of the population to appreciate the role of ICTs in resolving social problems by 2010." Exclusions, however, remain. ZaMirNET (Croatia) built a convincing argument for the differently abled. Its perspective was unequivocal:

> Information access is even more important for people with disabilities because most have mobility impairments and are more dependent on the use of ICTs. [...] If web accessibility is not achieved, many people are at risk of being partially or totally excluded from the information society.

While for Bytes for All (Pakistan), "More than any formal platform or organisation, the blogosphere [had] probably amounted to the strongest form of global activism,"[22] this potential could not be assured. The threat of censorship (5) was a constant preoccupation of civil society activists, even if dealt with specifically by relatively few reports over the years (anything between two to six authors). In the Republic of Korea, the country's real name system,[23] so-called "temporary blocking" of messages on the grounds of defamation, the routine deleting of posts to bulletin boards following recommendations by the Korean Communications Standards Commission (KCSC), and punishment for disseminating false information could all contribute to a narrowing of online freedoms. As Jinbonet wrote: "Raw voice is communicated on the internet without being filtered by an editor, and this sometimes can threaten a government and disturb social norms." In Jordan, self-censorship was evident online, and citizens had "reportedly been questioned and arrested for web content they ha[d] authored." Moreover, wrote Alarab Alayawm, "[d]espite the absence of a clear definition of who in government is responsible for monitoring the internet, it is obvious that security services are doing this." As suggested, surveillance grows in prominence over the 10 years, and in 2009, two authors (Egypt and Syria) highlight the issue.

22 See the use of microblogs in China (e.g. in GISWatch 2012) for a good example of online civil resistance.

23 "In June 2007, 37 major internet sites including information portals and government websites were forced to adopt a system that verifies a user's identity when posting articles or comments on bulletin boards."

Table 7: Summary of topics – Access to information and knowledge (Note: The first three categories all deal in some measure with policy, legislation and regulation, but have been categorised separately to show the emphasis on the right to information and on open knowledge in this context.)

Key focus	No. of reports	Country	%
Policy, legislation and regulation (right to access information)	7	Chile, India, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Uruguay	15
Policy, legislation and regulation (general)	7	Argentina, Bulgaria, DRC, Kenya, Paraguay, Syria, Zimbabwe	15
Policy, legislation and regulation (open knowledge)	6	Brazil, India, Kenya, Spain, Switzerland, Uzbekistan	13
E-government	12	Algeria, Bangladesh, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, Tunisia	25
Education	7	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Iraq, Jordan, Rwanda, Tunisia, Zambia	15
Access	6	Cameroon, India, Kazakhstan, Namibia, Palestine, Zimbabwe	13
Censorship, blocking	5	Jordan, Korea, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Spain	10
Culture	4	Brazil, Netherlands, Switzerland, Tunisia	8
Science	3	Brazil, Switzerland, Tunisia	6
Surveillance	2	Jordan, Spain	4
Online activism	2	Egypt, Syria	4
Mobile phones	2	Bangladesh, Japan, Tajikistan	4
Infrastructure	2	Ethiopia, Palestine	4
Information initiatives	2	Algeria, Rep. of Congo	4
Freedom of expression	2	Korea, Mexico	4
Local content	2	Pakistan, Tunisia	4
Personal data, libraries, women and gender, e-literacy, e-accessibility, businesses information, cybercrime		Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Uganda	

5.3.2. Overview of action steps

Table 8 shows that most authors (29) felt that policy change was an advocacy priority for civil society in the context of accessing information and knowledge. Many interventions were framed in the context of ICT policy that shaped access to infrastructure (e.g. Jamaica, Iraq, Algeria and Jordan, which called for the cost of access to be decreased). In Kenya there was the need for "various policies and regulatory frameworks to be put in place, among them a freedom of information law and cyber crime and consumer and data protection legislation", while in the Republic of Korea it was necessary to "abolish the internet real name system" and "abolish prosecution and punishment for the dissemination of false information." Right to access information legislation was needed in countries such as Nigeria (the bill needed to be pushed through) and Morocco. A "national content strategy" was needed in Albania, which would encourage "the private sector and individuals to create more and relevant content" in multiple formats; similarly, in the Republic of Congo there was a need to "develop a regulatory framework that supports content creation and access to online information." In South Africa, the government needed to "legislate and incentivise the production of local digital content" which should be "socially, economically, politically and culturally relevant to communities and should be written in familiar languages." In Kazakhstan the government needed to allocate resources so that people with disabilities could be included in the information society. Intellectual property needs were both general and specific, such as addressing "key issues of the knowledge economy" in Ethiopia, including e-commerce, cybersecurity, infrastructure policy and intellectual property rights, while in Pakistan, "[w]ith the number of individuals generating content online, the need for an effective intellectual property regime [was] greater than ever." In Croatia, policy requirements that published books be made available in an "accessible digital format [DIASY format]" for schools and universities were necessary.

Awareness raising (20) and capacity building (18) also required attention, while calls for content development (15) were the highest under this theme compared to other years. Awareness raising action steps included raising awareness of "the right to access information as a personal right, but also as a [state] responsibility" (Peru); raising awareness on the "process and means of demanding information" in line with access to information rights (Bangladesh); campaigns to "build confidence and awareness about ICT security and privacy" in Saudi Arabia; and promoting e-government services and information in Colombia so that "citizens can take advantage of these resources and save both time and money."

Most capacity building needs concerned the basic skills to use technology. The capacity of social movements to use ICT tools better needed to be strengthened in Costa Rica to "build citizenship", while in Namibia the "e-skills gap" needed to be addressed "urgently". In South Africa access needed to go "hand-in-hand with appropriate ICT training." Education was a site for capacity building. While teachers needed to be trained better in Iraq, in Zambia e-literacy had to be integrated into educational curricula. Media literacy programmes were needed in the Netherlands.

Many content development action steps spoke to the need for developing content that was relevant to local needs, including languages. For example, while ICT services were available in Rwanda they were "not always suited to local needs." Content that was "relevant" and "local" and that reflected the trilingual nature of the country (Kinyarwanda, English and French are used) was necessary. In Tunisia, content in Arabic that "[reflected] the richness in culture and tradition and the intellectual progressiveness of the Arab community [was] essential," and the Arab World Internet Institute recommended establishing "centres dedicated to the creation and promotion of e-content." Romania called for "funding, skills transfer and networking support" to enable citizen participation in the developing of local content. In both Tajikistan and Argentina, school-level curricula needed to be developed.

Three authors linked content creation to the need to develop digital tools for sharing information. For example, while "local content in local languages" was needed in Uganda, "applications with a high utility value for the community in areas such as health, education, market information, agriculture, and local administration" needed to be developed. While citizens needed to "be able to take up the role of content producers" in South Africa, "[t]his process has to include the development of appropriate applications or platforms to access and distribute information." In Romania, the private sector and government needed to pay attention to open source solutions to "encourage sustainable and inclusive access to online information."

Table 8: Summary of action steps – Access to information and knowledge

Action step	No.	Country	%
Policy development	29	Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Croatia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Zambia	60
Awareness raising	20	Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, DRC, Croatia, India, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Palestine, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Zimbabwe	42
Capacity building	18	Argentina, Cameroon, Chile, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Iraq, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Namibia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe	38
Content development	15	Algeria, Argentina, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Nigeria, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Uganda, Uruguay	31
Inclusion and participation	10	Argentina, Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Kazakhstan Romania, Syria, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe	19
Funding	8	Cameroon, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Palestine, Romania, South Africa, Tajikistan	17
Access	8	Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, Zambia	17
Collaboration	7	Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Romania, Tajikistan, Zimbabwe	15
Access to information	7	Argentina, Bulgaria, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan	15
Services	7	Algeria, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Namibia, Tunisia	15
Network and alliance building	6	India, Japan, Paraguay, Philippines, Romania, Spain	13
Policy implementation	6	Ethiopia, Jamaica, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda	13
Building confidence and trust	4	Mexico, Netherlands, Palestine, Saudi Arabia	8
Coordination	4	Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tajikistan, Uruguay	8
Developing tools	3	Romania, Uganda, South Africa	6
Raising voices	3	Egypt, Philippines, Spain	6
Monitoring	3	Chile, Colombia, Palestine	6
Gender, women	2	Rep. of Congo, Zimbabwe	4
Fostering dialogue	1	Zimbabwe	2
Research	1	Uruguay	2

5.4. ICTs and environmental sustainability (2010)

5.4.1. Summary of topics

The pioneering role that organisations across the globe played in the early internet – such as GreenNet in the United Kingdom, Pegasus Networks in Australia, and SANGONeT in South Africa – meant that they served a critical historical function in linking up activists, including journalists and social and environmental groups, as early as the 1980s. BlueLink in Bulgaria, which was founded in 1997, was initiated by several environmental non-profit organisations, linking the internet with environmental activism in that country.

Over the years, the fields of interest for ICT4D practitioners have extended to low-cost and sustainable technologies in contexts where there is no infrastructure, and the outspoken promotion of refurbished computers and open source technology in areas such as education – the latter leading to early calls for multinational vendors to take responsibility for discarded technology in developing countries. The historical importance – and thematic significance – of environmental issues to the ICT4D sector was shown by the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society Plan of Action, where "e-environment" (C7, 20) is one of the action areas alongside e-government, e-learning and e-health, among others.

Despite this early interest, it is difficult to say how prominently environmental issues have remained on the agenda of internet rights activists – by 2010, for example, there was a clear sense that many organisations were also only beginning to understand the problem of electronic waste (e-waste). While most of the authors in the 2010 edition saw the need to mainstream environmental concerns in ICT4D organisations, there were some who felt that environmental issues should not be part of their core mandate which, they argued, should continue to attend to more cross-cutting structural concerns, such as consumerism or market ideologies. Others such as Sohrab Razzaghi and Hojatollah Modirain (Arseh Sevom) writing on Iran felt that addressing environmental concerns required a measure of political and social stability:

> [H]uman rights are not only confined to freedoms, such as freedom of speech and prohibiting torture, but also cover some basic rights such as water, health, food, eliminating poverty, education, as well as freedom of information and access to the internet. [...] The political uncertainty in the country and harsh suppression of civil society have resulted in less attention being given to environmental issues and climate change.

Within the general field of "ICTs and environmental sustainability" the 53 authors who contributed to GISWatch 2010 were encouraged – although not limited – to write on issues to do with e-waste and climate change. The countries the authors worked in were grappling with myriad environmental challenges, whether the tangible effects of climate change, such as the melting of the glaciers that make up the Venezuelan Sierra Nevada, the impact of higher temperatures on sensitive rainforest ecosystems and floods and droughts on agriculture, and the regional political consequences of access to the water security of the Nile. In many countries the negative consequences of e-waste had been felt for some time, such as in India, where there were 52 million internet users, and 15 million regular mobile users. E-waste was processed largely by the informal sector, with few, if any, safety and health considerations. In countries lagging in e-development, the challenge of e-waste was still being anticipated. At the other end of the product chain – production – the report on the Republic of Korea was a clear account of the quite frightening challenges facing factory workers who had to deal with hazardous chemicals and materials used in manufacturing electronics which contaminate the environment and could harm their health. While 47 cancer cases among Samsung workers had been reported, the company had refused responsibility. The Korean Progressive Network Jinbonet wrote:

> There was no transparent and verifiable process in the investigation [into the death of a Samsung semiconductor factory worker from leukaemia], which can lead some results to be distorted and left out. It is also difficult for the complainants to verify the results in the case when there are usually several years between exposure to the harmful materials and the onset of diseases.

The topic analysis of the edition (see Table 9) showed that well over half of the authors wrote about e-waste, with comparatively fewer dealing with climate change. Most authors (22) offered a general scan of the country e-waste situation, reflecting something of the need for baseline research into e-waste. About a quarter of the

authors felt it important to highlight the policy and legislative environments in their countries (13), which mostly showed the absence of legislation to deal with the recycling of e-waste (an interesting example of this was the account of Sweden's challenges around eco-friendly government tenders). Similarly, several authors offered a baseline overview of climate change in their countries (9), some then going on to focus attention on other considerations, such as adaptation and mitigation (7) and policy and legislation (4).

Adaptation and mitigation topics included participatory sensing using mobile phones in the DRC. As Alternatives and University of Cape Town suggested, monitoring climate change in this way both drew practically on the ubiquity of the mobile phone, and was an opportunity to build and strengthen a sense of context and place:

> A participatory sensing system is one that allows individuals and communities to collect, share and organise information through data collection using mobile phones and other mobile platforms, in order to make a case for change, and to explore and understand their life and relationship with the environment.

While Promotank HQA discussed several mitigation efforts using ICTs in Kyrgyzstan, including a hydro-meteorological service – the "the main information centre for analysing and predicting climate" in the country – in Iran, Arseh Sevom saw a role for ICTs in water and city management, including to reduce air pollution by managing city traffic.

Authors reflected the need for better data on e-waste in their countries, with four focusing discussion on an analysis of e-waste quantities. PROTEGE QV offered a useful baseline analysis in Cameroon, estimating the amount of potential e-waste entering and exiting the market, with some commentary on reuse and recycling in the country. Four authors focused on developing information systems for managing environmental resources and climate change. While Escuela Latinoamericana de Redes (EsLaRed offered an overview of different kinds of climatological stations in Venezuela, CONDESAN listed information systems – including civil society initiatives for the management of natural resources – in Peru. For example, an agricultural information system had been set up in the Huaral Valley, using "fourteen community information centres (telecentres) located in rural areas, and an information portal with content that responds to the needs of the farmers in the valley."

The tensions provoked by the negative impact of ICTs on the environment through the lack of managing e-waste were not all resolved in the same way in these reports. Practical opportunities offered by recycling e-waste were identified, such as skills development and employment. Some authors engaged with the issue at the level of political challenge – governments and powerful stakeholders such as multinational vendors needed to be forced to be accountable. This whether it involved the disconnect between policy promises at the global level – such as being a signatory to the Basel Convention but having no practical instrument at the country level to honour this commitment – or, in Bulgaria, being alert to the "greenwashing" of big business looking to exploit new markets with the veneer of an eco-conscious agenda:

> As "green" products are proving a successful model for marketing, ICT vendors stress the fact that their newest products are greener and that is why customers should buy them, even if their old equipment satisfies their needs. This is a business practice that eventually leads to a commodity-driven lifestyle that directly contradicts the logic of green ICTs: saving nature's resources.

Addressing both e-waste and climate change was nevertheless a shared responsibility. The myriad stakeholders when it came to e-waste included "electronic goods dealers, collectors and refurbishers, vocational institutions, local authorities, lead agencies, statutory bodies" among others (see Uganda). Similarly, in Benin, climate change information and knowledge needed to be shared between "government, academic institutions, private institutions, NGOs, research consultancies."

Table 9: Summary of topics – ICTs and environmental sustainability

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
E-waste, general overview	22	Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Syria, Uganda, Zimbabwe	42
E-waste, policy, legislation and regulation	13	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Philippines, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, Uruguay	25
Climate change, general overview	9	India, Iraq, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, Peru, Saudi Arabia	17
General environment issues, causes, sustainability	8	Benin, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Syria, Uzbekistan	15
Adaptation and mitigation	7	DRC, Ethiopia, Iran, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Netherlands	13
E-waste initiatives	6	Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, France	11
Climate change, policy, legislation and regulation	4	Bangladesh, DRC, Iraq, Romania	8
E-waste, data	4	Bolivia, Cameroon, Croatia, Philippines	8
Climate change, information systems	4	DRC, Egypt, Peru, Rwanda, Venezuela	8
Business	2	Bulgaria, Korea, Sweden	4
Climate change, carbon footprint of ICTs	2	Netherlands, UK	4
E-waste, inclusion and local collaboration	2	Brazil, South Africa	4
Processing (e-waste), workers' rights (e-waste), ICTs and environment initiatives, participation (climate change), access, information and knowledge (e-waste), stakeholder responsibilities (climate change), monitoring (e-waste), climate change initiatives		Bosnia and Herzegovina, DRC, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Venezuela	

5.4.2. Overview of action steps

The action steps proposed by the authors are collated in Table 10. As can be seen, awareness raising on the issues of environmental sustainability are seen as an advocacy priority by authors (38), followed closely by policy interventions (36). Awareness raising included "user education programmes that encourage the use of reusable electronic goods" (Australia); newspaper and TV e-waste campaigns aimed at the public and policy makers (Bangladesh); including e-waste as a subject in IT curricula in Jordan; and campaigns on energy security in India. While an "official website" on climate change in Kyrgyzstan where "all information and the latest trends" could be shared was needed, in Japan it was necessary to "cultivate a mindset among consumers that best suits a low-carbon lifestyle." General environmental awareness also needed to be strengthened. In Ecuador there was a need to "educate future generations in ethical values related to respecting the environment and the efficient use of scarce resources." In Nigeria and the Philippines, awareness-raising material on e-waste needed to be translated into local languages. The media was often cited as a partner in the drive to raise awareness, perhaps suggesting the broad appeal of environmental advocacy issues. In the Philippines, "[s]chools, media organisations and NGOS must lead creative information campaigns adapted to Filipino socio-cultural practices, translated into different local languages, via all possible channels."

While many authors cited the need to develop policies on e-waste because they did not exist (including writing the Basel Convention in law), more specific policy changes were identified in countries like the Republic of Korea, where improvements in the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance system were needed, allowing workers who suffer work-related diseases to benefit from claims while the findings of investigations are still pending. Tighter regulations on greenhouse gas emissions for industry were needed in Kyrgyzstan, while in Jamaica it was necessary to "[update] policy guidelines" so that they were explicit on how ICTs could be used to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

As suggested, collaboration (28) across sectors in order to address e-waste was necessary. Participation and inclusion, a relatively stable advocacy need required by civil society, was cited by eight authors as important. In the Republic of Korea, "[w]orkers who [had] been allegedly affected by hazardous materials should be allowed to participate in an epidemiological investigation." In Rwanda, where intensive capacity building, awareness raising and information and knowledge sharing was necessary on both the impact of ICTs on the environment, and the use of ICTs to address the environmental crisis, there was "an urgent need for public participation in decision-making processes through public hearings, written submissions, and consultative meetings."

Resources needed to be allocated to environmental issues (11). This included taxing electronics to fund their safe disposal (Syria); incentives so that the informal sector could safely recycle discarded equipment while the hazardous processes were performed by formal recyclers (Uganda); offering grants or tax incentives for organisations dealing with the reuse or recycling of technology (Australia); investment by both the state and the private sector in recycling and refurbishing facilities in Ecuador; and government investment in energy-saving projects and products in Japan.

The need for research and innovation (19) was highest in this topic compared to other years. This included establishing university research centres on renewable energy and technology (Jordan); "academic assessments" on reducing the carbon footprints of ICTs (Mexico); and baseline data collection on e-waste (e.g. Nepal, Philippines). In South Africa an "evaluation of the current extent of contaminations, and remediation of contaminated sites" was needed.

In line with the need for research, access to information (19) was crucial, such as "[c]reating repositories with climate information and promoting the use of collaborative tools" in Venezuela. In Iraq, while sustainable development is part of the country's development imperatives, "[f]iltering has prevented accessing free information by intellectuals, especially the youth and women." Capacity building (15) needs included building e-waste recycling capacity and skills (e.g. in the manual dismantling of e-waste in Uganda). In Costa Rica, universities should offer their "technical expertise [on e-waste] to collective enterprises in urban and rural areas", while technical schools – a "breeding ground for new entrepreneurs" – needed to build the capacity of students to respond to e-waste as an opportunity. "Collective entrepreneurships" should also be encouraged. In Rwanda, there was the need to "strengthen national capacity for effective engagement in regional and global negotiations and collective actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change."

Table 10: Summary of action steps – ICTs and environmental sustainability

Action step	No.	Country	%
Awareness raising	38	Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, India, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, Uganda, UK, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Zimbabwe	72
Policy development	36	Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Rep. of Congo, Ecuador, France, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Palestine, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Zimbabwe	68
Collaboration	28	Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Egypt, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Ecuador, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Senegal, Spain, Syria, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe	53
Policy implementation	21	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Egypt, Iran, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Netherlands, Palestine, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Syria, UK	40
Research	19	Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Iraq, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sweden, Syria	36
Access to information	19	Argentina, Australia, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ecuador, Iran, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Venezuela	36
Monitoring	18	Australia, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Costa Rica, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Korea, Netherlands, Nigeria, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, Syria	34
Capacity building	15	Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Chile, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, India, Kenya, Morocco, Palestine, Peru, Rwanda, Uganda	28
Funding	11	Australia, Bolivia, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Japan, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Pakistan, Syria, Uganda	21
Inclusion and participation	8	Bulgaria, DRC, India, Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Sweden, Zimbabwe	15
Content development	3	Nigeria, Peru, South Africa	6
Access	3	Benin, Iran, Iraq	6
Coordination	3	Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda	6
Fostering dialogue	2	South Africa, Switzerland	4
Services	1	Japan	2
Network and alliance building	1	Costa Rica	2
Building confidence and trust	1	Saudi Arabia	2
Gender, women	1	Iran	2
Developing tools	1	Bulgaria	2
Raising voices	0		0

5.5. Internet rights and democratisation: Freedom of expression and association online (2011)

5.5.1. Summary of topics

The authors of the 55 country reports published in 2011 were encouraged to select a story or event to write about that illustrated the role of the internet in defending human rights. The result was a rich collection of reports that approached the topic of the internet, human rights and social resistance from different angles – whether discussing the rights of prisoners to access the internet in Argentina, candlelight vigils against "mad cow" beef imports in the Republic of Korea, the UK Uncut demonstrations in London, or online poetry as protest in China.

The contexts in which these stories occurred were diverse, with different implications for social mobilisation using the internet. In many countries across the world, the potential of the internet to galvanise progressive social protest had proved critical. While better access was still needed in some – countries such as Benin and Ethiopia draw attention to this in the report – by 2011 the popularisation of social media as an advocacy tool was felt throughout countries across the world. It had been used to network, organise marches, coordinate, popularise and manage social interventions of all kinds. A quarter of the reports (14) dealt with this phenomenon – noticeably higher than in other years.

In the United Kingdom events had demonstrated how social media had become the "standard mobilisation toolkit" for civil protest. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Facebook, with all the criticism of its privacy and security, [was] the space where grassroots initiatives and informal groups in Bosnia Herzegovina start[ed] their activities, connect[ed] with each other and [did] things."

The internet had an extraordinary power of making visible that which many would prefer to keep secret – a way of not only documenting violations, but of protecting those who were in danger of being violated. EngageMedia Collective, in its discussion on the use of video in Indonesia, demonstrated how difficult and delicate documenting the invisible can be, and the country report raised practical and ethical issues to take into consideration. (Four reports highlighted the role of video in securing or protecting rights.)

"Making visible" was not only a way of documenting and speaking out, and of mobilising widespread support for a cause; it was also used to hold authorities accountable for their actions. Activists in Jordan "always [took] into consideration the worst that the police could do. Because of this they assign[ed] some participants the task of documenting everything in the events, especially if police attack[ed] demonstrators."

While countries like Iran looked to create a "halaal" internet – "one that is pure from immoral websites" – Morocco showed how the internet can disrupt entrenched ideas of citizenship:

> [T]he common citizen [...] took refuge in the social and citizen media channels to lead a radical change of the idea of the state-citizen relationship. This relationship was based on a top-down approach to decision making when it came to state policies – while the internet helped to make these decisions evolve around the citizens' needs.

In Tunisia, the internet catalysed an essentially "leaderless" revolution, while for Sulá Batsú (Costa Rica) "the essential part [of the internet was] the spirit and the power of organising without organisations."

Reports showed that it was not always civil society organisations who galvanised social resistance. Often protests were catalysed by like-minded individuals who met online and instigated protests and campaigns for change. Resistance to importing "mad cow" beef into the Republic of Korea was sparked by spontaneous interactions among young people: "In the beginning, the most energetic participants were young people who had spent the entire day at school and used the internet and SMS to organise their friends and debate various issues."

The role of satire in social protest was seen in a number of reports. In China poems written in response to a hit-and-run incident involving the son of a deputy director at a public security bureau (known as the "My dad is Li Gang" online protests), were made all the more striking in that they drew on classical Chinese poetry and philosophy.

As already mentioned, the period under consideration – 2007 to 2017 – tracks a growing ambivalence towards the internet by internet rights activists, and the increasingly effective use of the internet for advocacy by reactionary groups. Countries such as Bulgaria showed that as much as the internet could be a force for progressive political change, it offered a vehicle for reactionary politics too. In that country reactionary groups

were incisive in using the internet to push their agenda:

> [E]xtremist online groups are meeting more frequently offline than online social activists. While social researchers point out the growing number of Facebook groups and causes in support of neo-fascism, reminiscent of Hitler's treatment of minorities, and protest against social policies supporting the long-term unemployment of Roma, offline incidents show the neo-Nazis do act in accordance with their claims. In the summer of 2010 two cases of violence emphasised the fact that the problem of intolerance is not a dormant or discursive one any more.

Similarly, in Thailand the internet had been used effectively to support the conservative politics of the monarchy, as the Thai Netizen Network observed: "What can then be called a 'digital witch hunt' emerged, as users began hunting down those who were against the monarchy."

The right to privacy was relevant here. Four authors raised the topic, and while the Netherlands was a country that could be "sleepwalking into a surveillance society", again, in Thailand:

> The personal data of victims, including their home addresses and phone numbers, were posted online. One person was even physically threatened, as the groups tracked down with reasonable accuracy – within a one-kilometre radius – where she lived (probably using social media), and offered a cash bounty to anyone who would "surprise" her at home.

A tension between online activism and social mobilisation in the street was felt throughout the reports. Some reports suggested a growing discomfort with the internet as a place of refuge, with its negative implications for active engagement in civil protest. Many reports mention the difficulty of translating support for a cause expressed through clicking on "Like" or "I'm attending" buttons on a Facebook page into public mobilisation. As the report from Iran put it: "The internet has also effectively turned the activist into a solitary, protesting computer user, fighting against multiple government computers."

This attention on the dangers of over-relying on the internet for social mobilisation was felt sharply in countries that did not have consistent access to the internet, whether through censorship or underdevelopment. In Lebanon activists felt excluded from the social protests taking place in the region:

> With the Arab Spring and revolutions being shared online, activists in Lebanon are feeling helpless not being able to broadcast their opinions and take on events that directly affect their own country. This showed the Lebanese that they are actually suffering from a subtle and worse form of censorship.

In Kazakhstan, even the most creative online interventions – a "remixed" and "redubbed" Shrek animation satirising a referendum – had little widespread impact because of the low levels of access in the country. In a different way, Japan showed that, in the wake of the recent tsunami, even highly developed countries faced the danger of over-dependency on technology for civic mobilisation and communication. Of the reports appearing in GISWatch 2011, nearly 20% (10) dealt with digital activism and campaigns that took place online exclusively, while slightly fewer (8) shared stories of how ICTs sparked offline protest and mobilisation.

Policy and legislation (5) receives comparatively less attention in this edition compared to other years, perhaps suggesting a starker landscape where the actions of the state in curtailing freedoms needed active civil protest and vocal opposition. As if reflecting this, freedom of expression is foregrounded by nine reports, and censorship, blocking and filtering, and shutdowns by a nearly equal number (8). While ZaMirNET considered the impact of defamation and criminal libel law on media freedoms in Croatia, in Tanzania, "it [was] believed that [the government was] trying to institute a mechanism through which content on social media sites [could] be controlled or even censored, as seen in China." In New Zealand, an interesting law allowing disconnection from the internet as a penalty for copyright infringement was discussed – here categorised as a unique kind of corporate censorship.

Table 11: Summary of topics – Internet rights and democratisation

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
Social media and networks	14	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Tunisia, UK, Venezuela, Zambia	26
Digital activism and online campaigns	10	Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Thailand, Uruguay	18
Freedom of expression	9	Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Korea, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Venezuela	16
Mobilisation and public protest	8	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Ecuador, Egypt, Korea, Morocco, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia	15
Censorship, blocking, filtering, shutdowns	8	Australia, Croatia, Iran, Mozambique, Nepal, New Zealand [law on disconnections], Tanzania, US	15
Right to information	6	India, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Romania, Sweden	11
Access	6	Argentina, Benin, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Japan, Lebanon	11
Policy, legislation and regulation	5	Brazil, France, New Zealand, Palestine, Spain	9
Privacy	4	Bulgaria, Rep. of Congo, Korea, Netherlands	7
Video	4	Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, Tunisia	7
War criminals	3	Bangladesh, Peru, Uruguay	6
Elections	3	Côte d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, Kenya	6
Reactionary backlash	3	Iran, Saudi Arabia, Thailand	6
Oppression of ethnic groups	3	Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Zambia	6
Networks and collective action	3	Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Spain	6
Human and civil rights	2	Bolivia, Brazil	4
Hate speech	2	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria	4
Trade	2	Colombia, Korea	4
Intellectual property, copyright	2	Colombia, New Zealand	4
Environmental activism	2	Costa Rica, Jamaica	4
Accountability	2	Indonesia, Nigeria	4
New media	2	Jordan, Kenya	4
Transparency	2	Nigeria, Palestine	4
Participation and inclusion	2	Palestine, Spain	4
Surveillance	2	Switzerland, US	4
Media	2	Croatia, Kenya	4
Education, cybercrime, vulnerable groups, monitoring, mobile phones, grassroots voices, disaster relief, intermediaries, e-government, women and gender, youth, sexuality, sexual rights and freedom, pornography		Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Jamaica, Japan, New Zealand, Romania, Saudi Arabia, US	

5.5.2. Overview of action steps

The analysis of action steps for the 2011 edition of GISWatch shows that policy and legislative change (25) is a focal action step proposed by nearly half of the reports. This is followed closely by awareness raising (23). Examples of policy and legislative change in this context include pushing for the approval of the Marco Civil (Civil Rights Framework for the Internet) in Brazil; developing regulations to limit violations of human rights online across content types (i.e. text, images and videos) in Bulgaria; policy on database systems that promotes transparency when processing personal data, and which pays attention to "privacy by design" (Netherlands); and petitioning lawmakers to limit the use of a sex offenders registry when punishing teenagers for "sexting" (United States). Some policy needs were geared towards access, such as creating policy that supports different technological standards to increase broadband and wireless coverage (Italy), a national broadband plan in Tunisia, and campaigning for an independent regulator in Mozambique.

Awareness raising and lobbying actions included creating awareness of tools for activism, and how they could be adapted for the local setting and languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina (creating useful information sheets on privacy and security was also necessary); campaigns on privacy and "personal information violations" in the Republic of Congo; creating public awareness of internet rights and principles in Pakistan; and "creating awareness about the use and existence of ICT tools for citizen participation" in Tanzania.

Eighteen authors identified capacity building as important, including computer literacy in Kazakhstan, and social media training in Ecuador to stimulate the "creative use of this technology in favour of democracy and participation." In New Zealand it was important to "create open learning communities where new suggestions are positively received and adopted where they show potential." Networks and alliances (16) included the need to build alliances in face-to-face settings. These allowed "personal networks" to be created in contrast to online social networks which could "amplify and expand momentum but [did not] necessarily instigate it" (New Zealand). In Bosnia and Herzegovina it was important to encourage "informal meetings of ICT geek and grassroots and social activists" to discuss online content, including "the use of stereotypes and inflammatory language".

About a quarter (14) of the reports identified the need for increased access to the internet to help secure the rights of freedom of expression and association and to strengthen democracy. Of interest, creating conditions for and encouraging dialogue was seen as an important need and role for civil society by several authors (8); a push towards conciliation rather than opposition. These included "[participating] in all spaces in which the issue [the controversial Lleras Bill on copyright and related rights online] is debated and solved" in Colombia, lobbying for a national IGF in Lebanon (see also the GISWatch edition on NRIs in 2017), and promoting "channels for communication" between "formal" and "informal" civil society groups using social media in Mozambique. In Palestine, discussions on ICT policy needed to be in both Arabic and English so that they did not become an "elitists' silo".

Table 12: Summary of action steps – Internet rights and democratisation

Action step	No.	Country	%
Policy development	25	Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Nigeria, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Tunisia, US, Venezuela	45
Awareness raising	23	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Croatia, France, India, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palestine, Romania, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand, US, Uruguay, Venezuela	42
Capacity building	18	Benin, Bolivia, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Iran, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Switzerland, Tanzania, Zambia	33
Network and alliance building	16	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Japan, Lebanon, Mozambique, Nepal, New Zealand, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Thailand	29
Access	14	Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Thailand, Zambia	25
Inclusion and participation	9	Benin, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Romania, Spain	16
Fostering dialogue	8	Argentina, Australia, Colombia, Lebanon, Morocco, Mozambique, Palestine, Rwanda	15
Access to information	7	Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, India, Italy, Japan, US	13
Raising voices	7	Australia, Bulgaria, China, Netherlands, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Spain	13
Research	5	Argentina, Jamaica, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania	9
Monitoring	5	Côte d'Ivoire, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Switzerland,	9
Collaboration	4	Bangladesh, Rep. of Congo, Kenya, Palestine	7
Developing tools	4	Bulgaria, Colombia, Egypt, Iran	7
Content development	3	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Croatia	5
Gender, women	3	Ethiopia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia	5
Policy implementation	3	Korea, South Africa, Zambia	5
Funding	2	Rep. of Congo, Morocco	4
Building confidence and trust	2	Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan	4
Services	1	Bulgaria	2
Coordination	0		0

5.6. The internet and corruption: Transparency and accountability online (2012)

5.6.1. Summary of topics

Several familiar advocacy paths are encountered when considering the role of the internet in combating corruption: a quarter (12) of the 48 reports in this edition of GISWatch foregrounded the topic of access to information as a mechanism to create more open and transparent societies. A similar number (11) discussed e-government initiatives in their country – at least on paper – as a way of creating accountable governance.

While the Electronic Frontier Foundation pointed to the Obama administration's poor track record in granting access to information requests in the United States, in the Republic of Korea, "central administrative institutions show[ed] a higher rate of information non-disclosure than other public offices" – a trend which was on the increase. As Jinbonet pointed out, "This [meant] that, unlike ordinary public information, information critical to national issues [was] not often disclosed." While access to public information, transparency and citizen participation were also discussed in Peru, in Hungary, the important role of journalism and citizen information leaks was shown in an account of Atlatszo, a website partly inspired by WikiLeaks and staffed by journalists and lawyers. According to Metatron Research Unit and Hungarian Autonomous Center for Knowledge (H.A.C.K.), Atlatszo "provides a working model of how the best practices of traditional journalism can be combined with emerging trends, including the potential for the internet to support critical information leaks, the open data movement, and citizen journalism."

E-government programmes – insofar as they succeeded in promoting an efficient, accountable and transparent government – had been shown to be as strong as the political will that drove those programmes forward. Jinbonet offered the following logic:

> In 2012, Korea scored the highest on the e-government index in the United Nations survey on electronic government. On the other hand, Korea ranked 43rd out of 183 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Given this, it is clear that the development of e-government does not guarantee transparency in government.

While PROTEGE QV (Cameroon) argued that ICT systems implemented in the country's customs administration "limit[ed] encounters with public officials" and in doing so had a positive impact on combating corruption, CONDESAN and Red Científica Peruana (Peru) pointed out the dangers of relying on the internet to improve the citizen-government relationship:

> Since there are neither good connections nor appropriate technical staff in rural areas, the rural municipalities have opted to establish an office in the nearest town and move part of their offices to the city. However, this has created discontent amongst the population, who felt that their leaders were governing from the cities. Even with the existence of portals to access information, citizens do not have access to the internet, and therefore, their only option to make themselves heard is to travel to town or the nearest city. Because of this we find that the government has not moved closer to citizens using ICTs – on the contrary, it has moved further away.

Six authors dealt with corruption in the context of elections. Nodo TAU recorded a negative experience in Argentina when it came to e-voting, and concluded:

> Although information technologies are valued in their ability to increase access to information through the digitisation of electoral rolls, the registration of voters, and the processing and dissemination of results, if applied to the act of voting, they make the process more vulnerable.

Transparency International (see the Jordan country report) argued a direct link between lower corruption and internet access for citizens – a 20% increase in internet access was reported to decrease corruption by 0.60 points. A number of country reports appeared to support this, highlighting the role that internet-savvy citizens could play as watchdogs on corruption – raising awareness, launching campaigns, and developing tools to track and monitor corruption (e.g. South Africa, Brazil). The role of social media and networks in tackling corruption was raised by 20% (10) of the reports. In the case of Morocco, DiploFoundation found that:

> Many Facebook groups [had] emerged to denounce corruption practices in Morocco. People [had] started taking initiatives to raise awareness about the phenomenon and its impact on the local economy from a citizen perspective.

Initiatives to monitor state activities (6) in a transparent way, and, in effect, to highlight areas of potential corruption were often innovative in their simplicity. In Saudi Arabia, the website 3addad.com – "The Index of Saudi Promises" – tracked local media for project deadline commitments made by Saudi officials, and then listed those projects with a countdown ticker next to each of the commitments made. The motivation behind this site had an emotional clarity that matched the directness of the idea. As the site founder Thamer al-Muhaimeed wrote: "This index is our memory of the sum of undelivered promises... because we have nothing but these promises."

Anas Tawileh (Syria) meanwhile commented on the use of platforms such as Ushahidi:

> It also reduces the potential for corruption, as employees in the workflow for any service provision within these agencies would know that many eyes are watching over their shoulders. This, effectively, crowdsources monitoring of administrative performance by the citizens themselves.

As some reports suggested, the link between censorship (4) and corruption could be tangential – one need not necessarily imply the other. But even in the absence of evidence of corrupt activities, in environments that were deliberately censored by the state, or information in the public interest withheld, corruption was a potential corollary. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, blocked websites left the Maan News Agency to ask: "Is withholding information from the public an act of corruption, in and of itself?"

A number of reports (5) focused on the potential of blogs to hold power to account. SETEM (Spain) found that online media tended to be more amenable to reporting on corruption:

> [D]igital media or digital publications by the mass media are much more open to covering cases of complaints and violations of rights, while the paper editions of the mass media are reluctant to publish such information.

Similarly, in Hungary, Atlatszo pursued stories more persistently and thoroughly than commercial or state-owned news outlets:

> In contrast to prevailing journalistic practice, claims are often backed up by original source documents which are either linked or published directly on the site. Presenting the evidence in the concrete form of the original source documents boosts the credibility of claims, which is key for anti-corruption work.

Nevertheless, the watchdog role citizens could play was dependent on a number of factors, including the level of access citizens enjoy, the freedom of institutions such as the media, the ability of citizens to access public events (and to report on those freely), and even the readiness with which a state shared information with its citizens. Independent monitoring initiatives, such as those monitoring municipal spending, were often as good as the quality of data that was made available by the state. Brazil showed that the authorities could go to great lengths to quash attempts to effect more transparency on spending, making the translation of complex data so that it can be easily understood by citizens virtually impossible.

Globally, corruption had created a distinct sense of distrust in nations' leaders. At least two authors withdrew their participation in the 2012 edition of GISWatch, saying it was too dangerous to write a report. KICTANet (Kenya) noted that:

> [A] large proportion of Kenyans believe all or most public officials, including the president, to be involved in corruption. The police are considered the most corrupt, followed very closely by parliamentarians and government officials. The media and civil society are the most trusted groups.

Benin decried the moral decay in that country, in which the youth are seen to be complicit. Remedies were proposed. DiploFoundation found that Morocco's Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane, who was to usher in a new era of accountability in that country, instead "sounded defeated and helpless with no concrete plans to eradicate corruption." Other reports, such as Syria, saw the youth as a necessary participant in anti-corruption efforts: "[The e-complaints platform] was completely conceived, developed and implemented by young Syrians aged between 14 and 16 years." This, the report added, "clearly showed the determination of the upcoming generations to tackle the challenges that hindered the development of their countries for decades."

Table 13: Summary of topics – Internet and corruption

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
Access to information	12	Bolivia, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Hungary, Jordan, Korea, Palestine, Peru, Romania, Spain, Tanzania, US	25
E-government	11	Argentina, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela	23
Transparency	11	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Indonesia, Peru, Romania, Spain, US, Uruguay	23
Social media and networks	10	Bulgaria, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Italy, Jamaica, Lebanon, Morocco, Romania, South Africa, Vanuatu	21
Accountability	8	China, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Uruguay	17
Corruption, general	7	Rep. of Congo, Egypt, Iraq, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Switzerland	15
Elections	6	Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, DRC, Indonesia	13
Monitoring	6	Brazil, Bulgaria, Morocco, South Africa, Syria, Tanzania	13
Blogs	5	China, Costa Rica, Hungary, Italy, Lebanon	10
Business	5	Lebanon, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK	10
Service delivery	4	Bangladesh, India, Syria, Uganda	8
Participation and inclusion	4	Bulgaria, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay	8
Censorship, blocking, filtering, shutdowns	4	China, DRC, Palestine, Thailand	8
Wikileaks and whistleblowers	4	Hungary, Netherlands, Nigeria, US	8
Privacy	3	Bolivia, Canada, South Africa	6
Alternative media	3	Hungary, Jamaica, Thailand	6
Video	3	Indonesia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia	6
Media	3	Hungary, Jamaica, Jordan	6
Policy, legislation and regulation	3	Bolivia, Netherlands, Uruguay	6
Public health	2	Costa Rica, Uganda	4
Awareness raising	2	Indonesia, Uganda	4
Culture	2	Italy, Peru	4
Open data	2	Kenya, UK	4
Corporate governance	2	Netherlands, UK	4
Open government	2	Peru, UK	4
Crowdsourcing	2	Peru, South Africa	4
Oil	2	Nigeria, Saudi Arabia	4
Mapping	2	Syria, Uganda	4
Cybercrime, security, multistakeholder, mobile phones, online campaign, poverty, mobilisation and protest, voice, freedom of expression, anonymity, women and gender, capacity building, access		Benin, Bolivia, Colombia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Italy, Palestine, South Africa, Uganda, Vanuatu	

5.6.2. Overview of action steps

The need for policy and legislative interventions were action steps cited by 19 of the authors, while 13 saw a weakness in the implementation of policies and law that already existed. These included calling for "effective standards of quality in public budgeting and disclosure of spending" in Brazil; regulating automated call services that were used for electoral fraud in Canada; open government legislation and an independent authority that is "fully accessible to all citizens for recourse to uphold and enforce the law" in Egypt (policies based on open government principles are also called for in Ethiopia); and the revocation of laws in Jordan where the Law on the Protection of State Secrets and Documents needed to be abolished, and Thailand where laws existed that prevented criticism of the monarchy.

Policy implementation interventions meanwhile involved, for example, enforcing sanctions on "persons who destroy[ed] records without authority" while also drafting "stringent record termination procedures" in the Republic of Korea; the investigation of corruption in Kyrgyzstan; the need for a change of culture in administrations when implementing the law on access to public information (Peru); auditing e-voting software in Argentina; and stronger security measures for voting databases in Canada.

Reflecting on the role of information in building the backbone of transparency and accountability, 18 authors focused on this as a necessary advocacy step, including calling for open government policies to be implemented, and, in the case of Kenya, civil society collaboration on open data initiatives in the health and education sectors. In Kyrgyzstan online resources were necessary for "providing the facts" on corruption to support anti-corruption campaigns – this included monitoring "all investigations of cases of corruption." As Metatron Research Unit and H.A.C.K. in Hungary put it: "Public interest information should be in the public domain."

Tackling corruption needed cross-sector collaboration (12) – for instance the "public" and the media needed to work together to "nurture a culture of transparency and accountability" in the Republic of Congo, while in Nepal both governmental and non-governmental agencies responsible for fighting corruption needed to link up with internet and telecom service providers to provide "user-friendly, accessible online services for online complaints systems." In line with the need for "stable institutions that were open to the influence of citizens", participation (11) meant the involvement of citizens in the management of spectrum in Colombia, and citizen monitoring of the quality of public services in Morocco because "they are the ones directly affected by government decisions."

A significant number of reports (16) highlighted the need for awareness raising. In Syria it was important to raise awareness on how ICT tools could be used to support citizen monitoring of corruption, while in Cameroon "convincing citizens that pushing for government accountability through the use of ICT tools [was] as important as any other development issues." The internet could also be used for naming-and-shaming: in Uganda corrupt individuals needed to be "exposed" online. While investigative journalism was a key tool in exposing corruption, better quality journalism was needed, both from professional and citizen journalists. In Jamaica it was necessary for citizen media to "improve their professional quality to reflect the tenets of good journalistic practices", while in Jordan "ICT activists need[ed] more training in good journalistic practice."

Eleven authors emphasised the need for increased internet access to combat corruption. "Raising voices" was seen as equally pressing and necessary in 11 reports. In Egypt citizens needed to "demand an open government platform,"[24] while in Iraq activists should "[n]ot rely on government-led initiatives to fight corruption":

> Rather, activists and NGOs should create their own forms of corruption exposure, in whatever format deemed necessary, to create public outrage, which in turn shames the government into action.

24 The term "open government" is more frequently used in the context of corruption than for other topics.

Table 14: Summary of action steps – Internet and corruption

Action step	No.	Country	%
Policy development	19	Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, UK, US, Vanuatu	40
Access to information	18	Rep. of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Hungary, India, Kenya, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, Uganda, Venezuela	38
Awareness raising	16	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, DRC, Rep. of Congo, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Kenya, Nepal, Palestine, Switzerland, Syria, Uganda	33
Policy implementation	13	Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, Hungary, India, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, Peru, Tanzania, US, Venezuela	27
Collaboration	12	Argentina, Benin, Bulgaria, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Romania, Syria, Uganda	25
Access	11	Bolivia, Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, India, Jordan, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, Vanuatu	23
Inclusion and participation	11	Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Syria, Uruguay, Venezuela	23
Raising voices	11	Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Iraq, Jamaica, Korea, Romania, Thailand, US, Uruguay, Venezuela	23
Monitoring	13	Canada, China, Rep. of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Hungary, India, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Peru, Syria, Uganda, Venezuela	27
Capacity building	9	Bangladesh, Colombia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan, Peru, UK, Uruguay	19
Fostering dialogue	8	Benin, Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Uruguay	17
Network and alliance building	6	Argentina, Bulgaria, Rep. of Congo, South Africa, Spain, Uganda	13
Services	6	Cameroon, Colombia, DRC, Rep. of Congo, India, Morocco	13
Developing tools	4	Peru, Thailand, Uganda, UK	8
Funding	3	Cameroon, Uganda, UK	6
Building confidence and trust	3	Benin, Costa Rica, Thailand	6
Research	1	Kenya	2
Content development	1	Indonesia	2
Gender, women	0		0
Coordination	0		0

5.7. Women's rights, gender and ICTs (2013)

5.7.1. Summary of topics

Women's rights and the empowerment of women using ICTs and the internet had been one of the earliest causes for advocacy among civil society organisations. Internet rights organisations had however long moved away from simple access and economic and social empowerment themes common in ICT4D narratives, to include a wide array of concerns in their advocacy for women's rights. Something of this new advocacy reach was suggested in the spread of topics and concerns in the 47 reports published in GISWatch in 2013. For example, various forms of VAW online – gender-based online harassment, hate speech, invasions of privacy and threats to life and person – have formed the epicentre of recent advocacy initiatives,[25] and here it was the most common topic foregrounded by authors (9). However, topics also included discussions affecting the youth and girls (6), women in the ICT sector (6), sexuality and sexual rights (2), leadership (2), and household workers (2), as well as more traditional ICT4D focus areas such as rural access and issues (3), women in agriculture (1), entrepreneurship (3), health (3), and education (3). The spread of these concerns is also testimony to the proliferation of access technologies and the internet rights concerns across different economic and social strata and contexts.

No "framework" of women's rights was imposed on the authors for this edition – although they were encouraged both to work with gender-rights organisations and to consider APC's Gender Evaluation Methodology manual. The result captured contrasting perspectives and nuances in context and approach when dealing with issues related to ICTs, women's rights and gender. For example, in Thailand, the authors wrote that "[b]ecause of the repressive cultural norms on proper sexualities" and "[u]nlike girls in the US who may face cyber-bullying after their half naked photos are published on the internet," Thai teens "enjoy popularity and fame from posting sexy/half-naked photos of themselves on the internet as a way to gain acceptance." It is a practice that is seen as a positive way to explore sexuality, and has become "widely popular and fashionable."

Fractures in the rights movement were evident. For example, in Bulgaria there was exclusion and even rejection of LGBTIQ groups in social protest and mass mobilisation: "Some of the LGBT activists participate [in the protests], but do not represent their struggle and even hide their homosexual identity." In Egypt, the author saw a kind of hiatus in strategy that allows reactionary groups to take charge:

> [O]ne does not find progressive women activists proposing solid solutions for Egypt's current problems. On the contrary, women who support the Islamists do have concrete plans. They are demanding for women to retreat into the home, to leave the public arena, to live a more secluded life, to restore traditional moral values, decrease the need for personal consumption and, by leaving work, create employment for the thousands of young males. This is seen as a fundamental first step to reduce social strife and build a better functioning society and nation.

The empowerment of women was a key theme addressed by authors in different ways, including when discussing entrepreneurship (see, for example, Ethiopia), the workplace and politics.

The role of women in the ICT sector received some focus – attention is given to the ratio of women enrolled in ICT studies at universities. For instance, in Costa Rica, 96.6% of IT professionals were male, while only 18% of the students studying ICTs as a major in university were female. Similarly, in Spain, Pangea considers the impact of the low number of female students studying ICTs on the representation of women in the sector. In Rwanda, school-level promotion of ICTs as a career choice was necessary. While celebrating a "Girls in ICT Day", women entrepreneurs had set up a group called Girls in ICT Rwanda, made up of entrepreneurs, professionals and university students, to "encourage women and girls to venture into ICTs."

Attention is also given to labour rights – such as the empowerment of household workers using ICTs in Jamaica, and the use of ICTs by the Domestic Workers Union in Uruguay in an effort to build their political participation and citizenship. As ObservaTIC notes:

> Domestic labour has historically been a sector with reduced access to labour rights and with serious issues in regard to unionisation and collective organisation. Salaried domestic work within private homes makes interactions and meetings very difficult as the women do not share a physical working space.

25 Such as APC's Take Back the Tech! campaign. See: https://www.takebackthetech.net

Women in political leadership roles was raised by two reports. In Côte d'Ivoire a young woman parliamentarian is seen as an embodiment of a "new Côte d'Ivoire":

> [Yasmina Ouégnin] rose through the social media limelight, with her official Facebook page and two Twitter accounts. She was open, engaging and very personal in her communications with Ivorians.

In the Cook Islands, ICTs were used to support women's participation in politics. They could be used to raise awareness, and to educate – including in empowering communities on topics such as voting:

> One of the key reasons for the reluctance of women to participate in party politics is the lack of information about what they might be getting themselves into. They fear the unknown. They do not think that they are qualified to run for office. They are less competitive, less confident, and more risk averse.

AZUR Développement drew attention to how a lack of basic, stable infrastructure such as electricity frustrated the desire of women's groups in the Republic of Congo to be online. In rural Cameroon, while women did access (5) the internet:

> Up to now [they had] used the internet merely for educational purposes and to overcome limitations in mobility. Mobile phones [had] broadened their livelihood options and well-being. However, they [had] yet to experience all the opportunities they [could] draw from their internet access to improve their daily lives, their general condition, or to promote their rights.

In Romania, gender rights were not part of ICT discourse – however, in the European context, women were a growing market for ICT services and businesses:

> As suggested, the level of gender mainstreaming in assessing the digital divide [was] absent from public discourse in Romania. However, there [was] a growing interest in the business sector in the issue of women and ICTs: a niche market of women as gadget users [was] developing in the country.

While country reports such as Tanzania focused on the innovative use of mobile phones for women's empowerment, in India, a country where nearly half of the 150 million internet users were women.

Digital Empowerment Foundation points to a growing digital divide between urban and rural women:

> More women will be pulled online by their interests, social networks, and improved accessibility. However, without longterm, dedicated interventions, rural women will potentially fall farther behind, as will women and girls at the bottom of the social pyramid.

ICTs are often used for criminal purposes, such as in the case of women abductions in Argentina, or lead to similarly terrifying consequences, as in this example from Pakistan:

> [F]our women [were] killed in a remote northern village of Gizar Alitray, for being exposed as having a good time (clapping to song, humming) at a wedding function. A mobile phone recording of the event was put out in the public space over the internet to "dishonour" them and their families. As a result, the women were murdered to recover family/tribe "honour".

While databases and "the production of information" were seen as critical to enlivening rights discourse in Ecuador – access to information was foregrounded by four reports – countries such as the Republic of Korea showed how delicate privacy issues became in the context of digitising the personal information of victims of domestic and sexual violence. The roll-out of an e-government initiative could be fraught: "The fact that the government forced the [Integrated Social Welfare Network] on victims whose lives are threatened and are hiding in shelters shows that the administration values efficient work processes over the human rights of victims."

While Colnodo clearly identified different cases of VAW in Colombia – a typology of violations is given – there "[were] no specific initiatives for the prevention of this violence." In Iran, Volunteer Activists wrote that "virtual violence against women [was] a malfunction of the internet":

> According to statistics, "desecration" [was] the second most common internet crime. Humiliation and disrespect, often through mobile phone text messages, threatening women with publishing their private photos on the net, and blackmailing them or their families [were] some prevalent methods.

As Bytes for All Pakistan put it, "[t]hese cases ... are illustrative of the growing vulnerability of women in the face of expanding trends of teledensity and internet [access]."

Table 15: Summary of topics – Women's rights, gender and ICTs

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
Violence against women (VAW) online	9	Argentina, Bangladesh, Colombia, DRC, Iran, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Rwanda, Venezuela	19
Youth and girls	6	Bolivia, Cameroon, Iraq, Nigeria, Philippines, Rwanda	13
Advocacy campaigns	6	Canada, India, Iraq, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru	13
ICT sector, business	6	Costa Rica, Iran, Nepal, Rwanda, Spain, US	13
Capacity building	6	Indonesia, Iran, Rwanda, Spain, Uruguay	13
Empowerment	5	Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Tanzania, Uruguay	11
Access	5	Cameroon, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Jamaica, Romania	11
Participation and inclusion	4	Brazil, Cook Islands, Syria, Venezuela	9
Movements and activists	4	Bulgaria, Italy, Japan, Jordan	9
Violence against women, general	4	Ecuador, Iraq, Korea, Venezuela	9
Censorship, blocking	4	China, Jordan, Netherlands, South Africa	9
Social media and networking	4	Côte d'Ivoire, India, Peru, Syria	9
Access to information	4	Ecuador, Netherlands, South Africa, Syria	9
Education	3	Bolivia, Iran, Rwanda	6
Rural issues	3	Cameroon, Ethiopia, Indonesia	6
Awareness raising	3	Canada, Iraq, Uganda	6
Entrepreneurship	3	Ethiopia, India, Tanzania	6
Health	3	India, Netherlands, Tanzania	6
General overview	3	Nepal, Romania, Switzerland	6
Policy, legislation and regulation	3	New Zealand, Romania, Uganda	6
Sexuality, sexual rights and freedom	2	Bolivia, Thailand	4
Cybercrime	2	Bolivia, Kenya	4
Leadership	2	Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire	4
Household workers	2	Jamaica, Uruguay	4
Voice	2	Jordan, Spain	4
Sexism	2	Romania, US	4
Freedom of expression	2	South Africa, US	4
Culture	2	Uganda, Iran	4
Labour rights	2	Uruguay, Venezuela	4
Safety online, LGBT, online communities, minorities, telecentres, indigenous communities, anonymity, hacktivists, crowdsourcing, mapping, exclusion, blogs, images used for advocacy, quotas, monitoring, politics, power, online activism, marginalisation, agriculture, use (of ICTs), video, reactionary backlash, privacy, e-government, social welfare, abortion, intermediaries and service providers, collaboration, mobile phones, religion		Bolivia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Peru, Tanzania, Uganda	

5.7.2. Overview of action steps

More than half the reports (24) called for policy and legislative change in their countries. The majority of these policy interventions involved legal requirements to prevent VAW (e.g. Argentina, Kenya, United States), while empowerment through access, capacity building and inclusion – such as through increasing the number of women entrepreneurs in the ICT sector (see Costa Rica) and participation in policy processes – was also addressed. In the Republic of Congo, the policy goals that would improve women's rights were stark and universal: "Pursue policies to bring electricity to rural and outlying zones."

Capacity building needs were addressed by 23 authors. These included building capacity among women to protect themselves online (e.g. Argentina), the capacity to "register complaints [of VAW] using electronic tools" (Peru), and the capacity of law enforcement agencies in dealing with VAW (e.g. Bangladesh). Women needed to be empowered to mainstream the use of the internet in their work, including rural women in the use of market data (India) and social media (Jordan). Capacity-building activities included developing school-level curricula on privacy and how to deal with negative repercussions when this privacy was violated (e.g. Thailand). There was the need to create supportive conditions so that female IT students could complete their studies, for example, if they were pregnant (see Costa Rica). Capacity-building roles for the private sector were also envisaged (e.g. offering mentorships and setting up information platforms for women – see Rwanda).

Awareness raising (21) activities included "mechanisms to warn against dangerous sites on the internet" (Argentina); launching online campaigns against VAW (Colombia); sharing information on missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada in demanding justice; and raising awareness of important gaps in legislation, such as in Nigeria, where the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) had not been recognised in local law. In Rwanda, the government needed to "create an environment that empowers and encourages girls and young women to consider careers in the growing field of ICTs." In some countries, the extent of patriarchal attitudes with regard to power – and the extent of the exclusion of women from the processes of power – were evident, such as in the DRC, where there was the need to "raise awareness of the benefits of including women and the opinions of women in decision-making," or in Pakistan, where efforts were necessary to change the "perception and treatment" of women so that they could be seen as "individuals with equal capabilities, rights and responsibilities as men." Awareness among women of their rights also needed to be raised (see Nepal). Intermediaries included the media, and in countries like Kenya, where there was the need to "build the capacity of media partners to report on online violence against women," both capacity building and awareness raising steps were usefully combined.

Fourteen authors felt that access to information was a crucial tool in the empowerment of women – more so than developing content (2), the latter including the development of "games, videos and audio" on abortion (the Netherlands). Action steps aimed at raising voices (14) included "listening to women's stories of harassment [and flagging] abusive content on Twitter" (United States) and citizen mobilisation against VAW. Nine authors recommended actions directed at inclusion and participation. There was a need to include women in the ICT sector as entrepreneurs and business leaders, and in the political sphere.

Networks and alliances (9) were necessary to petition international courts on gender violations (in Venezuela) and in forming a "digital bystander group" to develop "shared peer norms, and express online support for ethical use of digital communications" (New Zealand). Actions aimed at building trust and confidence (8) involved working with girls, parents and teachers to "combat the stereotypes in relation to gender and technology" (Costa Rica), building the confidence of women to report online violations (DRC), and creating online or virtual safe spaces for women that can be "[used] with a sense of security" (Japan).

A number of research (7) needs addressed VAW, such as the need for "people-centred research to collect incidents of hate speech and violence against women online" (United States), and developing an understanding of the experience of trafficked women and the role of ICTs in this trafficking in Argentina. Other research needs included the "impact of Anonymous activism in advocating for the protection and promotion of women's rights" in Canada, "measuring and quantifying" issues to do with privacy in Japan, and case study research documenting the process of passing legislation for "future analysis and record" in Uganda.

Table 16: Summary of action steps – Women's rights, gender and ICTs

Action step	No.	Country	%
Policy development	24	Argentina, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, DRC, Egypt, India, Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Korea, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Thailand, US, Uruguay, Venezuela	51
Capacity building	23	Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Côte d'Ivoire, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Netherlands, Peru, Rwanda, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Uruguay, Venezuela	49
Awareness raising	21	Argentina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, DRC, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Rwanda, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, Uruguay	45
Access to information	14	Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, DRC, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Switzerland, Venezuela	30
Raising voices	14	Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Italy, Netherlands, Pakistan, Romania, Uganda, US, Venezuela	30
Access	11	Cameroon, Canada, Rep. of Congo, India, Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain	23
Policy implementation	9	Colombia, Cook Islands, DRC, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Switzerland, US, Venezuela	19
Inclusion and participation	9	Brazil, Bulgaria, India, Côte d'Ivoire, Jordan, Nepal, New Zealand, US, Uruguay	19
Network and alliance building	9	Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Romania, Syria, US, Venezuela	19
Building confidence and trust	8	Canada, Costa Rica, DRC, India, Japan, Rwanda, Spain, US	17
Research	7	Argentina, Canada, India, Iran, Japan, Uganda, US	15
Collaboration	7	Bangladesh, Colombia, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan	15
Monitoring	7	Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, Korea, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Switzerland	15
Funding	7	Cameroon, Costa Rica, Rep. of Congo, Jamaica, Netherlands, Pakistan, Venezuela	15
Services	4	Pakistan, Peru, Thailand, Venezuela	9
Fostering dialogue	3	Bulgaria, Kenya, Uruguay	6
Coordination	3	India, Jamaica, Uruguay	6
Content development	2	Rep. of Congo, Netherlands	4
Developing tools	1	Tanzania	2
Gender, women	0		0

5.8. Communications surveillance in the digital age (2014)

5.8.1. Summary of topics

The 56 country reports published in 2014 were written at a critical time. They appeared a year after the revelations by Edward Snowden of the so-called "Five Eyes network", linking some of the most powerful countries in a global surveillance programme. There were also fresh threats of terrorism in countries such as Kenya – KICTANet had already pointed to the problematic impact of surveillance on rights in its 2008 report; the intensification of regional conflicts; and a drift towards authoritarianism in many states. Alarming parallels in Japan were made between the rise of totalitarianism ahead of World War II and what was happening then in that country.

The reports reinforced the idea that human rights were under threat globally. Common to most was that states – frequently with the cooperation of business – were acting illegally: their actions were neither in line with national constitutional requirements, nor with a progressive interpretation of global human rights standards. In the Republic of Korea:

> Communications surveillance, [...] which [had] insufficient legal control given the rapid development of the internet and mobile technologies, [had] largely extended the power of the police and the intelligence agency beyond the law.

Most authors (25) foregrounded policy, legislative and regulatory issues in this context – a typical scenario being governments attempting to rush through legislation without proper parliamentary discussion or due policy process and with scant reference to human rights standards or reporting by the media. Typically the right to privacy was under threat in surveillance legislation when it existed, while the limits of data retention and access to this data were often not reasonably circumscribed. The country reports reflected this, with 12 authors focusing on issues to do with data retention and protection, and eight addressing privacy issues. Only sometimes were there victories for privacy rights and for transparency – perhaps the most notable being the European Union (EU) cancelling its data retention directive, with a mixed knock-down effect on national legislation among EU members.

As numerous reports pointed out, defining who was or was not a threat to the state often depended on the regime in power, democratically elected or not. In the words of the chairperson of Aware Girls in Pakistan:

> I was shocked when I was told that I and my social media communications had been under surveillance for last three years... In my communication with the agencies it was clear that my work for peace and human rights was seen as "anti-state", and I was seen as an enemy rather than an activist.

Syria (Karim Bitar) showed how, during a national strike, even the children and families of striking union members were surveilled:

> Firstly, the police acquired all the mobile communication records of union members and their families, including schoolchildren, and tracked the real-time location of their mobile phones – the mobile service providers had offered to provide this at ten-minute intervals for several months.

Despite revelations such as those by Snowden, many country situations were still shrouded in secrecy, and typical of country reports exploring new territories, a number of authors (18) wrote general overviews of their country situations.

Nodo TAU reminded us that even if governments were transparent about their new programmes to capture and centralise data – in that case biometric data in Argentina – and emphasised the positive aspects of these programmes, the potential for them to be used in the future by others in ways that violated the rights of ordinary citizens remained. The Syria country report pointed out that less-democratic states had little impetus to not surveil their citizens. Many in totalitarian regimes, the author argued, suffered a kind of double surveillance, and were subject to the spying by world powers and their own governments: "It is not unrealistic to imagine this to turn into a global overlapping 'spaghetti' of surveillance programmes where everyone is spying on everyone else."

The complicity of business in surveillance needed to be addressed by civil society. While some service providers seemed to be making attempts at transparency by releasing statistics of government requests for information, many did not. Technology companies that made surveillance tools in the first place were a big part of the problem (three authors drew attention to the kinds of surveillance technology and software used).

Obscenely, in Nigeria, there was the allegation that the systems employed there were "tested" on Palestinians.

There were numerous cases of companies illegally spying on their employees, whether through monitoring correspondence or even telephonic communications. Marketing data – tracked and acquired without permission from the public – was a form of corporate surveillance.

A citizen-driven, balanced approach to legislating surveillance was necessary, with the recognition that some measure of surveillance was in the interests of public safety. Mireille Raad, writing on Lebanon, put this clearly: "Many argue that online privacy is a human right, while others insist that it is a negotiated contract between the state and its citizens – a contract in which citizens exchange some of their data in return for national security." Three authors foregrounded the need for citizen oversight of surveillance programmes.

Under threat was the idea of the internet as a free, open space that promoted democracy. "In mainland China the internet and everything in it can reasonably be viewed as public space – that is, ultimately belonging to the state," the author of its country report, Danwei, contended. In the UK, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) – the counterpart of the National Security Agency (NSA) in the US – had said: "[W]e are starting to 'master' the Internet... And our current capability is quite impressive... We are in a Golden Age." In this context, as in Switzerland, privacy became a "privilege", not a right. Elsewhere, activists were going "offline" out of necessity and safety. In Indonesia, Papuan activists said: "Now I only trust face-to-face communication. I rarely use the telephone to talk about sensitive issues."

Table 17: Summary of topics – Communications surveillance

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
Policy, legislation and regulation	25	Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, India, Japan, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Tunisia, UK, Zimbabwe	45
General overview	18	Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Indonesia, Korea, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Senegal, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda, UK, Uruguay, Yemen	32
Data retention, protection	12	Canada, Chile, Brazil, Rep. of Congo, Hungary, Jamaica, Korea, Kosovo, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic	21
Privacy	8	Australia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Slovak Republic, Sudan, Switzerland	14
Oversight	3	Argentina, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica	5
Surveillance technology and software	3	Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela	5
Intermediaries and service providers	3	Bulgaria, Hungary, Jamaica	5
Principles and standards	3	Kosovo, Thailand, US	5
Biometrics	2	Argentina, Rwanda	4
Hacking	2	Colombia, Yemen	4
Freedom of expression	2	India, Jordan	4
Media	2	Jordan, South Africa	4
Censorship, blocking	2	Bangladesh, China	4
Cybercrime	2	Chile, Peru	4
Online security, online activism, business, microblogs, elections, health, right to know, emergency law, terrorism, facial recognition, banking, access to information, campaigns, mobile phones, media, referendum, civil war, women and gender, social media and networks		Australia, Bahrain, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kenya, Lebanon, Peru, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, Switzerland, Syria, Uganda, Venezuela	

5.8.2. Overview of action steps

Most authors (38) saw a need to address the issue of surveillance through policy, legislative and regulatory interventions. These included developing a first-level legal framework to regulate surveillance activities, including protecting privacy, strengthening a civil rights framework for the internet (in particular, Marco Civil in Brazil, which had been passed in April 2014), and ensuring that surveillance laws were in line with national, regional and global freedoms charters and human rights obligations.[26] Policy implementation (10), so that laws that already existed were respected by authorities, and the monitoring of that implementation (10) were also considered important by authors. Monitoring mechanisms included appointing an independent "communications interception commissioner" (Cameroon), "active public oversight" (Chile) and, more broadly, the "periodic monitoring of threats to internet freedom" according to specific indicators (in New Zealand).

Given the relatively low public awareness of surveillance in their countries, awareness raising was also considered critical by the majority of authors (32), including raising awareness among the public about surveillance and, in the case of Pakistan, "ways to counter it through digital security tools and skills." It was important to "create awareness of the Snowden revelations and how the state and telcos have cooperated with the NSA [the National Security Agency in the United States]" in the Philippines; in Zimbabwe it was important to "build public support for legislative reforms by raising awareness on the right to privacy and its relevance to Zimbabweans' livelihoods and their democratic well-being"; and in Russia there was a need to conduct "outreach programmes" to make the public aware of the social and economic advantages of a free and open internet, and to lobby the government "not to suppress free expression online." Awareness raising could entail some risk taking. It was important in Thailand to "give [the public] examples so that they can see what they stand to gain and lose from a surveillance society," and – linking awareness raising to capacity building – to give them the "tools" to protect their privacy online. However, this should "be done with care, as it [was] uncertain if the junta [would] consider such actions to be illegal." In Uganda, awareness-raising programmes to sensitise the public to privacy laws and citizen rights – the "pros and cons of the online environment" – should be run by the government, private sector and civil society.

Linked to this, access to information was seen as important by seven authors, including governments and surveillance technology vendors sharing information on the "kind of [surveillance] technology used" (Bahrain). Information should be shared in "a format citizens [could] understand and use" (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Capacity building was a priority for 14 authors, and included training civil society (e.g. in personal data security), as well as actors such as "staff in the judiciary, the [Costa Rican Social Security System] and the legislature" on "issues such as citizen surveillance, security and data privacy" (Costa Rica, see also Senegal). It was also necessary to "strengthen the ability of activists to debate" on principles such as the International Principles on the Application of Human Rights to Communications Surveillance. School-level curricula on internet freedoms needed to be developed (e.g. Turkey and Romania). While general stakeholders such as the "public" were sometimes seen as necessary beneficiaries of capacity-building imperatives, WOUGNET in Uganda saw a need to specifically build the capacity of women to be safe online, linking the online vulnerability of women to violations and surveillance.

While collaboration between stakeholders (8) and the need to foster dialogue (10) spoke of creating cooperative spaces for engagement, a number of authors felt the need for more strident demands to be made – categorised as "raising voices" (9) – and new alliances and networks to be sought (9). In Argentina, for example, activists needed to "demand more transparency and accountability from the government" with respect to the use of biometric information; in Bangladesh, civil society needed to "speak up" on the unconstitutionality of surveillance provisions in the country's ICT Act amendment; while in Zimbabwe, new alliances with "like-minded regional organisations" needed to be forged in order to lobby for state compliance with international obligations.

The need for further research was proposed by a number of authors (6), including a comparative study on a citizen-centred approach to surveillance (Bangladesh) to see "what other countries have done and what they have achieved," and an in-depth analysis of "existing administrative and legal frameworks" in Bulgaria to benchmark current surveillance activities. Civil society also needed to "present researched alternatives to exist-

26 For example, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations affirmation of privacy as a fundamental right.

ing communications surveillance regimes that enhance respect for basic rights and freedoms" to contribute to a policy review process in South Africa.

Few authors overall in the 10 years focused on the need for technical tools such as apps to be developed, and, perhaps surprisingly in this context, this low level of attention to developing technical solutions continued. (Authors do propose building capacity and training people in the use of technical tools, however.)

Table 18: Summary of action steps – Communications surveillance

Action step	No.	Country	%
Policy development	38	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Lebanon, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, UK, US, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe	68
Awareness raising	32	Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, US, Zimbabwe	57
Capacity building	14	Bahrain, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Jamaica, Lebanon, New Zealand, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Slovak Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda	25
Policy implementation	10	Cameroon, Kenya, Kosovo, Mexico, Poland, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Uganda, Uruguay, Venezuela	18
Monitoring	10	Australia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Korea, New Zealand, Pakistan, Poland, South Africa, Venezuela	18
Fostering dialogue	10	Costa Rica, Lebanon, Mexico, Philippines, Russia, Serbia, Switzerland, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen	18
Raising voices	9	Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Korea, Mexico, Pakistan, Slovak Republic, Turkey	16
Network and alliance building	9	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Yemen, Zimbabwe	16
Collaboration	8	Bolivia, Costa Rica, Korea, Nepal, Romania, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen	14
Access to information	7	Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Chile, Hungary, Philippines, Uruguay	13
Building confidence and trust	6	Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Japan, Serbia, Turkey	11
Research	6	Argentina, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, South Africa, Uganda, Yemen	11
Inclusion and participation	5	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Slovak Republic	9
Coordination	4	Bolivia, Cameroon, Rep. of Congo, Mexico	7
Access	3	India, Nigeria, Yemen	5
Content development	3	Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia	5
Gender, women	2	Australia, Uganda	4
Funding	1	Rep. of Congo	2
Services	1	Rwanda	2
Developing tools	1	Thailand	2

5.9. Sexual rights and the internet (2015)

5.9.1. Summary of topics

Inevitably, many of the 57 country reports dealt with the rights of marginalised LGBTIQ communities (20), and the effectiveness of and challenges faced by pro-LGBTIQ campaigns online. While the internet offered a place of refuge, expression and support for LGBTIQ communities, more and more, this refuge could be vulnerable, transient, invaded. LGBTIQ activists were surveilled (3), subject to hate campaigns, had their emails hacked, and were beaten up. While three reports highlighted an online reactionary backlash against LGBTIQ communities, a number of previous GISWatch authors declined the invitation to write a report, stating that it was too dangerous to do so. In some countries, such as Sudan, the persecution of the LGBTIQ community was public and brutal: "Nineteen men were lashed 30 times and fined 1,000 Sudanese pounds each. Their offence: ross-dressing and 'womanly behaviour' at a private party." In Yemen homosexuality was punishable by death. Activism, in these contexts, was dangerous:

> The circulation of the information, which the government considers "immoral and against religion and tradition", puts the group's leaders at risk. Fatima, as well as others active in Freedom-Sudan campaigns, faces many challenges and difficulties. Her email account and Facebook page have been hacked several times. She received threatening messages, and her family and relatives have also been targeted. She has been forced to hide her identity on the internet and to stop her public activities defending LGBT rights.

Specific analyses of legal environments for sexual rights were also foregrounded in reports (13). For example, while Jinbonet wrote about anti-discrimination legislation and hate speech in the Republic of Korea, Alternatives considered the legal response to cyber misogyny in Canada, while Institut International de la Recherche Scientifique in Morocco looked at a then recently drafted criminal law that attempted to deal with the same. The active role of religious, cultural and patriarchal establishments in squashing sexual rights was a frequent concern – same-sex marriages and arguing for the right of same-sex couples to adopt brought activists in clear conflict with institutions, notably the Catholic Church (four reports consider the role of religion in the context of sexuality). China offers a provocative alternative to same-sex marriages in so-called "contract marriages" – a phenomenon widespread in Asia – arguing that this poses a challenge to global feminist discourse. A similar cultural challenge to rights is presented by Japan, where freedom of expression (3) advocates are in conflict with anti-child pornography advocates in the context of child pornography cartoons. Palestine shows the link between state surveillance and sexual harassment, while Nigeria suggests that sexual rights can be used as a diversion during presidential campaigns to distract from the issue of illegal state surveillance.

In a number of countries, there were positive developments. Australia offered a colourful account of how sexual rights could, over time, start to be incorporated into the mainstream:

> 1978 saw violent clashes between police and marchers in the first ever Gay Pride protest march in Sydney. A decade later police led the Mardi Gras parade, saluting the sexually diverse community, honouring the '78ers as they have become known, and celebrating drag queen iconoclasts.

In Bangladesh, institutional programmes recognised and supported third-gender people.

Reports dealt with the rights of sex workers (2). Cooperativa Eines (Spain) showed how the so-called "hacker ethic" that played with the ideas of anonymity and publicity could also be effectively used to express solidarity with sex worker rights. In interviews with sex workers in Costa Rica, Sulá Batsú pointed out how securing the rights of sex workers involved understanding the violations of rights on several levels at once:

> Maria's case is evidence of how discrimination for being an immigrant, a woman and poor, in addition to the stereotypes associated to her work and the violence sex workers experience, were multiplied by the disregard of privacy on social networks and the unauthorised use of online content by traditional media.

Six authors discussed censorship, blocking and filtering, including in the context of pornography (5).

The way in which sexual rights campaigns (9) were communicated was crucial to activists. In Ukraine, despite it being controversial among some feminists, Femen's public politicisation of the naked body stood out. In Lebanon, popular support for Jackie Chamoun, the Olympic skier who was

criticised for posing semi-naked for a sports calendar, went viral – showing how support for sexual expression and rights could be a spontaneous and a widely supported concern.

Sex education in schools (7) was a key issue addressed by authors, while teenagers and sexuality was addressed by five authors. Nodo TAU offered a useful first-base analysis of ICT and sexual education programmes in Argentina, suggesting that a sexual education curriculum that worked from the real-world experiences of learners as digital natives was missing. The Netherlands promoted a culture of mediation in schools – the poldermodel – in cases of criminal sexting, rather than a legal response. Brazil also suggested that legal remedies to school-level sexual cyber bullying and shaming were not the answer; rather, the structural causes of how this occurs in the first place needed to be understood and remedied: "Teenagers [were]simply mirroring the structures of the adult world they [found] themselves in."

Table 19: Summary of topics – Sexual rights and the internet

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
LGBTIQ people, communities, issues	20	Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, DRC, Brazil, Ecuador, India, Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malawi, Montenegro, Peru, Russia, Serbia, Sudan	35
Policy, legislation and regulation	13	Canada, Chile, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Morocco, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Switzerland, UK	23
Violence against women (VAW) online	9	Canada, Chile, Italy, Morocco, Palestine, Panama, Philippines, Romania, Uruguay	16
Campaigns	9	Croatia, Dominican Republic, Kosovo, Lebanon, Morocco, Peru, Romania, Spain, Ukraine	16
Education	7	Argentina, Croatia, Indonesia, Jamaica, Netherlands, Rwanda, Slovak Republic	12
General overview	6	Australia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Philippines, Sudan, Switzerland	11
Censorship, blocking, filtering	6	Egypt, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Turkey, UK	11
Pornography	5	Egypt, Iceland, Italy, Japan, UK	9
Online activism, movements	5	Ethiopia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Peru, Ukraine	9
Teenagers	5	Brazil, Indonesia, Jamaica, Paraguay, Rwanda	9
Access to information	4	Argentina, Chile, Indonesia, Rwanda	7
Practical interventions	4	Bolivia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Yemen	7
Activism, movements, general	4	Chile, Ecuador, Korea, Sudan	7
Hate speech	4	Colombia, Korea, Montenegro, Serbia	7
Repression	4	DRC, Egypt, Iraq, Russia	7
Religion	4	Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Philippines, Switzerland	7

Online safety	3	DRC, Jamaica, Paraguay	5
Surveillance	3	Chile, Nigeria, Palestine	5
Freedom of expression	3	Colombia, Japan, Korea	5
Reactionary backlash	3	Croatia, Dominican Republic, Russia	5
Awareness raising	3	Croatia, Macedonia, Romania	5
Feminism	3	Iceland, Japan, Ukraine	5
Girls, children	3	Jamaica, Paraguay, Rwanda	5
Identity	3	Kenya, Netherlands, Philippines	5
Marriage	3	China, Ecuador, Nigeria	5
Drag	2	Australia, Bulgaria	4
Minorities	2	Bangladesh, Italy	4
Child abuse	2	Bolivia, Italy	4
Online sex	2	Brazil, Indonesia	4
Abortion	2	Chile, Dominican Republic	4
Privacy	2	Colombia, Macedonia	4
Sex workers	2	Costa Rica, Spain	4
Access	2	Costa Rica, Jamaica	4
Gender equality	2	Jamaica, Malawi	4
Empowerment	2	Netherlands, Spain	4
Harassment offline	2	Egypt, Yemen	4
Chat rooms, social media and networks, sexual violence, monitoring, culture, conservatism, female genital mutilation, masculinity, visibility, community building, anonymity, voice, safe spaces, employment, ICT sector, access to justice, reproductive rights, stigmatisation, media, sexual rights, sex workers		China, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Japan, Kenya, Macedonia, Malawi, Palestine, Philippines, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand	

5.9.2. Overview of action steps

Both awareness raising (36) and policy and legislative development (31) were dominating concerns for civil society in this context. There was a need to raise awareness of reproductive and privacy rights for women among the population and health workers in Chile, while it was necessary to promote adolescent reproductive and sexual health rights and services in Jamaica (the right to abortion was a campaign issue in the Dominican Republic). In a number of countries, campaigns were necessary to create open and safe environments for the LGBTIQ community online. In Kazakhstan, donors needed to support programmes aimed at "sensitising journalists" on gender issues and LGBTIQ rights, to "encourage

progressive standards of reporting." In Iraq, activists working for sexual freedom needed to "hide their identity" and were part of a "semi-underground movement" to protect their safety. There was a need to raise awareness internationally of their plight. In Bangladesh awareness-raising and capacity-building campaigns were necessary so that "members of the third gender community [could] represent themselves with dignity and self-esteem." Action in the classroom was necessary. In Colombia teachers needed to be "educate[d]" on sexual diversity and rights and school-level programmes developed, and in Argentina there was a need to "[m]ake the links between technology and sexual education in the classroom more explicit" so that a "common base of understanding" across schools could be shared (see also Indonesia where a collective approach to the revision of the school syllabus was required).

Policy change needs included laws to protect children online while also ensuring their sexual rights (e.g. Paraguay, Rwanda), aligning local laws with international treaties and instruments on the rights of women and gender and sexual minorities (e.g. the Philippines), laws against hate speech (e.g. Serbia, Switzerland), constitutional guarantees protecting sexual orientation (e.g. Thailand, Turkey), the decriminalisation of homosexuality in India, and lobbying against a ban on same-sex marriage in Nigeria. In Bangladesh, the rights of third-gender people to access employment opportunities, and government services such as health and education needed to be recognised legally.

Although a specific focus on women was only found in two reports, action steps to address women's rights were listed by 19 reports. This included creating "dedicated spaces for women that offer[ed] information on sexualities and forums to connect with each other" (Albania), working with the women's movement in Morocco in the push for a law against gender-based violence, campaigning alongside anti-female genital mutilation activists in the Gambia, and addressing VAW in Romania, among others.

The need for capacity building was raised by 17 authors – for example, building the capacity of both institutions and civil society on online protection and privacy rights in Macedonia, and training in digital security and privacy for LGBT communities in Malawi "to empower them to safely organise online without being surveilled" (see also Kenya).

Building confidence and trust online was a high priority in this context for 15 authors. Words such as "support", "help", "safe" and "dedicated spaces" were used more frequently in this context than on other themes. Also in Malawi, "safe online and offline spaces for sincere and honest conversations about sex and sexuality needed to be created," while in Rwanda there was a need to build the "confidence of parents to discuss reproductive health with the children openly." Children needed to be empowered to be safe online (e.g. UK), while in Albania there was a need for "[d]edicated online counselling and the sharing of information [that] could help LGBTI people help themselves and accept themselves."

Building networks and alliances was a key way to create supportive environments, and 12 authors identify this as an important action step. Collaboration (10) was important. This included a multistakeholder advisory group on VAW in Brazil and, in Panama, a commission made up of the "three branches of the Panamanian state", civil society and the private sector on legislation to protect sexual rights online.

Research (12) is comparatively high on the list of advocacy priorities. In Sudan there was a need to "conduct further research into sexuality and sexual rights online" in order to "understand the specific possibilities and levers for advocacy and change"; in Canada a dedicated office "tasked with data collection, research and recommendations on implementing and creating laws" to address online misogyny was needed; and more research was needed on how child pornography in comics – so-called loli-con – might cause harm in Japan. Only one author identified the need for technical tools to be developed,[27] illustrating the low level of attention given to technical development and programmes by activists writing here overall – clearly, anonymity apps, as well as mapping tools, such as those that allow the tracking of online violations, or offer response services to violations, among others, would be appropriate to this context.

27 Security tools needed to be developed to ensure the online safety of the LGBT community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Table 20: Summary of action steps – Sexual rights and the internet

Action step	No.	Country	%
Awareness raising	36	Albania, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Gambia, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kosovo, Lebanon, Macedonia, Panama, Peru, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Serbia, Seychelles, Spain, Sudan, Turkey, Uruguay, Gambia	63
Policy development	31	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Gambia, India, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Korea, Macedonia, Malawi, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Serbia, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, UK, Uruguay	54
Gender, women	19	Albania, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Gambia, Jamaica, Japan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Philippines, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Yemen	33
Capacity building	17	Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, DRC, Costa Rica, Croatia, Kenya, Macedonia, Malawi, Netherlands, Panama, Romania, Rwanda, Serbia, Sudan, Turkey	30
Building confidence and trust	15	Albania, Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Malawi, Romania, Rwanda, Seychelles, Ukraine	26
Network and alliance building	12	DRC, Croatia, Ecuador, Gambia, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Montenegro, Nigeria, Sudan, Switzerland	21
Research	12	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Ethiopia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Netherlands, Palestine, Sudan	21
Access to information	11	Albania, Australia, Croatia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Malawi, Montenegro, Philippines, Russia, Seychelles	19
Collaboration	10	Albania, Australia, Croatia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Malawi, Montenegro, Philippines, Russia, Seychelles	18
Policy implementation	9	Bolivia, Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Panama, Romania, Serbia, Seychelles, Uruguay, Yemen	16
Content development	9	Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro, Seychelles	16
Fostering dialogue	8	Colombia, Costa Rica, Iceland, Japan, Malawi, Netherlands, Panama, Uruguay	14
Raising voices	8	Albania, Montenegro, Morocco, Peru, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sudan	14
Inclusion and participation	8	Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, Iceland, Malawi, Philippines, Spain, UK	14
Monitoring	6	Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Kosovo, Paraguay, Rwanda	11
Funding	5	Kazakhstan, Palestine, Russia, Sudan, Yemen	9
Services	5	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Kazakhstan, Malawi	9
Access	4	Albania, Australia, Ethiopia, Paraguay	7
Coordination	2	Dominican Republic, Palestine	4
Developing tools	1	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2

5.10. Economic, social and cultural rights and the internet (2016)

5.10.1. Summary of topics

The 45 country reports published in 2016 illustrated the link between the internet and economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs). As in previous years, authors were asked to select what they considered an important issue to discuss in their reports – and the topics covered could be thought of as indicative of at least some of the key possibilities and challenges facing countries when it comes to using the internet as an enabler of ESCRs. Some of these were likely to be familiar to ICT4D activists: the right to health (7), education (10) and culture (4); the socioeconomic empowerment of women using the internet (7); rural (3) and indigenous communities (3); and using ICT to address the marginalisation of local languages (3). Others dealt with relatively new areas of exploration, such as participatory community mapping of services, institutions and landmarks in Spain, the negative impact of algorithms on calculating social benefits in Poland, the use of 3D printing technology to preserve cultural heritage in Syria, and crowdfunding (2). Workplace and workers' rights (5) received some attention, as did the use of the internet in natural disasters (1) and discussions on the rights of displaced people (2). E-government (11) is the most common topic addressed by authors in this context. However, the spread of topics showed how many different areas of activity using the internet are relevant to ESCRs. These topics were often cross-cutting in concern – for example, the place of indigenous languages in the classroom, or the workers' rights of women in factories. The reports also suggested that in many instances – whether in mapping their immediate surroundings, starting an online TV station, or resuscitating a national museum – individuals, groups and communities were using the internet to enact their socioeconomic and cultural rights in the face of disinterest, inaction or even censure by the state.

An anxiety around the fate of local and indigenous languages – an issue that is both political and practical – could be felt in countries such as Nigeria, Peru and Argentina. In Nigeria, where "[u]p to 400 minority Nigerian languages [were] considered endangered, with 152 of them at risk of extinction," the official language is English – both the language of colonisation and, in that country, predominantly of the internet. As Fantsuam Foundation wrote:

> The level of internet access available to communities who speak marginalised languages is not reported on in Nigeria's access statistics. However, if we consider the sizes of the population groups that speak endangered languages, and that many of these groups live in rural areas and cannot speak English, we can guess that internet access is low.

The Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú described the structural exclusion of indigenous groups as "linguistic discrimination" – a discrimination that Peru's online phonetics project Mapa Sonoro,[28] literally a "Sound Map", tried to challenge. The project was an attempt to give visibility (or "audiobility") to marginalised languages for educational purposes – there were 47 indigenous languages spoken by as little as 14% of the population.

In a useful first-hand analysis of the Qom indigenous people living in Los Pumitas outside Rosario in Argentina, Nodo TAU found that 8.5% of this urbanised community could not read or write in Spanish. This required sensitive facilitation in community e-literacy workshops: "Those who do not use the computer as a tool, who can't recognise letters or form words, can easily be ashamed by those who do, and who work faster." As the authors also found, visibility is one thing, but sustained visibility that results in ongoing socioeconomic agency for indigenous communities is another. "Everything always costs us more and more," said Oscar Talero, a Qom living in Los Pumitas, who added:

> The culture is here, in the territory, the language, our customs; we have shamans, healers, midwives in the community. We have all that. We want to work with the state and they have to give us sustainability. If they do not, what we propose cannot be done and cannot be seen.

The issue of local languages was picked up in Macedonia's country report, which pointed to the absence of a local-language curriculum in the state's e-education programme. Country assessments of state programmes in schools were largely critical, and in some respects despairing. They were described as "slow" (Kenya) or in the case of Kosovo, a "story of lost opportunities". While KICTANet suggested a more upbeat perspective was necessary – "the country's youth [were] not sitting around waiting for laptops to

28 www.mapasonoro.cultura.pe

arrive in the classrooms... they [had already] colonised devices" – in Macedonia, the Computer for Every Child programme was a "prime example that show[ed] that simply adding computers and internet to an outdated curriculum [did] not result in a modern teaching practice and curriculum – it just result[ed] in an outdated curriculum with computers and internet."

One exception was Uruguay's Ceibal programme which, despite the obstacles it faced, had reportedly managed to connect over 50% of the country's poorest households to the internet. The programme offered an interesting example of how an e-education initiative could be used to enable the socioeconomic rights of communities generally, and how education policies can speak more broadly to social inclusion.

Seven authors focused on the right to health, a generally neglected topic in other years. In the Philippines, although the Aquino government "recognised public health as a key measure of good governance," challenges in its e-health interventions persisted, including "data manipulation by healthcare workers, system compatibility between agencies, and data portability." It was unclear if these would be remedied under the country's then-new regime, preoccupied with its war on illegal drugs and encouraging vigilantism against addicts rather than building rehabilitation centres. "Public health," wrote the Foundation for Media Alternatives, "does not appear to be a major concern."

In Venezuela, a country wracked by food and medicine shortages, stories had emerged of citizens forced to barter medicines using social media in a desperate attempt to secure critical drugs (as one commentator put it, "social networks [were] the new pharmacy in Venezuela"). EsLaRed reported that shortages in medicines were as high as 85%, and costs for some drugs had risen 75%. In its response, the government had set up centralised database systems linking supermarkets and pharmacies in order to monitor and control the supply and purchase of medicines and to limit hoarding.

An interesting programme had been launched in Uganda with the aim of providing rural communities a voice when it came to their sexual and reproductive health rights. So-called community health advocates were recruited, equipped with smartphones, and trained in the country's legal and policy health rights framework, as well as in the effective use of social media. According to the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, government community forums (Barazas) were ineffective in providing a platform for health concerns. The community health advocates offered some measure of accountability in a context where "Ugandans, especially those in rural communities, rarely challenge the status quo."

The number of reports focusing on women and gender was higher than in most years – for example, few authors focused specifically on gender in the context of freedom of expression and association, transparency and accountability, or surveillance. In South Africa, a capabilities survey by Research ICT Africa suggested that "women [were] showing more inclination towards becoming economically empowered and seem[ed] to identify the internet as a medium that can allow them to achieve this." In Yemen, two women – Safa'a and Afnan – had managed to keep their online cake business going despite the war in that country which forced many others to shut down their businesses: "The war has impacted on our business severely. Exported material we used for our products has doubled in price... [L]eaving the house to get decoration items... has become difficult given the state of insecurity."

In Cambodia, the plight of women garment factory workers had received international recognition because of the internet campaigning by human rights organisations: "More and more consumers [were] critically rethinking the consequences of fast and cheap fashion." This had placed significant pressure on the government and the industry in the country – the minimum wage for garment factory workers had more than doubled over the past five years, and, the author argued, social media had played an important part in that.

While Panama suggested how a lack of regulation of the telework sector allowed for the exploitation of teleworkers, in the Democratic Republic of Congo outsourcing in the telecommunications sector had had a negative effect on workers' rights, allowing service providers to exploit the labour force. In the words of one telecoms employee, who was given the ultimatum of being re-employed by an outsourcing company or losing his job, "There was no choice. I needed a salary to sustain my family. So I continue doing the same job, with the same uniform, but receiving less money overnight."

The Seychelles offered an example of how many unions were underutilising the internet to secure workers' rights and boost their own visibility. The Seychelles Federation of Workers'

Unions was "thinking about starting a Facebook page," but this was tentative – social media, as one unionist suggested, was "3.5 million HR accidents waiting to happen."

Some country reports explored relatively new areas of technology and its application. In Syria, large-scale 3D printing and digital imaging were being used to document and replicate cultural heritage destroyed in the war. An open content approach underpinned several of the heritage projects in the country:

> By releasing these artefacts under permissive licences [...] the space for innovation is significantly widened. This openness would also assist the efforts to restore and reconstruct the actual [heritage] sites in Syria when the war ends.

In an interesting report, Panoptykon Foundation discussed how algorithms used to calculate social benefits in Poland – in a system ironically named Emp@thy – disempowered the beneficiaries. Exactly how the benefits were calculated remained opaque, even to civil servants, and beneficiaries were strictly limited in their opportunities to ask for a recalculation or to challenge the results:

> The criteria according to which a certain profile of assistance is attributed to a person remains unknown to the unemployed throughout the whole process of profiling. They remain unclear even to the staff involved in this process. The unemployed are also deprived of the right to obtain information about the logic behind profiling; in particular, they cannot verify how certain features affected the profile of assistance that was attributed to them.

A striking thread ran through many of the reports: how the internet enables citizen-led initiatives that claimed socioeconomic and cultural rights in the face of state disinterest, inactivity or even repression. Community networks set up as part of the CitizenSqKm project in Spain, for example, allowed citizens to map an "inventory of the 'things' in their neighbourhood, including institutions, services, historical landmarks and natural surroundings." It was a political-participatory process of reclaiming public data, information and knowledge and increasing civic engagement in a context of growing austerity and state control. In Ukraine, crowdfunding ensured the sustainability of Hromadske.TV, an independent internet TV station started by "15 young Ukrainian journalists", while in Lebanon, the crowdfunding of social projects by the Lebanese diaspora "can give Lebanese a way around official government dysfunction and corruption":

> It also shift[ed] the power dynamics – not just to wealthy Lebanese abroad, but to ordinary Lebanese citizens who [could] put their own hard-earned money towards causes they believ[ed] in rather than through government channels or those offered by big financial institutions. Crowdfunding [could] instill important liberal values like individual initiative, transparency, accountability and entrepreneurship.

The internet was a rich enabler of these forms of non-institutional processes, interventions and actions – whether by consumers appalled by the working conditions of women in factories in Asia, or indigenous people opening a telecentre in their community. Even the cultural heritage reclamation in Palmyra, Syria was the result of the frustration of "archaeological experts, volunteers and activists" who saw the heritage being destroyed.

The internet, as the country reports showed, had the potential to turn the latent need for participation and social inclusion into a kinetic enactment of rights.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina – a "society in perennial conflict over the recent past, and feverishly busy re-writing history to better serve ethnic divisions" – citizen volunteers re-opened the National Museum following state disinterest in allocating resources for its ongoing operation, a result of the "divisive framing of what 'national' means, and reflecting the tensions between the dominant ethnic groups." One World Platform argued this experience gave citizens a tangible sense of what it meant to have rights:

> In terms of the definition of state as "duty bearer" we can say that the revitalisation of the museum exposed the state for its incapacity and unwillingness to mobilise resources to protect the cultural rights of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The people working on the project experienced what it meant to be "rights holders" and were empowered to engage as individuals with rights in order to protect and promote their access to culture. The internet enabled their empowerment, and helped to expose the state's lack of political will.

Table 21: Summary of topics – ESCRs and the internet

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
E-government	11	Bangladesh, Chile, Kenya, Kosovo, Morocco, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Uruguay, Venezuela	24
Education	10	Benin, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Kenya, Kosovo, Macedonia, Morocco, Russia, Senegal, Uruguay	22
Health	7	Bangladesh, Chile, Republic of Congo, India, Philippines, Uganda, Venezuela	16
Women and gender	7	Cambodia, Morocco, Russia, South Africa, Sudan, Turkey, Yemen	16
Access	6	Benin, Italy, Nepal, Nigeria, Uruguay, Yemen	13
Worker/ workplace rights	5	Cambodia, DRC, Rwanda, Serbia, Seychelles	11
Culture	4	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Korea, Romania, Syria	9
Indigenous communities	3	Argentina, Rep. of Congo, Peru	7
Local languages	3	Benin, Nigeria, Peru	7
Voice	3	Colombia, Peru, Russia	7
Participation and inclusion	3	Colombia, Romania, Spain	7
General overview	3	Italy, Maldives, Switzerland	7
Access to information	3	Philippines, Spain, Yemen	7
Policy, legislation and regulation	3	Kosovo, Morocco, Panama	7
Marginalised communities	2	Benin, Chile	4
Capacity building	2	Benin, Colombia	4
Awareness raising	2	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia	4
Memory	2	Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina	4
ICT sector	2	Costa Rica, DRC	4
Rural issues	2	Costa Rica, India	4
Entrepreneurship	2	Costa Rica, Yemen	4
Appropriation of technology	2	Kenya, South Africa	4
Movements, alliances and mobilisation	2	Macedonia, Sudan	4
Crowdfunding	2	Lebanon, Ukraine	4
Displaced people	2	Italy, Nepal	4
LGBT, propaganda, hate speech, reactionary backlash, literacy, feminism, campaigns, celebrity censorship, conflict, mobile phones, economic growth and jobs, technology hubs, outsourcing, youth, copyright, podcasts, elections, open knowledge, natural disasters, tools/apps, telework, welfare, profiling, violence against women, freedom of expression, community networks, class, economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive rights, online TV, accountability, social media and networks, food, science and technology		Armenia, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, DRC, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Macedonia, Nepal, Panama, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yemen	

5.10.2. Overview of action steps

Awareness raising (27), policy and legislative development (27) and capacity building (23) were all action steps identified by more than half of the authors.

Awareness-raising activities were cross-cutting and dependent on the specific issue being addressed. They included using the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process to draw attention to the discrimination of the LGBT community in Armenia; raising awareness of the link between the internet and ESCRs among treaty bodies dealing with ESCRs – the Committee on ESCRs should "conduct a day of general discussion on the subject" (Poland); lobbying the government on the importance of "internet access that is affordable and appropriate, in particular for people living under the poverty line" in Benin; raising awareness of the rural digital hubs among "students, teachers, entrepreneurs, customers and politicians" in Costa Rica; online campaigns that highlight the plight of women working in the garment sector in Cambodia, focusing on "trade unions and worker's rights of association, unionisation, community organisations and on a free internet"; drawing trade union attention to the problem of outsourced labour in the telecoms sector in the DRC; and encouraging the media to report on issues such as cultural heritage (see Jordan).

The need for policy change was also context specific, and included developing policy proposals on socioeconomic rights that are "more responsive to the realities women face in everyday life" (Russia); amending the labour law in Serbia so that it provides legal clarity on the use of technology in the workplace in a "manner that would reduce the problem of legal uncertainty and would protect workers from the arbitrariness of the employers"; and creating laws to regulate private sector telehealth services in India. More general policy imperatives were also made, such as calling for the ratification of charters, conventions and protocols, including the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the European Social Charter (Switzerland). Related to this, the government in Venezuela was encouraged to take into account recommendations made by reviews such as the UPR (including its shadow reports by civil society organisations) or by the Organization of American States.

The centrality of access to the internet to enact ESCRs is indicated by the high priority given to increasing access for communities and marginalised groups by 18 authors. These included investing in ICT infrastructure to provide access to medical services (Bangladesh); school-level programmes, such as Ceibal in Uruguay; and the erection of mobile towers in India (alongside better regulation of mobile networks to ensure a better quality connectivity and prevent "undue profiteering by private telecom operators").

Collaboration among stakeholders is seen as important by 14 authors, while resource allocation (14) receives the highest attention in the context compared to other GISWatch themes. Examples of this include donors funding projects that preserve cultural heritage, including by "funding start-ups run by Bedouin women in remote areas (Jordan)" and, in Kenya, more funding for digital literacy and local content, while also leveraging the Universal Service Fund to increase access to the internet. Crowdfunding was a useful way to raise money, and in Lebanon regulatory changes were needed to allow banks to service crowdfunding platforms.

Research and innovation are also seen as important in this context (11) – including better internet access data for indigenous communities in Argentina, and evidence-based research on health financing in Bangladesh.

The pivotal role of access to appropriate content and information in using the internet to enable ESCRs is shown by the emphasis on content development (12) and access to information (9) by authors. Examples of content that needed to be developed included "content that [met] the needs of indigenous people" (Republic of Congo); content in local languages for a digital literacy programme in Kenya in "forms that are adaptable to different uses and different platforms"; and "enrich[ing] the educational commons in the Albanian language" in Kosovo by funding teachers and students so that they can "build content using dedicated wikis." Gender rights were addressed by 10 authors, including the need to attend to the specific needs of women during natural disasters (Nepal). According to the Public Health Research Society Nepal (PHRSN), "Research has shown that women are the most affected by natural disasters, and the potential of the internet in mitigating this needs to be understood".

The need for developing tools (4) is identified marginally more by authors here than in other

years. In Nepal, safety-check tools needed to be developed and developers needed to be involved in policy discussions on the importance of the internet to enable ESCRs; in Venezuela, mobile applications needed to be developed to "help citizens access food and medicines"; and mobile apps for adult literacy programmes were needed in Benin.

Table 22: Summary of action steps – ESCRs and the internet

Action step	No.	Country	%
Awareness raising	27	Argentina, Armenia, Benin, Cambodia, DRC, Costa Rica, India, Italy, Jordan, Korea, Macedonia, Maldives, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yemen	60
Policy development	27	Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, DRC, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, India, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Kosovo, Lebanon, Macedonia, Maldives, Morocco, Nepal, Panama, Russia, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela, Yemen	60
Capacity building	23	Albania, Benin, Chile, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Maldives, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Serbia, Seychelles, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, Yemen	51
Access	18	Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Chile, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, India, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Uganda, Uruguay	40
Collaboration	14	Colombia, India, Kenya, Maldives, Morocco, Nepal, Panama, Poland, Spain, Syria, Uganda, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen	31
Funding	14	Bangladesh, Benin, Rep. of Congo, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Lebanon, Peru, Russia, Spain, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen	31
Content development	12	Argentina, Benin, Rep. of Congo, Kenya, Kosovo, Nigeria, Russia, Senegal, Serbia, Spain, Syria, Uganda	27
Research	11	Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Sudan, Turkey, Venezuela	24
Gender, women	10	Cambodia, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Nepal, Russia, Sudan, Turkey, Yemen	22
Policy implementation	10	Chile, DRC, India, Kenya, Maldives, Nepal, Philippines, Rwanda, Serbia, Switzerland	22
Access to information	9	Colombia, Maldives, Nepal, Russia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Venezuela	20
Raising voices	6	Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Seychelles, Ukraine, Yemen	13
Inclusion and participation	6	Chile, Costa Rica, Jordan, Korea, Morocco, Peru	13
Building confidence and trust	5	Chile, Colombia, Russia, Syria, Venezuela	11
Fostering dialogue	5	Colombia, Korea, Poland, Syria, Venezuela	11
Monitoring	5	Cambodia, India, Maldives, Poland, Venezuela	11
Developing tools	4	Benin, India, Nepal, Venezuela	9
Network and alliance building	2	Albania, Costa Rica	4
Services	2	Russia, Venezuela	4
Coordination	2	Chile, Kenya	4

5.11. National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) (2017)

5.11.1. Summary of topics

Most of the 41 country reports published in 2017 tracked the first-hand experiences of participating in or organising national and regional internet governance forums (IGFs). The so-called National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) are defined by the IGF as "organic and independent formations that are discussing issues pertaining to Internet Governance from the perspective of their respective communities, while acting in accordance with the main principles of the global IGF".[29] The reports offered a window into understanding challenges in achieving this vision of grassroots participation in internet governance – the edition invites a comparative reading with GISWatch 2007, with its focus on participation. Included among the reports were stocktaking exercises, organisational reviews, interview-based surveys, stakeholder analyses, polemics and personal reflections. In the case of countries like China, Serbia and the Seychelles, the absence of national IGFs formed the focus of the discussions.

Although we might talk of an IGF "community", the participants in this community faced sometimes radically dissimilar experiences and contexts – socially, economically, politically, in terms of networks they could drawn on, or capacity and knowledge. As a result, their agency and ability to influence national and regional internet governance mechanisms was markedly different. This whether setting up a forum in the Washington DC Beltway or in post-revolution Tunis; in Colombia, described as "a country with great social challenges – including when it comes to constructing the space for discussion," or in India, an exponentially expanding economy, whose drive to digitisation was experienced as "coercive"; or Bosnia and Herzegovina, which suffered "deep gender inequality" and violence.

In the DRC, the first IGF "started two hours late" because:

> The owner of the hall refused to let people in as the organisers had not finalised the contract to rent the hall for the two full days of the forum. The doors were only opened when the hall manager received a guarantee that the fee would be paid eventually.

"This," wrote the organisation Si Jeunesse Savait, "says a lot about the struggle of convening a national IGF in the DRC."

Compared to themes such as sexual rights or ESCRs and the internet, the range of topics within the focus on NRIs was comparatively narrow. About half the authors (20) offered a general overview of the NRIs in their countries, six highlighted multistakeholder engagement specifically, with a similar number (5) dealing with the experience of setting up an NRI. While each author was asked to reflect on the regional context, this was further elaborated on by four reports. Both policy impact (3) – a key question of the value of IGFs – and participation and inclusion (3) were elaborated on by a relatively low number of authors. Two authors emphasised the inclusion of the youth and the same number the participation of women. Only one (Canada) focused on indigenous communities.

Typical "core stakeholders" found at NRIs were governments, the private sector, the technical community and civil society, with some authors also listing academia and the media. Within these "sectors", frequently absent were women, young people, minorities, and poor and rural communities. Further marginalisation occurred through language, a lack of knowledge and technical know-how, and a lack of awareness of the forum, or of the importance of internet governance, despite it encouraging open participation. "Why don't we know about these things?" an Uber driver asked one author during an Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) meeting in South Africa.

Reports were critical of a convergence of perspectives at events, the "same people speaking to the same people." More inclusive multistakeholder discussions did not mean "more people", but a deeper representation of more diverse positions. Although EuroDIG had grown over the years, "[t]he debates [had] progressively become less constructive with more and more participants more worried about illustrating their positions than building common ones."

Authors saw the need to connect with "non-traditional" actors who had a stake in internet governance. For KICTANet in Kenya these included "mainstream human rights organisations, the health sector, the financial sector, agriculture, and manufacturing." In Latin America and the Caribbean, the agriculture, health and environment sectors were seen as important.

29 https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-regional-and-national-initiatives

Alternatives in Canada highlighted the absence of indigenous communities from internet governance discussions, suggesting that NRIs can replicate exclusions found elsewhere. "The exclusion of stakeholders such as women, youth and persons with disabilities is [...] the cause for the failure of development," writes the Senegalese organisation Jonction.

Specific mechanisms were necessary to ensure balanced participation. EMPOWER wrote that in Malaysia:

> It is unrealistic to expect civil society or activists who are less well-resourced to be able to present or reflect their stories in the international arena. [...] There is a lack of immediate relevance of the IGF to their struggles, there are language barriers, and there is a competitive workshop selection mechanism.

"Convening preparatory meetings, renting the forum's venue, providing food for the attendees, paying for the panellists' per diems [...] require huge means that are out of the reach of civil society organisations in Cameroon," wrote PROTEGE QV. "This immediately puts them at a disadvantage in terms of equal participation in the IGF." In the Republic of Congo, a survey of young people including government officials "revealed that 90% of respondents [did] not have any knowledge of internet governance," while in the Seychelles, the importance of inclusive, multistakeholder internet governance needed to be promoted.

Necessary activities to encourage participation included holding special capacity-building sessions during an NRI (see Colombia), working with the media in order to improve coverage of a forum (see Uruguay), and holding Youth IGFs and running pre-events at regional forums. The Colombian Bureau of Internet Governance envisaged a "permanent" presence in the regions "where it is most strongly needed to encourage citizen participation in decision-making processes related to the use of the internet."

A successful forum depended on commonly held ideas of citizenship and democracy. Transparency was needed in multistakeholder processes – as BlueLink (Bulgaria) pointed out, representation could be faked:

The government [had] also been clever enough to create its own quasi-NGOs that [looked] independent, but which are controlled by insiders, to give a sense of credibility in the policy-making and implementation process, while drawing on state funding.

Active participation was also dependent on the willingness of stakeholders to participate. In some countries there was a sense of apathy that struck against active participation in people-centred policy making over matters that impacted directly on citizens' lives. In Serbia, wrote the authors from SHARE Foundation, "it [was] not that some stakeholders [were] excluded, but many [...] [did] not even want to join the conversation out of a lack of desire or interest. They [saw] such conversations as irrelevant outside of government." In the Republic of Congo, "[m]any believe that it is up to the state alone to decide on the future of the internet."

"For them," AZUR Development wrote, "the government should decide everything."

As reports showed, governments could be an unstable and unpredictable participant, despite being a pivotal stakeholder in internet governance deliberations. Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA) found in the Philippines that its government may shun a local IGF meeting, but send delegates to international forums, such as those run by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), ICANN or a regional telecommunications body. Or, the organisation observed, a government may allow itself to be unduly influenced by the private sector "which has an interest in keeping regulators away from multistakeholder dialogues."

Governments may harbour resentments towards civil society, or other stakeholders. Pakistan showed how the IGF could be derailed by ongoing "hostile" policy-making processes, in its case the passage of a cybercrime bill. It was a problem if government officials left their posts in institutions, abandoning any continuity in setting up a nascent NRI. In Peru: "At the end of the event the members of the organising committee did not keep up communications; some left their positions at their institutions and there were no further meetings." It could also be problematic if officials remained in their positions, as was the case in Bulgaria, which "[enjoyed] a stable pool of policy makers." However, this "stability [was] associated with crony relationships and a lack of motivation for radical reform."

Civil society was dealt with critically in a number of reports, and could be a bottleneck to positive progress in internet governance. While in Ecuador "actors [had] complained about the

co-option of organisations," in Argentina civil society organisations were described as "absorbed in their own projects" and "focused on international events" rather than on the "construction of [governance] spaces." In Pakistan, "competitive activism ... pitches activists against each other in competition for the same pool of resources." In Cameroon, civil society was "divided and plagued by internal discord." This, the author remarked wryly, "hardly [helped] the situation."

Showing the impact of the NRIs on policy processes was difficult. Despite the recognition that IGFs were not decision-making forums, questions to do with the concrete impact of the events remained. Reports showed it was possible to put mechanisms in place that were likely to maximise influence – such as holding intersessional meetings (see Colombia for a good example of this), ensuring institutional buy-in into the event (EuroDIG, with the participation of the European Commission and Council of Europe, perhaps an extraordinary example of this), or even through increasing the diversity of stakeholders and issues confronted at an IGF. Concrete follow-up mechanisms were also mooted, such as an "impact review" that tracked recommendations for the extent to which they were actually implemented or tabled by the relevant legislative bodies (again, see EuroDIG).

Political will played a part in the impact mix: "[A] failure [of NRIs] with respect to concrete policy outcomes [was] not necessarily the fault of the forums," wrote BlueLink.net, "but of the national commitment to creating these outcomes in the multistakeholder environment that is available":

> To a certain extent, the IGF works for countries that already have good governance and working relations between stakeholders [...] and is less effective in countries where these are absent.

In some countries, activists needed to ask: Is there a need for an NRI? "How much impact does the [South Korea NRI] have on the policy-making process? Not so much," wrote Jinbonet, adding:

> Part of the reason is that there are many alternatives for discussing internet governance in South Korea. [...] One can attend almost any workshop anytime if you have the interest and on almost any topic – especially in a small country like South Korea, where you can travel to the other side of the country in half a day.

In New Zealand, "[t]he public policy-making process ... is already open and accessible and a new forum to directly shape those processes was not seen as necessary."

In Togo, stakeholders were collaborative and responsive to policy windows – a significant result of multistakeholder engagement. They were described as "motivated" to "deepen the debates on mailing lists [...] to produce more recommendations for policy and legislative change in the country." But in countries like Nigeria this was not sufficient: "In the Nigerian context, describing recommendations as merely advisory is as good as asking that they should be ignored."

NRIs were not typically robust – and could lack sustained interest from stakeholders or funding. Many reports described crumbling attempts to get the forums off the ground – the first NRI in Costa Rica was "half-a-day long and showed low participation," despite the country hosting the regional IGF the previous year. The NRI in Italy was "nothing more" than an annual gathering: "a two-day event, with random preparation process and with no follow-up." Although billed as a sub-regional event, the Central African IGF held in Kinshasa in 2013 had a mere 40 people in attendance, and "the only country other than the DRC represented was Cameroon, and it by only two civil society delegates."

Brazil and Turkey showed how forums suffered under political crisis. In Turkey, participation in the Youth IGF dropped off following a state of emergency, because young people feared "investigation or interruption to their businesses by authorities." "Several participants who joined the meeting also asked to be excluded from lists, photographs and records of the meeting for similar reasons," the author wrote.

Yet despite many of these challenges, authors felt that the NRIs were also useful and even critical mechanisms of deliberation, for learning and capacity building, creating essential links and building networks and partnerships – and even, for some, influencing policy. In Italy, despite the apparent haphazardness and lack of follow-up, there was something still worth pursuing: "[T]he absence of structured dialogue [means] government institutions will decide for the country at international forums on their own; and businesses will do the same in their international associations and initiatives."

An NRI could serve as an opportunity to counterbalance inequalities and exclusions that existed in society, and offered some measure of remedy to those imbalances. "The [South Eastern Europe] region faces problems that are different from those found in Western and Central Europe," wrote One World Platform, "and as a result, these challenges are not widely talked about." An absence of young voices in internet governance could be counterbalanced by holding Youth IGFs. In Senegal, the absence of women in the policy-making process meant that "gender should be at the heart of the priorities of the IGF."

Forums could be "safe spaces" for vulnerable groups, allowing them to engage openly in discussions, free from the threat of "harm and violence" (see New Zealand and Bosnia and Herzegovina). An IGF was a space where "everyone [could] ask a question, and all must answer," wrote Nodo TAU. It offered a way, said One World Platform, to enact a "real democracy."

Table 23: Summary of topics – NRIs

Key focus	No. of reports	Countries	%
General overview	20	Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, US	49
Multistakeholder engagement	6	Argentina, Cameroon, DRC, Italy, Pakistan, Venezuela	15
Setting up an NRI	5	Costa Rica, Seychelles, Turkey, Uruguay, Yemen	12
History of an NRI	4	Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Kenya	10
Regional issues	4	Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Tunisia	10
Policy impact	3	Korea, Nigeria, Tunisia	7
Participation and inclusion	3	Rep. of Congo, India, Malaysia,	7
Alternative models	2	China, New Zealand	5
Youth	2	Rep. of Congo, South Africa	5
Women and gender	2	Costa Rica, South Africa	5
Re-uniting and healing, domains, indigenous communities, multilingualism, self-regulation, cybersecurity, repressive regime, role of state, lack of engagement, post-revolution		Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Serbia, Tunisia	

5.11.2. Overview of action steps

The action steps show that the key needs in this context were increased collaboration (29), awareness raising (25) and inclusion and participation (24).

It was necessary to build knowledge on what the "multistakeholder approach" was (e.g. DRC), and there were calls for the "importance and validity" (Colombia) of the multistakeholder model to be promoted. A number of reports pointed out that the participation of stakeholders such as the private sector needed to be strengthened. Civil society had a catalysing role to play in this regard, especially given their experience in regional and global IGFs (e.g. Romania). Collaborative actions included a multistakeholder review of the strengths and weaknesses of an NRI (Argentina), and establishing a national advisory committee on internet governance to "promote research and development on internet governance" (Republic of Congo).

Authors also saw the need to raise awareness of internet governance in order to increase participation and equal collaboration, an indication of the relatively low level of awareness of internet governance issues among many of the countries discussed. For example, in Venezuela, it was important to "[s]ensitise decision makers in institutions and companies on the social, legal, economic, political and diplomatic stakes of internet governance" to encourage participation. Capacity (14) to engage on internet governance issues needed to be built among all stakeholders. Reports – see, for example, Paraguay and South Africa – suggested that universities had a key role to play, and relevant school-level programmes needed to be developed.

Funding (9) was needed to ensure the participation of more under-resourced stakeholders. In Ecuador, a "small budget" to host preparatory meetings ahead of the NRI would help to "ensure participation and interest among stakeholders and promote an inclusive environment." In India, an NRI was important because it promoted "local participation in local issues," and would encourage the open discussion of internet governance issues. As mentioned above in the topic analysis, broader participation of non-traditional internet governance stakeholders was necessary to deepen the discussion on internet governance. Appropriately in this context, fostering dialogue was called for by seven authors, including encouraging "debate and exchanges" between stakeholders ahead of an NRI to increase the "depth and expertise" of face-to-face engagement (e.g. Uruguay).

Policy (10) needed to be developed to promote the inclusion of "young people, women, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities" (Republic of Congo); in the Republic of Korea, it was necessary to ensure multistakeholder internet governance through the revision of the country's Internet Address Resources Act.

Table 24: Summary of action steps – NRIs

Action step	No.	Country	%
Collaboration	29	Argentina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, DRC, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Italy, Kenya, Korea, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Togo, Turkey, US, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen	71
Awareness raising	25	Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Serbia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen	61
Inclusion and participation	24	Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, DRC, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kenya, Korea, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, US, Uruguay, Yemen	59
Capacity building	15	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Rep. of Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, Paraguay, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, Yemen,	34
Policy development	10	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, DRC, Rep. of Congo, Egypt, Korea, Panama, Serbia, Tunisia, Venezuela	24
Network and alliance building	10	Brazil, Cameroon, Egypt, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, South Africa, Togo, Turkey, Venezuela	24
Funding	9	Cameroon, Canada, DRC, Rep. of Congo, Ecuador, Paraguay, Seychelles, Venezuela, Yemen	22
Research	7	Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Canada, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan	17
Fostering dialogue	7	India, Italy, Malaysia, Paraguay, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela	17
Building confidence and trust	6	Colombia, Ecuador, New Zealand, Nigeria, Tunisia, Venezuela	15
Access	5	Australia, Egypt, Malaysia, Venezuela, Yemen	12
Gender, women	5	Rep. of Congo, Costa Rica, Nigeria, Togo, Uruguay	12
Content development	4	Paraguay, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen	10
Access to information	4	Argentina, India, Kenya, Turkey	10
Raising voices	4	Argentina, Panama, Togo, Turkey	10
Monitoring	2	Canada, Venezuela	5
Policy implementation	1	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
Coordination	1	Costa Rica	2
Developing tools	0		0
Services	0		0

6. CROSS-CUTTING OBSERVATIONS

6.1. Areas of focus for advocacy

The range of topics covered over the years shows the extent to which internet rights are applicable across multiple areas of concern. These include rural and working class communities and sectors – from farmers to factory and household workers – the modern workplace, schools, clinics and hospitals, the ICT sector itself, in culture, science and education, government services, indigenous communities, in the translation of languages, music, art, and the creation of content. The "information society" in this regard occurs in myriad contexts with an equally diverse range of stakeholders, which internet rights activists seek to respond to in one way or another.

Several topics find carry-through over the period analysed, suggesting not only the longevity of some concerns, but that they are relevant to different advocacy spaces. These include e-government, education and censorship. As a topic of concern, education – which is seen as a site for capacity building – is considered, for example, more frequently than health. While censorship, such as blocking, filtering and shutdowns, receives more direct focus compared to surveillance overall,[30] there is a gradual increase in the use of the term "surveillance" over the period, in line with growing evidence and experience of surveillance (see the Appendix). For example, in 2008 on the theme of access to infrastructure, the term "surveillance" is only used four times in the country reports, compared to 46 times a few years later in 2011 on the topic of freedom of expression and association.

Access to the internet increases substantially over the period discussed, but remains a perennial concern for civil society. It is an advocacy priority when considering participation and ESCRs, but is also a topic of focus when discussing women's rights, gender and ICTs, freedom of expression and association online, transparency and accountability, and access to information and knowledge. However, the keyword analysis (see the Appendix) shows the extent to which an emphasis on "universal access" and "universal services" declines over the period – potentially reflecting a disillusionment with mechanisms such as universal access funds to increase access to underserved communities, as well as the proliferation of mobile phones globally.

While blogs and citizen media are already seen as key advocacy tools in 2007, there is a sharp increase in attention given to social media – both in terms of its impact on society, and its use as a tool for citizen mobilisation. In 2007, on the theme of participation, the terms "social media" and "social networks" are not used in country reports. This can be compared to 261 instances of their use on the theme of freedom of expression and association four years later (see the Appendix).

On the whole, environmental concerns remain siloed, despite involving multiple stakeholders and being an issue of broad public interest. While both gender issues and indigenous communities receive some measure of cross-cutting attention, internet rights activists show limited cross-cutting interest in the rights of other marginalised groups such as LGBTIQ people and people with disabilities. In particular, attention on the latter is low.

While some country reports in 2007 focus on FLOSS, this emphasis appears to drop altogether off the advocacy agenda (see also the keyword analysis of "open source" in the Appendix, which shows a notable drop-off in the use of the term). As represented in these reports, the subject of open hardware standards also appears to be low on the civil society advocacy agenda overall. Instead, open knowledge, intellectual property rights and copyright as generalised concepts receive stronger attention.

6.2. Key levers for change

Table 25 shows the number of actions steps per year as a percentage of the number of reports. These totals are then presented as global percentages in Table 26.

30 Except in GISWatch 2014 with its focus on the topic of "Communications surveillance in the digital age".

Table 25: Action steps per year as a percentage of country reports each year

	Participation	Access to infrastructure	Access to information and knowledge: Advancing human rights and democracy	ICTs and environmental sustainability	Internet rights and democratisation: Freedom of expression and association online	The internet and corruption: Transparency and accountability online	Women's rights, gender and ICTs	Communications surveillance in the digital age	Sexual rights and the internet	Economic, social and cultural rights and the internet	National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs)
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Policy development	68	61	60	68	45	40	51	68	54	60	24
Inclusion and participation		26	19	15	16	23	19	9	14	13	59
Capacity building	41	32	38	28	33	19	49	25	30	52	34
Access	41		17	6	25	23	23	5	7	40	12
Collaboration	41	30	15	53	7	25	15	14	18	31	70
Awareness raising	32	26	42	72	42	33	45	57	63	60	61
Policy implementation	18	24	13	40	4	27	19	18	16	22	2
Network and alliance building	18	8	13	2	30	13	19	16	21	4	24
Gender, women	18	13	4	2	5	0		4	33	22	12
Content development	14	26	31	6	5	2	4	5	16	27	10
Funding	14	21	17	21	4	6	15	2	9	31	22
Coordination	14	13	8	6	0	0	6	7	4	4	2
Access to information	9	3	15	34	13	38	30	13	19	20	10
Monitoring	9	18	6	34	9	27	15	18	11	11	5
Research	9	16	2	36	9	2	15	11	21	24	17
Services	5	10	15	2	2	13	9	2	9	4	0
Building confidence and trust	5	8	8	2	4	6	17	11	26	11	15
Developing tools	5	0	4	2	7	8	2	0	2	9	0
Fostering dialogue	5	5	2	4	15	17	6	18	14	11	17
Raising voices	0	5	6	0	13	23	30	16	14	13	10

As Table 26 suggests, policy development (54% of the total number of reports identify policy, legislative or regulatory change as a key action), awareness raising (48%) and capacity building (35%) are the three key action steps proposed by civil society regardless of the topic – they show resilience as actions to bring about change. That these are the three key levers for change is perhaps unsurprising given that the period is characterised by rapid growth in access, the social media "boom", and incipient mass surveillance by states. This at least creates unsteady policy environments, the need to raise awareness about these new developments, and the constant need to develop the capacity of government, civil society and citizen stakeholders. However, the predominance of policy interventions as a lever for change is also an indication of the extent to which internet policy did not properly reflect the rights and needs of citizens over the period reviewed.

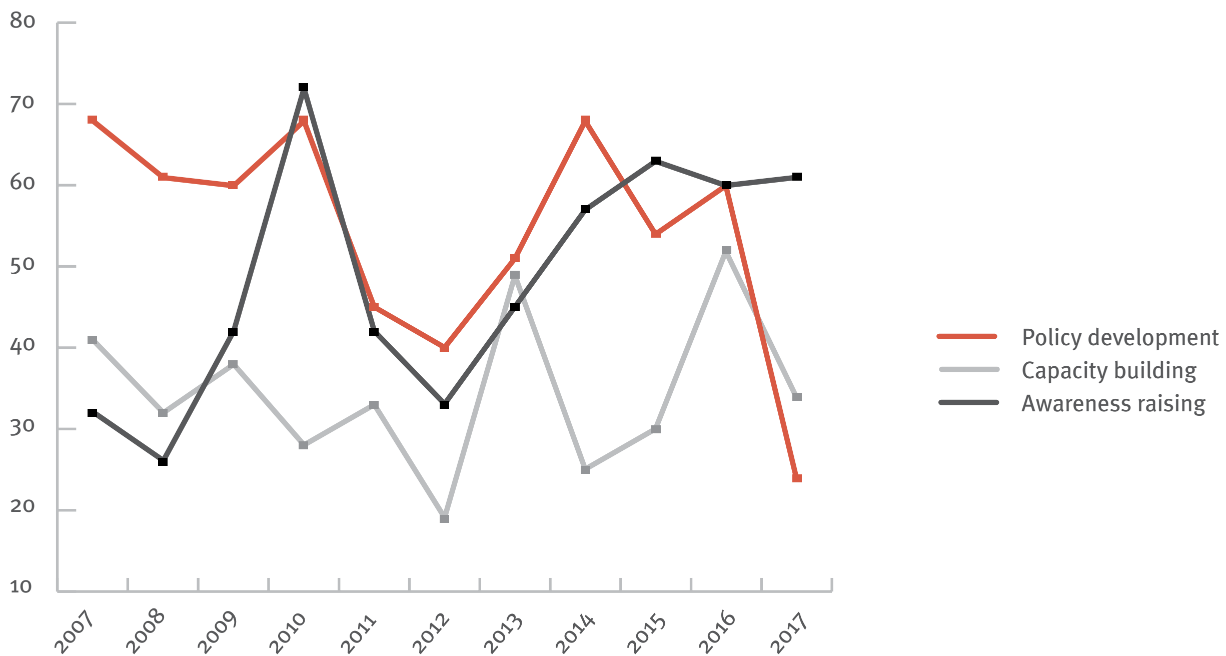
Table 26: Sum of action steps as percentage of the total number of country reports published

Action step	% of overall reports
Policy development	54
Awareness raising	48
Capacity building	35
Collaboration	29
Inclusion and participation	21
Access	20
Access to information	19
Policy implementation	18
Network and alliance building	15
Funding	15
Monitoring	15
Research	15
Content development	13
Raising voices	12
Gender, women	11
Building confidence and trust	10
Fostering dialogue	10
Coordination	6
Services	6
Developing tools	4

The graph in Figure 1 shows the relationship between policy development, capacity building, and awareness-raising activities – whether creating public momentum, or drawing the attention of policy makers to particular issues and concerns. It shows a strong correlation between the policy development and awareness-raising trajectories. Capacity building also shadows the policy development trajectory, except in the cases of ICTs and environmental sustainability and corruption, when it is significantly lower than awareness raising needs.[31] The graph suggests that overall, the three key advocacy levers have a symbiotic relationship, and are not independent concerns.

31 The drop in policy development in the context of NRIs could be anticipated – attitudes towards collaboration and dialogue are much more important than policy change in this instance.

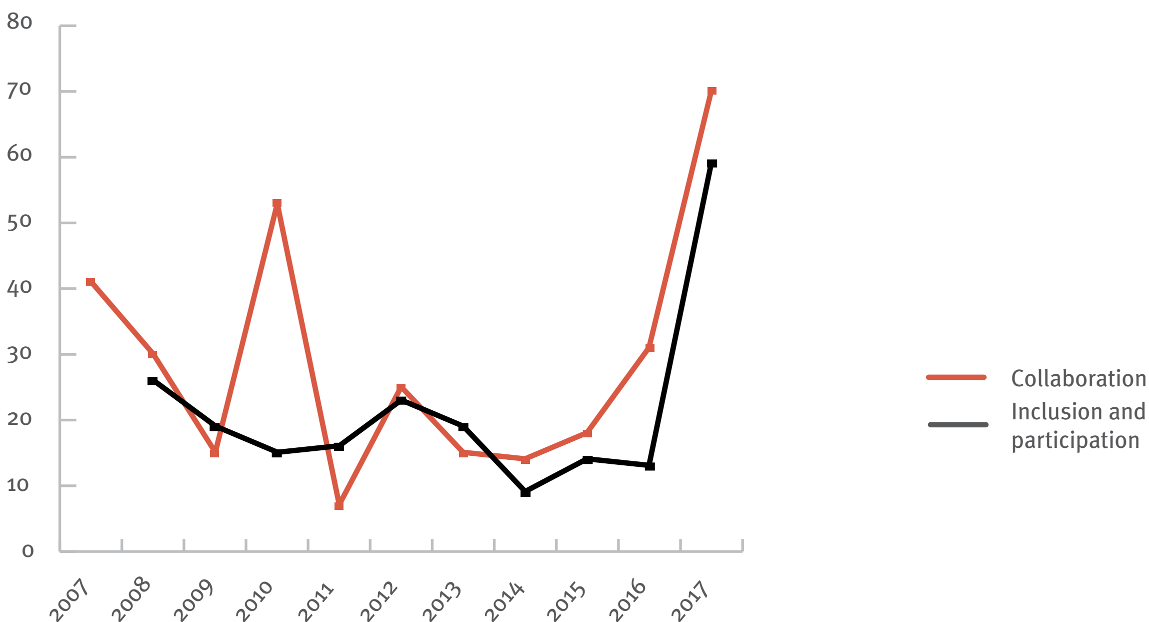
Figure 1



Overall, the action steps suggest that internet rights organisations see collaboration (29%) between stakeholders as a key lever for change. This collaboration should encourage the participation of excluded stakeholders, which increasingly also means including actors in the internet rights space who have not engaged there before. Collaboration is lowest when a more oppositional politics is assumed by internet rights groups, such as on the topics of freedom of expression and association or surveillance. In the case of access to information and knowledge, it may be that stakeholders such as the private sector show interests that are in strict tension with rights-based demands, as is the case with copyright reform, discounting the possibility of collaborative spaces being formed.

As the graph in Figure 2 suggests, collaboration and inclusion (21%) appear to follow the same trajectories, except in the case of ICTs and environmental sustainability, where there is a sharp divergence in their trajectories. In this instance it might be that internet rights activists have focused on the role of the private sector and state in proposing actions to address problems such as e-waste and climate change, rather than these presenting an opportunity for the inclusion of communities, whether through employment or participatory adaptation or mitigation initiatives (e.g. in the case of the latter an opportunity for collective forms of local governance can emerge).

Figure 2



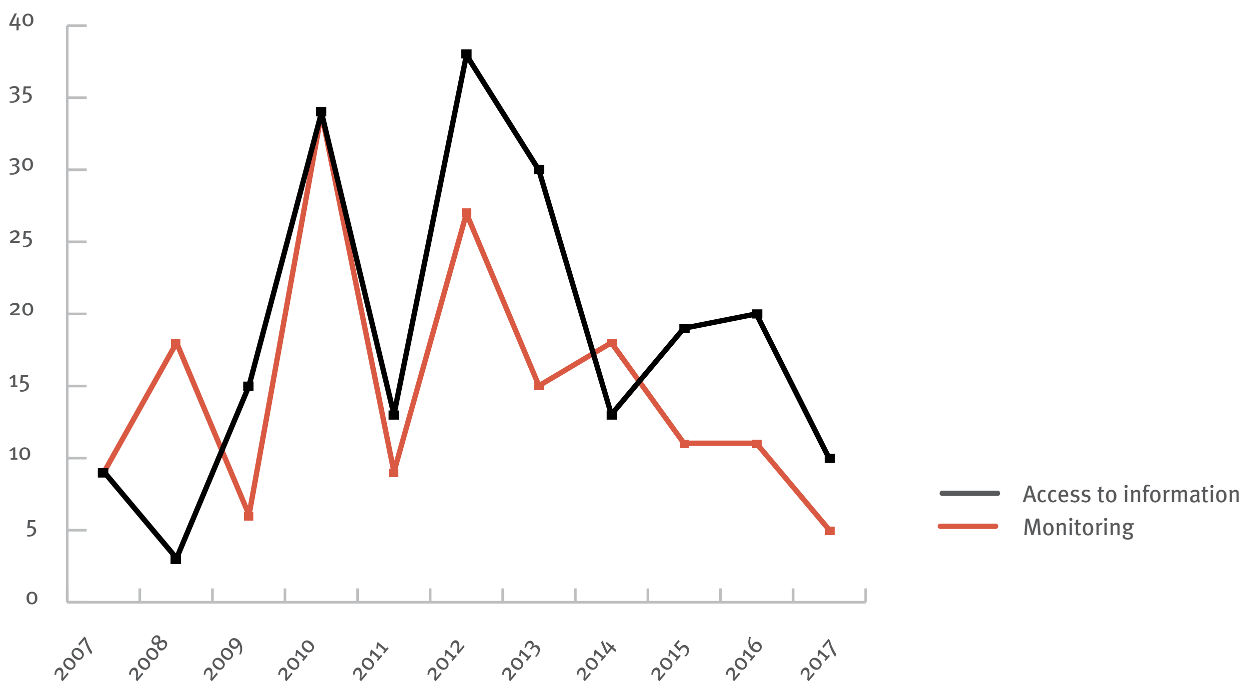
While collaboration is favoured as an advocacy strategy, the use of the term "multistakeholder" on the whole appears to be topic-specific (in this case in the context of NRIs), suggesting perhaps that it is a conceptually and politically bonded term with a lower advocacy currency across all topics.[32]

Access to information (19%) is a pivotal advocacy concern throughout the period analysed – whether in the context of e-government and transparency, censorship, teaching sexual rights in the classroom, or securing ESCRs more generally. While an advocacy interest in open source software and development appears to decrease over the period, a consistent interest in intellectual property rights is evident.

There appears to be little relationship between the need to access information and the development of content (13%). While access to information is a broad concern, and has widespread application, content development is focused on issues such as developing curricula for classrooms and producing content in indigenous languages. This could suggest that the driving imperative behind these two are different, and appropriate to different contexts.

There appears to be a relationship between access to information and monitoring (15%), as illustrated in Figure 3, except in the context of surveillance, when the need for oversight is an imperative. Both imply transparency and accountability.

Figure 3

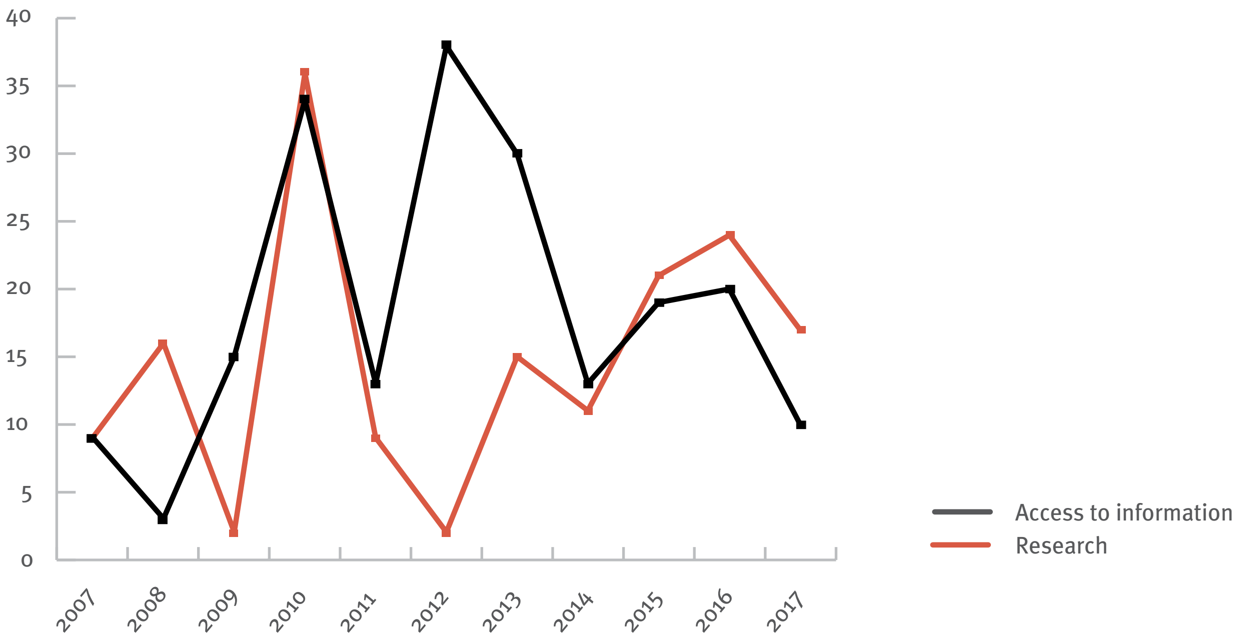


Some 15% of reports proposed research to accompany an advocacy drive. Research is highest on the topics of ICTs and the environment and surveillance, both lesser known fields for many of the authors at the time of writing the reports. As the graph in Figure 4 suggests, there is often a close relationship between research and the need to access information. There are clear divergences between the two on the topics of access to infrastructure and corruption.[33] In the case of corruption, the need to access information to secure transparency and accountability is dominant.

32 For example, it may be that the term is seen to be limited to meaning that only civil society, the private sector and government are necessary for a space to qualify as a "multistakeholder" space, lending legitimacy to processes where key stakeholders such as communities, the youth, unions, academics, the media or individuals, among others, might be excluded.

33 Here the low count for "access to information" on the GISWatch topic on access to information and knowledge should be ignored.

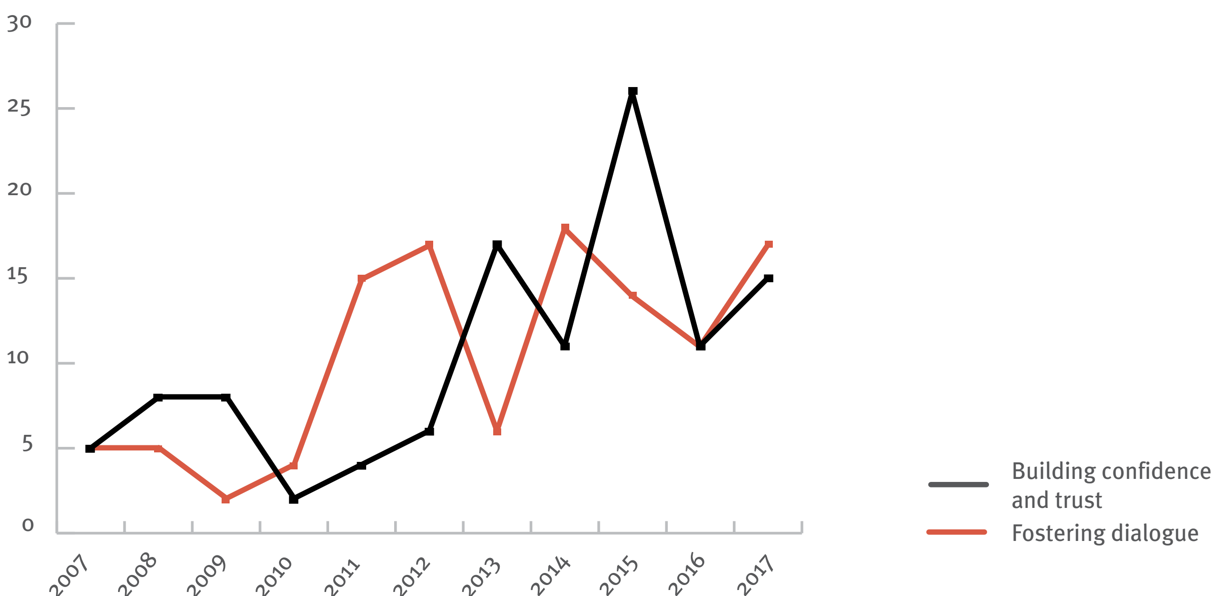
Figure 4



Although comparatively less frequent levers for change, building trust and confidence (10%) and fostering dialogue (10%) appear to increase steadily in importance over time, regardless of the topic, as seen in Figure 5. With respect to the first, there is an increasingly ambivalent attitude towards the internet expressed over the years under review – more and more, the internet can be an unsafe space, to the extent that being online can be life-threatening for some activists. VAW, surveillance, and the appropriation of the internet by reactionary groups are some of the change influencers. One could speculate that building trust and confidence might become an even more important advocacy lever in the future given the increase in the use of algorithms, the application of artificial intelligence, and phenomena such as so-called "fake news".

The low attention given to the development of technical tools (4%) overall mirrors an apparent decrease in advocacy importance placed on open source software and development.

Figure 5



7. CONCLUSION

The predominance of policy change as a key advocacy lever suggests the extent to which much internet policy is developed without proper consideration of the rights implications for citizens, groups and communities. Whether this is a cause for concern, or an inevitable feature of a rapidly changing technological landscape with evolving policy needs, is uncertain. Much of it depends on the specific context – it could be a result of a lack of capacity among policy makers, the exclusion of civil society from the policy-making process, the influence of conservative groups such as the Church on policy, or a desire by governments, including democratically elected ones, to control their citizens (see, for example, the UK's approach to online surveillance).[34]

While nearly half (48%) of the authors saw the need for awareness on issues to be raised among the public and civil society to create momentum for change, state actors were also the targets for awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives. Just over a third (35%) of the authors felt that capacity building was a key lever for change over the period. With new policy developed all the time to meet the demands of an evolving technological landscape with divergent and sometimes little-understood policy implications, it is unlikely that this need for awareness raising or capacity building will diminish.

The need for participation by excluded groups is a perennial concern that does not diminish over the period analysed. FMA wrote on the Philippines in 2007:

> Civil society has undoubtedly entered the ICT policy arena and has positioned itself as a legitimate actor in this space. It has successfully promoted a public interest discourse to frame its interventions and has pinpointed specific policy areas for reform. But the task remains unfinished, requiring continued strategic action.

The extent to which the task is unfinished is shown in the GISWatch reports – many internet rights organisations describe how disruptive a change of government can be to policy-making equilibrium.

In 2007 a number of activists were concerned that their governments did not have an ICT policy, or consider the internet fundamental to socioeconomic development. While there is now an acceptance of the importance of ICT policy as an integral part of development, new challenges emerge when trying to set up multistakeholder policy processes such as the NRIs. These include understanding and valuing multistakeholder collaboration in internet governance – and being willing to accept participatory spaces for policy deliberation.

Access remains a consistent advocacy focus area for internet rights activists – although the period shows a de-emphasis on "universal access" and "universal service" as useful conceptual advocacy categories. By 2017, there is instead a focus on local-level access through community networks that are set up, owned and led by the communities themselves.[35] As early as 2008, this is flagged as important by some organisations, such as Pangea in Spain:

> Citizen networks – networks created by citizens for self-service such as wireless community networks – must be explicitly supported and protected, not just left in a legal limbo or seen as unfair competition to commercial operators. They are a viable alternative way for building networks that are open and owned by the community, particularly by places and people who are not the focus of commercial offerings.

Despite an early interest in surveillance, reports over time show more consistent interest in overt forms of censorship, such as blocking, filtering and shutdowns. Suggestions that the internet has become an increasingly alienating experience for many – through surveillance,

34 While the need for policy and legislative change might partly be because of the umbrella topic for each year's GISWatch focusing on spaces where this is inevitable, policy considerations in the reports tend to move beyond a consideration of the theme at hand to a more structural account of approaches to rights-based policy in a particular country. Because of this, specific policy observations can frequently be comfortably generalised.

35 This is the topic for GISWatch 2018.

censorship, and the effective appropriation of the internet by reactionary groups – are unlikely to abate in the era of "fake news", artificial intelligence and the growing use of algorithms to shape our online experience and interactions.

There is little attention given to open source software or the development of technical tools over the period, the latter most evident in the context of surveillance and sexual rights online, where anonymising and privacy tools and other online safety apps would be beneficial for activists and communities. The apparent low interest in open source software is a distinct break from civil society advocacy prior to 2007, and is especially noticeable given that e-education and e-government are the focus of a number of reports – both were areas in which open source tools found particular advocacy application.

Access to information and open knowledge systems is a pivotal advocacy concern – whether in the context of e-government, teaching in the classroom, censorship and the right to information, or securing ESCRs more generally. While an advocacy interest in open source software appears to decrease over the period, a consistent interest in intellectual property rights is evident. Both e-government and education show promising sites for advocacy on cross-cutting issues, and could be further explored by internet rights advocates for this potential.

Access to information appears to have a somewhat higher priority as an advocacy lever for change than content production, the latter focused on issues such as developing curricula for classrooms and producing content in indigenous languages.

Some 15% of the reports proposed research to accompany an advocacy drive. This appears to be quite low, and may indicate that the activists are working in fields where there is a high level of knowledge production already. Research is highest on the topic of ICTs and the environment, and surveillance, both lesser known fields for many of the authors at the time of writing the reports.

Although generalities on action steps can be made, certain themes resulted in specific kinds of advocacy needs. For example, when talking about corruption, transparency and accountability, accuracy in media reporting was important, while creating safe and supportive environments was important in the context of sexualities online.

It is likely that the need for accountability and transparency will increase as an advocacy priority over time, especially in the context of the proliferation of decision-making technology such as algorithms. The need for better mechanisms to secure accountability and transparency, such as better journalistic reporting, should also increase.

Combined with phenomena such as "fake news", it is likely that future advocacy emphasis on the reliability of information – rather than just access to information – will be a priority. It may also be that there will be an increased need for civil society to develop content that is accurate, reliable and factual, outside of attending to the content needs of marginalised communities or concerns (the rise of fact-checking organisations globally is already a sign of this).

Both workers' rights and rights in the workplace receive some attention over the period, but there is a sense that the terrain here is only beginning to be properly articulated. The impact of technology on the workplace is also likely to grow in importance over time, as new kinds of work and "workplaces" take shape, new technology-driven business models are explored, and the widespread use of artificial intelligence for various roles is scaled up.

Although not part of this analysis, tentative regional observations can be made, such as an emphasis on e-education in Latin America, and an early focus on liberalisation and market-driven access in Africa with a more sceptical narrative of liberalisation evident in Latin America. However, these are largely inconclusive observations, and this review invites a complementary regional analysis.

Finally, the Republic of Congo called for help from international organisations to shape a people-centred ICT policy agenda in that country in 2008 – an advocacy window existed. There is a sense from the action steps overall that global collaboration between networks and organisations could benefit advocacy at the lo cal level, including the direction advocacy takes, and what it emphasises. Learnings in one country could be effectively applied to other contexts. While GISWatch is one attempt to create an awareness of different advocacy contexts, mechanisms to increase cross-country and cross-border collaborations are clearly essential, suggested by the longevity of forums such as the IGF, but also the growing relevance of alternative spaces for dialogue, such as RightsCon, the Internet Freedom Festival and the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa.

8. APPENDIX

The table below shows the results of a keyword or phrase search of country reports for each year. The number of instances of each keyword phrase is recorded. Searches for alternative spellings of keywords have also been done.

Number of reports	22	38	48	53	55	48	47	56	57	45	41
	Participation	Access to infrastructure	Access to information and knowledge: Advancing human rights and democracy	ICTs and environmental sustainability	Internet rights and democratisation: Freedom of expression and association online	The internet and corruption: Transparency and accountability online	Women's rights, gender and ICTs	Communications surveillance in the digital age	Sexual rights and the internet	Economic, social and cultural rights and the internet	National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs)
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Universal access	29	44	20	4	3	4	4	1	1	3	7
Universal service	21	20	9	0	2	0	0	3	0	3	2
	50	64	29	4	5	4	4	4	1	6	9
Women	51	29	26	13	68	22	2057	53	625	363	66
Gender	56	22	17	4	3	5	502	22	488	105	63
	107	51	43	17	71	27	2559	75	1113	468	129
Digital divide	30	48	10	14	10	2	24	4	5	30	26
Surveillance	1	4	9	0	46	12	10	1037	35	22	44
Social media	0	0	2	0	127	56	64	67	128	105	22

Social network	0	5	28	3	134	44	64	54	75	24	14
	0	5	30	3	261	100	128	121	203	129	36
Mobile	114	325	229	244	161	68	157	119	68	115	32
Multistakeholder/ multi-stakeholder	29	4	3	12	3	4	2	10	5	3	281
Anonymous/anonymity	0	6	8	0	31	32	42	32	68	11	55
Privacy	5	25	70	2	84	14	34	620	116	30	59
Copyright	19	2	84	1	51	1	0	11	1	71	9
Intellectual property	14	5	72	1	13	0	1	3	1	5	3
Open source	65	18	37	3	6	8	2	12	0	9	2
Open data	0	0	1	0	2	59	0	3	0	4	1
Cyber crime/cyber-crime/ cybercrime	4	7	13	0	31	2	43	55	37	5	56
VAW	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	1	10	0	0
Big data	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	3
Algorithm	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	1
Internet of things	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	4

A baseline review of the Global Information Society Watch country reports (2007-2017)

This review looks back over 11 years of civil society advocacy in the information society – a total of 510 country reports published in Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) from 2007 to 2017. It covers a period of important global shifts, from the exponential growth and influence of social media, to the turbulence and hope of the Arab Spring, to revelations of widespread state surveillance. It offers a summary of what internet rights activists wrote about, what they found important, the challenges they faced, and what they felt needed to be done to strengthen a people-centred information society. It is a resource for planning and action, and an index to advocacy – a way of looking back and strategising for the future.

GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH
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